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AGAWAM

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PTO member Alicia Gibbs and PTO President Deborah Paquette handed out wreaths to community members. SUBMITTED PHOTO

CHRISTMAS CHEER brought to tree lighting

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

AGAWAM – Clifford Granger Elementary School and William Sapelli High School held their annual tree lighting event at Granger school on Friday, Dec. 6.

At the event there was hot chocolate, cookies, live music and a special visit from Santa Claus to truly bring in the Christmas feel. The event was a great way to begin the holiday season for everyone in town.

"You're sipping your hot chocolate, there is music, there are friends and parents, it just feels very cozy," PTO President Deborah Paquette said.

This was the fourth year of this event and the community has enjoyed it each year. It brings the community together in a wonderful way.

"It is a common way for ev-

eryone to just spread joy," PTO member Alicia Gibbs said.

"It brings us all together in a way that only the holidays can and it just reminds us that the magic is alive and well," Paquette said.

Paquette has found the event to hold a special place for her and she loves seeing the community come together to celebrate it.

"I think that the term that has been most used for this event has been 'like a Hallmark moment,'" Paquette said. "It's very community focused, it is very warm...it's really special."

One of the highlights of the event was when Santa Claus arrived on a firetruck.

"We always need Christmas cheer to light the tree so we always have a special guest come

CHEER | page 9

Former city councilor passes away

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

AGAWAM – Former City Councilor and City Council President James "Jimmy" Cichetti passed away on November 23.

Many in the Agawam community are mourning his passing and want to take a moment to remember him for all the good he has done for the town.

"The one sentence that really sums up is 'Jimmy is he had a big heart,'" Mayor Christopher Johnson said. "Whenever someone needed something, he was there. If you needed someone to just talk to, he was there."

"He was such a kind soul,"



James Cichetti

Chief of Staff to the Mayor Barbara Bard said. "He was just always so happy and thoughtful."

Bard fondly recalled that Cichetti was always one of the first people to wish her a happy holiday, no matter what the holiday was.

"One of the first, if not the first, text a slew of people would get on a holiday morning would be from Jimmy Cichetti," Bard said. "I don't know how he texted everybody he knew first thing in the morning, but he did."

Johnson knew Cichetti as a person who was always willing to help others, whether it be acting as a listening ear, lending a hand

or helping someone to laugh.

"He was a great friend," Johnson said.

Cichetti spent eight years on the council, with two of them as the council president. Many remember him as a consensus maker on the council.

"Jimmy was a hard worker, he was council president for a couple of years and he did a great job in that role and he was a consensus builder," Johnson said. "Whenever there was a major issue that was coming up, he was there trying to get people together to do the right thing."

Bard met Cichetti mainly through his work on the city council.

"When he came on the council I helped train him and we just

COUNCILOR | page 9

Library holds marbled paper painting event

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

AGAWAM – The Agawam Public Library hosted an event for kids in grades five and six to come in and do marbled paper painting.

Each kid was given a tray that they coated in a layer of shaving cream. They then put drops of food dye into the shaving cream and were able to swirl it around.

After they finished doing this, they placed a piece of paper on top of the shaving cream and pressed it into their concoction. They then lifted the paper and with it came their painting.

Youth Associate Isabelle Malvezzi was the one who chose this program for the kids.

"I wanted to do something that I hadn't done before and that the kids hadn't done before," Malvezzi said.

Malvezzi had some leftover shaving cream at the library thanks to a previous event where kids got to make slime and she wanted to make use of it.

Then she saw this program idea on a library blog and she thought it would be a great fit for the library.

Malvezzi enjoyed getting to

see the kids figure out how the project worked and getting creative with it.

"My favorite part was seeing the stuff they made later in the class," Malvezzi said. "At first you could see they were a little unsure of how it worked and what they wanted it to look like but once they grasped the concept they were able to start planning it out."

The kids were able to ask for food dye in the colors of red, blue, yellow and green and they could have drops of it placed anywhere

in the shaving cream. This allowed them to make their own colors and designs as they went along.

After they finished making a variety of different marbled paper paintings, Malvezzi gave each child a paintbrush for them to make edits to their paintings.

Each of the kids seemed to enjoy the process and getting creative with the different color combinations they could use.

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By the end of the program, the kids had a variety of different marbled paper paintings to show off. TURLEY PHOTO BY QUINN SUOMALA



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Local business gives back



On Thursday, Nov. 14, Alvanos & Associates participated in Ameriprise National Day of Service at the Western Mass Food bank in Chicopee. The Alvanos & Associates staff and their clients spent the afternoon sorting approx. 5,000 pounds of frozen meat for the local food banks. They enjoyed the opportunity to visit the new, state-of-the-art facility and appreciate the efforts of those who made the volunteering experience so enjoyable.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Community Grange to hold annual Holiday Bazaar Dec. 14

FEEDING HILLS – Community Grange #382 will hold their annual Holiday Bazaar on Saturday, Dec. 14 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Grange Hall located at 47 North West St, in Feeding Hills.

Featured will be a bake sale, soup and baked beans to go, ornaments, wreaths,

décor, crocheted items, S & S Handmade Soap, Trudi's Sewing Creations, Joelle and Pat's knitted hats, mittens, scarves, Paws-a-tively Delectable and Tastefully Simple.

There will be a basket raffle and the fair is open to the public.

WOC holds successful food drive

AGAWAM – On Nov. 14 Work Opportunity Center, Inc. held their 13th annual food drive in front of Geissler's Supermarket in Agawam to collect items for donation to the Springfield Open Pantry. WOC, Inc. would like to thank Agawam residents for their overwhelming generosity. Together we raised \$144.32 in monetary donations and were able to bring 456 non-perishable items to The Springfield Open Pantry via the Rock 102 Mayflower Marathon. Many local families will benefit this holiday season from these donations.

WOC, Inc. is a nonprofit agency in Western MA which services adults with developmental disabilities. This organiza-

tion runs a Community Based Day Services program as well as two work programs. Within their CBDS program, they have a location in West Springfield that services individuals that reside in Agawam and West Springfield. CBDS is designed to enable individuals to enrich their life and enjoy a full range of activities by providing opportunities in social, educational and community activities.

The primary goal of the program is to have its participants become fully integrated and have access to their community. It was the CBDS program that organized and carried out the food drive to benefit The Open Pantry.

Department of Public Works to take Christmas trees in early January

AGAWAM – The Department of Public Works is pleased to announce, in addition to weekly trash and recycling services, Republic Services will be providing Christmas Tree and Bulk Collection services during the month of January.

Christmas Tree collections will take place the week of Jan. 6 through Jan. 10.

Christmas trees will be collected on the same day as scheduled trash collection. Please be aware that the regular trash truck will not be collecting trees, a separate truck

will be running for the collection of trees.

Christmas trees 7' or larger must be cut in half and placed on the tree belt no earlier than 7am of the collection day listed above.

Trees in plastic bags will not be collected.

It is not the responsibility of the hauler to dig out trees buried in the snow due to plowing or excessive snowfall prior to the scheduled collection days.

In the event of a snow delay during the scheduled collection week, residents

should make alternative arrangements to recycle their trees at the Bondi's Island Landfill. Collection routes for trees will not be re-scheduled.

Residents may dispose of trees prior to or after the scheduled collection days at the Bondi's Island Landfill.

January Bulk Collection is by appointment only. Residents who receive curbside trash and recycling services from the town and are in need of a bulk pick up in January should contact Republic Services at 413-

557-6700 to schedule a date for collection.

Bulk pick-ups will take place between Jan. 13 and Jan. 24, by appointment only. Any items left on the curb without an appointment will be the responsibility of the home owner to remove and dispose of. For more information on bulk collection services visit the DPW page of the town website at www.agawam.ma.us

For any questions regarding either service, please contact the DPW at 413-821-0600.

Agawam Day to be celebrated in FLA March 5

AGAWAM – The 44nd annual "Agawam Day in Florida" will be held on Wednesday, March 5, 2025 from 10 a.m. to p.m. Former Agawam residents, old friends, classmates and relatives will meet at Fort DeSoto National Park, St. Petersburg, FL, for a reunion, picnic, raffles, hugs and to share old memories. For more information, contact: Hank Drewnowski call/text at 860-462-7273 or email hdrew2452@gmail.com.

Community artists hang in APL

AGAWAM – The Agawam Public Library is happy to welcome back the Agawam Community Artists and Artisans for their yearly December exhibit. The ACAAs mission is to promote and encourage community participation in and develop an awareness and appreciation of the arts. They offer educational opportunities to local artists and artisans, and provide connections and camaraderie among artists in the area. Meetings for the ACAA are held at the Agawam Public Library on the second Wednesday of the month, where artistic demonstrations are exhibited. For more information on the ACAA, visit agawamarts.com. Art

from a variety of local artists and a variety of mediums will be displayed on the main floor gallery walls, in the Johnson Case, and in the cases leading to the Youth Room.

Visitors are welcome at the Agawam Public Library during regular open hours: Monday through Thursday 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Fridays and Saturdays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Details on holiday hours can be found on our website and social media. Please contact Adult Services Library Associate, Erica LeFebvre at (413) 789-1550 x8858 or elefebvre@agawamlibrary.org if interested in displaying artwork at the library.

Notice of Board of Appeals open position

AGAWAM – Please be advised that there is an opening on the Agawam Zoning Board of Appeals effective January 2025. The opening is for a regular position.

Interested parties should contact Barbara Bard in the City Council Office at 413-726-9716 or send in a letter of interest to bbard@agawam.ma.us as soon as possible.

Feline Friends Inc. holding holiday donation drive

FEEDING HILLS – Feline Friends Inc. will be holding two monthly donation drives at Smithland Pet & Garden Center on Saturday, Dec. 14 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. as well as Jan. 4. Volunteers will be collecting food, litter and monetary donations for the kitties. Opened bags/boxes will be accepted.

Smithland, a valued sponsor, is stocked with Friskies Pate or Shreds canned food (single flavor cases are preferred), many Fancy Feast varieties and unscented, clumping cat litter.

Feline Friends would also appreciate jars of baby food (meat/poultry varieties), paper towels, puppy peepads and gift

cards to Smithland or Costco. Checks or cash are always gratefully accepted at Feline Friends, P.O. Box 174, Feeding Hills, MA 01030.

Just a reminder that there is a donation bin at Smithland near the registers and at the Agawam Public Library.

Please add contact information with donations if donors would like an acknowledgment.

Feline Friends Inc. is a community-based, nonprofit sanctuary that does not discriminate against any cat based on age, gender or disability.

More information about our sanctuary may be found on our website at felinefriendsinc.org or our Facebook page at Feline Friends Cat Sanctuary.

Contact us with questions at info@felinefriendsinc.org or by phone at 413-786-5019.



NAMI-WM offers decluttering program fundraiser

HOLYOKE – NAMI-WM will be holding a Responsible Decluttering Program fundraiser at our office; 1221 Main Street, Suite 100, in the Catherine Horan Medical Building.

Volunteers will be collecting house-

wares, gently used clothing, towels, small household appliances, books, sporting goods and much more. All clothing should be in kitchen or 30 gal. size trash bags, durable goods should be in manageable size boxes. Anything wet or soiled, in non

- working condition, and any baby safety items will not be accepted.

Call the office to arrange a time to drop off items or to have them picked up. Visit the website to find a list of items that will be accepted.

'Blue Christmas' Service offered at St. David's

AGAWAM – Saint David's Episcopal Church is offering an ecumenical "Blue Christmas" service on Thursday, Dec. 19 at 7 p.m. This is a special service designed for those who find the Christmas season depressing or challenging. It will be led by the Rev. Domenic, a certified Grief Recovery Specialist and a Pastoral Care Specialist certified by the American Association of Pastoral Counselors. He has a practice offering individual counseling specializing in all dynamics of grief and loss. The service should last a little under one hour. Everyone is welcome.

Saint David's is located at 699 Springfield Street, Feeding Hills. For more information, please call the Church office at 413-786-6133 or check the Church website at www.stdavidsagawam.org.

PLEASE RECYCLE
THIS NEWSPAPER

Library announces upcoming adult programs offered in December

AGAWAM – The Agawam Library has a lot to offer. It's not too late to submit a tree for the Festival of Trees. Create a tree using unusual materials. Think egg cartons, balloons, or soda cans-and work together with your family, team, classroom or troop. The trees will be on display on the library's lower level throughout December.

The Buck-a-Bag Book Sale returns. Browse the book sale shelves and fill the bag with books, CD's and DVD's for only \$1. Bags will be available at the Information Desk. All proceeds benefit the Friends of the Agawam Library.

On Thursday, Dec.12 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., drop in throughout the day to catch a holiday movie marathon. And while you are watching, participate in making some holiday cards and/or gift tags. This is a perfect drop-in program to relax and finish up the flourishes before the holiday.

Adult Craft Night will take place on Thursday, Dec. 19 at 6 p.m. in the Clini Community Room. Join us for a craft night featuring paper folding to create beautiful Nordic Stars. These stars are sure to enhance your holiday décor. Participants are asked to please bring a ruler with them if possible. Please register for this event. Our Writers Group will also meet on Thursday, Dec.19 at 6 p.m. in the Peirce Conference Room.



There are two great authors lined up in our virtual author talk series for the month of December. Dr. Jeffrey Post from the Smithsonian Institute will present Uearthed: Exploring the Smithsonian National Gem Collection on Wednesday, Dec. 4 at 2 p.m. And bestselling author Laura Dave will discuss Pulse-Pounding, Family Driven Mysteries on Wednesday, Dec. 11 at 2 p.m. Please note that these are virtual author talks. Please visit <https://library.org/agawamlibrary/upcoming> for more information and to register.

Registration for adult programs is open now. Please visit our online calendar www.agawamlibrary.org to register, or call the Information Desk at (413) 789-1550 X4. A few reminders about holiday hours this month. The Agawam Library will be open 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24 and remain closed on Christmas Day. The library will be open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on New Year's Eve, Dec. 31 and remain closed on New Year's Day.

During the winter months, any closings or late openings will be reported to local TV stations 22 and 40, as well as their websites. Inclement weather closings or delays will also be posted on our social media platforms.

Please visit the website for more information www.agawamlibrary.org.

Colleen applications available

AGAWAM – Applications are open for the Agawam St. Patrick's Committee 2025 Colleen Coronation.

The purpose of the Agawam St. Patrick's Colleen Pageant is to promote a sense of spirit in the Irish community and Irish awareness to all. The Colleen must be present at: The Colleen Gathering, the Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Parade and the Agawam Memorial Day Parade.



She will also attend events and functions throughout the "Irish Season." It is a fun and exciting experience, as well as a great honor for the Colleen and her Court. Commitment to your Irish heritage is an important factor in the section process. Applications are due on Dec. 20. Abbie Fiore, President and Colleen Mom, will contact you to let you know that we have received your application as well as any updates that we will have.

The application is now available at a link located on Agawam St. Patrick's Committee's Facebook page.

According to the application, potential contestants must fill out the application, and include a photo of themselves and answer several questions. An informational meeting for contestants will be held on Saturday, Jan. 4, 2025 at 11 a.m. at the Agawam Public Library.

Cooper's offers Blessing Bracelets

AGAWAM – Cooper's Gifts has just received its largest order of Blessing Bracelets in the 8 years that the shop has been selling them. "They truly are the perfect gift for any occasion; from birthdays to retirement and encouragement to bereavement; for the good times and the tough times," says Kate Gourde, owner and shopkeeper of Cooper's Gift in Agawam.

The Blessing Bracelet is a phenomenon that has evolved from a gift between a few friends to a scale of over 1.5 million bracelets sold worldwide and a Hallmark movie, *The Blessing Bracelet (2023)*, starring Amanda Schull and Carlo Mark.

"Blessing Bracelets are a physical reminder to pause and think of 4 things in your life that are a blessing. These bracelets are beautiful quality; they are made of sterling silver, pearl beads and semi-precious stones, and some are accented with crystals or charms. They have been a top seller for many years, but the movie about the story behind the bracelets has really made them take off. We love this line for so many reasons; they come from a woman-owned company, are made in the U.S. and a give-back line to boot. That's our favorite part, we love gifts that give back," said Gourde.

Each bracelet is a reminder to appreciate what you have and comes with a tag that reads: "This is a Blessing Bracelet. Whenever you wear it, acknowledge one blessing in

your life for each bead on the bracelet. Each time you are drawn to the bracelet, silently find four people or things you can be grateful for. Be grateful for: your children, a flower, your dog, a perfect cup of coffee, a roof over your head—just find something. The more you wear the bracelet and the more blessings you find, the more you will be blessed. In one year, if followed, you will be aware of a profound change in your life."

"I wrote the tag after experiencing a major shift in my own life that taught me how important it is to be aware of all that you already have," shared Dawn Sprong, founder of *The Blessing Bracelet*. "Through our work, we have been able to help people rescue and adopt animals, support those in need, create mindfulness programs, form friendships and inspire ourselves and others [to see] that dreams really do come true. We create jewelry with [the] intention to inspire a shift in perspective into gratitude and consciousness, because changing ourselves changes the world," concluded Sprong.

They are truly a staff pick. "We all have our favorite Blessing Bracelets, and we all wear a personal stack. They are always introducing new designs; this year they outdid themselves with gorgeous holiday introductions, like snowflake crystal quartz and black Murano glass with silver and gold leaf accents. Plus, we now have some specialty trio sets that are breathtakingly beautiful," said Gourde.

Agawam DPW collects used lights

AGAWAM – Frustrated with broken holiday lights, or just have a bunch that no longer suits the needs? No matter what the reason, resist the urge to throw old holiday lights in the curbside trash or recycling collection cart. Holiday light strings are known as "tangles" in the recycling industry. Tangles are things like plastic bags, ropes, cords, hoses, wires, and light strings that jam sorting machinery by wrapping around the equipment, which is dangerous for workers.

Light strings may be delivered to the Department of Public Works front office through Jan. 31. This program is for light strings only: incandescent, LED and icicle light strings with wires and attached bulbs. Boxes, bags, and packaging must be removed before placing lights in the recycling container. Alternative options for recycling light strings would include mail back programs such as HolidayLEDs.com or Christmas-light-source.com.



Girls scout cookie season kicks off

HOLYOKE – More than 400 Girl Scouts and their families will gather at the Mass Mutual Center on Saturday, Dec. 7 from 4 to 6 p.m. to kick off "Embrace Possibility", which reflects the Girl Scout Cookie Program theme for the 2024/2025 season.

Activity stations set up around the concourse reflect the cookie season theme and are designed to build business savvy skills to help girls run and manage their Girl Scout Cookie businesses online and in person. The "cook-

ie rally" begins at 4:00 PM and then at 6 PM Girl Scouts and their families join Boomer and the Springfield Thunderbirds for an action-packed hockey game.

During Girl Scout Cookie season, each girl sets out to sell delicious cookies while also building entrepreneurial and business skills that are imperative for leadership and future success.

Girl Scout Cookie order taking begins Dec. 11. Community cookie booth sales begin Jan. 17, 2025 and continue through March 16.

WSU launches paramedic program

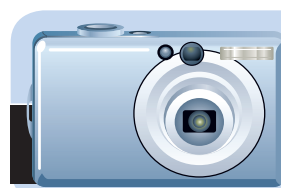
WESTFIELD – Westfield State University is excited to announce the launch of its new Paramedic Program, beginning January 2025. Developed in collaboration with key healthcare providers and emergency management organizations-including Coolidge Dickinson Hospital, Holyoke Medical Center, Mercy Medical Center; Fire Departments from East Longmeadow, Longmeadow, Southwick, and Westfield; and EMS providers from Chapin Ambulance, Northern Berkshire EMS, and Cataldo Ambulance - this program addresses the critical regional demand for highly skilled emergency medical professionals.

The program is designed to support workforce development by establishing a direct career pathway for Emergency Medical Technicians to advance to Paramedics. Through strong partnerships with employers in the field, Westfield State ensures the

curriculum reflects industry standards, equipping students with the skills and expertise needed for immediate employment in emergency medical services.

Students will benefit from a comprehensive curriculum, expert faculty, and state-of-the-art training facilities. The program includes one year of classroom instruction followed by clinical, field, and capstone internships, and can be completed in two years or through an accelerated 12-18-month track. To meet the diverse needs of working students, the program offers hybrid live lectures enabling remote participation with the in-person classes. Hands on skills labs are held in-person.

Applications are now open for the inaugural class starting Jan. 7, 2025. Prospective students can visit www.westfield.ma.edu/paramedic for detailed admission requirements and program specifics.



Send Us Your Photos!

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Opinion

Guest Column



Was your IRMAA article incorrect?

Dear Rusty:

In a recent article about Medicare's "Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount" and how IRMAA affects Social Security taxes, you described which income gets included in the IRMAA calculation. You said it is "your combined income from all sources, including 50% of the SS benefits you receive." That 50% number might be true in some cases, but I think a more accurate, general answer is that "your taxable SS benefit is what gets added to IRMAA." For example, we have enough income every year that we are always taxed at 85% of our SS benefit, so 85% of our SS values get added to our IRMAA. The way your answer reads, a reader of the article might think everyone has 50% of their SS benefit added to IRMAA.

Signed: IRMAA Victim

Dear IRMAA Victim:

I think you may have confused two terms I used when describing Medicare's "Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount" or "IRMAA." I also used the term "MAGI" (Modified Adjusted Gross Income), and it's important to distinguish between those two terms.

MAGI is what determines if the IRMAA provision applies, and IRMAA will affect how much your Medicare premium is. But MAGI is also used for another purpose - to see if your SS benefits are taxable. Your MAGI consists of your Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) from your income tax return, plus any non-taxable interest you may have had, plus 50% of the SS benefits you received during the tax year

IRMAA is a factor which will increase your monthly Medicare premium if your MAGI is over certain thresholds for your tax filing status. MAGI is used to determine if a higher Medicare premium applies, and it is also used to see if your SS benefits are subject to income tax.

Your MAGI does, indeed, always use only 50% of the SS benefits you received during the tax year (not 85% in some cases). That's because the SS contributions included in MAGI relate to SS contributions your employer paid on your behalf. Only half of your received SS benefits are used to determine MAGI because that's the amount of your SS benefits attributable to your employer's contributions. Said another way, the SS payroll tax you personally paid while working was from your taxable income, so it is not included in MAGI. But the amount your employer contributed was not taxable by the IRS and, thus, is included in MAGI. So, it's the portion of your SS benefits attributable to your employer which is included in MAGI. Thus, the terminology that MAGI is "your combined income from all sources, including 50% of the SS

SECURITY | page 5



Guest Column

Kissing balls for a new porch



It's really funny that sometimes I have to consult my own columns to remember how to do something. You see, now that the front porch is done, there is a new area to decorate, an area well-suited for kissing balls! My daughter and I were at the local garden center and there were so many beauties for sale.

Of course it would break my budget to buy one to go in the middle of each pair of columns, so it

looks like I'll be making them myself.

The first thing you will need is a styrofoam ball. One that is six inches in diameter would make a good size kissing ball.

Then gather a coat hanger and some wire cutters. Snip away the hook and straighten out the rest. Insert it through the middle of the ball and bend one end as a hanger.

About 18 inches will be showing; it will look better if you choose a gold colored hanger. If not, you can always cover it later.

Getting the piece of wire into the dead center can be difficult, so use a long wooden pick to pre-make the hole. After that insertion will be easy.

Having a selection of greens on hand will make a pretty kissing ball. Scavenge the landscape for holly, yew, white pine, juniper and the like. Now it is time to insert clumps of greenery into the ball.

GARDEN | page 5

Most Americans aren't obsessed with politics



The 2024 election is over, but the arguments about what it means are continuing. Did Donald Trump and the Republican Party win a mandate to govern as they wish? Did Democrats try too hard to appeal to their political base? Or not hard enough?

But drawing conclusions about the meaning of an election, especially about what it says about the American people, is difficult. Most voters simply aren't that focused on politics. They aren't obsessed with the latest news from Washington or what the candidates are saying.

As Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear writes in a recent New York Times column, "When most Americans wake up in the morning, they are not thinking about politics." They are thinking about their jobs,

their finances, their next doctor's appointment. They are thinking about feeding their families and getting their children off to school. They want to know their communities are safe.

"If you are staring at the cost of your child's prescription and wondering how you are going to pay for both it and your family's dinner," Beshear writes, "the offense of the day in Washington, D.C. or the latest crazy thing a politician said just isn't as important."

I couldn't agree more. Those of us who write about government and public affairs often forget that we're in the minority. For most people, they may follow the news, and most of them will vote; but politics, especially national politics, isn't at the top of their daily concerns.

One of the first lessons I learned when I was in Congress was that people care deeply about local matters. They pay a lot less attention to national issues. They are even less worried about international affairs.

Their concerns are much closer to home.

In my district, the experience was the same whether I was visiting with constituents in cafes,

CONGRESS | page 5

Election letters to the editor welcome

The Agawam Advertiser News welcomes readers to participate in this year's election campaigns by writing letters to the editor for publication on these pages. Letters of up to 250 words from local residents endorsing candidates on the ballot or discussing campaign issues should be sent to The Agawam Advertiser News, care of Turley Publications, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, faxed to 413-289-1977 or emailed to aan@turley.com. Please include a daytime telephone number for verification purposes (it will not be printed). Letters must be received by noon Monday to be considered

for that Friday's newspaper. No attack letters will be printed. No letters written by candidates supporting their own candidacy will be printed. If the volume of letters received is larger than the space available in the newspaper, or if the letters become repetitive, the newspaper reserves the right to print a representative sample. No endorsement letters will be printed in the last edition before the election. For more information, call 413-283-8393.

Campaign news

As part of its election coverage, the news-

paper plans to print stories about contested races for Congress, state Senate, state House, district attorney and Governor's Council during the weeks leading up to the election, as well as a question-and-answer voters guide. In order to ensure fairness to all candidates, no political press releases will be printed, nor will reporters cover political rallies or fundraisers.

Candidates who wish to further publicize their candidacy, beliefs and events may contact advertising, 413-283-8393 about paid advertising in The Agawam Advertiser News.



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413.283.8393
Fax: 413.283.7107
Subscriptions: 413.283.8393

EMAIL

Advertising Sales
Wendy Delcamp
wdelcamp@turley.com

Editor

Gregory Scibelli
aan@turley.com

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

must include a name, address, and daytime telephone number for author verification purposes. We do not publish anonymous letters. All letters are subject to editing for content and length. The deadline is Monday at noon. Please send letters to Agawam Advertiser News, care of Turley Publications Inc., 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, or e-mail aan@turley.com.

AGAWAM ADVERTISER NEWS TEAM



EDITOR/SPORTS
Greg Scibelli
aan@turley.com
sports@turley.com



ADVERTISING SALES
Wendy Delcamp
wdelcamp@turley.com

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CEO

KEITH TURLEY
President

DEANNA SLOAT
Graphics Manager



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Opinion

GARDEN ■ from page 4

Styrofoam is very durable – great for holding all of these stems, but much more difficult to work with than floral foam. For that reason, all but the most rigid stems need to be put on wooden picks before they can be stuck into the ball.

Make small bunches of greenery about four inches long, holding their stems next to the pick and wrapping the attached wire to it. One by one insert these bunches into the styrofoam.

It is best to work randomly around the ball – setting the dimensions if you will, rather than starting in one place and working out. Being that it is round, it will be hard to put it down while working on it.

After a while you'll get into the swing of things by wiring a few bunches of greens, putting them in, wiring a few more and so forth. Finally, give it a good look. Is it a nice, round shape? Is there any foam showing? Where could it use a few berries?

Rose hips or winterberry, or even artificial berries will surely brighten it up, as will strands of ribbon wired to a wooden pick and inserted into the bottom. Wired



ribbon is a good choice since it has a little shape; less droopy so to speak.

It will be surprising just how much greenery it takes to make a kissing ball. When I am making wreaths or decorations of any sort I always continue harvesting even after I think I have enough, just as a bit of insurance. It's always better to have extra than have to stop everything and go picking again.

One little factoid for cruise ship trivia: "Kissing bunches" in Old England were comprised of two intersecting circles of greens that were often decorated with fruit as well as figures of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The "kissing" aspect came from the sprig of mistletoe that hung on the very bottom of the sphere – evoking the same response it does when hung by itself today.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 33 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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CONGRESS ■ from page 4

speaking to service clubs or meeting with reporters and editors at local newspapers. People, whether they were Democrats or Republicans, were focused on their communities. They wanted to talk about a new factory, a planned road project or the local school system.

People do pay attention to the national economy, because it affects their lives. They may not know the latest inflation or unemployment numbers, but they know when costs go up for gas, groceries and housing. They care about crime, but their

focus is on community safety.

It's true, of course, that Donald Trump has upended our politics, putting himself at the center of every issue.

The decline of local newspapers, coupled with the rise of talk radio, cable TV news and social media, has nationalized our politics. Tune in CNN or Fox News, and you might think every national issue is a matter of life and death.

Politicians often amplify this thinking as they compete to turn highly motivated voters in a tight election. But that's not most Americans. Most care deeply about their families, their neighbors and their

communities. They want the government to share those concerns.

Beshear is a Democrat who has twice been elected governor of a state that just voted 65-35 for Trump. He recommends a focus on kitchen-table issues as a way forward for his party.

"The focus of the Democratic Party must return to creating better jobs, more affordable and accessible health care, safer roads and bridges, the best education for our children and communities where people aren't just safer but also feel safer," he writes.

In fact, that should be a good agenda

for any politician, Democrat or Republican. Meeting the people where they live and trying to improve their day-to-day lives isn't just good politics. It's good governing. We'll all be better off if our elected officials remember that.

Lee Hamilton is a Senior Advisor for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government; a Distinguished Scholar at the IU Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies; and a Professor of Practice at the IU O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.

SECURITY ■ from page 4

benefits you received during the tax year" is correct. MAGI is what determines how much of your SS benefits are taxable, but your MAGI also determines if IRMAA applies to your Medicare premiums.

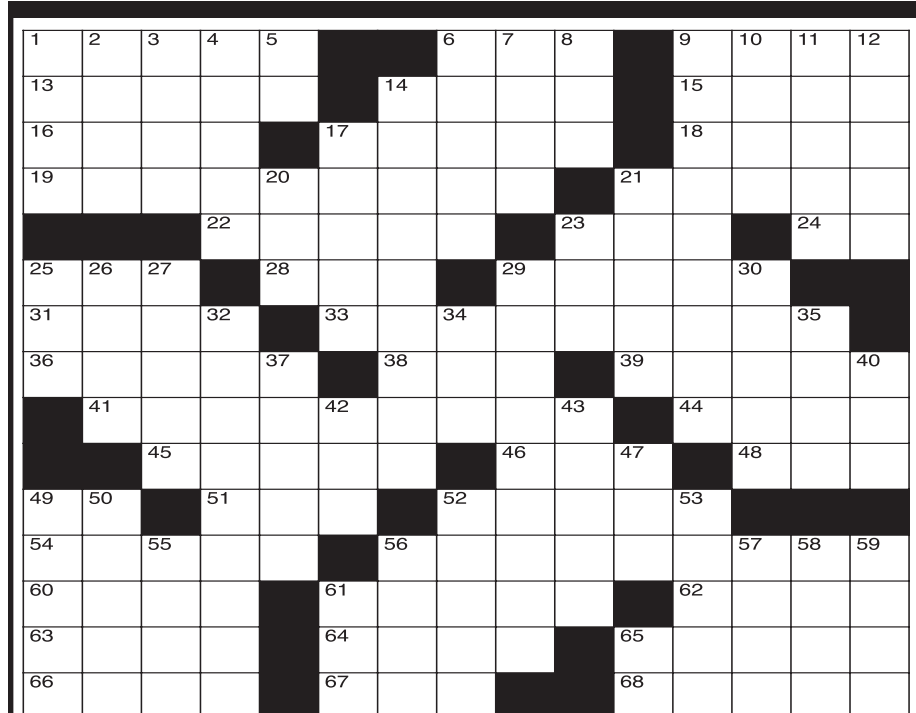
Your benefits are taxable if, as a married couple filing jointly, your total MAGI exceeds \$32,000. If your MAGI is over the first threshold but less than the 2nd threshold (\$44,000 for married filers) then 50% of the SS benefits you received during the tax year are included as part of your income taxable by the IRS. But if your MAGI goes over the 2nd threshold (\$44,000 for married filers) then up to 85% of the SS benefits you received during the tax year will be included as part of your income taxable by the IRS.

In short, MAGI determines how much of your income is subject to taxation. But MAGI is also used to determine if IRMAA applies. And how much your MAGI exceeds the separate IRMAA thresholds determines

what your Medicare premium will be.

So, the article correctly states that IRMAA only counts 50% of the SS benefits received because that is what is included in MAGI (which is what determines if IRMAA applies). But the amount of SS which may be taxable income by the IRS could be up to 85% of benefits received during the tax year if your MAGI is high enough.

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 ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.



CLUES ACROSS

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Thou __ do it | 39. Vehicle type | Rodgers target | Apple |
| 6. Sino-Soviet block (abbr.) | 41. Disorders | 2. Wings | 30. Mountain range |
| 9. Brainstem part | 44. One point east of southeast | 3. Overly studious person | 32. Violate the sanctity of something |
| 13. Town in New York state | 45. Indian soldier | 4. They protect your valuables | 34. Supervises flying |
| 14. Little (Spanish) | 46. Tree type | 5. The Volunteer State | 35. Talks |
| 15. Continent | 48. Midway between south and southeast | 6. Non-hydraulic cement | 37. Persian male given name |
| 16. Retch | 49. It cools your home | 7. Horse mackerel | 40. Born of |
| 17. Short-billed rails | 51. Corn comes on it | 8. Jackson and Diddley are two | 42. Forcibly take one's possessions |
| 18. Small period of time (abbr.) | 52. Ship's deck | 9. Splendid displays | 43. Discounts |
| 19. Confused | 54. A way to bake | 10. Mountain in NE Greece | 47. Knockouts |
| 21. A team needs one | 56. Improvised | 11. A daughter or your brother or sister | 49. Posh Colorado destination |
| 22. Woman in ancient times | 60. Butterfly genus | 12. German surname | 50. Form of therapy |
| 23. Republican Party | 61. Baseball fields have them | 14. Having more than one husband at a time | 52. British rock band |
| 24. Spanish be | 62. Designated space | 17. Romanian city | 53. Type of virus (abbr.) |
| 25. "The Godfather" character Johnny | 63. Discharge | 20. Energy | 55. The U. of Miami mascot is one |
| 28. Not around | 64. Two of something | 21. Makes less hot | 56. Volcanic crater |
| 29. City in Zambia | 65. Once more | 23. Gas diffusion electrode | 57. Middle Eastern nation |
| 31. A type of beginning | 66. Part of your face | 25. Former CIA | 58. Sinn __, Irish organization |
| 33. Numb | 67. Tax collector | 26. Set an example for others | 59. Ethiopian lake |
| 36. Gurus | 68. Cassia tree | 27. Support of a particular person | 61. Bits per inch (abbr.) |
| 38. Small, gray-headed | | 29. One from the Big | 65. Equally |

CLUES DOWN

1. One-time Aaron

EARLY DEADLINE For All Advertising & CLASSIFIEDS

All Papers Will Deadline Thursday, Dec. 19 at Noon for Publication Dec. 23 - 27

All Papers Will Deadline Friday, Dec. 27 at Noon for Publication Dec. 30 - Jan. 3

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Youth Associate Isabelle Malvezzi helped Charlotte Anderson to select the colors for Anderson's painting.



Children gathered at Agawam Public Library to participate in the marbled paper painting event. TURLEY PHOTOS BY QUINN SUOMALA



Youth Associate Isabelle Malvezzi helped Jesse Poirier plan out his next painting design.



Charlotte Anderson concentrated on creating her next painting.



Abigail Anderson worked on getting her shaving cream to the perfect orange color.

PAINTING ■ from page 1

Malvezzi was glad that the event allowed the kids to have fun and be creative. "Sometimes I feel like we put a lot of pressure on kids as they get older to make their creativity mean something, not just for the fun of it, and this was something to just have fun," Malvezzi said. Malvezzi hopes to do this program again in the future and add a slime-making component at the end. One of the kids suggested that it could be a fun idea and a good way to make use of all the leftover materials, and Malvezzi agreed.

To keep updated on the different programs at the library, go to their website at <https://www.agawamlibrary.org/>. The library has a few more fun events planned for people of all ages throughout the rest of December. There will be a teen movie night on Tuesday, Dec. 17 at 6 p.m. for teens to come and watch Star Wars: A New Hope. There is also going to be a fake snow making event for children in kindergarten through second grade on Wednesday, Dec. 18 at 6 p.m. Finally, there will be an adult craft night to make Nordic paper stars on Thursday, Dec. 19 at 6 p.m.

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USDA INSP. FROZEN PORK SHOULDER PICNIC. \$1³⁹ lb	USDA INSP. FRESH BONELESS BEEF SIRLOIN SPOON ROAST \$5⁹⁹ lb	CORNISH GAME HEN \$2⁷⁹ lb
USDA INSP. STORE MADE ITALIAN SAUSAGE ALL VARIETIES \$2⁷⁹ lb	USDA INSP. FRESH AMERICAN LEG LAMB \$5⁹⁹ lb	HOLIDAY APPETIZERS
USDA INSP. KAYEM BUDDABALL SMOKED PIT HAM BONELESS WHOLE..... \$3⁶⁶ lb	FROZEN IMPORTED LEG RACKS \$14⁹⁹ lb	USDA INSP. FRESH CHICOPEE PROVISIONS BLUE SEAL KIELBASA \$4⁹⁹ lb
USDA INSP. HATFIELD OLD TIME SKINLESS SHANKLESS HARDWOOD SMOKED WHOLE HAM \$2⁸⁹ lb		USDA INSP. FROZEN CODINO'S MANICOTI w/ RICOTTA 40 OZ \$4⁹⁹ ea
USDA INSP. FROZEN COOK'S HAM PORTIONS BUTT & SHANK \$1⁴⁹ lb		USDA INSP. FROZEN BACON WRAPPED SHRIMP 15 COUNT \$8⁹⁹ ea
USDA INSP. FROZEN BONELESS HAM DINNER AVERAGE 5 LB \$1⁹⁹ lb		USDA INSP. IQF FROZEN BOS'N CALAMARI 2 1/2 LB BAG \$9⁹⁹ ea
		USDA INSP. IQF FROZEN COOKED SHRIMP 16/20 COUNT 2 LB BAG \$19⁹⁹ ea

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SPORTS



Members of the Agawam High School girls basketball program do drills at last Thursday's practice.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Free throws drills are held at practice with teammates running sprints for missed shots.

Girls basketball looks for tournament appearance



Coach Tim Murphy observes his team's workout.



The girls basketball players make their way across the court.

AGAWAM – The Agawam High School girls basketball team is hoping to return to the state tournament this season.

The Brownies are scheduled to get things going with a matchup at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst against rival West Springfield on Saturday, Dec. 14 at 5 p.m.

The Brownies are part of the Pioneer Valley Kick-Off event being hosted at UMass.

COLLEGE:

D'Amours in action for Bridgewater State

WORCESTER – Kylee Piche (Bridgewater, MA) canned a pair of free throws with 19.8 seconds remaining to propel Bridgewater State to a hard-earned 63-61 victory over visiting WPI in a non-conference women's basketball matchup on Tuesday night inside the Tinsley Center.

Bridgewater State is 6-1 with its lone loss at Division I Bryant to open the season. WPI, which saw its three-game winning streak snapped with the result, is now 4-2 overall.

With Bridgewater State up by three with 4:27 remaining the fourth quarter, the Engineers did not go down without a fight. Caitlyn Dasaro (Fairfield, VT) made a key jump shot with 2:51 left, getting the Crimson and Gray within one at 59-58. Two possessions later, Ava Giansiracusa (Wethersfield, MA) tallied 1-of-2 free throws, tying up the game at 59 all with 1:30 remaining.

Piche put the Bears back ahead by hitting



Members of the wrestling team grapple during practice.



The girls wrestling program at Agawam has grown in the past few years.



Coach Armando Ramos directs his wrestlers as he instructs his competitors on moves.

Brownies wrestling team continues to be popular program

AGAWAM – With nearly 60 kids in the overall program, Agawam High School wrestling has continued to have some of the highest numbers of any sports team outside of football. Agawam wrestling, which also features a robust girls program,

has been practicing for the past two weeks in preparation for the winter season. While there are weekend tournaments schedule in the next couple of weekends, dual meet action gets going on Wednesday, Dec. 18 at Central High School at 7 p.m.



Lincoln Despard and Chase Rising lock up.

Sports

AHS winter varsity schedule

Boys Basketball

Thursday, Dec. 12	Away	Westfield	7 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 14	Away	West Springfield	7 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 16	Home	Minnechaug	7 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 19	Away	Commerce	7 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 23	Away	Chicopee Comp	7 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 28	Home	East Longmeadow	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 2	Away	Wahconah	7 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 6	Home	West Springfield	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 8	Home	Westfield	7 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 10	Away	Pittsfield	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 14	Home	Taonic	7 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 16	Home	Sci-Tech	7 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 17	Home	Chicopee	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 28	Home	Pittsfield	7 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 31	Away	Taonic	5:30 p.m.
Monday, Feb. 3	Home	Belchertown	7 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 8	Away	East Longmeadow	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Feb. 11	Home	Wahconah	7 p.m.

Girls Basketball

Thursday, Dec. 12	Home	Pope Francis	7 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 14	Home	West Springfield	5 p.m.
Tuesday, Dec. 17	Home	Drury	7 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 20	Away	Mt. Greylock	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 23	Home	East Longmeadow	7 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 30	Home	Belchertown	7 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 2	Away	Westfield	7 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 3	Home	Monument Mtn	5:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 7	Away	Pope Francis	7 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 10	Away	Drury	7 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 16	Away	Belchertown	7 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 18	Home	Southwick	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 21	Away	Tantasqua	6:30 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 24	Home	Easthampton	7 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 27	Home	Monson	7 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 30	Away	Monument Mtn	7 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 8	Away	East Longmeadow	5 p.m.
Monday, Feb. 10	Home	Mt. Greylock	6:30 p.m.

Ice Hockey

Thursday, Dec. 12	Home	Ludlow	6:30 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 14	Away	McCann Tech	6 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 18	Away	Taonic	7:30 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 21	Away	Easthampton	1 p.m.
Tuesday, Dec. 24	Home	Taonic	10 a.m.
Saturday, Dec. 28	Home	Southwick	2:30 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 30	Home	Chicopee	3 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 2	Away	Amherst	6 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 10	Away	Southwick	7:45 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 15	Away	Chicopee	7 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 18	Away	Westborough	5:30 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 20	Home	Longmeadow	12 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 25	Home	Gardner	6:30 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 1	Home	McCann Tech	6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Feb. 4	Home	Easthampton	8:40 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 8	Home	Hudson	4:50 p.m.
Tuesday, Feb. 11	Home	Amherst	8:40 p.m.
Friday, Feb. 14	Away	West Springfield	7 p.m.

Boys and Girls Swimming

Friday, Dec. 13	Home	Easthampton	4 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 16	Home	Ludlow	5:15 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 18	Home	Central	4 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 23	Away	Turners Falls	10 a.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 7	Away	Palmer	4 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 10	Away	Westfield	4 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 14	Home	Longmeadow	4 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 17	Away	Minnechaug	5 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 24	Home	Chicopee Comp	4 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 27	Home	Belchertown	4 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 29	Away	East Longmeadow	4 p.m.

Wrestling

Wednesday, Dec. 18	Away	Central	7 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 21	Away	Guilford Tournament	9 a.m.
Friday, Dec. 27	Home	Phil Tomkiel Tournament	9 a.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 8	Away	Putnam	7 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 11	Away	Leominster	10 a.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 15	Home	Minnechaug	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 22	Away	West Springfield	6:30 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 25	Away	West Springfield Duals	10 a.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 29	Home	Chicopee Comp	6 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 31	Away	Central Catholic Tourney	5 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 1	Home	Suffield Tournament	9 a.m.
Thursday, Feb. 6	Away	Longmeadow	7 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 8	Away	Agawam Duals	9 a.m.

Railers fall to Maine Mariners

WORCESTER – The Railers 4-3 loss to Maine Saturday night dropped their record at the DCU Center to 3-6-1 in 2024-25. That compares with a .500 mark on the road at 6-6-0.

There is no logic to it, nor is there any specific area or areas that Worcester needs to be better at.

“I don’t think there is any one thing you can put on that,” coach Bob Deraney said. “There is nothing that significant that says why we’ve been better on the road than at home.”

Some of the Railers’ home losses have been lopsided and interesting. This one was headed that way but turned out to have a thrilling, if disappointing, finish.

Worcester fell behind early, 2-0 and the Mariners eventually stretched that lead to 4-1. Then the Railers came alive late in the third period, scoring goals at 11:07 and 18:29, but could not overcome the early deficit.

Griffin Loughran, Anthony Repaci and Anthony Callin had the Worcester goals. Owen Pederson, Justin Bean, Jimmy Lambert and Matthew Philip scored for the Mariners, who snapped a four-game losing streak.

Callin was one of the Railers’ best players last season. His goal late in the third period was a beauty, a high hard snap shot from the right circle with Worcester having an extra skater, and his first of the year.

“I think it’s huge,” Deraney said of that goal. “I know it’s been weighing on him. He’s been second-guessing himself, gripping the stick too tight, all those things that happen to a guy who cares so much and wants to con-

tribute to the team.”

Repaci scored shorthanded at 11:07 to make it 4-2. He converted a pass from Matt DeMelis. Repaci continues to have a memorable, and perhaps in the long run, unprecedented season. He was 1-1-2 Saturday night and is 16-8-24 in 22 games.

Repaci is up to 160 points in a Worcester uniform. He is tied with Ice-Cats forward Marc Brown for third most in city history.

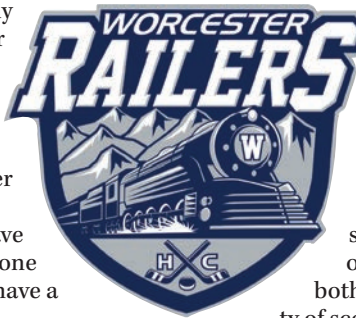
The Railers could not find any offensive traction until the game was almost over. Maine had the best of things by far, both in terms of time of possession and quality of scoring chances.

The first period was an omen of things to come. About three minutes after the puck drop the Railers incurred three consecutive icing calls in a span of 30 seconds. Then Pederson scored from 15 feet out at 7:37 into the period and Bean put one over Michael Bullion’s glove at 9:23 to make it 2-0.

Loughran’s goal was a thrilling one.

Early in the first period he caused a turnover that turned into a breakaway, but he got in too deep and Maine goalie Ryan Bischel stopped him. This time he was set up by a great pass from Connor Welch and zoomed in at top speed. His wrist shot from between the circles was essentially unstoppable.

Lambert made it a 3-1 game at 6:39 of the third period, beating Bullion from the side of the net. Philip scored on a breakaway at 17:54.



T-Birds stay on track with big OT win

SPRINGFIELD – The Springfield Thunderbirds (12-9-1-0) clawed back from 1-0 down after 40 minutes and emerged with a 2-1 overtime victory over the Rockford IceHogs (8-10-3-0) before a sold-out crowd of 6,793 on Saturday night at the MassMutual Center.

After the two clubs exchanged chances in the opening five minutes, the opening period brought very little in the way of offense against Springfield netminder Vadim Zherenko or Rockford goalie Mitchell Weeks.

The T-Birds were uncharacteristically sloppy in the defensive zone, and a pivotal turnover at 2:59 of the second period resulted in Rockford’s opening goal as Cole Guttman picked off a loose puck in the middle of the zone and slipped a five-hole shot through Zherenko to make it 1-0 IceHogs. It marked the first time in eight games that the T-Birds allowed the first goal of a game.

Offense did not come easily for Springfield, as the home team was outshot 16-6 in the middle period. Zherenko was at his best, making a pair of other breakaway saves on Guttman among his 24 denials through 40 minutes of play.

Zherenko rose up to make a game-changing stop in the opening seconds of the third, as he stretched out with the left leg to stonewall Samuel Savoie on a breakaway bid to keep the score at 1-0.

Less than three minutes later, Tyler Tucker continued

his torrid goal-scoring weekend, flipping a point shot over Weeks on the glove side, bringing about a Teddy Bear storm and equalizing the game, 1-1.

It appeared as if the Thunderbirds had taken the lead just a few moments later when a Michael Buchinger shot bounded high in the air and into the blue paint. Matthew Peca jabbed the loose puck across the goal line, seemingly making it a 2-1 Springfield lead. Despite being called a goal on the ice, the officials gathered and ultimately waved off the tally, and the 1-1 tie carried to the end of regulation.

The T-Birds rewarded their netminder in the extra session at 3:42 with their 19-year-old phenom stepping into the spotlight. After Aleksanteri Kaskimaki fed the puck through neutral ice to Dalibor Dvorsky, a 2-on-1 developed with Tucker joining the rush. Dvorsky patiently curled the puck to the middle of the ice around a sprawled defender before launching a perfect shot glove-side on Weeks to give Springfield its second overtime win in as many nights.

The rookie’s team-leading 10th goal of the season also went down as his first overtime game-winner as a pro. Springfield has now won four straight games and is 8-1-1 in its last ten games, springboarding the team into third place in the Atlantic Division standings.

The T-Birds next embark on one of their longest road trips of the season, beginning with a Saturday contest in Wilkes-Barre against the Penguins on Dec. 14 at 6:05 p.m. at Mohegan Sun Arena at Casey Plaza.



COLLEGE ■ from page 7

a free throw with 30.5 seconds to go, but Alice Kelly (Wethersfield, MA) hit a quick layup to put the Engineers back up by one with 25.7 seconds left. After a foul by the visitors, Piche netted both free throws, elevating the score to 62-61 in favor of the hosts with 19.8 seconds remaining. WPI held possession for the next 16.7 seconds but turned the ball with 3.1 seconds remaining. Piche added on another free throw point with 2.2 seconds to go, concluding the game at 63-61 in favor of Bridgewater State.

To begin the game, Bridgewater State dented the scoreboard first with a quick three-pointer from Arielle Cleveland (Groveland, MA) at 9:44. After this, the game would be absent of field goals for 3:04 with WPI’s Allison Fullem (Underhill, VT) breaking the streak at 6:40. The visitors would start the game with a five-possession scoreless streak, but free throws and Fullem’s basket ultimately ticked the scoring column and got the game rolling.

The first quarter featured a lot of back-and-forth ac-

tion, ending at 17-15 in favor of the Bears. Giansiracusa tallied five points for the Engineers and Piche accounted for seven points for the hosts.

During the second half, Kelly knocks in two shots for the Crimson and Gray to get the offense going, matching the score at 19 all. After a trey by Fullem, the Bears clawed ahead off free throws and kept the momentum going until halftime, where Bridgewater State led 32-27. At the half, Kelly accumulated six with Giansiracusa, Fullem, Shannon Reno (Millbury, MA) all chipping in five each. Piche dominated for the hosts, accounting for 14 points, with Kylie Grassi (Plymouth, MA) and Cleveland both adding on seven.

The third quarter began with WPI notching five straight points, but then the hosting responds to lift their lead back to five with 7:13 remaining in the stanza. The next two shots the visitors accounted were mirrored; Dasaro ticks the scoring column with a jump shot, followed by a Piche jump shot, and a Megan Stone (Hanson, MA) layup led to a Jessica D’Amours (Feeding Hills, MA) layup.



Fall graduate celebration becomes new HCC tradition

HOLYOKE – In what has quickly become a new annual tradition, Holyoke Community College celebrated its fall semester graduates with a special recognition ceremony on Monday, Dec. 2.

HCC initiated the fall ceremony in 2023 to engage graduates who complete their degrees and certificates in December, at the end of the fall semester.

“We have a saying in our house: You finish what you start,” said President George Timmons, turning to the students on the stage of the Leslie Phillips Theater. “And you have finished what you started.”

“This is really just the beginning of your celebrations as a college student,” he continued. “Today, we honor you because what you have just achieved deserves immediate recognition. At Commencement, on May 31, at the Mass Mutual Center in Springfield, we will come together again and formally welcome you as HCC alumni.”

According to the HCC Registrar’s Office, 198 HCC students qualified as fall 2024 semester graduates, completing their

academic requirements to earn either an associate degree or certificate. Many of them will transfer to four-year schools for the start of the spring 2025 semester.

“This is no small feat,” said Sharale Mathis, vice president of academic and student affairs. “You worked hard for this. You deserve all the applause, the cheers, the embarrassments, the shout-outs. All of it. You deserve it all.”

Two graduating students were invited to address their classmates. Both talked about their initial struggles in college and finding support and success at HCC.

Alexandria Casavant, a liberal arts major from Northampton, started college at a four-year art school in New York, but was discouraged by racial inequality, a lack of support, and neglect for student safety.

“Once I started attending HCC, I saw the difference almost instantly,” said Casavant, who is transferring to the University of Massachusetts Amherst to study music. “The staff was very kind to me and cared about what I had to say. I joined the Student Senate. I could have never imagined

myself doing that in high school, but here, I felt like I could do anything, and I felt like I had the space to challenge myself.”

Hilario “Juji” Peralta, a visual art major from Holyoke, enrolled at HCC in 2019, right after high school. He described his educational journey as a rollercoaster ride.

“Being so young and having so much time on my own hands, it got a little overwhelming,” Peralta said. “During my first semester, I struggled academically and really wasn’t sure of where I wanted to go or what I wanted to be.”

He took two years off during the pandemic and came back determined to finish. With the help of advisers from HCC’s ALANA Men in Motion program (for students of color) and El Centro (for Hispanic and Latino students), he did.

“My experience here at HCC has been nothing but good memories and connections,” Peralta said. “If there’s anything I would say about HCC and the people here, it is that it always gave me a sense of familiarity. I felt seen, heard, and understood. HCC has given me so many opportunities

to explore my interests and develop my passions. It has empowered me to envision and take control of my future and believe in my skills and abilities.”

About 70 fall graduates sat on the stage for the ceremony, with the theater seats filled with faculty, staff, family members, and friends. Each of the students who attended was recognized individually and walked across the stage to shake hands with Timmons, who placed an orange sash around their necks symbolizing their status as fall graduates.

“I know for many of you, this is just the beginning, whether it’s that first step into a new job, whether you’re transferring, whether you’re coming back - some do come back for another degree, and some come back to work as well,” Mathis said. “So, whatever the next chapter of your life is, I want you to know that we’re not going anywhere. We will be here. Once you walk through the doors of HCC, you are forever HCC. We were here for you from the beginning, we’re here for you on this next step, and we’ll be here whenever you need us.”

Better Business Bureau offers tips on holiday pop-up shops

Paula Fleming, CMSO & Chief Spokesperson
pfleming@boston.bbb.org

Attending local festivals and events is an exciting way to celebrate the holiday season. Many retailers turn to these events and set up temporary pop-up shops or booths to sell their merchandise. This gives shoppers the opportunity to browse unique holiday gifts and other merchandise in person.

The BBB receives complaints each year about temporary retail locations and pop-up shops. Consumers report everything from poor-quality merchandise to online purchase scams when ordering from the pop-up retailer’s website. They also report having difficulty obtaining refunds after temporary stores have closed their doors.

One consumer shared their experience shopping with a pop-up vendor at a fair: “[I saw] her booth at [fair name redacted] the last Sunday in June 2024. She was selling custom hoodies and other shirts. She did not have what I wanted so I placed an order. She promised it would be shipped. I sent several texts and nothing but excuses and she won’t return my money.”

Pop-up shops can be fun, but keep the following BBB tips in mind if you choose to buy from one of them:

- **Ask how long a store will operate.** If you are buying from a seasonal store, ask whether it will be open after the holiday and whether it will accept returns when the season is over. If not, consider buying elsewhere or taking more time to be sure the item is exactly what you want before making the purchase.



- **Review purchase policies.** Determine the company or vendor’s refund and return policies before you buy. If pop-up shops cannot offer concrete commitments on how they will handle any potential problems you may have with their products or services, reconsider doing business with them.

- **Be careful when placing orders.** If the pop-up shop offers to place a special order for an item you’re looking for, take extra steps to ensure it’s legitimate. Before placing the order, ask the seller for their contact information and confirm it works. Get details on how you will receive the order and when you should expect it to arrive and ask for a receipt and/or a copy of the order confirmation. Pay with a credit card so you have ad-

ditional protection in case you never end up receiving the item.

- **Pay attention to quality.** Occasionally, pop-ups sell counterfeit products, so be cautious when purchasing designer goods or the latest “must-have” gifts. Prices that are dramatically lower than regular retail stores may be a red flag that the items are either stolen or counterfeit.

- **Know the terms of any product or service guarantees.** If you are purchasing anything that comes with a manufacturer’s warranty, ask how you will be able to get the product serviced if needed.

- **Guard your personal information.** For small items, you might be better off paying in cash so you don’t have to share

any personal information. Just be sure you understand that you probably won’t have any recourse if something is not right. For larger items, paying with a credit card can provide additional protection if there are problems and the retailer disappears. Make sure you hang on to the receipt to match it against your credit card statement.

- **Consider whether the gift is for a hard-to-please recipient.** If you are planning a gift for someone who might need or want to return it, consider buying from a retailer with a long-standing business, strong reputation, and well-established return policies, instead of a pop-up shop. Look to BBB Accredited Businesses to shop from a vetted, trusted business. When possible, ask for a gift receipt that would make a return or exchange easier, if necessary.

- **If shopping online, do your research first.** If you are interested in trying a new or unfamiliar online merchant, do your research. Ask the company for its physical location (address and phone number) so you can check its BBB Business Profile at org. Check to see if the business is BBB Accredited so you know whether dealing with a trustworthy business. Online purchase scams are very common during the holidays, so if you’re unsure about a retailer, look for online reviews and search for any scams. Remember that deals that seem too good to be true are often scams.

- **Shop around.** Pop-ups often focus on unique or high-quality gifts that you may not find elsewhere, but some are simply mini versions of discount retailers, offering holiday-themed goods that may be available for less at a traditional retailer.

CHEER ■ from page 1

and help the countdown and we light the three at 7 o’clock,” Paquette said. “Just hearing the countdown and seeing the tree being lit is really, really special, and so is the magic it brings.”

Another element of the event that adds to the community feel was that the cookies and hot chocolate for the gathering were all donated by members of the community.

Additionally, many departments from the town come together to help make this event possible. For example, the DPW ensured that the tree had electricity and the fire department brought Santa Claus.

“There is a lot that goes into it, but it is all worth it and it definitely makes us all feel together,” Paquette said.

Another special part of the event was the live music. Music Teacher Paul Sawyer was the one who performed the music and while he sang the lyrics to his songs were projected onto a large screen.

Many people in the crowd joined in on singing along, which truly helped the event to feel like a magic moment.

Gibbs and Paquette are grateful for

Sawyer, as they felt his music brought the event together.

“Everyone can relate to the music and...it’s so special to have live music, we are blessed,” Gibbs said.

Sawyer graciously brings his own equipment so that his performance is possible.

Paquette and Gibbs are also grateful to DeCaro Landscaping for donating the tree that the town lit and for the Agawam Beautification Committee for taking care of the gazebo where the tree was placed.

Finally, they send their thanks to the high school students from the National Honor Society who volunteered their time to help out with this special event.

“There is a lot that goes into it, but it is all worth it and it definitely makes us all feel together.”

– PTO President Deborah Paquette

COUNCILOR ■ from page 1

developed a really good bond,” Bard said.

Bard recalled how hard Cichetti worked during his term as the council president. She was often there to give him advice or act as a helping hand as he went through his presidency.

“He encountered everything under the sun that year,” Bard said. “So we worked very closely together during his term.”

Throughout his work on the council, he also started the housing committee in town, due to his dedication to helping people in the area find and keep homes.

Johnson and Bard both admire how dedicated Cichetti was to the town.

“He genuinely cared about Agawam and was always willing to help whoever needed a helping hand,” Johnson said.

On top of his work on the council, Cichetti was deeply involved in the community. He could always be seen volunteering his time for various charities and community organizations.

“He was involved in so many different charitable events, whether someone loses a loved one and they are holding a benefit golf tournament, Jimmy was there helping

to organize it,” Johnson said. “Any community event you needed help, Jimmy was there helping. That’s who he was.”

Cichetti also worked as a realtor in the area. He loved being able to help people find their first homes.

“It gave him great satisfaction to be able to see someone buy their first home or a repeat customer come back,” Johnson said. “That was Jimmy’s passion.”

Bard and Johnson ask that as people go about their days they keep in mind the goal of “be like Jimmy.”

If each person could try to be a little more like Jimmy each day, Bard and Johnson feel that they can make the town a little bit of a better place.

“I hope they remember that no matter what was going on Jimmy was always there with a smile on his face and he always had a sense of humor,” Johnson said. “Sometimes you need someone to listen and sometimes you need someone to make you laugh and that is what Jimmy was.”

Cichetti’s family ask that any donations made in his name go to <https://smilelikejack.com/> or to Saint Jude Children’s Hospital at <https://www.stjude.org>.

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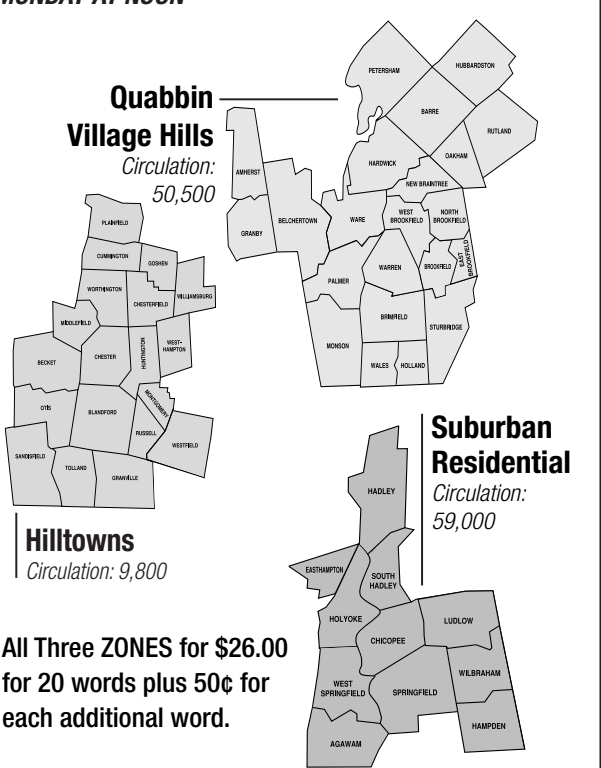
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Public Notices

AGAWAM ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the Agawam Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing at the Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main St., Agawam, MA, on **Monday, January 13, 2025 at 6:30PM** for all parties interested in the request of Elmira Usmonova, who is seeking a Special Permit in accordance with the Town of Agawam's Zoning Ordinances, Ch.180-8, Paragraph B, to allow for a 6-foot fence within the front setback at the premises identified as 28 S. Alhambra Circle.
Doreen A. Prouty
Chairperson, ZBA
12/12, 12/19/2024

AGAWAM ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the Agawam Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing at the Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main St., Agawam, MA, on **Monday, January 13, 2025 at 7PM** for all parties interested in the request of Katelin Grassetti, who is seeking a Special Permit in accordance with the Town of Agawam's Zoning Ordinances, Ch.180-23(K), to allow for the keeping of hens at the premises identified as 220 Line Street.
Doreen A. Prouty
Chairperson, ZBA
12/12, 12/19/2024

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Division Docket No. HD24P2464EA Estate of:

Jean Ann Beusee
Also Known As:
Jean A. Beusee
Date of Death:
August 16, 2024
INFORMAL PROBATE PUBLICATION NOTICE
To all persons interested in the above captioned estate, by Petition of Petitioner **Michele Hoey of West Springfield, MA.**
Michele Hoey of West Springfield, MA has been informally appointed as the Personal Representative of the estate to serve **without surety** on the bond.
The estate is being administered under informal procedure by the Personal Representative under the Massachusetts Uniform Probate Code without supervision by the Court. Inventory and accounts are not required to be filed with the Court, but interested parties are entitled to notice regarding the administration from the Personal

Representative and can petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including distribution of assets and expenses of administration. Interested parties are entitled to petition the Court to institute formal proceedings and to obtain orders terminating or restricting the powers of Personal Representatives appointed under informal procedure. A copy of the Petition and Will, if any, can be obtained from the Petitioner.
12/12/2024

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Probate and Family Court 50 State Street Springfield, MA 01103 Docket No. HD23P0805EA ESTATE OF: THOMAS ERNEST CASCIO, JR. ALSO KNOWN AS: THOMAS E. CASCIO, JR. DATE OF DEATH: 03/01/2023 CITATION ON PETITION FOR REMOVAL

To all interested persons:
A Petition has been filed by: **Anne Cascio of Feeding Hills, MA** requesting that **Jennifer Metz of Feeding Hills, MA** be removed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate.

You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before 10:00 a.m. on 01/03/2025.

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

WITNESS, Hon. Barbara M Hyland, First Justice of this Court.
Date: December 02, 2024
Rosemary A. Saccomani
Register of Probate
12/12/2024

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Probate and Family Court 50 State Street Springfield, MA 01103 (413)748-7758 Docket No. HD24C0354CA In the matter of:

Juliette Elizabeth LeBlanc CITATION ON PETITION TO CHANGE NAME

A **Petition to Change Name of Adult** has been filed by **Juliette Elizabeth LeBlanc of Agawam, MA** requesting that the court enter a Decree changing their name to:

Jace Apollo LeBlanc IMPORTANT NOTICE

Any person may appear for purposes of objecting to the petition by filing an appearance at: **Hampden Probate and Family Court before 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 12/31/2024.**

This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance if you object to this proceeding.

WITNESS, Hon. Barbara M Hyland, First Justice of this Court.
Date: December 03, 2024
Rosemary A Saccomani
Register of Probate
12/12/2024

LEGAL NOTICE PUBLIC HEARING

The Agawam City Council Administrative Committee will conduct a Public Hearing on **TUESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2025 at 6:30PM**, at the Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, MA, on a Verizon petition for permission to lay and maintain underground conduits, with the wires and cables to be placed therein, under the surface of North Westfield Street, Feeding Hills, MA with permission to lay and maintain underground conduits, man-holes, cables, and wires in the above way for the purpose of making connections with such poles and buildings as it may desire for distributing purposes. This petition is available by contacting the City Council Office, 36 Main Street, Agawam, MA or by emailing bbard@agawam.ma.us.

Robert E. Rossi, Chair
Administrative Committee
12/05, 12/12/2024

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Probate and Family Court 50 State Street Springfield, MA 01103 (413)748-7758 Docket No. HD24P2461EA George H Stancil Also known as: George Stancil Date of Death: 06/10/2024 CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION

To all interested persons:
A Petition for **Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative** has been

filed by **Karen S Beavin of Naples, FL** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that: **Karen S Beavin of Naples, FL** be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without Surety** on the bond in **unsupervised administration.**

IMPORTANT NOTICE
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 12/27/2024. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)

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

estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration
WITNESS, Hon. Barbara M Hyland, First Justice of

this Court.
Date: November 26, 2024
Rosemary A Saccomani,
Register of Probate
12/12/2024



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Early Deadlines

for all LEGAL NOTICES...

All Papers Will Deadline Thursday, Dec. 19 at Noon for Publication Dec. 23-27

Happy Holidays!

Happy New Year!

All Papers Will Deadline Friday, Dec. 27 at Noon for Publication Dec. 30-Jan. 3

Agawam Advertiser News

OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.

One is a free, brief **Death Notice** listing the name of deceased, date of death and funeral date and place.

The other is a **Paid Obituary**, costing \$225, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice and may include a photograph. **Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com.

Exceptions will be made only when the family provides a death certificate and must be pre-paid.

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visit www.publicnotices.turley.com



Town offers helpful winter maintenance tips

AGAWAM – The Town of Agawam would like to share some important winter maintenance information, including the placement of trash carts, keeping sidewalks clear, avoiding frozen pipes and keeping fire hydrants clear during the winter months.

Snow Removal and Trash and Recycling Carts: In the event of a snow storm, residents are asked to wait until 7am of their scheduled collection day to roll carts to the tree belt.; Residents are asked to remove carts from the tree belts as soon as possible. Please do not leave carts on the tree belt overnight during a snow storm.; The town is not responsible for any damage to carts left out during a snow event where services have been cancelled. ; Any change in service due to a snow event will be announced on the town's news page of the web site, as well as through the towns "Code Red" community notification call. To join Code Red, visit the main page of the town website at www.agawam.ma.us

Parking Bans: During heavy snowfall events, residents are asked to park off the street to allow plows to clear as much of the roadway as possible.; Parking bans will be posted on the town's news page of the website, as well as on the local news stations via WWLP, Western Mass News, and the following radio stations: 94.7, 102.1 and 560AM.; Any vehicle parked in violation of a winter parking ban may be removed by the town, with all charges and expenses incurred at the expense of the vehicle owner.

Sidewalk Maintenance; Under the Town of Agawam ordinance 155-10, it is the responsibility of the adjacent property owner to keep sidewalks clear of snow and ice within 24 hours after snowfall ends or where ice has encumbered.; Cleared snow and ice shall not be pushed into streets or other public rights of way.; Report snow and ice obstructed sidewalks to Agawam Police



Department 413-786-4767 or Department of Inspection Services 413-821-0632.

Keep Fire Hydrants Cleared: Citizens are asked to be observant of fire hydrant locations to ensure that emergency access to those hydrants are maintained.; The Water and Fire departments ask that a 2 to 3 foot circle around the hydrants be left clear of significant snow accumulations to provide clear emergency access.

Heat Your Home Safely and Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning; Check smoke and Carbon Monoxide detectors regularly and never leave these devices without batteries.; Have your heating system, water heater, and any other gas, oil, wood or coal-burning appliance serviced by a qualified technician every year.; Do not use a generator, charcoal grill, camp stove, or other gasoline or charcoal burning devices inside your home, basement, or garage, or near a window. Generators should

be located at least 20 feet from an occupied structure. Kerosene heaters are prohibited in Massachusetts; Keep fireplaces clean and well vented; Inspect home after heavy snow fall and make sure snow is removed from around exhaust stacks, vents and fresh-air intakes; Use space heaters in accordance with manufacturer instructions and do not use extension cord not suitable for space heaters.; Keep portable space heaters at least 3 feet from combustible material and turn them off when leaving or going to sleep.

Avoid Frozen Pipes; Drain water from all swimming pool and water sprinkler supply lines. Remove, drain and store hoses used outdoors.; Add insulation to attics, basements and crawl spaces. Insulation will maintain higher temperatures in these areas.; Weather strip doors and windows.; Leave cabinet doors under sinks open, especially if they are located on exterior



walls.; Set thermostats no lower than 55 degrees, even if the house is unoccupied.; If you are afraid a pipe will freeze, allow the faucet to drip slightly; Protect your water meter from freezing to avoid any maintenance or replacement charges.



Turley Publications, Inc.



Scarlett Legasey
January 25, 2024
Parents: Thomas & Jessica Legasey, Rutland
Grandparents: Donald & MaryAnn Dunbar, Ware
Thomas & Sharon Legasey, Spencer

Baby's Name: _____

Birthdate: _____

Parents' Names: _____

Parents' Town of Residence: _____

Grandparents' Names & Town of Residence: _____

Telephone #: (not to be printed - for office use only) _____

Please check the newspaper you would like your announcement to appear.

<input type="checkbox"/> Agawam Advertiser	<input type="checkbox"/> Quaboag Current
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<input type="checkbox"/> The Holyoke Sun	<input type="checkbox"/> Ware River News
<input type="checkbox"/> Journal Register	<input type="checkbox"/> The Wilbraham-Hampden Times

Deadline for photos and forms is Monday, December 16, 2024

Turley Publications would like to help you show off the newest member of your family this Christmas, FOR FREE!

Mail to:
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Palmer, MA 01069
Attn: Jamie Joslyn
Include a self addressed/ stamped envelope if you would like the picture returned or email photo to: jamie@turley.com with subject line: **BABY'S FIRST.**
This offer is available to all babies born in 2024.
Pictures will be published the week of December 23-27, 2024.

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