

TOWN Reminder

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Schleb reveals new book cover in Author Talk

By Ben Hernandez
Staff Writer

SOUTH HADLEY – JGS Life Care Director of Business and Reiki Master Mary-Ann Schleb revealed the book cover for her upcoming personal wellness book on July 21. “Calming the Chaos” is the first book for the new author and is scheduled for a Sept. 1 release.

Inspired by the author’s work as a reiki practitioner and coach, the book promises to help people navigate through the turbulent waters of life through teaching mindfulness and de-escalation techniques. Held in the Boat-house restaurant on 1 Alford Street, the event included a raffle, an author speech and catering by on-site staff. Catering options included mac and cheese, meatballs and meat skewers.

“It started with holistic health,” Schleb said as she recalled her journey into alternative medicine. Diagnosed with severe endometriosis in 1990, the author was told she would never be able to have children.

“That really wasn’t an answer that I wanted,” Schleb said.

The diagnosis didn’t sit well with her due to her Italian ancestry and the cultural expectation to have children. She stated “it wasn’t really an option” to not have kids and how the diagnosis didn’t “work for her.” After a number of unsuccessful surgeries, her sister offered her an unlikely alternative which would change the course of her life.

“In 1994, I actually discovered holistic wellness. It was through my sister, who said ‘try reiki.’ I’m like ‘what the Hell is that?’” Schleb said as she recalled her introduction to alternative medicine. “She knew I wouldn’t go myself, so she bought me a three-pack because when you’re Italian, you never waste gifts.”

Schleb reported the session went so well, it put her condition into remission. After a doctor consultation, it was determined her condition “went away.” Convinced by the results, she threw herself

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Mary-Anne Schleb sits with the mock-up cover of her first self-help book Calming the Chaos.

Turley photos by Ben Hernandez

Healthy Incentives Program supports needy families, farmers

By Ben Hernandez
Staff Writer

GRANBY – The Healthy Incentives Program celebrated \$100 million worth of produce distributed to needy families within the region. The first national program of its kind, HIP began in the Pioneer Valley as a way to supplement SNAP benefits through connecting participants with local food. Supporters, media and state representatives flocked to Red Fire Farm to celebrate the milestone and to spread program awareness to the public.

“So, HIP is like an add-on to SNAP,” said HIP Director for the Department of Transitional Systems Mia Koredebein. “If you live in Massachusetts and you get SNAP, then you’re automatically signed up for HIP.”

The director explained how local food is vital for supporting communities during a time of food scarcity. Beginning as a pilot

in Hampden County all the way back in November 2011 inspired by a survey conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture, the program expanded into a state-funded program within Massachusetts. Red Fire Farm was selected for the press conference as it was one of the first farms brought on board by the initiative.

“It started as a study done by the USDA and DTA... to see if people had better access to to buy more fruits and vegetables,” Koredebein said. “Living on a low income, would they want to buy more fruits and vegetables? And the answer was yes.”

Receiving HIP assistance is quite simple, according to Koredebein. Swiping an EBT card on affiliated farms automatically covers the cost of picked fruits and vegetables up to “\$40, \$60 or \$80 a month depending on your household size.”

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Red Fire Farm’s Ryan Voiland explains crop cultivation to state representatives.

Joint meeting brings new override proposal

By Ben Hernandez
Staff Writer

SOUTH HADLEY – The joint Select Board meeting with the Appropriations Committee tackled year-end budget concerns. The first directed budgetary concerns addressed by the Appropriations Committee and the Select Board was a transfer request by the police department of \$40,520, which would reallocate funds from the department’s personal services account to their operations.

“There’s two items here,” Town Administrator Lisa Wong said. “The larger one is \$26,600. This is part of the new contract that was recently put in place for fiscal year 26, 27 and

28. So, this is the uniform allowance per that new contract.”

Wong explained an additional \$14,520 was for the purchase of “additional software” intended to help with report writing and “investigative tools” and mentioned the sum transfer was one within the police department and stated the figures factored in a conservative estimate for prospected health insurance costs.

“We have group health insurance where we’re requesting a transfer to four items,” Wong said. “These are pretty known items, so we sort of know that these are items that can go over.”

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Nicholas Prentiss settling in as newest School Committee member

By Tina Lesniak
Correspondent

SOUTH HADLEY – Nicholas Prentiss is stepping into his new role on the South Hadley School Committee at a pivotal time for the district. With difficult budget decisions looming and discussions about the future of extracurricular programs dominating public conversation, the newly elected committee member says his focus is on learning, collaboration, and advocating for the resources students need.

Prentiss brings both financial and educational experience to the committee. Before running for office, he served on the town’s Budget Task Force, an experience he says gave him valuable insight into the fiscal pressures facing South Hadley.



Submitted photo
Nicholas Prentiss

“Before running for school committee, I served on the Budget Task Force that Please see **PRENTISS**, page 9



State Senator Jake Oliveira and State Representative Homar Gomez number among the attendees during the celebratory event.

Turley photos by Ben Hernandez

Hyundai Motor America donates \$10K to HCC food pantry

HOLYOKE – Representatives from Hyundai Motor America visited Holyoke Community College on Friday, July 17, to deliver a \$10,000 check to benefit the college’s food pantry.

This is the fifth consecutive year Hyundai Motor America has donated to the HCC food pantry through the company’s Hyundai Hope Initiative. This year, Hyundai doubled its annual donation to \$10,000, bringing their total contributions over five years to \$42,500.

“We’re incredibly grateful,” said Julie Phillips, HCC executive director of development. “You help make HCC a place where our students can focus on their education and on their career goals and not just on the next obstacle that life throws in their way.”

The annual donation adds to other gifts made throughout the year by local auto dealer Gary Rome, owner of Gary Rome Hyundai and a member of the HCC Foundation Board of Directors, whose efforts on behalf of HCC brought the Thrive Center and Food Pantry to the attention of the Hyundai corporate offices in California. Rome accompanied Hyundai officials to the check presentation ceremony.

Ben Ostiguy, Thrive Center senior programs coordinator, said HCC food pantry requests had more than doubled from 483 in fiscal year 2025 to 1,162 in fiscal year 2026, which ended June 30.

“That’s a remarkable increase,” he said, “and we distributed a mind-boggling 26,808 pounds of nutritious food and household goods, compared to 9,658 the previous fiscal year. That’s nearly triple the output of giving that we were able to do. And a big part of that was because of the generosity of Hyundai Hope and Gary Rome Hyundai.”

Hyundai Hope is Hyundai Motor America’s corporate social responsibility initiative that provides support in the area of health.

“Research has shown the number one concern for Americans is food insecurity, and basic needs are essential for these students,” said Brandon Ramirez, director of corporate responsibility for Hyundai Motor North America.

The HCC Thrive Center manages the college’s food pantry and provides services, such as food and housing assistance, that help address students’ basic needs.



Submitted photo

Representatives of Hyundai Motor America joined HCC staff and auto dealer Gary Rome in the college food pantry for a check presentation ceremony on Friday, July 17.

Staying safe from ticks and mosquitos

By Quinn Suomala
Correspondent

As the weather gets warmer there is an increase in the number of ticks and mosquitos as people go about summer activities. It is important for people to be aware of protection against these insects to prevent illnesses, including West Nile Virus, Lyme disease and Alpha-gal Syndrome.

The Director of Public Health in Wilbraham Ryan Paxton recommends that people check themselves, children and pets for ticks after going outdoors.

The key places to check are: inside and behind ears, along the hairline, the back of the neck, the armpits, the groin, the legs, and between the toes.

To remove a tick utilize fine point tweezers and grab the tick as close to the skin as possible. Try to pull straight out, as moving at an angle can leave parts of the tick behind.

Additionally, as is on the website for the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, people should avoid applying kerosene, petroleum jelly, nail polish or a hot match tip to remove a tick, as those methods aren’t effective and can result in injury.

The Department of Public Health also recommends noting when the tick was removed and where on the body it was removed from. This information will be helpful if a person or pet needs to go to a doctor for treatment.

A person should go to the doctor if they develop a rash where they were bitten or experience the common symptoms of tick-borne diseases (including fever, headache, fatigue or sore muscles). Someone should also go to the doctor if they have stomach or intestinal problems (including nausea, vomiting or diarrhea) or symptoms of an allergic reaction within a few hours of eating meat or dairy.

It is also important to be aware of mosquito bites. The West Nile Virus is the most common mosquito-born illness in the United States.

However, this illness has not been reported in humans in Massachusetts this year.

To prevent tick and mosquito bites a person can wear a light-colored long-sleeved shirt with long pants and tuck their pants into their socks. This helps to prevent a tick or mosquito from getting onto a person’s skin and can help a person to spot a tick on their clothing.

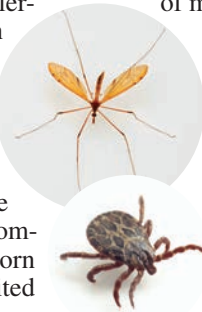
Avoiding outdoor activities between dusk and dawn during peak mosquito season also greatly lowers the risk of mosquito bites.

The Department of Public Health also recommends removing standing water in yards, as that is where mosquitos breed.

This can include water in garbage cans, flowerpots, bird baths and discarded tires.

Property owners can also utilize mosquito prevention services, including spraying private property with insect repellent to help reduce the amount of insects.

Additionally, people should use bug repellents that contain DEET on their skin. There should be no more than 30-35% DEET in repellents for adults and no more than 10-15% DEET in repellents for children.



Granby library set for fall book sale

GRANBY – Book lovers. Bargain Hunters. The Friends of the Granby Free Public Library will host their annual Month-Long Fall Book Sale during the month of September in the Community Room of the Library. You will be able to choose from a large assortment of used and like-new hardcover, paperback books, teen books and children’s books, along with a selection of CDs, DVDs, video games and audiobooks. The sale will run during regular library hours from Sept. 1 to 30.

Starting Aug. 1, the Library will be accepting donations of hardcover and paperback books, DVDs, music CDs, playable video games, and audiobooks in good condition acceptable for resale. The library does not accept donations of: Textbooks, encyclopedias, dictionaries, thesauri, Reader’s Digest books, or books with smoke, mold, mildew, or water damage. Donations are accepted at the library during open hours. Please do not leave donated books outside the library or in our book return. Donations accepted until Aug. 27. Thank you for your support! The library is located at 297 E State St in Granby MA 01033.

Magic performer appearing at Granby Library

GRANBY – Granby Free Public Library will host performer and writer Jonah Knight from 2-3:30 on Wednesday, July 29 for a fantastical quest to find The Lost Gem. Jonah Knight combines an interactive Dungeons & Dragons game with a live magic performance. Attendees can participate by portraying a character, rolling dice to determine random events, offering ideas, or they can just watch. During the performance, Jonah will perform magic to overcome obstacles and complete the quest. This performance is free for the public, for all ages. Children 6-11 must stay with an adult during the performance. Those interested can sign up to save a spot by calling 413-467-3320.

Agawam Community Artists and Artisans ‘Call for Art’

AGAWAM – Agawam Community Artists and Artisans (ACAA) is inviting artists and artisans to participate in its Sixth Annual Pioneer Valley Art Festival.

The Art Festival will be held on Friday, Aug. 21, and Saturday, Aug. 22 at the Polish American Club in Feeding Hills. Show hours are from 2 to 8 p.m. on Friday, and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday.

The ACAA is encouraging artists, artisans, and writers to submit their work for review. Among the artistic mediums included are watercolor, acrylic, oil, mixed media, sculpture, photography, ceramic, stained glass, wood, fashion, textile, and jewelry.

All work must be original and handmade by the artist or artisan, of professional quality. Prints and giclees will be accepted. No kits, food, soap, candles, or AI-generated work will be accepted.

Tent space is available on the paved parking lot for \$50. Students from any area high school are accepted free of charge, and must have a tent set up.

The Pioneer Valley Art Festival is highly promoted through local TV stations; Agawam Media Channel 15 and 1074HD; Agawam Cultural Council website; newspapers; town forums; Mailchimp; the ACAA website, www.agawamarts.com; and the ACAA Facebook page, that has over 850 followers.

The week before the festival, there will be over 20 street signs placed around Agawam.

Further information, including registration forms, can be obtained by contacting Ceil Rossi at email: tocare-free2@hotmail.com.

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Applications now being accepted for projects that rehabilitate or redevelop blighted, abandoned, vacant or underutilized properties in the Falls. Priority projects include multifamily buildings, commercial buildings, and mixed-use buildings.

Program guidelines: <https://southhadley.org/DocumentCenter/View/15218/Falls-Redevelopment-Fund---Guidelines--Application>

Applications are being accepted on a rolling basis and funding will be provided on a first-come-first served basis for eligible projects. Total funding available is \$50,000. Additional technical assistance will be provided to align eligible projects with additional funding to achieve program objectives.

For more information
contact: acapra@southhadleyma.gov
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Granby Library hosting photography workshop July 30

GRANBY – On Thursday, July 30 from 5 to 7 p.m. Granby Free Public Library will host “Photographing and Capturing the Beauty of Flowers and Gardens.” If you love flowers, plants, and gardens, chances are you love taking pictures of them too! How do you elevate your flower and plant photos from nice snapshots to gorgeous images that you’ll treasure for years to come? Come learn a set of simple techniques for taking stunning flower and garden photos. All cameras, phones, and experience

levels are welcome! You’ll have a chance to try your new skills as we photograph real flowers and experiment with backgrounds, small lights, reflectors, diffusers, Lensball, special effect attachments for your phone, and more. You’ll be amazed at the beautiful images you can create! This workshop is led by Massachusetts-based event, lifestyle, and branding photographer, Joan Celebi. Space is limited, so please contact the library to sign up. Sponsored by the Friends of the Granby Free Public Library.

Redevelopment funding grant applications available

SOUTH HADLEY – Applications are now being accepted for projects that rehabilitate or redevelop blighted, abandoned, vacant or underutilized properties in the Falls. Priority projects include multifamily buildings, commercial buildings, and mixed-use buildings. Program guidelines: <https://southhadley.org/Document-Center/View/15218/Falls-Redevelopment-Fund---Guidelines--Application>

Applications are being accepted on a rolling basis and funding will be provided on a first-come-first served basis for eligible projects. Total funding available is \$50,000. Additional technical assistance will be provided to align eligible projects with additional funding to achieve program objectives. For more information contact: acapra@southhadleyma.gov

Cultural Council seeking input, requests residents fill out survey

SOUTH HADLEY – The South Hadley Cultural Council wants to hear from residents. The council seeks input to develop community

priorities. Your response will influence guideline for grants for future local cultural programs. To take the survey, go to <https://tinyurl.com/shcc-survey>.

Aaron Saunders advocates fair access to Quabbin resources

By Ben Hernandez
Staff Writer

BELCHERTOWN – Multiple towns gathered to discuss the fate of the Quabbin Reservoir on July 10 at the Quabbin Visitor Center. The conference arose due to resident demand for equity and fairness, as well as to determine the fate of the reservoir. State Representative Aaron Saunders took the stand to address concerns about reservoir water extraction not benefiting the region.

“This is an important opportunity to hear directly from those who not only have been affected historically by Providence, but who are affected today and will be in perpetu-

ity,” Saunders said and listed extraction operations in the valley. Regional operations included rare earth minerals, oil and natural gas. The conference organizers, the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority, extract water.

“We need water. Folks here can only use water for essential purposes,” Saunders said. “While 180 billion gallons per day are extracted from this community.”

The comment was a direct address of the ongoing water ban in Belchertown which, as of this writing, prohibits non-essential outdoor water use such as lawn watering, irrigation, vehicle washing and filling swimming pools. Saunders called the current

situation in town “not great.”

“I imagine if there was 180 million gallons of water a day available in those communities, they’d feel that it might be fair,” Saunders said. “Not MWRA advisory board fair. It’s a different standard. We’ll address that at a different time. But it would be fair to share in that resource.”

Saunders addressed the current regional drought, which he described as so bad Belchertown schools would have to cancel fall sports due to the water ban preventing field irrigation and contrasted it with a recent police station visit in New Salem.

“It’s quite the luxury to be able to use the bathroom in a police station,” Saunders said.

“It’s one that’s not shared out here.”

In his speech, Saunders emphasized the conference wasn’t about seeking a hand-out or a petition for charity but to recognize the “value of the resource” extracted from the region which, according to the representative, numbers in the billions of billions of dollars in economic development.

“This isn’t handouts. It’s not charity. It’s recognition for the value of the resource you extract that has facilitated billions upon billions of dollars in economic development for our friends and neighbors in the eastern part of the state,” Saunders said. “It’s facilitated thousands upon thousands of desperately needed housing units while we can’t redevelop the Belchertown State School because we don’t have enough water. While the Chickadee Valley aqueduct runs under our streets, we don’t get a drop.”

Saunders stated the issue was how land was valued in the Quabbin valley. He stated the acre price came down to what the MWRA believed the land was worth. While Saunders acknowledged the MWRA was the largest taxpayer in the region, he found the assigned acre price to be woefully insufficient for the region.

“It’s an admission of how criminally small the considerations for our communities have been for decades and decades,” Saunders said. “For so-called annex land here in Belchertown, some of which I believe we’re on right now, it’s \$3,800 an acre. Might get you a shoebox in Boston.”



Delegates gather to discuss the future of the Quabbin Reservoir.

Submitted photo



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SOCIAL SECURITY

Matters

By Russell Gloor

Can my spouse file at 63 and then get half of mine when I later claim?

Dear Rusty:
My spouse is 63 and I am 65. I am planning to take my Social Security benefits at age 70. Can my lower earning spouse take his own benefits now, and then -when I take my full benefits at age 70, can he then file for 50% of mine instead of the lower benefit he is getting because he claimed at age 63?

Signed:
Higher Earning Spouse

Dear Higher Earning Spouse:
Yes, your lower-earning spouse can take his benefits based on his personal lifetime earnings record at any time (i.e., age 63) and, when you later claim your own SS at 70, your spouse will be evaluated to determine whether he is eligible for a “spousal boost” based on your Social Security record.
But to be sure you are clear, if you claim at age 70, your spouse will not get 50% of your age 70 benefit amount.
Spousal benefits are always determined by comparing each partners’ Full Retirement Age entitlement and, if your spouse’s FRA entitlement is less than half of your FRA entitlement, your spouse will get a “spousal boost” to bring his monthly SS retirement payment up to what he is entitled to as your spouse.
The amount of the “spousal boost” would be the difference between his FRA entitlement and 50% of your FRA entitlement, which would be added to his own (age 63) SS retirement amount.
And that means that his total benefit amount would be less than half of your age 70 amount (less also than 50% of your FRA amount, because he claimed at age 63).
One caution for your spouse to be aware of: if he is still working and claims at age 63, he will be subject to Social Security’s

Annual Earnings Test, which limits how much he can earn before SS takes away some benefits.
The earnings limit for 2026 is \$24,480 (changes annually) and if that is exceeded, SS will take back \$1 of benefits for every \$2 he is over the limit. FYI, Social Security will “take back” by withholding future benefit payments, so he will not get his benefits for some months if he exceeds the annual earnings limit.
And if the annual earnings limit is significantly exceeded, your spouse could even be temporarily ineligible to receive SS benefits (until he either earns less or reaches his full retirement age, the earnings limit goes away when FRA is reached).
The only way your spouse can avoid both a reduced personal benefit and the annual earnings test limitation is to wait until his own Full Retirement Age to claim Social Security.
However, if he’s not working full time and needs the Social Security money sooner, then claiming at age 63 may be a good choice. In any case, he won’t get half of your age 70 amount.
The Association Mature Citizens Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. This article is intended for information purposes and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the Association Mature Citizens Foundation’s staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association. To submit a question, visit amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory or email us at ssadviser@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.

Washing the elephant in the garden

The name Paul Rogers may ring a bell with some of my readers. Paul was a dear friend of mine, a mentor and acclaimed horticulturist who had amazing influence at Old Sturbridge Village, especially early on in my tenure.
He operated Stonehedge Gardens with his wife Barb in Charlton and for many decades wrote a regular column for the Worcester Telegram and Gazette. Paul also had a radio show, a weekly gardening Q&A on WTAG.

It was with his coaxing that I applied for and got this gig as the Garden Lady for Turley Publications over 20 years ago. He was very well known throughout Central Massachusetts, the Boston area and beyond.
Once I was in Bath, Maine, and to my disbelief someone mentioned that they knew Paul Rogers when I was shopping in a kitchen store of all places. But alas, I digress.
Paul and I would meet every other week at the Village unless he was traveling on some horticultural odyssey. Many times he and I would chat before we took our walks around campus to assess my beds.
I learned all about his trips in great detail and he got to know me pretty well, too. He always knew when I was “down in the dumps.”
During those periods, Paul would say, “you’ve got to wash the elephant.”
At first this made little sense to me, but after a bit I

understood. When you are not feeling like yourself, you have to tackle a project, a big, elephant-like project, and afterwards you will feel better.
Of course, his projects were, and mine are, typically

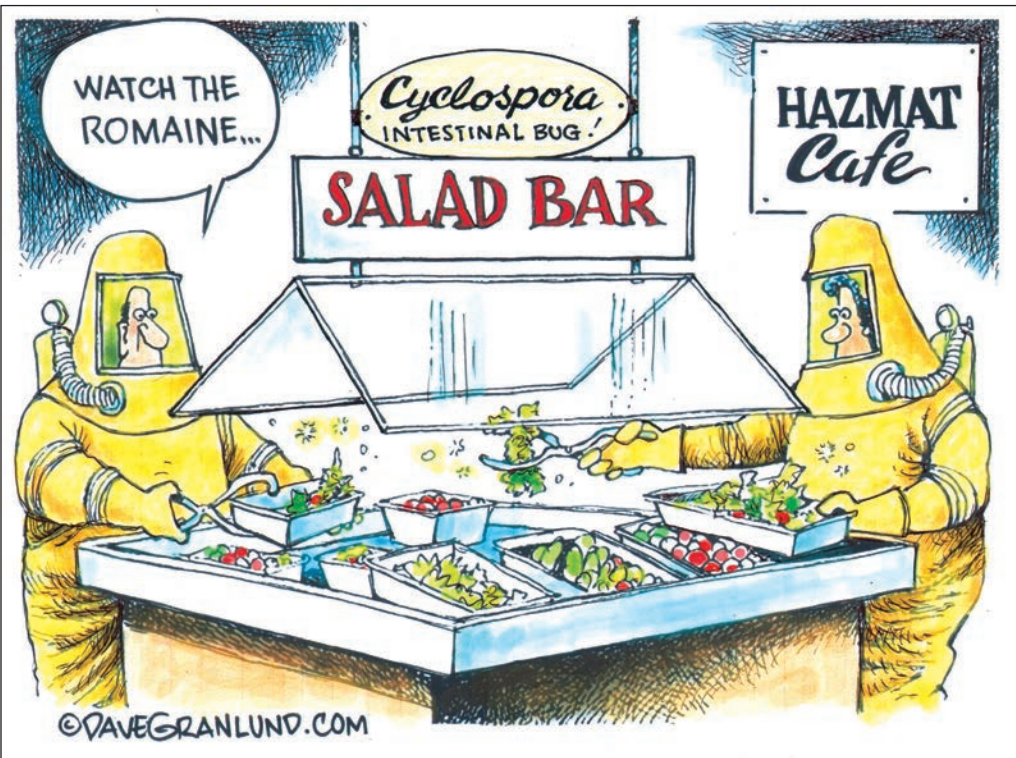
the tallest I could, six inches. Then I mowed down the garden.
After that I got into the bed with a hand trowel and one scoop at a time, dug up the bed. It was easier than I thought, because the irises were in worse shape than I thought. They came up so easily because they were weakened by a bad iris borer infestation.
I had never seen anything like it. As I unearthed the rhizomes I smelled the rot before I found my first borer. To say it was gross was an understatement.

Each rhizome was lifted, inspected and cut back to healthy tissue. Two inch long borers were collected in a yogurt container for the chickens. They ranged in color from light pink to deep mahogany.
To think that I’ve been gardening for so long and had never seen one before! The violet rhizomes were also dug up and discarded, as were the unwanted rose runners and suckers.
Thinning out the apothecary rose will certainly help to dissuade powdery mildew from taking hold next year. This year it’s pretty bad.
Meanwhile, the irises were moved to a holding bed, also known as the vegetable garden, while I solarize the area they came from to kill off any violet seeds. I hope. They are notorious at self seeding.
I realize I took this project on a bit later in the season than I should have; my irises

garden related.
So this weekend I tackled the iris and rose bed. Or shall I say the iris, rose and violet bed?
The violets were unwelcome guests in the garden, as were the borers, but we will get to that in a minute.
You see, I inherited this beautiful patch of blue-purple bearded irises when we moved to this house. For years it bloomed effortlessly. I divided it once a few years back and it was nice for awhile.
But this year blooms were sparse and rose suckers began to show up everywhere within the garden. Violet foliage crowded out the vertical spear-shaped iris leaves.
How was I to tame this mess and do it in the most efficient way possible? My approach may seem unconventional, but if I didn’t do it this way I might still be outside squatting in that very garden.
I took out the lawn mower and adjusted the height to



Please see **GARDEN**, page 5



Twenty-four days of mountains, miles & memories on the Appalachian Trail

by Julie Midura

Seventeen days into our 320-mile walk on the A.T. from North Carolina to Virginia, the sky broke open with unyielding rain, drumming the leaves overhead and turning the trail into a torrent of rushing water. The squish, squish, squish of water-filled shoes became a constant melody for the next eight days as rain drifted through the forest... sometimes in sheets and sometimes in hushed murmurs.
Wet foliage accosted us at every turn, the branches leaning heavily onto the trail from the weight of SO MUCH unrelenting rain.
Every step became methodical. Our eyes looked down rather than ahead, focusing on the individual brushstrokes rather than the entire painting. Only then were we able to see the tiny little details we likely would not have noticed under sunny skies.
As we continued to walk through ever-present WET, our attention narrowed. We focused our eyes on a much

smaller world-the one directly below our feet.
I crouched down to see a turtle shyly peeking its head out of its bright yellow lacquered shell. I squatted with my elbows on my knees in the middle of the path to watch a snail moving with ceremonial slowness as it crossed the trail on a rotting log, leaving a trail of silver in its wake. I stooped low to get a closer look at a vivid orange salamander with black speckles dusting its back and golden eyes staring straight into mine. I observed tiny creatures of our earth-who remain under cover on hot sunny days-come to life on the surface of the raindrops.
For eight days in a row, we awoke in a tent and pulled on soaking wet socks and shoes. We gripped trekking poles with fingers that turned white and puckered by days end. But we also witnessed magical forest spirits and tiny details we would never have noticed on a clear day.
It rained overnight and was still spitting when we packed up our wet tent on our final day on trail. Before we

started walking, we ended our morning prayer with, “And if it be your will, Lord, please let us end this hike under sunny skies.”
Several hours later, we reached the end of our journey at the Virginia border, completing our 320-mile walk from Fontana Dam, NC to Damascus, VA! We congratulated each other, snapped a few pictures, then continued hiking the final few miles toward the town of Damascus, where our friends were meeting us to shuttle us back to our car.
As we walked, the clouds finally began to loosen their grip on the sky. Minutes later, golden beams of sunlight spilled between the branches, as if an unseen hand was parting a curtain. The entire forest came alive with a radiance that could not be explained by mere sunlight alone.
I stopped walking, and with my pack on my shoulders, I tilted my face upward as the sun poured rivers of gold through the canopy above me. And suddenly, I was filled with an overwhelming revelation-so powerful that I began



Submitted photo

to weep uncontrollably.
I wept not because the rain finally stopped. Not because the hike had been so hard. Not because we completed our goal. I cried, because in that sudden moment of awakening, I could feel God’s presence to the depths of my very

soul. And I realized we had never walked a single mile alone.
God had carried us through every storm. Through every drop of rain. Every exhausting climb. Every wind-

Please see **TRAIL**, page 5

OPINION PAGE/ LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the Editor have a maximum of 350 words. We require writers to include their name, address and phone number in order for our office to authenticate authorship prior to publication. Addresses and phone numbers are not published.
Unsigned or anonymous letters will NOT be published.
We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions. Libelous, unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks or defamation of character are not allowed. Deadline for submissions is Wednesday at noon.
Please email (preferred) letters to townreminder@turley.com. Mailed letters can be sent to Town Reminder, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069.

Turley Election Policy

This newspaper will print free self-submitted statements of candidacy only four weeks or more out from the election. All candidates running in both contested and uncontested races are asked to submit their statements to the editor to include only biographical and campaign platform details. Total word count for statements is limited to between 300-500 words maximum. Please include a photo. We will not publish any statements of candidacy inside the four weeks from election threshold. To publish any other campaign publicity during the race, please contact our advertising representatives. We also do not allow personal attacks against other candidates or political parties in statements of candidacy, nor do we publish for free any information about key endorsements or political fundraisers.
Letters to the editor of no more than 250 words from supporters endorsing specific candidates or discussing campaign issues are limited to three total per author during the election season. No election letters will appear in the final edition before the election. We reserve the right to edit all statements of candidacy and letters to the editor to meet our guidelines.

TOWN Reminder

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TRAIL from page 4

swept ridge. Every stretch of muddy trail. Through every ache and every pain.

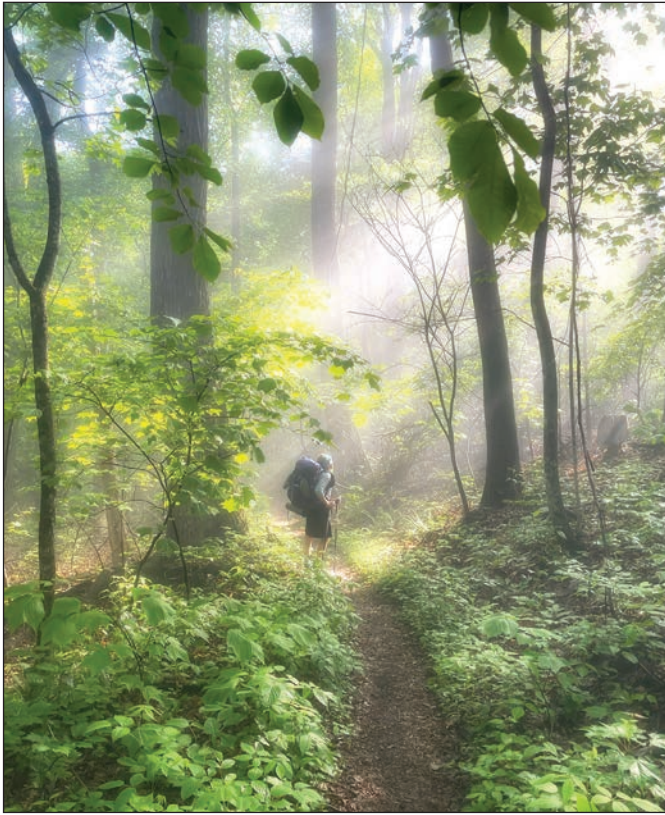
He had not been waiting for us at the end. Had not been watching us from a distance. He had been walking right alongside us, filling us with His glory with every step, and carrying us when we could no longer carry ourselves.

My fatigue had concealed it. The rain and clouds had obscured it. My own determination had camouflaged it. But here, in a moment of complete clarity, with the sunlight warming my face, drops of water dripping from the leaves above me, and over three hundred miles behind me, I could see it clearly.

God had been with us in every step.

In the strength when ours failed. In the shelter that appeared when we needed it most. In the strangers who offered kindness. In the moments when we thought we had nothing left, yet somehow continued forward.

I stood among the trees, while beams of golden light streamed through the branches above me in silent testimony. Stripped of my armor, I wept on my husband's shoulder while he held me in his arms. And finally, every raindrop, every ache, every hard climb, every trial, and every



Submitted photo

mile... made sense.

We completed our goal, not because it was easy, but because we kept putting one foot in front of the other for 24 days.

We embraced a path that humbled us. Carried us. Challenged us. Stripped us down and built us up-physically, mentally and emotionally. Taught us resilience. Showed us that we can sit in discomfort without becoming a casualty of it.

We tasted freedom. We inhaled silence. We knew peace.

The miles may be finished, but we will carry what they gave us as we step out of this wilderness and re-enter the world we left behind.

Onward!

Read more about Julie and Tom's wilderness adventures on Instagram @morethanthe-mountain

GARDEN from page 4

may not bloom next year, but it was then or never.

So now you have my "washing the elephant" story. And you know a little more about an amazing man who

I miss so much and think of often, especially when I am in the garden.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 34 years she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to pouimette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.



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Fire and Water study group offers update

SOUTH HADLEY – A Study Group, consisting of South Hadley residents, former and current personnel, and governance leaders from Fire and Water Districts 1 and 2 has been meeting over the past two months. The group has reviewed previous merger study reports, conducted a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) based on current operations and a potential merger, and is embarking on developing a business plan “mock-up” of what a South Hadley merger might look like. In addition, the group is seeking best practices developed by other Massachusetts municipalities that have conducted mergers.

The South Hadley Fire and Water Study Group was organized in response to current town budgetary challenges and a town-wide 2024 non-binding referendum that favored exploring a merger. Meetings are open to the public. Upcoming meetings will be held Aug. 5 at 6 p.m. at the South Hadley Senior Center and Aug. 26 at 6 p.m. at the South Hadley Public Library. The Study Group will continue to provide ongoing updates of their work. For more information, contact Study Group Chair, Christine Phillips, caphill33@gmail.com, 413-531-1063.

Committee holding bike ride to Cindy's Drive-In Saturday

SOUTH HADLEY – The South Hadley Bike/Walk Committee will hold a fun 30-minute leisurely ride from South Hadley Commons for an ice cream reward at Cindy's Soft Serve Ice Cream on Rte. 202 in Granby. Bring your bicycle, helmet, and a water bottle. All levels of riders are encouraged to participate. This will take place on Saturday, July 18 at 1 p.m. Meet at the band stand at the South Hadley Commons.

2026 mail in voting postcards now available

SOUTH HADLEY – Vote early by mail in all 2026 elections. No excuse is required. Applications will be mailed 45 days before each statewide election. Sign it and mail it back. Choosing “all elections” covers you for all of 2026. Primaries: Choose your party ballot if unenrolled. The deadline for the state primary/special town election is Aug. 25 at 5 p.m.

Fireworks display kicks off annual fair weekend

BELCHERTOWN – A beloved community tradition is coming back. The Belchertown Recreation Department, with support from other town departments, will bring fireworks back to town on Thursday, Sept. 24, at the Chestnut Hill Community School Recreation Area. The event will kick off Fair Weekend and celebrate America's 250th anniversary.

The evening will bring the community together for food trucks, family activities, and a fireworks show to close out the night. Residents and neighbors from surrounding communities are invited to attend. The celebration is planned in conjunction with the nationwide Semi-quincentennial commemoration marking 250 years of American independence.

The fireworks display returns after many years without one, reviving a September tradition that longtime residents will remember.

“We're thrilled to bring this celebration back to the community,” said Kyle Thibeault, Director of the Belchertown Recreation Department. “This is an event built by the community, for the community, and we can't make it happen without the support of our residents and local businesses.”

The event is funded entirely through donations and sponsorships from local businesses and community members. Fundraising is already well under way, and the Recreation Department is continuing to seek support to bring the celebration to life.

How to help: Residents may donate any amount, and businesses interested in sponsorship opportunities can find full details, including sponsorship levels and benefits, on the town website at www.belchertown.org/fireworks.

Sponsorship levels range from Bronze (\$500–\$999) through Platinum (\$5,000+), with benefits including banner placement, website recognition, and social media spotlights. Businesses interested in a customized sponsorship opportunity are encouraged to reach out through the contact information provided on the town website.



Team Mass Boys & Girls AAU Basketball Tryouts

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Cost: \$30 Covers both tryouts (players get t-shirt)
AAU membership needed \$28 (purchase on our website, well pull them)

Tryout # 1: Friday, July 31, 2026

Location: Oxford High School
100 Carbuncle Dr., Oxford, MA

- Boys & Girls Grades 4th-6th 5:15 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. (3rd grade can try out with 4th grade)
- Boys & Girls Grades 7th & 8th 6:30 p.m. - 7:45 p.m.
- Boys & Girls Grades 9th-12th 7:45 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Tryout # 2: Thursday, August 6, 2026

Location: North Brookfield High School
10 New School Dr., North Brookfield, MA

- Boys & Girls Grades 4th-6th 5:15 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. (3rd grade can try out with 4th grade)
- Boys & Girls Grades 7th & 8th 6:30 p.m. - 7:45 p.m.
- Boys & Girls Grades 9th-12th 7:45 p.m. - 8 p.m.

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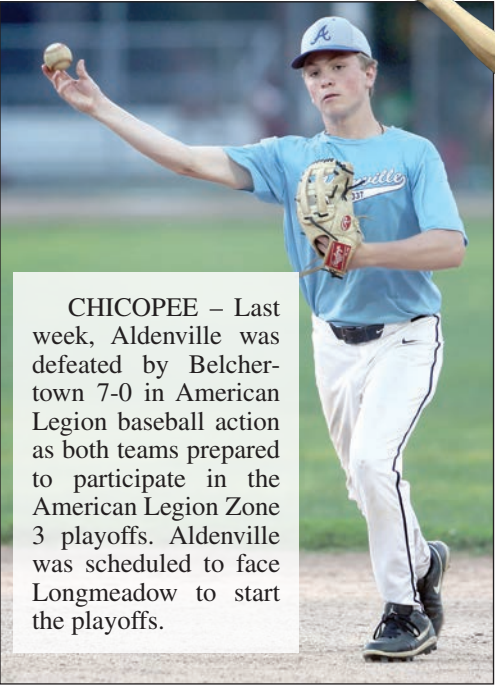
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Aldenville enters Legion playoffs



CHICOPEE – Last week, Aldenville was defeated by Belcher-town 7-0 in American Legion baseball action as both teams prepared to participate in the American Legion Zone 3 playoffs. Aldenville was scheduled to face Longmeadow to start the playoffs.



Matt Sutton fires away home.



Noah Carillon corraling a throw down to second base.



Cam Carpenter makes a backhand play.

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

Mutiny finishes up first dual league season

LUDLOW – Earlier this month, the New England Mutiny, which features soccer players from all over the region

as well as some players from out of state, finished up their season, unfortunately failing to reach any postseason play

despite playing in two leagues this season. The Mutiny participated in both the USL as well as the UWS, nearly doubling

its number of games this season. The Mutiny hope to have better luck next season with the added schedule.



Trinity Clark dribbles toward the goal.



Addyson Earl hustles after the loose ball.



Laci Lewis fights to keep possession.



Sadie Mathis winds up for a long shot.

PeoplesBank defeats Teddy Bear Pools

WILBRAHAM – Last Thursday night at Spec Pond in Wilbraham, Jake Jachym pitched PeoplesBank to a 7-5 win over Teddy Bear Pools. The Bankers got a save from Johnny Gegetskas to secure the win. The Bankers lead

the Tri-County League with a 15-3-1 record and 31 points. The regular season is about to wrap up with the playoffs beginning shortly after.

Please see **MORE PHOTOS**, page 7



Mason Barcomb pitches for Teddy Bear Pools.



Darien Rosado is safe as he slides home.

St. Joseph's suffers late-season loss

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

THORNDIKE – In what might've been a preview of a Tri-Country League playoff matchup, Teddy Bear Pools and Spas broke open the final meeting of the regular season against St. Joseph's by scoring nine runs across the fifth and sixth innings, rolling to an 11-1 victory at St. Joe's Field in Thorndike, last Friday night.

"We split with St. Joe's during the regular season, and we'll probably be seeing

them again in the playoffs," said Teddy Bear Pools player/manager Ryan Magni. "The first three innings of tonight's game was almost like a play-off game. Then we were able to break it open against their relief pitchers.

Even though Friday's make-up game was played at St. Joe's Field, Teddy Bear Pools served as the home team because their own field was unavailable. The game ended with two outs in the bottom of the sixth inning due to the ten-run mercy rule.

Teddy Bear Pools entered

the final week of the regular season sitting in third place in the league standings with a 13-5-1 record one point behind second place St. Joseph's. The Saints had a 14-4 overall record.

Peoples Bank (15-3-1), who are looking to capture the league championship title for the 13th consecutive season, was sitting in first place.

Teddy Bear Pools could move into second place with a win against BankESB on Thursday night and if St. Joe's losses their final two regular season games.

The Saints had the opportunity to move into first place if they defeated the DOC Spartans on Monday and Peoples Bank on Wednesday.

The top two finishers in the league standings earn a first round bye and the first place team will get home field advantage throughout the playoffs, which are all best of three series.

Teddy Bear Pools righthander Matt Drobiak, who graduated from South Hadley High School, was

Please see **ST. JOE'S**, page 7



Ray Toth gets the grounder to short.

Blue Sox fails to complete DH sweep

BRISTOL, CT – The Valley Blue Sox couldn’t complete a doubleheader sweep Friday night, surrendering a four-run lead in a 5-4 walk-off loss to the Bristol Blues in the second game at Muzzy Field.

After opening the evening with a 7-1 victory, marking the Blue Sox’s first win over Bristol this season, Valley (13-18-1) looked to carry that momentum into a sweep. But the Blues (16-18) had other plans, erasing a four-run deficit with five unanswered runs over the final three innings to split the seven-inning doubleheader.

“I thought we were playing really well,” head coach John Raiola said. “I thought those were some of the best swings that we took in a game all year. They beat us at the end, and that’s how it goes.”

Bristol completed its come-from-behind victory in the bottom of the seventh, giving it the walkoff win.

Christopher DiPrima (Yale) opened the inning with a single before Nicholas Francuzenko reached to put two runners aboard. With one out, Cal Chance (UMass Lowell) lined a single into right field, allowing DiPrima to score the winning run and hand the Blue Sox a walk-off defeat.

While the latter innings decided the contest, Valley struck first and early.

Anthony Tirado (Penn State) reached base to begin the game before stealing third and eventually scoring on a throwing error by Chance. Moments later, Chris Cancel (UConn) tagged and advanced to third before crossing the plate on Jacob Dilley’s (UNC Greensboro) sacrifice fly to right, giving the Blue Sox a 2-0 advantage after just one inning.

Making his Blue Sox debut, right-hander Justin Masteralexis (UMass) kept Bristol off the scoreboard early. The UMass product, making his first appearance since April, allowed no hits across 1 2/3 innings while striking out three.

“[It is] great for [Masteralexis], having him be able to get back out there,” Raiola said. “It went as well as I’m sure he would’ve hoped.”

Nick Tomasetto (Seton Hall) singled to put a runner aboard before Chris Carson (Stony Brook) turned on a pitch and sent it just inside the right-field foul pole for a two-run home run. Carson’s

first long ball of the season extended Valley’s lead to 4-0 and marked the Blue Sox’s 10th home run of the summer.

“Chris works hard,” Raiola said. “That was part of a bunch of really good swings today from a lot of guys.”

Bristol answered immediately in the bottom half of the inning when Nick Flores (VCU) lifted a sacrifice fly to left, trimming the deficit to three.

After loading the bases, Sean Britt (St. Johns) lined a two-run double into the left-center field gap to bring Bristol within one. Just two batters later, Evan Menzel (UConn) followed with an RBI single to center, tying the contest at 4-4.

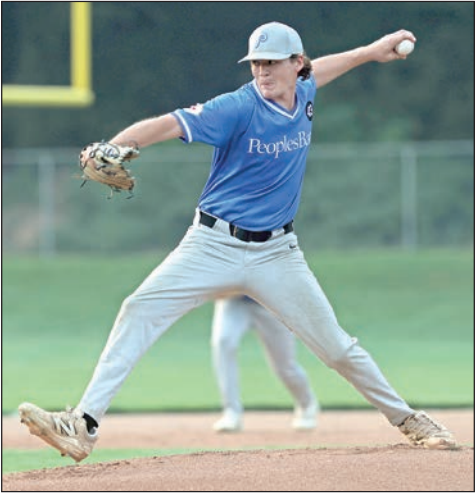
Once the Blues got hot, the Blue Sox were unable to answer offensively. Valley finished with six hits and struck out 12 times, managing just one baserunner over the final two innings.

Despite the result, Raiola said he was encouraged by the quality of his team’s play throughout the doubleheader.

“I thought the energy was really good,” Raiola said. “Our guys were taking really good swings. Sometimes that’s baseball. They beat us at the end.”



Alex Gochinski cleanly fields a grounder.



Jake Jachym sends a pitch home.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com
Robert Ninotti fires a throw across the diamond.

ST. JOE’S from page 6

the winning pitcher in last Friday’s game. He went the distance, allowing one run on just one base hit with three walks and two strikeouts.

“My defense made the plays behind me in tonight’s game,” said Drobiak. “This is a big win for us, and it feels great. We’re hoping to play them again in the playoffs.”

Teddy Bear Pools took a 1-0 lead against St. Joe’s with two outs in the bottom of the third inning.

Magni, who started in centerfield, drew a lead-off walk. Then St. Joe’s lefthander Jackson Hayes retired the next two batters before catcher Michael Toth hit a flyball which the centerfielder lost in the twilight. Toth, who graduated from

Granby High School, wound up at second base with a double and Magni scored on the play.

St. Joe’s tied the score in the fourth inning.

Designated hitter Mark Jodoin singled leading off the frame before stealing second. He scored the tying run when right fielder Ryan O’Leary hit a sacrifice fly.

Drobiak then retired seven of the final eight batters that he faced.

“We just didn’t hit the ball very well in tonight’s game,” said St. Joe’s manager Paul Marcinek. “You can’t beat many teams by scoring only one run.”

Prior to the start of the bottom of the fourth inning, righty Jack Feltovic replaced Hayes on the mound.

Teddy Bear Pools retook

the lead with two outs in that inning when designated hitter Bailey Griggs hit a ground ball single up the middle into centerfield scoring shortstop Ray Toth (walk).

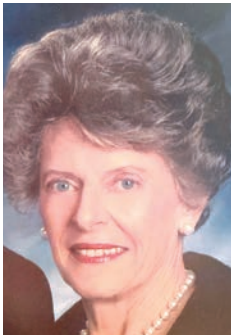
Teddy Bear Pools scored three more runs in the fifth inning. Two of the runs crossed the break on RBI singles from Ray Toth and right fielder Sean Rosemond. The other run scored following a throwing error by the catcher.

Holding a 5-1 lead, Teddy Bear Pools scored six more runs in the sixth.

Left fielder Josh Frometa and Magni knocked home a pair of runs with RBI singles, while second baseman Ramon Jomenez added a run scoring ground rule double to center. Griggs also drew a bases loaded walk during that frame.

Obituary

Carolyn (Czaja) Topor 1937-2026



Carolyn (Czaja) Topor, 89, of South Hadley, MA, passed away peacefully on July 16, 2026, after a short illness.

Born in Springfield, MA, to Josephine (Latosinski) and Joseph John Czaja, Carolyn graduated summa cum laude from Classical High School in 1954 and from Mount Holyoke College in 1958, where she studied piano, voice, and Italian and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. A Mary Vance Young Scholarship took her to Florence, Italy, to study art history, sparking a lifelong passion. She went on to pursue graduate studies at Harvard University.

Carolyn met the love of her life, Joseph Topor, during her freshman year at Mount Holyoke. They married on April 18, 1959, and shared 67 years of marriage. She devoted herself to raising her children with faith, integrity, and a love of learning, while remaining active with the Springfield Symphony, Mount Holyoke College, and community

arts and cultural organizations throughout her life.

Carolyn and Joseph were longtime members of Saint Theresa of Lisieux Roman Catholic Church, where she taught religious education, served on the church council, and chaired the Holy Door of Divine Mercy committee in 2016. She was named a Dame of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem by the Vatican that same year.

Deeply proud of her Polish heritage, Carolyn co-founded the New England Chapter of the Kosciuszko Foundation in 1996 and partnered with Elms College to help establish the Polish Center of Discovery and Learning. In 2008, she received the Knight’s Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland, the nation’s highest civilian honor for foreigners, presented by President Lech Kaczyński.

Carolyn and Joseph traveled to more than 64 countries across all seven continents. She is remembered

by her family as kind, generous, gracious, and endlessly curious — “Mother,” “Gert,” “Mom,” and “Mutti” to her children, and “Babci” to her grandchildren.

She is survived by her husband of 67 years, Joseph; her children Mary Elizabeth Daniel (Stephen), Joseph Martin Topor III (Jamie), David Jonathan Topor (Karen), and Jennifer Ann McDermott (Michael); her ten grandchildren; her brother Dr. Ronald Czaja and sister Joan Marsh; and many cousins, nieces, and nephews.

Visiting hours will be held Monday, July 20, 2026, from 3:00–7:00 pm at Cierplial Funeral Home, 61 Grape Street, Chicopee.

A funeral Mass will be celebrated Tuesday, July 21, 2026, at 11:00 am at Saint Theresa of Lisieux Roman Catholic Church, 9 East Parkview Drive, South Hadley.

Interment will follow in the family plot at St. Stanislaus Cemetery, 800 Montgomery Street, Chicopee.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made in Carolyn’s name to Mount Holyoke College or the Polish Center of Discovery and Learning at Elms College.

Keeping seniors safe in the heat

By Quinn Suomala
Correspondent

With summer time in full swing, already communities have been facing record temperatures. It is important to keep in mind key safety tips to keep seniors safe in the heat.

High temperatures lead to an increased risk for conditions like heat stroke and heat exhaustion.

Seniors are especially at risk for heat stroke due to a decrease in the body’s ability to regulate temperature as they age.

Signs to watch out for for heat stroke include: a body temperature of 104 degrees Fahrenheit, a change in mental state (including confusion, delirium, or irritability), a change in sweating pattern, nausea, flushed skin, rapid heart rate or breathing, and a headache.

If you notice any of these signs, call for medical assistance and then get the person inside or into shade, remove excess clothes and take action to cool them down immediately.

Senior centers do their best to remind elders of steps

to take for prevention.

“We encourage them to turn their air conditioners on, even despite the costs, and to drink lots of water,” Executive Director of the Agawam Senior Center Cynthia Sullivan said.

Senior centers like Agawam’s also have people on staff who keep an eye on seniors who are visiting.

“We’re always checking up on people to see how they’re doing,” Sullivan said. “We see many of the people here quite often, so we know when they don’t look okay.”

If people do want to get outside in the heat, it is best they do so in the early morning or later in the evening, when the sun is not at its peak. Also, activities should be kept to low impact to prevent over exertion.

Additionally, many senior centers are open as cooling centers for the public during heat waves. The Agawam Senior Center, the Holyoke Senior Center, the RiverMills Senior Center and the Wilbraham Senior Center are just some of the options available.

These senior centers also offer a variety of activities to

help keep seniors entertained while also beating the heat.

The Agawam Senior Center, for example, has a performance by the band Solar Eclipse on July 14 at 5:30 p.m. (with free ice cream included) and Bunko (a dice game) on July 21.

The Holyoke Senior Center is offering Tai Chi lessons on Thursdays from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. from now through Sept. 3.

For those interested, the RiverMills Senior Center is also offering an ice cream social on July 17 at 1:30p.m. They also have a visit from Paul Revere on July 28 at 2 p.m.

In addition to these activities, the senior centers also offer meals for people to come in, purchase and enjoy.

“Come in and eat, our meals are \$4,” Sullivan said. “There is no need to turn on your stove or oven and make your house warmer.”

The senior centers always welcome people to come by while they are open and take advantage of their activities and air conditioning. Utilizing them is a great way to beat the heat and have some fun.

Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley offering fun golf

BELCHERTOWN – Join members of the Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley on Sept. 12 for a fun day on the links at Cold Spring Country Club in Belchertown and be a champion for women and girls. The \$120 registration includes golf, cart, pastries/coffee, snacks, box lunch, beverages, prizes and more.

If you aren’t a golfer, you can donate a raffle prize or sponsor a hole.

Registration starts at 7:30 a.m., with a shotgun starts at 8:30 a.m. Registration form and link are at www.ZontaQV.org/golf. Questions can be directed to Mary Knight at 413-219-8260. Your support directly funds

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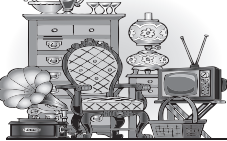
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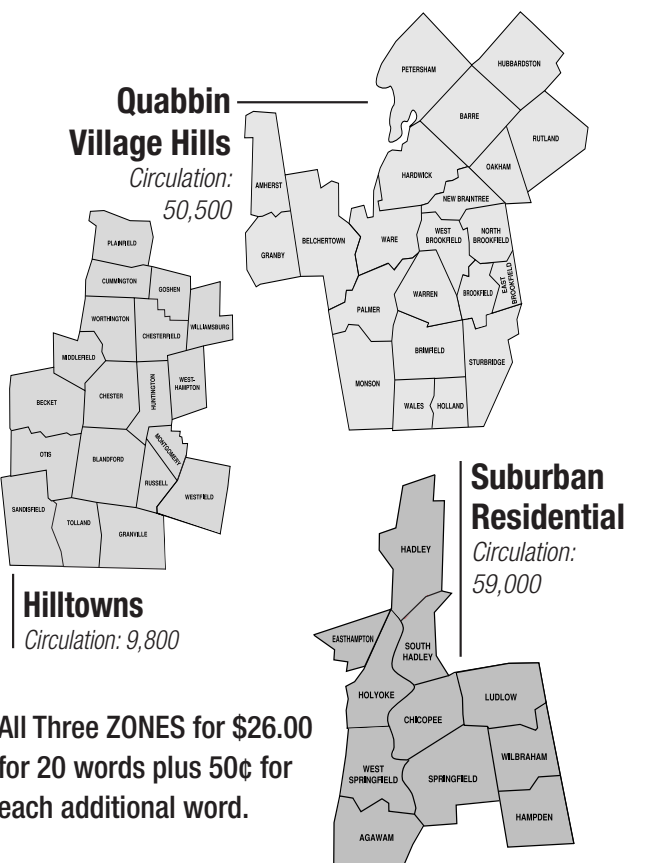
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PROGRAM from page 1

State Senator Jake Oliveira applauded HIP’s milestone and called it a “great program.” As he stood on Red Fire Farm’s campus, the senator took a moment to appreciate how hard the agricultural business was to operate.

“It is not easy to keep and maintain a farm,” Oliveira said. “There are a lot of things out of your control.”

Oliveira stressed HIP was a way to invest in local farms and called them “the backbones” of the regional food system. He stated though most state farms were run by “big agricultural businesses that are owned by corporations,” it wasn’t the case with-in Massachusetts.

“Most of our farms are run by families,” Oliveira said. “That’s why it’s important for programs like the Healthy Incentive Program because it has dual benefit. Number one, it benefits those one in seven Massachusetts residents that receive DTA benefits, but allows the to access healthy foods.”

Linking state benefits to the local food supply, Oliveira explained, was a great way



Turley photos by Ben Hernandez

Red Fire Farm was one of the first local farms enrolled in the state-wide Healthy Incentives Program.

to both support regional business and to offer widespread access to nourishing organic food. The senator also argued the state and insurers spent less money as a result of the program.

“Every dollar that we in-

vest in the Healthy Incentives Program is double in economic activity,” Oliveira said. “Since many farms are located here in western Massachusetts, that’s an economic boost for our region. Which means that, even though we

were celebrating \$100 million today for the Healthy Incentives Program, that’s \$200 million in economic benefits.”

Koredebein thanked community partners, customers and farmers for making the program possible, as well as



State Senator Jake Oliveira learns about garlic bulb planting from resident farmer Ryan Voiland.

the state for the continued assistance. She stated HIP was an example of “government innovation actually working at its best” and a stellar example of what happens “when we all work together.”

“If you think that families

should eat well, if you want to eat well yourself, if you think that farmers should be viable and local farms should have a shot at surviving, you’re going to think this program is a good idea,” Koredebein said.

PRENTISS from page 1

South Hadley put together,” Prentiss said. “It was a great experience and helped me understand the financial difficulties that the town is facing.” In addition to that municipal experience, he is also a teacher who has spent years working in schools, giving him firsthand knowledge of the challenges educators and students face every day.

As he begins his first term, Prentiss says he has two primary goals.

“My first priority is continuing to learn about how the school district operates and working with the rest of the committee as we set the goals and policies for the district,” he said. “My second priority is advocating for the level of funding that the school district needs to provide students with the education that they deserve.”

That advocacy comes as South Hadley confronts budget constraints affecting districts across western Massachusetts. Prentiss noted that neighboring communities, including Easthampton and Hadley, are facing similar financial pressures. While he praised district leadership for finding savings wherever possible, including creating

an in-house special education transportation department that has already saved more than \$400,000, he said many of the district’s largest expenses, including health insurance and legally mandated services, remain largely outside local control.

“The only sustainable way forward is an override,” Prentiss said. “School districts need an average yearly budget increase of four to six percent just to provide the same level of services year to year.”

Prentiss believes preserving extracurricular opportunities should remain a priority despite financial challenges. He describes athletics, arts programs, advanced coursework and after-school activities as essential components of a student’s education rather than optional extras.

“These programs provide students with unique opportunities that they can’t get elsewhere,” he said. “They help students discover who they are and what they want to do in the future. Many students specifically come to school every day because of those programs.”

While one-time use of free cash has preserved those offerings for the coming school year, Prentiss argues

that a successful override is necessary to sustain them over the long term.

Looking beyond the current budget debate, Prentiss says South Hadley’s greatest strength is its people.

“South Hadley’s teachers and paraprofessionals are what make it an excellent district,” he said, pointing to student achievement that consistently exceeds the state average on the high school MCAS. He also hopes to see continued expansion of vocational programs and career pathways for students.

Prentiss acknowledges that budget debates can divide communities, making communication especially important. He encourages residents to attend or watch School Committee meetings and points to the superintendent’s regular newsletter as another valuable source of information about district initiatives.

He also has a simple invitation for community members interested in seeing the schools up close.

“Schools always need substitute teachers,” Prentiss said. “I encourage anyone who wants a first hand experience of what our schools provide to come and work in the schools for a few days.”

Town administrator, school supt. holding community meeting

SOUTH HADLEY – Join town and school officials for an important community meeting. Learn more about town finances and operations on Saturday, Aug. 1 at 9:30 a.m. at

the South Hadley Senior Center. Share your ideas and concerns. The discussion is moderated by TA Lisa Wong and School Superintendent Jennifer Voyik.

Can’t make it in person? Join on Zoom: tinyurl.com/SHCommunity1

Send comments and questions to Selectboard@southhadleyma.gov or call 538-5030 ext 6181.

Legal Notices

TOWN OF SOUTH HADLEY NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing pursuant to the Wetlands Protection Act and the Local Wetlands Bylaw to consider a Notice of Intent filed on behalf of Hillcrest Park Condos proposing to address and remedy the multiple deficiencies identified in the latest dam inspection report. The project includes but is not limited to removing woody vegetation growing too close to the

dam, repair erosion, repair deteriorated concrete, fill holes and install a floating safety barrier at the spillway. Said activities are within the 50-foot Conservation Zone and 100-foot Buffer Zone to Bordering Vegetated Wetland, Bank, and Land Under a Waterway. The project is also located within Riverfront Area. (Map 16, Parcels 116 & 185).

The hearing will be held on Wednesday, August 5 at 6pm virtually. Login information will be provided with the posted agenda on the Town website.

A copy of the request is on file in the Conservation Commission office, Room U6, in the Town Hall, and is available to the public for inspection between the hours of 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM Mon – Thurs. Plans are also available online at www.southhadley.org/603/Project-Plans.

Any person interested or wishing to be heard should appear at the time and place designated.

April Doroski
Conservation Chair

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CLUES ACROSS

1. Listen to

5. Presents

10. A type of guitar

14. Actor Idris

15. A citizen of Iran

16. Pretentiously artistic

17. Harness

18. Diamond weight measurement

19. “Better Call ___”

20. Fervent support

22. Male cat

23. Jewish spiritual leader

24. Disposed to venture or take risks

27. A way to nail

30. Cool!

31. Women’s ___ movement

32. “Losing My Religion” rockers

35. Step-shaped recess

37. A princess can detect it

38. Tractor-trailer

39. Leslie and Leon are two ___

40. Color at the end of the spectrum

41. Lines where fabrics are sewn

42. Dodgers great Hershiser

43. Floor covering

44. Traveled aimlessly

45. Rocker Stewart

46. Body art

47. Congressman (abbr.)

48. No seats available

49. Breaks apart

52. Hand gesture

55. Ballplayer’s tool

56. Sword

60. Baseball team

61. Upper bract of floret of grass

63. Italian Seaport

64. Mars crater

65. Tube on a shoelace

66. U. of Miami mascot

67. South American nation

68. Video game series “Max ___”

69. Upper body part

CLUES DOWN

1. German courtesy title

2. Ancient Greek personification of mercy

3. Jewish calendar month

4. Family of long-legged frogs

5. Photo

6. Delivered a speech

7. Lute used in Indian music

8. Decorated

9. Cease to stand

10. The bottom layer

11. Member of a Semitic people

12. Part of a ticket

13. Defunct monetary unit

21. Challenges

23. Body part

25. Tell on

26. By way of

27. Shady green alcove

28. Egyptian city

29. ___ and flowed

32. Widens a hole

33. Eurasian wheat

34. Act incorrectly

36. “Be back later”

37. Al Bundy’s wife

38. Ocean

40. Large root eaten as a vegetable

41. Units of subjective loudness

43. Music genre

44. A way to drench

46. Popular hot beverage

47. Silk-like cotton fabric

49. Rumanian city

50. Come back

51. Vaccine developer

52. Canadian law enforcers

53. Wings

54. Observational comedian Bill

57. Small fry

58. ___ Clapton, musician

59. Take a chance

61. Semi-liquid food for babies

62. Consumed food



SCHLEB from page 1

into the practice and “became a sponge” under the guidance of a reiki master. Convinced by a client to get into coaching for herself and encouraged by her husband, Schleb opened the doors to her business in 1999.

“I did three guided journals years ago,” Schleb said when asked about what inspired her first book. “To be honest, it was supposed to be a workbook for my clients and it just turned out to be over 250 pages. I thought ‘that’s not a workbook any more, that’s an actual book, so maybe I should format it such.’”

The end result is a self-help book designed to help people regulate themselves through difficult times. The goal, much like her business’ tagline, is to “bring calm to the chaos;” to help people regulate through a chaotic world. To maintain inner calmness, according to Schleb, is an essential need to navigate through the turbulent waters of life.

“I really want to help people achieve calm,” Schleb said. “I also think that calm is not a luxury, it’s a lifeline and I want people to realize that.”

The well-attended event included co-workers, friends and people whose lives were affected by the director's influence.

Turley photos by Ben Hernandez



Schleb recounts the story of how she got into holistic medicine and its influence in creating the self-help book.



Schleb smiles as she poses with the revealed book cover during the proceedings.

VERRIDE from page 1

The first figure was an estimated \$5,000 for Select Board coverage, a budget figure Wong said they have “typically” kept the same, though admitted they’ve “always sort of gone over.” She stated they were looking for “\$5,000 more.”

“For IT, this additional expense, this current fiscal year, all municipalities are supposed to become in compliance to some new ADA

laws,” Wong said. “It did get pushed off a year, but one of the things that is required is not just the kinds of things that you think of for ADA compliance.” The town administrator listed additional expenses as ramps and lighting, software, website maintenance as the main pain points to be compliant.

“There is a feature through our existing software system, CivicPlus, called AudioEye. This is going to allow us to con-

tract with them,” Wong said an explained the contractors would work on this next year to “get our web and all those systems in compliance;” an update which would require yearly maintenance thereafter.

Unemployment claims are also projected to influence the budget. Wong reported though unemployment numbers remained at the “same number” year after year, the past few years had seen a significant rise

due to layoffs, which she identified as being the most significant in the school department.

“There have been some changes there,” Wong said. “And if you remember from past budgets, some of the unemployment claims do linger, so we have some overages this year. So, those are all coming from group health insurance. So, all of those combined are \$107,020.”

The old firehouse’s bud-

get will also increase by \$1,000 due to the increased natural gas costs. Though Wong acknowledged the budget has been kept relatively the same over the years, she admitted repairs and “additional expenses” were sometimes needed to keep the department functional.

The joint board voted to call a special town election on September 1st to vote on a potential override of \$3.5 million over three fiscal

years were floated during discussion. Both the motion to hold the special town election and the override proposition question to be added to the ballot passed.

If approved, the override would cover costs for both the municipal government and the public schools, which would include health insurance funding, for three fiscal years. The additional tax would be added in January 2027 to encompass half of the fiscal year.

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