



DCRSD student rep attends MASR Conference

BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT

DUDLEY/CHARLTON — The Dudley Charlton Regional School District had a presence at the annual Massachusetts Association of Student Representatives (MASR) Conference in 2024 with School Committee Student Representative Anthony Avoglia attending the event to network and learn from his fellow young leaders from across the Commonwealth.

Avoglia recalled his experience at the conference during a meeting of the school committee in December. He was one of around 50 delegates that attended the event in Marlborough where participants could discuss and debate issues facing municipalities and school districts on both the state and national stage. Avoglia admitted he wasn't sure what to expect from the event but found the gathering to be insightful and engaging.

"I met people from all around. They discussed a bunch of issues going around Massachusetts. Social and money issue are a big talk around this year. There was a lot of discussion about it, and a lot of problems going around. Actually, I went in with very low expectations, but I believe I gained a lot from it," Avoglia said.

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Gus Steeves

Terilyn Hensel helps the listening kids count cats as she reads her story.

Southbridge-based author explores autism through a boy's love of cats

BY GUS STEEVES
CORRESPONDENT

SOUTHBRIDGE — For Terilyn Hensel, her first children's book was "20 years in the making."

She said the idea for "Donny Loves Cats" came from two places: a friend who was "fixated on cats" she lost at age 16, and her mother in law, who

did watercolor art for a similar project, but "wasn't a writer." Hensel combined the two, found a friend who could do more art

Turn To **HENSEL** page 14

Bestselling author Hank Phillippi Ryan to visit Sturbridge

STURBRIDGE — Get ready for an unforgettable evening of thrilling mysteries and hearty comfort food as USA Today bestselling author Hank Phillippi Ryan comes to Sturbridge for an exclusive author event.

Sponsored by the Friends of the Joshua Hyde Public Library, this event will take place on Thursday, Feb. 13 at 6:30 p.m. at the iconic Publick House in Sturbridge. "Stewing Over Mysteries" is a night of captivating conversation, delicious food, and the chance to meet one of the country's top mystery writers.

This special evening will feature a discussion with Hank Phillippi Ryan, a five-time Agatha Award-winning author, about her bestselling novels and the secrets behind writing gripping mysteries. Whether you're a fan of her mysteries or new to her work, this is an opportunity to engage with a talented storyteller in an intimate setting.

Ticket information:

General Admission: \$20 – Includes admission to the event and dinner of beef stew, rolls, dessert, coffee/tea. A vegetarian and gluten-free option is available at time of ticket purchase.

Book & Ticket Package: \$34 – Includes event admission, dinner, and a signed copy of Hank Phillippi Ryan's novel, One

Book Club on the Go is the official bookseller for the event. <https://www.bookclubct.com/>

Tickets are limited, so don't miss out on this chance to dine, chat, and discover more about the art of mystery writing with one of the best in the genre.

To purchase tickets, visit www.sturbridgelibrary.org

For additional event details, please contact Becky Plimpton, Library Director, at 774-304-1415 or bplimpton@cwmar.org.

Hank Phillippi Ryan is the USA Today bestselling author of 15 psychological thrillers, winning the genre's most prestigious awards: five Agathas, five Anthonys, and the coveted Mary Higgins Clark Award. She's also investigative reporter for Boston's WHDH-TV, winning 37 EMMYs. Her newest is the page-turning standalone "One Wrong Word" – a twisty non-stop story of gaslighting, manipulation, and murder. She is the host of "Crime Time" on A Mighty Blaze, and co-host of "The Back Room" and "First Chapter Fun." She lives in Boston.



Hank Phillippi Ryan

Southbridge Lions Club boosts Dresser Memorial Park transformation with \$2,500 donation

SOUTHBRIDGE — The Southbridge Lions Club has provided a significant boost to the Dresser Memorial Park Project, contributing \$2,500 toward the transformation of the local park into a dedicated Veterans memorial space.

The donation was announced during the Lions Club's dinner meeting on Dec. 10, where members welcomed back Dave Adams, the driving force behind the project. Adams, a familiar face to the club, first presented his vision for revitalizing Dresser Park on Main Street during a visit on Oct. 15. His plans to expand and redesign the



park into Dresser Memorial Park, honoring the town's Veterans, deeply resonated with the club.

Recognizing the importance of the initiative, the Lions Club voted to support the early fundraising efforts. Lions Club President, "King" Dave Penttila, expressed the club's enthusiasm for the project.

"We're proud to support a project that aligns so closely with our mission."

Turn To **DONATION** page 14

Courtesy

(Left) Dave Adams (left) accepts a \$2,500 donation check from Southbridge Lions Club President "King Dave" during a Dec. 10 dinner meeting.

Sturbridge selectmen handle various business issues

BY GUS STEEVES
CORRESPONDENT

STURBRIDGE — Most of the business at the Select Board's final 2024 meeting Dec. 16 was about, or will affect, local commerce.

Starting with the latter, probably the biggest change is the fact the board unanimously approved hiking building inspection fees from \$40 to \$200, as requested by Building Commissioner Bill Lepage.

"\$40 doesn't even cover me going out and doesn't cover all the clerical work behind it," Lepage said, estimating that the town has seen "\$16,000 in revenue being lost" by having such low fees.

Lepage said he checked with South-

bridge, Webster and Worcester and found they charge \$200 for the initial visit and one re-inspection, and usually \$100 per reinspection thereafter. Although the board didn't opt for that yet, Lepage noted he has often had to visit sites several times because owners don't show up and other reasons, and suggested a "missed appointment" fee as well.

The size of the jump prompted Mary Dowling to say "It seems fair to me, but I have a little bit of a problem with how drastic an increase it is."

She later suggested going to \$150 now and adding the rest later, but when the vote came, did not make a motion to do so.

To Chair Jamie Goodwin, such a fee shouldn't be a problem for most businesses, but he'd have a problem with it for households.

Regarding a specific business, Interstate Towing, the board voted to support reducing its water/sewer fees on the basis of the kind of business it actually has. Based on the firm's request for an abatement, DPW Director Heather Blakeley said she calculated its usage in a couple of different ways to give the board options, noting "they're all defensible" and "the business doesn't fit in the traditional Title V options."

The one they approved (\$15,000 a year) is half what the property's zoned potential use (and the original fee) was, and Blakeley said they could recalculate it if its actual use changes.

A project that will affect the town more than businesses is the approval of a \$389,426 contract with Insituform to line sewer pipes. Blakeley said doing that will extend the pipes' lifespan when some are already cracking;

the work can begin this winter.

Before those, Economic Development Director Terry Masterson summarized the town's economy in 2024 and outlook for 2025. He noted most storefronts are occupied, a new theater is going into Hobbs Brook, OSV predicts rising attendance due to the nation's 250th birthday, and the Sturbridge Tourist Association is likely to start its own sign grant program after seeing interest in using ARPA funds for signs.

Some details from the most recent business survey included that most saw 2024 as good, had returned to pre-covid levels, and expected 2025 to be positive. Many (but by no means all) see significant business from the 300-500 weddings in town a year, with Public House hosting three to seven per weekend, and around 540,000 people visit town annually.

In general, local companies saw the existence of many hotels, good food, trails, OSV, Brimfield Fair and Sturbridge's central location as strengths; saw a need for better promotion especially of the Millyard businesses; and found I-90 and I-84 bottlenecks, "low evening [activity]

options," and lack of a central downtown as weaknesses.

Masterson said consumer spending in town was about \$63 million pre-covid, dropped notably during covid, but has rebounded to about \$80 million in 2024 (partly due to food cost inflation). Hotel revenue fell 50 percent in 2020 due to covid, but he expected 2024 to be about \$22 million (\$1 million above 2023). He said room demand has "almost hit a high water mark and is sort of plateauing."

Regarding jobs, he said there are about 5,300 total in town, with about half in leisure, hospitality and retail. About half of all businesses have just 1-4 employees.

Looking forward, one change that will affect businesses was discussed but is outside the town's control – the fact that the PanMass Challenge is moving out in 2026.

According to Sue Brogan, it will happen in town this year, but is moving to Worcester's Holy Cross College for a few reasons. Among them were the fact the average rider is 47 years old, so moving "cuts 10 miles off the route" and "about 1000 feet of vertical climbing" that's concentrated in the first

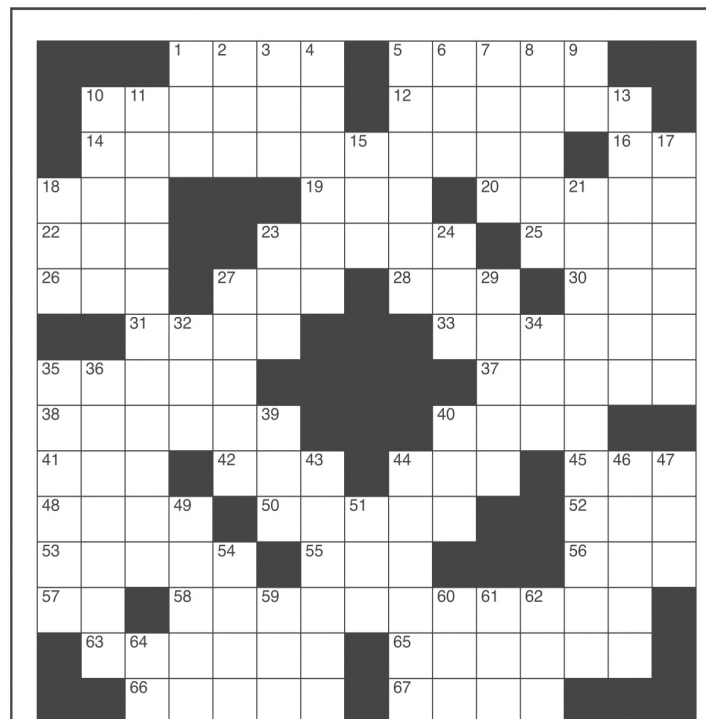
section. She said Friday Mass Pike traffic issues have made it hard for many riders to get here, so they reroute to the PMC's Wellesley start-point. Many have also complained about hotel costs and conditions here. In total, various issues have caused about 2000 riders to leave Sturbridge for Wellesley, she said.

When a selectman noted the hotels hike rates for individual events then drop them again, Brogan agreed, saying she's worked in the industry and dubbed it a "date for rate" system.

By contrast, though, Brogan praised the "unmatched" town and public safety cooperation they've seen over the years. She said she's "personally very sad" about the move, since she rides her bike to the Host Hotel start-point from home annually (about seven miles), but will have to drive to Worcester:

"The facilities at Holy Cross are beautiful, but we're really looking forward to our final ride from Sturbridge," she said, noting it's been here 44 years.

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



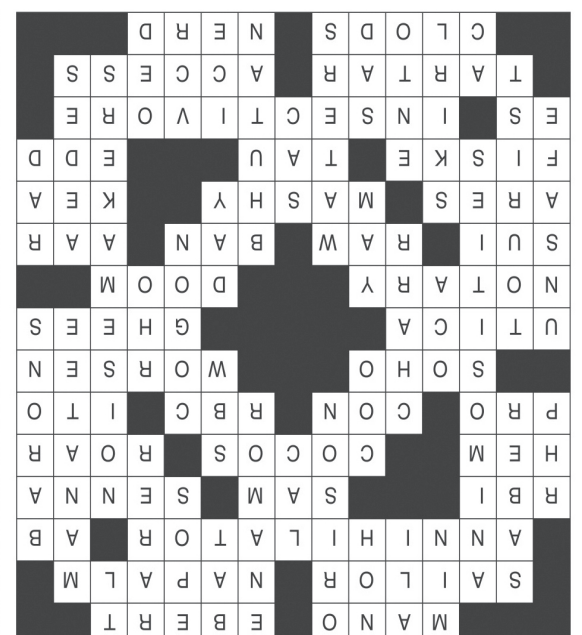
CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Hand (Spanish)
- 5. Siskel and __, critics
- 10. Seaman
- 12. Chemical weapon
- 14. One who eliminates
- 16. They precede C
- 18. Baseball stat
- 19. Americans' "uncle"
- 20. Cassia tree
- 22. Surround
- 23. Crisp and Pebbles are two
- 25. A sudden very loud sound
- 26. Affirmative
- 27. Disadvantage
- 28. Corpuscle count (abbr.)
- 30. OJ trial judge
- 31. New York art district
- 33. Become more bleak
- 35. Upstate NY city
- 37. Clarified butters
- 38. One who witnesses
- 40. Condemn
- 41. __ juris
- 42. Natural
- 44. Prohibit
- 45. Swiss river
- 48. Greek war god
- 50. 5 iron
- 52. New Zealand mountain parrot
- 53. Scandinavian surname
- 55. Follows sigma
- 56. Doctor of Education
- 57. Spanish be
- 58. One that feeds on bugs
- 63. Tooth issue
- 65. Get into
- 66. Lumps of clay
- 67. Overly studious student

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Variety of Chinese
- 2. Boxing's GOAT
- 3. Japanese classical theater
- 4. Prayer
- 5. Inspire with love
- 6. Ballplayers' accessory
- 7. Retailer payment system
- 8. More raw
- 9. Atomic #81
- 10. Fencing sword
- 11. Hostilities
- 13. Sea dweller
- 15. Resinlike substance secreted by certain insects
- 17. Businessmen
- 18. Rest here please (abbr.)
- 21. Loud devices
- 23. Make a soft murmuring sound
- 24. One point west of due south
- 27. Trout
- 29. Type of grass
- 32. South American plant
- 34. Letter of the Greek alphabet
- 35. Not secure
- 36. Traveler
- 39. Sweet potato
- 40. Period after sunrise and before sunset
- 43. Some are choppy
- 44. Asian country
- 46. Genus of mosquitoes
- 47. Cool!
- 49. Shrill, wailing sound
- 51. A baglike structure in a plant or animal
- 54. Within
- 59. Unhappy
- 60. Decorate a cake with frosting
- 61. Videocassette recorder
- 62. Largest English dictionary (abbr.)
- 64. It cools a home

PUZZLE SOLUTION



Courtesy

Continuing an annual tradition, Dudley Woman's Club members donated more than 600 food items valued at \$1,844 to assemble 30 Holiday Gift Baskets for local veterans, who needed a bit of help stocking the pantry and putting a holiday meal on the table. The club delivered the 30 baskets to Webster-Dudley Veteran's Agent Stephen P. Rogerson, who arranged delivery to those in need. The DWC membership of more than 65 women of various ages and backgrounds from Dudley, Webster, Southbridge, Charlton, Uxbridge, Millbury and several Northern Connecticut towns work together to uplift and support our communities. For more information, please visit www.dudleywomansclub.org.

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January events at Charlton Public Library

For further details and to register for programs, please visit our website (charltonlibrary.org)

Additional parking is available across the street at Town Hall and at the Elementary School.

Movies @ The Library
All showings are on Tuesdays at 1:00 - Dexter Hall

January 7 : "A Good Person." 2023. Rated R. 128 minutes. Florence Pugh, Morgan Freeman.

January 14 : "Reagan." 2024. Rated PG-13. 136 minutes. Dennis Quaid, Mena Suvari.

January 21 : "It Ends with Us." 2024. Rated PG-13. Runtime 130 minutes. Blake Lively.

January 28 : "Twisters." 2024. Rated PG-13. Runtime 122 minutes. Daisy Edgar-Jones, Glen Powell.

Threaded Together Fiber Arts Group (formerly Silver Needles Knit & Crochet Group)
Thursdays from 1:00-3:00 - Upstairs Reading Room

Bring your current project and relax with friends. All are welcome regardless of skill level.

Genealogy Group Meeting
Thursday, January 2, 6:00-7:30 - Community Meeting Room

Tonight's meeting is general discussion, planning for 2025 programs, and storytelling.

Better Read Than Dead Book Club - FINDING CHANDRA by Scott Hingham
Wednesday, January 8, 11:00-12:00 - Sibley Reading Area

A monthly meet-up to discuss fascinating true crime books. Books available at circulation prior to discussion.

CPL Book Discussion - ONE DAY IN DECEMBER by Josie Silver
Thursday, January 9, 6:00-7:00 - Community Meeting Room

Books are available for checkout at the adult circulation desk one month prior to discussion.

Check library event calendar listing for Zoom link.

Quabbin, Then and Now: North Quabbin Photography Presentation
Saturday, January 11, 11:00-12:30 - Dexter Hall - Registration requested.

Dale Monette of North Quabbin Photography, has taken Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) images from the Quabbin Reservoir archives taken in the mid 1930's of the construction of the Quabbin Reservoir and recreated these photographs from the same location in present day settings. Come see how the houses and scenes looked during the construction period of the Quabbin compared to what it looks like now

some 80 years later. Many never seen before images from the DCR Archives are included in this program. You will also see pictures of what everyday life was like living in the four Quabbin Valley towns that would soon be no more.

Friends of the Library Meeting
Tuesday, January 14, 3:30-4:30 - Community Meeting Room

Monthly meeting of Friends of Charlton Public Library. All are welcome. Join us!

Simple Steps to Getting Organized in the New Year
Tuesday, January 14, 6:00 - 7:30 - Dexter Hall - Registration required.

This fun and interactive workshop will get you focused on your organizing goals. Learn tips on: New ways to think about your stuff; How to get started; Hot spots to help the process; Tackling the paper trail.

Alzheimer's Caregiver Support Group
Thursday, January 16, 6:00-7:30 - Community Meeting Room

Led by experienced caregivers and offers information, resources, and strategies specific to caring for someone with Alzheimer's and other Dementias along with support for transitioning to different care settings. Co-sponsored by Tri-Valley and Charlton Public Library.

Death Cafe
Thursday, January 16, 6:00-7:30 - Dexter Hall

A group-directed discussion of death with no agenda, objectives or course of action, no set conclusions and no judgment. Death Cafés are a safe environment to gather, eat cake, and enjoy open-minded conversation about dying and death. Email kwalker4@mac.com with questions.

Saturday Acoustic Roots Jam
Saturday, January 18, 12:00-1:30 - Community Meeting Room

An acoustic only music jam. Open to all 18+. Email Cule5632@gmail.com for more information.

Felt Succulent Craft
Tuesday, January 21, 6:00-7:30 - Community Meeting Room - Registration required

Wednesday, January 22, 10:30-12:00 - Community Meeting Room - Registration required

This month we're making lovely felt succulents. This program is for adults and teens ages 13 and up.

Charlton Ukulele League & Ensemble
Thursday, January 23, 6:00-7:30 - Community Meeting Room

Experienced musicians and newbies all welcome. Email Cule5632@gmail.com for more information.

gmail.com for more information.

Critical Thinking Discussion Group - THE METAMORPHOSIS by Kafka
Friday, January 24, 1:00-2:00 - Sibley Reading Area (Main Floor)

No experience with critical thinking discussion groups is necessary. Books/materials are available for checkout one month prior to discussion. Email saga3@charternet for more information.

Beekeeping for Beginners
Thursday, January 30, 6:00—7:30 - Dexter Hall - Registration requested.

Come learn all about the honeybee and all of the fascinating things they do as individuals and as a colony. You will leave this presentation armed with the knowledge to start your very own hive. Presented by Scott Herbert, owner of Charlton Bee Company.

PLEASE VISIT THE KIDS PAGE ON OUR WEBSITE FOR STORYTIME DETAILS AND MORE PROGRAMS!

Lego Club
Friday, January 3, 3:30—4:30 Story Time Room

LEGO Club encourages children to learn while having fun! Creativity, problem-solving, and teamwork are some of the skills that "playing" with LEGOS can teach children. All LEGO's provided. Try out the Lego Challenge or create your own design! Bring your friends to this drop-in program for ages 5-10.

Fiber Arts Club for Tweens & Teens
Fridays, January 6 & 27, 3:45 - 4:30 - Story Time Room

Are you interested in knitting, crocheting, needle felting, or other fiber art? Join us to practice your craft, learn from more experienced friends, or teach others! Don't forget to bring your current projects.

This group is best for tweens

and teens ages 9 -18.

My Little Pony Club
Wednesday, January 22, 4:00—4:30 Story Time Room - Registration is required.


Do you love My Little Pony? Meet up with other My Little Pony fans and do a fun activity! Don't forget to bring your favorite pony (if you have one)! This club is for ages 5-10.

Holiday Bazaar

Saturday, December 7, 2024
9:00 am – 3:00pm

St Joseph's Church Hall
10 H Putnam Rd Ext., Charlton, Mass

We are actively seeking crafters and vendors for this event.
Call Joyce at 774-262-0820 for a registration form or information.



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Southbridge Lions Club Annual Cartoon Character Breakfast coming soon

SOUTHBRIDGE — We invite you to join the Southbridge Lions Club for its 32nd Annual Cartoon Character Breakfast on Sunday, Feb. 9.

Bring the kids to meet their favorite cartoon characters at the Southbridge Community Center, 153 Chestnut St., from 7 a.m.-noon. The all-you-can-eat breakfast includes, pancakes, French toast and ham.

The proceeds from the breakfast will be put into the Lions' Charity account to be distributed within the community to families, individuals and groups in need of help. Tickets are available in advance from any

Southbridge Lions member, or at the door. Costs are \$10 for adults, and \$5 for children under the age of ten. Credit and debit cards will be accepted at the door in addition to cash.

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CMS Chamber presents an evening with medium Gary McKinstry

STURBRIDGE — Join the Chamber of Central Mass South and our guests at The Barn at Wight Farm in Sturbridge for an inspiring night with Gary McKinstry, the Psychic Medium Entertainer, on Feb. 27 from 7 to 9 p.m.

Internationally known Psychic Medium Entertainer, Gary McKinstry, will share his gift to connect with the spirit world and bring intuitive messages to guests of the Chamber's Medium Night. Gary's work as a psychic medium for more than 30 years not only includes clients in the USA, but also Brazil, France, Australia, Germany and Canada. Whether one on one or in a large arena, Gary is dedicated to helping people in all walks of life and death and will deliver your messages with style.



Courtesy
Internationally known Psychic Medium Gary McKinstry will share messages from the spirit world at CMS Chamber's Medium Night in Sturbridge.

In this gallery reading, Gary randomly selects individuals from the audience to deliver messages, guided by spirits. Messages may be from the afterlife or pertain to the present. While not everyone gets a reading, all are encouraged to listen as the messages hold collective

meaning. A psychic gallery reading elevates the group's consciousness, offering deep and transformative experiences, providing hope and inspiration.

Gary McKinstry is from Dudley, and he attended Bay Path Regional Vocational Tech-

nical High School. He is well known locally for his appearances at The Publick House Historic Inn. Gary has appeared on live radio shows throughout New England since 1995, made TV appearances, and is featured in several printed publications. Gary and his wife Vir-

ginia currently reside in Norway, Maine. To learn more about Gary and his work visit www.gary-mckinstry.com.

Tickets are \$60 for CMS Chamber members and their employees, or \$65 for non-Members. Cash bar. This intimate and enlightening evening with Gary is limited to 100 attendees, so get your tickets now!

For Medium Night tickets and information give the Chamber a call at 508-347-2761 or email info@cmschamber.org.

Medium Night is presented by the Chamber of Central Mass South with gratitude to the evening's sponsor, Steve's Collision Center, Inc. Dedicated to perfection, the goal of the team at Steve's Collision Center is to exceed your expectations. Steve's Collision Center is located at 210 Charlton Road, Route 20, in Sturbridge. They can be reached by phone at 508-347-9116 or you may visit online at www.stevescollision.com.

Learn more about the Chamber of Central Mass South online at cmschamber.org.

Southbridge Senior Citizens Association sponsors Maine Clambake trip in July

SOUTHBRIDGE — The Southbridge Senior Citizens Association is pleased to announce that it is sponsoring a trip to enjoy a Foster's Clambake in York, Maine on Sunday, July 20.

Your day will begin by boarding a deluxe coach bus at 8:00am leaving from St. Joseph's Church, 10 H. Putnam Rd. Ext. in Charlton. Our first stop of the day is at everyone's favorite store located at When Pigs Fly bakery. Once we are done shopping at the bakery, we will drive to visit the beautiful Nubble Lighthouse before moving on to Foster's Clambake.

Our New England Clambake will feature New England Clam Chowder, freshly dug Maine clams and mussels, succulent Maine lobster, sweet corn on the cob, roasted red bliss potatoes and homemade blueberry crumb cake. Coffee, iced tea and lemonade are included with the meal and a full cash bar is available. For travelers who prefer, BBQ chicken or a vegetarian option may be substituted for the lobster.

The afternoon continues with a stop at Stone-wall Kitchen to pick up jams and jellies and, if time permits Yummie's candy store. We will then head for home after a wonderful day in Maine. We will arrive back in Charlton at approximately 6pm.

The price for the trip is \$109. The reservation forms are available at the Southbridge Senior Center, 153 Chestnut St. in Southbridge. A twenty-five-dollar deposit is due when you sign up and the full payment must be received by June 20, 2025. Payments and reservation must be made at or mailed to the Casaubon Senior Center. To receive a reservation for by email, send your request to SouthbridgeSeniorTrips@gmail.com. Please note that all adults 60 years old or older from any town are welcome on this trip.

Charlton Public Library presents "Simple Steps to Getting Organized in the New Year"

CHARLTON — Are you tired of all the clutter and ready to do something about it? On Tuesday, Jan. 16, from 6-7:30 p.m., the Charlton Public Library will host an organizing workshop guaranteed to help you start the new year off on the right foot. Jenna Elliott, owner of The Naked Flower Professional Organizers, will get you focused on your organizing goals in this fun and interactive workshop. She will share tips on: New ways to think about your stuff; How to get started; Hot spots to help the process; and Tackling the Paper Trail.

Jenna has been an organizer and re-designer for more than 20 years and works with a variety of clients, both in the office and in the home. Prior to starting The Naked Flower Jenna was a master floral designer and project manager for a fortune 500 company.

Please register for this program by visiting our Web site/event calendar at charltonlibrary.org.

Charlton Public Library is located at 40 Main St. in Charlton.



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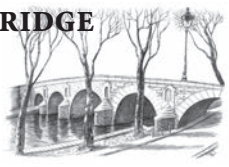
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FRANK G. CHILINSKI
PRESIDENT/PUBLISHER

BRENDAN BERUBE
EDITOR

Leave the phone 'til last in the morning

Most weeks, our Editorial space is typically some-thing our staff is curious about. While the subject of cell phone and screen addiction comes up often, this week, there was a noticeable shift in our view on the topic after receiving a wise tip.

That tip was to ignore your phone, don't even look at it, until 30 minutes after you wake up. In that time, sit down, have your morning coffee and read a book. When you start to scroll on your phone just after waking up, you put yourself into what's called a passive scrolling phase, which can derail your entire day and ward off productivity.

A few days into following this new advice, and there is a noticeable sense of comfort and relaxation that can carry you throughout your day. It's like taking 30 minutes every morning to get back to the basics and recall simpler times.

Most people feel like they are in control of their phone use, but are you? How can you determine if you have a phone addiction, or are just part of the modern era grind? We've said it before, and we'll say it again, nothing beats the days of watching Jeopardy uninterrupted, without the pressure of responding to a ding from your phone.

In 2011, only 35 percent of the population owned smartphones, now 81 percent do. It is our main form of communication, so much so that now there is a term called nomophobia, or the fear of going without your phone.

Excessive cell phone use is a huge problem for many. As far as addiction goes, some experts say the dopamine connection the phone offers can be linked to something akin to a drug addiction. The triggering of that chemical in your brain, reinforces compulsive behavior. When we can't predict when we will receive a text or a "like" on social media, we check our phones more often.

Adolescents are more vulnerable to this problem than any other age group. Excessive use in that age group is such an issue that most teenagers never turn off their phones. Experts say that the younger a child has access to a phone, the sooner the problems begin. Problematic cell phone use is linked to low self esteem, low impulse control, depression and anxiety.

Signs you may have a phone addiction could be that you reach for your phone if you're bored, you feel anxious or upset if you can't get to your phone, you wake throughout the night to check it, or your phone has caused you to get into an accident. Other signs could be that you spend most of your waking hours on your phone, and that it interferes with personal relationships or work.

When trying to focus on work, or any task, you are significantly disrupted and your concentration is thrown off.

Ways to break the addiction in order to fix your relationships, your health and other responsibilities include figuring out if there is a larger issue as to why you're using your phone so much. Are you avoiding something else bigger? Resolving the larger issue at hand, could cause a decrease in phone use.

Change your settings to remove notifications and other alerts, set your screen to dark mode at night, keep your phone out of sight and never charge it in your bedroom. After a certain time, set your phone up so that only emergency contacts can get through to you, everyone else can wait. Try replacing games on your phone with real in person games, or develop a hobby you've been wanting to try. Too much cell phone use can develop into a loss of control.

There have been some experiments where people have gone two days without their phones. Some people choose to give up their phones all together, while others make significant changes to reduce use.

The potential risk of depression, insomnia and lack of productivity just isn't worth it. Think back to pre cell phone times. While there are safety benefits to having a phone, we don't need to be connected 24/7, and we don't need to respond or answer our phones just because they ding.

Your responsibility is to yourself and it's wild how much you can get done if you just unplug. Take a breather, shut your phone completely off for 15 minutes and see how you feel. If you do try this trick, send us an email and let us know what you find.

OPINION

Christmas, 2025, and the yearlong candle

Christmas is the day set aside to celebrate the birth of Jesus. It is an event that conjures for many a time of hope, and promise, peace, calm and goodness, when God came on earth as one of us, revealing that it is possible to live our higher angles even as mere mortals.

But when exactly is that date, and does it really matter now that it's 2025?

Over the years, scholars have done extensive research on the subject, resulting in a variety of documentaries; some suggesting Jesus was in fact born around Dec. 25 – the day most Christians celebrate the birth of our Savior. Others suggest Jesus was born during the spring or other time of year.

Such research notwithstanding, for the last several hundred years there remain three different days to celebrate Christmas, depending upon your Christian tradition, heritage, and denomination. Most Christians from the West celebrate on December 25th, but different Christians from the East will do so on Jan. 6, or Jan. 7.

Then, of course, there are the twelve days of Christmas – and thankfully we've got a few more to go, in case you were concerned that somehow you missed the Season!

Like so many things in the Bible, Jesus' birthday is never really identified except to say it was during the time of Caesar Augustus.

That said, when is Jesus' birthday,



BEYOND THE PEWS

By DR. RB
MCFEE

CHARLTON
CITY UMC

and in the grand scheme of things, does the exact date matter, especially as we enter the New Year, and some folks have already moved on, having started to take down their decorations.

Retailers certainly have moved on – Santa has been replaced unceremoniously by Cupid, and before you know it, Leprechauns and Easter Bunnies will be hopping around, stomping on any vestige of Christmas decorations left in stock.

Should Christmas be dismissed so readily, especially if it was in fact a springtime event? Or the bigger question – should Christmas ever be moved on from? Though I'm not suggesting we keep Santa and his reindeer on the lawn for the next 12 months, is the birth in Bethlehem and our potential rebirth something that only is visited once per year?

Perhaps the Ghost of Christmas Future had it right when the fate of Scrooge was predicated on heart change, and a willingness to let the Spirit of Christmas become manifest in his life and actions, not just on one day or even one season but all year long. Consider the final lesson, the promise old Ebenezer made that freed him from Marley's dire fate....

"I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future.

Turn To **PEWS** page 14

New Year's victory

After their stunning victory on Christmas morning, 1776, Washington and his army held Trenton, aware that the British would not let the humiliation go unanswered. Just days earlier, they had achieved the impossible. After a daring midnight crossing of the icy Delaware River, Washington's army launched a surprise attack on the Hessians, overwhelming the enemy in a fierce battle. The victory saw over 900 enemy soldiers captured and reignited hope for the revolutionary cause.

But Washington knew the war wasn't over. The British, eager for revenge, sent reinforcements to crush the rebellion. Washington, outnumbered, outgunned, and with no easy escape, prepared his men for the inevitable showdown. Suspense hung in the frigid air as the sound of marching British troops grew closer each day, setting the stage for a desperate fight to survive.

On Jan. 2, the British arrived in Trenton with 8,000 men under General Cornwallis. "We've got the old fox now!"

POSITIVELY SPEAKING TOBY MOORE

Cornwallis reportedly exclaimed, convinced there was no escape for the Continental Army. Throughout the day, Washington's men battled fiercely, holding the British at bay in skirmishes that pushed them to the brink. As night fell, the British, certain of their impending victory, settled in to rest, confident they would crush the rebels at dawn.

But Washington wasn't about to wait for defeat. Knowing that holding Trenton was impossible, he devised a bold plan. On New Year's night, under the cover of darkness, he ordered his men to quietly abandon their campfires, leaving them burning brightly to deceive the British into thinking the army was still there. Then, in a daring maneuver, Washington led his troops on a silent march toward Princeton.

Princeton, about 12 miles away, was strategically vital. It housed a smaller British force and was a key supply and communication hub. Striking Princeton would weaken the British and allow Washington to escape the trap at Trenton and keep the momentum of his campaign alive.

In the early hours of Jan. 3, Washington's army arrived at Princeton under the cover of darkness. The Redcoats caught off guard, scrambled to defend themselves as the Continental troops launched a swift and ferocious attack.

Initially, the element of surprise worked in Washington's favor, but the British quickly regrouped. Their disciplined volleys tore through the smoke-filled air, threatening to break the Continental line.

Amid the chaos, General Hugh Mercer, one of Washington's most trusted officers and a key leader, was surrounded by British soldiers and mortally wounded while leading a daring charge. His fall sent a ripple of

Turn To **POSITIVELY** page 12

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.

TO THE EDITOR

Thankful for an act of quiet generosity

To the Editor:

We hope that the gentleman who helped us at the Cumberland Farms in Southbridge reads this. He noticed we had a flat tire, filled it with his portable air equipment, phoned Southbridge Tire to expect us, refused pay and departed.

In a world seemingly taken over by unwanted stress and strife, his quiet generosity saved us much time, fret, effort, and cost. We remain grateful, and we thank him.

Pat & Larry Morrison
Sturbridge

Time for New Year's financial resolutions



FINANCIAL FOCUS

TREVOR
NIELSEN

Now that the calendar has flipped, it's time for some New Year's resolutions. You could decide you're going to exercise more, lose weight, learn a new skill, reconnect with old friends — the possibilities are almost limitless. This year, why not add a few financial resolutions to your list?

Here are a few to consider:

Reduce your debts. It may be easier said than done, but if you can cut down on your debt load, you'll increase your cash flow and have more money available to invest for your future. So, look for ways to lower your expenses and spending. You might find it helpful to use one of the budgeting apps available online.

Boost your retirement savings. Try to put in as much as you can afford to your IRA and your 401(k) or other employer-sponsored retirement plan. If your salary goes up this year, you've got a good opportunity to increase your contributions to these retirement accounts. And once you turn 50, you can make pre-tax catch-up contributions for your 401(k) and traditional IRA. You might also want to review the investment mix within your 401(k) or similar plan to determine whether it's still providing the growth potential you need, given your risk tolerance and time horizon.

Build an emergency fund. It's generally a good idea to maintain an emergency fund containing up to six months' worth of living expenses, with the money kept in a liquid, low-risk account. Without such a fund, you might be forced to dip into your long-term investments to pay for short-term needs, such as an expensive auto or home repair.

Keep funding your non-retirement goals. Your traditional IRA and 401(k) are good ways to save for retirement — but you likely have other goals, too, and you'll need to save and invest for them. So, for example, if you want your children to go to college or receive some other type of post-secondary training, you might want to invest in a tax-advantaged 529 education savings plan. And if you have short-term goals, such as saving for a wedding or taking an overseas vacation, you might want to put some money away in a liquid account. For a short-term goal, you don't necessarily need to invest aggressively for growth — you just want the money to be there for you when you need it.

Review your estate plans. If you haven't already created your estate plans, you may want to do so in 2025. Of course, if you're relatively young, you might not think you need to have estate plans in place just yet, but life is unpredictable, and the future is not ours to see. If you have already drawn up estate plans, you may want to review them, especially if you've recently experienced changes in your life and family situation, such as marriage, remarriage or the addition of a new child. Because estate planning can be complex, you'll want to work with a qualified legal professional.

You may not be able to tackle all these resolutions in 2025. But by addressing as many of them as you can, you may find that, by the end of the year, you have made progress toward your goals and set yourself on a positive course for all the years to come.

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

Transportation memorabilia

Happy New Year! Thank you to those of you who reached out after my latest top 10 auction items column. As I mentioned in that column, there are many other categories of antiques and collectibles that are selling well in addition to those I listed, but we've had good results recently for the 10 items I mentioned.



ANTIQUES, COLLECTIBLES & ESTATES
WAYNE TUISKULA

vice for passengers and freight. As for aviation, the Wright Brothers made the first heavier than air powered aircraft flight in 1903.

Whether by plane, train, automobile, or ship, many collectors have an attachment to some form of transportation memorabilia. I'll start by discussing nautical memorabilia and trains. I'll cover additional methods of transportation in my next column.

Ship paintings by good artists are always popular. We sold a ship painting by Canadian artist John O'Brien for over \$20,000 in 2016. Over a decade ago, we auctioned a book of trade cards, many related to the 19th century shipping trade, which brought a figure in the mid-thousands. Some of our more recent sales were for a brass ship's telegraph for \$1,250, a model of the U.S.S. Constitution by Lannan Ship Galleries in Boston that brought \$1,300, and a Chelsea Ship's clock for \$550.



Some rarer pieces can bring even stronger auction results. A 1907 moonlight image of Cunard Lines Lusitania sold for over \$15,000 in 2015. George Henry Hunt was planning his return to the United States on White Star Line's "Oceanic" in 1912. The Oceanic developed mechanical problems and he was transferred to the Titanic before its ill-fated journey. Hunt was lost at sea when the ship sank. The letter he wrote to his parents explaining the change in his travel plans sold for \$275,000 at auction in 2022.

Railroad memorabilia collectors often like to collect items from their area. Others specialize in certain categories like railroad signs or lanterns. Rail-

road pocket watches are also popular with collectors. In 1895, railroads required that pocket watches contain 17 or more jewels so that they would be precise enough for workers in the industry. In 2020, we sold a Ball Official Railroad Standard 23 jewel gold filled pocket watch for \$425. In 2023, an Elgin 10-karat gold railroad pocket watch brought \$600. In 2011, we sold an Illinois Watch Co. "Railroader" 14-karat gold pocket watch for \$1,300. Other collectible railroad memorabilia we've sold includes a group of brass and nickel cap badges that went for \$190 in 2011. Signs and broadsides are also popular with collectors. An enamel Newmarket, New Hampshire, rail-

Turn To **HINT** page 14

Random Tips and Tricks



TAKE THE HINT
KAREN TRAINOR

From boosting your hearing to cutting cleaning tasks down to size, the following random tips and tricks are easy ways to make everyday life a little easier.

And remember readers send in your best hints and you could win a three course Dinner for Two at the Publick House in Sturbridge. Drawing will take place next week!

Hydrogen Peroxide Hint: Hydrogen peroxide. It does much more than sooth a sore throat or clean a cut. Did you know one cup of H₂O₂ to one quart water creates a safe bleach substitute for fine washables? Pouring a couple of ounces of hydrogen peroxide in a full dishpan can prevent the spread of germs when had washing. Even your plants can benefit from H₂O₂. Just water or mist plants with an ounce of hydrogen peroxide in one quart water.

Boost your fitness training with these tips! Experts advise doing cardio and weights in the same workout, rather than switching off days to boost your fat burning. They claim you can get most out of your weight lifting workout if you do just five minutes of cardio warmup followed by your weight training sets, rather than doing your entire cardio session first.

Want to make a fabulous first impression? Try these tips: Be positive and make others feel comfortable. Lean into a greeting with a firm handshake and a smile. Avoid these red flags of anxiety: Frequently touching your mouth, a tight or forced smile, swinging your foot or leg, folding or crossing your arms, slouching and avoiding eye contact.

The virtues of a cup of tea go way beyond taste! A study conducted by Harvard University found that those who drank one or more cups of black tea per day had more than a 40 percent lower risk of having a heart attack compared to non-tea drinkers. Need another reason to take a tea time break? Tea contains 1/3 less caffeine than coffee or cola!

Resolving to walk more? These tips are for you! Walking to "digest your meal" is more than an after dinner pastime. Studies show when you walk within 30 minutes after eating you can increase the amount of calories you burn by as much as 30 per cent! But be sure to avoid caffeinated beverages before you walk. They cause thirst and a loss of bodily fluids.

Cut cleaning time in half with these tips! After cleaning grout and tile, rub liquid turtle wax car wax on, and polish when dry. It makes the tiles twice as easy to clean next time. When you clean your refrigerator or freezer, wipe the inside down with straight white vinegar and allow it to air dry. It will discourage future growth of mold and mildew and instantly deodorize your refrigerator.

Attention Baby Boomers, if your night sight isn't what it used to be - improving night vision can be as close as your refrigerator! Did you know foods containing beta-carotene help you to see better in dim light? Cantaloupe, carrots, collard greens, kale and chicken all help deliver vision boosting Vitamin A!

Do you suffer from frequent backaches? Try drinking lots of water! It helps prevent dehydration that can contribute to muscle aches. By drinking eight 8-ounces of water daily, you'll also flush out acidic wastes that can build up in the tissues & muscles - another contributor to back pain.

Have a headache? Try these unconventional remedies: Mix two tablespoons of apple cider vinegar with two teaspoons of honey in a glass of water, drink it slowly, and get results within a half-hour! Or eat ten to twelve almonds. Experts say the almonds are equal to

Turn To **HINT** page 14

2025 is the year of the Monstera



GARDEN MOMENTS
MELINDA MYERS



Melinda Myers

The National Garden Bureau has declared 2025 as the Year of the Monstera, calling it "the world's most iconic indoor plant."

Kick-off 2025 with the addition of a monstera plant to your indoor garden. You'll join other gardeners observing 2025 as the Year of the Monstera. Each year, the National Garden Bureau (NGB) selects and celebrates one plant in each of the following categories: annual, perennial, bulb, edible, and shrub. The plants are chosen for their popularity, easy-care nature, adaptability, diversity, and versatility.

Monstera certainly meets the criteria and as NGB declared it is "the world's most iconic indoor plant." The large, glossy heart-shaped leaves have distinct perforations called fenestrations. Scientists speculate these holes allow tropical downpours to pass through, minimizing plant damage.

There are several different monstera, ranging in size and leaf shape including some with variegated leaves. Some are easy to grow while others are a bit

fussier. Always check the plant label for specifics on caring for the monstera you select.

One of the most popular and readily available is the Monstera deliciosa, commonly called split-leaf philodendron, even though it is not a philodendron. It's known for its large heart-shaped perforated leaves on thick stems. In its native habitat, it can grow 66 feet tall but typically grows up to 7 or 8 feet indoors. The flowers that seldom appear indoors are like a peace lily with a cone-shaped structure (spadix) surrounded by a cupped white sheath (spathe).

The flowers may be followed by an edible fruit that tastes like a combina-

tion of pineapple, banana, and mango. This flavorful combination inspired its nickname, fruit salad plant, and the botanical name that translates to delicious monstrosity.

In general, these tropical beauties prefer growing conditions like that of their native habitat. They prefer bright, filtered indirect sunlight. Avoid direct sunlight that can scorch or cause leaves to turn yellow. Grow monstera in a quality well-drained

Turn To **MONSTERA** page 14

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Local artist encourages “a totally new perspective” through library show

BY GUS STEEVES
CORRESPONDENT

SOUTHBRIDGE — With some forms of art, what they represent is very obvious. Not so with Clay Tull's current abstract show at Jacob Edwards Library.

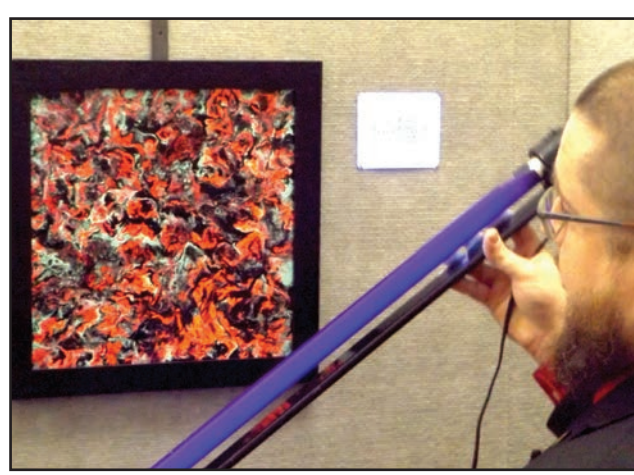
That, of course, is the whole point. Although Tull said the five paintings reflect a personal journey through darkness to discovery, he hopes viewers take each piece, “turn it upside down and try a totally new perspective.” As with life's experiences, they can “turn something that might be a negative energy into a positive energy,” he said.

“The idea is about shining light and changing perspective,” Tull said. “... Out of the ashes comes creation. Without the darkness, you can't appreciate the happiness that develops.”

In life, that means finding light even in the darkest times (three of the pieces include blacklight-sensitive paint), turning our imperfections to our benefit, and “discover[ing] our path into our own new world,” he said. In the art show, that's reflected in how the five paintings are arranged, with the three blacklight works in the middle representing the fact “we have beauty all around and within ourselves.” The last one (the left one) was painted soon after his



Clay Tull with the first of his five pieces at Jacob Edwards Library.



Clay Tull exposes one of the pieces to blacklight. (Unfortunately, the effect doesn't show up in print.)

granddaughter was born and thus is “the perfect exclamation point on the journey,” representing self-confidence even though barriers may still exist, he said.

The works, all in a “fluid art” style Tull said was partly inspired by Jackson Pollack and Salvador Dali, reflect a significant change from what he started doing years ago. Then, he “was struggling to do realistic photo paintings.” While those got quick responses, he said he feels abstract art enables him to “see who's really paying attention to the work” because they spend more time with it, exploring its intricacies. Those explorations can spark conversations between him and the viewer, between the viewer and the piece, and within the viewer.

There are quite a few such intricacies in the current show, hidden



Margaret Morrissey and Clay Tull talk about his art show.

in what might seem to be chaos to some viewers: odd faces, a bird-like head, textures (he likes people touching his work), and other hidden items. Often the same section turned upside down or on its side reveals something completely different, and “things will appear in the painting I didn't necessarily put there,” he said.

“I see myself as a powerplant of energy

that projects any negative energy into light, he said.

Tull said he purposely painted smaller works so people can change how they hang them every so often. He only signs them on the back to avoid telling buyers which way they should go, but that does indicate which way is his favorite. He noted the way they're currently hanging does not necessarily reflect that,

though.

He also doesn't title them because he wants the buyer to do that. Doing so makes the person part of the art and the art part of that person's experience, because they'll see it with their own viewpoint (which could change over time).

“We'll share that moment in time for the existence of the painting,” Tull said.

“I've been painting since I was a little kid”

in Texas, he said.

Like many people his age range, he grew up with Highlight Magazine's hidden picture art, and that's reflected in the current show.

His art began with pen and ink; for a while he was doing textured layers that were “almost like braille.” In high school, Tull won several art shows with digital art that enabled the viewers to use a touchscreen to pixelate and play with photos, but he noted even then he liked the idea of being able to turn things around.

As he got older, he intended to go to Houston Art Institute, but life took him a different direction. Instead, he largely studies and plays with the various techniques himself. He sees his current paintings as being “the physical form of something I was doing digitally” in previous years, but notes he doesn't start one with “a preconceived notion” of what it'll become.

“If you allow yourself to look through a different lens, you give yourself a happier perspective,” Tull said, later adding, “Remember, we're all connected with our struggles. Enjoy your ride, because we all have limited time here.”

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

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“Road Trip 1927 – 18,000 miles in a Model T Ford” presented at Sturbridge Historical Society meeting

STURBRIDGE — On Thursday, Jan. 23, at 7 p.m. at the Publick House, the Sturbridge Historical Society is presenting a program by Sturbridge photographer Bob Arnold. Almost a century ago, in 1927, Carey and Maud Melville, Bob’s grandparents, made an epic, eight-month-long, 18,000-mile road trip with their three children.

Packing everyone into a Ford Model T Touring Car named Hubbub with attached trailer, the Melvilles left their Worcester home Worcester in January, with the objective of traveling the entire periphery of the United States and, as Mrs. Melville noted in one of her many journals, “... finding out-of-the-way places and experiencing the natural wonders the country had to offer.” The issues these travelers encountered stand in sharp contrast to what

we find when we set out on a road trip today. Many roads were unpaved and unnamed, often little more than trails that were muddy in the rain and dusty the rest of the time. The business of providing travel and roadside amenities from gas to food was in its infancy, often with options few and far between.

Carey Melville had taken a sabbatical from his teaching position at Clark University, which provided the time for the road trip. He was an accomplished amateur photographer and more than a hundred of his photographs from the trip will be featured in the program, illustrating both the joys and the trials of cross country travel in 1927.

Bob Arnold is a freelance photographer, amateur historian and avid collector of all things Sturbridge. In addition to serving cli-



ents throughout New England, Bob has been documenting life in our community since he and his family moved here in 1970. His work over the past 50 plus years has

yielded a unique perspective on the commercial, cultural, and environmental changes in our community and his ongoing program of digital preservation of doc-

uments and photographic images assures that future generations will have access to the visual record of our past. Bob lives in town with his wife, Susan, their dog,

Jesse and thousands of images.

The program begins at 7 p.m., and is generously hosted by the Publick House.

Charlton Public Library presents

“Quabbin, Then and Now: A Photography Presentation”



CHARLTON — On Saturday, Jan. 11, from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Dale Monette of North Quabbin Photography will present “Quabbin, Then and Now.”

Monette has taken Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) images from the Quabbin Reservoir archives taken in the mid 1930’s of the construction of the Quabbin Reservoir and recreated these photographs from the same location in present day settings. Come see how the houses and scenes looked during the construction period of the Quabbin compared to what it looks like now some 80 years later. Many never seen before images from the DCR Archives are included in this program. You will also see pictures of what everyday life was like living in the four Quabbin Valley towns that would soon be no more. Free and open to the public, but registration is requested. Please visit charltonlibrary.org (event calendar) to register.

Charlton Public Library is located at 40 Main St. Additional parking available across Main Street at Town Hall.



News, really close to home

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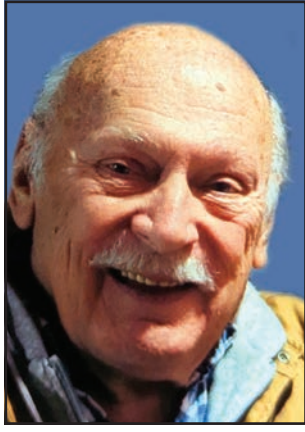
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OBITUARIES



Martin R. Karlon, 84



CHARLTON - Martin R. Karlon, 84, a longtime resident of Charlton, died at peace on Thursday, Dec. 26, 2024, at UMass Harrington Hospital in Southbridge after a battle with cancer.

He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Nancy (Smith) Karlon of Charlton; two children, Marty Karlon and his wife, Dina, of Concord, N.H., and John Karlon and his wife, Wendy, of Bolton; a brother, Michael Karlon and his wife, Rhonda, of Millbury; a sister, Tina Rasku, of Worcester; five grandchildren; and ten nieces and nephews.

Marty, as he was known to all, loved cooking, Cadillacs, vegetable gardening, playing pitch, tractors, napping on his couch, and being out and about, shooting the breeze with his large circle of friends.

He loved to drive, whether it was taking a friend to Boston for medical treatment, making a run to Western Mass. for 50 pounds of kielbasa and chicken thighs, or going on meandering Sunday drives with Nancy to Point Judith, R.I., the Niantic Book Barn, or whatever flea market they came across.

Marty was always on the lookout for a good deal, and never saw a pile

of bricks, stone, wood, tools, catering supplies, or bulk food items that he wouldn't find a use for "someday."

He was a big fan of polka music and listened to polkas on the radio every weekend, often cranking up the volume (to the dismay of his wife).

Marty was born in Worcester on June 11, 1940, to the late Martin D.

and Rose (Stoskus) Karlon.

He graduated in 1959 from the former St. Peter's High school in Worcester, where he was a standout football player (fullback/linebacker) and drove a kick-ass 1940 Ford painted purple, with white running boards. Most importantly, he met Nancy at St. Peter's.

Marty was a proud member of his beloved Singletary Rod and Gun Club in Oxford since 1955 and was an active member of the Charlton Beagle Club for decades.

He served in the U.S. Army from 1962-65, primarily at Fort Devens, and worked at Norton Company in Worcester for many years. He also ran a catering business on the side for nearly 50 years, providing affordable, quality food for weddings, funerals and charitable events.

Funeral services will be private. A memorial event will be scheduled in mid-2025.



Robert H. Menard, 90



pool player. He was also an avid volleyball player and built a court in his yard. Robert was an avid outdoorsman and was a life member of the Hamilton Rod and Gun Club in Sturbridge. As an outdoorsman he enjoyed hunting, fishing, archery and competitive shooting. Above

all he loved to spend time with his family.

His funeral was held on Monday, Dec. 30th, from the Daniel T. Morrill Funeral Home, 130 Hamilton St., Southbridge, with at Mass at 10:00am in St. Anne Church, 16 Church St., Sturbridge. Burial was in St. Anne's Cemetery, Sturbridge. Calling hours in the funeral home were held on Sunday, Dec. 29th, from 2:00 to 4:00pm.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to the American Cancer Society, P.O. Box 1120, Framingham, MA 01701.

www.morrillfuneralhome.com



Jacob Edwards Library welcomes poet Dr. Naida Saevedra

SOUTHBRIDGE —The Jacob Edwards Library, 236 Main St., Southbridge, will be hosting a very special poetry presentation with scholar Dr. Naida Saavedra on Thursday, Jan. 16 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. The presentation will be in the Reading Room of the library.

"Multiple Voices, Identities and Homes: A Conversation About Latino Poetry" is based on the groundbreaking Library of America Anthology - "Latino Poetry" edited by Rigoberto González. This is a major public humanities initiative taking place across the nation. Southbridge was one of two Massachusetts libraries to be awarded the grant.

This program is presented as part of Latino Poetry: Places We Call Home, a major public humanities initiative taking place across the nation in 2024 and 2025, directed by Library of America and funded with generous support from the National Endowment for the Humanities and Emerson Collective.

The Jacob Edwards Library is pleased to host a presentation by Dr. Naida Saavedra who will introduce the collection and highlight some of the major poets and their poems that have contributed to the canon.

Naida Saavedra is a writer, scholar, and professor. Her books of fiction include Vestier y otras miserias (Verbum, 2015) and Desordenadas (SEd, 2019). She has co-edited Ecos urbanos: Literatura contemporánea en español en Estados Unidos,



Naida Saavedra

Hostos Review Issue 15 (2019) and the anthology #NiLocasNiSolos: narrativa escrita por mujeres en Estados Unidos (El BeiSmAn PrESS, 2023). Saavedra holds a PhD in Latin American and Latinx Literature from Florida State University and her research focuses on issues of identity, migration, and social media in contemporary Latinx literature. She is documenting the current USA literary movement in Spanish for which she published the essay book #NewLatinoBoom: car-

tografía de la narrativa en español de EE UU (El BeiSmAn PrESS, 2020). Saavedra lives in Massachusetts, where she is a professor of Latin American and Latinx Literature at Worcester State University.

For nearly five centuries, the rich tapestry of Latino poetry has been woven from a wealth of languages and cultures. With distinctive rhythms, lyricism, and candor, and nuanced understandings of place, history, and origin, Lati-

no poets have brought dazzling insight to what it means to make a home in America.

Recognition of the beauty and power of this tradition has grown in recent years, with Latino poets receiving two national and twelve state Poet Laureate-ships, two Pulitzer Prizes, and three National Book Awards. At the same time, the perennial questions confronted by Latino poets—of exile and belonging, language and identity, struggle and solidarity, and labor and landscape—have become ever more urgent.

What does Latino poetry reveal about America? How might it help us imagine a more just, joyful, and capacious future? Places We Call Home seeks to foster nationwide conversation on this vital literature through a groundbreaking new anthology edited by Rigoberto González, events around the country, an online media archive, and a wealth of library resources meant to spur in-depth reflection and discussion on key figures and themes.

Funded with generous support from the National Endowment for the Humanities and Em-

erson Collective, Places We Call Home is directed by Library of America and presented in partnership with the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures; the Academy of American Poets; Cave Canem; Poetry Society of America; and the National Book Foundation, among others.

Library of America is a nonprofit organization that champions our nation's cultural heritage by publishing America's greatest writing in authoritative new editions and providing resources for readers to explore this rich, living legacy.

"The Most Dangerous Game" next up in Shawna Foundation's film screening series

SOUTHBRIDGE —The Shawna Foundation's next UnderGround Thursday Screening is the classic "The Most Dangerous Game."

Produced in 1932 and starring Joel McCrea and Fay Wray, this film was controversial upon release and remains so today. And just as relevant.

Based on a short story of the same name by Richard Connell, it has a storyline that has been used for the 93 years that followed.

A psychotic big game hunter deliberately strands a luxury yacht on a remote island, where he begins to hunt its passengers for sport.

Filmed on the same sets of the original "King Kong" at night by the same director, Ernest B. Schoedsack, who with these two movies changed cinema history forever.

The screening takes place on Feb. 6 at 7 p.m. at starlite, 39 Hamilton St. in Southbridge, and is free!

UnderGround Thursday is funded in part by the Southbridge Cultural Council and the Mass. Cultural Council.



ANTIQUES

continued from page 7

road station sign fetched \$400 last year. A sign with a map of stations along the Boston and Albany Railroad sold for even more. A Norwich and Worcester Railroad excursion broadside

(sizable sheet of paper printed on one side) to see the Worcester professional baseball team play in 1881 brought \$1,300 in 2022.

Railroad memorabilia has brought strong prices in other auction houses as well. A 1935 poster

advertising trips to Atlantic City sold for \$7,500 in 2023. A rare Kansas Pacific railway lantern from 1869 reached \$41,900 in 2022. For those who like larger memorabilia, a New York Central System caboose that had been restored and de-

scribed as a tiny house sold for \$37,500 in 2018. That's some steep train fare.

We are still cataloging the Civil War memorabilia auction, an online auction of antiques in a Beacon Hill estate, and a comic book, sports mem-

orabilia, and collectibles auction. We are also accepting consignments of items in my top 10 list for future auctions. 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).

HINT

continued from page 7

taking two aspirins but won't irritate your stomach.

**

Win a Three Course Dinner for Two at the

Publick House

Your tips can win you a great dinner for two at the historic Publick House Historic Inn in Sturbridge! Simply send in a hint to be entered into a random drawing. One winner per month

(or whenever I receive enough tips for a column) will win a fabulous three course dinner for two at the renowned restaurant, located on Route 131 across the town common in historic Sturbridge. Because I'm in

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

**

Do you have a helpful

hint or handy tip that has worked for you? Do you have a question regarding household or garden matters? If so, why not share them with readers of Stonebridge Press newspapers? Send questions and/or hints

to: Take the Hint!, C/o the Southbridge Evening News, PO Box 90; Southbridge, MA 01550. Or E-mail KDRR@aol.com. Hints are entered into a drawing for dinner for two at the historic Publick House Inn.

MONSTERA

continued from page 7

potting mix in a container with drainage holes. Water them thoroughly when the top two inches of soil are dry. Pour off excess water or place the pot on pebbles in a saucer. The pebbles elevate the pot above any water that collects in the sau-

cer to avoid root rot. As this water evaporates, humidity increases around the plant.

Further boost the humidity by placing your monstera with other plants. As one plant loses moisture or transpires, the neighboring plants will benefit.

Only apply houseplant fertilizer when

the plants are actively growing, usually March through October. Let the plant and your garden goals be your fertilization guide. Fertilizers provide needed nutrients to plants in need of a nutrient boost or when you want to stimulate more growth.

Support the plant with a moss pole or tre-

lis as it starts to climb. The large aerial roots attach to nearby surfaces to help them climb. In nature, these roots help monstera to climb trees and have been used to make rope in Peru and baskets in Mexico.

Use these beauties to create an indoor tropical paradise or to provide some green relief.

No matter your indoor décor, this unique plant will make a welcome addition.

Melinda Myers has written over 20 gardening books, including Midwest Gardeners' Handbook, Revised Edition, and Small Space Gardening. She hosts The Great Cours-

es "How to Grow Anything" instant video and DVD series and the nationally syndicated Melinda's Garden Moment radio program. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine. Myers' Web site is www.MelindaMyers.com.



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- Sturbridge Villager
- Charlton Villager
- Southbridge News
- Webster Times
- Auburn News
- Blackstone Valley Tribune

POSITIVELY

continued from page 6

panic through the American ranks, and the line began to falter. Soldiers hesitated, their resolve wavering as confusion spread across the battlefield.

At that critical moment, Washington rode to the front, a commanding figure on horseback. With bullets whizzing

past him, he placed himself squarely in the line of fire, rallying his men with an unshakable display of courage. “Stand firm, men!” he shouted, his voice steady and resolute, cutting through the din of battle.

Inspired by their commander’s fearless leadership, the troops surged forward with renewed determination.

The tide of the battle

turned. The Continental soldiers pressed their advantage, outflanking and overwhelming the British forces. By mid-morning on Jan. 3, 1777, the town of Princeton was firmly in American hands. The victory was hard-fought and costly, but it proved once again that Washington’s leadership and the army’s tenacity could triumph against all odds.

The back-to-back wins at Trenton and Princeton reinvigorated the revolutionary cause at its darkest hour: Washington’s daring maneuvers and ability to out-think and outfight the British proved that the Continental Army was a force to be reckoned with.

Cornwallis, upon discovering Washington’s brilliant escape, was

stunned. Across the colonies, news of the victory spread like wildfire across the colonies, inspiring hope and a new wave of recruits joining the fight for independence.

General Washington and his band of underdogs had prevailed. His New Year’s resolutions were clear: defy the odds, outwit his enemies, and keep the dream of inde-

pendence alive, no matter the cost.

Let this be the year you face your battles, big or small, with the same fearless resolve—proving that, like Washington and his army, you, too, can achieve greatness against the odds. What will your resolutions be this year?

LEGALS

Holland, MA Conservation Commission

In accordance with the Wetlands Protection Act, Chapter 131, Sec 40, a public hearing by the Conservation Commission will be held on Tuesday 01/14/2025 in the Conservation Commission Room, second floor, in the Holland Town Hall, 27 Sturbridge Rd, Holland, MA. This meeting is to review a Notice of Intent (NOI) filed by Landscape Evolution, c/o Richard Chapin for replacing an unsecure shoreline wall at 28 Hamilton Drive, Holland, MA. To comply with the Open Meeting Law, all public hearings are scheduled for 6:30 PM and, barring unforeseen circumstances, will be taken in the order in which they appear on the agenda. This meeting will be held in person and virtual; for virtual meeting login information contact Holland Conservation at conservation@hollandma.org or call (413) 245-7108 x114.

Conservation Commission
Town of Holland
January 9, 2025

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Worcester Probate and Family Court**

**225 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01608
Docket No. W024P4265GD
NOTICE AND ORDER:
Petition for Appointment
of Guardian of a Minor**
In the interests of
Julius R. Hoover
of **Southbridge, MA**
Minor

NOTICE TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES

1. Hearing Date/Time: A hearing on a Petition for Appointment of Guardian of a Minor by filed on 12/16/2024 by Erin E. Williams will be held **01/21/2025 08:30 AM Guardianship of Minor Hearing** Located **Worcester Probate & Family Response to Petition:** You may respond by filing a written response to the Petition or by appearing in person at the hearing. If you choose to file a written response, you need to:

File the original with the Court; and
Mail a copy to all interested parties at least five (5) business days before the hearing.

3. Counsel for the Minor: The minor (or an adult on behalf of the minor) has the right to request that counsel be appointed for the minor.

4. Counsel for Parents: If you are a parent of the minor child who is the subject of this proceeding you have a right to be represented by an attorney. If you want an attorney and cannot afford to pay for one and if you give proof that you are indigent, an attorney will be assigned to you. Your request for an attorney should be made immediately by filling out the Application of Appointment of Counsel form. Submit the application form in person or by mail at the court location where your case is going to be heard.

5. Presence of the Minor at Hearing: A minor over age 14 has the right to be present at any hearing, unless the Court finds that it is not in the minor’s best interests.

THIS IS A LEGAL NOTICE: An important court proceeding that may affect your rights has been scheduled. If you do not understand this notice or other court papers, please contact an attorney for legal advice.

Date: December 16, 2024

Stephanie K. Fattman
Register of Probate

January 9, 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 January 22, 2025, at 7PM on the application of Michael Dyer. The applicant has filed for a Notice of Intent for the construction of a single-family residence, driveway, and associated site work, within the 100-foot buffer zone to a Bordering Vegetated Wetland and the outer riparian zone to McKinstry Brook. The project location is: Hill Road, Charlton MA 01507. Parcel ID: 46-B-4.2 & 46-B-3.2.

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
January 9, 2025

TOWN OF SOUTHBRIDGE PUBLIC NOTICE

Water Facility AC Upgrade

Sealed bids will be received by the Town Manager, Town Hall, 41 Elm Street, Southbridge, Massachusetts until 10:00 AM on Friday January 17, 2025, for Generator Maintenance and at that time opened and publicly read. Bid specifications are available on the Town Website or contact hprescott@southbridgemass.org. Bidding is per MGL Chapter 30 s39M. Prevailing wage rates per MGL c149 s26 to 27D inclusive issued by Dept. of Labor Standards.

A walk-through of the Water Treatment Facility will be at 511 Breakneck Rd, Southbridge, MA 01550, on Wednesday January 8, 2025, starting at 10:00 AM. A representative of the Town will be available to address questions.

Envelopes must be clearly marked “Bid – WTF AC Upgrade”. A 5% bid deposit shall be included with sealed bids. The successful Bidder will be required to provide a 50% payment bond.

The Town shall award a contract to the lowest responsible and eligible bidder. The Town reserves the right to reject any or all bids if in the public interest to do so, and to waive any informalities in the bids.

Town of Southbridge
Jack Jovan
Town Manager
January 2, 2025
January 9, 2025

TOWN OF STURBRIDGE Board of Selectmen Public Hearing

National Grid has made a petition to the Sturbridge Select Board to install one (1) JO Pole on Whittemore Road beginning at a point approximately 216 feet Northwest of the centerline of the intersection of Whittemore Road & Fiske Hill Road. National Grid proposes to install pole 26-50 in public way for new infrastructure to support load of OH lines, Sturbridge MA. National Grid also requests permission to lay and maintain underground laterals, cables, and wires in the above or intersecting public ways. The pole hearing will take place on **Monday, February 3, 2025 at 6:35 p.m.** at the Sturbridge Town Hall, 2nd floor, Veteran’s Memorial Hall located at 308 Main Street, Sturbridge, MA 01566. January 9, 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 January 22, 2025, at 7PM on the application of John Shi.

The applicant has filed for a Notice of Intent to cross a Bordering Vegetated Wetland with two driveways to two proposed single-family homes outside of the 100-foot buffer zone. The project location is: Lot 1 and Lot 2 Boucher Road, Charlton MA 01507. Parcel ID: 40-B-8.29 and 40-B-8.30.

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
January 9, 2025

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Worcester Probate and Family Court**

**225 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01608
Docket No. W024P2344GD
NOTICE AND ORDER:
Petition for Appointment
of Guardian of a Minor**
In the interests of
Ava Janelle Ramos
of **Southbridge, MA**
Minor

NOTICE TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES

1. Hearing Date/Time: A hearing on a Petition for Appointment of Guardian of a Minor by filed on 07/12/2024 by Hayley L Cimochoowski will be held **01/17/2025 08:30 AM Guardianship of Minor Hearing** Located **Worcester Probate & Family Response to Petition:** You may respond by filing a written response to the Petition or by appearing in person at the hearing. If you choose to file a written response, you need to:

File the original with the Court; and
Mail a copy to all interested parties at least five (5) business days before the hearing.

3. Counsel for the Minor: The minor (or an adult on behalf of the minor) has the right to request that counsel be appointed for the minor.

4. Counsel for Parents: If you are a parent of the minor child who is the subject of this proceeding you have a right to be represented by an attorney. If you want an attorney and cannot afford to pay for one and if you give proof that you are indigent, an attorney will be assigned to you. Your request for an attorney should be made immediately by filling out the Application of Appointment of Counsel form. Submit the application form in person or by mail at the court location where your case is going to be heard.

5. Presence of the Minor at Hearing: A minor over age 14 has the right to be present at any hearing, unless the Court finds that it is not in the minor’s best interests.

THIS IS A LEGAL NOTICE: An important court proceeding that may affect your rights has been scheduled. If you do not understand this notice or other court papers, please contact an attorney for legal advice.

Date: November 15, 2024

Stephanie K. Fattman
Register of Probate

January 9, 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 January 22, 2025, at 7PM on the application of Christopher Hansen.

The applicant has filed for a Request for Determination of Applicability to conduct land clean up and debris removal within River Front Area. The activity location is: 0 Sandersdale Road, Parcel ID 77-C-8.2, Charlton MA 01507.

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
January 9, 2025

**ADVERTISEMENT INVITATION FOR BIDS
CHARLTON #2 SCHOOLHOUSE STRUCTURAL AND EXTERIOR REPAIRS**

The Town of Charlton is soliciting sealed bids from qualified bidders for the #2 Schoolhouse Structural and Exterior Repair project until 1:00 PM on Thursday, January 30, 2025 for General Bid. The Work includes selective framing reinforcement, wood siding and trim repair, slate roof replacement, exterior painting and foundation repointing matching historic construction as described in the following specifications, appendices, and drawing set prepared by Cirrus Structural Engineering. The site is listed in the State Register of Historic Places and work is funded by a Massachusetts Historical Commission Preservation Projects Fund grant. Contractors shall have minimum of three years’ experience working on historical structures and familiarity with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Rehabilitation.

Bidding procedures shall be in accordance with M.G.L. c. 149, Sections 44A-J as most recently amended, and all other applicable laws. Bids are subject to prevailing wage rates as required by M.G.L. c. 149, Sections 26 to 27H inclusive. A pre-Bid Conference and Site Visit will be held at the main entrance of the #2 Schoolhouse, 145 Northside Road, Charlton, MA 01507 on Thursday, January 9, 2025 at 10:00 AM. The Site Visit is strongly encouraged for General Bidders.

The Invitation for bid is available in person from the Office of the Town Administrator or for an electronic copy, be emailing mary.devlin@townofcharlton.net. To be considered, proposals must be submitted and received in the Office of the Town Administrator, 37 Main Street, Charlton, MA 01507 no later than 1:00 p.m., Thursday, January 30, 2025.

General bids shall be accompanied by a bid deposit that is not less than five (5%) of the greatest possible bid amount (considering all alternates) and made payable to the Town of Charlton. The successful bidder will be required to furnish a Performance Bond and Payment Bond each in the amount of one-hundred percent (100%) of the contract sum. Bonds shall be obtained from a surety licensed to do business in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, on a form provided by the Town. The Town of Charlton reserves the right to waive any informality, to cancel this IFB, and to reject any or all bids if it is in the public interest to do so.

January 1, 2025
January 9, 2025

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Creative Coloring

Color in this picture to create your own masterpiece.



Double Word Puzzle

Unscramble the words to reveal the sentence.

NULRA

1 2 3 4

EDAARP

5

YRAE

6

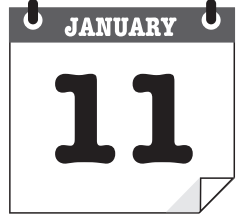
OLCROS

7 8

5 2 J 7 6 5 T H 1 3 2 5 4 2 8

Answer: Enjoy the lanterns

THIS DAY IN HISTORY



1759: The first American life insurance company is incorporated in Philadelphia.

1908: Grand Canyon National Monument is created.

1935: Amelia Earhart becomes the first person to fly solo from Hawaii to California.

NEW WORD

LUNAR

determined by the moon

World FACT:



This celebration occurs in many Asian countries and prominently features animals.

Answer: Chinese (lunar) New Year

How they say that in...

- English:** Snake
- Spanish:** Serpiente
- Italian:** Serpente
- French:** Serpent
- German:** Schlange

Did You Know?

Chinese New Year is the longest Chinese holiday, as it lasts 16 days. However, only the first seven days are a public holiday.



Get the PICTURE?



Can you guess what the bigger picture is?

Answer: Dragon puppet

⊙ * ♄ ☺ ♁ ~ Ⓜ ⚡ ✨ ✕ ✖ ✕ ✗ ✚ ✛ ✜ ✞ ✟ ✠ ✡ ✢ ✣ ✤ ✥ ✦ ✧ ✨ ✩ ✪ ✫ ✬ ✭ ✮ ✯ ✰ ✱ ✲ ✳ ✴ ✵ ✶ ✷ ✸ ✹ ✺ ✻ ✼ ✽ ✾ ✿ ⊕

CRYPTO FUN

Solve the code to discover words related to dog training. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 24 = A)

A. 20 13 24 12 1

Clue: Controls pet

B. 26 19 4 4 24 9 10

Clue: Give an order

C. 12 24 7 13 25 2

Clue: Caution

D. 19 3 13 2

Clue: Follow commands

Answers: A. leash B. command C. safety D. obey

SUDOKU

			5	9				
2	1							
	5		3		2			
3			1	5				8
			6	8		3		
							7	
				6			8	
			5				1	4
2	8					9		3

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Level: Intermediate

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

3	6	8	2	5	9	1	4	7
7	9	3	5	2	8	6	1	4
1	5	4	3	9	6	7	8	2
8	1	2	9	4	3	5	7	6
5	4	7	6	8	2	3	9	1
6	3	9	7	1	5	4	2	8
4	7	5	8	3	1	2	6	9
9	2	1	4	6	7	8	3	5
3	6	8	2	5	9	1	4	7

ANSWER:

HENSEL
continued from page 1

for it, and brought the story to Jacob Edwards Library last week.

As all that suggests, the story images are laden with felines – about 83 of them. Donny's unlike most kids; for him, "cats were his pals," not toys or other children; "cats tucked in close [at night] made him feel secure" and he noticed "nothing else of anyone at the playground."

If that sounds autistic, that's intentional, although the story never uses the term and avoids all psychological labels. Hensel said one of her main goals is promoting inclusion; she's had autistic children read the story and

say "That's me." "They're a really undeserved audience," she said, speaking more generally of kids with various disabilities. Although her own family doesn't have one, she said she's met many kids somewhere on "the spectrum," and hopes this book series gives them and their parents a voice.

"This is something our growing population is starving for," she added.

Indeed, CDC data cited at autismspeaks.org shows the autistic population is rising; in 2023, it was one in 36 children, up from one in 44 nationwide. About 4 percent of boys and 1 percent of girls have it, as do about one in 45 (slightly more than 2



Gus Steeves

Terilyn Hensel's new book features meter for older readers (left page) and sight words for those less skilled (right page).

percent) of adults. On average, those kids are diagnosed at age five (slightly older among girls). In Massachusetts, 72.5 percent graduate high school with a regular diploma, more than 86 percent get vocational rehab services, and about half get jobs afterward. (The website doesn't

seem to distinguish based on the spectrum from severe autism to high-functioning Asperger's syndrome.)

Donny's mom is like a lot of parents of autistic children – she tries hard to give him "a broader horizon," but really needs to recognize that "he finds his own way," Hensel

said. By contrast, when he meets Juan – who is equally enamored of trains – Donny's mom doesn't quite understand why Juan's mom just reads while her son plays. The two boys find a way to connect, but I won't tell you how.

"Even though it's not a reference book, I want it to be as true as possible," Hensel said, noting she hopes to find time to continue research for the series. She's already written a second story, "Donny Finds a Team," but has other ideas in the wings.

Likewise, being an English teacher of 30-plus years, including years at Bartlett and Trinity Catholic, she "couldn't step away from the educational piece" of it. While the text (in meter, not prose) is written "for more advanced readers," pages also have boxes of "sight words" for earlier readers. There's also a Spanish version; she's used both

at Trinity and with English learners at lower grades, and is devising lesson plans to go with the story.

On top of those things, she also helps her husband Chris with filmmaking; editing his scripts and writing one of her own. When she's not traveling for those, she's also a member of the Southbridge Planning Board.

Hensel said she didn't want to self-publish, but was able to find a small publisher for this book she has "outgrown." Like many authors, she's now sending out many query letters to agents for the rest of the series, noting most publishers don't accept unsolicited manuscripts.

"I'm very excited," she noted. "I think it opens up a new avenue in my life."

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

DCRSD
continued from page 1

The Massachusetts Association of Student Representative promotes its mission "to connect, train, and empower Student Representatives on school committees all across the Commonwealth." Part of their goal is to empower and enable student representatives to maximize their terms and provide a voice to school committees to help them better understand the in-school experience from a different perspective.

Avoglia said the conference was a great opportunity for him, so much so that he has now joined MASR for the remainder of his term.

"I met a lot of good people, and they provided me with resources. Turning ideas into action was one of their big things. They work at the state level to push stuff forward, when one student representative has a problem, they kind of join together and are able to push things forward which I thought was very cool," he said.

Avoglia plans to bring input from his meetings with MASR to future school committee discussions in the hopes of helping the Dudley Charlton Regional School District stay ahead of the issues and be a leader in providing the best education, opportunities, and quality of life for its students.

DONATION

continued from page 1

sion of serving the community," Penttila said.

The \$2,500 donation will help advance the transformation of Dresser Memorial Park, creating a meaningful space for reflection, remembrance, and community gatherings.

"This contribution is more

than just a monetary gift," Adams shared. "It's a testament to the unity and support of our community. Together, we'll create a space that truly honors our Veterans and stands as a symbol of our collective gratitude."

With fundraising efforts still in the early stages, the Lions Club's

contribution marks a significant step toward realizing the vision for Dresser Memorial Park. Community members are encouraged to stay informed and get involved as plans progress.

For updates on the project and opportunities to contribute, follow local news and announcements.

PEWS

continued from page 6

all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons

that they teach." — Charles Dickens, "A Christmas Carol"

Maybe that is the real reason we don't know the exact date

of Christ's birth because the season which reminds us, even transforms us into greater generosity, kindness, a sense of forgiveness, tolerance, hospitality, and the promised Peace on Earth associated with that important Silent Night cannot, should not be relegated to one day or even a few weeks.

The sense of goodness our faith associates with Christmas is a universal message, a promise predicated in part on our willingness to uphold the virtues of the season, and be transformed as people towards a greater sense of goodwill, as Scrooge so well expressed.

That said, as we enter a New Year, I can't think of a better way to face 2025, and try to live the year than with the spirit of Christmas – a sensibility that doesn't just belong to Dec. 25, or Jan. 7, or even springtime, but all year long – offering understanding, forgiveness, more random acts of kindness, more hugs, less shrugs, and well you get the idea.

Christmas is when Light entered a war torn world. History hasn't changed, and war still exists – big ones between nations, and little ones between individuals. But we can be better than that.

So I'll keep a candle lit in my window as a reminder that, like Scrooge, I should try to keep Christmas in my heart all year long, and shine a light in remembrance of the Light that entered our world 2000 years ago.

That candle will also be a promise that imperfect as we mere mortals are, my little candle is a commitment to share the sensibility emblematic of Christ's life.

Perhaps you, too will join me in one little candle in your window, one promise, one more kindness to those we meet in this New Year, another flight around the sun we are blessed to be part of?

Wishing you and yours a blessed 2025.

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