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WREATHS — across — AMERICA

Town honors veterans with ceremony and wreath placement

By Paula Ouimette
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WARE – For the second year, the town celebrated Wreaths Across America Day with a moving ceremony at Veterans Park before volunteers took to the cemeteries to honor veterans buried there.

The ceremony opened with a moment of silence, followed by

the presenting of the colors by the Quabbin Navy Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps, led by Cadet Aiden Fuller. Scouts led the Pledge of Allegiance and Jane Sterndale sang the National Anthem.

This effort is organized by resident and veteran Frank Bateman, along with his wife Kristin.

Wreaths Across America became a nonprofit organization in 2007, continuing the

wreath-laying tradition started by Morrill Worcester, owner of the Worcester Wreath Company of Harrington, Maine over 30 years ago.

This year, the town joined the almost 5,000 communities across the nation that participate in this annual event, in placing Balsam wreaths adorned with red ribbons at the gravestones and markers of veterans.

Bateman reminded the volun-

teers about the significance of the day, and to uphold Wreaths Across America's mission to remember, to honor and to teach.

"We are here to remember not their deaths," Bateman said. "But their lives."

Freedom, Bateman said, does not come without a price, and for many servicemembers, it comes at

Please see **WREATHS**, page 7

Turley Photo by Paula Ouimette
The family of Herbert Moulton prepared to place a wreath to honor all prisoners of war and those missing in action.

Select Board hears comments regarding Zekos Auctions

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
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HARDWICK – The Select Board began their Dec. 9 meeting with visitor's comments regarding Zekos Group and the public auction of three municipal-owned properties.

Zekos Group is a professional team of real estate auction experts that focus solely on providing consultation, strategic analysis and exemplary auction services to municipalities and government agencies.

A multi property auction has been ordered for the three properties, which could have a historical value to the town. The auction will be held on a date to be determined, according to the Zekos Group website.

The buildings consist of a school house on 58 Ruggles Hill Road, the former Calvin Paige Building on Barre Road, both located off the common, and the former school building at 179 Main St. in Gilbertville.

During the visitor's comments of the Select Board meeting, several residents and members of various town departments shared some concern. According to members of the Historical Commission these three buildings are deemed historic and are part of the character of the town's historic district.

One of the residents asked if there is a procurement policy for the auction group to go through prior to selling these properties.

Town Administrator Justine Caggiano said, "we don't have to go through the process of procurement".

The residents who spoke before the Select Board are aware that Zekos Group has sold a lot of prop-

Please see **HARDWICK**, page 11

New Braintree resident celebrated 100th birthday

By Paula Ouimette
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NEW BRAINTREE – This past Sunday, the town's oldest resident and Boston Post Cane holder Stephanie Benoit celebrated her 100th birthday at home, surrounded by family and friends.

Born on Dec. 15, 1924, in Florence, New Jersey, Benoit served in the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II, from the age of 20 until the war ended.

During her time in the military, Benoit wrote letters to many young men serving overseas, including Norman Benoit, who went on to become her husband on April 12, 1947.

The couple started their lives in New Braintree moving from the Benoit Farm to the Gleason House, then to Daley's Blacksmith Shop then to the "Old Cold House" before



Submitted Photo
Stephanie Benoit of New Braintree celebrated her 100th birthday with family and friends on Dec. 15.

building their forever home on Hardwick Road, where Benoit still lives today.

The couple had 10 children, Christine, Norman Jr.,

Please see **BIRTHDAY**, page 12

HOLIDAY FLAIR DRIVE-THRU *lit the night*



Turley Photo by Ryan Drago
It's truly a happy holiday when residents get to experience happiness and bright lights at Greenville Park.

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
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WARE – It's time to spread some holiday cheer as the Ware Holiday Flair Drive-Thru returned to Greenville Park this past Saturday evening.

This annual holiday event is made possible by the Holiday Flair Committee.

Every corner of the road was covered with glowing inflatable displays and holiday decorations for all the drivers to see. The drive thru began with a nice greeting from Town Manager Stuart Beckley who was guiding cars into the entrance of

Greenville Park.

The guests would be greeted by Santa's helpers as they slowly drove into Greenville Park for the Holiday Flair. The lights grew brighter as the cars made their way to the center of Greenville Park with lights and characters playing holiday music and greeting everyone who drove through.

Mickey and Minnie Mouse stood happily below a Christmas ornament greeting the guests of the holiday flair drive thru. Yukon Cornelius and the Abominable Snowman were at Greenville Park this year hanging out

Please see **DRIVE-THRU**, page 3

Recognitions awarded at School Committee meeting

By Paula Ouimette
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WARE – Students and staff were recognized and celebrated for their achievements at the School Committee meeting earlier this month.

Superintendent Dr. Michael Lovato began this quarterly recognition when he started working for the school district over a year ago, hoping to boost school spirit and spread pride throughout all areas of the campus.

At the Dec. 4 meeting, Lovato recognized Coach Morgan Toelken for his dedication to his student-athletes and the school community.

"He never says no," Lovato said. "His attitude is amazing...his willingness to help."

Stanley M. Koziol Principal

Pamela Iwasinski said staff at her school recognize students who "really embody" the six pillars of character, including caring, citizenship, trustworthiness, responsibility, respect and fairness.

With the help of her staff, Iwasinski identified six students who display these pillars of character.

Students were Serenity Dookhran, Abigail Hazzard, Molly Shea, Zoey McRobbie, Leona Goddu and Avery Pasquale.

Iwasinski also recognized two staff members who she called "true team players," both of whom always support students; Karen Hill and Elizabeth Smith Zajchowski.

Ware Middle School Principal Kimberly Thompson said they selected five students to be recog-

Please see **AWARD**, page 13



Submitted Photo
Ware Jr./Sr. High School students recognized were Gabrielle Kaczuwka, Lana Bennington, Liam Wedhoff, Matthew Gambino and Shelby Hogan. Staff recognized were Daniel Bressette, Donna Warburton and Becky Hebert (not shown in photo).





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Reese McKeever reaches up with a short-range shot.



Kyla Campbell works from the free-throw line.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com
Amelia Orszulak gets the three-point attempt off.



Molly McGrail gets the one-hand shot.



Madisyn Slattery drives to the hoop.



Shelby Hogan carefully enters the paint.



Tory Finocchio looks to get around an opponent.

Ware takes win in Franklin Tech tourney

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

TURNERS FALLS—The Ware varsity boys' basketball team has been invited to play in the Eagle Holiday Classic at Franklin County Tech a total of nine times. The Indians didn't have very much trouble winning the championship game for the sixth time this year.

After defeating the Mount Everett Eagles, 52-29, in the opening round game, last Thursday afternoon, the Indians coasted to a 70-33 victory over the Franklin Tech Eagles in the finals, the following night.

"We've been able to win this tournament six of the nine years that we've been playing it," said Ware head coach Gene Rich. "We won the championship title four straight years from 2016 to 2019. We also won it again in 2021. Being able to play in this tournament at the beginning of the regular season is a good thing for us."

A year ago, the Indians lost to St. Mary's of Westfield, 49-45, in the championship game.

Ware junior Jack Gaudreau was selected as the MVP of this year's tournament.

He scored all ten of his points against Mount Everett during the first half. He then scored a game-high 24 points in the championship game by making eleven field goals and three free throws.

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Indians need OT to get first win

WARE – Even with an overtime involved, neither Ware or Hopkins Academy was able to break 30 points in the season opener for both teams. Ware was three points better in the overtime period and won

29-26. The Indians improved to 1-0 on the young season and had its home opener on Tuesday against Athol. The Indians will host Granby on Dec. 27 at 7 p.m.



Quaboag girls basketball continued its preparation for the regular season last week.



The Cougars opened up their season later in the week.



Quaboag is on the road for their first three games.



Cayden Bousquet keeps the ball away from his opponent.

Dustyn Cook goes low to avoid a defender.

Pioneers don't have answer for Duggan

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

PALMER— First-year Pathfinder Tech boys' varsity basketball coach Ethan Ortyl is hoping to win a lot of games during his coaching career. He had to wait a little bit longer before celebrating his first career victory.

The Pioneers suffered an 80-18 non-league home loss to powerhouse Duggan Academy in the season opening game, last Thursday night.

"This game was a good test for us against one of the best teams that we're going to play all season," said Ortyl, who replaced Zac Button as the Pioneers varsity coach. "The players continued to play hard in tonight's game, and they care about each other. We're going to bounce back and keep battling in every game that we play this season. I just love this group of players."



Dayne Shanley takes a mid-range shot.

Turley photos by Sofia DiGrande

It was also the first varsity start for all five of the Pioneers starters. Those five players are junior Dustyn Cook, junior Dayne

Shanley, junior Aiden Girard, sophomore Cayden Bousquet, and

Please see **PIONEERS**, page 10



Cougars back on the prowl

WARREN – Last Thursday night, Quaboag girls basketball got their regular season going with a 46-21 win at Marlborough. The Cougars did not make tournament last season, but are hoping to get back in this year after missing out by just one win. Quaboag also had a Saturday matchup against the Advance Math & Science Academy. They were edged in that contest 41-38. Quaboag had its home opener on Dec. 18 against Southbridge, then has an extended break until Dec. 30 against Bay Path at 6:30 p.m.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

Their home opener is on Dec. 18 against Southbridge.



The Cougars had a tri-scrimmage last week with Granby and host Belchertown.