

SPENCER NEW LEADER

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Free by request to residents of

East Brookfield, West Brookfield, North Brookfield, Brookfield, Leicester and Spencer

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Friday, January 23, 2026

Country Bank, Woo Sox present Most Valuable Teacher Award to LMS's Cheryl Wright

LEICESTER — On Tuesday, Jan. 6, Leicester Middle School science teacher Cheryl Wright was surprised to receive the Most Valuable Teacher Award from Country Bank and the Woo Sox. Her student, Lillian Mulhearn, who is in eighth grade at LMS, nominated Wright.

Wright is honored and surprised at the award.

"It is nice to be recognized for all the hard work and long hours that all teachers put into the teaching and learning of their students. Lillian has always had a special place in my heart. I am humbled that she nominated me. I am thankful for this program provided by the Woo Sox and Country Bank," Wright said.

Mrs. Wright just completed the DIG (Discoveries in Geosciences) Field School



Cheryl Wright receiving the Most Valuable Teacher Award from Country Bank and the Woo Sox.

in eastern Montana this summer. She worked alongside researchers at excavation sites in Hell Creek State Park. Her classroom is now directly connected to the Burke Museum in Seattle, Washington. The museum provides her classes with curriculum and soil, in a "Burke Box," from Hell Creek to sort through and identify.

The connection between students and fieldwork makes science come to life and I hope to inspire future paleontologists from New England, said Mrs. Wright. This is one example of how Mrs. Wright fully immerses her students in science concepts. She loves teaching science and will continue to inspire her students. She thanks all the people who support educators and will continue spreading her love of learning.

Spencer to prioritize bridge and culvert projects

BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT

SPENCER — A month after confirming that a third-party contractor will be examining several dams in town, Spencer town officials confirmed the town will also be looking at other structures like bridges and culverts making infrastructure a focus in the early days of 2026.

Highway Superintendent Peter Boria approached selectmen on Jan. 12, seeking to pursue a partnership with GIL Engineering to assess and prioritize bridges and culverts that may soon need replacement or repairs. The company will utilize data already available to help create a prioritized list of future projects for the town to consider.

This is not the first time the town has partnered with GIL Engineering. The company previously designed improvements to the Wire Village Road bridge and temporary improvements for the Thompson Road bridge that allowed it to reopen after the state forced its closure in 2024 due to safety concerns. Boria said the town has faith in GIL Engineering to provide appropriate advice on getting ahead of other potential infrastructure projects.

"I think they will try to come up with some creative and cost-effective solutions. I asked them if they would provide a propos-

al to do an evaluation of all of our bridges and culverts and make sure that we're not missing anything that we might not see on the Mass DOT reports so that we don't end up with another Thompson Road Bridge scenario where all of a sudden you find a bridge that just kind of hits you out of left field and you didn't know what was coming," said Boria.

The scope of work will include reviewing existing record plans, inspection reports, and load rating reports then ranking structures based on condition and urgency of needed repairs. The company will also create a comparison matrix summarizing each structure's condition and preservation needs and present findings to town staff.

"Based on what you'll get from this report, you'll have a good overview of the condition of all 14 bridges and two smaller culverts that the town is responsible for and try and prioritize next steps from this report," said Boria. "By no means is this going to be a report you're just going to get and probably sit on and say everything is in great shape."

Selectmen and the Town Administrator praised the proposal, seeing it as the first step of a larger bridge maintenance plan. The process will cost \$11,491, which will be paid from the Highway Department's operating budget.

Hearts for Heat to host 18th Annual Spaghetti Dinner

NORTH BROOKFIELD — North Brookfield Hearts for Heat is hosting its 18th Annual Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser on Saturday, Jan. 31 from 5-7 p.m. in the North Brookfield Elementary School Cafeteria. The dinner is \$12 per person with a cap of \$36 for a family of four or more. Takeout available. Tickets are only available at the door.

Sponsored with the Hayden Masonic Lodge and supported by Hannaford Supermarket, this is truly "community helping community." Big ticket raffles include: Celtics team signed basketballs, WooSox Family Pack-tickets for four and other paraphernalia, Marks of Asgard Tattoo \$100 gift certificate Local gift certificates donated so far include: Angel Nails,

Bike House Brewery, Bogey Lanes, Boston Bruins signed puck, City of Smoke, Connect Restaurant, Inishowen Farms, JARS Café & Bakery "Tea for Two," Jim's Pizza, Joy of Beans, NB Liquors, Salem Cross Inn, Second Chance Animal Shelter, Shaman's Closet, Springfield Thunderbird Hockey tickets, Strandz Hair Salon, Subway, and Whitco. The Door Prize is a Mr. Coffee 10-Cup Optimal Brew Coffeepot.

The Otters will provide musical ambiance all evening.

Students from the NBHS National Honor Society and Valley View School will assist. The dinner's snow date is the following Saturday, February 7th. Tickets are only available at the door.

NB Hearts for Heat is a 501(c)3 charitable organization to help North Brookfield residents in need of emergency home heating assistance for Oil, Propane, Natural Gas, Electric, Pellets, or Cord Wood. 100% of donations are used for fuel purchases. We have assisted 345 families since 2009.

Donations can be mailed to NB Hearts for Heat, P.O. Box 44, North Brookfield, MA 01535. North Brookfield Savings Bank will match the first \$3000. Thank you also to Monson Savings bank for their \$2000 support.

To access the printable 2025-26 application, visit <https://www.heartsforheat.org/NorthBrookfield/index.html>.

N. Brookfield PD promotes Martin to Sergeant, adds new officer

BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT

NORTH BROOKFIELD — The North Brookfield Police Department cele-

brated a promotion and the addition of a new officer on Jan. 13, with the Board of Selectmen hosting a room full of supporters for both announcements.

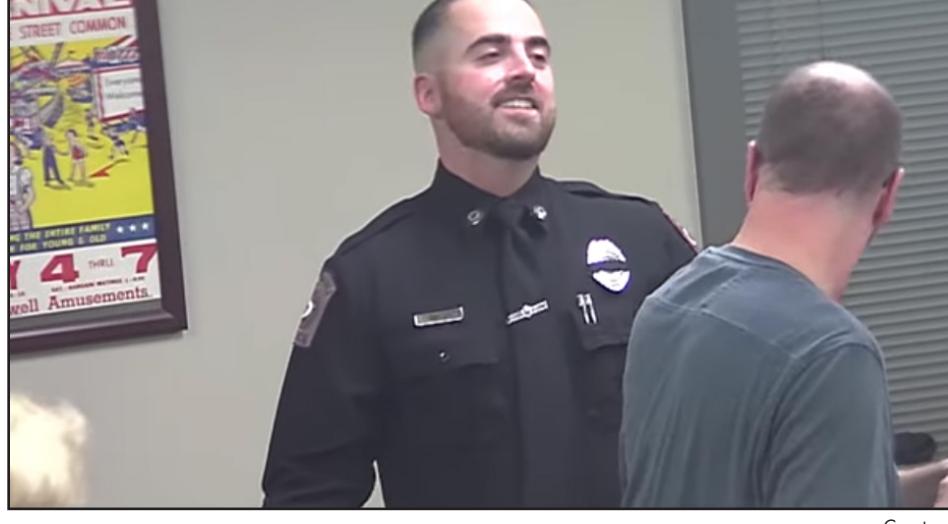
Officer Jeff Martin was promoted to Sergeant at the request of Chief Ryan Daley while Robert Nelson was also hired as a new officer to succeed Martin. Both officers were highly recommended by the chief due to their experience and leadership qualities.

Martin's promotion to Sergeant was a popular one due to his involvement in many programs and investigations during his tenure with the department and his success with procuring grants. Daley listed off Martin's achievements

including as a patrolman and a member of the local dive team, a firearms instructor, and an ALICE instructor with the local schools.

"Officer Martin is regarded and looked highly upon as a mentor for other officers in the area," said the Chief. "I believe he'll provide a very good knowledge base for our officers here and provide a great service for our officers in the town."

With Martin's promotion, that left an open officer position which will now be filled by Robert Nelson. Nelson comes to North Brookfield from Stow bringing with him 22 years of full-time experience and another four years as a part-



Courtesy

North Brookfield Police Officer Jeff Martin was promoted to Sergeant earlier this month.

Celebrate ‘Winter’ at ArtWorks Gallery

WARE — ArtWorks Gallery invites artists of all mediums from throughout the northeastern US to explore the theme of “Winter.” The deadline for entry is Feb. 12 by midnight. The entry form and full details can be found on workshop13.org.

ArtWorks Gallery is located at 69 Main St. in Ware. “Winter” will be on display from March 7 through April 4, opening with a reception on Saturday, March 7, from 3-5 p.m. Gallery hours are Saturdays and Sundays from 1-4 p.m.

The juror for “Winter” is Susan Tilton Pecora. Susan has been painting the streets, harbors, factories and farms of New England throughout her life. She works in watercolor, egg tempera and oil. She is a signature member of The New England Watercolor Society, host of the WGBY, PBS affiliate television show “Reflections Through Watercolor” and The Copley Society in Boston.

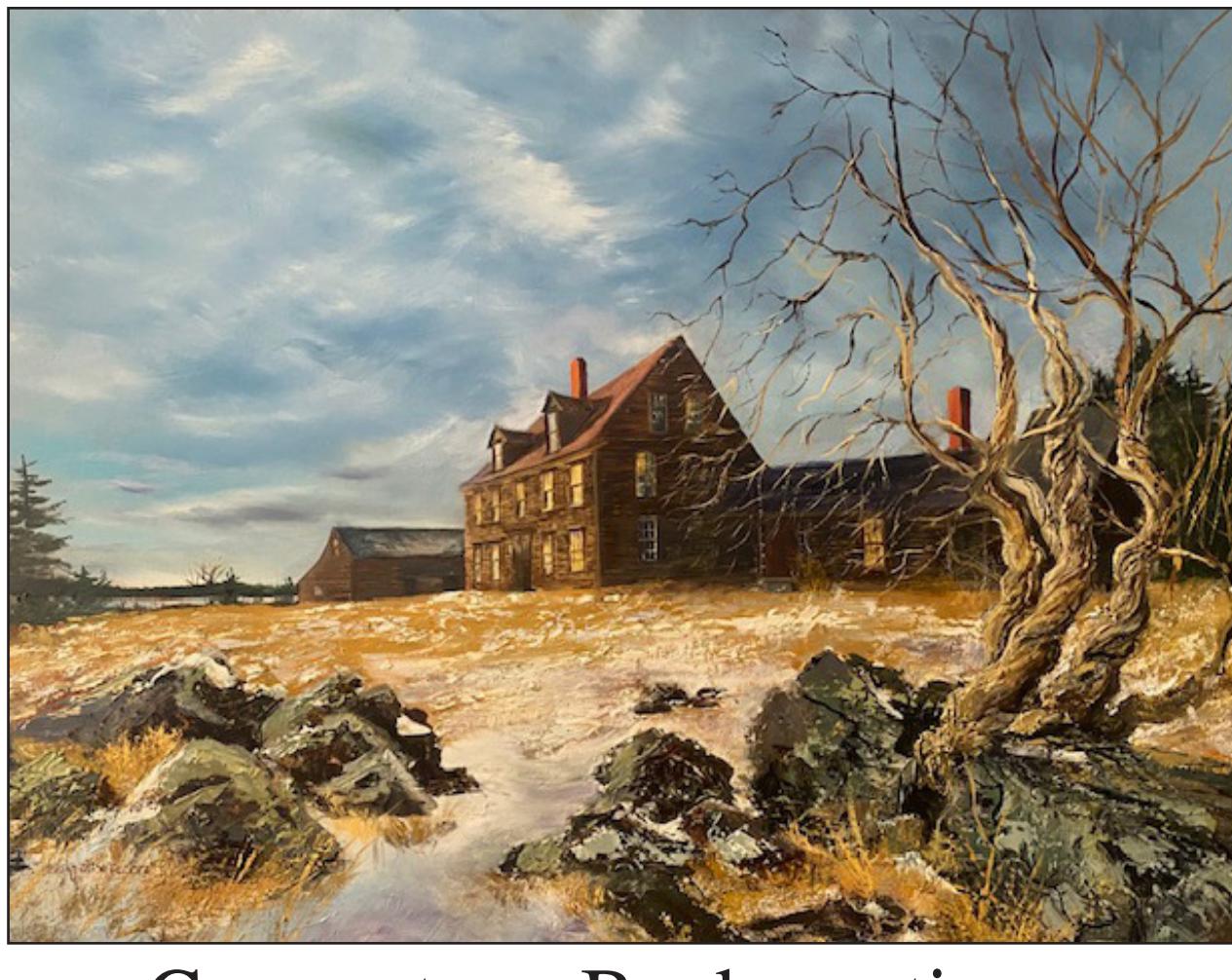
Her paintings have been exhibited throughout the country, winning awards at the National Art League in New York, San Diego Art Asso. and Rocky Mountain Art Association among others. Her work has been

featured in American Artist Magazine, “Splash, the Best in Watercolor” North Light Books. In 2007, she was asked to create a painted ornament for the White House Holiday tree by Congressman Richard Neal.

Susan is represented by West Brookfield Art & Frame in West Brookfield, Ma., Ingram Fine Art, Wiscasset and Rockland, Maine, Arnould Gallery, Marblehead, and Michelson Gallery in Northampton. Prints of her works are available at The Deerfield Museum Store, Cape Art Tiles, Randall’s Farm in Ludlow and The Lobster Pot in Provincetown.

About ArtWorks Gallery and Workshop13

ArtWorks Gallery is Workshop13’s gallery on Main Street. This space features numerous art exhibitions each year and is also available to rent for individual or group shows. Workshop13 is a dynamic center where arts, culture, and community converge—expanding access to the arts and nurturing creativity and self-expression in our rural region. For more information, visit workshop13.org, or call 413-277-6072.



Cornerstone Bank continues support for WCAC with \$25,000 Fuel Fund donation

WORCESTER — Temperatures are dropping and Cornerstone Bank, a community bank with locations throughout Central Massachusetts, wants to help make sure residents have the warmth they need to get through the coldest months. Just like last year, Cornerstone is donating \$25,000 to the Worcester Community Action Council’s Emergency Fuel Fund. The Bank contributed \$50,000 in both 2022 and 2023.

“Each year, we see how rising fuel costs place real strain on families,” said Cornerstone Bank CEO Todd Tallman. “WCAC continues to be a lifeline for residents who might otherwise have to choose between staying warm or meeting other essential needs. We are grateful to be able to support their efforts again this year.”

The Emergency Fuel Fund helps homeowners and renters pay home heating bills and past due balances on utility bills incurred from November through April of each year. Income-eligible residents can apply for aid through the agency’s federally funded Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

“Our mission as a community bank is to support the well-being of the people who live and work here,” Tallman added. “We hope this contribution helps ease the burden for households facing a difficult winter.”

About Cornerstone Bank
Cornerstone Bank was formed in 2017, born of a long history of supporting the community, and providing a strong foundation to help people and businesses thrive.

Serving Worcester County, Massachusetts, Cornerstone Bank’s local presence and community-based banking model enables a unique ability to deliver outstanding service, with a personal touch.

Cornerstone, which is a subsidiary of PeoplesBankCorp, MHC, operating independently under its own name and brand, provides the highest level of service and expertise for individuals, businesses, and community organizations with branch locations throughout Central Massachusetts.

Cornerstone works to connect customers with opportunities through a broad range of deposit and loan products and services.

Built on Trust is not just a tagline, but also one of our guiding corporate values. Whether a business or personal partnership, Cornerstone stands on the foundation that relationships are built on trust. To learn about Cornerstone Bank’s

personal and business banking offerings, please visit cornerstonebank.com or call 800-939-9103.

Leicester Senior Citizens Club launches membership drive

LEICESTER — The Leicester Senior Citizens Club is a group of older adults that meets at the Leicester Senior Center twice a month. The club is looking to attract new members from all the area towns and cities.

The group meets on the first and third Tuesday of each month. Meetings begin at 10 a.m. At the conclusion of each meeting, there is a scheduled form of entertainment or informational presentation.

The Leicester Senior Citizens Club is linking older adults with each other, and to opportunities that improve their health, well-being, and sense of community. It is the club’s way of reducing the effects of isolation. We want to offer special programs beyond normal hours, and we need input and ideas from new members to help get us there. Membership is open to all individuals aged 60 and older. The cost to join is \$10 for an annual membership.

To learn more about the membership drive or to sign up, please visit the Leicester Senior Center at 40 Winslow Ave., Leicester, during operating hours (Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.), or call David Wood, Program Director at the senior center, at (508)-892-7016.

SPENCER ALMANAC REAL ESTATE

BROOKFIELD

None.

EAST BROOKFIELD

None

LEICESTER

\$251,000, 1098 Stafford St #9, Temple, Christopher M, to Giron, Christopher, and Malewicz, Ryan.

NORTH BROOKFIELD

\$543,000, 61 Hillsville Rd, Blouin, Richard D, and Blouin, Julia L, to Murphy, Belinda J.

SPENCER

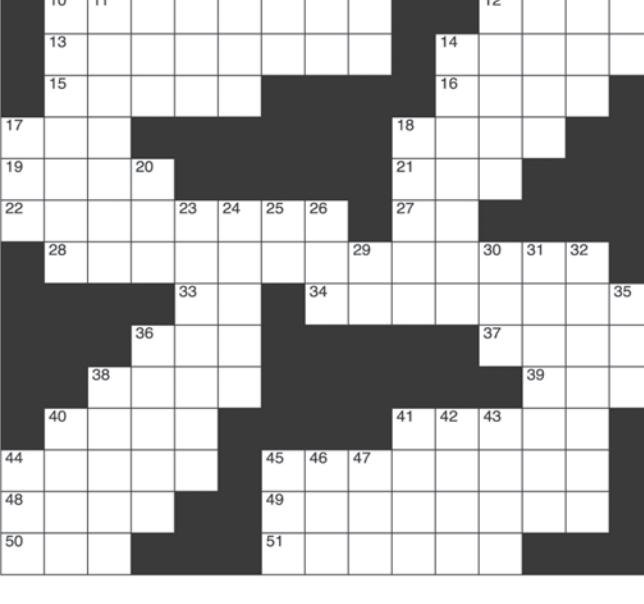
\$435,000, 9 Hebert Rd, Scott, Keith, to Richards, Molly E, and Richards, Robbie C.

WARREN

\$205,000, 124 Southbridge Rd, Secretary Of Veterans Aff, to Silverskin LLC.

WEST BROOKFIELD

None



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Mechanical lever
- 7. Rocky peak
- 10. Leave a country
- 12. Discount
- 13. D.C. ballplayer
- 14. Partner to “ooed”
- 15. Engine sound
- 16. Japanese ornamental box
- 17. Fido is one
- 18. Amounts of time
- 19. DiFranco and Phylo are two
- 21. Yearly tonnage (abbr.)
- 22. Make secret plans
- 27. “Tiny Bubbles” singer
- 28. “His Airness”
- 33. Morning
- 34. Perfected
- 36. Winger guitarist Beach
- 37. Abba ___, Israeli politician
- 38. Self-immolation by fire ritual
- 39. A way to save money
- 40. Pulpit
- 41. Make ecstatically happy
- 44. Once more
- 45. Works on
- 48. Nocturnal S. American rodent
- 49. State again
- 50. Expression of disappointment
- 51. Type of door

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Yugoslavian communist leader
- 2. Exchange rate
- 3. High school dance
- 4. Peter’s last name
- 5. When you anticipate arriving
- 6. Israeli city __ Aviv
- 7. Goat-like mammals
- 8. Margarine
- 9. End-of-the-spectrum color
- 10. Make poisonous
- 11. Popular beverage
- 12. Actress Lathan
- 14. Where planes land and depart
- 17. Political fundraising entity
- 18. The distinctive spirit of a people or an era
- 20. Buffer used in microbiology
- 22. Light, open carriage
- 24. Metrical feet
- 25. Email subject line feature
- 26. A street with lots of nightmares
- 29. Rapper Rule
- 30. River in Scotland
- 31. One who settles a dispute
- 32. Most chummy
- 35. We all have our own
- 36. Arab tribe
- 38. Slap
- 40. Ottoman military commanders
- 41. Scottish or Irish Gaelic language
- 42. Emit coherent radiation
- 43. Sun or solar disk (Egyptian mythology)
- 44. Inclined to
- 45. Olfactory reference syndrome
- 46. Chest muscle (slang)
- 47. Body part

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WEST BROOKFIELD

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EcoTarium selected for call to International Space Station

AMATEUR "HAM" RADIO TO CONNECT STUDENTS WITH ASTRONAUTS AS THE ISS ORBITS 250 MILES ABOVE EARTH

WORCESTER — The EcoTarium Museum of Science and Nature has been selected to host a live contact with an astronaut aboard the International Space Station (ISS) through ARISS (Amateur Radio on the International Space Station) in spring 2026. In collaboration with the Central Massachusetts Amateur Radio Association (CMARA) and North High School, hundreds of students will be invited to participate in the event and related education programs, and 10 students will have the rare opportunity to speak directly with an astronaut in orbit.

"The ARISS contact is an exciting opportunity for museum visitors, and school children from across the region," said Jason Gurtman, manager of educational programs at the EcoTarium. "By giving students the chance to speak directly with an astronaut aboard the ISS, we're sparking wonder and affirming

that there is a place for everyone in space science. This project will serve as a catalyst for curiosity, equity, and lifelong engagement with STEM learning."

The EcoTarium's contact with ARISS is scheduled for the week of March 9. NASA will confirm the exact date and time in late February or early March, depending on ISS orbital passes. Recent changes to ISS crew operations may affect the availability of participating astronauts, and the contact schedule remains subject to adjustment. A public community celebration will follow at the EcoTarium on Saturday, March 14, featuring hands-on activities and educational experiences focused on amateur radio and space exploration.

"What a thrill to be able to place a call to outer space using radio waves," said EcoTarium CEO Noreen Johnson Smith. "For over 125 years, scientists have

been expanding the way we use radio waves to communicate and discover distant objects in the universe. Calling the astronauts is an exciting lesson on the power of electromagnetic waves."

This initiative advances the EcoTarium's mission of igniting curiosity and inspiring a passion for science, technology, engineering, and math. The Museum offers year-round astronomy programming for visitors of all ages, including the new NASA-funded permanent exhibit Lift Off! Space Explorers, full-dome shows in the Alden Planetarium, newly renovated observatory, and a monthly Astrophysics Speaker Series.

"Space science and wireless communications technology are foundational to our high-tech future," said Fred Kemmerer, ARISS technical mentor and American Radio Relay League (ARRL) New England Division director. "An ARISS con-

tact gives young people hands-on exposure to these technologies and often sparks a lifelong interest in high-tech communications and related career paths."

George Gumbrell, a CMARA board member and parent, emphasized the long-term impact of early exposure to amateur radio.

"If you're interested in science and engineering," he said, "amateur radio provides a foundation for lifelong exploration."

Gumbrell's son Connor, now in high school, was introduced to amateur radio at age 5 and has since spoken directly with an astronaut aboard the ISS.

"The exposure to amateur radio and hands-on problem-solving showed me what was possible," Connor said. "It's why I plan to pursue electrical engineering after high school."

For more information, visit ecotarium.org/iss.

Assumption students named to Fall Dean's List

WORCESTER — Assumption University has announced those who have been named to the University's Dean's List for the fall 2025 semester. Students named to the Dean's List must achieve a grade point average of 3.5 for a five-class, 15-credit semester to be included on this prestigious list, which is announced at the completion of the fall and spring semesters.

Kya Birtz of Leicester
Anne Bisson Ingersoll of West Brookfield
Breana Escobar of Rochdale

Berthiaume announces local office hours

REGION — State Rep. Donnie Berthiaume and Chief of Staff, Donna, and Sen. Peter Durant's office invites Constituents and town officials to meet them to express any concerns, ideas, or issues that they may need assistance with. Please feel free to contact Donna if you would like a private meeting. 774-402-4742

Wednesday, Feb. 11 — In the Town of West Brookfield, at the Senior Center, 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 11 — In the Town of Brookfield at the Town Hall, 12:30 — 1:30 p.m.

Thursday, Feb. 12 — Town of North Brookfield — Senior Center 11 a.m.-noon

Wednesday, Nov. 18 — in the Town of Leicester at the Senior Center, 9 — 9:45 a.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 18 — In the Town of Spencer, at Howe Village, 10- 11 a.m. - With Tammy Ruda from Rep. Marsi's Office.

Wednesday, Nov. 18 — In the Town of East Brookfield at the Senior Center 11:15 a.m. — noon.

Renee Morin of Spencer
Brenna Donohue of Spencer
Braydyn Mercier of Rochdale
Lindsey Soter of Spencer

"Earning the right to be named to the Assumption University's Dean's List is an extraordinary accomplishment and we congratulate those students who demonstrated exemplary academic excellence this semester," said Assumption University President Greg Weiner, Ph.D. "These students have demonstrated a deep commitment to the pursuit of truth in the company of friends that lies at the heart of the Catholic liberal education Assumption provides."

About Assumption University

Assumption University, founded in 1904 by the Augustinians of the Assumption, is a premier New England university for high-quality education, integrating career preparation and education of the whole person, drawing upon the best in the rich and centuries-long tradition of Catholic higher education.

Assumption's graduates are known for their intellectual seriousness, thoughtful citizenship, and devotion to the common good. The University offers 37 majors and 49 minors in the liberal arts, sciences, business, nursing, professional studies, and other areas, as well as graduate degrees and professional credentials. For more information about Assumption University, please visit assumption.edu or follow us @AssumptionUMA.

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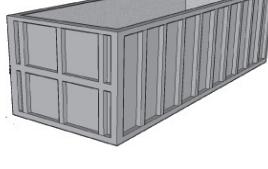


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TOWN OF SPENCER

Public Meeting —

Monday, January 26, 2026, at 6:00 PM

Valley & Mill Streets

Infrastructure Improvements

The Town of Spencer will provide a public information meeting at 6:00 PM on Monday January 26, 2026 as part of their Selectmen meeting. The meeting will be held in the McCourt Social Hall located at 157 Main Street in Spencer. Alternatively, you can attend the meeting via phone at 1-866-899-4679 using access code: 479-429-349, or via the following link: <https://www.gotomeet.me/TownofSpencerMA/boardofselectmen>.

The purpose of the meeting is to update the public on upcoming construction on Valley and Mill Streets anticipated in the spring of 2026. Construction will include sewer main lining, street drainage improvements, sidewalk construction, and repaving of the streets.

Construction is being funded by a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) provided by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and awarded by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities.

In addition to providing information about this CDBG-funded project, the Town of Spencer encourages community input on potential activities that would benefit from future CDBG funding. All community members and stakeholders are invited to attend this meeting, learn more about the Valley and Mill Streets project, and share thoughts on potential CDBG-eligible activities to be included in future grant applications.

All people with questions or comments will have an opportunity to submit written comments up until and through the public hearing. Please submit comments to Erica Johnson at the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission at ejohnson@pvpc.org or 413-781-6045. Anyone who requires special accommodations to attend this meeting should contact the Town prior to the hearing date at 508-885-7500.

For Advertising Information

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Friday's Child



Kassidy

Age 15

Registration #7379

Kassidy is a bright, energetic child with a big personality and a love for being the center of attention. She enjoys singing, dancing, and doing arts and crafts—especially when she can show off her creative side. Kassidy is imaginative and expressive, often turning everyday moments into opportunities for fun and performance. She has a great sense of humor and loves to make people laugh with her jokes and silly antics. Kassidy especially enjoys spending quality time with adults and responds well to positive attention and encouragement. She's at her best when she knows what to expect and feels supported by the people around her. Kassidy is curious, spirited, and full of life. Whether she's working on an art project or putting on a dance routine, she brings joy and excitement to every activity she takes part in.

<https://www.mareinc.org/child/22540928059>

If you're at least 18 years old, have a stable source of income, and room in your heart, you may be a perfect match to adopt a waiting child. Adoptive parents can be single, married, or partnered; experienced or not; renters or homeowners; LGBTQ+ singles and couples.

As an adoptive parent, you won't have to pay any fees, adoption from foster care is completely free in Massachusetts.

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





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FRANK G. CHILINSKI
PRESIDENT AND PUBLISHER

BRENDAN BERUBE
EDITOR

EDITORIAL

Small gestures still matter

Much of daily life moves quickly. Conversations are brief, errands are efficient, and many interactions are transactional by necessity. In that kind of pace, it is easy to overlook the impact of small, ordinary gestures.

Yet in communities like Spencer, Leicester, and the Brookfields, those small moments still carry weight.

A held door, a waved thanks, a brief check-in with a neighbor, or patience offered in a crowded parking lot may seem insignificant in isolation. Taken together, they form a tone. They shape how it feels to live in a town, to share space with others, and to navigate everyday routines with a sense of mutual regard.

These gestures are not about formality or tradition. They are about awareness. They signal that people recognize one another as more than obstacles or background noise. In smaller communities, where paths cross often, that recognition helps prevent the quiet fraying that can occur when people retreat too far into their own routines.

This matters particularly during the winter months, when days are shorter and patience can wear thin. Weather complicates travel, schedules feel tighter, and the social energy of warmer seasons is less available. Small kindnesses do not solve those challenges, but they soften them.

There is also a practical side to this. Communities function better when everyday interactions remain civil and considerate. Misunderstandings are fewer. Tensions dissipate more quickly. People are more willing to help when help is needed. None of this requires organized effort or formal programs. It begins and ends with individual choices.

It is tempting to think that meaningful change must be large or visible. In reality, the habits that sustain a community are often quiet and repetitive. They are reinforced every time someone chooses patience over irritation or courtesy over indifference.

These choices rarely draw attention, and they do not need to. Their value lies in accumulation. Over time, they shape a community that feels livable, resilient, and human.

In the end, small gestures still matter, especially when practiced consistently. They are among the simplest ways residents contribute to the shared life of their towns, without meetings, announcements, or recognition.

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.

• Friday, January 23, 2026

VIEWPOINT

OPINION AND COMMENTARY FROM SPENCER, LEICESTER AND THE BROOKFIELDS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Great, just great

To the Editor:

Does anyone remember Putin's useful idiot using the slogan "Make America Great Again?" I submit that he has behaved more like the Manchurian Candidate than the President of the United States. When he took office, we were actively supporting Ukraine resistance to a Russian invasion. It is a role we have proudly taken on the world stage, at times including committing troops to the struggle. The ones we participated in of late, would be hard to characterize as victories. Instead, the candidate who represented himself as a peace maker and adverse to military actions was elected.

Fast forward to today, and his actions could hardly be more contrary. Instead, we are following a script that Putin and Chi could have co-wrote. When your agenda includes invasion of Ukraine or Taiwan, what supports it more than the leader of the west, invading Venezuela, and threatening to also invade Columbia, Cuba and Mexico? If you have your eye on reclaiming the USSR, starting with Estonia, and Latvia, which are NATO countries we have pledged to defend with our European allies, how does threatening to seize Greenland from Denmark, impact that alliance? Is this great?

Our nation of immigrants, that chose to not pass the bipartisan immigration bill, that would have addressed and fixed many of our current issues, has instead funded a private masked armed mercenary army, poorly trained, ignorant purposely of our laws and due process (I do wonder how many of them are pardoned Jan. 6 thugs) Instead of actually focusing on gangs, rapists , drug dealers and human traffickers,

like in Nazi Germany, they go door to door, checking papers of all non-whites they encounter. People who are resistant to this behavior, take classes to learn their legal first amendment rights.

Good, the young mother shot dead by an ICE office suffering from PTSD, who cut her off and jumped in front of her car, Noem and her machine immediately blamed the dead woman, and tried to convince us that what we actually saw with our own eyes was false. The claimed the shooter was taken to the hospital. We saw him jump back in his vehicle and drive away, and his neighbor saw him return home, load his car and wife and disappear. The feds are telling us "nothing to see here"; they are withholding the evidence from the state. Great work.

The people of Minnesota are pretty fed up with the entire illegal program. When they exercise their rights and demonstrate, they are gassed and shot, with a variety of different ammo. Trump responded by tripling the offending presence. On a different channel, Iranians are protesting their government.

Just a couple months ago, we bombed Iran's nuclear labs, and have long recognized them as sponsors of terrorists worldwide. Trump is now threatening military action, in support of Iran's protesters. Is it great to kill our own protesters but support Iran's?

I will reserve comments on Epstein, grocery, insurance and utility prices , for another time, but we know they are all Great.

KEN KIMBALL
BROOKFIELD

A beacon in the storm: Why the Leicester Democratic Town Committee matters now

To the Editor:

As we head into a turbulent 2026, one truth is unmistakable. This is not a moment for complacency, silence, or retreat. It is a moment for courage, clarity, and community. The Leicester Democratic Town Committee enters this pivotal year grounded in purpose and strengthened by the people who refuse to give up on democracy, dignity, and one another.

Across our nation, democratic norms are under pressure. The rights so many fought and sacrificed for, voting rights, bodily autonomy, freedom of expression, and the promise of equal protection under the law, are being challenged in ways that feel both relentless and deeply personal. For many of our neighbors, fear has become a daily companion. Fear of discrimination. Fear of erasure. Fear that their voices no longer matter.

The Leicester Democratic Town Committee exists precisely for this moment.

Our purpose is clear. We are here to help win back our democracy, not as an abstract idea, but as a living promise that works for everyone. We believe democracy is strongest when participation is broad, when leadership is accountable, and when every person, regardless of race, gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration status, religion, or economic standing, is treated with dignity and respect. Equal rights are not negotiable. They are foundational.

In a small town like Leicester, that work takes on a special meaning. Change does not only happen in Washington or on cable news. It happens in library meeting rooms, at kitchen tables, on front porches, and in conversations between neighbors. It happens when people show up, consistently and imperfectly, but with determination, to organize, educate, and mobilize. That is the quiet strength of a local town committee, and it is a power too often

underestimated.

The Leicester Democratic Town Committee has grown not just in numbers, but in resolve. We are organizers, volunteers, parents, workers, retirees, and students united by the belief that silence is not an option. We are committed to building coalitions, supporting candidates who share our values, protecting the vote, and pushing back against hate, misinformation, and authoritarian impulses wherever they appear.

Most importantly, we aim to be a beacon of hope.

Hope for the family afraid their loved one's rights will be stripped away. Hope for the young voter wondering if their future will be safer, fairer, and more free. Hope for those who feel unseen, unheard, or targeted simply for being who they are.

Hope, however, is not passive. It is something we build together through action.

If you believe in democracy, if you believe in equal rights, and if you believe that fear should never dictate who we are or how we live, now is the time to act. Get involved. Attend meetings. Volunteer your time. Help register voters. Speak up when silence feels easier. Stand shoulder to shoulder with your neighbors. Five minutes, five hours, five weeks — whatever you can do. Every. Single. Moment. Counts. Reach out, we will figure where you can help. ldtcmass@gmail.com

The challenges ahead are real, but so is our strength. Together, the Leicester Democratic Town Committee will continue to fight for a future rooted in justice, equality, and hope. This is our moment, and it belongs to all of us.

In democracy and solidarity,

ELIZABETH M. ZITO
CHAIR
LEICESTER DEMOCRATIC TOWN
COMMITTEE

Notes on Trump's last week of ongoing chaos and destruction

To the Editor:

First, Minneapolis. Remember here that the initial issue concerned fraud, not violent crime. Nevertheless, the Trump administration flooded the city with up to 3,000 Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers. This week the Department of Justice lawyers who investigated the fraud and got indictments, arrests, of admittance of guilt etc. all resigned, The reasons? Rather than investigating the shooting of a non-violent protester, the Trump Administration wanted the government to focus on the woman killed and her partner.

Also, right away, the FBI took over the investigation and excluded local police and officials.

Then came news that the Trump administration had opened a criminal investigation of the Democratic Minnesota Governor and Minneapolis Mayor. While outraged at the activities of ICE Agents and the statements of guilt ,without evidence, by Trump and Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, the two officials have consistently called for the people of the city to remain calm and respect the law.

Finally, over the weekend, information came out that the Trump seems to have put a U.S. Army unit on alert to intervene in Minneapolis.

Next, we have Trump wanting to "own" Greenland, which is part of the country of

Turn To LETTER page A5

Why Social Security matters more for women



FINANCIAL FOCUS

TREVOR NIELSEN

When planning for retirement, Social Security isn't just another item on your financial checklist. For women especially, it's often the cornerstone of a secure retirement. The Social Security Administration reports that nearly 55 percent of Social Security benefit recipients are women, and for many, it's their primary source of retirement income.

Unlike investments that can lose value when the market drops, Social Security provides guaranteed income that adjusts for inflation and generally lasts as long as you live. That reliability makes it valuable for helping to address two major retirement risks: rising costs and the possibility of outliving your savings.

Life expectancy. On average, women live about five years longer than men (CDC 2023 Life Expectancy measure). That means they rely on Social Security for a longer period, making the decision of when to start benefits especially important.

Taking Social Security early reduces your monthly benefit. You can claim benefits as early as age 62, but every year you wait increases your monthly payments by two-thirds of 1%, or 8% per year, maxing out at age 70. Given women's longer life expectancy, that patience can pay off.

Building your benefit. Your Social Security benefit depends on your 35 highest-earning years. If you have years with zero or very low earnings in that calculation, it can reduce what you receive in retirement. Many women step away from work or reduce their hours to care for family members, and that trend is increasing. A 2025 University of Kansas analysis found that the share of mothers with children under age five leaving the workforce fell more in early 2025 than at any point in the past 40 years. The study also noted that rising return-to-office policies may continue to impact working mothers.

While staying in the workforce builds a stronger earnings history and better benefits, that isn't realistic for everyone. Those who can't may need to plan and fund alternative sources for retirement income.

Protection for married women. Marriage can provide additional Social Security options. A lower-earning spouse may receive up to 50 percent of their partner's full retirement-age benefit.

If your spouse dies, you can receive the higher of your own benefit or up to 100 percent of your deceased spouse's benefit. However, if you remarry before age 60 (age 50 for disabled widows), you lose eligibility for survivor benefits from your late spouse while the new marriage lasts.

Women divorced after at least 10 years of marriage may qualify for benefits based on an ex-spouse's record. If you remarry, you forfeit spousal benefits while the new marriage continues.

A word of wisdom: Report any name changes following marriage or divorce to the Social Security Administration to ensure your earnings and benefits are correctly credited.

Navigate carefully. Given the complexity of Social Security rules, the unique retirement challenges women face and the lasting impact of claiming decisions, working with a qualified financial advisor can be invaluable. An advisor can help you navigate questions about timing, spousal benefits and how Social Security fits into your overall retirement plan.

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.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

More kings & queens' taxes?

To the Editor:

A few weeks ago, I submitted a letter basically stating the Massachusetts state government kingdom runs without regards of us citizens who they're supposed to work for. I've discovered a few more examples to further prove my point.

First, Mass. State Sen. Cynthia Stone Creem (D-Newton) has filed a bill that will restrict the public of the number of statewide driving miles. The legislation is titled "An Act Aligning the Commonwealth's Transportation Plan with its Mandates and Goals for Reducing Emissions and Vehicle Miles Traveled" (S.2246). She calls this "the Freedom to Move Act," but the purpose is the exact opposite. Sen. Stone Creem, in defending this bill, says it does not limit people's choices about how to get around, impose fines, penalties, or taxes. But language in the bill wants "identification and discussion of current policies and recommendations for policies, laws, and regulatory actions (penalties in some form including additional taxes) that may facilitate reductions in vehicle miles traveled."

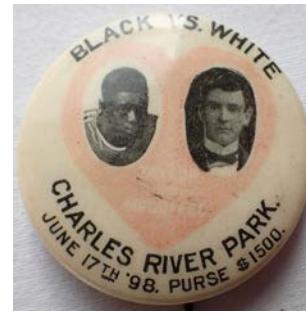
What's not asked is "how is the state going to pay for this?" What about the parts of the State whose businesses heavily rely on tourism (Cape Cod, Western Mass for example) for their existence? Have they thought about the lost tax revenue from these businesses? How about the lost tax revenue from our present gas tax, which is already declining due to electric vehicles. The thought of losing tax revenue will drive the Statehouse Liberals nuts! Seeing Sen. Stone Creem is from Newton, which is a MBTA community, and has easy access to mass transit, has she or anyone else considered the communities that have no mass transit, like the communities of far Western Mass, most parts of Central Mass outside of Worcester, and Cape Cod? Being familiar with the Cape, if one wants to travel anywhere there, one needs a vehicle.

Second, I wonder how many voters have ever heard of the "Clean Heat Tax" or better known as the "Clean Heat Standard?" According to the Mass. Fiscal Alliance this program was (emphasis on "was," past tense) scheduled to begin in 2026. The Clean Heat Standard is a "regulatory mandate designed to force" consumers away from traditional home heating fuels and into electrification as part of the State's Net Zero by 2050 agenda. How is electricity manufactured? By fossil fuel generating plants mostly. Independent analysis estimates this policy will increase yearly home heating costs by \$255 to \$425 per household, with the heaviest burden falling on working families, small businesses, and retired senior citizens who can least afford it. Has the State considered nuclear power which, according to a MFA report, would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 92 percent at a fraction of the cost of wind and solar projects while being a more reliable power source?

As I previously stated, this was slated to begin this year, but has been delayed until Jan. 1, 2028. This delay ensures the policy will not take effect until after the 2026 gubernatorial election and during the first full winter of Gov. Healy's second term, should she win again. If Gov. Healy thinks this is a good policy, then there should be no delay in the implementation. Secretly delaying an expensive new tax on those who are already having financial troubles is not the way to put the people first. Whatever happened to our freedom of choice, be it driving or what to use to heat our homes?

With these new mandates being potentially rammed onto us residents of Massachusetts by our own kings and queens, there are those who worry and complain about President Trump's kingdom. Let's take care of Mass. first.

JOHN SHOCK
CHERRY VALLEY



Today's column will focus on pinback buttons. Pinback buttons are usually round metal discs with a pin attached to the back that you can wear on a shirt, jacket, etc. We often associate them with political campaigns, but they were used in advertising, political messaging, and for other purposes.

I'll start by providing some history on pinback buttons. Prior to pinbacks several variations of clothes fastener buttons were created by craftsmen to commemorate George Washington's inauguration in 1789. Mount Vernon has nine different inaugural button versions in their collection, according to their website. One has an eagle with the date March 4, 1789, when Washington was originally scheduled to be inaugurated. It was rescheduled to April 30. Another popular president's campaign advanced the use of buttons. During Lincoln's 1860

Pinback buttons



campaign ferrotype (also known as tintype) photographs were made into campaign buttons. The images on thin metal sheets were reproduced and typically inserted inside of brass holders with campaign messages embossed on the brass. In 1896, the Whitehead and Hoag Company began producing brightly colored

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pinback buttons using a new plastic material called celluloid.

Political buttons are some of the most popular with collectors. The American Political Items Collectors group lists several subcategories of pinbacks. Some are presidential campaigns, focus on a single election year, single political parties, 3D items, local campaigns, Women's Suffrage movement, Prohibition movement, social causes, and Civil Rights.

Other types of collectible pinback buttons include comic characters, events, advertising, funny or serious sayings, entertainment, and sports.

You can buy some pinbacks for under a dollar while others can sell well into the thousands, and

we've seen some good results in our auctions. A group of political pinbacks, including McKinley for president, sold for over \$200. A group of 17 advertising, souvenir, Temperance Movement, circus & other pinbacks went for \$330 in 2024.

As you might expect, sports related pinbacks are some of the most collectibles. Twelve early 1900s tobacco premium and 1930 Cracker Jack baseball pinbacks brought over \$260. Major Taylor was an African American cyclist who lived in Worcester and is in the U.S. Bicycling Hall of Fame. A pinback button labeled "Black vs. White" promoted an 1898 race between Taylor and Eddie McDuffee. It sold in one of our 2022 auctions for over \$1,400.

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paid \$45 for what took him about 10 minutes to design the image for the State Mutual Life Assurance Company. Smiley face pinback buttons with the original State Mutual markings on the back have recently sold between \$10 and \$60 in online auctions. It's not a windfall but still enough to put a smile on your face.

The single-collector Civil War auction we've been working on will begin soon.

We're preparing for a major auction with fine jewelry, sterling silver, art, and other antiques and collectibles that will take place after that.

We also have been accepting consignments for a major sports and comic book auction that will take place in the summer. It will feature the first baseball Ted Williams signed when he signed a contract with the Boston Red Sox. 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).

LETTER

continued from page A4

our NATO ally, Denmark. All along, Denmark and people in Greenland have indicated they would be happy now, as in the past, to welcome more (some are already stationed there) American armed services.

However, they do not want to "sell" themselves or Greenland to the United States. Because of its effect on our most important military alliance, I cannot overstate the terrible effect of Trump saying he wants to own Greenland and his administration supporting

him.

To counter his demand and show support, many of our closest European allies immediately sent small groups to their military to Greenland. Likewise, both Republican and Democratic members of Congress immediately flew to Denmark to indicate their support for its position.

And never forget that global warming gets worse and worse. Scientists yet again say the damage to us continues and will get worse.

Finally, also do not forget that we continue to lose friends while our adversar-

ies get stronger and stronger. An example of each.

Our excellent neighbor Canada, with a patriotic and very wise leader, moves more and more away from the United States, making economic deals with Europe and China and reducing ties to Trump's America and our economy.

Finally, China has announced its greatest trade surplus which economists say is also the greatest in recorded history. Economists say the only way we can now compete with China is to have our economies work closely with European (and

Canadian and Mexican) economies. However, what does Trump now do? He imposes more tariffs on European countries that agree with Denmark and Greenland.

Is what Trump does and wants good for our communities, us, our and our children and grandchildren? Or should we try, peacefully, and democratically, to do our best to change the situation? Poll after poll indicate that up to two out of every three Americans do not approve of most of the things Trump does.

KEVIN KANE
SPENCER

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New storytelling group, The Story Exchange, forming in Brookfield

BROOKFIELD — A new community storytelling group, The Story Exchange, is forming in Brookfield and will hold its organizational meeting at 6 p.m. on Tuesday,

Feb. 10 at the Merrick Public Library Annex, 18 Common St., Brookfield.

The Story Exchange is designed for indi-

viduals interested in telling and developing true, personal stories, shared aloud in a supportive, structured environment. The group emphasizes storytelling craft, focused lis-

tening, and constructive feedback, and welcomes participants of all experience levels. Stories shared during meetings are expected to be true, personal narratives, typically five to seven minutes in length, focused on a single moment or experience rather than a full life history.

The group will be facilitated by Joe Klimavich, an accredited public relations consultant and adjunct professor of communication at Worcester State University, who has taught effective speaking and communication courses for many years. While facilitated, The Story Exchange is intended to be largely member-driven, with participants shaping discussions, stories, and feedback through shared experience.

If you've lived a little, noticed a lot, and you're curious about shaping real moments into meaningful, well-told stories, you'll feel at home with this group.

"As a public relations professional and educator, telling stories - my own and those of my clients - has always been central to my work," said Klimavich. "Inspired by programs like The Moth and Stories from the Stage, The Story Exchange grew out of a belief in the power of true stories, told well, and the value of listening as much as sharing."

Participation will be limited to six to eight storytellers per session. There is no cost to participate, but advance registration is required. Interested individuals should send a brief introductory email to joe.klimavich@gmail.com and indicate whether you are interested in sharing a story during the first meeting.

Following the organizational meeting, The Story Exchange will meet on the first Tuesday of each month at the Merrick Public Library Annex.

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From Uganda to Jamaica

VISITING PRIEST CONNECTS WITH SAINT JOSEPH STUDENTS

WEBSTER — Saint Joseph School recently welcomed Fr. James Kandole Saturday, a Catholic priest serving in Jamaica, for a two-day visit on Tuesday, Dec. 2, and Wednesday, Dec. 3. Fr. Saturday is a longtime friend of Rev. Richard Polek, pastor of Saint Joseph Parish, and the two met through Food for the Poor, an international relief and development organization that supports communities in need through emergency aid and long-term assistance, including housing and other basic necessities.

Fr. Saturday began his visit by joining the school community for its Advent Prayer Service on Tuesday morning. Afterward, he spent the day in the school's classrooms, meeting students and staff across every grade level. Teachers noted how naturally he connected with younger children—at times sitting on the floor with them to talk about their interests and questions. In the Pre-K 3 classroom, Fr. Saturday used a small Nativity set as a hands-on way to discuss the birth of Jesus, helping students reflect on the meaning of the season in an age-appropriate, engaging way.

Later that afternoon, students in Grades 5–8 gathered in the parish center for an energetic question-and-answer session. Students asked everything from his favorite foods—such as matoke (green bananas) and Jamaica's well-known jerk chicken—to thoughtful questions about his childhood in Uganda, his decision to become a priest, his favorite Bible verse, and his guiding purpose in life. Fr. Saturday emphasized a consistent theme throughout the discussion: his hope is to help others "fall in love with God," encouraging students to live with humility, perseverance, and trust in God.

Middle school students were especially interested in Fr. Saturday's reflections on his ministry in Jamaica and his community's experience during Hurricane Melissa, a Category 5 storm that struck Jamaica in 2025. He spoke candidly about the fear and uncertainty of the hurricane, the practical steps people took to find safety, and the



Courtesy

Saint Joseph School National Junior Honor Society member Axel Kapitulik (Grade 8) presents a \$500 check to Fr. James Kandole Saturday. The donation will support Fr. Saturday's ministry and help fund repairs to his church following Hurricane Melissa, a Category 5 hurricane that struck Jamaica in October 2025.

lasting emotional impact of the destruction—while also sharing a message of faith and resilience in the aftermath.

Fr. Saturday returned on Wednesday for a final gathering with the entire student body. Beth Boudreau, Principal of Saint Joseph School, presented him with a school gift bag and Saint Joseph School items as a token of appreciation. During the assembly, the Saint Joseph School National Junior Honor Society (NJHS)—advised by Mrs. Karen Lefebvre—presented Fr. Saturday with a \$500 donation to support his church's work.

NJHS is a national student organization that recognizes middle school students for

scholarship, leadership, service, character, and citizenship. At Saint Joseph School, members commit to service throughout the year and organize regular fundraisers to support a variety of charitable causes—both local and beyond. The donation to Fr. Saturday's ministry is one example of how NJHS students at Saint Joseph School put their values into action through planned giving and ongoing service initiatives.

The assembly concluded with the school community singing "Sto Lat" and taking a group photo with Fr. Saturday. Staff and students expressed gratitude for his visit and shared hope that he will return to Saint Joseph School again in the future.



Fr. James Kandole Saturday sits with Saint Joseph School's PreK three-year-old students during his classroom visit, speaking about the Nativity and the birth of Jesus as the children listen attentively.

Sheriff's Office announces promotion of local correctional officer

WEST BOYLSTON — Worcester County Sheriff Lew Evangelidis is proud to announce the promotion of four officers to the rank of sergeant at the Worcester County Jail and House of Correction. Among those advancing from officer to sergeant is Andrew Schuler of Spencer.

In their new roles, these sergeants will take on increased leadership responsibilities, including supervising officers and civilian staff, overseeing inmate activities, and ensuring the safety and security of both staff and inmates within the facility.

"These promotions recognize individ-

uals who consistently demonstrate leadership, professionalism, and a deep commitment to public safety," said Sheriff Lew Evangelidis. "Each of these officers has distinguished themselves through their dedication and ability to lead by example. I am confident they will continue to strengthen our mission to serve the residents of Worcester County with integrity and excellence."

The Worcester County Jail and House of Correction houses pre-trial detainees and inmates serving sentences of 2.5 years or less. In addition to managing the facility, the sheriff's office operates community resource centers in Fitchburg, Worcester, and Webster.

For more information about the Worcester County Sheriff's Office and opportunities to join as a Correctional Officer, please visit www.WorcesterCountySheriff.com.



Courtesy

Sheriff Evangelidis (Right) and Sergeant Andrew Schuler (Left).

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OBITUARIES

Diane Ruth Valencourt, 79



N O R T H
BROOKFIELD- Diane Ruth Valencourt, 79, of North Brookfield, passed away peacefully on January 8, 2026 surrounded by the family she loved so dearly.

She was born on May 23, 1946, in Ware, MA the daughter of the late Harold and Helen (Lyons) Chenevert. She grew up in North Brookfield alongside her four siblings and was a proud graduate of North Brookfield High School, Class of 1964.

On July 15, 1967, Diane married the love of her life, Joseph A. "Joe" Valencourt Jr. Together, they built a life centered on the values of family and community. While raising her children, Diane operated a beloved childcare business out of her home for over 20 years, touching the lives of many local families. Later in life, she brought her warmth and gift for conversation to the North Brookfield Newsroom, where she served as a cook and server for over nine years.

Diane was known for her vibrant, outgoing personality. She was a dedicated member of the Theatre Guild of North Brookfield, where she shared her talents in numerous productions, often appearing on stage alongside her family members.

Family was the single most important thing in Diane's life; she structured every activity to ensure her loved ones were near. She especially cherished summers at Old Orchard Beach and peaceful trips to Ogunquit, Maine, with her husband, Joe.

Her memory lives on through her children Michelle L. Lucchesi and her husband Christopher, Joseph A. "Jay" Valencourt III and his wife Deirdre and David M. Valencourt. She was the "Nana" who cherished her six grandchildren Sarah, Jordyn, Julia, Olivia, Joey, and Max; two great-grandchildren Fox and Wren; siblings, Richard Chenevert, Harold Chenevert Jr and his wife Esther, Judith Novak & her husband Paul and Joseph Chenevert and his wife Judy, as well as many cherished nieces, nephews and friends. Her adored cat Pumpkin will miss her. Diane was predeceased by her beloved husband, Joseph A. Valencourt Jr. and a granddaughter Macy.

Friends and loved ones are invited to attend a graveside service and celebration of Diane's remarkable life to be announced in the Spring. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made in Diane's name to the Theatre Guild of North Brookfield 1205 Oakham Rd New Braintree, MA 01531. Arrangements are under the care of Pillsbury Funeral Home 44 Gilbert St North Brookfield.



Robert A. Jackman, 89

North Brookfield - Robert A. Jackman, 89, of North Brookfield, passed away on Monday, January 12, 2026, surrounded by his loving family at home.

He leaves behind his beloved wife of 61 years, Patricia E. Jackman; his daughter, Martha L. Conley and her husband, Steve, of Standish, ME; his son, Peter W. Jackman and his wife, Patty, of Baiting Hollow, NY; his four beloved grandchildren, Joshua and James Conley, and Sarah and Tyler Klos; as well as his brother, Paul Jackman of GA, and his sister, Lynne Pincince of Hillsboro, NH. He was born in Saugus, MA, son of the late Edward and Doris Jackman.

Bob earned his bachelor's degree from Northeastern University and later went on to earn his Master of Divinity from the former Bangor Theological Seminary. In his spare time, he loved visiting the White Mountains in New Hampshire, and Downeast Maine. In his younger years, he enjoyed tent-trailer and travel-trailer camping with Pat and the kids. More

recently, he visited Bermuda, Scotland, Alaska, and made a western states National Parks tour. He enjoyed watching the Red Sox play, and playing the occasional round of golf, as well as solving crossword puzzles. He also enjoyed indulging in sweets. However, the time he could spend with his family was that which he loved most of all.

Calling hours for Robert were held on Friday, January 16, 2026, from 4:00PM to 6:00PM in Varnum Funeral Home, 43 E Main Street, West Brookfield, MA 01585. A Funeral Service was held the following day, Saturday, January 17, 2026, at 11:00AM in West Brookfield Congregational Church, 36 North Main Street, West Brookfield, MA 01585. Burial will be held in Walnut Grove Cemetery in North Brookfield in the spring.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Sharing Cupboard Food Pantry, PO Box 371, West Brookfield, MA 01585.

Varnum Funeral Home is honored to serve the Jackman family. An online tribute page is available at varnumfuneral-home.com.

Send all obituary notices to Stonebridge Press, PO Box 90, Southbridge, MA 01550, or by e-mail to obits@stonebridgepress.news

LEGALS

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

The Trial Court Probate and Family Court

Worcester Probate and Family Court

225 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01608

Docket No. WO26P0061GD

NOTICE AND ORDER:

Petition for Appointment

of Guardian of a Minor

In the interests of

Alayna Rondeau

of Spener, MA

Minor

NOTICE TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES

1. Hearing Date/Time: A hearing on a Petition for Appointment of Guardian of a Minor filed by on 01/08/2026 by Derek J. Ingalis of Falmouth, MA will be held 02/05/2026 08:30 AM Guardianship of Minor Hearing

Located Worcester Probate & Family Court

2. 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.

ORDER TO PETITIONER(S)

IT IS ORDERED THAT copies of this Notice and the Petition for Appointment of Guardian of a Minor be served in hand on the minor, (if 14 or more years of age and not the petitioner), the guardian, the parents of the minor, and any other person if ordered by the Court, at least **fourteen (14)** days prior to the hearing date listed above. **Service must be made by the sheriff, constable, or other person approved by the Court.**

If service in hand cannot be accomplished on any interested party. **IT IS ORDERED** that copies of this Notice and the Petition for Appointment of Guardian of a Minor be served on the interested party by leaving at and mailing by regular first class mail to last and usual place of residence of the

interested party at least **fourteen (14) days** prior to the date of hearing listed above.

If the identity of whereabouts of an interested party is **not known**, **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that copies of this Notice and Petition for Appointment of Guardian of a Minor be served on all interested persons at least **fourteen (14)** days prior to the hearing date by mailing first class mail and by publishing a copy of the Order and Notice once in **Webster Times, Webster** publication to be at least **Seven (7)** days prior to the hearing date.

If required, service on the United States Veteran Administration and the Department of Children and Families may be accomplished by regular first class mail at least **Seven (7)** days prior to the hearing.

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: January 8, 2026

Stephanie K. Fattman

Register of Probate

January 23, 2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court

Probate and Family Court

Worcester Probate and Family Court

225 Main Street

Worcester, MA 01608

(508) 831-2200

Docket No. WO26P0089EA

CITATION ON PETITION FOR

FORMAL ADJUDICATION

Estate Of:

Larry M McPartland

Date of Death: 07/01/2025

To all interested persons:

A Petition for **Formal Adjudication of Intestacy and Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Michael McPartland of North Brookfield MA** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that:

Michael McPartland of North Brookfield MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **With Personal Surety** on the bond in unsupervised administration.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: **10:00 a.m. on the return day of 02/10/2026**.

This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day,

action may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)

A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.

WITNESS, Hon. Kathryn M. Bailey, First Justice of this Court.

Date: January 12, 2026

Stephanie Fattman,

Register of Probate

January 23, 2026

TOWN OF BROOKFIELD

BOARD OF HEALTH

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Wednesday, January 28th, 2026,

at 7:00pm

Banquet Room, Brookfield Town

Hall, 6 Central Street,

Brookfield, MA

In accordance with provisions of G.L. c.111, §31, the Board of Health will hold a Public Hearing on Wednesday, January 28th, 2026, at 7:00pm in the Banquet Room of the Brookfield Town Hall located at 6 Central Street, Brookfield, MA 01506, to review and hear comments relative to a proposed amendment to the Board of Health Regulation entitled Restricting the Sale of Tobacco Products. Proposed amendment in the draft regulation include, but are not limited to, amending restrictions on the sale of and the nicotine content of oral nicotine pouches.

The proposed regulation can be reviewed by contacting the Brookfield Board of Health at (508) 867-2930 extension 22 and may be found at www.mytowngovernment.org/01506 under Board of Health

Any person interested or wishing to be heard on this proposed regulation should appear at the time and place designated.

January 9, 2026

January 16, 2026

January 23, 2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

The Trial Court

Probate and Family Court

Worcester Probate and Family Court

225 Main Street

Worcester, MA, 01608

Docket No. WO26P0092GD

CITATION GIVING NOTICE OF

PETITION FOR APPOINTMENT OF

GUARDIAN FOR INCAPACITATED

PERSON PURSUANT TO

G. L.c. 1908, § 5-304

In the matter of:

Eric Gerhard

Of: West Brookfield, MA

RESPONDENT

Alleged Incapacitated Person

To the named Respondent and all oth-

er interested persons, a petition has been filed by **Department Of Developmental Serv of Worcester, MA** in the above captioned matter alleging that **Eric Gerhard** is in need of a Guardian and requesting that

Adam S. Gerhard of Newmarket, NH **Jeremy Gerhard of Southfield, MI** (or some other suitable person) be appointed as Guardian to serve **Without Surety** on the bond.

The petition asks the court to determine that the Respondent is incapacitated, that the appointment of a Guardian is necessary, and that the proposed Guardian is appropriate. The petition is on file with this court.

You have the right to object to this proceeding. If you wish to do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance at this court on or before 10:00 A.M. on the return date of **02/10/2026**. This day is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline date by which you have to file the written appearance if you object to the petition. If you fail to file the written appearance by the return date, action may be taken in this matter without further notice to you. In addition to filing the written appearance, you or your attorney must file a written affidavit stating the specific facts and grounds of your objection within 30 days after the return date.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The outcome of this proceeding may limit or completely take away the above-named person's right to make decisions about personal affairs or financial affairs or both. The above-named person has the right to ask for a lawyer. Anyone may make this request on behalf of the above-named person. If the above-named person cannot afford a lawyer, one may be appointed at State expense.

WITNESS, on. Kathryn M. Bailey, First Justice of this Court.

Date: January 12, 2026

Stephanie K. Fattman

Register of Probate

January 23, 2026

Lanterns Along Main Street

There was a time when every important message in life arrived in an envelope.

You could tell what kind of day it was going to be by the look of the mail. A thick envelope meant paperwork. A thin one with careful handwriting meant something better. Sometimes it was a birthday card. Sometimes it was a note from an old friend who had not forgotten you. Either way, it required a small ritual. You carried it inside. You sat down. You opened it slowly. You read it more than once.

These days, most of our messages arrive silently. They pop onto a screen and vanish with the swipe of a finger. Efficient, yes. Convenient, absolutely. But I sometimes wonder what we lost when we stopped holding words in our hands.

I was reminded of this last week, when I found a small stack of old letters tucked inside a desk drawer. They were not famous letters. No historic figures. No dramatic confessions. They were simple notes from people who mattered to me at different points in life. A thank-you card from a neighbor after we helped move a couch. A short letter from a relative who has since passed. A postcard sent from a vacation years ago, the handwriting slightly crooked, the ink faded around the edges.

What struck me was not the content alone. It was the care. Someone took time to sit down, choose a pen, and

LANTERNS ALONG MAIN STREET By CHARLES

shape each word. Someone thought enough of me to place a stamp in the corner and walk it to a mailbox. That effort carried meaning all its own.

In our Massachusetts towns, we still see glimpses of that slower rhythm. You notice it when someone holds the door at the post office and waits, rather than rushing past. You see it when neighbors exchange Christmas cards that arrive days after the holiday, yet feel no less warm. You hear it when someone says, "I wanted to tell you this in person," and means it.

We live in a world that rewards speed. Faster replies. Faster news. Faster everything. There is nothing wrong with progress. I appreciate being able to check in on family with a quick message or send a photo across the state in seconds. But speed should not replace intention.

There is something grounding about slowing down long enough to put thoughts on paper. When you write a letter, you tend to choose words more carefully. You pause. You reconsider. You often soften your tone because you know the message cannot be edited after it is sent. That alone might improve a few conversations in modern life.

I am not suggesting we abandon technology or return to quill pens and candlelight. I am suggesting we remember that human connection benefits from effort.

A handwritten note does not need to be long. It does not need perfect grammar. It needs sincerity.

Imagine what would happen if more of us sent a simple card to a teacher who made a difference, a neighbor who checked in during a tough week, or a family member who rarely hears how much they matter. Those envelopes would carry more than paper. They would carry recognition.

Our small towns have always thrived on these quiet gestures. The casserole dropped off without being asked. The wave to a familiar face at the grocery store. The short conversation at the hardware counter that turns into advice about life rather than screws. These are the lanterns along our main streets. They do not blaze. They glow steadily, guiding us back to one another.

This week, I plan to write a few notes and send them the old-fashioned way. No special occasion. No dramatic reason. Simply a reminder to people I appreciate that they are seen and valued.

If you are looking for a simple way to make the world around you feel a little warmer, consider doing the same. Write one letter. Address one envelope. Drop it in the mailbox and walk away knowing you have sent something more lasting than a notification.

In a fast-moving world, choosing to slow down, even briefly, can feel quietly revolutionary. And sometimes, the smallest acts carry the brightest light.

— Spencer

Brookfields Lions Club accepting scholarship applications

NORTH BROOKFIELD — The Brookfields Lions Club is now accepting applications for its annual scholarship program, according to club president Bill Cass.

Each year, the club awards a scholarship of up to \$1,000 to a graduating senior in each of the club's member communities, Cass said. Recipients of the 2026 Brookfields Lions Club scholarship awards will be announced in June.

To qualify for consideration, applicants must live in one of the member communities — Brookfield, East Brookfield, North Brookfield, West Brookfield, and New

Braintree — and submit an application before their school's spring break. The application must include the student's class rank and be signed by the school's guidance director.

The application form is now available for download on the club's website at brookfieldslionsclub.org/scholarships. The completed form should be mailed to the scholarship selection committee care of Brookfields Lions Club, Scholarship Committee, P.O. Box 128, North Brookfield, MA 01535.

For additional information, please contact the Brookfields Lions Club at brookfieldslionsclub@gmail.com.

WEEKLY POLICE BLOTTER

Spencer
There were no current arrest logs available as of our press deadline for this week's edition.

Leicester
The Leicester Police Department reported the following arrests from Jan. 1-14.

Jose Gonzalez Santana, age 43, of Spencer was arrested on Jan. 1 for Failure to Appear Upon Recognition, operating an Uninsured and Unregistered Motor Vehicle, and providing a false ID to law enforcement.

An individual whose identity has been withheld from publication received a summons in lieu of arrest on Jan. 1 for Carrying a Dangerous Weapon (a stun gun).

Thomas Michael Martin, age 64, of Spencer was arrested on Jan. 2 for Operating Under the Influence (liquor), Negligent Operation of a Motor Vehicle, a Marked Lanes Violation, and Possession of an Open Container of Alcohol in a Motor Vehicle.

Two individuals whose identities have been withheld from publication each received a summons in lieu of arrest on Jan.

3 for Larceny in an amount Over \$1,200.

An individual whose identity has been withheld from publication received a summons in lieu of arrest on Jan. 5 for Larceny in an amount under \$1,200.

Steven Frank Lewis, age 76, of Cherry Valley was arrested on Jan. 6 for Assault & Battery with a Dangerous Weapon.

An individual whose identity has been withheld from publication received a summons in lieu of arrest on Jan. 8 for Unlicensed Operation of a Motor Vehicle and Use of an Electronic Device While Operating a Motor Vehicle (first offense).

Famata J. Kennedy, age 36, of Southbridge was arrested on Jan. 8 for Failure to Appear in Court After Release and Unlicensed Operation of a Motor Vehicle.

Saimir Sulce, age 64, of Worcester was arrested on Jan. 9 for Shoplifting By Concealing Merchandise.

An individual whose identity has been withheld from publication received a summons in lieu of arrest on Jan. 12 for Unlicensed Operation of a Motor Vehicle and a Motor Vehicle Lights Violation.

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Local students earn Dean's List honors at Nichols College

DUDLEY — Nichols College is proud to recognize the academic accomplishments of students on the fall 2025 Dean's List.

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

The following local students have achieved Dean's List honors for the fall 2025 semester:

Zoe Cataldo of N. Brookfield
Colin Wallace of N. Brookfield
About Nichols College

Nichols College has earned business accreditation from the prestigious Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB International), the longest serving global accrediting body for business schools and the largest business education network connecting learners, educators, and businesses worldwide. Founded in 1815, Nichols transforms today's students into tomorrow's leaders through a dynamic, career-focused business and professional education. Nichols offers real-world learning focused on professional depth - combined with vibrant living, competitive athletics, and an unmatched alumni advantage - equipping students to exceed their own expectations. www.nichols.edu

Local students earn President's List honors at Nichols College

DUDLEY — Nichols College is proud to recognize the academic accomplishments of students on the fall 2025 President's List.

President's List recognizes those students who achieve high grades during a single semester. Students whose semester grade point average is 3.85 or higher for at least 12 undergraduate credit-hours and no grades below B- will receive President's List honors.

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

Kiana Barnes of E. Brookfield
Dylan Clark of Brookfield
Faith Lamonda of Spencer
Brennan Ogert of Spencer
Jett Reilly of Spencer

About Nichols College

Nichols College has earned business accreditation from the prestigious Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB International), the longest serving global accrediting body for business schools and the largest business education network connecting learners, educators, and businesses worldwide. Founded in 1815, Nichols transforms today's students into tomorrow's leaders through a dynamic, career-focused business and professional education. Nichols offers real-world learning focused on professional depth - combined with vibrant living, competitive athletics, and an unmatched alumni advantage - equipping students to exceed their own expectations. www.nichols.edu

Hofstra University congratulates Fall Dean's List students

HEMPSTEAD, N.Y. — Hofstra University congratulates the students named to the fall 2025 Dean's List for their outstanding academic achievements. Students must earn a grade point average of at least 3.5 during the semester to make the Dean's List.

Abbi Lane of Leicester.

Elizabeth Manfield of Spencer

Jessica McCarthy of Spencer

Jenna Oberg of N Brookfield

Hofstra University's primary mission is to provide a quality education to its students in an environment that encourages, nurtures, and supports learning. At Hofstra, new ideas take shape through collaboration, engagement, and interaction. Hofstra students create their success with small classes and dedicated faculty, alongside a beautiful campus, plus all the opportunities of New York City within easy reach.

Music & Movement at the Merrick Public Library in Brookfield

BROOKFIELD — Every Wednesday from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., join Julie at the Merrick Public Library in Brookfield for songs kids know and love! Stretch, move, sing, and dance, all while developing early literacy skills through music and rhythm! Recommended for ages five and under, but all ages are welcome. Drop in—no registration necessary. This program is sponsored by the Jeppson Memorial Grant and the Friends of the Merrick Public Library.

Lasell University's Dillon Winkelmann receives Collaboration Recognition Award

NEWTON — Dillon Winkelmann of Spencer was selected to receive the Collaboration Recognition Award at Lasell University for the Fall 2025 semester. This peer-nominated award recognizes students who demonstrate excellence in collaboration through effective communication, idea-sharing, and teamwork. The award reflects Lasell's emphasis on collaboration as a core learning outcome and a key career readiness competency identified by the National Association of Colleges & Employers.

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* June Cazeault * Laurie Sullivan* Lori Johnson-Chausse * William Gilmore II * Maureen Cimoch * Bryan Pelletier

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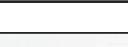
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Leicester Democratic Town Committee to hold 2026 Democratic Caucus

LEICESTER — The Leicester Democratic Town Committee (LDT) will hold its 2026 Democratic Caucus on Monday,

March 9, at the Leicester Public Library, located at 1136 Main St., Leicester.

The caucus will begin promptly

at 6 p.m., with doors opening at 5 p.m. Registration will open at 5:30 p.m. and close at 6:15 p.m. All eligible Democrats are encouraged to arrive early to ensure timely registration and participation.

Democratic caucuses are an important part of the party's grassroots

process, allowing registered Democrats to participate in the selection of delegates and alternates to Democratic conventions and to engage directly in party governance at the local level.

Participants must be registered Democrats in the Town of Leicester and meet all eligibility requirements as outlined by the Massachusetts Democratic Party. Same-day party registration may be available in accordance with party rules.

The caucus location is ADA accessible. Individuals requiring other aids are encouraged to contact the Leicester Democratic Town Committee in advance at ldtcmass@gmail.com so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

The Leicester Democratic Town Committee welcomes community members who are interested in civic engagement, democratic participation, and helping shape the future of the Democratic Party in Leicester and across the Commonwealth.

For additional information or questions regarding the caucus, please contact the Leicester Democratic Town

Committee at ldtcmass@gmail.com or other auxiliary aids, are encouraged to contact the Leicester Democratic Town Committee in advance at ldtcmass@gmail.com so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

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**Natassia Rodriguez
of North Brookfield
achieves Dean's List at
NECC**

HAVERHILL — Congratulations to Natassia Rodriguez of North Brookfield on being named to the Northern Essex Community College Fall 2025 Dean's List.

To be included, students must attain a grade point average of 3.3 or higher within the term, carry six or more credits within the term, and be matriculated in a degree program.

Northern Essex Community College, the first federally designated Hispanic Serving Institution in New England, is an education leader for the Merrimack Valley. Through a supportive learning environment and cultural inclusion, NECC embraces all identities and inspires initiative and excellence through top-notch affordable certificate and associate degree programs online and at campuses in Haverhill and Lawrence. NECC offers many bachelor's degree transfer options, workforce development and community education classes, and is host to the NECC Police Academy, MassHire Merrimack Valley, and Gallaudet University's Regional Center for the deaf and hard of hearing. Visit Northern Essex online at www.necc.mass.edu.

Brookfield Council on Aging hosting seminar on thinking ahead

BROOKFIELD — The Brookfield Council On Aging invites the community to a seminar, "Something to Think About: Planning Ahead, Being Prepared," on Tuesday, Feb. 10 at 10:30 a.m. Lunch will be served.

Pre-sign up is required by e-mailing seniors@brookfieldma.us, or you may drop by in person Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, 10 a.m.-noon at the Brookfield Congregational Church, 8 Common St.

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