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# Packard hits the ground running on School Committee



Nicholas Packard was recently elected to the Leicester School Committee.

## Local communities struggle with staff retention

**BY KEVIN FLANDERS**  
**STAFF WRITER**

REGION — Amid increasing struggles with staff retention, officials in local communities are searching for new ways to recruit and retain talented employees.

Even before COVID-19, area towns were already experiencing challenges with staff members departing in large numbers for other communities. But the post-pandemic years have compounded the issue with waves of retirements and resignations, as well as younger workers seeking remote jobs and opportunities in larger towns and cities.

Financial constraints have also worsened the problem, officials said. Local towns vary in coverage of their employees' insurance costs, but most staff members are responsible for a significant portion.

In Spencer, the town pays 60 percent of insurance costs, and the employee cost share is 40 percent.

"The pay is pretty good, but insurance has gone up. What they have to pay for insurance is really hurting," said Spencer Select Board Chairman John Howard.

Officials in several local towns have expressed frustration over investing resources into training and developing employees, only to see them leave a short time later. Many employees spend less than two years on the job, others leaving within months.

"Two of our firefighters recently left for Providence, R.I., after getting a couple years of training on the job with us," said Spencer Selectman Ralph Hicks. "It's difficult to find consistency when you have that level of turnover."

In Leicester, public workshops will be scheduled to discuss ways to improve retention issues and the overall experience for employees. Potential options include hiring an outside consulting firm; creating an HR director position; or resurrecting the town's disbanded Personnel Committee.

"People are taking this issue very seriously, and many items will need to be discussed," said newly elected Leicester Selectman Doug Belanger, who addressed the issue of retention extensively during his campaign this past spring.

Looking long-term, local officials said there may be opportunities to use creative strategies for securing fresh talent and incentivizing employees to stay.

When employees do choose to move on, officials said it's important to quickly find replacements who are eager to learn and develop. This may involve creating unconventional recruiting practices that cast a wider net in search of talent.

"The market for experienced, knowledgeable municipal personnel remains extremely competitive. As a result, we have to consider applicants from non-municipal settings for position openings, and do what we can within our limited resources to retain them," said Leicester Town Administrator David Genereux.

Leicester residents will receive updates when public workshops are scheduled.

In Spencer, retention is expected to be further addressed at upcoming meetings.

**BY KEVIN FLANDERS**  
**STAFF WRITER**

LEICESTER — Newly elected School Committee member Nicholas Packard is looking forward to a busy summer ahead of September's return to classes.

At the June 11 election, Packard ran unopposed for a one-year continuation term of an unexpired seat. Next year, should he choose to run again, it would be for a standard three-year term.

"I have been employed in school districts basically my whole life, and it's always been an interest of mine to join the School Committee in my local town," Packard said. "Having purchased a house in Leicester two years ago, I became a resident right before the budget deficit was announced and the override attempt. It got me interested in how the school budget got to where it was and how it can proceed from there. Now that I am elected, I feel the responsibility to assist the school district with remaining on track."

Packard has never previously held an elected position. He served on various subcommittees for the school districts in which he was employed.

Packard currently serves as the Director of Data and Enrollment Services for Fitchburg Public Schools. He previously worked for the Providence Public School District in Rhode Island, as well as Oxford Public Schools. Throughout his career, he has held such positions as data coordinator, registrar, and director of EduCare, among others.

In his current chapter in Leicester, Packard is eager to give back to students, families, and educators.

"Being such a new resident of Leicester, so much of the beginning of my term will be exploratory and supporting the committee with its existing goals and providing the knowledge I have to set new goals," Packard said. "Long-term, I am hoping to institute good practices and update policies, as needed, to allow the Leicester Public Schools to grow with

the ever-changing world around it."

Managing budgetary challenges is a major emphasis not only for Packard and his colleagues, but school officials throughout the area. Student retention, among other key ingredients, is integral to financial success.

"I feel like any community member you ask will say budget is one of the biggest areas of concern," Packard said. "The other area of concern that the district has is the growing number of immigrant students and, in turn, English learner students. Smaller suburban or rural districts, like Leicester, have never needed to worry much about this problem, but that population is growing and will continue to grow, and we need to adjust our practices and policies to accommodate these students."

Away from work and municipal service, Packard enjoys reading and writing, spending time with family, and going for walks with his dog.

## Busy summer ahead at Richard Sugden Library

**BY KEVIN FLANDERS**  
**STAFF WRITER**

SPENCER — Guests of all ages are invited to take part in a busy summer of programming at Richard Sugden Library.

Among the highlights is the library's summer reading program, which will embrace the statewide theme of: "Read, Renew, Repeat."

The Statewide Summer Library Program is funded by the Massachusetts Library System, the Boston Bruins, and the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

"All programs are free and will be held in the air-conditioned library. We look forward to seeing you at your library this summer," read a statement released by the library.

Meanwhile, the Spencer Chats program meets every Monday from 10:30-11:30 a.m. at the library. Adults are welcome to drop in for fun conversations and discussions. Each meeting begins with the topic of Spencer history, and the group is facilitated by Spencer historian Mary Baker-Wood.

A meditation program is held every Tuesday from 9-10 a.m. Learn, practice, and discuss mindfulness using various tools.

"This group is facilitated by Wendy O'Leary, an author, educator, and public speaker with expertise in emotional wellbeing for children and adults," the library statement read. "She teaches mindfulness and self-compassion to support emotional awareness, regulation, and resiliency."

If you would like to participate in this program, please send an email to [woleary25@gmail.com](mailto:woleary25@gmail.com).

The Spencer Crochet Club is holding a crochet series this summer (July 2, 9, 16, 23, 30). All programs will take place from 11 a.m. to noon at the library. All levels of crocheters are welcome; please bring your own supplies.

On Wednesdays, the Knit with Us group meets from 3-4 p.m. Teens and adults are invited to bring their knitting projects.

On Monday, July 15, a special program will be held in the library meeting room from 6-7:30 p.m. Adults and teens are invited to create their own unique copper bookmarks. Registration is required for this event, and space is limited. This program is supported in part by a grant from the Spencer Cultural Council.

On Wednesday, July 17, guests will be able to walk part of the Cider Mill neighborhood. Presented by historian Mary Baker-Wood and the Richard Sugden Library, the event will begin at the back of the library. The stroll will take place from 8:30-9:30 a.m.

"During this walk, you will learn about the area of Cider Mill's history, including Cider Mill Stream and Pond, which flows out of Lake Whittemore and used to supply water to downtown mills, and provided recreation for boaters and ice skaters. The adjacent Pleasant Street and Lincoln Street neighborhoods were home to some of Spencer's oldest fam-

Turn To **LIBRARY** page **A8**

## N. Brookfield selectmen approve contractor for Highway Department renovations

**BY KEVIN FLANDERS**  
**STAFF WRITER**

NORTH BROOKFIELD — The town is one step closer to starting a major facilities renovation project.

At the June 25 Select Board meeting, members were presented a contract by the Chairman of the Fire and Highway Renovation Committee, Eric Hevy.

Select Board members voted to award the contract to W.J. Mountford Co., which submitted the lowest bid of three companies that have a high approval rating.

The contract award is for the renovation of the Highway Department building, which will be used for the new fire station. Additionally, the renovation of the current fire station will convert the building into the Fire Department headquarters.

Finally, renovations to the Huck's Building on Donovan Road will allow the site to be used by the Highway Department.

The total cost of the bid was \$4,704,000. Project highlights include the installation of a shower at the Highway Department, as well as a kitchen at the Fire Department, among other features.

"I am very thankful to the members of our Highway and Fire Renovation Committee for all their efforts in streamlining and organizing this massive project," said Selectman Vaughn Schlegel. "There's been a lot of debate and work put into this, and I think our Fire Department and Highway Department deserve better work environments so that they can better serve the town."

The renovations are expected to have several positive impacts, including improved retention of employees and recruitment of new talent.

"Upgraded facilities will help not only to improve the morale of town employees, but also of the residents knowing that their town has much needed updates," Schlegel added. "We're very fortunate that the bid came in at \$4.7 million, as the original approved amount at Town Meeting was \$6.1 million. This will help to alleviate a lot of the burden on the taxpayers."

The multi-phase project is expected to begin with renovations to the Huck's Building, but no time-frame has been announced. Contracts, bonds, and insurance arrangements must be finalized prior to the start of the project.

Also at the June 25 Select Board meeting, members voted to approve a contract with J.L. Construction Corp. at the cost of \$295,387.93. The company will perform upgrades to sidewalks on North Main Street in the center of town.

Funds from the Complete Streets grant program will assist with this project. The first phase of upgrades will take place on the east side of the street, including improvements to the walkway and granite curb. The installation of ADA pedestrian ramps and minor drainage work will also take place.

A separate bid will go out later for work to be completed on the west side of the street. Funds remaining from the grant will be used for this work.



Courtesy

## SUMMER CONCERT SERIES CONTINUES WITH PETTY LARCENY

The Spencer Parks & Recreation Commission's 2024 Summer Concert Series continues from 2 to 5 p.m. on Sunday, July 7 at Powder Mill Park, corner Smithville and Meadow Roads, Spencer, with Petty Larceny. The Petty Larceny Band is an award-winning group of musicians runnin' down their dream to bring you all your favorite Tom Petty songs . . . and more! For more than a decade, they've been bringing the music of Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers to life throughout New England. They're winners of three consecutive Worcester Music Awards as "Best Tribute Band," and their lead singer was recently named "Best Male Vocalist." Petty Larceny also covers songs from the Traveling Wilburys, Mudcrutch and Stevie Nicks. Following Petty Larceny, next up in this series that continues every Sunday through Aug. 18 will be the Chuck & Mud and the Hole in the Dam Band on July 14. The concert series is proudly sponsored by Cornerstone Bank. Cornerstone Bank is an independent, mutual savings bank serving the residents, businesses, and communities throughout Central Massachusetts from offices in Charlton, Holden, Leicester, Rutland, Shrewsbury, Southbridge, Spencer, Sturbridge, Warren, Webster and Worcester.



# DA brings together public safety, health officials to find common ground in fight against overdose epidemic

SHREWSBURY — Last Tuesday, public safety and public health professionals met to discuss how best to work together to address the overdose epidemic at an event organized by Worcester County District Attorney Joseph D. Early, Jr.'s office.

"We have so many good, caring people here who are all in this fight together against this horrible disease," said Early. "People view each other from a distance, but let's use today to come together, put aside our differences, find our common ground and move forward to build safer, healthier communities for all."

The event featured two speakers from the CT Overdose Response Strategy (ORS) team, Robert Lawlor, a Drug Intelligence Officer from New England High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (NEHIDTA) and Anna Gasinski, a Public Health Analyst from the CDC Foundation. They talked about their firsthand experience fostering healthy collaboration between public health and public safety agencies.

"We're all dedicated to addressing the overdose and addiction crisis. We all want to save lives. We just go about it differently," said Lawlor. "We need to work together on this problem. And we're more similar than we realize."

Lawlor and Gasinski walked the nearly 100 attendees through the process of finding those similarities and building upon them to work on projects together.

"Although approaches may differ, the mutual goal is a commitment to their community which provides common ground for collaboration," said Gasinski.

The Prevention and Support Network hosted the collaborative meeting last Tuesday at Independence Hall, Veterans Inc.'s treatment facility located in Shrewsbury. Early thanked Veterans Inc. President and CEO Vincent Perrone and Executive Director Denis Leary for generously agreeing to host the meeting.

The Prevention and Support Network was initially formed by Early in 2015 as the Opioid Task Force. The name was changed last year to reflect the broader scope of the work that is being done to address all the different root causes and impacts of the overdose crisis, including addressing mental health and trauma.

Anyone can join the Prevention and Support Network and attend upcoming meetings by emailing [info@worces-terda.org](mailto:info@worces-terda.org).

## LEICESTER MIDDLE SCHOOL HONOR ROLL

LEICESTER — Leicester Middle School has released its honor roll for the fourth quarter of the 2023-2024 school year.

**8th Grade High Honors**  
Matthew Alves, Rory Barrett, Emma Bernabei, Brady Bouchard, Jude Campbell, Allison Gagne, Haylee Kularski, Joseph Kulla, Brock Lopez, Julianna McCormick, Trinity Medeiros, Charlotte Mercer, Max Milonis, Katherine Ozarowski, Alivia Perry, Katarzyna Piascik, Maryangelie Rivas, Paula Roberts, Ryan Sweeney, Jayke Williams

**7th Grade High Honors**  
Camden Beaudry, Elijah Belisle, Liam Gentile, Papayaw Larbi, Rocco Lauder, Tighe Lauder, Kingston Nguyen, Nick Nguyen, Jaedyn Perry, Marielee Yamaliz Valentine, Hunter Wright

**6th Grade High Honors**  
Olivia Cardona, Avery Cole, Christopher Harrington, Tyler Kularski, Fiona Liebman, Ayla Lis, Charlie Marttila, Cadence Medeiros, Emma Mercier, Owen Murphy, Sonya Potvin, David Sabor, Joseph Ukoh, Leah Varney

**5th Grade High Honors**  
Fionna Barrett, Mackenzie

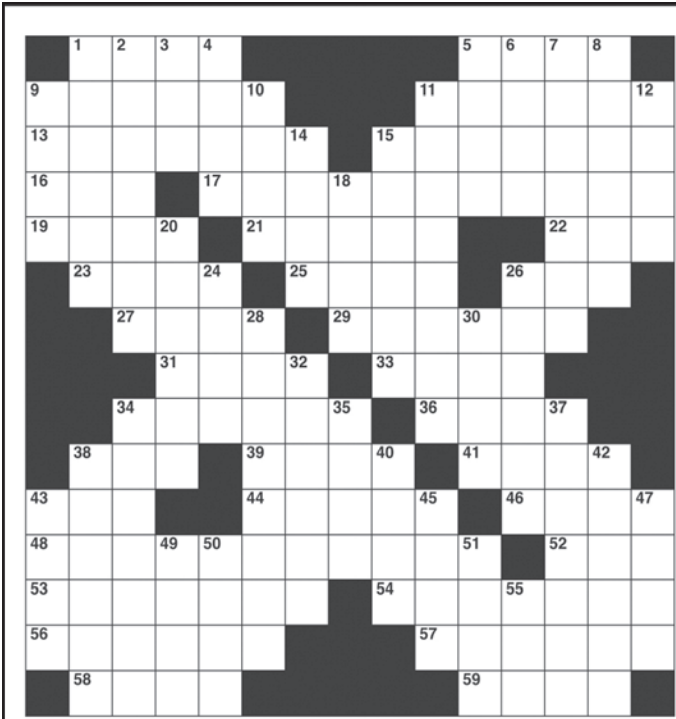
**4th Grade High Honors**  
Beaulac, Juliette Bellisario, Aubrey Bullock, Brooklyn Bullock, Victoria Cardona, Celeste Couture, Logan Curren, Anna Derrick, Raegan Higgins, Sophia Kennedy, Payton Lacroix, Larissa LaFlamme, Nanakwasi Larbi, Astrid Tocay Ajtun, Kason Ward

**3rd Grade High Honors**  
Jack Albro, Brody Arnberg, Muhammad Arslan, Kennedy Bates, Isabella Cortes Flores, Zachary Couture, Stella Entwistle, Stephen Giaquinto, Jonathan Ho, Hailey Knott, Sarah Kozlowski, Kaylee Luby, Michael Lupien, Alena Martinkova, Josiah McDonald, Maia Mitchell, Trevor Moorghen, Nikolai Ngo, Brandon Nguyen, Desmond Strom, Nicholas Stuart, Shane Stuart, Lillian Warner, Jameson Wood

**2nd Grade High Honors**  
Jansen Benton, John Derrick, Javier Flores, Benjamin Hagglund, Braydon Herbert, Maci Lusignan, Lincoln Meloche, Thinh Pham, Lily Schimke

**1st Grade High Honors**  
Elisa Aguirre, Griffin Bayer, Maxwell

**5th Grade Honors**  
Arianna Alicea Rodriguez, Philip Armstrong, Narta Berisha, Daniel Ciciliane, Matthew Cormier, Ava Cruz, Rylee Garrahie, Jayden Gleason, Alessandro Guzman, Jealousy Hollyer, Siobhan Kane, Gracie Laudon, Camille LeBlanc, Andrew Lemerise, Jackson McKenzie, Dominic Oldham, Logan Perry, Logan Ross, Nevaeh Sackor, Jane Mercer, Hugo



- CLUES ACROSS**
- 1. Six (Spanish)
  - 5. Invests in little enterprises
  - 9. Large dung beetle
  - 11. Gored
  - 13. Partially paralyzed
  - 15. Still a little wet
  - 16. Legal field media company
  - 17. Not working
  - 19. 500 sheets of paper
  - 21. Church structure
  - 22. Sheep disease
  - 23. Small drink of whiskey
  - 25. Weaving tradition
  - 26. Pestilence
  - 27. Body part
  - 29. Nabs
  - 31. Places to stay
  - 33. Witnesses
  - 34. Looked for
  - 36. Arranges
  - 38. Political action committee
  - 39. Middle eastern nation (alt. sp.)
  - 41. Hair-like structure
  - 43. Parts producer
  - 44. Greek city
  - 46. Subway dwellers
  - 48. Norm from "Cheers"
  - 52. Clean a floor
  - 53. Vied for
  - 54. Canned fish
  - 56. Inspire with love
  - 57. Sent down moisture
  - 58. Wrest
  - 59. Partner to carrots

- CLUES DOWN**
- 1. Mounted
  - 2. Assign
  - 3. Wrath
  - 4. Self-immolation by fire ritual
  - 5. Parts of an organism
  - 6. Person from England
  - 7. Tropical plants of the pea family
  - 8. Body part
  - 9. Practice boxing
  - 10. Containers
  - 11. Contrary beliefs
  - 12. Bleached
  - 14. Pre-Islamic Egyptian
  - 15. A group of similar things ordered one after another
  - 18. Innermost spinal cord membranes
  - 20. Cassava
  - 24. A restaurant's list of offerings
  - 26. Annoy constantly
  - 28. Orchestrate
  - 30. Z Z Z
  - 32. Astute
  - 34. Highly decorated tea urn
  - 35. Teach to behave
  - 37. Endurance
  - 38. Urinating
  - 40. Barbie friend dolls
  - 42. Repents
  - 43. Man-eating giant
  - 45. Jewish calendar month
  - 47. Accelerated
  - 49. Husband of Sita in Hindu
  - 50. Lump of semiliquid substance
  - 51. Lying in wait
  - 55. Cease to exist



## Portland Harbor Lights and Sights Cruise July 23 with Paxton-area Seniors

PAXTON — At 8:45 a.m. Tuesday, July 23, Wilson Bus Lines will depart Paxton Senior Center at 17 West ST (Route 31, just south from Paxton's single traffic light) headed for Jonathan's Restaurant in Ogunquit, Maine, for a delicious luncheon followed by a one-and-three-quarter-hour cruise out of Portland Harbor.

This cruise out of busy Casco Bay allows travelers to experience the iconic lighthouses and sights of bustling Portland Inner Harbor and main shipping channel as well as picturesque Diamond Pass which ferries summer residents and their groceries to and from the various islands. Enjoy seeing as many as four lighthouses and four forts, lobster boats, seals and seabirds. You will get a close-up view of Portland Headlight, Maine's oldest and most photographed lighthouse. We may make a quick stop at the Kennebunk Service Plaza for sustenance on our way home, completing this fun day. We expect to arrive back at Paxton Senior Center at 7:15 p.m.

Our entire day costs \$132 which includes the delicious lunch at Jonathan's, the one hour-45-minute cruise on Casco Bay and the Luxury Wilson Bus Motor Coach.

Payment is due July 2. Payment is non-refundable unless ticket can be resold.

Now back to Jonathan's: Choose between Chicken Piccata (boneless breast of chicken sauteed with lemon, capers, butter and wine); Lemon Baked Scrod with lemon beurre Blanc and seasonal crumbs; and Roast Pork Loin finished with natural pan gravy. All entrees are served with house salad, vegetable, starch and dessert, along with coffee or tea.

For reservations, call or email Deb Grensavitch (508)754.6366. Her email is [grensavitchd@aol.com](mailto:grensavitchd@aol.com). Please make payment to FOCOA (this stands for Friends of Paxton COA) and mail to Deb Grensavitch, 88 Laurel St., Paxton, MA 01612-1234.

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\$420,000, 11 Main St, Flipping Good Inc, to Carlson, Karen.  
\$375,000, 4 Martin Rd, Dipietro, Eve M, to Fisher, Jack W.  
\$365,000, 4 Hyde St, 123 Kids LLC, to Annunziata, Jacob P, and Sherblom, Arianna.

**EAST BROOKFIELD**  
\$79,000, 154 S Pond Rd, Cormier & Sons Const & Hm, to Kelly 3rd, Raymond L, and Richardson, Helena.

**LEICESTER**  
\$437,000, 122 Mannville St, Roberg, Deborah, to Kennedy, Sean R.  
\$405,000, 130 Baldwin St, Martin, Patrick B, to Sielawa, Bethany, and Sielawa, David.

**NORTH BROOKFIELD**  
\$451,000, 77 New Braintree Rd, Smith Paige E Est, and Bonavita, Tracy, to Craig, Nicholas D, and Craig, Caroline M.  
\$350,000, 40 Mount Pleasant St, McMaster, Lorraine M, to Ortiz, Margarita.

**SPENCER**  
\$1,800,000, 94 Main St, Drake Petroleum Co Inc, to Om Main St Spencer LLC.  
\$324,000, 48 Mechanic St, Cedar Hills Realty LLC, to Mercer, Victoria, and Mercer, Jesse.

**WARREN**  
\$490,000, 130 Keys Rd, Hoang, David T, to Stillman, Gregory, and Stillman, Mikayla.

**WEST BROOKFIELD**  
\$1,300,000, 19 Hill Brook Dr, Bagg, Ethan, and Bagg, Tiffany, to Buelow Jr, Gary J, and Buelow, Corie.  
\$375,000, 56 Front St, Joseph Jr, Jeffrey, to Cooper, Carla A, and Klein, Heather L.  
\$355,000, 18 Chapman Ave, Klein, Heather L, and Klein, Scott E, to Antonino, Joseph.



# Library program explores lives of Victorian authors

**BY KEVIN FLANDERS**  
**STAFF WRITER**  
BROOKFIELD — A special program at Merrick Public Library this month will explore the fascinating lives of the Victorian Era's most impactful authors.

Presented by History At Play, LLC, the event is set for Thursday, July 11, at 6 p.m.  
“History At Play, LLC, (HAP) has garnered nationwide applause for their solo immersive living history experiences, chronicling the lives of legendary pioneers who

changed society,” read a statement released by the library.  
HAP founder and artistic director Judith Kalaora will portray Boston author and philanthropist Annie Adams Fields (1834-1915). Guests will also enjoy glimpses into the lives of Fields's closest literary friends, including Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Charles Dickens.  
“Mrs. Fields had an incredible influence on literary decisions at Ticknor and Fields

Publishing House (forerunner to Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing),” read the statement issued by the library. “Counting Oliver Wendell Holmes, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Sarah Orne Jewett amongst her closest friends, Annie witnessed a great deal of Victorian revelry at her waterside museum in Beacon Hill.”  
Fields kept journals recounting 13 years of experiences with her famous colleagues, including some of their most intriguing moments.

The presentation portion of the July 11 event will run for approximately one hour, followed by a segment for questions from guests.  
The program is free and open to the public.  
“There will be laughter, disbelief, and even some blushing cheeks when you hear the tantalizing tales of the Victorian Gossip Girl,” the promotional statement read.  
For more information about the program, visit [www.merrickpubliclibrary.org](http://www.merrickpubliclibrary.org).  
Since its founding in 2010, the HAP troupe has

brought the legacies of great trailblazers to life in museums, libraries, corporations, universities, historical societies, senior living residences, and schools across the country.  
HAP programs are available for booking in several formats, including in-person events, virtual programs, and hybrid performances.  
Kalaora, a Massachusetts resident and graduate of Syracuse University, w e n t

on to complete the Education Program of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre of London, England.  
For more information about HAP programs, or to book an event at your venue, visit [www.HistoryAtPlay.com](http://www.HistoryAtPlay.com).  
To learn more about upcoming library events, or to register for a program, call 508-867-6339.

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## Erica Cordeiro graduates from University of Mississippi

UNIVERSITY, Miss. — Erica Cordeiro, of Spencer is among the more than 3,100 students who earned their degrees from the University of Mississippi in May.  
Cordeiro, who majored in Finance and Real Estate, received a Bachelor of Business Administration from the School of Business Administration.  
“Our May 2024 graduates are distinguished by incredible achievements, character and resilience,” Chancellor Glenn Boyce said. “They accomplished so much during their years at Ole Miss, and we can't wait to see all the ways they

will pursue their passions and reach their full potential on their paths to a bright future.”  
May 2024 graduates were invited to walk across the stage at the University of Mississippi's 171st Commencement exercises, which were held by individual colleges and schools May 8-12. The university-wide morning Convocation took place Saturday, May 11 in the Grove, with Wright Thompson, senior writer for ESPN, giving the keynote address.  
Undergraduate and graduate candidates received degrees from the College of

Liberal Arts, General Studies and schools of Accountancy, Applied Sciences, Business Administration, Education, Engineering, Journalism and New Media, Law and Pharmacy.  
The University of Mississippi, affectionately known as Ole Miss, is the state's flagship university. Included in the elite group of R1: Doctoral Universities - Highest Research Activity by the Carnegie Classification, it has a long history of producing leaders in public service, academics and business. Its 16 academic divisions include a major medical school, nationally recog-

nized schools of accountancy, law and pharmacy, and an Honors College acclaimed for a blend of academic rigor, experiential learning and opportunities for community action. Recognized among the nation's most beautiful, Ole Miss' main campus is in Oxford, which is routinely acknowledged as one of the country's best college towns.

## McCance to continue as School Committee Chair

**BY KEVIN FLANDERS**  
**STAFF WRITER**

LEICESTER — Donna McCance will continue to chair the School Committee, following a unanimous vote at its recent reorganization meeting.

This marks McCance's third straight year as Chair of the committee. She broke a precedent last year by becoming the first person in the history of the Leicester School Committee to be nominated as Chair for a second consecutive year.

“I truly appreciate the support of our committee members, and I am honored to be able to continue with the incredible momentum of growth established by our Leicester Public Schools Superintendent, Dr. Brett Kustigian,” McCance told the New Leader. “As we move into our third year of working together, we are very excited about continuing to develop and grow exciting educational programs for our students, as well as enhancing our school grounds toward that purpose.”

During McCance's tenure as Chair, working closely with Kustigian and his team, the school department has seen significant progress. The transition of the high school to the former Becker College campus was a major success, and the schools continue to add and expand programming at all levels.

Looking ahead, school officials are excited about new opportunities that will help retain students. Meanwhile, recently created programs like the LHS e-sports team will continue to develop, school officials said.

“Consistency is key in any organization, whether it be private or public,” Kustigian said. “Donna has been the Chair since I arrived in Leicester, and we are on the same page. This consistency benefits LPS, as positive momentum will carry us to the future.”

Also at the reorganization meeting, School Committee member Paul Messier was nominated as Vice Chair. Dylan Lambert was voted as Secretary.

The School Committee also has two newly elected members. Nick Packard is filling a one-year unexpired seat that was previously resigned by another member.

Meanwhile, new School Committee member Jim Reinke is filling a three-year seat.

Both new members ran unopposed at the June 11 election.

### P.E.T. of the Week

Sponsored by Leicester Veterinary Clinic, LLC

Meet Loki!  
Hello there, lovely people! My name is Loki, and I'm here to introduce you to the joy and love that I bring into every room I enter. ?? Despite being a senior, I've still got the heart of a puppy and the energy to match! You see, I've got a playful spirit that just won't quit. Whether it's chasing after a ball, going for a brisk walk, or curling up for some cuddles, I'm always ready for some fun and affection. Age is just a number, right? Now, I'll admit it - I can be a bit nervous around men. But with patience, understanding, and gentle care, I know I can overcome my fears and learn to trust again. All I need is someone who's willing to take the time to earn my trust and show me that there's nothing to be afraid of. If you choose to adopt me, you'll gain a loyal companion who will fill your days with endless joy, laughter, and love. I can't wait to find my forever home and become the cherished member of the family that I know I was meant to be. Oh, and did I mention that I love going on hikes? It's true! Exploring the great outdoors is one of my favorite pastimes. However, I do need to work on my leash manners a bit. You see, I get so excited while exploring that I can be quite strong on the leash. So, I'll need someone who can handle my exuberance and help me become the best hiking buddy I can be. So, if you're ready to open your heart and home to a sweet senior like me, please consider giving me a chance. I promise to fill your life with love, laughter, and unforgettable adventures. Let's make each day an exciting new journey together!



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## Friday's Child



**Michael**  
**Age 12**

**Hi! My name is Michael and I can make anyone laugh!**

Michael, who likes to be called Mikey, is a bright and friendly boy. He is a great dancer but tends to be self-conscious, and he is also learning to play the guitar. He recently played on a football team, was an excellent player, and really LOVED it. Mikey is also very curious and likes to ask questions about what he does not understand. Mikey does have a great sense of humor and can make anyone laugh. He can light

up a room with his smile and laughter. To meet Mikey is to love him.  
<https://adopt.mareinc.org/waiting-child-profiles#gallery/child/6309>

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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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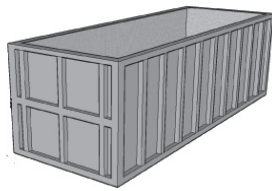


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**FRANK G. CHILINSKI**  
PRESIDENT AND PUBLISHER

**BRENDAN BERUBE**  
EDITOR

EDITORIAL

Facts about Independence Day

One of our favorite holidays to write about is Independence Day. We all know the stories of our forefathers, John Adams, Sam Adams, George Washington, Paul Revere, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin, and Alexander Hamilton to name a few. However, the history is endless. We thought we would shine a light on aspects surrounding Independence Day that aren't commonly known.

The famous painting that depicts the signing of the Declaration of Independence isn't exactly an accurate portrayal. All of the delegates were never together at the same time in Philadelphia. The final signing took place roughly a month later on Aug. 2. The Declaration was formally dated and adopted by Congress on July 4, however Congress voted for independence on July 2.

Celebrating their new independence, soldiers along with civilians tore down a statue of King George III and melted it into bullets. In Georgia, people burnt the King in effigy and even held a faux funeral service. In Philadelphia, the King's coat of arms was burned in a bonfire. Massachusetts was the first state to recognize July 4 as a holiday in 1781.

In 1777, fireworks could be seen in the sky and the ringing of bells rang through the night in Philadelphia. Ships were decorated and lined the coast and streamers could be seen flying in celebration everywhere. The oldest annual parade takes place in Bristol, R.I.; 2020 will be the town's 235th consecutive celebration after its start in 1785.

In New England, dining on salmon became tradition. The story behind the popular cuisine, is due to the influx of salmon that summer. Along with the salmon, people had peas and turtle soup.

One common fact is that Thomas Jefferson and John Adams both died on July 4, 1826. James Monroe also died on the fourth of July in 1831. President Calvin Coolidge was born July 4, 1872.

Left out of mainstream history was the story of Crispus Attucks, the first to die in the patriot cause. Attucks was a black/Native American patriot who was shot, and the first to fall during the 1770 Boston Massacre. Attucks was a runaway slave who was a rope maker and sailor. History says he was shot by two musket balls to the chest. In 1778, it became legal in Rhode Island for free and enslaved blacks to serve the cause, with freedom as part of their payment.

Educated by her owners, Phillis Wheatley was a well-known poet during those times. Wheatley was kidnapped in West Africa and brought to America. At the age of 20, in 1773, she became the first African American and third female to publish a book of poetry. She eventually became free. She also advocated for independence, writing in support for George Washington's Revolutionary War in her poem, "To His Excellency, General Washington." Washington, impressed by her talent invited her to a meeting.

In 1958, when Alaska and Hawaii were on deck to become states, a history teacher assigned his class to design a flag depicting the two new states. Robert Heft, 16, received a B- on the project. Unhappy with the mark, Heft sent the flag to Dwight D. Eisenhower. After the flag was chosen, Heft had his grade changed to an A.

Another fun fact is that Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration on what was referred to as a laptop. A writing desk that could fit over a person's lap.

In 1778, Washington ordered a double ration of rum for soldiers to celebrate with.

In 1776, there were roughly 2.5 million people living in America. The current population is now 325.7 million.

Wearing an American flag, whether it be on a tee-shirt, headband, towel or shorts, is in violation of the Flag Code. The code says that you are in violation if you sell, display any "article of merchandise, upon which shall have been printed, painted, attached, or otherwise placed a representation of [the flag... in order to] advertise, call attention to, decorate, mark, or distinguish the article or substance on which so placed." The code, however, is not enforceable.

VIEWPOINT

OPINION AND COMMENTARY FROM SPENCER, LEICESTER AND THE BROOKFIELDS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Murders & violent crime

To the Editor:

Trump has been charged for crimes in New York. Trump says "All of this while murders and violent crime hit unimaginable records! This is so bad for New York."

The murder rate in New York City is 5.8 per 100,000 citizens. Statewide, New York ranks at 4.5 per 100,000, showing that the dense city does have more problems than rural areas.

The murder rate in Mississippi is 20.7 per 100,000. Louisiana is 19.8. Those are about FOUR TIMES as high as New York City. Arkansas, at 11.8, is twice as high as New York City. That's not dense cities; that's statewide; town and country.

Massachusetts scores 2.5; twice as safe

as NY. Boston scores 5.5, more in line with New York City. My Republican state senator wants to block gun legislation and, I guess, make Leicester as famous as Lewiston, Maine. MAGA across the state wants us to vote for Trump and join these red states. Think about it, people.

These Republican states are hellholes, not New York. When Trump rants that the courts in New York should concentrate on the rampant crime in the state or city, he is just whining about being taken to task for his own misdeeds.

Trump is a one man crime wave: Tax Fraud, Business Fraud, Sexual Abuse, Insurrection, and Espionage.

ALLAN JOHANNESSEN  
LEICESTER

Come join us!

To the Editor:

Our pastor, Jack Moore, the congregation and I welcome you to worship with us at "The Living Word Church."

Our pastor teaches God's Word straight from the Bible as God instructs him through the guidance, instruction of our Savior, Redeemer, Jesus, the Son of the living God, God in the flesh!

The church is located at the American Legion #138, 175 Main St., Spencer; at the corner of Grove Street. All are welcome. Sunday, 8 a.m.

Looking forward to meeting you! Dwell in peace!

ROLAND BLAIS  
BROOKFIELD

Debate recap

To the Editor:

Although I was disappointed in Joe Biden's performance in the presidential debate, as he looked and sounded far older than he did at the rally he attended immediately after, he did actually address the questions that he was asked. Conversely, Trump used it as a rally. He barely addressed the actual questions he was asked, choosing instead, choosing to lie about his accomplishments, and Bidens policies and accomplishments.

Among the questions that Biden answered and he did not was his position on signing a total abortion ban, what he would do to rescue Social Security, whether he would continue our arms support to Ukraine, whether he would weaponize the justice department against his detractors, his policy regarding NATO and our allies.

Let's start with Trump's grifting Supreme Court. Instead of having ethics rules at least equal to lower courts, they have none, and have ruled that the millions in gratuities Clarence Thomas has received are just fine. Like their biggest contributor, who pardoned his entire jury that had been convicted of crimes, their ruling on January 6 activities being normal discourse, will open the door for Trumps blanket pardon of jury convicted felons. On the subject of felons, a jury, chosen collectively by prosecution and defense lawyers, returned 34 guilty verdicts. That represents a unanimous 408 guilty votes. I hope the judge will render a sentence with those given for other similarly convicted felons.

When questioned what they would do to strengthen Social Security and Medicare, Trump lied and said Biden was putting illegal immigrants on them. It is my understanding that you need to have been issued a Social Security number and to have contributed to it. That was what I was told when I signed up to collect. That said, we are generally living and collecting, much longer than FDR envisioned. Joe Biden had the right answer: Bezos, Musk, Buffett, Gates all pay off their personal SS in the first couple hours of period, if they pay at all. Instead of having a cap, make it the same percentage on every dollar earned as the first one, call it National Security tax, payable for living, deriving income in or from our country or its citizens. Problem solved.

I still have questions about the Trump/Putin relationship, and what has been done with the documents he

absconded with. We know the secret intel on how close our subs can get to shore without detection, was shared with an Aussie billionaire over dinner at Mara Lago and released to the press spoon after. Biden noted that over 40 of Trumps closest presidential advisors, no longer support him. John Bolton told us that his attention deficit had him cut his hourly morning briefings down to 15 minutes, which he only tolerated if there were pictures or graphs. He calls him a moron, who should never be allowed in the oval again. If we were foolish enough to elect him again, I doubt our allies would share sensitive info with us again. Because of him, they may not now, as we know he share info from Israel with Putin in session no other American attended.

His clown show GOP house is giving you a preview of the foolish lengths his puppets will go to please him. In addition to not taking up the bipartisan border bill, that would have added agents, drug detection equipment and judges to cut reviews from years down to months, these jokers, investigated Hunter Biden (who was convicted by an actual court), Tony Fauci, Merrick Garland (who they refused to talk to for 11 months when nominated to SCOTUS), and now they are subpoenaing Trump prosecutors and judge. We are paying hugely for this show.

Trump had promised to cut or eliminate the deficit. He threatened Nancy Pelosi to not even bring up extension of the debt limit, and ran an 8 trillion dollar deficit, which is the largest in our history. Two trillion of that was a tax cut for millionaires, which he hopes to extend. He passed no other legislation and kept no promises. Biden is running a \$4 trillion deficit, repairing our infrastructure, subsidizing healthcare, and food programs, forgiving usurious college loans, addressing guns, the environment, all while delivering the lowest unemployment and strongest economy in the world. Trump wants more tariffs. Who do you think actually bears those costs? Do you think doubling the cost of Toyota's, Honda's or Hyundai's will improve your life?

I was listening to a man being asked his take on the debate. He said sure, Joe is old, but he is doing a good job, and I would still vote for him if he was dead, and I am a Republican.

I hope voters will judge on content, more than style

KEN KIMBALL  
BROOKFIELD

Leading by example

Many who've studied history have heard the stories of Alexander the Great, who famously led his troops into battle, always at the front lines, putting his life in danger but doing exactly what he expected his soldiers to do. Similarly, Joan of Arc inspired her followers by fearlessly leading French troops during the Hundred Years' War. These leaders weren't just commanding from a safe distance. They led from the front, instilling a vision in their soldiers' minds of what they should do.

In the 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership, John C. Maxwell states, "People do what people see."

The idea is that people will tend to mimic the actions of their leaders rather than follow verbal instructions.

Whether a soldier following a commander, an employee observing a CEO, a child watching a parent, a student emulating a teacher, or athletes on a team, people are likelier to do what they see their leaders do. This underscores leaders' immense power and responsibility in shaping the behaviors and actions of those they lead.

Leaders are interesting. They tend to be visionaries entrusted with bringing their dreams to life. To do that, they must thoroughly understand their purpose, vision, and strategy for achieving it, but that's not all.

Leaders must articulate what they want from their team members, but more than verbal communication is needed to create a lasting impact. Vision without action achieves nothing. A leader must exemplify the behaviors they wish to see. The better a leader's actions, the better their team's actions will be.

If a restaurant manager tells their staff that maintaining a clean kitchen is essential, yet they catch them leaving dirty dishes in the sink and not correctly storing ingredients, do you think the staff will adhere to it?

Consider a sports coach who emphasizes the importance of punctuality and discipline but frequently arrives late to practices. Do you think the players will take the coach's words seriously and maintain punctuality and discipline?

Remember that famous public service announcement from the late '80s where an angry father bursts into his son's room, yelling because he discovered his son was smoking marijuana? After a tense standoff, the son yells, "I learned it by watching you!" This commercial perfectly highlights the point.

Teaching what is right is far easier than doing what is right. It's easier to tell the team what to do than to do it. It's easier to instruct someone on how to behave and then retreat to a private space where no one can see any contradictions. This type of leadership, often justified with thoughts like, "Well, they need to do it, not me. I'm just here to tell them how they should be," can be ineffective.

It's a hypocritical form of leadership. An effective leader is in a challenging position. They must hold not only those under their guidance accountable but also themselves.

A good leader is a visionary, a teacher, a figure of accountability, and an agent of change. Leaders are responsible for improving their team's performance and embodying the values they wish to instill. Leaders who don't achieve good results are often seen as not leading by example.

A leader must also lead themselves. Maxwell states, "Followers may doubt what leaders say, but they'll always believe what they do."

So, what's the most valuable thing a leader can do to be effective? Lead by example.

St. Francis of Assisi said, "Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words if necessary."

There are many historical figures who emphasized the importance of leading by example.


Nelson Mandela lived out his commitment to peace and reconciliation during his struggle against apartheid in South Africa, even after 27 years of imprisonment. Similarly, Florence Nightingale revolutionized healthcare by tirelessly working alongside her nurses during the Crimean War, setting high standards of hygiene and care through her actions.


Leaders who lead by example bring their vision to life. When leaders act with integrity, demonstrate the behaviors they expect, and consistently align their actions with their words, they inspire their teams to do the same. Are you ready to step up and be the example your team needs to achieve greatness?

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# Annual Guide to Pick Perfect Produce



TAKE  
THE  
HINT  
  
KAREN  
TRAINOR

Last week this column featured tips to harvest home grown vegetables for peak perfection. But what if you don't have a backyard garden? No worries. Each year at this time this page offers tips to choosing the freshest picks, whether it be at a farmer's market, roadside stand, or grocery store. Read on for our annual guide to help you pick perfect produce from early crops through the end of the season.

Beans, snap: Look for small seeds inside straight, fleshy pods. If you can see large seeds through the skin than the beans are probably too old. Avoid beans with dry-looking, rusty, wilted or damaged pods.

Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cauliflower: Look for tightly compacted flower clusters on broccoli and cauliflower, and compact, uniform sprouts. Avoid wilted, yellow, or dirty heads, and avoid loose, open sprouts or those that are yellow or pale green.

Cabbage and head lettuce: Look for firm compact heads that are heavy for their size. On leaf lettuce, choose unwilted, compact, crisp-looking compact plants.

Carrots: Look for deep orange colored and smooth skinned roots. Avoid carrots with purple or green shoulders or pale in color, or ones with forked or crooked roots. Oversized roots usually mean they are woody. If tops are still attached on carrots, they should be fresh.

Celery: Choose large, firm stalks with uniform stalk and a white bottom. Avoid spindly, wilted stalks.

Chard: Look for fresh, dark green leaves with bright, tender stalks. Avoid wilted, poorly colored leaves.

Collards and kale: Check for tender, green, full-sized leaves with tender tips; avoid wilted, tough or overly large leaves.

Corn on the cob: Choose for well-filled cobs with plump, straight rows of kernels. Avoid large, wrinkled kernels.

Cucumbers: Pick long, slender cukes that are medium to dark green.

Peppers: Look for firm, darkly colored fruit with uniform size, color, and number of lobes. Avoid wrinkled or shriveled ones or fruits that are sunburned (contrasting color spots).

Radishes: Choose medium-sized, firm, crisp roots. Avoid wilted or soft roots or those with growth cracks or insect damage. Oversized roots will be pithy. Sunburned crowns are also not desirable.

Summer squash: Choose ones that are uniform in size, color, and shape. Avoid large fruits (over mature) or ones with scarred skins, missing stems, or that are soft or wilting.

Tomatoes: Look for smooth skinned, firm fruits with uniform color. Avoid fruits with growth splits, sun scald, or overripe (soft) fruits.

Apples: Choose firm, well-colored fruit that feels crisp.

Blueberries: Pick plump, firm, deep blue berries with their natural waxy silver coating.

Cantaloupe: Look for a smooth shallow base; thick, coarse, corky netting that stands out from skin. Should yield slightly when pressed on non-stem end and have the slight scent of cantaloupe.

Cherries: Should be dark in color, glossy, plump, with fresh looking stems.

Nectarines: Fruit should be plump, slightly soft along "seam"; either orange-yellow or greenish between red-blushed areas

depending on variety.

Oranges: Choose firm oranges, heavy for its size; smooth-textured, with bright-looking skin.

Peaches: Should be somewhat firm, becoming slightly soft; red with creamy, orangy base color.

Pears: Look for firm fruit, just barely beginning to soften. Bartlett's: pale to rich yellow; Boscs: green to brown yellow.

Pumpkin: Look for a pumpkin with an even orange hue. Give it a thump; if it sounds hollow, it is ripe and ready to be picked. Look for hard skin and a hard stem. Leave several inches of stem when you harvest a pumpkin. Doing so will slow down the rotting process

Watermelon: Should be symmetrical with bright green rind with a creamy yellow underside. Choose a watermelon that's heavy for its size.

Win Dinner for Two at the Publick House

Your tips can win you a great dinner for two at the historic Publick House Historic Inn in Sturbridge! Simply send in a hint to be entered into a random drawing. One winner per month will win a fabulous three course dinner for two at the renown restaurant, located on Route 131 across the town common in historic Sturbridge. Because I'm in the business of dispensing tips, not inventing them (although I can take credit for some), I'm counting on you readers out there to share your best helpful hints!

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### The Cheap Fake

To the Editor:  
Anyone watching the presidential debate saw the truth. President Biden is the Cheap Fake President. The propaganda news organizations in coordination with the White House have been filtering the information out to hide the truth from the American citizens. Scripted news conferences, altered videos, and select sound bites to make Joe seem he is functional. From the debate along with uncut videos at the D-Day and Juneteenth we see the truth. We have an Alzheimer's patient as our President, and it's clear that he is not capable of doing the presidential duties. That's why his Attorney General is in contempt of Congress. He is refusing to release the tapes of the interview of Biden by the special prosecutor Hur. It would further prove this fact to the public. So Garland would rather protect his friend Joe and put our country at risk with a sick leader. That should be disgusting to every American citizen.

So, we now know that President Biden isn't capable to make policy. So, who is making this Dem Progressive policy? It's pretty obvious. Joe is a puppet that is sitting on the leg of a ventriloquist named Obama. The cabinet is all former Obama officials who are in contact with Obama constantly. It's clearly Obama's policy to favor Iran over Israel. Hence the billions released to Iran and hard-line stance with Israel. It was Obama who started Ukraine on the path to war

with Russia. He needs to finish it to fulfill his legacy. It is Obamas plan to change our suburbs and get Dem supporting Illegal immigrants into them. If Joe has another four years in office, we will have 20 percent of the US population made up of illegal aliens. They will control your towns.

The curtain has been pulled back and we see the truth. Biden is the puppet president, and all you who voted for him are the gullible audience to the puppet show. They show you fake images, tell lies about his opponent, and make you feel like you're making the decisions. In the truth you are a sucker and loser in the Obama/Biden shell game.

It's time to wake up and admit to the facts; you were played. I know it feels better when this happens to group together with the other losers and blame it on the ones that warned you. But facts are facts. We have record inflation, millions of illegals, and the futures of our kids being ruined. The Biden/Obama illegal invading hordes will ruin our Medicare, Social Security, and town budgets. We see this now, and when the town overrides come, it will be worse. Its tome for you all to wake up and vote for the competent guy that had America doing great. It's time to throw the Cheap Fake out and vote Trump in 2024. It's our only hope to Save America.

MARK ROBILLARD  
SPENCER

### Things I don't understand

To the Editor:  
Why do some people have difficulty keeping promises?

Why can't many of our senators and Congressmen work in harmony for the people they represent?

Why is it a fact many people driving cars play with their phones and other electronic gadgets?

Why are many of our roads and bridges not built to last a lifetime or longer?

Why must a woman change her last name when she gets married?

Why is breaking news on our TV very seldom good news?

Why do some people say one thing and mean something different?

Why does being on time for an event for some people mean being at least 15 minutes late?

Why do we only have grandfather clocks?

Why can't some people park their cars in between the white lines in a parking area?

Why don't we always get what we order from a drive thru restaurant?

Why is it a fact some people do not return phone calls?

Why won't I stop judging other people by my standards?

Why are many of our TV stations so biased?

Why do birds from the north fly south, but do not stay?

Why is it when you tell someone who is going to perform on stage "Break a leg," it means do a good job?

Why do some people live in Syracuse, N.Y., where they receive an average of 103 inches of snow per year?

Why is the proper name for a fruit fly drosophila melanogaster?

Why, in the poem "DASH," don't more people live out their lives with gust and class until the end of their DASH?

Why, according to Yogi, isn't a nickel worth a dime anymore?

Why do people say one thing and mean something else?

Why is there so much hatred in our world today?

Why do some women spend hours combing their hair and in public keep pushing it away from their face?

Why can't some people return shopping carts to their designated space?

Why are telephone lines still above ground?

Why do some people pronounce realtor as "realator?"

Now I understand what I didn't understand. God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

DONALD L. GAUDETTE, SR.  
SOUTH HADLEY (FORMERLY OF BROOKFIELD)

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## Managing weeds in the garden



Melinda Myers

Persistence is the key to success when battling bindweed.

No matter the weather, weeds seem to thrive and reproduce, and if left unchecked, they can overwhelm the garden and gardener. These unwanted plants find their way into your garden as seeds, roots, rhizomes, or whole plants. Seeds can be carried in by the wind, birds, and other animals, or on the soles of shoes. Roots, rhizomes, and even plants hitch a ride in the soil or with plants that we move into the garden.

Start early managing weeds in your garden. Smaller weeds are easier to pull and removing them before they flower and form seeds can prevent hundreds of weeds in next year's landscape.

This is not always possible. Weather and busy schedules often limit gardening time, allowing these vigorous plants to overtake the garden.

It is never too late and worth investing time in managing weeds in the garden. Weeds are adaptable and vigorous, outcompeting your desirable plants for water and nutrients. Many serve as host plants for insect pests and diseases that may also attack your garden plants.

Carefully dig or pull weeds, removing the top and roots. Established weeds may have a deep tap root or extensive root system that may be difficult to remove. Depending on the weed, any part left behind has the potential to start a new plant.

Find the tool that best works for you. A Dutch or action hoe works well on small weeds where there is space between plants. Glide the cutting edge just below the soil surface to cut the roots. Many gardeners find a weed knife to be a useful tool. It allows you to dig right next to

### Letter submission policy

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

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

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# Area residents receive degrees from Clark University

WORCESTER — Clark University awarded 1,376 degrees (503 Bachelor's, 847 Master's, 26 doctoral degrees) to the Class of 2024 and conferred four honorary degrees during the University's 120th Commencement exercises on Monday, May 20. The graduates included 653 international students representing 39 countries.

Following is a list of area residents who received degrees:

Maddy Jane Kroot, from Spencer graduated with a Master of Arts.

Nourhan Malek Abusalah, from Leicester graduated with a Master of Business Administration.

Geography Professor Rinku Roy Chowdhury read a com-

mencement address from Dr. Robert D. Bullard, "the father of environmental justice" and the Distinguished Professor of Urban Planning and Environmental Policy at Texas Southern University, who was unable to attend in person due to an illness.

"Every successful progressive social movement in the United States has had strong, fearless, and dedicated young people and students leading the way, pushing hard at the front and pressing for justice now, rather than justice delayed," Bullard wrote.

Bullard grew up a child of the Jim Crow South, attending all-Black elementary, middle, and high schools and undergraduate college. In a

speech that cited a number of environmental justice milestones over the years, Bullard wrote that he was "happy to be able to pass the baton to the up-and-coming generations of environmental justice advocates who will continue with the same resilience that so many involved in the journey have already shown."

In addition to Bullard, honorary degrees were conferred to Sean B. Carroll, Distinguished University Professor and Baló-Simon Chair of Biology at the University of Maryland, who has been called "the greatest science storyteller of our time"; Akiko Iwasaki, Sterling Professor of Immunobiology at the Yale University School of

Medicine, who researches the mechanisms of immune defense against viruses at mucosal surfaces; and Michel Nischan, a four-time James Beard Award-winning chef and champion of the farm-to-table concept.

Two members of the Class of 2024 also spoke during the ceremony. Laila El-Samra addressed her fellow undergraduates and said that during the COVID years, "Clark's unique spirit prevailed, fostering resilience and solidarity."

Graduate student speaker Gabe Spindel lauded Clark for providing a diverse learning environment.

"We encompass every

corner of the earth," he said. "Celebrating Diwali, Ganesh Chaturthi, and the Chinese New Year has enriched me in a way no classroom ever could."

In closing, Clark President David B. Fithian told the graduates, "My greatest hope for you is that you truly relish the never finished business of the project that is you, that you embrace the joy of discovery still ahead, and that you seize the opportunities to learn even more about the world, yourself, and what fulfills you."

Complete coverage of Clark's 120th Commencement can be found on the web.

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 more than 45 undergraduate majors and major tracks, more than 30 advanced degree programs, a growing number of professional certificate 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.

## Local residents named to RIT Dean's List

ROCHESTER, N.Y. — The following students were named to the Dean's List at Rochester Institute of Technology for the spring semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. Full-time degree-seeking undergraduate students are eligible for Dean's List if their term GPA is greater than or equal to 3.400; they do not have any grades of "Incomplete", "D" or "F"; and they have registered for, and completed, at least 12 credit hours.

Ingrid Rossetti of Brookfield, who is in the computer science program.

Ryanne Wilson of W. Brookfield, who is in the industrial engineering program.

Rochester Institute of Technology is home to leading creators, entrepreneurs, innovators, and researchers. Founded in 1829, RIT enrolls more than 20,500 students in 200 career-oriented and professional programs, making it among the largest private universities in the U.S.

With 145,000 alumni worldwide, the university is internationally recognized and ranked for its leadership in technology, the arts, and design. RIT also offers unparalleled support services for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. The cooperative education program is one of the oldest and largest in the nation. Global partnerships include campuses in China, Croatia, Dubai, and Kosovo.

For the latest news, go to [rit.edu/news](http://rit.edu/news).

To follow RIT on social media, go to [rit.edu/socialmedia](http://rit.edu/socialmedia).

## Nichols College announces Dean's List

DUDLEY — Nichols College is proud to recognize the academic accomplishments of students on the Spring 2024 Dean's List.

Dean's List recognizes those students who achieve high grades during a single semester. In order to be included on the Dean's List, a student must have a minimum average of 3.5 for at least 12 undergraduate credit-hours and must have received no grades below B- during the semester.

The following local students have achieved Dean's List honors:

Alannah Downs of Spencer

Brennan Ogert of Spencer

Dean's List recognizes those students who achieve high grades during a single semester. In order to be included on the Dean's List, a student must have a minimum average of 3.5 for at least 12 undergraduate credit-hours and must have received no grades below B- during the semester.

About Nichols College

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## Kristine Roth graduates from Elms College

CHICOPEE — Kristine Roth of West Brookfield graduated with a Graduate Certificate in Adult Gerontology Acute Care from Elms College during the May 18 commencement ceremony.

Roth was among 400 students who received their degrees.

Elms College is a coed Catholic college offering a liberal arts curriculum that prepares students holistically for a purposeful life in a diverse and interconnected world. Founded in 1928 by the Sisters of St. Joseph, Elms College has a tradition of educating reflective, principled and creative learners, who are rooted in faith, educated in mind, compassionate in heart, responsive to civic and social obligations, and capable of adjusting to change without compromising principle.

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# OBITUARIES

## Beverly J. Cassavant, 80



West Brookfield - Beverly J. (Smith) Cassavant, 80, of West Brookfield, died on Saturday, June 22, 2024 at UMass Memorial Medical Center - University Campus in Worcester. She leaves her sons, Duane Cassavant and his wife Wendy, Wesley K. Cassavant and his wife Charlene of West Brookfield, and Mark and his wife Tammy of Ware, fourteen grandchildren, thirteen great-grandchildren and several nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her husband of 54 years, Ed in 2016, as well as her sister, Gerry Burnham. She

was born in Ware, daughter of the late Earl A. Smith and Evelyn G. Schwartz. When her children were younger, she worked in the housekeeping department of the then called, Quaboag Nursing Home. Later, as they got older, she worked as a long-time Customer Service Representative for the former, Walsh Insurance Agency in West Brookfield. A Graveside Service for Beverly will be held on Friday, July 12, 2024 at 11:00AM in Pine Grove Cemetery in West Brookfield. Varnum Funeral Home, Inc., 43 East Main St., in West Brookfield is assisting her family with arrangements. An online guest book is available at [varnumfuneralhome.com](http://varnumfuneralhome.com)

## Beth H. Butkiewicz, 84



SPENCER- Beth H. (Hodgerney) Butkiewicz, 84, died on Tuesday, June 25th at St. Vincent Hospital, Worcester. She is survived by her loving husband of 65 years Victor S. "Bucky" Butkiewicz, her son Timothy J. Butkiewicz and his wife, Joann of Hardwick, her daughter Jennifer S. Butkiewicz of W. Brookfield, 4 grandchildren; Lindsey Butkiewicz and her significant other, Josh Oliver of N. Brookfield, Lauren Langlois and her husband, Bob of Brookfield, Molly Sisco and her husband, Ben of Ashland, and Curtis Butkiewicz and his significant other, Lauren McDonald of Hardwick, 8 great grandchildren; Emmett, Oliver, Walter, Jax, Lennon, Odin, Wyatt, and Westin, her brother Ernest "Neil" Hodgerney and his wife, Barbara of Spencer, her sister Susan H. Andrews and her husband, Wayne of Gallatin, TN, her sister-in-law Janice Beauchamp and Debbie White and her husband, Philip, as well as many nieces and nephews. She is also survived by

her closest friends Lloyd and Louise Johnson, and Janice Farr. She is predeceased by her brother-in-law Michael Butkiewicz and her sister-in-law June Lapierre and her husband, Donald. She was born in Spencer, daughter of Ernest W. and Vera A. (Johnson) Hodgerney. She attended and graduated from David Prouty High School. She worked as a cafeteria worker for Lake St. Elementary for a few years, but mainly was a homemaker. During her earlier years she participated in horse shows and even won several ribbons. She enjoyed traveling with her close friends, Lloyd and Louise and especially loved traveling with her family to Prince Edward Island when she was a child. More importantly, she enjoyed spending time with family and friends. A private service will be held at the request of the family. The J.HENRI MORIN & SON FUNERAL HOME, 23 MAPLE TERR., SPENCER are assisting the family with arrangements. In lieu of flowers donations may be made to the First Congregational Church Fire Fund at <https://www.spencerchurch.org/vanco-giving-page> [www.morinfuneralhomes.com](http://www.morinfuneralhomes.com)

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LIBRARY

continued from page A1

ilies," the library statement read. On Thursday, July 18, Noreen Newell will share firsthand, educational stories of her experiences growing up during WWII in England and then moving to Spencer. Adults and teens are welcome to attend. On Tuesday, July 23, a book discussion will be held from 11 a.m. to noon at the library

and on Zoom. Guests will discuss "The Librarianist" by Patrick deWitt. Copies of the novel are available at the library's main desk. On Wednesday, July 31, guests are invited to "Walk Into History" at Pine Grove Cemetery. Guests will meet at the Pine Grove Cemetery (Route 31 North) and walk from 8:30-9:30 a.m. "During this walk, you will also learn how two local women are working with cemetery officials to

safely restore older grave markers to their original condition and read the messages they contain," the library statement read. Several children's programs will also take place this month. To learn more, contact the library. Richard Sugden Library is located at 8 Pleasant St. To register for upcoming programs, call 508-885-7513.

For Advertising Information

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# LEGALS

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
**The Trial Court**  
**Probate and Family Court**  
**Worcester Probate and Family Court**  
**225 Main Street**  
**Worcester, MA 01608**  
**(508)831-2200**  
**Docket No. WO24C0280CA**  
**CITATION ON PETITION TO CHANGE NAME**

In the matter of:  
**Rewanna Zakriya Jalil**  
**A Petition to Change Name of Minor**  
has been filed by  
**Rewanna Zakriya Jalil of Brookfield MA** requesting that the court enter a Decree changing their name to:  
**Rewanna Zakriya Saad**  
**IMPORTANT NOTICE**  
Any person may appear for purposes of objecting to the petition by filing an appearance at: Worcester Probate and Family Court before 07/16/24. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance if you object to this proceeding.  
WITNESS, Hon. Leilah A Keamy, First Justice of this Court.  
Date: June 12, 2024  
Stephanie Fattman,  
Register of Probate  
July 5, 2024

the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before:  
**10:00 a.m. on the return day of 07/23/2024.**  
This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.  
**WITNESS, Hon. Leilah A. Keamy, First Justice of this Court.**  
Date: June 26, 2024  
Stephanie K. Fattman,  
Register of Probate  
July 5, 2024

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
**The Trial Court**  
**Probate and Family Court**  
**Docket No. WO24P1184EA**  
**Worcester Division**  
**Estate of:**  
**Paul George D'Amato**  
**Also Known As: Paul D'Amato**  
**Date Of Death:**  
**February 19, 2024**  
**INFORMAL PROBATE PUBLICATION NOTICE**

To all persons interested in the above-captioned estate by Petition of Petitioner **Marina Re of New York, NY** a Will has been admitted to informal probate.  
**Marina Re of New York, NY** has been informally appointed as the Personal Representative of the estate to serve without surety on the bond. The estate is being administered under informal procedure by the Personal Representative under the Massachusetts Uniform Probate Code without supervision by the Court. Inventory and accounts are not required to be filed with the Court, but interested parties are entitled to notice regarding the administration from the Personal Representative and can petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including distribution of assets and expenses of administration. Interested parties are entitled to petition the Court to institute formal proceedings and to obtain orders terminating or restricting the powers of Personal Representatives appointed under informal procedure. A copy of the Petition and Will, if any, can be ob-

tained from the Petitioner.  
July 5, 2024

**Notice of Public Hearing**  
The Brookfield Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a Public Hearing beginning at 6:05 pm on Wednesday 24 July 2024 at the Brookfield Police Station conference room at 7 Prouty Street. The purpose of the hearing is to consider an application from Alex Layoko, represented by Rizziti Construction, requesting a Special Permit for adding a deck at his residence at 104 Quaboag Street. Property is pre-existing, non-conforming, and in the flood plain district. Applications can be reviewed at the Town Hall located at 6 Central Street, Brookfield MA 01506.  
Tim Simon- ZBA Chairman  
July 5, 2024  
July 12, 2024

**Public Notice**  
In accordance with the provisions of Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 131, Section 40 of the Wetlands Protection Act, the North Brookfield Conservation Commission will hold a public meeting on **July 9, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.** at Town Offices, 215 North Main Street, North Brookfield, MA for an NOI and associated activities at 16 Smith Hanson Rd., North Brookfield. Any person interested in this matter is invited to attend the hearing.  
July 5, 2024

**Linda Sontor**, owner of a **2004**, Plate # **55LJ88** Vin# **2HGES16574H570394**, has abandoned vehicle on **05/12/24** at Deer Pond Auto/ JR'S Towing LLC. Deer pond will seek ownership of vehicle after 21 days of first ad placement if vehicle is not reclaimed and charges paid for  
**Jose Cruz**, owner of a **2005 Dodge Sprinter**, Plate# **1NL766** Vin# **WD-0PD744555801033**, has abandoned vehicle on **04/24/24** at Deer Pond Auto/ JR'S Towing LLC. Deer pond will seek ownership of vehicle after 21 days of first ad placement if vehicle is not reclaimed and charges paid for.  
**Christopher Watson**, owner of a **2005 Chevy Malibu**, Plate# **BQP2188** Vin# **1G12T52855F306672**, has abandoned vehicle on **04/28/24** at Deer Pond Auto/ JR'S Towing LLC. Deer pond will seek ownership of vehicle after 21 days of first ad placement if vehicle is not reclaimed and charges paid for.  
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July 5, 2024

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
**The Trial Court**  
**Probate and Family Court**  
**Worcester Probate and Family Court**  
**225 Main Street**  
**Worcester, MA 01608**  
**(508) 831-2200**  
**Docket No. WO21P1968EA**  
**CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION**  
**Estate of:**  
**Charlene M Stavros**  
**Date of Death: 11/12/2019**

To all interested persons:  
A Petition for **S/A- Late and Limited Formal Testacy and/or appointment** has been filed by  
**Brydi Richard of Spencer MA** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.  
**The Petitioner requests that:**  
**Brydi Richard of Spencer MA** be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve Without Surety on the bond in unsupervised administration  
**IMPORTANT NOTICE**  
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before:  
**10:00 a.m. on the return day of 07/23/2024.**  
This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.  
**WITNESS, Hon. Leilah A. Keamy, First Justice of this Court.**  
Date: June 26, 2024  
Stephanie K. Fattman,  
Register of Probate  
July 5, 2024

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
**The Trial Court**  
**Probate and Family Court**  
**Worcester Probate and Family Court**  
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**(508) 831-2200**  
**Docket No. WO21P1968EA**  
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**Brydi Richard of Spencer MA** be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve Without Surety on the bond in unsupervised administration  
**IMPORTANT NOTICE**  
You have the right to obtain a copy of



**GARDENING**

continued from page A7

the weed and pop it out of the ground with minimal impact on surrounding plants.

If bending is an issue, you may opt for one of the standup weeders. There are several types available. Most have tines you insert into the soil surrounding the weed. A hand or foot-operated action causes the tines to tighten around the weed roots before you lever it out of the ground.

Perennial weeds are

a bit more challenging. Many have extensive roots that are nearly impossible to remove entirely. Repeatedly digging up the plants can eventually manage these weeds, but it can take years. Cutting the plants back to the ground as soon as they appear can help “starve” them, prevent reseeding, and help contain and even eliminate some perennial weeds.

If the weeds begin to take over the garden, tackle those flowering or setting seeds first. Do not compost these or perenni-

al weeds. Most compost piles don’t get hot enough to kill the seeds or perennial weeds. Contact your local municipality to find out your options for disposing of these as well as perennial and invasive weeds.

Once the weeds are out of the garden, spread a layer of organic mulch over the soil surface. The finer the mulch, the thinner the layer needed. Pull the mulch away from tree trunks, shrub stems, and the crowns of your other plants.

Mulching helps sup-

press weeds by reducing seed sprouting and making it easier to pull the seedlings that get through the mulch. Increase your success by placing a couple of sheets of newspaper or a piece of cardboard beneath the mulch. Mulching won’t stop existing perennial weeds like quackgrass and bindweed. Keep managing these until all the roots have been removed.

Shredded leaves, evergreen needles, and other organic mulch also conserve moisture, moderate soil temperatures, and

add organic matter to the soil as it breaks down. Mulch also helps protect the soil from compaction and erosion during heavy rains. As many places experience more intense rainfall and higher-than-normal summer heat, mulching the soil becomes even more beneficial.

Consider the benefits when you head out to tackle the weeds in your garden. You will improve the health and beauty of your garden while burning between 200 and 400 calories every hour you

weed.

*Melinda Myers has written over 20 gardening books, including Midwest Gardener’s Handbook, 2nd Edition and Small Space Gardening. She hosts The Great Courses “How to Grow Anything” instant video and DVD series and the nationally syndicated Melinda’s Garden Moment radio program. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine. Myers’ Web site is [www.MelindaMyers.com](http://www.MelindaMyers.com).*



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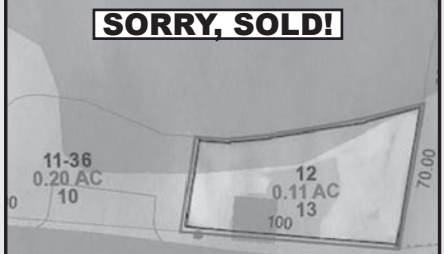
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## Flea market on the W. Brookfield Common

WEST BROOKFIELD — The tradition continues! The First Congregational Church, 36 N. Main St., W. Brookfield, has been hosting their Flea Market on the town Common for more than 50 years. This year, the Flea Market will be held on Saturday, Sept. 14 from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Sellers of all kinds are welcome - flea folk, antique dealers, crafters, product vendors, and those emptying out basements and attics! No food vendors, please. Spaces are available for \$40 for a 20 x 20 grassy spot. Vendors must bring their own tables and tents. The church will sponsor a food tent with grilled goodies, cold drinks and sweet treats. Email to fccofwb@leamarket@gmail.com or call 508-867-7078 for an application and more information.

Mark your calendars; the tradition continues!

## Erin MacKay of Spencer named to University of Scranton Dean's List

SCRANTON, Pa. — Erin E. MacKay of Spencer was among more than 1,650 students were named to The University of Scranton's Dean's List for the 2024 spring semester. The Dean's List recognizes students for academic excellence. A student must have a grade point average of 3.5 or better with a minimum number of credit hours during the semester to make the Dean's List. The list includes students from the Jesuit university's College of Arts and Sciences, Kania School of Management and the Leahy College of Health Sciences (formerly the Panuska College of Professional Studies).

MacKay is a senior journalism and electronic media major in the University's College of Arts and Sciences.

The University of Scranton is a Jesuit university located in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

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

BIDDEFORD, Maine — Savannah Cote of North Brookfield and Gabrielle Soter of Spencer been named to the Dean's List for the 2024 spring semester at the University of New England. Dean's List students have attained a grade point average of 3.3 or better out of a possible 4.0 at the end of the semester.

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**HILLCREST Country Club**

Casual Dining - Serving food Thursday, Friday & Saturday Nights  
Banquet Facilities for Holiday Parties, Surprise Parties, Showers, Etc.

**Trivia is Back Sat. Nights at 7pm!**

**THE BAR IS OPEN!**  
**7 Days at Noon**  
Join us for a cold drink  
and some delicious fried food  
on Thursday, Friday &  
Saturday Nights 5-9pm

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