

TOWN Reminder

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Community meeting centers on school funding

By Ben Hernandez
Staff Writer

SOUTH HADLEY – Town Administrator Lisa Wong and Superintendent Jennifer Voyik discussed the new school initiatives during the Community Meeting on Aug. 1. Voiced concerns over the school budget in light of recent cuts were heavy on the minds of townsfolk during the proceedings.

“It doesn’t mean that’s it’s going to cut in half or disappear,” Town Administrator Lisa Wong said as she addressed public concerns of further potential budget cuts. “But we want to make sure that we are providing the services that our students need and we’re doing it an efficient way.”

Wong referenced previous public meetings when she discussed potential ways to

raise revenue and mentioned the hiring of a new vocational director, which was “part of the strategic positions” approved during the previous town meeting.

“So, that person is starting on Monday,” Wong said. “They come from a vocational technical school and have a lot of experience.”

Wong stated they were “excited” for the new hire’s onboarding and stated they

already offered ideas on ways to “increase Chapter 74 money coming in” with other proposed plans to also increase Chapter 70 revenue. Chapter 74 refers to the Massachusetts general law which governs state-approved vocational technical education programs, while Chapter 70 relates to the primary program used to secure state funding for public elementary and secondary schools.

“The piece about vocational schools is one where it’s a win-win because you are actually bringing in more dollars and it’s making financial sense,” School Superintendent Jennifer Voyik said. “You’re also aligning education to student needs.”

Voyik explained she saw a lot of “other areas” where other schools had been doing “the same thing” and cited specialized transportation as

an example. She stated the town “made a big investment a few years ago” to buy vehicles for the local district.

“My understanding is that’s improved service,” Voyik said. “It has also been a huge expense saver for us.”

She mentioned the decision saved “over a million dollars a year” as the town doesn’t have to outsource its

Please see **FUNDING**, page 9

Operation Backpack *featured at* Chamber's networking event



Brunelle's Marina by the Boathouse Restaurant in South Hadley hosted the annual networking event.

By Ben Hernandez
Staff Writer

SOUTH HADLEY – Brunelle's Marina in South Hadley hosted the August After Five networking event organized by the Amherst Chamber of Commerce. The annual multi-chamber event included drinks, food, speeches from local community businesses, live music and river cruises on the restaurant's ship; the Lady Bea.

“This is a traditional event that the Chamber has done in partnership with the South Hadley Granby Chamber for the past several years,” said Executive Director of the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce Jacob Robinson.

This year's event added a new chamber to the event, the West of the River Chamber of Commerce, which represents Western Springfield and Agawam. The director stated he was “really excited” about bringing more folks into the area to

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Turley photos by Ben Hernandez
Amherst Chamber of Commerce Director of Sales Robin Brown, Director of the South Hadley-Granby Chamber of Commerce Cody Goncalves and Marketing & Events Coordinator Polia Potochevska.

Town Administrator provides updates on West St. building

By Ben Hernandez
Staff Writer

GRANBY – The Granby Select Board gathered on Aug. 10 to discuss recent town developments. Town Administrator Ron Aponte announced the senior center parking lot was undergoing some ceiling maintenance, which is scheduled to occur either by the weekend of Aug. 15 or should “Mother Nature not cooperate,” on the weekend of Aug. 22.

“Just as a heads up,

there'll be no parking in here just in case someone wants to come in and do some work over the weekend,” Aponte said and mentioned building inspector concerns regarding information not being submitted to them “in the correct format or on a timely enough basis.”

Aponte expressed intent to organize a meeting between the Board of Assessors and the building inspector to “make sure everyone was on

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Granby Food Mobile fights food scarcity

By Ben Hernandez
Staff Writer

GRANBY – The Food Mobile on Aug. 14 was held at Church of Christ Congregational. The mobile combats food scarcity within the region, providing donated food to struggling families who came prepared with reusable shopping bags.

“How it mainly got started is with the Granby to Go program,” said Granby to Go Program Manager Judy DeLong. “We noticed in November, when the government shut down, that families were struggling even more than what they usually were.”

DeLong reached out to Granby to Go volunteers and non-profit organization Neighbors Helping Neighbors to help “put something together.” The first mobile

was coordinated in November and was held at Kellogg Hall. She described the initial service as “like a drive-through.”

“We noticed that also in the community, there were a lot of elderly that were also in need of food,” DeLong said.

“It's been a blessing to many in the community,” said Granby Church of Christ Christian Education Director and Co-Chair of Missions Tasondra Jardine. Jardine also is the co-president of both the Neighbors Helping Neighbors and Granby to Go's boards. “We average providing food to between 40 to 48 families per mobile in an hour.”

According to Jardine, the organizations are sister pantries which have

Please see **MOBILE**, page 2



Turley photos by Ben Hernandez
Granby to Go coordinators pose in front of generous food donations.

Cultural Council hosting movie night

By Ben Hernandez
Staff Writer

GRANBY – The Granby Cultural Council is hosting a free movie night on August 28 at Cindy's Drive-In campus. The large outdoor screen will be playing “Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Arc” in the field behind the town famous ice cream stand. Cultural Council chair Joanna Delphia recommends attendees bring blankets, lawn chairs and friends.

“Showtime is 8 p.m. We'll have a booth up for about

an hour,” Delphia said and mentioned later the booth opening will be at 7 p.m. “Of course, we'll be taking donations but again, the event is free for the public.”

The movie night is one of many events in the works for the council, who strives to put Granby on the map as both a cultural epicenter and a local tourist attraction. The events are designed to not only bring more eyes to the town but to increase awareness around the Cultural Council.

“I think we wanted to do something that was family

friendly,” Delphia said when asked why they chose the iconic movie as the night's screening. “It's an outdoor movie night so there may be noise, but I think so many people have seen this film that it won't be a problem for people to miss little parts or if they have to get up and get an ice cream.”

Delphia stated the well-known film was a way to pull people in and get townsfolk more involved with the wider community. She expressed her desire to have original and different events in town other than the usual band

music nights or other traditional outdoor concerts.

“We want to try to attract other artists, maybe have more ideas of what to do outside,” Delphia said. The chair stated she wanted to have more “diversity” in the Council's offerings, “maybe more diverse cultural events” as a supplement to more traditional planned outings. She cited plays as one potential fun offering for the community and expressed a desire for more venues within town limits.

Please see **MOVIE**, page 9

MOBILE from page 1

come together to provide food and volunteers for the event, which occur every two weeks. DeLong called the partnership a “win-win situation.” Granby food mobiles occur every two weeks, where families in need may receive food after answering a few basic questions.

“We take stats to see how many people are coming through, which just gives us a good idea of who we’re feeding,” DeLong said. “We do not ask them any personal information. That is not for us to do.”

The program started out slow until a massive boom in January. Ever since the start of the year, DeLong stated the mobile was “in full force” and attributes the growth to word of mouth advertising. The donated food is sourced through food drives, community donations and earmark grants provided by the state. DeLong credited recent grant windfalls to state representatives Mindy Domb and Homar Gomez.

“We noticed the families need the real basics, like the dairy, the meats and everything else,” DeLong said when asked about what was provided by the food mobile. “We get milk, we get cheese, we will get yogurt, we will get meats.”

The night’s offerings also included peanut butter, jelly and bread. Volunteers from the church’s Youth Group and Missions Board helped with food distribution, along with volunteers from the Granby Council on Aging.

“It means a lot,” DeLong said when asked what the program meant to her. “It’s seeing that kids succeed in school by having a full stomach. I have elderly family members and, seeing that they’re also getting fed, that’s really important too.”

As the program continues to grow, DeLong stated her

only goal is to reach more people. As she reflected on how the food mobile continues to address the scarcity gaps within the community, she strives to ensure no one has to make a difficult choice between eating and paying their bills.

“We are there to help them make sure they get something to eat,” DeLong said. “Like

I said, we want to reach as many people as we can in the community...because then we’re making sure people are getting food; so now, people don’t have to spend that extra money and they can pay the electric bill, or pay their mortgage or put gas in their car.”



The food mobile is housed on Church of Christ Congregational campus.



Zucchini, asparagus and red peppers presented in front of an eager volunteer.



Smiling volunteers prepare to do their part.

Turley photos by Ben Hernandez



A group photo of the joint non-profit organizational effort.



Volunteers ready themselves for service with Select Board member Mark Bail.



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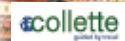
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Fatal crash involving electric scooter under investigation

SOUTH HADLEY — On Monday, Aug. 10 at approximately 9:15 p.m., first responders were dispatched to the area of Willimansett Street and Hollywood Street in South Hadley following a report of a motor vehicle crash.

A preliminary investigation indicates that an electric scooter and a Hyundai sedan collided in the breakdown lane while the Hyundai was traveling northbound on Willimansett Street.

The 19-year-old male operator of the electric scooter was transported to Baystate Medical Center for evaluation and treatment. He was pronounced deceased at the hospital on Tuesday. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will determine the cause and manner of death.

The 17-year-old male operator of the Hyundai remained at the scene. Contrary to some reports, this incident was not a “hit and run.”

The crash remains under investigation by the Massachusetts State Police Detective Unit assigned to the Northwestern District Attorney’s Office, the Massachusetts State Police Collision Analysis and Reconstruction Section, the Massachusetts State Police Crime Scene Services Section and the South Hadley Police Department.

The Town extends its deepest condolences to the family and loved ones of the young man who died. We recognize that this devastating event will have a lasting impact on the lives of all involved.

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. An upcoming meeting will be held 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.

Sept. 1 State Primary/Special Town Election Information

SOUTH HADLEY—Not sure if you are registered to vote in the State Primary/Special Town Election? **Check your registration online** at: <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ovr/>

Saturday, August 22 is the last day to register to vote in the State Primary/Special Town Election

If you requested a mail-in ballot by the deadline, **all ballots MUST be received by 8 pm on election day, September 1st.** Please allow 5-7 days to mail your ballot or drop it off in the Election Drop-Box behind Town Hall.

Tuesday, August 25th is the last day to apply to vote by mail in the State Primary/Special Town Election

Track the status of your mail-in ballot here: <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/WhereDoIVoteMA/TrackMyBallot>

In-person early voting will take place August 22nd and August 24th-28th. All in-person early voting will take place in the Town Clerk’s office.

Have questions about voting in South Hadley or want to view sample ballots for the September 1st elections? Visit the Town Clerk’s election website: <https://southhadley.org/620/Elections>

Please note that any links work best when opened directly within your web browser.

Please direct any questions, comments, or concerns to the Town Clerk’s office at 413-538-5030, ext. 6183, or elections@southhadleyma.gov.

Senior Center to show zoom presentation on 9/11 tragedy

SOUTH HADLEY – In observance of the 25th Anniversary of 9/11, the South Hadley Public Library, in partnership with the South Hadley Senior Center and South Hadley High School, will host a live community viewing of a special Zoom presentation by FDNY First Responder Joseph T. Bonanno on Wednesday, Sept. 2 at 6 p.m.

Sponsored by the 9/11 Tunnel to Towers Foundation, Mr. Bonanno will share his personal experiences and reflections on the rescue and recovery efforts at Ground Zero following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Attendees are encouraged to submit questions for Mr. Bonanno in advance through the South Hadley Public Library website at www.shadleylib.org.

Community members may attend the presentation at the South Hadley Public Library, the South Hadley Senior Center, or South Hadley High School. Please register with the location you plan to attend. Library registration is available at www.shadleylib.org. To register at the Senior Center, call 413-538-5030 (Option 3). Registration information for South Hadley High School will be announced soon.

This free program, sponsored by the 9/11 Tunnel to Towers Foundation, is open to the public. You do not need to be from South Hadley to attend.

Sharing the crops

Martha Terry, South Hadley, holds three large bowls of vegetables, tomatoes, zucchini, yellow squash, and cucumbers, from her backyard garden that her husband, Tom, will deliver to the local food pantry Neighbors Helping Neighbors. All the produce is grown pesticide free and fertilized with their own homemade compost. This was from a recent harvest.



Submitted photo

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

Church hosting summer event

GRANBY – Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Granby will be having their Summerfest on Sunday, Aug. 23 from 12 to 4 p.m. Chicken dinner is \$15 and includes a half bbq chicken, baked potato and corn on the cob, as well as dessert and bottled water. Hamburgers and hot dogs will also be available. Raffles prizes including \$500, \$250, \$100. Raffle baskets, bake sale, kids games, prizes, lottery trees and more. Fun for the whole family.



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SOCIAL SECURITY

Matters

By Russell Gloor

I worked for my ex-husband but wasn't paid and now have little Social Security. What are my options?

Author note: This is article number 500 in the AMAC Foundation's "Ask Rusty" series of Social Security articles, which have been published nationwide every week since February 2017. "Ask Rusty" is provided free of charge as an integral part of the AMAC Foundation's mission to "support and educate America's seniors." If you would like to help the AMAC Foundation fulfill its mission, charitable donations are graciously accepted at <https://amac-foundation.org/donate/>.

Dear Rusty:
Sadly, I was in business with my ex-husband. I'm a nurse and he was a chiropractor. He refused to pay me "on the books" and now, at age 73, after divorcing him due to his financial irresponsibility. (I don't want to burden you with the thefts that he perpetrated), I am stuck with a small \$773 Social Security payment each month. At age 73 I am now faced with having to go back into the workforce. Is there anything I can do to prove that I worked 40 years for my husband, but wasn't paid?

Signed: Distressed Divorcee

Dear Distressed:
We are so sorry to hear of your unfortunate circumstances. Assuming your ex-husband is now collecting Social Security retirement benefits or is at least eligible to if you are divorced at least two years, you should be able to collect an ex-spouse benefit as his former wife. In that case, you would be entitled to receive 50% of the Social Security benefit he was entitled to at his own Full Retirement Age because he and you were married for over 10 years. The way that will work is that you would continue

to receive your personally-earned \$773 monthly Social Security retirement amount earned from other employment, but you would also be entitled to a supplemental "spousal boost" to bring your payment up to half of the SS payment amount your ex-husband is entitled to at his SS Full Retirement Age. In other words, because you were married to your ex for more than 10 years, you are entitled to the same Social Security benefits as though you were still married. That is true, even if he has remarried and his new wife is also getting a spouse benefit from his record. You will still be entitled to an ex-spouse benefit from your ex-husband as his former wife. And if he dies before you, as a surviving ex-spouse you will get the same Social Security benefit he was receiving at his death, instead of the smaller amount you will get while you are both living.

Regarding rejoining the workforce, while you can certainly go back to work at age 73 without it negatively affecting your Social Security benefits, if you are struggling financially, I suggest you visit this website sponsored by the National Council on Aging: www.benefits-checkup.org. At this website, you can enter your zip code and find much information about other supplemental assistance you may be entitled to where you live, including healthcare and medication assistance, housing, nutritional assistance, etc. Regarding your question: "Is there anything I can do to prove that I worked 40 years and

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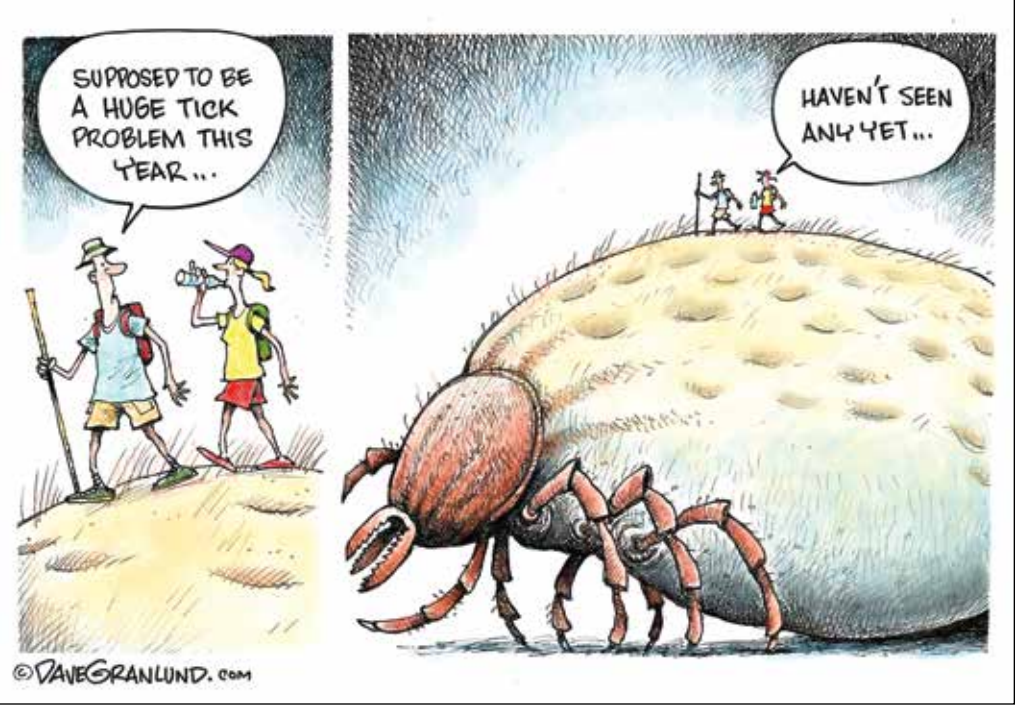
Weeds and seeds

I came back from vacation and was shocked as to how much the garden had grown. Crops were ready to be harvested and weeds that were merely inches tall had grown by leaps and bounds! Of course, we did have nearly a half foot of rain that week, and this probably played a part in such exuberant growth. Read on to learn how indiscriminate watering by Mother Nature can mean weeds, weeds and more weeds. Why such a growth spurt? Because just like other seeds, those of our least favorite weedy plants need both sunlight and water in order to germinate and grow well. When we water on purpose, we can direct the rain where we'd like – usually at the base of the plant. Unfortunately, rainfall that lands on a brick path, the garden aisle, and also in between plants within the row can cause a lot of weeds to sprout. Hand weeding and hoeing are both great exercise, and the best option for otherwise bare areas of young weeds. Many gardeners make the mistake, however, of hoeing too deeply and exposing more weed seeds to sunlight. Try to just scrape the surface of the soil. Stirrup hoes are particularly effective, skimming across the soil and severing the stems of weeds at the root line as they go. Very tall weeds can be cut down by use of garden shears, scissors or a week whacker, depending on the size of the area. Once cut back, you can cover the whole area with a

weed seed. In the future you can use mulch to reduce the amount a weeding you have to do – it will also help to conserve soil moisture in years that rainfall isn't so plentiful. Mulch doesn't have to be expensive – it can be as simple as a "biscuit" of spent hay, a few sheets of newspaper secured with stones, pine needles or grass clippings – as long as these materials are applied thick enough to exclude light, weed seeds should not sprout. Sometimes I will put a layer of corrugated cardboard down first, wet it then add the mulch on top. It really seems to make a difference having that preliminary layer to keep light out. This may be an unlikely pairing for this column, but there are plants that we desire to grow this time of year, and they are cover crops. Cover crops add lots of organic matter to the soil when incorporated in during the spring or summer months. While winter rye is the standard, you can grow oats, too. If sown right now, oats will germinate but die back as soon as frost hits. Leave the plants in place, though, and they will prevent erosion by holding onto the soil with their roots. Plant parts can be incorporated

ing cover crop seed, the soil surface should be scuffed up so that the seeds will make good contact with earth. Once prep is complete I rake the soil smooth and broadcast the grain, first throwing the seed in one direction and then the other. It's a good idea to divide the seed in half and try to cover all the area you have once, then go back and fill in the light spots with the rest. After the seed has been sown I'll drag the flat end of a steel rake over the soil surface to bury it ever so slightly. My goal is to have the seed sprout now, so that its roots will hold the soil and its nutrients in place over the off season. Winter rye will put on an amazing amount of top growth by spring – weed whack or mow it first to make incorporating easier. I am also contemplating "tarping" it to solarize the soil at the same time, then working in the dead plants by hand. Either way, if you do this for a few years in a row you'll watch the organic matter content of your soil soar, reportedly at a rate of three to four thousand pounds per acre!

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.



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.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Does South Hadley really need an override?

To the editor
In investigating budgets and State allocations, this is what I have been able to glean from existing State documentation. In the interest of transparency, it does not support local fiscal responsibility nor the claimed need for an override. With respect to Chapter 70 education funding, the State's FY27 budget fully incorporates revised foundation budget calculations for items like employee health insurance, special education and low-income students. Also, reflecting updated student enrollment and municipal fiscal capacity, the statewide minimum Chapter 70 aid is set at \$160 per pupil. South Hadley is scheduled to receive \$11,417,059 in Chapter 70 education aid; however, the total for all educational items amounts to \$12,674,279 (see: <https://www.mass.gov/cherry-sheet-estimates>). The Town will also receives other forms of state assistance through programs such as Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) @ \$3,356,200 and other local aid accounts, including,

\$63,921 for Public Libraries and \$118,014 for Veterans Benefits, as well as PILOT reimbursements (unremarkable @ 51,683). While the state determines the amount of aid each municipality receives, how those revenues are incorporated into South Hadley's long-term operating budget, capital plan, and financial decisions is determined by the Town through its own budget process. It is the Town's financial decisions and operating budget process that are highly questionable. One would also expect the Select Board, Appropriations Committee, Town Administrator and others in budgetary control to have more compassion for Town residents who might not have the capacity to bear the burden of additional permanent taxation. In conclusion, I urge South Hadley residents to go to the polls on Sept. 1st and vote "NO" on the Special Ballot Question [AKA override]. Thank you for voting the will of the people as was done on April 14.

— Dr. Stephen Frantz is a resident of South Hadley

\$3.5 million override for South Hadley is permanent

To the editor
On Sept.1, South Hadley voters will go to the polls to vote on a 3rd override proposal. I believe that many voters think that this override is only for 3 years to cover the deficit, but it is not. The proposed override is called an "operating override" and does not expire. This override, if approved, will permanently increase the base tax levy limit to fund recurring operational costs like schools, libraries and police beyond the 3-year period. It's interesting that you don't hear Town officials talking about this part of the override proposal. This is not like a Debt Exclusion which is a temporary

tax increase to directly pay off a specific project like the Mosier School. Taxpayers will be on the hook for 37% of the cost for that project. Get ready to dig into your pockets to pay off another 30 year bond. Once that specific debt is fully paid off, the extra tax levy drops off and ends. In a recent email I received from Town Administrator, Lisa Wong she states in part: "An override in this state is by definition and law a permanent increase unless voted on as an underride." If this 3rd override succeeds, it can only be reversed by an underride which must be placed on a local ballot and be approved by a majority of voters in a municipal

referendum. These override requests by the Town Administrator and the Selectboard is reminiscent of the Community Preservation Act (CPA) which was shot down by voters 3 separate times. That vote was for adding a 1 ½ % surcharge on property valued over \$100,000. This goes far beyond that. It is imperative that voters come out in force to defeat the latest \$3.5 million override on Sept. 1. Primary elections typically have a low voter turnout, but I urge all voters, especially seniors, to VOTE NO! This is too big of an issue to sit home on the couch. **Michael J. Wozniak South Hadley, MA**

Another South Hadley tax override looming

To the editor
When the tax override question was put to South Hadley voters in April 2026, they rejected it by a 2 to 1 vote. Now 4 months later, South Hadley voters will again be asked to approve a tax override ballot question. This time for \$3.5 million. Many voters

don't even know this is happening on Sept. 1. Here's the question on the ballot: "Shall the Town of South Hadley be allowed to assess an additional \$3,500,000 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purposes of operating the Municipal Government and Public Schools

for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026?" The Town Administrator has said that the \$3.5 million would stabilize the budget for the next three budget cycles. In actuality, an approved override will be a permanent tax increase. If the Town

Please see **OVERRIDE**, page 5

TOWN Reminder

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EVENT from page 1

network across the existing regions within the valley.

A yearly event tradition is to feature one non-profit organization which has done “good and positive work” within the community. This year featured Operation Backpack, a non-profit organization created by Sheila Adams, which provides school supplies for struggling students within the region.

Robinson believed the decision to feature the grassroots organization centered around the organization’s seasonal relevance, with school fresh in the minds of many as the education season begins. He applauded Adams’ work in the community and also saw the feature as an opportunity to “get engaged and support work happening in the educational space.”

“I’ve known about Sheila’s mission for a little while now,” said Director of the South Hadley-Granby Chamber of Commerce Cody Goncalves, who advocated for her spotlight during the night’s festivities. “I thought it was a great opportunity for her to spotlight her nonprofit and get some recognition.”

Throgs of small business owners gathered to hear

words from Chamber of Commerce members as the music died down. Concalves lead the proceedings. In his opening speech, he thanked the marina for the venue, the Boathouse Restaurant for catering the event and introduced the night’s guest speakers.

“For everybody that doesn’t know me or hasn’t talked to me tonight, my name is Sheila Adams and I run Operation Backpack out of South Hadley and Granby,” Adams said. “I’m sponsored by St. Pat’s Church but I have to get my own donations and money to run Operation Backpack.”

During her speech, Adams outlined the non-profit’s mission statement, as well as extending a wish for those in attendance to reach out and help her cause. She also expressed gratitude for People’s Bank for sponsoring her during the event.

“My mission is a very simple one,” Adams said to a quiet and attentive audience. “No child will go to school without a backpack and supplies. If we don’t take care of our children, who will take care of them? They’re our future and I really believe in that. Please remember me.”



General Cleaners booth.

Turley photos by Ben Hernandez

VERRIDE from page 4

wants to collect an additional \$3.5 million every single year, it will be free to do so. The Town ought to be upfront about that. I believe the lack of transparency and lack of clear information is contributing to a trust deficit. That trust deficit manifested as “No” votes in April.

Given that: (I) this override ballot question is coming so soon after the last one; (ii) many voters are still on

summer vacation; and (iii) arguably a significant number of registered voters have no idea this is happening, it seems likely and very unfair, that low voter turnout could determine the outcome of the tax override question.

This \$3.5 million override question is being tacked onto the September 1st state political primary election. But a majority of South Hadley voters are Independents or Unaffiliated and many don’t vote in Primaries. Because

our local elections typically only happen in April and November, even high propensity voters wouldn’t expect such an important ballot question in September.

Low voter turnout will increase Town government’s trust deficit, in my opinion. I urge all South Hadley voters to go to the polls on Sept. 1, at the South Hadley High School. Polls open at 7 a.m.

Linda Sachs
South Hadley



Live music was provided by DJ Jay Cote of Cote Entertainment.



South Hadley and Granby Chamber of Commerce President Steven Laplante smiles for the networking audience.



Sheila Adams introduces Operation Backpack to the crowd.



People’s Bank Assistant Vice President of Business Banking Paul Accorsi Jr. and Banking Central Manager Katarzyna Bernash pose for the camera.



The networking event was catered by the Boathouse Restaurant located next to Brunelle’s Marina.

UPDATES from page 1

the same page” and to avoid further miscommunications between the two departments. The town administrator also mentioned he met with “certain members” of the ongoing West Street Building project regarding IT costs submitted for the future municipal headquarters.

Aponte summarized the meeting as “very strange.” He described the quoted hardware costs as “very reasonable” though the projected labor costs were “astronomically through the roof.” With an expressed desire for a “little bit more consistency” between pricing and labor, Aponte reported he was still waiting to hear back from them.

“More or less, we told them to sharpen their pencils,” Aponte said.

The town administrator also provided an update on the new municipal building’s security systems. Though the Select Board had originally chosen Rackcliff as the main contractors to install cameras and the “entry security systems” on the premises, Aponte informed the Board the company was not on the state bid list.

“We were under the assumption that they were, but we found out that they’re not,” Aponte said.

After reaching out to other vendors it turned out Ochters, who also was in the bidding for the cable poll installation at the site, offered a better price for the full security solution. Aponte called the revelation a “fortuitous error.” As he concluded his report, Aponte also reported

the building inspector met last week with insurance representatives and stated early indications suggested “things went well.”

“We had all the proper documentation in place,” Aponte said and stated the International Organization for Standardization analysts seemed “pleased” with the presentation. Though he was hesitant to conclude the project was in the clear, he appeared optimistic about the results.

“Of course, we won’t know for sure until we actually receive the report back, probably in a few weeks, but that’s important for the insurance rates for the entire town,” Aponte said. “Not just necessarily the municipality and municipal buildings, but across the board.”

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Forge Baseball Clinic returns to Western Mass.

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

WILBRAHAM—One of the last sports camps of the summer of 2026 was held at Spec Pond in Wilbraham from August 10-13.

A total of 57 baseball and softball players between the ages of 6-16 from Wilbraham and the surrounding communities attended the four day clinic.

“This is our fourth year conducting the baseball clinics, and this is probably the best one yet,” said camp director Dustin Brisson “We have almost 60 kids, including a couple of softball players for the first time, this week. It’s the most campers we’ve ever had at this clinic and I’m very pleased.”

Brisson, who is the owner of Forge Athletics, was born in Florida and played college baseball at the University of Central Florida from 1997-2000. The first baseman was drafted by the Boston Red Sox in the 15th round of the 2000 MLB draft.



Ryan McLane does a running drill

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

Campers receive some instructions from one of the coaches in the Forge Baseball Clinic.

Please see **CLINIC**, page 7

Tri-County finals forced to a deciding game three

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

SOUTH HADLEY—Third-seeded Teddy Bear Pools & Spas had a golden opportunity to sweep the top-seeded St. Joseph’s Saints in the Tri-County League championship series.

Teddy Bear held a 1-0 lead entering the top of the third inning in game two.

St. Joe’s rallied for three runs in the third and fourth innings and they evened the best-of-three series at 1-1 following a 6-3 victory at South Hadley High School Friday, Aug. 7.

The game came to an end after five innings due to darkness, which didn’t please the Teddy Bear players and their supporters.

“It’s a very frustrating situation,” said Teddy Bear player/manager Ryan Magni. “I think we should’ve been able to finish the final two innings of tonight’s game at St. Joe’s Park before playing the deciding game tomorrow night.”

The baseball field at South Hadley High School doesn’t have any lights and the first pitch of game two was thrown by Teddy Bear righthander Sean Rosemond at 5:55p.m. The three umpires made the

decision to end the game at 7:45 p.m.

“The pace of tonight’s game was very slow,” said St. Joe’s manager Paul Marcinek. “We were very lucky to finish five innings which made it an official game.”

Had the game ended before the bottom of the fifth inning, it would’ve resumed at South Hadley High School the following day. If the score would’ve been tied, game two would’ve been replayed from the beginning, which has been a TCL rule for many years.

Teddy Bear won game one of the championship series, which was an old fashion pitcher’s duel, 3-1, at St. Joe’s Park, last Thursday night.

Righthander Matt Drobiak, who graduated from South Hadley High School in 2024, went the distance for Teddy Bear. He allowed a run on six hits and three strikeouts without issuing a walk.

Drobiak outdueled St. Joe’s righty Trey Yesu, who graduated from Monson High School in 2022.

Yesu also went seven innings allowing three runs (two earned) on six hits with six strikeouts and two walks.

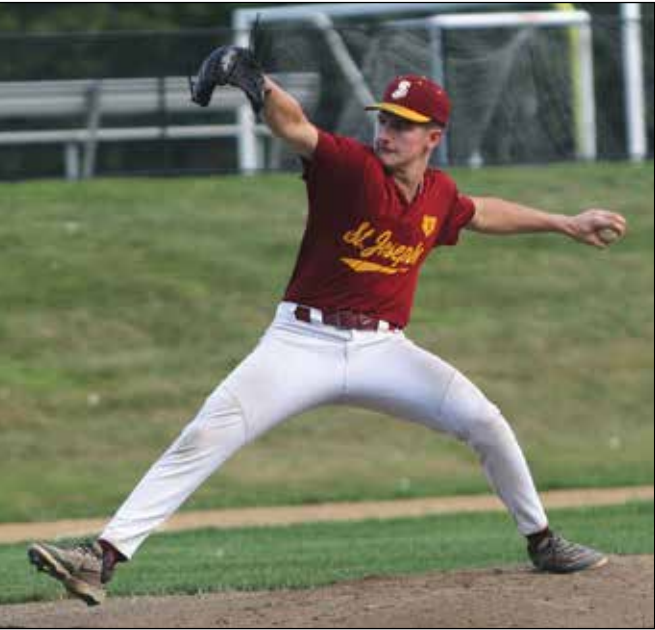
Teddy Bear took a 1-0 lead in game against lefthander

Jackson Hayes with two outs in the bottom of the first inning following a run scoring double by second baseman Ramon Jimenez.

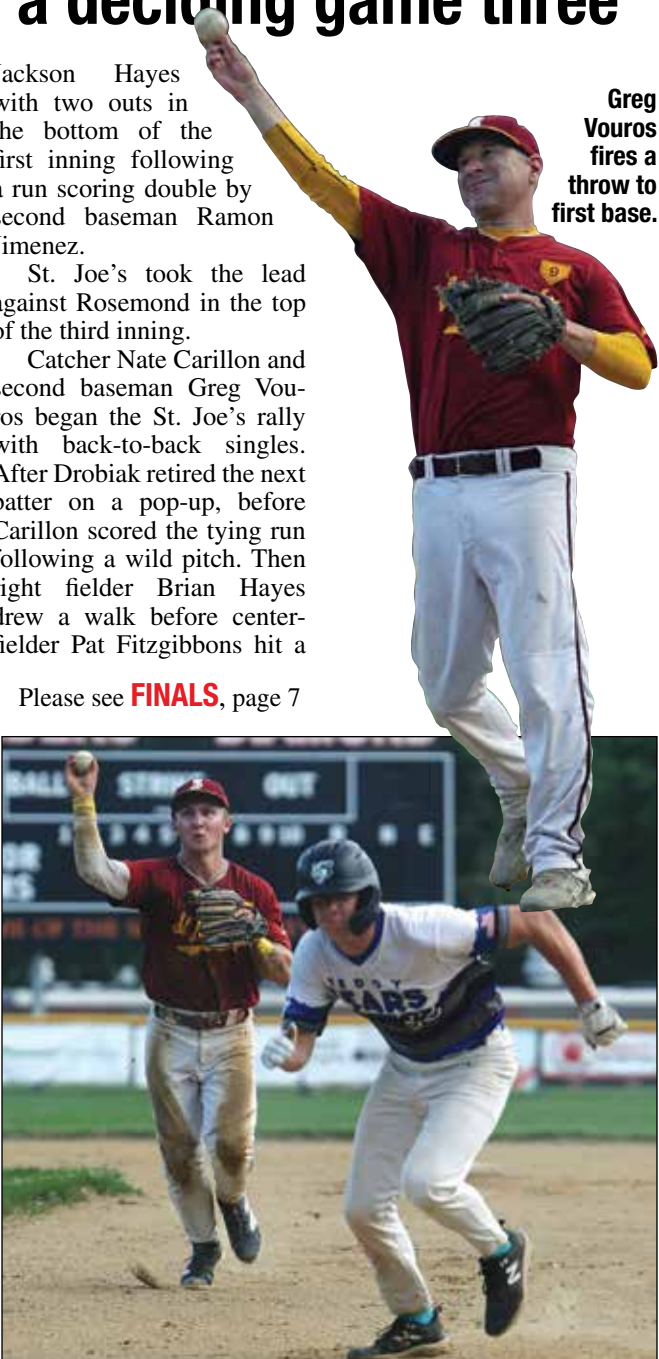
St. Joe’s took the lead against Rosemond in the top of the third inning.

Catcher Nate Carillon and second baseman Greg Vourros began the St. Joe’s rally with back-to-back singles. After Drobiak retired the next batter on a pop-up, before Carillon scored the tying run following a wild pitch. Then right fielder Brian Hayes drew a walk before centerfielder Pat Fitzgibbons hit a

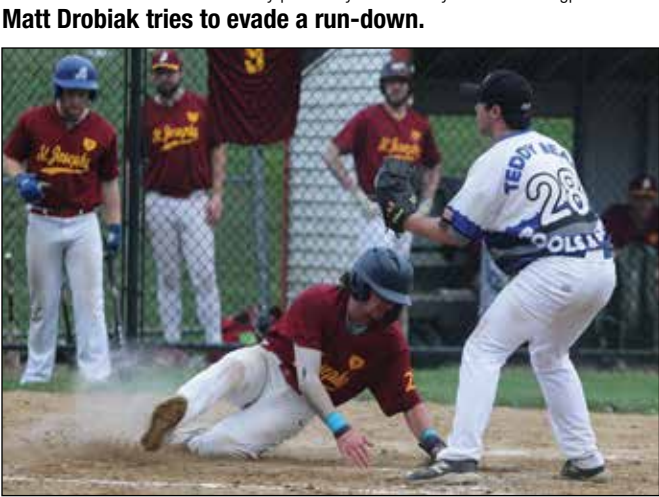
Please see **FINALS**, page 7



Lefty Jackson Hayes sends a pitch home.



Greg Vourros fires a throw to first base.



Nate Carrill slides safely home.

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

Matt Drobiak tries to evade a run-down.

Lusitano keeps the soccer going, hosts collegiate match

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

LUDLOW— In what could become an annual tradition, the UConn and UMass women’s soccer teams met in an exhibition match in front of a large crowd at Lusitano Stadium on Aug. 5.

Neither team was able to find the back of the net during the contest, played in three 30-minute intervals, but it was still a memorable evening at the 108-year-old stadium located on Winsor Street in Ludlow.

“It’s very exciting to be hosting a college soccer match here at Lusitano Stadium,” said Joe Ferrara Jr., who’s the Managing Director of the New England Mutiny and the General Manager of the Western Mass. Pioneers. “Both UConn and UMass have been very supportive of the Mutiny over the years. I also have a personal relationship with both coaching staffs.”

The last time a college soccer match was held at Lusitano Stadium was on October 17, 2018.

On that fall evening, the Worcester State University Lancers squared off against the Western New England University Golden Bears in a non-conference men’s match-up.

Cyrus Raines, a Belcher-town High School graduate, delivered his first collegiate goal during the second half, which lifted the Lancers to a 1-0 shutout victory. Raines, who’s a defender, finished his college soccer career with three goals.

The Worcester State head coach at that time was Jason Willis, who’s currently an assistant coach for the Western Mass Pioneers. He also coaches a Western United Pi-

neers team.

Willis graduated from Ludlow High School, and he helped the Lions boys’ soccer team win two state titles and three Western Mass. titles back in the 1990’s.

Ferrara, who also graduated from Ludlow High School in the 1980’s, played many soccer games on the grass stadium field.

“I recall scoring a lot of big goals on this field while I was in high school,” Ferrara said. “I also played for the Lusitano Whites, which won the first ever summer league championship on this field. I hope the college players appreciate the history of this place.”

This past spring, Ferrara approached UMass head coach Jason Dowiak about playing the exhibition match against UConn at Lusitano Stadium.

“Because it was UMass turn to host the exhibition, I asked coach Dowiak if he would be interested in playing the game here this year,” Ferrara said. “He thought it was a very good idea.”

It was something that Dowiak, who was hired as the UMass women’s soccer coach in 2017, had always wanted to do.

“I’m beginning my ninth season as the UMass women’s soccer coach and this is something that I’ve always wanted to do,” said Dowiak following the scoreless draw. “I’ve watched several Mutiny games here in the past and this was really a very special night for us. I’m very glad that the soccer community came out and supported us. This was an electric atmosphere for an exhibition game.”

A year ago, UMass posted a 5-8-4 overall record

Please see **LUSITANO**, page 7

CLINIC from page 6

Brisson, who played 345 minor league games, advanced to Double A Portland. His baseball career came to an end due to an injury.

"I was blessed to have the opportunity to play professional baseball," Brisson said. "I'm doing what I can to give back to these kids."

Some of the camp instructors were Lindsay Beer, David Wendt, Ace Adams Chade Shade, who's the head coach of the Springfield College baseball team, Pat Strange, who's the pitching coach at Westfield State University, Dan Gomez, who's the head baseball coach at Western New England University, and Terry Doyle, who's the the baseball coach at New England College.

"It's an honor to have these coaches working at our

clinic this year," Brisson said. "They want to help these kids. This is a high level skills clinic. I just want the older kids to have the opportunity to work with the

Brodie Craven makes a throw.



Adam Smola swings off a tee.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com
London Shepard focuses on solid contact off the batting tee.

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college coaches."

A couple of the guest speakers at the clinic were Brandon Seymour, who's the general manager of the Valley Blue Sox, Nancy Street, who's a board member of the Miracle League of Western Massachusetts, and Duke

Castiglione Jr who's a sportscaster at a television station in Boston.

Ray Fagnant, who grew up in Chicopee and is the Boston Red Sox Northeast Regional Scouting Supervisor, also spent a day at the clinic.

A few of the different stations were hitting, fielding, and throwing.

LUSITANO from page 6

and went 3-6-2 against their Mid-American Conference foes.

"I thought my team played very well against a fantastic UConn team, and this is a positive step for us," Dowiak added. "I feel like we can go into tough environments and still be successful."

One of the three graduated students listed on the UMass women's roster is Bianca Cardano, who's from Monson. She attended Minnechaug Regional where she played soccer for Nundi Goncalves, who's another Ludlow High graduate.

"I've played a lot of games at this stadium," Cardano said. "My family and friends were here tonight. It was a very special night."

Cardano, who's a management major, fell in love with the UMass campus when she made her official visit.

"UMass was always my top choice," she said. "The girls on the soccer team are like members of my own family. We're hoping to finish first in the Mid-American Conference."

Cardano, who's a starting defender, played in 16 games as a freshman before missing her entire sophomore season recovering from a right knee injury. She was limited to just three matches (two starts) in 2024.

A year ago, Cardano was a starter in ten of the 14 matches that she played in.

"We're really hoping that Bianca is able to play the whole season for us this year," Dowiak said. "She's a fantastic leader on and off the field."

Cardano isn't the only Minnechaug girls' soccer player to play soccer at UMass.

Jess Howe, who was a member of the Lady Falcons 2005 Western Mass championship team and the 2008 state title team, was a defender at UMass from 2009-2012.

UConn head coach Margaret Rodriguez played soccer at Lusitano Stadium for a couple of seasons as a member of the Western Mass. Lady Pioneers. She also played for the Mutiny for one year when they played their home matches at Agawam High School.

"We've led the Big East in fan support during the past several years," Rodriguez said. "This was a good way for my players to get used to playing in this type of a setting under the lights."

The Huskies, who finished the 2025 campaign with an 11-4-3 overall record and a 7-1-2 conference record, were picked to finish second behind Georgetown in the BIG EAST Preseason Women's Soccer Coaches' Poll.

Redshirt sophomore Se-Hanna Mars, who plays for the Mutiny, was selected to the preseason All-Big East team, along with senior Anaya Johnson.

There is a very good chance that the UConn and UMass women's soccer teams will be meeting at Lusitano Stadium again next August.

Western Mass. soccer fans will get another chance to take in collegiate action at Lusitano Stadium, as the Western New England University men's team hosts Wesleyan University on September 22 at 7 p.m.

FINALS from page 6

two run single into right field giving St. Joe's a 3-1 lead.

With one-out in the bottom of the third inning, Drobak, who started at first base, launched a solo home run over the left field fence.

Holding a slim 3-2 lead, St. Joe's scored three more runs in the fourth inning.

The first two runs crossed the plate following a two-run single down the right field line by Vouras.

At that point, Rosemond was replaced on the mound by righthander Mason Barcomb.

Shortstop Jacob Hayes greeted the relief pitcher with an RBI single into left field giving the visiting team a commanding 6-2 lead.

After Jackson Hayes retired the first two batters in the bottom of the fourth on flyballs to center, consecutive walks by third baseman Alex Gochinski, right fielder Ty Evans, and catcher Eric Rob-

said. "She keeps everything in order. I appreciate all the support from many different people that I've received running this camp."

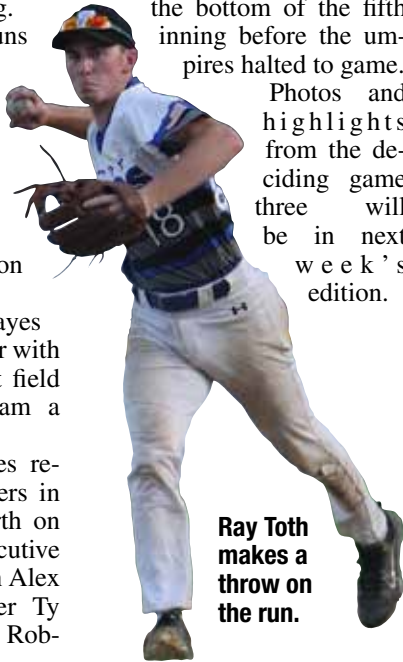
Brisson and his staff is already looking forward to holding the baseball clinic at Spec Pond again next summer.

ert loaded the bases. Another walk by Ryan Magni placed Teddy Bear's second run.

Relief pitcher Matt Irzyk, who wound up as the winning pitcher in game two, retired the only batter he faced in the fourth on a pop-up caught by Jacob Hayes.

Irzyk allowed a single to shortstop Ray Toth in the bottom of the fifth inning before the umpires halted to game.

Photos and highlights from the deciding game three will be in next week's edition.



Ray Toth makes a throw on the run.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com
Ramon Jimenez takes a swing.

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Gauthier engaged to Ward

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TYLER & TESSBOSTON, MA

Submitted photo

Tess Gauthier, of South Hadley is engaged to be married to Tyler Ward of Black Diamond, WA next July 31, 2027 in Boston, Mass.

SECURITY from page 4

wasn't paid?" Social Security determines benefits based solely on your personal earnings as reported to the Internal Revenue Service, which is, in turn, dependent on how your joint income taxes were filed over the years you worked in your husband's business.

Social Security is unable to assist you with IRS matters. I'm afraid yours is more of a legal matter you would need to pursue by discussing your situation directly with the IRS or engaging an attorney for assistance.

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-advisor or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.

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