

# Trinity Catholic Academy recognizes 25 years of service



SOUTHBRIDGE — Trinity Catholic Academy, along with Fr. Ken Carnivale recognized seven fine individuals for their dedication to Trinity Catholic Academy and the Southbridge Community for over 25 Years of service at this year's 25th Annual TCA Golf Tournament held earlier this Fall. The following were recognized for 25

years of service: Paula Letourneau, School Secretary, Deb Curran, second Grade teacher, Colleen Casey – eighth Grade Teacher, Josie Cita – Principal, , Janet, Garon, volunteer, Joe LaFleche – Endowment Board Member, and Bob & Denise Clemence longtime advocates/supporters/ Parents/Grandparents and Endowment Board President.

The stability that these individuals have supplied over the years, reinforces the framework of what Trinity Catholic Academy is to our community now and for generations past and future. Here is just a “small chunk” about each these dedicated individuals through facts and quotes: Principal Citta, originally from New York State, she is an alum

of Mount ST. Mary's College, in Newburg, N.Y. She wears many hats at TCA, administrator, teacher, IT director, sometimes Physical Education teacher and so much more. She is well admired and respected by all at TCA as a dedicated leader. With 25 years at the

Turn To **TCA**, page **A14**

## Town sets tax rate at \$19.44

SOUTHBRIDGE – The town came closer than it has in many years to having a split tax rate last week, when three councilors supported a motion to shift the tax burden by 30 percent. The majority rejected the concept, voting instead to set a single rate of \$19.44, a few cents lower than last year.

The most vocal proponent of the change was Mike Marketti, who argued this year's Covid situation has seen several programs benefit businesses, including ongoing micro-business loans via the Quaboag CDC and a recent Council vote to exempt local liquor license renewal fees for this fiscal year. He also noted the need to address some “heavy fiscal issues,” including roads, trash collection and the fire station. He also proposed such a change last year, but was the only one to vote for it then.

“We need a tax system that is fair, across the board, that the residents

Turn To **TAX RATE**, page **A14**

## Winter storm leaves thousands in the dark

REGION – A powerful winter storm overspread the region last weekend, causing several accidents and widespread power outages.

At the height of the Dec. 5 storm, nearly 50,000 customers statewide were without power, with multiple communities picking up over a foot of snow. The speed limit was reduced on the Mass. Pike, which saw several accidents.

Surface streets were equally treacherous, with accidents reported in Charlton, Leicester, and Spencer. Police in those communities also received multiple reports of downed power lines.

In Sturbridge, Route 148 was closed in the area of Warren Road due to fallen trees and power lines. Meanwhile, the Warren Fire Department helped provide assistance during multiple accident responses on the Mass Pike.

The storm also caused several local events to be postponed. The fifth annual Stuff the Bus campaign, which had been slated for Dec. 5 in

Turn To **STORM**, page **A8**



Photo Courtesy

Accidents were reported throughout the area during last weekend's snowstorm, including this wreck in Charlton.

## Putting people, place and plants in play for waste cleanup

BY GUS STEEVES  
CORRESPONDENT

REGION — Southbridge and Webster are old mill towns with many areas of potentially contaminated soil. According to DEP's Web

site, Southbridge has seen 168 reportable releases of various kinds of pollutants over many years, with three new ones this year. Webster has had 136 overall, also with three this year. Most were cleaned up quickly (including Southbridge's three, but Webster's are still in process), but some have required complex and lengthy cleanups. Some sites have not been discovered, and may never be.

Typically, if a site requires extensive cleanup, that means removal of the soil and

trucking it to some hazardous waste landfill or entombing it on site. The latter is likely to be the result at the Southbridge DPW barn on Guelphwood Road, where the town has been going back and forth with the state and federal government for years about PCB contamination.

But the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources and Northeast Organic Farming Association are piloting a three-year project in Springfield that could be useful – and far less costly

– in these towns and similar locations. Termed “bioremediation of urban soils,” it uses plants, fungi, bacteria and community effort to clean up toxins, with the goal being to rebuild a diverse small ecosystem on the property.

“The people, the place and the way we feel are all part of the remediation process,” Andrew Lorion of Springfield's Gardening in the Community told an online NOFA forum last week.

He said the project's goal is to test “the effectiveness of

different remediation strategies and educate the public.”

GTC's test site is a vacant house lot on Franklin Street, Springfield, where they do various tests to determine soil quality, then spread compost, seeds from a mixture of plants and fungi, and bacteria “from the most hard places to live around the world. We hope that will help us with the pollutants,” he said.

One of their most common assistants in the process is

Turn To **REMEDIATION**, page **A4**



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# Holland Library hosting pastel paint workshop

HOLLAND — The Holland Public Library will be hosting a Pastel Paint Workshop Tuesday, Jan. 12 from 6-8 p.m.

Maichack Arts is back to present this hands-on workshop via Zoom where you will create a beautiful work of art featuring dandelions.

All materials will be provided, and can be picked up at the library prior to the class. Registration is limited to 10 participants (teens and adults only, please). Please call the library to register at (413) 245-3607. You may leave a message on the answering machine.

This program is presented by the Holland Public Library with a grant from the Holland Cultural Council and the Mass. Cultural Council.

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### Notice of Vacancy Sturbridge Board of Assessors


The Town of Sturbridge is seeking to fill a vacancy on the Board of Assessors. This is an elected, unpaid position. The person appointed must be a register voter of the Town of Sturbridge. A special election for the seat on the Board will be held in April of 2021.


The Board of Assessors is responsible for determining the fair and equitable valuation of all real and personal property in the Town, in accordance with Mass General Laws. The Board of Assessors duties include acting upon abatement requests for real estate, personal property, motor vehicle excise and boat excise taxes. The Board is also responsible for acting upon personal exemption requests for real estate (Elderly, Veterans, Blind Persons, Surviving Spouses, etc.) as well as acting upon applications for classification of real estate as agricultural/horticultural, forestry or recreational land. The Board meets once a month.

If you are interested a position on the Board, please send a letter of interest to Jeff Bridges, Town Administrator at [JBridges@Sturbridge.Gov](mailto:JBridges@Sturbridge.Gov).

The position remains open until filled.

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**~ AND ~**

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# Legislators offer help in securing unemployment benefits

BY KEVIN FLANDERS  
STAFF WRITER

REGION – As residents continue to grapple with an overwhelmed unemployment assistance system, local legislators are working hard to help with navigation.

Area state representatives and senators have seen a recent increase in calls and emails from residents who haven’t received an unemployment check in months. Others have gotten notices from the Mass. Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) demanding repayment of monies previously approved during the pandemic.

Even in normal times, local officials receive a steady flow of calls related to unemployment issues. But since September, an influx of desperate residents have called with complaints that their benefits were either suspended or retracted as part of a DUA crackdown on fraudulent claims.

“They have had a big issue with fraud,” said State Rep. Peter Durant, of Spencer. “Several people have had their identities stolen, and the DUA had to take precautions to investigate.

Of course, that hurts a lot of the people with legitimate claims.”

Comprehensive DUA investigations of fraud have led to a significant backlog of unemployment claims that need to be processed. Additionally, many residents’ claims have had missing information or errors, which caused DUA adjudicators to flag them as potentially fraudulent. These residents will need to resubmit their claims with the proper documentation in order to receive benefits.

Moreover, confusion has surrounded the difference between “pandemic unemployment assistance” and general unemployment benefits. Thousands of residents have erroneously filed under the wrong category, officials said. To be eligible for pandemic unemployment assistance, residents must demonstrate that they lost their jobs as a direct result of the COVID-19 crisis.

Meanwhile, scammers continue to flood the system in search of ways to take advantage of the confusion.

“There have been a considerable number of fraudulent applications to unemployment, which has resulted in a delay due to increased scrutiny of

all applicants,” said Sen. Anne Gobi, of Spencer. “I receive a number of requests daily from people who are having trouble opening a claim or getting their funds from an already open and approved case.”

Many of the fraudulent claims are the result of autonomous software programs. During the weekend of Nov. 14-15, approximately 31,000 unemployment claims were filed statewide, officials said. DUA staffers will need to pore over every claim to ensure its legitimacy, as well as the thousands of claims that were submitted in the ensuing weeks.

Over the last several months, local officials have helped serve as intermediaries between desperate residents and overwhelmed DUA officials. With Christmas and the winter season fast approaching, many residents can’t wait much longer for their claims to be processed. Some families are already struggling to figure out how they’ll provide food and heat their homes this winter.

Area leaders continue to work long hours to help secure relief as quickly as possible.

“We have some good contacts at the DUA, and we have helped advocate and get things moved along for people,” Durant said. “The entire process can be very confusing for people. It’s especially difficult when a person’s business closed and there is no one to verify that an employee worked there.”

Officials and residents alike are eager for the distribution of vaccines over the next several months. This will allow residents to feel safe about restarting their businesses, interviewing for new jobs, or moving on to the next chapters in their careers.

“Once these vaccines get rolled out, we will start getting more people back to work,” Durant said.

For now, residents are urged to have all of their documents organized when filing claims or appealing DUA repayment orders. It is important to save all communications from employers related to COVID-19 layoffs or closures.

Local legislators are also assisting residents who have been scammed or had their identities stolen.

“Anyone who is the victim of a fraudulent claim – please let me know so we can notify unemployment,” Gobi said.

# DA’s office assists in combating opioid crisis

BY KEVIN FLANDERS  
STAFF WRITER

REGION – The Worcester County District Attorney’s Office will use federal grant funding to assist police depart-

ments in combating the opioid crisis.

The federal Department of Justice recently awarded the Worcester County District Attorney’s Office a \$1.2 mil-

lion grant to help facilitate outreach and recovery efforts. District Attorney Joseph Early, Jr., will team up with local police departments to support several grant-funded programs.

Among other projects, the federal grant monies will fund recovery coaches who will respond with police personnel and offer services after an overdose. These critical measures can help start victims down the path to treatment and recovery, police said, rather than allow them to be cycled back through the same destructive process.

Police in all 60 of Worcester County’s cities and towns began using the Critical Incident Management System (CIMS) earlier this year to track overdose incidents. The goal of the system isn’t to track data for the purpose of

arresting people, but rather to maximize assistance opportunities, police said.

Law enforcement officials discovered at the start of the opioid crisis that it is impossible to solve the problem simply through the criminal justice system. A broader support system of counselors, clinicians, recovery groups, and family advocates is necessary, officials said.

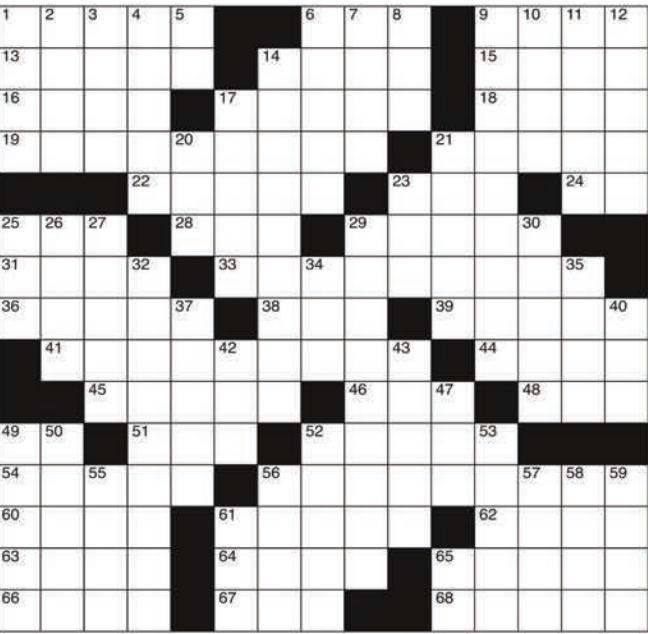
Federal and state grant funding will continue to pave the way to recovery for many desperate residents and families.

“We’re glad to have been awarded this grant so we can help support our police partners in their response to the opioid epidemic,” District Attorney Early said. “When we implemented CIMS, our goal was to respond to every overdose incident and help

people get access to services. This grant will ensure that overdose victims in every community receive help getting into treatment and on the path to recovery.”

While many area police departments already have overdose follow-up protocols in place, the latest grant funding will allow recovery coaches to work on a regional basis and assist police departments that may not have the budget to employ coaches on a full-time basis.

“This is the piece of the puzzle that has been missing,” said Spencer Police Chief David Darrin. “I have trained nearly sixty percent of our officers and dispatchers in crisis intervention techniques. We also have CIMS thanks to DA Early



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Skateboarders love them
- 6. Popular sports podcast (abbr.)
- 9. Former Ohio State great Michael
- 13. Not dirty
- 14. Earth goddess (Greek myth.)
- 15. A Spanish river
- 16. Pig meat (French)
- 17. Famed astronomer
- 18. Floating ice
- 19. Broadcast
- 21. Aquatic mammals
- 22. Some are bath
- 23. Hip hop trio
- 24. NY Giants’ #56
- 25. Small European viper
- 28. Neither
- 29. Multiple Tony-winner Rivera
- 31. Loud noise
- 33. Second year high schooler
- 36. “\_\_ in comparison”
- 38. Golf score
- 39. Raise
- 41. Pastas
- 44. Easily manageable
- 45. Fathered
- 46. Pouch
- 48. Institute legal proceedings against
- 49. News organization
- 51. Unruly group of people
- 52. Fasten or secure
- 54. Sheets of glass
- 56. Doubled
- 60. Foolish person
- 61. Rooney and Kate are two
- 62. Small, rich sponge cake
- 63. Advice or counsel
- 64. Large wading bird
- 65. Famed British physicist
- 66. Narrow ridges (Swedish)
- 67. Field force unit
- 68. Lying face downward

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Proof of purchase (abbr.)
- 2. Soap ingredient
- 3. Blackbird
- 4. Single steps
- 5. Tin
- 6. Books have lots of them
- 7. Made of fermented honey and water
- 8. You can get it in a bed
- 9. Room for communal meals
- 10. Early Syrian kingdom
- 11. Provokes dry amusement
- 12. Use with “thou”
- 14. Mollusk
- 17. Grain storage units
- 20. Not a car, not a truck
- 21. Ooze
- 23. N. Vietnamese ethnic group
- 25. Tennis pros group
- 26. Something that’s not what it’s purported to be
- 27. E. Indian trees
- 29. Beloved December holiday
- 30. Regions
- 32. Metric unit of length
- 34. Peter’s last name
- 35. Beige
- 37. 18-year period in astronomy
- 40. Where golfers begin
- 42. Basketball stat (abbr.)
- 43. Frocks
- 47. Soda comes in it
- 49. On approval
- 50. Trims by cutting
- 52. Small finch
- 53. Language Bura\_\_
- 55. Nothing
- 56. Imbecile (British)
- 57. Tropical Asian plant
- 58. Abba \_\_, Israeli politician
- 59. Small freshwater fish
- 61. Indicates position
- 65. Data processing



REMEDIATION  
continued from page A1

the oyster mushroom, an easy-to-grow species that likes contaminated sites. But they also use some edible plants for what they do; for example, radish roots work deep into the soil while peas add nitrogen. GTC’s Ibrahim Ali said the ultimate goal is to grow edible blueberries and other fruit, but nobody expects the early stages to be safe for consumption, and those plants will be composted for use on ornamental plants.

Often, Nature has already started the process with weeds. “Weeds are doing a great job with really bad soil [preparing it] for the next plants to come” by restructuring the soil, said soil ecologist Nancy Klehm. “Weeds are our friends ... with terrible soil conditions.”

Among other things, she noted the “spontaneous vegetation” that takes root on sites can say a lot about the conditions, as can some fairly basic observations of soil texture, color and smell, and what animal life the site has. Those simpler

tests come first, before lab and microscope analyses actually identify what the chemistry is.

They also use what’s called an indigenous microbe trap (boiled rice wrapped in burlap and buried for a week) to see what bacteria already live there and how that community changes over time. Klehm noted it’s a good idea to get samples from various parts of the property and from nearby wild sites that show what the microbe mix should look like.

The whole thing is not necessarily a short process. Although they expect to see some definite improvement over the three-year study, “a lot of remediation projects take decades. It depends on what it’s contaminated with,” she noted.

Whenever possible, she avoids the traditional hazardous waste disposal method.

“I kind of have a problem with that, because life should not be bagged up and considered toxic,” she said.

Klehm has done similar projects focused especially on building a community’s relationship with the land in many places, including Chicago, Los

Angeles, Qatar and Ecuador. While she notes many “remediation” projects “cap a site with two inches of soil ... and call it done,” her practice is fueled by a much longer-term, Native American ethos aiming to heal the land and ourselves in the process. A big part of it is getting young people involved, and she’s particularly excited when the neighbors of a project come by to start asking questions and pitching in.

“This world is our world,” she said. “This is not about ownership. It’s a response to being where you are ... and becoming more a part of the place we’re living.”

For her, the goal is not “efficiency,” but “involv[ing] the maximum number of people” and “getting whole families involved.” The process needs to be accessible and teachable, so people can replicate it elsewhere, and expand the healing.

“A healthy body can respond better than an unhealthy body to illness,” Klehm observed.

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



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# MARIANAPOLIS PREP SCHOOL ANNOUNCES TRIMESTER 1 HONOR ROLL

THOMPSON, Conn. — Below are the students who have earned their place on the Trimester 1 Honor Roll.

Head of School List  
Olivia-Mae Acquaah-Harrison, Charlton; Abigail Alicandro, North Oxford; James Alves, Uxbridge; Kaitlin Baca, Webster; Greyson Baldaro, Oxford; John Barnwell, Danielson, Conn.; Morgan Beaudreault, Dayville, Conn.; Lillian Belsito, Millbury; Maya Benway, Acton; Abigail Boria, Charlton; Benjamin Bouchard, Douglas; Celia Bouchard, Douglas; Samuel Bouchard, Douglas; Vincent Bourgeois, Thompson, Conn.; Campbell Braun, South Grafton; Jessie Calkins, Charlton; Stephen Canavan, Ashford, Conn.; Hansen Cao, Shenzhen, China; Dominika Chmielewski, Webster; Lauren Conde, Danielson, Conn.; Sidney Corriveau, Brimfield; Spencer Courville, Charlton; Anna Czechowski, Webster; Giana DeCesare, Chepachet, R.I.; Alexandra Delano, Charlton; Joseph DiPietro, Worcester; Danielle Doiron, Charlton; Fiona Doiron, Charlton; Ava Fabiano, Killingly, Conn.; Chiara Faiola, Auburn; Courtney Fleming, Douglas; Felicia Fongemie, Ashford, Conn.; Barbara Forgues, Shrewsbury; Fabian Gabriel, Zlin, Czech Republic; Alexandra Giorgio, Millbury; Ashley Giorgio, Millbury; Xiayuan Gong, Wuxi, China; Madelyn Grundstrom, Moosup, Conn.; Emily Hammond, Sutton; Angelina Hargrave, Charlton; Sofia Hargrave, Charlton; Donovan Hendrick, Willimantic, Conn.; Sophie Hendrick, Willimantic, Conn.; Philip Heney, Douglas; Thu Hoang, Hai Phong, Vietnam; James Hoban, Millbury; Maura Hoban, Millbury; Patrick Hoban, Millbury; Kaylynn Horan, Putnam, Conn.; Nghi Huynh,

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; Mackenzie Jutras, Greenville, R.I.; Ethan Kalmin, Dudley; Claire Kelleher, Auburn; Zachary King, Plainfield, Conn.; Avery Kurzontkowski, Shrewsbury; Kate Landis, Brooklyn, Conn.; Molly Landis, Brooklyn, Conn.; Abigail Leahy, Leicester; Juhyoung Lee, Seoul, South Korea; Lauren Lemire, Southbridge; Qianhui Lin, Beijing, China; Zachary Litke, Brooklyn, Conn.; Sydney Lundt, Woodstock, Conn.; Bridget MacDonough, Grafton; Ian MacKenzie, Woodstock, Conn.; Kiera MacKenzie, Woodstock, Conn.; Szymon Mamro, Webster; Claire Marchand, Holden; Delia Marchand, Holden; Wednesday Maskova, Sestajovice, Czech Republic; Tessa McCabe, Douglas; Benjamin McGarry, Thompson, Conn.; Conner McLeod, Foster, R.I.; Keegan McLeod, Foster, R.I.; Emma McQuiston, Webster; Katherine Melnick, North Grosvenordale, Conn.; Sara Michailides, Chepachet, R.I.; Ayame Mizuno, Nagoya, Japan; Zaire Moore, Thompson, Conn.; Luciana Najjar, Northborough; Abbie O'Brien, Plainfield, Conn.; Declan O'Connor, West Boylston; Riley O'Connor, Dudley; Jenna Olivieri, Douglas; John Perweiler, Oxford; Long Pham, Hanoi, Vietnam; Katrina Piekieniak, Dudley; Morgan Polinski, Webster; Wiktorja Potem, Webster; Jill Reardon, Fiskdale; Brianne Rett, Uxbridge; Lucas Rhoads, Stafford Springs, Conn.; Olivia Richardson, Lincoln, R.I.; Emma Russell, Brooklyn, Conn.; Anthony Russo, Brooklyn, Conn.; Thomas Santos Soares, Porto Alegre, Brazil; William Savoie, Northbridge; Cassidy Semo, Dudley; Trinity Semo, Dudley; Emily Shamback, Sterling, Conn.; Andrew Shultz, Oxford; Zachary Stoddard, Pomfret Center, Conn.; Maya

Summiel, Dayville, Conn.; Matthew Tomasino, Leicester; Violeta Torres, Plainfield, Conn.; Thang Tran, Da Nang, Vietnam; Daniel Twohig-Mann, Douglas; Rachel Ullstrom, Auburn; John Vigliotti, Worcester; Caroline Vigneault, Southbridge; Caroline Villa, Auburn; Tram Vo, Phan Thiet, Vietnam; Aurora Voas, Oxford; Emily Walsh, Thompson, Conn.; Yunpeng Wang, Shenzhen, China; Kyle Woodruff, Southbridge; Wenyang Yuan, Beijing, China; Anthony Zurowski, Plainfield, Conn.

Dean's List  
Isata Bah, Shrewsbury, United Kingdom; Callista Bibeau, Danielson, Conn.; Rayliana Bonnell, Oxford; Patrick Brooks, Worcester; Jamie Calkins, Charlton; Zuzana Cejkova, Jindrichuv Hradec, Czech Republic; Martina Concato, Vicenza, Veneto; Xander Cook, Uxbridge; Jasmine Creighton, Webster; Sydney Duby, Worcester; Benjamin Duquette, Webster; Olivia Duquette, North Grosvenordale, Conn.; Nicholas Fennelly, Charlton; Jaiden Foskett, Charlton; Lily Givner, Oxford; Isabella Gonzalez, Plainfield, Conn.; Timothy Hall, Plainfield, Conn.; Garret Hippert, Brooklyn, Conn.; Kualim Johnson, Auburn; Thomas Kennison, Somers, Conn.; Caroline King, Rochester; Ayana Kobayashi, Nagoya, Japan; Haruna Kobayashi, Nagoya, Japan; Olivia Kowalski, Charlton; Katerina Looney, Dudley; Alana Lorusso, North Oxford; Evan Lundt, Woodstock, Conn.; Ian Martin, Moosup, Conn.; Salvatore Masciarelli, Northbridge; Sean Michailides, Chepachet, R.I.; Kylie Miller, Webster; Charles Mukweva, Harare, Zimbabwe; Michael Nespala, Celakovice, Czech Republic; Nhan Nguyen, Ho Chi Minh

City, Vietnam; Hayley O'Connell, Webster; Collin O'Connor, Sutton; Linh Pham, Hanoi, Vietnam; Sophia Rabor, Dayville, Conn.; Emma Raps, Webster; Grace Rhoads, Stafford Springs, Conn.; Morgan Royston, Oxford; Hannah Schoemer, Oxford; Olivia Sczuroska, Pomfret Center, Conn.; Alex Spetseris, Webster; Lily Tessmer, Lancaster; Chinh Tong, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; Owen Trainor, Brooklyn, Conn.; Ashley Vandenbrouck, Oxford; Isabella Vigliotti, Worcester; Elizabeth Walker, Thompson, Conn.; Anna Wildes, North Uxbridge; Kang Xu, Xi'an, China; Zhihe Ye, Beijing, China; Abdullah Zameer, Woodstock, Conn.; Xingyu Zhu, Wenzhou, China; Yutian Zhu, Hangzhou, China

Honor Roll  
Aaron Barnwell, Danielson, Conn.; Nicholas Boligan, Thompson, Conn.; Grace Booth, Webster; Domenic Capalbo, Worcester; Kara Corriveau, Brimfield; Claire Crossman, Oxford; Bridget Duffy, Shrewsbury; Ruiyi Gao, Hohhot, China; Audrey Hammond, Sutton; Lily Hayes, Danielson, Conn.; Camille Larson, Charlton; Michael Levesque, Narragansett, R.I.; Kaya Lukasek, Webster; Riley Martin, Moosup, Conn.; Sydney Masciarelli, Northbridge; Jacob McCabe, Douglas; Olivia Montione, Dudley; Andrew Peck, Paxton; Dominic Penny, Charlton; Luis Arturo Perez Povedano, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; Elena Polsky, Thompson, Conn.; Kaeleigh Sullivan, Douglas; Maggie Vo, Worcester; Wondimu Weinberg-O'Brien, Worcester; Tyler Whiteley, Foster, R.I.

## Pets perish in Charlton fire

BY JASON BLEAU  
VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT  
CHARLTON – A two-alarm fire in Charlton resulted in the loss of several pets after a two-family home was caught fire in the late morning hours of Dec. 3.  
Emergency responders dispatched the Charlton Fire Department to 19 South Sturbridge Rd. at around 11:09 a.m., where first responders discovered smoke coming from a doorway on the first floor. According to a press release, a passerby had been attempting to rescue family pets that were

known to be inside the home. A second alarm was requested by Fire Chief Ed Knopf bringing mutual aid to the scene. Fire department members made entry in an attempt to determine if any residents were inside. In the process the firefighters extinguished more of the blaze on the first floor. It took around 30 minutes for the fire to be deemed under control. The scene was cleared by 5:05 p.m. that evening.  
No residents were home during the fire, however emergency responders did locate four deceased pets inside the home allegedly perishing due

to smoke inhalation. A fifth animal, a dog, was located alive and rescued from the home. Firefighters provided oxygen for the dog who as of this report is recovering at the Tufts Animal Hospital in Grafton. Five residents were displaced due to damage resulting from the fire.  
The Charlton Police Department received mutual aid from Southbridge, Sturbridge, Auburn, Dudley and Leicester. The department is working with the District 7 Fire Investigation Unit and Fire Marshalls Office to investigate the cause of the fire.



Photos Courtesy — Bud Harris Photography  
Firefighters inspect the damage from a fire in a two-family home on South Sturbridge Road in Charlton.

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## SOUTHBRIDGE ACADEMIC HONOR ROLL

**SOUTHBRIDGE** — Southbridge High School, Southbridge Middle School, and Southbridge Academy are proud to present the honor roll for the first quarter of the 2020-2021 school year. Congratulations to the following students:

### Southbridge High School High Honors

Freshmen: Daniel Castillo, Paulin Koo, Zenath Mohammed, Jan Sanchez, Nola Shanbaum, Jaynece Velasquez  
 Sophomores: Reynaliz Garcia-Torres, Jasmine Maldonado, Emma Pelloni, Kole St. Laurent, Kyle St. Laurent

Juniors: Connor Gonyea, Kylee Trifone, Norman Valdes

Seniors: Yamaris Amalbert, Renee Estela Araujo, Jeremy Peters

### Southbridge High School Honors:

Freshmen: Kyan Boucher, Brody Carlson, Colby Facticeau, Haycer Garcia, Carmine Gianquinto, Yaneliz Henriquez, Emma Latour, Christian Ortiz-Torres, Danny Paulino, Yasiri Rojas, Zachary Singvongsa, Brady

Spinelli, Leysha Torres Torres, Genesys Vargas Hernandez, Kenneth Villemarie

Sophomores: Jamir Bautista Ortiz, Mariana Beaudry, Lissi Castillo Medina, Nathaniel Castillo, Jerick Diaz Santiago, David Dunkle, Shanyce Escobar, Leilani Franceschi, Briyana Gomez, Raymond Moreau, Curtis Prendiville, Christopher Tyz

Juniors: Mariah Amponsah, Jayleen Aponte Reyes, Aaliyah Aponte, Alexavier Arroyo, Jenielle Colon-Morales, Nathan Cotto, Yarielis Diaz, Ahslynne Farr, Adriana Figueroa Ramos, Isabella Paniss, Aisha Perez, Carelis Rodriguez Rivera, Karla Rodriguez

Seniors: Juliana Beaudry, Isabella Cabreara, Deyalanis Carrero Soto, Aimar Colon-Miranda, Angelina Irizarry, Steven Otero Quinones, Wandalis Quinones-Otero, Beatriz Roman, Najum Soofi, Janelle Tremblay, Leghacy Williams-Otero

### Southbridge Middle School High Honors

Sixth Grade: Yaneli Alvarez,

Cameron Aponte, Preston Carpenter, Jasmine Coleman, Kaylee Gevry, Jaden Maldonado Cosme, Zaidelis Ortiz-Tirado, Pedro Pagan, Jasik Rondeau, Jayden Rowell, Korban Roy-Bouthillette, Kayley Surprenant, Hector Tavaraz, Demyah Thompson, Nicholas Tremblay

Seventh Grade: Emily Baker, Yasmin Garcia Robles, Luis Henriquez, Natalie Ingles, Mariah Lee, Juan Lopez, Kyle Mondor, Gabriela Torres Lopez, Josiah Torres,

Eighth Grade: Marie Augusto, Briana Berrios, Erishnael Borrero, Giovanni Colon, Mackenzie Drennan, Miranda Magalhaes, Jersey Mejias, Mason Nichols, Ashton Oullette, Yamirelis Santos-Alvarado, Angelica Vega

### Southbridge Middle School Honors

Sixth Grade: Helen Bessette, Adiliviu Budencea, Jinette Goguen, Demitrus Gonzales, Stefany Gutierrez, Andrew Johnson, Chelee's Maldonado, Carla Rodriguez Rivera,

Jazel Rodriguez, Shianalys Rodriguez, Leilani Rohena Torres, Jariel Rosario, Jordan Shutts, Isaiah Torres

Seventh Grade: Alexander Bermudez Miranda, Luis Fradera O'Toole, Hannah Gendron, Isaiah Harris-Harrington, Kevin Hernandez, Dakota Loring, Cheyenne Menard, Niti Patel, Rebeca Rivera Ortiz, Marian Rodriguez Rivera, Yoxiel Rojas Rivas, Amelia Sosnicki, Miguel Velazquez

Eighth Grade: Kasney Bibeau, Syncere Coderre, Makayla Collazo, Mikayla Darling, Jaylin Geer, Matthew Gollman, Felix Lopez, Aaron Mandeville, Nicholas Marchesseault, Rubi Martinez, Yahir Negron Claudio, Keyrianis Rivera Encarnacion, Julian Rivera, Yaxel Rojas Rivas, Kenny Rosado-Ortiz, Nayelix Vega, Dayzyah Wintzel-Neely

### Southbridge Academy Honor Roll

Trenton Desmaris, Nikko Letendre, Alex Plaud-Medina, Malikye Puella Coates

# Baker administration pushes awareness of COVID precautions

BY KEVIN FLANDERS  
STAFF WRITER

**REGION** — With mask fatigue and other frustrations continuing to build statewide, the Baker-Polito Administration is scrambling to find creative outreach options.

Last week, Gov. Charlie Baker announced a new public awareness effort encouraging residents to continue heeding health guidance. Dubbed "Get Back Mass," the campaign highlights the importance of wearing a mask, practicing good hygiene, keeping a safe distance, and avoiding large gatherings.

"The campaign features residents from across the Commonwealth who, in their own words, draw the connection between taking precautions and getting back to the activities, people, and experiences they enjoy," read a statement released by Baker. "The campaign underscores the importance of taking precautions so the Commonwealth can slow the spread of

the virus and keep our communities safe."

The multilingual campaign will run on several platforms this winter, including television and digital ads. The Get Back Mass program will also utilize social media messages, and informational posters will be displayed in several public locations.

The program will run through at least February, officials said. Depending on COVID-19 conditions toward the end of the winter, the campaign could be expanded to March and beyond.

The Get Back Mass campaign is the latest in a series of public awareness efforts the Governor has launched to help slow the spread of COVID-19. The state has seen sharp increases in new cases and hospitalizations over the last month. State leaders blame the surge mostly on large private gatherings and complacency with health measures, as well as travelers returning to the state without adhering to quarantine

regulations.

Looking ahead, officials are particularly concerned about a steeper spike emerging from Thanksgiving travel and gatherings.

In addition to the Get Back Mass campaign, the Baker-Polito Administration made several other COVID-19 announcements last week. These include an award of \$650,000 in grant funding to community-based and faith-based organizations to help reduce the spread of the virus.

"The COVID-19 Community Grant Program supports nonprofit, community-based, and faith-based organizations in raising awareness of COVID best practices," the Governor's statement read.

Twenty organizations statewide will receive grant awards ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000. Awardees will engage in peer leadership activities, advanced COVID-19 health communications, educational programs, and community outreach efforts, among

others.

Also, the Governor announced last week the expansion of the Abbott BinaxNOW testing program to include Massachusetts long-term care facilities. This will increase COVID-19 testing availability throughout the winter for some of the state's most vulnerable residents.

For more information on statewide efforts to combat COVID-19, visit [www.mass.gov](http://www.mass.gov).

## Winter Tree Scavenger Hunt underway

**STURBRIDGE** — The 11th Annual Winter Tree Scavenger Hunt sponsored by the Sturbridge Conservation Commission is currently underway at Heins Farm.

Walk the beautiful Heins Farm trails any time during the month of December while discovering your

favorite decorated winter tree! When you find your favorite, take a selfie and post it on the town Recreation Department's Facebook page or e-mail it to [ecarson@sturbridge.gov](mailto:ecarson@sturbridge.gov). Submit your photo no later than Thursday, Jan. 7 to be included in our Grand Prize drawing. Winners will be drawn at the

January Conservation Commission meeting.

Families or other small groups can submit entries as a "team." We encourage family participation, but primary participants should be under the age of 13.



Photo Courtesy

The 11th Annual Winter Tree Scavenger Hunt sponsored by the Sturbridge Conservation Commission is currently underway at Heins Farm.

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PRESIDENT & PUBLISHER

BRENDAN BERUBE  
EDITOR

EDITORIAL

# The struggle against Old Man Winter

The first big nor’easter of the season has come and gone, leaving us with anywhere from three to nine inches of snow (or more in some cases), depending on where you live. As with most things, we like to think about how our ancestors handled certain situations. It was during a snowy drive last winter that we became more grateful for studied snow tires and heat, after thinking about how those before us dealt with travel during snowstorms.

During the winter of 1717, a storm dumped four feet of snow, creating snowdrifts of up to 25 feet. Passing through the snow covered roads was too much for a postman who traded his horse for a pair of snowshoes. Objects similar to skis were attached to carriages as a means of winter transportation.

Streets had to be passable for wood and food deliveries. When the roads were not passable townspeople would gather together in large groups and dig out a path. The snow was placed into the back of a horse-drawn cart by gangs of men and driven to the closest river to be dumped. Salt was also used on streets, but many people complained because it ruined their shoes and clothes.

Fast forward to 1840, when the first snow plow patent came to be. It wasn’t until 1862 that the first snowplow was put into use. The plow was attached to a cart and pulled by a team of horses. Soon after, many cities began to use the horse-drawn snowplow.

Typically the use of the horse-drawn plow was only used to clear main streets, leaving side streets and sidewalks snowed in by large piles often blocking entrances to businesses. Many business owners actually brought lawsuits against the plowing companies as a result because their customers could not gain access to the storefronts.

The solution to that conundrum, was the hiring of snow shovellers to accompany the plow. The blizzard of 1888, however, was too much for the “modernized” plow, leaving many people trapped inside their homes. This emergency was the catalyst cities needed to begin coming up with a better plan for snow removal. One idea was to stay on top of the storm as it started, instead of waiting for it to end. Different men driving the plows were assigned to certain neighborhoods as well.

The invention of the automobile brought with it a crutch and a new possibility as far as snow removal went. The crutch being that an entirely new method needed to be engineered and put into use. In New York in 1913, a dump truck could be seen on city streets. Seven years later the first snow loader, came on to the scene. It had a big scoop with a conveyor belt. The snow would go into the scoop via the belt, then dumped into the back of the truck. From there, off to the river it went.

It wasn’t until 1959 when the weather was able to be predicted more accurately, allowing towns and cities to better prepare for any incoming storms.

Reading old diaries of our New England ancestors gives the perfect window as to what it was like to experience a bitter cold winter, prior to modern practices.

As literary critic Van Wyck Brooks wrote in “The Flowering of New England, 1815-1865,” “All praise to winter, then, was Henry’s feeling. Let others have their sultry luxuries. How full of creative genius was the air in which these snow-crystals were generated. He could hardly have marveled more if real stars had fallen and lodged on his coat. What a world to live in, where myriads of these little discs, so beautiful to the most prying eye, were whirled down on every traveler’s coat, on the restless squirrel’s fur and on the far-stretching fields and forests, the wooded dells and mountain-tops,—these glorious spangles, the sweepings of heaven’s floor.”

# OPINION

Viewpoints and commentary from the Tri-Community and beyond

## Readers Share Timely Tips!

As we countdown to the festive holidays, readers took time from the hustle and bustle of the season to share their favorite tips and tricks. From creative COVID related strategies to sparking sentimental memories, the following hints from area readers are sure to please!



TAKE  
THE  
HINT

KAREN  
TRAINOR

Bringing extended family to the holiday table without literally having them at the table this year can be a reality, thanks to this reader’s present project:

It looks like the Covid virus is going to be here for the holidays. Many families will have to skip the traditional get together where everyone looks forward to homemade food. I am trying something different this year. Because we won’t be able to share a favorite recipe at the table, I am creating a family cook book. I have emailed family and extended family members requesting that they send me one or more of their favorite recipes. I will then put together a family favorite cook book. They will then receive a copy at Christmas. Stay safe, and Happy Holidays. Chris Griffin

Whitinsville, MA

Feeding baby his first finger foods can be a challenge – here’s an easy way to up the odds your little one can easily “pick up” the healthy foods:

My 10 month old grandson is loving finger foods, and banana is a favorite. Picking up chunks of banana can be slippery business, though. My daughter found that sprinkling the banana pieces with powdered peanut butter makes the task simple, and my grandson LOVES the combination!!! Also gets more protein into the little guy at the same time.

Janine Cortesa  
Uxbridge MA

This clever reader discovered a way to stretch the budget by increasing the lifespan of disposable face masks:

Disposable facial masks are expensive. Cloth are great but here are some tips for safely extending the life of the disposable types. I experimented, and mine did hold up to at least one wash in the washer and being dried in the dryer. I figured it was worth a try, and the worst thing would be that there would be lint all over that load of clothes and I would need to re-do the laundry. However, mostly I soak both the disposables and cloth masks in a stainless steel bowl with boiling or very hot water to which some drops of essential oils such as tea tree or lavender as well as a capful of rubbing alcohol has been added. Those particular oils hold some anti-bacterial properties. After an hours soak thoroughly rinse, wring out and hang indoors or outside preferably in a sunny spot to air dry. Hope this helps stretch the budget!

Annie Wuelfing  
East Brookfield MA

This reader has long promoted the

virtues of gifting nostalgic presents! Here are two ideas she shares:

I started coin collections for my niece and nephew, which I continue to add to at holiday time. I began by giving them Lincoln Pennies at age 1 with books, and each year at Christmas

I give them another few coins of years of birthdates of both sets of grandparents, aunts, uncles and more as keepsakes. Hopeful they will collect coins like their grandpa or at least they have a second book with the genealogy recorded and real coins from their biological grandfather, aunt and uncle.

I am trying to get cousins together again after Covid, and last year I paid to get old 8mm family movies on disc and had four reunions across the U.S. with cousins, copies for all.

My point is, to share stories now, take phone photos of old 35mm, 110, 126 and historic photos and share with family on Facebook etc. so they can keep them for their genealogy folders and suggest to them to do so. “Seize the moment,” in the words of Robin Williams!

Who knew? This reader’s slow cooker method eliminates the hassle of peeling and cutting hard-as-a-rock butternut squash!

Here is my tip. Put the whole butternut squash right in the crockpot, add just a little water and cook it until soft. It comes out so good, I can even eat the skin. I wish my father knew this on all those holidays! Just scoop out the seeds in the middle, no peeling needed.

Cathy Patchen  
North Brookfield, MA

Prize Winner  
Congratulations to Chris Griffin of Whitinsville, MA, whose name was drawn for Dinner for Two at the Publick House in Sturbridge. Chris submitted the family recipe book idea above.

Win Dinner for Two at the Publick House

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

# Life in balance

I’m not a very athletic guy. I’ve mentioned this before, but we used to be a skiing family. We’d head north to the slopes several times a year and occasionally out west to the Rockies. I never really enjoyed skiing, but Arlene and the kids did, so off we’d go.

I think much about life can be learned staring down a hill from eight-thousand feet while standing on two skis. The first thing that comes to mind is that it was unnatural. I don’t think we were meant to slide down a hill with two planks strapped to our feet.

The next and most prominent thought was that it was dangerous. On Vail Mountain one afternoon, I counted eleven skiers being towed down on sleds by the ski patrol. Later in the same day, I watched a teenager fall off a ski lift.

Why would I submit my family to such risk? I guess the answer is that they loved it ... and you can’t live life in a protective bubble. Other than damage to my self-esteem and confidence, we never suffered a major ski injury.

I did learn a valuable life lesson while on skis. As I said, I never felt comfortable. I could be skiing perfectly down the slopes, then get a sudden sense of fear, believing I was going to fall and inflict serious injury. When

that happened, and it always did, I’d purposely fall. I realized I was doing it. My oldest son asked, why are you falling so much? I shrugged it off, but his question stuck in my head and I pondered it the rest of the day. Then in the dark of night, I realized what I was doing.

As I said, I could be coming perfectly down the hill, get a sudden stroke of fear and purposely fall. I believe my lack of comfortability and confidence told me I was going to fall and harm myself, so instead, I decided to plan my fall because it was something I could control. I was sabotaging my own success on skis. Rather than planning to succeed, I did the opposite.

I’m preparing to speak to my local chamber of commerce this month. In my thoughts about why businesses and individuals succeed and fail, I think about my purposeful failure on the slopes. I didn’t envision making it to the bottom of the hill without falling. Unconsciously, I planned, executed, and succeeded at my own failure.

I wonder how many people, organizations and businesses do the same thing. How many marriages begin and end the same way? Or how many students flunk out of college

Turn To **MOORE** page **A9**

# Consider these year-end financial moves



FINANCIAL  
FOCUS

JEFF  
BURDICK

We’re nearing the end of 2020 – and for many of us, it will be a relief to turn the calendar page on this challenging year. However, we’ve still got a few weeks left, which means you have time to make some year-end financial moves that may work in your favor:

Here are a few suggestions:

Add to your IRA. For the 2020 tax year, you can put in up to \$6,000 to your traditional or Roth IRA, or \$7,000 if you’re 50 or older. If you haven’t reached this limit, consider adding some money. You actually have until April 15, 2021, to contribute to your IRA for 2020, but the sooner you put the money in, the quicker it can go to work for you. Plus, if you have to pay taxes in April, you’ll be less likely to contribute to your IRA then.

Make an extra 401(k) payment. If it’s allowed by your employer, put in a little extra to your 401(k) or similar retirement plan. And if your salary goes up next year, increase your regular contributions.

See your tax advisor. It’s possible that you could improve your tax situation by making some investment-related moves. For example, if you sold some investments whose value has increased, you could incur capital gains taxes. To offset these gains, you could sell other investments that have lost value, assuming these investments are no longer essential to your financial strategy. Your tax advisor can evaluate this type of move, along with others, to determine those that may be appropriate for your situation.

Review your investment mix. As you consider your portfolio, think about the events of these past 12 months and how you responded to them. When COVID-19 hit early in the year, and the financial markets plunged, did you find yourself worrying constantly about the losses you were taking, even though they were just on “paper” at that point? Did you even sell investments to “cut your losses” without waiting for a market recovery? If so, you might want to consult with a financial professional to determine if your investment mix is still appropriate for your goals and risk tolerance, or if you need to make some changes.

Evaluate your need for retirement plan withdrawals. If you are 72 or older, you must start taking withdrawals – technically called required minimum distributions, or RMDs – from your traditional IRA and your 401(k) or similar retirement plan. Typically, you must take these RMDs by December 31 every year. However, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Stimulus (CARES) Act suspended, or waived, all RMDs due in 2020. If you’re in this age group, but you don’t need the money, you can let your retirement accounts continue growing on a tax-deferred basis.

Think about the future. Are you saving enough for your children’s college education? Are you still on track toward the retirement lifestyle you’ve envisioned? Or have your retirement plans changed as a result of the pandemic? All of these issues can affect your investment strategies, so you’ll want to think carefully about what decisions you may need to make.

Looking back – and ahead – can help you make the moves to end 2020 on a positive note and start 2021 on the right foot.

*This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Please contact Jeff Burdick, your local Edward Jones Advisor in Sturbridge at 508-347-1420 or jeff.burdick@edwardjones.com.*

## STORM

continued from page **A1**

three towns, had to be postponed to Saturday, Dec. 12.

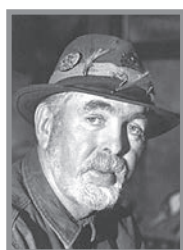
Run each year by AA Transportation, the Stuff the Bus program enables the community to donate toys for local youngsters. On Dec. 12, AA Transportation will bring buses to Spencer, North Brookfield, and Leicester. From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., AA employees at each site will collect new, unwrapped toys.

AA Transportation officials thank all donors for their continued support and patience through the postponement.





# On the hunt



THE GREAT  
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Deer hunting in Massachusetts has been great for some, and others not so good. It depends on who you ask. With all check stations closed and deer being registered online this year because of Covid, it will be a while before we can get some of the harvest figures. It seems the younger generation is doing extremely well harvesting some real impressive bucks locally.

A Milford group of hunters harvested a good number of big bucks last week, while others struggled to bring home a couple of small does. Some hunters were blaming the high harvest of deer to archers prior to the shotgun season. Archers did harvest the highest number of deer in the last few years, as stated in a previous column.

The shotgun deer season will end this Saturday, followed by Black powder season, which opens this coming Monday, Dec. 14 and runs through the end of the month. The ice crusted woods made it a bit noisy for hunters trying to sneak up on deer during the start of the second week of deer hunting, but warmer temperatures for the last three days should help shotgunners finish up their season on a high note. Hunters that worked the woods

with a couple of buddies, did the best, as deer were pushed to waiting gunners on well-traveled runs.

Primitive arms season is a favorite method to hunt deer for many hunters. The accuracy of the rifled barrels is amazing, and are capable of hitting their target at 100 yards or more in the right hands. Loading the gun is also extremely easy with the new Power Belt Bullets, and the 50 grain pellets, that are simply dropped down the barrel, prior to ram rodding the bullet down the barrel. Some hunters can reload as fast as 15 seconds.

A lot better than the old ball and patch, which for years allowed for a smoothbore gun only in Massachusetts! Changing hunting laws in Mass. is like pulling teeth with legislators! The Sunday hunting bill and the Crossbow bill needs to be passed. Now that elections are just about over, sportsmen will again try to convince Massachusetts Fish & Wildlife that these bills need to be addressed and passed this year.

Trout fishing anglers are still fishing numerous bodies of water from their boats, but they are hopeful that some cold weather is on the horizon. It has been a few years now that many lakes and ponds in the area, have provided very little ice fishing, because of unsafe ice. With the darn pandemic giving anglers a touch of cabin fever, a little bit of ice fishing could be just what the doctor ordered. Watching TV every day makes it hard to concentrate on everyday life that we are accustomed to. When the vaccine is available, I will be in line.



Photo Courtesy

This week's picture shows this writer's two dogs, Molly & Twig.

This coming spring may not see sportsmen's shows open if we do not get the pandemic under control. That would be a shame! Thousands of sportsmen attend the shows annually, pumping thousands of dollars into the economy, not to mention seeing old friends and telling lies about their fishing and hunting experiences in 2020.

Shopping for Christmas gifts this year is being done mostly online, which is a good idea. Purchasing a hunting or

fishing license is now available online, and is one of the best things you can give any sportsmen. Gift certificates are also a great gift, when purchased at a sportsmen or sportswoman's favorite store.

Be sure to social distance and wear a mask.

*Take A Kid Fishing & Keep Them Rods Bending!*

## Christmas comes to Hitchcock Academy

Water by R.D. Hitchcock of Charlton (a long lost relative of founder Samuel Austin Hitchcock?) patrons can enjoy Santa reading Twas The Night Before Christmas and musical performances outdoors from Hitchcock's second floor balcony.

According to Executive Director, Cindy Skowyrza the goal of all the activities is to spread cheer while following COVID guidelines.

"The idea," she said, "was to come up with ways to share the season; to make memories, and still keep within protocols."

To that end, Skowyrza and her staff of elves plan to take full advantage of trees and greens donated by Weston Tree Farm and Lacombe Family Tree Farm to "spruce up" Hitchcock inside and out with an invitation for community members to come and use Hitchcock Academy as a backdrop for their holiday photos.

Throughout the season, Hitchcock Academy's front porch will feature a Community Tree.

Skowyrza says, "this tree is special. Other than lights, this tree will be decorated with personalized ornaments, which will celebrate the present while honoring special people who have passed."

For \$5, patrons can purchase one type of ornament in memory of a loved one. Or they can become a Hitchcock Star by purchasing a star ornament.

"The hope," Skowyrza says, "is to have a Community Tree every year; adding new ornaments to the old and turning it into a Memory Tree as well as a Community Tree."

This year, Hitchcock Academy is proud to be a Toys for Tots drop off location. Anyone can drop off an unwrapped toy in the box in Hitchcock's lobby until December 15. Hitchcock will also have supplies on hand to craft your own ornament and to make a card to send to our troops.

"We want to show our gratitude to those who serve," Skowyrza said.

Crafting and cardmaking begin on Dec. 9 and continue Tuesday through

Thursday from noon to 8 p.m. and Friday from noon to 6 p.m. until Dec. 23.

On Dec. 16 at 6:30 p.m., artist Anna Ozolins will host a Make Your Own Centerpiece class. Cost of the class is \$15. Interested participants should bring their own container but HFA will provide an assortment of seasonal greens. Skowyrza also mentioned that people are free to bring any decorative accent(s) they wish to include in their centerpiece.

"There is no question that COVID has effected how we celebrate the holidays this year," Skowyrza said, "but COVID does not mean that we stop celebrating."

She reminds people to wear a mask and notes that activities will be set up to accommodate social distancing. She invites people to visit hitchcockacademy.org for schedule information and a complete list of activities.



BRIMFIELD — The Dec. 12 and 13 weekend kicks off Hitchcock Academy's long list of Christmas festivities featuring lights, decorated trees, Christmas carols, crafts, photo opportunities, cookies, and cocoa. From 3 to 7 p.m. on Saturday the 12th, and from 1 to 5 p.m. on Sunday the 13th, thanks to the sponsorship of Pool

### MOORE

continued from page A8

because they can't picture themselves graduating? I think the true numbers would shock us all. I believe most failure is subconsciously planned and executed.

The question then is, why don't we picture ourselves making it to the bottom of the slope unharmed and still upright on our skis?

I think the answer is obvious, and it's because we haven't planned to do

so. We push off the top of the mountain with a hope and prayer of making it. We don't have a plan to make it to the bottom while still upright because our fear causes us to protect ourselves against the inevitable failure. No success plan, no positive image of succeeding ... is maybe why so many skiers end up on sleds and why so many businesses, marriages and life plans fail.

If I had spent more time planning to stay upright rather than planning to hit the ground, I bet I may have found the success and enjoyment that others

do on the slopes. I may have learned to enjoy skiing!

Is this a story about a winter sport? Certainly, skiing is the example, but it's more about our balance in life. Does your lack of an optimistic belief in your success sabotage your plans in any or every activity?

Before we begin any endeavor, do you plan your success, envision your accomplishment, and believe you'll make it to your goal on your feet?

In short, get your ducks in a row, have a positive plan, have fun, live more, and worry less.

Believe in and imagine your success before it happens. Create a plan with a successful ending. Execute your plan and make it to the bottom of the slope on your feet.

Believe you can and will.

Gary W. Moore is a freelance columnist, speaker, and author of three books including the award-winning, critically acclaimed, "Playing with the Enemy." Follow Gary on Twitter @GaryW Moore721 and at [www.garyw-moore.com](http://www.garyw-moore.com).



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# OBITUARIES

## Kathleen Gibson, 77

FISKDALE- Kathleen” Kathy “ Gibson, 77 of Sturbridge MA, passed away on Saturday, Dec 5th, after a short illness



She is survived by her three children, Laurie Johnson and her husband Paul of Boylston MA, her daughter, best friend and devoted caregiver Susan McDowell of Woodstock, CT and her son Steven Gibson and his wife Kara of Nantucket Massachusetts. Kathy also leaves behind her grandchildren Erin McDowell, Brianna Krushefsky, Aidan McDowell and Tyler Gibson who she loved dearly. She is survived by her

sister Arlene Kingston Stanton of Charlton Massachusetts. She is pre-deceased by her parents Wilfred and Mary Casey, her sister Mary Mosher and niece Dawn Mosher. She is also survived by five nephews and nieces. Kathy was blessed in her life with many friends who were more like family. Her children are thankful for each of them and the gift of their friendship that brought her great joy. Her children are especially grateful to Leslie Mallon and Ellen Rigatti for giving her the gift of true friendship for decades. Kathy was born and raised in Charlton Massachusetts. A resident of Sturbridge Massachusetts for the past 50+ years where she raised her children with her former husband

William Gibson of Southbridge. She was a hairdresser for several years in several salons, but her greatest joy was being a Mom. Her children want to extend their appreciation to VNA care network and Tri-Valley Elder Services for their compassionate care and dedication to their Mom. Additionally, to the outstanding doctors nurses and PCA's at 6 ICU and the 7th floor of UMASS University for taking such wonderful care of her and her children in her final days. If you would like to honor her memory, her children ask that you do a random act of kindness for someone in need this holiday season as Kathy would have loved that. Her children learned the magic of giving through

watching her kindness, generosity and caring acts for friends when they were ill or in need. York Beach Maine was her favorite place and where some of her best family memories were made; her children will honor her with a memoriam at Nubble light house. Funeral arrangements will be private in light of the COVID pandemic. A celebration of life with her large circle of friends and her family will be held at a future date. The Daniel T. Morrill Funeral Home, 130 Hamilton St., Southbridge, is directing arrangements. [www.morrillfuneralhome.com](http://www.morrillfuneralhome.com)

# 2019 Bay Path male grads achieve 100 percent pass rate for NCLEX-PN




The male graduates of the Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy Class of 2019 recently earned a 100 percent pass rate for the National Council Licensure Examination, a comprehensive adaptive exam that allows students to become licensed and practice as licensed practical nurses (LPNs).

CHARLTON — The male graduates of the Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy Class of 2019 recently earned a 100 percent pass rate for the National Council Licensure Examination, a comprehensive adaptive exam that allows students to become licensed and practice as licensed practical nurses (LPNs). This comes after Timothy Nikopoulos, LPN of Charlton notified Gretheline Bolandrina, MSN Ed, RN, CRRN Academy Director of passing the NCLEX-PN on his first attempt. “It as a bit of a wait, about four moths since I signed up, and a bit of a drive to South Burlington, Vermont to take one of the only four available test dates in New England” wrote Nikopoulos. He added, “I have begun working as an LPN, with my second shift of training.” Nikopoulos completed his last two weeks in the Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst with his final practicum night shift in the medical ICU. He plans to secure a position in a nurse residency program in critical care/ICU in a hospital setting. The Accelerated BS in Nursing is a full-time undergraduate program that allows students to earn a BS in Nursing in 17 months. This option is open to students who have completed bachelor’s degrees in other disciplines. Nikopoulos enjoyed the ABSN program at UMass, despite the transition to online learning in April 2020. He was named on the Dean’s List for the Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 semesters. Nikopoulos stated “the rigorous nature of the practical nursing program at Bay Path provided a great framework of knowledge for me to excel in the ABSN program.” His anticipated graduation date is February 2021. “This accomplishment of the graduates from the PN Class of 2019 warms an educator’s heart,” said Academy Director Bolandrina. “The Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy prides itself on producing real world ready nurses, outstanding outcomes, and passing on the first try. Male or female graduates, the Academy celebrates NLCEX success.” The other male members of the PN Class of 2019 are as follows: James Karuri, LPN of

Worcester Onesmus Katua, LPN of Worcester David Macharia, LPN of Worcester Gideon Mendza, LPN of Cherry Valley Timothy Nikopoulos, LPN of Charlton Isaac Njoroge, LPN of Worcester Erik Olson, LPN of Sturbridge James Wachira, LPN of Worcester At Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy, the program is a 40-week, (10-month), full-time, Monday through Friday, evening program. The program begins mid-August and is completed in late June. Graduates receive a Practical Nursing Certificate and are eligible to take the NCLEX-PN licensure exam. The Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy is fully approved by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services Department of Public Health Board of Registration in Nursing ([www.mass.gov/dph/boards/rn](http://www.mass.gov/dph/boards/rn)) and is accredited by the Commission on Occupational Education ([www.council.org](http://www.council.org)). For more information, visit [www.baypath.net](http://www.baypath.net)

PLACE MOTORS IS PROUD TO SPONSOR



**Hi! My name is Kelsi and I am a talented singer!**

Kelsi is an outgoing girl of Caucasian descent with a strong personality. She loves being the center of attention and she has a great sense of humor. Some of Kelsi's favorite activities include playing outside, swimming, doing arts and crafts, and playing video games. Kelsi is also a talented singer! When she grows up, Kelsi wants to attend cosmetology school. In school, she is known to be bright and resourceful.

Kelsi is legally freed for adoption and would benefit from a permanent family who could build a relationship with her slowly over time. Kelsi is very active and it would be best if her future resource can spend time with her engaging in activities she enjoys. The family should also be able to offer Kelsi patience, flexibility, and consistency.

**Who Can Adopt?**

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

The process to adopt a child from foster care requires training, interviews, and home visits to determine if adoption is right for you, and if so, to help connect you with a child or sibling group that your family will be a good match for.

To learn more about adoption from foster care, call the Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) at 617-6273 or visit [www.mareinc.org](http://www.mareinc.org). The sooner you call, the sooner a waiting child will have a permanent place to call home.

## Bay Path UNICEF Club holds fundraiser for children's nutrition



This holiday season, the Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy UNICEF Club pounced on the opportunity to help support UNICEF USA to raise awareness and funds to children's nutrition worldwide by holding a bake sale.

CHARLTON — This holiday season, the Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy UNICEF Club pounced on the opportunity to help support UNICEF USA to raise awareness and funds to children's nutrition worldwide by holding a bake sale. The UNICEF club raised and donated \$113.23. UNICEF Club PR Officer, Isabella Boateng of Manchester, Conn. stated, “Malnutrition has resulted in almost 50 percent of all childhood deaths. UNICEF keeps increasing its efforts to reach the most remote villages and communities all over the world, to ensure that all children have the adequate nutrition necessary for growth, learning and development. UNICEF has been treating malnutrition in the first 1,000 days of a child's life, UNICEF has assisted in cutting down the number of children badly affected by stunting by nearly 100 million since 1990.” The Officers of the UNICEF Club, member, and Club Advisor, Professor Cheryl Cahill, MSN, RN were filled with enthusiasm and drive to make a difference in the lives of children. “In spite of the pandemic and hardship in these present times, we organized a Bake sale to raise for funds” said Boateng. She added, “Volunteers baked delicious homemade pastries which were served with coffee, tea, or hot chocolate for a donation. The event was successful with safety protocols observed.”



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# Country Bank announces sponsorship agreement with Worcester Red Sox

WORCESTER — Country Bank, a full-service financial institution serving the region with assets of \$1.8B, today announced that it entered into an elite-level corporate sponsorship arrangement as a Founding Partner of the Worcester Red Sox. Country Bank's multi-tiered sponsorship includes an iconic sign in right field atop the stands known as the "Worcester Wall" along with the Country Bank Guests Services located on the first base concourse.

The partnership between the WooSox and Country Bank also underscores their mutual commitment to the community through the WooSox Foundation and Country Bank's Charitable Giving Program by supporting local non-profits in the region through a combined charitable giving campaign throughout the baseball season.

In addition, both organizations will be working together to launch a Teacher of the Month Program that recognizes the outstanding work teachers do every day to educate and support students.

"We have been impressed and inspired by Country Bank's sense of community involvement," said WooSox President Dr. Charles A. Steinberg. "We see how helpful they are to various institutions and thousands of people in our region, and we

welcome them to Polar Park with open arms as we work together to enhance the quality of life in our community even more."

"In an era where spectator sports continue to be redefined by new norms of social distancing, sports sponsorships are taking on new forms. With that in mind, we couldn't be more excited to be a part of the WooSox, and the Worcester community. The addition of year-round entertainment, including ball games, concerts, and various family activities at Polar Park, is exciting for the people and businesses in the region. We all look forward to the day when we can come together again at the ballpark enjoying activities with our families and friends. We also look forward to seeing our businesses thrive once again after being heavily impacted by the pandemic," said Paul Scully, President and CEO of Country Bank.

To kick off their partnership, last week a team from Country Bank and the WooSox Mascot, Smiley Ball, delivered 500 Thanksgiving meals prepared by Old Sturbridge Village along with iconic apple pies from Worcester based Table Talk Pies to the St. John's Food Pantry for the Poor.

"The alignment of our organizational values with the WooSox solidifies our commitment to service and teamwork as we continually strive for excel-



Photo Courtesy

**Pictured: Dr. Charles Steinberg, President of Worcester Red Sox, Paul Scully, President and CEO of Country Bank, Mary McGovern, EVP and CFO of Country Bank, Tom Wolcott, SVP, Commercial Lending of Country Bank, Shelley Regin, SVP of Marketing of Country Bank and Jack Verducci, VP, Corporate Partnerships of the WooSox.**

lence in all we do," shared Scully.

About Country Bank

Country Bank is a full-service mutual community bank serving central and western Massachusetts with 14 offices in Ware, Palmer, West Brookfield, Brimfield, Belchertown,

Wilbraham, Ludlow, Leicester, Paxton, Charlton, and Worcester. Country Bank is a member of FDIC, DIF, and the SUM network. Country Bank can be reached at 800-322-8233 or online at [countrybank.com](http://countrybank.com).

## Festival of Crafts perseveres in 2020

BY JASON BLEAU

VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

DUDLEY - The Shepherd Hill Music Parents Association didn't let the COVID-19 pandemic stop them from continuing their annual fundraiser the Festival of Crafts in 2020, shifting the event to an online experience.

The annual showcase of crafters has been a longstanding tradition at Shepherd Hill Regional High School as a staple of the holiday season drawing hundreds to purchase hand made holiday gifts with the proceeds to the entry fees helping support band, chorus and show choir programs at Shepherd

Hill. In order to continue their largest fundraiser Shepherd Hill Music Parents Association took advice from one of the high school's teachers Kristin Griffiths to move to event to a digital setting through Dec. 11 to allow consumers to connect with sellers online.

Jeff Cloutier, President of the SHMPA, said the process was smooth in working with crafters to embrace a format that is much different from past years. They also leaned heavily on webmaster Scott Szretter to help set up the online marketplace where participants could shop. The shift to virtual also required a more openminded

approach to who could participate as a seller.

"In a normal year, we evaluate the crafters to make sure everything is hand made. We do not allow vendors, but for the virtual fair, we allowed anyone. It's been a tough year for everyone and most of our crafters are from New England, so we wanted to give everyone an opportunity. It is restricted to crafters who have some form of online presence, unfortunately we were not able to serve everyone this year," Cloutier said.

Unfortunately, the fundraiser efforts of the SHMPA have taken quite a hit in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The association's second largest fundraising effort involved working volunteer programs at Gillette Stadium which has been unable to host fans or groups since April due to the outbreak. Cloutier acknowledged that the virtual fair has not produced the same income as the live event but at least it brought something to help the association continue to support the high school's music programs.

"The virtual fair only generated about 3 percent of what we make from the in-person fair. In a normal year, we make money on the crafter registration, customer admission and

food sales. This year, we only have a small registration fee. We wanted to keep the fee low because this was more about doing something for both our crafters and our community. We also didn't know what to expect in terms of traffic," said Cloutier. "We want to thank all of our crafters and customers both past and present. Our fair works so well because we have loyal following with both our crafters and our customer. I also want to thank our volunteers who got the fair up and running. Our organization is 100 percent made up of volunteers who selflessly dedicate their time."

## LEGALS

### NOTICE OF MORTGAGEE'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE

By virtue of and in execution of the Power of Sale contained in a certain mortgage given by David M. Nichols and Kristina L. Nichols to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, acting solely as a nominee for Full Spectrum Lending, Inc., dated October 14, 2004 and recorded in Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds in Book 34897, Page 29 (the "Mortgage") of which mortgage The Bank of New York Mellon f/k/a The Bank of New York, as Trustee for the Certificateholders of the CWABS, Inc., Asset-Backed Certificates, Series 2004-12 is the present holder by Assignment from Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc. as nominee for Full Spectrum Lending, Inc., its successors and assigns to The Bank of New York Mellon f/k/a The Bank of New York, as Trustee for the Certificateholders of the CWABS, Inc., Asset-Backed Certificates, Series 2004-12 dated August 12, 2015 and recorded at said Registry of Deeds in Book 54226, Page 385, for breach of conditions of said mortgage and for the purpose of foreclosing the same, the mortgaged premises located at 16 Camp Road, Fiskdale (Sturbridge), MA 01518 will be sold at a Public Auction at 1:00 PM on December 30, 2020, at the mortgaged premises, more particularly described below, all and singular the premises described in said mortgage, to wit:

All that certain parcel of land situate on the Southerly side of Camp Road in Sturbridge, the County of Worcester and State of Massachusetts, being known and designated as follows: Beginning at an iron pipe on the Southerly side of Camp Road at the Northeast corner of land herein described and the Northwesterly corner of one Debreuil;

Thence S. 11 deg. 2 min. West along land of Dubreuil and now or formerly of Arthur Denault, et ux., 439.29 feet to an iron pipe;

Thence S. 7 deg. 46 min. West along other land now or formerly of Arthur Denault, et ux., 87.63 feet to an iron pipe at other land now or formerly of Arthur Denault, et ux.;

Thence N. 76 deg. 7 min. West along other land now or formerly of Arthur Denault, et ux., 150.0 feet to an iron pipe at other land now or formerly of Arthur Denault, et ux.;

Thence N. 10 deg. 55 min. East along other land now or formerly of Arthur Denault, et ux., 497.83 feet to an iron pipe on the Southerly side of Camp Road;

Thence N. 67 deg. 58 min. East along the Southerly side of Camp Road, 22.38 feet to an iron pipe;

Thence S. 84 deg. 28 min. East along the Southerly side of Camp Road, 96.46 feet to an iron pipe;

Thence S. 74 deg. 19 min. East along the Southerly side of Camp Road, 31.16 feet to the iron pipe at the point of beginning.

Being the same property as conveyed from Dale J. Hurd and Melissa Jean Hurd (formerly known as Melissa J. McGarry) to David M. Nichols, individually, as described in Book 19544 Page 142, Recorded 01/23/1998, in WORCESTER County Records. Tax ID: 190-02315-016

For mortgagor's title see deed recorded with the Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds in Book 19544, Page 142.

The premises will be sold subject to any and all unpaid taxes and other municipal assessments and liens, and subject to prior liens or other enforceable encumbrances of record entitled to precedence over this mortgage, and subject to and with the benefit of all easements, restrictions, reservations and conditions of record and subject to all tenancies and/or rights of parties in possession.

Terms of the Sale: Cashier's or certified check in the sum of \$5,000.00 as a deposit must be shown at the time and place of the sale in order to qualify as a bidder (the mortgage holder and its designee(s) are exempt from this requirement); high bidder to sign written Memorandum of Sale upon acceptance of bid; balance of purchase price payable by certified check in thirty (30) days from the date of the sale at the offices of mortgagee's attorney, Korde & Associates, P.C., 900 Chelmsford Street, Suite 3102, Lowell, MA 01851 or such other time as may be designated by mortgagee. The description

for the premises contained in said mortgage shall control in the event of a typographical error in this publication. Other terms to be announced at the sale.

The Bank of New York Mellon f/k/a The Bank of New York, as Trustee for the Certificateholders of the CWABS, Inc., Asset-Backed Certificates, Series 2004-12

Korde & Associates, P.C.

900 Chelmsford Street

Suite 3102

Lowell, MA 01851

(978) 256-1500

Nichols, David, M., 19-034233

December 3, 2020

December 10, 2020

December 17, 2020

### CHARLTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION Public Hearing Notice

A **Public Hearing** will be held remotely via Zoom Conferencing by calling 1-646 558 8656 and using meeting ID # 876 5763 5499 and password 127927 at 7:05 PM on 12/16/2020 to consider a **Notice of Intent** for Steven Goodman for the property Located at: 241 Sturbridge Rd, Charlton, MA For the construction of 1.2 million sq. ft. warehouse structure, with associated access drive, loading docks and parking areas.

*This is a Public Hearing under the requirements of G.L. CH. 131 §40, as amended. Plans are available at the Town of Charlton website – Conservation Commission*

December 10, 2020

### Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Division of Wetlands and Waterways Public Notice

Pursuant to 33 U.S.C. 1341 and M.G.L. c. 21 §§ 26 - 53, notice is given of a 401 Water Quality Certification application for the proposed construction of a 1.2 million square-foot distribution warehouse and associated access drive, loading docks, and parking areas at 241 Sturbridge Road in Charlton, Massachusetts. Portions of the proposed project will occur within Bordering Vegetated Wetlands that border McKinstry Brook, a cold-water fishery and Out-

standing Resource Water. Additional information may be obtained from LEC Environmental Consultants, Inc., 781-245-2500. Written comments should be sent to MassDEP Central Region Office, Division of Wetlands and Waterways, 8 New Bond Street, Worcester MA 01606 within twenty-one days of this notice.

Any group of ten persons, any aggrieved person, or any governmental body or private organization with a mandate to protect the environment who submits written comments may appeal the Department's Certification. Failure to submit written comments before the end of the public comment period may result in the waiver of any right to an adjudicatory hearing.

December 10, 2020

### 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. WO20C0360CA

#### CITATION ON PETITION TO

#### CHANGE NAME

#### In the matter of:

#### Shirley Ann Rafferty

A **Petition to Change Name of Adult** has been filed by **Shirley Ann Rafferty** of **Charlton MA**

requesting that the court enter a Decree changing their name to: **Shirley Ann Ramsey**

#### IMPORTANT NOTICE

**Any person may appear for purposes of objecting to the petition by filing an appearance at: Worcester Probate and Family Court before 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 12/29/2020. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance if you object to this proceeding.**

**WITNESS, Hon. Leilah A. Keamy, First Justice of this Court.**

Date: November 30, 2020

Stephanie K. Fattman

Register of Probate

December 10, 2020





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**WEBSTER** – 6 Nicholas Circle! 8+ Rm Center Hall Colonial! 1.22 Acres! Sought After Neighborhood! Great Commuter Location Accessible to Many Major Routes! Spacious Stainless Steel Appliance Cabinet Packed Eat-in Kitchen & Formal Dining Rm! 23 x 24 Plrplace Family Rm w/Cathedral Ceiling & Slider to the Huge Deck! Front to Back Living Rm! 1/2 Bath w/Laundry Closet! The 2nd Floor You'll Find the Comfortable 12X17 Master w/Walk-in Closet & Full Bath w/Linen Closet! 2 Additional Bedrooms plus an Office/Nursery/Bedroom all w/ Ample Closets! 2nd Full Bath off the Hall w/Linen Closet! 2.5 Total Baths! Lower Level Ideal for Storage or Future Expansion! 2 Car Garage w/Electric Openers w/Double Door Entry to the Basement for Moving Larger Items aka Boys Toys! 2 Z Oil Heat, 2 AC, Separate Oil Water Heater! Irrigation! Don't Delay! **\$418,900.00**

**DOUGLAS** – 102 SE Main St! Start Packing! Spacious 9 Rm Colonial! 2.23 Acres! Center Island Granite Kit w/Soft Close Cabs, SS Appliances! Slider to 24' Deck! Open Floor Plan! Hickory Wood Floors throughout the Kit, Din & Liv Rms, all w/Recessed Lighting! 1st Flr Office or Possible 4th Bdrm w/Oak Hrdwd Flr! Full Bath in the Hall! 2nd Flr w/Full Dble Vanity Bthrm & 3 Comfortable Bdrms, all w/Beautiful Wood Laminate First! Master w/Cathedral Ceiling, Skylight, Ceiling Fan, Bay Window overlooking the Back Yard and a Master Bath! Lower Level w/2 Finished Rms, Utility Rm w/Laundry and Half Bath! 3.5 Baths Total! Recent C/Air, Heat & Roof! 24x26 2 Car Detached Garage! Huge Shed! Nearby Nature Trails & Wallum Lake Beach! **\$379,900.00**









**WEBSTER LAKE** – 112 Gore Rd! **NORTH POND!** Sucker Brook Cove! 8 Rm, 3 Bdrm, 1.5 Bath Ranch is Ready for You! Southwestern Exposure! Gorgeous Sunsets! Unique Waterfront! An Open Floor Plan! Lake Views from Nearly All Rooms! 2x6 Construction! Energy Efficient Blinds in Every Room! 4 Oil Tanks - Fill Up Once a Year! C/Air! Gas Fireplace! Whole House Fan! Meticulously Cared For! Large workshop! 3 Car Garage! Carport! 2 Sheds w/Electric! Back Yard is Perfect for Family Gatherings! Plenty of Off Street Parking! Summer is Here! **\$539,900.00**

**WEBSTER** – 55 Hillside Ave! 7 Rm, 4 Bedroom Cape! Great Highway Access! Walk to Memorial Beach! View July 4th Fireworks from Your Backyard! Liv Rm w/ Hrdwds, Ceiling Fan & Pellet Stove! Eat-in Kit! Fam Rm! Full Bath! 1st Flr Master w/Hrdwds & Ceiling Fan! Oil Heat! Vinyl Sided! Younger Roof! Replacement Windows! Town Services! Fenced Yard! 1 Car Garage! **\$239,900.00**

**SHREWSBURY** – Waterfront – Flint Pond w/Direct Boating Access to Lake Quinsigamond! The Quiet of Flint, All the Action of Quinsig! Privacy Galore on Sargents Island – 4.27 Acres – 2,000' Waterfront! Beautiful Sunrises & Sunsets! Looking for a Getaway, Principal Residence or Second Home, Winters in Florida, Summers on the Island! Tons of Potential, Do a Little or Do a Lot! 4+ Rm, 1 Bdrm, 1.5 Bath "A" Frame with the Ability to Finish the Walk-out Lower Level, add a Family Rm, Bdrm, Bathrm! Nature Abounds, Visited by Deer, Fox, Eagles & More! In Time for Summer! **\$579,900.00**

**GRAFTON** – 168 Brigham Hill Rd! 8 Rm Garrison Colonial set on 1.3Acres! 4 Comfortable Bdrms & 2 Full Bthrms! Freshly Painted, Floors Recently Refinished! Spacious Kit w/Lunch Counter! SS Appliances w/Gas Cook-Top! Grand Dining Rm for Family Gatherings! 19x26 Living Rm w/Pellet Stove! Master Bdrm w/Dble Closets & Hot Tub! Bright & Airy Mudroom out to the 2 Car Garage! Furnace & Hot Water Tank 5 Years Young! Radon tested at 2.5! Newer Roof on Garage & Breezeway! New Well Water Tank Installed! Title V in-hand! Property Abuts Grafton Land Trust - Hiking Trails Right Out Your Back Door! Convenient to Routes 90, 9 & 20! Immediate Occupancy! **\$449,900.00**



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*Featured New Listings!*

**WEBSTER - 11 PERRYVILLE ROAD**



**ON DEPOSIT**

Beautiful Split entry home, situated on 1 acre, nicely landscaped lot! Vaulted ceiling! 6 rooms, 3 bedrooms, 2 full baths, Fireplace! Central Air - 2 Zones! Covered deck. All town services! 2 car garage under. Shed! **\$289,900.**

**DUDLEY - 22 ROBERTS ROAD**



**ON DEPOSIT**

Lovely 3 bedroom Ranch! Single door 2 car garage with storage! Eat-in kitchen, Fieldstone Fireplaced Living Room! 3 bedrooms, hardwood floors, Remodeled bathroom! Lower Level fieldstone walls/fireplace! In-ground pool! - 3.58 ACRES includes extra lot. **\$312,000.**

**WOODSTOCK CT - 110 JOY RD**



**ON DEPOSIT**

Quisential Woodstock Farmhouse w/Spectacular views of Pond. Detached Studio Building! 2.5 Acres. Prof. Landscaped. 5 Bedrooms. Fireplaced Dining, library/Music room. Master Bedroom, 2 Full Baths! Renovated Kitchen. Upstairs, 4 Bedrooms w/Full Bath. **New Price \$399,900.**

**WEBSTER - 21 3RD STREET UNIT: B**



**SORRY, SOLD!**

Condominium – Living leisurely! 3 bedroom, 2.5 bath (including master suite) home. Freshly painted! Recessed lighting, gas fireplace, and sliding doors, to beautiful balcony. Walkout basement! built-in outdoor grilling spot. Easy access to 1395. **\$224,900**

**N. ATTLEBORO - 523 KELLY BLVD.**



**SORRY, SOLD!**

Farmhouse style home! Sun-drenched interior! Spacious floor plan! living room, eat-in kitchen. 6 rooms total, 4 bedrooms, 2 baths! Heated by gas / hot water baseboard! Outdoor kitchen, pool! Jacuzzi tub/shower. Located just minutes from Rt 95 & 495! assisted sale **\$408,500.**

**WEBSTER - 103 UPPER GORE RD**



**ON DEPOSIT**

Estate Sale! **LOCATION! LOCATION! Scenic Upper Gore Rd! Amazing View of Beautiful Webster Lake!** Main level has 3 Bedrooms, Kitchen, Dining Rm, Common Bathroom, Master Bedroom & Master Bath – Fireplaced Living Room!! Finished Lower Level, 1/2 Bath, Laundry, Large room w/Pellet Stove & Direct Garage Access! Tiered deck, w/Screened porch, leads directly to your "Salt water" Inground Pool! **\$319,900.**

**LAND WEBSTER/OXFORD/DUDLEY/DOUGLAS**

Oxford - 4 Leicester St - Approx. 8.47 ACRES! River Frontage Possible to be Subdivided! **\$89,900**

Webster - Upper Gore w/View of the Lake! 1+ Acre! Artesian Well, Septic Design & Conservation - DONE. **NEW PRICE \$115,000.**

Webster - Cooper Road 2 Buildable Lots! Water & Sewer Access. Zoned Lake Res! Each **\$24,500.**

Douglas-Mount Daniels 2.5 Acres abuts Douglas State Forest! **ON DEPOSIT! \$132,900**

Dudley - Marshall Terrace 12,000+/- Sq Ft Lot! Potential for a 2 Family! **SORRY SOLD! \$70,000.**

Dudley - Packard Dr. 2 Lots! Very Private! off Ridge Dr. Will not last! **SORRY SOLD! \$50,000**

**OXFORD - 4 SPICEBUSH LANE**



**SORRY, SOLD!**

**One level living** with added 35 x 18 finished walk-out lower level. Cathedral ceilings, skylight dining, hard-wood flooring and central air. Stainless appliances! Large double oven. Over-sized 30 x 14 deck. quiet cul-de-sac! **New Price \$314,900.**

**SOUTHBIDGE - 14 SERVANT WAY**



**SORRY, SOLD!**

**Young ranch with heated 2 car garage, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms. Efficient Propane heat, central air! Open floor plan! gas fireplace! Master Suite w/bathroom, Master California Closet!** assisted sale **\$279,900.**

**OXFORD - 115 CHARLTON ROAD**



**SORRY, SOLD!**

Beautiful home set back off road providing privacy and oversized yard. Kitchen w/granite counters & abundance of cabinets. Cathedral ceilings kitchen, dining and living room. Open floor plan! large deck with large backyard through sliders in dining room. Hardwood floors! Tile baths. Master bedroom/master bath! Finished walkout lower level w/bat 2 car garage. Extras: above ground pool! **\$369,900.**

**WEBSTER - 20 KINGSBURY**



**SORRY, SOLD!**

**NEW TO THE MARKET!** Custom Sprawling Split 2800+ SF! Central Air! Kitchen, Dining Room, Cathedral Ceiling Living Room, 3 Bedrooms! Granite Counters & New Flooring! New Boiler - Hot Water Tank - Oil Tank! FULL finished Lower Level w/ Full Bath & Laundry! THERE'S MORE! 2 Car Garage, renovated to include Hydro Heat, AC & 1/2 Bath! Great for Fitness Studio, Game Room or Home School! Over 1.4 Acres! **\$360,000.**

**WEBSTER - 52 CUDWORTH ROAD**



**SORRY, SOLD!**

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*On the shores of Lake Chargoggagoggmanchauggagoggchaubunagungamaugg*

**Webster Lake - 100 Lakeside Ave**



**SORRY, SOLD!**

**WEBSTER LAKE! PANORAMIC VIEWS! BEAUTIFUL SUNSETS! Extraordinary Waterfront Contemporary!** Architect designed with Lake Living in mind. Custom Built with Attention to High Quality & Detail. Outstanding open concept, water view from almost every room. Nicely situated on a .25 acre level peninsula, 180' +/- prime lake frontage! Enhanced by a all natural shoreline! All you need to live is located on the 1st floor. Grand 2 story foyer, cozy fireplaced living room, gourmet kitchen, lake facing dining , formal dining room, media room & spacious 1st floor guest BR Suite w/ private bath. Incredible 2nd floor fireplaced lake-facing corner master suite w/luxurious private bath, 3 more 2nd floor BRs & full bath! Something Special! **Remember, Timing Is Everything!** **\$1,075,000.**

**Lake Shirley - 647 Reservoir Rd**



**SORRY, SOLD!**

Lakefront! Lake Shirley! Modern Flare on a Lakefront Colonial! 1st level Formal large entry foyer, living room, gas fireplace, chef kitchen, Impala black granite, center island, 3 season porch, overlooking the lake. 1st FL bedroom suite w/ shower and jacuzzi tub. 2nd floor Master Suite! Lower level Summer kitchen, full bath, game room. Crown moulding & hardwood floors throughout, wired sound system, radiant floors. oversize 2 car garage. Additional Guest House! assisted sale **\$1,040,000.**

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415B Main Street, Spencer, MA 01562

# Town Hall limiting traffic to appointment only

BY JASON BLEAU  
VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

CHARLTON – The Charlton Town Hall has been added to the growing list of municipal buildings in Southern Worcester County shifting to an appointment-only format of meeting with members of the local community. The shift is in response to the growing number of COVID-19 cases in the region which also led to a similar shift in nearby Dudley.

Town Administrator Andrew Golas said the decision to close the town hall to the public and make all visits by appointment only is an attempt to help offset any risk of exposure for town employees. The move will also allow the town hall to maintain a controlled response to any COVID-19 situation without having to close down completely and disrupt services to the community.

"We did receive word that the town is being designated as a red community, so we've had that high-risk designation. As



Photo Jason Bleau

Charlton's Town Hall is moving to appointment only visitation in the wake of a second wave of the COVID-19 outbreak.

we're seeing the increases in cases it will help ensure that we have continuity of government moving forward if there is an issue that involves us having to quarantine staff it limits our exposure to the public, but also allows for us to work remotely in a better fashion," Golas said.

For the foreseeable future the town hall is asking that citizens call ahead to make an appointment with their specific department before visiting the building or handle their business over the phone if possible. Anyone who does visit the town hall will be asked to certify that they are

not displaying symptoms of COVID-19 and that they have not been exposed or ordered to quarantine.

Golas clarified that the closing of the town hall does not mean the offices are closing. No employees have been laid off or furloughed and no offices are being temporarily shut down. The move only restricts who can access the town hall and when. Golas could not say

for sure when the town hall would reopen noting it will depend on what the next few months brings in terms of a vaccine or decreased cases in the region.

"We're really trying to be responsive to the health and data metrics that we see coming from the state level. My anticipation is that as we see the rollout of a vaccination and things react from that point that is probably when we'll see a return back open to the public," said Golas. "My long range projection is to probably say we'll be looking at March or by that time, but it depends on what we'll see from the state level as far as guidance and how quickly the vaccination process rolls out or if there's any other data metrics that show that case numbers are going back down."

The town administrator concluded that Charlton citizens are remaining diligent about the virus and that the town hall had already seen a reduction of in-person business prior to the closure. He reminds citizens to remain vigilant as the region continues to manage a second wave of the pandemic.

## Charlton police continue annual Toy Drive



Photo Jason Bleau

Donations filled a cruiser on Dec. 6 during day two of the final weekend of the 2020 Charlton Police Toys for Tots Drive.

BY JASON BLEAU  
VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

CHARLTON – Ringing in the 2020 holiday season, the Charlton Police Department continued its annual tradition collecting toys to benefit Toys for Tots.

On Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 5 and 6, the Charlton Police Department welcomed donation to help families in need pro-

vide a fun Christmas for their children in a year that has been particularly challenging. Each year the Charlton Police team with the Worcester County Toys for Tots effort to collect toys throughout November culminating in a two-day final collection. According to Officer Derek Gaylord, who manned the drive on Dec. 6, this was a particularly successful year even in spite of the economic hardships being faced by many in the middle class.

"We've all been very impressed with the number of toys and the quality of the donations. We didn't expect that this year, but it's a good sign and something we're very happy to see," Gaylord said. "This shows us that the community really does care. There are a lot of people hurting and I think people are stepping up and doing the right thing. It's much appreciated."

The toy collection is always a great undertaking for the department and with 2020 hav-

ing increased limitations due to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as a heightened need for the holidays the department and Toys for Tots had to evolve with the times. However, both parties remained committed to providing an opportunity for families to ensure their kids had a Christmas to remember.

"We do this every year and it's ongoing for about six weeks or so then we really try to do a big push for this final weekend. The Marines run the Toys for Tots in Worcester County. This year it's a little different. We're taking them to Worcester a few times and have already donated a carload. After today we'll probably have at least one more. They're the ones who distribute the toys through Worcester County," Gaylord said.

In 2019 Toys for Tots of Worcester County donated nearly 42,300 toys to 14,385 children. To donate or apply for toys, visit [www.toysfortots.org](http://www.toysfortots.org).

## Charlton to maintain single tax rate

BY JASON BLEAU  
VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

CHARLTON – The Charlton Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to remain with a single tax rate, maintaining one unified rate that applies to business and residential properties. This approach will continue the town's tradition of spreading the tax burden evenly among residents and businesses.

Selectmen held their annual tax classification hearing in late November where they received a brief presentation about the tax rate and what their votes would mean for the community. In the end Charlton's top board agreed to stay with the status quo and avoid putting added pressure on businesses to manage the tax burden. Selectman Bill Borowski helped lead the

charge to support the single tax rate and clarified the vote of selectmen after the unanimous decision.

"What these motions were in a nutshell says that both residential and businesses are going to be taxed the same. The rationale behind that is you want to encourage business to come to town and towns that have a split tax rate generally don't have quite a favorability," Borowski said. "In fact, you'll see many larger municipalities that even have a split tax rate have been trying, sometimes with great difficulty, to move that burden away from businesses."

Selectmen also argued that staying with a single tax rate with encourage businesses to move into town with the understanding that the tax burden will be distributed fairly.



# Charlton resident receives dual Master’s degree from Grand Canyon University

CHARLTON — Sarah Grant of Charlton, adjunct faculty at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy, recently received dual degrees: Master of Business Administration and Master of Science in Nursing: Nursing Leadership in Healthcare Setting recently from the Grand Canyon University.

Grant is a recent addition to the Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy Clinical Faculty.

“My nursing academic journey began with a Practical Nursing Certificate in 2007 from Massachusetts Bay Community College,” said Grant.

Becoming an LPN expanded her world view and provided her not only with the knowledge, inspiration, and discipline to seek academic progression but also to have a challenging and meaningful professional life. She looks back at her academic progression with gratitude. She completed her Associate degree in nursing at Quinsigamond

Community College in 2015 and obtained her license as a Registered Nurse. She then completed her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at Grand Canyon University in 2017. As an undergraduate, her clinical affiliations included Saint Vincent Hospital in Worcester; Milford Hospital in Milford; Harrington Hospital in Southbridge, and in the Worcester Public School System. Her previous employment includes Hospice of Western & Central Massachusetts as an RN Case Manager; Wingate at Worcester as Nurse Supervisor; and Parson Hills Nursing as Staff Nurse.

Grant is serving her first term as a Clinical Facilitator at Bay Path Practical Nursing. Already, practical nursing students are glowing with comments such as “Professor Grant is an excellent instructor. She makes sure you understand very well. I remember everything she taught us.” And “My clinical facilitator, Professor Grant, is such an amazing instructor. Am so thankful to have her.”

## TAX RATE

continued from page A1

will support. A split tax system is the only way that I know of to achieve fairness and generate the revenue we need,” he said. “... Every year for the last 10-20 years that I’ve been watching this, it’s always been more of a burden on the residential, one-family and the commercial and industrial always pay a lower percentage increase.”

To him, split rates better reflect “the ability to pay.”

Under state law, towns can choose to shift up to half of the property taxes from the residential class to commercial, industrial and personal property (CIP) classes, but only a minority of communities do so. Assessor Wil Cournoyer showed a map depicting those places; most are in the eastern third of Massachusetts, but there are clusters around Springfield, Greenfield and in the northern Berkshires. The closest are Auburn and Worcester. He noted Sturbridge and Webster eliminated their split rates in recent years.

The motion to change came from Gus Steeves, who noted 30 percent was the point at which residents would actually see taxes drop compared to last year. Had it passed, it would have made the residential rate \$17.84, but the CIP rate \$25.27. The other supporter, Joe Cotrona, didn’t speak on the issue, but has repeatedly voted against spending and transfers

in recent months.

The Council’s six-member majority sided with Jackie Ryan’s argument. She noted she lived in Sturbridge when it had a split rate, but “it negatively impacted the community,” so the town switched back over five years.

“It’s not something that will be economically sustainable for the community if we start down this trend,” she said, advocating instead for providing incentives to bring business to town.

During his presentation to council, Cournoyer said Southbridge’s total taxable value is almost \$1.2 billion and rose by \$67.2 million last year. Of that, \$22.8 million was “new growth” – new construction of all kinds, most of which fell in the “personal property” category. That’s a slight misnomer, since it’s largely comprised of business equipment, not household items. Combined, they equate to \$445,037 in new taxes.

Standing out, though, was industrial growth of just over \$5 million, most of it in the form of solar arrays that started producing energy this year. Most of it came from just three parcels: the Remillard, Annese and West arrays off Dresser Hill Road.

Generally, he said, property values are calculated based on “arms-length” sales – that is, those that aren’t between family members. There were 103 of those in the residential class last year, and about four CIP properties. If not enough occur

in a given class in a year (minimum 10), they can include the previous year (if that reaches 10) or use a more complex method of calculating the income such a property would generate.

This year, the average single family home is worth \$214,743, meaning it will pay \$4174.61 in taxes under the single rate system. The commercial average is \$565,543, with a tax bill of \$10,994.15; for industrial, it’s \$615,533, with a bill of \$11,965.95.

In response to a question from resident Evelyn Velez, Cournoyer also discussed the potential of a residential exemption, first debated at length last year. The town could enact an exemption of up to 35 percent, for which about 3700 owner-occupied homes might qualify. Doing so would shift the burden within the residential class toward higher-value homes and apartment buildings, and he recommended against it on the grounds Southbridge doesn’t have many vacation-type second homes. Using a different map, he showed it’s used mostly in the Boston area and on Cape Cod.

According to Mass Department of Revenue website data, Southbridge’s tax rates have bounced quite a bit so far this century. The highest rate was \$20.75 in FY2018; the lowest, \$11.21 in 2007. The largest jump was between 2009-10, by \$2.55, but that was dwarfed by the \$4.45 drop between 2003-4.

## TCA

continued from page A1

school, she loves what she does and what the school does for the students that she gets to educate and support. Mrs. Citta started at TCA part time as the social studies teacher for grades 5-8 and later became the 5th grade teacher before becoming principal. Mrs. Citta says, “these years seem to have flown by, each better than the last, fulfilling a dream of teaching young people, helping to open their minds to the possibilities that lies before them, and then as principal for the opportunity to make a difference in the life of the school.”

What does Mrs. Citta like about being at TCA? “The notion that as a school we help to raise children in an environment of faith, encourage them to strive to do their best in all realms of their education and help to round them out as human beings. It is immensely satisfying as an educator to watch the growth, development, and maturation of students over time as they become amazing young adults.”

Principal Citta’s memorable notes at TCA: “I think all of my time at TCA as memorable. Every day has a bright spot—preschoolers singing a song, a young child’s good morning or the thank you from a parent who has needed reassurance or advice.”

Deborah Curran, started as a first grade teacher in 1987, since 2000 she had been the second grade teacher at TCA making this her 33 year at the school. Deborah says, “as a lead teacher, I am responsible for getting substitute teachers when needed. I currently

run the afterschool program at TCA.” During these years she has also run the Bingo program that was a “mainstay” at TCA and scored all the basketball games. She loves being at TCA as she gets to share her love of teaching with students and parents who are invested in their children’s education as a “team” for educational results. Deborah shares that one of her favorite things about TCA is “The “family” feel of our school, mostly smaller class sizes, the ability to share our beliefs and faith, celebrating feast days and holidays -why would I teach anywhere else? My own child and nephews attended TCA.” “I want those possibilities for all my students. It is a sacrifice financially to teach at a Catholic school, but what I do not make financially I make-up spiritually. We are all asked to make sacrifices in our lives and choosing to work at TCA has always been a priority of mine because the rewards outweigh the sacrifices. Teaching in a Catholic school was my first choice when I first started teaching, ...there is nowhere else I would rather be.”

Deborah tells of the annual St. Francis Blessing of the Animals. “One year, we even had a horse come to the Blessing of Animals. Another one of my favorite memories was when the teachers rode on donkeys in our gym to play basketball for a fundraiser. It was funny to see Sister Roberta scooping up donkey poop!” Deborah says, she looks forward to teaching for many more years to come “and I now get to teach the children of some of her past students!”

Paula Letourneau has been the school secretary going on 29 years. She says, “I love the small family atmosphere and everything we offer kids to help mold them into well-rounded successful students. Both my children attended TCA and now my grandson is in 1st grade, so I look forward to the continuation of Catholic education with our “gem” of a school!” Paula herself is a Southbridge Catholic Alum of the former Notre Dame Grammar School.

Colleen Casey – “This is my 29th year at Trinity Catholic Academy. “I started out in Second grade for a year then moved to Third grade then Fifth. The class of 2001 was my first 8th grade class and have been loving the middle school ever since!”

“I am a co-advisor to the TCA Student Council and National Junior Honor Society. I founded our After-School Program and the Peace Garden. With 8th grade comes many responsibilities such as the yearbook, retreat, and graduation as well as our many fundraisers.

“I love TCA for the amazing family that we are!”

“I am blessed with so many beautiful memories of Trinity Catholic Academy, but I would have to say my fantastic moments at Nature’s Classroom are on the top of my list!!!

“I forever look forward to seeing our students grow and change through the years and then spread their wings into the world to make it a better place!” Janet Garon a great volunteer; former TCA parent (two children) and always in support of TCA and the Community, active in the Festival of Trees and so

much more over the years. We are grateful for her dedication. Here husband Bob, is a Southbridge Catholic Alum!

Joe LaFleche- another great volunteer; a Southbridge Catholic Alum from St Joan of Arc School, a member for the Knights of Columbus, having helped at the TCA “back to school picnic” years past, he is currently on the TCA Endowment Board. Joe’s time and effort are so appreciated at Trinity Catholic Academy.

Bob Clemence – Last, but certainly not least! A longtime supporter and volunteer of TCA. Bob led the initial creation of the TCA Golf Tournament 25 years ago, he was President 1995- 2014, and still serves on the committee to this day. Bob and Denise’s children (five from 1987-2008) and their nieces and nephews are TCA Alums. Currently their grandchildren attend TCA, both great advocates for the school and the Southbridge community. As President of the TCA Endowment Fund, the Clemence couple’s presence is invaluable! Bob & Denise always refers to “TCA as our Local Educational Gem, we all need to do all that we can to preserve it for future generations.”

TCA is deeply grateful for these wonderful individuals.

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Central Massachusetts  
see surge in  
COVID cases

BY KEVIN FLANDERS  
STAFF WRITER

REGION – With COVID-19 conditions rapidly worsening statewide, central Mass. officials continue their scramble to convince residents to follow health protocols.

Last week, multiple communities throughout the region were listed in the state’s “red zone” for COVID-19 transmission. Positive cases have soared over the last two weeks, both locally and across the state.

North Brookfield (27 positive cases over the last 14 days); Spencer (63); Leicester (63); Charlton (102); Sturbridge (40); and Southbridge (157) have all seen alarming spikes in new cases.

With winter approaching and the holiday season in full swing, officials fear those numbers will continue to rise.

“As COVID infections are on the rise throughout the region, I want to remind the public just how important following the CDC guidelines are to staying safe and reducing transmission,” said Spencer Town Administrator Thomas Gregory. “All persons over the age of five must wear a face covering whenever in public – indoors and outdoors. The Governor’s stay-at-home advisory advises all residents to stay home from 10 p.m. until 5 a.m. While this is not a requirement, residents are strongly encouraged to comply.”

Additionally, indoor gatherings at private residences are limited to ten people, including family household members. Outdoor gatherings are limited to 25 people.

Officials urge residents to adhere to protocols at private residences. State leaders have blamed several outbreaks on large private gatherings without masks or social distancing.

“Face coverings are also strongly encouraged in a private residence when non-household members are present,” Gregory added. “Spencer has now been categorized by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health as a high-risk community. Now that winter is here – and with the holidays approaching – please follow the guidelines that are in place.”

Leicester officials are offering similar insistences. The town has spent much of the last two months in the state’s red zone, leading to the cancellation of trick-or-treating and several other events.

“The Leicester Board of Health and the Town Administration are working closely with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and regional health officials in response to COVID-19,” read a statement released by town officials. “The Leicester Board of Health guides the town response to COVID-19, implementing the recommendations of both the MDPH and the CDC as appropriate, as well as working with the public schools.”

The most current guidance and recommendations being implemented in Leicester will be listed on the town Web site: [www.leicesterma.org](http://www.leicesterma.org).

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