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COMMUNITY

Daiana Torres crowned Chicopee's 2025 Colleen



Meghan Oxley, Hannah O'Neil, Daiana Torres, Wilmette Cumba and Emma Caproni pose for a group photo during this year's Colleen Coronation Ball at the Portuguese American Club in Chicopee.

TURLEY PHOTO BY KRISTIN RIVERS

2025 Court also announced

By Kristin Rivers
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CHICOPEE - Daiana Torres, a Chicopee Comprehensive High School student, has been crowned this year's Chicopee Colleen at the Colleen Coronation Ball on Feb. 22.

The 2025 Court Members are Wilmette Cumba, a member of the Army National Guard, Hannah O'Neil, a student at Chicopee Comp, Emma Caproni, a student at Pope Francis Preparatory School, and Meghan Oxley, also a stu-

dent at Chicopee Comp.

The ball took place at the Portuguese American Club and featured 11 contestants as they were narrowed down to five finalists, who were scored on accomplishments, personality, poise and appearance.

As for this year's scholarship recipients, they are Hannah O'Neil, Emma Caproni, Kaitlyn Gilhooly and Lilian Young. Young served on the Colleen Court in 2024.

This year's judges were Michelle Sears, Todd Kenney and Lynn Ireland, with Ula Kulig serving as tabulator.

The co-hosts were Mark Galarneau, a committee member and board of directors member, and Alivia Mendes, a committee mem-

ber and 2022 Court Member.

Before the winner was chosen, the five finalists answered one question: "What can we do to encourage civic engagement in your generation?"

Oxley suggested gathering people and having them join the community.

"We could start by gathering the people and making them join the community and have them vote and add people to different kinds of organizations," Oxley said.

Cumba focused on building connections between different generations to foster understanding.

"I believe that to encourage civic engagement with my generation, we have to kind of understand each other

between all different generations," Cumba said.

Torres emphasized awareness and utilizing social media platforms.

"I believe to engage more civic engagement in our generation, we should be able to make everybody more aware. Some people don't know the issues that are happening or open opportunities to volunteer at food banks, churches or even at homeless shelters," Torres said. "We can even use our power of social media. That's a big platform right now. We can make these kids aware of places that they can volunteer and ways that they can help out. They can donate money, food, even some

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COMMUNITY



TURLEY PHOTO BY KRISTIN RIVERS

District Governor Vin Marinaro speaks to the Rotary Club of Chicopee during their Feb. 11 meeting at The View Tavern.

Rotary Club of Chicopee welcomes District Governor

2026 co-presidents also announced

By Kristin Rivers
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CHICOPEE - The Rotary Club of Chicopee welcomed District Governor Vin Marinaro on Feb. 11, where he talked with the members about membership, The Rotary Foundation, the youth and belonging.

Rotary Co-President John Arthur also announced Scott Channel and Fred Borys as the new co-presidents for 2026.

"I know that you and Scott are going to be dynamite. Already, I get the feeling that there's going to be a lot of good going on next year," Arthur said.

Borys thanked Arthur and fellow Co-President Lou Arasate for their leadership.

"We've had a couple of very successful fundraisers, we increased membership," Borys said. "Also, some very generous donations. So, I think for Scott and myself—in essence to me—I'd just like to follow in

your footsteps."

Borys's major goal is an emphasis on membership, crediting Arasate, Mayor John Vieau—also a member of the Rotary Club—and Arthur for their efforts.

"So, we'd like to have an emphasis on more members. A greater profile in the community, possibly, if we could do that," Borys said. "I think everybody in the club is aware, but we're very well-set financially so there's no reason that we can't do something dramatic in our area as well."

Channel echoed Borys's goals, including utilizing social media and local media to spread the word about the club.

"I think, overall, we're looking forward to it and I'm looking forward to be a part of it," Channel said.

Marinaro said there are around 1,500 members right now, with Rotary International considering a move to merge districts, which he did not want to happen.

An example of this was in New York where three

See ROTARY CLUB page 9

Barry School project reaches feasibility phase

By Amanda Munson
Correspondent

CHICOPEE - The School Committee was updated on the continuous Anna E. Barry Elementary School construction project on Feb. 19.

Presenting at the meeting was Vice President of Caolo and Bieniek Architects Bert Gardner, who is the project architect for the Barry School project, introducing himself to the committee and providing an update on where the project is today.

"The city is pursuing a project at the Barry Elementary School to either renovate it, add on to it, or construct a new one to replace it. Part of the MSBA's process is that we have to study a base repair and new construction option. That's all on the existing Barry School site," Gardner said.

Showing a synopsis of what the MSBA's process is along with the Anna E. Barry School Feasibility Study, Gardner shared the latest status.

"We're fairly along, I think you guys started the process in April of 2022 when you submitted an SOI, statement of interest, to the MSBA for participation in their grant program. Our office didn't come on board just before

module three—beginning with the feasibility study—and our contract date was December 1, 2024, where we interviewed for the project and was successful," Gardner said.

Gardner explained what their role is on the project.

"So, our job is to look at the feasibility of upgrading the Barry School experience. We're in module three, which is our feasibility study that consists of two reports we submit to the state, one's the preliminary design program which basically identifies what the educational program in the school needs to be and we look at various options on how we can lay that out for a successful project," Gardner said. "At that point, there's a second report that goes in called the preferred schematic report from all the options we prepare in the preliminary report, you'll pick the one that kind of rises to the top as the most educationally beneficial and most cost-effective solution. Then we'll move into module four which is the schematic design."

Referring to module four—the schematic design—Gardner explained how the next few modules

See BARRY SCHOOL page 7

Jason Auclair receives Grinspoon Excellence in Teaching Award

By Amanda Munson
Correspondent

CHICOPEE - Chicopee Schools recognized a total of eight teachers who received the Excellence in Teaching Award, and Mr. Jason Auclair of Chicopee High School was one of the eight who received this award.

The Pioneer Valley's Excellence in Teaching Awards program is defined as annually honoring Western Massachusetts educators and seeks to motivate teachers at all stages of their careers to aspire to excellence, administered by the Harold Grinspoon Charitable Foundation.

As stated on the HGF website, "Superintendents and heads of schools act as, or appoint, representatives to oversee a process determined by each district for selecting Excellence in Teaching Award recipients. Eligible educators must teach full time and be certified in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the number of awards in each district is based on student population."

Speaking highly of his co-workers, past and current students in the high school and teaching at all grade



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHICOPEE HIGH SCHOOL PACERS FACEBOOK PAGE

Mr. Jason Auclair, a social studies teacher at Chicopee High School, with colleagues at CHS pose for a group photo, in celebration of his recent teaching achievement and recognition.

levels over 23 years, Auclair began discussing his early teaching career and what he believes earned him the award. Officially known as the 10th Grade U.S. History Teacher of CHS, Auclair began reflecting on his last 23 years of teaching career.

"I pretty much have taught every grade level in my 20 years. Typically, the curriculum will change based upon whatever the trends are, but sometimes they just have me teach dif-

ferent levels based on whatever the need is. The one thing that's been consistent is that generationally, people talk about how much kids have changed and how kids are so different from what they were like when they were children," Auclair said. "But I think fundamentally, even though there are definitely some changes because of technology and all the other things that we associated with how kids are different, I still think fundamentally that

kids are still pretty much the same. And have been since I've been teaching."

When asked about his beginnings within the interest of a history career, Auclair reflected on his college days and what kick-started his history teacher endeavor.

"I was in college as an undergrad at Westfield State and had a US history class that focused on the Civil

See JASON AUCLAIR page 7

IN THE CITY

City Council appropriates \$30,000 for public messaging

By Kristin Rivers
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CHICOPEE - City Council has appropriated \$30,000 for public messaging during their Feb. 18 meeting.

The appropriation would go to the Police Expense Account for Special Services from available funds in the Stabilization Fund.

Mayor John Vieau explained one of the reasons it was decided to put the mayor's order in was "because of the city of Chicopee--heaven forbid--is in a crisis or emergency could really sometimes use a hand in messaging."

"I know that we've also included the superintendent of schools and talked with representatives of even DPW and just about every department," Vieau said. "So, in a case of an emergency, messaging becomes very important and the goal is to work with professionals to try to get the message out to the public in the best fashion possible. This would help us pay for a consultant or a firm in order to provide that message in crisis."

Police Chief Patrick Major focused on instances

over the last few years-- specifically, from the police department's point of view--of high-profile violence and fatalities in the city "that we've had sometimes issue getting messaging out across maybe not due to problems on our end," citing the District Attorney's office as an example.

"But some instances it's a school too. As you know, we do have a public information officer. Some of these instances that public information officer's also on the street providing police services during the incident while it's happening," Major said. "It's hard to do dual role of providing those services while also engaging the public, and I know it's been a concern for the public to not have instant messaging going out, letting them know what's going on at the schools. The Crisis Communication Team would be available to help us out getting the message of the city across to everybody in a very timely fashion."

Fire Chief Daniel Stamborski echoed Major's points.

"We've had just in the last couple weeks a few tragedies in the city that were horrible and we need the correct message to go out. We live kind of in an age of misinformation

with social media sources and this company is professional at what they do and I think they would help our cause as a city and, specifically, our departments and the School Department," Stamborski said.

Vieau added this resource would be available to all departments, including the City Council, to help with issues with messaging "whenever it's necessary to get that information to the public."

"We are working in conjunction with some of our partners about how to handle certain situations like that, but it would be ideal to have an entity or firm readily available 24/7 to help in amidst a real crisis or emergency to help get messaging out," Vieau said.

When Ward 6 Councilor Samuel Shumsky asked if a consultant was picked, Vieau replied an RFP was sent out--and three proposals received--and a consultant chosen.

"We will let you know who that is once funding's in place and we can sign a contract," Vieau said.

Ward 1 Councilor Abigail Arriaga said she was "really looking forward to this."

"As a parent of children in two separate schools here in Chicopee, you do see things

that on Facebook and it gets quite alarming and it's very hard to get the right information, so I really hope that this helps with that and the fear of parents, because as soon as they kind of see something posted it definitely spirals," Arriaga said. "So, I would really love something like this. So, I actually, really, was happy to see this. So, I really just want to say thank you."

Councilor-At-Large Tim Wagner was "not entirely sure how I feel about this particular order."

"At times, it seems as though city hall is entirely unresponsive to people--and not to make light of all the hard work and the effort put in by numerous city departments to keep people safe over the course of this past weekend and into the start of this week--but, it seems to me that the city of Chicopee only let people know about the situation with the sand and salt deliveries hours and hours and hours after other towns have done such," Wagner said. "It strikes me as a little bit odd that we're trying to focus on messaging rather than getting a message out at all sometimes and I think it says that we're in a pretty bad place if we need

to hire somebody to assist in this messaging stuff when we already pay people to professionally do that in many of our city departments."

Wagner knows, however, how social media posts "can take on a life of their own."

"But I don't think that's going to particularly change with this petition being in place. I'm not in favor of this. I think it's completely and entirely redundant and I think we need to, frankly, before we even consider a position like this up our game a little bit," Wagner said.

Wagner later said--while reiterating his earlier points and reflecting on being a student when an active shooter report took place--he, also, would not vote in favor before knowing the name of the chosen consultant and having a look at their reputation and work before the \$30,000 is spent.

Ward 2 Councilor Shane Brooks, meanwhile, supports this, recalling his child experiencing the active shooter report during her first day of high school.

"The amount of misinformation that was spread out there was beyond erroneous and having been physically

there with President Laflamme because I was on my way to pick up my daughter--who was on crutches at the time--to see the massive response of every police officer, essentially, in the city and from neighboring communities. There wasn't a whole lot of time to message out," Brooks said. "Like, I'd rather have somebody onsite addressing an issue than sitting behind a desk typing up an email or a Facebook post about what's going on. I think this will inherently help our cause to enhance communication and I'm fully supportive of this."

Shumsky shared he was one of those students at the time when that active shooter report took place and "it's an unfortunate memory that I'll have for the rest of my life."

"It's something that I hope no child, no student, no parent, no teacher--anyone--should ever have to live through or experience. It was not a highlight of a school year or in any way, shape or form," Shumsky said. "So, I do agree with Councilor Brooks that that's a perfect example as to why we should be supporting this and I will say it confidentially that I am in full support of this tonight."

Pedestrian Struck in November Motor Vehicle Crash in Chicopee Identified

CHICOPEE - On Saturday, November 23, 2024, at approximately 6:40 p.m., Chicopee Police Officers responded to a call regarding a motor vehicle versus pedestrian collision at the 1500 block of Granby Road

in Chicopee, Massachusetts. Upon arrival, officers located an adult male victim. The victim was transported to Baystate Medical Center where he succumbed to his injuries.

The victim has been

identified as Edgar Francisco, 72, of Chicopee.

This remains an ongoing investigation by the Hampden District Attorney's Office Motor Vehicle Homicide Unit in conjunction with the Chicopee Police Department.

CPL announces upcoming programming

CHICOPEE - Here are some of our upcoming library programs.

The Chicopee Library will be doing a 15 hour beginner computer class "Tech Goes Home" on Wednesdays and Fridays in March from 1 to 3 p.m. At the conclusion of 15 hours of class, participants will receive a computer and one year of internet. Registration is required.

Wednesday, March 5 at 6 p.m. - Sourdough Brandon

Registration required (413-594-1800x3 or through the library calendar). Learn how to make, maintain, and store a sourdough starter from an expert sourdough baker and food blogger on SourdoughBrandon.com. You'll leave with many tips and tricks on how to keep your sourdough starter active, what to make with your starter, and even leave with some free sourdough starter!

About Sourdough Brandon: Brandon started SourdoughBrandon.com to help home bakers bake naturally leavened, sourdough bread and baked goods with detailed recipes and visual guides.

Brandon grew up in the small town of Mt. Airy, North Carolina, in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, where he was surrounded by Southern hospitality and delicious home cooking. "I've always baked in some capacity," Brandon says, "but when I made my first loaf of sourdough bread, I knew I would be doing it for the rest of my life."

After years of studying

piano and music education at New York University, and working in various higher education roles from NYC to Boston, Brandon moved to a rural and peaceful hilltown in Western Massachusetts.

The joy of baking with sourdough is that it is a life-long learning journey. You don't need fancy equipment or professional training to make delicious, wholesome baked goods at home.

Brandon hopes to share his passion of home baking through his recipes and detailed guides. Maybe you'll be as inspired as he is to turn on your oven and bake for you and your family.

Thursday, March 6 at 6:30 p.m. - Writer's Group

Writer's Group meets the first Thursday of each month at 6:30pm. We invite all those who love to write to join us for a friendly, supportive place to work on your writing. This group shares writing goals, discusses writing processes and strategies, and sets the direction of future meetings. Stacie Klinowski, a local writing teacher, will help lead the group. This group is for adults.

Wednesday, March 26 at 6 p.m. - Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia

Join us on Wednesday, March 26 at 6pm for a presentation on "Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia." Learn about the difference between Alzheimer's disease and dementia, the early warning signs of dementia, risk factors, the importance of early detection, new treat-

ment options, and local resources. This program is presented by the Alzheimer's Association. Register through the calendar or call the Reference Desk at 413-594-1800x3.

Thursday, March 27 at 6:30 p.m. - Sun on the Muddy

Local authors Jim Armenti and Dave Madeloni present Sun on the Muddy: poems, music and photos at the Chicopee Library on Thursday, February 27 at 6:30pm. Author and musician Jim Armenti and photographer Dave Madeloni present poems, songs and photographs from their new book "Sun on the Muddy". Armenti, who is a singer/songwriter for the Lonesome Brothers shares his reflections on the people and things that make a life while Madeloni finds beauty in often ignored places. This program is free and open to the public. No registration is required.

For people wishing to work on genealogy, the computer lab is available to work on genealogy on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 a.m. to Noon and 6 to 8 p.m. We are a FamilySearch Affiliate Library and have helpful databases such as Ancestry, American Ancestors and HeritageQuest to help you in your search.

If you need technology help, we offer one-on-one computer help on Mondays at 2pm or by appointment. For more information, email or call the Reference Desk at cpl@chicopeepubliclibrary.org and 594-1800 x3.

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IN THE CITY

Spring Gardening Workshops take place March 29

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
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WESTFIELD - The Western Massachusetts Master Gardener Association is gearing up for the coming spring with its upcoming Spring Gardening Workshops on March 29.

The event takes place from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Westfield South Middle School has 10 workshops this year, which are "Making Your Garden Edible," a hands-on workshop called "Updating an Old Garden," "Gardening in Shades of Shade," "Native Plants," "Healthy Lawns," "Vase Worthy Gardening," another hands-on workshop called "Growing and Using Herbs," "Companion Planting," "Ins and Outs of House Plants" and "Garden Gold: Soil and Compost."

There will also be raffles and a marketplace fair with informational booths, vendors, a soil testing station testing for PH and texture, an Ask a Master Gardener Booth, complimentary refreshments and more.

This year's speakers include retired nutritionist and Master Gardener Chris Brown, Larri Cochran, certified horticulturist and Landscape for Life Trainer, Northampton Community Garden co-director, and vice president of the Western Massachusetts Master Gardener Association, Ken Conway, head gardener at Better View Landscapes, Janet Dodder,

Horticulture Education Chair for the Springfield Garden Club, Leslie Duthie, horticulturist at Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary, Cornell Master Gardener Chris Ferrero, Master Gardener Ed Sourdiffe, aka "The Green Thumb Guru," award-winning author Eric Toensmeier and Jen Werner, Urban Forestry Commissioner for the City of Northampton.

Seats are filling up fast and everyone is encouraged to register very soon. Online registration through March 27 is \$30 for two seminars and, if sessions are available, \$40 cash only at the door the day of.

For those who may not want to register online, they can download the form and send it in with a check, which needs to be mailed and arrive by March 16.

Rosey Bonner, a member of the WMMGA and part of the Planning Committee for the event, explained the association has been around for many years, becoming a non-profit after the Master Gardener Program Funding was cut in 1989.

The association oversees three sub-regions in Franklin, Hampden, Berkshire and Hampshire counties, takes part in community projects and also speaks at libraries, Farmers Markets, garden clubs and more.

"Our primary mission as master gardeners is we consider ourselves a service organization and our mission, really, is to educate the public

on best practices in gardening on sustainable gardening practices," Bonner said. "So, that's what this workshop is all about."

Bonner shared she's one of the newer members of the association and joined after retiring as a school administrator.

"So, when I retired, this is what I said I wanted to get my hands in the dirt and do," Bonner said.

Bonner explained one workshop is already filled up and they are categorized into groups to serve gardeners at all levels who "have different loves and likes," expressing excitement for all the offerings coming up.

"So, we have many gardeners that love flowers--and landscaping and flowers--so we put three of the workshops geared towards that, and one of them is 'Gardening in the Shades of Shade,'" Bonner said. "People always struggle. 'What do I plant in the shade?' We can find lots of plants to put in the sun, and so this speaker--who is a Cornell Master Gardener--will be talking about some of the nuances of that and suggestions of plants."

The "Vase Worthy Gardening" workshop, Bonner added, focuses on "how to put flowers in your existing beds and landscape that you can use as cut garden flowers to make basis of flowers."

"And the third one--which is nearest and dearest to our hearts as master gardeners--is native plants. Be-



SUBMITTED PHOTOS ROSEY BONNER

Heidi Dollard from the Mass Pollinator Network talks with an attendee; the organization will be one of many on hand again at this year's WMMGA's Gardening Workshops.

cause we really know for our bugs and our birds and everything to survive that whole life cycle, we need diversity in our yards," Bonner said. "But, we need native plants because our native insects need plants. They may be getting nectars and dolts from one plant, but they can't lay their eggs on that plant. They need a different native plant as a host plant."

Another workshop Bonner looks forward to is about the ins and outs of house plants.

"People are always wanting to know 'what do I do with my house plants?' because these are the times you're transplanting, you're getting them outside. So, Ed

Soudiffe--he's a master gardener--he will be conducting that workshop," Bonner said.

The "Garden Gold: Soil and Compost" workshop, which focuses on compost and soil, is another one near and dear to the association.

"You can have the healthiest plants that you're about to put in. You can have the great sun, good wind. You don't have good soil, your plants aren't going to thrive. So, Janet will really talk about what makes up good soil, how do you keep your soil healthy and part of that is how you make and use compost as a supplement to your soil," Bonner said.

Bonner encourages all surrounding communities to

check out the workshops this year and sign up as soon as possible to secure their seat.

"We want you to get out in the garden and enjoy it, have a healthy productive (season) and this is a great way to get some knowledge, but it also gets you inspired.

The end of March gets you saying, 'Time to get in there.' We call it 'Let's Get Growing' because we will grow as learners, but we want to get our plants and our flowers and our vegetables growing

and think of new and different things and get resources," Bonner said. "So, I'd say get on out here and get inspired for spring!"

To learn more and to register, visit wmmga.org.

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 March 2025.

Sensory Play Saturday will be held at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, March 1. Come let your babies socialize and explore sensory play! We will have our play area set up with some sensory activities and other play opportunities. For babies 0-24 months and their caregivers.

Saturday Playgroup will be held at 1 p.m., on Saturdays, March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29. Come play at the library! The playspace will be open for families with kids of all ages to meet up and play.

Terrific Twos will be on Tuesdays, March 4 and 18 at 10:30 a.m. This program includes a short storytime and a rotating selection of crafts and activities. No registration is required. This program is just for two year olds and their caregivers.

Read to a Dog on Wednesdays, March 5 at 4 p.m. Meet

Lina, a two year old chocolate lab trained as a pediatric therapy dog. She will be here to listen to kids practice reading. Therapy dogs are good listeners with calm energy and can help kids who struggle with reading aloud. For ages 5 and up. Space is limited, contact the Children's Room to Sign up.

Afterschool Thursdays is a new program series for school age children that the library is introducing in March and plans to run through the spring. Each Thursday afternoon will be a different opportunity for older kids to explore a fun, creative activity. Recommended for ages 6 and up, teens and tweens welcome. On the first Thursday of each month, the longstanding Build with LEGO program will continue. Freeform building time with a big pile of LEGO will be on Thursday, March 6 at 4 p.m. On the other Thursdays different activities including art, games and science experiments will be offered at 4pm. No registration required.

Stop by for a Kids Room Craft on Tuesday, March 11 at 4 p.m. This month's craft is a paper shooting star. For all ages.

Storytime will be held in the children's program room on Wednesdays March 12 and 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 March 14 and 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!

On Wednesday March 19 at 10:30 a.m. in the community room, the library will have a Little Kid Dance Party geared for kids five and under and their caregivers. Older kids are welcome, as well, especially during school vacation week. There will be songs, dancing and big movement! Please note: there will be no Dance Party on March 5 this month.

The library will host a Meet-up for Homeschooling Families on Thursday, March 20 at 11 a.m. Homeschooling families can meet each other and hang out. Chicopee's point person for AHM (Advocates for Home Education in MA) will be there. We do different activities each month.

ee's point person for AHM (Advocates for Home Education in MA) will be there. We do different activities each month.

Teen Programs

An Escape Room for Teens will be set up after school (2:30-4:30) on Tuesday March 4 through Thursday March 6 in the meeting room near the Teen Space. Middle and High school students can stop by and try to solve a Batman-themed mystery.

Teen Wayback Wednesday, the program sometimes known as Throwback Thursday, will be on Wednesday, March 12 from 2:30 to 4 p.m. Join us for an afternoon of "kid" programming just for teens. Play with toys, do a craft, and enjoy activities with the giant parachute! Teen programs are open to middle and high school students.

Teen Anime Club will meet on Wednesday, March 19 from 3 to 4:30 p.m.. This month's activity will be "Anime Wheel of Fortune". 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

Chicopee Historical Society presents Derek Strahan Talk

CHICOPEE - The Chicopee Historical Society presents a talk by Derek Strahan on local sites "then and now" through present-day and historical images. The event is Wednesday, March 19, 2025, at the Chicopee Public Library Bazan Community Room, 449 Front Street, Chicopee, Mass., at 6:30 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

Derek Strahan is the managing editor and primary author of the website "Lost New England," which features then-and-now images of locations across the

region. In addition, he is the author of two books: "Lost Springfield, Massachusetts and New England Then and Now," and he is the host of the "Western Mass History" podcast.

Mr. Strahan is a Westfield State University graduate with degrees in English and Regional Planning, and he currently works as a land use and environment planner. He serves on the board of directors of the Longmeadow Historical Society and is a past president of the Springfield Preservation Trust.

RiverMills to hold 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

Banish 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.

Top Tips to prepare your home for the Spring Real Estate Market!

- ✓ Create a Budget
- ✓ Enhance your Curb Appeal
- ✓ Prepare your Yard
- ✓ Spring Clean Everything
- ✓ Declutter and De-personalize
- ✓ Set the right Temperature
- ✓ Asses the Flooring
- ✓ Choose the Right Lighting
- ✓ Consider minor repairs
- ✓ Curate a Home Office Space
- ✓ Freshen Up Paint and Hardware
- ✓ Focus on the Kitchen and Bath
- ✓ Create a Welcoming Porch or Patio
- ✓ Remember the Garden
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OPINION

LETTER TO EDITOR

What if?

To The Editor:
There is speculation of an asteroid that could possibly plummet our planet in 2032 causing catastrophic damage according to astrologers. There is only about a 3% chance of this happening.

But what if our nation were to merge with Russia, China and North Korea adopting their values or lack of basic values, I should say, toward civil rights abuse. Given the power of these four coun-

tries could and most likely would dominate the planet in ways distinguishing freedoms and democracy forever. The probability of this happen is much greater than an asteroid.

The United States has been a counter-balance against the rise of Authoritarianism rule among the nations in which people enjoy individual creativity.

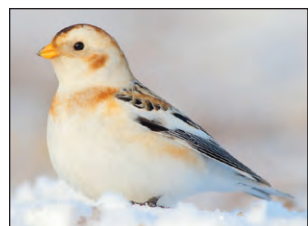
The U.S. must never rebuff and shun their allies!

Bill Paul, Chicopee

GUEST COLUMN



By Ellenor Downer



Snow bunting

I received an email from an Oakham resident said he and a friend on Feb. 12 startled a flock of about eight snow buntings as they drove along Adams Road in New Braintree.

He said, "The buntings are seen here every winter." On Feb. 18, I drove over Adams Road and saw the same flock of snow buntings. Their white bellies will be visible as they flew up from the side of the road.

The snow bunting is seven inches long with a plumpish body. In winter, snow buntings are streaked with buff and black. The ear patch and the back is streaked with buff as well as the flanks and breast. The belly is white and the bill yellow-orange. The male's crown is black and the female's buff.

The male in summer is a striking white and black. The head and breast are white and the back, tail and bill are black. The female in summer plumage is a more subdued version of the male with her head a gray color.

Snow buntings summer on the tundra and rocky shores, their breeding grounds. The female lays three to nine creamy blue or gray eggs in a nest of moss, grasses and earth placed on rocky ground. Their song is a musical warble and calls include "tew" and soft, buzzy notes.

In winter, they inhabit open fields, roadsides and beaches in the southern Canada and the United States.

Brown creeper

Last week, I saw a brown creeper moving up a tree near one of my bird feeders and suet cakes. When they get near the top of the tree, they fly down to the base and climb up the tree in a different spot on the tree.

Birds and more at my feeder

Sunday during the

storm, I spotted an opossum under my feeder digging in the snow for seeds. At this point, it switched to rain and the opossum had wet fur. Besides the opossum, I had squirrels and the usual black-capped chickadees, white-breasted nuthatches, tufted titmice, downy woodpeckers, dark eyed juncos, bluejays and mourning doves.

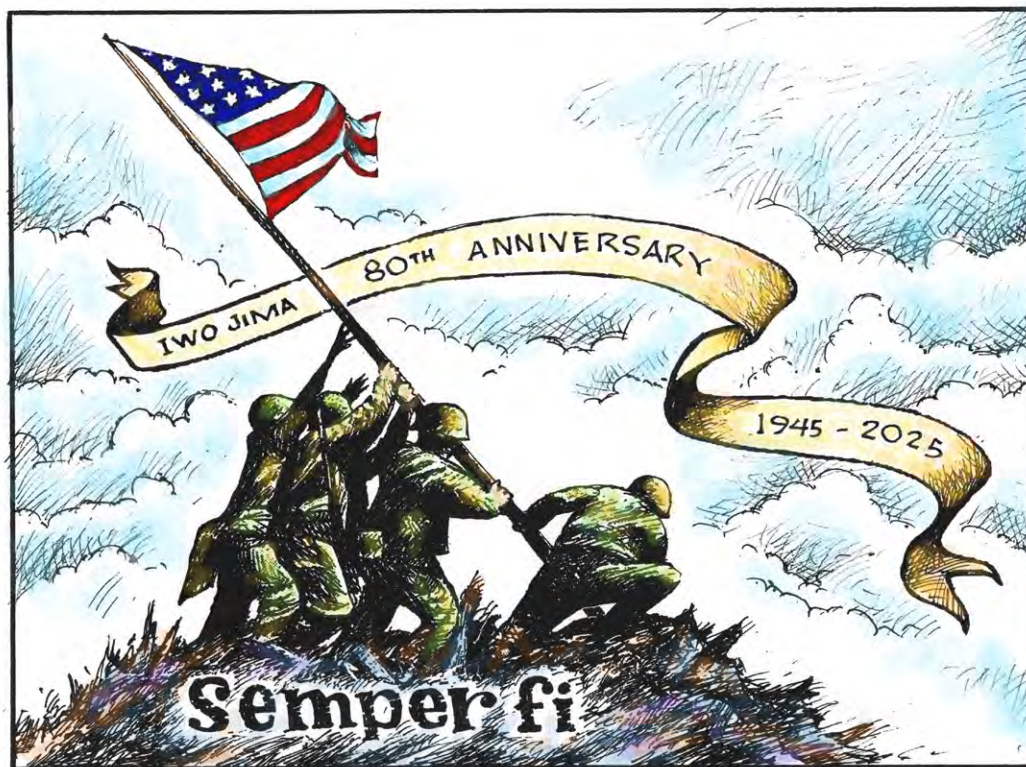
Bald eagle

An Oakham resident saw a bald eagle land on the ice on Lake Dean. Late last month, fishing derby participants saw an eagle at Lake Dean.

Loon facts

The Loon Preservation Committee newsletter mentioned facts about the first migration and acquiring breeding territory. Each fall, juvenile loons undertake their first migration to their wintering grounds. The article said, "First, they have to manage the energetic costs of migration—sadly, not all survive the trip from their lakes to their wintering grounds. Those that make it to the ocean encounter a new and unfamiliar world, filled with prey species that they have no experience catching and predator species like sharks and seals that they have no experience evading. Without their parents to show them the ropes, they have to quickly learn where to forage and how to evade these new predators. And carry-over effects resulting from the environmental conditions they experienced on their lakes during development can also influence their survival—those juvenile loons that were raised on lower quality territories may start off in worse shape than others, which can reduce their chance of survival. All of these factors combine to mean that there is a 53% chance that a loon will survive from hatch to adulthood (age three)."

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.



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GUEST COLUMN



by Roberta McQuaid

Leave it to fate

I never thought I would say this, but I am out of ideas for this week's column.

Every topic I come up with has been covered at one time or another. So, as the snow falls every so furiously outside, I am going to resort to the "stick your finger in the gardening encyclopedia, and see where it lands" trick.

I'll leave the topics of the week to fate.

Here goes: For the first topic, my finger landed on a funny picture of geranium plants with their rootballs wrapped in newspaper hanging from the beams in someone's basement. I have written before about my success in bringing my geranium plants inside for the winter and placing them in a south facing window.

Just yesterday I was looking at the plants more closely, knowing that soon enough, I will be snipping the tips to take some cuttings. But I digress, the picture I saw is just another way to overwinter your geranium plants, especially if you don't have a sunny window or a lot of indoor gardening space.

Many old timers used to talk of this method a lot and had great success with it. You could either try and pot the plants up ahead of time or go right from the basement to the outdoors after the threat of frost has passed and after a thorough hardening off process, of course.

Second topic: My finger landed on the herb Lovage (*Levisticum officinale*). I have started lovage from seed nearly every year for the last 30 years.

This celery substitute is always on the list of transplants needed for the herb garden at Old Sturbridge Village. Lovage seed is not viable for long, so new seed is needed each year, or germination will be sparse.

The plant is considered a perennial, meaning it will return year after year, but in my experience, the best foliage production will be in the first year. The flowers are "umbrella" like dill and fennel but flowers only take away from foliage production, so they are best snipped off.

The hollow stems are used in place of celery in soups and stews. My mom always enjoyed drying the leaves for use during the winter months.

Topic three: Hostas! I was never a big fan of Hostas until I had a yard that had substantial amounts of shade. These versatile plants are a perfect companion for many shade loving perennials, especially if they are planted in fertile soil with ample moisture.

Like other perennials, Hostas need a period of dormancy to succeed, so they will do well in our climate, and down to Zone 8 or so. Most varieties are grown for their foliage only; I find it funny that some gardeners snip off the flowers as they begin to form, saying that it actually

takes away from the look of the plant.

There are so many types to choose from and in colors ranging from grass-green to yellow and even blue-gray! Some are variegated or splashed with color.

Leaf sizes range from minuscule to huge! One pest that loves Hosta leaves is the slug. To lessen their interest in the plant, be sure to remove decomposing foliage.

Use any number of traps, homemade or otherwise to keep your plants damage free.

And the last fate-filled topic is: Chile peppers! There are all kinds of hot peppers out there for the gardener to experiment with. You might think that growing instructions may differ for fire-hot peppers, but they are grown in the same manner as regular bell peppers.

Start the seeds inside, or purchase transplants. Warm the soil ahead of installing the plants, and don't overdue it fertility-wise. Provide supplemental water if the summer gets droughty.

Harvest when the peppers turn color, and do so wearing gloves being ever mindful not to touch your eyes. I had always heard that a milk bath should help ease the sting of an accidental burn; others say ingesting starchy food does the trick.

Well, I hope this unconventional column was an enjoyable read. It's never too late to pull out a reference book or two for some interesting factoids.

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 claiming Social Security when I have a Health Savings Account

Dear Rusty
I have reached my full retirement age (66 plus 8 months) and plan to apply for Social Security this month, but I've seen articles, which say that when I apply, I must also take Medicare Part A.

This, even though I am continuing to work and am covered by my employer's health insurance (a high deductible plan). I contribute bi-weekly into an Health Sav-

ings Account. I've read that Medicare back dates Part A coverage by six months, which suggests I would have had to stop contributing to my HSA six months ago.

If this is true, will I need to pay penalties and such to the IRS? I'm not able to find anything else about this topic and I'm wondering what you might have to say. I have my wife and two children on my employer's HDHP. We con-

tribute \$6,000 annually to our HSA and my employer contributes \$1,250 on Jan. 1 each year. We can live without the HSA, but the taxes and IRS penalties concern me.

Signed: Wanting to Claim SS (but concerned)

Dear Wanting to Claim
I'm afraid that what you've read is correct – it is mandatory for you to take Medicare Part A (inpatient hospitalization coverage) when receiving Social Security benefits after age 65. Medicare Part A is free to you and even though you are still covered under your employer's creditable high deductible healthcare plan and can delay taking Medicare Part B, you must take Medicare Part A to collect Social Security after 65. Medicare and your em-

See **SOCIAL SECURITY** page 7

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Send letters to:
The Chicopee Register,
24 Water Street,
Palmer, MA 01069
or email
chicopeeregister@turley.com.
The deadline for
submissions is Tuesday at noon.

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.

CHECK OUT ALL THE

Turley Publications
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IN THE CITY

FTLOG Designer Purse & Power Tool Bingo Fundraiser set for March 2

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!!

CPD and CFD Honor Guard participate in Coronation Ball



PHOTOS AND CAPTION COURTESY OF CHICOPEE FIRE DEPARTMENT

CHICOPEE – On Feb. 22, the Chicopee Fire Department and Chicopee Police Department Honor Guard participated in the opening ceremonies of the 2025 Chicopee Colleen Coronation Ball. We are grateful to our members who volunteered their time.

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, of 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 communica-

tions 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

From Ireland to America at RiverMills

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

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.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOEL RODOWICZ

Daiana Torres reacts after she's announced as this year's Chicopee Colleen.



This year's contestants hold hands as they await the announcement of who made the final five at the Colleen Coronation Ball.

COLLEEN from page 1

clothes that they don't have fitting anymore. Old hoodies for the winter, coats and just give back to our community in that way. Then, they can also build their resume as well."

O'Neil reflected on providing opportunities for her generation to raise their voice and share their ideas.

"My opinion, I think kids don't fully understand the processes, so letting them have a seat at the table and having more of a voice, I think, would really improve the engagement. As well as more social media engagement as well and just more for high schools," O'Neil said. "Like people to go into high schools and make their projects known."

Caproni also focused on social media and combatting misinformation.

"In our generation, we are chronically online and social media has become an integral part of our lifestyles. I think we should use social media as a tool to help engage people in civic roles," Caproni said. "Online there is so much fake information that's being spread around and I think we should be using social media to spread truthful information and really encourage people to engage in their civic duties."

After it was announced Torres was this year's Grand Colleen, she shared this message with the audience.

"I just want to say thank you and I can't wait to represent you guys as Chicopee's Colleen for this year. I will represent you guys with good pride and representation, and I just want to say to my court that I am excited to spend this year with you guys. I'm excited and thank you to the judges, honestly, and thank you," Torres said. "And lastly I want to say thank you to my coach, Jordan, for pushing me to do this opportunity and making me believe in myself. Without her, I don't know I would be able to do this opportunity. Thank you Jordan!"

Colleen and Court Reflect

As the celebrations continued, Torres, Cumba, O'Neil, Caproni and Oxley were emotional, humbled and honored to be part of the court this year.

"Crazy. Never thought it would happen," Oxley said.

"I've wanted this since I was a little girl. So, my dream has come true right now," O'Neil said.

"I'm happy to make my coach proud, my parents proud and all of Chicopee proud," Torres said.

"This is my second time doing this, so I thought, 'Why not do it again? Try again' and here I am again," Cumba said.

"I feel so grateful for this opportunity. This is something that I've been wanting since I was a little girl and being able to make my dreams come true," Caproni said.

The girls shared what inspired them to participate in the contest this year.

"My family and all the support that I got at school," Oxley said.

"It's just been a long time and my dad had definitely pushed me to do this and my family," O'Neil said.

"My coach definitely helped me pursue all of this," Torres said.

"I think it was definitely my parents pushing me to do something else," Cumba said.

"This has been a lifelong dream of mine and I'm really doing this in honor of my Nona who passed away a few years ago," Caproni said.

As for what everyone looks forward to doing, the girls said this.

"Meeting people, talking to them and making new friends," Oxley said.

"The parade is really exciting for me," O'Neil said.

"I'm most excited to spend this next year with my court--my girls--and the parade and the whole night beforehand," Torres said.

"I think I'm just excited for the whole experience," Cumba said.

"I'm just excited to represent my city and just have all these new experiences," Caproni said.

This was their advice for future contestants.

"Don't hold yourself back and just go for it," Oxley said.

"Breathe, take a breath before you speak and just be confident in yourself and be yourself," O'Neil said.

"Just be yourself. Don't think that anything is too far out of your reach," Torres said.

"Just go for it, honestly. It's not that bad," Cumba said.

"Believe in yourself and take a deep breath, because this is all going to be worth it," Caproni said.

Their message to the community and supporters was this.

"Thank you to them. They've been the biggest support that I can get," Oxley said.

"Say a big thank you to my family and my friends who have supported me through this and giving me a lot of confidence," O'Neil said.

"I just want to say thank you to everybody who was involved and I cannot wait to represent you guys with pride," Torres said.

"I'd like to say thank you to my mom, my dad and my grandparents, my siblings," Cumba said.

"I'd like to thank God, my family, my friends and all my loved ones for supporting me on this journey," Caproni said.

Also, to proudly show off that Irish pride.

"Be happy for yourself. Don't ever think too small of yourself," Oxley said.

"I have a lot of family from Ireland and I have family that has competed in this event before and I want to follow in their footsteps and make my parents proud as well," O'Neil said.

"Tradition just means representation and making



From the left, 2025 Chicopee St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee President Kathy Sliwa, Hannah O'Neil, Emma Caproni, Kaitlyn Gilhooly, 2024 Colleen Court Member Lilian Young and Scholarship Chair—and this year's Woods Award Winner—George Balakier pose for a group photo. O'Neil, Caproni, Gilhooly and Young are this year's scholarship recipients.



Meghan Oxley, Wilmette Cumba, 2025 Chicopee St. Patrick's Day Committee President Kathy Sliwa, Daiana Torres, Hannah O'Neil and Emma Caproni pose for a photo after receiving their gifts."

everybody feel proud of their culture, not being afraid of who you are," Torres said.

"I think representing the

culture means continuing on everything that they have done in the past," Cumba said.

"I'm just so grateful to

represent my Irish heritage and represent my family members who have come before me," Caproni said.

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Comp falls to Holyoke in quarterfinals



TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM
Xavier Kleps goes for an open shot.

HOLYOKE – After scoring an upset win during the regular season, Chicopee Comprehensive was hoping lightning would strike twice in the quarterfinals of the Western Mass. Class A Tournament. But it was not to be as the Colts fell to host Holy-



Francis Jordan takes the easy jump shot.

oke 62-51 last Monday night. Xavier Kleps had 12 points while Elijah Kleps had 10 points. Jacoby Haney also had 10 points in the game. The Colts were scheduled to face Burlington in the Division 2 state tournament on Feb. 28 at 6 p.m.



Modesto Galindrez gets ready to go up for a shot

Colts set to enter state tournament

CHICOPEE – It was a tough end to the regular season and sectional playoffs for Chicopee Comprehensive High School girls basketball.

The Colts were scheduled to enter the state tournament earlier this week against Tewksbury High School, but were doing so after finishing the season

10-10. The Colts, which won four of its first five games and had an 8-3 record early on, fell in the Western Mass. quarterfinals and then lost in nonplayoff action to finish 10-10 overall. The Colts hoped to reach the next round of the state tournament following the Tewksbury game earlier this week.

T-Birds get big win in shootout

BRIDGEPORT — The Springfield Thunderbirds (26-19-2-3) walked a tight-rope and escaped with a 3-2 shootout win over the Bridgeport Islanders (12-33-3-3) on Sunday afternoon at Total Mortgage Arena.

From the game's onset, T-Birds starting netminder Vadim Zherenko was dialed in, as he fended off a ferocious first-period barrage as the Isles launched 15 shots at the Springfield net. Despite managing only five attempts at the opposite end, the T-Birds kept the game even heading into the second.

For a second straight day, the T-Birds offense came to life in the back end of the middle frame, beginning with Otto Stenberg cashing in for the game's opening marker at 11:05. Hugh McGing gathered the puck behind the goal line and slipped it into the left circle for a pinching Anton Malmstrom. The Springfield defenseman's shot glanced off Henrik Tikkanen before coming to rest in the crease for Stenberg, who tapped it into the yawning net to give Springfield the 1-0 lead.

Both teams exchanged unsuccessful power plays during second-period action, but a strange sequence

of events at 5-on-5 resulted in the next key moment in the game. It began at the 17:27 mark when Matthew Peca one-timed a pass from MacKenzie MacEachern from the right-wing circle. The captain immediately celebrated what he believed to be a goal, but referees deemed it hit the crossbar, and play continued. Just seconds later, Brian Pinho beat Zherenko on a breakaway end of the rink, and the Isles believed they had tied the game, 1-1.

After a replay review, the officials determined that Peca's shot did, indeed, find the back of the net, and as a result, the Pinho goal was wiped away, and Springfield had the 2-0 lead heading into the third.

Despite what has been a difficult season, the last-place Islanders refused to waver in the third. Eetu Liukas finally solved Zherenko with a perfectly placed wrist shot from the left side at 10:13 of the final period, setting the stage for a chaotic finish to regulation in a 2-1 game.

After Springfield killed off one Islander power play,

See **T-BIRDS** page 7



Elijah Kleps flies for a layup.



Jacoby Haney goes for a three-pointer.



Garrett Gauthier heads down the court.

Railers get shutout win in road finale

CHARLESTON, SC – The Worcester Railers HC (24-23-2-4 54pts) lost to the South Carolina Stingrays (33-13-3-2, 71pts) on Sunday afternoon by a final score of 3-0 in front of a crowd of 4,503 at the North Charleston Coliseum.

The Railers are back on the ice next at the DCU Center taking on the Bloomington Bison on Friday, February 28th, at 7:05 p.m. for Monkey Wrenches weekend.

Jamie Engelbert (1-0-1) opened up the scoring with a goal for the Stingrays early in the second period. 8:35 into the third period Alexander Suzdalev (1-0-1) netted another goal for the Stingrays increasing their lead to 2-0. The Stingrays kept their momentum going with a goal late in the third period by Tyler Weiss (1-0-1) which would be the final goal of the game to give the Stingrays a 3-0 win over Worcester.

Neither team was able to

get the puck in the net in the first period. Hugo Ollas had 11 saves on 11 shots while Garin Bjorklund had 7 saves on 7 shots. The score was 0-0 going into the second period.



The Stingrays struck first with a goal from Jamie Engelbert (14th) just 2:18 into the second period, placing a shot perfectly over the glove hand of Ollas to score what would eventually be the game-winner. This was the only action in the second period, while South Carolina out shot the Railers 15-4 in the second.

Alexander Suzdalev (10th) gave the Stingrays a 2-0 lead over the Railers in the third period. The Stingrays continued their scoring with a goal by Tyler Weiss (14th) who finished off a rebound along the far side on a wide open net. Weiss' goal was the final goal of the game giving the Stingrays a 3-0 victory over the Railers. The Railers outshot the Stingrays 12-11 in the third period.

Pacers defeat McCann Tech



Braydon LaDuke heads up the ice.

HOLYOKE – On Feb. 11 in a makeup game, Chicopee High School hockey grabbed a 6-2 win over McCann Technical High School. The Pacers were not scheduled to participate in the Western Mass. Tournament, and were placed in nonplayoff action last week. Highlights from that action will be in a future edition.



Damian Loniaz looks to make a stop.



Jake Fournier dekes with the puck.



TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM
Brennan Corcoran readies a wrist shot.



Alex Rochele tries to work away from pressure.

IN THE CITY

Events & announcements schedule

Open Swim

CHICOPEE – Open Swim will be hosted at Chicopee High School from Noon to 2 p.m., having kicked off on Jan. 12 and will be running through March 2.

The cost is \$3 for residents and \$5 for non-residents.

To learn more, contact the Parks & Recreation Department at 413-594-3481.

Polish Junior League of Massachusetts awarding scholarships

REGION – The Polish Junior League of Massachusetts has announced that it will be awarding scholarships again this year for college students of Polish Heritage.

Scholarships will be awarded to undergraduate students, and one scholarship will be granted to a graduate or returning student. Application information and forms may be obtained at www.polishjuniorleaguema.org/applications.

Deadline for receipt of application materials is May

1, 2025.

Selection is based upon financial need and academic achievement.

Applications are available online at www.polishjuniorleaguema.org/applications.

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 Aldenville 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.

SOCIAL SECURITY from page 5

ployer's plan will coordinate healthcare benefit payments.

That does, however, also mean your Health Savings Account will be affected because, as you have found, Medicare will backdate your Part A coverage by six months. And because Part A is not a high deductible plan (a requirement for HSA), any contributions you make after the effective date of Part A will be subject to an IRS penalty, and your HSA contributions won't be considered tax-exempt. This will mean the IRS will likely assess a 6% excise tax on any contributions made after your Part A effective date and you'll need to pay income tax on those contributions.

What you may wish to consider is stopping your HSA contributions now and waiting an additional six months or so to claim your Social Security benefits (to get beyond the HSA penalty phase). This would have the advantage of avoiding the IRS penalty on

your HSA contributions and would also increase your Social Security benefit due to Delayed Retirement Credits. You earn DRCs at the rate of .677% for each month beyond your FRA that you wait to claim, which means an SS benefit about 4% higher if you wait six months longer to claim SS.

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 amac-foundation.org/program/social-security-advisor or email us at ssadvisor@amac-foundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.

VOC Offering Free Tax Preparation for eligible residents through VITA Program

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 minimize 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.

Ready for Kindergarten

CHICOPEE - FREE workshop with at-home activities and tools parents can use to help young children develop strong brain connections for success in school.

Childcare provided and program is for families of three to five year olds

Monday, Feb. 24 at Szetela Early Childhood School on 66 Macek Drive., Chicopee from 5 to 7 p.m.

Join us for pizza at 5p.m.

FREE KIT WITH LEARNING MATERIALS also provided.

Please register for this program.

Call or e-mail: Silvia at Durands@headstart.org or 413-505-9053.

JASON AUCLAIR from page 1

War, which in high school I never was very interested in, but now as a college student I was really interested in. It's hard to really get any perspective on the importance of history when you're young, I was passionate about history and went on to major in it," Auclair said.

Questioned on why he believes he earned this award, Auclair said this.

"I think part of what we do, your personality plays a part in that. But I think a lot of it is just hard work and being committed to what you do. I've always felt ever since I got into teaching that being prepared and working hard is kind of the best approach to take to being a good teacher," Auclair said. "And then letting the joy of the subject and how much you enjoy being with the kids, aligned with hard work, you cannot go wrong."

Auclair mentioned that this line of work may not have the holiday bonuses or sales incentives, but over the years he's received letters and cards from students that he says, "It's more meaningful than any type of monetary reward or recognition."

"If I could, to all of my colleagues who work in the building with me, they are important in helping each other get through the day. I believe my colleagues were the ones that nominated me and without them, our job would be a lot more difficult. Thank you," Auclair said.

shoutout, beating Tikkanen through the right armpit to give Springfield the edge. Zherenko took care of matters from there, stopping Matt Maggio and William Dufour before getting an assist from the post on Chris Terry's attempt to push the shootout into a fourth round. The shootout triumph was Springfield's first away from home since Dec. 31, 2022.

Winners of three straight, the T-Birds continue their five-game road swing on Friday night when they visit the Hartford Wolf Pack for a 7:00 p.m. puck drop at the XL Center.

BARRY SCHOOL from page 1

will develop.

"The schematic design is pretty robust because they want to establish what the cost of the project is going to be at the end of module four, as you see module five is funding the project. The MSBA will take our cost estimate for this and basically determine what their share of the project will be and they'll come out with a project funding agreement that the city will sign and the MSBA will sign. That will establish what the eligible costs are for the project moving forward, the city knows what their share is going to be, the MSBA knows what their share is going to be," Gardner said. "At that point, once we've got approval and the agreement is signed, we'll move into detailed design, which is design development and construction bid documents. There's two procurement paths you can take, construction manager at risk and also a hard bid."

The construction manager at risk is beneficial if the city plans to renovate an existing building, with the benefit of getting the contractor on site early and to do the investigative work in the existing building.

"If you are going to build a new building, it's probably more cost effective to go with a hard bid and just get the low bidder for the project. Because we



TURLEY PHOTO BY TEDY MAKUCH

don't have to investigate how the walls are actually put together, where we might run into surprises behind walls. That's something that will come out in the whole process here. Module Seven is construction, once we bid the project, it'll go into the construction phase which can take anywhere from two to three years. Depending on what the site conditions are and other factors, it's a long process altogether, it's usually a four-to-five-year process thing. But Chicopee is in the pipeline now and we're moving forward with the feasibility study," Gardner said.

Referring to the feasibility study, district leadership, staff, parents, and community members participated in programming sessions led by Educational Planner Mike Pirolo and Educational

Consultant Paul White from MLP Integrated Design, along with Caolo and Bieniek Architects for the Anna E. Barry Elementary School, Gardner explained a collaborative process designed to inform the Barry Elementary School Feasibility Study and pre-design process with school tours, observational building walkthroughs with district leadership, program verification meetings and visioning sessions.

Participants went through a step-by-step process aimed at capturing their high-level thinking around educational, architectural, and community goals and priorities, child development, vision of teaching and learning, and vision of the ideal learning environment.

"The first things we do with the stakeholders is we do

something called the visioning process for the school, it's actually one of my favorite parts because we learn as the architects what's important to Chicopee, what's important to the School Department and what's important to the neighbors, and what they want the school to be when it's done," Gardner said.

Gardner went on to update the School Committee on various site updates of the existing Barry School site and the ongoing investigation to alternate sites in the feasibility study. From the onset of the project, the Mayor and School Department are seeking the very best interest of the city's schools and relying on the feasibility process to ensure the educational and community goals are supported to the greatest extent possible.

T-BIRDS from page 6

Tikkanen raced to the bench in the final minute, and with a cavalcade of bodies around the slot, Sam Bolduc found a home for a point wrist shot at 19:07, and the game was tied heading into overtime, 2-2.

The Islanders had most of the high-danger chances in the 3-on-3 period, but Zherenko locked back in and answered the bell on three Bridgeport attempts while getting a break as Bolduc rang a shot off the post.

Peca got the T-Birds off on the right foot in the

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SCHOCHET IS CURRENTLY HIRING!

We are currently accepting resumes for an **Experienced Property Manager or Asst Property Manager** at Weldon House in Greenfield, MA. Weldon House is a 105-unit elderly/disabled apartment community with a Section 8 project based subsidy program. 3+ years of prior multifamily property management experience, strong knowledge of Section 8 program. COS designation required and ARM designation preferred. Able to motivate and manage property management staff and have excellent organizational, interpersonal and communication skills. Excellent benefits package and competitive salary. Interested and qualified candidates, please submit resume to: **careers@schochet.com**. Pre-employment background check & drug testing required. EOE
For more information on this position please contact **Robin @ 617-398-5144 schochet.com**

The **Town of Russell Sewer/Water Department** is accepting résumés for the full time position of **SEWER/ WATER OPERATOR** at **Town of Russell WWTP, 200 Main Street, Russell, MA 01071-0131** or email **russellwand@townofrussell.us**. Applicants will need a Grade 4 Wastewater, 1T Water, and a 1D Water licenses or the ability to acquire them.
Inquire at office or thru email.

Worthington Police Department Full-time Police Officer

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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IN THE CLASSROOM

Colleges announce Dean's and President's lists

Chicopee residents on Quinnipiac University Fall Dean's list

HAMDEN, C.T. - The following Chicopee students were named to the dean's list for the Fall 2024 semester at Quinnipiac University:

To qualify for the dean's list, students must earn a grade point average of at least 3.5 with no grade lower than C. Full-time students must complete at least 14 credits in a semester, with at least 12 credits that have been graded on a letter grade basis to be eligible. Part-time students must complete at least six credits during a semester. Names followed by an asterisk denotes with honors.

- From Chicopee: Emma Corridan* Nicholas Farrell Madeline Fournier Gracie Martineau Shreeya Patel*

Disjuan Merced on Dean's List at Nichols College

DUDLEY - Disjuan Merced of Chicopee, MA, has achieved Dean's List honors for the fall 2024 semester at Nichols College.

Dean's List recognizes those students who achieve high grades during a single semester. In order to be included on the Dean's List, a student must have a minimum grade point average of 3.5 for at least 12 undergraduate credit-hours and must have received no grades below B- during the semester.

Chicopee Resident named to Dean's List at Dean College

FRANKLIN - Dean College is pleased to announce that Lisette Ayala of Chicopee has earned a place on the Dean's List for the Fall 2024

semester. Students named to the Dean's List have demonstrated a serious commitment to their studies while at Dean College.

Jemar Mack named to the Dean's list at Tufts University

MEDFORD - Jemar Mack, Class of 2025 of Chicopee, was named to the dean's list at Tufts University for the fall 2024 semester. Dean's list honors at Tufts University require a semester grade point average of 3.4 or greater.

President's List honors at Nichols College for fall 2024

DUDLEY - Nichols College is proud to recognize the academic accomplishments of students on the fall 2024 President's List.

President's List recognizes those students who achieve

high grades during a single semester. Students whose semester grade point average is 3.85 or higher for at least 12 undergraduate credit-hours and no grades below B- will receive President's List honors.

The following Chicopee students have achieved President's List honors: Rhea Bullens and Amani Mkambavange.

Worcester Polytechnic Institute announces Fall 2024 Dean's List

WORCESTER - A total of 2,393 undergraduate students at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) were named to the university's fall 2024 Dean's List. The criteria for the WPI Dean's List differ from that of most other universities as WPI does not compute a grade point average (GPA). Instead, WPI students are named to the Dean's List based on the

amount of work completed at the A level in courses and hands-on projects.

"WPI's academic programs are rigorous and require a level of independence beyond what is required in traditional courses. WPI students work on real-world, open-ended problems on campus and in communities around the globe. Far from being simple academic exercises, the projects students complete have genuine and lasting impacts in our partner communities," said Provost Andrew Sears. "Some of this nation's best and brightest students come to WPI to study engineering, science, business, and the humanities. Those named to the Dean's List have excelled in all of their work, and we are exceptionally proud of these outstanding students."

The following students from Chicopee were named to the Dean's List for Fall 2024:

- Emily Boyer, class of 2027, majoring in Aerospace Engineering
- Hayden Courchesne, class of 2028, majoring in Mechanical Engineering

SNHU announces Fall 2024 President's List

MANCHESTER, NH - It is with great pleasure that Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) congratulates the following students from Chicopee on being named to the Fall 2024 President's List. The fall terms run from September to December.

Full-time undergraduate students who have earned a minimum grade-point average of 3.700 and above for the reporting term are named to the President's List. Full-time status is achieved by earning 12 credits over each 16-week term or paired 8-week terms grouped in fall, winter/spring, and summer.

- Rosalyn Rondeau
- Jennifer Rodriguez
- Mohamad Kariem Allam
- Tara Tessier
- Christine Halama



MacDuffie offers fun summer camp

Camp MacDuffie is an exciting summer day camp for rising 1st to 8th graders.

Participants spend the morning engaged in a program area of their choosing, enjoy lunch by Sage Dining Services (included), and then stay active with various outdoor/indoor activities and field trips throughout the week.

Their program leaders are passionate and experienced, and they all look forward to creating a fun and supportive environment for your child to thrive in this summer.

Come along and join Camp MacDuffie this summer.

MacDuffie Hoops Basketball Camp

MacDuffie Hoops Summer Camp available with Coach Steiner. Are you ready to take your game to the next level? This summer, join Coach Steiner and the MacDuffie coaching staff for an elite basketball experience at MacDuffie Hoops Summer Camp!

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- Hands-on coaching from Coach Steiner & MacDuffie's top coaches
- This camp is for players who are serious about improving and want to sharpen their skills, build confidence, and grow their game.

The MacDuffie School is located in Granby, MA. Limited spots are available - Register today!

Don't miss your chance to train with Coach Steiner! Sign up now and get ready to work hard, compete, and have fun!

- #MacDuffieHoops
- #TrainWithCoachSteiner
- #SummerBasketball
- #GetBetter

Day and overnight camp for girls

It's in our DNA. Our founder, Juliette Gordon Low, was a famous lover of nature. Today, Girl Scouts honors her legacy by promoting respect and love of the great outdoors far and wide.

Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts (GSCWM) summer camps offer a wide variety of programs for all different interests.

Summer camp is a great way for girls to explore leadership, build skills, and develop a deep appreciation for nature. In a girl-led environment, all campers are able to challenge themselves and take healthy risks while

surrounded by supportive friends and camp staff. No prior Girl Scout experience needed to attend Girl Scout camp!

Camping has been a cornerstone of the Girl Scout experience for more than a century. While girls are swimming, hiking, and honing their skills on the archery range, they're also achieving valuable life skills whether at Day Camp at Lewis Perkins in South Hadley or Overnight Camp at Bonnie Brae in Otis. Girl Scouts' dedication to progression in outdoor programming means campers practice age-appropriate skills and gain experience

they need to feel confident taking the next step in their outdoor journey.

No matter which camp you choose or whether the stay is a few days, a week, or longer, your camper will have a ton of fun making new friends, trying new things, practicing new-found skills, and creating memories that will last a lifetime. Financial assistance is available.

Camp Lewis Perkins and Camp Bonnie Brae are American Camp Association Accredited. More information and sign up here: <https://www.gscwm.org/en/members/for-girl-scouts/camp-and-outdoors/summer-camp.html>.

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN
Fun all summer long for ages 4-14!
hartsbrook.org/summer-programs

PACKARD MOUNTAIN Learning Center

We have summer enrollment options for school age children.

Hours 8 a.m. - 4 p.m., \$350/wk. Accepting vouchers.

Structured daily schedule to include curricular content, free play, and arts and crafts.

Lots of outdoor and weather permitting water play.

www.packardmountain.com

Girl Scout Camp For All Girls!
DAY & OVERNIGHT
www.gscwm.org

Greene Acres Equestrian Center L.L.C.
April Vacation Riding Camp - April 22-24
2025 Summer Riding Sessions
June 23-27 • July 14-18
July 28 - August 1 • August 18-22
9AM - 3PM LUNCH NOT PROVIDED
Basic Horse Care, Daily Riding, English & Western, Ages 5 & up
Call to Register (413) 813-9291
53 Ware Road, Belchertown
Email: Amanda.greeneacres@gmail.com

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Open 7:00 a.m.-5:30* p.m. / MONDAY - FRIDAY
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9 Weeks • Full & Part Time Options/Single Weeks or All Summer!
Swimming • Field Trips • Close walk to Playgrounds & CHCS Pool
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K-6th Grade • Full & Part-Time • Homework Support
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Co-ed • Grades 1-8
June 30 - August 15

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Space is limited so don't wait!

Be part of this year's camps and discover the true meaning of summer...having fun and making friends!

Camp MacDuffie offers seven weeks of exciting camp experiences:

Week 1: June 30 - July 3
Week 2: July 7 - 11
Week 3: July 14 - 18
Week 4: July 21 - 25
Week 5: July 28 - August 1
Week 6: August 4-8
Week 7: August 11-15

• Arts • Athletics • Coding • Science • Dance • Lego's • Creative Writing • Theater • Science • And More!

Monday-Friday 9am-3pm • Area fields trips and lunch included
Extended care available if needed 7:30am-5pm

Register now for summertime fun at MacDuffie.org/summer-camp

The MacDuffie School • 66 School Street • Granby, MA 01033 • 413.255.0000 Ext.103