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Meet Earl Grey

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SERVING PALMER, MONSON, BRIMFIELD, HOLLAND & WALES

The Journal Register

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PALMER

Town seeks ambulance contract for ALS coverage



By Marcelo Gusmão
Staff Writer
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PALMER – The town's emergency response services have changed ever since the purchase of a designated ambulance at the Fire Station.

The town recently unveiled its own designated ambulance for the Fire Department, after previously relying on the private company, Palmer Ambulance Services, for Advanced Life Support services (ALS). With the company now closed, the town has been working to address the increase in call volume for first responders at the de-

partment.

Town Manager Brad Brothers said that he reached out to the fire department to add shifts in order to ensure that there is 24/7 response coverage as of Nov. 1.

"In addition, we let our neighboring towns know we may have an increase for mutual aid," Brothers said. "This is not uncommon for all towns, as many are struggling with staffing."

Brothers said that the cost for additional staffing to the fire department was \$15,000 in November. Town Council previously approved approximately \$100,000 back in November, which will be available

through the end of the fiscal year on June 30, 2025.

"We are reviewing all options at the moment before any agreement is signed," Brothers said, "but the options range from keeping it in-house to contracting out with an outside agency for Advanced Life Support coverage."

Brothers said that all the costs tied to ambulance service will be new to the municipal budget, as Palmer Ambulance was a self-funded operation.

"While I wish we were given more time to game plan for the closure of Palmer Ambulance, I think we've played the hand we've been

dealt well as we continue to weigh more permanent options," Brothers said. "From my research so far, every option will have a significant impact on the municipal operating budget."

The town is currently soliciting quotes from potential providers, and Brothers said he hopes to see a designated ALS Service contracted with the town at some point next month.

If you have questions or concerns about the town's emergency response services, you can contact the Fire Department by calling 413-283-3861, or Town Hall by calling 413-283-2600.

TRAIN STATION

Feedback sought about station for East/West Rail

By Marcelo Gusmão
Staff Writer
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PALMER – Last week, the Department of Transportation held a meeting at the library to solicit feedback from the public about the East/West Rail Project.

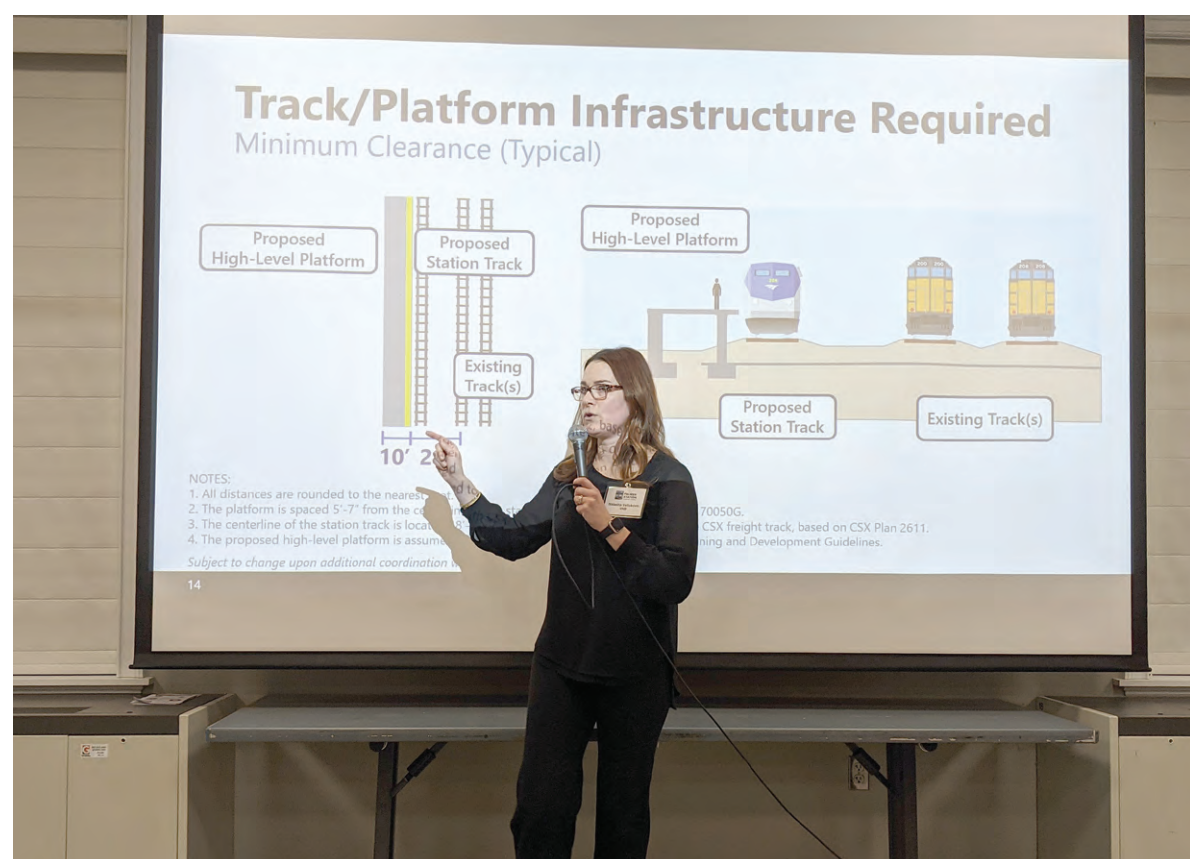
Members of the public were invited to a public information meeting in the Palmer Public Library's

Community Room on Monday, Dec. 16, where the project team provided an overview of the study's background, the station site alternatives and evaluation, and design considerations for the potential future rail station. After the presentation, the attendees were asked to provide feedback on the site alternatives and design considerations.

Andy Koziol, the director of the project, has been with the Depart-



Director Andy Koziol made a presentation about the future of the East/West Rail Project.



Natasha Velicovic pointed out the infrastructure requirements on the slide.

ment of Transportation since June of last year. "We received quite a bit of feedback, there was a lot of public participation," Koziol said.

Of the previous 11 sites, the project team has narrowed the focus to six that meet the ideal criteria for the new site.

"One of the reasons we went

out for public feedback was to give public a chance to highlight anything we might have missed," Koziol said. "We feel pretty confident, with the local knowledge of the Steering Committee, together with that we've done a comprehensive look at each site, but the public can bring additional factors. I

think committee is being patient to make sure we use all the information available to us before we make any further decisions."

The meeting involved some controversy, much of which was centered on the elimination of

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MONSON

School Committee announces digital report card system

By Marcelo Gusmão
Staff Writer
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MONSON – At last week's School Committee meeting, the Acting Superintendent reported on new grants, ongoing projects, and community outreach opportunities in the district.

Acting Superintendent Katherine Watts began the Dec. 19 meeting with updates concerning the schools.

Watts announced that the town is the recipient of a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Grant of \$143,000 to build and strengthen the tiered supports and Granite Valley.

"We also are able to have a Family Outreach Coordinator for the remainder of the year, and we'll be able to host community events throughout the semester, too, as a result of this grant," Watts said.

The grant also provides profes-

SCHOOL | page 5

COMMUNITY

Holiday Joy Bags assembled for local seniors

Staff Report

THREE RIVERS – For the last five years, Renee Niedziela and the team at J. Stolar Insurance have put together Holiday Joy bags for local seniors.

"This has been a very personal project. Our Dad, John Stolar, founded J. Stolar Insurance 43 years ago in Three Rivers and taught myself and my brother, Chris Stolar, how important and meaningful it

was to be active and supportive in the community" said Niedziela.

Local businesses and individuals contribute small goods such as toiletries, food stuffs, calendars, hand sanitizers and much more. The goal is to fill 125 gift bags to be delivered to two senior housing units in Palmer. The gift bags contents have grown over the years to now contain over 40 items.

"The first year, I didn't know

JOY | page 12



SUBMITTED PHOTO
Holiday joy bags for seniors are ready for delivery.

COMMUNITY

Town authorizes funds for wastewater plant

By Marcelo Gusmão
Staff Writer
mgusmao@turley.com

PALMER – The town recently voted to authorize the appropriation of funds to pay for improvements made to the town's wastewater treatment plant.

The first bond order was to authorize borrowing \$2,720,000 to pay the costs of designing and making improvements to the wastewater treatment plant ultraviolet facility.

"All or any portion of the

amount authorized to be borrowed by this order may be obtained through the state's Clean Water Trust," stated Councilor Mark Caci. "In that regard, the Town Manager and any other appropriate officials of the town are authorized to execute any and all agreements that may be required to obtain financial assistance through the trust."

Caci read that the amount authorized will be reduced to reflect funds contributed by Monson

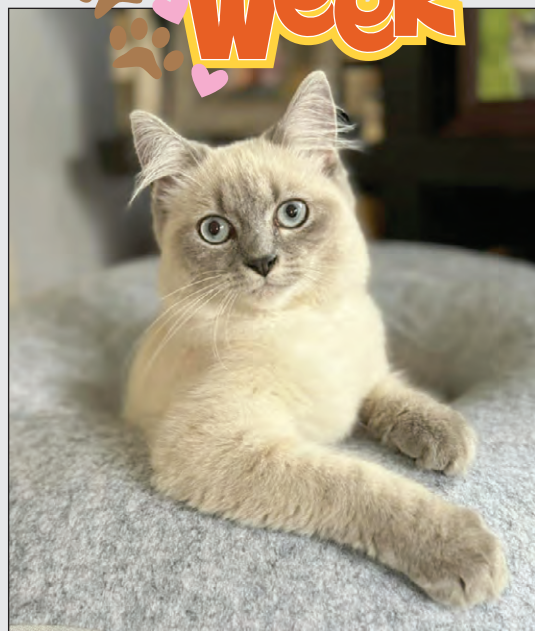
WASTEWATER | page 11



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Pet of the Week



EARL GREY

This is Earl Grey, who lives with Christine Reed in Monson. He loves eating raspberry popsicles on his cat patio. We feature your pets here. Is your fur friend a dog, cat, chicken, lizard, horse, bird, mouse...you get the point. Is there a pet you're fostering and trying to re-home? All pets are welcome! Email a high-resolution jpg of your pet with a little information to journalregister@turley.com.

Sounds of Joy



A happy child visiting with Santa and the elves.



Turley staff photos
Jen McMullen, Debbie Lawrence, Tj's Tavern owner, and Alex Hebert visit with Santa.

spread through the hall at Tj's Tavern



Debbie Lawrence and American Legion Commander Carl Santos visit with Santa.



Families enjoy the event with homemade food, snacks and ice cream.

MONSON—The annual children's Christmas party was held last week. Thirty children and their families from Monson were treated to gifts, homemade snacks, ice cream and a visit from Santa Claus. Debbie Lawrence, owner of Tj's Tavern, hosted and sponsored the event.

"This day is one I look forward to all year long," said Lawrence. "It is a wonderful feeling watching the children open their gifts, being excited and just enjoying themselves. It's a lot of work and time, but watching them makes all of it worth it."

DEADLINE

The Journal Register has changed its firm deadline for public submissions to Mondays. To get your submission in for that week's edition space permitting, email Editor at journalregister@turley.com or call the office at 413-283-8393 by noon on Mondays. We appreciate the cooperation of our readers.

Are you having difficulty communicating with your partner, struggling with boundaries, and healthy relationships?

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Country Bank supports QV CDC with a \$10,000 Donation

WARE—Country Bank, a full-service financial institution serving Central and Western Massachusetts, announced a \$10,000 donation to the Quabog Valley Community Development Corporation (QV CDC) to help local communi-

ties in the region.

"The Quabog Valley Community Development Corporation is grateful for this generous donation from Country Bank. This donation will help us continue to run our Senior Outreach Program, which helps seniors with prescription pickup, grocery shopping, food bank deliveries and other chores. Country Bank's support is not only an invest-

ment in the Quabog Valley CDC's mission, but an example of Country Bank's commitment to making a difference in the community," stated Melissa Fales, QV CDC Executive Director.

Seniors with underlying medical conditions can significantly impact their ability to get out safely to meet their everyday needs. The deliveries allow them to remain safely at home while addressing their critical needs.

To learn more about the various support programs the QV CDC offers, visit www.QV CDC.org.

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Share the Adventure with us soon!
For further information call Randall at (413) 436-5357 or email adventuretours@att.net or go to www.adventuretoursofwarren.com

Corrections

The Journal Register will gladly correct factual errors that appear in this paper. Corrections or clarifications will always appear on Page 2 or 3. To request a correction, send information to Editor at journalregister@turley.com, or call 283-8393, extension 236. Corrections may also be requested in writing at: Journal Register, Attn: Editor 24 Water St., Palmer, MA, 01069.

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CAMPUS NOTES

Aliya Hedgecock of Monson among Belmont University's Fall 2024 Dean's List Scholars

MONSON — Aliya Hedgecock was named among the students who qualified for Belmont University's fall 2024 Dean's List.

Belmont University recently released the Dean's List for the fall 2024 semester. Approximately 53% of the University's 7,175 undergraduate students qualified for the fall 2024 Dean's List.

Dean's List eligibility is based on a minimum course load of 12 hours and a quality grade point average of 3.5 with no grade below a C.

Linton family specializes in everything from parties and septic

By Abby McCoy
Correspondent

PALMER — Michael Linton, the new owner of Linton Septic, is charting an exciting course for his family's long-established business.

The company, founded in 1981 by his parents, Barry and Colleen Linton, has been a constant in the Ludlow area for over four decades. Michael, who grew up working alongside his parents, has always had a deep connection to the business and is now taking it to new heights.

Linton Septic's origins date back to when Barry Linton bid on the Ludlow trash contract, initially offering trash hauling services. Over time, the company evolved into a full-service septic pumping business, with Barry managing the physical work and Colleen handling all the administrative tasks.

Linton worked weekends

and summers alongside his parents, learning the ins and outs of the industry. However, at a pivotal point in his life, Barry Linton encouraged Michael to pursue other opportunities, leading him to start his own venture, Michael's Party Rentals, 25 years ago.

The business, based in Palmer, has grown steadily over the years. But after his parents' retirement last year, Linton decided to take the reins of Linton Septic, a decision that felt like a natural next step for him. Already owning real estate in Palmer with his Party Rental Business, he combined the two offices into one and runs them both from his Palmer office.

Despite initial concerns from his parents about overburdening him with both businesses, Michael knew it was the right time.

"I've always known that one day I'd take over the business," Linton said. "The founda-

tion they built is incredibly strong, and I want to continue growing it to new levels."

Since acquiring Linton Septic, Linton has already begun expanding its reach, taking advantage of the skills he honed in running his party rental business.

In 2024, Linton Septic is on track to service more homes than ever before, with an expanded service area that now spans from Huntington to Oxford, Hadley to Rutland, and even into Connecticut. Linton's focus is on improving service speed, a commitment he emphasizes by offering a maximum two-week wait for service appointments, with plans to reduce that to just one week.

"I want our customers to know that when they call us, we're going to get to them quickly," Linton said. "There are other companies that take longer, but we pride ourselves on being responsive and effi-

cient."

Additionally, Linton Septic has undergone a digital transformation. The company now boasts a fully functioning website at lintonseptic.com, making it easier for customers to access information and schedule services online. The company has also modernized its payment system, offering credit card transactions and the option to email receipts, eliminating the need for paper mail.

Looking ahead, Linton is working on expanding Linton Septic's capabilities even further. One of his goals for 2025 is to achieve Title V Certification, which is crucial for companies providing septic system services in Massachusetts. Title V is a state regulation that ensures septic systems are functioning properly and are up to code, offering an added layer of trust for customers.

"Becoming Title V certified will allow us to offer even

more comprehensive services and demonstrate our commitment to quality," Linton says.

His parents, Barry and Colleen, are thrilled to see their son taking the business to new heights. Linton talks of how proud his parents are with his decision to continue to build the family business they worked so hard to cultivate.

For Linton, the future is bright. He's eager to continue building on the strong foundation laid by his parents while growing both Linton Septic and Michael's Party Rentals. "It's a lot of work, but I wouldn't have it any other way," he says. "I'm excited for what's ahead."

Linton Septic, with its rich history and promising future under Linton's leadership, is set to continue serving the Palmer/Ludlow area and beyond for many years to come.

Grant funds awarded to Monson for recycling

MONSON — State Rep. Angelo J. Puppolo, Jr. (D-SPRINGFIELD), is pleased to announce that the Department of Environmental Protection's Sustainable Materials Recovery Program has awarded the Town of Monson a \$2,100 grant through the Recycling Dividends Program.

"I am pleased that Monson will be able to continue to maximize their recycling and waste reduction efforts as they work toward a healthier and sustainable environment for their residents through the continued support of the DEP and the Legislature," stated Puppolo.

The Recycling Dividends Program recognizes municipalities that have implemented policies and programs proven to maximize materials reuse and recycling, as well as waste reduction. Communities that receive this funding must reinvest in their own municipal recycling efforts.

MassDEP's SMRP program provides funding for recycling, composting, reuse and source reduction activities that will reduce the amount of waste disposed of in landfills and incinerators. Waste prevention and recycling reduce greenhouse gas emissions by capturing the embodied energy in everyday products and packaging waste and converting it into new products.

Palmer DVTF chosen as Country Bank organization of the month

PALMER — The Palmer Domestic Violence Task Force is very excited to have been chosen to set up a table for the month of December, at Country Bank for Savings, 1485 Main Street, Palmer location.

Each month the bank picks a business or organization within the community to highlight. "Although October is technically Domestic Violence Awareness month, domestic violence happens throughout the year," shared Crystal Rondeau, Palmer Domestic Violence Task Force Coordinator.

Rondeau went on to share that nationally the rate of reported domestic violence incidents reported are 20% higher in the month of December, as compared to the other

months of the year.

Rondeau states that over the past seven years of working in the field of domestic violence she has witnessed many victims stay in dangerous situations to enable their children to have Christmas. Or if they do leave, their biggest concern is their kids' Christmas being ruined.

In response, Rondeau and other community members have played Santa for these children by adopting them.

Rondeau went on to explain that many programs such as Santa's Elves of Palmer, Toys for Tots, etc help many however they have a cut off date to sign up.

Very often those dates have

passed when the Domestic Violence Survivor finally has the courage to leave.

Since taking over the Palmer DVTF nearly three years ago, Rondeau reports that she has used the task force's Facebook page to ask followers to consider adopting the children of the Palmer Survivors that fall into this situation; which they have done.

Crystal M. Rondeau stands in front of the table setup in the Palmer Country Bank.

Submitted photo



Veteran's lunch friends

Phil Christensen, 105 and Joseph Berthiaume 104 enjoy lunch at Amvets Veteran's Prime Rib Lunch on Dec. 13.



Photo by Estelle Moynahan

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USDA INSP. FROZEN TURTLE CREAM PIE 25.1 OZ. \$5⁹⁹ ea	USDA INSP. GROUND FRESH DAILY 80% LEAN GROUND BEEF 7 LB BOX \$3⁹⁹ lb	USDA INSP. HILLSHIRE FARMS POLSKA KIELBASA 14 OZ OR 15 OZ... \$3⁴⁹ ea
	USDA INSP. IQF FROZEN RAW SHRIMP PEELED & DEVEINED 51/60 CT 2 LB BAG..... \$7⁹⁹ ea	USDA INSP. FROZEN 5 LB BLOCK JUMBO RAW SHRIMP 6-10 FOR STUFFING \$39⁹⁹ ea

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Palmer Senior Center

PALMER— The Palmer Senior Center, 1029 Central St., has many activities for seniors Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information or to reserve a meal please call 413-283-2670.

Special events January:
Wednesday, Jan. 1 – Center is closed
Friday, Jan. 3- Showing 12:30 p.m. movie “A Little Bit of Heaven”
Monday, Jan. 6- 10:30 a.m. Therapy dog
Tuesday, Jan. 7- noon Lunch bunch China House in Palmer
Wednesday, Jan. 8- 1 p.m. Wii Bowling
Thursday, Jan. 9- 10 a.m. Tai Chi, 1 p.m. Sunshine village craft
Friday, Jan. 10- 11:30 a.m. Dan Lynch writing group informational, 1-3 p.m. Brown Bag pick-up
Monday, Jan. 13- 1 p.m. Bake and Take
Tuesday, Jan. 14- 10:30 a.m. Trip to McKinstry Market Garden. They accept SNAP.
Thursday, Jan. 16- 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Memory Café Ben and Ed show
Monday, Jan 20- Center is closed
Wednesday, Jan 22- 1 p.m. Wii Bowling
Thursday, Jan. 23- 10 a.m. Tai Chi, 1 p.m. Sunshine Village Paint
Friday, Jan. 24- 12:30 p.m. showing a movie “Instant Family”
Monday, Jan. 27- 10:30 a.m. Marathon Bingo
Wednesday, Jan. 29- Jeopardy style trivia
Friday, Jan. 31- 1 p.m. Wii Wheel of Fortune

Breakfast is served every Tuesday and Thursday at 9:15 a.m. and is \$3. Lunch is served every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 11 a.m. to noon and a suggested donation is \$2. Please call before 10 a.m. the day before to reserve a meal at 413-283-2670. Individuals must sign up for breakfast, otherwise a meal will not be ordered for them.

Wednesday, Jan. 1- Center is closed
Thursday, Jan. 2- Chef’s choice
Friday, Jan. 3- Hotdog with bun, potato salad, baked beans and ketchup, Jello with topping
Monday, Jan. 6- Breakfast sausage, scrambled eggs, potatoes o’Brien, cranberry snack loaf and spiced apples.
Tuesday, Jan. 7- Ham, egg and cheese croissant.
Wednesday, Jan. 8- Ham and swiss, mayo, coleslaw, chicken veggie soup, club roll and mixed fruit.
Thursday, Jan.9- Cinnamon buns
Friday, Jan. 10- Spaghetti and meatballs, tossed salad with ranch, garlic bread, mixed fruit.
Monday, Jan. 13- Mac and Cheese, stewed tomatoes, WW bread, cranberry juice, Jello with topping.
Tuesday, Jan. 14- Egg, sausage and cheese croissant
Wednesday, Jan. 15- crab cake with tartar, steamed corn, coleslaw, whole wheat bread and chilled peaches
Thursday, Jan. 16- Egg, bacon and cheese croissant.
Friday, Jan. 17- Chicken Marsala, tossed salad with Italian, penne pasta, garlic bread, mixed fruit
Monday, Jan. 20- Center is closed.
Tuesday, Jan. 21- Chef’s choice.
Wednesday, Jan. 22- Shepherd’s pie, steamed peas, mashed potato topping, 12 grain bread, spiced peaches.
Thursday, Jan. 23- Waffles and Sausage
Friday, Jan. 24- BBQ pulled pork, broccoli slaw, half baked sweet potato, WW burger bun, birthday cake.
Monday, Jan. 27- Beef stew with carrots and peas, mashed potatoes, wheat roll, Jello with topping.
Tuesday, Jan. 28- Egg, bacon and cheese croissant
Wednesday, Jan. 29- Jamaican jerk chicken, collared greens, coconut rice, oatnut bread, mixed fruit.
Thursday, Jan. 30- Egg, sausage and cheese on a roll
Friday, Jan. 31- Beef Stroganoff, brussels sprouts, egg noodles, Italian bread and a cookie

Second Chance expands Project Keep Me

EAST BROOKFIELD— Second Chance Animal Services is proud to announce the expansion of its groundbreaking Project Keep Me program to include services for veterans seeking in-patient treatment. Since its inception, Project Keep Me has provided temporary housing for the beloved pets of domestic violence survivors, allowing individuals to prioritize their safety while knowing their pets are well cared for. With this new addition, Project Keep Me will now support veterans undergoing in-patient care, offering a lifeline for those who may struggle to find accommodations for their pets during critical treatment periods.
 “Project Keep Me has been a vital resource for survivors of domestic violence, and we’re thrilled to now offer this support to veterans as well,” said Sheryl Blancato, CEO and founder of Second Chance Animal Services. “Expanding the program to include veterans means we can help keep veterans and their pets together, allowing them to focus on healing and recovery.”
 For veterans facing the difficult decision to seek in-patient treatment, Project Keep Me provides a solution to ensure the safety and well-being of their pets, allowing them to focus fully on recovery. Pets enrolled in

the program will receive temporary housing, food, and medical care as needed, with support extending up to 90 days. This temporary arrangement not only eases the burden on pet owners but also reinforces the importance of pets as a source of comfort and companionship during recovery.
 “Veterans who need in-patient treatment are often unable to access the resources they need because they have no safe place to board their pets,” said Blancato. “We’re committed to making sure that neither survivors nor veterans have to choose between their own health and the safety of their beloved pets.”
 Since launching, Project

SCHOOL | from page 1

sional development opportunities for teachers and instructional aids.
 “We’re very excited to partner with the May Institute on this endeavor,” Watts said, “and we’re very grateful for the grant from the state.”
 Watts reported that the high school has also received a grant for Project Lead The Way, amounting to \$10,000. This grant is to launch an engineering pathway at the high school.
 “Hopefully, we will be able to also receive another grant through the One8 Foundation,” Watts said, “but this grant is specifically from ProjectLeadTheWay.org itself, and it’s a starter grant.”
 “What we’ve done at the other schools is we’ve applied for expansion grants, so we’ve already told them that that is our intention,” Watts added. “Hopefully, with their support, we’re going to be able to build that program out over four years as we’ve discussed before.”
 Watts announced an update to the report card system.
 “Starting semester two, all district report cards will be distributed electronically to students,” Watts announced. “This switch is cost-effective, and it’s eco-friendly.”
 Watts emphasized that families can request a hard copy of the report card if they prefer, but that switching to digital will save the district money on postage, which can be up to \$1,000 per school.
 “We did a test run,” Watts said. “Some of us that have kids

in the district had them send it to us. It was so easy to just click on it and it just pops up, it couldn’t be easier.”
 Watts talked about the district’s work to expand learning beyond the classroom and outside the school and to bring the community into the school.
 “The whole eighth grade civics class went to the Armory in Springfield,” Watts said. “They went over a period of two days, and they had a great time. It was very interactive, so they really enjoyed it.”
 The day of the meeting, the high school’s Community Service Club visited the Senior Center, which was expanded on in the Student Representative Report. That same day, the VIP Life Skills class visited the Holyoke Mall.
 “They had a wonderful experience there,” Watts said. “They were able to interact with the community and purchase items, control their money – or not – and they really had a wonderful time.”
 Watts talked about Project 351, which is a statewide project where one student from all 351 towns and cities in the commonwealth is selected to participate in a community service project.
 “This year, Mason Murphy was selected as our person,” Watts said. “I’m sure in the next months we’ll hear more about what he’s planning to do, but it’s very exciting and we congratulate him.”
 Watts described a trip taken by the preschool students and their families to the Ket Tree Farm, where the students tagged trees that were then sold

to homes around the area.
 “The people that bought the trees were able to take pictures of the decorated tree and then send the pictures back to the preschool students,” Watts said. “So far, the furthest family away that has a tree that has responded was from Medford, MA, so that’s pretty cool.”
 Watts also talked about the Hour of Code for the first and fourth grade, which was hosted by Liberty Mutual and facilitated by Rachel Jagadowski. “We hope to expand this program next year,” Watts said.
 The Achieve, Contribute, and Thrive Life Skills program’s holiday gathering was also held last week.
 “Students created their own decorations, they cooked and baked a variety of international dishes, and selected the music for the event,” Watts said. “I was able to go, the food was amazing, so shout out to them, they did a great job.”
 Watts reminded the committee about the upcoming trip to Spain in 2026.
 “Sign-ups are now open for this experience of a lifetime, so we want to remind families that are interested to please reach out to Ms. Paula Garces,” Watts reported.
 “record attendance” for

the Early Childhood Center’s holiday concert, with over 300 people in attendance. She then updated the committee on the trout eggs project.
 “Trout eggs have arrived at Granite Valley, and they are thriving in their big tank,” Watts said. “Grade Four works with the maintenance and having the trout eggs flourish, and then they wind up releasing the eggs behind the police station in the spring. It’s part of their science curriculum and it’s a lot of fun, so they’re looking forward to that.”
 The Class of 2025 has scheduled a fundraiser for their class at Main Street Tavern on Thursday, Jan. 2.
 “I always like any reason not to cook, so come join me there,” Watts said.
 Watts concluded her presentation by reminding the committee that the schools will be on holiday break from the end of the school year on Dec. 21 until Thursday, Jan. 2, 2025.
 “We wish everybody a beautiful holiday season and look forward to seeing everybody in 2025,” Watts said.

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Behavioral Health Network announces new additions to Executive Leadership Team

SPRINGFIELD — Behavioral Health Network, Inc. has announced two new members of its Executive Leadership Team, Anthony Boswell and Sigfredo Irizarry.

Anthony Boswell joined BHN as Senior Vice President in October. In this role, he will provide strategic leadership across multiple service lines and play an instrumental role in shaping the organization's future direction. With extensive experience in mental health leadership, Boswell's expertise will be key in advancing BHN's mission and expanding its impact in the commu-

nity. Prior to joining BHN, Boswell served as CEO of LevinThor, LLC, a consulting firm specializing in management, leadership, and education. He has also held senior leadership positions at mental health organizations in Springfield, MA, New Orleans, LA, and Washington, DC, further enhancing his diverse experience in the sector.

Boswell attended the United States Air Force Academy and earned a B.A. from Stony Brook University, a Master of Education in Organizational Leadership from

the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a Juris Doctor from the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School.

Sigfredo Irizarry joined BHN in November as Vice President of Performance Improvement, Applications & Data Analytics. In this position, Irizarry will lead efforts to enhance performance improvement initiatives across the organization, focusing on optimizing applications and leveraging data analytics to improve service delivery. His strategic vision and leadership will play a key role in the company's continued

success and operational efficiency.

With 30 years of experience in IT, Irizarry specializes in IT leadership, system information, business continuity, cybersecurity, and process automation. He is an accomplished IT executive, adept at leading diverse teams and developing sustainable IT strategies. Irizarry has extensive experience in managing technical teams, complex system migrations, and cyber security efforts to mitigate risks.

Currently pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity from Purdue University, Irizarry

is enrolled in the CISSP Track. He also holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and Management from the International Institute of The Americas.

Steve Winn, President and CEO of BHN, stated, "We are excited to welcome Tony and Sigfredo to our Executive Leadership Team. Their experience and leadership will be key in driving our strategic vision and enhancing the quality of services we provide. These appointments demonstrate our commitment to strengthening BHN's leadership and advancing our mission to de-

liver exceptional behavioral health services."

BHN has been providing behavioral health services to children and families in Western Massachusetts since 1938. The agency provides community-based services that include innovative, integrated whole-health models as well as traditional clinical and outpatient and therapeutic services, day treatment, addition services, crisis intervention and residential supports.



Protesters gathered outside the Palmer Public Library to criticize the DOT's direction.



Scarlet Lamothe held a sign advocating for a direction for the rail project.



Chief among the protesters' concerns was that the station would be placed too far from downtown to bolster economic development.

STATION | from page 1

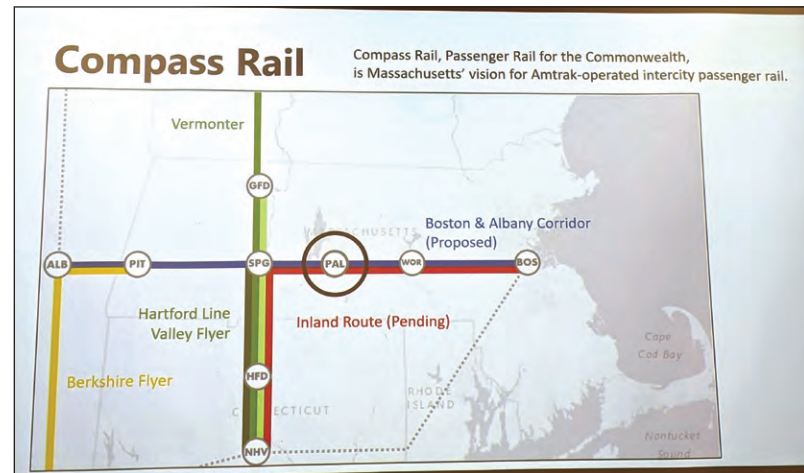
Steaming Tender Restaurant as a potential site for the station.

"Very early in our process we identified what we refer to as the requirements for rail infrastructure," Koziol said.

Koziol explained that the designs require a high-level, 800-foot platform to allow for level boarding on all coaches. There will also need to be about 1,775 feet of an adjacent track.

Koziol said that this is complicated by the properties near Steaming Tender, citing the CSX yard across from the tracks.

"Part of that is the CSX yard right across from tracks," Koziol said, "then the horizontal width beneath the South Main Street bridge. Not only would the bridge have to



The proposed rail will stretch East to West from Boston to Albany, and connect to the North/South line that runs through Springfield.

be reconstructed, but this particular layout would require purchasing several properties, which would make that not feasible."

This was countered by Blake Lamothe, the owner of Steaming Tender, who argued at the meeting that another proposal could fit in

the space provided by the restaurant and would be a better use of the town's assets.

"News stations are categorizing it a Category Four with Amtrak, which means they want to build these big long platforms," Lamothe said. "We could have gone under Category Two or Three, which would allow us to use the existing structure for the station stop."

Another concern Lamothe voiced was for the central corridor passage coalition. He said that combining a North/South line with the East/West station would allow passenger service up to Montreal, and would trigger growth and overnight stays in the center of town.

"By managing assets, what you

can do is put a couple million dollars into an existing station and develop a North/South

line along with the East/West line and take the money to put into town to upgrade parking lots, infrastructure, sidewalks, and the stuff we need to get good, healthy growth downtown again," Lamothe said.

"The amount of people in town who are going to take the

train are minimal," Lamothe said, "so you've got to create economic growth here."

Koziol agreed with Lamothe that a station far from the town center would not be ideal for economic growth, and mentioned it as a focus for the project.

"The general sentiment is that having the meeting station as close to downtown is desirable, we've heard that repeated several times through multiple mediums," Koziol said.

This project is currently ongoing, with the first route currently in the works. Koziol said that the team is going to use the feedback its received to hone in on a site that is both feasible to DOT and supported by the community, at which point the project team will be able to work on a conceptual design for the station.

"Along the way, there will be supportive planning activities to plan for things like various mobility options — like a bus service that can serve the station to bring additional passengers," Koziol said. "We'll be looking at environmental constraints and preparing ourselves to go after federal funds. We're really not getting involved in those quite yet, but setting the stage in background data analysis."

An informal meeting with the public concerning the station is scheduled for Monday, Jan. 27, from 6-8 p.m. You can continue to send your feedback to DOT by sending an email to Andrew.M.Koziol@dot.state.ma.us.

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BASKETBALL



Offense struggles in opener

MONSON – Last Tuesday night, Monson High School girls basketball fell to Wahconah 63-29. The offense struggled for the Mustangs as they were not able to get any momentum going. Olivia Chrzan was the exception as she scored 21 of the Mustangs' 29 points. Monson is 0-2 to start the season. They are next in action on Dec. 27 against Hampshire Regional at 7 p.m.

Carli Zielinski tries to block a pass.



Emma Bannon stops the progress of an opponent.



Olivia Chrzan makes her way up the court.



Emma Bannon passes on the run.



Hylia Ellis starts a play for the Mustangs.

Turley photos by Sofia DiGrande

BASKETBALL

Palmer falls in road game



Dylan Doherty shoots from the free throw line.



Taydem Haley flies for the basket.



Gavin Smola shoots in pressure.



Stephen Fredette gets the mid-range jump shot.

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

GRANBY – Last Monday night, Granby High School boys basketball grabbed its second win of the sea-

son, holding on for a 57-51 win over Palmer. The Panthers kept the game close throughout, but Granby was

able to hold its lead late in the game, not allowing the Panthers to grab a lead. The Panthers suffered their first

loss of the season while Granby improved to 2-0. In the defeat, Stephen Fredette led Palmer with 11 points.

BASKETBALL



Pioneers jump out to a good start

Greenly Lagimoniere attempts a three-pointer.



Ciara Green reaches out to grab a rebound.



Desiree Croteau makes a pass along the perimeter.

PALMER – Last Monday and Wednesday, Pathfinder girls basketball was able to put up a pair of wins to get its season started. Last Monday night, the Pioneers opened up the year with PVCIC, defeating the visitors 36-12. Their defense was excellent throughout the game though it took some time for the offense to get moving. Desiree Croteau had 15 points to lead all scorers. The Pioneers defeated Duggan 49-27 on Dec. 18 and are back in action Dec. 27 against Smith Academy at 6 p.m.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli



Megan Clark approaches the basket for a layup.



Addison Doktor goes for a put-back.

ICE HOCKEY

Hurricanes battle to draw with Chicopee

AMHERST – After a tough loss against Greenfield to open the season, Amherst hockey, which co-ops with Pathfinder, had its first matchup with Chicopee, another co-op program. The two teams

ended up in a 2-2 tie. Nate Desbien and Eric Chen had the goals for the Hurricanes. Chicopee got two goals from Jake Fournier. Amherst is 0-1-1 to start the year while Chicopee is 1-0-1 to start the season.

Pathfinder gets in early hole, falls to PVCA



Dustyn Cook goes for the shot with pressure underneath the hoop.



Cayden Bousquet runs into traffic in the paint.



Matthew Vanasse waits for his opponent's jump to finish before taking a shot.



Cassian Kowalik shoots over an outreached defender.

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

PALMER – Last Monday night, Pathfinder found itself in 14-2 deficit very early, and the Pioneer Valley Christian Academy

rode that to a 49-37 win over Pathfinder. While Pathfinder was able to muster some more offense in the

middle of the game,

PVCA finished stronger for the win. Cassian Kowalik had 15 points while Sauri Nieves had 11 points for the Pioneers.

T-Birds fall to Checkers on the road

SPRINGFIELD — The Springfield Thunderbirds (12-10-2-1) fell victim to a two-goal comeback by the Charlotte Checkers (15-6-1-2) last Wednesday night at Bojangles Coliseum in a 4-3 defeat.

The T-Birds did themselves no favors by taking back-to-back penalties just four seconds apart, resulting in 1:57 of two-man advantage time for the league's top power play. Steve Konowalchuk's team dug in, though, as Vadim Zherenko and the penalty killers did the job to survive the lengthy threat.

Charlotte still rode the momentum from the power play to the game's opening tally by Oliver Okuliar at 4:45 of the first period, giving the Checkers a 1-0 advantage.

After the burst from Char-

lotte, the T-Birds quickly chipped away on the shot board. At 15:00 of the frame, Dalibor Dvorsky brought Springfield even with his team-leading 11th of the season, cashing in on a rebound at the edge of the crease and driving it past former T-Bird Chris Driedger.

The 1-1 score continued for nearly a whole period of game action until the T-Birds' third and fourth units capitalized on back-to-back shifts. Tanner Dickinson started the scoring blitz with a wrist from the left circle that glanced off traffic and eluded Driedger at 14:02 of the second period, making it a 2-1 lead for Springfield.

34 seconds later, Mathias Laferriere and Drew Callin entered the offensive zone on a 2-on-1 and took advantage of the situa-

tion. Driedger made an initial pad save off a Laferriere shot from the left circle. However, the rebound kicked right to Callin, who quickly deked to the forehand and put it behind Driedger to give the T-Birds a 3-1 advantage.

Penalties, though, continued to throw a wrench in the T-Birds' plans, and the Charlotte power play finally connected in the final minute of the second as Rasmus Asplund redirected a Trevor Carrick wrist shot behind Zherenko, chopping the lead to 3-2 at 19:21 of the middle frame.

For a second straight night, rookie Ben Steeves provided a clutch tying marker for Charlotte, taking a feed from Okuliar in the right circle and snapping a shot past Zherenko's stick hand at 3:55 of the third, bringing the game to a stalemate, 3-3.

The two teams did not generate much after the Steeves goal, with the two clubs combining for only eight shots in the entire third period, and the tie score carried into the final three minutes of the game.

Again, discipline proved pivotal, as Tobias Bjornfot drew a high-sticking double minor and a four-minute power play for the Checkers with 2:39 remaining.

The league's top man advantage lived up to their billing in the final minute, as Wilmer Skoog unloaded a blistering one-time slapper that found twine with 54 seconds left to give Charlotte the 4-3 lead. Springfield's last-ditch efforts to tie came up empty in the closing moments, and Charlotte completed the two-game sweep of the T-Birds.

Next HoopHall ceremony announced

SPRINGFIELD – The Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame announced that the Class of 2025 Enshrinement Ceremony will take place on Saturday, Sept. 6, in Springfield – the Birthplace of Basketball.

The nominees for the upcoming class were set to be revealed on Thursday, Dec. 19, at 3 p.m. during "NBA Today" on ESPN. The Class of 2025 Finalist Announcement will be Friday, Feb. 14, as part of the NBA All-Star Weekend in San Francisco, and the Class of 2025 will be announced on Saturday, April 5, during the NCAA Final Four Weekend in San Antonio.

Enshrinement Weekend will begin at the Mogan Sun on Friday, September 5, with the Tip-Off Celebration and Awards Gala, inclusive of the Class of 2025 jacket and ring presentation and the annual Hall of Fame Awards. The Enshrinement Ceremony will take place the following day in Springfield's historic Symphony Hall and will be available to a global audience.

A full schedule of events will be announced at a later date.

Coaching classes available

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

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

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

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

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

Additional requirements for all coaches:

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

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

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

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

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Athlete of the Week

Desiree Croteau
Pathfinder

Croteau had a great game for Pathfinder in a win over PVCIC last week. She led the Pioneers with 15 points. To nominate someone for Athlete of the Week, contact Managing Sports Editor Gregory A. Scibelli at 413-283-8393 ext. 258 or send an e-mail to gscibelli@turley.com.

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Railers announce major coaching change

WORCESTER – The Worcester Railers Hockey Club (@RailersHC), proud ECHL (@ECHL) affiliate of the New York Islanders (@NYIslanders) and Chief Operating Officer Michael G. Myers have announced that Bob Deraney has taken on a new role within the organization, Head of Scouting, effective immediately. Nick Tuzzolino has been named Head Coach & General Manager of the Worcester Railers.

"Bob has been a part of the Railers family for a number of years," Myers said. "We can't thank him enough for his dedication and commitment to this organization over the past several seasons. We look forward to him continuing to work with the team in this new role."

Tuzzolino becomes the fifth head coach in Worcester Railers history after

serving as General Manager & Associate Head Coach to begin the season. He first came to Worcester in June after he spent the 2023-24 season as assistant coach and director of player development with the Savannah Ghost Pirates. As a defenseman, he played over 500 games professionally between the UHL, IHL, ECHL & American Hockey League from 2007-2023. During his initial retirement, he coached the Buffalo Jr. Sabres of the Ontario Junior Hockey League from 2016-20.

"In his time here, Nick has demonstrated his readiness to lead the team both on and off the ice," Myers said. "He has a wealth of experience in dissecting professional systems and working in pro player development. We're excited for him to take the reins and continue his work on bringing a winning culture to Worcester."

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Modern readings on classic Christmas songs

What are "Baby It's Cold Outside" and "I'll Be Home for Christmas" supposed to be about?

By **Marcelo Gusmão**
Staff Writer
mgusmao@turley.com

HOLIDAY – The Christmas songs that we've been listening to for generations are an integral part of the holiday, not only for tradition, but because the music has continued to adapt to its audience over the years.

There's only one holiday that comes with its own widely accepted soundtrack, and that's Christmas. The staple of songs that we consider Christmas music has been collected from Catholic hymns to commercial jingles, and a solid staple of songs about Yule time from the 1940s.

It may seem strange that in 80 years, we've barely expanded this collection with new material. Sure, the Jackson Five and Michael Buble will come along and give us an iconic cover of the familiar music, but somehow nothing breaks through into the canon the way the original classics. These songs have been able to endure by illustrating the feelings of people around the winter season, and audiences have continued to update their interpretations as the years pass.

For some of these songs, modern interpretations have given the music new legs, allowing them to speak to a wide variety of audiences. In other cases, when divorced from its original context, the music might take on a grisly, even negative connotation in the minds of new listeners.

But in the spirit of artistic expression, there is no right or wrong answer; all that matters is what the song says to you.

Baby It's Cold Outside

A couple years ago, a meme started to circulate concerning the 1944 winter-themed duet, "Baby, It's Cold Outside" by Frank Loesser. The song has widely been enjoyed for the back-and-forth of the two singers, where the (usually) female singer presents excuses why she needs to go home, and the (usually) male singer counters with excuses for her to stay the night. The tone of the song is meant to be read as playful and flirtatious, but Internet pundits have started to speculate that the song is meant to represent rape culture, and have labeled it as "problematic."

In an article for the Rolling Stone in 2020, Amelia McDonnell-Parry wrote that "Loesser originally wrote 'Baby, It's Cold Outside' as a playful call-and-response duet for him and his wife to perform at their housewarming party while their guests were preparing to bid them goodnight." Five years later, the song was popularized in the film *Neptune's Daughter*, where the script referred to the male singer as "The Wolf" and the female singer as "The Mouse," reinforcing the predatory reading of the song.

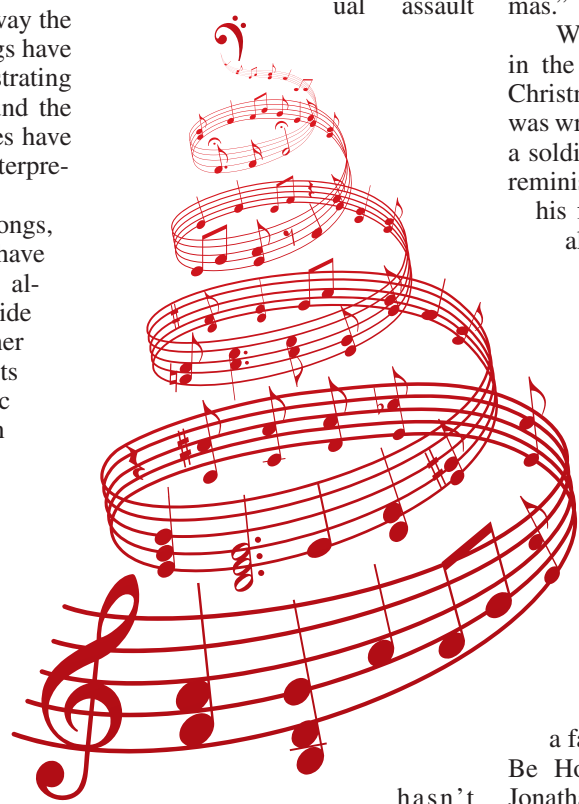
So is this song about sexual assault? There's no denying that a huge theme of the song is how pushy The Wolf is throughout it, not even letting The Mouse finish her line before he's started protesting. After all, The Mouse refus-

es and The Wolf persists over 30 times; any man who resists a no that much is a man to stay as far away from as possible.

Except, The Mouse doesn't really say "no," does she? She does a couple of times, but if you look at her lines, most of them focus on how her family will react and what the neighbors might think. She ought to say "no, no, no, sir," because that's what's expected of a respectable lady in society – but the implication is that she would rather continue to enjoy his company.

Much has been made of one particular line from the song, where The Mouse asks "What's in this drink?" leading to the song being nicknamed "The Date-Rape Song," presuming that the line is referencing the use of drugs in sexual assault cases. The use of date-rape drugs did not become popularized until long after the song was initially written, with the most common such drug, Rohypnol, colloquially referred to as "roofies" being patented in 1962 and becoming widely available in 1974.

This isn't to say that the use of mind-altering substances for sexual assault



schanel as The Wolf and M. Ward as The Mouse, which is one of the few versions where the genders are reversed.

The meaning of a song is not meant to be all things to all people, of course. Interpretation of art is as much about the reaction from the audience as it is the intentions of the creator, so while Loesser certainly wasn't thinking about roofies when he wrote "Baby, It's Cold Outside," that doesn't negate the reaction from a listener in 2024 who finds The Wolf's inability to take no for an answer to be pushy and annoying.

The song may not have been written to depict sexual assault, but its satire of the hoops that women are expected to go through to express sexual attraction.

I'll Be Home for Christmas

Another Christmas song that has changed its meaning over time is "I'll Be Home for Christmas," composed by Walter Kent with lyrics by Kim Gannon. The song was recorded in 1943 by Bing Crosby with "Danny Boy" as its B-side, and went on to become a Top 10 hit, outpacing Crosby's previous holiday classic, "White Christmas."

When it was first recorded in the 1940s, "I'll Be Home for Christmas (If Only in My Dreams)" was written from the perspective of a soldier fighting in World War II, reminiscing about Christmas with his family. The song was actually controversial at the time, banned by the BBC, who "felt that the lyrics might lower morale in troops overseas," according to Linda Rodriguez McRobbie in a 2013 article for *Mental Floss*.

Despite this direct connection to soldiers, nothing in the song directly references wartime, so in peace times, this meaning briefly shifted. College students related to the isolation portrayed in the song, and in 1998, a family comedy film titled *I'll Be Home for Christmas* starred Jonathan Taylor Thomas as a college student returning home for the holidays, with no mention of war at all.

College students were not the only homesick listeners to appropriate the song, though; in December of 1965, astronauts Frank Borman and James Lovell aboard Gemini VII requested that the song be played for them by the NASA ground crew.

While soldiers continued to enjoy the song throughout this time, it was Josh Groban's 2007 recording of it that sought to highlight the loneliness of soldiers away from home during the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan. His cover featured recordings from soldiers sending messages to their families and loved ones in their hometowns, including Captain Patrick Caukin, Specialist Brook Frisk, Lieutenant Colonel Phillip Stag, and Norm Young, among others who are unnamed. The last recording is sent from "Gigi" to her father about wrapping presents while he is overseas.

Like "Baby It's Cold Outside," the meaning of "I'll Be Home for Christmas" is not set in stone. The song touches the hearts of anyone who misses their family during the holidays, whether they're away at college, at war, or even off-planet.

Sen. Markey, Rep. Deluzio Introduce Legislation to Transform U.S. Rail Network

New All Aboard Act would make \$200 billion investment in rail

WASHINGTON – Senator Edward Markey, member of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, today introduced the All Aboard Act, legislation that would dedicate \$200 billion over five years to build high-speed rail, expand existing passenger rail service, and electrify the most heavily polluting railyards and corridors.

The legislation includes critical labor protections for the existing union labor workforce and creates a rail personnel training grant program for rail workers. The legislation is led by Representative Chris Deluzio (PA-17) in the House.

"An accessible, reliable, and electrified rail network across our nation would put us on a high-speed track to fend off the worst effects of the climate crisis," said Senator Markey. "The All Aboard Act makes critical investments in every link of our rail network – from investing in our workers to expanding passenger rail to electrifying railyards across the country. This bill would give Americans the train service they are clamoring for, help save our planet, and do it all with union labor. With the All Aboard Act, I'm calling 'all aboard' the train to a greener, more connected future."

"The American people ought to have a rail system that is safe, gets folks quickly where they want to go, and keeps the economy moving—all while slashing road traffic," said Congressman Deluzio. "I am proud to join with Senator Markey to introduce the All Aboard Act to make transformational investments in the United States rail network like electrification. This bill will make American passenger and freight rail a lot safer and cleaner and will invest in the rail workers who make it all happen."

This legislation is supported by a broad coalition of labor, transportation, and environmental groups, including the Sierra Club, the Green New Deal Network, the National Resources Defense Fund, Earthjustice, the Union of Concerned Scientists, the Tallahassee Food Network, the Transportation and Trades Division of the AFL-CIO, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, United Electrical Workers, International Association of Machinists, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Ways Employees Division, the Teamsters Rail Conference, SMART-Mechanic, SMART-Transportation, the Transportation and Communications Union, the Transport Workers Union, the American of Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, Transportation for America, the Rail Passengers Association, the High-Speed Rail Alliance, and Solutionary Rail. Specifically, the All Aboard Act would:

Expand Passenger Rail and High-Performance Rail. The All Aboard Act would invest \$150 billion over five years across several successful rail grant programs established or expanded in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Specifically, the bill provides \$80 billion to the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail, \$30 billion to the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure Safety Improvement program, \$30 billion for Amtrak, and \$10 billion for the Railroad Crossing Elimination program.

Establish a Green Railroad Fund. The All Aboard Act would create a new Green Railway Fund that would dedicate \$50 billion over five years to electrify highly polluting rail yards, support electric high-performance passenger rail projects, and electrify the existing highest trafficked corridors by freight and passenger trains. With these funds, the U.S. rail network will take a lesson from many countries that have already fully electrified their train system, reducing air pollution in many frontline communities and driving down emissions from transportation.

Create a Dedicated Rail Formula Program. The All Aboard Act would create a first-of-its-kind, \$3.5 billion rail formula program for states to perform rail planning, maintenance, operations, and capital investment. Although states can rely on regular formula funding to expand highways, federal investments in rail come only through competitive grants. States need regular, reliable funding to plan for and

execute a more robust rail network.

Address Air Pollution from Railyards. The All Aboard Act would provide \$500 million in grants under the Clean Air Act to address air pollution from railyards in frontline communities. Like other modes of transportation, air pollution from diesel-powered locomotives caused disproportionate harm in environmental justice communities. This investment is a down payment on addressing that harm.

Invest in the Rail Workforce. The All Aboard Act recognizes that the rail workforce is the backbone of a safe, efficient rail network and would invest \$300 million over five years to establish freight and passenger rail training centers. These centers would be run in partnership with organized labor and provide the training and development necessary to deliver the rail network of the future.



"The All Aboard Act is an investment in our transportation workers, our climate, and our communities, and the Sierra Club is proud to support it so Americans across the country can access the benefits of rail. Expanding and electrifying the U.S. rail system to move people and goods will help improve air quality, speed up the delivery of goods, reduce traffic congestion, and cut climate pollution," said Katherine García, Director of Sierra Club's Clean Transportation for All Program.

"As America's largest transportation labor federation, representing the passenger and freight rail workforce, we are proud to support the All Aboard Act," said Greg Regan, president of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO. "This bill will expand high-speed rail programs and passenger rail systems, including Amtrak, while electrifying rail yards and reducing air pollution for both rail workers and the surrounding communities. The All Aboard Act upholds an essential industry safety standard by requiring two-person crews for any resulting federally-funded projects, and also invests in the workforce by establishing training centers in partnership with unions. We thank Senator Markey and Congressman Deluzio for championing this effort and look forward to working together to push this bill forward."

"I want to thank Senator Markey for introducing this very important piece of legislation that is intended to improve air quality technology for locomotives while also ensuring workforce development as there's a transition to this green technology," said Brian Bryant, International President of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers. "The IAM was founded as a rail union in 1888 and has very deep roots in the industry. As the representative of more than 35,000 rail workers, the IAM Rail Division supports this legislation that is intended to help improve and expand passenger rail across the U.S. This is growing our nation's rail technologies while ensuring good, union-paying jobs."

"UE represents thousands of workers in the rail industry; both those who manufacture locomotives and parts, and rail crew drivers who work in rail yards across the U.S. For years, workers, their families and communities have organized for bold action to address the urgent issue of rail pollution. With federal support through the All Aboard Act, the railroads must do their part to make necessary investments required to clean up our communities and create good union jobs," said Carl Rosen, General President of the United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America.

"We urgently need fast electric trains to improve lives, reduce traffic, and clean up our air - and we plan to build them! The All Aboard Act is a visionary proposal to more than double investment in our passenger and freight railroads, take the first steps towards railroad electrification, and provide significant resources to support communities harmed by rail infrastructure. We applaud Senator Markey and his team for painting an inspirational picture of the track we all deserve and a way to get there," said Saul

Levin, Campaigns and Political Director at the Green New Deal Network.

"The All Aboard Act of 2024 sets the stage for what the zero-emissions rail future could look like, and this future looks a lot brighter," said Yasmine Agelidis, Attorney on Earthjustice's Right to Zero Campaign. "Old diesel locomotives are some of the worst offenders when it comes to health-harming air pollution, spewing toxins into our air that can lead to asthma, heart issues, and cancer. By upgrading rail lines across the country with all-electric options, we can improve transportation and mobility for millions of Americans while cleaning our air. We thank Senator Markey for his leadership in modernizing American rail."

"Fully electrifying America's railways would revolutionize how we move people and goods throughout the country, providing more efficient intercity connections and strengthening economic activity between regions," said Jim Mathews, President & CEO of Rail Passengers Association. "The All Aboard Act takes seriously the scope of the challenges—and opportunities—involved in modernizing the U.S. rail network, and we applaud Senator Markey for his leadership and ambition on this issue."

"The Brotherhood of Maintenance of Ways Employees Division, International Brotherhood of Teamsters strongly supports Senator Markey's All Aboard Act and we applaud his bold vision for the future of our passenger and freight rail systems. BMWED has been a leader in rail labor for pushing for the United States to build its first high-speed rail train and expanding passenger rail. The funding in this legislation will help ensure that America builds and maintains the 21st century high speed rail and passenger rail network it needs. BMWED is also the leading union in maintaining overhead catenary for railroads and the funding in this legislation will help build more catenary and upgrade our existing rail catenary system, creating tens of thousands of jobs for BMWED members. Finally, we are grateful for Senator Markey's commitment to continue to work with BMWED to ensure these federal grants have the strongest labor standards required so that it will be rail labor, including BMWED, members operating and maintaining these vital systems," said Jeff Joines of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Ways Employees Division, International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

"America deserves a world class passenger rail system, but too many Americans have been quite literally off the rails for far too long. Passenger railroads have linked the country together in the past and can once again. While some progress has been made in recent years, as a nation we're still far behind where we should be. Senator Markey's All Aboard Act presents a comprehensive way forward for American passenger rail, including accelerating progress toward building state-of-the-art high-speed rail," said Mark L. Wallace, President of the Teamsters Rail Conference. "The Teamsters Rail Conference, which represents the majority of unionized rail workers in this country, is proud to endorse the All Aboard Act. Senator Markey's bill not only will boost economic activity and speed passengers to their destinations, it also will create thousands of good paying jobs for Teamster members and others who operate the trains and build and maintain the rails."

Senator Markey is a long-time advocate for electrifying rail and a leader on supporting rail labor. Last Congress, Senator Markey introduced the BRAIN Train Act, which established a new \$25 billion passenger rail grant program and required that the FRA prioritize projects that connect historically under-connected areas. In April 2024, Senator Markey worked closely with a broad coalition of environmental groups and labor groups to send two letters to the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Transportation, calling for the EPA to update its locomotive emissions standard and for the DOT to require federally funded work to reduce emissions and to use union labor. In July 2023, Senator Markey chaired an Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Clean Air, Climate, and Nuclear Safety Hearing on reducing locomotive emissions and the need for EPA to update its 2008 locomotive emission standards.

Virtual support groups for those with cancer

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

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

“Sharing concerns with a support group can be a beneficial way for people facing cancer to get the help they need to cope with the physical and emotional concerns that arise during and after a cancer diagnosis,” said St. Onge. “While support and self-help groups can vary greatly, groups share one thing in common, they are a place where people can share personal stories, express emotions, and be heard in an atmosphere of acceptance, un-

derstanding, and encouragement.”

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

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

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

Senators Markey and Paul urge President Biden to extend TikTok divestment deadline

WASHINGTON – Senator Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), a member of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, and Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.), sent a letter to President Joe Biden urging him to provide TikTok owner ByteDance with a 90-day extension to either sell TikTok or face a ban in the United States, as authorized by the Protecting Americans Data from Foreign Adversaries Act.

The lawmakers urged the Biden administration to trigger the 90-day extension before Jan. 19, the deadline by which ByteDance must either divest TikTok or face a ban. On Jan. 10, the U.S. Supreme Court has

scheduled oral arguments to consider whether the law violates the First Amendment.

Earlier this month, the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the legislation that bans TikTok.

In the letter, the senators wrote, “The stakes here are high: As a practical matter, even if the Court rules that the law is constitutional by the January deadline, ByteDance cannot divest TikTok in that limited time. Consequently, absent a judicial injunction, decision overturning the law, or action by you, TikTok will soon be banned in the United States, causing its creators and users serious hardship.”

Local musician hits the stage in Palmer

PALMER – Local to South Hadley, musician Kyle Ray will be performing for one night only at the Palmer Historical Cultural Center on Saturday, December 28, 2024.

The concert will feature his brand new single, “Shoobox”, a song about his life and story, will be performed live for the very first time on a stage, so be sure to mark your calendar.

You can find tickets by scanning the QR code for \$15 ahead of time, or \$20 at the door. The address is 2072 Main Street, Three Rivers, MA 01080.

Don't miss this chance to welcome home a neighbor, and spend some time before the New Year listening to some good music, and hearing for the first time a new song that will end up in your saved playlist.



The group of volunteers who collected and prepared the holiday joy bags.



Submitted photos
One of Santa's helpers fills the holiday joy bag.



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what to expect for support. I asked friends and businesses for support and we filled 125 bags with a good amount of donations. This year's efforts just sets me back. The support has been unbelievable. Donations and boxes are flooding in and the office is full” said Niedziela.

Thirteen volunteers braved the

chill and filled the bags on Friday night in the J. Stolar workshop. Delivery of the gift bags will happen the upcoming weekend.

“We have a good bit of leftover misc items, 5 of this, 10 of that, and we wanted to keep giving” said Niedziela. “We have partnered with another local organization to pass

support. Everything left over will go to the AMVets Post 74 in Three Rivers for local veterans.”

“I am grateful on behalf of my team and myself for the support. This project has been growing but can't without that support. We are planning for next year already.” said Niedziela.

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