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Thursday-Friday, November 20-21, 2025

U14 Charlton-Dudley Rams Cheer team heads to AYC Nationals after dominant season

CHARLTON — The U14 Charlton-Dudley Rams cheer team is officially headed to the American Youth Cheer (AYC) National Championships in Orlando, Florida, after an outstanding competition season that saw them consistently place among the best teams in the region.

To earn their coveted nationals bid, the team needed to place in the top three at three separate competitions.

These girls only have 2 minutes and 30 seconds at each event to prove themselves or see their season come to an end.

Their journey began in October at the Central Massachusetts Locals Competition, where they placed 2nd, securing their spot at the next level. They then went on to the Massachusetts State Competition, where they delivered a standout performance and earned the



Charlton receives grant to launch sidewalk improvement project

BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT

CHARLTON — Charlton's longstanding mission to enhance sidewalk access to its town center got a big boost courtesy of the State's HousingWorks Infrastructure Program (HWIP) that will allow the town to proceed with project engineering.

The \$300,000 grant will include surveys and engineering for future construction of sidewalks that will connect Main Street to North Main Street and Route 20 in Charlton, as well as to Maynard Field, essentially creating enhanced accessibility to Charlton's town center.

Charlton Town Administrator Andrew Golas explained that the purpose of the project is to create a better pedestrian network to connect existing and future housing to the businesses and resources along Main Street. The grant money will allow Charlton to produce a plan for development that will serve as the guideline for estimated costs and the extent of the new sidewalk.

"We are utilizing funds provided by Amazon in the

Community Partnership Agreement as a required match for this funding. Overall, we hope to use the development of the engineering plans to apply for future development grants that may be available to complete the project," Golas said in email correspondence with the Villager.

The area along the projected route includes the Charlton Town Hall, Charlton Public Library, the town green, several sports fields, a skate park, the Charlton Grange, and numerous businesses. The goal is not only to increase accessibility, but also to improve pedestrian safety.

Golas explained that the engineering phase of the project will take roughly nine months to a year, which he hopes will allow the town to apply for additional construction funding once the scope of work is complete. The town will continue to leverage available Amazon funds from the Community Partnership Agreement to complete the construction of the project. Officials have yet to develop a full cost estimate for the initiative.

title of State Champions, placing 1st overall. Most recently, on Nov. 8, the U14 Rams competed at Regionals, once again rising to the occasion and finishing 2nd in New England, officially punching their ticket to Nationals.

The U14 team is made up of 31 dedicated cheerleaders from Charlton and Dudley who have been training together since July. Over months of practices, conditioning, and choreography, they have sharpened their skills, strengthened their bonds as teammates, and demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to their sport.

"We are incredibly proud of this U14 team," said Erika Lundy, Charlton-Dudley Rams Cheer Program Director. "They have shown grit, resilience, and heart every step of the way. To qualify for AYC Nationals is an amazing accomplishment, but what makes me most proud is how they support one another, push through challenges, and represent our community with such sportsmanship and pride."

With Nationals quickly approaching, the team is rapidly fundraising to help cover travel and competition expenses for the athletes and their families. The team has just two weeks to raise the necessary funds to ensure that every cheerleader who earned this opportunity is able to attend.

Community members, local businesses, and supporters who are interested in contributing to the Rams' Nationals journey are encouraged to reach out.

To support the U14 Charlton-Dudley Rams Cheer Team, please contact Erika Lundy, Charlton-Dudley Rams Cheer Program Director, at elundy11@live.com.

Southbridge Gateway Players Theatre, in conjunction with Elm Street Congregational Church, are hosting auditions for "Godspell." Written, conceived and originally Directed by John-Michael Tebelak. Music and Lyrics by Stephen Schwartz. Auditions will be held on Jan. 4 & 5 at 6 p.m. in the church sanctuary at Elm Street Congregational Church, 61 Elm St., Southbridge.

Actors should be prepared to sing a song from the show. Performance dates are March 20 & 21 at 7 p.m., and March 22 at 2 p.m. Rehearsals will be held on Sunday and Wednesdays beginning January 11th. Presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). The cast consists of adults ages 18 and up. Directed by Lynn Boucher, produced by Lou-Ellen Corkum, and Music Director is Chris Rubenacker. For more information, please contact Gateway at 508-764-4531.

Prepare ye for the time-

less tale of friendship, loyalty and love based on the Gospel According to St. Matthew. A small group of people help Jesus Christ tell different parables by using a wide variety of games, storytelling techniques and hefty doses of comic timing. An eclectic blend of songs, ranging in style from pop to vaudeville, is employed as the story of Jesus' life dances across the stage. Dissolving hauntingly into the Last Supper and the Crucifixion, Jesus' messages of kindness, tolerance and

love come vibrantly to life. Characters: Jesus Charismatic and high energy, yet gentle and loving. He is the deceptively calm leader of the troupe. He is eventually betrayed by Judas and persecuted. Gender: male, Age: 18 to 30, Vocal range top: G5, Vocal range bottom: A3 John The Baptist / Judas He possesses the attributes of two Biblical figures: he is both Jesus' lieutenant and most ardent disciple, and also the doubter who begins to question and rebel. Like Jesus, he is also charismatic, but in an overt revolutionary way. Handsome and masculine with a subtle undertone of sexuality. Gender: male, Age: 18 to 35, Vocal range top: G5, Vocal range bottom: A3 Ensemble Soloists, featured actors, and others, 8-10 performers, all genders.

Gateway Players announce auditions for "Godspell"

Bethlehem Lutheran Church supports homeless with prayer vigil, Sleep Out

STURBRIDGE — The chill was palpable, the rain steady, but the warmth of purpose was stronger. On a cold Friday night, Nov. 7, Bethlehem Lutheran Church hosted two powerful events: a Prayer Vigil for the homeless followed by the Sleep Out for Homelessness.

"I slept out last night to raise awareness of homelessness in our community and also to support St. Luke's Guesthouse, which does such great work in Southbridge," shared Sturbridge resident, Heather Miranda.

Scout Troop 338 also learned about how those experiencing homelessness live by spending the night in the rain on the Charlton green. The cold temperatures and steady rain did not stop them from learning from their experience, hope-



fully gaining a better understanding of how some of their neighbors and friends have to survive.

St. Luke's Guesthouse, a temporary shelter in Southbridge operating since 2013, is a true beacon of hope. We are a family shelter, offering people a safe place to live for an extended time. While they live there, they have more than a roof and paid

utilities. They have case management services, provided by our case manager Brittany, that help guests save money for a place of their own, gain financial literacy in a safe and substance-free facility. For our critical work to continue, the support of the community is vital, just as Troop 338 felt on their cold night out.

The Week of Solidarity

showcased our community's heart in action. Businesses stepped forward with monetary donations, including North Brookfield Savings Bank, Southbridge Credit Union, Southbridge Lions Club, Rotary Club of Southbridge, RBC, Machado Consulting, and Healy and Healy. Additionally, local restaurants turned fellowship into funding! Honest Town Eats and Metro Bistro in Southbridge, along with UNO Pizzeria and Panera Bread in Sturbridge, hosted "Dining Out" events. Non-profit partners, like Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Sturbridge, provided the space, and YMCA Camp Woodstock provided a much-needed hot breakfast. This movement was deeply personal, with community members like Tamsin Lucy inspiring donations

through personal platforms, and perfectly summing up the spirit of the event by simply stating "Sleeping out just makes sense."

On behalf of the present and future guests of St. Luke's Guesthouse, thank you for taking the time to learn, raise awareness, and provide support to those experiencing homelessness!

If reading this article has moved you, your involvement is still needed! Consider joining this critical community effort by following St. Luke's Guesthouse on social media and exploring our Web site, friendsofstlukes.org. Your financial contribution to this wonderful mission is deeply appreciated and directly supports a family's journey toward stability and a safe place to spend the night.

Holiday makes for early deadlines

Due to the Thanksgiving holiday, the submission deadline for any press releases and letters to the Editor intended for publication in our Nov. 28 will be Thursday, Nov. 20 at 10 a.m. Submissions can be e-mailed to news@stonebridgepress.news.

The staff wishes our readers a safe and happy Thanksgiving.

Gateway Players hosting auditions for “Remedial”

SOUTHBIDGE — Gateway Players Theatre in Southbridge is hosting auditions for "Remedial," written by local playwright Jordan Miller. Auditions will be held on Dec. 14 and 15 at 6:30 p.m., with a weather date of Dec. 17 at 6:30 p.m. if needed, in Fellowship Hall at Elm Street Congregational Church, 61 Elm St., Southbridge.

Auditions will consist of cold readings from the script. Performance dates are Feb. 27 & 28 and March 6, 7 & 8. Rehearsals will be held on Monday and Wednesday nights. Character information is listed below. Directed by Jordan Miller, and Produced by Stephen Jean. For more information, please contact Gateway at 508-764-4531.

Robin is a disillusioned author who reluctantly takes a job teaching remedial English to a group of adult students. Bitter from past trauma and career setbacks, Robin initially struggles to connect with these diverse students, each of whom carries their own burdens. As the story unfolds, the classroom becomes a space for unexpected growth, where Robin and the students challenge each other’s assumptions and learn to confront their insecurities. Through humor, conflict, and shared vulnerability, "Remedial" explores themes of resilience, empathy, and the transformative power of understanding and human connection.

Character Information (Gender is flexible, except where mentioned)

ROBIN: An English professor and author. Intelligent and generally good-hearted, but jaded and aloof. About 55

DR. HAMILTON: Robin’s therapist. Friendly and helpful, but also firm when needed. Any age

ANGEL: A hard-working, streetwise parent trying to go back to college. Intelligent, but not very well educated. Upbeat and witty. Early 30's. Should be played by someone assigned female at birth.

DEVIN: A generally clueless dunce. Devin provides much of the comic relief. Early 20's

JAMIE: A young adult who was unable to have a childhood. A hard worker and a no-nonsense person. Early to mid 20's. Should be played by someone assigned male at birth

MORGAN: A decidedly average adult trying to make changes for their two children. Early 40's

CAMERON: A person reluctantly going back to school. They are unmotivated and unserious. Mid 20's to mid 30's.

BLAKE: A person with autism. Blake is very helpful and intelligent, but lacks some traditional social skills. 20's or 30's.

Community Calendar November 21-28

Friday, Nov. 21
The week starts fresh with skies of gray,

Yet plenty of happenings brighten the day.

At the Jacob Edwards Library, from 10–4,

Drop in for crafts and explore the décor.

Evening brings music at Sturbridge Senior Spot,

A 6 p.m. sing-along to warm things up a lot.

Saturday, Nov. 22
If handmade treasures bring you cheer,

Brookfield’s big event is here.

St. Christopher Church Craft Fair, a hometown delight,

Runs 9 a.m.–3 p.m., with gifts just right.

In Sturbridge, Hitchcock Academy hosts craft time at ten,

A morning of projects for kids and parents again.

Sunday, Nov. 23
Back for day two, with more to explore,

St. Christopher’s fair opens its doors once more.

From 9 a.m.–1 p.m., browse tables with care—

You might find a treasure that’s rare and fair.

Later at 2, the Southbridge Choir sings,

Filling the chapel with shimmering strings.

Monday, Nov. 24
A quiet start as the week turns slow,

But the Charlton Library Storytime begins to glow.

At 10:30 a.m., little readers

unite,
For songs, smiles, and stories bright.

Tuesday, Nov. 25
The Wales Senior Center serves lunch at noon,

A warm hearty meal in a friendly room.

Then at 5, the Brimfield Selectboard meets,

Where town talk echoes through wooden seats.

Wednesday, Nov. 26
The Thanksgiving rush begins its race,

But pause for calm at the Holland Library Space.

A crafting hour at 4 p.m. sharp,

With paper leaves shaped like a heart.

Thursday, Nov. 27 —
Thanksgiving Day

No meetings today, no programs to keep—

Only gatherings warm and laughter deep.

May kitchens glow and families stay near,

Sharing gratitude through the close of the year.

Friday, Nov. 28
The long weekend rolls in with gentle grace,

A chance to rest at your own pace.

If cabin fever starts creeping around,

The Sturbridge trails offer solid ground—

A brisk morning walk, crisp and bright,

To finish the week in peaceful light.

REAL ESTATE

Charlton
\$640,000, 47 Northside Rd, Brown, Jill G, to Hemingway, Daniel J, and Hemingway, Gianna M.

Holland
\$465,000, 35 Island Rd, Spink, Bradley T, and Spink, Patricia, to Cavanaugh, Joseph A.

\$385,000, 10 Brandon St, Bard, Kevin F, and Bard, Joelle L, to Consolati, Daniel F, and Consolati, Jeanne M.

\$369,900, 71 N Wales Rd, Catt, Christine J, to Hart, Brandon.

\$310,000, 77 Vinton Rd, Mason, Dan, and Mason, Samantha, to Harter, Mitchell.

SOUTHBRIDGE
\$450,000, 7 Quail Run, Rahimi, Maggie, to

Mohammad, Naghat.
\$420,000, 15 Bruce Ln, Marley Jr, Donald J, to Aviles, Elizabeth B.

\$412,000, 236 Charlton St, Konstantakis, Sophie, to Marrero, Angel M.

\$410,000, 314 Hamilton St, 314 Hamilton St LLC, to Hasmukhbhai, Patel D, and Hasmukhbhai, Patel C.

\$270,000, 152 Chapin St, Feeney Jr, James, to Biggins Jr, William M, and Chaves, Taylor M.

STURBRIDGE
\$600,000, 18 South Rd, Hundley, Erin H, and Krug, Richard H, to Viel, Jacob, and Viel, Madeline.

\$60,000, 30 South Rd, Sachem Capital Corp, to Posada, Lazaro V.

VILLAGER ALMANAC

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Saturday: 9 a.m.-1 p.m. (May 25 will be our last open Saturday until Labor Day) Sunday: Closed

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Tuesdays 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Friday Closed

visit www.townofcharlton.net or more information.

Individual offices may vary
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..... (508) 248-5971 or (508) 987-0326

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STURBRIDGE 508-347-6463

Weekdays 8:30 – 5:00 and Sat. 9:00 -12:00

BRIMFIELD: 413-245-3451

Weekdays: 9:00 – 4:30 and Sat. 9:00 -12:00

WALES: 413-245-9808

Weekdays 8:30 – 12:30 and 2:00 – 4:30 and
Sat. 9:00 – 12:00

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

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

• **Charlton City United Methodist**, 74 Stafford St. 248-7379, web site: CharltonCityUMC.org
Sunday worship and Children’s church 10am

• **St. Anne St. Patrick Church**, 16 Church St., Fiskdale (508) 347-7338
www.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, Saturday Vigil Mass 4:30 p.m., Sunday Mass 8 a.m., Sunday Family Mass 10 a.m., Sunday LifeTEEN Mass 5 p.m., Weekday Mass Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 8:30 a.m.

• **Wayside Church**, 6 Haggerty Road, 248-5144
• **Assemblies of God Southern New England District Headquarters**, Route 20, 248-3771, snedag.org, Office hours Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

• **Living Word Church of Charlton**, 10 Main Street - Grange building 1st Floor, Charlton, Ma 01507, Pastor Craig Bellisario, (508) 233-8349
Sunday Service 10:00am.

www.livingwordcharlton.com
info@livingwordcharlton.com

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

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

Sunday Worship 9:30 a.m.
• **Bethlehem Lutheran Church**- 345 Main Street, Sturbridge, MA 01566
Phone 508-347-7297

Web: 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

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
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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Sunday 8 a.m., 10 a.m., and noon

Weekday masses 8:30 & 8:45 a.m., St. Mary’s Church
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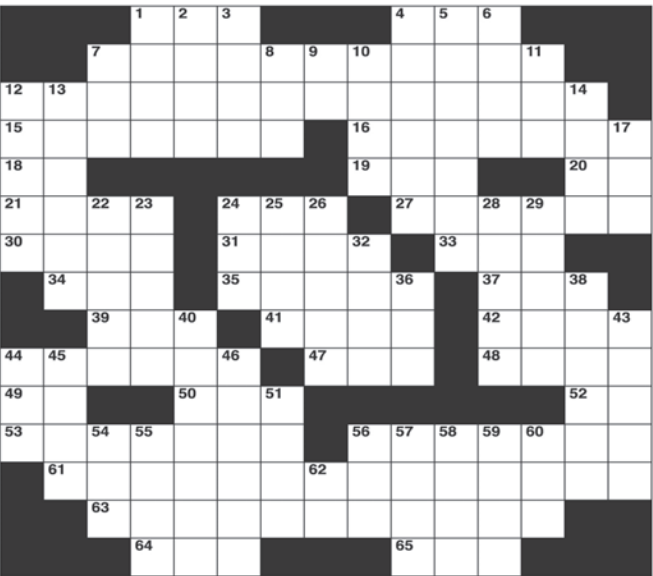
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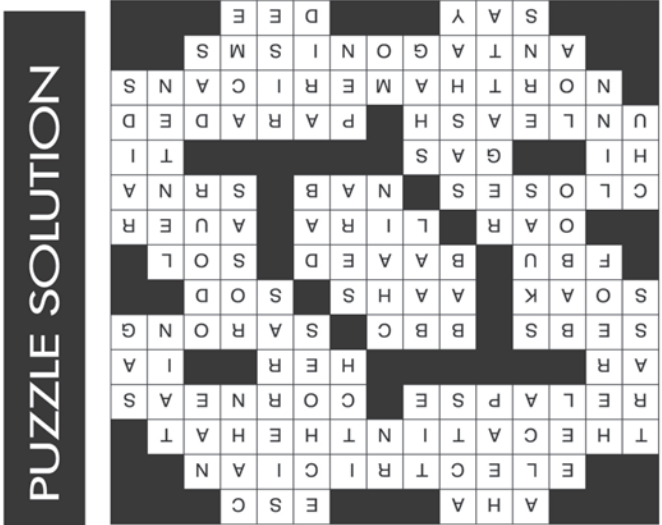


CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Expression of surprise
- 4. Keyboard key
- 7. One who works on lights
- 12. Notable children’s story
- 15. Fall back into a bad pattern
- 16. Eye parts
- 18. Atomic #18
- 19. Of she
- 20. Farm state
- 21. One point south of southeast
- 24. British media entity
- 27. Asian garment
- 30. Drench
- 31. Expressions of pleasure
- 33. Turf
- 34. UK trade union (abbr.)
- 35. Bleated
- 37. Fifth note of a major scale
- 39. Paddle
- 41. Monetary unit of Italy
- 42. American classical pianist
- 44. Shuts down for the day
- 47. Seize
- 48. Soluble ribonucleic acid
- 49. Greeting
- 50. Some cars still need it
- 52. Atomic #22
- 53. Let go
- 56. Marched in public
- 61. U.S. residents, Mexicans and Canadians
- 63. Hostilities
- 64. Speak aloud
- 65. River in NE Scotland

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Razorbill genus
- 2. Longtime Baltimore tight end
- 3. Performs on stage
- 4. Supports a sentiment
- 5. Rugged mountain ranges
- 6. Broadway songwriter Sammy
- 7. Snakelike fish
- 8. Men’s fashion accessory
- 9. Hospital worker
- 10. Something to scratch
- 11. No (Scottish)
- 12. Volcanic ash
- 13. Of this
- 14. American jazz drummer Watts
- 17. Drop down
- 22. English dialect
- 23. Predatory seabirds
- 24. Imams’ deputies
- 25. Fertility god
- 26. Fence material
- 28. Parks and DeLauro are two
- 29. Distinctive smell (Brit.)
- 32. Protein-rich liquids
- 36. Touch lightly
- 38. Season for Catholics
- 40. Boat race
- 43. Police actions
- 44. Chinese river
- 45. Waterfall (Scottish)
- 46. Walk ostentatiously
- 51. Type of carpet
- 54. Mauna __, Hawaiian volcano
- 55. Sea eagles
- 56. An enclosure for confining livestock
- 57. Dry
- 58. An increase in price or value
- 59. The highest point of something
- 60. Government lawyers
- 62. Larry and Curly’s pal



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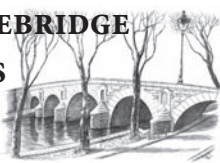
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QCC unveils Auxilium Center, empowering entrepreneurs to launch and grow

WORCESTER — Quinsigamond Community College recently celebrated the official launch of the Auxilium Center for Entrepreneurship with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. In collaboration with The Cliff & Susan Rucker Foundation and Auxilium Worcester, the center provides mentorship, workshops and support for students and alumni to launch and grow businesses.

“Community college students come here with dreams, and our job is to empower them,” said QCC President Dr. Luis Pedraja. “This center is going to provide the resources to make that happen, thanks to the support of the Rucker Foundation and the support of our community.”

QCC received an official Massachusetts state citation and certificate of achievement from the city of Worcester during the ceremony and local leaders, including Worcester Vice Chairman & Councilor-at-Large Khrystian King and Tim Murray, president and CEO of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, and Mayor Joseph Petty, praised the center as a catalyst for economic development.

“This is a great program,” said Mayor Petty. “The key to economic development here in the city is the small businesses.”

The Auxilium Center will serve as a hub for students and alumni across disciplines, offering guidance on business planning, financial literacy, and access to community networks. The initiative aims to level the playing field for those who may lack traditional support systems.

Entrepreneurs and alumni shared personal stories about launching busi-



Courtesy
Director of the Auxilium Center for Entrepreneurship at QCC Rocky Knight and QCC President Dr. Luis Pedraja (center) cutting the ribbon with local officials, QCC trustees and QCC students.

nesses and the importance of having a network of support. Harolyn Castillo, a QCC alum and founder of Verde Events, expressed the challenges of starting a new venture after 18 years of being a nurse, and how she found a network of support at the college.

“QCC is family for me. It was my first college and where I learned English. Having mentors around is very helpful,” Castillo said.

Rocky Knight, director of the Auxilium Center for Entrepreneurship at QCC, noted that there are a variety of opportunities for community members

to be involved in the center, such as hosting a workshop or providing mentorship.

Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Kathy Rentsch highlighted the center’s role in experiential learning and acknowledged QCC’s appeal that attracts a wide range of ages and backgrounds.

“We provide a unique opportunity that combines experience with academic grounding and social capital,” said Rentsch.

For more information, visit QCC. edu/auxilium.

CHRISTMAS FAIR

St Joseph’s Church
10 H Putnam Road
Charlton, MA

Saturday
December 6, 2025
9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Baked goods, food, crafters, flowers, raffles and entertainment.
10am Shepherd Hill Show Choir
12 pm. Rock Voices.

St. Christopher’s Craft Fair offers two days of food, fun & holiday shopping

BRIMFIELD — On Saturday, Nov. 22 and Sunday, Nov. 23, St. Christopher Church will hold its annual craft fair. Located at 20 Sturbridge Road (route 20) it has easy access and plenty of parking. The hours of the fair are Saturday 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. and Sunday 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Admission is free.

The craft fair offers a wide variety to choose from including unique pieces of handcrafted jewelry, primitives, Christmas decorations & ornaments, organic lotions & soaps, resins, watercolors, stained glass, pottery, sea glass, wreaths, mugs, honey products, quilted, knit & crochet items, stone and shell art, wooden décor and tie dye, all in addition to the clubs bargain tables that offer an array of goods especially for those on a tight budget. Our strolling caroler Lauren helps bring the Christmas spirit.

The kitchen is open

throughout the day and will offer a breakfast menu and a variety of sandwiches, soups, chili, chowder, meat pies, and desserts. Whole meat pies can be purchased to take home. A cookie walk on Saturday starts at 9 am. It sells out quickly so go early.

For those who like to take a chance there are raffles. The main raffle has a variety of prizes that include numerous local restaurants, themed gift baskets, a fire pit, and tickets to entertainment venues, among others. There is also a raffle comprised of unique gifts from crafters and a tree filled with lottery tickets.

The Women of Saint Christopher’s organize the fair.

Club president Cindy Skowyra says, “There are so many festivals these days with many great crafters and artisans, but I think ours is a bit special, it’s right at the beginning of the holiday season and the inviting setting pro-

vides the warmth and character of a community gathering to support local artisans, and the food is great.”

The group will also be selling winter/cemetery boxes after the Thanksgiving weekend.

Rev. Jack Brennan, pastor of St. Christopher’s, says, “I know that I can always count on this group for support and that is important for the life of our parish. They make a difference in the life of our parish. I invite everyone to come to the fair and see who we are. I also invite you to join us anytime.”

Masses are on Saturday at 6 p.m. and Sunday at 10:30 a.m. Weekday masses are Monday and Wednesday at 9 a.m. Holy Day masses vary. For more information about the fair or St. Christopher’s Church, contact the parish at 413-245-7274 or email stchrisbrimfield@gmail.com or check it out on the church’s Facebook page.

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SOUTHBRIDGE — Elm Street Congregational Church reaches out to our local community through our free monthly lunch offering.

On Wednesday, Nov. 19 from 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m., we will be serving Ham and Beans. All lunches include dessert and drinks. If you are interested in joining our volunteer group please let us know. We are all a part of helping out our community!

Elm Street Congregational Church is located at 61 Elm St., with entrances accessed from Park Street and using ramp behind Southbridge Town Hall.

Call 508-764-8058 for more information.

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Bay Path Nursing graduate’s inspiring journey

From 911 dispatcher to Unit Manager, overcoming obstacles with compassion

CHARLTON — For Lauren A. Locke of Lisbon, Conn., nursing is more than a profession—it is the fulfillment of a lifelong calling shaped by resilience, service, and unwavering compassion. After years of personal challenges, Locke made the decision to return to school in 2019, enrolling at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy, and has since forged a remarkably fast-moving, remarkable, and influential career.

Locke’s dedication to nursing has propelled her from a 911 dispatcher to a respected healthcare professional and community role model. Returning to

school in 2019 after years of personal challenges, Locke has since built a fast-advancing career and now serves as a pediatric home care nurse while preparing to enter an LPN-to-RN program.

“Nursing has been a passion and life goal of mine for as long as I can remember,” Locke said. “After years of life getting in the way and obstacles, a friend of mine convinced me to go back to school with her.”

Rapid career progression during a critical time

Locke began working as an LPN prior to graduation and quickly advanced to Unit Manager at Odd

Fellows Home of Worcester shortly after passing her NCLEX-PN. Her hiring occurred during the Massachusetts state of emergency, earning her the unique recognition of being: “First hired as LPN undergrad, underboard with Hero’s Pay under Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker Order #24.”

Her leadership and clinical skill during this unprecedented time demonstrated the resilience and commitment that have defined her professional growth.

Excellence in specialized pediatric care

Locke currently provides highly special-



Lauren Locke
Courtesy

ization administration, nebulizer therapy, chest vest and chest PT, and oral, nasal, and tracheostomy suctioning—often for medically fragile or nonverbal children.

Her prior roles include service at Villa Maria Skilled Nursing Facility and earlier leadership as an LPN Unit Manager at Odd Fellows Home. Before entering nursing, Locke spent eight years as a 911 dispatcher for American Ambulance in Norwich, CT, building critical crisis communication and emergency response skills.

Honored through the national #gameonhero program

In 2020, Locke was a proud recipient of the Yasso Game On Hero Award, part of the company’s nationwide #gameonhero Program, which recognized individuals whose compassion and service uplift their communities during difficult times. Yasso’s Experiential Marketing Associate, Taylor Hunt, shared that the company received an overwhelming number of moving hero nominations nationwide, each demonstrating extraordinary positivity and care. Among those honored by the program was Locke, then a Bay Path Practical Nursing student whose story exemplified the spirit of resilience celebrated by the initiative—caring for an 83-year-old client, assisting in making fabric masks for hospitals, caring for her grandmother, and completing her education through remote learning and Digital Clinical Experience (DCE).

and be recognized by such a great company doing great things for the healthcare system and community,” Locke said. “Such an inspiring thing to be a part of during a traumatic time.”

Locke’s own recognition through the program reflects her dedication to patient care, kindness, and community service.

Additional recognitions & certifications

Locke has also been nominated for: Feed Inc. Kindness Award, Kate Spade Hero Award, and the Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy Class of 2020 Clinical Excellence Award. Her professional development includes training and certifications in Mental Health First Aid, Dementia Care, and Stop the Bleed.

Continuing her educational journey

Despite navigating personal health obstacles, Locke is currently completing science prerequisite courses at Three Rivers Community College in preparation for an LPN-to-RN program. She continues working as a pediatric home care nurse, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to her patients and future in nursing.

“Lauren embodies the perseverance, compassion, and professionalism that define Bay Path nurses,” Gretheline Bolandrina, DHA, MSN Ed, RN, CRRN, retired Academy Director shared. “Her journey is both inspiring and deeply reflective of the impact a dedicated nurse can have on families, communities, and the healthcare system.”

A shift in tradition

All Saints Academy students express faith through Prayer Wall

WEBSTER — All Saints Academy usually marks World Drawing God Day with its namesake activity: students visually express their personal understanding of God, sharing their faith in a creative and engaging way. This year, the tradition took a meaningful turn.

Instead of sketches, students were asked to celebrate the day by writing prayers. Every student, during their religion class, composed a heartfelt prayer for an individual or a group, whether local or global. These diverse prayers will be assembled to create a "prayer wall" within the school, a physical representation of the community's collective hopes and intentions.

Students in seventh



and eighth grades shared moving, personal reflections. Their prayers encompassed a variety of causes, from addressing food insecurity and

homelessness to supporting those affected by global events like Hurricane Melissa in Jamaica.

Many students focused on personal and family life, asking God to watch over their parents or to protect single mothers working tirelessly for their children. Others looked outward with a broader spiritual message, asking God to pray for those who do not yet know or believe in Jesus Christ, or for those who have lost their faith journey.

This poignant collection of prayers sends a powerful message, demonstrating a deep sense of empathy and spiritual connection among the students as they celebrate their faith journey alongside others across the world.

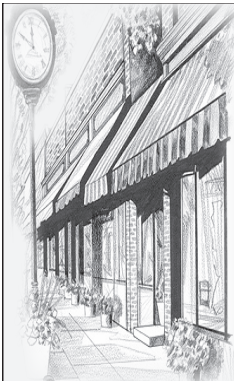
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December events at Charlton Public Library

For further details and to register for programs, please visit our Web site (charltonlibrary.org)

Additional parking is available across the street at Town Hall and at the Elementary School.

The library will be closed Dec. 25.

Movies @ The Library
All showings are on Tuesdays at 1:00 pm ONLY unless noted - Dexter Hall - no registration required.

December 2: **THE FANTASTIC FOUR: FIRST STEPS.** Forced to balance their roles as heroes with the strength of their family bond, the Fantastic Four must defend Earth from a ravenous space god called Galactus and his enigmatic Herald, Silver Surfer. 2025. Rated PG-13. 115 minutes. Starring Pedro Pascal, Vanessa Kirby, Ebon Moss-Bachrach, and Joseph Quinn.

December 9: **THE ROSES.** A tinderbox of competition and resentments underneath the façade of a picture-perfect couple is ignited when the husband's professional dreams come crashing down. 2025. Rated R. 105 minutes. Cast includes: Olivia Colman, Benedict Cumberbatch, and Kate McKinnon.

December 16: **THE NAKED GUN.** Lieutenant Frank Drebin Jr becomes a police officer like his legendary father and must save the police department from shutting down by solving a case. 2025. Rated PG-13. 85 minutes. Starring: Liam Neeson, Kevin Durand, Pamela Anderson, Liza Koshy.

December 23: **THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER.** When the notorious Herdman siblings, the worst kids in town, crash the annual Christmas pageant auditions looking for snacks, they unexpectedly land the lead roles. First-time director Grace, along with her family, must manage both the unruly children and angry townspeople, leading to chaos that ultimately reveals the real spirit of Christmas. 2024. Rated PG. 114 minutes. Featuring: Judy Greer, Lauren Graham, Elizabeth Tabish, Kirk B.R. Woller, and Kynlee Heiman.

December 30: **FREAKIER FRIDAY.** 22 years after Tess and Anna endured an identity crisis, Anna now has a daughter and a soon-to-be stepdaughter. As they navigate the challenges that come when two families merge, Tess and Anna discover that lightning might strike twice. 2025. Rated PG. 97 minutes. Starring: Lindsay Lohan, Jamie Lee Curtis, Chad Michael Murray, Mark Harmon, and Christina Vidal.

Play Games!
Mondays, December 1, 8, 15, 22, 12:30-2:00 pm - Community Meeting Room - no registration required
Dec. 1 = party games; Dec. 8 = Cribbage; Dec. 15 = Scrabble; Dec. 22 = Cribbage

Tiny Tots Storytime (ages 0-2.5)

Tuesdays, December 2, 9, 16, 10:00-10:45 am - Storytime Room

For babies and toddlers age 0- 2.5 with a caregiver. Join us for songs, fingerplays, board books, shakers, scarves, dancing, motor skills activities, and free play! Due to the high number of attendees, this is now a ticketed program. A certain number of tickets will be given to each child on a first-come-first-served basis. Once all tickets have been passed out, the program will be full. Late Arrivals: Available tickets will be given out until 5 minutes after the program has started. After that time, the program will be closed until free play time. We thank you for your understanding.

Adulting 101, Mindfully

Tuesdays, December 2 and 16, 5:00-6:00 pm - Community Meeting Room - registration required

Join us for a free, eight-week series for teens presented by Sur-thrive Wellness. Each session covers a different "Adulting" theme/topic combined with mindful practices. These sessions are best for teens aged 12-16, but older teens are welcome to attend. Please register for each session you wish to attend. December 2 topic: what are values? Introduction to the values wheel and identifying personal values, and introduction of Values SMART Goals.

December 16 topic: What is Block Scheduling & Pomodoro. What is block scheduling? Fill out a block schedule for current week. What is Pomodoro and some apps that provide Pomodoro timers; practice Pomodoro. Sur-thrive Wellness is a Holistic Accessibility Expert, specializing in working with those with disabilities, including depression, anxiety, autism spectrum, learning disabilities, and other disabilities. www.sur-thrivewellness.com

Ballroom Dance Night
Tuesday, December 2, 6:00-7:30 pm - Dexter Hall - no registration required

We're partnering with Bay Path Evening School to waltz into the holiday season in style! Join us in beautiful Dexter Hall for an enchanted evening of ballroom dancing. Everyone is welcome, come alone or bring a partner. No registration is required.

Celebrate & Create: Festive Card Design in Canva

Tuesday, December 2, 6:00-7:00 pm - Local History Room - registration required

Saturday, December 6, 1:30-2:30 pm - Local History Room - registration required

Get into the creative spirit with this hands-on workshop where we'll design beautiful, personalized festive cards using Canva! This session is perfect for all ages and skill levels—whether you're new to Canva or have some experience. Learn how to choose templates, add images and text, and customize

colors and layouts to create cards that celebrate the season in your own unique way.

Baby Storytime (0-12 months)

Wednesdays, December 3, 10, 17, 10:00-10:45 am - Storytime Room - no registration required

For infants - 12 months only. Join us for board books, songs, fingerplays, music, shakers, scarves, bubbles & free play! This is a drop-in program. No registration or ticket required.

Better Read Than Dead Book Club

Wednesday, December 3, 11:00-12:00 - Local History Room - no registration required

Do you love true crime? So do we! Join us for a monthly meet up to discuss entertaining & fascinating details about true crimes. The book will be available at the adult circulation desk one month prior to the meeting. We will be discussing *A Murder in Hollywood* by Casey Sherman.

Dementia Friendly Charlton Meeting

Wednesday, December 3, 2:30-3:30 pm, Community Meeting Room - no registration required

Threaded Together Fiber Arts Group (formerly Silver Needles Knit & Crochet Group)

Thursdays from 1:00-3:00 pm - Sibley Reading Area - no registration required

Bring your current project and relax with friends. All are welcome regardless of skill level.

Young Scientists Stem Program

Thursdays, December 4, 11, 18, 10:15-11:00 am - Storytime Room - registration required

Join us for a free in-person “Young Scientists” series facilitated by STEM Beginnings and hosted by the Charlton Public Library. Children, ages 3-6, with a parent/caregiver, will learn STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) concepts through hands-on activities, storytime, and simple experiments. Parents/ caregivers are encouraged to help their child and join in the fun. Siblings are welcome and must be supervised. Registration is required. Space is limited to 12 children, ages 3-6. Online registration is required. “Young Scientists” is sponsored by the YMCA Family & Community Partnership (YFCP), a Massachusetts Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) Grant program funded by the Department of Early Education & Care and awarded to the YMCA of Central Massachusetts.

Book Ornament Craft
Thursday, December 4, 6:00-7:30 pm - Community Meeting Room - registration required

Wednesday, December 10, 10:30 am - 12:00 pm - Community Meeting Room - registration required

As the year comes to a close we thought it would be fun to make these 'books read' ornaments. It's the perfect way to track all the books you

read this year! Enter up to 16 book titles when you register online, and we will have your book covers printed and ready for you to cut out. All supplies are provided. Registration is required. This craft is for adults and teens ages 13 and up. Registration for this event opens and closes earlier than our usual events because staff need time to prepare your book covers.

Genealogy Group
Thursday, December 4, 6:00-7:30 pm - Community Meeting Room - registration not required

The Charlton Library Genealogy Group is a friendly group of people who share an interest in genealogy. We meet monthly on the first Thursday of the month from 6:30-7:30. Meetings will alternate between general discussion topics and guest presenters. The meetings are free and open to the public.

Preschool Storytime (Ages 3-5)

Fridays, December 5, 12, 19, 10:00-10:45 am - Storytime Room

For ages 3-5. Join us for stories, songs, fingerplays, scarves, activities, crafts, and free play! This is a TICKETED program. A certain number of tickets will be available for each child on a first-come, first-served basis. Once all tickets have been passed out, the program is full. Late Arrivals: Available tickets will be given out until 5 minutes after the program has started. After that time, the program will be closed until free-play begins. We thank you for your understanding.

Critical Thinking Discussion Group - the intro and Chapters 1-6 of *This View of Life* by David Sloan Wilson.

Friday, December 5, 1:00-2:00 pm - Sibley Reading Area - no registration required

No experience with critical thinking discussion groups is necessary. Books/materials are available for checkout one month prior to discussion. Questions? Email saga3@charter.net.

Lego Club
Friday, December 5, 3:30-4:30 pm - Storytime Room - no registration required

LEGO Club encourages children to learn while having fun! Creativity, problem-solving, and teamwork are some of the skills that "playing" with LEGOS can teach children. Join us on the first Friday of each month to complete a LEGO challenge. All LEGO's will be provided. Try out the Lego Challenge, or create your own design! Bring your friends! This is a drop-in program recommended for ages 5 - 10.

Drop-in Tech Help - Local History Room - no registration required

Saturdays, December 6, 13, & 20 from 10 am - noon

Tuesdays, December 2, 9, & 16 from 4:30 - 5:30 pm

Do you have a few quick questions about technology? Would you like to learn how to use apps like Libby or Kan-

opy? Drop in and speak with Charlton Library's Digital Skills Instructor and get the dedicated support you need. If you will need more than 15 minutes of tech help, please make a one-on-one appointment in person at the library, online, or by calling 508-248-0452. We cannot assist with setting up a new device; fixing/restoring/repairing a broken or infected device, app, or email account; entering sensitive information for you (e.g. credit card information, social security number, online banking, etc.); keyboarding, typing, or proofreading documents. We cannot provide medical, legal, and business advice or opinions.

One-on-One Tech Help - Local History Room - registration required

Thursdays at 4:30, 5:30, or 6:30 pm (No session on Dec. 25th)

Tuesday, December 23 at 4:30, 5:30, or 6:30 pm

Do you have a more complicated question than we can cover during Drop-in Tech Help? Would you like to learn some basic email or internet skills? Make a one-on-one appointment with the Charlton Library's Digital Skills Instructor and get up to 60 minutes of dedicated support. Please make a one-on-one appointment in person at the library, online, or by calling 508-248-0452. We cannot assist with setting up a new device; fixing/restoring/repairing a broken or infected device, app, or email account; entering sensitive information for you (e.g. credit card information, social security number, online banking, etc.); keyboarding, typing, or proofreading documents. We cannot provide medical, legal, and business advice or opinions.

Open Session with Jack-Jack the Therapy Dog

Monday, December 8, 4:00-4:30 pm - Storytime Room - no registration required

This is an open session to visit with our Therapy Dog, Jack-Jack. Jack-Jack's breed is Coton de Tulear, and he is a licensed therapy dog. Registration is not required. All ages are welcome! (If you are interested in having a private visit with Jack-Jack for a reading session or any other reason, please register for one of our Private Visit sessions.)

Friends of Charlton Public Library

Tuesday, December 9, 3:30-4:45 - Community Meeting Room

The monthly meeting of the Friends of Charlton Public Library. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Cookie Swap
Tuesday, December 9, 6:00-7:30 pm - Community Meeting Room - registration required

Let's get ready for the holiday season with some sweet treats! Participants in the cookie swap will bake seven dozen of their favorite type of cookie - some to enjoy during the swap and others to pass out for later! Participants are asked to bring 14 loose cookies to sample

during the program and 14 packages of 5 cookies to hand out to others. At the end of the night you will have an assortment of delicious cookies to share with your guests this holiday season! Be sure to tell us what type of cookie you are making when you register, so we can ensure a wide variety. For adults and teens ages 13 and up. This class is limited to 15 participants. Note: This is a potluck event; neither the food nor the facilities have been inspected by the state or by a local health agency.

Intro to IndieFlix & Great Courses

Tuesday, December 9 from 6:00-7:00 pm - Local History Room - registration required

Saturday, December 13 from 1:30-2:30 pm - Local History Room - registration required

IndieFlix is a streaming platform that offers a diverse collection of independent films, documentaries, television series, and shorts from around the world. Designed to spotlight creative storytelling and underrepresented voices, IndieFlix connects viewers with thought-provoking, award-winning, and community-driven content. Whether you're interested in social issues, education, or entertainment, IndieFlix provides meaningful viewing experiences that inspire conversation, empathy, and change. The Great Courses is a streaming and educational platform that offers hundreds of video lectures taught by award-winning professors and experts from top universities and institutions. Covering a wide range of subjects—from history, science, and literature to photography, cooking, and personal development—The Great Courses lets lifelong learners explore new ideas at their own pace. With engaging visuals, expert instruction, and high-quality production, it's a trusted resource for anyone looking to expand their knowledge and curiosity.

CPL Book Discussion - The Vegetarian by Han Kang

Thursday, December 11, 6:00-7:00 pm - Community Meeting Room - no registration required

Books are available for checkout at the adult circulation desk one month prior to discussion.

CULE Yule Holiday Recital

Thursday, December 11, 6:30-7:30 pm - Sibley Reading Area - no registration required

Join us for our annual Cule Yule Holiday Recital featuring our own Charlton Ukulele League Ensemble. Come and sing along or just listen. No registration. All are welcome! Light refreshments provided by Friends of the Charlton Public Library.

Snowman Bookstack Craft

Tuesday, December 16, 6:00-7:30 pm - Dexter Hall - registration required

Wednesday, December 17, 11:00 am-12:00 pm

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BRENDAN BERUBE
EDITOR

A season of small places doing big things

Late November has a way of slowing us down. The light fades early, the fields settle into frost, and even the most hurried among us feel a tug toward quieter rhythms. In small towns, that shift is often easiest to notice in the familiar places where people gather: the church hall setting up craft tables, the library preparing its winter programs, the school staging a holiday concert. These are simple scenes, but taken together they remind us that strong communities are rarely built through grand gestures. More often, they are made sturdy by the steady work of neighbors who keep showing up.

In towns across our region, that steady work is particularly visible right now. Volunteers are organizing seasonal events, stocking food pantries ahead of the holidays, and preparing for winter assistance programs that mean the difference between struggle and stability for many households. It is easy to overlook the hours of planning and coordination behind these efforts. Yet these quiet contributions are what ensure that no one faces the season alone.

This time of year also highlights something else essential to the character of our towns: the willingness of residents to support one another through local traditions. Craft fairs, tree lightings, pie socials, library festivals—none of them happen without people deciding they’re worth continuing. And when we attend, donate, perform, or simply lend a hand folding chairs at the end of the night, we help ensure these traditions endure.

In an age when it can feel as though community life is increasingly spread thin, the resilience of these local customs matters. They give people a place to belong. They create opportunities for residents of different ages and backgrounds to share space, talk face-to-face, and remember that despite our differences, we live in the same towns and want the same things: safety, connection, opportunity, and a sense of home.

Looking ahead to winter, municipal boards will be turning toward budgets, infrastructure planning, and long-term needs. Those discussions often feel distant from the everyday moments that shape local life. But the truth is that both are part of the same story. Strong community ties complement strong public systems. One keeps us rooted; the other keeps us moving forward. The small acts—volunteering at a senior luncheon, buying a raffle ticket, showing up for a school production—are part of the same fabric as the big decisions that determine how our towns grow and adapt.

As the holiday season begins, it is worth taking stock of the community we have and the community we want to build. Not everything comes easily to small towns. But what we do have in abundance is spirit—the kind that shows itself most clearly during this season of gatherings, kindness, and shared purpose. If we continue to invest in one another, even in small ways, the road through winter becomes much brighter.

Now is a good time to pause, look around, and appreciate the strength that comes from living in a place where people care enough to give their time, their talents, and their presence. It is a season that reminds us that the greatest gifts a community has are the people who keep it going.

Letter submission policy

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

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

OPINION

Millennials and financial fraud:
Protecting yourself in a digital world

Fear of fraud is universal. Today, 77 percent of Americans are concerned about fraud and identity theft when managing finances online, according to 2025 research from Edward Jones and Morning Consult. Even more striking: 26 percent of Americans have personally experienced financial fraud.

While fraud is often associated with the elderly, millennials are among the hardest hit. Over one-fourth (28.6 percent) of millennials reported experiencing financial loss due to scams — more than any other generation, per 2024 research from PYMNTS Intelligence.

Here are common scams targeting millennials:

- Cryptocurrency – Promises of guaranteed profits or zero risk are red flags. Watch for Ponzi schemes and fake crypto launches.
- Payment apps – Watch for scammers impersonating someone you know or spoofing app emails to steal credentials.
- Online shopping – Beware of fake sites or ads selling trendy items at unrealistic prices.
- Student loan forgiveness – Scammers who offer debt relief for a fee just want your info or money.
- Government – IRS calls or texts about an unclaimed refund or an unpaid tax bill are scams. The IRS only contacts taxpayers in writing by U.S. mail.



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- Job and gig – Avoid unusually high-paying online jobs requiring upfront purchases.
- Romance – Requests for money in online relationships are a major warning sign.

Stay vigilant. Learning to spot fraud matters. Be suspicious of these warning signs: unexpected windfalls, like contests you didn’t enter; pressure to pay immediately or upfront; requests for payment via gift cards, wire transfers or crypto; or receiving a check and being asked to wire part of it back.

Also look out for spelling and grammar errors in emails and texts, fake social media profiles, requests to access your computer to “fix a problem” and unsolicited contact, especially from a bank, government agency or tech support.

Protect yourself. Some practices can help you stay safe. Use strong, unique passwords and different ones for different accounts. Use multifactor authentication (MFA) wherever possible; it can block unauthorized access. And before entering personal or financial information on a website, make sure the URL starts with https:// and shows a padlock icon. This means it’s a secure site.

If you think you’ve been scammed, don’t beat yourself up. Scammers are professionals who exploit human psychology. Anyone can fall victim. Here’s what to do:

Act quickly. Contact your bank or payment company immediately to try to stop any payments in progress. Change your passwords and usernames right away if they may have been compromised. Run an anti-virus scan on devices that might be affected.

Report the crime. File a report with the Federal Trade Commission at reportfraud.ftc.gov. For online fraud, also file a complaint with the FBI’s Internet Crime Complaint Center (ic3.gov). These agencies can provide resources and connect you with law enforcement.

Protect yourself going forward. Monitor your credit reports regularly and consider freezing your credit with the credit agencies. Learn more ways to protect yourself at consumer.ftc.gov.

The digital world offers incredible convenience but also opportunities for criminals. Stay alert and know how to respond to help protect yourself and your financial future.

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.

‘Tis the season for collecting



ANTIQUES,
COLLECTIBLES
& ESTATES
WAYNE TUISKULA

The holiday season is fast approaching, which means people are preparing to decorate. Sometimes decorations are handed down through generations. People might also reminisce about the holidays of their youth or appreciate the craftsmanship of holiday decorations made during Victorian times, leading them to seek out vintage pieces.

I’ll start with a look back at a holiday that has already passed. Many people have fond memories of dressing in costumes and trick-or-treating when they were younger. Some collectors like the nostalgia and history of Halloween. Others like the scary element, including images of jack-o-lanterns, witches, ghosts, and skeletons. Whatever the reason, Halloween is one of the most popular holidays for collectors.

Halloween collectibles can go for anywhere from a dollar to tens of thousands of dollars. Vintage postcards are among the most inexpensive collectibles and you may find some for a dollar or less. Of course,



an advanced collector may pay much more. A rare postcard signed by the artist had all the things that collectors are looking for with a witch, broom, and cauldron, mice, snake, black cat, bats, and a full moon. It sold for \$2,600 in 2022. Other items that Halloween collectors look for include figurative pieces, candy containers, vintage masks, costumes, and metal noisemakers. Older decorations made from papier mache, cardboard and crepe paper, metal, porcelain, and ceramics are all popular with collectors. Rare and unique items can even lead to bidding wars. A cast iron doorstop depicting a girl in costume holding a jack-o-lantern was said to be one of four known to exist. It sold for over \$34,000 in 2016.

Moving ahead on the calen-

dar, Abraham Lincoln’s October 3, 1863, proclamation declared the last Thursday of November to be a day of national Thanksgiving. In 1941, Franklin Delano Roosevelt made the fourth Thursday of November a federal holiday. Despite its history, Thanksgiving collectibles aren’t as popular as those of other holidays. However, a turn of the century skittles game with cast iron wheels in the shape of a Thanksgiving turkey sold for over \$2,600 in 2013.

Christmas collectibles are so popular that there is a collectors group called “the Golden Glow of Christmas past.” Like Halloween, there are a wide variety of Christmas collectibles. Some items on the Golden Glow of Christmas Past website include “antique glass and spun cotton

ornaments, Belsnickle figures, and vintage lights like bubble lights and blow molds.” Vintage and antique Christmas figures and aluminum trees with color wheels are also sought after. We’ve sold ornaments that have brought strong prices. Sixteen clip-on birds that went on a Christmas tree brought \$480, nine glass Santa and elf ornaments sold for over \$500, and 12 other figural ornaments went for over \$600 in one of our auctions last year. Of course, older and rarer pieces can bring some huge prices. A German made nodding Father Christmas store display from the turn of the century reached \$28,000 at an auction house in 2017. That definitely brought both the buyer and seller some Christmas cheer.

Our single-collector Civil War auction will be taking place later this month. Following that, we’ll have a major auction with fine jewelry, sterling silver, art, and other antiques and collectibles. Please visit our Web site, <https://centralmassauctions.com>, for links to upcoming events.

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

Lanterns Along Main Street

There is something about small-town Massachusetts that encourages a person to slow down, even when they hadn’t planned to. You can be in the middle of an ordinary errand—a stop at the hardware store, a walk to the post office, a loaf of bread from the market—and suddenly you catch a moment that makes you pause. A porch flag stirring in the breeze. The smell of woodsmoke from a chimney. Two neighbors comparing notes on their tomato plants as if they’re discussing national policy. Life settles into a gentler rhythm when you let it.

Not long ago, while waiting at a stoplight, I saw a teenager jog across the crosswalk. Halfway through, he stopped to pick up a mitten someone had dropped and set it neatly on the railing where it could be found. He didn’t look around to

see if anyone noticed. He wasn’t performing kindness; he was practicing it. The light turned green, and traffic moved on, but the gesture stayed with me far longer than the delay.

These small courtesies are one of the things that define towns with real Main Streets. They’re places where errands happen on foot, conversations happen by accident, and people notice what’s around them because life isn’t rushing past at 55 miles an hour. That slower pace doesn’t mean people have less to do. It simply means they don’t mind taking a moment to do it well.

I’ve always believed that kindness grows best in places where people expect to see each other again. In small towns, anonymity is limited. If you cut

LANTERNS
ALONG
MAIN
STREET
By CHIPPY

someone off in traffic, you may find yourself behind them in line at the bakery. If you hold the door for someone juggling packages, you might see them again at the town meeting.

That kind of continuity creates a gentle accountability, the sort that nudges us toward our better selves.

Much of the kindness I see around here is practical rather than poetic. I once watched two strangers push a stalled car out of an intersection before anyone behind them honked. I saw someone sprint after a receipt whisked away by the wind. And once, I passed a man kneeling on the sidewalk helping a child fix a slipped bicycle chain while the child’s mother looked on with exhausted relief. None of these moments were dramatic.

Yet each one was a reminder that goodwill doesn’t always require a spotlight.

Patience plays a part, too. People here wait an extra moment when someone is counting out coins. They give space to a driver trying to back out of a tight spot. They don’t mutter when the person ahead at the counter is sorting through envelopes. These gestures may seem small, but they make daily life feel lighter.

My grandfather used to say that a community shows its character in the quiet hours. I think he was right. The kindness you see in small-town Massachusetts isn’t flashy. It’s steady. It’s intentional. And it adds up.

This week, if you find a chance to brighten someone’s day—even briefly—take it. With enough of those moments, Main Street glows a little brighter for everyone.

Create your own winter containers



GARDEN
MOMENTS
.....
MELINDA
MYERS

Add a bit of seasonal beauty to your front steps, window boxes, and other outdoor spaces with winter containers. Fill them with greenery, berries, cones, baubles and more. You'll find many of these items in your own backyard and more at your favorite garden retailer.

Collect a few evergreen stems, interesting seedheads and pods, colorful stems, and fruit and berry covered branches from your landscape. Plants you enjoy in the winter garden are good candidates to include.

Many native plants make excellent additions to winter containers. Include berry-laden stems of plants like winterberry, dried flowers of smooth hydrangea, colorful stems of red twig dogwood, branches of paper bark birches and fruit from native crabapples, hawthorns and roses.

Collect a few evergreen cones and harvest some stems topped with seedheads and pods from gardens and native plantings. Add some airy texture and motion to your winter containers with native and ornamental grasses. Leave them in their natural state or add some paint and glitter for a bit of bling.

Do not include invasive plants like phragmites, teasel and oriental bittersweet. These will drop seeds in your landscape and soon become a problem in your gardens and surrounding natural spaces.

Convert one or two of your summer or fall containers into a winter display or start with an empty planter. Make sure the container you select can tolerate winter weather. Concrete, iron, metal, wood and fiberglass containers are best suited for year-round use.



Winter containers filled with greenery, colorful stems, cones, berries and more can brighten the landscape all winter long.

Even plastic pots will last for a few years when left outside and kept safe from damage by snow shovels and snow blowers.

Make sure the pot has drainage holes to prevent waterlogged soil and water from overflowing the pot. Fill the container, up to an inch below the rim, with a well-drained potting mix, sand or topsoil. The soil helps hold the greenery, twigs and other materials in place and adds weight to keep the pot upright throughout the winter. Add a rock to the bottom of lightweight containers to prevent them from blowing over in the wind.

Use a mix of evergreens to provide a variety of textures, various shades of green and a backdrop for the items.

Pine, spruce, arborvitae, boxwood and junipers may be growing in your landscape and most of these are available at garden centers. Spruce tips make it easy to create vertical accents in your containers. Select fresh greenery with pliable branches and firmly attached needles. Secure the stems by placing them at least four inches into the soil.

Next, add the other materials you purchased or collected from your landscape. Create vertical interest with colorful and fruit-laden stems and branches. Tuck in seedheads, pods, cones and colorful branches for added interest throughout the arrangement. Depending on your style, add artificial materials such as ribbon and outdoor ornaments. It's your opportunity to be creative.

Water thoroughly to remove air pockets and lock your ingredients in place. Keep the soil moist until the potting mix freezes to extend the beauty of your winter arrangement. If possible, set your planter in a sheltered location out of drying winter winds and sunlight to keep it looking good even longer.

Once your container is complete, it's time to relax and enjoy your favorite winter activities and celebrations.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including the *Midwest Gardener's Handbook, 2nd Edition* and *Small Space Gardening*. She hosts *The Great Courses* "How to Grow Anything" streaming courses and the nationally syndicated *Melinda's Garden Moment* radio program. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for *Birds & Blooms* magazine and her Web site is www.MelindaMyers.com.

Cornerstone Bank kicks off annual toy drive to benefit local children

WORCESTER — Cornerstone Bank is once again inviting the community to join in the spirit of giving with its annual toy drive, running now through Saturday, Dec. 6. All Cornerstone Bank branch locations are collecting new, unwrapped toys to benefit local children in need this holiday season.

Since its founding in 2017, Cornerstone has proudly partnered with local charities to brighten the holidays for families in its communities. This year, all branches except the Southbridge location will donate collected toys to Planting the Seed Foundation, a Worcester-based nonprofit that supports underprivileged children and families. The Southbridge Branch will continue its long-standing tradition of supporting the Cops 'N' Kids Toy Drive, a local program that has received donations from Cornerstone Bank for more than five years.

"Our Annual Toy Drive is one of our favorite traditions," said Corner-

stone Bank CEO Todd Tallman. "It's inspiring to see our customers, employees and neighbors come together to make the holidays brighter for local children. These donations represent more than just gifts; they reflect the care and generosity that make our communities so special."

Unwrapped toys for children of all ages can be dropped off at any Cornerstone Bank branch during regular business hours through Saturday, Dec. 6.

To find a list of Cornerstone Bank locations, please visit cornerstonebank.com/locations.

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 commu-

nity-based banking model enables a unique ability to deliver outstanding service, with a personal touch. Cornerstone, which is a subsidiary of PeoplesBankCorp, MHC, operating independently under its own name and brand, provides the highest level of service and expertise for individuals, businesses, and community organizations with branch locations throughout Central Massachusetts. Cornerstone works to connect customers with opportunities through a broad range of deposit and loan products and services. Built on Trust is not just a tagline, but also one of our guiding corporate values. Whether a business or personal partnership, Cornerstone stands on the foundation that relationships are built on trust. To learn about Cornerstone Bank's personal and business banking offerings, please visit cornerstonebank.com or call 800-939-9103.

Worcester Talking Book Library presents "Channeling Rachel Carson"

WORCESTER — On Saturday, Nov. 22, at 2 p.m., the Worcester Talking Book Library will host theatrical performer and NPR storyteller Diane Edgecomb portraying Rachel Carson. Free and open to the Public, this empowering one-woman show shines light on the many ways we can find our way home to the wonder of the natural world.

From the true North of Rachel Carson's life work and the remote beauty of the Maine cottage where she wrote *Silent Spring* to channeling powerful memories of our own key nature experiences, this performance brings to life the sense of wonder Rachel wrote about so movingly at the end of her life. The ability to wonder is a sense that brings renewal and a gift from those that take us by the hand and bring us back to our love and delight in nature. Oracle-award winning author and storyteller Diane Edgecomb skillfully weaves a hauntingly beautiful tale of her own journey of poignancy, joy and light.

Rachel Carson was the founding spirit of the environmental movement. Her accessible nature writings transformed the understanding of a generation, opening eyes to the miraculous stories unfolding every moment in the living biosphere of this natural world. "The Edge of the Sea," "The Sea Around Us," and "Silent Spring" — the book that challenged the entire petrochemical industry — placed her as the foremost nature writer of her time and as a true visionary. No reservations required.

This program will take place in the Banx Meeting Room at Worcester Public Library, located at 3 Salem Sq., Worcester.

PickleballU, Cornerstone Bank offer free open play for local seniors

STURBRIDGE — PickleballU, and indoor six-court pickleball facility located in the former JC Penny's space in Sturbridge, and Cornerstone Bank have teamed up to offer seniors aged 60 and older free open play twice a week through the fall and winter months. The positive physical and social aspects of playing pickleball are well documented and many players have already taken advantage of this offering in the past few weeks.

"While pickleball may be a relatively inexpensive sport to participate in compared to say golf or skiing in terms of equipment needed and fees" notes Gary Galonek, one of the owners of PickelballU. "We certainly understand there are seniors on fixed incomes that want to participate but unable

to justify the expense."

Galonek also thanks Cornerstone for co-sponsoring these free play sessions, adding, "They are great community partners, and we appreciate having them on board for this initiative."

In addition to open play sessions, PickelballU offers instructional clinics, private lessons, numerous leagues and other spe-

cial events hosted in its 1,500-square-foot lounge. It also has a fully stocked pro-shop with all the gear you need to play the game.

These free sessions take place on Tuesdays and Thursday from noon to 1:30 p.m. For more information or to register, please visit www.PickleballU.com or call 774 304-1008.

Local students begin first semester at Lasell University

NEWTON — Marisa Harris, a student from Charlton, and Sebastian Troyse, a student from Fiskdale, began their first semester in the Fall of 2025 at Lasell University.

Saint Joseph School honors veterans through service, fundraising, and Field of Flags

WEBSTER — Saint Joseph School recently observed a meaningful Veteran's Week, combining prayer, service, and community involvement to honor those who have served our country.

In the days leading up to Veterans Day, students participated in a school-wide good deeds initiative to benefit the Disabled American Veterans (DAV). By completing extra chores at home, helping neighbors, and performing acts of kindness, students were encouraged to "earn" donations in support of veterans. The project culminated in a \$2 Patriotic Dress Down Day, where students and staff traded uniforms for red, white, and blue attire.

Together, these efforts raised more than \$500, which Saint Joseph School donated to the DAV. In gratitude, the DAV provided the school with 48 American flags. On Wednesday, Nov. 12, the school community celebrated the success of the fundraiser with a group photo in the gymnasium showcasing their patriotic outfits and school spirit.



Saint Joseph School veterans or spouses of active-duty military and their children gather after placing flags in the school's Field of Flags, a tribute honoring and remembering the service and sacrifice of all who served.

On Friday, Nov. 14, the focus turned from fundraising to visible tribute. Parents who are veterans or spouses of active-duty

Gymnasium to assemble the school's Field of Flags. Each flag placed in the ground served as a visible reminder of the courage, sacrifice, and selfless service of the men and women who have worn our nation's uniform.

As an additional sign of appreciation, military personnel in attendance were given red, white, and blue ribbons from the school. These small tokens symbolized Saint Joseph School's ongoing gratitude for the sacrifices made not only by service members themselves, but also by the families who support them.

The purpose of the Field of Flags is twofold: to honor veterans in a public and prayerful way, and to educate students about the importance of remembering and supporting those who have served. Throughout the week, teachers and staff encouraged students to reflect on the freedoms they enjoy and the responsibilities that come with them.

This Veteran's Week initiative is closely tied to Saint Joseph School's mission statement, which emphasizes Religion, Respect, and Responsibility.

- Religion: Students prayed for veterans and their families, asking God to watch over them and to bring healing to those who carry visible and invisible wounds of service.
- Respect: By learning about the experiences of veterans, students were taught to honor the dignity of each person and the sacrifices made on their behalf.
- Responsibility: Participating in the fundraiser, contributing good deeds at home, and helping to build the Field of Flags reminded students that they have an active role to play as citizens and people of faith—called to serve others, give back, and support those in need.

Through these Veteran's Week activities, Saint Joseph School not only raised funds for the Disabled American Veterans but also formed hearts and minds. The Field of Flags now standing in front of the Nowak Gymnasium serves as a powerful, daily reminder to students, families, and visitors that freedom is never free—and that gratitude must be shown not only in words, but in action.

Federated Church of Sturbridge & Fiskdale announces Holly Berry Fair vendors

STURBRIDGE — The Federated Church of Sturbridge & Fiskdale will hold its annual Holly Berry Fair on Saturday, Dec. 6 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the church's Fellowship Hall at 8 Maple St., Sturbridge.

Co-chairs Nancy Castendyk and Janet-Rae Sinanian say the annual event will feature an impressive lineup of local artists and makers offering one-of-a-kind gifts—from leather goods and alpaca items to cozy knits and seasonal décor. Shoppers can also stop by Koinonia's booth, where members of the Federated Church women's group will be selling their much-loved baked goods and homemade treats.

"It's a wonderful way to kick off the holiday season," says Castendyk. "There's always something special to discover, and it's all in support of our local artisans and community."

Featured local artisans include Penny Adams (aromatherapy), Corinn Algier



Handcrafted items like these cute reindeer will be offered at this year's Holly Berry Fair on Dec. 6.

(herbalism/salves), Charles Batterby (leather goods), Mary Bernstein (tie dye), Sandi Bostrom (handbags), Benjamin Brigham (country decor), Susan Bundeiff (stained glass), Tamara Cook (snowflake tree), Bonnie Fancy (knitted items), and Collette Gage

(alpaca items).

The fair will also feature Madison Gallipeau (crocheted items), Emma Lane (stone jewelry), Linda McManus (table runners), Missy Peters (wooden items), Julia Plasse (handbags), Mary Shaw (crocheted scarves), and Janet Sinanian (iris folded cards).

For additional information about the Holly Berry Fair or other upcoming events, please visit the Church website at sturfed.org, visit the Church's Facebook page @ FederatedChurchSturbridgeFiskdale, or contact the Church office at (774) 304-1021 or churchoffice@sturfed.org.

The Federated Church of Sturbridge & Fiskdale joyfully celebrates Christ's presence and God's grace in our lives. Members of the community are welcome and invited to join in worship on Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m. Services are also live-streamed on the church's Facebook page.

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BY BRO. JIMMY FALZONE
MAJOR GENERAL SALEM TOWNE
MASONIC LODGE

SOUTHBRIDGE — On Saturday, Nov. 1, the Major General Salem Towne Masonic Lodge (MGST) Community Outreach Program was in full swing at Big Bunny Supermarket in Southbridge. This event was a Food Drive to collect food donations for the Food Share pantry located at 446 Hamilton St. in Southbridge.

Volunteers from the MGST Masonic Lodge in Southbridge weathered the cool windy morning for five hours to collect food donations. The food share services are the towns of Southbridge, Sturbridge, Holland, Wales, Brimfield, and Charlton. Big Bunny Market was buzzing with shoppers that morning and people were very generous and supportive of the food drive.

The shoppers from Big Bunny market and people from the community dropped off food were bringing all kinds of donations. For example, a case



Left to right: Brother Chris St. Cyr, Brother Clay Tull, sitting Brother Paul Davidson, Brother Will Proper and Brother Larry Burbridge. We Master Masons thank the community for all their support.

of cereal, a case of peanut butter, several cases of canned Chef Boyardee ravioli, one gentleman stop his car in front of our booth and gave us a case of baby formula. Another lady stopped her car and gave us bags from Walmart, and so many boxes of pasta and canned goods items from big bunny shoppers. By the time the MGST Masonic Lodge members put all these single items in paper bags, along with the paper bags already full of what the shoppers have given us, we were able to collect and donate 156 bags of groceries to the food share

three pick-up trucks full of food. We also collected \$308 in cash donations thanks to the generosity of the Big Bunny shoppers. The lodge volunteers unanimously decided to take the \$308 dollars and went back into the supermarket and purchased a lot more groceries for the Southbridge Food Share Pantry. A special thank you to Big Bunny market owners Pete and Jon Cournoyer and the staff at Big Bunny for supporting their community and allowing us Master Masons to run this food drive.

The volunteers of the Southbridge Food Share

were all smiles and very, very happy to see 3 pickup trucks full of grocery bags that were collected from the food drive. Kathy Vancamp one of the volunteers from the food share, was so appreciative and grateful to see those trucks full of food collected by us Master Masons and for doing this food drive. The

way this community came together to meet our challenge we Masons made to the community, to fill 3 pick-up trucks full of food was amazing. Times are tough in this economy right now with the government shutdown and families not getting food assistance. The Food Share was very grateful to the

Major General Salem Towne Masonic Lodge of Southbridge for picking the Southbridge Food Share as part of their Community Outreach Program for this year. If you would like more information about Freemasonry, go to massfreemasonry.org to read to and to find a lodge nearest you.

Coraline Casasanto Ferro wins local competition in Lions International Peace Poster Contest



Courtesy

Coraline Casasanto Ferro's 1st place poster shows the flags of many nations being stitched into a quilt by diverse hands.



Courtesy

2nd place winner Julianna Sawiras drew the world enclosed in a peace sign surrounded by flags of many countries floating in a starry universe.

CHARLTON — Coraline Casasanto Ferro, a 6th grade student at Charlton Middle School, has taken the first step to becoming an internationally recognized artist by winning a local competition sponsored annually by The Charlton Lions Club.

Coraline's poster was among more than 600,000 entries submitted worldwide in the annual Lions International Peace Poster Contest. Lions International sponsors the program to emphasize the importance of world peace to young people everywhere.

Her poster was selected by a panel of judges from the local club (Helene Doucette, Kathy Gallant, Dana Gould, Michele Piergallini, Sue Proulx, Jim Stoddard, Rhonda Teatreault and Cynthia Young) for its originality, artistic merit and portrayal of this year's contest theme ("Together as One"). The judging was held on October 28 at the school. Crystal Logan, the school's art teacher, coordinated the contest among 6th graders.

The Charlton Lions Club President Dana Gould said he was impressed by the expression and creativity of the students at Charl-



Courtesy

Children of many races play in harmony around a colorful, giant peace sign in the 3rd place poster painted by Jessica Baxter.

ton Middle School. "It's obvious these young people have strong ideas about what peace means to them."

Coraline's poster will advance through the district, multiple district and international levels of competition. If her poster wins the international contest, she will be declared the grand prize winner and take home \$5,000. For taking first place in the Charlton contest, she received a \$50 Walmart gift card.

The panel of judges selected Julianna Sawiras as second-place winner and Jessica Baxter as third-place winner; they each received a \$25 gift card.

Lions Club President Dana Gould said he was impressed by the expression and creativity of the students at Charl-

School's 6th grade assembly on November 12 to present the winners with their certificates and

gift cards. Coraline's poster was sent on to the next level of competition.

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DISCOVER

A community built on stone — Worcester Mineral Club continues its tradition in 2025

WEBSTER — In an age when screens glow brighter than campfires and nature feels increasingly distant, it is no small triumph that the Worcester Mineral Club continues to gather people around the ancient wonders buried beneath our feet.

With the arrival of the 48th Annual Mineral, Gem, Fossil & Jewelry Show, returning Nov. 22 & 23, the club once again invites Central Massachusetts to reconnect with the earth—and with each other.

The show will take place inside the St. Joseph School’s Richard Nowak Gymnasium, at 50 Lincoln St., Webster, where colorful new signage is already reminding locals that the weekend before Thanksgiving belongs to minerals, fossils, gems, and community.

Show hours are welcoming to families and collectors alike: Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Children will be greeted with free grab bags, a tradition that has launched countless young collectors into a lifelong fascination with geology. Their excitement is matched only by the patient expertise of club members, who staff a variety of educational displays designed to explain mineral formation, fossil preservation, and the remarkable geological history of New England.

This year promises an expanded focus on lapidary teachings, giving visitors a rare chance to watch skilled cutters and polishers transform rough stone into sparkling works of art. For many, this is the moment when geology becomes personal—when a simple rock becomes a gemstone through knowledge, practice, and human creativity.

And for those who arrive with questions (and perhaps a mystery stone in hand), the beloved mineral identification table will once again be a centerpiece of the show. Visitors are encouraged to bring their own specimens from backyard gardens, hiking trails, and long-forgotten boxes in the attic. The thrill of finally naming a rock often sparks more conversation than the minerals themselves.

Of course, the vendor floor remains a highlight: rows of tables filled with crystals, fossils, jewelry, and specimens from around the world. But the show has always been more than commerce—it is a gathering of curiosity. A place where experienced collectors and first-time visitors meet over a shared appreciation for the stories locked inside every stone.

Admission is modest—\$6 for adults, \$5 for seniors and students, and free for both children 12 and under and scouts in uniform—ensuring that the event remains accessible to the entire community.

As the Worcester Mineral Club approaches nearly nine decades of existence, it stands as a reminder of something timeless: that wonder does not expire. That learning does not end. That holding a piece of the earth’s ancient past can still inspire awe in a world moving far too fast.

The minerals may be ancient, but the curiosity they spark feels forever new. And that, above all, is why this annual show continues to endure.

Thimble Pleasures Quilt Guild embraces theme of “Creating Comfort”

UPTON — In keeping with its mission statement, Thimble Pleasures Quilt Guild has chosen “Creating Comfort” for the theme of its upcoming quilt show theme. The guild members involve themselves in various outreach charity programs both locally and nationally that create comfort for others. For many years, the members have been visiting local nursing and assisted living facilities to work with the residents in designing their own lap quilts. These lap quilts are then sewn by the guild members and returned to the residents during a Reveal Party. From February to October of this year the guild made a total of 136 lap quilts for these residents and many more extra lap quilts made for residents who were not able to attend the design session.

In addition to lap quilts members also make fidget quilts that are distributed to nursing homes as well as to members’ family and friends who might need them. Placemats are also made in the spring and for the winter holidays and given to a local Senior Centers. The receiving Senior Center is done by a drawing held during a guild meeting. Chemo caps are made and donated to UMass Memorial Hospital or given to local residents who are undergoing chemo therapy and in need of these caps. Brian’s Quilts, flannel-backed small quilts made for children, are given to local police departments to carry in their cruisers to comfort a child in need due to accident, fire or family need.

Nationally, the guild participates is distributing Kennel Quilts to rescue leagues working in disaster stricken areas. Kennel Quilts are sent out to areas of our country that are rescuing animals from forest fires, earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, or blizzards. More than 50 Kennel quilts have been distributed this year to these areas.

A new project, Kitten Bags, is providing cotton drawstring bags filled kitten toys and treats and given when a kitten is adopted from the Blackstone Valley Regional Animal Shelter.

In addition to these projects the guild also donates full-sized quilts through its Comfort Quilt program. These quilts are given to those in need and to people whose story has touched our members with joy, loss, stress, illness, and in many other ways. These quilts are also donated to support groups such as the End of Life Program at Milford Regional Medical Center. Many quilts have also been sent to the Ukraine to support refugees there as well as to areas of the United States which have experienced disasters.

Examples of all these projects can be seen at the Thimble Pleasures Quilt Guild biennial quilt show on March 15 & 16 from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School in Upton. A display and demonstrations of the making of these items will also take place at the show.

Former Sturbridge resident releases novel about New England’s criminal underbelly

REGION — “The Vampires of York, Maine: A Modern Crime Story” follows the misadventures of Jerry O’Shaughnessy, journalist turned bar owner, as he gets involved in a missing girl case. In the process, he uncovers human trafficking, a neo-Nazi gang and supernatural elements in coastal Maine. Packed with history and local lore of the Seacoast, this story has deep ties to the Worcester mafia.

From the book: “What happened on this spot sent shockwaves through the frontier and into the towns. Some say this traumatizing event caused the Salem Witch Hysteria. Those who think so reason that Salem was the town where refugees from the massacre had fled, and only a few weeks later began the witch trial of Sarah Good accused because she wasn’t devout enough. People were quite scared. Life in this area was terrifying in the winter of 1692.

“Here today, we tend to feel those problems are confined to an ancient era, but in reality they were a seed that is still alive even in those with very easy means.”

The novel is currently available online and at Tidepool Bookshop on Chandler Street. Meet the author book signings are scheduled for Sunday, Dec. 7 at West Brookfield Art & Frame during the town’s White Christmas celebration beginning at 11 a.m.; and Saturday, Dec. 13 at Moon Magick Café by Chey in Southbridge from 2 to 5 p.m.

Author Jonathan Cook worked for 40 years in the restaurant industry including a stint as co-founder of Homefield Kitchen & Brewery in Sturbridge. He was a journalist for 10 years at various small papers throughout New England. He now writes fiction full time from his home in Worcester where he’s working on the prequel to “Vampires,” called “The Graverobbers of Wormtown,” set in Worcester in the 1990’s.

STURBRIDGE — Saint Anne – Saint Patrick Parish and Shrine, together with the Federated Church and Bethlehem Lutheran Church, invite the community to a Thanksgiving Ecumenical Church Service and Gathering on Tuesday, Nov. 25, at 7 p.m.

The service will be hosted by Bethlehem Lutheran Church, located at 345 Main Street, Sturbridge. The evening will be a joyful opportunity for neighbors and friends of all faith traditions to come together in gratitude, prayer, and fellowship.

“Each year, this gathering reminds us of the deep unity that exists among our churches and within our wider community,” said Fr.

Salvator Musande, Pastor of Saint Anne Saint Patrick Parish. “It is a beautiful expression of our shared faith and gratitude for God’s abundant blessings.”

Pastor Dave Cote of the Federated Church shared, “In a world that can often feel divided, coming together in thanksgiving allows us to celebrate what connects us — our shared humanity and our call to love one another.”

Pastor Dan Purtell of Bethlehem Lutheran Church added, “We are delighted to host this service and welcome everyone to join us. Giving thanks together helps us remember that gratitude is at the heart of faith, hope, and community.”

Members of Brookfield Congregational Church, Elm Street Congregational Church, and Holy Trinity Church will also be joining in this year’s celebration, further enriching the spirit of unity and thanksgiving shared among our local faith communities.

The service will include shared prayers, readings, and music from all congregations, followed by light refreshments and fellowship. A freewill offering will be collected during the service to benefit St. Luke’s Guest House in Southbridge, which provides shelter and support for those in need within our local community.

All are welcome to attend this special evening of thanksgiving and unity.

Local churches unite in Thanksgiving Ecumenical Service

Ruth Wells Center announces upcoming events

SOUTHBRIDGE — The Ruth Wells Center for the Arts, located at 111 Main St. in Southbridge, is pleased to announce upcoming events. For more information, go to website- ruthwellscenter.com, Facebook or call 508-764-3341.

2025 has been a vibrant, exciting year — monthly exhibits, workshops, festivals- something for every age. We will end the year with a birthday party- for the Ammidown Castle which is our home. On Saturday, Dec. 13, from noon-4 p.m., we will celebrate the 200th birthday of this lovely house, which serves as a backdrop for all our events. Join Ebenezer Ammidown for cake and entertainment. The choir from St. John Paul II parish will sing season favorites, joined by musicians from Southbridge

Sturbridge Affordable Housing Trust launches homeownership program with up to \$100,000 in assistance

STURBRIDGE — The Sturbridge Affordable Housing Trust is proud to announce the Sturbridge Buy Down Program, a new initiative designed to help first-time homebuyers purchase a home in Sturbridge, Massachusetts. Through this program, eligible applicants may receive up to \$100,000 to help reduce the cost of purchasing a home — making homeownership more attainable for local families and individuals.

Program Highlights:

- Up to \$100,000 in financial assistance toward your first home
- May include funds for necessary home repairs
- Homes remain affordable for future buyers through a deed restriction

Eligibility Requirements:

- Must be a first-time homebuyer
- Must meet income and asset limits
- Completion of a certified homebuyer education course is required
- Home must be used as the buyer’s primary residence

Affordable home prices range from \$360,000 to \$451,000, depending on the size and type of home. Qualified applicants will be selected through a lottery process. Applications must be submitted by the published deadline to be entered into the lottery.

Information sessions will be held on Tuesday, Dec. 2, 6-8 p.m. and Saturday, Dec. 6, 10 a.m.-noon

Sturbridge Town Hall, 308 Main St., Sturbridge

Attendance is recommended but not required.

Questions?

Call Town of Sturbridge Planning Department, 774-304-1434, for more information

Email: agriffin@sturbridge.gov

Experience the joy of the season with Federated Church Holiday Concert and Sing-Along

STURBRIDGE — The Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale will present a holiday concert and sing-along on Sunday, Nov. 30, at 3 p.m. in the church sanctuary at 8 Maple St., Sturbridge, according to Rev. David W. Cote, pastor.

The concert will feature music of the season from the Fanfare Brass Ensemble and the Sturbridge Federated Church choir, under the direction of choral director, Andrew Kosiba.



The Fanfare Brass Ensemble, established by David Neill in 2008, draws its inspiration from the acclaimed Philip Jones Brass Ensemble. The Fanfare Brass Ensemble is composed of experienced brass musicians including David Neill (Bass Trombone), Trumpet players Robert Venables, Sheldon Ross, Ken McCance, and Melissa Willis, Jean Jeffries (French Horn), Trombonists David Sporny and Charles Emery, Ernie Adams (Bass Trombone), and David Winer (Tuba).

The event is free to the public, with a voluntary goodwill offering to be collected during the performance.

For more information about the event, please visit the church website at sturfed.org or contact the church office at (774) 304-1021 or via email at churchoffice@sturfed.org.

The Federated Church of Sturbridge & Fiskdale joyfully celebrates Christ's presence and God's grace in our lives. Members of the community are welcome and invited to join in worship on Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m. Services are also live-streamed on the church's Facebook page.

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LIBRARY

continued from page A1

pm - Community Meeting Room - registration required

Join as we make this month's adult craft, a snowman bookstack! Participants will paint wooden blocks and a miniature snowman and turn them into a winter themed faux bookstack.

Intro to Craftsy
Tuesday, December 16 from 6:00-7:00 pm - Local History Room - registration required

Saturday, December 20 from 1:30-2:30 pm - Local History Room - registration required

Craftsy is an online learning platform for anyone who loves to create. It offers a wide variety of step-by-step video classes taught by expert instructors in crafts such as sewing, quilting, baking, painting, knitting, and more. Whether you're a beginner or an experienced maker, Craftsy provides the tools, tips, and inspiration to help you build new skills and bring your creative ideas to life. With on-demand access and downloadable patterns, Craftsy makes learning fun, flexible, and

easy to follow from home.

Alzheimer's Caregivers Support Group

Thursday, December 18, 6:00-7:30 pm - Community Meeting Room - no registration required

The Alzheimer's Support Network Caregiver Support Group is led by Alzheimer's Care Professionals and experienced caregivers. We offer information, resources, and strategies specific to caring for someone with Alzheimer's and other Dementias along with support for transitioning to different care settings. Co-sponsored by Tri-Valley and Charlton Public Library.

Death Cafe
Thursday, December 18, 6:00-7:30 pm - Dexter Hall - no registration required

A Death Café is a group directed discussion of death with no agenda, objectives or course of action, no set conclusions and no judgement. Death Cafés provide a safe environment to gather, eat cake, drink tea or coffee, and enjoy open-minded conversation about dying and death. It is an opportunity to share, explore and question our own perceptions of death. It's not a

bereavement session – just an open conversation about a topic that we often find taboo. You are welcome to share as much or as little as you wish. The group meets monthly on the third Thursday of the month from 6-7:30 pm in Dexter Hall. Questions? Email kwalker4@mac.com. The Death Cafe model was developed by Jon Underwood and Sue Barsky Reid, based on the ideas of Bernard Crettaz.

Gentle Flow Yoga
Saturday, December 20, 10:00-11:00 am - Dexter Hall - registration required

All Levels Welcome! Breathe, stretch, and unwind in this relaxing 60-minute yoga class. Perfect for beginners and experienced yogis alike, this class will blend gentle, mindful movement with calming breathwork and end in a deeply restful savasana. Bring a mat, water bottle and any props. (Some blocks and knee pads available). Led by Erin Anderson – RYT-200 yoga instructor and SEL facilitator. Registration is required. This program is for adults and teens ages 13 and up.

Saturday Acoustic Roots Jam-SARJ

Saturday, December 20, 12:00-1:30 - Community Meeting Room

An acoustic only music jam. Open to all 18+. Email RichatCule5632@gmail.com for more information.

Needle-Felted Melted Snowman

Tuesday, December 23, 4:00-5:00 pm - Community Meeting Room - registration required

For kids and teens, ages 8-18. (An adult helper may attend to help) Created a handmade needle-felted melted snowman! Learn how to turn wool roving into a cute winter decoration. *PLEASE NOTE:* This craft requires the use of sharp needles. Registration is required. Please register one child or teen per registration. (There will be a space to add an adult helper if applicable.)

Crafternoon
Friday, December 26, 2:30-3:30 pm - Storytime Room - registration appreciated

Drop by the Storytime Room and make a fun craft! Best for ages 5-10. Please register so we know we will have

enough supplies!

Preschool Open Play
Saturday, December 27, 10:00-11:00 am - Storytime Room - no registration required

Meet up with other children & caregivers for fun open play and socialization! Age-appropriate toys will be available to play with. For caregivers with children ages 3-5.

Hot Chocolate Paint & Sip

Monday, December 29, 10:30-11:30 am - Storytime Room - registration required

Join us for a cozy morning of painting and hot chocolate drinking! Follow along as staff provide instructions on how to create a winter themed painting. All supplies will be provided, but kiddos are asked to bring a favorite mug to enjoy their cocoa. Best for ages 8-12.

Noon Year's Eve Party with the BaNannies!

Wednesday, December 31, 11:00 am-12:00 pm - Dexter Hall - registration appreciated

Join us for a special kids' party to celebrate the New Year, featuring special guest mother-daughter

rock duo, The BaNannies! The BaNannies are a mother-daughter duo passionate about nurturing little minds through music, movement, and laughter. They offer a range of multi-sensory activities, including dancing, instrument play, puppet shows, singing, and more. We'll also have various activities and crafts! This program is best suited for children aged 0-7, but all ages are welcome! Please sign up so we know how many people to expect!

Puzzle Race
Saturday, January 3, 10:30 am - Dexter Hall - registration required

Can your team complete a jigsaw puzzle faster than your friends and neighbors? Each team will receive the same 500 piece puzzle provided by the library. The team that finishes first or completes the most before time is called wins! Adults, teens, and families with children aged 8+ are welcome to participate. Registration is required – only one person from each team should register. Teams can have up to six members. Don't have a team? Email Betsy at perryb@cwmars.org and we'll put together a team of interested folks!

LEGALS

SALE OF MOTOR VEHICLES

Under G.L. c.255 Sec.39A Notice is hereby given by Cruise Control Transportation Inc. Pursuant to the provisions of G.L. c. 255, Section 39A. that on or after November 8, 2025 at Cruise Control Transportation Inc. the following motor vehicle/s will be sold at private sale to satisfy our garage keeper's lien thereon for storage, towing charges, care and expenses of notices and sale of said vehicle:
VEHICLE MAKE: 2017 Chevrolet Equinox
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Worcester MA 01602
VEHICLE MAKE: 2014 Nissan Sentra
VIN: 3N1AB7APXEY204775
LAST REGISTERED OWNER: Thomas Maher
2 DEB RD
WOBURN MA 01801
VEHICLE MAKE: 2006 Acura TL
VIN: 19UUA66266A028268
LAST REGISTERED OWNER: Angel Ortiz Cruz
30 1/2 HACKER ST APT 2
Worcester MA 01603-2821
VEHICLE MAKE: 2004 Ford Taurus
VIN: 1FAFP53254A205030
LAST REGISTERED OWNER: Sandra M, Zadrick (203) 460-2985
410 EMAIL ST APT 209
MERIDEN CT 06450
VEHICLE MAKE: 2014 Chevrolet Sonic
VIN: 1G1JC5SH3E4241653
LAST REGISTERED OWNER: Hanlon, John J
5638 ELEUTHERA WAY
NAPLES FL 34119
VEHICLE MAKE: 1999 moped
VIN: LJ7TCA2F7RZ515647
LAST REGISTERED OWNER: Trobaugh, Jules A
15 WESTLAND ST
WORCESTER MA 01602-2128
November 24, 2025
November 31, 2025
December 7, 2025

(SEAL)
THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
LAND COURT
DEPARTMENT OF THE TRIAL COURT
Docket Number: 25 SM 003500
ORDER OF NOTICE
To:
Angela S. Chiodi f/k/a Angela Broden; Dominic Rocco, as Personal Representative of the Estate of Alan Broden a/k/a Alan Gene Broden; Dominic Rocco, Trustee of the Alan Broden Testamentary Trust; Philip W. Summers, as guardian ad litem for Alan Gene Broden

and to all persons entitled to the benefit of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, 50 U.S.C. c. 50 §3901 (et seq): Select Portfolio Servicing, Inc. claiming to have an interest in a Mortgage covering real property in Sturbridge, numbered 71 Shepard Road, given by Angela S. Chiodi f/k/a Angela Broden, Alan Broden to Bank of America, N.A., dated August 23, 2006,

and recorded in the Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds in Book 39630, Page 1, and now held by the Plaintiff by assignment, has/have filed with this court a complaint for determination of Defendant's/ Defendants' Servicemembers status. If you now are, or recently have been, in the active military service of the United States of America, then you may be entitled to the benefits of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act. If you object to a foreclosure of the above-mentioned property on that basis, then you or your attorney must file a written appearance and answer in this court at Three Pemberton Square, Boston, MA 02108 on or before December 29, 2025, or you may lose the opportunity to challenge the foreclosure on the ground of noncompliance with the Act. Witness, Gordon H. Piper, Chief Justice of this Court on November 13, 2025.
Attest:
Deborah J. Patterson
Recorder
27034
November 20, 2025

CHARLTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

In accordance with the Town of Charlton Stormwater Management Rules & Regulations, the Charlton Conservation Commission will be accepting comments on the following application:
The applicant, Victor Mourao, has submitted a Land Disturbance/ Stormwater Management Permit on November 10, 2025, for land disturbance associated with the construction of a single-family home. The project site is located at Lot 2 Hiland Road, Charlton, MA 01507, and is also known as: Parcel 1A-G-6.4. Copies of the Land Disturbance Application are available at the Charlton Conservation Commission office during business hours.
Thomas O'Malley
Chair, Charlton Conservation Commission
November 20, 2025

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Worcester Probate and Family Court
225 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01608
(508) 831-2200
Docket No. WO25P3867EA
CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION**
Estate Of:
**James L Julian
Date of Death:08/07/2025**

To all interested persons:
A Petition for **Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **James L Julian, II of Leominster MA and Thomas N Julian of Coventry RI** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition. The Petitioner requests that:

James L Julian, II of Leominster MA and Thomas N Julian of Coventry RI 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 12/09/2025.**

This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)

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

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

Date: November 06, 2025
Stephanie Fattman,
Register of Probate
November 20, 2025

TOWN OF CHARLTON Invitation for Bids #12 PROPANE

The Town of Charlton hereby invite sealed bids for the term December 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026 for #12 Propane. Specification and bid proposal forms are available at the Town of Charlton Town Hall, Selectmen's Office, 37 Main Street, Charlton, MA 01507. All bids must be in conformity with all pertinent statutes and regulations of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. All bids must be sealed and labeled **"#12 PROPANE"** and received at the Town Administrator's Office, 37 Main Street, Charlton, MA not later than 2:00 PM. on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, at which time and place, bids will be publicly opened and read. The Town reserves the right to reject any or all bids, or any part thereof; when it appears to them that it's in the best interest of the Town by doing so.
November 13, 2025
November 20, 2025

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Worcester Probate and Family Court
225 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01608
(508) 831-2200
Docket No. WO23P2829EA
CITATION ON PETITION**

FOR ORDER OF COMPLETE SETTLEMENT

Estate Of:
**Robert William Arthur
Date of Death: 03/09/2025**

A Petition for **Order of Complete Settlement** has been filed by **James A. Arthur of Concord MA** requesting that the court enter a formal Decree of Complete Settlement including the allowance of a final account , 1st and other such relief as may be requested in the Petition.

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 12/09/2025** . This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

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

Date: November 10, 2025
Stephanie Fattman,
Register of Probate
November 20, 2025

Vertical Bridge is proposing to construct a 154.0 ft Monopole telecommunications tower facility located at 90 Route 171 located approximately 1,600 feet southeast of the intersection of Woodstock Ave W/ Route 171 and Peake Brooke Road, Woodstock , Windham County, Connecticut 06281. Any interested party wishing to submit comments regarding the potential effects the proposed facility may have on any historic property may do so by sending comments to: Project 250053991 PR, EBI Consulting, 21 B Street, Burlington, MA 01803, or at (617) 715-1822 .
November 20, 2025

CHARLTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

In accordance with the Town of Charlton Stormwater Management Rules & Regulations, the Charlton Conservation Commission will be accepting comments on the following application:

The applicant, Gianfranco Ritacco, has submitted a Land Disturbance/ Stormwater Management Permit on November 5, 2025, for land disturbance associated with the construction of a single-family home.

The project site is located at 22 McIntyre Road, Charlton, MA 01507, and is also known as: Parcel 67-A-3.4. Copies of the Land Disturbance Application are available at the Charlton Conservation Commission office during business hours.
Thomas O'Malley
Chair, Charlton Conservation Commission
November 20, 2025

Host a memorable Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is a cherished holiday across much of North America. Canadians enjoy this day of gratitude, gathering and savory feasts in early October, while Americans celebrate Thanksgiving near the end of November.

According to Pew Research, 74 percent of survey respondents plan to attend Thanksgiving dinners with others, while 34 percent will host from their own homes. For those preparing to welcome guests this year, blending planning with heartwarming traditions can create a truly memorable Thanksgiving experience.

Start planning early

Menu and guest list planning can take more than two weeks, followed by a few days allotted to do some meal



prep. The New York Post reports many peo-

ple spend five hours actively cooking on Thanksgiving Day. AllRecipes.com indicates most Thanksgiving hosts spend around seven hours in the kitchen overall. By drafting a clear timeline for shopping, prep, cooking, and cleanup and delegating various tasks to others, Thanksgiving hosts can enjoy the holiday more.

Create a smart and

masterful menu

Americans consume about 46 million turkeys on Thanksgiving, according to Electro IQ. Naturally, turkey remains a focal point of Thanksgiving dinners. Many other side dishes can round out the meal, but hosts are urged to stick to familiar recipes or test new ones in advance to reduce stress. Simple, elegant offerings that are tried

and true will be well received.

Set the tone with decorating

Outfitting a home in beautiful fall decor can help create the mood for Thanksgiving. Hosts can incorporate rich, autumnal hues in browns, golds and reds. A floral centerpiece or cornucopia in fall-toned flowers is fitting. Small pumpkins or gourds outfitted

with tags can be used for name cards to help seat people at the table accordingly, separating anyone who may clash.

Foster inclusivity

Thanksgiving is about food, but it also is about warmth and connection with others. Having guests share things they are thankful for or offering a pre-meal prayer helps set a thankful tone. Pew Research Center indicates that 65 percent of Thanksgiving dinners include a prayer or a blessing.

Set aside extras

Thanksgiving may be a holiday of excess, with many holiday hosts cooking up more than everyone can possibly consume. Inviting extra people to dinner who may no longer have extended families may ensure that food will be finished; otherwise, having plenty of to-go containers at the ready enables guests to take home leftovers so they don't go to waste.

Hosting a memorable Thanksgiving holiday is about the joy of sharing moments with friends and family and enjoying delicious food.

How kids can balance school and extracurricular activities

Extracurricular activities figure prominently in the lives of modern children. While extracurricular activities like sports play and club participation have been linked to a number of positive outcomes, including improved academic performance, child development experts warn that too much time in structured activities can compromise kids' creativity and make it harder for youngsters to learn how to structure their own time.

Managing school and extracurricular activities can feel like a juggling act, and it's important that parents work with kids so youngsters learn to balance school work and afterschool pursuits. With the school year in full swing, parents and kids can work together and consider the following strategies to ensure there's sufficient balance between academics and extracurricular activities.

- Emphasize that academics come first. Extracurricular activities are undeniably important, but studies illustrate the importance of emphasizing academics over pursuits like sports. Though many parents recognize academics should be a student's top priority, youth sports and scholastic sports now require greater commitments of time than in years past, which could make it hard to prioritize academics and may even give a false impression of future outcomes. A 2025 survey of parents of young athletes found that 22 percent feel their child could play higher-level collegiate sports. Those expectations are not supported by statistics from the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), which reports that very small percentages of high school athletes go on to play at the collegiate level. For example, just 1.4 percent of male scholastic soccer players and 2.7 percent of female scholastic soccer players play division I soccer in college. While kids should not be discouraged from participating in extracurricular activities, it's important to prioritize academics and ensure kids

are afforded ample time to do their best in the classroom. Recognition of that significance can make it easier for kids and parents to avoid overscheduling and creating a situation where it's hard for students to maintain a balance that increases their likelihood of being successful.

- Identify the activities that are most important to students. Overscheduling activities is a concern, and a 2024 report from SolutionHealth noted that kids who spend more time in extracurricular activities are more likely to struggle with mental health issues like anxiety and depression. Kids may find it easier to balance school and extracurricular activities when they pare down and identify the afterschool pursuits that are most important to them.
- Work with children on time management skills. Parents can work with children and even enlist the help of coaches, scout troop leaders and others to instill time management skills in young students. Encourage young kids to use daily planners so they can stay organized. In addition, kids can keep a daily time journal that documents how they spend their time each day. After a week or two of tracking their time, parents and kids can identify ways to be more efficient. Parents also can examine time journals to look for periods when kids can get some free time, which is important for young people's development.
- Encourage kids to ask for help if they need it. Parents can emphasize that schedules need not be set in stone. Encourage kids to ask for help and offer input if the plan they develop with their parents to balance school and extracurricular activities is not working or proving too challenging.

Balance is important as kids navigate school and extracurricular activities. Parents and kids can try various strategies and remain flexible to help kids fulfill their commitments to school and afterschool activities.

Thanksgiving weekend travel tips



Thanksgiving is consistently one of the busiest travel holidays of the year. In fact, AAA indicates that, in the United States, it may be the most traveled of all the holidays, with record numbers of both drivers and air travelers. In 2024, nearly 80 million Americans were expected to travel over Thanksgiving weekend. The Wednesday before Thanksgiving is a particularly busy day on the roads, but high volumes continue throughout the weekend.

A high demand for travel during this time of year means individuals wanting to see friends or family for Thanksgiving should plan accordingly. These tips, courtesy of AAA and the Transportation Safety Administration (TSA), can make Thanksgiving travel go more smoothly.

- Book flights early. If you are able, secure flights early in the day and use personal time

off from work to fly in to a destination at the beginning of the week. The propensity for flights to be delayed or canceled increases as the day and week goes on. An early departure may increase the chances of a flight leaving on time. Also, the TSA reports that the Tuesday and Wednesday before Thanksgiving, as well as the Sunday after, are the busiest days for Thanksgiving air travel. Choosing an alternative day to fly may mean smaller crowds and less stress.

- Consider TSA PreCheck®. TSA PreCheck is a paid program that enables you to get through security lines faster. Interested parties must verify their identities through a third-party service that handles PreCheck applications, and await confirmation of approval. A TSA PreCheck membership lasts for five years. This membership offers consistent time savings at the airport with dedicat-

ed PreCheck lanes, and the benefit of keeping items like laptops and liquids in your bag.

- Consider traveling by train. If Amtrak services your destination, taking the train may be the least stressful way to travel over Thanksgiving. In addition to not having to navigate roadways or sit in traffic, you won't face security screening like you will at the airport. Once on the train, there is Wi-Fi, nice views and efficient travel. Trips booked in advance are more affordable than booking closer to the holiday.
- Pack light. Avoiding the baggage carousel can shave much time off of travel. Plus, there's no risk of luggage getting diverted or not making it to your final destination. A carry-on bag is the way to go for ease, particularly if you must get on a different flight if the original one is delayed or canceled.
- Service your car. If

road travel is planned for Thanksgiving, make sure your car is in good condition for a road trip. Be up-to-date on oil changes, make sure the tires are properly inflated and double-check your emergency preparedness kit prior to leaving. It also may be a good idea to invest in AAA benefits, which afford extra peace of mind in the event of a breakdown as well as savings on travel-related expenses, such as lodging.

- Pack your patience. In addition to your holiday essentials, it is wise to also pack some patience this Thanksgiving travel season. Leave extra time so you're not racing to your destination and can calmly contend with people also looking to get home for the holidays.

Thanksgiving means turkey and trimmings, but also millions of people traveling to give thanks alongside those they love.

Unique places for holiday shopping

Although the holiday season is a relatively brief period, it still can consume months of time in regard to preparation, shopping and hosting. According to a SWNS Digital survey of 2,000 adults in the United States, the average American spends six weeks preparing for the holiday season. Five weeks are devoted to planning presents, meals and other essentials, while an entire week is just for decorating.

Shopping for presents can consume a lot of time, especially for those who aren't quite sure what to get. Thinking outside of the typical retail box may help with inspiration, and shoppers may encounter smaller crowds and find better deals. Here are some unique places to shop to grab great holiday gifts.

- **Pharmacies:** While you're picking up your prescription or medicine



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cabinet essentials, take a spin around the store to see what else might be available. Typically, pharmacies have entire aisles dedicated to seasonal merchandise, so you might be able to find holiday decorations, gift wrap, candles, pampering items, and even food-related items and gift baskets.

- **Farmer's market:** Farmer's markets pop up in towns on set days of the week. Although plenty of farm-related produce and plants are available, these markets also attract many other small businesses. You can find craftsmen, jewelry makers, niche food sellers, and so much more.
- **School (or church) bazaar:** In an effort to raise funds for the PTA or other organizations, schools and churches often host

holiday fairs and bazaars right before the holidays. Area businesses rent table space and set up booths with an array of different products for sale. This is a great spot to grab interesting finds all under one roof. Plus, you're supporting the local community in the process.

- **Home improvement retailer:** Plenty of people will appreciate practical gifts that they can use in and around the home. A visit to a hardware store or home improvement retailer offers up aisles of essentials for the do-it-yourselfer. While new shelving for the garage or a set of flashlights may not be the most glamorous gifts, these items can come in handy.
- **Craft store:** Cater to recipients' favorite hobbies by ensuring they'll

be flush with plenty of supplies. Craft stores have a bevy of items for every interest imaginable. They're also surprisingly good places to grab deals on picture frames, housewares, food-making supplies, and decorative items.

- **Specialty food store:** Head to small specialty food stores to load up on unique items larger supermarkets might not carry. Ethnic markets may have flavorful and interesting ingredients to group together in a food basket that makes an ideal gift for transplants missing the flavors of home.
- **Before a person logs on to the internet for online shopping or heads to the nearest strip mall, he or she can explore various unique places to shop for holiday gifts.**

Budget-frendly holiday shopping tips

Holiday shopping and entertaining involve a whirlwind of activity to round out the end of the year. The holiday season also tends to be an expensive time of year. According to Capital One Shopping, the average spending for holiday travel, gifts and entertainment expenses is \$1,638. The National Retail Federation says American consumers spend an average of \$997.73 on gifts and other holiday items each Christmas.

For some people, adding an additional \$1,000 to their November or December budgets can be challenging, and many individuals seek budget-friendly solutions for their holiday celebrations. The following guidelines can help corral spending this year.

- **Set a budget** It's impossible to keep a budget if one is never established in the first place. Determine how much you can comfortably spend on gifts, travel and entertaining, as well as any other holiday expenses. Once the number is calculated, divvy up spending accordingly.
- **Plan your list**

Make a list of everything you need to purchase gifts for, along with gift ideas and estimated costs. Set a dollar amount for each individual, particularly if you will not be spending the same amount on each person. Having numbers in black and white, and comparing them to what you have allocated for gifts, will enable you to see whether you are overspending or on budget.

- **Shop early** Begin holiday shopping as early as possible, even months before the holidays arrive. Such an approach enables you to take advantage of sales as they come up. Also, you will not fall victim to impulse buys or last-minute purchases because you are under a time crunch.
- **Track spending** Utilize whatever method works for you to keep apprised of spending. It may be jotting down numbers on a piece of paper or using a budgeting app on a smartphone. Having a clear idea of what you have spent and any dollars remaining will help you keep your overall spending in line with

your budgeted amount.

- **Get coupons** Signing up for stores' loyalty programs can enable you to receive members-only coupons or digital codes to your phone or email. Compare the discounted final price with other stores' offers to make sure that you are getting the best deals. Browser extensions also can search automatically for coupons and apply them to the checkout when online shopping.
- **Use credit cards wisely** Credit cards come with various perks, many of which are points or cash back accumulated with each purchase. Utilize a card that works best for your needs, whether it's to get airline miles or score extra spending money for a particular retailer. Only charge what you can pay in full when the bill arrives; otherwise, the benefits may be negated by high interest rates.
- **Holiday spending can derail financial plans for those who do not establish a firm budget and commit to spending wisely towards the end of the year.**

Jaxen Age 6 Registration #8858

Jaxen is a happy, loving, and affectionate child who brightens every room he's in. He has a joyful personality and loves to give hugs and cuddle with those he feels close to. Jaxen finds happiness in simple pleasures—playing games, listening to music, singing, and reading interactive books that let him engage with stories in a hands-on way. Curious and full of energy, Jaxen loves to explore the world around him. He enjoys spending time outdoors, running, climbing, and discovering new adventures. The park is one of his favorite places to be, especially when he can find new challenges to climb and conquer. Jaxen is also a little songbird—he adores music and has an incredible memory for tunes. He can quickly pick up songs he hears, especially ones with catchy or repetitive rhythms, and he loves to sing along with enthusiasm and joy. When it comes to food, Jaxen enjoys classic favorites like macaroni and cheese, peanut butter and jelly, and pasta. He's also making great progress in learning to try new foods, including vegetables, as he continues to grow and explore new tastes. Jaxen thrives in environments filled with warmth, patience, and encouragement. His playful nature, curiosity, and love of connection make him a delightful child who brings smiles and laughter to everyone around him.

<https://www.mareinc.org/child/21181580426>

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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.

Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service at Bethlehem Lutheran Church

STURBRIDGE — The Sturbridge faith community will join together for an Ecumenical Service of Thanksgiving on Tuesday, Nov. 25, at 7 p.m. According to The Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale's pastor, the Rev. David W. Cote, six local churches will join together at the Bethlehem

Lutheran Church, 345 Main St., Sturbridge. Participating in this year's Thanksgiving service, in addition to congregations from the Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale and Bethlehem Lutheran Church (Sturbridge), will be congregations from the Brookfield Congregational Church

(Brookfield), the Elm Street Congregational Church (Southbridge), Holy Trinity Church (Southbridge), and St. Anne/St. Patrick Catholic Church (Fiskdale). "In a season that calls us to remember our blessings, we gather as one community of faith to give thanks," said Rev. Cote. "This service re-

minds us that, no matter which church we call home, we share a community, a hope, and plenty of reasons to be grateful." A free offering will be collected during the service for the benefit of St. Luke's Guest House, a short-term (non-emergency) shelter located at 141 Main St., Southbridge. St.

Luke's is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization offering Christian hospitality and furnished rooms to adults, single parents, and families in need of temporary shelter while they address their challenges and work toward more stable housing. Their service area in Southern Worcester County includes:

Brimfield, Brookfield, Charlton, Dudley, East Brookfield, Holland, Oxford, North Brookfield, Southbridge, Sturbridge, Wales, Warren, Webster, and West Brookfield. Attendees are also encouraged to bring non-perishable food items. All donations collected will be delivered to local food pantries.



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