

Ayers hired as Interim Town Administrator for Brookfield

**BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT**

BROOKFIELD — The Brookfield Select Board has officially appointed Robert “Bob” Ayers as interim town administrator. The decision was made official on Jan. 28 after the Select Board previously sought to put to rest what one member deemed to be “conspiracy theories” surrounding the hiring process. Ayers, a former Select Board member, was the only candidate considered during the meeting. Select Board Chair Richard

Chaffee spoke highly of Ayers, calling him a capable candidate willing to put in the work. “I’ve known Mr. Ayers for an excess of 30 years, and I know that he has the personal integrity that if this job is more than what he thinks it is and if he’s not comfortable with learning the procedures and what takes place for the town, I know he’ll say we have to find to someone to replace him,” said Chaffee. “I felt really comfortable with the fact that he was a selectman, a Board of Health member, a police officer, and he’s lived in town his whole life. I know Brookfield is in his heart and he’s going to do his very best for the community.” The search for an interim administrator sparked some controversy in January which caused the Select Board to divulge some of the finer details of the hiring process during their meeting on Jan. 20. Select Board member Sarah

Campbell and Town Accountant Laurie Bartkus were charged with vetting candidates for the job before reporting back to the full Select Board about the qualified candidates. Bartkus acknowledged they used Google to search for details about each candidate, which revealed some important details about their job histories. “A quick search of some of these candidates led us to not even interviewing them, some poor news articles, evaluations, and selectmen meeting minutes,” said Bartkus. They even discovered that one applicant left a prior workplace off of their resume which caused them to question why. “We did have one candidate that chose to leave off a town that had previously employed her. We had another candidate that had been just recently out on administrative leave. We chose not the interview that candidate, which unfortunately left us with one via-

ble candidate to interview. We did have two other candidates that we did reach out to that had already accepted employment by the time we reached out to them,” Bartkus concluded. The lone remaining candidate was Ayers, and both Bartkus and Campbell acknowledged him as a worthy pick. For her part, Campbell wished they had a larger selection to pick from so that they had options, but also acknowledged they had to work with the applications they received. “It’s good to have at least some competition so you have something to base it off. Even now, I’m open to it, but I can’t create viable candidates,” she said. Ayers was officially added to the town website following his appointment at the end of January. He will retain the position through at least June of 2026 to close out the fiscal year.

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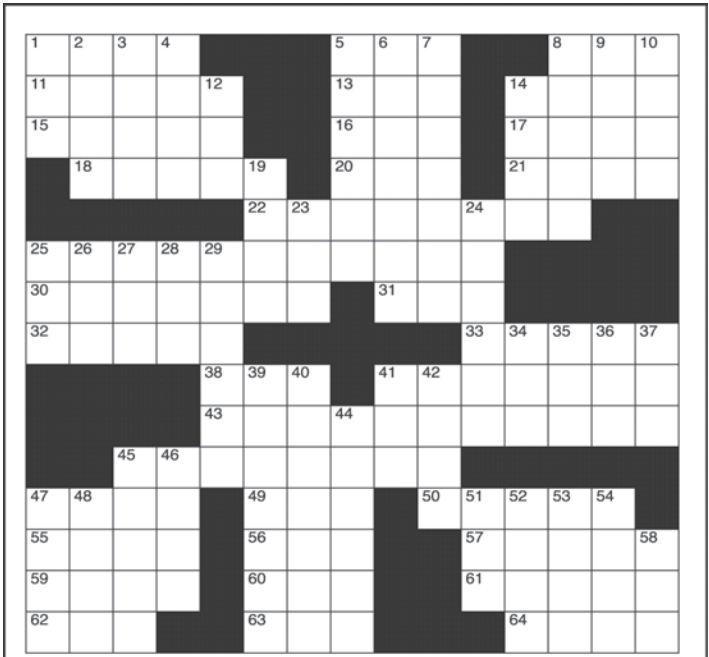
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- ### CLUES ACROSS

 - Breezed through
 - Consumer protection agency
 - Criminal syndicate
 - Moves back from
 - Satisfaction
 - Feel concern or interest
 - Monetary units
 - Congressman (abbr.)
 - Israeli city
 - Restaurants
 - 2,000 lbs.
 - Grandmother
 - North, South and Central
 - In an early way
 - Foes
 - Social networking platform
 - Early term for basketball player
- Another name for sesame plant
 - Disallow
 - Provide greater detail
 - Inaccessible
 - Evoke emotions
 - Ancient kingdom near Dead Sea
 - Celtic punk rockers
 - A fencing sword
 - Actor Idris
 - Affirmative (slang)
 - Afflicted in mind or body
 - One point north of northeast
 - Born of
 - Social media hand gesture
 - Hong Kong food stall __ pai dong
 - Opposite of beginning
 - Email function

- ### CLUES DOWN

 - Sign language
 - Fashionable
 - Borough in Helsinki
 - Inability to hear
 - More quickly
 - An idea accepted as a demonstrable truth
 - Shrewdly
 - Rooney and Kate are two
 - Mediterranean port
 - Benedictine monk
 - Midway between south and southeast
 - Town in Galilee
 - Satisfy
 - Mice genus
 - Brass instrument
 - Chest muscle (slang)
 - Transmits genetic information from DNA
 - Records electric currents generated by the brain
- Woman (French)
 - Short route aircraft
 - Pitching statistic
 - Pointed end of a pen
 - Popular sports league
 - Body part
 - Inoffensive
 - Yellowish cotton cloth
 - Feline
 - Does not tell the truth
 - Seduced
 - Spiritual leader
 - Abba __, Israeli politician
 - Repair
 - Olive genus
 - Swiss river
 - Prejudice
 - C. European river
 - Keep under control
 - Father

PUZZLE SOLUTION

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Leicester Democratic Town Committee to hold 2026 Democratic Caucus

LEICESTER — The Leicester Democratic Town Committee (LDTCC) will hold its 2026 Democratic Caucus on Monday, March 9, at the Leicester Public Library, located at 1136 Main St., Leicester. The caucus will begin promptly at 6 p.m., with doors opening at 5 p.m. Registration will open at 5:30 p.m. and close at 6:15 p.m. All eligible Democrats are encouraged to arrive early to ensure timely registration and participation. Democratic caucuses are an important part of the party’s grassroots process, allowing registered Democrats to participate in the selection of delegates and alternates to Democratic conventions and to

engage directly in party governance at the local level. Participants must be registered Democrats in the Town of Leicester and meet all eligibility requirements as outlined by the Massachusetts Democratic Party. Same-day party registration may be available in accordance with party rules. The caucus location is ADA accessible. Individuals requiring other aids are encouraged to contact the Leicester Democratic Town Committee in advance at ldccmass@gmail.com so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The Leicester Democratic Town Committee welcomes community members who are interested in civic engagement, democratic partici-

pation, and helping shape the future of the Democratic Party in Leicester and across the Commonwealth. For additional information or questions regarding the caucus, please contact the Leicester Democratic Town Committee at ldccmass@gmail.com. or other auxiliary aids, are encouraged to contact the Leicester Democratic Town Committee in advance at ldccmass@gmail.com so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The Leicester Democratic Town Committee welcomes community members who are interested in civic engagement, democratic participation, and helping shape the future of the Democratic Party in Leicester and across the Commonwealth. For additional information or questions regarding the caucus, please contact the Leicester Democratic Town Committee at ldccmass@gmail.com.

Berthiaume announces local office hours

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

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

Wednesday, Feb. 11 — In the Town of Brookfield at the Town

Hall, 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.

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

Wednesday, Feb. 18 — In the Town of Leicester at the Senior Center, 9 – 9:45 a.m.

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

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

WEEKLY POLICE BLOTTER

Spencer
The Spencer Police Department reported the following arrests during the week of Jan. 27 to Feb. 3.
Llesica Cosme Barrera, age 27, of Spencer was arrested on Feb. 3 for Operating Under the Influence (Liquor), Possession of an Open Container of Alcohol in a Motor Vehicle, and a Marked Lanes Violation.

Leicester
The Leicester Police Department reported the following arrests during the week of Jan. 29 to Feb. 4.
An individual whose identity has been withheld from publication received a summons in lieu of arrest on Jan. 29 for Operating a Motor Vehicle after suspension of license and operating a motor vehicle with No Inspection Sticker.
Jonathan Mark Croteau, age 30, of Athol was arrested on Jan. 29 for Shoplifting By Asportation, Assault & Battery on a Police Officer, Assault & Battery, and Assault & Battery with a Dangerous Weapon. A second individual whose identity has been withheld from publication received a summons in lieu of arrest during the same incident for Shoplifting By Asportation.
Nicholas Gerard Saulnier, age 35, of Worcester was arrested on Jan. 31 for Operating Under the Influence (Liquor), a Marked Lanes Violation, and Indecent Exposure.
Anthony R. Rivera, age 24, of Worcester was arrested on Jan. 31 for Unlicensed Operation of a Motor Vehicle and a Marked Lanes Violation.
Zachary G. Victor, age 37, of Spencer was arrested on Jan. 31 for Operating Under the Influence (Liquor), Negligent Operation of a Motor Vehicle, and a Marked Lanes Violation.
An individual whose identity has been withheld from publication received a summons in lieu of arrest on Jan. 31 for Unlicensed Operation of a Motor Vehicle and operating a motor vehicle with No Inspection Sticker.

What should you do in the new year? Get your “estate needs in order”. No one likes to talk about death, that is why you should have everything done in advance. Make sure your hard-earned money and investments are left to those you want. Call me for a free consultation. Also, handling all types of real estate matters.

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Nominations wanted for Educator & Hero of the Year

PALMER — The Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce, the area non-profit that promotes business, development and tourism within surrounding communities of Hampden, Hampshire, and Worcester counties, is seeking nominations for its 2026 Choice Awards. Nominations are needed in the categories of Community Hero and Educator of the Year.

Nominations can be submitted on the Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce official website, QHMA.com through Feb. 13. Online voting for this year's finalists will be open to the public and conducted from Feb. 15 through March 15, also at QHMA.com.

Finalist voting will also include a number of Chamber-member specific categories

honoring local non-profits, manufacturing and service businesses. All finalists will be honored and the announced at the Choice Awards Dinner on Wednesday, May 6 taking place at the Steaming Tender Restaurant, located at the former historic Palmer Railroad Station site.

"The annual Choice Awards is one of the most distinguished programs the Chamber conducts. It is an honor each year to celebrate a new class of extraordinary individuals who make our region so special. Last year, we received more than 22,000 finalist votes, which is a testament to how deeply our communities appreciate those who make a difference in our lives every day," said James Przypek, Chief Executive Officer of the

Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce.

The criteria to nominate are:

Community Hero of the Year

An individual (citizen, resident, veteran, first responder) who has gone above and beyond via a single outstanding act within the last 12 months, or a series of contributions over an extended period for the betterment of their community. The individual must reside or have performed their act or work within the Quaboag Hills 15 member communities.

Educator of the Year

An individual who has positively impacted the school (public, regional, private or independent) and the students for which they work. The individual must reside,

or the school for which they work must be located within the Quaboag Hills 15 member communities.

About the Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce

Established in 1978 and headquartered in Palmer, the Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce's purpose is to advance economic growth, interests and tourism for our members through policies, programs and development in the Quaboag Hills region, including the fifteen towns of Belchertown, Brimfield, Brookfield, East Brookfield, Hardwick, Holland, Monson, New Braintree, North Brookfield, Palmer, Spencer, Wales, Ware, Warren, and West Brookfield.

Leicester Senior Citizens Club launches membership drive

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

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

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

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

Spencer Democratic Town Committee to hold 2026 caucus

SPENCER — The Spencer Democratic Town Committee (SDTC), will hold its 2026 Democratic Caucus on Thursday, March 5 at the Spencer McDonalds at 7 p.m. Caucus will welcome attendees with registration beginning at 6:30 to 7 p.m. Caucus will begin promptly at 7 PM. All eligible Spencer Democrats are encouraged to attend and participate in this important part of the party's grassroots process, which allows all registered Spencer Democrats to participate in the selection of delegates and alternates to the Massachusetts State Convention, which will be held in Worcester on May 29 & 30.

Participants must be registered Democrats in the town of Spencer and meet all eligibility requirements as outlined by the Massachusetts Democratic Party. Same day Party registration may be available in accordance with party rules, or voters may check with the Town Clerk's office to make sure they are currently registered as Democrats or change their registration to become a registered Democrat if they desire to do so. The Caucus location is ADA accessible. Individuals requiring other aids are encouraged to contact the Spencer Democratic Town Committee in advance at spencerdemsma@gmail.com so that appropriate arrangements can be made. There is a virtual option for attendees and guests to attend via Google Meet at <https://meet.google.com/kpu-eqrs-dqu>

If you are a concerned voter, we welcome you to join us as a registered Spencer Democrat and help with the work needed to empower Democrats and contribute to positive, progressive action in Massachusetts and across the country. For any additional information regarding our committee or this caucus, please contact the Spencer DTC at spencerdemsma@gmail.com.

Leicester residents earn Dean's List honors

LEICESTER — Siblings Cole Delage (RPI), Dylan Delage (UMass Boston), and Ryan Delage (Worcester Polytechnic Institute) have all been named to the Dean's List at their respective universities for the fall semester of 2025.

Cole is a 2023 graduate of Leicester High School. Dylan and Ryan both graduated with the Class of 2025.

P.E.T. of the Week

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Meet Dante

Dante is not a cuddle bug-and she's okay with that. She's the kind of dog who needs time, patience, and space to feel safe. It can take months for Dante to become comfortable with new people and her new home, but once she does, she will thrive in the right environment.

Important to know: Dante is an escape artist-even at her old age. She has escaped multiple times from her previous home and has even gotten loose while on walks. Because of this, a fully fenced, secure yard is absolutely required, and her adopter must be diligent with doors, gates, and leashes at all times.

Dante's ideal home: -Adult-only household (she prefers women) -No other pets -Fully fenced, secure yard (required) -Calm, low-activity home

Someone experienced, patient, and willing to let her move at her own pace Dante does best in a quiet setting where there isn't a lot of foot traffic or constant activity. She's not looking for a busy social life-she's looking for stability, routine, and understanding.

If you're someone who believes in giving a dog the time she needs to feel safe and doesn't expect instant affection, Dante may be the perfect companion for you.



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Music & Movement at the Merrick Public Library in Brookfield

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

Part-time custodian needed for 215 Mill Street, Worcester, MA

Notify Erika at 508-612-9743

Friday's Child



Tristan
Age 15
Registration #8627

Tristan is a healthy, energetic young boy who is eager to find his forever family. He has a love for staying active and enjoys participating in a variety of sports, including basketball, baseball, and karate. Tristan is always excited to try new things and will soon be starting swimming lessons, which he's looking forward to as another fun challenge. In addition to his athletic interests, Tristan enjoys playing video games and can happily spend time relaxing indoors when it's time to unwind. That said, he truly thrives in outdoor environments and loves being outside whenever he can. Some of his favorite activities include camping, fishing, and hiking, where he can explore nature and stay active at the same time. Tristan would do well with a family who enjoys an active lifestyle and values spending time together, whether that's cheering him on at a game, heading out on outdoor adventures, or simply enjoying quality time at home. With the right family, Tristan will continue to grow, explore his interests, and share his enthusiasm, energy, and love for fun experiences.

<https://www.mareinc.org/child/21188696732>

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

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



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Western New England University celebrates outstanding academic achievements

[SUBHEAD] Nearly 600 students named to Fall semester President’s List

SPRINGFIELD — Western New England University (WNE) takes immense pride in recognizing the outstanding academic achievements of nearly 600 students who have been named to the President’s List for the Fall 2025 semester. Students are named to the President’s List for achieving a semester grade point average of 3.80 or higher.

Madeleine Johnson of Rochdale has been named to Western New England University’s President’s List for the Fall 2025 semester.

Gabriel Paquette of W. Brookfield has been named to Western New England University’s President’s List for the Fall 2025 semester.

Ariana Masterjohn of W. Brookfield has been named to Western New England University’s President’s List for the Fall 2025 semester.

Alexis Kaloudis of Brookfield has been named to Western New England University’s President’s List for the Fall 2025 semester.

Thomas Robidoux of W. Brookfield has been named to Western New England University’s President’s List for the Fall 2025 semester.

Matthew Tiberii of W. Brookfield has been named to Western New England University’s President’s List for the Fall 2025 semester.

Shyra McWhorter of N. Brookfield has been named to Western New England University’s President’s List for the Fall 2025 semester.

Kathryn Dolimount of Leicester has been named to Western New England University’s President’s List for the Fall 2025 semester.

Western New England University (WNE) is a private, nationally ranked, comprehensive institution with a focus on preparing work-ready and world-ready graduates. Founded in 1919 in Springfield, Massachusetts as a division of Northeastern College, WNE’s 215-acre suburban campus serves more than 3,700 students, including over 2,500 full-time undergraduates. More than 47,000 alumni have earned degrees through its more than 90 undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs at Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Business, Engineering, and Pharmacy and Health Sciences, and School of Law. Students come from 39 U.S. states and territories and 23 countries. Of 45,104 living alumni, 30 percent remain within the region, residing in the four Western Massachusetts counties and northern Connecticut.

WNE is classified among nationally ranked universities in US News and World Report, and among the Top 100 Undergraduate Engineering programs, and in the Doctoral/Professional Universities category in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.

Worcester Polytechnic Institute announces Fall Dean’s List

WORCESTER — Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) has announced its Dean’s List for academic excellence for the Fall 2025 semester.

The criteria for the WPI Dean’s List differ from that of most other universities as WPI does not compute a grade point average (GPA). Instead, WPI students are named to the Dean’s List based on the amount of work completed at the A level in courses and hands-on projects.

“WPI’s academic programs are rigorous and require a level of independence beyond what is required in traditional courses. WPI students work on real-world, open-ended problems on campus and in communities around the globe. Far from being simple academic exercises, the projects students complete have genuine and lasting impacts in our partner communities,” said Provost Andrew Sears. “Some of this nation’s best and brightest students come to WPI to study engineering, science, business, and the humanities. Those named to the Dean’s List have excelled in all of their work, and we are exceptionally proud of these outstanding students.”

The following students were named to the Fall 2025 Dean’s List:

Matthew Carter of West Brookfield, class of 2028, majoring in Architectural Engineering

Ryan Delage of Leicester, class of 2029, majoring in Electrical and Computer Engineering

Adrianna Navarro of Spencer, class of 2028, majoring in Biomedical Engineering

William Panepinto of Leicester, class of 2028, majoring in Architectural Engineering

James Sweeney of Leicester, class of 2028, majoring in Chemical Engineering

About Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) is a top-tier, STEM-focused university with an R1 research classification and global leadership in project-based learning. Founded in 1865, WPI’s distinctive approach integrates classroom theory with real-world practice, preparing students to tackle critical challenges through inclusive education, impactful projects, and interdisciplinary research. With more than 70 Bachelor’s, Master’s, and doctoral degree programs across 18 academic departments and over 50 global project centers, WPI advances knowledge and innovation in fields such as life sciences, smart technologies, advanced materials and manufacturing, and global innovation. Learn more at www.wpi.edu.

Abby Radebaugh named to President’s List at Plymouth State University

PLYMOUTH, New Hampshire — Abby Radebaugh of Brookfield has been named to the Plymouth State University President’s List for the Fall 2025 semester. To be named to the President’s List, a student must achieve a grade point average of 3.70 or better for the Fall 2025 semester and must have completed at least 12 credit hours during the semester, at least nine of which must confer grade points, at the time the lists are finalized. Radebaugh is majoring in Nursing at Plymouth State.

About Plymouth State University
Established in 1871, Plymouth State University serves the state of New Hampshire and the world beyond by transforming our students through advanced practices where engaged learning produces well-educated undergraduates, and by providing graduate education that deepens and advances knowledge and enhances professional development. The Plymouth State Cluster Learning Model emphasizes open, integrative, and project-based experiences. With distinction, we connect with community and business partners for economic development, technological advances, healthier living, and cultural enrichment with a special commitment of service to the North Country and Lakes Region of New Hampshire. To learn more about Plymouth State University, visit www.plymouth.edu.

Brandon Allen named to Dean’s List at Western New England University

SPRINGFIELD — Western New England University (WNE) is proud to announce that Brandon Allen of W. Brookfield has been named to the Dean’s List for the Fall 2025 semester. Allen is one of nearly 800 students to achieve this mark of academic excellence. Students are named to the Dean’s List for achieving a semester grade point average of 3.30 or higher.

A WNE education provides career-span agility through a curriculum grounded in professional/experiential studies, enhanced by the liberal arts, and enriched by mentored research that equips graduates to adapt and succeed in the workplace of the future.

Western New England University (WNE) is a private, nationally ranked, comprehensive institution with a focus on preparing work-ready and world-ready graduates. Founded in 1919 in Springfield, Massachusetts as a division of Northeastern College, WNE’s 215-acre suburban campus serves more than 3,700 students, including over 2,500 full-time undergraduates. More than 47,000 alumni have earned degrees through its 90+ undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs at Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Business, Engineering, and Pharmacy and Health Sciences, and School of Law. Students come from 39 U.S. states and territories and 23 countries. Of 45,104 living alumni, 30% remain within the region, residing in the four Western Massachusetts counties and northern Connecticut.

WNE is classified among nationally ranked universities in US News and World Report, and among the Top 100 Undergraduate Engineering programs, and in the Doctoral/Professional Universities category in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.

Salve Regina University announces Dean’s List for Fall Semester

NEWPORT, R.I. — The following students were named to the Dean’s List during the fall 2025 academic semester at Salve Regina University. To qualify for the Dean’s List, students must earn a semester grade point average of 3.6 for full-time students completing at least 12 graded credits, or a semester grade point average of 3.8 for part-time students completing at least six credits.

Allison Decelle of Spencer
Madeline Milionis of Leicester
Gia Norcia of Spencer
Payton Prouty of Spencer
Greenly Waugh of Spencer

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LEICESTER MIDDLE SCHOOL ANNOUNCES HONOR ROLL

LEICESTER — Leicester Middle School has released its honor roll for the second quarter of the 2025-2026 school year.

- 8th Grade High Honors
Beverly Ampaw, Maxwell Belizaire, Jolene Boudreau, Landon Bullock, Justin Cai, Olivia Cardona, Avery Cole, Mila Cortes, Gavin Ford, Adalynn Grant, Christopher Harrington, Tyler Kularski, Fiona Liebman, Cadence Medeiros, Emma Mercier, Nana Obeng, David Sanborn, Lily Schrader, Joseph Ukoh, Leah Varney
- 7th Grade High Honors
Juliette Bellisario, Aubrey Bullock, Anna Derrick, Rylee Garrahe, Shaylie Moore, Stacy Morrobel Dominguez
- 6th Grade High Honors
Maxwell Alade, Skylar Backstrom, Vivienne Belizaire, Leah Cunningham, Benjamin Machado, Tylor Moorghen, Layla Mullins, Addison Murphy, Autumn Schimke, Madison Westberg, Dylan Williams
- 5th Grade High Honors
Julia Blanchard, Aubrielle Camacho, Kinsley Champagne, Ava Cunningham, Myles Derrick, Jurell Evans, Cristian Guzman, Maximus Huynh, Panjri Joshi, Jacob Lovejoy, Madelynn McNally, Victor Medina Garcia, Jada Moore, Allison Muzzy, Jayden Nguyen, Javian Ruiz, Audrey Sanborn, Mason Settle, Joshua Soucie, Ryan Soucy, Phuc Khang Tran Ly, Jacob Varney, Brynn Wayman, Wyatt Zwirblia

- 8th Grade Honors
Dianexiz Acevedo-Ortiz, Elisa Aguirre, Trey Blais, Michael Cormier, Bridget Dillon, Athena Flanders, Shelby Grant, Haidi Hadi, Emily Hipple, Juliette Hoekstra, Ava Johnston, Sophia Johnston, Aaliyah Layne, Sadie Lenahan, Ayla Lis, Reagan Lyon, Benjamin Marjault, Hunter Martin, Charlie Marttila, Francis Marubu, Owen Murphy, Sophia Muzzy, Sonya Potvin, Hailey Rooney, Harmony Rowland, Kayzen Santana-Ernestburg, Rayman Singharaj, Anthony Sullivan, Jackson Trainor, Liam Tremblay, Aaliyah Trought, Aiden Valinski, Amy Van Hazinga, Brady Walsh, Brody Weber
- 7th Grade Honors
Arianna Alicea Rodriguez, Mackenzie Beaulac, Edmund Besse, Charli Brunelle, Brooklyn Bullock, Kyesmarie Camacho, Victoria Cardona, Daniel Ciciliane, Sophia Collins, Logan Curren, Arizona Fleming, Jayden Gleason, Alessandro Guzman, Raegan Higgins, Sophia Kennedy, Larissa LaFlamme, Kris Lapi, Alivia Larson, Camille LeBlanc, Julianne LeClair, Andrew Lemerise, Mason Lynch, Nora MacDonnell, Olivia Maki, Jackson McKenzie, Karizma Menard, Alexander Perez, Logan Perry, Theresa Reynolds, Logan Ross, Scott Rowland, Leonel Sanchez Orellana, Isabella Sirianni, Michael Therrien, Charlyse Torres, Kason Ward

- 6th Grade Honors
Gannon Arnberg, Kaydence Beamenderfer, Nolan Beaudry, Summer Blais, Huy Bui, Elizabeth Cooper, Giuliana Escobar, Draven Fernandes, Calvin Fryer, Owen Giddix, Hunter Hayes, Adhuresa Latifi, Luke LeBlanc, Noah Loosemore, Olivia Mason, Jackson McCauley, Santy Melendez Vasquez, Benjamin Miller, Anna Nguyen, Hafsa Oubih, Bently Payne, Blake Potvin, Emilianna Rodridguez, Rayden Singharaj, Richard Spratt, Julianna Trainor, Anthony Walsh, Tristan Walsh, Scarlett Wells, Finian Wood, Julian Wooden

- 5th Grade Honors
Charlotte Barber, Jaziah Billinger, Mallory Brunell, Han Bui, Aubrey Colby, Delaney Copper, Gabriella Dillon, Declan Friend, Aryanna Furtado, Victoria Heenan, Avery Jackson, Madeline Jiang, Olivia Jyringi, Olivia Lynch, Colin McGowan, Lila Meloche, Hattie Nadeau, Domenic Nardella, Grayson Nichols, Camila Pacheco, Mason Pacheco, Brock Patterson, Mason Patterson, Joseph Sirianni, Michael Siwale, Myla Snow, Alexander Walsh, Ryder Walsh, Emmett Younger, Arham Zahid

Local residents named to Clark University’s Fall Dean’s List

WORCESTER — The following local residents were named to Clark University’s Fall 2025 Dean’s List:

Ana G. Ruggieri, of Leicester was named to second honors.

Abigail E. Gahagan, of Leicester was named to first honors.

Ava Elizabeth Paradis, of W Brookfield was named to second honors.

Ellie M. Hills, of Leicester was named to first honors.

Students must have a GPA of 3.8 or above for first honors or a GPA between 3.50 and 3.79 for second honors.

Founded in 1887, Clark University is a liberal arts-based research university that prepares its students to meet tomorrow’s most daunting challenges and embrace its greatest opportunities. Through 33 undergraduate majors, more than 30 advanced degree programs, and nationally recognized community partnerships, Clark fuses rigorous scholarship with authentic world and workplace experiences that empower our students to pursue lives and careers of meaning and consequence.

LEICESTER HIGH SCHOOL ANNOUNCES HONOR ROLL

LEICESTER — Leicester High School has released its honor roll for the second quarter of the 2025-2026 school year.

- 12th Grade High Honors
Kyle Bates, Eryn Berkstresser, Avery Bullock, Brandon Escobar, John Gahagan Shane Garrahe, Eliannie Guzman Bueno, Emily Hunt, Natalia Kallio, Gabriel Key-Wallace Hannah Martin, Zoe Morales, Nola Perry, Kassidy Poce, Nicole Tuson
- 11th Grade High Honors
Jacob Beaulac, Joshua McCormick, Sabrina Wright
- 10th Grade High Honors
Matthew Alves, Brady Bouchard, Andrew Boucher, Haylee Kularski, Brock Lopez, Alena Martinkova, Julianna McCormick, Trinity Medeiros, Charlotte Mercer, Katherine Ozarowski, Paula Roberts, Ryan Sweeney, Jayke Williams
- 9th Grade High Honors
Jordan Argyriadis, Camden Beaudry, Nick Nguyen, Hunter Wright
- 12th Grade Honors
Lenny Angua-Mante, Abigail Baker, Kate Barbato, Landon Beveridge, Isabella Beyers, Collin Connor, Jacob Cosper, Jasmine Fuller, Jason Fuller, Jordan Giggey, Brody Grant, Rowen Hennessy, Savannah Kulig, Ava Lane, Elyssia Leboeuf
- Isabella LePoer, Savannah Lumb, Martinez Castillo, Augustine Marubu, Christopher Moffat, Elias Narvaez, Lucas Souza Sampaio, Alicea Santos, Jack Skoglund, Nathan Wilder, Tyler Williams, Dakota Zinkevich

- 11th Grade Honors
Destiny Barshell, Inal Bouzid, Jenna Bush, Kelsey Cole, Alexander Fournier, Taylor Gallant, Kenneth Lane, Jahnisha Naima Layne, Jeremy Ledbetter, Valerie Maynard, Kaidyn McDowell, Nayeli Merino Canas, Robert O’Neil, Gianna Panepinto, Laila Paquin, Ava Petruzzi, Jillian Rodrique, Taylor Rodrique, Mary Van Hazinga, Casey Waterman
- 10th Grade Honors
Jack Albro, Anthony Andino, Muhammad Arslan, Russell Baker, Rory Barrett, Kennedy Bates, Emma Bernabei, Jude, Campbell, Zachary Couture, Allison Gagne, Annalise Guzman, Hailey Knott, Joseph Kulla, Michael Lupien, Matthew Magoun, Joyce Marubu, Josiah McDonald, Max Milonis, Maia Mitchell, Nikolai Ngo, Brandon Nguyen, Alivia Perry, Desmond Strom, Shane Stuart, Jameson Wood

- 9th Grade Honors
Elijah Belisle, Sarah Clark, Lucas Alves Cruz, John Derrick, Brody Dufries, Javier Flores, Liam Gentile, Benjamin Hagglund, Braydon Herbert, Mya Jones, James Karas, Diana Kitchen, Callie Ladner, Papayaw Larbi, Rocco Lauder, Tighe Lauder, Brody Mateiko, Lila McDonald, Kingston Nguyen, David Pacheco, Jaedyn Perry, Thinh Pham, John Poppalardo, Ella Rowden, Zenah Stagg, William Toomey, Robert Zinkevich

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Leicester Women’s Club serves community, welcomes new members

LEICESTER — The Leicester Women’s Club, founded in 1962, is proud to announce that funds raised at their 2025 Holiday Auction have been disbursed to McAuley Nazareth, Inc., the Leicester Food Pantry, Hearts for Heat, the Leicester Historical Society (May House and Swan Tavern), and the Greenville Baptist Church Food Pantry. The Club also holds a basket raffle at the Harvest Fair in September, with funds raised used for scholarships for graduating seniors who are Leicester residents.

At their next event, Wednesday, March 18, members and guests will enjoy a lunch at Pine Ridge Golf club. The lunch is \$28, payable at the door, and includes salad, entrée, dessert, rolls and coffee or tea. A cash bar is available. Guest speakers will be Stephanie K. Fattman, Worcester County Register of Probate, and Kathryn A. Toomey, Worcester County Register of Deeds. Mrs. Fattman and Mrs. Toomey will give a short presentation about the services their offices provide and answer questions from the audience. Reservations required before Monday, March 9, to Linda Monahan at 508-330-9250.

West Brookfield Historical Commission announces 2026 scholarship

WEST BROOKFIELD — The West Brookfield Historical Commission is pleased to announce its 2026, 15th annual scholarship in the amount of \$2000. Qualified students must reside in West Brookfield and may attend Quaboag Regional High School, or be school- choice students, home schooled students, and independent school students.

This award is made possible through the J. Irving and Jane L. England Charitable Trust.

Application criteria:

The students must be planning to attend either a four-year college/university program or a two-year college with the intent to transfer to a four-year college. The Commission will show preference to study plans with concentration on History and History-related areas. Major or minors may include Political Science, Social Studies, Anthropology, Archaeology, Historical Preservation, Museum Studies, and Education in any of these related fields.

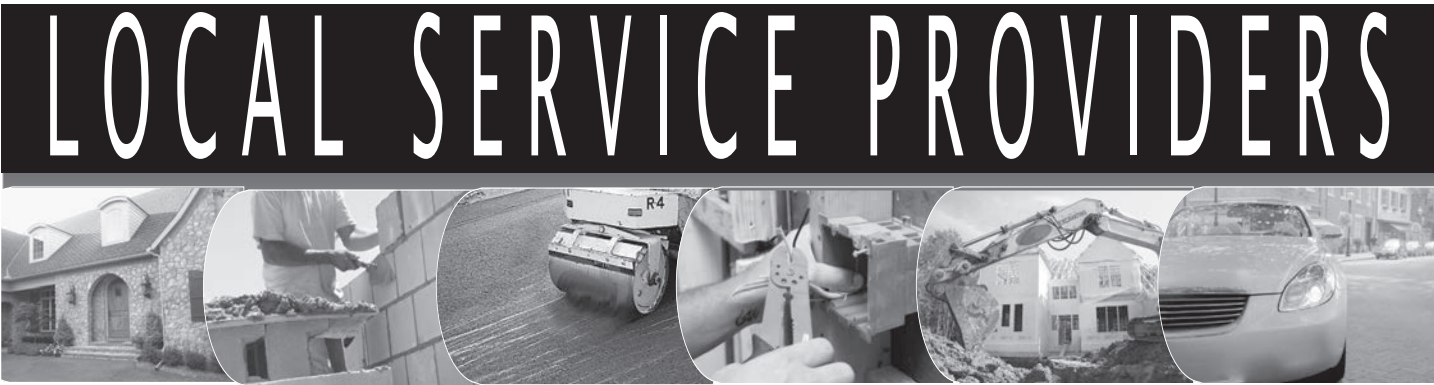
Applicants must submit a brief essay based on one of the Notable Persons or Significant Places listed on the application. All necessary information will be found on the West Brookfield Historical Commission website. <http://westbrookfield.org>

Essays are due no later than April 6.

E-mail- info@westbrookfield.org

Mail: West Brookfield Historical Commission, PO Box 372, W. Brookfield, MA 01585.

The application and details can be found on the Historical Commission Web site, <http://westbrookfield.org>.



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BRENDAN BERUBE
EDITOR

EDITORIAL

Taking care with what we share

Small towns run on information. We pass it along at the post office counter, at the school pickup line, in the grocery store aisle. News travels fast in communities like ours, sometimes faster than we realize.

That can be a strength. When a neighbor needs help, word spreads quickly. When a local fundraiser is announced, people show up. When roads are closed or weather turns rough, information moves from one household to the next almost instinctively.

But there is another side to that closeness. Rumors can take hold just as quickly as facts. Partial information can turn into certainty. A secondhand comment can become a full-blown story before anyone pauses to check whether it is true.

This matters more now than it did a generation ago. Social media and group text messages amplify everything. A post written in frustration can reach hundreds of people in minutes. A misunderstanding can grow legs before the person at the center of it even knows it exists.

Local government, schools, and public safety agencies all feel the effects. Residents show up at meetings already angry about something that is not quite accurate. Teachers and administrators find themselves responding to claims that began as speculation. Volunteers and town employees face criticism based on information that was never confirmed.

None of this is unique to Spencer or the surrounding towns. But it lands differently in small communities, where people know each other and reputations matter. A careless comment does not disappear into the noise. It lingers.

Being thoughtful about what we share does not mean staying silent or avoiding hard conversations. It means slowing down just enough to ask a simple question: Do I know this to be true? And if I do not, is it fair to pass it along anyway?

There is value in waiting for official information, whether it comes from a town meeting, a school committee agenda, or a public statement. There is value in listening directly to the people involved rather than relying on a chain of retellings. There is also value in remembering that most local officials, educators, and volunteers are trying to do the best they can with limited time and resources.

Small towns work best when trust runs both ways. Residents deserve clear, accurate information. Local institutions deserve the chance to explain their decisions without a cloud of rumor hanging overhead.

Taking care with what we share is a small act, but it adds up. It keeps conversations grounded. It protects neighbors from unnecessary harm. And it helps ensure that when something truly important needs attention, the community can focus on facts instead of noise.

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.

VIEWPOINT

OPINION AND COMMENTARY FROM SPENCER, LEICESTER AND THE BROOKFIELDS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Spencer needs the Rescue Squad

To the Editor:

The Spencer Rescue Squad has served the town of Spencer for over 60 years. In that time, the Squad has saved the town millions of dollars.

The town has never had to pay to purchase, equip and stock an ambulance. The town has never had to pay the Squad's employees. The town has never had to purchase land and construct facilities that house the three ambulances and personnel.

The Rescue Squad is a "Not for Profit" organization. All profits earned go back to the organization. It has a Board of Directors that are not paid. They are dedicated volunteers from town.

One thing that people don't know is that the demographics of the town has changed. In the '80's and '90's, the majority of people had health insurance that covered the full price of an ambulance ride. That has changed to where now most people have Medicare etc. which does not compensate the Squad the full cost of the ambulance service. The Squad has to right off many thousands of dollars each year. The Squad cannot bill a patient for the difference. This is why the Squad is in the situation it is in now and why it needs help from the town.

The Board of Selectmen are contemplating bringing in a "For Profit" Service

because they think they are going to save money. How can a "For Profit" be less expensive than a "Not for Profit" service? Where would they house the service? How many ambulances would they provide? Where would they house the personnel? They won't be able to use the Rescue Squads facility. It is private. The town would have to purchase the facility at fair market value. Where is the town going to get the funds from.

My question is: How many ambulances is this service going to provide? How many personnel are they going to station in town? How much is the town going to rely on Mutual Aid?

I believe the quality of service is going to deteriorate.

I realize that the voters voted down the Rescue Squads request for funds. Please reconsider that decision.

The Town of Spencer needs the Spencer Rescue Squad.

The Board of Selectmen has made two horrific blunders. The first was when it lowered the The second is the shuttering of the Rescue Squad. If they save any money, it will be at the expense of the service the residents of the town will not receive. The town will still have to pay.

JOHN WILSON
SPENCER

"Do you see what I see?"

To the Editor:

I had been writing on the average of one letter every couple of weeks to the New Leader, but then decided that I would take a break and enjoy the holidays with friends and family.

I am so happy that I did because with everything going on in our country, it occurred to me that under the present, corrupt administration it could very well be the last Christmas we (as Americans) will ever have.

Trump already refers to himself as "King!" What will he want to be called next, Jesus??

Will Christmas become Trumpmas, or Trumpmess? He is already telling us our daughters and granddaughters don't need dolls; they already have too many.

He has brought violence and fear into our lives. He is condoning ICE beating and murdering America citizens, deporting people born in the US, including a

five year old boy being sent to Texas alone and scared. Imagine if that was your child or grandchild?!

Imagine if your loved one was murdered for using their freedom of speech, or for trying to help a woman who was pepper sprayed in her face and then knocked to the ground. I saw a woman being pulled from her car and then thrown on the ground as she was yelling "please don't hurt me, I am handicapped.

He is wiping his feet on our Constitution and breaking down our judicial system. He needs to be stopped now.

If we saw someone in our family or in our neighborhood acting like Trump, we would want him in a mental care facility yet we still have people believing in him over what we have seen with our own eyes. What is wrong with you people?

Wake up before it's too late!

NOREEN FERNANDES
WEST BROOKFIELD

Just the facts

To the Editor:

In my younger days, I was a fan of a TV series named "Dragnet," starring Jack Webb and Harry Morgan. Det. Joe Friday would commonly advise whoever was reporting on a crime, "Just the facts, ma'am." It seems they are becoming increasingly hard to come by. It was Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who often famously said "Everyone is entitled to their own opinions, but no one is entitled to their own facts".

In an interview with George Stephanopolis of ABC News, Kelly Ann Conway presented the concept of "alternate facts" George asked her to clarify that it was just a different way of saying "lies."

I have watched at least eight comments by Faux Noos commentators, telling us to disbelieve the evidence of our own eyes, and that Alex Pretti, the military veteran and ICU nurse who went to the aid of a woman that ICE agents had knocked to the ground, that he was brandishing a gun and was a threat to the agents safety. While I do not get the logic of carrying a weapon to a peaceful protest, the NRA would support that it was one of his rights totally violated.

When he helped the woman up brandishing his cell phone camera, 6 agents pinned him to the pavement face down. One agent then pulled the gun from his belt and yelled gun. This is a person trained in de-escalation? Two other agents then shot Alex 10 times in the back. They then tried to justify it by putting the gun back in his belt. Fox is still insisting they killed him because he threatened them. Want to buy a bridge?

This last week, Tulsi Gabbard and the FBI seized voting records that date back to the election Trump lost by 11,780 votes. It will not surprise me if they find them. Trump must think us all really stupid. Gabbards job is national security, which customarily means between countries. He claims she did it because Pam Bondi, the US AG wanted her to. He further stated

that states are just agents of the federal government. These are all alternative truths.

If you are familiar with the Federalist Papers, where Jefferson and Madison discussed why there would even be any need to have a federal government, they came up with 4 reasons for the states to relinquish any sovereignty.

- 1) Military- to establish and fund a standing Army and Navy
- 2) A national bank and currency
- 3) Trade and treaties with foreign nations
- 4) interstate commerce

They believed Congress to be a part time job with infrequent meetings (to some extent, that is still true)

I mention this, because our constitution, though amended and perverted over the years, was expressly designed to protect states and citizens rights, having just rejected an overbearing foreign government. My point is, the federal government is an agent of the states and the people, not the opposite.

To further emphasize the "no Kings" attitude, our constitution specifically grants election rules and oversight to the states and localities and prohibits federal involvement or armed troops of any kind, anywhere near the polls. Even partisans must keep their distance. ICE agents surrounding polls, is not democracy. Also, the Stalin plan of not carrying who votes or how, only who counts the votes, is not democracy. Although not highly reported, the Arizona cyber ninja recount, cost millions and found a few more Biden votes.

More than ever, you president saying things, does not make them true, One paper credited him with over 30,000 lies in his first term. You definitely can fool some people all of the time. They probably lose bets on replays, thinking it could never happen again.

KEN KIMBALL
BROOKFIELD

Tax-saving moves you can still make for 2025



FINANCIAL FOCUS

TREVOR NIELSEN

Tax season is upon us, and while April 15 may seem like it's right around the corner, you still have time to make some strategic moves that could lower your 2025 tax bill. Whether you're looking to reduce your taxable income or set yourself up for a more secure financial future, these options are worth considering.

Contribute to an IRA. One of the most popular tax-smart moves is contributing to an Individual Retirement Account. You have until the April 15 filing deadline to contribute to an IRA for the 2025 tax year. You can contribute up to \$7,000, or \$8,000 if you're 50 or older.

If you choose a traditional IRA, your contributions may be tax-deductible depending on your income level and whether you participate in an employer-sponsored retirement plan. Your earnings grow tax-deferred until you withdraw them in retirement. With a Roth IRA, you won't get an immediate tax deduction, but your earnings can grow tax-free if you follow the withdrawal rules.

Max out your Health Savings Account (HSA). If you're enrolled in a high-deductible health plan, a Health Savings Account offers triple tax advantages. You can still make HSA contributions for 2025 until April 15. The limits are \$4,300 for individual coverage and \$8,550 for family coverage. If you're 55 or older, you can contribute an additional \$1,000.

HSA contributions reduce your taxable income, the money grows tax-free, and withdrawals for qualified medical expenses are never taxed. Plus, HSAs have no "use it or lose it" rule. Your savings roll over year after year, making an HSA a valuable tool for building resources to cover healthcare costs in retirement.

Self-employed? Consider a SEP IRA. Business owners and self-employed individuals have another powerful option: the SEP IRA. You can make contributions for 2025 up until your business tax return deadline, including extensions. For 2025, you can contribute up to 25 percent of your compensation, with a maximum of \$70,000. This can significantly reduce your taxable income while building your retirement nest egg.

Don't forget required minimum distributions. If you turned 73 in 2025, make sure you've taken your Required Minimum Distribution from your traditional IRA or 401(k) for 2025. Missing this deadline can result in a steep penalty, so it's important to verify that if your 73rd birthday was in 2025, your RMD has been withdrawn before April 1.

Consult a professional. While these moves can help reduce your tax burden, everyone's financial situation is unique. Before making any major financial decisions, it's wise to consult with a tax advisor or financial advisor who can provide guidance tailored to your specific circumstances.

The April 15 deadline is fast approaching, but you still have opportunities to make smart choices that could benefit both your current tax return and your long-term financial health. Don't let this window of opportunity close without considering your options.

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

Edward Jones, its employees, and financial advisors cannot provide tax or legal advice. You should consult your attorney or qualified tax advisor regarding your situation.

QCC's Commonwealth Honors program promotes research

WORCESTER — Students in Quinsigamond Community College's Commonwealth Honors program presented their research findings at a recent Honors Colloquium Student Showcase. The Honors Colloquium is an interdisciplinary course required for students completing designated honors pathways. Designed to foster intellectual curiosity and collaboration, the course brings together faculty from multiple disciplines to explore a central theme from diverse perspectives.

Each student develops a thesis related to the semester's theme, conducts in-depth library research and produces a research paper. The experience culminates in a poster presentation, shared both in class and at the Honors Colloquium Student Showcase,

where students present their work to the broader QCC community. Many participants also take their research beyond campus, presenting at the Undergraduate Research Conference at UMass Amherst.

One section of the Honors Colloquium course, co-taught by Associate Professor of Biology Opeyemi Odewale and Professor of English John Stazinski, employed the theme "The Small Engines of Humanity: Germs, Cooties, and Diseases – Microbial Impact & Societal Transformation."

"The Honors Colloquium is unique among classes at QCC in that the students, every single semester, become very close and end up forming a true learning community," said Stazinski. "They're genuinely

engaged by each other's projects and tend to keep each other on track."

At last month's showcase, students presented their research on how microbes influence contemporary societal challenges.

Student Luis Cruz investigated the gut-eye axis, inspired by his background in ophthalmology and future plans for graduate school and a Ph.D. His project explored early eye treatment options to prevent surgery. Another student, Emma Dattis, examined how music and social networks influence the gut microbiome, uncovering links between cultural factors and microbial health.

Other sections of the Honors Colloquium included "The World in 2050: A Certain

Uncertainty," "(Hi)stories of American Violence" and "Truths or Consequences: Examining Movements for Change."

For more information on QCC's Commonwealth Honors Program, visit qcc.edu/learn-qcc/commonwealth-honors-program.

Annual Lunar New Year celebration at EcoTarium features live Lion Dance performance!



WORCESTER — The media is invited to join us at the EcoTarium on Sunday, Feb. 15 as we celebrate the Lunar New Year and welcome the Year of the Fire Horse. Experience the vibrant traditions of this cultural celebration with a live Lion Dance performance by the SUN Lion Dance Team from the Southeast Asian Coalition of Central Massachusetts (SEACMA) at 12:15 p.m. on the Museum's lower level.

Date: Sunday, Feb. 15
Event Time: Live Lion Dance Performance at 12:15 p.m.
Media Arrival Time: Noon
Location: The EcoTarium - Lower Level of the Museum

The media is invited to attend this event. Please contact Danielle Fisher at dfisher@ecotarium.org or 508-929-2738 with questions and to RSVP.

Cornerstone Bank donates \$10,000 to RCAP Solutions to support housing counseling in Worcester

WORCESTER — Cornerstone Bank today announced a \$10,000 donation to RCAP Solutions, Inc., in Worcester to support staffing at its Housing Consumer Education Center (HCEC) following state funding cuts that have reduced access to free housing counseling services across Worcester County.

HCEC is a proven, no-cost resource that helps individuals and families stabilize their housing through one-on-one counseling, financial education, sustainable spending classes and pre- and post-homebuyer support. Recent reductions in state funding have limited staff capacity at a time when demand for housing guidance continues to grow, placing low-income residents at greater risk of housing instability.

"Stable housing is the foundation of strong families and healthy communities," said Todd Tallman, CEO of Cornerstone Bank. "With state funding cuts putting essential counseling services at risk, we felt it was important to step up and support RCAP Solutions' Housing Consumer Education Center so they can continue helping Worcester County residents stay housed, informed and financially resilient."

Cornerstone Bank's contribution will help RCAP Solutions retain skilled HCEC staff so they can continue assisting individuals and families in navigating the housing market, addressing financial challenges and maintaining stable housing.

"Cornerstone Bank's support will make a meaningful difference for the individuals and families we serve," said Brian D. Scales, President & CEO of RCAP Solutions. "This funding strengthens our Housing Consumer Education Center's ability to provide essential counseling and guidance at a time when many in our community are facing growing challenges. We are deeply grateful for Cornerstone Bank's commitment to helping local families find stability and a path forward."

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OBITUARY

Rear Admiral Francis W. Lacroix, United States Navy (Retired) , 79



RADM Francis William Lacroix, USN (Ret.) passed away peacefully at age 79 on January 14, 2026, in Punta Gorda, Florida. A native of Spencer, Massachusetts and the second eldest of nine children born to Albert Ronald Lacroix and Marie (Berthiaume) Lacroix, he was a 1963 magna cum laude graduate of Assumption Preparatory School in Worcester, Massachusetts. He then entered the NROTC program at The Ohio State University where he studied physics and French. After graduation in 1967, he married his “lovely prep school sweetheart,” Maryellen Donelan. He then entered the Navy’s nuclear propulsion training pro-

gram where he completed his post-graduate studies in nuclear engineering. He served in the Navy for 35 years and in the nuclear submarine service for over 20 years. In addition to making many undersea deployments on several boats, he supervised the refueling and construction of nuclear submarines and was a member of the nuclear propulsion examining board (NPEB) which was responsible for monitoring the nation’s nuclear Navy for safe operation. He eventually commanded the nuclear attack submarines USS Jacksonville and USS Dallas, then a squadron of seven nuclear attack submarines during which time he also led submarine tactical development for the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets. While in the Navy, he was awarded a fellowship to study

Defense Economics at the RAND Corporation, a think tank in California, after which he served as head of the Navy’s Program Development branch in Washington, D.C. In 1991, he was promoted to Rear Admiral. He then attended the J.F.K. School of Government at Harvard University as a Senior National Security Fellow. As an admiral, he first served as the Director of

the Department of the Navy’s multi-billion-dollar Navy and Marine Corps Manpower and Operations budgets. Next, he was assigned to the Joint Staff as Deputy Director for Force Structure and Resources (J-8). Here he led several major defense reviews including those affecting the reduction/reorganization of U.S. military forces after the Cold War and the post-Desert Storm review of national and combat intelligence needs and capabilities.

In 1993, he was promoted to Rear Admiral (upper half) and advanced to be the Director (J-8) where he became the principal budget and military acquisition advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In November of 1995, he was selected for promotion to Vice Admiral and assigned to a Fleet Command. Medical circumstances ended his sea-going career. While on active duty he received many individual and unit awards including the Legion of Merit (4), the Defense Distinguished Service Medal (2), and the Navy and Defense Expeditionary medals, the Battle Efficiency “E”, the Navy and Meritorious Unit Commendations and several others. He retired on January 1, 2002.

Following retirement from the Navy, he first became Executive Vice President and Director of Studies and Analysis for the Engineering Division of Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) in McLean, Virginia. He then spent several years as a Senior National Security Policy Analyst at RAND Corporation. He was a lifetime member of the Ohio State Alumni Association and was the 2010 Ohio State NROTC Alumni Honoree. He was also a member of the Naval Institute and the Naval War College Foundation.

In retirement, Frank continued to challenge himself intellectually by reading, studying languages, and travelling the world with his beloved wife of 58 years. One of his greatest joys was encouraging his children and grandchildren in their studies and personal endeavors. He will be remembered for his devotion to his family and friends, his dedication to the U.S. Navy and The Ohio State University, and his unwavering faith in God.

He is survived by his loving wife, Maryellen, daughter Kristen Harnisch and son-in-law David Harnisch, daughter Katherine Lacroix, grandchildren Tyler, Natalie, Ellen, Ryan and Julia, and siblings Eve-Marie Lacroix (Joseph Hutchins) and Paulette Berthiaume (Edward Connelly) of Florida, Joseph (Susan) LaCroix, Victor (Annette) Lacroix and Charles Lacroix of Spencer, Massachusetts, Monique Lacroix Theall of New Hampshire and Marie (Michael) Collins of Maryland. He is predeceased by his brother Vincent Lacroix, and son Matthew Lacroix, a Navy Reserve Commander and submariner.

A Memorial Mass will be held at Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church in Centerville, Massachusetts on Saturday, March 21, 2026 at 11 a.m.

The admiral will be buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery at a date to be announced.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to the Tunnel to Towers Foundation (t2t.org).



In Loving Remembrance
John Soboleski III
February 18, 1988 - February 18, 2026
Happy 38th Birthday in Heaven

Gone But Not Forgotten
We will never forget your birthday
We will never forget you
We still love you and miss you
so very much
Until we meet again
Happy Birthday in Heaven

We love and miss you so much John
Our Blue Eyed Angel
Your Loving Family and Friends

LEGALS

NOTICE OF MORTGAGEE'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE
By virtue and in execution of the Power of Sale contained in a certain mortgage given by Akyeampong Associates, LLC to New Silver Lending LLC dated January 18, 2024 and recorded with the Worcester County (Southern District) Registry of Deeds in Book 70108 at Page 82, as affected by an assignment from New Silver Lending LLC. to NS Pool LLC. dated January 23, 2024 and recorded with the Worcester County (Southern District) Registry of Deeds in Book 70229 at Page 345, of which mortgage the undersigned is the present holder by assignment, for breach of the conditions of said mortgage and for the purpose of foreclosing the same will be sold at Public Auction at 12 o'clock P.M. on the 20th day of February 2026 at 27 Maple Street in Spencer, Worcester County, Massachusetts, all and singular the premises described in said mortgage,
To wit:
Property Address is: 27 Maple Street, Spencer, MA 01562
A certain parcel of land with the buildings thereon and all the privileges and appurtenances thereto belonging situated in Spencer on the east side of Maple Street and being shown on Plan of House Lot in Spencer dated April 23, 1946 by E. A. Chamberlin, said plan recorded in Plan Book 139, Plan 4 and being more particularly bounded and described as follows: BEGINNING at the most westerly corner of the parcel herein described on the easterly line of said Maple Street; THENCE N. 40° East by said easterly line of Maple Street eighty-one (81) feet to a point at a stone wall; THENCE S. 82° East by a stone wall and land of William Forrest one hundred five (105) feet to a point at another stone wall; THENCE Southwesterly by said wall one hundred (100) feet to a point; THENCE N. 83° West continuing by said wall and part of the way eighty (80) feet to the place of beginning. BEING the same premises conveyed to the Mortgagor by deed recorded herewith.
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 five thousand dollars (\$5,000) 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 certified or bank check at Barton Gilman, LLP, One Liberty Square, 4th Floor, Boston, MA 02109 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.
NS Pool LLC
Present holder of said mortgage By its Attorneys,
Barton Gilman, LP
One Liberty Square, 4th Floor Boston, MA 02109
January 30, 2026
February 6, 2026
February 13, 2026

NOTICE OF MORTGAGEE'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE
By virtue and in execution of the Power of Sale contained in a certain mortgage given by Eva Adjoian to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for HarborOne Mortgage LLC, dated November 26, 2019 and recorded in the Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds in Book 61494, Page 1, of which mortgage the undersigned is the present holder, by assignment from: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for HarborOne Mortgage LLC, its successors and assigns to Wells Fargo Bank, N.A., recorded on December 1, 2023, in Book No. 69952, at Page 104 Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. to NewRez LLC DBA Shellpoint Mortgage Servicing, recorded on February 7, 2024, in Book No. 70172, at Page 364 for breach of the conditions of said mortgage and for the purpose of foreclosing, the same will be sold at Public Auction at 9:00 AM on March 3, 2026, on the mortgaged premises located at 132 North Brookfield Road, East Brookfield, Worcester County, Massachusetts, all and singular the premises described in said mortgage,
TO WIT:
The land in East Brookfield, Worcester County, Massachusetts, with the buildings thereon, situated on the easterly side of the State Highway leading to North Brookfield and bounded and described as follows:
BEGINNING at a point in the easterly line of said State Highway at land now or formerly of one Snay;
THENCE northeasterly by said Snay land 162.25 feet to land of the North Brookfield Railroad Company;
THENCE northwesterly by said railroad land 77.35 feet to land now or formerly of one Balchunas;
THENCE southwesterly by said Balchunas land 181.25 feet to said highway;
HENCE southeasterly by said highway 75 feet to the place of beginning. Containing about 12,881 square feet of land, and being the premises shown as Lot No. 5 on a plan of House Lots in East Brookfield, owned by Arthur Ledoux” , which said plan is recorded with the Worcester District Registry of Deeds in Plan Book 41 Plan 54.
For mortgagor’s(s’) title see deed recorded with Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds in Book 61493, Page 394.
These premises will be sold and con-

veyed 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:
Adesposit of Ten Thousand (\$10,000.00) Dollars 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 certified or bank check at Harmon Law Offices, P.C., 150 California St., Newton, Massachusetts 02458, or by mail to P.O. Box 610389, Newton Highlands, Massachusetts 02461-0389, 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. The description of the premises contained in said mortgage shall control in the event of an error in this publication.
Other terms, if any, to be announced at the sale.
NEWREZ LLC D/B/A SHELLPOINT MORTGAGE SERVICING
Present holder of said mortgage By its Attorneys,
HARMON LAW OFFICES, P.C.
150 California St.
Newton, MA 02458
(617)558-0500
28366
February 6, 2026
February 13, 2026
February 20, 2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Worcester Probate and Family Court 225 Main Street Worcester, MA 01608 (508) 831-2200 Docket No. WO26P0156EA CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION
Estate Of:
Kenneth DeVries Date of Death: 12/02/2025
To all interested persons:
A Petition for **Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Alicia Hashey of Spencer MA** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition. The Petitioner requests that:
Alicia Hashey of Spencer MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without Surety** on the bond in **unsupervised administration**.
IMPORTANT NOTICE
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your

attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: **10:00 a.m. on the return day of 03/03/2026**. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.
UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)
A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.
WITNESS, Hon. Kathryn M. Bailey, First Justice of this Court.
Date: January 30, 2026
Stephanie Fattman,
Register of Probate
February 13, 2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Worcester Probate and Family Court 225 Main Street Worcester, MA 01608 (508) 831-2200 Docket No. WO26P0279EA INFORMAL PROBATE PUBLICATION NOTICE
Estate Of:
James Arthur Pquette Also Known As: James A Paquette Date of Death: November 30, 2025
To All persons interested in the above-captioned estate, by Petition of **Lisa D Audette of Belchertown MA** a Will has been admitted to informal probate.
Lisa D Audette of Belchertown MA has been informally appointed as Personal Representative of said estate to serve without surety on the bond. The estate is being administered under informal procedure by the Personal Representative under the Massachusetts Uniform Probate Code without supervision by the Court. Inventory and accounts are not required to be filed with the Court, but interested parties are entitled to notice regarding the administration from the Personal Representative and can petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including distribution of assets and expenses of administration. Interested parties are entitled to petition the Court to institute formal proceedings and to obtain orders terminating or restricting the powers of Personal Representatives appointed under informal procedure. A copy of the Petition and Will, if any, can be obtained from the Petitioner.
February 13, 2026

The quiet comfort of familiar errands

There is a particular kind of comfort in doing the same small things the same way, week after week, year after year. It is not the sort of comfort that announces itself. It does not come with fireworks or applause. It slips in quietly, usually while you are not paying much attention, and settles somewhere between habit and gratitude.

For me, it shows up most often during errands.

Not the big ones. Not the kind that require lists, calendars, or steeling yourself for frustration. I mean the ordinary errands.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Can the free press make it to the ninth round?

To the Editor:

We are finally seeing some of the content of the Epstein files, and it is just the tip of the iceberg. Trump announced that we should go on to more important things (like ballrooms, triumphal arches, recognition of his great accomplishments as a peacemaker, and threatening of our neighbors and trade partners); and of course, ignore the thousands of times he is 'mentioned' in those Epstein files. (Will he be adding his visage to Mount Rushmore?) A substantial portion of our nation still support this morally bankrupt man. For quite a few years, I've heard all kinds of criticisms of our 'wokeness'. I think I'm getting a better understanding of that criticism. To support such a disgusting man, it helps to be asleep to the injustice and corruption he has committed for many years.

It's time to 'wake up!' How many more 'woke' individuals like the activist mother and the caring ICU nurse in Minneapolis will die before this administration is held accountable for its murderous behavior. Will our democracy and remnants of a justice department survive? Will America be 'great again?' If greatness means a greater willingness to ignore the suffering of others, the demise of our system of checks and balances, and the all too real threat of climate change already upon us, then we have become more of the problem than the answer. We sorely need a caring America that doesn't judge people by the color of their skin or the size of their bank accounts!

Increasing the size of our gross national product is not an excuse to condone or ignore our truly gross behavior. We don't need a great military might willing to serve a self-serving autocrat, or a few wealthy oligarchs who worship the golden calf, golden toilet, or whatever motivates them.

How is it that so many people can see these atrocities and still appear supportive of such behavior? There are certainly some who see the world differently and have taken the stance that this is survival of the fittest (as opposed to a perilous situation that threatens all of us and our descendants and demands that we find common ground to effectively face the threat). But there are many good, generous people who still support Donald Trump and his policies. I suspect that we are not seeing the same news. In this day of artificial intelligence, the computer search engines we interact with quickly adapt to our viewing habits and readily provide suggestions of other news that would perk our interest (and our support of their advertising clients). Every autocracy attacks a free press, and we all need to become more vigilant and find trusted sources that truly investigate, and not just push conspiracy theories or ignore critical information. I encourage you to watch live coverage of some congressional sessions if you have time, and listen to interviews available from professionals that truly know the science and the law. The "Meidas Touch Network" and "Democracy Now" include Constitutional scholars, law professors with substantial experience as prosecuting attorneys, and scholars in various fields of science, finance, history, and medicine. Donald Trump may claim to be a stable genius, deserving of a Nobel Peace Prize, but he is clearly not a source of information that deserves our trust.

Quality investigative journalism is essential to safeguarding our democracy. I fear that we will no longer be able to rely on the Washington Post to come to our rescue. Jeff Bezos, owner of both the Washington Post and Amazon, just purged his paper of an outstanding team of journalists. He is the fourth richest man in the world, and he recently chose to spend \$75 million to finance Melania Trump's documentary; so financial hardship is not a likely cause for this alarming turn of events. Is there news he wants to hide, or some favor he seeks from the Trump Administration? Careful, David, this sounds a bit like conspiracy theory. But in the battle between the free press and power-seeking billionaire oligarchs, I fear the press will not make it to the ninth round.

DAVID W. BROWN
NORTH BROOKFIELD

The ones you could almost do with your eyes closed. The trip to the grocery store where you already know which cart has the wobbly wheel. The stop at the post office where the clerk nods before you even reach the counter. The gas station where you don't have to think about which pump to use because you always pull into the same one.

In small-town Massachusetts, these errands are less about the task and more about the reassurance. They remind you that, despite everything else changing at a dizzying pace, some parts of life remain dependable.

I sometimes think about this when I am standing in line, waiting my turn, listening to the quiet hum of everyday life. Someone ahead of me is chatting with the cashier about a grandson's basketball game. Someone behind me is patiently holding a cup of coffee and pretending not to be in a hurry. No one is performing. No one is in a rush to be impressive. We are all just there, together, taking care of small necessities.

Years ago, I did not appreciate this. I wanted efficiency. I wanted things done quickly and without interruption. Conversations felt

LANTERNS ALONG MAIN STREET

By CHARLES

like obstacles. Familiarity felt dull. I mistook speed for progress and novelty for meaning.

Age has corrected that misunderstanding.

Now I notice the rhythm. I notice how often I see the same faces and how comforting that repetition can be. I notice how a brief exchange, no longer than a sentence or two, can brighten an otherwise ordinary morning. A simple "Good to see you" carries more weight than it used to.

These errands also remind me how much of community life is held together by people who rarely get any attention. The clerks, tellers, attendants, and cashiers who show up every day, learn names without trying, and quietly make things run. They are part of the architecture of our towns, as essential as sidewalks and stop signs.

When one of them is missing, you feel it immediately. The day is still functional, but something is off. A familiar note is missing from the chord.

I think my parents understood this better than I did when I was younger. They treated errands as opportunities rather than obligations. They lingered. They listened. They understood that life is not only what hap-

pens at milestones, but also what happens between them.

Now I find myself doing the same. I take the long way through the aisles. I exchange a few words even when silence would be faster. I leave with what I came for, yes, but also with a quiet sense that I am part of something ongoing and shared.

There is comfort in knowing where things are. There is comfort in knowing who will be behind the counter. There is comfort in knowing that tomorrow or next week, you will likely do it all again, and that repetition is not a failure of imagination but a sign of belonging.

In a world that constantly urges us to upgrade, optimize, and move on, these familiar errands gently suggest another approach. Stay. Notice. Appreciate. Let the ordinary be enough.

Some nights, when I drive home as the last light fades and the streetlamps come on along Main Street, I think of them as lanterns. Small points of steady light, not meant to dazzle, just meant to guide you home.

That is what these routines are, too. Lanterns along the way.

QCC business professor wins national faculty award

WORCESTER — Quinsigamond Community College Professor Jean McLean has been named a recipient of the Dale P. Parnell Distinguished Faculty Award by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). This is a national honor recognizing faculty who demonstrate passion for teaching, commitment to students and excellence in the community college mission.

McLean, who has worked at QCC for more than 30 years, was recognized for her student-centered teaching, leadership in academic innovation and advocacy for student success, both inside and outside the classroom.

"As a first-generation college student raised by a single mother who was deaf, I learned early that education is the surest path to independence. I have devoted my career to creating opportunities for students, especially those who needed someone to believe in them," said McLean.

In the classroom, McLean emphasizes real-world skills, critical thinking and confidence-building, helping students connect coursework to meaningful career and transfer outcomes. Her commitment to mentoring continues well beyond graduation, as she remains a steady source of support while students pursue careers and further education.

Beyond teaching, McLean has played a pivotal role in expanding academic and career pathways at QCC. Working with colleagues and industry partners, she helped develop new programs such as the Insurance and Logistics certificates, expanded transfer opportunities through articulation agreements with four-year institutions and secured Perkins funding to support business tutors.

McLean's leadership and service have been equally impactful. She currently serves as chair of the Academic Policy and Standards Council and has been deeply involved in college governance. She previously served eight years as vice president of the Faculty Senate, founded QCC's

chapter of the Alpha Beta Gamma Business Honor Society, and mentors new faculty members in curriculum design, assessment and student-centered teaching practices.

"Jean McLean exemplifies everything the Dale P. Parnell Distinguished Faculty Award represents," QCC President Dr. Luis

Pedraja said. "Her unwavering commitment to students, her leadership across the college and her belief in the transformative power of education have left an indelible mark on our institution and the hundreds of students she has served."

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HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATOR POSITION
STURBRIDGE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
 The Town of Sturbridge D.P.W. is accepting applications for a Heavy Equipment Operator Position. This is a full-time position. Valid Class B CDL (min) and Equipment Hydraulic Licenses 2A, 4E, and 4G are required. Effective communication and supervisory skills are required. Applicants will be reviewed on their ability to operate all DPW equipment competently, including, but not limited to, grader, loader, roadside mower, excavator, backhoe, catch basin cleaner, and street sweeper. Applicant shall have construction-related experience operating heavy equipment. See the Job Description for more information. The starting pay rate will be \$29.56/hr. Applications are available at the Sturbridge Municipal Garage, New Boston Road Extension, Sturbridge, MA, or on the Town of Sturbridge website under job opportunities. Applications will be reviewed starting on February 9, 2026. The Department is a Union shop. The Town is an Equal Opportunity Employer (EOE).

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STAND OFF

continued from page A1

negotiator, SWAT Unit, Drone Unit, K-9 Unit, as well as the State Police Air Wing Unit.

In a press conference broadcast by WCVB Channel 5 Boston, Jeff Travers, the Senior First Assistant District Attorney for the Worcester District Attorney's Office, confirmed that gunfire was exchanged resulting in the death of the suspect and the injury of one Millbury police officer.

"The suspect discharged a firearm towards police officers, striking and injuring a Millbury Police Officer who was a member of the CEMLEC SWAT team. That officer was reported to be in stable condition. Officers returned fire towards the suspect, and he is reported to be deceased," confirmed Travers.

Madison's identity was initially redacted so that next of kin could be informed but later identified by the District Attorney's

Office in a written release.

While the identity of the injured Millbury officer was eventually made public by some news outlets, the Stonebridge Press has decided not to include the officer's name in this story as the Millbury Police had yet to post any statement confirming those reports and indicated a desire to protect the privacy of the officer. The most recent update from the department on Feb. 5 stated, "The officer's injuries are non-life threatening, and he remains in good spirits as he faces a long road of recovery ahead."

Spencer Police Chief Michael Befford released a statement on the department's social media in the hours following the incident acknowledging details of the standoff and assuring locals there was no danger to the public.

"I would like to assure Spencer residents that there is no ongoing threat to public safety. I want to extend my sincere thanks to the Spencer Police officers who handled the scene, as well as

those who responded from home. I would also like to thank the many mutual aid police departments who assisted with this incident. Thank you as well to the Spencer Fire Department, the Spencer Rescue Squad, and the District Attorney's Office," the Chief wrote.

Details on a motive or the condition of the initial victim who was shot by the suspect were not included in any media releases from law enforcement or the Attorney General. However, reports from several news outlets named 28-year-old Sean Scannell as the victim.

The incident remains under investigation by detectives with the Massachusetts State Police out of the Worcester District Attorney's Office, State Police Crime Scene Services, State Police Ballistics Section, and the Spencer Police Department.

Anyone with information is encouraged to contact the Mass. State Police Detectives assigned to the Worcester County District Attorney's Office at 508-453-7536.

CULTURE

continued from page A1

ularly and is committed to listening, collaborating, and following through on its goals. Their ongoing focus, they said, is on putting words into action for the betterment of the faculty, staff, and students at Leicester Middle School.

School Committee members, along with Dr. Kustigian, the School Superintendent, thanked the students for their thoughtful presentation and praised their leadership, creativity, and dedication to making LMS a welcoming and supportive environment for all. Finally, a special thanks goes out to the parents who support their students'

achievements at LMS and encourage them to have a voice for positive change.

School Committee Chair McCance said, "'I was highly impressed by the growth mindset that was displayed by these remarkable students when they were speaking. Their commitment towards focusing on being better and doing better is admirable.'"

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Saint Joseph School Student Council puts faith into action with winter drive

WEBSTER — At Saint Joseph School, Student Council is designed to help students become thoughtful leaders who serve their community. Elected annually by their peers, Student Council members represent the voice of the student body and support school life through outreach projects, student-led initiatives, spirit activities, buddy programs, and school dances. The goal is not only to build leadership skills, but

also to form students who understand that leadership includes responsibility and service. Student Council members are guided by Beth Boudreau, Principal, Mary Ann Weaver, Teacher Moderator, and Rev. Richard Polek, Pastor and Headmaster. That mission was especially visible when the Student Council partnered with the Webster Police Department for its annual

coat, hat, and glove drive. With support from school families, the Council collected 40 coats, 48 hats, 36 scarves, and 90 pairs of gloves, making it the most successful drive the school has held to date. Students presented the donations to Webster Police Chief Michael Shaw. The items will be distributed through the Webster-Dudley Food Share to help local families stay warm during the winter months.

School leaders noted that the drive's success reflects both the generosity of fami-

lies and the commitment of students who organize and lead service projects that benefit others.



Courtesy Student Council Officers from Saint Joseph School present donated coats, hats, scarves, and gloves to Webster Police Chief Michael Shaw. The items will be distributed through the Webster-Dudley Food Share.

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