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Town Hall audit results reviewed

By Paula Ouimette
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WARE – Lisa Miller from CBIZ, Inc. presented her findings to the Selectboard from an audit recently conducted of Town Hall employee reimbursement records.

At the March 18 meeting, Miller said the audit covered the years 2015-2019 and included all of the employee reimbursements for those years.

“There was approximately 157 items where the employees averaged one or less reimbursements annually,” she said. “They basically averaged one reimbursement or less on an average annual basis.”

Miller said from that population, they looked at a base of 5% of the reimbursement from a random sample.

“We also sampled all reimbursements that were greater than \$1,000 regardless of whether or not they were within the random sample,” she said.

Miller said her staff were on site in the Town Hall to review the financial package and verify the documentation. She said they were able to validate those items.

“What we did notice and observe in the records as we looked at the financial

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Close to 50 people braved the frigid water of Beaver Lake this past Saturday for the annual Polar Plunge event to support Special Olympics Massachusetts.

POLAR PLUNGE

Turley Photos by Paula Ouimette

Annual event helped raise money for Special Olympics

By Paula Ouimette
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WARE – For the seventh year, Ware Police Officer Jeannine Bonnayer has led the charge into the frigid water of Beaver Lake to help support a cause that is close to her heart.

The Polar Plunge raises money to support Special Olympics Massachusetts, which gives student-athletes of all abilities a chance to participate in Olympic-style events. This year’s Polar Plunge raised over \$5,750 – more than doubling Bonnayer’s goal of \$2,500.

“This is the most people

I’ve ever had,” Bonnayer said of the event held on March 22.

Last year, Bonnayer said she had just over 20 people taking the plunge, and this year, that number was closer to 50.

Joining Bonnayer in support of Special Olympics Massachusetts were members of Monson Police Department, UMass Amherst Police Department’s K-9 Parker and K-9 Officer Ted Bonnayer, Wilbraham Police Department, Westcomm Regional Dispatch and dozens of community members. Members of the Ware Fire

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Dawson Whitham, age 5, enjoyed digging in the sand on the beach.

Pathfinder Tech proposes budget

By Marcelo Gusmão
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PALMER –Pathfinder Regional Technical Vocational School presented its budget for fiscal year 2026 at an annual dinner.

On March 12, stakeholders from all nine towns serviced by Pathfinder were invited to attend the school’s annual budget presentation dinner. The towns were represented by school board members, finance committees, town administrators and managers, and the budget was presented by Superintendent Eric Duda.

Duda opened the ceremony with highlights from the past year, including competitive grants and improvements to the school, such as the new gym floor, which was funded by the town of Palmer.

“We reviewed the competitive grants we’ve received,” Duda said. “One for \$1.25 million for the complete renovation of our horticulture and electrical programs, which was the largest we ever received.”

In addition to this grant, Duda highlighted a grant for \$100,000 that helped the school upgrade its HVAC program. The school also qualified for two competitive grants, including \$280,000 for the past year, and a grant of \$420,000 that was desig-

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MEET THE CANDIDATES

School Committee candidates share views at forum

By Paula Ouimette
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WARE – There is one contested position on the annual town election ballot this year; with four candidates running for two open seats on the School Committee.

On March 21, a candidates forum was hosted by

Ware Community Television and the Ware River News in the Ware High School library, where candidates introduced themselves and answered a series of questions submitted by members of the community.

Brian Winslow has served on the School Committee for 16 years, and is its current chair, is seeking reelection. He is retired and he works as a school bus driver, which he said he loves.

Winslow talked about the challenges the school district has faced, and some of its

accomplishments, which are celebrated monthly at School Committee meetings.

“Ware’s a great place,” he said.

Melissa Whitham, who serves on the town’s Charter Review Committee, said she is running for the School Committee because there are so many important topics to address. She has lived in town since 2013 with her wife and three children.

Whitham is in her 17th year of teaching in

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Selectmen held public hearing on CDBG joint application

By Ryan Drago
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WARREN – The Board of Selectmen held a public hearing for the fiscal year 2025 Community Development Block Grant joint application between Warren and Millbury.

Speaking on the application between the two towns was Principal Planner from the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, John O’Leary. This proposed application helps communities such as Warren and Millbury through supporting community development activities to build stronger and more resilient communities.

To support community development, activities are identified through an ongoing process. Activities may

address needs such as infrastructure, economic development projects, public facilities installation, community centers, housing rehabilitation, public services, clearance/acquisition, micro-enterprise assistance, code enforcement, homeowner assistance and much more.

The Community Development Block Grant is administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. O’Leary

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Quaboag Drama gets a 'CLUE'

Theater club brings classic whodunit comedy to stage

By Ryan Drago
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WARREN – This past weekend Quaboag Regional Middle High School performed “Clue: High School Edition”.

This production was presented by the Quaboag Regional Middle High School Drama Club, the Quaboag Regional Theater Department and the 21st CCLC. The show is based on the Paramount Pictures Motion Picture and based on the popular Hasbro Board Game, CLUE.

The play featured many talented students of Quaboag, and some were going to be performing for the last time on the Quaboag stage. The show featured 14 scenes with remarkable stage props, designs and sets. The costumes were designed by Christine Taylor, who also served as the Stage Director.

James Joinville of QRMHS served as produc-



Turley Photo by Ryan Drago

Quaboag Regional Middle High School performed the high school edition of the play “Clue”. The characters listened through the door after a mysterious murder took place.

er and technical director. Joinville shared a note that was featured in the program for the show.

According to Joinville, the school’s production of “Clue” featured a lot of firsts.

“This is probably the first time that we have tackled a straight play like this and the first time that we have double casted a show,” Joinville said.

The students have worked hard and showed a lot of dedication to put this great show together during the entire weekend.

Joinville acknowledged all of the seniors who will be graduating this year, and that “Clue” was going to be their last show as members of the Quaboag Theater Department.

A total of 11 seniors were a part of the production of “Clue” as Joinville wanted to express how proud he was of all of them.

“You have all grown so much as performers but more importantly, how you have grown into amazing people, and I know that you

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SPORTS

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Indians receive sportsmanship award

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

WARE – The seniors on the 2024-25 Ware girls' varsity basketball roster are Tory Finocchio, Shelby Hogan, and Kyla Campbell.

The tri-captains were invited to play in the annual IAABO 28 Hampshire/Franklin Basketball Senior All Star game at Frontier Regional on March 14.

Hogan and Campbell were members of the West squad, which pulled out a 51-49 overtime victory over the East team on a buzzer-beating shot. Finocchio didn't play in the All-Star game due to an injury.

"I can't say enough about our three seniors. Although they didn't always score the most points, their defense and leadership were instrumental to our success this season," said Ware girls' varsity basketball coach Dan Orszulak. "Most importantly they built a culture where every player felt valued. They helped create an environment where underclassmen could thrive. They supported and encouraged the underclassmen to compete, take risks and learn from their mistakes. Although at times it came at the cost of their own playing time, they put the needs of the team in front of their own and they showed them what it takes to be a great team-



Submitted photo
The Ware girls basketball team were the 2025 recipients of the Jack Leaman Sportsmanship Award.

mate. We will miss them."

At halftime of the girls' All-Star game, the Lady Indians received the Jack Leaman Sportsmanship Award.

"I am proud of the way our girls conduct themselves on the court," Orszulak added. "They are fierce competitors but handle their disappointments with dignity and class. In games that didn't go our way, the girls always competed very hard. In games where we are way ahead, we treat the other team with dignity and without running up the score. I am happy that other people see the same things in my team that I do."

It was the first time that the Lady Indians basketball

team received the sportsmanship award, which is given by the referees.

MacDuffie Academy received the boy's sportsmanship award.

The Ware girls' hoop team qualified for the Division 5 state tournament for the second consecutive year with an 11-9 record.

The Lady Indians, who finished in first place in the Franklin South league standings, began the regular season with back-to-back victories against Hopkins Academy and Athol.

After losing the next three games, the Lady Indians put-together two four game winning streaks.

They had a 10-4 record following a 36-27 home win

versus Ludlow on January 29. That victory clinched a berth in the Division 5 state tournament.

The Lady Indians also handed Franklin County Tech its first league loss in three years with a 44-26 home victory on January 13.

Another victory came against rival Palmer, 42-39, in a non-playoff home game, which snapped a five game losing streak.

The Lady Indians season came to an end following a 39-38 road loss to Palmer in a preliminary round game on February 26.

"We lost a tough game against Palmer in the playoffs where we needed to make just one more play to advance," Orszulak said. "I am hoping our returning girls work hard in the off season. These girls exemplified what it means to be a team. They got along better than any team I've ever coached."

The other players on the Lady Indians 2024-25 varsity roster are eighth grader Daisy Laverdiere, eighth grader Naomi Torres, eighth grader Gloria Cotaj, eighth grader Lana Bennington, eighth grader Lucy Hebert, eighth grader Gabrielle Kaczuwka, freshman Amelia Orszulak, freshman Molly McGrail, sophomore Reese McKeever, sophomore Reaghan Jacobs, sophomore Emily Jones, and junior Madisyn Slattery.



Travis Wells also will play college football, heading for Assumption College.

Panthers pair headed for college football

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

BARRE— For the first time since they were in elementary school, Quabbin seniors Travis Wells and Luke Salvadore will be playing for different football team's next fall.



File photos
Luke Salvadore is headed to play college football at Union College.

"Luke and I have created a very good bond on and off the field since we began playing football at the youth level in the fourth grade," said Wells, who lives in Barre. "We're always hanging out and doing things together."

Wells will be continuing his football career about 20 miles down Rte.122 at Assumption University in Worcester.

"Assumption isn't that far away, and I can always come home anytime that I want," said Wells, who's planning to study Criminal Justice. "Leaving Luke will definitely be a very difficult thing for me, but we'll always be best friends."

The Assumption football head coach is Andy McKenzie.

During his recruiting process, Wells dealt mostly with assistant coach Kyle Ashby.

"Coach Ashby is responsible for recruiting the Worcester County area," Wells said. "He

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Spring preseason underway



Pathfinder's Carly Juda plays coach during practice last Friday.

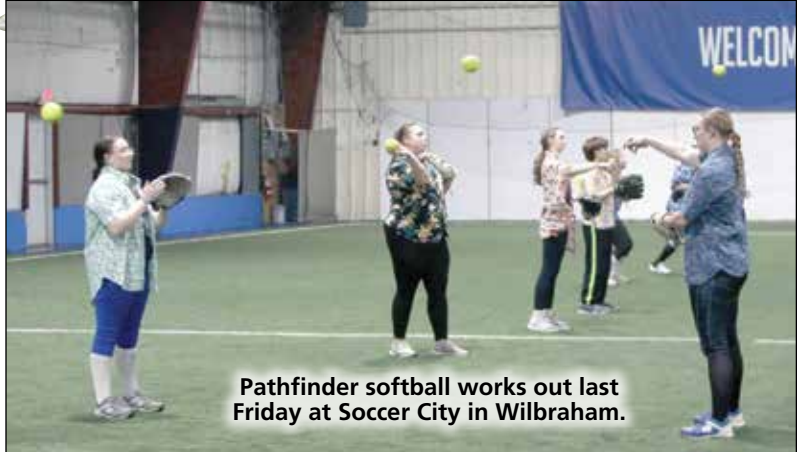


Arianna does a swinging drill.



Laylana Patran watches a pitch come in during batting practice.

PALMER – The spring season is underway in high school sports with many teams set to open up the season later this week. More teams will get going early next week, weather permitting as well as if baseball and softball fields are ready for play.



Pathfinder softball works out last Friday at Soccer City in Wilbraham.



LEFT: Zaylee Brodeur works on hitting with the tee.

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

Sun shines bright on 48th Road Race

By Gregory A. Scibelli
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HOLYOKE – For the first time in several years, it was gorgeous weather for the Holyoke St. Patrick's Road Race last Saturday afternoon the city streets.

More than 6,000 people participated in this year's event, with nearly 5,000 participants finishing the 10K, or 6.2-mile course.

This year, it was Samuel Whittaker of Salem, CT, who finished the race in 31:24. Alex Corbett, who placed second in last year's race, came in 23 seconds later at 31:47.

The top female finisher was Angelia Rafter at 34:13 and she placed 12th overall. Rafter is from Glastonbury,

CT. Among local finishers, Matt Provost of Monson was 19th overall at 35:09. Ryan Davis of South Hadley was a close 20th at 35:10. Lindsay Smith of South Hadley finished 22nd at 35:12.

While the race course, commonly known as a "hilly" course throughout downtown Holyoke ending with a turn off Beech St. and up the hill on Hampden St. toward the finish line remained largely the same, there was one noticeable change in this year's event.

Presidential Timing took over the official timing duties after 4RUN3 went out of business last

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Suburban League starts new award in honor of late coach

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

CHICOPEE — The Pioneer Valley Girls Suburban Basketball League was always very special to Eileen Monaghan.

Growing up in Chicopee, Monaghan played for a Suburban League basketball

team. She then coached her daughter's Suburban League teams. In recent years, Monaghan was one of the referees in the league.

Monaghan most likely would've been back on the basketball court refereeing Suburban League games this winter, but she was tragically killed last April.

Suburban League Commissioner Joe Ciejka, who's from Ware, couldn't recall another person who played, coached and was a referee in the Suburban League during the past 40 years.

"I believe Eileen is the first person to play, coach, and has been a referee in the Suburban league," Ciejka said. "Eileen

brought an incredible spirit to the Suburban League and the kindness of hearts. Even though her heart has been silenced, we're not going to let her spirit ever die."

The inaugural Eileen Monaghan Sportsmanship Award was given to the Gateway 5/6th grade basketball team prior to the start of

the 5/6th grade Division 2 championship game between Easthampton and Hampshire, which took place at Chicopee Comp on March 9.

"I think the sportsmanship award is very special because it shows how many lives that my mom touched," said Kathleen Brooks, who is Eileen's youngest daughter.

"She just loved girls sports, especially basketball. She probably would've been very proud of this award."

Brooks, who presented the sportsmanship award to Gateway, graduated from Chicopee Comp in 2019 where she played soccer, bas-

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