

Dabrowski to be honored as Charlton's Citizen of the Year

BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT

CHARLTON — Charlton's Old Home Day is just around the corner, and with it comes the annual batch of citizen awards honoring standout members of the community both present and past.

The Old Home Day Committee officially announced the honorees during a meeting of the Board of Selectmen on Aug. 12 in advance of the big day. All nominees will be recognized with their official honors during Old Home Day on Labor Day weekend which celebrates its 128th year in 2025.

The Citizen of the Year, one of the highest honors the town bestows upon its citizens, is presented to those who have made a consistent impact in the Charlton Community. This year, that honor goes to Diane Dabrowski, a lifelong Charlton resident and a longtime realtor in the area.

Over the years, Dabrowski has

Courtesy

(Right) Local realtor Diane Dabrowski will receive the Citizen of the year honor at this year's Charlton Old Home Day on Aug. 31.



not only shown commitment to her community, but also those in need beyond Charlton's borders raising tens of thousands of dollars for Free the Kids, Inc., which supports orphaned and vulnerable children in Haiti. Her efforts continue the dream of her late daughter, Emily Dabrowski, who passed away from complications with mononucleosis in 2017. Diane set up a memorial foundation in her daughter's name, funded in part by the community and contributions from her real estate clients and family, to support graduating seniors at Shepherd Hill Regional High School and Bay Path.

The annual Community Service Awards given to those who have made contributions to help brighten up the community and make life better for local residents includes five individual honorees this year. Retired Fire Captain Ralph Harris, Jr., Deborah Marquis who Chairs the Keep Charlton Beautiful Committee, Council on Aging members Linda Walker and Rebecca Cook, and Edward Ciesluk, Jr., a trustee of the Knights of Columbus Council 11379 and a Director for the

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Charlton approves changing for Stafford Street, Center Depot Road intersections

BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT

CHARLTON — Changes are coming to two intersections in Charlton as town high-way officials and the Select Board seek to prevent the growing number of dangerous crashes occurring in both areas.

Following an evaluation by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Charlton Department of Public Works Director Harold "Nick" Piehl recommended the town pursue installing all-way stops at the intersection of Stafford Street and Center Depot Road as well as the Center Depot Road, City Depot Road, and HK Davis Road intersection which were both deemed to be dangerous areas under their current formats. This is the second time in a matter of three years that the Stafford Street and Center Depot Road intersection has been flagged by Mass DOT. While the town considered changes in the past, they did not move forward with the recommendations due to a variety of factors. However, the Board of Selectmen approved proceeding with the changes after the latest recommendation on Aug. 12.

Piehl provided numbers that showed a con-

cerning number of incidents that could have been corrected with improved safety measures. While town officials admitted an all-way stop may not be the end-all solution, they felt it was worth a try rather than

doing nothing to respond to the data.

"The number that stood out to me was 32 correctable incidents with an all-way stop. It's my prerogative as a public official, and you as an

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Sturbridge planners approve 660 Main tech project

BY GUS STEEVES
CORRESPONDENT

STURBRIDGE — The Planning Board concluded and unanimously approved plans for a 40,000 square foot tech building at 660 Main Street after hearing a few more details on the project Aug. 11.

Planner Jean Bubon said "all requirements have been met at this time," after receiving updated plans, traffic evaluation, peer review, fire department comments and other things

they'd been waiting for. With the changes this project's proposing, she said she feels the "groundwater protection district will be better protected than it is currently."

Engineer Dan Sheehan specifically cited additional signage that will stop trucks from going into an overgrown access road, and an added turnaround for emergency and other vehicles. In response to a board question, he said the site won't need a transformer and will use existing power poles and sew-

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Program reconnects children to nature through tracks

BY GUS STEEVES
CORRESPONDENT

SOUTHBRIDGE — For naturalist Heather Simpson, getting kids outdoors is such an important part of helping them understand their world.

"Today's kids know so much about animals on the other side of the world, but almost nothing about local species, and it's fun to get them excited about those animals," she said. "My fear is if these kids aren't in love with Earth, they won't care about saving it, so I try to get them reconnected to it."

She said that after her recent presentation on tracking at the Community Center. It was mostly geared for kids, about a dozen of whom attended with some adults.

Although she didn't take them outside this time — some of her programs do — it gave them a chance to explore and play with the "huge variety of mammal tracks" of various kinds regularly left by some of our woodlands' more common denizens.

Not surprisingly, she started with footprints.

"When I'm in the woods, I often don't see anything," but snow, mud and other surfaces show that other lifeforms are out there. Simpson noted the tracks generally fall in three key walking styles: whole-foot tracks; just-toes tracks with heels in the air; and toe-nail/hof tracks.

Bears, humans and raccoons fall in the first group, with both being five-toed. Our region only has one na-

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Gus Steeves

Maria Millonis and Piper Allicea-Tilton look over the fur samples.

SOUTHBRIDGE POLICE LOG

SOUTHBRIDGE — The Southbridge Police Department reported the following arrests during the week of Aug. 11-18.

Jayna Lee Cormier, age 29, of Southbridge was arrested on Aug. 11 in connection with a warrant for operating a motor vehicle after suspension of license.

Three juveniles, two aged 16 and one aged 15, were arrested on Aug. 12 for Larceny in an amount totaling less than \$1,200 (joint venture), Larceny of a Motor Vehicle (joint venture), and multiple counts of Nighttime Felony Breaking & Entering into a Vehicle.

Matthew Bunge, age 33, was arrested on Aug. 13 in connection with multiple warrants.

Grant A. Normandin, age 56, of Southbridge was arrested on Aug. 14 for Trespassing.

A 19-year-old from Southbridge received a summons in lieu of arrest on Aug. 14 for operating a motor vehicle after suspension of registration, operating after suspension of license, a Motor Vehicle Lights Violation, and for not being in possession of a registration.

Jonathan James Ferron, age 35, of Southbridge was arrested on Aug. 15 for multiple counts of drug possession with intent to distribute and in connection with a warrant for operating a motor vehicle after revocation of license.

Justin Gilchrest, age 33, of Webster was arrested on Aug. 15 for Failure to Stop for Police, driving at a rate of speed exceeding the posted limit, a Marked Lanes Violation, a Moped Violation, Littering From a Motor Vehicle, Failure to Stop or Yield, Negligent Operation of a Motor Vehicle, and Disorderly Conduct.

David Miranda Zayaes, age 31, of Southbridge was arrested on Aug. 15 for Malicious Damage to a Motor Vehicle, operating a motor vehicle after suspension of license, and

multiple counts of Violation of an Abuse Prevention Order. A 35-year-old male from Dudley received a summons in lieu of arrest during the same incident for Assault & Battery.

Tylene Rosie Ortiz, age 28, of Southbridge was arrested on Aug. 16 for Disorderly Conduct, Disturbing the Peace, and Simple Assault & Battery. Isadelis Rivera, age 31, of Southbridge was arrested during the same incident on the same charges.

Eric Xavier Gonzalez Pizarro, age 32, of Southbridge was arrested on Aug. 16 for Disorderly Conduct, Disturbing the Peace, Assault & Battery with a Dangerous Weapon, and Assault with a Dangerous Weapon.

Mackenzie Parrettie graduates from Hartwick College

ONEONTA, N.Y. — Mackenzie Parrettie of Charlton graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Hartwick College during the May 17 commencement ceremony.

Parrettie was among the 232 students who received undergraduate and masters degrees.

Hartwick College, recognized as The Life Balance College, is a private liberal arts and sciences institution in Oneonta, N.Y. With its innovative FlightPath approach, Hartwick integrates academic excellence, career readiness and an engaging campus life, fostering a well-rounded and fulfilling college experience. Committed to transparent tuition and a strong emphasis on health and wellness, Hartwick equips students for lifelong success-both personal and professional.

REAL ESTATE

CHARLTON

\$820,000, 13 Scott Dr, Elizabeth Alicea Ft, and Alicea, Elizabeth A, to Towadros, Rafaat, and Towadros, Evon.

\$799,900, 35 Blood Rd, Mi Kasa Su Kasa LLC, to Marsi Jr, John J, and Delrossi, Lucy K.

\$652,000, 6 Baker Pond Rd, Horner, Ryan M, and Horner, Amy M, to Brown, Holly A.

\$565,000, 24 Oxford Rd, Doucimo, Michelle L, to Cook, Hunter J, and Cook, Erin N.

\$482,000, 14 Daniels Rd, Mcneaney, Kim M, and Mcneaney, William J, to Cornacchia, Damian J, and Phillips, Lisa.

\$312,000, 171 Stafford St, Obiren, Kevinetta, to Daigneault, Richard S, and Daigneault, Dawna.

HOLLAND

None

SOUTHBRIDGE

\$700,000, 895 Dennison Dr, Johnson, Arthur, and Johnson, Jean, to Fannin, Alice, and Knoll, Lynn.

\$400,000, 78 Pleasant St, 76-78 Pleasant Street Rt, and Daou, Joseph E, to Merry Pizza Inc.

\$360,000, 24 Lynn Ln, Digiovanni, Kelly, to Sanchez, Esther L.

\$340,000, 45 Alpine Dr, Melillo, James L, and Melillo, Kelsey D, to Figueroa, Miguel R.

\$325,000, Mechanic St, Five Brothers Rt, and Daou, Joseph, to Royal 211 213 LLC.

\$325,000, Thomas St, Five Brothers Rt, and Daou, Joseph, to Royal 211 213 LLC.

\$310,000, 186 Dresser St, 186 Dresser Street Rt, and Choinski, Stanley, to Ortiz, Eliseo A.

\$272,500, 637 Worcester St, Baniukiewicz Jr, Michael, and Baniukiewicz, Darci, to Taylor, Clay, and Taylor, Angela.

STURBRIDGE

\$750,000, 28 Preserve Way, Ertel, William, and Ertel, Michelle, to Malik, Ishita, and Yun, Mark.

\$240,000, 12 Cormack Rd, Denise P Herrick RET, and Herrick, Denise P, to Beckerle, Michael, and Beckerle, Paula.

\$240,000, 14 Cormack Rd, Denise P Herrick RET, and Herrick, Denise P, to Beckerle, Michael, and Beckerle, Paula.

A 41-year-old male from Webster received a summons in lieu of arrest on Aug. 17 for Armed Assault with intent to Rob and Armed & Masked Robbery (subsequent offense).

Jeffrey Castillo, age 36, of Southbridge was arrested on Aug. 17 for Unlicensed Operation of a Motor Vehicle and operating a motor vehicle with obstructed or nontransparent windows.

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• Central Baptist Church
256 Main St., Southbridge, MA 01550
Tel 508/764-6365; Worship 10:00 A.M.

• Charlton Federated Church, 64 Main St., 508- 248-5550, Sunday worship 10:30 a.m. Summer worship is 9:30 a.m. www.fed-church.org

• Charlton Baptist Church, 50 Hammond Hill Road, 248-4488, www.charltonbaptist.org, Sunday worship 10 a.m.

• Charlton City United Methodist, 74 Stafford St. 248-7379, web site: CharltonCityUMC.org

Sunday worship and Children's church 10am

•St. Anne St. Patrick Church, 16 Church St., Fiskdale (508) 347-7338

www.stannestpatrickparish.com

Saturday Vigil Mass at 4 pm, Sunday 8 am, 10 am, 12 noon, Youth Mass (September to May) 5 pm. Daily Mass Mon - Thurs 7:30 and 10 am, Fri and Sat 7:30 am

• St. Joseph's Church, 10 H. Putnam Ext, 248-7862, www.stjosephscharlton.com, Saturday Vigil Mass 4:30 p.m., Sunday Mass 8 a.m., Sunday Family Mass 10 a.m., Sunday LifeTEEN Mass 5 p.m., Weekday Mass Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 8:30 a.m.

• Wayside Church, 6 Haggerty Road, 248-5144

• Assemblies of God Southern New England District Headquarters, Route 20, 248-3771, snedag.org, Office hours Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

• Living Word Church of Charlton, 10 Main Street - Grange building 1st Floor, Charlton, MA 01507, Pastor Craig Bellisario, (508) 233-8349

Sunday Service 10:00am.

www.livingwordcharlton.com

info@livingwordcharlton.com

• New Life Fellowship A/G, SNED Chapel, 307 Sturbridge Road, Rt. 20, Charlton, MA, Sunday Worship 10:00 a.m.

• Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale- 8 Maple St. Sturbridge, 774-304-1021

www.sturfed.org

Sunday Worship 9:30 a.m.

• Bethlehem Lutheran Church- 345 Main Street, Sturbridge, MA 01566

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Pastor Dan Purtell

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Hollandchurch.org

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Pastor Dan Maketansky

Holy Trinity Episcopal Church

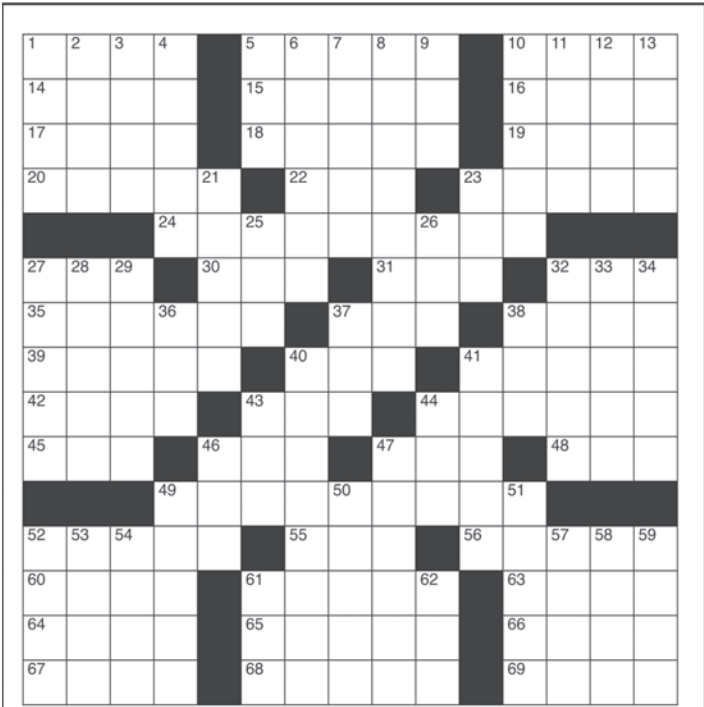
446 Hamilton St., Southbridge, MA 01550

Phone: 508-765-9559

Web: www.holytrinitysouthbridge.org

Sunday Service 11:00 am

Pastor Dan Purtell



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Mongolian politician
- 5. Coconut palms
- 10. Rounded knob
- 14. Japanese city
- 15. Covers in soft material
- 16. Walk around
- 17. Ancient region in Syria
- 18. French painter
- 19. Grandmother
- 20. Cow part
- 22. Rocky peak
- 23. Secret plan
- 24. Sings to one's lover
- 27. More (Spanish)
- 30. Father
- 31. Chinese philosophical principle
- 32. Hat
- 35. In agreement
- 37. A person's brother or sister
- 38. Evil spirit
- 39. Monetary units
- 40. Partner to cheese
- 41. About Sun
- 42. A place to dance
- 43. Performer _ Lo Green
- 44. Beach accessory
- 45. Recipe measurement (abbr.)
- 46. Partly digested food
- 47. Pooch
- 48. Honorific title added to family name
- 49. Salts
- 52. Lichens genus
- 55. Lowest point of a ridge
- 56. Type of sword
- 60. Albanian language
- 61. Gold measurement
- 63. Italian seaport
- 64. Longtime late night host
- 65. Extremely angry
- 66. U. of Miami mascot
- 67. Mid-month day
- 68. Omitted from printed matter
- 69. Upper body part

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Two-toed sloth
- 2. Cooking ingredient
- 3. Iranian city
- 4. Publicly outs
- 5. Steep-sided hollow
- 6. Spoke
- 7. General law or rule
- 8. Extravagantly theatrical
- 9. Very fast airplane
- 10. Arm bones
- 11. Ancient kingdom near Dead Sea
- 12. _ fide: legitimate
- 13. Gemstone
- 21. Counsels
- 23. Top exec
- 25. Cool!
- 26. Touch lightly
- 27. Extract money via taxation
- 28. Dyes
- 29. Cloying sweetness
- 32. Soft drinks
- 33. Capital of Guam
- 34. Chemical compound
- 36. The bill in a restaurant
- 37. Car mechanics group
- 38. Late comedian Newhart
- 40. Health care for the aged
- 41. Wise individuals
- 43. A passage with access only at one end
- 44. Trim
- 46. Former OSS
- 47. The upper surface of the mouth
- 49. Edible lily bulbs
- 50. Type of reef
- 51. Vaccine developer
- 52. Mottled citrus fruit
- 53. A place to store lawn tools
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- 61. Spanish soldier
- 62. Mark Wahlberg comedy



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FRANK G. CHILINSKI
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BUSINESS MANAGER
RYAN CORNEAU
860-928-1818 EXT. 102
ryan@salmonpress.news

OPERATIONS DIRECTOR
JIM DiNICOLA
508-764-6102
jim@stonebridgepress.news

EDITOR
BRENDAN BERUBE
508-909-4101
news@stonebridgepress.news

PRODUCTION MANAGER
JULIE CLARKE
508-909-4105
julie@villagernewspapers.com

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Finding “solutions through compromise” on immigration

BY GUS STEEVES
CORRESPONDENT

SOUTHBRIDGE — To Regina Edwards, a simple lesson from immigration comes in the form of one short question: “Who’s an immigrant, and aren’t we all?”

Edwards is a member of Grassroots Central Mass, several members of which came to Jacob Edwards Library to talk about the “very complex dimensions to this whole question of immigration” in an effort to “connect and bond” with other people in the community.

One of those dimensions is war, presented as a brief video of local resident Phoutasone (“DJ Phou”) Ketnouvang. He related the fact he came to the US from Laos as a child in 1980, with his mother having to bribe a Viet-Cong soldier with his father’s gold watch to let them cross the Thai border. They eventually made it to Southbridge, where the local Hispanic community “took me in and gave me a home ... where I didn’t live in fear,” he said, noting they “rallied with us, getting us furniture, clothes and food.”

A member of that Hispanic community, Jasmin Rivas, asked listeners to think about why people leave their homelands.

Reading a poem, she noted, “No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark.”

The poem listed several kinds of atrocities refugees faced in their homelands and insults some receive when here, but noted “the insults are easier to swallow than <seeing> the body of your child.”

Her poem elicited a variety of responses. One woman said her family’s been here since the 1960s from Ontario, Canada, and came because they thought “there wasn’t so much snow here” since her father worked for the railroad and wanted to transfer here. But when they got here, they also saw “snow up to the telephone poles.”

Rotary Club of Sturbridge presents Fifth Annual TREK Sturbridge Halloween 5K, 1K & Fun Walk

STURBRIDGE — The Rotary Club of Sturbridge has announced that pre-registration is now open for its popular TREK Sturbridge Halloween 5K, 1K, and Fun Walk, which is slated to return on Sunday, Oct. 26, according to club president and race director Klaus Hachfeld.

“To pre-register for this year’s event, just go to getmeregistered.com, and type “Sturbridge” in the search field in the upper right-hand corner,” says Hachfeld.

Participants who pre-register by October 21 will get a free 2025 TREK Sturbridge Halloween 5K tee-shirt.

All activities begin at the OSV Education Center on Old Sturbridge Village Road (not to be confused with Old Sturbridge Village Academy at the main entrance to the village). Parking will be available in the Education Center lot.

The family-friendly event offers two timed races, including a 5K Trail Run & Fun Walk, and a 1K Pre-Teen Run. In the spirit of the season, participants are encouraged to come in costume. The event also includes free children’s game starting at 9 a.m. at the Education Center.

The timed 1K Pre-Teen Run (\$20 registration) starts at 9:15 a.m. This is for the 12 and under crowd, and the course is accessible for anyone with mobility challenges.

The timed 5K Trail Run (\$35 registration) & Fun Walk (\$30 registration) will start at 10 a.m. using Old Sturbridge Village Road and the Arbutus Park Trail in the Leadmine Mountain Wildlife Conservation Lands.

An awards ceremony will follow at 11:15 a.m. starting with a competition for best Halloween costume for all registered runners and walkers. Judging will be by popular choice.

On-site registration will also be available starting at 8:30 a.m. on the day of the race.

The Trek Sturbridge Halloween 5K and Fun Walk is a Sturbridge Rotary Club fundraiser, with all profits going to the organization’s community needs projects. For additional information, or to sign on as an event sponsor, email the race director at laserklaus@gmail.com. Or visit the Sturbridge Rotary Club Web site at <https://sturbridgerotary.com>.

While that sparked a little laughter, another man said his father left Germany under Hitler in 1938 because he “didn’t know what would happen” there. A third man had a reverse story – his father’s family was here, but went to France when he was five because their Judaism was “much more acceptable” there. (He came back for college and stayed.)

Edmonds noted some people opine “Why don’t they get in line and do it the right way?” In fact, most do – but the “right way” is very complex, with several different paths, some that lead to citizenship and some that don’t. Refugees often take eight to 10 years to go through the process, and the Constitution grants people born here citizenship, while some people brought here as children by their parents can work but don’t have a path to citizenship.

She said the law has many categories based on social class, profession, nation of origin, marital status and other details; some can get the documents, some can’t. Lately, she added, some people who have been following the rules are getting arrested while at court hearings and during immigration interviews.

Later, Edmonds said there have been recent cases where the US government is denying people already here the right to family reunification by bringing kin from overseas. One friend has kin in Ghana and has been seeking such a visa for 15 years now. Such family sponsorships are generally being disallowed now, while corporate sponsorships are happening. Rivas, however, noted those are quite costly (about \$10,000 for both the company and the person).

One audience member said he’d worked with Nepalese people born in and expelled from Bhutan. The US had allowed about 100,000 to come here legally, but he knew of about 50 who have recently been deported by ICE. They were sent back to Bhutan, who immediately expelled them again; they’re now stateless in India, he said.

To Erick von Bleicken, such issues are unfortunately not new. He summarized a history of various ways the law has targeted certain groups of immigrants – most notably the Asian Exclusion Act and laws against Africans. The latter nearly caught his own father, born in what was then the German colony of Tanganyika (now Tanzania). At first, the US wanted to exclude him sight unseen, but let him in when he proved to be white.

“Even the idea of America is entirely the product of immigration,” he said, noting everyone who’s not Native American or the descendant of slaves came as an immigrant.

He attributed some of the fear and prejudice surrounding immigration to “some of our own religious convictions,” and pointed out many groups “have wrestled this ball back and forth” over the years. But he argued knowing the facts can help us find “solutions through compromise.”

To Dave Niles, two major myths dominate the discussion of immigration: the ideas that illegal immigrants are negative for the economy and commit crimes. He put up a slide showed federal tax data from 2022 that undocumented people paid \$96.7 billion in state, local and federal taxes that year. The six states benefiting most from that money are California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois and New Jersey.

By contrast, the estimated cost to deport all roughly 11 million undocumented

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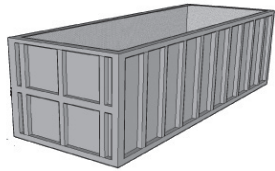


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WHILE SUPPLIES LAST

Fundraiser supports DCRSD Baseball and Lacrosse

BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT

DUDLEY/CHARLTON — A recent fundraiser procured significant funds that will help purchase equipment and celebratory championship clothing for the Dudley Charlton Regional School District’s Baseball and Girl’s Lacrosse programs.

The money, which was raised through donations on SNAP Raise, helps offset the expenses for specialty items for both programs. District Athletic Director Chris O’Donnell appeared before the School Committee in July where he revealed that the platform used allowed supporters and families to voluntarily donate to help funds over the course of around a month’s time.

The items that will be covered by the money include championship shirts for the lacrosse team as well as goal targets, box goals, stand-up goalie foam, collapsible defenders and a team camera. The baseball program will invest in a weighted mound tarp and home plate for weather protection, base plugs to keep bases secure, and stone dust for infield, lines, and home plate.

O’Donnell explained that the funding was a way to offset the existing program budget and allow families and supporters to donate by choice to benefit local sports.

“These funds are raised supplemental, and do not supplant our operating budget and our basic re-

sponsibilities. These teams took part in the SNAP fundraising application. This is a platform that the Class of 2025 at Shepherd Hill took part in successfully and used. The contributions came from family members, parents, relatives, friends, etcetera. Families can choose to donate through the app online in any amount,” said O’Donnell. “The goal behind these fundraising efforts was to cover the cost of specialty items in order to help strengthen and expand the programs beyond their current rosters. Both teams

had successful years, winning Midland-Wachusett League. The future is bright for both groups.”

The School Committee accepted the funding after asking for some specifics about how the money was raised and how it would be used. The combined price tag for all expected investments between the lacrosse and baseball teams came out to roughly \$8,975. It was not clear if enough funds had been raised to cover all or only a portion of that cost.

Local student-athlete lifts her game to new heights

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

NORTH BROOKFIELD — Having soared to national dominance after only a few years in the sport, a local high school standout athlete is inspiring the next generation to check out competitive weightlifting.

Entering her senior year at Tantasqua Regional High School, North Brookfield’s Brooke Buzzell began lifting during her freshman year. Her hard work and dedication to training rapidly propelled her through several levels of competition, culminating with a roster spot on Team USA.

“I started with CrossFit, but I didn’t like running, which proved to be a problem for that sport, so I decided to focus on lifting,” Buzzell told the New Leader. “Getting onto Team USA requires you to be both in the top eight in the country and top two in your weight class for females 17 and under.”

Currently ranked third overall in the country, Buzzell took part in Youth Worlds in Peru in 2024 and 2025. She finished twelfth during her first competition, im-



Courtesy North Brookfield's Brooke Buzzell has enjoyed national success in competitive weightlifting.

proving to seventh place this year.

“I went to Youth Pan Ams in Ecuador last year and came in third. Later this year, I will be competing in my second Youth Pan Ams in Mexico,” said Buzzell, who is also on the national development team and just returned from a week-long training camp at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs.

A typical weightlifting meet includes three attempts at each of the two Olympic weightlifting lifts. These are called “the snatch” and “the clean and jerk.”

“Your highest made attempts for each lift are combined for a total, and the highest total wins,” Buzzell explained.

Buzzell’s max lifts in each category are 187 pounds for the snatch and 240 pounds for the clean and jerk.

Looking forward to a promising senior season, Buzzell is excited to keep working hard to reach her dreams while also inspiring other athletes to get involved in the sport.

In addition to her athletic goals, Buzzell is eager to take the next steps toward her eventual career.

“I’m most excited to intern this year with a local physical therapist, as well as continuing to work as a CrossFit coach,” Buzzell said. “As for weightlifting, I plan on continuing to lift and see where it takes me.”

Buzzell plans to study exercise science in college and explore career opportunities in physical therapy.

UMass Amherst announces spring graduates

AMHERST — Approximately 5,000 students received bachelor’s degrees in over 100 majors at the University of Massachusetts Amherst’s Undergraduate Commencement on May 16, 2025 at the McGuirk Alumni Stadium.

Below is a list of students from your area that received a bachelor’s degree from the University of Massachusetts Amherst:

Brimfield	Lila Elinor Ives Brandon Rodrigues
Ethan Charles Eroh Cooper Garrett Hurt	Holland
Charlton	Alexis Carson Clement Theodore Carson Timothy James Hagen Alexa Lynn Knight Kassandra Lee Knight
Olivia Hazel Cloutier Christian David Figueroa Grace Kathryn Gamelli Michael J Gard Ryan James Hennessey John David Lehmann Eric Christopher O’Loughlin William Ross	Southbridge
Fiskdale	Juliana Lynn Beaudry Dylan Bernard Bellerive Aaron Paul Mancaniello Samantha Yvonne Nordstrom Manav Alpesh Patel
	Sturbridge
	Emma Comeau Carol Laura DeRose Jillian Andrea Gore Olivia April Olson Theodora O Onwubueke Allison Lynne Parker Troy Douglas Reed Olivia Marie Rizzo
	Wales
	Joseph James Adams

Fattman announces no-cost early literacy tutoring initiative for Dudley Charlton School District

REGION — State Sen. Ryan Fattman (R-Sutton) announced that Dudley Charlton Regional School District will participate in the No-Cost Early Literacy Tutoring initiative. This program includes 272 elementary schools throughout Massachusetts and will provide literacy tutoring for students at no cost to the district or students.

“Literacy is the backbone of education and is essential for future success in life,” said Fattman. “I’m glad to see Dudley Charlton Regional School District apply for and receive this initiative that will only help their students and communities. This early literacy initiative comes at a crucial time for Dudley Charlton. We’re facing budget challenges with some schools losing Title I funding for the 2025-26 school year, which makes state support even more valuable. Many of our kindergarten and first-grade students struggle with foundational reading skills - learning to connect sounds with letters and blend

them into words.”

The Dudley Charlton Regional School District continues, “This intensive tutoring program will give our youngest learners the extra practice and one-on-one attention they need to master these essential building blocks of reading. We’re excited to partner with the state and watch our students develop the strong literacy foundation they need to succeed.”

Offered through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), this initiative will provide participating schools and districts with tutors at no cost to the school or student. The tutoring will offer flexible models — including in-person and virtual formats — designed to meet local needs during and after the school day. DESE has selected qualified tutoring providers to partner with schools and work with students across the state. First graders are prioritized as this is a crucial year to solidify early reading skills.

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Dr. Gretheline Bolandrina

Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy Director marks 12 years as dedicated Pan-Mass Challenge volunteer

CHARLTON — Gretheline Bolandrina, DHA, MSN Ed, RN, CRRN, Director of the Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy, recently marked her 12th year as a committed volunteer for the Pan-Mass Challenge (PMC) — one of the most impactful athletic fundraising events in the nation. On Aug. 2 & 3, the PMC community came together from all corners of the world with one mission: to raise funds for cancer research and treatment at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

Since 2013, Bolandrina has served as a volunteer for PMC. She started as a medical volunteer and became the Signs and Supplies Manager at the PMC's Monument Finish shortly thereafter, where she ensures smooth logistics and safety by managing crucial signage and distributing materials to support other volunteers, riders, and staff. With 3500+ volunteers, their efforts help guide thousands of cyclists through their final miles, culminating in an emotional and inspiring finish line experience.

The Pan-Mass Challenge raises critical funds for cancer research and treatment at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and relies on a vast network of volunteers like Dr. Bolandrina. Her long-term service exemplifies her passion for community health and her unwavering support for causes that extend beyond the classroom and clinic.

“Volunteering with the Pan-Mass Challenge has been one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life,” Bolandrina shared. “Along with my family, my husband Joseph, our children, and their significant others, it’s an honor to be part of something that brings hope, healing, and support to so many.”

Her role in the PMC reflects the values she promotes at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy: leadership, service, and compassion—both professionally and personally.

QCC’s Scholar-in-Residence leveraging AI tutoring

WORCESTER — Quinsigamond Community College is empowering faculty to pursue research, while inspiring campus-wide academic excellence and community belonging through its Scholar-in-Residence program. QCC Professor of Computer Science Hao Loi was selected as the 2025/2026 Scholar to conduct research on how artificial intelligence tutoring tools impact student success in computer programming courses.

The Scholar-in-Residence program is a faculty development initiative that selects one faculty member each academic year to conduct a research project, foster a research community through presentations, and integrate their findings into the existing curriculum.

Loi’s research project examines the integration of Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s LLM Tutor, known as PyTutor, in QCC’s Introduction to Python Programming course. The study specifically focuses on how AI-assisted learning affects first-generation college students and non-traditional learners, who often balance work, family responsibilities and academic demands.

According to Loi, early observations suggest that PyTutor, combined with peer tutoring and additional support sessions, helps level the playing field for students who might otherwise struggle with programming concepts.

“I have already heard from students that it makes them feel like they belong in the class and that they really can succeed. They are more willing to try things out and work through problems on their own,” commented Loi.

PyTutor provides students with instant feedback on coding problems, offering hints and guidance without simply providing answers. The tool allows students to work through programming challenges at their own pace and on their own schedule, a critical feature for community college students who often have time constraints.

“The key is using AI in ways that support real learning without replacing important thinking and interaction. When used thoughtfully, AI can make learning more accessible and more inclusive,” Loi said. “But we have to stay focused on what is best for students.”

The mixed-methods research study will assess PyTutor’s effectiveness in improving student comprehension, boosting retention rates and fostering success in STEM pathways for community college

students.

Findings from the study will inform curriculum enhancements across QCC’s Data Science Certificate program, Computer System Engineering Technology and Computer Science degree tracks. The research aims to align course offerings with current industry trends and workforce development needs.

“Our faculty are uniquely gifted teachers and scholars. QCC’s Scholar-in-Residence program fosters faculty engagement and support for their academic research. Faculty members develop or expand upon their academic research with the intent to publish or present at a regional or national conference as well as on our campus,” said Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Kathy Rentsch. “I am incredibly proud of the breadth and depth of scholarly work going on across

our campus and look forward to promoting Dr. Loi’s work in the coming academic year.”

Loi plans to publish the results in peer-reviewed educational technology journals, as well as hold monthly faculty workshops focused on AI integration in education. He will cover topics such as ethical considerations and hands-on implementation strategies.

“These kinds of opportunities are huge for teaching faculty like me,” Loi said. “We don’t always get a lot of time to step back and dig into a project or really explore something new in our teaching.”

The Scholar-in-Residence program started in 2022. Previous scholars were Professor of English Michael Gormley, Professor of History Dr. Benjamin Wendorf, Professor of English Dr. Mark Bates and Professor of Sociology Dr. Teresa Varriale-Gonzalez.

Hands-on training classes equip future electricians

CHARLTON — In a bid to meet the growing demand for skilled workers in the electrical industry, Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical School’s hands-on training course offers students the chance to acquire essential skills needed in the field. With employers actively seeking apprentices with practical experience, this course provides invaluable training across a wide range of areas.

The curriculum includes comprehensive modules such as wire splicing, conduit bending, residential wiring, and three/four-way switching. Students will also gain expertise in service installation, motor control, grounding/bonding, and fire alarm systems. The course further covers solar installation, snaking wires,

basic multi-meter use, circuit troubleshooting, and load center/panel wiring. Additional skills taught include GFCI/AFCI installation, low voltage projects, lock out/tag out (LOTO), smart home installation, using the NEC, rigid pipe threading, basic Ohm’s Law, and ladder & safety harness use.

Spanning 150 hours of immersive training, the course is divided into two 75-hour semesters. Successful completion of both semesters and fulfillment of all course requirements, as determined by the instructor, are necessary to obtain a final certificate. This class is taught by Kevin Ancil, who is a Master Electrician and Licensed Journeyman. Kevin has more than 30 years in the electrical industry. He has been an Electrical Instructor with Bay Path Continuing Education since 2015, and he started this hands-on training class a couple years ago. Prospective students should note that a list of necessary hand tools will be provided on the first night of class, but these are not included in the course fee. To ensure the course can proceed, a minimum enrollment of 10 students is required. Interested individuals are encouraged to register early, as the course will be canceled if this number is not met one week prior to the start date. Class starts Sept. 9, 5:30-8:30 p.m., and runs every Tuesday and Thursday until Dec. 18. To learn more and/or enroll, visit: augusoft.baypath.net and search on class ID 42213.

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FRANK G. CHILINSKI
PRESIDENT/PUBLISHER

BRENDAN BERUBE
EDITOR

Seize the waning days of summer

Oh, no! Summer is coming to an end; however, we know the weather will stay warm likely through September, then it's on to what we New Englanders affectionately call "Sweatah weathah." But for now, let's focus on making the most of what we have left of our coveted New England summer days.

Time passes so quickly that we forget we had meant to do this, or go here and see that, or visit this old friend. The good news is that there is still time for a no regrets summer.

The most fulfilling thing we can do is to reconnect with friends. Plan a night out having appetizers, or a last-minute summer grill session. Even planning a short meet up for a walk or a hike is a great idea. Find a lake or a river with some nice rocks and just relax and catch up, taking in all that summer has to offer.

Nostalgia tells us that time spent with friends on our bikes until the lights came on were the best carefree times during the summer months. Why not take a night and watch old movies to bring you back, and escape from the go, go, go that is adulthood. Our favorite blasts from the past include "Field of Dreams," "Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure," "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom," "Crocodile Dundee," and anything with Steve Martin and Martin Short.

Spending time outdoors during late night hours is always a treat. Look up at the stars, even if it's from your own porch and enjoy a peaceful moment, listening to the crickets and the frogs have a chat.

That book sitting on your coffee table that's been staring at you all summer? Pick it up, and give yourself a goal to read at least five pages...just do it, before you know it, you'll be engrossed in it.

Get outside and go for a run, bike ride or a hike in a new place. Find places that you can revisit when the snow falls! Snowshoes and Nordic skis, heck even moon boots do the trick! But alas, let's stay focused on summer.

Take a refreshing swim in a nearby lake or river. Pop yourself onto a floaty and just bob as all of your cares float away.

Try to cook as many meals as possible outdoors on your grill. Soon it'll be too cold to wait to flip your burgers and dogs.

We love all seasons, and every time one ends, we get excited for the next. One of the benefits of living in New England is enjoying a solid four-season year. Pretty soon it will be pumpkin everything, apples and crisp fall leaves, but for now...let's stay in summer mode!

Letter submission
policy

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

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

OPINION

“This place is your playground”

Auburn's A Great Notion brings real books to the social media era



READER'S
JOURNEY

GUS
STEEVES



Courtney and Tyler Galicia

AUBURN — After years of being a school mental health counselor, Courtney Galicia got tired of crying at home over her students' trauma and not being to help them enough. So she started a bookstore.

A Great Notion, the two-and-a-half-year-old store she runs with husband Tyler, is now the kind of job she says “when you're doing what you love, it's not work” and is “a really cool way to get back in touch with the community.”

Her husband, Tyler, isn't quite in the same position yet. He's still teaching full time, but is totally on the same page, noting, “I want to make a life out of this.”

They decided to go for what he dubbed their “pipe dream re-

Turn To **PLAYGROUND** page 16

(Below) This is a normal scene at “A Great Notion” highlighting the store's family-like community sensibility. Courtney Galicia, left, takes care of her daughter Cooper while Tyler Galicia helps a customer and Emma Christian, right, uses her phone to promote the store online.



National Watermelon Month

It's fat free, low calorie, sweet and delicious. As if that isn't enough, watermelon is high in lycopene, an antioxidant that helps reduce the risk of cancer. All that and it's fun to eat too!

In celebration of the virtues of summer's favorite fruit, the Watermelon Promotion board has designated August as National Watermelon Month!

Undoubtedly millions of cookouts have included watermelon this month, and will continue to be on the menu long after August! In celebration of summer's favorite fruit, here are some tips and tricks for picking, storing and eating wonderful watermelon:

**

Picking a Perfect Melon:

An ideal candidate should be firm and symmetrical, free of bruises, cuts and dents. Check out the bottom of the melon. The underside should have a creamy yellow spot from where it sat on the ground and ripened in the sun. Select melons that are heavy for their size. Watermelons are 92% water, which obviously accounts for most of their weight. A good rule of thumb is to buy the melon size that will satisfy your needs, so you don't waste any.

Did you ever wonder what the grades on the watermelon stickers mean?

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- U.S. Fancy - Very few defects are permitted.
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- U.S. No. 2 - Greater areas of defects are allowed compared to higher



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grades; of-shape is permitted

* For example, Grade No. 1 consists of watermelons that are mature, have similar varietal characteristics, are fairly well formed, and are not overripe. Watermelons should be free from sunken lesions, decay, sunscald, and damage by other means

**

Ripen and Store:

Melons will ripen after they are picked but their sugar content won't increase. To ripen, store melons at room temperature. It shouldn't take more than a few days for them to ripen.

Don't refrigerate melons unless they become too ripe or have been cut. Watermelons don't like frigid temps.

Watermelons that are stored long lose flavor and texture. Melons cannot be successfully frozen, as it causes rind to break down and produces a mealy, mushy texture. Once a melon is cut, it should be wrapped and stored at 37° 39° F. Cut watermelons should be loosely covered in plastic wrap or stored in plastic containers before refrigerating.

According to the USDA:

- Watermelon stored at 50 to 60 °F with a relative humidity of 90% will be acceptable for up to 3 weeks.
- Watermelons held in dry storage below 75 °F will have approximate shelf life of up to 10 days. If dry storage temperatures are above 75 °F, shelf life will decline to 5 days.
- At temperatures between 32 and 45 °F, watermelons are subject to chilling injury that may result in pitting, off-

Turn To **WATERMELLON** page 14

TO THE EDITOR

There is no need for rodenticides

To the Editor:

I want to thank the Charlton Garden Club and the Charlton Library for their collaboration in bringing the Wing Masters to Charlton for a presentation on Aug. 8. It was great to have a chance to appreciate these birds close up and see their personalities with their rehabilitators and to hear about their injuries and how those injuries hinder them living in the natural world. Many of their injured birds cannot be released due to their injuries. Automobiles, habitat loss, and rodenticides do the most damage.

As humans, we can do something about these things. Not using rodenticides may be the easiest. These are not needed, as the birds of prey (in-

cluding owls, hawks, and falcons) will swoop down and eat these tasty treats. The problem lies with a rodent that is not killed by the rodenticide it ingests, and the poison is instead ingested by the hawk or owl that eats a rodent. Two deaths occur then: the rodent is killed by the raptor and the raptor is subsequently killed through secondary poisoning.

To learn more about rodenticide poisoning, see Raptors are the Solution.org.

Please educate yourself about the benefits of our raptors and help them to help us!

Maureen Doyle
Southbridge

Planning your business exit: Start with the end in mind



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If you own a business, you've probably spent countless hours thinking about how to grow it, manage daily operations and serve your customers. But have you thought about how you'll eventually step away from it? While it might seem premature, planning your successful exit from your business is one of the smartest moves you can make as an owner.

The reality is that most business owners have 80 to 90 percent of their net worth tied up in their companies, according to the Exit Planning Institute. That's a significant investment that deserves careful planning to protect. Unfortunately, 70 to 80 percent of businesses put on the market don't sell, and about half of all business exits are involuntary due to unexpected circumstances like health issues, family emergencies management disputes or economic downturns.

Exit planning is more than preparing for retirement. It's taking control of your future and ensuring you can transition away from your business when and how you choose. You can start with the end in mind – a proactive approach that can inform your current business decisions and help increase your company's value and marketability.

Begin by articulating your personal goals for both the transaction and your life afterward. Maybe you want to sell only a portion of your business, stay on as a paid consultant or use the proceeds to start your next venture. Understanding your vision helps shape everything else.

You'll want to calculate how much money you'll need to fund your desired retirement lifestyle, accounting for expenses that may be currently covered by the business, like your cellphone, vehicles, travel and health care. Don't forget about your legacy goals too – what you want to leave for your family or charitable causes.

Getting started requires building a strong professional team. At the center should be a financial advisor who can help you through the planning, execution and post-sale phases. You'll likely also need a tax professional, legal advisor, commercial banker and business valuation expert. Depending on your exit strategy, you might later add specialists like business brokers, investment bankers or employee stock ownership plan advisors.

Understanding your business's current value is crucial. It's a good idea to get a calculation of value at least three to five years before your planned exit. This isn't as formal or expensive as a qualified appraisal, but it gives you a realistic range of what your business might be worth.

This step may reveal a gap between what you need financially and what your business could sell for. If so, don't panic. You have several options: work longer, adjust your spending expectations, save more outside the business or focus on increasing your company's value. You can boost value by increasing profits through higher market share, new products, better pricing or reduced costs. You can also improve intangible assets like employee expertise, operational systems and customer relationships.

Finally, consider who your successor might be. Selling your interest to family members, business partners or employees often provide more control over timing and lower transaction costs, though they may result in lower sale prices. Selling the business to third parties typically bring higher proceeds but less control over the process.

The key message is simple: it's never too early to start planning your exit. Whether you're thinking about stepping away next year or in the next decade, taking proactive steps now puts you in control of your business's future and your own financial security.

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.

What is it about money?

What is it about money? At first glance, it is nothing but paper, or digits on a screen, or the shimmer of gold, silver, or crypto code. It seems to hold no intrinsic value—and yet it governs nearly every movement of our world.

We pursue it because we must: to feed our families, to build our dreams, to secure the lives we long for. In this society, money is a necessity. And yet, it slips through our fingers like water. One can possess it in abundance, only to watch it vanish overnight. It is a teacher disguised as currency—revealing what we value, fear, and chase. A balancing act of spirit and matter. For what does it profit a person to gain all the money in the world if, in doing so, they lose their soul—their inner compass, their true Self.

How much of our lives have been shaped by money? Not only by its absence, but by the illusion that once we finally possess it, we will at last feel safe, valid, and real. Whispering to ourselves: "Once I get enough, I'll relax. Once I'm promoted, I'll be whole. Once I buy that thing, I'll finally become someone." But the finish line keeps moving, always just beyond reach. If we don't awaken to that trick, it pulls us deeper into its labyrinth.

And if we fall into that trap, money ceases to be a tool. We no longer use it—we worship it, potentially turning us into something not unlike a modern-day Scrooge—rich in possessions, but poor in spirit.

Carl Jung, the famous psychiatrist, taught that when money aligns with our values and purpose, it stops being just currency—it becomes a mirror, a symbol, a servant of the Self.

It can express who we truly are, fueling work that brings meaning and relationships that nourish life. But when we separate money from our purpose, or never discover one outside of accumulation, money begins to work against us.

When we chase it for the shimmer of cars, clubs, houses, and status, it's just a mask. Yet behind that mask, nothing is there.

Society tells us this chase is typical, even noble. Careers are chosen, lifestyles built, identities forged on its foundation. But deep down, the psyche

POSITIVELY SPEAKING

TOBY MOORE

knows the truth: money without meaning is hollow. It leaves us restless, dissatisfied, still searching for something we cannot name.

And it is a double-edged sword, because money not only shows up in greed—it also hides in fear. Fear of financial instability

can bind us just as tightly as the lust for wealth. It can stop us from risking, from creating, from offering the gifts of our soul. In that fear, we trade potential for safety, burying our talents in the ground. The shadow of money lies not only in hoarding gold, but also in the person who never becomes what they could be because of the fear of instability.

It seems that Jung saw money not simply as coins, paper, or digits, but as energy—a collective symbol, created by society and invested with psychic weight. To him, money's value was never inherent but symbolic, reflecting what we project onto it: security, power, or even self-worth.

At its best, it can serve as a tool for expression, growth, and care. But when money becomes the measure of meaning, when we pursue it for its own sake, it can easily slip into darkness - confusing worth with wealth.

The endless chase for wealth and status leaves us mistaking accumulation for wholeness; we try to patch inner wounds with outer excess. In truth, Jung thought, the only wealth that endures is the journey of individuation—the slow, lifelong work of becoming who you truly are.

Money, then, should serve the soul—not the other way around. In hands guided by purpose, it expands creativity and generosity. In hands ruled by fear or greed, it magnifies insecurity and imbalance.

And so the real question is not how much you can make, but whether your relationship with money is rooted in alignment with who you are.

If you find yourself trapped in fear or endlessly chasing status, Jung would call you back inward: discover your purpose, and let money serve that higher calling.

Toby Moore is a columnist, the star of Emmy - Nominated A Separate Peace, and the CEO of Cubestream Inc.

Freshen up your late season gardens and containers with strawflowers



GARDEN MOMENTS
.....
MELINDA MYERS

As summer is winding down and fall approaches, your thoughts may turn to mums, asters, and pansies. Consider changing things up this year by adding deer-resistant strawflowers to your late summer and fall containers and gardens.

Grow strawflowers (*Xerochrysum bracteatum* formerly *Bracteantha*) in full to part sun and moist well-drained soil. They are heat and cold tolerant, grown as annuals in most areas, and short-lived perennials in zones 8 to 10. You'll enjoy continuous blooming and visiting pollinators from spring through summer and into fall until frost. Plant some now to replace fading summer annuals, freshen up your late season garden or create fall containers. The range of flower colors makes them easy to include in your late season displays.

Plant strawflowers in the garden or a container with drainage holes and fill with a quality potting mix. Select a pot, at least 12 inches in diameter to avoid the plant becoming rootbound and drying out too quickly. Although the flowers look dry, the plants prefer moist well-drained soil. Check containers daily and water thoroughly as needed. Those growing in the garden should be watered



Suntory Flowers — Courtesy

Peachy Keen, Pink and White Granvia strawflowers combine nicely creating a colorful container garden.

thoroughly when the top few inches of soil are crumbly and moist.

Strawflowers unique blossoms look and feel dry to the touch, making them extra fun for kids to grow. This straw-like texture of the flowers inspired the common name. You may also hear them referred to as everlasting flowers since they don't wilt readily when picked and retain their shape and color for years once dried.

Granvias (suntory-flowers.com) are larger, vigorous plants with much bigger blooms than other strawflowers, making them excellent thrillers in containers and showy in the garden. You can find these supersized strawflowers in gold, pink, white, Crimson Sun, Harvest Orange, Peachy Keen and Orange Flame.

Set a pot of colorful strawflowers among your pumpkins, orna-

mental squash and other fall décor. Combine them in containers and garden beds with other fall favorites like ornamental kale and cabbage, grasses, ornamental peppers, pansies, calibrachoa, and more.

Grow plenty so you'll have enough to enjoy as cut flowers and even more to dry for crafting wreaths, garland, flower spheres, and adding to dried arrangements. Harvest strawflowers when two to three layers of their petal-like bracts have unfolded but the center is still tightly closed. The flowers will continue to open as they dry so waiting too long results in a more open bloom. Harvest regularly to encourage even more flowers.

Recut the stems at an angle and place the strawflowers in fresh water and condition them in a cool, dark place for a Turn To **STRAWFLOWERS** page 14



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Safe Boating certificate & paddlecraft course offered at Bay Path in Charlton

CHARLTON — The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary Tri-State Flotilla, Massachusetts will be instructing two upcoming boating safety classes. “The Paddler’s Guide to Safety,” a class for novice paddlers covering basics like: equipment required and advisable for kayaks, canoes, paddleboards, etc.; also, safety concerns, situational awareness, and practice skills. Scheduled for Thursday, Sept. 18 from 6 till 8 p.m.

The Boat America Course that meets current and future state mandated educational requirements is offered in a two-night format developed to provide the skills and confidence needed to explore the coast and inland waters by boat. Basic knowledge and skills are needed to have safe and enjoyable boating experiences. This course is perfect for families that have just purchased any type of boat or are planning to in the future, and for the boater keeping up with changes to boating regulations and laws. Basic marlinespike seamanship (knots etc.) will also be included. Scheduled for Tuesday, Oct. 7 and Thursday, Oct. 9, from 5:30 to 9 p.m.

Successful completion of the BA course

will certify any minor, from 12 to 16 years of age, to operate a powerboat, including a Personal Water Craft / Jet Ski (for 16 & 17-year-old operators), on all Massachusetts waters; in conjunction with the Mass. Environmental Police. Approved by National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) it will also cover the requirements to operate a vessel in most other states & many countries where boat-

ing safety education is mandatory including Rhode Island and Connecticut.

The Hanson-Milone Boater Safety Act, signed into Mass. Law Jan. 8, will now require all Mass. motorboat operators to complete an approved Safe Boating Certificate course before April 1, 2026 for anyone born after Jan. 1, 1998, and by April 1, 2028 for boaters born before Jan. 1, 1998. Enforcement of the new law will begin on Sept.

1, 2026. This course meets the future Mass. requirement. Most boating insurance companies offer a discount on premiums for successful completion of this course.

Participants 16 years old and under must be accompanied, in person, by a registered parent/guardian. Space is limited, so register soon:

Both courses will be offered at Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School, 57

Old Muggett Rd., Charlton.

Register online at www.baypath.augusoft.net via Fun & Play/Sports & Leisure links.

By calling Sheri Dreitlein (508) 248-5971 or email sdreitlein@bay-path.net

You can also contact our Public Education Officer Phil Kubat for registration or additional information: email phil.uscgaux@verizon.net or call (508) 478-3778.

To locate these and other USCG Auxiliary courses, go to: https://www.cgaux.org/boating-ed/class_finder/index.php.

The Coast Guard Auxiliary is the uniformed civilian component of the U.S. Coast Guard and supports the Coast Guard in nearly all mission areas. The Auxiliary was created by Congress in 1939. For more information, please visit www.cgaux.org.

Scams targeting seniors on the rise

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

REGION — The recent bust of an elaborate elder fraud ring serves as the latest reminder of an expanding crisis that is costing seniors millions.

Last week, 13 suspects were charged in connection with a transnational elder fraud scheme that investigators say involved call centers in the Dominican Republic.

The goal of the complex operation, according to investigators, was to trick hundreds of elderly victims across the U.S. into believing that their grandchildren or other close family members were in trouble and needed money.

In total, the investigation identified more than 400 victims, with an average age of 84. These included at least 50

victims in Massachusetts.

The scheme cost victims a total of more than \$5 million in losses.

According to the charging documents, the suspects, led by Oscar Manuel Castanos Garcia, ran a sophisticated call center operation in the Dominican Republic.

Once the suspects obtained money from victims, they laundered their illicit proceeds back to the Dominican Republic, investigators said.

Castanos Garcia allegedly oversaw multiple call centers in the Dominican Republic, where he employed co-conspirators who carried out what are commonly known as “grandparent scams.”

These scams would often begin with an “opener” employee, who would call victims and pretend to be a

grandchild who was in an accident, investigators said.

Later in the process, a “closer” would allegedly follow up with another call, pretending to be an attorney representing the victim’s grandchild, asking for a sum of money to pay fees related to the accident.

Castanos Garcia allegedly ran the call centers with the help of several managers who supervised, instructed, and paid employees.

In many cases, suspects from the call centers allegedly made follow-up calls to victims and asked for additional funds to assist their grandchildren.

Members of the public who believe they may be victims of this scheme, or other elder fraud scams, should contact investigators by email at: US-AMA.VictimAssistance@usdoj.gov.

You may also call 1-800-225-5324 to speak with investigators.

The following agencies and officials are thanked for their involvement in the investigation: the Justice Department’s Office of International Affairs; the Dominican National Police; and Assistant U.S. Attorney David Holcomb.

Locally, law enforcement leaders continue to expand educational programs to warn residents about the prevalence of scams. In recent years, Worcester County police departments have been forced to investigate a sharply rising number of incidents.

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Gus Steeves
A couple of the smaller participants hang out together.



Gus Steeves
One visitor peruses the raffle offerings.



Gus Steeves
Lynne Sarty and her granddaughter Bella came in medieval finery.

Dogged persistence



Gus Steeves
Tina Blamire of Red Hot Rescue with Sophia Howard and Duke the dog.



Joanna Bardsley with Kermit

Gus Steeves



Sean Leary
draws a caricature of a human-dog couple.

Gus Steeves

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Gus Steeves

Gus Steeves
(Left) Laura Kelley has a meeting of the minds with Jake.

Gus Steeves

Eddie and Lucy Sheridan rock the punk aesthetic, while Punch goes shark.

Gus Steeves

And the winner is ... Marge the biker Lab.

STURBRIDGE — Hamilton Rod & Gun Club went to the dogs Sunday, as pooches from all over strutted their stuff to benefit Rutland's Sweet Pea Rescue. Dozens of canines brought about 75 people, some of both in costume ranging from sharks and biker dogs to medieval and burlesque humans.

The event aimed to collect funds to continue Sweet Pea's rebuilding effort. The non-profit's building burned down in 2015, and has been slowly recovering ever since. Besides the fashions, participants could also mingle with several other regional animal-related groups, bid on raffles from a couple dozen area donors, snack, and dance to the blues-rock of the Sara Ashleigh Band.

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OBITUARIES

Shirley P. Hanlon, 90

Southbridge: Shirley P. Chestnut St., passed away Memorial University Her husband Reed C. she leaves her brother, Joseph ter-in-law, Doris Skarani of and nephews, grand nieces Shirley was predeceased by and his wife Arlene and Henry and her husband George, and Shirley was a businesswom-not always kind to women a force of strength and wis-of the Skarani family enter-never one to be outmaneu-Those who knew her admired her clear sense of justice and her ability to balance firmness with kindness. Family was at the heart of Shirleys life. Her relationships with her brothers and sister were marked by loyalty, respect, and deep affection. For the Skarani family meant everything-heritage, love, and tradition-not greed or competition. Shirley carried the same devotion into her own household when she married the love of her life. Her husband was her anchor and joy, and their bond was evident to all who



(Skarani) Hanlon, 90, of on August 17th at UMass Campus, after an illness. Hanlon passed away in 1998, Skarani of Southbridge; sis-Southbridge; many nieces and nephews and cousins. her brothers, Christy Skarani Skarani, a sister Helen Poulin sister-in-law Carol Skarani. an and although the era was with ambition, Shirley was dom. She was the backbone prides-fair minded yet sharp, vered, and always respected.

knew them, Outside of the family and business, Shirley enjoyed life's pleasures with vigor. She loved visiting the casino, where she not only had good fortune but also found joy in the energy and camaraderie of the game, Marco Island where she had a second residence and enjoyed time with many friends and she was a steadfast supporter of her church, grounding her long life in faith, community, and service. Shirley's friendship were many, her generosity toward others unwavering. She had a gift for appreciating people as they were, and in turn, she was deeply loved and respected. Her sharp minds and vibrant spirit remained clear until her final days. Shirley's life was one of strength, loyalty, and love-a life that shaped her family, community, and the many friends she cherished. She will be profoundly missed and lovingly remembered by all whose lives she touched. A Funeral Service for Shirley will be held on Thursday, August 21st, at 11:00am in the St. Nicholas Albanian Orthodox Church, 126 Morris St., Southbridge. Burial will follow in Oak Ridge Cemetery, Southbridge. In lieu of flowers donations may be made to the St. Nicholas Albanian Orthodox Church, P.O. Box 650, Southbridge, MA 01550. The Daniel T. Morrill Funeral Home, 130 Hamilton St., Southbridge, is directing arrangements. www.morrillfuneralhome.com

LEGALS

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Worcester Probate
and Family Court
225 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01608
(508) 831-2200
Docket No. WO25P2865EA
CITATION ON PETITION FOR
FORMAL ADJUDICATION
Estate Of:
Russell Lee Peloquin
Also known as: Russell L Peloquin
Date of Death: 01/31/2025

To all interested persons:
A Petition for **Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Brenda L Peloquin of Southbridge 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:
Brenda L Peloquin of Southbridge MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without Surety** on the bond in **unsupervised administration**
IMPORTANT NOTICE

You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: **10:00 a.m. on the return day of 09/16/2025.** This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.
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. Leilah A. Keamy, First Justice of this Court.
Date: August 14, 2025
Stephanie Fattman,
Register of Probate
August 21, 2025

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Worcester Probate
and Family Court
225 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01608
(508) 831-2200
Docket No. WO25P2864EA
CITATION ON PETITION FOR
FORMAL ADJUDICATION
Estate Of:
Teena Marie Wood
Also known as: Teena M Wood
Date of Death: 06/27/2025

To all interested persons:
A Petition for **Formal Adjudication of Intestacy and Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Angela M Lucier of Woodstock CT** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition. The Petitioner requests that:
Angela M Lucier of Woodstock CT be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without Surety** on the bond in **unsupervised administration**
IMPORTANT NOTICE

You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: **10:00 a.m. on the return day of 09/16/2025.** This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.
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WITNESS, Hon. Leilah A. Keamy, First Justice of this Court.
Date: August 14, 2025
Stephanie Fattman,
Register of Probate
August 21, 2025

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Worcester Probate
and Family Court
225 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01608
(508) 831-2200
Docket No. WO25P2811 EA
CITATION ON PETITION FOR
FORMAL ADJUDICATION
Estate Of:
Aleta I Coughlin
Date of Death: 02/07/2025

To all interested persons:
A Petition for **Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Dennis W Divoll of Charlton 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:
Dennis W Divoll of Charlton MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without Surety** on the bond in **unsupervised administration**
IMPORTANT NOTICE

You have the right to obtain a copy of

the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: **10:00 a.m. on the return day of 09/09/2025.** This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.
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. Leilah A. Keamy, First Justice of this Court.
Date: August 12, 2025
Stephanie Fattman,
Register of Probate
August 21, 2025

Town of Holland
Zoning Board of Appeals
Notice of Public Hearing
In accordance with M.G. L Chapter 40A the Holland Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing on **Wednesday, September 10, 2025 at 7:15 p.m.** at the Holland Town Hall, 27 Sturbridge Rd, 1st Floor Community Room, Holland, MA 01521. If dial in access is needed, please contact the Town Hall at 413-245-7108 x101. The purpose of the hearing is to consider a request from **David Tremblay** for a **Special Permit** according to Holland Bylaw section 7. **Relief requested:** An Accessory Dwelling Unit with a 2 car garage and 2 bedroom apartment above. The property located at: **306 Mashapaug Rd.** Parcel ID # **R07 / D5**
Don Beal, Chairperson
Zoning Board of Appeals
Date: 8/13/2025
August 21, 2025
August 28, 2025

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Worcester Probate
and Family Court
225 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01608
(508) 831-2200
Docket No. WO25P2818EA
CITATION ON PETITION FOR
FORMAL ADJUDICATION
Estate Of:
Theresa A Gwozdz
Date of Death: 06/03/2025
To all interested persons:
A Petition for **Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Andrea**

M Hippert of East Douglas 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:
Andrea M Hippert of East Douglas MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve 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 09/09/2025.** This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.
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. Leilah A. Keamy, First Justice of this Court.
Date: August 13, 2025
Stephanie Fattman,
Register of Probate
August 21, 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 September 10, 2025, at 7PM on the application of Robert Manthorne. The applicant has filed a Notice of Intent for the construction of a building addition, parking lots, and a stormwater management facility within Riverfront Area. The project location is: 29 Southbridge Road, Charlton, MA 01507. Parcel ID: 33-B-22.1. 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
August 21, 2025



IMMIGRATION

continued from page 3

umented people would be about \$967.9 billion, and it'd take about a decade to do, he said.

Regarding crime, Niles noted a Texan study found that undocumented people commit crimes "at a far lower rate" than either naturalized or native-born citizens. He attributed that to one

simple fact: if you're undocumented, "you don't want to call attention to yourself." He also observed that our laws do not just grant "due process" rights to citizens, but to everyone who's here.

Niles said he's known two undocumented people over the years, both in the same situation – their student visas expired. One was from Canada,

the other from Malaysia; the latter became a notable player in the Providence art scene, where he helped organize the Waterfire events.

"We can chart the tax contributions of undocumented immigrants ... but it's difficult to quantify how they truly contribute to their communities," he said, urging people to "not throw away our

humanity" in today's climate of animosity.

Edmonds encouraged people to explore their own ancestry and family experiences with immigration. She said she worked with the Women's Oral History Project, which included a look at immigrant stories. Among the people she interviewed, she found several who spoke "four or five languages, just not

English," when they arrived here, and were "passionate" about learning it.

Edmonds said there are at least six immigration-related bills now before the state Legislature, and urged people to "tell them we want to protect those who are more vulnerable." Five of them are pro-immigrant, but she singled out one with the "misleading name"

of the Shield Act (S 1096/H 2009) for opposition on the grounds it would "protect ICE agents." By contrast, she supported one (HD 4886) that would require ICE agents to take off their masks and ID themselves as law enforcement.

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



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PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT FOR

TRSD/Union 61 PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS

SY 2025 - 2026

TRSD/UNION 61 PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT - Offers Meals at No Cost for All Students

TRSD / UNION 61 Public Schools participates in the **National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program**. As part of this program, **Burgess Elementary School** offers healthy meals every school day. The Commonwealth is supplementing National School Lunch Program funds to ensure all students have access to healthy school meals in Massachusetts, regardless of household income. We ask that families complete a Meal Benefit Application as this provides data for school funding and community resources. The results from each Meal Benefit Application are used to ensure sustainability for this program.

Qualifications for children to receive free or reduced-price meals include belonging to a household whose income is at or below the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines, belonging to a household that receives public assistance, or if the child is homeless, migrant, runaway, foster, or participates in a Head Start or Even Start Pre-K program.

Household size and income criteria are used to determine eligibility for free and reduced-price benefits if the household does not receive assistance or the children are not in the other categories mentioned above. Children can get free or reduced-price meals if the household’s gross income falls at or below the limits on the Federal Income Eligibility Guideline chart.

FEDERAL ELIGIBILITY INCOME CHART For School Year 2025-2026						
	Maximum Household Income Eligible for Free Meals			Maximum Household Income Eligible for Reduced Price Meals		
Household size	Yearly	Monthly	Weekly	Yearly	Monthly	Weekly
1	\$20,345	\$1,696	\$392	\$28,953	\$2,413	\$557
2	27,495	2,292	529	39,128	3,261	753
3	34,645	2,888	667	49,303	4,109	949
4	41,795	3,483	804	59,478	4,957	1,144
5	48,945	4,079	942	69,653	5,805	1,340
6	56,095	4,675	1,079	79,828	6,653	1,536
7	63,245	5,271	1,217	90,003	7,501	1,731
8	70,395	5,867	1,354	100,178	8,349	1,927
Each additional person:	+7,150	+596	+138	+10,175	+848	+196

To apply for free or reduced-price meals, households can fill out the application and return it to the school unless the household has already received notification that their children are approved for free meals this year. Application forms are being distributed to all households with a letter informing households of the availability of free and reduced-price meals for their children and what is required to complete on the application. Applications are also available **at the principal's office in each school, and on the school's website**.

Only one application is required for all children in the household and the information provided on the application will be used for the purpose of determining eligibility and verification of data. Applications may be verified at any time during the school year by the school or other program officials. An application for free or reduced-price benefits cannot be approved unless it contains complete eligibility information as indicated on the application and instructions. In the operation of child feeding programs, no child will be discriminated against because of race, sex, color, national origin, age, or disability.

Families can apply for benefits at any time. If a household member becomes unemployed or if the household size increases, the household should contact the school. Such changes may make the children of the household eligible for benefits if the household's income falls at or below the Federal Guidelines. Contact your child’s school principal’s office at any time to request an application.

Under the provisions of the free and reduced-price policy, determining officials will review applications and determine eligibility. Parents or guardians dissatisfied with the ruling of the official may wish to discuss the decision with the determining official on an informal basis. Parents wishing to make a formal appeal for a hearing on the decision may make a request either orally or in writing to your child’s school to the hearing official.

When known to TRSD / UNION 61 SCHOOL DISTRICT, households will be notified of their children’s eligibility for free meals if they are members of households receiving assistance from the:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR); or
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) if the State program meets Federal standards.

An application is not required for free meal benefits for Assistance Program participants and all the children in the household are eligible for free meal benefits. If any children were not listed on the notice of eligibility, or if a household does not receive a notice of eligibility, the household should contact the school to have free meal benefits extended to them. Participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) may be eligible for free or reduced-price meals, but they will need to turn in an application including household size and total income.

When known to TRSD / UNION 61 PUBLIC SCHOOLS DISTRICT households will also be notified of any child’s eligibility for free meals if the individual child is considered “Other Source Categorically Eligible”, because the child is categorized, as defined by law as:

- Foster
- Homeless,
- Migrant,
- Runaway,
- Enrolled in an eligible Head Start, or
- Enrolled in an eligible pre-kindergarten class.

If any children were not listed on the notice of eligibility, the household should contact the school about their eligibility through the list above or should submit an income application.

Households notified of their children’s eligibility must contact the school if the household chooses to decline the benefits.

Community Eligibility Provision

TRSD / UNION 61 PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT participate in the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. As part of these programs, **Tantasqua Sr. High School, Tantasqua Vocational High School, Tantasqua Jr. High School, Brimfield Elementary, Brookfield Elementary, Holland Elementary and Wales Elementary are implementing CEP**; offering healthy meals every school day at NO COST to the students due to the benefits of the Community Eligibility Provision for school year 2025-2026. Students are able to participate in these meal programs without having to pay a fee or submit a household application.

Non-Discrimination Statement:

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

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To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant’s name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

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78Estate planning in Massachusetts



BY CHRISTOPHER J. MALLON
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT,
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REGISTERED PRINCIPAL

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There is a common misconception that estate planning is only necessary for the ultra-wealthy, but in reality, estate planning is something that should be addressed by most Americans. The recommended planning strategies may change based on a person's net worth, but even modest estates should still address the basics. This article will discuss some of these considerations, as well as the Massachusetts estate tax, which is unique to its residents.

For starters, it may be helpful to review what an estate actually is. An estate is simply a legal term which refers to the "total sum of a person's assets minus debts at their time of death". This includes everything that person owns such as real estate, bank accounts, investments, personal items, and outstanding debts such as mortgages and credit card balances.

If you don't know the total size of your estate, a qualified Financial Planner can help. They should have software to aggregate these items and help calculate your total net worth. This is typically the first step before mapping out any suggested action items.

Once you have a clear picture of your assets and liabilities, you'll want to decide how your assets should be distributed upon death. The goal is to determine "who should receive what" and deliver it in the most tax efficient manner possible. Proper planning can also help reduce some of the undoubted stress for your loved ones.

Even if you have a "modest" sized estate, it is better for you to make these decisions rather than leaving it to state laws. If your assets do not have a beneficiary

attached, and if there is no will, a probate court will need to make the determination. This can be a costly and time-consuming process which involves attorney fees, court fees, and potential appraisal fees. The average cost of probate as a percentage of the estate's value typically falls between 3 and 7 percent.i

When evaluating your estate planning needs, some of the common items you'll want to review include:

Beneficiaries: ensure beneficiary designations on retirement accounts like 401(k)s, 403(b)s, IRAs, annuities, and life insurance policies are up to date

TOD Registrations: consider utilizing a Transfer on Death registration for non-retirement assets

Last Will and Testament: a document which outlines how assets and personal items are distributed and names an executor to handle the process

Trusts: legal structures which can help manage and distribute assets

Power Of Attorney: a legal document that allows someone to manage your financial affairs if you become incapacitated

Health Care Proxy: a legal document which allows someone to make health related decisions if you become incapacitated

Estate Taxes: depending on the total size of your estate it may/may not be subject to Federal (or Massachusetts) estate taxes

An estate tax is sometimes referred to as a "death tax," which is applicable only if your total value exceeds certain thresholds. While most Americans are well under the federal estate tax levels (in 2025 its \$13.99 million per individual or \$27.98 million for married couples), Massachusetts has its own estate tax which has a much lower threshold.

Massachusetts imposes a tax on estates that exceed \$2 million per person. This tax is progressive, ranging from 7.2 percent to a top rate of 16 percent. ii

If you're a married couple in Massachusetts, you might think you'd automatically get

to shield \$4 million in assets (i.e. \$2 million per person). The reality? When the first spouse dies, his/her \$2 million exemption is not portable to the other spouse.

With this in mind, married couples in Massachusetts should pay careful attention to their total estate value. For those with estates valued over \$2 million, there are advanced planning strategies available which involve the use of Credit Shelter (or Bypass) Trusts. These trusts are designed to utilize the \$2 million exemption when the first spouse dies (essentially allowing a couple to shield up to \$4 million in combined assets).

Yes, \$2 million is a lot of money and not everyone will be impacted by this issue. But when you factor in soaring real estate values, a couple 401(k)s, and (possibly) a vacation home and/or business, there are more and more families whose total net worth exceeds \$2 million.

The bottom line is that regardless of your total net worth, estate planning should not be overlooked, and it should be one part of your comprehensive financial plan. An experienced Financial Planner can help get you started, identify potential issues, and determine when to involve an attorney or CPA in the process.

This article was actually written by the author:

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Family Literacy Festival brings free, all-ages learning & fun to Worcester Common Oval

WORCESTER — SCENSOB Foundation is thrilled to announce the Family Literacy Festival 2025, a free community celebration of books, culture, and hands-on learning, set for Sunday, Sept. 7, 11 a.m.–4 p.m. at the Worcester Common Oval. The festival removes financial barriers so every family can participate—no tickets, no fees, just show up and read, play, and learn.

Families will enjoy book giveaways, story corners, STEM and maker stations, family crafts and games, live music & dance performances, a cultural fashion show, bounce houses, and a bustling vendor/author marketplace. There will also be food trucks selling their culinary creations. Community partners will offer literacy resources, back-to-school supplies (while supplies last), and wellness and safety demonstrations.

Literacy isn't a luxury; it's a launchpad. We designed this day so families don't have to choose between paying a bill and building a child's love of reading. Our goal is simple-Open the door wider—to books, to culture, to opportunity—and welcome every family through it.

SCENSOB Foundation welcomes sponsors, exhibitors, performers, and volunteers. Support helps keep the festival completely free and expands book and supply giveaways.

STRAWFLOWERS

continued from page 7

few hours or overnight when using in fresh arrangements.

Hang the stems in bundles upside down in a warm, dry place when preserving them dried. You may opt to remove the stem and replace it with florist wire if you plan on using the dried strawflowers in a wreath or an arrangement where a stem is needed. As the flower dries, it secures the wire in place. Remove the flowers from the stems once dried if you plan on using just the flowers in crafting projects.

Discover the beauty and many uses of strawflowers this fall. Then next season, start early and grow even more to enjoy all season long.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including the Midwest Gardener's Handbook, 2nd Edition and Small Space Gardening. She hosts The Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" DVD and instant video series and the nationally syndicated Melinda's Garden Moment radio program. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine and was commissioned by Suntory Flowers for her expertise in writing this article. Myers' Web site is www.MelindaMyers.com.

WATERMELLON

continued from page 6

- Americans consume more watermelons than in any other country.
- The seeds of a watermelon can be white, spotted, brown, striped, black, pink, or red, and range in size from 5 to 15 millimeters.
- Watermelon's official name is Citrullus lanatus and it is a vegetable. It is related to cucumbers, pumpkins and squash.
- The first recorded watermelon harvest occurred nearly 5,000 years ago in Egypt.
- A watermelon was once thrown at Roman Governor Demosthenes during a political debate. Placing the watermelon upon his head, he thanked the thrower for providing him with a helmet to wear as he fought Philip of Macedonia.
- Early explorers used watermelons as canteens.
- The word "watermelon" first appeared in the English dictionary in 1615.
- The watermelon is one of the most varied of all melons, with some two hundred varieties grown in fortyfour states.
- More watermelons are sold during the Independence Day weekend than the rest of the entire year.
- Over four billion pounds of watermelons are produced in the United States each year.
- Every part of a watermelon is edible, even the seeds and rinds.
- ** 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 email KDRR@aol.com. Hints are entered into a drawing for dinner for two at the historic Publick House Inn.

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From São Paulo to Massachusetts

A nurse's journey to compassionate care

CHARLTON — In the heart of Massachusetts, a dedicated nurse is celebrating a major milestone. Maria de Amorim Hentschke, a recent graduate of Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy, has passed the NCLEX-PN on her first attempt, officially becoming a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) in the state. This accomplishment is a testament to her hard work and the rigorous training she received at the academy.

A strong foundation in education de Amorim Hentschke's journey to becoming an LPN is a story of international experience and local dedication. Before her nursing education in Massachusetts, she earned a postgraduate degree in Family Medicine from the Universidade de São Paulo in Brazil. There, she worked with the Brazilian Federal Government, gaining valuable experience managing patients with chronic conditions like hypertension and diabetes. This hands-on experience has shaped her philosophy of providing compassionate, holistic care.

When asked about the strengths of the nursing program, de Amorim Hentschke credited the instructors. "Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy's biggest strength is the dedication of the instructors," she said. "They truly care about students' success and take time to explain difficult topics."

She also praised the well-organized clinical placements at facilities like Quaboag Rehabilitation & Skilled Care Center and Harrington UMass Memorial Health, which provided her with a wide range of real-world experience.

A commitment to excellence de Amorim Hentschke's dedication extends beyond her core education. She has earned certifications in Dementia Care, Mental Health First Aid, and Stop The

Turn To HENTSCHKE page 16



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Webster Lake Waterfront 88 Union Point
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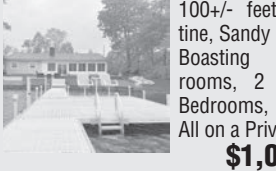
Excellent opportunity! Natural Western Facing Shoreline-Beautiful Sunsets - Views of Middle to North Pond! 7,000 +/- Sq. Ft. Waterfront Lot! Fireplaced living room! 12 X 30 one car garage.
\$660,000

Webster Lake Waterfront 8 Long Island
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Beautifully Updated Circa 1890s Classic Antique Island Cottage, with Rare Boat House Included! Extremely Unique, Clean & Well Maintained, Modern Conveniences w/the Charm of Yester-Year! 1,240 SF, 6 Rms, 3 BRs, 2-1/2 Baths, Hardwood Floors! Fireplace w/Wood Pellet Stove, Wrap-Around Screened Porch, Lg Outbuilding w/Full Bath/Shower/Laundry & Workshop, Patio! Town Wtr/Swr + Private Well for Outdoor &/or Off-Season Water Use! 14,300 SF +/- Level Lot w/105+ of Shoreline.
\$595,000

SORRY, SOLD!
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100+/- feet of Pristine, Sandy Shoreline! Boasting 6 Large rooms, 2 Baths, 3 Bedrooms, Garage. All on a Private road.
\$1,000,000

Webster Lake Waterfront Lots Bates Point Rd
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Lot #1003R Natural Level Shore line 3800 +/- Sq Ft **\$180,000 SORRY SOLD!**
Lot #1004R Natural Level Shore Line 5000 +/- Sq Ft **\$350,000 SORRY SOLD!**
Lot #1005R Natural Level Shore line 7800 +/- Sq Ft **\$380,000 SORRY SOLD!**



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PLAYGROUND
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tirement plan” when “I realized I could get hit by a bus someday,” he said. She partly attributed it to her mom's early death five years ago, noting she didn't want to have any regrets if she departed this world early.

Walking into their 65 Southbridge St. space gives you a sense of openness and welcome, especially as one or both of the Galicias greets you. A screensaver of

jellyfish plays on the TV screen when it's not being used for other things, their baby daughter Cooper sits in a crib by the register, and, of course, people browse and chat about books.

“This place is your playground,” Courtney added.

It felt the same way last year, but looked fairly different. Outside it was the same – a space in a sprawling red wooden building shared by a church, realty office and other things. But inside,

its bookshelves were packed much tighter; today, the space is more open, and they aim to use it to “host events as a main attraction.”

One such event represents what they're hoping to do. In May, Jersey Shore star Mike Sorrentino brought his book talk to A Great Notion. Courtney recalled having 500 people show up (many more than the space can hold). A line went around the building, with people sampling a food truck and

Auburn Police presence ensuring peace.

Given where they are now, it's a little ironic that Courtney admits she wasn't much of a reader in school.

“I was one of those kids in high school who wondered 'Why are we doing this?'" when it came to reading assigned books. “It was challenging for me.” Later, in college, she became a history major, but found a lot of the books dull.

It was Tyler who loved reading, and later instilled that in Courtney, encouraging her, his students and others to “start with something you enjoy.” The store's name comes from his favorite novel, Ken Kesey's “Sometimes a Great Notion.”

For Courtney, that starting point was graphic novels. She said she “thinks graphic novels are very helpful” for getting kids to dive into reading even though some teachers “hate them.”

Although there have

always been comics, graphic novels are a recent phenomenon, and the Galicias are more than willing to tap into other such tools to encourage reading. Courtney said online presence via Booktalk, Bookstagram and other hashtags go a long way to promote their brand. They even have their own online influencer in Emma Christian, who created an Instagram account as “a great opportunity for a booksore I love.”

“The community's huge online, and they're really into supporting each other,” Emma said, noting the store's followers have grown from 120 to 500 in three weeks.

Courtney also noted they're working with another local social media site which goes by the name “Wicked Creatiff” after its owner's first name, Tiffany.

All of them are consciously tapping into the fact that many younger people are focused on shopping local. That's especially critical for small

bookstores who face the monopoly of Amazon, which can afford to lose money on books to control the market and make it difficult for small stores to get local authors they control, the Galicias said.

They have a shelf of local authors who are either self-published or went through small publishers and thus still have the rights to their own work, but don't presently have direct contact with such publishers. They also use their front window as space for a variety of locally-sourced crafts, art and other items, noting many people are tired of the chain stores.

“In five years, I'd love to build my own space and have outdoor space to do events,” Courtney said when asked what they plan for the future.

“So far, so good,” Tyler added. “We just need to keep going that way.

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

HENTSCHKE
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Bleed, and has completed training in Domestic Violence and Narcan Administration. She is also a proud member of the UNICEF Club and the Mock Code Team. She was inducted to the National Technical Honor Society. Her commitment to the community is clear through her volunteer work, which includes health screenings at Shepherd Hill High School and the Charlton Senior Center. For her efforts, she was nominated for The Dr. Adelina Healy Clinical Excellence Award and received the Random Act of Kindness Award.

After a well-deserved trip to Brazil, she plans to apply for nursing positions in October. With her strong background in chronic disease management, a wide range of certifications, and fluency in Portuguese, English, and Spanish, she is poised to make a significant impact on the local healthcare community. She is eager to contribute her skills and compassionate approach, delivering safe, evidence-based care to patients in Worcester and beyond.



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