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Thursday-Friday, February 12-13, 2026



Missing Sturbridge man found in Boston

STURBRIDGE — The Sturbridge Police Department happily reports that Steven Lynch, who was reported missing on Jan. 1, has been located in Boston by the Boston Police and reported to be safe.

We would like to thank the community for the tips, support, and well wishes provided during this investigation. Your assistance was greatly appreciated.

We also thank the members of the Sturbridge

Police Department, along with the Worcester Police

Department, Boston Police Department, Massachusetts

State Police, and the Windsor, Conn. Police

Department for their professionalism and cooperation.

Gateway Players to hold auditions for "Charlotte's Web"

SOUTHBRIDGE — Gateway Players Theatre in Southbridge is hosting auditions for "Charlotte's Web."

Adapted by Joseph Robinette. Based on the book by E.B. White. Auditions will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 24 at 6 p.m. and Sunday, March 1 at 4 p.m. in Fellowship Hall at Elm Street Congregational Church, 61 Elm St., Southbridge.

Auditions will consist of cold readings from the script and role playing. This is a Youth Production for ages seven to 17. Performance dates are May 1, 2, 3, 8 & 9. Rehearsals will be held on Thursdays at 6 p.m. and Saturdays at 2 p.m. Character information is listed below. Directed by Lou-Ellen Corkum, and Produced by Stephanie Ruggiere. For more information, please contact Gateway at 508-764-4531. Presented by permission through special arrangement with Dramatic Publishing.

The Children's Literature Association named this "the best American children's book of the past two hundred years," and Joseph Robinette, working with the advice of E.B. White, has created a play that captures this work in a thrilling and utterly practical theatrical presentation. The costumes and unit set may be simple or as colorful and elaborate as you wish; it's the story and relationships that make the show. All the enchanting characters are here: Wilbur, the irresistible young pig who desperately wants to avoid the butcher; Fern, a girl who understands what animals say to each other; Templeton, the gluttonous rat who can occasionally be talked into a good deed; the Zuckerman family; the Arables; and, most of all, the extraordinary spider, Charlotte, who proves to be "a true friend and a good writer." Determined to save Wilbur, Charlotte begins her campaign with the "miracle" of her web in which she writes, "Some pig." It's the beginning of a victorious campaign which ultimately ends with the now-safe Wilbur doing what is most important to Charlotte.

Main Characters

Fern Arable

John Arable

Martha Arable

Avery Arable

Homer Zuckerman

Edith Zuckerman

Lurvy

Wilbur

Templeton

Charlotte

Goose, Gander, Sheep, Lamb

3 Narrators

Ensemble

Reporter, Photographer, Spectators

Judges, Fairgoers, Announcer, Uncle (a pig), Spiders

young girl
her father
her mother
her brother
her uncle
her aunt
a hired hand
a pig
a rat
a spider
farm animals



Courtesy

Last Monday morning, 200 children at Old Sturbridge Village gathered around two enormous oxen - Red and Don - to see whether they spotted their shadows as Farmer Will and Selectman Tom Kelleher looked on. It was Old Sturbridge Academy's unique twist on Groundhog Day. With the nation marking the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, it felt especially fitting to look to the ox - New England's unsung workhorse of the era - to predict the weather. Unfortunately, they're in agreement with Punxsutawney Phil (and Ms. G) - six more weeks of winter! - and that's based on two animals, not just one!

New York Times bestselling author Tess Gerritsen to headline Stewing Over Mysteries Event

Friends of the Joshua Hyde Public Library presents an evening with the master of medical thrillers

STURBRIDGE — The Joshua Hyde Public Library is thrilled to announce that renowned author Tess Gerritsen will be the featured guest at the upcoming Stewing Over Mysteries event on Wednesday, March 11 at 6:15 p.m. at the Publick House in Sturbridge.

Tess Gerritsen, a New York Times bestselling author known for her gripping medical thrillers and the beloved Rizzoli & Isles series, will share insights into her writing process, discuss her latest work, and engage with mystery enthusiasts in an intimate



setting. With more than 30 million copies of her books sold worldwide and the inspiration

behind the hit TNT television series, Gerritsen brings a unique perspective as both a former physician and master storyteller.

"We are absolutely delighted to have Tess Gerritsen as our speaker at

Turn To GERRITSEN page A10

Courtesy

(Left) Tess Gerritsen

PUBLIC NOTICE RIGHT OF WAY MAINTENANCE

As required by Massachusetts General Law Chapter 132B, National Grid (New England Power and/or Massachusetts Electric Company) hereby gives notice that it intends to selectively apply herbicides along specific transmission line rights-of-way in 2026.

The selective use of herbicides to manage vegetation along rights-of-way is done within the context of an Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) program consisting of mechanical, chemical, natural, and cultural components. In right-of-way vegetation management the pest or target is vegetation (primarily tall growing) that will cause outages and safety issues. National Grid's IVM program encourages natural controls by promoting low growing plant communities that resist invasion by target vegetation. The selective use of herbicides and mechanical controls are the direct techniques used to control target vegetation and help establish and maintain natural controls.

National Grid may utilize any of the herbicides noted on the MA Sensitive Materials list. Rodeo, and possibly one of the following herbicides, Arsenal or Arsenal Powerline, will be applied directly to the surface of stumps immediately after target vegetation is cut (Cut Stump Treatment). Garlon 4 or Garlon 4 Ultra will be applied selectively to the stems of target vegetation using hand-held equipment (Basal Treatment and Dormant stem treatment). Krenite S or Rodeo, mixed with Escort XP, and one of the following herbicides, Arsenal or Arsenal Powerline, or Milestone will be applied selectively to the foliage of target vegetation using hand-held equipment (Foliar Treatment). Cambistat as a tree growth regulator. Applications shall not commence more than ten days before or conclude more than ten days after the following treatment periods. The herbicide mixes and additional information about rights of way management in Massachusetts can be found here:

<https://www.mass.gov/rights-of-way-vegetation-management>

Municipalities that have rights-of-way scheduled for herbicide treatments in 2026:

Charlton

Treatment Periods

February 1, 2026–May 30, 2026	May 30, 2026–Oct 15, 2026	Oct 15, 2026–Dec 31, 2026
CST	Foliar	CST
Basal	CST	Basal
Dormant stem	Basal	Dormant stem
	Cut stubble	

*The exact treatment dates are dependent upon weather conditions and field crew progress.

Further information may be requested by contacting
(during business hours, Mon-Fri from 8:00 am-4:00 pm):
Mariclaire Rigby, National Grid, 939 Southbridge Street, Worcester, MA 01610.
Telephone: (781) 290-8310 or email: mariclaire.rigby@nationalgrid.com

Volunteers from St. Anne – St. Patrick Parish and Shrine preparing and serving meals at the Mustard Seed



Courtesy

Volunteers from St. Anne – St. Patrick Parish and Shrine preparing and serving meals at the Mustard Seed in Worcester.

FISKDALE — St. Anne-St. Patrick Parish is continuing its community outreach through the Mustard Seed Catholic Worker, a community kitchen in Worcester. This February marks the third year of this minis-

try, which serves about 150 meals to people in need.

"This is a simple but powerful way to live our faith," said Joe Krans, coordinator and volunteer. "When we serve together, we build com-

munity and offer real hope to our neighbors. Whether you help cook, serve, or donate, you're sharing a meal with someone who truly needs it."

Turn To **MUSTARD SEED**

page A10

Sturbridge Historical Society presents “Exploring Massachusetts Property Records”

STURBRIDGE — On Thursday, Feb. 26, at 7 p.m. at The Publick House, the Sturbridge Historical Society, in collaboration with the Joshua Hyde Public Library, will present “Exploring Massachusetts Property Records” by genealogist Seema-Jayne Kenny.

Are you curious about who once owned your home? Wondering what land your ancestors may have bought or sold? This presentation introduces everyday researchers to the fascinating world of Massachusetts land records. Learn how to use online tools like MassLandRecords.com, understand the meaning behind different types of deeds, and uncover surprising details—from property disputes to family connections. Whether you’re exploring genealogy or local history, land records can help piece together the past in a way few other sources can.

Kenney started in the business of genealogy after completing the Genealogical Research Certificate Program at Boston University’s Center for Professional Education in 2010. Since then, she continued her education via ProGen & NIGR in 2012. Along the way, she joined several Genealogy Societies, attended local conferences, and enjoyed several webinars. Kenney has been a successful presenter in the past of programs at the Joshua Hyde Public Library.

Kenney is presenting two additional programs this spring in Sturbridge about genealogy. On March 26, the Joshua Hyde Public Library will host “Getting Started with Ancestry.com: A Practical Introduction to Family History Research”. This beginner-friendly session introduces you to the core features of Ancestry.com, includ-

ing how to navigate your family tree, evaluate hints, and organize genealogical information on one of the most widely used family history platforms. And in June Kenney will be at the Senior Center to present “Become the Ancestor Your Family Remembers”. This session offers practical guidance on documenting your own life story using a variety of formats—from job applications and photo captions to vivid personal memories.

This program is supported in part by a grant from the Sturbridge Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.

The program is free and open to the public; and is generously hosted by the Publick House.

Lauren Gunagan of Sturbridge makes Dean's List at Adelphi University

GARDEN CITY, N.Y. — Lauren Gunagan has been named to Adelphi University’s Fall 2025 Semester Dean’s List.

Gunagan, from Sturbridge, was among a select group of outstanding students recognized by Adelphi’s deans of Arts and Sciences, Education and Health Science, Business, Nursing and Public Health, Social Work and Psychology for superior academic performance. The list comprises full-time students registered for 12 or more credits who have completed at least nine graded credits who achieved a GPA of 3.5 or above for the semester. This recognition becomes part of the student’s academic record and is entered into the individual’s transcript.

About Adelphi: A modern metropolitan university with a personalized approach to higher learning

Adelphi University, New York, is a highly awarded, nationally ranked, powerfully connected doctoral research university dedicated to transforming students’ lives through small classes with world-class faculty, hands-on learning, and innovative ways to support academic and career success. U.S. News & World Report named Adelphi a 2026 Best National University, Best College for Veterans, and Top Performer in Social Mobility. In addition, Forbes has ranked Adelphi the top private university on Long Island for three past three years. Adelphi serves more than 7,300 students at its beautiful main campus in Garden City, New York—just 23 miles from New York City’s cultural and internship opportunities—and at dynamic learning hubs in Manhattan, the Hudson Valley and Suffolk County, as well as online. More than 123,000 Adelphi graduates have gained the skills to thrive professionally as active, engaged citizens, making their mark on the University, their communities and the world.

What should you do in the new year? Get your “estate needs in order”. No one likes to talk about death, that is why you should have everything done in advance. Make sure your hard-earned money and investments are left to those you want. Call me for a free consultation. Also, handling all types of real estate matters.

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25 Elm St

Gateway Players to hold fundraising performance of “Godspell”

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

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

Performance dates are March 20 & 21 at 7:30 p.m. and March 22 at 2 p.m. The performances will be held at Elm Street Congregational Church, 61 Elm St. in Southbridge. Entrance is on Park Street (around the corner). Book by John Michael Tebelak, Music and Lyrics by Stephen Schwartz, Conceived and Originally Directed by John Michael Tebelak, Based on The Gospel According to St. Matthew. “Godspell” is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). Directed by Lynn Boucher, Produced by Lou-Ellen Corkum and the

Musical Director is Chris Rubenacker.

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

The cast includes: “Jesus” - Alex Gardner, “John the Baptist/Judas” - Mark Lammert Ensemble: Billy Bolster, David Yutzler, Davyn Walsh, Deb Hollett, Erin Simpson, Hannah Bilis Heather Crabbe, Kirsten Smaltz, and Robyn De Gennaro.

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

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

erance, and love come vibrantly to life.

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

St. Anne – St. Patrick’s Calendar

Raffle celebrates Lucky Month

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

The calendar features four \$100 prizes drawn every Saturday in March as well as several random cash prizes throughout the month. On St. Patrick’s Day, the lucky winner will receive \$500.

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

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

St. Anne - St. Patrick Parish is an active parish community. It offers daily Mass for worship, religious education, and community ministries. It welcomes visitors to St. Anne Shrine, the new Memorial for the Unborn, the Hall of Saints, the Russian Icon Exhibit, the Votive Chapel, the Generations Statue, and the Angel of Hope Monument. Our pilgrims feel at peace walking the ground, including the Stations of the Cross and the Holy Stairs. And weather permitting, pilgrims also have access to a picnic grove. The Daily Rosary is recited at 3 p.m. in the St. Patrick Chapel, and weekend Masses are celebrated in its outdoor pavilion in the summer. Its religious gift shop is open every day from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Cornerstone Bank donates \$10,000 to RCAP Solutions to support housing counseling in Worcester

WORCESTER — Cornerstone Bank today announced a \$10,000 donation to RCAP Solutions, Inc., in Worcester to support staffing at its Housing Consumer Education Center (HCEC) following state funding cuts that have reduced access to free housing counseling services across Worcester County.

HCEC is a proven, no-cost resource that helps individuals and families stabilize their housing through one-on-one counseling, financial

education, sustainable spending classes and pre- and post-home-buyer support. Recent reductions in state funding have limited staff capacity at a time when demand for housing guidance continues to grow, placing low-income residents at greater risk of housing instability.

“Stable housing is the foundation of strong families and healthy communities,” said Todd Tallman, CEO of Cornerstone Bank. “With state funding cuts putting essential counseling

services at risk, we felt it was important to step up and support RCAP Solutions’ Housing Consumer Education Center so they can continue helping Worcester County residents stay housed, informed and financially resilient.”

Cornerstone Bank’s contribution will help RCAP Solutions retain skilled HCEC staff so they can continue assisting individuals and families in navigating the housing market, addressing financial challenges and maintaining stable housing.

“Cornerstone Bank’s support will make a meaningful difference for the individuals and families we serve,” said Brian D. Scales, President & CEO of RCAP Solutions. “This funding strengthens our Housing Consumer

Education Center’s ability to provide essential counseling and guidance at a time when many in our community are facing growing challenges. We are deeply grateful for Cornerstone Bank’s commitment to helping local families find stability and a path forward.”

A bout 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 Peoples BankCorp, MHC,

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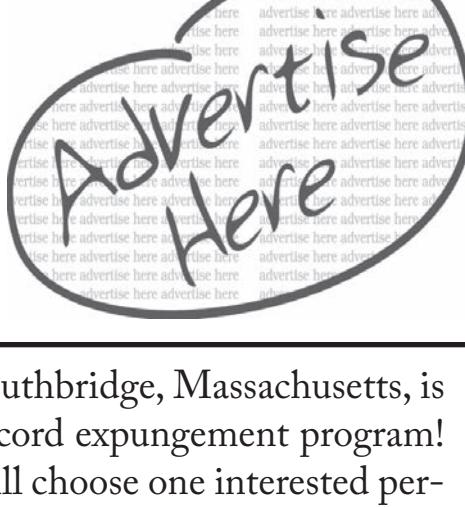
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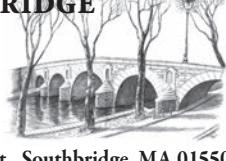


Green Path Cannabis in Southbridge, Massachusetts, is proud to offer a monthly record expungement program! Each month, Green Path will choose one interested person to receive legal services to evaluate and assist their petitions to seal or expunge a criminal record of cannabis possession. Green Path will give hiring consideration to qualified participants as well as their spouses and children if an employment vacancy exists.

Please apply for consideration at greenpathcannabis.com or email kailyhepburn@kailyhepburnlaw.com.

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FRANK G. CHILINSKI
PRESIDENT/PUBLISHER
BRENDAN BERUBE
EDITOR

The quiet strength of Main Street

It does not take a ribbon cutting or a headline-grabbing announcement to know that something is happening along our Main Streets. Sometimes the clearest signs of local strength are subtle: a storefront light switched back on after months of darkness, a handwritten "Now Open" sign taped carefully to a door, or the sound of conversation drifting out of a café on an otherwise ordinary afternoon.

Southbridge, Sturbridge, and Charlton each have their own commercial rhythms and challenges, but they share something fundamental: a long tradition of locally owned businesses that quietly anchor daily life. Hardware stores that still recognize customers by face. Restaurants where the owner is also the host and sometimes the cook. Shops that may not appear on travel blogs but remain indispensable to the people who live nearby.

In recent years, running a small business has not been easy. Rising costs, workforce shortages, changing shopping habits, and the convenience of online retail have reshaped how people spend their money. Many long-time proprietors have retired, while others have chosen not to reopen after difficult seasons. These changes can leave gaps that feel personal, because when a local business closes, it is not just a service that disappears. It is a familiar place in the routine of a town.

Yet what is equally striking is how often those gaps are filled again. A former employee takes a leap and opens a shop of their own. A family renovates a long-vacant building and gives it new purpose. A business adapts, adding new offerings or adjusting hours, not because it is easy, but because it is necessary.

Local businesses do more than sell goods and services. They sponsor youth teams, donate gift cards to school raffles, and provide first jobs for teenagers learning responsibility and customer service. They keep money circulating locally, supporting other businesses in turn. They give Main Street its character, something that cannot be replicated by national chains or online carts.

Supporting these businesses does not require grand gestures. It often comes down to small, consistent choices. Choosing to buy a gift locally instead of clicking a button. Picking up takeout from a nearby restaurant on a busy evening. Recommending a local shop to a new neighbor. These decisions may feel modest, but taken together, they matter.

At the same time, it is worth recognizing that the responsibility does not fall solely on residents. Town leaders, property owners, and planners all play roles in shaping business-friendly environments. Reasonable regulations, clear communication, and thoughtful use of shared spaces can help ensure that Main Streets remain places where entrepreneurs are willing to invest their time and savings.

The health of a town is often measured in big ways: population figures, tax rates, school enrollment. But there is another measure that is just as telling. It is the number of doors that are open on Main Street, the lights in the windows, and the sense that something is happening, even if it is happening quietly.

In Southbridge, Sturbridge, and Charlton, that quiet strength is still there. It shows up every morning when a shop opens on time and every evening when someone locks up, hoping tomorrow will be a little better. Those efforts deserve notice, respect, and support, because strong communities are built not only in meeting rooms, but also across counters, tables, and doorways on Main Street.

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

Tax-saving moves you can still make for 2025

Tax season is upon us, and while April 15 may seem like it's right around the corner, you still have time to make some strategic moves that could lower your 2025 tax bill. Whether you're looking to reduce your taxable income or set yourself up for a more secure financial future, these options are worth considering.

Contribute to an IRA. One of the most popular tax-smart moves is contributing to an Individual Retirement Account. You have until the April 15 filing deadline to contribute to an IRA for the 2025 tax year. You can contribute up to \$7,000, or \$8,000 if you're 50 or older.

If you choose a traditional IRA, your contributions may be tax-deductible depending on your income level and whether you participate in an employer-sponsored retirement plan. Your earnings grow tax-deferred until you withdraw them in retirement. With a Roth IRA, you won't get an immediate tax deduction, but your earnings can grow tax-free if you follow the withdrawal rules.

Max out your Health Savings Account (HSA). If you're enrolled in a high-deductible health plan, a Health Savings Account offers triple tax advantages. You can still make HSA contributions for 2025 until April 15. The limits are \$4,300 for individual coverage and \$8,550 for family coverage. If you're 55 or



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older, you can contribute an additional \$1,000.

HSA contributions reduce your taxable income, the money grows tax-free, and withdrawals for qualified medical expenses are never taxed. Plus, HSAs have no "use it or lose it" rule. Your savings roll over year after year, making an HSA a valuable tool for building resources to cover healthcare costs in retirement.

Self-employed? Consider a SEP IRA. Business owners and self-employed individuals have another powerful option: the SEP IRA. You can

make contributions for 2025 up until your business tax return deadline, including extensions. For 2025, you can contribute up to 25 percent of your compensation, with a maximum of \$70,000. This can significantly reduce your taxable income while building your retirement nest egg.

Don't forget required minimum distributions. If you turned 73 in 2025, make sure you've taken your Required Minimum Distribution from

your traditional IRA or 401(k) for 2025. Missing this deadline can result in a steep penalty, so it's important to verify that if your 73rd birthday was in 2025, your RMD has been withdrawn before April 1.

Consult a professional. While these moves can help reduce your tax burden, everyone's financial situation is unique. Before making any major financial decisions, it's wise to consult with a tax advisor or financial advisor who can provide guidance tailored to your specific circumstances.

The April 15 deadline is fast approaching, but you still have opportunities to make smart choices that could benefit both your current tax return and your long-term financial health. Don't let this window of opportunity close without considering your options.

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.

Edward Jones, its employees, and financial advisors cannot provide tax or legal advice. You should consult your attorney or qualified tax advisor regarding your situation.

The quiet comfort of familiar errands

LANTERNS ALONG MAIN STREET By CHARLES

There is a particular kind of comfort in doing the same small things the same way, week after week, year after year. It is not the sort of comfort that announces itself. It does not come with fireworks or applause. It slips in quietly, usually while you are not paying much attention, and settles somewhere between habit and gratitude.

For me, it shows up most often during errands.

Not the big ones. Not the kind that require lists, calendars, or steeling yourself for frustration. I mean the ordinary errands. The ones you could almost do with your eyes closed. The trip to the grocery store where you already know which cart has the wobbly wheel. The stop at the post office where the clerk nods before you even reach the counter. The gas station where you don't have to think about which pump to use because you always pull into the same one.

In small-town Massachusetts, these errands are less about the task and more about the reassurance. They remind you that, despite everything else changing at a dizzying pace, some parts of life remain dependable.

I sometimes think about this when I am standing in line, waiting my turn, listening to the quiet hum of everyday life. Someone ahead of me is chatting with the cashier about a grandson's basketball game. Someone behind me is patiently holding a cup of coffee and pretending not to be in a hurry. No

one is performing. No one is in a rush to be impressive. We are all just there, together, taking care of small necessities.

Years ago, I did not appreciate this. I wanted efficiency. I wanted things done quickly and without interruption. Conversations felt like obstacles. Familiarity felt dull. I mistook speed for progress and novelty for meaning.

Age has corrected that misunderstanding.

Now I notice the rhythm. I notice how often I see the same faces and how comforting that repetition can be. I notice how a brief exchange, no longer than a sentence or two, can brighten an otherwise ordinary morning. A simple "Good to see you" carries more weight than it used to.

These errands also remind me how much of community life is held together by people who rarely get any attention. The clerks, tellers, attendants, and cashiers who show up every day, learn names without trying, and quietly make things run. They are part of the architecture of our towns, as essential as sidewalks and stop signs.

When one of them is missing, you feel it immediately. The day is still functional, but something is off. A

familiar note is missing from the chord.

I think my parents understood this better than I did when I was younger. They treated errands as opportunities rather than obligations. They lingered. They listened. They understood that life is not only what happens at milestones, but also what happens between them.

Now I find myself doing the same. I take the long way through the aisles. I exchange a few words even when silence would be faster. I leave with what I came for, yes, but also with a quiet sense that I am part of something ongoing and shared.

There is comfort in knowing where things are. There is comfort in knowing who will be behind the counter. There is comfort in knowing that tomorrow or next week, you will likely do it all again, and that repetition is not a failure of imagination but a sign of belonging.

In a world that constantly urges us to upgrade, optimize, and move on, these familiar errands gently suggest another approach. Stay. Notice. Appreciate. Let the ordinary be enough.

Some nights, when I drive home as the last light fades and the streetlamps come on along Main Street, I think of them as lanterns. Small points of steady light, not meant to dazzle, just meant to guide you home.

That is what these routines are, too. Lanterns along the way.

To THE EDITOR Southbridge seniors deserve better

To the Editor:

For those of you who know me, you know that I am deeply troubled by what is happening to our seniors at Lebanon Hill Housing. One of the reasons that I decided to run for Town Council is my frustration with a lack of solutions and our Council's propensity to embrace what once was and not what could be. It's time to move forward.

Southbridge has one of the highest proportions of seniors in the region, yet some of the fewest senior friendly housing options. Property taxes are increasing and rents are rising; fixed incomes aren't. Many older residents are living in aging homes that are difficult to maintain, expensive to heat, or unsafe for aging in place. Southbridge does not offer affordable options for older residents who want to sell their homes and stay in the community and Southbridge does not offer affordable options for senior residents who rent and want to stay in the community.

Our seniors at Lebanon Hill have faced a 144 percent increase in rent in just three years, driven by speculative investors. Many of these wonderful human beings are scared, anxious, and uncertain about what lies ahead — and whether they'll be forced to leave the town they've called home for decades. This is not just a housing issue — it's a moral one.

Housing is central to Southbridge's future. It's a big deal. I've read our town's master plans going back to 1983. I was surprised to learn that the number of single and multi family homes has remained largely stagnant for more than 40 years. That stagnation has pushed Southbridge homeowners to shoulder around 86 percent of the town's entire property tax burden — an unusually high share for a community of our size.

and income level. This is not sustainable. If we don't change course, what will the tax burden look like ten years from now?

We have real problems to solve. We can't fix schools, strengthen the economy, or reduce the tax burden without addressing housing. These issues are acutely interconnected.

Our seniors need safe, secure housing. Veterans and people with disabilities need safe, secure housing. Young families, single parents, and working class residents need affordable housing. Bringing properties back onto the market and working with responsible developers to build new affordable options will help expand our tax base and reduce the financial pressure on residents. We have an abundance of underutilized buildings in town that are ripe for transformation into modern, functional homes.

But none of this happens without leadership.

Southbridge needs nine Town Councilors who show up, who do the work, and who are actively involved in moving this community forward. We cannot afford passive voices and empty seats at the table. The challenges we face require Town Councilors who listen to residents, read reports, do research, understand the data, identify solutions and are willing to make difficult, long term decisions in the best interest of the community.

Our future deserves nothing less. In the words of Councilor John Daniel, "Why not Southbridge."

Respectfully

Shelley Klein
Southbridge

Worcester Polytechnic Institute

announces Fall Dean's List

WORCESTER — Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) has announced its Dean's List for academic excellence for the Fall 2025 semester.

The criteria for the WPI Dean's List differ from that of most other universities as WPI does not compute a grade point average (GPA). Instead, WPI students are named to the Dean's List based on the amount of work completed at the A level in courses and hands-on projects.

"WPI's academic programs are rigorous and require a level of independence beyond what is required in traditional courses. WPI students work on real-world, open-ended problems on campus and in communities around the globe. Far from being simple academic exercises, the projects students complete have genuine and lasting impacts in our partner communities," said Provost Andrew Sears. "Some of this nation's best and brightest students come to WPI to study engineering, science, business, and the humanities. Those named to the Dean's List have excelled in all of their work, and we are exceptionally proud of these outstanding students."

The following students were named to the Fall 2025 Dean's List:

Aiden Custance of Brimfield, class of 2028, majoring in Biomedical Engineering

Lucas O'Connor of Sturbridge, class of 2029, majoring in Mechanical Engineering

Alexander Shettler of Brookfield, class of 2026, majoring in Computer Science

Joshua Martin of Southbridge, class of 2025, majoring in Civil Engineering

Neo Phommachanh of Southbridge, class of 2028, majoring in Aerospace Engineering

James Bernard of Uxbridge, class of 2028, majoring in Mechanical Engineering

Parin Boyalla of Uxbridge, class of 2028, majoring in Mechanical Engineering

David Cranney of Charlton, class of 2028, majoring in Mathematical Sciences

Caleb Deters of Uxbridge, class of 2028, majoring in Civil Engineering

Aidan Dugan of Charlton, class of 2027, majoring in Civil Engineering

Adam Faucher of Charlton, class of 2026, majoring in Society, Technology and Policy

Zachary Oliveira of Uxbridge, class of 2027, majoring in Management Engineering

Julia Philbrook of Uxbridge, class of 2027, majoring in Biomedical Engineering

Jack Tasick of Uxbridge, class of 2027, majoring in Electrical and Computer Engineering

About Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI)

is a top-tier, STEM-focused university with an R1 research classification and global leadership in project-based learning.

Founded in 1865, WPI's distinctive

approach integrates classroom theory with real-world practice, preparing students to

tackle critical challenges through inclusive

education, impactful projects, and inter-

disciplinary research. With more than 70

bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree

programs across 18 academic departments and over 50 global project centers, WPI advances knowledge and innovation in fields such as life sciences, smart technol-

ogies, advanced materials and manufacturing, and global innovation. Learn more at www.wpi.edu.

Friday's Child



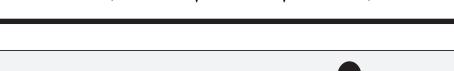
Tristan
Age 15
Registration #8627

active at the same time. Tristan would do well with a family who enjoys an active lifestyle and values spending time together, whether that's cheering him on at a game, heading out on outdoor adventures, or simply enjoying quality time at home. With the right family, Tristan will continue to grow, explore his interests, and share his enthusiasm, energy, and love for fun experiences.

<https://www.mareinc.org/child/21188696732>

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.



Alfred Laskowski named to Salve Regina University's Fall Dean's List

NEWPORT, R.I. — Alfred Laskowski of Fiskdale was named to the Dean's List during the fall 2025 academic semester at Salve Regina University. To qualify for the Dean's List, students must earn a semester grade point average of 3.6 for full-time students completing at least 12 graded credits, or a semester grade point average of 3.8 for part-time students completing at least six credits.

Salve Regina University is a Catholic, coeducational institution of higher education founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1947. The University offers rigorous, innovative academic programming in the liberal arts tradition that prepares students to be global citizens and lifelong learners. More than 2,700

undergraduate and graduate students from around the world are enrolled at Salve in 48 undergraduate majors, 13 master's degree programs, combined bachelor's/master's programs, and doctoral programs.

Every undergraduate student engages in Salve Compass, a transformational four-year program through which they develop the experience, skills, and wisdom required for a fulfilling career and to make a positive difference in the world. The University is also home to the Pell Center for International Relations and Public Policy, a multi-disciplinary research center focused on the intersection of politics, policy, and ideas. For more information visit salve.edu.

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Community Calendar

February 13-20

Friday, Feb. 13

- Senior Exercise, 9–10 a.m., Community Room, Community Center, 153 Chestnut St., Southbridge.
- Preschool Storytime (Ages 3–5), 10–10:45 a.m., Story Time Room, Charlton Public Library, 40 Main St., Charlton.
- iPhone Essentials: Find My, Wallet, and Translate, 10:30–11:30 a.m., Dexter Hall, Charlton Public Library, 40 Main St., Charlton.
- Winter Story Time, 10:45–11:30 a.m., Joshua Hyde Public Library, Sturbridge.
- Personalizing Your Device: Widgets and Apps, 12:30–1:30 p.m., Dexter Hall, Charlton Public Library, 40 Main St., Charlton.
- Kids Yoga with Lindsey, 4–4:30 p.m., Community Meeting Room, Charlton Public Library, 40 Main St., Charlton.

Saturday, Feb. 14

- Southbridge Chess Club, 10–11:30 a.m., Pioppi Room, Jacob Edwards Library, Southbridge.
- Book Signing: Walter Hersee, "To Defend All That Is Dear," 10:30–11:30 a.m., Joshua Hyde Public Library, Sturbridge.
- Friends of Sturbridge Trails Ice Carving Event, Saturday, Riverlands Trail area, 52 Stallion Hill Rd., Sturbridge (event listing notes an evening stroll and illuminated displays; see organizer details).
- Old Sturbridge Village: Valentine's Day Afternoon Tea (Feb. 14–15; reservations required) and Night In the Museum (Youth Overnight Program) (Feb. 14; registration required).
- Old Sturbridge Village: "Love History!" daytime admission promotion begins during school vacation week (Feb. 14–22; see details).

Sunday, Feb. 15

- Old Sturbridge Village: Valentine's Day Afternoon Tea (second day; reservations required).
- Old Sturbridge Village: "Love History!" daytime admission

promotion continues.

- Monday, Feb. 16 (Presidents Day)
 - Senior Exercise, 9–10 a.m., Community Room, Community Center, 153 Chestnut St., Southbridge.
 - Joshua Hyde Public Library: Presidents Day (listed as an all-day closing).

Tuesday, Feb. 17

- Latino Group, 9 a.m.–noon, Community Room, Community Center, 153 Chestnut St., Southbridge.
- Winter Toddler Time, 10:45–11:30 a.m., Joshua Hyde Public Library, Sturbridge.
- Pitch, noon–1 p.m., Community Room, Community Center, 153 Chestnut St., Southbridge.
- Winter Playgroup (Southbridge Recreation Department), 1:30–3 p.m., Community Room, Community Center, 153 Chestnut St., Southbridge.
- Kids Concert with Music at the Blissful!, 3:30–4:30 p.m., Joshua Hyde Public Library, Sturbridge.
- Sturbridge Select Board, 6:30 p.m., Town Hall, Sturbridge (public meeting listing).

Wednesday, Feb. 18

- Senior Exercise, 9–10 a.m., Community Room, Community Center, 153 Chestnut St., Southbridge.
- Workshops for Job Seekers (Virtual), 9 a.m.–noon, remote (Southbridge listing).

- Drop-in Needle Felting for Adults, 10–11:30 a.m., Charlton Public Library, 40 Main St., Charlton.

- Paper Roses Craft, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m., Dexter Hall, Charlton Public Library, 40 Main St., Charlton.

- Dungeons and Dragons for Teens, 1–3 p.m., Charlton Public Library, 40 Main St., Charlton.

- Winter Baby Time, 10:45–11:30 a.m., Joshua Hyde Public Library, Sturbridge.

- Clay Gnomes with Rick Hamelin!, 2–4 p.m., Joshua Hyde Public Library, Sturbridge (registration required).

- Harlem Shuffle Book Discussion, 2–3 p.m., Jacob Edwards Library, Southbridge.

- Open Session with Jack-Jack the Therapy Dog, 3:30–4:30 p.m., Charlton Public Library, 40 Main St., Charlton.

- Charlton Old Home Day Committee Meeting, 5:30 p.m., Charlton (town calendar listing).

- Tech Help, 5–7 p.m., Joshua Hyde Public Library, Sturbridge.

- Armchair Travelers Book Club, 6:30–7:30 p.m., Joshua Hyde Public Library, Sturbridge.

- Old Sturbridge Village: Maple Days begins (Wed.–Sun. starting Feb. 18) and February Vacation Week Discovery Adventures (listed Feb. 18–20).

Thursday, Feb. 19

Valentine's Night

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Brayden Michaelson named to Dean's List at Plymouth State University

PLYMOUTH, New Hampshire — Brayden Michaelson of Charlton has been named to the Plymouth State University Dean's List for the Fall 2025 semester. To be named to the Dean's List, a student must achieve a grade point average between 3.5 and 3.69 for the Fall 2025 term, be a matriculated student with at least 12 credits, at least nine of which must confer grade points at the time the list is finalized. Michaelson is majoring in History & Social Studies Ed at

Plymouth State.

About Plymouth State University

Established in 1871, Plymouth State University serves the state of New Hampshire and the world beyond by transforming our students through advanced practices where engaged learning produces well-educated undergraduates, and by providing graduate education that deepens and advances knowledge and enhances professional development. The Plymouth State Cluster

Learning Model emphasizes open, integrative, and project-based experiences. With distinction, we connect with community and business partners for economic development, technological advances, healthier living, and cultural enrichment with a special commitment of service to the North Country and Lakes Region of New Hampshire. To learn more about Plymouth State University, visit www.plymouth.edu.

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Brimfield to mark 250th anniversary of Independence

BRIMFIELD — Save the date! On Saturday, June 13, a community-wide celebration marking the 250th anniversary of our nation's freedom will take place in Brimfield.

In recognition of this year's historic milestone, a full day of remembrance and celebration is planned. All are wel-

come to attend the day's events, which include the following: Revolutionary War themed cemetery tours, a ceremony at the town common gazebo, a parade, and fun-filled festivities at the Brimfield Winery. The evening will close out with a spectacular fireworks display.

Additional details and updates will be available through the Friends of Historic Brimfield event Web site, www.fohbrimfield.org. Tax-deductible donations can also be made in support of this celebration through this website, and in gratitude, donors will be recognized in the event program. Donations can also be mailed to: Friends of Historic Brimfield, P.O. Box 52, Brimfield, MA 01010 with "Spirit of Brimfield" in the memo.

This event is currently being sponsored by the Massachusetts Army National Guard and Classic Hits 97.7

FM. If you or your company are interested in any level of corporate or business sponsorship, please visit the event website at www.fohbrimfield.org. Additional volunteers are needed for both planning and to help with activities during the event, or if you are interested in putting a float in the parade, contact Friends of Historic Brimfield at (413) 239-0288 for more information.

Be sure to save the date for this celebration of the founding of our country! More information will follow.

Local historian releases groundbreaking Revolutionary War study

Book signing scheduled Feb. 14 at Joshua Hyde Public Library

STURBRIDGE — Local historian and author Walter J. Hersee announces the release of "To Defend All That Is Dear," a groundbreaking reconstruction of Sturbridge's Revolutionary War roster that recovers dozens of forgotten patriots and provides a replicable research model for communities preparing for the nation's 250th anniversary.

A public book signing and author talk will be held on Saturday, Feb. 14 at 10:30 a.m. at the Joshua Hyde Public Library, located at 306 Main St., Sturbridge.

Unlike traditional Revolutionary War histories that retell familiar battles, *To Defend All That Is Dear* focuses on the recovery of the soldiers whose service was omitted, mis-recorded, or lost through generations of incomplete documentation. Through meticulous archival work—including cross-referencing the Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors volumes, pension files, muster rolls, Continental returns, bounty records, and town meeting documents—Hersee identified 186 overlooked soldiers tied to Sturbridge and confirmed 23 wartime deaths previously absent from the town's historical memory.

"Every community has missing patriots," Hersee explains. "Their absence isn't intentional—it's a quiet drift caused by record loss, transcription errors, and assumptions passed down over centuries. This book shows how towns can recover those names and restore them to the story."

The study also serves as a practical guide. Hersee's transparent methodology demonstrates how individuals, local historians, genealogists, and his-

torical societies can rebuild their own Revolutionary War rolls using both traditional and modern tools. With the 250th anniversary approaching, the book arrives at a crucial time for communities seeking accurate histories and inclusive commemorations.

Hersee, a member of the Sturbridge Historical Commission, the Community Preservation Committee, and several regional history initiatives, has been widely recognized for his work updating Sturbridge's honor rolls and re-examining long-standing assumptions about local Revolutionary War service.

"This is more than Sturbridge's story," Hersee notes. "It's a blueprint. Any town—large or small—can do this work and rediscover those who stepped forward 'to defend all that is dear.'"

Published under his imprint, Heritage Oak Press, the book includes corrected service profiles, narrative insights, and detailed explanations of the research process—bridging scholarly rigor with accessible community history.

Residents, history enthusiasts, genealogists, and representatives from regional historical societies are encouraged to attend the Feb. 14 event to meet the author, learn about the research, and obtain signed copies.

Walter J. "Wally" Hersee is a Sturbridge-based historian, researcher, and author whose work centers on recovering forgotten local stories through deep archival research. He serves on several historical and municipal committees and is the author of "Common Witness: Leaves from a New England Town" and forthcoming works from Heritage Oak Press.

SOUTHBRIDGE — Join Crocodile River Music on Feb. 26 at 6:30 p.m., when they return to Jacob Edwards Library in Southbridge for a celebration of Black

History Month!

This is a free event thanks to the support of Southbridge Cultural Council and Massachusetts Cultural Council.



Courtesy

Tantasqua Regional Junior High School is proud to celebrate its Students of the Quarter! These outstanding students have shown excellence through their hard work, positive attitude, leadership, and commitment to our school community! Photo courtesy of the school's Facebook page.

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Courtesy

Last week, the Charlton Fire Department participated in annual ice and cold water rescue training at Camp Joslin. Firefighters reviewed and practiced essential rescue techniques for icy and cold water emergencies, reinforcing the skills needed to respond safely and effectively during the winter months. As temperatures fluctuate and ice conditions become unpredictable, this type of hands-on training is critical to protecting both our responders and our community. Preparedness and continuous training remain a top priority for the department. Photo courtesy of the department's Facebook page.

Wales Community Pantry hosting Bingo fundraiser

BRIMFIELD — The Wales Community Pantry is hosting a Bingo afternoon at the First Congregational Church in Brimfield Feb. 15 from 2-5 p.m.

Get your game on and come join us for an afternoon of Bingo fun and support a good cause! Win gift cards

for a night out. All proceeds go to the Wales Community Pantry! Coffee & tea will be available, and baked goods will be available for purchase. Bingo night pricing is \$20 entry fee, which includes two tickets. \$5 for each additional ticket. You can buy ticket online or at the door. Bring friends, family, and your lucky Bingo charm!

All proceeds directly support the Wales Community Pantry so we can continue helping neighbors in need.

To purchase tickets online, visit <https://secure.givelively.org/event/wales-community-pantry/bingo-win-a-night-out?>

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Western New England University celebrates outstanding academic achievements

Nearly 600 students named to Fall President's List

SPRINGFIELD — Western New England University (WNE) takes immense pride in recognizing the outstanding academic achievements of nearly 600 students who have been named to the President's List for the Fall 2025 semester. Students are named to the President's List for achieving a semester grade point average of 3.80 or higher.

Stephen Ngaruiya of Charlton has been named to Western New England University's President's List for the Fall 2025 semester.

Austin Ayotte of Charlton has been named to Western New England University's President's List for the Fall 2025 semester.

Ellen Butler of Charlton has been named to Western New England University's President's List for the Fall 2025 semester.

Sarah Jalbert of Charlton has been named to Western New England University's President's List for the Fall 2025 semester.

Kaylin Tietz of Brimfield has been named to Western New England University's President's List for the Fall 2025 semester.

Emily Moran of Holland has been named to Western New England University's President's List for the Fall 2025 semester.

Jack Leland of Brimfield has been named to Western New England University's President's List for the Fall 2025 semester.

Tess Chevalier of Brimfield has been named to Western New England University's President's List for the Fall 2025 semester.

Kallie Laflamme of Sturbridge has been named to Western New England University's President's List for the Fall 2025 semester.

Ludmilla Venades of Brimfield has been named to Western New England University's President's List for the Fall 2025 semester.

Western New England University (WNE) is a private, nationally ranked, comprehensive institution with a focus on preparing work-ready and world-ready graduates. Founded in 1919 in Springfield, Massachusetts as a division of Northeastern College, WNE's 215-acre suburban campus serves more than 3,700 students, including over 2,500 full-time undergraduates. More than 47,000 alumni have earned degrees through its more than 90 undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs at Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Business, Engineering, and Pharmacy and Health Sciences, and School of Law. Students come from 39 U.S. states and territories and 23 countries. Of 45,104 living alumni, 30 percent remain within the region, residing in the four Western Massachusetts counties and northern Connecticut.

WNE is classified among nationally ranked universities in US News and World Report, and among the Top 100 Undergraduate Engineering programs, and in the Doctoral/Professional Universities category in

the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.

Matthew DiLibero of Uxbridge named to University of Alabama Dean's List

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — Matthew DiLibero was named to The University of Alabama Dean's List for Fall Semester 2025.

A total of 15,388 students enrolled during Fall Semester 2025 at The University of Alabama were named to the dean's list with an academic record of 3.5 (or above) or the president's list with an academic record of 4.0 (all A's). These driven students are making waves across UA's more than 70 undergraduate programs and 12 colleges and schools.

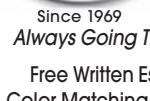
The UA dean's and president's lists recognize full-time undergraduate students. The lists do not apply to graduate students or undergraduate students who take less than a full course load.

For more information visit news.ua.edu.

The University of Alabama, part of The University of Alabama System, is the state's flagship university. UA shapes a better world through its teaching, research and service. With a global reputation for excellence, UA provides a forward-thinking environment and over 200 degree programs on a beautiful, student-centered campus. A leader in cutting-edge research, UA advances discovery, creative inquiry and knowledge through more than 30 research centers. As the state's largest higher education institution, UA drives economic growth in Alabama and beyond.

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OBITUARIES

Stephen P. Mathews

September 19, 1984~January 08, 2026



Stephen P. Mathews, 41, of Tarpon Springs, Florida, passed away on January 8th, 2026. He is survived by his wife Nicole Mathews; son Deklan; daughter Finley; father Patrick F. Mathews; mother Sharon; brothers Gregory (Charlotte) and Brendan (Blakeley); sister Bridget; father-in-law James Gasparino and mother-in-law Christina; brother-in-law Michael (Kristen) Gasparino; multiple nieces and nephews, aunts, uncles and cousins. Stephen grew up in Sturbridge Massachusetts, where he developed a lifelong love of baseball, competition and community. He attended St. Johns High School in Shrewsbury Massachusetts where he was an accomplished student-athlete and standout left-handed pitcher, helping lead his team to Division I state title in 2002. His dedication and on-field talent earned him a scholarship to Eckerd College in St. Petersburg Florida where he played collegiate baseball for all four years, graduating with a degree in sociology with a minor in criminology. His interest in criminology led to his attending the St Petersburg Police Academy, graduating in 2007. He began serving a distinguished eighteen-year career on the police force rising to leadership positions as Detective Sergeant in several squads within the organization earning the respect of his fellow officers and supervisors. In

recognition of his courage and commitment to protecting others, he was also the recipient of a Life Saving Award, an honor reflecting his selflessness and dedication to duty. In his off time, he enjoyed spending time with his wife of 14 years, Nicole and

their two children. He loved baseball, including coaching his son's baseball team, fishing, golf, and landscaping. He loved vacations with the family. Their most recent trip was to the Midwest to visit four ballparks. Stephen will be remembered as a loving husband, father, son, brother and friend – a man whose life was marked by dedication, loyalty, humor, and an unwavering love for his family. He will be missed by all. Please consider donating to a fund set up in Stephen's honor to support St. Petersburg Police Department law enforcement officers who would benefit from non-insured mental health support and services. This can be done at <https://www.suncoastpba.com/donate> and typing Mathews Family in the comment section. A service in celebration of Stephen's life was held on Thursday, January 15, 2026 at the First Baptist Church of St. Petersburg, a church large enough to accommodate the over 450 family, friends and colleagues who attended. The streaming link for the service is still active: https://www.youtube.com/live/SgMmK_yTp8o

Michele Latour, 60



Fiskdale: Michele (LaFrance) Latour, 60, passed away a happy and positive soul on Saturday, Jan. 31st.

Michele leaves behind her husband of 25 years, Barry G. Latour; her beloved son, Daniel Peet of Fiskdale; her mother, Billie Jean (Cone) LaFrance of Fiskdale; her two brothers, Joe LaFrance of Fiskdale and Jerome LaFrance and his wife Mary of Fiskdale; her sister, Sharon LaFrance of Fiskdale; and her great nephew, Ayden Blair. She was predeceased by her father, Oliver LaFrance and her nephew, Zac Sheridan.

Michele was originally diagnosed with breast cancer in 2017, which she treated aggressively. In 2022 the cancer metastasized to stage 4. Michele lived courageously and with a great

sense of humor.

Until her cancer diagnosis she worked throughout her life in various offices including, Channing Bete, Old Sturbridge Village, FlexCon, Southbridge School Department and Holland Elementary School.

Calling hours for Michele were held on Saturday, Feb. 7th, from 10:00am to 12:00pm in the Daniel T. Morrill Funeral Home, 130 Hamilton St., Southbridge, with a service following in the funeral home at 12:00pm. Burial in Holland Cemetery, Holland, will be held at the convenience of the family.

If you would like to make a donation in Michele's honor please donate to Metavivor at metavivor.org or to a local charity that is meaningful to you. www.morrillfuneralhome.com

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HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATOR POSITION STURBRIDGE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

The Town of Sturbridge D.P.W. is accepting applications for a Heavy Equipment Operator Position. This is a full-time position. Valid Class B CDL (min) and Equipment Hydraulic Licenses 2A, 4E, and 4G are required. Effective communication and supervisory skills are required. Applicants will be reviewed on their ability to operate all DPW equipment competently, including, but not limited to, grader, loader, roadside mower, excavator, backhoe, catch basin cleaner, and street sweeper. Applicant shall have construction-related experience operating heavy equipment. See the Job Description for more information. The starting pay rate will be \$29.56/hr. Applications are available at the Sturbridge Municipal Garage, New Boston Road Extension, Sturbridge, MA, or on the Town of Sturbridge website under job opportunities. Applications will be reviewed starting on February 9, 2026. The Department is a Union shop. The Town is an Equal Opportunity Employer (EOE).

John Eliot Bergman, 71



Charlton: John Eliot Bergman, formerly of Southbridge, died suddenly Monday morning, February 2, at the age of 71. He had lived for the past year and a half at Overlook Skilled Nursing Facility in

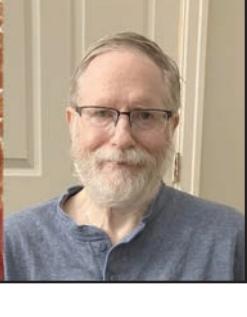
Charlton, where he had become ill the night before he died. He took a turn for the worse overnight and was rushed to Harrington Hospital in the wee hours, where doctors were unable to revive him.

John was born in New York City, but moved to Southbridge before his first birthday when his parents took over the Sturbridge Yankee Workshop. He attended public schools in Southbridge before graduating from Worcester Academy. He continued his studies at Curry College and UMass Amherst, but stopped short of a degree. In more recent years, John had lived in various places in Connecticut and Massachusetts before settling at the old Cordis Mills Apartments in Millbury, where he resided for 12 years.

John had a religious awakening in his early 30's, and his faith and membership in The Local Church in Worcester became a defining part of his life. He was also a friend of Bill W., with close to 20 years of sobriety under his belt, of which he was justly proud.

John made friends easily and kept most of them his entire life. He always had a kind word for everybody he met, regardless of their background or station in life. He was simply the sweetest guy you could ever hope to meet. Though he never used a computer and often struggled to figure out his "smart" phone, John loved sending cards to people, just to let them know he was thinking of them and cared for them. He was known for his quick wit and his unique sense of humor, and loved to crack people up, including himself.

He was also a passionate music lover.



He learned to play piano and guitar at a young age, and had a fine singing voice. In his younger years, John managed to catch many of the iconic bands of the 1960's and '70's, and more recently,

many of his favorite folk and bluegrass artists. He kept a large and eclectic CD collection, which he delved into frequently. He had an uncanny memory for song lyrics, which always astounded his music-loving friends. He was also an avid sports fan, and loved following the Celtics, Patriots, and Red Sox.

John is survived by his younger sister, Annie, of Southbridge, who was a tremendous help to him, especially in his later years. He also leaves his Towler cousins, of Vermont and Arizona, who loved him dearly and will miss him greatly. In addition, he leaves legions of friends, in the church, in the program, and elsewhere, who helped see him through some of life's toughest challenges, as he did for them.

He will be laid to rest in Oak Ridge Cemetery in Southbridge, alongside his parents.

His family wishes to give special thanks to the staff at Overlook, in addition to Karen Martin, who helped John so much in recent years, as well as the many friends who faithfully kept up with him and warmed his heart right to the end.

A memorial gathering in celebration of John's life will be held in the spring, at a time and place to be announced. Daniel T. Morrill Funeral Home, 130 Hamilton St., Southbridge is directing arrangements.

In lieu of flowers, those wishing to make a donation in John's memory are urged to give to their local food bank.

www.morrillfuneralhome.com

Walenty Szlosek, Jr., 91

Southbridge: Walenty Szlosek, Jr., 91, of Blackmere Rd., passed away on Tuesday, Feb. 3, 2026 in his home after a long illness.

His wife of 67 years, Hazel V. Szlosek, passed away in 2020. He leaves his son, Dwayne D. Szlosek of Dudley; his daughter, Vanessa V. Schoonover and her husband Royl of Westminster, VT; and his two grandchildren, Beckie Boyd and Ryan Schoonover; and many nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by four brothers, Peter Szlosek, John Szlosek, Winslow Szlosek and Stanley Szlosek and four sisters, Helen Robinson, Stephanie Szlosek, Wanda Zach and Theresa Walek. He was born in Webster the son of Walenty and Amelia (Zajac) Szlosek

Sr.

Walenty owned and operated the Tall Pine Greenhouse in Southbridge for 35 years. He also worked for CPC Engineering in Sturbridge for over 20 years. Prior to CPC he worked at the former Charlton Woolen Mills. Walenty loved fishing and was a licensed pilot and flew out of the Southbridge Airport in his younger years. Above all Walenty was devoted to his family.

A graveside service will be held on Wednesday, Feb. 11th, at 12:00pm in West Ridge Cemetery, Charlton. There are no calling hours.

The Daniel T. Morrill Funeral Home, 130 Hamilton St., Southbridge, is directing arrangements.

www.morrillfuneralhome.com

GERRITSEN

continued from page A1

this year's Stewin Over Mysteries event," said Library Director Becky Plimpton. "Her ability to blend medical expertise with edge-of-your-seat suspense has captivated readers around the world. This is a rare opportunity for our community to meet one of the most influential voices in contemporary mystery and thriller fiction."

The Stewin Over

Mysteries event will feature audience Q&A and book signing by Ms. Gerritsen. Attendees will have the chance to purchase Ms. Gerritsen's books on-site. Tickets are available now on the library website, sturbridgelibrary.org, and at the Joshua Hyde Public Library. Tickets are \$22 for the event and dinner, or a savings of \$3 on a \$36 package bundle that includes a signed copy of *The Summer Guests*. The book vendor for this event

is Book Club on the Go. Seating is limited, and this event will sell out.

About Tess Gerritsen

Tess Gerritsen is the New York Times bestselling author of more than 25 novels, including the Rizzoli & Isles series. Her books have been translated into 40 languages and have sold more than 30 million copies worldwide. A former physician, she now writes full-time and lives in Maine.

MUSTARD SEED

continued from page A1

St. Anne-St. Patrick Parish began its Mustard Seed ministry in February 2024. Parish volunteers prepare, cook, transport, and serve the meals. This is a hands-on way for parishioners and community members alike to put faith into action and build community through service. People at the Mustard Seed enjoy the meals and continue to express their appreciation to the parish.

Volunteers typically meet at the parish center on the Sunday before to prepare the food and then cook and serve the meal on the scheduled Monday. The 2026 meal

service dates are on the following Mondays: February 23, April 27, June 29, Aug. 31, Oct. 26, and Dec. 28.

Get involved:

- Volunteer to help prepare and serve meals – all are welcome, whether you're a long-time parishioner or part of the wider community.
- Bring a group from your parish, school, or organization to participate.
- Donate food or funds to support meal preparation.

Volunteers say serving at the Mustard Seed is a powerful way to experience the joy of giving and to live our faith in service to others.

Those interested in

volunteering to help prepare or serve a meal are encouraged to contact Joseph Krans at Joseph.Krans.PresenceWork@gmail.com. Donations in support of this initiative may be mailed to St. Anne-St. Patrick Parish, Attn: Mustard Seed Project, 16 Church St., Fiskdale, MA 01518.

The Mustard Seed Catholic Worker is a house of hospitality inspired by the vision and witness of Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day. To learn more about the Mustard Seed, please visit <https://mustardseedcw.org/>. To learn more about St. Anne St. Patrick Parish, please visit <https://stannestpatrickparish.com/>.



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Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale Irish Feast coming March 16

STURBRIDGE — A Sturbridge tradition returns just in time for your St. Patrick's Day celebration. The Federated

Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale will host its annual Irish Feast on Monday, March 16, at the historic Publick House Restaurant,

inviting the community to gather for good food, good company, and a good cause.

This year's Irish Feast

will benefit both the Federated Church and The Center of Hope Foundation, Inc., a Southbridge-based nonprofit that supports people with disabilities and their families from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, helping them access resources, services, and opportunities to live meaningful, fulfilling lives.

"We're fortunate to partner once again with the Publick House, which makes this evening possible year after year," said event chair Ken Benson. "This dinner has always been about community, and we're especially proud that it will also support the important work being done by The Center of Hope right here in our region."

Pastor Rev. David Cote added, "An Irish Feast is about more than corned beef and cabbage. It's about neighbors sitting down

together, sharing a meal, and supporting organizations that reflect our shared values of care, inclusion, and compassion."

Guests will enjoy a buffet-style Irish dinner featuring corned beef and cabbage, boiled potatoes, carrots and turnips, dinner rolls and Irish soda bread, a choice of beverage, and a cupcake for dessert. Dinner will be served in two seatings: The early seating will take place from 4:30 – 6 p.m., while a later seating happens from 6:30 – 8 p.m. Adult tickets are \$18, and children ages four to 12 are \$7.

Tickets must be purchased by March 15 as no tickets will be sold at the door. Tickets will be available Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon starting February 13 in the Federated Church of Sturbridge parlor, 8 Maple Street, where you may use cash, check, credit/debit

card, or Venmo.

The church website at sturfed.org and Facebook page both offer payment links and QR codes for those wishing to purchase tickets using PayPal. You may also purchase tickets electronically using Venmo at @Federated-Church. Please include your address, the number of meals you wish to purchase, and your preferred seating time. Time permitting, tickets purchased by Venmo will be mailed to the address provided. Late orders will be held at the door.

For more information or to purchase tickets, contact the Church Office at 774-304-1021 or Ken Benson at 774-230-3848. The Federated Church of Sturbridge & Fiskdale joyfully celebrates Christ's presence and God's grace in our lives. Learn more at sturfed.org or email choffice@sturfed.org.

Local residents named to Clark University's Fall Dean's List

WORCESTER — The following local residents were named to Clark University's Fall 2025 Dean's List:

Jaiden E. Gombos, of Brimfield was named to first honors.

Alexis M. Taudel, of Fiskdale was named to first honors.

Kayla R. Southworth, of Brimfield was named to first honors.

Students must have a GPA of 3.8 or above for first honors or a GPA between 3.50 and 3.79 for second honors.

Founded in 1887, Clark University is a liberal arts-based research university that prepares its students to meet tomorrow's most daunting challenges and embrace its greatest opportunities.

Through 33 undergraduate majors, more than 30 advanced degree programs, and nationally recognized community partnerships, Clark fuses rigorous scholarship with authentic world and workplace experiences that empower our students to pursue lives and careers of meaning and consequence.



Courtesy

Earlier this week, members of the Charlton Police Department Canine Unit, who are assigned to the day shift, had the opportunity to distribute Valentine's Day Cards at Heritage Elementary School. These cards were kindly donated by Friends of Charlton Police Dogs feature our four-legged friends, Dozer, Milkshake, Red and Raya. The kids were happy to take home a pic of their favorite K9s, and we enjoyed our time at the school. Happy Valentine's Day to all! Photo courtesy of the department's Facebook page.



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