

Chicopee Register

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COMMUNITY

Laughs for Backpacks raises over \$5,000 for Back to School Event



TURLEY PHOTOS BY KRISTIN RIVERS

The Laughs for Backpacks Comedy Night Fundraiser was a huge success on Feb. 7, raising a grand total of \$5,189.71 for the 2025 Back to School Event taking part at Rivers Park on Aug. 24

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
krivers@turley.com

CHICOPEE - The Laughs for Backpacks Comedy Fundraiser on Feb. 7 raised over \$5,000 to support this year's Back to School Event.

The 2025 Back to School Event will happen at Rivers Park on Sunday, Aug. 24.

The fundraiser, held at the Portuguese American Club, featured raffle baskets, a 50/50 raffle--which was later donated back to the comedy fundraiser--a cash bar, remarks from Ricardo

Diaz, owner of Faded Barber Lounge, and Monica Torres, community & constituent liaison for the City of Chicopee, a video recapping the 2024 Back to School Event and performances from local comedians Tim Lovett, Davey Lozano and Kim DeShields.

The fundraiser was sponsored by Curry Honda Chicopee, Open View Tree Services, Gil's Auto Repair + Performance, HG Property Management LLC, Riley Home Realty, Aesthetic Beauty Revolution, Bella Luna Aesthetics and Wellness, Fourty-Four General

Services, JR's Handy Solutions, Beautiez of the Skull Hampden County, Simply Dental Group and NM Nails.

Diaz, who was joined by Luz Lopez, cofounder of Breaking Oppression, was elated about the event.

"It's been a journey to get here. It's something that's going to be good for our Back to School Event. Something that Luz, I and many other people put together," Diaz said.

Lopez explained the fundraiser was through Funny 4 Funds, a nonprofit organization utilizing comedy night fundraisers to help support

events.

"So, we're raising (money) so that we can make this event bigger and better than last year's," Lopez said.

Diaz and Lopez enjoy collaborating on events.

"Luz is a great partner. Breaking Oppression is a great organization, what they got going on, what they stand for, what they do for the youth, for the community," Diaz said. "Just everything that they do is everything that I stand for and that's the reason why I felt that they were

See **BACKPACKS** page 5

COMMUNITY



TURLEY PHOTOS BY KRISTIN RIVERS

DJ Luis D serenades an attendee during the Valentine's Day Dance.

Love in the air at RiverMills Valentine's Day Dance

By Kristin Rivers
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CHICOPEE - The senior center was a full house on Feb. 14 as seniors enjoyed this year's Valentine's Day Dance.

The dance featured a variety of love songs for couples and their friends to dance to throughout the afternoon--overseen by DJ Luis D--along with Valentine's Day-themed treats for all.

There was also a special serenade performed by Richard Salvas to his sweetheart, Christine Rumanowski.

Among the couples were Dan Dulchinos and Elaine Dutton, who will mark 9 years together in March and found each other after they both lost their spouses.

Dutton was previously

married for 53 years, while Dulchinos was previously married for 49 years.

"He was my 9th grade school teacher and he came to my husband's wake and it was so nice to see him there because I hadn't seen him in years," Dutton said.

"I didn't know she had a son--she had a 49-year-old son--and she said, 'Louis, this is the man I told you about that turned my whole life around.' So, that kind of hit home and a couple days later, I said, 'She thinks enough of me, maybe I could help her through her grievings,'" Dulchinos said.

A couple days after that wake, Dulchinos called Dutton to see how she was and told her if she needed someone to talk to, he'd be there.

"So eventually she

See **VALENTINE'S DAY** page 9

COMMUNITY



SUBMITTED PHOTO KIM CAISSE

From Miss Meneguzzo's classroom, the children were proud to help Belcher Elementary School and Lorraine's staff in loading up the truck.

Belcher Elementary donates cereal to Lorraine's Soup Kitchen

By Amanda Munson
Correspondent

CHICOPEE - "This week we ran out of cereal and now we have enough for a couple of months!" When Belcher Elementary was approaching a half day at school, the staff reviewed their past attendance and wanted to create an incentive to get kids in the building and eager to learn. Equipped with an ongoing cereal drive and a local connection, Belcher Elementary School showed off their cereal donation in the form of a domino presentation across the auditorium, and successfully filled up the Lorraine's food truck at the end of the school day on Feb 14.

The brain behind the whole operation was Vice Principal Kimberly Paquette, who was craving a good cause to support Executive Director

Kim Caisse at Lorraine's Soup Kitchen and wanted to establish a core memory to the children of Belcher Elementary. The environment was ecstatic, the kids were nearly jumping out of their seats to get a better view of the massive domino display that was the size of half the auditorium, with staff and guests anxious to see the dominoes in effect.

Learning more about the cereal drive, Paquette began this operation in the middle of January.

"This has been going on for about four weeks now, I'm having students and families donate cereal boxes. The biggest goal was to donate to Lorraine's right here in Chicopee and support our families locally, while also increasing attendance when our students have a half day at school," Paquette said. "We brainstormed what a fun as-

sembly that we could do to get them engaged and motivated to come to school, so that's how we kind of took the cereal box collection challenge and turned it into the dominoes you see today."

Starting near the front office, down the hallway past the lunchroom windows, wrapping around the doorways to create a never-ending illusion of cereal boxes, staff nearly knocked the dominoes down four times. From popular name brands to kids' favorite breakfast options, everyone was proud to donate to Lorraine's Soup Kitchen who's in need of staple items like rice, pasta and cereal.

Paquette explained how the drive motivated the students.

"School attendance is the

See **BELCHER ELEMENTARY** page 7

COMMUNITY

Chicopee marks Black History Month



SUBMITTED PHOTO MONICA TORRES

From the left, Superintendent Dr. Marcus Ware, Deacon Badette "Lady Bug" Lanier, her father, Ret. Sgt. William Dufres, Chicopee Cultural Council Member Wilhelmina Humphries, Al Kendall, member of the Commission on Disability, Chicopee Cultural Council Member Nancy Shepard-Murray and Sgt. Thomas Gazda from the Chicopee Center C3 Unit in a group photo.

By Kristin Rivers
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CHICOPEE - Residents, community members, local and state elected officials and more gathered inside City Hall Auditorium on Feb. 13 to mark Black History Month in a flag-raising ceremony.

Due to the weather conditions, the ceremony was held indoors with performances from the Chicopee High School Chorus led by Michael Kagan and remarks from Superintendent Dr. Marcus Ware, State Rep. Shirley Arriaga (D-Chicopee), State Sen. Jake Oliveira (D-Ludlow), Ayanna Crawford, chief of staff for State Rep. Orlando Ramos (D-Springfield), Nia Johnson, community engagement coordinator at the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office, Choyce McIn-

tosh-Rodriguez, pro bono coordinator at Community Legal Aid for Western MA, Al Kendall, member of the Commission on Disability, and Erns Rinvil.

Deacon Badette "Lady Bug" Lanier provided the blessing.

The flag was draped by Azael Diaz from the Facilities Department and mayor's proclamations were presented to Lanier and her father, Ret. Sgt. William Dufres.

Ware explained acknowledging Black History Month "remains essential" because "it honors the achievements, struggles and contributions of black individuals who have shaped history despite systemic barriers."

"It serves as a reminder of the ongoing fight for racial justice and equality while providing an opportunity for education, reflection and

celebration of Black culture. By recognizing this month, we affirm the importance of diverse narratives in shaping our collective history and inspire future generations to continue striving for equity and inclusion," Ware said.

Arriaga emphasized optimism and not repeating history, believing everyone should be treated equally "regardless of who they are, where they're from, the color of their skin and their financial bank accounts."

"I don't care if you have five dollars in your pocket, I don't care if you have a \$1 million in your pocket, I don't care if you were born in the U.S. or if you originated from a different country, which many of us have. That's what we came here to

See **BLACK HISTORY** page 10

IN THE CITY

Exploring creativity and musical talent at CPL

Exploring creativity and musical talent at CPL

By Amanda Munson
Correspondent

CHICOPEE - "I encourage everyone to visit a library." In the midst of February break for the school kids, many families and patrons are wondering what activities and events are happening around them that are engaging for everyone involved.

Whether it's an art project, computer lessons, genealogy research to ukulele lessons, the library had all of that covered and more.

Catching up with Youth Services Coordinator Erin Daly and reviewing the library calendar full of children's events that were occurring the week of school break and beyond, Daly was helping assist Ukulele Teacher Julie Stepanek Murray set up for her third music lesson of the day, while helping out patrons at the desk consecutively. In conversation about the library's varying music

programs and the importance of targeting a certain audience—specifically kids in the Children's Room—Daly wanted to highlight everything that was occurring at the library and encouraged everybody to visit.

Speaking about the ukulele lessons for kids, teens and adults on Feb. 18, Daly shared this.

"Our ukulele friend Julie wrote a grant to teach three different ukulele lessons for different ages today and the Cultural Council funded it. She had a ukulele story time for our little friends. She read a book and explained how the instrument worked, letting everyone touch the ukulele and strum the strings. Everyone can learn to play the ukulele and Julia is a great ukulele teacher and just a library fan," Daly said. "Music programs get everybody, kids to adults, moving around. Music's good for our brains. The library has got it, like we're here making art, playing music, and doing all those cool human things that we can do altogether. Music is an amazing stress reliever."

The main takeaway was that Daly wanted to ensure families understood that events and activities at the library are completely free to all.

"We love doing the art and we are giving the arts away for free!" Daly said.

When asked about the variety of music programs offered to patrons, Daly mentioned The Springfield Symphony Orchestra Petting Zoo, preschool dance parties and summer concerts in the new backyard area of the library.

"We do a dance party for our little preschool friends every other Wednesday morning, we play different songs and do a variety of motions with noise makers and scarves, it's always really fun. It's like the best cardio in the world and then you take a nap for one track and then you get back to your day. Then we have the Springfield Symphony Orchestra coming back in April, it brings musical instruments everywhere and the kids can try them out or just learn what an orchestra has to offer," Daly said. "We have concerts all sum-

mer and they are going to be on Thursday nights and we have our outdoor space with the shade structure, it'll be a lot more comfortable to hang out back there. We always hire good musicians, I wish more people would come out to experience the free concerts!"

Daly encouraged all library patrons, users and friends to be vocal about the appreciation towards the local libraries and continue to use the space that's made for the public. All these events, activities, and music lessons are greatly supported by the Cultural Council.

When asked what her day-to-day looks like, Daly added a small note.

"I just do a lot of different things all the time. It is all towards trying to provide a fun and good community experience here. I get to be creative here and share that with everyone who visits," Daly said.

To learn more about upcoming events, visit chicopeepubliclibrary.org.

CPD warns of smishing scam

CHICOPEE - In a recent text message phishing (smishing) scam, cybercriminals send you a text that appears to be from the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). The text says that you have a package at the post office that cannot be delivered due to an incomplete address. The message contains a PDF file and directs you to open it to complete your address.

You are then directed to click a button in the PDF file, which takes you to what appears to be a USPS web page. The page instructs you to enter your address, personal data, and credit card number so the USPS can attempt to deliver your package. The catch is there never was a package. The USPS page is

actually fake and controlled by cybercriminals. If you enter any information here, cybercriminals will be able to steal it immediately!

Follow these tips to avoid falling victim to a smishing scam:

This smishing scam claims to be from the USPS, but be wary of any unsolicited text messages from unknown numbers. If you aren't sure if a message is legitimate, delete or report it.

Don't reply to unexpected text messages, even to say "STOP" or "unsubscribe." If you have any questions regarding delivery, contact your local post office directly.

Never click on any attachments or links from suspicious text messages or emails.

Traffic violation leads to narcotics arrest

CHICOPEE - On Monday February 10, 2025 around 2:45 p.m., detectives were monitoring traffic on Broadway St. when they observed a red motor vehicle drive past their location.

The detectives recognized the operator of the vehicle as Kashmin Harmon, and knew Kashmin's license to operate a motor vehicle was suspended. At that time the Detectives activated their blue lights and attempted to conduct a traffic stop on the vehicle.

The vehicle immediately pulled to the side of the road however, as the detectives exited their cruiser and began to approach the vehicle, the operator sped off. This resulted in a pursuit up Broadway St. into Springfield due to the time of day, the amount of traffic and the fact that the vehicle was driving erratically passing cars and running red lights the pursuit was called off.

Shortly after the pursuit was called off detectives monitoring traffic on Springfield St. observed the vehicle drive past them at a high rate of speed, passing vehicles and running the red light at the intersection of Springfield St and Fairview Ave. The vehicle then continued into the center making several turns in an attempt to hide from the cruisers in the area that was looking for it.

As the initial detectives were turning onto West St one of them observed Kashmin walking into the Shell station on the corner of West St and Center St. Detectives were able to follow Kashmin

into the store and attempted to place him under arrest.

Kashmin became combative and refused to put his hands behind his back, this resulted in a scuffle in the store and ultimately took four officers to secure Kashmin in handcuffs.

Through the use of our real time crime center, officers were able to track the operation of Kashmin's vehicle throughout the center and learned that in an attempt to hide the car Kashmin parked it on Dublin St. As a result of placing Kashmin under arrest an inventory of his vehicle was done.

During the inventory detectives located 50 doses of what they believed to be fentanyl on the driver side floorboard. During the booking process Lt. Fopp located 50 packets of what is believed to be heroin/fentanyl, along with two individual wrapped baggies containing a white powdery substance consistent with cocaine.

Kashmin Gonzalez-Harmon a 33-year-old male from Chicopee was arrested and charged with the following:

- Possession of Heroin
- Subsequent Offense
- Resisting Arrest times 4
- A&B on a Police Officer times 3
- Unsafe Operation of a Motor Vehicle
- Operating a M Vehicle with a Suspended License
- Reckless Operation of a Motor Vehicle
- Fail to Stop for Police
- Speeding
- Trafficking in 18 Grams or more of Cocaine

Chicopee Public Library Hosts Events for Kids and Families

CHICOPEE - Each month the Chicopee Public Library hosts a variety of free programs for children, teens and families. The Youth Services Department seeks to provide opportunities for entertainment and enrichment that promote literacy and explore creativity. Here is the slate of events for February 2025, including lots of fun programming during February School Val-

uation Week.

Saturday Playgroup will be held at 1 p.m., on Saturdays, Feb. 22. Come play at the library! The playspace will be open for families with kids of all ages to meet up and play.

Storytime will be held in the children's program room on Wednesdays Feb. 26 at 10:30 a.m. Storytime is based loosely around the early childhood literacy skills:

sing, talk, read, write and play. We read books, sing and move, and do a craft or activity. Recommended for preschool aged kids.

Little Movers will be held in the children's program room on Fridays Feb. 28 at 11 a.m. Babies crawling to 24 months and their caregivers are invited to join us for free play followed by circle time exploring songs, fingerplays

and movement!

Teen Programs

Teen Anime Club will meet on Wednesday, Feb. 26 from 3 to 4:30. This month's theme is Pokémon arts and crafts. Teen programs are open to middle and high school students.

For more information about the library and all of the upcoming events, visit www.chicopeepubliclibrary.org

From Ireland to America

CHICOPEE - The Council on Aging will the program "From Ireland to America" on Wednesday, March 5 at 1:30 p.m. at Chicopee Council on Aging's RiverMills Center, 5 West Main St.

Roger Tincknell is back at RiverMills Center to celebrate the upcoming St. Patrick's Day holiday. During this program, you will hear the songs, stories and ballads from Ireland, along with some step dancing and spoon playing.

This program is supported by the Chicopee Cultural Council, a local agency supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. Registration is required.

Elder Fraud Prevention with Liberty Bank

CHICOPEE - The Council on Aging will offer an Elder Fraud Presentation on Thursday, March 20 at 10 a.m. at Chicopee Council on Aging's RiverMills Center, 5 West Main St.

Join Dawn Creighton, Community Outreach Officer with Liberty Bank for a workshop on scam and fraud prevention. You will also play a fun game of Fraud BINGO. You must register in advance.

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St. Patrick's Day Dinner

CHICOPEE - The Council on Aging will have a St. Patrick's Day Dinner on Thursday, March 6 at 5 p.m. at Chicopee Council on Aging's RiverMills Center, 5 West Main St.

Celebrate St. Patrick's Day with a delicious Corned Beef dinner catered by Hamel's, while listening to traditional Irish songs by local Western Mass band Ban-

ish Misfortune. Beer, wine and non-alcoholic beverages will be available for purchase.

Tickets are \$20 and there is a limit of two tickets per person. Registration is now open for this dinner.

Please call RiverMills Center to inquire about ticket availability. You must register in person.

The Republic of Dance at RiverMills

CHICOPEE - The Council on Aging will host The Republic of Dance on Thursday, Feb. 27 at 2 p.m. at Chicopee Council on Aging's RiverMills Center, 5 West Main St.

Take a tour around the globe by experiencing dances and music from America, Africa, the Celtic Nations, Greece, India, Spain and

the Middle East. Each performance is different. This program is performed by The Small Planet Dancers in Westfield, MA.

This program is sponsored by the Chicopee Cultural Council, a local agency sponsored by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. Registration is required.

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IN THE CITY

City of Chicopee facing road salt shortage due to supply shortages

CHICOPEE - Mayor John Vieau and the Chicopee Department of Public Works team has been on the streets of Chicopee, last night and since early this morning, surveying snow and ice conditions. The City did a good job removing snow through the night on early Sunday morning, but the heavy rain through the day Sunday has created thick sheets of ice and ruts that are not plowable. The Mayor is asking everyone to be patient

as the City's hard working snow and ice team continues to do everything they can amidst the challenges this weekend storm has created for them.

Another challenge confronts Chicopee, which they are working hard to rectify: The City of Chicopee Department of Public Works was scheduled to receive delivery of road salt to treat roads and sidewalks on Feb. 13. The scheduled delivery was not

received and DPW immediately began searching for salt from alternative suppliers. DPW trucks have been going daily to Albany, NY obtaining truckloads of road salt. The are limited supplies in the greater area due to the unanticipated winter storms and this ice storm in particular. The delivery was supposed to be delayed until today, Monday Feb. 17, but again the delivery was again delayed. We are continuing to send trucks

to Albany for road salt until a full delivery is received, but there is no timeline.

Due to heavy rains and clogged storm drains many streets are faced with sheets of ice that we are unable to plow. We are continuing to salt the streets with the product available and want to ensure everyone that we will continue to work with our suppliers to obtain salt and keep the roads and sidewalks safe.

Please drive only if necessary and drive with caution at all times as the road conditions are still icy as crews work to improve their conditions, specifically on the side streets. Make way for emergency vehicles and responders. Please make every effort to maintain your own property and the public sidewalks for our pedestrians. If your storm drain is blocked, please help clear it to allow for better drainage of stormwater off the street which will reduce

freezing and icy conditions at night. We urge everyone to please be careful.

The City of Chicopee appreciates your understanding and cooperation as we work to provide safe roads for our community.

Though Chicopee City Hall is closed today in recognition of President's Day, Mayor Vieau is there at his office overseeing snow and ice removal operations with his staff and the DPW.

FTLOG Designer Purse & Power Tool Bingo Fundraiser

CHICOPEE - The For The Love of Good Foundation will be hosting a Purse & Power Tool Bingo Fundraiser on March 2 at the Chicopee Moose Center on Fuller Road. Bingo starts at 2 p.m. and the doors open at Noon.

Join us for a FUN afternoon of bingo and raffles to support our work at For the Love of Good Foundation. Play Bingo with friends to win a beautiful designer purse or a wonderful power tool.

\$35 will get you 10 bingo games and a free Dauber.

Payments accepted: Venmo, PayPal, Cash App, Checks and Cash.

Table of Eight SPECIAL

DISCOUNT: Buy seven tickets, Get one FREE.

Get your tickets TODAY!! Call Debbie 413-315-9072.

Cash Bar, BYO Snacks, Raffle & Door Prizes & Light Refreshments, 21 & Older ONLY.

We continue to do this good work in the loving memory of Kevin Joslyn, our beloved friend and cherished founder.

For more info about our work, visit our Facebook Business Page or our incredible website, fortheLoveofGoodFoundation.org. Thank you for your continued support!!

English as a Second Language Class

CHICOPEE - The Chicopee Senior Center will offer "English as a Second Language" Mondays at 1:30 p.m. beginning March 24 through May 19 at Chicopee Council on Aging's RiverMills Center, 5 West Main St.

If English is a new language for you, or if you want to work on your English skills,

this class is for you. Mary Gallagher will be leading this class where you will focus on communications along with writing and reading skills. This 8-week series will be an interactive class where you will apply your language skills in every day situations. You must register in advance at RiverMills Center

VOC offering free tax preparation for eligible residents

CHICOPEE - Valley Opportunity Council (VOC), which manages the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program that provides free tax preparation to those of low- and moderate-income, began offering tax preparation and filing appointments on Tuesday, January 21.

VITA tax preparation appointments are available through April 30 at three VOC locations: 20 Lathrop Street, West Springfield, 516 Chicopee Street, Chicopee; and 300 High Street, Holyoke.

To schedule an appointment, call (413) 612-0206. Those eligible for the VITA program must live in Massachusetts or Connecticut with an income of up to \$67,000. Appointments are available on weekdays, evenings and weekends.

Certified volunteer tax professionals help qualified individuals prepare and file basic state and federal tax returns and prior year returns. VOC also offers free electronic filing (e-filing) of tax returns, allowing for individuals to receive their refunds much quicker than paper filings and save up to hundreds of dollars in filing fees.

The core mission and goal of VITA is to assist low-to moderate-income taxpayers in satisfying their tax responsibilities and minimizing financial hardships, in turn saving taxpayers thousands of dollars in filing fees. The VITA program is sponsored by VOC and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

In 2024, VOC helped 861 individuals file their state and federal tax returns through the VITA program. VOC has been providing the VITA program for 25 years in the communities of Chicopee, Holyoke, and as of last year, Westfield.

The Valley Opportunity Council is the largest and most diverse Community Action Agency in Western Massachusetts with an annual budget of \$45 million. With this Federal designation, the VOC has established a powerful network of support and collaborative services intended to encourage community members to actively achieve self-sufficiency for themselves and their families. VOC employs over 250 staff members and has 150 local vendors, providing a significant economic investment in the community.

Events & announcements schedule

Dream Designers

CHICOPEE - Join us for exciting and interactive STEM activities designed to ignite curiosity, creativity and critical thinking in children 2.9 to five years old and their families.

Explore, experiment and discover the wonders of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math through hands-on experiences!

Location: Tuesdays at H.B. Lawrence Elementary School, 156 Cabot St., Holyoke

Thursdays at Szetela Early Childhood School, 66 Macek Dr., Chicopee

Time: 4 to 5 p.m.

Dates: Tuesdays: Jan. 28 through March 11

Thursdays: Jan. 30 through March 13

Children must attend with an adult.

To learn more, call Shane at 413-310-1632.

Japanese For Beginners Zoom Class

CHICOPEE - The Chicopee Council on Aging will offer Japanese for Beginners Zoom classes beginning Tuesday, Jan. 14 thru Tuesday, April 1 at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom.

Join Charlie Duquette, USMC/Retired, for this

12-week series on learning basic Japanese. You will need a valid email address and access to Zoom for this class as it will be virtual and in the comfort of your own home. Class will meet at 4:30 every Tuesday beginning Jan.14 thru April 1 via Zoom. A study group will be held at Chicopee Senior Center every Friday at 2 p.m. from Jan. 17 thru April 4. You must provide a valid email address at the time of registration.

Chicopee Senior Center Volunteer Dishwasher needed

CHICOPEE - The Chicopee Council on Aging at RiverMills Center is looking for a volunteer Dishwasher for our congregate meal site. This volunteer position would be Monday thru Friday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

This position would be assisting with dishwashing for the congregate meal site after lunch service. If you are interested in this volunteer opportunity, please contact RiverMills Center's Volunteer Coordinator Brandon Dumas at 413-534-3698 ext. 130 for additional information or stop by the reception desk to pick up an application.

Harmony House Needs Volunteers

CHICOPEE - The doors have opened at Harmony House of Western Massachusetts and potential volunteers are invited to explore the opportunity to help others in our communities.

Harmony House of Western Massachusetts is a social model home for hospice care located in Chicopee. After closing our original home in 2019 and purchasing a house in the Al-denville section of Chicopee for renovation, the organization is actively serving our residents with the help of volunteers and staff members.

Harmony House is currently in need of caregivers and people who would enjoy the opportunity to support our residents. Whether it's a few hours a week or a few hours a month, Harmony House is a welcoming place for people looking to help people.

Harmony House is a local, non-profit organization whose mission is to provide a loving home offering compassionate care for people who are on hospice and are in need of care.

If interested in learning more or becoming a volunteer, please complete the

online volunteer application form at www.harmonyhouse-wma.org/volunteer-1 or email us at harmonyhousewma@gmail.com.

Holyoke Chicopee Head Start holding Raising A Reader Family Shared Reading Program

HOLYOKE - The Holyoke Chicopee Family & Community Program is currently hosting a "Raising A Reader" Family Shared reading program.

The program is for families with children from infant to five years old.

Let's get together for fun activities that develop reading readiness and social emotional skills! Take home a red bag each week with books to borrow.

The program takes place on Wednesdays, 4 to 5 p.m. at HCS Head Start the first and third Wednesday of the month at 41 Commercial St., Holyoke.

Please call or email Shane at ShaneW@headstart.org or 413-310-1632.

This program is funded by the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) grant awarded to HCS Head Start by the Department of Early Education and Care.

\$310,000 Available in Scholarship and Fellowship Awards

Application Deadline March 15

WESTFIELD - The Horace Smith Fund, celebrating its 125th anniversary, will be awarding \$310,000 in scholarships and fellowships to residents of Hampden County, who have also graduated from an eligible high school or private school. This year 20 scholarships, three fellowships and one William R. Rooney Award for students with special needs will be presented to recipients at the June 19 Awards Night ceremony at Storowton Carriage House in West

Springfield.

Scholarships are offered not only to graduating high school seniors but also to students already in college or those wishing to return to college. Scholarships of \$12,000 are distributed as \$3,000 annually and renewable each year until graduation. Fellowship awards of \$15,000 are distributed as \$7,500 annually and renewable for one additional year to students pursuing a full-time graduate degree. Students must maintain at least a B average to renew.

Recipients are selected on a variety of criteria, including academic records,

merit and financial need. Of great importance is a personal written account of why the student feels deserving of financial assistance. Applicants must submit their transcripts and, if applicable, college entrance exam scores or graduate degree specific tests, and three letters of recommendation.

Completed applications must be received

either electronically or be mailed to The Horace Smith Fund at 16 Union Avenue, Suite 2K, Westfield, MA 01085 no later than March 15, 2025. Applications are available at local high school guidance offices, college financial aid offices, and on-line at www.HoraceSmithFund.org or by phoning (413) 739-4222.

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.

Feb. 22
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OPINION

GUEST COLUMN



By Ellenor Downer

Male and female hooded merganser



My daughter saw a pair of hooded mergansers on the Ware River on two different occasions.

She said, "They were riding those rapids to the bridge and looked like they were having a blast. Then they just hung out under the bridge."

The hooded merganser is the smallest of the mergansers at 18 inches long. It has a short thin bill and crested head. The male has a black head, white fan shaped patch within the crest, which is only visible when the crest is raised. The flanks are brown and the back black. It also has black vertical lines on its white breast. The female is plain brown with a darker back and red brown crest. The immature female looks like the adult female and the immature male similar to the female, but they some white in the crest.

Hooded mergansers dive underwater and eat small fish, frogs, crustaceans, mollusks and aquatic insects. Courtship begins in mid winter. Females do head bobbing and pumping. Most male displays involve crest raising. The male makes a frog like note and the female makes a hoarse "gak."

The female lays six to eight white eggs in a nest of grasses and down placed in a tree cavity or nest box. Mergansers summer on wooded rivers and lakes and winters on similar locations as well as along the coast.

Ludlow birds

On Saturday, Jan. 25 a Ludlow resident emailed about the birds in her backyard. She said, "The usual visitors are purple finches, white-throated sparrows, juncos, titmice, nuthatches, bluejays, mourning doves, cardinals and red bellied woodpeckers. Yesterday Jan. 24, we had a cowbird at the feeder. We haven't had any visit us in the five years we've fed the birds in winter. Just wondering if others in the area have seen a cowbird this early."

Bluebirds and northern flicker

I received an email on Sunday, Jan 26 from a North Brookfield resident, She said, "I live in North Brookfield, down on Lake Lashaway. I had five blue birds and a northern flicker on my feeders this morning along with the usual birds. Early Spring?"

Brimfield birds

I received an email from a Brimfield resident on Jan. 21. He said, "Today in the yard all the usual birds were about however the junco flock has increased to about 65 birds. Other not so commonly seen birds were a Carolina wren, and a white-throated and a tree sparrows."

In another email he wrote, "Yes the blue jays sure do like the peanuts. The titmice also get their share. And once in awhile a red-bellied woodpecker with show up and take a peanut. When I walk around the yard there are a couple of places under a tree or shrub where the ground is littered with empty peanut shells."

Birds in my yard

I continue to have the usual birds at my feeders and suet feeder such as black capped chickadees, titmice, white breasted nuthatches, downy woodpeckers, mourning doves and blue jays. Now that it is February, I expect to see male red-winged blackbirds.

I received a state of the art bird feeder equipped with a camera for my birthday. I have not set it up yet. I will take it down once bears come out of hibernation because I would not want it destroyed.

People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by calling me at 413-967-3505, leaving a message at extension 100, emailing my-backyard88@aol.com or edowner@turley.com or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005.



DAVE GRANLUND © www.davegranlund.com

GUEST COLUMN



More questions for the Garden Lady

Eleanor wrote in with this question for the Garden Lady regarding amaryllis bulbs: "I have three bulbs from last year that have been hibernating and now they are in the sun and have produced long green leaves but no buds. I read it somewhere that if you let them dry out, no more water, but keep them in the sun they will send out buds, but I cannot find where I read that. I hope it is true...so I can still get flowers this year before I have to repeat the whole process (by putting them back in dormant condition in August for a few weeks). I do have one more bulb from last year that did give me a flower... but these other three ones are not showing me any prospects. Can you help?"

Without seeing your bulbs and the foliage, my best guess would be that they will likely not flower this year. What leads me to that conclusion is that one other bulb you have already flowered.

If they were on the same timeline, then probably the other bulbs did not have enough strength to send up a flower stalk. I would not let them dry out, but continue to water and fertilize monthly so that the foliage will grow strong, and be able to make enough energy for blooms next year, after a period of dormancy in the fall.

I know this is upsetting after all of your hard work. Re-bloom is often an experiment.

Sadly, sometimes it happens and sometimes it doesn't. It may not be anything you did wrong – it could be that the one bulb that did flower was a bigger bulb to begin with or was from healthier stock initially.

Meredit, who gardens in Wilbraham, posed this question to the Garden Lady: "As I look at all

of the seed packets strewn before me, what your best advice would be for starting seeds indoors?"

Ah-hah! I have been itching to talk about this, so your timing is perfect.

Although we are excited to get the season started, the biggest mistake people make is starting seeds too early. Always research the varieties you want to grow in a good seed catalog.

Johnny's Selected Seed and Fedco come to mind as having great advice on how many weeks prior to the last frost seeds should be sown. For example, tomato seeds should be planted indoors the last week of March or first week of April.

Although that seems late (we want to do it now), we don't want root bound transplants come May.

While average household temps will still result in seeds sprouting, bottom heat by use of heat mats will aid in germination because it will keep the seed bed a constant temperature.

Plants usually suffer without enough light – placing seedlings in the window usually results in seedlings that stretch to the sun. A simple shop light with fluorescent bulbs set a couple of inches above growing plants works out great.

Think about the soil you are using, too.

A soilless mix is far superior to regular potting soil or garden soil. It's milled a little finer, and is made to be well-drained weed and pathogen free.

Moistening it to the consistency of a wrung out sponge before use is perfect. Don't bury small seeds too deep. Tiny seed should simply be pushed into the soil surface and not covered.

Hardening off the seedlings you grew before planting them in the ground is very important. Start acclimatizing them to the great outdoors slowly, first by putting them in the shade for a few hours, working up to full sun over the course of a week's time.

By taking my advice into account, you will be well on your way to growing healthy seedlings indoors.

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.

GUEST COLUMN



Reader asks about Social Security benefits for someone with multiple ex-spouses

Dear Rusty

If a financially well-off individual had multiple ex-spouses, could it happen that the multiple ex-spouses could each be collecting Social Security based on their own financial situation as compared to their rich ex-spouses?

Thus, multiple payouts by SS? Just curious, because there are probably many people in this situation as a result of the ever-increasing number of people involved in multiple marriages that each lasted more than ten years. Signed: Curious Ex-Spouse

Dear Curious Ex-Spouse:

A former spouse can only collect one SS benefit either their own SS retirement amount, or an amount as an ex-spouse if the marriage lasted 10 years or more. And it is possible for multiple ex-spouses of a marriage to the same person to qualify for benefits from those unions, if each marriage lasted at least 10 years. But each ex-spouse can only qualify for one benefit payment either their own earned SS benefit, or their benefit as an ex-spouse.

In other words, someone with two or more ex-spouses might have their ex's collecting full benefits on their record, provided that each marriage lasted at least 10 years. But an ex-spouse can only get one benefit – their own SS retirement amount or an ex-spouse amount, whichever is higher.

It's possible, also, that an ex-spouse can collect benefits from a former spouse at the same time as a current spouse is also collecting spouse benefits on the same record. And there is no detriment to either's amount because multiple spouses or ex-spouses are collecting on a one person's SS record (Social Security is, after all, a means for spouses, or ex-spouses, to avoid poverty). However, an ex-spouse's own SS retirement benefit from their personal lifetime work record must be less than any ex-spouse benefit they are entitled to from a former spouse. Essentially, if the "10-years-married" rule is satisfied, ex-spouses are subject to the same benefit rules as a current spouse.

You are correct that we see some cases like this these days, but each eligible ex-spouse can only get one benefit and their ex-spouse benefit is always offset by any personal SS retirement benefit the ex-spouse may also be entitled to on their own lifetime work record.

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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The deadline for
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WE CARE ABOUT YOUR NEWS!

The Chicopee Register welcomes submissions of news in or related to Chicopee and its residents. Our "People News," is filled with submitted engagement announcements, wedding announcements, birth announcements, your new baby or news about your 25th or 50th anniversary celebrations. Please e-mail correspondence along with a photo to chicopeeregister@turley.com or send it to: Chicopee Register, c/o Turley Publications, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069.

Election letters to the editor

The Chicopee Register 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 Chicopee Register care of Turley Publications, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, faxed to 413-289-1977 or emailed to journalregister@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 Thursday'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 the editor at 413-283-8393.

Campaign news

As part of its election coverage, the newspaper 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 Chicopee Register.

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IN THE CITY

CPD celebrates Valentine's Day with Sunshine Village



PHOTOS AND CAPTION COURTESY OF CHICOPEE POLICE DEPARTMENT

CHICOPEE – On Feb. 14, some of our officers took part in a Valentine's Day event at Sunshine Village. Each participant at Sunshine Village received a Valentine from their friends at CPD. Once again, we would like to thank Sunshine Village for inviting us to take part in all of their great events.



Harmony House benefits from St. Joan of Arc School students



SUBMITTED PHOTO

CHICOPEE - Harmony House of Western Massachusetts, the home for the terminally ill, gratefully accepted a large donation of supplies collected by the National Junior Honor Society of St. Joan of Arc School in Chicopee.

Guided by their staff advisors and teachers, Mrs. Paula Donais and Mr. Ron Chimelis, honor students from grades seven and eight collected cleaning supplies, paper products, gift cards and more to donate to the home. As with any home, all these supplies are needed on a weekly basis. In addition,

a bake sale was held by the students the proceeds were donated to Harmony House.

Ms. Gina Mazza, President of the Board of Directors of Harmony House, visited the school recently to accept the donations. She had the opportunity to speak with several seventh-grade students about Harmony House and answer several questions.

"On behalf of Harmony House, I'd like to say how delighted we are that the young students of St. Joan of Arc decided to choose us as the beneficiary of their hard work. It's an honor to meet

such admirable young people who are willing to work together to benefit the community. We thank you all very much."

Harmony House is a local, non-profit organization whose mission is to provide a loving home offering compassionate care for people who are on hospice and are in need of care. If interested in learning more or becoming a volunteer, please complete the online volunteer application form at www.harmonyhousewma.org/volunteer-1 or email us at harmonyhousewma@gmail.com.

BACKPACKS from page 1

the organization to work with and to partner up with. Luz Lopez alongside Wilfredo Lopez--which is her brother--they do great things for the community and they've been a huge part of what we do in Chicopee with the Back to School Event."

"We're excited to be working with Faded Barber Lounge and Ric to be able to help and continue providing all of these resources to the students in Chicopee," Lopez said. "So, Ric has been doing this for several years now--this would be the fourth year--so we were grateful to be able to have the opportunity to work with him because he's so passionate about making sure people are going to school looking good and feeling good."

Diaz added for this year's Back to School Event, they're already looking for sponsors and donations.

"And not only donations and sponsors but for people to donate their time and help out with different things like setting up. A big part of this event is the crew that we put together to set it up," Diaz said. "If anybody wants to be a part of it, it's a big community event where if we all come together, it's going to be a great event this upcoming 2025 year."

There will also be more fundraising events in the works, so stay tuned.

Lovett is a branch owner of Funny 4 Funds and was thrilled to participate, emphasizing the importance of giving back.

"Making people laugh is the greatest job in the world,



Ricardo Diaz, owner of Faded Barber Lounge, and Luz Lopez, cofounder of Breaking Oppression, pose for a photo ahead of the Laughs for Backpacks Comedy Night Fundraiser. Diaz and Lopez are also co-collaborators on the Back to School Event.

so I feel like that's how I give back. I like this. I like making people leave feeling better, walking out the door than they did coming in the door," Lovett said.

Lovett also has the Pioneer Valley First Comedy Tour Bus, a comedy bus that does a 90-minute tour with comedy from private shows and renting as a party bus to special trips.

"That was a chance to do something different and people seem to love it. We did First Nights in Northampton and we had to actually do another show because people were still fighting to get on the bus," Lovett said. "Our last few shows have been sold out and we have a show, actually, tomorrow that's sold out and our next show is March 1. So, if you want more infor-



Tim Lovett gets the audience going during his set at the Laughs for Backpacks Comedy Night Fundraiser.



TURLEY PHOTOS BY KRISTIN RIVERS
Kim DeShields smiles as she performs her set. She also served as host.



Davey Lozano chats with Donna Marratta during his set. He later had an audience member also dance with him on stage.

mation, go to funbus.org."

Lovett, who has done comedy for 10 years, credits DeShields for getting him into comedy when looking for advice on getting into the art. She had him watch her purse and she later called him up to the stage.

"She went and signed me up, so that's how I got into comedy," Lovett said.

Lovett also had praise for Diaz.

"I like that he came to us and did that. He's been humble the whole way. He's just been very easy to work with and this is his passion. It's, really, I'm the one that's honored that I'm a part of it, you know what I'm saying?" Lovett said. "I'm humbled that I get to be a part of it."

Diaz's message was this.

"If we all come together and continue to work together, we can make great things

happen within our community, and not only within our community. I'd say that everything is taking initiative and if we take initiative, then we can also have surrounding cities do their own thing too," Diaz said. "There's never no competition. When we see other cities do what we're doing and in the city of Chicopee, it makes us happy. Puts a smile on our face, it means everything to us because we know that there's a lot of kids out here and a lot of families that need resources and these types of events--especially in these days--and if we can help out in any way, then that means everything to us."

Lopez echoed Diaz's message.

"I think that from this event, a lot of people have been motivated to participate more in contributing to helping people in the community, so if we continue to show that leadership, then people will continue to join," Lopez said.



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Offense shut down in playoff loss

WILBRAHAM – Last Friday night, Chicopee Comprehensive girls basketball was defeated by Minnechaug 65-30 in the quarterfinals of the Western Mass. Class A Tournament. The Colts were scheduled to face Agawam in non-playoff action following that, then await their seed in the state tournament this weekend. In the loss to Chaug, Eliza Burger had 11 points.



Kaitlyn Gilhooly looks to make a pass.



Eliza Burger sends a shot flying to the hoop.



Waleries Pena tries to dribble around an opponent.



Ava DeBettencourt sends a pass away.



Kaitlyn Gilhooly looks to shoot.

Pacers prep for sectional championship



Aldalish Cruz gets ready to lock up at 106 pounds.



Giovanni Moye tries to use his opponent's leg to get a takedown.



Michael Jenksin starts his match at 144 pounds.

LUDLOW – Weather postponed their meet by about a day, but the Ludlow High School wrestling team held its final dual meet of the season, a 59-18 win over Chicopee High School. The meet concluded the league season for both teams. Ludlow competed in the sectional championship at Wayland High School last weekend and is looking forward to the upcoming state tournaments



Aylan Pawwaz holds an advantage at 126



David Thomas attempts to turn over his opponent.



Jeremiah Delgado goes for the leg in a takedown attempt.

Comp boys fall in Class A quarterfinals

CHICOPEE – Earlier this week, Chicopee Comprehensive High School boys basketball fell 62-51 in a rematch against Holyoke. But this time, the two teams were playing in the quarterfinals of the Western Mass. Class A Tournament. In the matchup, Xavier Kleps had 12 points while Elijah Kleps had 10 points. Holyoke was led by Calvin Godbolt with 21 points. Aden Cabrera had 18 points and Jordan King-Perilli had 16 points. The Knights were scheduled to face Central in the semifinals while the Colts went to nonplayoff action until the state tournament begins next week.

HoopHall announces award winners

SPRINGFIELD – The Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame announced the recipients of the 2025 Curt Gowdy Media Award and John Bunn Lifetime Achievement Award at NBA All-Star Weekend. Legendary Detroit Pistons play-by-play announcer George Blaha, renowned CBS analyst Clark Kellogg, veteran women's basketball writer Michelle Smith, and influential NBA journalist Adrian Wojnarowski are the 2025 Curt Gowdy Media Award recipients. Boston Celtics long-time Vice President of Media and Alumni Relations Jeff Twiss is the recipient of the 2025 John W. Bunn Lifetime Achievement Award. The Curt Gowdy Media Award is named in honor of the late Curt Gowdy, a legendary sports broadcaster and former Hall of Fame Board member and President. This prestigious award is presented to

See HOOP HALL page 7

SPORTS

T-Birds suffer one-goal loss to Rockford

ROCKFORD, Ill. — The Springfield Thunderbirds (23-19-2-3) suffered a second straight gut-wrenching loss in the closing moments, falling 4-3 to the Rockford IceHogs (19-22-5-1) on Saturday night inside the BMO Center.

Things got off to a rocky start for the T-Birds, who fell behind 1-0 just 64 seconds into the game after a mis-played puck wound up on the tape of Joey Anderson inside the right-wing circle. Anderson made no mistake in snapping it through Colten Ellis on the stick side, giving Rockford the 1-0 advantage.

Ellis solidified things over the next 15 minutes, turning away the next nine IceHogs attempts while the T-Birds struggled to find offense. Finally, a pair of Rockford penalties afforded Springfield a 4-on-3 power play, and Matt Luff unleashed a perfect wrist shot that squeaked past Ben Gaudreau's blocker to tie the game, 1-1, at 18:17.

Springfield's momentum would not last long, though,

and just 32 seconds later, Brett Seney picked off a loose puck in the high slot and quickly wristed a try under the crossbar to restore the IceHogs lead, 2-1, heading into the intermission.

Anderson's hot hand carried over into the early stages of the second, as he found a gap through the five-hole of Ellis to make it a 3-1 score at 5:19 of the middle stanza.

Through the opening 30 minutes of play, the T-Birds had managed just six shots on goal. However, the visitors clawed their way back, beginning with Illinois native Hugh McGing tucking home a rebound outside the blue paint at 12:55 to cut the Rockford lead to 3-2.

Dylan Peterson thought he had brought the T-Birds back even when he shuffled a loose puck across the goal line just over a minute later, but the call was changed to no-goal after the referees congregated. Nevertheless, Springfield pressed on, and on the next shift, Matthew Peca



punched home a rebound off an Alek Kaskimaki shot, and the game was deadlocked at the 14:56 mark of the second.

Ellis and Gaudreau did their part to lock things down from that point, as the two netminders kept the score locked in the 3-3 stalemate into the game's final minutes. Unfortunately for Springfield, they succumbed to a late game-winner for a second straight game when Andreas Athanasiou broke up the ice in a 2-on-1 with Anderson and tucked a backhand around Ellis to win it for Rockford with just 1:59 left in the third. Ellis suffered only his second loss in his last 11 starts, and the Springfield goalie also saw his five-game win streak get snapped in the process.

Railers take care of Americans

ALLEN, TX — The Worcester Railers HC (23-20-2-4 52pts) beat the Allen Americans (13-27-7-2, 35pts), on Sunday afternoon by a final score of 3-1 in front of a crowd of 3,144 at the Credit Union of Texas Event Center. The Railers are back on the ice next at the North Charleston Coliseum taking on the South Carolina Stingrays on Wednesday, February 16th at 10:30 a.m. EST.

Worcester got the scoring started as they tacked on the first three goals of the game in the first period. The first came from Jordan Kaplan (1-0-1), followed by Tyler Kobryn (1-0-1) and it was Lincoln Hatten (1-0-1) who finished off the first period trifecta. Brayden Watts (1-0-1) scored the first goal for Allen on the power play 11:35 into the

second period making it 3-1. Neither team would net one in the third period leading us to



the 3-1 Worcester win.

For the second time in the weekend series the Railers jumped out to a 3-0 first period lead. Jordan Kaplan (16th) started the scoring party 11:21 into the first period. Tyler Kobryn (4th) followed up Kaplan 15:06 into the first, and it was Lincoln Hatten (5th) who scored the third Worcester goal in the period giving them a commanding 3-0 lead heading into the second. Shots favored Worcester

16-4 in the first period.

Allen had three power play opportunities in the second period, it was not until the third power play that they grabbed their first goal of the night. It was Brayden Watts (17th) who cut the Railers lead to two. Watts had the only goal of the period, giving Worcester a 3-1 lead heading into the third period. Shots favored Allen 17-10 in the second period.

Despite a 5-on-3 power play chance for Worcester as well as an Allen power play chance neither team was able to cash in on their respective opportunities. The scoreless period led to a 3-1 final, with Worcester walking away with the series sweep over the Allen Americans. Allen outshot Worcester 16-8 in the third, and 37-34 in the game.

Bonsignore scores third-place finish in opener

Four-time NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour champion Justin Bonsignore opened his 2025 NASCAR season with a third-place finish in the Whelen Modified Tour opener at New Smyrna Speedway last Saturday night. Now, his eyes will turn to the World Center of Racing.

Bonsignore will make his second career NASCAR Xfinity Series start for Joe Gibbs Racing in Saturday's United Rentals 300 at Dayto-

na International Speedway.

The New York native made his Xfinity Series debut in 2024 with Joe Gibbs Racing at New Hampshire Motor Speedway and ran inside the top-five for a long portion of the race. He also competed in the ARCA Menards Series event at Daytona in 2024, his only Superspeedway experience leading into this weekend.

"Running the ARCA race at Daytona certainly helps a bit with the learning

curve of a Superspeedway and the drafting," Bonsignore said. "The Joe Gibbs Racing team and Toyota have proven over the years they have incredibly fast cars. I'm excited to get out there in practice and learn as much as possible in our No. 19 M3 Technology, USNE Power, Toyota GR Supra. I know our goal will be to get to the end of the race with a shot... that's about all you can ask for at a place like Daytona."

IN THE CITY



CPD takes part in Family Fun Night at Bowe School

CHICOPEE — Members of the police department spent time with their friends at Bowe Elementary School during the school's Family Fun Night event on Feb. 11. The department thanked everyone on Facebook for coming out and hope they had as much fun as they did.



PHOTOS AND CAPTIONS COURTESY OF CHICOPEE POLICE DEPARTMENT



Posing with their favorite cereal flavors and brands, the group yelled out "Cereal!" and smiled for the camera before cleaning up all the boxes.

BELCHER ELEMENTARY from page 1

biggest struggle throughout public schools and it's hard for families to get students here when there's a delay or when it's a half day at school. We've been trying to come up with creative ways on these days to motivate families to send their children and today we were successful!" Paquette said. "Our attendance rate did go up and we are almost at 87%."

When asked what her favorite type of cereal is, Paquette picked up a box of Cinnamon Toast Crunch and smiled.

"The other piece of the puzzle was that we gave the incentive to all the classrooms, whoever collected the most boxes of cereal would earn an Ice Cream Cereal Topping Party, which ended up being a total of 209 boxes from one classroom," Paquette said.

Catching up with Executive Director Kim Caisse at Lorraine's, she mentioned that the pantry ran out of cereal the same week of the cereal drive and expressed her gratitude towards Belcher Elementary for thinking of them.

"We are always running out of cereal, so this is perfect.



TURLEY PHOTOS BY AMANDA MUNSON

The exact number of cereal boxes was 1,029 from the Belcher Elementary School staff, students and families.

I mean, it couldn't have come at a better time and Belcher Elementary is my home, it's so nice to be back and have them supporting us. One of the kindergarten teachers always runs a food drive for us and things like that, they've been very supportive," Caisse said.

Caisse ended with this message. "In a time where people

are struggling and there's a lot of hardship and sadness, today made me feel hopeful and my heart was full for what those kids and families did for us," Caisse said.

To learn how you can support Lorraine's Soup Kitchen & Pantry, visit lorrainessoupkitchen.com or contact Caisse at executive-dir@lorrainessoupkitchen.com and 413-592-9528.

HOOP HALL from page 6

members of the print, electronic, and transformative media whose efforts have made a significant contribution to the game of basketball.

The Bunn Lifetime Achievement Award was instituted by the Basketball Hall of Fame's Board of Trustees in 1973 and is the most prestigious award presented by the Hall of Fame outside of Enshrinement. Named in honor of Hall of Famer John W. Bunn (Class of 1964), the first chairman of the Basketball Hall of

Fame Committee who served from 1949-64, the award honors coaches, players, and contributors whose outstanding accomplishments have impacted the high school, college, professional, and/or the international game.

Blaha, Kellogg, Smith, Wojnarowski, and Twiss will be recognized for their contributions to basketball during the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame Enshrinement Weekend on September 5-6. For further details, including ticket information, visit hoophall.com/events/enshrinement-2025.

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Team Mass Boys & Girls AAU Basketball Tryouts

Cost: \$30 Covers both tryouts (players get t-shirt)
AAU card \$25 (purchase on our website, we'll pull them)

Tryout # 1: February 22, 2025

Location: Tantasqua Jr High School (320 Brookfield Road, Fiskdale, MA)

- Boys Grades 4th-6th 8:30 a.m. - 9:40 a.m.
- Boys Grades 7th & 8th 9:45 a.m. - 10:55 a.m.
- Boys Grades 9th-12th 11 a.m. - 12:10 p.m.
- Girls Grades 4th-6th 12:15 p.m. - 1:25 p.m.
- Girls Grades 7th-8th 1:30 p.m. - 2:40 p.m.
- Girls Grades 9th-12th 2:45 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Tryout # 2: March 1, 2025

Location: Oxford High School (100 Carbundle Drive, Oxford, MA)

- Boys Grades & Girls Grades 4th-6th (9 a.m. - 10:25 a.m.)
- Boys & Girls Grades 7th & 8th (10:30 a.m. - 11:55 a.m.)
- Boys and Girls Grades 9th-12th (12 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.)

Pre Register/pay on website: teammassbasketball.com

Questions Email: teammassbasketball@gmail.com or call 413-539-1548
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www.wilbraham-ma.gov. Application deadline 3/21/2025. EOE

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The Worthington Police Department is seeking qualified candidates for **Full-time Police Officer**.

Applicants must be a minimum of 21 years of age or older, a U.S. Citizen and possess a valid driver's license. They should also have a high school diploma/GED, license to carry and be certified by Massachusetts Municipal Police Training Committee and be POST certified.

This is a benefited position with a salary range of: \$52,000.00 - \$75,733.00.

The successful candidate shall be highly motivated, self-disciplined, possess a community policing philosophy and live in or near Worthington.

This position has the potential to be elevated to Police Chief.

Send letter of interest, resume and three references with relevant contact information to:

Worthington Police Department P.O. Box 247 Worthington, MA 01098

Or via email to: **sboard@worthington-ma.us**
Subject line: Employment

Responses will be accepted and reviewed until the position is filled.

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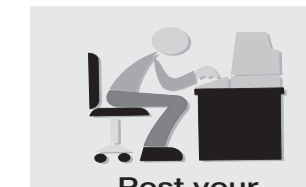
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ALL REAL ESTATE advertised herein is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act, which makes it illegal to advertise "any preference, limitation, or discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin, or intention to make any such preference, limitation, or discrimination." We will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate which is in violation of the law. All persons are hereby informed that all dwellings advertised are available on an equal opportunity basis.

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All real estate advertising in this newspaper is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968, which makes it illegal to advertise any preference, limitation or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status (number of children and or pregnancy), national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, or any intention to make any such preference, limitation or discrimination.

This newspaper will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate that is in violation of the law. Our readers are hereby informed that all dwellings advertising in this newspaper are available on an equal opportunity basis. To complain about discrimination call The Department of Housing and Urban Development "HUD" toll-free at 1-800-669-9777. For the N.E. area, call HUD at 617-565-5308. The toll free number for the hearing impaired is 1-800-927-9275.



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IN THE CITY

VALENTINE'S DAY from page 1

called me and we got together and now we're living together," Dulchinos said. "We're both blessed to have each other."

The couple was thrilled with the turnout for the dance.

"It's absolutely wonderful because with the snowstorm we just had, everybody's confined for a few days. But, to come out and enjoy ourselves at our age is super," Dutton said.

"This DJ draws a lot of people. Every time they have him listed as having something here, a lot of people sign up. It's good, he's entertaining, he tries to make them happy. It's a good turnout," Dulchinos said.

"And to put on this type of event with the little goodies that you get and stuff like that, they did a beautiful job," Dutton said. "Because we have lunch here and the lunch is fabulous. We just stayed and hung around and had our tickets for the dance."



A couple gets lost in the music as they share a special dance together during the Valentine's Day Dance at the RiverMills Senior Center on Feb. 14.

Their secret to a long marriage is talking to each other, listening and never going to bed angry. For those looking for love, stay away from the bars.

"We both love each other very much and we're blessed to be together," Dulchinos said.

"We believe in God and we believe that He's the rea-

son that we're together," Dutton said.

DJ Luis D, real name Luis "Dancing Machine" Rodriguez, was excited to see the couples get out on the dance floor as he churned out the love songs.

Rodriguez loves playing "Can't Help Falling in Love" by Elvis Presley and "Unchained Melody" by the Righ-



TURLEY PHOTOS BY KRISTIN RIVERS

The red and white were out in full force as friends and couples posed for photos together.

teous Brothers at the event.

"It was awesome. These people had a great time. They all came with nice, all the red Valentines. They were all on the dance floor, had an awesome time and I had an awesome time," Rodriguez said.

Rodriguez said the turnout meant so much to him "because I think they're awesome people," mentioning how peo-

ple came up to him to request a song, especially if it's one they've danced to before.

"I think it's putting happiness in their heart because I know as a senior, half of them are all alone and it's so nice to put that into their hearts," Rodriguez said. "I'm here to help and to just put a smile on their face."

He also loves how events

like this bring people together and give joy.

"When I come in, I want to give them a special show. I want to give them all the smiles and all that happiness," Rodriguez said.

Dulchinos and Dutton encourage the community to come to these events.

"I would tell them, don't stay home. Come to these events because you may not have the opportunity again," Dutton said.

"As you get older, it's nice to be able to go see people your age too," Dulchinos said. "You have memories with people that you meet and share memories."

Rodriguez's message on this Valentine's Day is to be happy and spread joy.

"Enjoy life because life is way too short. I always used to be like 'Hurry, hurry' and then when I became a little older now, I go, 'Why?' Be happy, enjoy, be kind to each other because that's the only way that happiness has," Rodriguez said. "Share that love!"

PUBLIC NOTICES

CHICOPEE CITY COUNCIL ZONING COMMITTEE LEGAL NOTICE

The Zoning Committee of the Chicopee City Council will hold a public hearing on **Monday, March 3, 2025 at 6:30 PM*** in the Auditorium, 3rd floor, City Hall, 274 Front Street., Chicopee, MA 01013 to discuss the following:

Special Permit application under Chapter 275-58 (C 7) for the purpose of operating a towing and storage business located at 78 West St. Applicant – Cruise Control Transportation, Inc., Joshua Roy, President, 210 Charlton Rd., Sturbridge, MA 01566.

The plans/application can be viewed on the City Council website <https://www.chicopeema.gov/880/Pending-Applications>

The March 3, 2025 Zoning Committee hearing shall be available to the public via zoom and in person. Zoom credentials are available upon request by calling (413) 594-1435 M-F 8:30 AM – 5 PM or by email at aczarniecki@chicopeema.gov.

The petition and materials related to this proposal are on file in the Office of the City Council, Chicopee City Hall, 274 Front Street. (plans and applications are also available on the City Council website <https://www.chicopeema.gov/880/Pending-Applications>.) You may also call (413) 594-1435 or email aczarniecki@chicopeema.gov 02/14, 02/21/2025

SALE OF MOTOR VEHICLES Under G.L. c.255 Sec. 39A

Notice is hereby given by Interstate Towing, Inc. pursuant to the provisions of G.L. c. 255, section 39A, that on February 21, 2025 at Interstate Towing, Inc the following Motor Vehicles will be sold at private sale to satisfy our garage keeper's lien thereon for storage, towing charges, care and expenses of notices and sale of said vehicles.

2004 HONDA ACCORD EX VIN: 1HGCM56874A120827 Anthony Rivera 42 Carver St., Springfield, MA 01108

2012 SUBARU LEGACY 2.5I PREMIUM VIN: 4S3BMB69C3016449 Ronald Kreth 103 Park Ave., Rutland, VT 05701

1993 TOYOTA COROLLA VIN: JT2AE04E8P0022374 Alyze Nieves Cuciano 191 Boston Post Rd, Waterford, CT 06385

2001 HONDA ACCORD EX VIN: 1HGCG16581A082641 D Salazarcastillo 357 E 195th St., 2G Bronx, NY 10458

2003 HONDA CRV EX VIN: SHSRD78863U147131 Luis Fernando Murales Veliz 538 Park Ave., Apt. 2 Worcester, MA 01603

2005 HYUNDAI ELANTRA GLS/GT VIN: KMHDN56D35U134314 Jason Leo Kelley 31 Palomba Dr., #426

Enfield, CT 06082

02/07, 02/14, 02/21/2025

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. HD25P0289EA

Estate of:
Margaret Mary Austin
Also known as:
Margaret M Austin
Date of Death: 10/21/2024
CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION

To all interested persons:
A Petition for **Formal Adjudication of Intestacy and Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Ann M Cadieux of East Sandwich, MA** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that: **Kirsten Valentine Cadieux of Minneapolis, MN** 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 03/12/2025. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)
A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.
WITNESS, Hon. Barbara M Hyland, First Justice of this Court.
Date: February 12, 2025
Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate
02/21/2025

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampden Probate
Docket No. HD25P0317EA
Estate of:
Lawrence Boucher
Date of Death: 3/28/2022
INFORMAL PROBATE PUBLICATION NOTICE
To all persons interested in the

and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
(413)748-7758
Docket No. HD25P0321EA
Estate of:
Lynn Dee Bennis
Date of Death: 12/02/2024
CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION

To all interested persons:
A Petition for **Formal Adjudication of Intestacy and Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Lawrence E. Bennis of Chicopee, MA** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that: **Lawrence E. Bennis of Chicopee, MA** 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 03/14/2025. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)

A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.
WITNESS, Hon. Barbara M Hyland, First Justice of this Court.
Date: February 14, 2025
Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate
02/21/2025

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampden Division
Docket No. HD25P0317EA
Estate of:
Lawrence Boucher
Date of Death: 3/28/2022
INFORMAL PROBATE PUBLICATION NOTICE
To all persons interested in the

above captioned estate, by Petitioner **April M. Allen of Ipswich, MA**

April M. Allen of Ipswich, 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.
02/21/2025

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. HD25P0312EA
Estate of:
Robert James Gaudrault
Also known as:
Robert J Gaudrault
Date of Death: 10/18/2024
CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION

To all interested persons:
A Petition for **Formal Adjudication of Intestacy and Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Gary P Gaudrault of Fort Myers 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: **Gary P Gaudrault of Fort Myers 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 03/14/2025. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.
UNSUPERVISED AD-

MINISTRATION 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: February 14, 2025
Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate
02/21/2025

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampden Division
Docket No. HD25PO306EA
Estate of:
Sandra J. Maki
Date of Death: March 18, 2022
INFORMAL PROBATE PUBLICATION NOTICE
To all persons interested in the above captioned estate, by Petitioner **Nicole M. Twarog of Ludlow, MA** a Will has been admitted to informal probate.
Nicole M. Twarog of Ludlow, 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.
02/21/2025

Sale of Motor Vehicles Under G.L. C.255 Sec. 39A

Notice is hereby given by Interstate Towing, Inc. pursuant to the provisions of G.L. c. 255, Section 39A, on February 28, 2025 at Interstate Towing, Inc., the following motor vehicles will be sold at private sale to satisfy our garage keeper's lien thereon for storage, towing charges, care and expenses of notices and sale of said vehicles.
2018 Kia Optima VIN: 5XXGT4L33JG182683

2018 Kia Optima VIN: 5XXGT4L33JG182683

Ronny Tejada Ruiz 9 Oswald St., Fl 1 Worcester, MA 01607

2011 Hyundai Sonata GLS VIN: 5NPEB4ACXBH192744 Amina Ownes 123 Orchard St., Springfield, MA 01107

2013 Kia Optima EX VIN: 5XXGN4A71DG243355 Koroma Mustapha 31 College Dr., Concord, NH 03301

2016 Toyota Corolla VIN: 2T1BURHE4GC549038 Leandro Machado 44 Dwight St., Apt. 2 Chicopee, MA 01013

2011 Ford Escape Limited VIN: 1FMCU9EG5BKB77111 Rocio De La Cruz Montero 21 1/2 High Acres Rd, Ansonia, CT 06401

2006 Honda Odyssey Exl VIN: 5FNRL38606B431070 Plymouth Rock Assurance Corp PO Box 32 North Billerica, MA 01862

2006 Honda Accord Ex VIN: 1HGCM56796A012591 Angel Rosa Ferrer 36 Jennes St. Springfield, MA 01104

Moped VIN: RFSBDSAANX004500 Flynn John 66 Pleasant St. Enfield, CT 06082

2013 Chevrolet Cruze VIN: 1G1PC55B1D7225793 Nelson Ramirez Ramirez 2095 Northampton St., Holyoke, MA 01040

2008 Honda Civic Lx VIN: 2HGFA16508H521051 V O Alorvaldivia 57 Oak St, Apt. 1 Islip, NY 11751
02/14, 02/21, 02/28/2025

SALE OF MOTOR VEHICLES UNDER G.L. c.255 Sec. 39A

Notice is hereby given by Interstate Towing, Inc. pursuant to the provisions of G.L. c. 255, section 39A, that on March 7, 2025 at Interstate Towing, Inc the following Motor Vehicles will be sold at private sale to satisfy our garage keeper's lien thereon for storage, towing charges, care and expenses of notices and sale of said vehicles.

2018 Mercedes GLE 350 VIN: 4JGDA5HB5J106835 Krista Purvis 99 Pike St., PO Box 58 Carbondale, PA 18407

2013 Nissan Rogue VIN: JN8AS5MV9DW659218 Nelson Joel Cruz Jr. 24 Outlook St. East Hartford, CT 06108

2014 Ford Fiesta SE VIN: 3FADP4B3EM210919 Jazmin Rene Ann Rutheford 1735 Newmark Ave., Apt D Coos Bay, OR 97420
02/21, 02/28, 03/07/2025

IN THE CITY

CPD takes part in Night to Shine



PHOTOS AND CAPTION COURTESY OF CHICOPEE POLICE DEPARTMENT

CHICOPEE – On Feb. 7, several of our officers participated in the 2025 Tim Tebow “Night to Shine” hosted by Life Point Church. We are grateful to be a part of this night.

BLACK HISTORY from page 1

the U.S. We came here for a better life, for our futures, for our children, for our family members, whether that is you came here today or your family members came here 100 years ago or on the Plymouth or etc.,” Arriaga said. “And it’s important. Why is that important? Because, unfortunately, people do treat others differently, who do not look like us, and guess what? If you look around this room, we all look different and that doesn’t mean that people are less worthy than.”

Johnson stressed how discourse, no matter which way you voted or what your values are, is healthy and

“some conversations need to be had, even if they make you uncomfortable.”

She also reflected on Revolutionary War Spy James Armistead Lafayette, who enlisted to fight for the Americans’ Continental Army and how anyone who fought for the army would be freed and no longer a slave. Also, Shirley Chisholm, the first African-American woman to serve in Congress and the first African-American woman or woman to seek the presidential nomination.

“The harms done to African-Americans in this nation can never be undone and I know that many of you--if not everyone in this room--knows that. However, we



Choyce McIntosh-Rodriguez, pro bono coordinator at Community Legal Aid for Western MA, reflects on equal justice access.



Ayanna Crawford, chief of staff for State Rep. Orlando Ramos (D-Springfield) talks about education and teaching Black history to the next generation.



Superintendent Dr. Marcus Ware provides welcoming remarks on behalf of Mayor John Vieau, who was unable to attend due to illness.



Nia Johnson, community engagement coordinator at the Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office, talks about how she loves being a Black woman and the importance of having conversations, especially if they involve discourse.

need to acknowledge it and we need to work together to do better and this here--this flag-raising that we’re having today--I believe is a step in the right direction and I truly hope to see it continue in this great city of Chicopee,” Johnson said.

Crawford focused on Carter G. Woodson, a historian, author and the founder of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, calling him “the Father of Black History.”

In February 1926, Woodson had launched--as it was known at that time--Negro History Week, a weeklong celebration, Crawford said, was “not just for Black folks,

but it was for everyone” and “to get to know us Black folks.”

“In that year, he launched it--the celebration--and now we see the precursor--or the evolution, if you will--of Black History. And so, this moment in time as we hear about the dismantling of DEI, the dismantling of canceling Black History, we have to understand that Carter G. Woodson was simply saying that Black folks exist,” Crawford said. “He was simply saying that you ought to know about our history, he was simply saying that we too matter and he simply was saying that I want to educate you on the effects and the realization of

who Black people are here in America.”

McIntosh-Rodriguez talked about her organization, which offers free civil legal aid to elders and low-income individuals and families who cannot afford an attorney.

She stressed equal justice for everyone, sharing the story of a client who was sued by a credit card company for debt. The case was later dismissed with CLA’s help.

“It just really shows how much the work I do and equal access to justice is really important. We just encourage everyone to try and get involved and help lessen the justice gap and make equal access justice available to

everyone,” McIntosh-Rodriguez said.

After thanking Chicopee Cultural Council Member Wilhelmina Humphries for inviting her to the ceremony and her work on CLA’s Board of Directors, McIntosh-Rodriguez shared her gratitude.

“Black History is so rich and is so important and I wouldn’t be here without the contributions of all the African-Americans before me,” McIntosh-Rodriguez said.

To view the full ceremony, visit ChicopeeTV’s Facebook page.



TURLEY PHOTOS BY KRISTIN RIVERS

Azael Diaz drapes the Black History Month flag inside City Hall Auditorium on Feb. 13.



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