



VETERANS
Veterans' wreath laying
PAGE 2



LOCAL
Baby's First Christmas
PAGE 3



SPORTS
Winter season begins
PAGE 7

AGAWAM

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APD holds successful toy donation drive

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

AGAWAM – The Agawam Police Department held their annual toy drive to gather toy donations for Toys for Tots and Bethany Assembly of God.

This toy drive lasted two days, with the police set up outside at the Geissler's parking lot from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day.

"First and foremost, the event is to give toys for children that don't have them, can't get them, so it is good to get out in the community just because we have the platform for the community to see us," Off. Adam Smith said.

A bunch of police officers as well as some community volunteers all gathered together to offer up their time to help with the drive.

"Everyone here is here on volunteer time," Smith said.

Throughout the day, people from the community all came out to give toy donations to the police officers. Their goal for the day was

to fill at least one cruiser, and they more than made that.

By 12:30, an hour and a half after the drive began, they had already filled one cruiser and had to go out and get another one.

The police and volunteers were blown away by the support from the community.

"The amount of items we receive from them is unbelievable and the charity that they give to us is awesome," Smith said.

They were particularly grateful for the contributions from the Polish American Club. The club did a drive of their own and then brought their items to the police to add to their drive.

The police have been doing this event for over a decade now and they look forward to it each year.

"I like to do my part, to come in and be a part of the community," Smith said. "One of the main reasons I am a cop is to give back to the community."



Staff of the police department as well as various community members all volunteered their time to help out the toy drive.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY QUINN SUOMALA

DONATION | page 12

Volunteers come together to bring holiday cheer to homebound seniors

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

AGAWAM – More than 15 volunteers gathered in the Agawam Senior Center on Dec. 13 to package gift baskets for homebound seniors.

This effort was led by the Agawam Senior Center Outreach Coordinator Lori Arsenault. She had all of the volunteers come in and assembled the gift baskets so they could be distributed.

The baskets included tooth-

paste, deodorant, word puzzles, candy, snacks and much more.

"So, this is to make sure they get something fun, filled with personal needs items, snacks, goodies and things like that," Arsenault said.

Everyone involved in preparing the baskets had an enjoyable time putting them all together. They were able to snack on cookies and hot chocolate as they sang along to Christmas songs and packed the baskets.

"I love watching them, the

laughing, the music, the camaraderie; they talk to each other, they laugh, they share holiday stories," Arsenault said. "It is very fun and they feel good about doing this. It gives them a little Christmas spirit. If you didn't have Christmas spirit coming in, you do have it when you leave."

Arsenault loves the response that this project gets from the community each year.

CHEER | page 11



In under an hour, the gathered volunteers put together over 115 gift baskets for homebound seniors.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY QUINN SUOMALA

City council approves tax rate for FY2025

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

AGAWAM – The city council received a presentation from Mayor Christopher Johnson and City Assessor Carolyn Reed discussing the tax rates for fiscal year 2025.

For FY24 in Agawam the average single family tax bill had an average bill of \$4,881.

The residential tax rate was \$14.54 and the average value was assessed at \$335,714. The single family parcel was 7751.

Johnson and Reed compared these rates to similar communities in the area, such as Wilbraham and Longmeadow, and Agawam is below the average rate.

"We are definitely on the lower end for the average single family tax bill relative to parcel size and services offered," Reed said.

As they were coming up with the tax rate for FY2025, Johnson and Reed looked at the rate increases from past years.

Agawam's average in FY2022 was \$4,438. FY2024 is \$4,881. This was an increase of 9.98%.

In contrast, the average for similar surrounding communities in FY2022 was \$6,681 and

the FY2024 average was \$7,332. This is a percent increase of on average 11.68%.

For FY2025 in Agawam they plan to increase the residential tax rate from \$14.54 to \$14.64. This will cause an average increase in the single family tax bill of \$153, which is a much smaller increase than from FY2023 to FY2024.

"The increases we are looking at this year are significantly below those averages [of the past few years]," Johnson said.

The commercial, industrial and personal property rates all will go from \$27.54 to \$27.70.

Johnson and Reed are confident that this shift is the best fit for residential and commercial properties.

"We believe the proposed shift at 1.59 is a good balance between the residential and commercial/industrial taxpayers," Johnson said. "We have one of the lowest residential and commercial/industrial tax rates in the surrounding communities."

The FY2025 levy limit is \$91,220,917 with a levy ceiling of \$105,436,971. Due to this, they have set the tax levy as

TAX RATE | page 2



Local historical museums celebrate Massachusetts

AGAWAM – Historian and scholar William Hosley will be the featured speaker at the Agawam Historical Association's Winter Meeting on Thursday, Jan. 16 2025 at 6:30 p.m. at the Captain Charles Leonard House, 663 Main St.

Hosley will present "Making History, Celebrating Massachusetts' Local Historical Museums." Hosley said "Massachusetts has 351 towns and as many community-based historical museums. Most are small. Many are run by volunteers. No two are alike. They preserve and present local artifacts and stories. They collect. They offer public programs. They advocate for preservation. They serve schools and greet tourists." Hosley considers them a civic miracle, and he will tell their story and why they matter.

Hosley is an independent scholar, historian, writer, and photographer who retired from a long career as a museum curator and director. He is passionate about art, local history and historic preservation. He was formerly Director of the New Haven Museum and Connecticut Landmarks, where he cared for a chain of historic attractions. Prior to that, as a curator and exhibition

developer at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Bill organized major exhibitions including The Great River: Art and Society of the Connecticut Valley, The Japan Idea: Art and Life in Victorian America, and Sam & Elizabeth: Legend and Legacy of Colt's Empire, an exhibition that that spawned the Coltsville National Historical Park in Hartford, Connecticut.

The Agawam Historical Association is a private, non-profit organization working to preserve historic materials, documents, and landmarks pertaining to the Town of Agawam and to provide educational opportunities concerning Agawam's history. The association operates the c. 1757 Thomas Smith House at 251 North West St., in Feeding Hills, and the Agawam Historical and Fire House Museum at 35 Elm Street in Agawam. The Smith House is preserved in largely original, unrestored condition. The museum occupies the former Elm Street Fire Station, and houses artifacts pertaining to the town and the Agawam Fire Department. New members are always welcome. For additional information regarding the Agawam Historical Association.

'Winter Scene' Art Workshop to aid preservation efforts

AGAWAM – The historic Captain Charles Leonard House at 663 Main St., will be the location of a "Winter Scene" art workshop by local artist Patti Bessette on Friday evening, Jan. 17, 2025, from 6:15 to 9:30 p.m.

Cost per person is \$40 and includes all materials and step-by-step instruction needed to paint a winter scene on 18"x24" canvas. No experience is necessary. Registration is required as seating is limited. Participants need only bring their creativity, snacks and a beverage. A raffle will also be held.

Please contact Charlotte at (978) 549-7820 for tickets and information.

A portion of the proceeds will aid the preservation efforts at the Captain Charles Leonard House, built in 1805 as a stage tavern and considered Agawam's finest Federal-era building. The house was restored in the late 1930s by Mrs. Minerva Davis, who established a Board of Trustees to oversee the operation of the house as Agawam's Community House, the role it has served since 1939. The Captain Charles Leonard House was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.

The Captain Charles Leonard House is available to rent for business functions and social events. For rental information, please call 413-786-9421.

Notch Visitor Center announced open for winter 2024-2025

AMHERST – Winter at the Mount Holyoke Range is a magical experience, and a visit to the Notch Visitor Center, 1500 West St., Route 116, is the perfect way to enjoy it.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation's Mount Holyoke Range State Park is ideal for hiking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. The Notch Visitor Center enhances your park experience with engaging exhibits that highlight the unique features of the Mount Holyoke Range.

Special public programs provide a

broader perspective of the park, and staff are on hand to offer trail information and hiking suggestions. There's something for everyone, from beginners to seasoned adventurers.

Free admission and parking. The center is open Tuesday through Sunday, from 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

For more information and upcoming programs, call 413-253-2883 or visit <https://www.mass.gov/locations/mount-holyoke-range-state-park>.

Honoring veterans



Volunteers lay more than 10,000 wreaths were laid at the Veteran's memorial Cemetery in conjunction with Wreaths Across America.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY KARA WALSH-VEY



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TAX RATE ■ from page 1

\$75,379,627, leaving an excess levy capacity of \$15,841,290.

Johnson and Reed also provided an update on the socioeconomic status of Agawam. The current population is 28,393 and the median household income is \$84,980, which is an 8% increase over the past year.

The labor force in September was 15,964 with an unemployment rate of 3.1%. Overall, the town had a Standards and Poors rating of AA.

Additionally, the top five taxpayers in Agawam are Eversource, Six Flags, Berkshire Power, Hood and OMG. Johnson and

Reed both agree that these are well-rounded sources of tax dollars.

"From my perspective as an assessor it is a good mix of utilities, entertainment, manufacturing as well as a power plant," Reed said.

The city council was pleased by this report. They felt that Agawam was in a good position.

"We have only a 10 cent increase," City Councilor George Bitzas said. "Compared to other cities and towns we are in great shape."

With this in mind, the council voted unanimously to approve this proposal by Johnson and Reed.

WSU launches new paramedic program in Jan.

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 Cooley 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.





Harleigh Jane Hearn
 July 15, 2024
Parents: Will Hearn & Mackenzie Scott, West Springfield
Grandparents: Bill & Sheryl Hearn, West Springfield
 Russ & Joan Eckert, Agawam



Madilyn Joan Hearn
 January 24, 2024
Parents: Tom Hearn & Tabby Crawford, Westfield
Grandparents: Russ & Joan Eckert, Agawam
 Bill & Sheryl Hearn, West Springfield

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 ACAA's 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 elefbvre@agawamlibrary.org if interested in displaying artwork at the library.

Agawam Day to be held in FLA

AGAWAM – The 44th 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.

Feline Friends Holiday 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 Fe-

line 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.

For 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.



Dr. Kenneth Richmond becomes MiraVista's new medical director

HOLYOKE – MiraVista Behavioral Health Center is excited to announce the appointment of Dr. Kenneth R. Richmond, MD, MS, as its new Medical Director. Dr. Richmond, a highly respected psychiatrist and experienced leader in the field of behavioral health, brings a dynamic combination of clinical excellence, strategic vision, and unwavering dedication to patient care to MiraVista.

Dr. Richmond's distinguished career spans nearly two decades and includes a remarkable array of leadership roles in both military and civilian settings. He served as Deputy Chief of the Medical Staff and Medical Director of multiple mental health clinics during his tenure in the United States Air Force, where he was recognized with honors such as the Meritorious Service Medal. His expertise, which spans inpatient, outpatient, and telepsychiatry services, as well as public and community psychiatry, will be instrumental as MiraVista prepares to expand its offerings to include onsite, outpatient

mental health services in 2025.

"Dr. Richmond is an accomplished leader whose innovative approach to behavioral health and addiction treatment aligns perfectly with our mission of transforming mental health and substance use care in our community," said Francis M. Sauvageau, CEO, TaraVista and MiraVista Behavioral Health Centers. "His extensive experience and passion for fostering positive outcomes will be instrumental as we continue to enhance and expand the care we provide. We are delighted to welcome him to MiraVista and look forward to the incredible impact he will make."

Dr. Richmond holds an MD from George Washington University School of Medicine and a Master's in Organizational Leadership from Quinnipiac University. He completed his psychiatry residency and a Public Service Psychiatry Fellow-



Dr. Kenneth R. Richmond, MD, MS

ship at the University of Pittsburgh, where he also served as Chief Resident. A Diplomate of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology and a Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, Dr. Richmond has also contributed to advancing mental health education and awareness through teaching, public speaking, and advocacy.

In his new role, Dr. Richmond will oversee and play a key role in the development of MiraVista's professional staff, including physicians and nurse practitioners ensuring the delivery of high-quality, evidence-based care while championing the organization's commitment to accessible and compassionate treatment for mental health and substance use.

"I am truly honored to join MiraVista Behavioral Health Center and contribute to its mission of providing transformative

care," said Dr. Richmond. "Throughout my career, I have been passionate about creating environments where individuals feel supported and empowered in their recovery. I am excited to collaborate with MiraVista's talented and dedicated team to deliver innovative, patient-centered solutions that make a lasting difference in the lives of those we serve while continuing to distinguish MiraVista as a leader in the provision of mental health and substance use treatment, including Medication Assisted Treatment for those challenged by opioid use disorder."

MiraVista Behavioral Health Center is a leading provider of comprehensive mental health and substance use treatment services for adolescents and adults. By combining clinical expertise with a supportive, stigma-free approach, MiraVista empowers individuals and families to embark on journeys of healing and recovery.

For more information about MiraVista Behavioral Health Center and its services, please visit www.miravistahbcare.com.

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 benefits you received during the tax year" is correct. MAGI is what determines how much

SECURITY | page 5

Early Christmas shoppers...



DAVE GRANLUND © www.davegranlund.com

Guest Column

Coriander makes a great cookie



Today was the designated day to begin to bake like crazy. Personally, I wish we could cull the number, and honestly the sheer volume of Christmas cookies we make, but if the kids or my husband hear of that I will be banished to Grinch status.

It's a tradition to go through the recipes ahead of time and decide what cookies we'll bake.

One of my all-time favorites, and one I would never consider culling, is the coriander cookie. My family tried a sample at Old Sturbridge Village's Christmas by Candlelight some years back and enjoyed it so much we added the recipe to our repertoire. Yummy indeed!

You may be surprised to learn that Coriander sativum is the Latin name for two herbs. Confused? Most folks are when they learn that the seeds of this plant are called coriander, while the leaves are known as cilantro.

Both have been used for culinary purposes since the beginning of time! All portions of the plant are

GARDEN | page 12



Snowy owls have already been spotted in Massachusetts this year. They come from the tundra area of Canada into the United States during the winter. Usually, the snowy owls that head to this area are immature. This irruptive behavior may or may not be coordinated with the lemming cycle, one of their primary foods especially during their breeding cycle.

The snowy owl is about 24 inches long and primarily white, yellow eyes and variable amounts of black spots and barring. Immatures are darker than adults and females darker than males.

Snowy owls frequently hunt during the day. Their diet is mainly rodents, Arctic and snowshoe hares, fish, birds including waterfowl and carrion.

They nest on the tundra in a shallow depression on a mound on top or on a gravel mound. They line

the nest with feathers and bits of moss. The female lays three to ten white eggs. When prey is abundant the clutch size is larger. They make barking noises during breeding, but are quiet in winter.

They inhabit the open tundra and when they move south, they inhabit airports, beaches, marshes and open fields.

Many years ago, a snowy owl appeared in Oakham during the winter. I was lucky to see it

BACKYARD | page 12



Snowy owl



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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.

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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.

Opinion

Guest Column

A wintry hike on Mt. Monadnock

By Julie Midura
Guest Columnist

“I don’t think we’re on the trail anymore.” Tom and I drove to Mt. Monadnock in New Hampshire last week following a recent snowstorm. After parking our car at the trailhead, we made quick work of the road walk to the old Halfway House site, where we had a choice to make. We could continue straight ahead onto the well packed out and very popular White Arrow Trail, or hang a sharp right onto the lesser used and more difficult to follow Hello Rock Trail.

We paused when we reached the junction. One look in the direction of Hello Rock Trail told us that we would have our work cut out for us if we chose that route. Not only was the snow much deeper than we expected, but there were no other boot prints in sight. We would be breaking trail.

After not hiking anything strenuous in weeks and feeling less than confident in our ability to tackle some moderate trail breaking, I hesitated for a fraction of a second. I took a deep breath, exhaled slowly, then turned right towards Hello Rock Trail. No time like the present to see just how out of shape we were!

As we broke through the calf-deep, thick blanket of white that covered the treadway, the path was fairly obvious—four feet wide and slightly lower than the earth on either side. But we continued forward, undaunted by the fact that we were fairly certain we were no longer on the actual trail. After all, if we couldn’t locate the path, we’d just follow our footprints in the snow back to where the trail was more obvious, and then attempt to find the spot where we had made a wrong turn. In the meantime, we enjoyed moving through the Narnia-like forest of white.

I was in the lead when I stopped suddenly at the base of a very steep rock outcropping. The thought of going up the hill made my heart rate soar. However, the hope that we might be able to catch sight of the trail from the top and reconnect with the path we were supposed to be on helped assuage my fear. I ignored my rapidly beating heart, slammed my trekking poles into the snow-covered rock, kicked my spike-clad boots into the snow, and hauled myself up.

Only to realize that “You can’t get there from here.”

Upon reaching the top of the snow covered ledge, we discovered that we were mere feet from a sheer vertical drop-off. At



Tom takes in the beautiful snow covered view.



Julie smiles brightly at the top of Mt. Monadnock.



this point, we had three options. Well, in reality, just two, since plunging off the ledge onto the jagged rocks below was never really a viable option to begin with.

1- Continue bushwhacking upwards in an attempt to see where we would end up. The hope being that we’d eventually find Cliff Walk Trail. (Tom’s idea)

2- Turn back and try to find where we zigged when we should have zagged, and get back on the actual trail. (My idea)

One of the great things about hiking with a partner is that when one of you has a harebrained, cockamamie, dare I say utterly ridiculous idea, the more rational one can help you dial back the crazy, so to speak

Now I’m not saying that I’m always the logical part of the equation. Quite the contrary. I’m usually the one who likes to push the envelope when we hike together. You know—find out just how much we are capable of.

In those instances, Tom graciously offers his unsolicited advice, both for the betterment of our marriage, as well as to ensure that we aren’t put into a perilous situation by my occasionally wacky ideas.

On Saturday, however, it was my turn to be the sensible half of our partnership. With temperatures in the teens, I had no desire to continue bushwhacking in an area where a magnitude of snow had effectively erased the crevices and deep holes surrounding the enormous boulders which were lying in wait to swal-

low a leg or twist an ankle. And after only mild persuasion on my part, Tom agreed. Needless to say, ‘self preservation’ won out over ‘adrenaline rush’ and we turned back, eventually finding the sharp right turn we had missed earlier.

And at the end of the day, the summit was reached, views were had, pizza was consumed, hot cider was enjoyed, joy was found. And we lived to hike another day.

Honestly, what more could we possibly ask for? See you in the wintry wild places, my friends!

Follow Julie and Tom on Instagram @morethanthemountain for more of their hiking adventures.

SECURITY | from page 4

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.

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CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Miller beer variety
- 4. Member of people inhabiting Bering Sea islands
- 9. Stomach
- 14. Investment vehicle
- 15. Fictional soccer coach Ted
- 16. Irregular in botanical parlance
- 17. Cease standing
- 18. “American Horror Story” actress
- 20. Grow milk teeth
- 22. Plant parts
- 23. Snow house
- 24. Most contemptuous
- 28. Note to repay
- 29. Old English
- 30. Wings
- 31. Financial institutions
- 33. Parks and Lopez are two
- 37. Mr. T’s “The A-Team” character
- 38. Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
- 39. Give off
- 41. Semitic alphabet letter
- 42. Farm state
- 43. Actress Sarandon
- 44. Back parts
- 46. Zoroastrian concept of holy fire
- 49. Touchdown
- 50. One point north of due east
- 51. Refurbishes
- 55. Silver and Dogg are two
- 58. Former Tigers catcher Alex
- 59. Type of envelope
- 60. Seriously considered
- 64. Unhappy
- 65. Past (archaic)
- 66. Asian wild dog
- 67. Old English letter
- 68. Young domestic sheep
- 69. Football players need to gain them

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Dormant Peruvian volcano
- 2. Norwegian composer
- 3. Indicates location
- 4. Pubs
- 5. Unable to walk easily
- 6. Electronic warfare-support measures
- 7. World leader
- 8. Midsection
- 9. Jewish calendar month
- 10. Urological condition
- 11. A small quantity of anything
- 12. Mountain Time
- 13. Affirmative
- 19. Word element meaning ear
- 21. Carried away
- 24. Short-billed rails
- 25. Newborn child
- 26. Sword
- 27. Groups of people
- 31. Prickly, scrambling shrubs
- 32. Become less intense
- 34. Polishes
- 35. Indicates position
- 36. Songs sung to one’s beloved
- 40. The 12th letter of the Greek alphabet
- 41. Insects
- 45. Israeli politician
- 47. Pre-digital
- 48. Roaming
- 52. Ambience
- 53. Brew
- 54. Late
- 56. Make ecstatically happy
- 57. Semitic alphabet letter
- 59. Blend
- 60. Dash
- 61. Self
- 62. Exclamation of satisfaction
- 63. Hill or rocky peak

CROSSWORD SOLUTION ON PAGE 9

EARLY DEADLINE For All Advertising & CLASSIFIEDS

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AAA reminds drivers how to go on ice and snow

As drivers cope with the first wintry weather of the season, AAA offers the following tips for driving safely in snowy, rainy, and icy conditions.

Stay home. If you really don't have to go out, don't. Even if you can drive well in bad weather, it's better to avoid taking unnecessary risks by venturing out.

Drive slowly. Always adjust your speed down to account for lower traction when driving on snow or ice. Curbing your speed provides you with more time to react.

Accelerate and decelerate slowly. Apply the gas slowly to regain traction and avoid skids. Don't try to get moving in a hurry and take time to slow down for a stoplight. Remember: it takes longer to slow down on icy roads.

Increase your following distance. Allow five to six seconds of following distance between your vehicle and any vehicle in front of you. This space allows you time to stop safely if the other driver brakes suddenly.

Know your brakes. Whether you have antilock brakes or not, keep the heel of your foot on the floor and use the ball of your foot to apply firm, steady pressure on the brake pedal. Don't pump the brakes.

Don't stop if you can avoid it. There's a big difference in the amount of inertia it



takes to start moving from a full stop versus how much it takes to get moving while still rolling. If you can slow down enough to keep rolling until a traffic light changes, do it.

Don't power up hills. Applying extra gas on snow-covered roads just starts your wheels spinning. Try to get a little inertia going before you reach the hill and let that inertia carry you to the top. As you reach the crest of the hill, reduce your speed and proceed downhill slowly.

Don't stop going up a hill. There's nothing worse than trying to get moving up a hill on an icy road. Get some inertia going on a flat roadway before you take on the hill.

"Driving safely in wintry conditions takes practice, and many people in our region might be out of practice," said Mark Schieldrop, Senior Spokesperson. "Bad weather and sloppy road conditions are a factor in nearly half a million crashes every year. Reducing your speed and leaving plenty of space between yourself and other

vehicles is the best way to prevent a collision."

The return of wintry conditions is also a reminder for drivers to check the condition of their tires, replace worn wiper blades and keep an emergency kit in their vehicles. Some suggested winter-related items include:

- First-aid kit
- Blankets
- Drinking water/snacks for everyone in the car including pets
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Rags, paper towels or pre-moistened wipes
- Basic toolkit including duct tape and warning devices such as flares or reflectors
- Ice scraper/snow brush
- Jumper cables/jump pack
- Traction aid such as sand, salt or non-clumping cat litter
- Tarp, raincoat and gloves
- Shovel

AAA Northeast is a not-for-profit auto club with offices in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, New Hampshire and New York, providing more than 6.5 million local AAA members with travel, insurance, finance and auto-related services.

Agawam DPW collects used holiday 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 ic-

cle 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.

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 housewares, 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.

Colleen pageant applications now 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.

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SPORTS

Boys shine at UMass

AMHERST – Last Saturday night, the Agawam High School boys basketball team were the main event of the Pioneer Valley Tip-Off event held at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. The event, put on by the sports management students at the school, is a showcase even for Western Mass. basketball teams held during the opening weekend of the winter season. Agawam has

participated in past seasons. This year, the Brownies were in mid-season form as they dominated rival West Springfield 75-43. Elijah Maldonado, who is looking for 1,000 points this season, led all scorers with 28 points. Melih Tomak had 13 points and Brody Sheehan scored eight points in the win. The Brownies are 2-0 to start the season and face Commerce on Thursday, Dec. 19 at 7 p.m.



Caeden Roeder goes for the offensive rebound.



Melih Tomak shoots in traffic.



The Agawam defense works on stopping the Terriers.



Gavin Cruz shoots for the Brownies.



Elijah Maldonado makes a side rush to the hoop. TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



Brody Sheehan lines up a three-point attempt.

Brownies suffer loss in season opener

WEST SPRINGFIELD – While Agawam was able to spread its scoring around during its season opener last Thursday night, Ludlow's new co-op with Belchertown got three goals from Sean Kefalas, including a game-winner in overtime as the Lions prevailed 5-4. Ludlow got on the board first early in the first period on a Tanner Severyn goal, but Agawam stayed in the game throughout. Kefalas had two goals in regulation and Evan Dias also had a goal for the Lions. Andy Holton, Cole Buffum, Zach Hollister, and Landon Ashford scored for Agawam. Charlie Fijal, of Belchertown, had two assists for the Lions. Ludlow and Belchertown are a co-op this season using the Ludlow High School name. The Lions face Minnechaug this weekend and Agawam will face Taconic in a special 10 a.m. game on Christmas Eve, Tuesday, Dec. 24.



Aiden Pisano tries to win the faceoff.



Vinny Montagna works behind the net.



Casey Thomas heads up the ice.



The Agawam hockey offense fights for the puck.

Boys swimming gets win over Easthampton

AGAWAM – Last Friday afternoon, Agawam High School boys swimming defeated Easthampton 104-0. The girls results were not reported. The Brownies swept the entire event, with competitors getting wins in every event.

Nicholas Frisino won the 50 free and 500 free. Camryn Saroglou took two events. He won the 100 free and 200 free. Fred Ryzek took the 200 individual medley. The three relay teams were also successful. Agawam faced Ludlow earlier this week and next face Turners Falls on Monday, Dec. 23 at 10 a.m.

How to contact the Sports Editor

Have the scoop on a local sports story? Want to submit a team photo, pass along a potential story idea, or just find out how to get a copy of that great photo of your young athlete? Please send all sports-related press releases and information to Sports Editor Greg Scibelli at: sports@turley.com or call, 1-413-283-8393.

Sports

Thunderbirds grab point in overtime

SPRINGFIELD – The Springfield Thunderbirds (12-9-2-0) dispatched a 4-1 second intermission deficit to earn a standings point before ultimately falling in overtime, 5-4, to the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins (14-7-1-0) on Saturday night at Mohegan Arena at Casey Plaza.

Upstart rookie Rutger McGroarty quickly got the Penguins on the board on their Teddy Bear Toss night as he took a delicate saucer pass from Joona Koppanen and deked to the forehand to tuck it behind Vadim Zherenko just 1:53 into the opening period.

The T-Birds were able to draw two power play opportunities while trailing 1-0, but the Penguins' penalty kill dispatched both of the Springfield man-up situations. Special teams continued to trend in the home team's direction as the Penguins cashed in on their first power play on a goal by Emil Bemstrom at 16:06 of the frame to give Wil-

kes-Barre/Scranton a 2-0 lead into the intermission.

Filip Larsson was not heavily taxed in Penguins crease in the first, but he came up with the nine saves asked of him to start the night.

Thanks to their top offensive unit, the T-Birds quelled some of the Penguins' momentum at 5:17 of the second. Aleksanteri Kaskimaki took a drop feed from Leo Loof and whipped it in the low slot to Dalibor Dvorsky. While Larsson slid across to deny the T-Birds' star rookie, the rebound trickled behind the netminder, allowing Marcus Sylvegard to backhand it into the yawning net to cut the deficit to 2-1.

Special teams, though, proved to be Springfield's undoing once again just 3:16 later as Valtteri Puustinen slipped behind the defense on a power play and chipped a backhander past Zherenko to make it a 3-1

Penguins lead.

Late in the period, the Thunderbirds thought they had solved Larsson on a power play scramble in the crease, but after a review, the goal was washed out, and Bemstrom took advantage with just 18 seconds left in the frame, snapping a wrist shot under the crossbar, extending the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton lead to 4-1 after 40 minutes.

The T-Birds' leaders rapidly turned the game around as the final period began. Captain Matthew Peca flung a wrister over Larsson's glove just 17 seconds into the period to make it a 4-2 contest. Less than four minutes later, crashing in for a rebound in the slot area, former Penguin Scott Harrington notched his first as a Thunderbird at 4:08 to cut the margin to 4-3.

Larsson and the Penguins tightened to hold the fort into the game's final two min-

utes, but a penalty with 2:09 on the clock handed Springfield another power play and a chance to get an equalizer. With Zherenko at the bench for an extra skater, the T-Birds seized the moment as Matt Luff found Kaskimaki in the slot, and the rookie's snapper eluded Larsson to tie the game with 1:56 left.

The Thunderbirds had another power play chance to close out regulation, but the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton penalty kill shut it down to get the game into the extra period.

Unfortunately, the T-Birds' magic ran out in the extra session as a penalty gave the Penguins a 4-on-3 power play, and Bemstrom completed his hat trick with a spinning jam shot at 4:27 of the overtime to snap the T-Birds winning streak. Despite coming short of victory, Springfield earned standings points for the 11th time in its last 13 games.

Worcester Railers get point, fall in shootout

WORCESTER – It has been one of those weekends that seem like a month for the Railers. They have battled one of the ECHL's best teams in the Trois-Rivieres Lions and changed a coach all at the same time.

Worcester lost its final game under Bob Deraney, 5-3, Friday night. They lost their first game under Nick Tuzzolino, 3-2, Saturday night but it was one of those half-a-loaf deals. The Railers earned a point with a shootout loss.

It says something about the Lions that Worcester played one of its best games in recent weeks and still could not get two points. Trois-Rivieres is loaded with offensive opportunities and flawless goaltending.

The Railers out shot the visitors, 41-26, but still could not outscore them.

It was, however, an encouraging start to Tuzzolino's head coaching career and in general he liked what he saw.

"I don't want to say that I was excited about how we played," he said, "because the result wasn't there, but we made a few minor adjustments in clogging up the neutral zone and our forecheck, and I thought they were really good."

The goal scorers were Justin Kaplan and Matthew Kopperud for Worcester while the Lions got two goals from Cormier. The first was from Xavier Cormier, the second

from Tommy Cormier. Alex Beaucage had the only shootout goal.

It was a good goaltending night both ways. Zachary Emond made 39 saves for the Lions. Michael Bullion, who had been in a slump, stopped 23 and made the save of the night early in the third period.



He stopped Logan Nijhoff on a penalty shot at 2:31. The period was Bullion's best as he also made some big saves late to keep the score at 2-2.

Xavier Cormier put Trois-Rivieres ahead at 4:29 of the first period. It was a tap-in goal with the Lions on a power play. Kaplan tied it at 8:45, also on a power play. He beat Emond with a rebound backhander.

Kopperud scored from the right circle at 14:26 to give Worcester a 2-1 lead, then Tommy Cormier converted a long break-away at 18:01.

"If we can carbon-copy what we did tonight," Tuzzolino said, "I don't see us losing more than a couple games here and there. It's one of those things where that type of system can plug in play some players and drive some teams wild up front."

"I guess my overall goal is to work on the consistency of that this week because we'll have a good stretch and really have all things firing for Maine. It's a very big week-end for us."

Coaching classes available

Coaches hired after Aug. 1, 1998 are required to take a coaching course to be eligible to coach high school sports in Massachusetts.

According to the Pioneer Valley Interscholastic Athletic Association, all coaches hired prior to Aug. 1, 1998 are exempt from taking the Fundamentals of Coaching Course. Coaches hired after that and before July 1, 2005 must have completed the NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching Course with the exception of Certified MA teachers.

All coaches (stipend or volunteer) first serving as an interscholastic coach after July 1, 2005 must complete the NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching Course, and an approved Sports First Aid course.

The NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching Course requirement must be met through attending an MIAA sponsored Fundamentals of Coaching Class with MIAA Certified Instructors. Must be completed and passed prior to coaching a second year.

The NFHS Sports First Aid may be met by completing on-line courses with the NFHS www.nfhslearn.com. Must be passed prior to coaching a third year.

Additional requirements for all coaches:

- Massachusetts requires coaches to be certified in CPR per Section 1. Section 47A of chapter 71 of the General Laws. Additionally, AED training is required and will most likely be done in conjunction with the existing mandated CPR training.

- All MIAA member school coaches (stipend or volunteer) are required to take annually the on-line National Federation Concussion Course, or other MA Department of Public Health recognized education program, prior to the start of their season. Rugby Coaches must see Rule 76.2 for additional coaches' education information.

Any questions, please call Donna Harrington at 508-541-9804 or email dharrington@miaa.net.

Fundamentals of coaching classes are being offered on Wednesday, Jan. 29, 2025 from 4 to 8 p.m. and Saturday, Feb. 8, 2025 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Classes are open until capacity is reached and then a waiting list is established. There are on-line components to the course once the classroom portion is completed



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Itsy Bitsy franchise continues to expand

HOLYOKE – The Itsy Bitsy franchise continues to expand at Holyoke Community College. For the second year in a row, students in Professor Sheryl Civjan's Psychology of Women class have taken up the college's "Itsy Bitsy" theme for a campus-based community service project. Last fall, Civjan's students created the Itsy Bitsy Closet, transforming a storage room next to the college's Itsy Bitsy Child Watch Center into a family-friendly resource room full of donated books, clothes, and other children's items, all free to HCC student-parents.

This semester, they put together five Itsy Bitsy Stations, containers of children's books, games, small toys, art supplies, and other items, that student-parents can access to occupy their kids when visiting certain campus offices, in particular: Financial Aid, Admissions, Advising, English as a Second Language, and the HCC Library.

"Some college offices can be difficult to go to for appointments when you have kids," said Civjan. "These boxes will give kids something to do while they're parents are waiting."

Civjan said the idea came from staff at the Itsy Bitsy Child Watch.

"Students have shared that they are sometimes self-conscious when they are bringing their kids into campus offices," said Emily Webber, director of the itsy Bitsy Child Watch, a free drop-in service for HCC student-parents. "This is an effort to make the campus feel more inclusive to student-parents and families. Having little play stations helps people feel more welcome. I talked to Sheryl about that, and her students took the idea and ran with it."

The idea for using "Itsy Bitsy" as the title for early childhood programs at HCC started in 2020 when, during the pandemic, HCC educators created a series of video interviews for early education students and professionals (the Itsy Bitsy Zoomcast). The theme grew into a title for a new suite of early education classrooms modeled after preschool and kindergarten facilities (the Itsy Bitsy Learning Lab). The Itsy Bitsy Child Watch opened in 2022, followed last year by the Itsy Bitsy Closet, and this year by the Itsy Bitsy Stations.

Civjan's students put together three containers for the HCC Library, each targeting different age groups.

"We found that students who have children don't always have a safe, comfortable place where they can sit and feel like they're not intruding on another person's space," said Rebecca Hardy, administrative assistant for the HCC Library. "So, we wanted to make sure that the students who do have children feel welcome and that their children have things to do to keep them quietly engaged."

Student Olivia Jolley of South Hadley, whose team prepared boxes for the Admissions Office, said the project ties in directly to the themes of the class, and although



she does not have children herself, Jolley said some of her classmates do. "One had a baby a couple of weeks ago," she said, "and she's a single parent."

Webber said she appreciates the hard work Civjan's students put into their projects.

"I think it's an ongoing partnership," Webber said. "I don't know what will come next, but they do amazing things. The Itsy Bitsy Closet has been a great success. Students come by every day. Hopefully this will have a similar impact."

Obituary

Rick A. Psholka

1961-2024

Rick Adam Psholka, 62, of Worcester, MA passed away in his home on Nov. 28th, 2024.

He was born in Holyoke, MA in 1961, to his parents Rhoda and Carl Psholka from Agawam, MA. Rick attended Agawam Public Schools, and worked at Six Flags New England for several years.



He is survived by his sister Deena and brother Ted, many nieces and nephews, aunts, and uncle. His cousin Denise dedicated time and patience to care for him and make sure he was in attendance at family events.

Rick loved visiting with his nieces and nephews and their children, seamlessly fitting in as "one of the kids". He was always reading, journaling, or keeping in touch with others through texting or social media.

The family will be holding a private Celebration of Life.

Rick was an animal lover. In his memory, please donate to a local animal shelter.

Virtual support groups for those with cancer

During a cancer journey patients and their families often benefit from the support of others. Virtual support groups are being held now and through 2025, by Camille St.Onge, LICSW and oncology social worker.

For many years, people had to travel to a predetermined location to attend cancer support group meetings. As a result of restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic virtual support groups began meeting entirely online, with participants joining through video conferencing platforms like Zoom. Today, many people prefer this method because it offers flexibility, and convenience, and allows them to access support from where they are without needing to physically travel to a meeting location.

"Sharing concerns with a support group can be a beneficial way for people facing cancer to get the help they need to cope with the physical and emotional concerns that arise during and after a cancer diagnosis," said St. Onge. "While support and self-help groups can vary

greatly, groups share one thing in common, they are a place where people can share personal stories, express emotions, and be heard in an atmosphere of acceptance, understanding, and encouragement."

The support groups are designed to help patients, their families and caregivers cope with the challenges of a cancer diagnosis.

Virtual Support Group offered include: General Cancer Support Group: first Wednesday of each month, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; Partners in Caregiving: second Wednesday of each month, 5 to 6:30 p.m.; Expressive Writing through Cancer, third Wednesday of each month, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Breast Cancer Support Group, fourth Wednesday of each month, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

All meetings are currently held virtually and are made possible by funds raised by the Walk of Champions. For more information contact Camille St.Onge, LICSW, Oncology Social Worker by calling 413-239-7239 or by email at cstomagin@gmail.com.

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 Grasseti, 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

NOTICE

ERRORS: Each advertiser is requested to check their advertisement the first time it appears. This paper will not be responsible for more than one corrected insertion, nor will be liable for any error in an advertisement to a greater extent than the cost of the space occupied by the item in the advertisement.

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.

PUBLIC NOTICES ARE NOW ONLINE

- 1 Email all notices to notices@turley.com
- 2 Access archives and digital tear sheets by newspaper title.
- 3 Find a quick link to the state of Massachusetts' public notice web site to search all notices in Massachusetts newspapers.

Public notice deadlines are Mondays at noon, Fridays noon for Monday holidays.

visit www.publicnotices.turley.com

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Volunteers gathered at the senior center to learn how they would go about packaging gift baskets.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY QUINN SUOMALA



Volunteers all came together to make the gift baskets and have some holiday fun.



Outreach Coordinator Lori Arsenault walked the gathered volunteers through the process of packaging the gift baskets.



Chief of Staff to the Mayor Barbara Bard, City Councilor Anthony Russo and Senior Center Director Cindy Sullivan all enjoyed the gift basket making process.



After volunteers had put the needed items into the gift baskets they wrapped them and added bows.



Volunteers Mary DeVivo, Margy Oczowaki and Loren Forastiere all volunteered their time to help package gift baskets.



Deputy Director of the Senior Center Kristina Lynch joined in on the fun and helped to package gift baskets.



Mayor Christopher Johnson and City Councilor Anthony Russo both volunteered their time to help package gift baskets.



Chief of Staff to the Mayor Barbara Bard joined in on wrapping up gift baskets.

CHEER ■ from page 1

“A highlight is the phone calls I get after,” Arsenault said. “People call me up and they are in tears, saying they can’t believe that someone got this basket...that’s my favorite part.”

Arsenault spent several months planning for this event with the help of her fellow staff at the senior center.

She sent out the first mention of it in the senior center newsletter back in August, where she began to ask for various donations to help with the project itself.

From there she continued to send out

reminders and plan out what supplies would be needed. She is grateful to all in the community who donated.

“The response has been amazing,” Arsenault said. “We’ve had several businesses that donated a lot of money, we have seniors that came in and donated products. Every time I turned around somebody dropped off a bag in my office.”

Arsenault has been running this event for five years now. She was inspired to create it while she was working the meals on wheels program at the senior center.

Through that she realized how many seniors may not be able to get out and get

essentials or receive gifts during the holidays, so she wanted to help with that.

“I knew that a lot of meals on wheels people are not able to get out of their houses and a lot of them do not have family that live nearby, so at Christmas time it can be pretty stuff,” Arsenault said. “They get a Christmas present even if they don’t have family nearby.”

Since she started it, the program has grown larger and larger each year. This year Arsenault and the volunteers made more than 115 gift baskets to go out to seniors in the community.

“We started with about 30 people,” Ar-

senault said. “Then the next year it grew, and then it grew, and grew.”

Arsenault is very thankful for the team of staff and volunteers who have helped her throughout the years in making this happen.

“I have a very supportive group of people I work with at the senior center, they do whatever they can to help me with this project,” Arsenault said. “And all the volunteers...they’re amazing.”

She plans to continue doing this for many years in the future, and she hopes someone else will take over the project when she is not able to run it anymore.

GARDEN ■ from page 4

edible but some argue that the green portion is barely that. Read on.

I liken cilantro to be the “marigold” of the herb world. Either you love it or you hate it. I, for one, immensely dislike it and if given the chance to pick it out of my salsa I will certainly do it! Even in a restaurant.

I found it interesting to learn that some people possess a genetically predisposed aversion to it, according to studies by Charles J. Wysocki of the Monell Chemical Senses Center in Philadelphia.

To me it has a bitter taste that I have a hard time describing beyond that. Dirty? Soil-like?

Most people that do dislike it have a similar lack of descriptive ability; they just can't put their finger on it, but they don't like the taste...or the smell of it.

As I mentioned, cilantro is often used in salsa and other Mexican, Asian and Italian dishes including curries, sauces, salads and soups. If you prefer to grow the plant more for its greens and less for its seeds, manage it as you would spinach.

Sow seeds in the ground in the cool of the season and in succession every two weeks. It dislikes being transplanted but doesn't mind pot culture. Harvest greens rather aggressively – about one-third of the plant at a time.

Just like spinach, there are slow-to-bolt varieties to choose from such as aptly named “Slow Bolt” and “Long-standing.”

Coriander seeds, on the other hand, have a pleasant (at least to me!) fragrance once dried. The scent is easier to pin-point too; nutty and spicy (ever so slightly) come to mind.

Coriander seed is also well known in various ethnic cuisines and is a favorite in spice blends, curry being the most popular. It is also used in the making of a number of distilled spirits and herbal liqueurs, and cookies.

It's funny that I can like one part of the plant and not the other. Coriander seed can be eaten whole, crushed or powdered.

The Herb Society noted that during World War II the seeds were coated in white or pink sugar and thrown from carnival wagons, earning the name “confections” or “confetti!” When the seeds were replaced by balls of colored

paper the name confetti stuck. Take this one to your next game of Cruise Ship Trivia!

It is easy to harvest the seeds. Simply let the heads dry to brown right on the plant. Clip them and place inside a paper bag; as they dry further they will open and the seeds will pop out.

Even if you are only interested in harvesting the seeds, multiple plantings (or a big garden patch) are necessary to get a decent-sized harvest.

No matter how you like your Coriander sativum, sow the seeds in a sunny, well-drained spot in place for the best success. If you let a few drop their seed each year, chances are you will be blessed with volunteers.

Enough writing, I have four batches of cookies to get in the freezer! Merry Christmas to all of my gardening friends out there!

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.

BACKYARD ■ from page 4

perched on a fence post near an open field in the daytime. People came from all over to see this rare visitor. Logan Airport is a popular winter stop over.

Bald eagle sighting

On Dec. 2 I received an email from a Brimfield resident. He said, “I've been checking the local ponds but not a lot happening. However, I have seen a bald eagle or two at the pond on New Reed Street four time in the last two weeks and another birder I met there reported seeing eagles there that I missed. On one visit two adult bald eagles were sitting in the same dead tree about fifteen feet apart.”

Christmas Bird Count

He plans to participate in the Allen's Bird Count Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, Dec. 14. National Audubon Society 125th Christmas Bird Counts take place Saturday, Dec. 14 through Sunday, Jan. 5, 2025. This is one of the most popular birding events of the year. It is rarely held on the actual designated holiday itself, counts are scheduled to take place on various days surrounding Dec. 25 within the official count period noted above. Counting takes place anytime during the 24 hours, midnight-to-midnight.

The goal is to find, identify and count all birds within a



Dark-eyed junco

15-mile diameter “count circle.” All are welcome. Compilers do their best to make sure that beginners join a group with at least one experienced birder. Locations in late December include: Quabbin on Saturday, Dec. 28 compiler Scott Sumner at ssumner@aol.com and Westminster on Wednesday, Jan. 1, 2025 compiler Charles Caron at 978-874-5649 or caronev@aol.com.

People may visit <https://www.audubon.org/community-science/christmas-bird-count> to read about CBC history, science and data.

Juncos and snow

The Brimfield resident noted a large flock of juncos about 40 the day before the Dec. 5 snow storm. He said, “Storms a commin' I looked out near where the feeding stations are located and where I spread mixed seed on the ground and a quick count resulted in 40 junco. And chickadees and titmice were constantly back and forth to the black oil sunflower seed feeder.” I also saw a large flock of juncos on my daughter's lawn in Barre on that Wednesday.

Pond visits

The Brimfield resident makes frequent trips to ponds in his area. He found most of them frozen over on Dec. 4. He did count 12 hooded mergansers at Holland Pond, a large group of mallards over 200 and three black ducks at Sherman Pond.

People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by calling me at 413-967-3505, leaving a message at extension 100, emailing mybackyard88@aol.com or edowner@turley.com or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005.



Only a few hours into the first day of the toy drive, the police department had already received more than a cruiser worth of toys. TURLEY PHOTOS BY QUINN SUOMALA

DONATION ■ from page 1

They love seeing everyone from the community come out to support this work.

“A highlight for me is the good will,” Sgt. Chris Soto said. “All the volunteers are happy, the community is happy to help and I am glad I am here to facilitate it.”

They also appreciate all the community members who give them snacks and beverages throughout the day.

“The community that comes over and drops off coffee, I would like to thank them,” Smith said. “They see that it is cold out and come help.”

The police make sure that they do this drive each year so that they can help ensure that families in Agawam can get toys for the holidays.

“If we didn't help Bethany out, they may not be able to fill all of the orders,” Soto said. “So it is important that we do this, there is a need for it.”

Each year the department gets about four cruisers worth of toys and they are so grateful for all of these contributions.

This event is just one of many charity events that the police do throughout the year. One of their other larger events is their annual Thanksgiving drive, but they do many others on top of that.

“We do a lot of random charity events that I think everyone should be a part of,” Smith said.

If people are interested in keeping updated on the different charity events the police department does throughout the year, they can go to their Facebook page, Agawam Police Department.

Hope Your Holiday Season Is **Extra-Extra** Happy!



Thanks to all of our readers and advertisers for supporting our publication and the future of local community journalism. We value our role in this community, and we're committed to keeping you current in 2025 and beyond with a focus on the local news and events that matter most to you.

We wish you an informed and fabulous new year!

AGAWAM

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