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Thursday-Friday, December 18-19, 2025

# MassDOT celebrates early completion of Route 20 reconstruction project

CHARLTON — In an event last week in Charlton, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Interim Secretary and CEO Phillip Eng, Undersecretary and State Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver, and other local officials cut a ribbon to celebrate the completion of the Charlton, Oxford Route 20 Roadway Reconstruction Project. The work significantly improves safety, traffic flow, and access for drivers, bikers and pedestrians along 3.2 miles of Route 20 from Richardson's Corner Road in Charlton to the Route 12 intersection in Oxford. About 26,000 vehicles travel along this section of Route 20 each day. The project was completed one year ahead of schedule using an innovative



In an event last week in Charlton, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Interim Secretary and CEO Phillip Eng, Undersecretary and State Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver, and other local officials cut a ribbon to celebrate the completion of the Charlton, Oxford Route 20 Roadway Reconstruction Project. design-build methodology that expedited traffic management and the utility relocation process allowing the road to open early. “Congratulations to MassDOT for their hard work to deliver this and the entire team at urgently needed reconstruction project one full

## Sheriff swears in Southbridge resident as Academy-trained correctional officer



Officer Dante Smith of the Worcester County Sheriff's Office.

PAXTON — On Friday, Dec. 5, Worcester County Sheriff Low Evangelidis administered the Correctional Officers Oath to the 12 graduates of the Sheriff's Office 64th Basic Recruit Training Academy (B.R.T.A.) in the Zecco Auditorium at Anna Maria College. Among the graduates was Officer Dante Smith of Southbridge.

The Worcester County Sheriff's Office is dedicated to protecting the residents of Worcester County and building a workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities it serves. The graduates of B.R.T.A. #64 form a capable group of new correctional officers, bringing unique skills and experiences to the department. This class comes from eight Massachusetts towns, as well as towns in Rhode Island and Connecticut, and includes four individuals with current or prior service in the U.S. Armed Forces.

The Sheriff's Office Academy offers a paid, full-time 13-week training program designed to prepare recruits for maintaining the care, custody, and control of inmates at the Worcester County Jail & House of Correction. Training combines classroom instruction with hands-on practice.

Recruits receive instruction in key areas, including de-escalation, the duty to intervene, fire safety, defensive tactics, and first responder procedures, along with significant training on suicide prevention, mental health, and substance abuse awareness.

Training also includes daily physical fitness, weekly academic assessments, and guest instruction from various WCSO staff.

“After 13 demanding weeks, I am proud to present some of the best and brightest in corrections,” said Evangelidis. “Our Training Department is among the strongest in the state, and these graduates are ready to serve as full-time correctional officers and support our mission. Congratulations to them as they begin their careers.”

Applicants must complete a written exam, physical fitness test, background check, and psychological screening. The Sheriff has also implemented hiring policies to ensure fairness, including banning political recommendation letters and giving preference to those who have served in the military.

The Worcester County Sheriff's Office is now accepting applications for its 65th Basic Recruit Training Academy, beginning in Spring 2026. More information is available at [www.WorcesterCountySheriff.com/Careers/Correctional-Officer-Academy/](http://www.WorcesterCountySheriff.com/Careers/Correctional-Officer-Academy/).

## Charlton Lions bring holiday cheer to old and young

CHARLTON — The Charlton Lions Club recently brought smiles to residents of Charlton Manor when they caroled in costume and brought gift bags loaded with useful and fun items. The week of Dec. 15, they will deliver gift cards to the principals of three Charlton schools; the cards will be given to families who need a little extra help this season. Decked out in Santa, Mrs. Claus, elf and Frosty the Snowman gear or just fun

Turn To **LIONS** page **A9**

(Right) The Charlton Lions, dressed for the occasion, gather outside the Charlton Manor before caroling to residents.



## Masons Christmas Party has great turnout



Master Masons gathered for the 1st official Christmas Party of the Major General Salem Towne lodge (MGST).

BY BRO. JIMMY FALZONE  
MAJOR GENERAL SALEM TOWNE  
MASONIC LODGE

SOUTHBRIDGE — On Saturday, Dec. 13, the Webster apartment's (formally Webster Masonic Lodge) dining hall area was packed with Master Masons, from the Major General Salem Towne Lodge (MGST) and the Doric Chapter of Southbridge. About 40 members, families and significant others attended and enjoyed fine food and most of all being together and the comradery. The best part of the gathering was watching the excitement of the children when they were told

Courtesy

(Right) Children wait patiently as Santa called the children's names and he handed them their Christmas presents.



Santa was coming, and they all went running to see Santa as he entered the room waving and saying HO.HO.HO. The children and adults alike started cheering and clapping as Santa enters the dining hall and Santa proceeds to sit in his chair. As Santa sat in his chair the children went running over and they jumped up and down with joy and so much excitement. He waved to everyone and started to take his gift bag out and started to call the names of children to hand out the gifts. Camera phones click as people photograph their children, and adults with Santa. If you would like more information about Freemasonry and to find a lodge nearest you, visit our website at [www.massfreemasonry.org](http://www.massfreemasonry.org).



# Sheriff’s office partners with Amazon to combat holiday package theft

WORCESTER — Sheriff Lew Evangelidis and the Worcester County Sheriff's Office are partnering with Amazon this holiday season to help residents safeguard their deliveries from package theft. With more people shopping online than ever before, porch piracy continues to be a growing concern nationwide, especially during the busy holiday months.

This initiative is part of a broader nationwide effort led by the National Sheriffs' Association to raise awareness about simple, proactive steps customers can take to prevent theft and help law enforcement focus on higher-priority calls during the holiday season.

“Package theft is more than an inconvenience during a season meant for celebration. It diverts valuable law enforcement resources,” said Worcester County Sheriff Lew Evangelidis. “When residents take simple steps to safeguard their deliveries, it helps us focus our efforts on the emergencies and critical calls that matter most.”

Keeping your packages safe

In partnership with Amazon, the Worcester County Sheriff's Office recommends the following strategies to help reduce the risk of package theft:

- Track Your Packages: Use Amazon's real-time Map Tracking feature on Amazon.com or the Amazon app to see exactly when a delivery will arrive.
- Choose Hidden Drop-Off Spots: Provide delivery instructions through the Amazon app or website to have packages placed in a discreet location.
- Use Pickup Locations: Amazon offers more than 25,000 secure package pickup sites nationwide, allowing customers

to choose delivery to home, work, Amazon Lockers, or partner locations.

- Share Tracking: Amazon's Share Tracking tool allows you to share delivery details with trusted friends or family who can retrieve packages if you're not home.
- Check Delivery Photos: Review the confirmation photo provided by Amazon to verify where your package was placed.
- Select a Delivery Window: In areas where Same-Day Delivery is available, customers may choose a specific delivery window that best fits their schedule.

"While the vast majority of packages make it to customers without any issue, we know how frustrating it can be when criminals get in the way," said Gilad Solnik, Amazon's Director of Worldwide Security Operations. "Amazon has many features and technologies built into the delivery experience to help keep packages secure this holiday season and throughout the year."

If you experience package theft

If you believe your package has been stolen, we encourage you to take the following steps:

1. Report the theft to your local police department.
2. Contact Amazon Customer Service through the app or website for 24/7 assistance.
3. Check with neighbors to see if they received your package by mistake or noticed any suspicious activity.

The Worcester County Sheriff's Office remains committed to keeping our community safe this holiday season and year-round. By working together with residents and partners like Amazon, we can reduce theft and help ensure a happier, safer holiday season for everyone.

# Winter Coat Closet offers free coats

SOUTHBRIDGE — Free winter coats will be available every Saturday until Christmas (the 13th and 20th) through the Winter Coat Closet, an ecumenical mission of local churches located at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, 446 Hamilton St., Southbridge.

We received so many beautiful donations over the past

few weeks. No one in our community should go without a coat! We have men's and children's winter coats, gloves and other winter items available. One coat per person, please.

For more information, call (508) 765-9559 or e-mail [holytrinitysouthbridge@gmail.com](mailto:holytrinitysouthbridge@gmail.com).

# REAL ESTATE

Charlton  
\$720,000, 8 New Spencer Rd, Latour, Gordon F, to Rei, Ali.  
\$315,000, 10 Overlook Ave, Guertin Michelle A Est, and Hooper, Stephanie M, to Donoghue, Kayla, and Fannon, Adrian.

Celimar V.  
\$400,000, 18 Ballard Ct, Pilsudski Polish Amer Cit, to Our Bright Future Inc.  
\$390,000, 82 Cliff St, Fournier, Andrea L, to Freehart, Christopher.  
\$200,000, 76 Lens St, Alicea, Renes, to Tetreault, Robert W.

Holland  
None

SOUTHBRIDGE  
\$663,000, 31 Hamilton St, 31-33 Hamilton LLC, to Normandy 2 LLC.  
\$589,999, 79 Off Hamilton St, Kbg Realty Properties LLC, to Rios-Santos, Michael E.  
\$480,000, 613 Charlton St, Ardan Building Svcs LLC, to Cruz, Angel L, and Rosario,

STURBRIDGE  
\$440,000, 5 Jerry Rd, Juaire, Raymond N, to Cruz, Andrew, and Aponte, Kelsey.  
\$490,000, 22 Mountain Brook Rd, Flipping Good Inc, to Isack, Asisa.  
\$224,298, 5 Fairview Park Rd #10, Perkins, Gail A, to Margolis, Lauren E.  
\$140,000, 165 Cedar St, Rose, Kristen A, and Rose, Amy L, to Rose, Kristen A.

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Charlton Middle School..... (508) 248-1423  
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**WALES:** 413-245-9808  
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## CHURCH LISTINGS

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

• **Charlton Federated Church**, 64 Main St., 508- 248-5550, Sunday worship 10:30 a.m. Summer worship is 9:30 a.m. [www.fed-church.org](http://www.fed-church.org)

• **Charlton Baptist Church**, 50 Hammond Hill Road, 248-4488, [www.charltonbaptist.org](http://www.charltonbaptist.org), Sunday worship 10 a.m.

• **Charlton City United Methodist**, 74 Stafford St. 248-7379, web site: [CharltonCityUMC.org](http://CharltonCityUMC.org)  
Sunday worship and Children's church 10am

• **St. Anne St. Patrick Church**, 16 Church St., Fiskdale (508) 347-7338  
[www.stannestpatparish.com](http://www.stannestpatparish.com)  
Saturday Vigil Mass at 4 pm, Sunday 8 am, 10 am, 12 noon, Youth Mass (September to May) 5 pm. Daily Mass Mon - Thurs 7:30 and 10 am, Fri and Sat 7:30 am

• **Elm Street Congregational Church**, 61 Elm Street, Southbridge, Ma 01550  
Phone: 508-764-8085 • Sunday service 10:00 am  
Pastor Kathryn Light

• **Faith Baptist Church**, 515 Dennison Drive, Southbridge  
Phone number 508-764-6132,  
Worship Service: Sunday 10:00 a.m.

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

• **Wayside Church**, 6 Haggerty Road, 248-5144

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

• **Living Word Church of Charlton**, 10 Main Street - Grange building 1st Floor, Charlton, Ma 01507, Pastor Craig Bellisario, (508) 233-8349  
Sunday Service 10:00am.  
[www.livingwordcharlton.com](http://www.livingwordcharlton.com)  
[info@livingwordcharlton.com](mailto:info@livingwordcharlton.com)

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

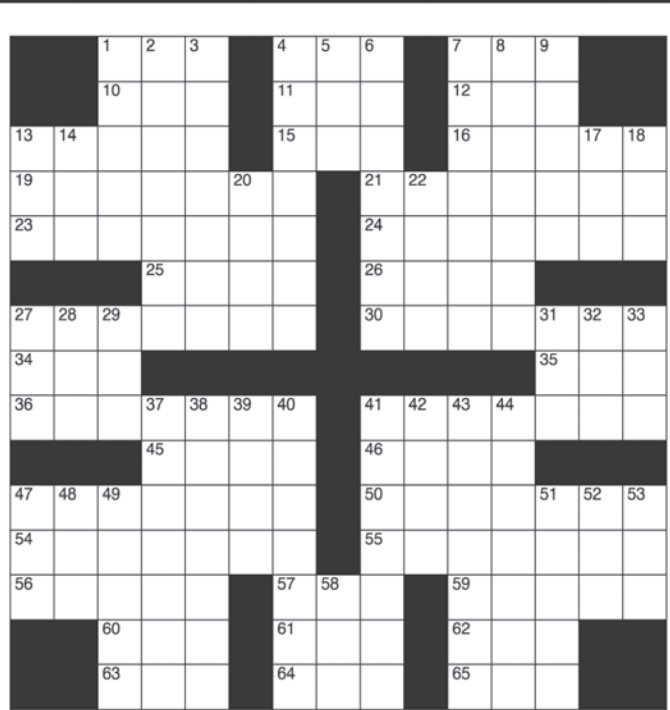
• **Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale-** 8 Maple St. Sturbridge, 774-304-1021  
[www.sturfed.org](http://www.sturfed.org)  
Sunday Service 9:30 a.m.

• **Bethlehem Lutheran Church-** 345 Main Street, Sturbridge, MA 01566  
Phone 508-347-7297  
Web: [www.bethlehemsturbridge.org](http://www.bethlehemsturbridge.org)  
Services - Sunday 9:00 am  
Pastor Dan Purtell

• **Holland Congregation Church**  
“Where the Bible is preached.”  
11 Sturbridge Road, Holland, 413-245-9926  
[Hollandchurch.org](http://Hollandchurch.org)  
Sunday Service @ 10:00 am  
Pastor Dan Maketansky

• **Holy Trinity Episcopal Church**  
446 Hamilton St., Southbridge, MA 01550  
Phone: 508-765-9559  
Web: [www.holytrinitysouthbridge.org](http://www.holytrinitysouthbridge.org)  
Sunday Service 11:00 am  
Pastor Dan Purtell

• **St. John Paul II Parish**  
279 Hamilton St., Southbridge  
Rev. Carlos Ardila, Pastor  
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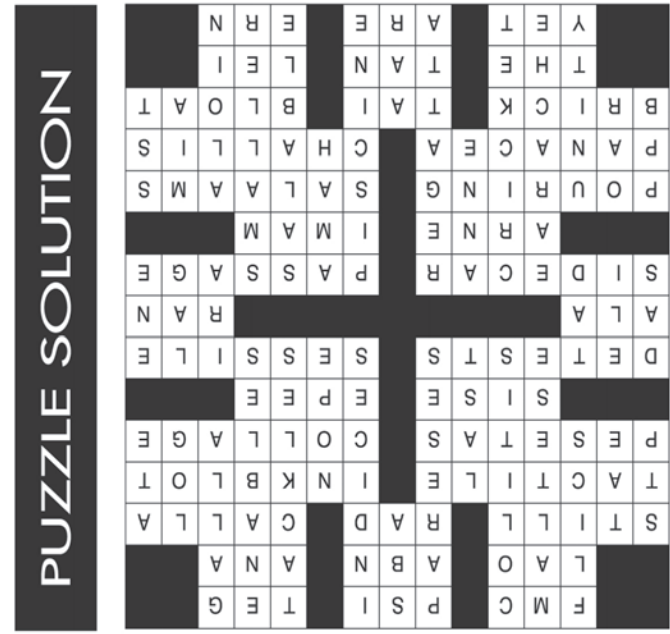


## CLUES ACROSS

1. American automotive titan  
4. Tire term  
7. Two-year-old sheep  
10. Indigenous people of Thailand  
11. Anti-Soviet Cold War group  
12. Actress de Armas  
13. Not moving  
15. Cool!  
16. Plants of the arum family  
19. Connected with touch  
21. Pen stain  
23. Monetary units  
24. School kids' art project  
25. Early Bell Canada executive  
26. Sword  
27. Hates  
30. Fixed in one place  
34. Pie \_\_ mode
35. Moved swiftly on foot  
36. Carrier on vehicle  
41. A path to get through  
45. "Rule, Britannia" composer  
46. Spiritual leader  
47. Flowing  
50. Respectful compliments  
54. Cure  
55. Soft, lightweight fabric  
56. Building material  
57. Japanese delicacy  
59. A way to cause to be swollen  
60. One and only  
61. You might get one in summer  
62. Wreath  
63. Thus far  
64. They \_\_  
65. Employee reference number

## CLUES DOWN

1. Policemen (French)  
2. Toy dog  
3. Intestinal condition  
4. Muscular weaknesses  
5. Helps little firms  
6. Alphabetical lists  
7. Takes down  
8. Facilities  
9. Ethnic people of Ethiopia  
13. Engine additive  
14. Explorers group  
17. Written account  
18. Consumed  
20. Opposite of first  
22. No (slang)  
27. Government lawyers  
28. NY Giants great  
29. Small amount  
31. A way to save for your future
32. Fall behind  
33. Midway between northeast and east  
37. Head pain  
38. Wildly popular sport  
39. "Princess Diaries" actress Hathaway  
40. Boat race  
41. About fish  
42. Nursemaid  
43. Able to be marketed  
44. Not as large  
47. Parts per billion (abbr.)  
48. Paddle  
49. Oneness  
51. Bitter chemical  
52. Not around  
53. Very fast airplane  
58. Main tributary of the Rhine



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# Cornerstone Bank honors employees for milestone years of service

WORCESTER — Cornerstone Bank, a community bank with locations throughout Central Massachusetts, recently honored 25 employees who reached milestone anniversaries in their tenure in 2025. The Years of Service Awards were presented on Thursday, Dec. 4, at the Barn at Wight Farm in Sturbridge. Cornerstone employees are recognized for every five years of service.

“The longevity of our employees is very important to us,” said Cornerstone Bank CEO Todd Tallman. “We’re proud to have such a dedicated and passionate team whose commitment to our customers and communities defines who we are as an organization.”

- 40 Years
  - Karen Largesse
- 25 Years
  - Jason Main
  - Colleen Lord
- 20 Years
  - John Jawor
  - Jamey Mekal
- 15 Years
  - Michael Pacheco
  - Kyle Bourque
  - Sara Seaver
  - Susan Wilcox
- 10 Years
  - Heather Dumais
  - Thomas Moschos
  - Rebecca Field
  - Johanne Mahon
  - Lisa Tucker
  - Laura Pimental
- 5 Years
  - Denise Steeves
  - Erin McGinnis
  - Sophie Descoteau
  - Alycia Rozzen
  - Makenna Obuchowski
  - Caralyn Stevens



- David Harmon
- Alan Whitney
- Bonnie Kinsman
- Nicole Gaylord

“Congratulations to this year’s honorees,” Tallman added. “We’re grateful for your dedication, enthusiasm and outstanding service. You make Cornerstone stronger every day, and we look forward to celebrating many more milestones together.”

About Cornerstone Bank  
Cornerstone Bank was formed in

2017, born of a long history of supporting the community, and providing a strong foundation to help people and businesses thrive. Serving Worcester County, Massachusetts, Cornerstone Bank’s local presence and community-based banking model enables a unique ability to deliver outstanding service, with a personal touch. Cornerstone, which is a subsidiary of PeoplesBankCorp, MHC, operating independently under its own name and brand, provides the highest level of service and expertise for individuals, businesses, and community

organizations with branch locations throughout Central Massachusetts. Cornerstone works to connect customers with opportunities through a broad range of deposit and loan products and services. Built on Trust is not just a tagline, but also one of our guiding corporate values. Whether a business or personal partnership, Cornerstone stands on the foundation that relationships are built on trust. To learn about Cornerstone Bank’s personal and business banking offerings, please visit [cornerstonebank.com](http://cornerstonebank.com) or call 800-939-9103.

## Demolition bylaw proposed in Southbridge

SOUTHBRIDGE — The Southbridge Town Council is currently holding readings of a proposed bylaw regarding the demolition of buildings. This proposal has been

worked on for the past several years with the Historic Commission and Building Department. This bylaw is being proposed for the purpose of preserving and

protecting significant buildings and structures within the Town of Southbridge which constitute or reflect distinctive features of the architectural, historical, or

cultural history of the Town and to limit the detrimental effect of demolition on the character of the town. A copy of the proposed bylaw is available at

the Town Clerk's office as well as the Town Manager's office. If you wish to provide any comments, please send them in writing to the Town Manager's office.

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FRANK G. CHILINSKI  
PRESIDENT/PUBLISHER  
BRENDAN BERUBE  
EDITOR

A pause worth protecting

The days that lead to Christmas, New Year’s, and the end of the calendar year have a rhythm all their own.

Schools wind down, offices slow, and routines loosen their grip. Even in towns where life is usually measured by meeting agendas and work schedules, this week brings a rare pause. It is not loud or dramatic, but it is meaningful.

For many families across Southbridge, Sturbridge, and Charlton, this stretch of days is shaped by long-standing traditions. Some gather around dinner tables that have seen generations come and go. Others visit churches they may only enter once or twice a year. Some mark the season quietly, perhaps with a walk, a phone call, or a memory carried alone.

What matters is not how the holiday is observed, but that the pause exists at all.

In small towns, the pace of daily life rarely slows on its own. There are roads to plow, budgets to manage, classrooms to run, and neighbors to help. Even when winter tightens its grip, responsibility continues. That makes this brief window especially valuable. It reminds us that community is not only built through work, but also through rest.

This is also a week when kindness tends to surface without much prompting. A door is held open a little longer. A check-in call is made. A meal is dropped off quietly. These gestures do not make headlines, but they are the glue that holds towns together long after decorations come down.

The close of the year naturally invites reflection. What went well. What was difficult. What was learned. In communities like ours, that reflection often centers not on grand achievements, but on people. A neighbor who stepped up. A teacher who went the extra mile. A volunteer who never asked for recognition.

As another year edges toward its end, it is worth holding onto the calm this week provides. January will arrive soon enough, along with its deadlines and demands. For now, there is value in stillness, in gratitude, and in recognizing the shared humanity that binds these towns together.

However, this week is spent, may it offer a moment to breathe, to reconnect, and to carry a bit of its quiet forward into the year ahead.

# OPINION

## Blue Christmas, Renewed Christmas?

BY DR. RB MCFEE  
DRMCFEE2020@GMAIL.COM

Everyone carries a burden, and often it feels heavier during Christmas. There’s no shame in it. The shame is not letting the power and beauty of Christmas into your spirit to bring you back to the joy you once felt.

Many years ago, I was the very essence of a Blue Christmas. Even my nail polish was blue! Put differently, my “ho ho ho” was fast on the go and I was about as frustrated and angst filled as Charlie Brown when he was trying to direct the Peanuts Christmas pageant.

But unlike Charlie Brown, I knew the meaning of Christmas, or thought I did. I just couldn’t feel it, even though I knew Luke 2 by heart. So I tried different strategies to deal with Christmas. One year I didn’t even decorate, the following year I put up so many lights up – even in the bathrooms.... I decorated like Snoopy trying to win first place in the lighting category ‘most likely to cause a seizure – sunglasses recommended.’

And to make matters worse, whenever I turned on the radio it seemed the airwaves were mocking me, the song “Where are you Christmas?”

Maybe it wasn’t a taunt but instructive? Sadly I’d change the channel before I

stuck around for the ending, which is full of hope and a reminder that the Power of Christmas transcends whatever pain, challenges, difficulties, losses or hurts we face.

Net result....both years were still Blue Christmases. Neither approach helped me out.

In hindsight it’s easy to see why....worldly approaches to spiritual issues. You can’t deck the halls out of a Blue Christmas; you can cover it up but can’t treat it. I wished there had been a Blue Christmas Service to attend, like the one coming up at Charlton UMC on December 20th.

How about you? Is your heart a little heavier this Christmas than in years past? Are you having difficulty feeling the deep spiritual joy that Christ’s birth used to fill you with?

You aren’t alone.

That is why over the last forty or so years, the Blue Christmas service has become more prevalent. Sometimes referred to as the longest night service, because it is traditionally held around the Winter Solstice – the darkest day, longest night of the year - it



BEYOND THE PEWS  
• BY DR. RB MCFEE •  
CHARLTON CITY UMC

has been conducted by Catholic and Protestant churches throughout the United States.

Although each service may vary from others, the common focus on recognizing there are people hurting at this sacred time of year, and need to find a way back to the manger, the star, the silent night beauty of Christ’s birth in spite of whatever difficulties one is facing.

What often adds insult to injury is the feeling of guilt at focusing on the empty chair at the dining room table, the IV meds going into a body once robust but now ravaged, a divorce, a job loss, or whatever pain causing issue, instead of celebrating the birth of our Savior. Or the notion your Blue Christmas means you are bad or faithless Christian. Neither one is true.

Thankfully there is a way to go from Blue Christmas to a Renewed Christmas. It is an important, powerful and necessary journey if we are to find our way back to the joy in Christmas, and beyond.

Is it a simple journey from Blue Christmas to Renewed

Christmas? No! But it is a worthwhile one to take.

For starters, prayer is the cell phone that connects us with the journey Guide.

Over time the transformative Power of God, Christmas, and the real meaning of this time of Light will happen.

Take a moment to envision an obscure town near Jerusalem, in the dark of night, when angels told the world, told the shepherds about the greatest event ever; an event that has changed human history and human hearts – the birth of Christ.

Take the journey the shepherds did from their fields to the manger in Bethlehem. Place yourself there – in your heart, in your mind.

And consider taking this journey with those of us who have walked the walk, prayed the prayers, and accepted the love of Christ, the whispers of the Holy Spirit, the guidance of Scriptures, and the support of others – clergy, lay leaders, and the fellowship of fellow faithful.

All journeys start with the first steps so why not join us in a safe, warm, encouraging ecumenical Blue Christmas service Saturday, Dec. 20 at 6:30 p.m., hosted by Charlton City UMC on 74 Stafford Street.

Praying that you have a Renewed Christmas this year, and beyond.

## AI in personal finance: The promise and the limits

Your smartphone buzzes with an alert: Your budgeting app has spotted an unusual spending pattern and suggests transferring \$50 from your savings account to your checking account. Later that day, a robo-advisor automatically rebalances your investment portfolio. Welcome to the age of artificial intelligence (AI) in personal finance, where technology is reshaping how we manage money.

What AI can do for your wallet. From tracking every latte to forecasting next month's bills, AI-powered tools are making financial management more accessible than ever. Some apps categorize transactions automatically, while other platforms offer conversational financial advice through text messages. These tools can monitor your credit score, suggest budget adjustments, and even negotiate lower bills on services like cable and internet.

The investing landscape has transformed as well. Robo-advisors use algorithms to build diversified portfolios, automatically rebalance holdings and apply strategies to minimize tax bills. Educational tools powered by AI can explain complex concepts through interactive games and simple question-and-answer formats, making financial literacy more accessible.

Where AI falls short. Here's what the algorithms can't do: understand what truly matters to you.

AI doesn't know whether you value sustainable investing over maximum returns. It can't weigh the emotional complexity of saving for a child's

education versus retiring early. When sudden illness strikes or a job change upends your plans, AI lacks the context and empathy to guide you through those human moments.

Technology can crunch numbers brilliantly, but it can't offer wisdom. It can't replace human judgment, experience, or ethical reasoning. Robo-advisors' predetermined algorithms may not suit investors with complex financial needs like estate planning or comprehensive tax planning.

The human touch still matters. This is where human financial advisors remain indispensable. They provide what technology can't:

- Long-term perspective: Help you maintain focus when markets get volatile, and emotions run high
- Goal coordination: Balance compet-



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ing priorities, help partners merge their financial visions and remind you of goals you’ve tucked away and didn’t know still mattered

- Accountability: Keep you on track with your financial strategy through life's inevitable changes
- Emotional support: Offer reassurance and wisdom during major financial decisions

Research validates it: Those who regularly work with a financial advisor and have a financial strategy are more likely to feel optimistic about their financial future than those who manage finances on their own, according to 2025 research from Edward Jones and Morning Consult.

Find the right balance. The future likely lies in a hybrid approach: combining data-driven AI insights with the

human wisdom of a financial advisor who understands your values, priorities, and life's inevitable curveballs. Think of AI as a powerful calculator and your financial advisor as the mathematician who knows which equations to use.

As these technologies evolve, the key is treating AI as a tool, not a guide.

Stay curious about what technology can do for your finances. Stay critical of its limitations. And remember: What matters most in your financial life is something only you can define.

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

## Lanterns Along Main Street

LANTERNS  
ALONG  
MAIN STREET  
By CHIPPY

a cart and does not notice. Someone else reaches for the same loaf of bread. A register freezes, and the line grinds to a halt. In summer, these moments might cause irritation. In winter, they are met with sighs and shrugs.

We have all been on the other side of it.

There is also a rhythm to winter errands that I did not notice when I was younger. The list is shorter, but the trip feels longer. The conversations are fewer, but they linger. The goal is not speed. The goal is completion without aggravation.

At this stage of life, I find myself more aware of how small interactions set the tone for the day. A cashier who takes an extra moment to ask how you are holding up. A stranger who helps reach an item on a high shelf. Someone holding the door while cold air rushes in behind them.

None of this is remarkable, and that is precisely the point.

We spend a lot of time talking about community as if it only exists at meetings or events or organized gatherings. But most of it happens quietly, in places like grocery stores, pharmacies, and hardware aisles, where people are just trying to get through the day.

Winter makes those moments unavoidable.

You cannot rush past them as easily. You are bundled up, slowed down, forced to share space. You notice things you might otherwise miss, like how many people shop alone, or how often someone pauses to reread a label because they are no longer certain what they came in for.

I see a bit of myself in that.

There was a time when errands were something to get through as quickly as possible so I could get back to the next obligation. Now, they feel more like markers in the day. A reason to step outside. A reminder that life still moves forward, even when the days are short and the weather discourages enthusiasm.

By the time I load the bags into the car and wrestle the cart back into place, I am usually ready to go home. Ready for warmth, for quiet, for the comfort of familiar routines. But I am also aware that I have just participated in something small and shared.

We all did.

Winter will keep testing our patience. The lines will stay slow. The aisles will stay crowded. The errands will keep taking longer than planned. But there is something grounding in knowing that everyone around you is navigating the same small inconveniences.

It is not grand. It is not poetic. It is simply life in winter, Massachusetts style, carried out one errand at a time.

And somehow, that feels like enough.

Letter submission policy

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

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



# T.L.C. Home Services honors cancer patients at annual Festival of Giving Trees

SOUTHBRIDGE — T.L.C. Home Services, LLC proudly participated in the annual Festival of Giving Trees, held Dec. 4–7 at the LaSalle Reception Center. This cherished community event showcases beautifully decorated Christmas trees donated by local businesses and organizations, with proceeds supporting cancer research and local



cancer-related programs through the Silent Spring Institute and other charitable initiatives. This year marks T.L.C. Home Services’ second tree donation on behalf of Cleaning for a Reason, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing free home cleanings to cancer patients across the United States and Canada. Every ornament, ribbon, and gift was carefully selected to honor the impact of the mission on patients and families. “Participating in the Festival is a deeply valued tradition for our company,” said owner Tammie Chenevert. “We are honored to stand alongside Cleaning for a Reason, supporting a mission that brings hope, comfort, and

care to families facing cancer. This event beautifully reflects how our community comes together to make a meaningful difference.” Community members attending the Festival enjoyed festive displays, purchased raffle tickets, and helped raise funds for cancer research and local support programs. T.L.C. Home Services’ second decorated tree on behalf of Cleaning for a Reason added a special, heartfelt touch to the event, highlighting the company’s ongoing dedication to supporting families facing cancer. Since joining Cleaning for a Reason in 2022, T.L.C. Home Services has provided free cleanings to 40 local cancer patients, totaling \$15,926 in donated services. The company was recognized as one of the Top 100 Partners in the program for 2023 and 2024, serving among the highest number of patients nationwide.

Courtesy (Left) T.L.C. Home Services owner Tammie Chenevert inspects her tree while setting up for the Festival of Giving Trees.

## QCC Police Chief first collegiate member of Central MA board of directors

WORCESTER — Quinsigamond Community College Chief of Police Stephen DiGiovanni has been sworn in as a member of the Board of Directors for the Central Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association, marking a historic first for the organization. He is the first collegiate chief to hold an officer position within the association. DiGiovanni was nominated to fill a vacant three-year term and was elected by his peers during the association’s November 2025 meeting and started his tenure on December 9, 2025. The Central Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association represents more than 75 police departments across the region.



Courtesy Photo Stephen DiGiovanni

Its mission is to promote effective law enforcement, support education and professional development, and foster collaboration among public and private agencies concerned with law enforcement. DiGiovanni has worked at QCC since 2008, becoming the college’s first full-time detective in 2014, Deputy Chief of Police Operations in 2015 and Chief of Police in February 2024. “I am humbled and honored to be trusted in this position, and I am fortunate to be among some of the best police chiefs in the Commonwealth,” said DiGiovanni. “It’s inspiring to be part of a network of leaders who support and learn from one another.”

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# Eversource employee leads Auburn winter coat drive to support local families

AUBURN — Families in need across Worcester County are warmer this holiday season thanks to a successful winter coat and clothing drive organized by Eversource Gas Operations Field Supervisor Michael St. Pierre at the Auburn work center on Westec Drive.

On his own accord, St. Pierre launched the coat drive among employees at the Auburn center as a way to give back to the communities that Eversource serves.

“Growing up as one of six children, my parents faced difficult decisions regarding essential needs like utilities, groceries, or

Courtesy

(Right) Sheriff Lew Evangelidis celebrates a successful drive with Mike St. Pierre, an Eversource employee who was responsible for organizing the coat drive.



clothing,” commented Michael St. Pierre. “These personal experiences drive my commitment to assisting those less fortunate.”

Under Mike’s leadership, employees collected a wide variety of winter essentials, including:

- 71 winter coats
- 35 pairs of warm socks
- 30 pairs of gloves
- 22 winter hats
- Seven pairs of ski pants
- Six pairs of children’s boots
- Three scarves

A longtime supporter of local law enforcement, St. Pierre noted that he was aware of the Worcester County Sheriff’s Office Annual Winter Coat Drive and felt that partnering with the Sheriff’s Office was the natural choice. The Sheriff’s Office’s existing distribution network ensures that donated items reach families who need them most.

# Last minute antique and collectibles holiday gifts

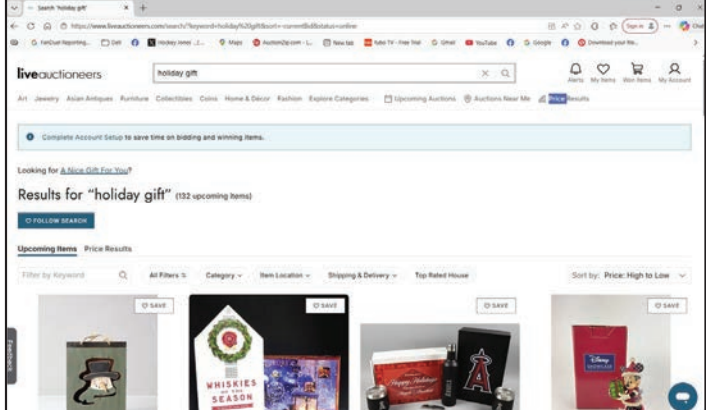


ANTIQUES, COLLECTIBLES & ESTATES

WAYNE TUISKULA

If you typically are shopping at the mall on Christmas Eve or ordering one day delivery for gifts on Amazon on Dec. 23, you still may have time to buy that special gift for the collector in your life.

We run our auctions on LiveAuctioneers, so I’ll start by discussing their platform. There are over 5,000 auction houses running auctions on liveauctioneers.com. No matter what you are looking for, you can probably find it there. As an example,



I searched “oil lamp” and found 233 auction listings currently running. You can narrow your search to a 20-mile radius from your location or expand it to search around the world. Many auction houses allow local pick up so you can get the item right away. You can also search for auctions that are ending soon. You will want to check the auction house’s shipping policy. Some auctioneers may ship in-house quickly after an auction, and others may contract outside shippers, and it can take longer.

Other online auction options include HiBid. Their website also touts having thousands of auctioneers on their hibid.com platform. Invaluable is United Kingdom based with their website claiming “over 5,000 premier auction houses and dealers globally.” If you search invaluable.com you will find many United States auction houses based there.

With time running out before the holidays you may want to attend a live local auction. You can find both live and online auctions on auc-

tionzip.com. You can search for auctions in your area by entering your zip code in the search bar. The default is 30 miles but can be expanded further. You can also search by date and narrow your results down to auctions in New England and even to individual New England states.

If you want to purchase something online right away TIAS (The Internet Antique Shop) tias.com has been in business since 1995. I used to sell on there when they first went online. Ruby Lane (rubylane.com)

offers antiques from around 1,500 dealers, according to their website. They were formed in 1998. Also, check individual sellers shipping policies with these sites.

You may also find that gift you’ve been looking for online locally on Facebook Marketplace. I did the same “oil lamp” search and found hundreds of listings throughout New England. There are also Facebook groups for people selling antiques locally and you can also search on Craigslist.

An estate sale is another option. Estate sales may be listed in newspapers along with the websites estatesales.net and estatesales.org. Serious buyers get there early, sometimes the day before the sale to sign lists to be one of the first admitted into the sale.

Of course, there

are plenty of local antique shops where you can search for gifts. You can walk in and buy a gift and make sure you still have plenty of time to wrap it for the holidays. Happy Holidays!

The single-collector Civil War auction is starting soon. Following that, we’ll have a major auction with fine jewelry, sterling silver, art, and other antiques and collectibles. There is still time to consign items for that sale. Please visit our website <https://centralmassauctions.com> for links to upcoming events.

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

The Worcester County Sheriff’s Office and Worcester County Reserve Deputy Sheriff’s Association Annual Winter Coat Drive raises funds to purchase and then distribute roughly 4,000 winter coats each year to individuals in need across the county.

“Our distribution locations include women’s shelters, veteran organizations, senior centers, religious institutions, schools, and more,” explained Worcester County Sheriff Lew Evangelidis. “We’ve been doing the coat drive for well over a decade, but we were impressed by what Mike and his colleagues were able to pull off. This is what the holiday season is all about.”

The Sheriff emphasized that the impact of the coat drive extends beyond physical warmth.

“For us as a law enforcement agency, the coat drive creates a meaningful opportunity to build trust and bridge gaps between the community and law enforcement,” Evangelidis added.

“I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with Eversource and the Worcester County Sheriff’s Office to support individuals facing hardship during this challenging time,” commented St. Pierre. “This initiative has been among the most satisfying experiences of my career.”

On Dec. 3, Evangelidis and members of his team visited the Auburn work center to collect the donations and personally thank Eversource employees for their efforts.

The donated items from the Auburn center will be distributed through the Fitchburg Community Support Center, one of three centers operated by the Sheriff’s Office that assist individuals reentering society after incarceration, and generally support the greater community.

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# Bartlett dominates Southbridge in 105th Thanksgiving Day matchup



WEBSTER — Bartlett High School delivered a decisive performance in the 105th Thanksgiving Day football game, defeating Southbridge 50–6 at Memorial Field. The Indians controlled the contest from start to finish, piling up 338 rushing yards and forcing multiple turnovers to improve to 7–4 on the season while winning their third consecutive Thanksgiving Day match-up, while the visiting Pioneers dropped to 2–9.

Senior Lawrence Smith led the way for Bartlett, rushing 15 times for 214 yards and four touchdowns. Smith was named the recipient of the Vincent Sabatinelli Trophy as the game’s Most Valuable Player for the second consecutive year. He also contributed through the air, completing two two-point conversions to Kenny Arpin.

Bartlett opened the scoring in the first quarter on a nine-yard touchdown run by Smith, followed by a two-point conversion. The Indians extended their lead in the second quarter with three additional touchdowns, including a 44-yard run by Jaesean Atkins and another long scoring run by Smith. Southbridge answered with a 70-yard kickoff return for a touchdown by Alex Bermudez Miranda, however, Bartlett took an imposing 30–6 lead into half-time.

The ground game remained dominant in the second half. Arpin had an 8 yard touchdown run in the third quarter while Smith added a 24-yard touchdown run in the fourth quarter. Arpin capped the scoring with a 57-yard interception return on the final play of the game. Arpin also rushed for 29 yards and a touchdown, while Atkins finished with 55 yards and a score on three carries.

Defensively, Bartlett limited Southbridge to 90 yards of total yards, forced 5 turnovers and consistently

won the battle at the line of scrimmage. Aiden Turner led the Indians with 5.5 total tackles, while Xavier Butler recorded five tackles, a sack, a tackle for loss, and two forced fumbles. Kenny Arpin added two interceptions, including the game-ending pick-six.

Bartlett’s balanced attack and disciplined defensive effort allowed the Indians to pull away early and maintain control throughout the rivalry match-up. The victory closed the regular season on a high note for Bartlett in one of central Massachusetts’ longest-running Thanksgiving football traditions.

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# Sophomores named to Bay Path honor roll

CHARLTON — Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical School congratulates the following Grade 10 students on being named to the honor roll for the first quarter of the 2025-2026 school year.		
High Honors	Honors	
Madeline Candice	Azhan Nasir Ahamd,	
Adugyamfi, Yaniel Aviles,	Davian Alexander Alicea	
Caterina Beverlianna Boon,	Aponte, Arlind Aliu, Chase	
Morgan Lynn Brooks,	Michael Anthony, Matheus	
Claire Elizabeth Calnan,	Holanda Antonelli, Nyahlise	
Derek Alexander Campos,	Lillian Aviles, Isabella	
Cassidy Lynn Chickering,	Elizabeth Barrell, Zachary	
Sydney Faustina Chisholm,	Barry Barsalou, Gianna	
Noah James Cole, Alyssa	Rae Bedard, Elizabeth	
Marie Cuevas, Aaron	Susan Bennington Lynch,	
Justin Desautels, Ayla Rose	Addam James Bergeron,	
Drisco, Christopher Jeremy	Cody James Blair, Austin	
Feliciano, Madelyn Helena	Gordon Brodeur, Benjamin	
Frost, Melody Starr Fuentes,	Robert Brooks, Brian Bui,	
Vanessa Diane Gordon,	Julia Rose Bukowski, Collin	
Shaylan Rose Hesselton,	Edward Burrtt, Andrew	
Emma Mae Jalbert, Max	Mason Carter, Sydney	
Everett Landry, Isabella	Rae Cavan, Keegan Jack	
Grace Leatham-Wright,	Champlin, Julie Elizabeth	
Ginelly Shantel Molina,	Chenier, Sadie Ann Cleary,	
Adalynn Jane Nietzsche,	Raymond Joseph Clouthier	
Giavanna Bella Orsi, Saverio	IV, Ayva Marie Coffey,	
James Palaia, Julian Thomas	Jackson Murray Coughlin,	
Papierski, Jacob Louis	Addyson Kaeleigh Coutu,	
Pecore, Kurtwood Russell	Esmee Elizabeth Cyr, Holly	
Pettiford, Ava Sophia Reed,		
	Alexia Grace Rondeau,	
	Thomas Francis Shivick,	
	Grace Autumn Shoblom,	
	Paul Joseph Skarzenski,	
	Tatiana Maria Smolynsky,	
	Nelson Tobias Sorto, Olivia	
	Ruth Torres, Thomas Earl	
	Welch, Spencer Thomas	
	Wisniewski	
	Marie Dailey, John Michel	
	Rousseau Daniel, Tavish	
	McKinley Davis, Norah	
	Abigail Dean, Arielle Grace	
	Deauseault, Tristan Nichole	
	Defazio, Oliver Gage	
	DeLorge, Nicolas James	
	DiGoia, Ava Marie Dufault,	
	Fable Dufresne, Rylie Anne	
	Dwyer, Dominik John	
	Dzibasik, Brian Thomas	
	Finnegan, Madyson Riley	
	Fitzgerald, Kylee Marie	
	Fournier, Anthony Joseph	
	Fredette, Charlotte Susan	
	May Fredette, Tyler Blake	
	Friend, Mehki Styles	
	Fuentes, Jayden Robert	
	Afolabi Giwa-Bello,	
	Matthew Donald Graves,	
	Colton Philip Hall, Marcus	
	Roy Hamilton, Addison	
	Katie Harrington, Kasey	
	Lee Harris, Yadiel Enrique	
	Hernandez Navarro, Fatima	
	Edilene Herrera, Chloe	
	Rose Hosley, Veronica	
	Mae Jansrud, Colin Henry	
	Joyce, Jannie Mahoney	
	Kabba, Victoria Rose Kaiser,	
	Brooke Marie Kasprzak,	
	Cadence Gillian Kilderry,	
	Alana Dianne Kowalewski,	
	Brayden Albert Kruas,	
	Jordyn Kate Labrecque,	
	Brianna Ashleigh Laforest,	
	Andrew Arthur Lashua,	
	Wesley Patrick Lawless,	
	Ryan Khai Lima, Valentina	
	Medeiros Lima, Juliano	
	Ligeniale Lopez, Kaitlin	
	Angela Lulu, Emily Ann	
	Macko, Amelia Layne	
	Magorian, Cynthia Kagan	
	Marc, Julia Danielle	
	Marini, Aydan Michael	
	Marsh, Sherlyn Mazariegos	
	Hernandez, Madison Grace	
	McKinstry, John Steven	
	McMahon, Ashlyne Emily	
	Monsen, Derek Omar	
	Morales, Jesus Morel,	
	Bryton Favor Mosong,	
	Shea Alfred Mulligan, Mia	
	Angell Navedo, Raider	
	Keith Newton, Nathaniel	
	Leif Noyes, Teagan Patrice	
	O'Halloran, Landen Spencer	
	Olszta, Anthony Jadon	
	Ribeiro Ortiz, Gabriella	
	Olivia Pace, Matilda Cecile	
	Paradis, Mason D. Michael	
	Parker, Michael Thomas	
	Payson, Jocelyn Rose Peck,	
	Aleya Jeanne Pereira, AJ	
	Jesse Perron, Parker Jonathan	
	Piehl, Tyler Garcia Procino,	
	Joseph Lewis Pretty, Brady	
	Leonard Reilly, Randall	
	Roland Richard, Christopher	
	Jeffrey Richardson, Bo Carl	
	Riley, Shaye Patricia Riley,	
	Camden David Rockwood,	
	Danna Paola Rodriguez	
	Lopez, Emilyanis Joan	
	Rodriguez, Ethan Vance	
	Rodriguez, Riley Sebastian	
	Rodriguez, Sylah Diane	
	Rodriguez, Ava Victoria	
	Rondeau, Keomar Arnaldo	
	Rosario Sanchez, Esmerelda	
	Rosario Tirado, Isabella	
	Roszkowski, Aiden Lee	
	Rubito, Rianna Gathoni Ruo,	
	Jayden Jose Santos, Kayla	
	Elizabeth Shepard, Brianna	
	Jingchen Shi, Alejandro	
	Javier Sierra Varas, Liam	
	Charles Sirmans, Victor	
	Manuel Sobinski, Heather	
	Holiday Starr, Jade Antonia	
	Stien, Angela Sofia Suarez	
	Pineros, Victoria Marie	
	Sullivan, Gavin Joseph	
	Thompson, Shafick Yamal	
	Vasquez-Grande, Gina Grace	
	Vautour, Angelina Marie	
	Vazquez, Colin Anthony	
	Vega, Logan James Verity,	
	Sadie Mckenna Villegas,	
	Sione Flynn Villegas, Ella	
	Violette Wall, Robert Charles	
	Welch, Colby Deary Wells,	
	Madison Elizabeth Wells,	
	Riley John West, Sydney	
	Alexandra Winer, Julianis	
	Paola Zayas Rivera	
	Principal's List	
	Gregory Todd Amos,	
	Cameron Michael Barry,	
	Emerson Hagen Borgeson,	
	Liam David Bray, Abel Pax	
	Burdick, Miguel Camacho,	
	Aiden Michael Collins,	
	Elijah Gabriel Cornier,	
	Brody James Coughlin,	
	Nadya Anita Delgado, Ian	
	Joseph Fantasia, Adrie James	
	Ford, Grace Willow Foster,	
	Rylan James Fuller, Autumn	
	Rae Gatto, Evelyn Ann Gray,	
	Caleb John Kozlowski,	
	Lindsay Kanha Labonte,	
	Logan James Mondino,	
	Angel Adalberto Morales,	
	Marieliz Magdalena Morel,	
	Martha Mumbi, Gabriel	
	Armando Ortiz, Genesis	
	Lianni Pacheco, Treva	
	Mae Plank, Tianyu Qi,	
	Blake Leonard Richard,	
	Nicholas Donald Richard,	
	Owen Miles Stewart, Jaelyn	
	Doherty Thomas, Nayelis	
	Nahir Torres Godineaux,	
	Haidynn Anne Tuttle, Joniel	
	Leonardo Velez Diaz,	
	Collyn Walter Walker, Noah	
	Joel Waterhouse, Benjamin	
	Richard Wolanski, Chloe	
	Olivia Young, Isabella Anne	
	Zorena	

## LEGALS

The Brimfield ZBA will hold a public hearing on Monday, December 29, 2025, at 5:00 pm in the Town Annex Clerk's Office, 23 Main St. This hearing is on behalf of Anthony Soto for the property at 94 Holland Rd Brimfield, Assessor's parcel 17-C-3. The applicant is appealing against a denial from the Building Inspector in connection with his permitted agricultural use of the property. The use is allowed by right in the AR Zoning district. Abutters and members of the public are encouraged to attend and share feedback. The Brimfield ZBA will hold a public hearing on Monday, December 29, 2025, at 5:15pm in the Town Annex Clerk's Office, 23 Main St. This hearing is on behalf of Stephen Cook for the property at 15 Oakwood Rd, Assessor's parcel 6-E-47. The applicant is asking for relief of Brimfield Zoning Bylaws s.4, setback for front yard for a garage. Abutters and members of the public are encouraged to attend and share feedback. December 12, 2025 December 19, 2025		
<b>Public Notice</b> Notice is hereby given under Chapter 138, Section 12 of Massachusetts General Laws of a public hearing to be held in the George Parent Meeting Room, second floor of the Town Hall, 41 Elm Street, Southbridge, MA, on Thursday, January 22, 2026 at 1:00 p.m. during the regular scheduled Liquor Licensing Board Meeting in regard to a violation of the Southbridge Massachusetts Liquor Licensing Board regulations.. This hearing pertains to Cohasse Golf Club, Inc., D/B/A Cohasse, 393 Eastford Rd., Southbridge, MA, 01550. Anyone wishing to speak will be given the opportunity to be heard. This notice is also published electronically on www.stonebridgepress.com and on www.masspublicnotice.org Town of Southbridge Liquor Licensing Board December 18, 2025		
<b>ADVERTISEMENT INVITATION FOR PROPOSALS COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN CONSULTANT SERVICES</b> The Town of Charlton, acting through its Planning Board seeks proposals from professional planning consultants to prepare a Comprehensive Master Plan pursuant to MGL Ch 41 §81D with community participation, and a review of the Town's existing town plans, studies, documents, zoning bylaw and subdivision rules and regulations to incorporate the goals of the Master Plan. All applicants/individuals interested in providing these professional services may obtain a copy of the Request for Proposals (RFP) by mail from Assistant Town Planner Jayne Garney, 37 Main Street, Charlton, MA 01507, by phone at (508) 248-2237 or by email at Planning@townofcharlton.net. Copies of the RFP are also available at the Town Hall (37 Main Street, Charlton, MA) during regular business hours. All proposals are due on Wednesday, January 28, 2025, at 11:00 AM. One (1) formal response, six (6) copies,		
and one (1) electronic copy (on a flash drive) of the proposal must be submitted to the Planning Office in the Town Hall by this date and time. All submissions must be clearly labeled "COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN CONSULTANT SERVICES" on the exterior of the envelope. A separate fee proposal must be received at the same time in a separate, sealed envelope marked "Price Proposal". Late proposals will not be accepted. The Town reserves the right to reject any or all proposals. December 15, 2025 December 18, 2025		
<b>NOTICE OF MORTGAGEE'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE</b> Premises: 173 Pleasant Street, Southbridge, MA 01550 By virtue and in execution of the Power of Sale contained in a certain mortgage given by Ronald J Benvenuti Jr and Ronald J Benvenuti to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as Mortgagee, as nominee for Guild Mortgage Company LLC, and now held by <b>Guild Mortgage Company LLC</b> , said mortgage dated October 7, 2022 and recorded in the Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds in Book 68328, Page 320, said mortgage was assigned from Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as Mortgagee, as nominee for Guild Mortgage Company LLC to Guild Mortgage Company LLC by assignment dated February 8, 2024 and recorded with said Registry of Deeds in Book 70191, Page 304; for breach of the conditions in said mortgage and for the purpose of foreclosing the same will be sold at <b>Public Auction</b> on January 8, 2026 at 12:00 PM Local Time upon the premises, all and singular the premises described in said mortgage, to wit: <i>The land, together with the buildings thereon, in Southbridge, Worcester County, Massachusetts, property now known as Parcel B-1 of 173 Pleasant Street, Southbridge, MA, and is more formerly described as follows: BEGINNING at a point at the northeast corner of tract herein described on the westerly sideline of Pleasant Street at the southeast corner of Parcel B-2; Thence S. 37° 37' 40" W., along the westerly sideline of said Pleasant Street, a distance of one hundred twenty and sixty-one hundredths (120.61) feet to a point; Thence N. 61° 29' 20" W., along land of Marc A. and Janet M. Cournoyer, a distance of one hundred thirty-three and sixty-one hundredths (133.61) feet to a point; Thence N. 27° 15' 00" E. along land of Felix Burda, now or formerly, a distance of sixty-eight and eighty-one hundredths (68.81) feet to a point; Thence N. 57° 57' 00" W. along said Burda land, a distance of four and ten hundredths (4.10) feet to a point; Thence N. 24° 40' 00" E. along land of Leo Desmarair, now or formerly, a distance of seventy-seven and forty-four hundredths (77.44) feet to a point; Thence S. 52° 02' 00" E along said Parcel B-2, a distance of one hundred sixty-five and eighty- hundredths (165.80)feettothepointofBEGINNING. The above tract contains an area of 19,670 square feet.</i>		
<i>For title, see deed recorded herewith.</i> The description of the property contained in the mortgage shall control in the event of a typographical error in this publication. For Mortgagor's Title see deed dated October 6, 2022 and recorded in the Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds in Book 68328, Page 317. TERMS OF SALE: Said premises will be sold and conveyed subject to all liens, encumbrances, unpaid taxes, tax titles, municipal liens and assessments, if any, which take precedence over the said mortgage above described. FIVE THOUSAND (\$5,000.00) Dollars of the purchase price must be paid in cash, certified check, bank treasurer's or cashier's check at the time and place of the sale by the purchaser. The balance of the purchase price shall be paid in cash, certified check, bank treasurer's or cashier's check within thirty (30) days after the date of sale. Other terms to be announced at the sale. Brock & Scott, PLLC 23 Messenger Street 2nd Floor Plainville, MA 02762 Attorney for Guild Mortgage Company LLC Present Holder of the Mortgage (401) 217-8701 December 11, 2025 December 18, 2025 December 25, 2025		
In accordance with the Wetlands Protection Act, Chapter 131, Sec 40, a public hearing by the Conservation Commission will be held on Tuesday 12/23/2025 at 6:30 p.m. in the Conservation Commission Room, second floor, in the Holland Town Hall, 27 Sturbridge Rd, Holland, MA. This meeting is to review a Notice of Intent (NOI) filed by DC Engineering & Survey, Inc, co/Gary Kady for Construction of a single-family residence, driveway and associated site work, at Lot A-2 Vinton Road (Map 5-A-1.2) Holland, MA 01521. To comply with the Open Meeting Law, all public hearings are scheduled for 6:30 PM and, barring unforeseen circumstances, will be taken in the order in which they appear on the agenda. This meeting will be held in person. The application is available for review by at the Conservation Commission Office, Town Office Building on Mondays (1:00 PM – 4:00 PM) and Tuesdays (9:00 AM – 4:00 PM). Conservation Commission Town of Holland December 18, 2025		
<b>NOTICE OF MORTGAGEE'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE</b> By virtue and in execution of the Power of Sale contained in a certain mortgage given by Holly A. Moran to Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, Inc., dated September 17, 2003, and recorded with the Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds in Book 31726 at Page 52, of which mortgage the undersigned is the present holder by assignment from Wells Fargo Bank, N.A., S/B/M Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, Inc., to U.S. Bank Trust National Association, as Trustee of the LB Igloo		
Series IV Trust, dated May 5, 2021, recorded in Book 65100, Page 244; by an assignment of mortgage from US Bank Trust National Association, as Trustee of the LB-Igloo Series IV Trust to U.S. Bank Trust National Association, as Trustee of the LB-Cabana Series IV Trust, dated July 23, 2021, recorded in Book 65813, Page 83. For breach of the conditions of said mortgage and for the purpose of foreclosing the same will be sold at Public Auction at 1:00 P.M. on the 7 <sup>th</sup> day of January 2026, at 9 Cricket Drive, Sturbridge, MA 01566, all and singular the premises described in said mortgage, To wit: The land in Sturbridge with the buildings thereon, situated on the westerly side of Cricket Drive extending from Grasshopper Lane, being lot 11 on a plan of Country Hill Estates by Wayne Morse and Donald Murray, dated February 19,1964 and filed with the Worcester District Deeds, Plan Book 280 Plan 45, bounded and described as follows: EASTERLY by Cricket Drive 109 feet; SOUTHERLY by lot 12 on said plan 103.25 feet; WESTERLY by land of Gervais 109.02 feet; and NORTHERLY by lot 10 on said plan 102.40 feet.		
Subject to restrictive covenants covering the premises and other lots shown on said plan dated April 8, 1964 and recorded with the Worcester District Registry of Deeds in Book 4462, Page 273. Premises to be sold and conveyed subject to and with the benefit of all rights, rights of way, restrictions, easements, covenants, liens or claims in the nature of liens, improvements, public assessments, any and all unpaid taxes, tax titles, tax liens, water and sewer liens and any other municipal assessments or liens or existing encumbrances of record which are in force and are applicable, having priority over said mortgage, whether or not reference to such restrictions, easements, improvements, liens or encumbrances is made in the deed. Terms of sale: A deposit of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) by certified or bank check will be required to be paid by the purchaser at the time and place of sale. The balance is to be paid by wire transfer to Demerle & Associates P.C., 10 City Square, 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Boston, MA 02129 within thirty (30) days from the date of sale. Deed will be provided to purchaser for recording upon receipt in full of the purchase price. In the event of an error in this publication, the description of the premises contained in said mortgage shall control. Other terms, if any, to be announced at the sale. U.S. Bank Trust National Association, as Trustee of the LB-Cabana Series IV Trust, Present holder of said mortgage, By its Attorneys, Demerle & Associates P.C. 10 City Square, 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor Boston, MA 02129 (617) 337-4444 December 11, 2025 December 18, 2025 December 25, 2025		



# OBITUARIES

## Joan Merry Dirlam, 92

Southbridge: Joan Merry (Jefferys) Dirlam, 92, passed away on Wednesday, December 10th, in her home after a brief illness.

Her husband of 41 years, Peter B. Dirlam, passed away on November 26th, of this year. She is survived by her children, Dale Marie Golden and her husband Hugh MacDonald of Oakland, CA and G. Jeffrey Crooks and his wife Pamela Crooks of Houston, TX; her six grandchildren, Drew Marie Assael and her husband Sam Assael of San Diego, CA, Evan Greene of Oakland, CA, Shannon Crooks Halvorsen and her husband Rob Halvorsen, Shelby Crooks, Courtney Crooks Miller and her husband Jeffrey Miller, and Nathan Crooks all of Houston, TX; her seven great grandchildren, S. Chance Assael and Dash Marie Assael of San Diego, CA, Sam Halvorsen, Eli Halvorsen, Cheyenne Miller, Myles Miller and Levi Miller, all of Houston, TX; her former husband, George C. Crooks of Texas; and nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her son, Philip R Crooks formerly of Arizona in 1998. Joan was born in Augusta, ME the daughter of Frederick and N. Althea (Cole) Jefferys. She graduated from Brookfield High School in 1950. She received her bachelor's degree in teaching from UMass Amherst in 1954 and went on to receive her master's degree from Worcester State College.

Joan started her teaching career teaching 3rd grade in Troy, NH. After moving to Sturbridge she taught 2nd grade at Burgess Elementary School in Sturbridge and retired many years ago after a 25 year career in teaching. Joan was an inspiring actress in her youth and was able to continue her passion in her later years becoming a member of the Gateway Players in Southbridge. While with Gateway she appeared in their renditions of "Arsenic and Old Lace", "The Glass Menagerie" and her favorite roll in "Bye



Bye Birdie".

Joan loved the water and taught swimming in Brookfield and sailed with George Crooks when she lived in Hampton, NH and then later all over Cape Cod – their sailboat was moored in Falmouth, MA. As an Airforce wife she traveled all over the United States.

She also was very artistic and did tole painting as well as elaborate basket weaving.

Joan was a volunteer with the Harrington Hospital Auxiliary and served with her husband, Peter, on the board of Old Sturbridge Village.

Joan loved her cats. She also loved to travel and she and Peter traveled around the world.

Joan will forever be remembered as a dedicated teacher and loving mother, grandmother, great grandmother and wife.

Her funeral service will be held on Monday, Dec. 29th, at 11:00am in the First Congregational Church of West Brookfield, 36 N Main St, West Brookfield. Burial will be in Oak Ridge Cemetery, Southbridge. Calling hours will be held on Sunday, Dec. 28th, from 4:00 to 6:00pm in the Daniel T. Morrill Funeral Home, 130 Hamilton St., Southbridge.

www.morrillfuneralhome.com

## Eleanor Louise Cupka, 94

Eleanor Louise (Favreau) Cupka, 94, of Richmond, Virginia, passed away peacefully on October 27, 2025, at Our Lady of Hope Health Center.

Eleanor, affectionately known to all as "Ellie," was born on January 12, 1931, in Southbridge, Massachusetts, to Valmore O. Favreau and Evelyn Dudley Favreau. She lived a full and rich life, and on August 27, 1949, she married the love of her life, Paul Anthony Cupka, Sr. in East Douglas, Massachusetts. Together, they shared 69 wonderful years of marriage and raised six children, creating a legacy of love and devotion that will endure for generations.

Eleanor was predeceased by her beloved husband, Paul A. Cupka, Sr., as well as her parents, Valmore and Evelyn, her brothers Roger and Robert Favreau, her sister Deborah Bentley, and a grandson, Carl Joseph Cupka. She is survived by her six children: Darien Cupka (Robin), Rodman Cupka (Cydney), Cheryl Wiltshire, Paul Cupka, Jr., Lauren Walker (Gary), and Gregory Cupka (Heidi), all of whom were blessed to be in her care. She is also survived by 14 grandchildren, 15 great-grandchildren,



and one great-great-grandchild, along with numerous nieces, nephews, and friends who will carry her memory in their hearts.

Eleanor was a devoted and selfless wife, mother, and grandmother, always putting the needs of her family above her own. She will be remembered for her boundless generosity, her warm hospitality, and her love of family. She was a frequent and gracious hostess at family gatherings and holiday celebrations, where her presence and spirit brightened every room.

An avid lover of history, reading, and travel, Eleanor was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, taking pride in her membership and her passion for preserving and sharing history. She also enjoyed her active involvement in the Red Hat Society, where she found joy in the camaraderie and events they organized.

Eleanor's legacy of kindness, love, and devotion will forever remain in the hearts of all who knew her. She touched many lives with her generous spirit, and her memory will continue to inspire and uplift those fortunate enough to have been part of her life.

A celebration of her life will be held in January.

### LIONS

continued from page A1

Christmas sweaters, fourteen members of The Charlton Lions Club arrived on Sunday afternoon, December 7, with gift bags labeled for men or women. The Lions led residents in singing a host of fun Christmas songs as well as traditional carols.

"It was great to see the joy on residents' faces and watch them all sing along with the carols they knew by heart," said Club President Dana Gould. The sound may not have always been worthy of recording, but it

was strong and heartfelt.

After the "concert," club members distributed large bags of gifts and candy.

"Socks – just what I need!" exclaimed one resident as she pulled items out of her bag. Gifts also included gloves, candy and toiletries.

In time for Christmas, a representative of the Club will bring \$750 in gift cards to principals at Charlton Elementary, Charlton Middle, and Heritage schools. Principals will then choose families among their students to receive the cards based on need.

The caroling and gifts to needy fami-

lies are annual projects for The Charlton Lions. Lions Clubs International is the largest service organization in the world, and the Charlton Club embodies the international motto, "We serve."

The Club meets the second and fourth Wednesdays of every month, September through June, at 6:30 p.m. at The Overlook. Club members come from many backgrounds – professionals, business people, homemakers and retirees. If you would like to learn more about membership in the Charlton Club, please contact Membership Chair Jennie Frisella at 508-434-2527.



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# Friends of Charlton Library team up with Sturbridge Coffee Roasters

CHARLTON — The Public Library, a 501(c)3 Friends of Charlton organization, has partnered with Sturbridge Coffee Roasters for a

special holiday offer. While Christmas shopping is currently underway, the Friends are looking ahead to Valentine's Day!

Place your order throughout the month of December and your coffee will be available in time for Valentine's Day gift-giving.

The coffee sale features seven different blends from Sturbridge Coffee Roasters. Flavors include a special Library Friends Blend, Black Gold Blend, Mexican Organic Swiss Water Process Decaf, Colombian Supremo Medium, Sumatra Mandheling Organic Dark, Winter Wonderland, and Chocolate Raspberry; all flavors are available in ground and whole bean

form. The cost is \$17 per 12-ounce bag. Proceeds from the sale allow the Friends to support the mission of the Charlton Public Library.

Order forms are available at the circulation desk at the Charlton Public Library, 40 Main St., Charlton, and also on the Friends' Facebook page (facebook.com/charltonlibraryfriends).

Completed forms and payment must be returned to the Library's Circulation Desk by Jan. 2, 2026. Cash, check, and payment through Venmo (@FriendsofCharltonLib) or Zeffy accepted. Coffee orders will be available the week of Feb. 9 for pick-up at the library.

For every bag of coffee purchased, you'll

receive an entry to win a basket filled with a variety of Valentine-related goodies. Stock up and increase your chances to win!

For questions or more information, please email charltonfriends@gmail.com or call 774-230-1410.

Proceeds from fundraisers enable the non-profit Friends to further the mission of the Library by sponsoring a variety of programs, projects, and events, including discounted museum passes, the summer reading program, author talks, music concerts and performances, and other cultural and educational experiences. The Friends of Charlton Public Library appreciate your continued support.

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Applicants should submit a cover letter and resume to: Spencer Housing Authority 13 McDonald Street Spencer, MA 01562 Attn: Kimberly Hurlbrink You may also email cover letter and resumes to Kimberly Hurlbrink: kim.hurlbrink@spencerhousing.org Resumes will be accepted until 2:00PM on December 19, 2025. Spencer Housing Authority is an equal Opportunity Employer

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**ROUTE 20** continued from page A1 year ahead of schedule,” said Gov. Maura Healey. “Safety is always our top priority, and this project is a great example of what can happen when we work together with impacted families and community members. When we invest in transportation, our team at MassDOT delivers results that make a real impact in people’s lives.”

“Today's ribbon cutting for the Reconstruction of Route 20 is not just another major road project but one that marks a new day for the towns of Charlton and Oxford that demonstrates to everyone that safety is our top priority. Under the Healey-Driscoll Administration, not only are we investing in rebuilding our infrastructure but we are investing in the public we serve by delivering meaningful projects that enhance safety, quality of life and local businesses,” said Interim MassDOT Secretary & MBTA General Manager and CEO Phillip Eng. “I can't be more proud of the MassDOT workforce and our District 3 team for their commitment to the local community and the families that have been the voice advocating for these critical improvements so we can better serve the public and future generations.”

“This project reflects what can be achieved when communities, families, and public officials come together around a shared commitment to safety,” said Undersecretary and State Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver. “I’m grateful to the Brodeur family, our elected officials, and our MassDOT team, as well as our contractor DW White, for helping bring this project to completion a year ahead of schedule.”

The Charlton, Oxford Route 20 Roadway Reconstruction Project includes widening and resurfacing of the roadway, adding full shoulders, and installing a continuous median to

separate opposing traffic and eliminate unsafe left-turns. Drivers will now use intersections with traffic signals at Route 12, Route 56, Richardson Corner Road to make left turns. A new roundabout at Oxbow Road and emergency pull-off areas were included to increase safety.

Additionally, the project included replacing the bridges over the Little River and French River. MassDOT built 13 retaining walls, installed four culverts, supported 8.5 miles of upgraded utilities, and implemented extensive stormwater-treatment improvements. Multimodal access was also expanded with a shared-use path along the westbound side of Route 20 and a new sidewalk along the eastbound side of Route 20 increasing safety for bikers and pedestrians.

The corridor improvements were funded through an 80/20 federal-to-state split, with a total project cost of \$107.7 million. Although planned as a four-year effort, the project reached full beneficial use in October 2025 -- a full year ahead of schedule. Additionally, a \$2.8 million MassWorks Infrastructure Program grant supported the extension of the Route 20 sewer main and was coordinated as part of the project construction.

“Having represented Charlton throughout my time in Congress, and Oxford for many of those years, I know just how critical an artery Route 20 is for residents, commuters, and commerce throughout central Massachusetts. I am pleased that with the partnership of the federal government and a substantial infusion of federal dollars, this much-needed reconstruction has finally come to fruition,” said Congressman Richard E. Neal. “This project represents a transformational investment in public safety, one that will improve traffic flow and expand safe access

for drivers, bikers, and pedestrians alike. I applaud MassDOT for their stick-to-itiveness, delivering a project that will make an immediate and lasting difference in the lives of the people of two terrific communities.”

State Sen. Ryan C. Fattman (Worcester and Hampden District) said, "Today's ribbon cutting marks a decade of partnership and dedication paying off for Central MA, specifically for Charlton and Oxford. Route 20's reconstruction is an important investment and commitment to safety, economic opportunity, and growth for the community. I'm proud to represent this vital area of Central MA and celebrate this completed project that will beneficially serve for decades to come."

State Rep. Paul K. Frost (7th Worcester District) commented, “We have all come a long way since our first meeting at MassDOT District 3 Headquarters in 2015, after a tragic head-on accident happened at the curve on Route 20 in North Oxford. The families of victims of the road—including Lisa Brodeur, who lost her husband years before, and her son, now deceased, who was left with severe brain damage—were outside demanding action. We worked together and set a plan in motion for short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term safety improvements. The project had local, state and federal partners and was expedited and finished early. It not only addressed head-on collisions at the curve but also improved other areas of the Route 20 corridor where accidents had been occurring at high frequency. I’m happy we are here now, with the project completed as promised. I thank MassDOT and especially District 3 for their dedication and commitment to see this through and to address the many concerns brought up along the way.”

Friday's Child



**Jaiianne**  
**Age 14**  
**Registration #7402**

Jaiianne, lovingly called “Jai,” is a bubbly, joyful, and energetic girl who lights up every room she walks into. She has a deep love for animals and nature, especially cats and dogs, and shows her compassionate side by looking out for little critters she finds outside—she even builds tiny homes for frogs using natural materials. Creative and expressive, Jai enjoys singing, dancing, and performing, often using these outlets to share her bright personality. Her social worker believes she would flourish in a chorus or acting class, where she could showcase her talents and build her confidence. With her warmth, playfulness, and imagination, Jai is a child who brings joy and creativity wherever she goes.

<https://www.mareinc.org/child/22533922820>

If you're at least 18 years old, have a stable source of income, and room in your heart, you may be a perfect match to adopt a waiting child. Adoptive parents can be single, married, or partnered; experienced or not; renters or homeowners; LGBTQ+ singles and couples. As an adoptive parent, you won't have to pay any fees, adoption from foster care is completely free in Massachusetts.

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



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