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Thursday-Friday, December 4-5, 2025

Sturbridge Affordable Housing Trust launches homeownership program with up to \$100,000 in assistance

STURBRIDGE — The Sturbridge Affordable Housing Trust is proud to announce the Sturbridge Buy Down Program, a new initiative designed to help first-time homebuyers purchase a home in Sturbridge, Massachusetts. Through this program, eligible applicants may receive up to \$100,000 to help reduce the cost of purchasing a home — making homeownership more attainable for families and individuals.

Program Highlights:

- Up to \$100,000 in financial assistance toward your first home
- May include funds for necessary home repairs
- Homes remain affordable for future buyers through a deed restriction
- Eligibility requirements:
 - Must be a first-time homebuyer
 - Must meet income and asset limits
 - Completion of a certified homebuyer education course is required
 - Home must be used

as the buyer's primary residence

Affordable home prices range from \$360,000 to \$451,000, depending on the size and type of home.

Qualified applicants will be selected through a lottery process. Applications must be submitted by the Jan. 22, 2026 at 2 p.m., to be entered into the lottery.

Information sessions will be held on Tuesday, Dec. 2, 6-8 p.m. and Saturday, Dec. 6, 10 a.m.-noon, Sturbridge Town Hall, 308 Main St. Attendance is recommended,

but not required.

Questions? Call Town of Sturbridge, Planning Department, 774-304-1434 for more information.

Ruth Wells Center celebrates 200th anniversary of Ammidown Castle

SOUTHBRIDGE — The Ruth Wells Center for the Arts, located at 111 Main St. in Southbridge, is pleased to invite the community to a 200th birthday celebration of the spectacular building that houses the Center.

Built by Ebenezer Ammidown in 1825, the building has been known as several names throughout the centuries. Saturday, Dec. 13, from noon to 4 p.m., the public is invited to drop in for cake and sparkling wine toast, along with other goodies. Entertainment will be provided by members of the St. John Paul II parish choir, and musicians from Southbridge High School. Ebenezer himself will greet visitors and answer questions about his lovely home.

All are welcome. Please join us.



Courtesy

ITS/MEI (Industrial Transfer) in Southbridge recently donated what team members generously brought in for our annual Food Drive to benefit local pantries. The Southbridge Food Share is deeply grateful for the support of this wonderful community partner.

Master Masons do it again!



Courtesy

Major General Salem Towne Lodge booth with members working hard to accommodate these tasty treats to people waiting in line, who attended the busy event on the Southbridge town common.

BY BRO. JIMMY FALZONE
MAJOR GENERAL SALEM TOWNE
MASONIC LODGE
SOUTHBRIDGE

SOUTHBRIDGE — Saturday night, Nov. 29 was a beautiful, cold, clear night for the Christmas Tree lighting festivities on the Southbridge Town Common. The Major General Salem Towne Lodge (MGST) Community Outreach Program has taken part in this annual event for approximately five years.

The smell in the air of kettle corn cooking stopped people in their tracks and kept them waiting in line. To see the smiles on the children's faces as they tell their parents what they wanted, hot dogs, fried dough, deep fried Oreos, or kettle corn. There were all kinds of vendors selling Christmas items, like ornaments that light up that they could wear around their necks or heads. Christmas music played from the Gazebo in the town

common. Vendors sell hot chocolate and cookies. Even had two white Lamas on display from the Orchid Patch/Andes Alive organization. Santa and Mrs. Claus were seated taking pictures in the Gazebo on the common. When the parade started, and Santa came by, the line to purchase these tasty treats that MGST Lodge was selling was still long while many adults and children watched the parade go by. The common was lit up with

Christmas lights and decorations of all kinds. Many commented on the cold and were grateful to the Master Masons for returning to offer delicious treats.

The Master Masons will continue to carry out this tradition with the community at the Christmas Tree lighting event. For further information regarding Freemasonry or to locate a lodge in your area, please visit our Web site at www.massfreemasonry.org.

Hitchcock Academy, Rick's Place partner to offer Grief Gathering for families

BRIMFIELD — Hitchcock Academy, in partnership with Rick's Place, is hosting a Grief Gathering on Sunday, Dec. 7 from 3-4 p.m. at Hitchcock Academy, 2 Brookfield Rd., Brimfield.

This program is open to all community members with children ages five to 18 who have experienced the death of a loved one. This program is free of charge, but registration is required. Grief cannot be fixed, but connection and community can help ease its weight. Grief Gatherings provide a supportive space for children, teens, and their caregivers to find understanding, share experiences, and honor the person who has died. No one should have to grieve alone.

Families attending the Dec. 7 Gathering will have the opportunity to take part in conversation, receive compassionate support, and engage in a simple, yet meaningful activity designed

to acknowledge both their grief and the memory of their loved one. Youth and adults will remain together throughout the program in a safe, welcoming environment. Light refreshments will be available.

About Hitchcock Academy
Hitchcock Academy is a community center dedicated to providing inclusive, enriching programs that connect, support, and strengthen the community through educational, recreational, and cultural programming.

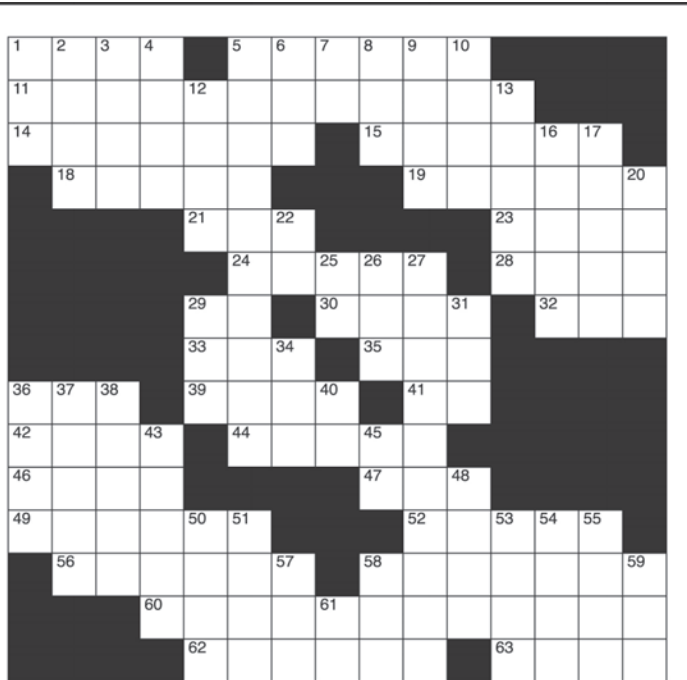
About Rick's Place
Rick's Place offers compassionate grief support for children, teens, and families throughout Western Massachusetts and Northern Connecticut. Through free grief support programs and community partnerships, Rick's Place provides safe spaces for youth and caregivers to connect, share, and be on the grief journey together.

Tantasqua Jr. High announces honor roll

FISKDALE — Tantasqua Regional Junior High School has released its honor roll for the first quarter of the 2025-2026 school year.

Grade 7
Highest Honors: Ryan Michael Beland, Jackson Richard Bishop, Gracie Makenna Busha, Joel Raymond Cairms, Kathryn Elizabeth Chechile, Madison Rose Contois, Tanner Michael Corriveau, Arya Kimber Datto, Jack James Desabrais, Dniel McCabe Downing, Monique Cassandra Dubois, McKenzie Ellyn Estabrook, Cavin Allen Farra, Caitlyn Anne Gilbert, Scarlett Athena Gimm, Lora Najma Goodwin, Mila Mae Gray-Storey, Tanner James Grindle, Rishaan Rajesh Iyer, Elise Isabella Jenkinson, Varnika Jiang, Declan James Keary, Lilliana LaFlamme, Benjamin Joseph Laprise, Avery Delaney Lemovitz, Bryn Elizabeth Michalak, Benjamin Andrew Micucci, Mackenzie Marylin Nash, Grace Helen Neill, Isabel Rose Percival, Jaden Dorothyanne Perpchuk-Johnson, Angela Ren, Callie Lynn Ritchie, Sylvie Monique St. Clair, Amelia Raine Thomas, Ana-Sophia Ticlea, Mynn Vongchampa, Zoe Mae Williamson, Alexandria Marie Yiznitsky

Honors: Nicholas Eugene Abair, Evelyn Diane Alesbrook, Martin Luther-King Asare, Abigail Elizabeth Baj, Benjamin Michael Barham, Carter John Barnes, Zachary Phillip Bartlett, Wyatt Gabriel Blodgett, Jaylen Carmela Borgomastro, Eliana Natalia Bou, Thatcher Arthur Branniff, Sophia Kathaleen Brawn, Anthony Tyler Brito, Ethan Victor Bunnell, Carson Michael Caouette, Nathalie Rhain Galisanao Charette, Kayleigh Marie Chenevert, Katherine Bryna Chisholm, Rylan Noah Cloutier, Madison Louise Cook, Noah James Courtemanche, Jase William Daley, Aburiella Elisabeth Desplaines, Emilia Jean Dougherty, Jazelle Leigh DuBois, Yvette Marcelle Dubreuil, Dylan Thomas Edens, Adelyn Joyce Edwards, Zaiden Andrew Eller, Devin Addison Epstein, Jack Grayson Fairbrother, Jaxson Wyatt Farraher, Giuliana Sophia Farrell, Nekelle Marie Ferraguto, Francesco Vincenzo Ferrentino, Giulia Maria Fiorucci, Sydney Elizabeth Kylie Fitzgibbons, Ashlynn Rose Foley, Autumn Rose Folger, Samuel Joseph Gilbert, Caroline Petra Guerraz, Samael Richard Gustafson, Masin Anthony Guzman, Kaelynne KarsynElyse Hunter, Luca Christo Jones, Harper Edith Keough, Mackenzie Rose Kiley, Shaena Marie LaBouef, Isaac Rafiq Lakhani, Mason David Landine, Louis Robert Latch, Liam David Mahoney, Alice Fae Anastasia Mazzone, Julia Lei Metterville, Ava Marie Moore, Chloe Sophia Moore-Rodriguez, Cori-Marie Natale, Kyle Lucas Neifert, Griffin Robert Neslusan, Erick Charles Norrgard, Landon Adam Ohanesian, Simon Roger Op-rica, Drew Joseph Ortendahl, Liam Brady Ortendahl, Idriss Mohammed Ouchattou, Sarah Ruweka Paiyagala, Grace Sutton Pattee, Katherine Elizabeth Pedro, Arianna Abdalinda Ramos-Ortiz, Tanner Paul Renaud, Jerlitz Abigail Reyes Mora, Jaylah Anaïs Reyes, Luca Ambrose Rondina, Tristrin Paul Roy, Julia Lacerda Santos, Gianna Marie Savage, Lucy Susan Shute, Spencer Stanley Skowyra, Brady Richard St. Laurent, Norah Parnell Stern, Kaydence Elizabeth Symczak, Maycie Lynn Sypek, Jason Andrew Thomas, Averie Danielle Toomey, Anaya Grace Torres, Thomas Jameson Tremblay, Lukasz Paul Ucher, Jayden

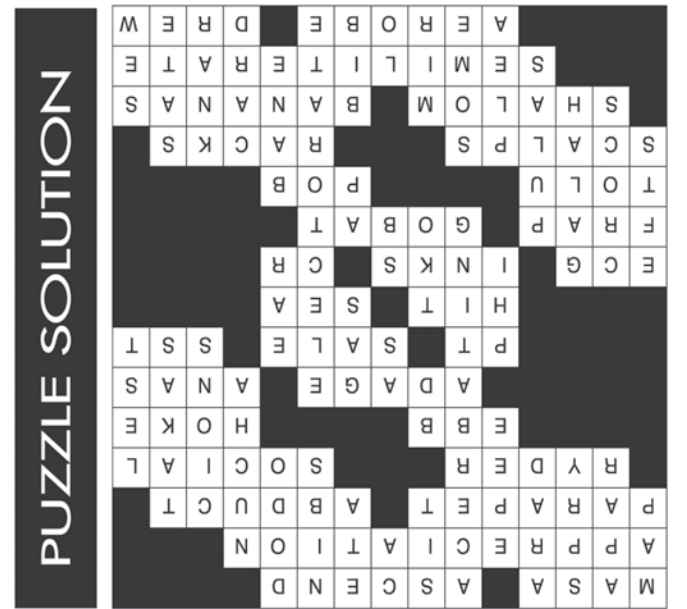


CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Dough made from corn flour
- 5. Rise
- 11. Gratitude
- 14. A low wall
- 15. Kidnap
- 18. A cup golfers want to win
- 19. Outgoing
- 21. "Partner" to flow
- 23. Former Michigan coach Brady
- 24. Proverb
- 28. Gasteyer and de Armas are two
- 29. Helps a body recover
- 30. Baseball Cy Young winner
- 32. Very fast airplane
- 33. Offensive baseball stat
- 35. Body of water
- 36. Record of one's heartbeat
- 39. Signs a contract
- 41. Atomic #24
- 42. Bind securely
- 44. French Jesuit theologian
- 46. Fragrant brown balsam
- 47. Post office box
- 49. Sells tickets at inflated prices
- 52. Places to hang coats
- 56. Jewish salutation
- 58. Yellow fruits
- 60. Poorly educated
- 62. Microorganism
- 63. Talk show host Barrymore

CLUES DOWN

- 1. A way to plan
- 2. Three-banded armadillo
- 3. Mobile
- 4. Romanian city
- 5. Making sour
- 6. Take a seat
- 7. "The Golden State"
- 8. When you hope to arrive
- 9. Pointed ends of pens
- 10. Extinct flightless bird
- 12. Sharp-pointed dueling sword
- 13. Nape of neck
- 16. Problems (Spanish slang)
- 17. Narrow carpet
- 20. To avoid the risk of
- 22. Spiritual academic degree (abbr.)
- 25. Equally
- 26. Traditional cars still need it
- 27. Eligible voters
- 29. Greek alphabet letter
- 31. Body part
- 34. Referee-declared outcome
- 36. Means to moving money
- 37. Popular footwear brand
- 38. Cockatoo
- 40. NFL's big game
- 43. Botswana currencies
- 45. News-reporting organization
- 48. Batman villain
- 50. Urgent request
- 51. Not all
- 53. Hallmark's specialty
- 54. Knot in a tree
- 55. Satisfy
- 57. Notable space station
- 58. Baby's dining accessory
- 59. Stitch clothing
- 61. ___ and behold



Oswaldo Verdezoto, Paige Evelyn Walker, Caileigh Marie Wszolek, Joseph Michael Yiznitsky

Grade 8
Highest Honors: Elizabeth Belle Balunis, Chase Alexander Bonneau, Adalynn Leigh Bouchard, Sydney Anne Braney, Stella Cristina Carpaldi, Benjamin Justin Cournoyer, Kaylianna Beverly Downing, Violet Marie Fiske, Mason Lucas Godin, Ethan Michael Hayward, Maya Elizabeth Kennedy, Luisa Ann Lamas, Layla Noel Lempke, Mary Rose Letendre, Mackenzie Noelle McNally, Lily Ann Mulcahy, Brendan Joseph Parzych, Lucy Alette Ricci, Stewart William Simpson, Ella Jane Touloumtzis, Olivia Valentina Ucher

Honors: Samantha Marie Alarie, Molly Katherine Bean, Ella Lou Bercume, Max Vincent Bergman, Andrew Robert Bernier, Cole Allen Biron, Casey Elizabeth Blier, Eloise Cate Bochicchio, Lacey Ann Borynski, Luciano Jason Boswell, Sunny Boucher, Braxton Edward Brodeur, Ayva Rose Brown, Aeryn Bunnell, Violet Emily Ciandella, Alexandria Morgan Colpitts, Mia Starr Cottone, Isla Estelle Czub, Edouard Charles deVarennes, Charlotte DeMay Deys, Zoey Bishop Olsen Dinsmore, Lillian Amae Donahue, Emily Louise Fahl, Thane Anthony Fama, Ayvalynne Rose Garfield, Olivia Malloy Garrett, Natalee Hannah Genduso, Nevaeh Lee Girard, Devin

Federated Church announces holiday service schedule

STURBRIDGE — The Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale has announced its 2025 Christmas service schedule, according to Rev. David Cote, pastor.

The Church will conduct Sunday-morning Advent services at 9:30 a.m. on Dec. 7 (Light of Peace), Dec. 14 (Light of Joy), and Dec. 21 (Light of Love).

On Dec. 24, Christmas Eve, the Church will hold its annual Christmas Eve candlelight service at 9 p.m.

The Federated Church of Sturbridge & Fiskdale joyfully celebrates Christ's presence and God's grace in our lives. All are welcome. For additional information, please visit the Church Web site at sturfed.org or contact the Church office at (774) 304-1021 or churchoffice@sturfed.org.

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Heritage School (508) 248-4884
Charlton Middle School (508) 248-1423
Shepherd Hill Regional High School
..... (508) 943-6700
Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School
..... (508) 248-5971 or (508) 987-0326

HOLLAND: 413-245-7108
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Weekdays 8:30 – 5:00 and Sat. 9:00 -12:00

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Weekdays: 9:00 – 4:30 and Sat. 9:00 -12:00

WALES: 413-245-9808
Weekdays 8:30 – 12:30 and 2:00 – 4:30 and Sat. 9:00 – 12:00

CHURCH LISTINGS

- Central Baptist Church
256 Main St., Southbridge, MA 01550
Tel 508/764-6365; Worship 10:00 A.M.
- Charlton Federated Church, 64 Main St., 508- 248-5550, Sunday worship 10:30 a.m. Summer worship is 9:30 a.m. www.fed-church.org
- Charlton Baptist Church, 50 Hammond Hill Road, 248-4488, www.charltonbaptist.org, Sunday worship 10 a.m.
- Charlton City United Methodist, 74 Stafford St. 248-7379, web site: CharltonCityUMC.org
Sunday worship and Children's church 10am
- St. Anne St. Patrick Church, 16 Church St., Fiskdale (508) 347-7338
www.stannestpatparish.com
Saturday Vigil Mass at 4 pm, Sunday 8 am, 10 am, 12 noon, Youth Mass (September to May) 5 pm. Daily Mass Mon - Thurs 7:30 and 10 am, Fri and Sat 7:30 am
- Elm Street Congregational Church, 61 Elm Street, Southbridge, Ma 01550
Phone: 508-764-8085 • Sunday service 10:00 am
Pastor Kathryn Light
- Faith Baptist Church, 515 Dennison Drive, Southbridge
Phone number 508-764-6132,
Worship Service: Sunday 10:00 a.m.
- St. Joseph's Church, 10 H. Putnam Ext, 248-7862, www.stjosephscharlton.com, Saturday Vigil Mass 4:30 p.m., Sunday Mass 8 a.m., Sunday Family Mass 10 a.m., Sunday LifeTEEN Mass 5 p.m., Weekday Mass Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 8:30 a.m.
- Wayside Church, 6 Haggerty Road, 248-5144
- Assemblies of God Southern New England District Headquarters, Route 20, 248-3771, snedag.org, Office hours Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Living Word Church of Charlton, 10 Main Street - Grange building 1st Floor, Charlton, Ma 01507, Pastor Craig Bellisario, (508) 233-8349
Sunday Service 10:00am.
www.livingwordcharlton.com
info@livingwordcharlton.com
- New Life Fellowship A/G, SNED Chapel, 307 Sturbridge Road, Rt. 20, Charlton, MA, Sunday Worship 10:00 a.m.
- Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale- 8 Maple St. Sturbridge, 774-304-1021
www.sturfed.org
Sunday Worship 9:30 a.m.
- Bethlehem Lutheran Church- 345 Main Street, Sturbridge, MA 01566
Phone 508-347-7297
Web: www.bethlehemsturbridge.org
Services - Sunday 9:00 am
Pastor Dan Purtell
- Holland Congregation Church "Where the Bible is preached." 11 Sturbridge Road, Holland, 413-245-9926
Hollandchurch.org
Sunday Service @ 10:00 am
Pastor Dan Maketansky
- Holy Trinity Episcopal Church 446 Hamilton St., Southbridge, MA 01550
Phone: 508-765-9559
Web: www.holytrinitysouthbridge.org
Sunday Service 11:00 am
Pastor Dan Purtell
- St. John Paul II Parish 279 Hamilton St., Southbridge
Rev. Carlos Ardila, Pastor
Weekend services Saturday 4 p.m., Sunday 8 a.m., 10 a.m., and noon
Weekday masses 8:30 & 8:45 a.m., St. Mary's Church (508) 765-3701

Gateway Players announce auditions for “Godspell”

SOUTHBRIDGE — Gateway Players Theatre, in conjunction with Elm Street Congregational Church, are hosting auditions for "Godspell." Written, conceived and originally Directed by John-Michael Tebelak. Music and Lyrics by Stephen Schwartz. Auditions will be held on Jan. 4 & 5 at 6 p.m. in the church sanctuary at Elm Street Congregational Church, 61 Elm St., Southbridge.

Actors should be prepared to sing a song from the show. Performance dates are

March 20 & 21 at 7 p.m., and March 22 at 2 p.m. Rehearsals will be held on Sunday and Wednesdays beginning January 11th. Presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). The cast consists of adults ages 18 and up. Directed by Lynn Boucher, produced by Lou-El-len Corkum, and Music Director is Chris Rubenacker. For more information, please contact Gateway at 508-764-4531.

Prepare ye for the timeless tale of friendship, loyalty and love based on the Gospel

According to St. Matthew. 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, tolerance and love come vibrantly to life.

Characters:

Jesus
Charismatic and high energy, yet gentle and loving. He is the deceptively calm leader of the troupe. He is eventually betrayed by Judas and persecuted.

Gender: male, Age: 18 to 30, Vocal range top: G5, Vocal range bottom: A3
John The Baptist / Judas
He possesses the attributes of two Biblical figures: he is both Jesus' lieutenant and most ardent disciple, and also the doubter who begins to question and rebel. Like Jesus, he is also charismatic, but in an overt revolutionary way. Handsome and masculine with a subtle undertone of sexuality.

Gender: male, Age: 18 to 35, Vocal range top: G5, Vocal range bottom: A3
Ensemble
Soloists, featured actors, and others, 8-10 performers, all genders.

Seniors named to Bay Path honor roll

CHARLTON — Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical School congratulates the following students in Grade 12 on being named to the honor roll for the first quarter of the 2025-2026 school year.

High Honors
Helena Rowan Adkins, Addison Emily Aho, Adriana Nataly Alicea, Jacob John Archambault, Alexander Tyr Audunsson, Vincent Paul Bedard, Isabella Aria Bitar, Edward Stephen Blash, Dominic Dewayne Boyd, Aleah Claire Brink, Brianna Livia Brink, Samuel Elia Ceppetelli, Frederick James Cierpich, Emily Ann Corey, Jacob William Creeron, Valentina Ashley Culberson, Brody Lawrence Cunningham, Myiah Kiara DeLaRosa, Basil Doud, Jocelyn Elizabeth Evans, Yandel Feliciano, Jordan Mariah Ferreira, Jayla Marie Fowler,

Luke Robert Heller, Liam Wayne Hesselton, Nicholas Edward Jalbert, Tabian Marschall Keegan, Zackery Collin Kelleher, Phoebe Alyson Lawendowski, Nicholas Sebastian Londono, Cullen Gregory MacLeod, Ava Rose Mastro-totaro, Alexis McGee Messina, Liam Macrae Nicoll, Sebastian Alexander Nieuwenhoff, Benjamin Francis Nocchi, Mariah Lynn Pereira, Jacob Paul Pratt, Kayleigh Jean Ramm, Nathan Alexander Rouille Montoya, Luke William Smolski, Ashley Mikayla Tingle, Anne Louise Turcotte, Esmerelda Velez, Ava Quiyn Wall, Hunter Earl White
Honors
Bayleigh Alexis Abdella, Sarah Rebecca Appiah Kubi, Violet Renee Aucella, Victoria Rose Bachand, Rhianna Anne Balliet, Ari-anna Rose Belanger,

Nathan Paul Bernard, David Betancur, Roger Joseph Bishop, Dominic Raymond Brodeur, Lucien Stephen Brodeur, Alissa Lynn Burlingame, Dimitri Anthony Burt, Liam Michael Carlson, Lily Sabina Chartier, Charles Michael Congdon, Lorelie May Cur-boy, Connor Anthony Czechowski, Joseph Michael Daige, Smauel Richard Davis, Treyton Joseph Dery, Cody Daniel Dombroski, Christopher Michael Dufresne, Zenovi Irene Dupont, Heidi Lynne Ebbeling, Matthew Aaron Falcigno, Leia Marie Foster, Rylee Rose Fulmine, Bridgette Anne Gaudreau, Aiden Mark Giroux-Provencher, Aliyah Marie Gonyea, Jocelynn Rose Gordon, Molly Elizabeth Grant, Anna Rosa Guay, Isaiah Terrence Harris-Harrington, Sadie Lynn Hawley, Kolton Trevor

Hemenway, Lillian Elaine Horner, Hannah Jean Ingalls, Natalie Rose Ingles, Joshua William Irons, Amara Kimberly Johnson, Christian Michael Johnson, Ayden Matthew Kennedy, Samuel Arjun Kittredge, Allison Hemenway Klar, Cassie Lee Kotomski, Kirstine Marie Laflash, Marshall Thomas Lafond, Nia Mya Laforest, Callie Mae Lambert, Joel Carlos Landor, Jomar De Jesus Landor, Zachary Raymond Landry, Gabrielle Ruth Lapin, Michael Wayne Lapointe, Nathan Ryan Legendre, Miranda Kate Linde, Matthew James Lopez, Julianna Rose Lovejoy, Michael Anthony Lulu, Philipos Anastasio Makrodimitras, Mystic Leigh Marion, Bradley Anthony McCarthy, Emily Jean McDonald, Madeline Beverly McDonald-Trimby, Avery Lynn McLaughlin,

Felix Casey Menard, Sebastian Luke Moniz, Angelo Michael Montiverdi, Alexis Paige Moody, Jackson Ryan Mullins, Chaser Patrick Newman, Connor James O'Brien, Matthew Thomas Obrycki, Kelsey Lynn Olson, Cole Henry Paradis, Adam Jason Phaneuf, Samuel Joseph Prefontaine, Jae Mia Prochnow, Samantha Jeanne Reseigh, Grace Elizabeth Retallic, Taylor Lynn Richard, Vincent Timothy Rose, Jordan Joyce Russell, Brianne Marie Sentence, Jaxon Russell Sitko, Alexxis Lynne Spennard, Keagan Robert Standring, Nathan Adam Steen, Gaige Charles Thompson, Josiah Felix Torres, Yandel Omar Torres, Ezekiel Velazquez, Harley Ann Waddell, Londyn Nancy Walker, Marcanthony Justin Weld, Katherine Marie Widebeck, Trey Stephen Wilkin, Noah Williamson, Harrison Riley Wilson, Adriana Marie Young, Haylee Marie Zurowski

Lucas Scott Lyons, Emmanuel McDaddie, Izaiah Timothy Monette, Gianna Marie Morelli, Tyson Joseph Moriarty, Jeremiah Betsaleel Noel, Kamryn Leigh Nourse, Niti Nilesh Patel, Amari Audrey Pereira, Aiden Charles Perzanoski, Angelina Marie Petro, Marcus Joseph Rodriguez, Sawyer Luke Schultz, Jared Robert Senosk, Alexander Chares Skladzien, Damon Robert Taylor, Thadaeus Boadi Tweneboa, Sebastian Paul Vargas, Aynara Shirel Vazquez, Kyle Evan Velez, Natalie Helen Vigeant, Zaylie Elaine Whiteman, Brook Michelle Worthington

Community Calendar

December 5–12

FRIDAY, DEC. 5
A chill in the air and lights all aglow,
To Southbridge we wander, with spirits in tow.
Library Lego Club, 3–4 p.m. at JEL, bright and neat,
Where young builders gather and create something sweet.
SATURDAY, DEC. 6
To Sturbridge Town Hall, at 10 a.m. sharp,
A Holiday Craft Fair warms every heart.
Tables of treasures, ornaments too,
A merry good outing for the whole family crew.
Meanwhile in Charlton, a seasonal sight,
St. Joseph Church Fair, 9–2, pure delight.
Cookies and quilts and handmade décor,
And warm Christmas cheer right through the door.

SUNDAY, DEC. 7
Brimfield's a-bustle with holiday cheer,
Winter Concert at 2 p.m. draws neighbors near.
Music that sparkles, voices that blend,
A gentle December afternoon to spend.
MONDAY, DEC. 8
At the Holland Library, the fun never ends—
Story Hour at 11, with songs, crafts, and friends.
Snowflakes of paper, glitter that gleams,
Perfect for bright little wintertime dreams.
TUESDAY, DEC. 9
In Wales they gather as daylight grows thin—
Council Meeting, 6 p.m., neighbors filing in.
Budgets and bylaws and year-end review,
Civic engagement for me and for you.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 10
Southbridge Senior Center brings comfort and cheer,
Chair Yoga at 10, a good way to steer
Body and mind through the stress of the season—
A moment of calm for a very good reason.
THURSDAY, DEC. 11
The Jacob Edwards Library, warm and bright,
Hosts Holiday Storytime, 6:30 tonight.
Families arrive as the winter winds blow,
Listening to tales of reindeer and snow.
FRIDAY, DEC. 12
Week's end in Charlton with joy once again—
Heritage School Concert, 7 p.m. begins then.
Songs from the students ring through the hall,
A tuneful December gift shared with all.

QCC's food pantry supporting students through record demand

WORCESTER — Quinsigamond Community College's HomePlate Food Pantry & Resource Center is experiencing unprecedented demand, serving more students and families than ever before as economic pressures and food and housing insecurity impact the local community. The college is focusing its Giving Tuesday campaign on raising funds for the food pantry to meet this demand.

Since the beginning of July, the pantry has registered more than 750 students, supporting close to 1,700 household members. This marks a significant increase from the same period last year, when close to 450 students and 890 household members were served.

"We have adjusted our system so that we don't have to turn anyone away, but the need goes up every week," said Manager of the Home Plate Food Pantry and Resource Center Charlotte Operach.

On the busiest days, HomePlate serves up to 100 students. The pantry provides food items as well as personal hygiene items such as toothpaste and diapers. Additionally, students experiencing housing issues are connected to resources.

"If I think about my kids going hungry, I would rather miss a day at school, just to go to work to save my kids," said a nursing student using the food pantry. "As a mother, it's worrying. You cannot concentrate in school."

About 75 percent of the pantry's food supply comes from the Worcester County Food Bank, with the remainder purchased through donations and grants. Popular items include fresh fruits and vegetables, frozen meats, oatmeal, pasta and diapers.

Operach noted that community support is critical, especially as the demand continues to increase. The pantry accepts product donations at the main campus as well as monetary donations through the QCC Foundation. Grocery store gift cards, now accepted up to \$50, are also highly valued, allowing students to meet specific dietary needs.

"With everything going on with SNAP benefits and the cost of living so high, there's a lot of anxiety," Operach said. "But our students are so resilient."

For more information or to donate, visit QCC.edu/foodpantry and QCC.edu/giving-tuesday.

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EDITOR

The steadying power of winter routines

December settles in quietly, but without hesitation. After the rush of autumn obligations, our towns shift into the measured rhythm that New England winters know so well. The pace may not be slow, exactly, but it is steadier — marked by familiar rituals that return each year and anchor us as the days grow shorter.

Across our community, those winter routines are already taking shape. Morning commutes begin a little earlier to account for frost on the windshield. Children shuffle into school wrapped in layers that weren't needed a month ago. Local road crews stand ready for the first real storm of the season, equipment tested, routes set, and long workdays anticipated. None of these habits are new, but their reliability is part of what carries communities through the coldest months.

Winters here can still catch us off guard, but the seasonal predictability offers something worth acknowledging. In a world that often feels uncertain, routines give structure and reassurance. Families begin preparing their homes — stacking wood, sealing windows, organizing boots by the door. Seniors plan grocery trips around the forecast. Parents adjust schedules to accommodate earlier sunsets. These preparations may be mundane, but they are also a form of resilience.

Municipal departments follow their winter playbooks too. Highway crews track storm systems days in advance. Public works teams ready salt and sand supplies. Local officials coordinate warming shelters and emergency contacts. These processes repeat annually, refined by trial, error, and experience. They are not exciting, but they are essential. A town that responds efficiently to winter weather is a town that has learned from many winters before.

There is also something grounding in the personal routines winter encourages. People return to indoor hobbies that wait patiently all year: baking, reading, woodworking, puzzles, crafts. Many households reestablish rituals that only make sense when darkness falls before dinnertime — family movie nights, card games, slower meals. When practiced consistently, these patterns give a sense of stability that counters the season's starkness.

Winter routines do not solve every challenge. Storms still disrupt schedules. Cold snaps still test heating budgets. Short days still wear on people who miss the sun. But even then, the repetition of familiar habits creates an environment where those hardships can be managed more effectively. Knowing what to expect does not erase difficulty, but it reduces the disorientation that unpredictability brings.

This is also a good time to revisit practical winter planning: checking smoke detectors, reviewing emergency kits, and confirming that household supplies are in order. These small steps matter, and taking them early often prevents larger problems later. Preparation is not dramatic work, but in New England, it is part of ordinary life.

Winter's routines are not meant to confine us; they are meant to steady us. They provide a rhythm that helps families and towns navigate the months ahead with confidence. While the season can feel long, it is also the time when households rediscover the value of consistency, and when communities benefit from the quiet efficiency that experience brings.

In the coming weeks, as temperatures dip and snow becomes more common, embracing these winter habits may offer a sense of continuity at a time when daylight is brief and schedules are full. There is comfort in the familiar — and in knowing that, despite the challenges of the season, we have been here before and we know how to move through it.

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

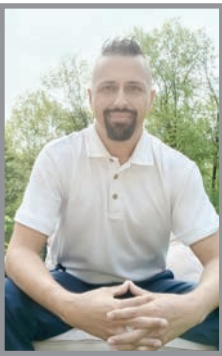
Holy Family Christmas

As my church and I have prepared for the winter holiday season, for us, specifically Christmas, we have pondered the plight of those who do not anticipate the holidays with merriment. Whether because of grief, loneliness, poverty, or a myriad of other struggles, the holidays can be a struggle. We are hosting a Blue Christmas worship service on Dec. 20 at 6:30 p.m. to partially spiritually address the darkness some of us may experience this time of year.

Thinking about others who may be blue, I remembered that the holy family probably didn't experience the first Christmas with elated joy. With all that's happening in our country, it's appropriate to recall that Jesus's mother was forced

to labor in, let's say, uncomfortable conditions because they were not hospitably welcomed by the locals. And then, some time before his second birthday, the holy family was forced to flee the country and become refugees. Not exactly pleasant.

Though I've never experienced it myself, I love the idea of Las Posadas (translated, the lodgings). It's a nine-day prayer festival immediately preceding Christmas—nine days to commemorate the nine months of Mary's pregnancy—celebrat-



BEYOND THE PEWS

BY REV. JOHN H.D. LUCY
CHARLTON CITY UMC

ed primarily, coincidentally, in Latin American countries and cultures. Each community may celebrate slightly differently, but typically a couple is chosen to portray Mary and Joseph and each night they travel from house to house in the community, where they are told there is no room, until they reach the designated household where they will be welcomed to spend the night and feast. Often the last night, Christmas Eve, is spent at a church.

I love the idea of Las Posadas because it incorporates all the prayer and carol singing and feasting and anticipation we normally associate with Christmas—plus pinatas—and combines it with the reality: Mary and Joseph did not have it easy before or after the birth. And many of us, perhaps particularly those in our immigrant communities from the countries that most celebrate Las Posadas, also do not have it easy. Yet, somehow, like the holy family, there can nonetheless be celebration despite what the world throws at us.

So whether you celebrate Christmas because of Christ or not, or celebrate Christmas at all, I pray that you hear that the hope of love coming down at Christmas is not reserved only for those whose lives are swell.

Is this a good year for tax-loss harvesting?

Thanks to market swings, evolving tax laws and new technology, it may be a good year to consider tax-loss harvesting — a strategy that can help reduce taxes and improve long-term returns.

What is tax-loss harvesting? When you sell an investment for less than you paid, you may be able to use that loss to offset gains from other investments, potentially reducing your overall tax bill.

If your total capital losses exceed your gains, you can use up to \$3,000 of those losses to reduce ordinary income each year. You can carry any remaining losses forward to future tax years. The strategy doesn't eliminate taxes altogether; it simply defers them, which can free up money to reinvest elsewhere.

How it works. Imagine an investor who sold one stock for a \$10,000 gain and another for a \$10,000 loss. The two transactions cancel each other out, meaning no capital gains tax is owed for that year. The investor can then

reinvest the proceeds while following the IRS's

"wash-sale rule." This rule prevents you from claiming a loss if you, or your spouse or a related party, repurchase the same or a "substantially identical" investment within 30 days before or after the sale.

Because of this rule, you should consider how tax-loss harvesting will affect your investment strategy, as the benefit of holding on to that investment (and letting it grow over time) may outweigh the benefit of lowering your capital gains tax bill for a given year.

Good candidates for tax-loss harvesting include investments that no longer fit your strategy (when rebalancing your portfolio, for example), have poor investment potential or can be easily substituted with other investments.



FINANCIAL FOCUS

TREVOR NIELSEN

Why 2025 may be favorable. Several factors suggest 2025 may be a good time to consider tax-loss harvesting.

First, market volatility has created more opportunities to realize losses. The first half of the year saw sharp market swings that left some portfolios uneven. Many large asset managers have already harvested billions in losses, using them to help lower clients' tax liability while keeping investment strategies on track.

Second, tax law changes are on the horizon. With major tax reform provisions scheduled to expire in the coming years, many investors are motivated to manage their gains and losses proactively. Those in higher tax brackets stand to benefit most, as the savings increase with your tax rate.

Finally, technology has made the process more efficient. In the past, investors typically harvested losses near year-end. Today, au-

tomation and direct indexing allow for continuous monitoring and harvesting throughout the year, capturing losses as they appear.

Putting it into practice. Tax-loss harvesting isn't right for everyone, and it's not a reason to overhaul your investment strategy. The approach works best for investors with taxable accounts, current or expected capital gains and a long-term perspective.

Consult your financial advisor and a tax professional before making decisions. When used thoughtfully, tax-loss harvesting can help you navigate a volatile market, reduce taxes, and keep more of your money working toward your future goals.

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@edward-jones.com.

Lanterns Along Main Street

There's a small ritual I've noticed in a lot of Massachusetts towns—something so ordinary you could miss it unless you're paying attention. It happens in the morning, long before the school buses growl to life or the commuter rush begins. Shopkeepers unlock their doors, sweep a few stray leaves from their thresholds, and prop the door open for a minute to "let the day in," as one fellow once told me.

I've always liked that expression. You don't open the door; you let the day in. As if the day were something polite, waiting on the step with its hat in hand.

That morning moment reveals something about these towns. You learn who gets up early, who doesn't mind the cold bite of a December morning, who chats across the street as naturally as breathing. You learn that the fellow who runs the hardware store has the same whistle every day, and that the woman who works the bakery counter taps her knuckles on the window before she flips the sign to Open, like a quiet promise that she means it.

What strikes me isn't the routine itself, but the way people seem to take com-

fort in it. In a world with so many moving parts—so much technology, so many shortcuts, so many alerts and reminders buzzing for our attention—there's something steadying about a place where the first order of business is sweeping off the stoop. You don't need an app for it, and nobody's angling for recognition. They just do it because it makes the day feel like it's beginning on the right foot.

I drove through a handful of towns in the area last week and found myself stopping for coffee in one of those little places where the tables wobble and the mugs are mismatched. The man behind the counter asked if I wanted a refill before I had even taken my first sip. It wasn't pushy—just habit, the way some people press a hand against your shoulder before they walk by. A courtesy without any expectation attached.

At the table next to mine, two men were talking about the high school basketball team. One of them still called the gym the new gym, even though it was built sometime in the mid-1990s. You hear that kind of thing a lot around here. Old labels

LANTERNS ALONG MAIN STREET

By CHIPPY

have a long half-life. A building can be new for decades if the one before it was older still.

That's the quiet charm of these towns: time doesn't hurry. Not in a stubborn way, but in a comfortable one. Something might change—a new family moves in, a business closes, a bridge gets repaired—but life doesn't shove ahead. It ambles. And in that ambling, people notice things that would go unremarked elsewhere.

They notice if the library lights are on a little later than usual. They notice when a regular stops showing up for morning coffee and someone goes to check in. They notice when the town hall flag flaps oddly because the rope has caught, and someone climbs up to fix it without calling attention to the effort.

You don't need to romanticize small towns to appreciate this. They have their problems, just like anywhere else. But they also have a certain sturdiness—a belief that life is best lived with a bit of care and a steady gait.

I watched an older couple walking down Main Street

in a town I won't name because it could be almost any of them. They weren't in a rush. They weren't talking. They were simply keeping pace with each other, stopping once to look at a storefront display of knitted hats and again to check whether the barber's pole was spinning that day. They walked as though the sidewalk belonged to them in the best way—not possession, but familiarity.

There's something reassuring in that. We spend so much time thinking about what's urgent that we sometimes forget what's simply there. And in these Massachusetts towns, there's an impressive amount of there—small kindnesses, unspoken habits, a rhythm you can find only if you slow down enough to fall into step with it.

The next time you're up early, drive through town before the day has fully stretched awake. Watch the shop doors open, the lights flicker on, the first few conversations hover above the sidewalk like breath on cold air. You'll see what I mean.

You'll see that a community isn't built on grand gestures. It's built on the quiet act of letting the day in.

Cornerstone Bank sponsors EcoTarium’s ‘Legacy of the Stars Gala’ to celebrate opening of Stoddard Exhibition Hall

SPENCER — Cornerstone Bank is proud to support the EcoTarium with a \$5,000 sponsorship of the Legacy of the Stars Gala, celebrating the grand opening of the Stoddard Exhibition Hall. The new hall marks a milestone moment for the EcoTarium, enabling Worcester to host major national exhibitions for the first time in its history.

This sponsorship builds on Cornerstone Bank’s ongoing support of the EcoTarium through its multi-year commitment to the museum’s Capital Campaign, to which Cornerstone contributed a total of \$12,500 in 2023 and 2024.

“The EcoTarium has enriched generations of children and families by making

science and nature accessible and inspiring,” said Cornerstone Bank CEO Todd Tallman. “We are honored to support the opening of the Stoddard Exhibition Hall and help bring world-class educational experiences to Worcester.”

Founded in 1825 as the Worcester Lyceum of Natural History, the Ecotarium is one of the oldest natural history museums in the United States. The Legacy of the Stars Gala honors the individuals and community partners who have strengthened the EcoTarium over its 200-year history. Proceeds from the event will support “The Secret World of Elephants,” the first major exhibition to be featured in the new Stoddard Exhibition Hall when it opens in

March 2026.

Cornerstone Bank remains committed to investing in organizations that inspire curiosity, support lifelong learning and broaden access to educational opportunities for local families.

About Cornerstone Bank

Cornerstone Bank was formed in 2017, born of a long history of supporting the community, and providing a strong foundation to help people and businesses thrive. Serving Worcester County, Massachusetts, Cornerstone Bank’s local presence and community-based banking model enables a unique ability to deliver outstanding service, with a personal touch. Cornerstone, which is a subsidiary of PeoplesBankCorp,

MHC, operating independently under its own name and brand, provides the highest level of service and expertise for individuals, businesses, and community organizations with branch locations throughout Central Massachusetts. Cornerstone works to connect customers with opportunities through a broad range of deposit and loan products and services. Built on Trust is not just a tagline, but also one of our guiding corporate values. Whether a business or personal partnership, Cornerstone stands on the foundation that relationships are built on trust. To learn about Cornerstone Bank’s personal and business banking offerings, please visit cornerstonebank.com or call 800-939-9103.

Sheriff’s Office partners with Emerge Career to deliver free, high-demand diesel and HVAC training

WORCESTER — The Worcester County Sheriff’s Office and Emerge Career [www.emergecareer.com], a national leader in workforce development for individuals directly or indirectly involved in the criminal justice system, are proud to announce a new partnership to provide Free, High-Demand Training in Diesel Technician and HVAC Technician Careers to qualifying residents across the county. These fast-growing vocations offer starting salaries averaging \$75,000, creating direct pathways to economic mobility for participants and their families. Student eligibility includes individuals who have experienced arrest, probation, parole, or incarceration, as well as those with an immediate family member who has gone through these experiences.

This initiative expands on a successful multi-year collaboration between the Sheriff’s Office and Emerge Career through their Free CDL Training Program, which has become one of the most effective reentry workforce pipelines in the region. Over the past year alone, Emerge Career graduates in Worcester County have earned an average of \$83,000, all while maintaining an extraordinary 0% recidivism rate among program graduates.

“Emerge Career is bringing real solutions to an often-overlooked population,” said Worcester County Sheriff Lew Evangelidis. “This partnership is about dignity, opportunity, and second chances. When individuals leave our facilities with job-ready skills and employers ready to hire them, our

communities become safer and stronger.”

Through this expanded partnership, individuals in the county will now have access to:

- Free Diesel Technician Training (new)
- Free HVAC Technician Training (new)
- Free CDL Training (continuing program)

Each program includes employer-aligned curriculum, nationally recognized certifications, and job placement support to ensure graduates seamlessly transition into high-wage, high-growth careers.

How to Enroll

- Apply for Free CDL Training Here [https://www.app.emergecareer.com/register?utm_source=sheriffs_office-out-of-custody&utm_medium=press-release&utm_campaign=donnelly&utm_term=nov2025&utm_content=no-incentive]

- Apply for Free Diesel Tech & HVAC Tech Training Here [https://form.jotform.com/253055956415158?utm_source=sheriffs_office-out-of-custody&utm_medium=press-release&utm_campaign=ma-new-vocations-launch-2025&utm_term=nov2025&utm_content=no-incentive]

“Our goal has always been simple,” said Tyler Brewer from Emerge Career. “Provide training that leads directly to real jobs with real wages. Worcester County continues to show what’s possible when reentry is focused on evidence-based opportunity.”

This partnership underscores both organizations’ shared commitment to reducing recidivism, strengthening families, and empowering individuals with the skills needed to build stable, successful futures.



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GARDEN MOMENTS
.....
MELINDA MYERS

When looking for a unique holiday tree this season consider adding a plant you can enjoy now and throughout the year. Select a larger specimen to use as a floor plant, adding dramatic scale to your indoor décor. Smaller plants can be placed on tabletops throughout the house to add a bit of extra cheer in any room.

Transform a weeping fig, rubber tree or fiddleleaf fig into a holiday tree with a few lights, garland and ornaments. All three of these make great additions to an indoor garden and their tree-like appearance makes them a perfect substitute for more traditional Christmas trees.

Grow them in bright,

indirect light with evenly moist but not soggy wet soil. Water thoroughly and pour off any excess water that collects in the saucer. Or place pebbles in the saucer to elevate the pot above the water, creating a gravel tray. The excess water will evaporate, increasing humidity around the plant. Avoid drafts of hot and cold air and be prepared for some leaf drop on the weeping fig with a change in the seasons or growing conditions. It will survive and eventually send out new leaves.

Consider a Norfolk Island pine when looking for something that looks more like a pine tree. You will often find them decorated and sold for the holidays in garden centers and floral shops. Or add your own decorations for the festive look you prefer.

Grow Norfolk Island pine in a cool, well-lit location that's free of drafts of



Lemon cypress trees surrounded by poinsettias create a festive holiday display.

hot and cold air. Regularly turn the plant to encourage even growth. Avoid dry air and keep the soil evenly moist to retain green, flexible and healthy needles and branches. Boost the humid-

ity around this and other plants while reducing maintenance by using a gravel tray.

Purchase Rosemary wreaths and tree topiaries for a festive as well as fragrant and edible addition to

the holidays. Just give the leaves a pet to enjoy the fragrance as it boosts your spirits. Pluck a sprig or two to add flavor to your winter meals and beverages.

Growing Rosemary indoors can be challenging so don't let past failures stop you from trying. Experiment until you find the location and maintenance routine that keeps your plant thriving. Grow it in a sunny window or under artificial lights and water thoroughly as the soil begins to dry. If the plant turns brown, move it out of sight to the back of your indoor garden. It still smells good when you give it a pet and only you will know.

Lemon Cypress makes a great miniature holiday tree, centerpiece or gift for a friend. The fragrant charreuse foliage of this dwarf evergreen continues to brighten your winter décor long after the holidays are over. Grow it in a sunny

window and turn it occasionally to encourage even growth. You'll have the best results if you keep it in a cool location free from cold and hot air drafts.

Investing in one of these plants is sure to brighten your spirits and holiday décor. With proper care you can continue to enjoy them year-round and for next year's holiday celebrations.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including the *Midwest Gardener's Handbook, 2nd Edition* and *Small Space Gardening*. She hosts *The Great Courses "How to Grow Anything"* streaming courses and the nationally syndicated *Melinda's Garden Moment* radio program. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for *Birds & Blooms* magazine and her Web site is www.MelindaMyers.com.

Latest auction news



ANTIQUES, COLLECTIBLES & ESTATES
.....
WAYNE TUISKULA

I hope that you had a Happy Thanksgiving! While most of us were out grocery shopping and cleaning up after the big meal, some major auctions were in the headlines.

Famous puppets made news when Jim Henson's puppets and memorabilia auction took place late last month. Henson was the beloved creator of the "Muppets." Henson's "Crystal of Truth" from "The Dark Crystal: Age of Resistance" sold for \$89,600, according to the UPI, while Miss Piggy's high heels went for \$22,400. The auction brought in \$2.6 million total, which will be used to preserve Henson's archives.

A major piece of art that saved a woman during the Holocaust broke a modern art record last month. Gustav Klimt's "Portrait of Elisabeth Lederer" was painted over three years from 1916 to 1918. It depicts the daughter of one of Vienna's wealthiest families wearing an Asian Emperor's cloak. When Nazi Germany annexed Austria in 1938, they raided the Lederer's art collection. "Elisabeth Lederer made up a story that Klimt, who was not Jewish and died in 1918, was her father," according to AP News. She convinced the Nazis to give her a document stating that she was Klimt's daughter, which spared her life. Some



of Klimt's works burned in a fire in an Austrian castle, making the existing works more valuable. The painting is one of two full length portraits in private hands. The sale surpassed the previous record for 20th century art held by an Andy Warhol portrait of Marilyn Monroe, which brought \$195 million in 2022. "Portrait of Elisabeth Lederer" sold for a record \$236.4 million.

A different type of art also made news recently, with a rare Fabergé egg coming to auction. "Peter Carl Fabergé and his company created more than 50 of the eggs for Russia's imperial family between 1885 and 1917, each elaborately unique and containing a hidden surprise," according to CBS News. Czar Alexander III gifted an egg to his wife every Easter. Nicholas II continued the tradition by presenting eggs to his wife and mother. A four-inch-tall "Winter egg" was carved from carved rock crystal, featuring platinum snowflake decorations and 4,500 rose-cut diamonds. When open, it reveals bejeweled quartz flowers symbolizing spring. There are currently 43 known Fabergé eggs, and most are in museums. The

"Winter egg" was originally sold when Russia was struggling in the 1920s and selling off artifacts. A London antique dealer purchased the egg for £400, which is a little under \$700 at current exchange rates. It exchanged hands several times and was once thought to be lost for decades until being sold in 1994 for 7 million Swiss francs (\$5.6 million at exchange rates then). It was resold for \$9.6 million in 2002. The current auction record for a Fabergé egg is \$18.5 million from a 2007 sale. This egg is expected to crack that record with a \$26 million estimate.

Our single-collector Civil War auction will be taking place this month. Following that, we'll have a major auction with fine jewelry, sterling silver, art, and other antiques and collectibles. Please visit our website <https://centralmassauctions.com> for links to upcoming events.

Contact us to consign items or for auction information at: Wayne Tuiskula Auctioneer/Appraiser Central Mass Auctions for Antique, Collectibles Auctions and Appraisal Services info@centralmassauctions.com or (508-612-6111).

Federated Church of Sturbridge & Fiskdale announces Holly Berry Fair vendors

STURBRIDGE — The Federated Church of Sturbridge & Fiskdale will hold its annual Holly Berry Fair on Saturday, Dec. 6 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the church's Fellowship Hall at 8 Maple St., Sturbridge.

Co-chairs Nancy Castendyk and Janet-Rae Sinanian say the annual event will feature an impressive lineup of local artists and makers offering one-of-a-kind gifts—from leather goods and alpaca items to cozy knits and seasonal décor. Shoppers can also stop by Koinonia's booth, where members of the Federated Church women's group will be selling their much-loved baked goods and homemade treats.

"It's a wonderful way to kick off the holiday season," says Castendyk. "There's always something special to discover, and it's all in support of our local artisans and community."

Featured local artisans include Penny Adams (aromatherapy), Corinn Algier (herbalism/salves), Charles Batterby (leather goods), Mary Bernstein (tie dye), Sandi Bostrom (handbags), Benjamin Brigham (coun-



Handcrafted items like these cute reindeer will be offered at this year's Holly Berry Fair on Dec. 6.

try decor), Susan Bundeiff (stained glass), Tamara Cook (snowflake tree), Bonnie Fancy (knitted items), and Collette Gage (alpaca items).

The fair will also feature Madison Gallipeau (crocheted items), Emma Lane (stone jewelry), Linda McManus (table runners), Missy Peters (wooden items), Julia Plasse (handbags), Mary Shaw (crocheted scarves), and Janet Sinanian (iris folded cards).

For additional information about the Holly Berry Fair or other upcoming

events, please visit the Church website at sturfed.org, visit the Church's Facebook page @FederatedChurchSturbridgeFiskdale, or contact the Church office at (774) 304-1021 or churchoffice@sturfed.org.

The Federated Church of Sturbridge & Fiskdale joyfully celebrates Christ's presence and God's grace in our lives. Members of the community are welcome and invited to join in worship on Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m. Services are also live-streamed on the church's Facebook page.

Steve Ide Memorial Toy Drive issues weekly update

SOUTHBRIDGE — The annual Steve Ide Memorial Toy Drive, sponsored by Cops & Kids and the Southbridge Lions Club, is officially underway, and organizers report strong early momentum as the holiday season approaches.

Volunteer shoppers—affectionately referred to as "elves"—have already begun purchasing gifts for local children in need. At this stage of the drive, donations for older children, particularly those ages 8 to 16, are most urgently needed. Individual contributions continue to come in, and organizers expressed deep appreciation for the community's generosity.

Those wishing to make financial contributions may do so by check. Donations should be made payable to Southbridge Lions Toy Drive and may be dropped off at any Southbridge Credit Union branch.

Toy collection boxes will be placed at various locations throughout Southbridge and Sturbridge beginning Friday, Nov. 21, as well as on the Friday following Thanksgiving.

In addition, two community events are planned for Saturday, Nov. 29. The Sturbridge Police Department will host its annual "Stuff-the-Cruiser" event, inviting residents to help fill a police cruiser

with donated toys. That evening, the Town of Southbridge will hold its Christmas Parade, which will conclude with a gathering on The Common. Members of the Southbridge Lions Club, including Mrs. Claus, will be present at both events.

Families seeking assistance through the Toy Drive may obtain an application at the Southbridge Police Station. Applications may also be requested by contacting any member of the Southbridge Lions Club.

Organizers encourage residents to participate in any way they can to help ensure a bright and joyful holiday season for local families.

Housing survey now open

CHARLTON — The Town of Charlton is preparing a housing plan to better understand housing challenges faced by the community. This plan will help guide the Town as it pursues

opportunities to provide more affordable and diverse housing opportunities.

Your input is an essential part of the housing plan.

Please take 10 minutes to complete this communi-

ty survey before Dec. 31 at www.surveymonkey.com/r/charltonhousing.

For more information on the housing plan or survey, please contact Emily Glaubitz at eglaubitz@cmrpc.org.

Girls on the Run Worcester County celebrates coach for 10 seasons of impactful service

WORCESTER — Girls on the Run Worcester County, a nonprofit that empowers young girls, is proud to recognize volunteer coach Jennifer Bolt for achieving the incredible milestone of 10 seasons of service with the organization. Jennifer Bolt has made a long-term impact on the lives of more than 232 girls through her consistent dedication, compassion, and belief in the power of positive mentorship.

Girls on the Run inspires girls in grades 3 to 8 to be joyful, healthy, and confident using a fun, experience-based curriculum that creatively integrates running. In addition to preparing participants for a celebratory 5K at the end of each season, the program equips them with life skills that last. Local volunteer coaches, like Jennifer, are at the heart of this work, leading teams through lessons that combine fun physical activity with vital social-emotional development.

Bolt first became involved with Girls on the Run in 2018.

In her words, “I love GOTR so much, and I’m so happy to be part of such an important program that helps girls shine!”

She is consistently bringing energy, compassion, and a commitment to every participant’s growth. Combined with the organization’s evidence-based curriculum, Girls on the Run coaches help meet today’s girls’ mental and physical needs. With an increase in girls reporting greater levels of sadness and depression, encouraging role models who consistently show up like Jennifer are critical in preparing girls for adolescence and beyond.

Program Director Katie Esposito praised Bolt for her enduring contributions,



Jennifer Bolt

saying, “Her dedication has become a shining example of what it looks like to live out the GOTR mission every single day. Jen embodies the heart of this program. Through her dedication, she has created a space where girls feel supported, empowered, and inspired to reach their full potential. She is an Adjustment Counselor who understands the importance of girl only programming. By showing up consistently, Jen not only encourages girls to believe in themselves, but also helps shape a culture of empowerment and community at the school. Leaders like her embody the very essence of programs that aim to inspire and support young women.”

As the organization expands, remarkable role models like Jennifer are essential to ensuring the program reaches girls when they need it most. Girls on the Run Worcester County

is always looking for caring and enthusiastic individuals to join its roster of coaches and help the next generation pursue their dreams. In a recent post-season experience survey of coaches, 97 percent felt Girls on the Run had been a valuable experience for them, 98 percent formed positive relationships with the participants on their team, and 95 percent felt that they were making a difference in participants’ lives. In a separate research study, coaches reported that coaching a Girls on the Run team helped them build community connections, enhance their own social-emotional skills, strengthen their professional skills, and gain more confidence.

Visit www.gotr-worc.org for more information about Girls on the Run Worcester County and how to get involved.

About Girls on the Run Worcester County

Girls on the Run (GOTR) Worcester County offers after-school empowerment programs designed for girls in grades 3 through 8. The nonprofit helps girls in Worcester County build confidence, increase their level of physical activity, and learn essential life skills. Facilitated by

trained volunteer coaches, the research-based curriculum explores core topics relevant to 8- to 13-year-olds, including managing emotions, expressing empathy, and standing up for ourselves and others. The program includes a Community Impact Project and culminates with a 5K Celebration.

GOTR Worcester County is one of more than 160 councils a part of Girls on the Run International (GOTRI). Since GOTR was founded in 1996, this national movement has served more than 2.5 million girls in all 50 states and Canada. Visit www.gotr-worc.org to learn more.



Courtesy

Dec. 13 from 9-10 a.m. will be the final 2025 youth workshop at the Ruth Wells Center for the Arts, located at 111 Main St., Southbridge. This is a family workshop- all are welcome to create an ornament to bring home. Registration is required and may be found on the Web site, ruthwellscenter.com. This workshop is free for family members; otherwise \$5 per child. Don't miss the chance to explore your creativity. For more information, call 508-764-3341.

All Saints students join in World Diabetes Day



WEBSTER — In honor of All Saints Academy students living with Type 1 diabetes, the entire school community joined together on World Diabetes Day to learn more about the condition and show their support. Through engaging videos, food comparisons, and hands-on lessons, students explored how the body uses energy from food to play, learn, and grow.

During the lessons, students discovered that people with Type 1 diabetes are unable to fuel their bodies properly because their pancreas does not produce insulin.

Insulin acts like a key, unlocking the door that allows energy from food to enter the body’s cells. Without it, sugar remains in the bloodstream instead of reaching the places where it is needed, which can make a person with diabetes very sick. These activities gave students a clearer understanding of why individuals with diabetes check their blood sugar, take insulin, and use medical devices. Most importantly, they learned that kids with diabetes can do everything their peers can do.

To cap off the day,

students created blue backpack rings to hang on their backpacks as a symbol of solidarity with everyone living with diabetes—especially their fellow ASA classmates. The circular shape represents life, health, and unity, while the blue mirrors both the sky that connects all people and the color of the United Nations flag.

The event aimed to raise awareness and foster a supportive, informed, and inclusive school environment—one where every student feels understood and empowered.

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Wings of Song sings of night, moon, and stars

STURBRIDGE — Night. Darkness. Silence. In the sky on a clear night, our Moon may be riding high. Our sibling planets may be seen piercing the dark-

ness with clear, unblinking points of light: Venus, Jupiter, Mars... Stars—suns like ours, but at unimaginable distances—send their light out, visible on Earth perhaps

many centuries later. In late December in Earth’s Northern Hemisphere, nights are long and cold. For millennia, humans have gathered to mark this

time with fires and dances and singing and musical instruments and stories and revelry: to tell the dark and the cold that our spirits are undaunted, and to celebrate the lengthening of days that begins at this time.

Wings of Song—a community chorus centered in Sturbridge and drawing its fifty active members from a large number of towns in south-central Massachusetts and northeastern Connecticut—celebrates both Christmas and the Winter Solstice in song this year with a focus on night, moon, and stars: the darkness from which light is born, and reborn.

The celebration takes the form of two concerts: one at St. Joachim Chapel, 16 Church Street in Fiskdale (part of Sturbridge), on

Saturday, Dec. 13 at 7:30 p.m., and the other at the Elm Street Congregational Church, 61 Elm St. in Southbridge, on Sunday, Dec. 14 at 3 p.m. As always, both concerts are free to the public, with a freewill offering collected. As always, both venues are handicap accessible. As always, yummy refreshments will be served after each concert. And as always, folks are advised to come early to be sure of a seat.

Music Director Nym Cooke provides this glimpse into what you’ll hear: everything from an operatic quartet by Baroque composer Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764) to the bluegrass gospel song “Beautiful Star of Bethlehem”; from “Moon is Walking”

by Joseph Shabalala of Ladysmith Black Mambazo to the world premiere of “Notte” by Wings of Song tenor Gianni Davilli; from the tender Danish Christmas song “Among the Stars of Midnight” to John Rutter’s magnificent choral setting of “O Holy Night”; from the shape-note song ‘Star in the East’ to Henry VIII’s “Green Grow’th the Holly”... Audiences will join us in singing three Christmas classics that feature stars: “The First Nowell,” “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” and “We Three Kings of Orient Are.”

People are strongly encouraged to bring stars or moons, to be held or hoisted aloft at key points in the proceedings. More than one moon is fine, in the spirit of celebration.

Trinity Catholic Academy announces honor roll

SOUTHBRIDGE — Trinity Catholic Academy has released its honor roll for the first trimester of the 2025-2026 school year.

Grade 4
Honors: Emelia Franco, John Nadeua, Elizabeth Nellenback, Owen Quigley, Vincent VLK

High Honors: Lucius Batih, Victoria LaBonte, Joseph Nellenback

Grade 5
Honors: Vera Abud Fuentes, Jaime Cruz, Mason Gonzalez, Connor Kreidemaker, Matthew Ol-

son, Jeziah Suarez

High Honors: Charlotte Heckendorf, Jameson Howard-Donlin, Emma LaBarge, Elinor Matzelle

Grade 6
Honors: Emiliana Boswell, Tesslynn Cahill, Cameron Clifford, Karieliz Colon-Martinez, Juliana Dintino, Theodore Frazier, Elizabeth Gordon, Carson Lazo, Sachi Swadia, Jaydin Wales, Benjamin Zuziak

High Honors: Alerix Gonzalez, Kaleigh Haglund, Jake Simanski

Grade 7
High Honors: Aurora Brother, Evelyn Howard-Donlin, Olivia Latour, Michael Poulin, Mia Yanez Velasquez

High Honors: Angel Delgado, Ainsley Heckendorf, Jayden Zarzycki-Kotarba

Grade 8
Honors: Nicolas Gauvin, Carilynne Norris, Caius Ovalles, Zyon Stockley, Alexio Yacavace

High Honors: Abigail Frazier, Celia Ladd, Heer Swadia

LEGALS

SALE OF MOTOR VEHICLES

Under G.L. c.255 Sec.39A Notice is hereby given by Cruise Control Transportation Inc. Pursuant to the provisions of G.L. c. 255, Section 39A. that on or after November 8, 2025 at Cruise Control Transportation Inc. the following motor vehicle/s will be sold at private sale to satisfy our garage keeper’s lien thereon for storage, towing charges, care and expenses of notices and sale of said vehicle:

VEHICLE MAKE: 2017 Chevrolet Equinox
VIN: 2GNFLGE36H6136074
LAST REGISTERED OWNER: Robert Dube
471A Mill St
Worcester MA 01602
VEHICLE MAKE: 2014 Nissan Sentra
VIN: 3N1AB7APXEY204775
LAST REGISTERED OWNER: Thomas Maher
2 DEB RD
WOBURN MA 01801
VEHICLE MAKE: 2006 Acura TL
VIN: 19UUA66266A028268
LAST REGISTERED OWNER: Angel Ortiz Cruz
30 1/2 HACKER ST APT 2
Worcester MA 01603-2821
VEHICLE MAKE: 2004 Ford Taurus
VIN: 1FAFP53254A205030
LAST REGISTERED OWNER: Sandra M, Zadrick (203) 460-2985
410 EMAIN ST APT 209
MERIDEN CT 06450
VEHICLE MAKE: 2014 Chevrolet Sonic
VIN: 1G1JC5SH3E4241653
LAST REGISTERED OWNER: Hanlon, John J
5638 ELEUTHERA WAY
NAPLES FL 34119
VEHICLE MAKE: 1999 moped
VIN: LJ7TCA2F7RZ515647
LAST REGISTERED OWNER: Trobaugh, Jules A
15 WESTLAND ST
WORCESTER MA 01602-2128
November 24, 2025
November 31, 2025
December 7, 2025

Town of Sturbridge Zoning Board of Appeals Public Hearing Notice Variance Thomas & Joanne Hamerly

In accordance with the provisions of M.G.L. Ch. 40A, §10 & §11, the Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a Public Hearing on Wednesday, **December 17, 2024 at 6:35 PM at the Center Office Building located at 301 Main Street, Sturbridge, MA 01566** and/ or by virtual means if circumstances warrant, in accordance with applicable law; on the application of Thomas & Joanne Hamerly for the property located at **143 Walker Pond Road**. Pursuant to §300-18.2 of the Zoning Bylaw, the applicant is requesting a Variance from Article XIV Intensity Regulations, §300-14.2 Table of Standards which requires 20’ setbacks in the Rural Residential District to permit the construction of a shed within approximately 2’ off the side property line.

The proposed request may be viewed at <https://www.sturbridge.gov/zoning-board-appeals/pages/recent-filings> or arrangements can be made to view the application and plan by contacting the Sturbridge Planning Department at (508)347-2508 or by email at jlacy@sturbridge.gov. Any person interested or wishing to be heard on this proposal should appear at the time and place designated. Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, this meeting will be conducted in person and may be conducted via remote means if circumstance warrant, in accordance with applicable law. This means that members of the

public body as well as members of the public may access this meeting in person, or via virtual means. <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/472675877>

Every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post of the Town’s website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of the proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.

Diane Trapasso, Chair
Sturbridge Zoning Board of Appeals
November 27, 2025
December 4, 2025

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. WO25C0564CA

CITATION ON PETITION TO CHANGE NAME

In the matter of:
Rwby Rainn Babbitt
A **Petition to Change Name of Minor** has been filed by **Rwby Rainn Babbitt of Charlton MA** requesting that the court enter a Decree changing their name to:
Rubee Janne Hunt

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Any person may appear for purposes of objecting to the petition by filing an appearance at: Worcester Probate and Family Court before 10 a.m. on the return day of 12/16/2025. 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: November 12, 2025
Stephanie Fattman,
Register of Probate
December 4, 2025

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. WO25C0571CA

CITATION ON PETITION TO CHANGE NAME

In the matter of:
Nyanjugu Githul
A **Petition to Change Name of Adult** has been filed by **Nyanjugu Githul of Southbridge MA** requesting that the court enter a Decree changing their name to:
Nyanjugu Nyakinda

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Any person may appear for purposes of objecting to the petition by filing an appearance at: Worcester Probate and Family Court before 10 a.m. on the return day of 12/16/2025. 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: November 18, 2025
Stephanie Fattman,
Register of Probate
December 4, 2025

(508)831-2200 Docket No. WO25C0571CA

CITATION ON PETITION TO CHANGE NAME

In the matter of:
Nyanjugu Githul
A **Petition to Change Name of Adult** has been filed by **Nyanjugu Githul of Southbridge MA** requesting that the court enter a Decree changing their name to:
Nyanjugu Nyakinda

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Any person may appear for purposes of objecting to the petition by filing an appearance at: Worcester Probate and Family Court before 10 a.m. on the return day of 12/16/2025. 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: November 18, 2025
Stephanie Fattman,
Register of Probate
December 4, 2025

CHARLTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

In accordance with the Wetland Protection Act of the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Chapter 131, Section 40, the Charlton Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing on December 17, at 7PM on the application of Sean Bushe. The applicant has filed a Notice of Intent for the razing of an existing house and the construction of a new single-family dwelling, septic system, driveway, retaining wall, and associated grading within the 100-ft buffer zone to a Bordering Vegetated Wetland. The project location is: 140 Sandersdale Road, Charlton, MA 01507. Parcel ID: 77-E-11.

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, this meeting of the Charlton Conservation Commission will be conducted in person and via remote means. Members of the public who wish to participate can access the meeting remotely by request.

Copies of the NOI may be examined at the Conservation Office by appointment during business hours.

Thomas O'Malley
Chair, Charlton Conservation Commission
December 4, 2025

CHARLTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

In accordance with the Wetland Protection Act of the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Chapter 131, Section 40, the Charlton Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing on December 17, 2025, at 7PM on the application of Scott Herbert.

The applicant has submitted a Request for Determination of Applicability for the construction of a shed and the removal of fallen trees within the 100-ft buffer zone of a Resource Area. Address: 35 Old Oxford Road, Charlton, MA, 01507. Parcel ID: 71-B-6

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, this meeting of the Charlton Conservation Commission will be conducted in person and via remote means. Members of the public who wish to participate can access the meeting remotely by request.

Copies of the NOI may be examined at the Conservation Office by appointment during business hours.

Thomas O'Malley
Chair, Charlton Conservation Commission
December 4, 2025

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. WO25P3949EA

INFORMAL PROBATE PUBLICATION NOTICE

Estate Of:
Stephanie Lapierre
Date of Death: 10/11/2025

To All persons interested in the above-captioned estate, by Petition of **Petitioner Kenneth A. Lapierre of Phoenix AZ** a Will has been admitted to Informal probate.

Kenneth A. Lapierre of Phoenix AZ has been informally appointed as Personal Representative of said 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 obtained from the Petitioner.

December 4, 2025

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. WO24P0806EA

CITATION ON PETITION FOR ORDER OF COMPLETE SETTLEMENT

Estate Of:
Daniel J. Tortora
Date of Death: 11/03/2023

A Petition for Order of Complete Settlement has been filed by **Kiersten Sorin of Waltham MA** requesting that the court enter a formal Decree of Complete Settlement including the allowance of a final account and other such relief as may be requested in the Petition.

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 12/16/2025** . 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: November 20, 2025
Stephanie Fattman,
Register of Probate
December 5, 2025

OBITUARIES

Peter B. Dirlam, 91

Southbridge: Peter Brackett Dirlam, 91, of Southbridge, Massachusetts, passed away peacefully on November 26, 2025. A life-long learner, accomplished businessman, devoted community member, and cherished husband, brother, and uncle, Peter lived a life marked by curiosity, service, and deep loyalty to his family and hometown.

Born on May 2, 1934, in Southbridge, Peter was the son of Mabel Agnes (Berry) Dirlam and John Conrad Dirlam. With Peter's arrival imminent, his parents built a new family home on Woodland Street to accommodate their growing household. He was the youngest of three children and is survived by his brother, John Dirlam of Southbridge. He was predeceased by his sister, Mary Dirlam Freedman.

Peter graduated from Cornell University in 1956, an experience that shaped his intellectual life and forged many of his life-long passions. At Cornell

he was a hammer thrower on the track team—training alongside teammate and five-time Olympian Al Hall—and was active in the Outing Club, Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity, and the Arts & Sciences community. He spent his junior year studying in France through Sweet Briar College and even took a philosophy course at the Sorbonne. Throughout his life he fondly remembered professors Blanchard Ridout, Loren Pietre, Victor Lange and Johann Hannesson, and remained a proud supporter of the Fiske Icelandic Collection and Cornell Athletics.

After college, Peter returned to Southbridge to join his father and brother at the J.I. Morris Company, manufacturers of precision miniature screws, specialty parts, and industrial polishing fabrics. Peter expanded the company's offerings to include a successful line of retail eyewear comfort products. In 2008, he and his brother John purchased the remaining Morris family interests and continued



operating the business together until 2017.

Peter's interests were wide-ranging and pursued with great enthusiasm. In earlier years he lived in East Brookfield, where he raised collies and operated a licensed kennel, donating puppies to community organizations including St. Joseph's Abbey and the Treasure Valley Scout Reservation. He also served the town as Chairman of the Finance Committee and as a Library Trustee, and contributed his skills as treasurer and consultant to Christ Memorial Episcopal Church in West Brookfield.

A passionate reader and supporter of the arts and humanities, Peter developed

notable Arctic and whaling collections, which he and his wife later donated to the Jacob Edwards Public Library in Southbridge. Through friend Robert Gross he corresponded with artist Rockwell Kent, who created bookplates for Peter's collections; this correspondence is now preserved in the U.S. Library of Congress.

In 1984, Peter married Joan J. Crooks, with whom he shared more than four decades of companionship and service. Peter and Joan joined the First Congregational Church of West Brookfield—where they were married on June 30, 1984—and remained active members throughout their lives. Together they supported the Worcester Ecotarium, contributing rare Arctic and natural history items, and were engaged in numerous local organizations.

Peter was also deeply involved with Old Sturbridge Village. The Dirlam family had supported the museum since its earliest days as Quinebaug

Village, and Peter carried that legacy forward by serving as an Overseer, founding the OSV Research Library Committee, and helping organize fundraising book auctions. He even combined his love of the outdoors with philanthropy by helping sponsor horseback trail rides supporting OSV's Morgan Horse research programs—having taken up riding himself in midlife with friends and instructors who shared his passion.

Peter is survived by his beloved wife, Joan; his brother, John; Joan's children, G. Jeffrey Crooks and Dale Marie Golden MacDonald; and his nieces and nephews: Lise Blumenthal of Cornwall, VT; Anne Berlind of Portland, ME; John Berlind of Burlington, VT; Paul Berlind of New Durham, NH; and Sasha Frey of Stow, MA. He also leaves a large family of step-grandchildren, grandnieces and grandnephews.

Peter will be remembered for his keen intellect, his devotion to local histo-

ry and cultural institutions, his meticulous craftsmanship as a businessman, and his generosity toward the communities and causes he loved. His life's work—whether in industry, scholarship, or service—reflected a steady commitment to stewardship and curiosity.

His funeral service will be held on Saturday, Dec. 13th, at 11:00am in the First Congregational Church of West Brookfield, 36 N Main St, West Brookfield. Burial will be private. Calling hours will be held on Friday, Dec. 12th, from 4:00 to 6:00pm in the Daniel T. Morrill Funeral Home, 130 Hamilton St., Southbridge.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made in Peter's memory to the Jacob Edwards Memorial Library, 236 Main St, Southbridge, MA 01550, or Old Sturbridge Village, 1 Old Sturbridge Village Rd, Sturbridge, MA 01566, or the Worcester Ecotarium, 222 Harrington Way, Worcester, MA 01604.

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TUESDAY WINTER STORY TIME

Stories, songs, rhymes and a craft. Designed for children 3-5 years old but open to kids of all ages with an adult caregiver. December 2, 9 and 16. Sponsored by the Friends of the JHPL.

WINTER BABY TIME

Join Ms. Meredith for songs, rhymes, fingerplays and stories. For children 2 years and younger with an adult caregiver. Sponsored by the Friends of the JHPL. December 3, 2025 through February 25, 2026. There will be no Winter Baby Time on December 24 or 31.

FRIDAY WINTER STORY TIME

Stories, songs, rhymes and a craft. Designed for children 3-5 years old but open to kids of all ages with an adult caregiver. December 5, 2025 through February 20, 2026. There will be no Winter Story Time on December 26, 2025 or January 2, 2026.

Wednesdays from 5:00pm to 7:00pm
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HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

On Wednesday, December 24, the Library will be closing at 2pm.

On Thursday, December 25, the Library will be closed.

On Wednesday, December 31, the Library will be closing at 2pm.

On Thursday, January 1, the Library will be closed.

Monday, December 1 - 3:30pm to 4:30pm
FAMILY CRAFT TIME

- DIY Felt Ornament

Families are invited to join us as we practice simple sewing skills by making and decorating our own felt ornaments. This program is intended for children ages 7 to 12 with an adult caregiver. Registration is required. Sponsored by the Friends of the JHPL.

Tuesday, December 9 - 1:00pm

AFTERNOON BOOK GROUP

This month's book is "Inheritance" by Dani Shapiro.

Wednesday, December 10 - 4:00pm to 5:30pm

WINTER PAINTING FOR KIDS

Kids ages 8-12 are invited to join us for a winter themed paint night. This will be a step-by-step painting tutorial. No prior experience needed. All supplies will be provided and kids will take their finished pieces home. Registration is required. All children must be accompanied by an adult caregiver. Sponsored by the Friends of the JHPL.

Thursday, December 11 - 4:30pm to 5:30pm

TWEEN THURSDAYS: FINGER KNIT

HEADBAND

Tweens and teens ages 10 to 17 are invited to join us in creating finger-knit headbands. No prior experience needed. Registration is required. Sponsored by the Friends of the JHPL.

Saturday, December 13 - 10:45am to 11:30am

WHO DUNUT? CHILDREN'S AUTHOR VISIT WITH JOSH FUNK

Who donut? Josh Funk, that's who! Children's author Josh Funk, creator of beloved duo Lady Pancake and Sir French Toast, is swinging by the JPHL to talk about his newest picture book, 'Who Donut? A Holiday Mystery'. Kids, ages 5 to 12, will get the chance to meet Josh and ask him questions about his work and his books while enjoying this fun holiday read. There will be a simple craft afterwards to wrap the visit up with a bow.

Monday, December 15 through Saturday, January 31

WINTER READING CHALLENGE

Stop by the Children's Room beginning December 15 and pick up a winter themed reading challenge. Complete each task on the wintery forest path and receive a FREE COOKIE from the Bake Shoppe at the Publick House. Limit one coupon per child. A huge thank you to the Publick House for sponsoring this event.

Monday, December 15 through Friday, December 19

ADULT TAKE AND MAKE CRAFT - Q-TIP SNOWFLAKES

Pick up your kit while supplies last.

Monday, December 15 - 3:30pm to 4:30pm

FAMILY CRAFT TIME - PAPER SCULPTURES

Come learn about Surrealist art by making paper sculptures at the library. For children ages 7 to 12 with an adult caregiver. Registration is required. Sponsored by the Friends of the JHPL.

Tuesday, December 16 - 6:30pm

WORLD BUILDING BOOK GROUP

This month's book is "An Absolutely Remarkable Thing" by Hank Green.

Wednesday, December 17 - 6:30pm

ARMCHAIR TRAVELERS BOOK GROUP

This month's book is "We Measure the Earth with Our Bodies" by Tsering Yangzom Lam.

Thursday, December 18 - 6:00pm to 7:00pm

LEGO CLUB

Come build with Legos. Suitable for children ages 5 to 12 with an adult caregiver. Registration is required. Sponsored by the Friends of the JHPL.

Friday, December 19 - 3:00pm to 4:30pm

WINTER SENSORY

PLAYTIME

Activities for kids ages 3 to 12. Sensory play can get messy, please dress accordingly.

Monday, December 22 - 2:30pm to 4:30pm

HOLIDAY HANGOUT

Stop by the library for a chill holiday hangout for all ages! We will have hot chocolate and light snacks available, as well as several craft stations set up: DIY salt dough ornaments, a gift wrapping station, a holiday card making spot, and more! No registration necessary. Sponsored by the Friends of the JHPL.

Wednesday, December 31 - 11:30am to 12:30pm in the Fellowship Hall at the Federated Church.

NEW YEAR'S NOON PARTY

Let's welcome the New Year with a fun family party! Kids ages 2 to 12 can help ring in 2026 with crafts, activities, and a countdown to noon - all the fun of New Year's Eve without having to stay up until midnight! A huge thank you to the Sturbridge/Fiskdale Federated Church for allowing us to use their Fellowship Hall. Children must be accompanied by an adult caregiver. Registration is required. Sponsored by the Friends of the JHPL.

To register for programs go to sturbridgelibrary.org.

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Gateway Players hosting auditions for “Remedial”

SOUTHBRIDGE — Gateway Players Theatre in Southbridge is hosting auditions for "Remedial," written by local playwright Jordan Miller. Auditions will be held on Dec. 14 and 15 at 6:30 p.m., with a weather date of Dec. 17 at 6:30 p.m. if needed, in Fellowship Hall at Elm Street Congregational Church, 61 Elm St., Southbridge.

Auditions will consist of cold readings from the script. Performance dates are Feb. 27 & 28 and March 6, 7 & 8. Rehearsals will be held on Monday and Wednesday nights. Character information is listed below. Directed by Jordan Miller, and Produced by Stephen Jean. For more information, please contact Gateway at 508-764-4531.

Robin is a disillusioned author who reluctantly takes a job teaching remedial English to a group of adult students. Bitter from past trauma and career

setbacks, Robin initially struggles to connect with these diverse students, each of whom carries their own burdens. As the story unfolds, the classroom becomes a space for unexpected growth, where Robin and the students challenge each other's assumptions and learn to confront their insecurities. Through humor, conflict, and shared vulnerability, "Remedial" explores themes of resilience, empathy, and the transformative power of understanding and human connection.

Character Information (Gender is flexible, except where mentioned)

ROBIN: An English professor and author. Intelligent and generally good-hearted, but jaded and aloof. About 55

DR. HAMILTON: Robin's therapist. Friendly and helpful, but also firm when needed. Any age

ANGEL: A hard-work-

ing, streetwise parent trying to go back to college. Intelligent, but not very well educated. Upbeat and witty. Early 30's. Should be played by someone assigned female at birth.

DEVIN: A generally clueless dunce. Devin provides much of the comic relief. Early 20's

JAMIE: A young adult who was unable to have a childhood. A hard worker and a no-nonsense person. Early to mid 20's. Should be played by someone assigned male at birth

MORGAN: A decidedly average adult trying to make changes for their two children. Early 40's

CAMERON: A person reluctantly going back to school. They are unmotivated and unserious. Mid 20's to mid 30's.

BLAKE: A person with autism. Blake is very helpful and intelligent, but lacks some traditional social skills. 20's or 30's.

HACE gala marks 40 years of empowering Hispanic youth

WORCESTER — The Hispanics Achieving and Celebrating Excellence (HACE) Awards celebrated its 40th anniversary yesterday, honoring decades of work uplifting Hispanic and Latino youth across Worcester, Southbridge and surrounding communities.

Founded in 1985, the program has awarded more than \$240,000 in scholarships to over 850 students in Central Massachusetts. The annual event recognizes Hispanic and Latine students for achievements in academics, arts, athletics, community service, leadership and civic engagement.

"This is more than an anniversary. It's a celebration of Latino culture of excellence, service to the community and the incredible power of perseverance," said keynote speaker Eladia Romero-Rodriguez, regional manager for the

Office of U.S. Congressman James P. McGovern. "For 40 years, HACE has not simply spoken about empowerment, they have embodied it."

Speakers at the event highlighted the program's role in creating pathways to higher education and leadership for Latine youth, especially amid systemic challenges such as financial barriers, underfunded schools and cultural isolation.

State Sen. Robyn Kennedy praised the organization's impact, calling it "a lifeline and a launching pad" for generations of students.

"When Latino students succeed, our entire community succeeds," Kennedy said.

"I stand on the shoulders of people who created the path for me to be here today," said Worcester City Manager Eric

Batista, a former HACE recipient. "It's my job to continue that legacy and give back to the young people of the city."

The celebration also honored founders and long-standing committee members, such as Maria Addison, Olga Lopez Hill and former State Senate President Harriette Chandler, who have sustained the program for four decades. Leaders urged continued support through mentorship, volunteerism and financial contributions to ensure future success for Latino youth.

"Your support for this organization is saying to each one of those students, 'We believe in you.' Higher education changes lives and you are changing lives by being here," said QCC President Dr. Luis Pedraja.

For more information or to contribute, visit QCC.edu/hace.

Christopher
Age 16
Registration #8213

Christopher ("Chris") is an energetic, sweet, and lovable young person with a big personality and a heart to match. He's known for his quick wit, sense of humor, and perfectly timed one-liners that always make the people around him laugh. Chris has a playful, sassy side and brings lighthearted energy wherever he goes. Chris loves being active and outdoors—whether it's swimming, shooting hoops, or tossing a football, he's always ready for a game. He enjoys trying new activities and thrives when he's part of a team. When it's time to relax, Chris can often be found playing video games or diving into a good book. He especially enjoys sports-themed stories and graphic novels, which combine his love for adventure and creativity. Those who know Chris describe him as kind, thoughtful, and full of life. He's a caring friend who enjoys connecting with others, sharing laughs, and showing his genuine personality. With his curiosity, humor, and warm spirit, Chris brightens any room he walks into and brings a smile to everyone he meets

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



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Learning at sea

Saint Joseph students take field trip to Battleship Cove

FALL RIVER — Students in Grades 5–8 from Saint Joseph School recently traveled to Battleship Cove in Fall River for a memorable field trip on the eve of Veterans Day.

At Saint Joseph School, field trips are carefully chosen to correlate with teaching units and serve as extensions of the curriculum. This year’s visit to Battleship Cove was planned to honor the service and sacrifice of our nation’s veterans, deepen students’ understanding of U.S. military history, and connect classroom learning in social studies, science, and STEM with real-world experiences aboard historic naval vessels.

Battleship Cove is a nonprofit maritime museum and war memorial that houses the world’s largest collection of World War II-era naval vessels. Located along the waterfront in Fall River, the museum is home to several National Historic Landmarks, including the battleship USS Massachusetts, the destroyer USS Joseph P. Kennedy Jr., and the World War II submarine USS Lionfish, as well as historic patrol torpedo boats and other craft. Together, these ships preserve the stories of American sailors and commemorate the sacrifices of veterans from World War II through the Vietnam era.

For many Saint Joseph School students, the highlight of the trip was stepping aboard the USS Lionfish, a World War II submarine preserved much as it appeared during its service in the Pacific. Students were struck by the submarine’s cramped quarters, narrow passageways, and stacked bunks, all of which offered a powerful visual of what daily life was like for submariners at sea. They were especially fascinated by the size of the torpedoes and the complexity of the equipment needed to operate the vessel beneath the ocean’s surface. The experience brought to life the courage, precision, and teamwork required



Saint Joseph School seventh grade students stand on the deck of the USS Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. at Battleship Cove during a recent field trip. Behind them is the mighty battleship USS Massachusetts, a powerful reminder of the courage and sacrifice of the sailors who served on these historic ships.

of the sailors who served on submarines like the Lionfish.

Adding a very special dimension to the day was the students’ tour guide, Chloe Johnson, daughter of Saint Joseph School’s middle school math instructor, David Johnson. Chloe is a senior at Massachusetts Maritime Academy, where she is majoring in Marine Engineering. Earlier this year, she completed an immersive internship with the Military Sealift Com-

mand, sailing on the USS Mount Whitney (LCC 20) in Gaeta, Italy. During her internship, Chloe gained hands-on experience in the world of marine engineering by performing daily maintenance, troubleshooting mechanical systems, and contributing to the overall operation of the ship.

Johnson shared stories from her time aboard the Mount Whitney and explained how systems like those the students were seeing on the historic vessels continue to function—albeit in more modern forms—on today’s ships. Her firsthand perspective helped students connect what they were observing at Battleship Cove with real career paths in engineering, maritime service, and the military. Hearing from a young adult who is now working toward a future at sea made the experience especially inspiring.

Throughout the visit, students were encouraged to reflect on the bravery and dedication of the men and wom-

en who served aboard these ships, as well as the responsibilities we share as citizens to remember their sacrifices. By walking the decks, climbing the ladders, and peering into the living and working spaces of sailors from another era, students gained a deeper appreciation for the history they study in class and the freedoms they enjoy today.

The Grade 5–8 field trip to Battleship Cove exemplified Saint Joseph School’s commitment to meaningful, experience-based learning. It blended history, STEM, and career exploration while fostering respect for veterans and gratitude for those who serve. As students returned to Webster, they carried with them not only facts and photographs, but also a renewed sense of appreciation for our nation’s military history and the people whose stories are preserved within the steel hulls at Battleship Cove.

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Southbridge Garden Club readies for annual Holiday Greens Sale

SOUTHBRIDGE — Members of the Southbridge Garden Club are preparing for its annual sale of hand-crafted wreaths, swags, container arrangements, and other natural holiday decorations. This always popular sale will take place on Friday, December 5 from noon to 5 pm, and Saturday, Dec. 6 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Ruth Wells Center for the Arts, 111 Main St., Southbridge.

The members will be decorating Noble Fir wreaths with their hand-crafted designer-quality bows, as well as natural and other decorative items. Additionally, they have been collecting greens throughout the area and from their own yards and gardens to create unique swags, to fill variously sized containers with lovely arrangements, and to tie up into bundles for those who want to “DIY.” Each item is a unique creation that will enhance your holiday decorating.

The proceeds from the sale supports scholarships, programs, and beautification projects sponsored by the Southbridge Garden Club. The Club is a non-profit regional organization whose mission is to share an interest in horticulture and to expand our knowledge of gardening for our mutual benefit and that of our local communities.

Free community lunch Dec. 17

SOUTHBRIDGE — Elm Street Congregational Church reaches out to our local community through our Free Monthly Lunch offering. On Wednesday, Dec. 17 from 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m., we will be serving vegetable soup, and all lunches include dessert and drinks. If you are interested in joining our volunteer group please let us know. We are all a part of helping out our community!

The church is located at 61 Elm St., and may be accessed from Park Street or behind town hall, using entrance ramp. For more information, call 508-764-8058. All are welcome- join us for a delicious meal and fellowship.

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