

Stars, Stripes & Fair Nights



The 167th Belchertown Fair took place over the weekend with games, rides, exhibits and a parade for the community to enjoy.



TURLEY PHOTOS BY RYAN DRAGO
Belchertown Girl Scouts Service Unit 167 marched in the parade.

167th Belchertown Fair arrives on patriotic year

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
rdrago@turley.com

BELCHERTOWN – The community came together to celebrate the 167th Belchertown Fair this past weekend, despite a rainy forecast.

This year's fair held from Sept. 25-27 had a patriotic theme of Stars, Stripes & Fair Nights as the nation also celebrated its 250th anniversary of independence.

Please see **FAIR**, page 12

Granby COA gets new director

By Ben Hernandez
Staff Writer

GRANBY – The Granby Council on Aging has a new director. An experienced outreach coordinator in Older Adult Services with a long history in case management,



Lauren Hannigan

Lauren Hannigan took the position because she loved Granby's "small-town community feel."

"I spent the last eight years in Hadley," Hannigan said. "I also really loved what I did with seniors, or older adults, and it was important to me that I could continue. Granby seemed like a really great community, so that's why I chose it."

Hannigan stated Granby really loves and appreciates their senior center, while also wanting the build-

Please see **NEW COA**, page 6

SB rules out operating use for \$340,896 in excess funds

By Melina Bourdeau
Correspondent

BELCHERTOWN – The Select Board ruled out spending \$340,896 in excess cherry sheet funds on operating expenses but delayed choosing between reserves and capital needs until it can review possible school emergencies at its Oct. 5 meeting.

The board has not decid-

ed how much, if any, of the money should go into a reserve or toward capital projects.

Town Manager Steve Williams said the allocation needs to be addressed for the November special town meeting.

If the town does not act, the funds will roll into free cash next year. Members agreed to revisit the question after school officials

provide information about possible emergency needs.

Cherry sheets are Massachusetts' annual statements of local aid and assessments, which municipalities use in preparing their budgets.

Williams told the board that Belchertown had \$340,896 in excess funds

Please see **EXCESS FUNDS**, page 4

Granby reveals tax work-off program

By Ben Hernandez
Staff Writer

GRANBY – A Senior Property Tax Work-Off Abatement program was approved by the Granby Select Board. The program, which allows eligible senior citizens and veterans to work for the town in exchange for property tax deductions, is part of an initiative to utilize skilled workers to perform needed tasks within the community.

The area is no stranger

to tax work-off programs, with Belchertown approving a similar program back in August. Participants will be paid \$15 an hour to work at town institutions for a maximum of 100 hours of allotted volunteer service, totaling a maximum abatement limit of \$15,000. The program has 10 open slots available, with selected volunteers beginning



The program is geared to help seniors with their tax bills.

Please see **TAX WORK-OFF**, page 8



TURLEY PHOTO BY BEN HERNANDEZ

A sign showcasing what the building will look like after the project is completed.

West Street project nears completion

By Ben Hernandez
Staff Writer

GRANBY – The West Street Build project is making progress. The town-wide project to renovate the former West Street School into municipal buildings will create a "one-stop" location for local government branches. Kicked off with a groundbreaking ceremony on April 28th this year, the project is nearing completion.

"Petitions are up for the largest part," Operations Project manager Neil Joyce said. "All of the rough-in inspections have been completed."

Joyce reported most of the drywall installation was complete, with the required materials having been "hung, taped and finished." Joyce mentioned the first coats of paint were applied to the walls and contractors were moving forward with other concerns.

"In terms of upcoming work in the next 60 to 80 days, we're expecting ceiling grid, flooring work, resumption of mill work and finishes in terms of painting," Joyce said. "The last of the ceiling grid will go in."

Please see **PROJECT**, page 5

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167th BELCHERTOWN FAIR

Congratulations Winners!

“STARS, STRIPES & FAIR NIGHTS”

GARY WHITLOCK
Best Presentation of Theme Decorated Booth
Youth Booth Winner: BHS Class of 2028 - Junior Class
Adult Booth Winner: Christ Community Church

GIANT PUMPKIN CONTEST
• **ADULT: First Place Giant Pumpkin:** Michael Vinsch - 327 lbs.
• **ADULT Second Place Giant Pumpkin:** Hope Guardenire
• **YOUTH First Place Giant Pumpkin:** Knox Senecal
• **YOUTH Second Place-Giant Pumpkin:** Maisie Senecal

PARADE
Judge's Award – Best Presentation of Theme: Pathfinder Regional Vocational School
Kevin Brown Founder's Award: Celebrating Creativity, Agriculture or Community Spirit - Austin Ridge Acres

Floats
1st: Tall Tree
2nd: Alegra
3rd: Austin Valley Farms
Bands
1st: Pathfinder Regional Vocational School
Marching Units (Amateur)
1st: BGA Eagle Youth Cheerleaders & Football
2nd: Footloose School of Dance
3rd: Girl Scouts
Marching Units (Professional)
1st: Company A 8th Mass Volunteer Infantry
2nd: Belchertown Fire Dept
3rd: Hampshire County Sheriff's Dept.

Antique Cars
1st: Mark Belanger
2nd: Tom Stockton
3rd: Grande Marshall
Antique Trucks
No Entries
Antique Tractors
1st: Morgan Lavalie
2nd: Zack Zawalski
3rd: aniel Austin
Antique Apparatus – No entries
1st: Belchertown Fire Dept.
Decorated Animals
1st: Oliver- BPD
2nd: Belchertown Democratic Town Committee
3rd: Girl Scouts Dog with Flag
Animals
1st: Harmony Acres Dog Training
2nd: Green Acres
3rd: Go Greene Home- Dog with Sweater

EXHIBIT HALL
Andy Michaud Apple Pie Contest
Adult: Audrey Lavigne
Helen Papp Award: Chantal Laliberte
Preston Atwood Award: Tina DeLullo
Glen Butler Award: Shannon Byrnes
E.C. Howard & Son Award: Reid Collins
Hubert & Jennie Greene Award: Russell Prouty
Les Campbell Award: Mark Shea
Bob Wilson Award: Ann Clough
Fair Cake: (Adult) Alicia Austin
(Youth) Penelope Couture
Scarecrow: (Adult) Shawn Lindholm
Elsie Waskiewicz Award: Susan Waite
PEOPLE'S CHOICE
(Adult) Sharon Kahl-Oey
(Youth) Helen Bierly
Judy Bettencourt Award: Helen Bierly
Kevin “K.B.” Brown Award: Diana Edwards
Donna Butler Award: Addi Hernandez

PULLING PONY DEMO
1st: Haley Porter with Buck & Blue Full Pull 2,100 lbs.
2nd: Addison Porter with Prince & Willey
3rd: Sienna Bowman with Bear & Kit
4th: Wyatt Ingman with Princ & Willey
5th: Sean Porter with Buck & Blue

OXEN PULLS
Overall Best Teamster Award: Colby Haskell
2400 AND UNDER
No class
2800 AND UNDER
1st: Kenny Molton with Rusty & Rock
2nd: Hunter Lucina with Pete & Trump
Best Over all Driver: Hunter Lucina
3200 AND UNDER
1st: Ken Molton Jr-with George & Junior
2nd: Ken Molton Jr with Tiny & Bill
FREE FOR ALL CLASS – OVER 3200
No class

HORSE PULLS
3300 AND UNDER
1st: Kristopher Perkins with Boomer & Playboy- Full Pull 11,000 lbs.
Best Driver in Class: Kristopher Perkins
3300 AND OVER
1st: Ben Baumann with Chief & Carl Full Pull – 11,000 Full Pull
2nd: Mike Boisseau with Max & Red
Best Driver in Class: Mike Boisseau

FROG JUMPING CONTEST
Youth
1st: Collin LaJoie
2nd: Jase Vickers
3rd: Declan Szczepanek
Adult
1st: Erin Szczepanek
2nd: Chris Cichaski
3rd: Lydia Lajoie

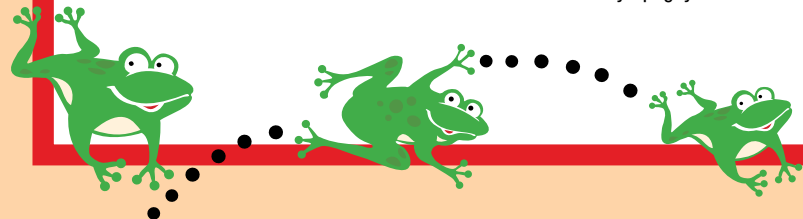
POULTRY SHOW
YOUTH
Best Standard: Kylie Liptak-Salmon Favoreie
Best Bantam: Paige Holmes-White Leghorn
Best Turkey: Loralie Backus- Red Bourbon Hen
Reserve Standard: Kylie Liptak Salmon Favorene
Reserve Bantam: Claire Austin- NB White Silky
Best WaterFowl: Jena Rose Zawalski-Pekin White
ADULT
Best Standard: Ray & Larah-Dominique Pullet
Reserve Standard: Shannon Byrnes- Blue Amerauraca
Reserve Bantam: Shannon Byrnes- Charlemont
Best Bantam: Shannon Byrnes- Charlemont
SHOWMANSHIP
Pee Wee Showmanship
1st: Russell Sprague
2nd: Bradley Sprague
Cloverbud Showmanship
1st: Claire Austin
2nd: Theo Bachand
3rd: Paige Holmes
Junior - Showmanship
1st: Mason Shattuck- Emma Massey(Tie)
2nd: Kylie Liptack-Lilly Kaczuzwka(Tie)
3rd: Leona Rodriguez
Senior Showmanship
1st: Jena Rose Zawalski
2nd: James Coty

RABBIT SHOW
Best In Show: Brielle Parker
Reserve Best in Show: Kylie Liptak
Best Showman: Brielle Parker
Outstanding Exhibitors: Kylie Liptak
Herdsmanship: Briell Porter
JUNIOR SHOWMANSHIP
1st: Brielle Parker
2nd: Kylie Liptak
3rd: Wesson Backus
4th: Andrew Mason
5th: Everett Backus
6th: Page Holmes
SENIOR SHOWMANSHIP
1st: Loralie Backus
2nd: Jamison Backus
NOVICE SHOWMANSHIP
1st: Colton Lamoreoux
2nd: Rogan Lamoreoux
CLOVERBUD SHOWMANSHIP
1st: Russell Spraguy
2nd: Bradley Spaguy

BABY CONTEST
JUDGE'S CHOICE AWARD: Luke Hodgen
Youngest
1st: Leon Hislop-Knodel
2nd: Simon S-S-W
3rd: Blaise Kraucunas
Best Smile
1st: Octavia Gilman
2nd: Parker Normand
3rd: Madeline Overgaard
Oldest
1st: Emelia Boudreau
2nd: Madeline Overgaard
3rd: Octavia Gilman
Best Hair
1st: Emelia Boudreau
2nd: John Wallin
3rd: Pearl Gamache
Happiest
1st: Leon Hislop-Knodel
2nd: Toryn Stalneckner
3rd: Madeline Overgaard
Best Cheeks
1st: Emelia Boudreau
2nd: Charlotte Couture
3rd: Leo Morris
Nicest Eyes
1st: Parker Normand
2nd: Leon Hislop-Knodel
3rd: John Wallin
Best Dressed
1st: Charlotte Couture
2nd: Hazel Griffin
3rd: Denver Choauette
Sleepiest
1st: Hazel Griffin
2nd: Riley David Boudrea
3rd: Benjamin Ely

KID'S PEDAL TRACTOR PULL – PEDAL FOR THE MEDAL
Light Class 4-5 Years Old
1st: Louisa Beechar
2nd: Tyler Charbonnet
3rd: George Souza
Medium Class 6-7 Years Old
1st: Finn Healy
2nd: Sawyer Bachand
3rd: Collin LaJoie
Major Class 8-9 Years Old
1st: Roselynn B
2nd: Lauren Souza

YOUTH BALE TOSS
AGE 4-8
Cancelled
AGE 9-13
Cancelled
BALE TOSS
POWDER PUFF
Cancelled
BOY'S NIGHT OUT
Cancelled





The old saying is “It takes a village”and this Fair is a great example of that. Mother Nature put us to the test. We have a great village!! Tent Day historically kicks off fair week on Sunday. Faced with the prospect of heavy rain we made a last-minute decision to try to put them up on Saturday. Little did we know this was not the only change of plans we had to make. The call went out and unbelievably people responded, and we had a work force to make quick work of the tents and the pulling area. With an eye to the impending weather, vendors put their tents up early. As you all know we had perfect fair weather till the weekend. Then the winds blew and we were looking for the house to drop from the sky. Despite the wind, cancelled bands, collapsed tents and pouring rain we continued. By Sunday when the Lt. Governor made a surprise visit, many vendors had left and activities were rearranged. But no surprise to us, hearty fair fans were roaming to get their rides in or have their favorite food. The 167th Fair will join the epic fair stories people tell. We hope, in spite of the challenges, you had time to enjoy our greatest community event from the fireworks to the last bit of fried dough.

THE FAIR COMMITTEE



Thank You Volunteers!

Thanks to our loyal, hardworking volunteers. Without you, none of this would happen. You are truly the backbone behind the scenes. Regardless of your ability we found a place for all of you! If we have missed your name, we are sorry. We are tired as all of you are. This amazing list is just the people who work fair week from Tents Up to tear down. There are more who work thru the year to plan this event. Thank you again and as someone reminded us... Mark your calendar, The 168 Belchertown Fair & Parade is only 51 weeks away. ACCURATE AS OF 9/19/2026

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Kyle Accuosti | Carla & David Chaisson | Sharon Marean |
| Teresa & Dean Adam | Nicholas Chaisson | Heather Mason |
| Lisa Aiken | Pierre, Erin, Cole & Devin Chevalier | Don & Lukin Matus |
| Lorraine Alves | Terry Chevalier | Vickie McAndrew |
| Bill Austin | Wendy Chevalier | Cathy Mellin Burton |
| Claire Austin | Christ Community Church | Rob Mileski |
| Chris & Stephanie Austin | Ed Comeau | Damion Nadeau |
| Dan, Loni, Bailey Austin & Savannah Westcott | Melissa Cook | Kate Nadeau |
| Mary Alice Austin | Cooper Coburn | Deb Neven |
| Jeff, Valerie & Jackie Austin | Christophr | David Nauman |
| BCTV | Jessica Courchesne | Becky Newsome |
| Sylvia Bachand | Country Bank Volunteers | Abigail Nicolson |
| Theo Bachand | David Crutchfield | Trish Nicolson |
| Jonathan Backus | Ed Drew | Meredith Normandeau |
| Everett Backus | Tamara Falcone | Mark & Cheryl Nute |
| Jamison Backus | Kristen Farmer | Bruce & Janet Officer |
| Loralei Baccus | Liliana Galesi | Sharon Orr |
| Wesson Baccus | Jim Gamboro | Rita Owczarski |
| Belchertown Select Board Office | Drew Gatesman | Jeremy Pietrowski |
| Belchertown Congregational Church | Linda Gay | Carol Pino |
| Belchertown EMS | Hope Guardenier | David & Suzanne Provonost |
| Belchertown Fire Department | Mona & Rob Griffin | Jonathan & Mandy Ritter |
| Belchertown Highway Department | Gail Gramarossa | Zachary Ritter |
| Belchertown Maintenance | Fran Henderson | Jonathan Ritter |
| Administrative Staff to Selectboard | Addi Hernandez | Mandy Ritter |
| Belchertown Police Department | Megan & Josiah Hession | Charlir Rogers |
| Belchertown 4 H | Ken Hislop | Madeline Rondeau |
| Belchertown Water – District | Amanda Hodgen | Nicole Rondeau |
| BPD K 9 program | Ike Hodgen | Alec Rose |
| Ladies of Town Hall | Jack Hodgen | Deanna Ruscio |
| Theo Bachand | Jeff Hodgen | Deborah Sacon |
| Jonathan Backus | Alex Howard | Julie Salva |
| Wesson Backus | Alani & Evan Iannoli | Mary Carmen-Salva |
| Everett Backus | Mike Jensen | Mason & Melissa Shattuck |
| Jamison Backus | Ginny Jensen | Jess Soucie |
| Laralie Backus | Karl Jensen | David Sousa |
| Wesson Backus | Lisa Kaczuwka | Steven Souza |
| Caitlin Beachell | Lillian Kaczuwka | Natalie Stebbins |
| Darene Beatty | Jackie Lafleur | Linda Sterling |
| Dan Beaudette | Dazaray Larose | Tom Stockton |
| Kari Bachand | Shawn Lindholm | Cassie Syriac |
| Marianne Bodzinski | Peg & Lew Louraine | Linda Tsoumas |
| Garry Bock | Kaleb Lane | Erin Thibault |
| Lauren & Devin Bock | Zack Lane | Boy Scout Troop 64 |
| Damien Bourgeois | Amanda Landry | Dana Volungis |
| Gary & Sandy Brougham | Sonia Landry | Linda Weston |
| Cindy Brown | Kerri Laurenzo | Debbie Whidden |
| Meredith Brown | Lynda Lewis | ML Wilson |
| Tom & Nancy Brown | Dennis Liptak | Diahann Wimmer |
| Scott Brown | Jessie Liptak | Linda Tsoumas |
| Dana Burton | Kylie Liptack | UMASS Baseball Team |
| Colleen Butler | Dakota Lofland | Carrie & Kevin Vickers |
| Donna Butler | Katherine Lofland | Jase Vickers |
| Ron Carriveau | Lydia Lajoie | Linda Weston |
| | Caleb Lane | Graham Wojtowicz |
| | Alex Loss | Jeff Zawalski |
| | Hollie Rainard-Loss | Jena Rose Zawalski |
| | Brian Mailhot | Zachary Zawalski |



2026 Fair SPONSORS

Without the generous support of these individuals and businesses, this event would not be possible. We say it often but it is TRUE. They continually support this event and the Belchertown Community. Please THANK THEM by supporting them when you are able.

- In Kind Service**
- Amherst Copy & Designworks
 - Atkins Farms
 - Austin Brothers Valley Farm
 - Austin Ridge Acres
 - BCTV Parade
 - Belchertown 4H
 - Belchertown Police K9 Program
 - Belchertown United Church of Christ, BUCC
 - BHS Band
 - Chicopee High School Color Guard
 - Garry Bock
 - Gary & Sandy Brougham
 - Lloyd Butler Jr. Trucking, Inc.
 - Boy Scout Troop 64
 - Terry Chevalier
 - Christ Community Church
 - Cold Spring Orchard
 - Devon Lane
 - Scott Dubey
 - Fanelli Amusements
 - Fantastic Farmers 4H Club
 - First Student Bussing
 - GTB Design
 - Harmony Acres Dog Training
 - Ken Hislop
 - Hodgen Landscaping
 - Amanda Hodgen & Steve Souza
 - Hope United Methodist Church
 - Impact Fire Equipment
 - Jared Lauziere & Shoshin Ryu Martial Arts
 - Peg Louraine
 - Brian Mailhot
 - Maple Leaf Pub
 - Meredith Normandeau
 - Mark & Cheryl Nute
 - Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical School
 - Quabbin Valley Rabbit Breeders
 - Quality Fleet Service
 - Servpro
 - Shedworks
 - Snow Storage Unit
 - Tall Tree
 - UMASS EMTs

- Judges Choice Award**
- Bell & Hudson Insurance Agency
 - Friends of the Fair
 - Industrial Technical Services, Inc
 - Spectrum
 - TruNorth Bank
 - Window World-Pulling Area

- Best of Show**
-  For Business. For Living. For You.

- Don's Auto Service
- Ed Drew
- Drew Gatesman
- McCarthy's Pub
- Stadler Ace Hardware

- Blue Ribbon**
- Cindy Brown
 - Hulmes Associates
 - Mill Valley Vet Clinic
 - Pelham Auto Service
 - Tom & Nancy Brown
 - Turley Publications, The Sentinel

- Red Ribbon**
- Beers & Story Funeral Homes
 - Jim & Donna Boyko
 - Mill Valley Snowmobile Club
 - Mill Valley Splicing
 - New England Wound Care

- White Ribbon**
- Teresa & Dean Adam
 - Elizabeth Boyko
 - Boyko Landscaping
 - Linda Gay
 - Interstate Battery
 - Shawn Lindholm
 - Randall's Farm
 - North Brookfield Savings Bank
 - Station 5 Salon
 - Tilton Automotive

SPONSORS of SHRINERS

The Shriners have been missed in past years. There is a sponsorship fee to have them come to any parade. This year Amanda Hodgen assumed the task of making this happen. The businesses listed contributed to ensure that you would have the opportunity of seeing their antics. They are some of the loyal sponsors of other events in town. Please share a BIG THANK YOU when you see them.

- Don's Auto Service
- DF Plumbing
- Devon Lane Farm Supply
- Alix & Sons Computer Inc.
- HTS Ltd.
- Westover Auto Salvage
- Bay Road Inspection Station, LLC
- Complete Septic Service, LLC
- S.T. Hulmes & Sons
- Quabbin Valley Acupuncture
- Green Acres Equestrian Center, LLC
- Mill Valley Splicing

- Hodgen Landscape Co, Inc.
- Mill Valley Snowmobile Club, Inc.
- Kim's Pet Grooming
- Amy's Landscaping
- Mill Valley Veterinary Clinic
- Belchertown Eyecare & Sunglass Shop, Inc.
- McCarthy's Pub
- J. G. Austin Services
- Quabbin Well & Pump
- Village Package & General Store
- Quality Fleet Services, Inc.

COMMUNITY

‘Like new’ book sale at CML

BELCHERTOWN—The Friends of Clapp Memorial Library are having a book sale of “Like New” books on Saturday Oct. 10. This will take place from 9:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. in the main room of the library. Hundreds of adult fiction and nonfiction works will be up for sale as well as selected young adult books and some non-reader children’s books. These gift quality books will have copyright dates less than 4 years old and will all be priced from \$1 to \$5. Buy like new books at significantly low prices for yourself or your family. Remember the holidays are coming and books are the best gift you can give to everyone on your list.

Friends of the CML annual meeting Oct. 15

BELCHERTOWN—Renovations in the Clapp Memorial Library basement are moving right along as are the Friends plans for Book Sales in 2027. Now is your chance to get in on the action and be a part of future Book Sales. The Friends will hold their Annual Meeting on Thursday, Oct. 15 at 7 p.m. on the main floor of the library. They will elect several Board officers including President, Vice President, Treasurer, Recording Secretary, and Membership Secretary (each for a 2-year term) plus up to 3 at large board members (1-year terms). Position descriptions can be found at friends-of-clapplibrary.org. All are welcome to attend and be heard.

Belchertown Cultural Council now accepting grant applications

BELCHERTOWN—The Belchertown Cultural Council (BCC) is now accepting applications for Fiscal Year 2027 grants supporting local arts, humanities, and science programming in town. The BCC is part of the Local Cultural Council Program, the largest grassroots cultural funding network in the country. Each year, the Massachusetts Cultural Council distributes state funding to 351 local and regional councils, including the BCC, who then regrant that money to support cultural programs and projects in their own communities. Individuals, groups, and organizations are all eligible to apply. Funding can support a wide range of activities, including field trips, artist residencies, community events, public art, performances, and other programs in the arts, humanities, and sciences that benefit Belchertown. The Fiscal Year 2027 application window opens Sept. 1, 2026 and closes Oct. 15, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.. Full eligibility requirements and step-by-step instructions are available on the Local Cultural Council application process page at massculturalcouncil.org. Applications must be submitted through the Massachusetts Cultural Council’s online grants management system; paper and mailed applications cannot be accepted. The Massachusetts Cultural Council is also hosting a virtual info session (webinar) on the Local Cultural Council application process on Sept. 10, 2026 at 6 p.m. No travel is required, and the session is

open to anyone interested in applying for the first time or with questions about the process. “We’re excited to open another grant cycle and support the artists and organizations that make Belchertown’s cultural life so vibrant,” said Mel Donovan, Chair of the Belchertown Cultural Council. “The info session is a great way to get your questions answered before you start your application, and BCC members are always happy to help too.” Local BCC members are also available to answer questions throughout the application period. Residents can visit the Belchertown Cultural Council page at belchertown.org/bcc to learn more, find contact information, and access the application.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Fair boys

These boys worked hard all weekend, setting weights, raking, for the Horse and oxen pulls. The next generation learning from the previous. Left to right. First row, Jack Hodgen, Zachery Ritter, Jacob O’Connor, Nicholas Hodgen. Back row, Davis Sousa, Bradley Ritter and Landen O’Connor.

St. Francis of Assisi announces Scramble Golf Tournament

Proceeds to support new parish center

BELCHERTOWN—St. Francis of Assisi Parish is excited to announce its upcoming Scramble Golf Tournament to raise funds for the construction of a new Parish Center on their Jabish Street campus. The tournament will take place at Cold Spring Country Club in Belchertown on Oct. 17, with registration check-in beginning at 7:30 a.m. and a shotgun start at 8:30 a.m. Pre-registration is required. This event is made possible thanks to the generosity of our Platinum Sponsor: Window World of Western Mass. Participants will enjoy a day of golf, including a continental breakfast and lunch. The entry fee is \$150 per person or \$600 per foursome, which covers golf, cart, and

lunch. In addition to some exciting playing prizes, the tournament will feature a \$10,000 hole-in-one prize. Local businesses are encouraged to consider sponsoring a tee or green, with sponsorship information available on the tournament entry form. Entry forms can be found on the St. Francis of Assisi Parish website at Sfrancisbelchertown.com, as well as at Cold Spring Country Club, the Gathering Space at St. Francis Church, the parish office on Park Street, and Bell & Hudson Insurance Agency. Join us for a day of fun, fellowship, and fundraising to support our community’s new Parish Center. For more information contact James Phaneuf, Tournament Director, Tel. 413-219-3874, Jrphaneuf55@gmail.com

Deadline to register to vote Oct. 24

BELCHERTOWN—From the Town Clerk, the deadline to register to vote in the upcoming November 3, 2026 State Election is Saturday, Oct. 24, 2026. Be sure to check your voter registration status ahead of time at www.mass.gov and put “check voter registration status” in the search bar. If it shows that you are inactive, please contact the Town Clerk’s Office to update your status prior to the election. The reason voters show as inactive is because the Town did not receive a signed census for 2026. If you return your signed census each year, your voter status will remain active, and you will avoid having to

complete additional forms at the time of voting. You can register to vote online at www.registertovote-ma.com. The State has mailed out the red “Information for Voters” booklets to all voters in the State. This booklet explains all 9 questions that will appear on the Nov. 3rd ballot. The last page of this booklet has a tear out sheet where you can mark your responses ahead of time. You are welcome to bring this voter checklist with you to vote, to help complete the ballot quicker. For the first time, Belchertown will have a

2-page ballot. Not just a 2-sided ballot, but 2 separate pages. We do anticipate it taking voters longer to mark their ballots in the voting booths and are hoping to shorten the time if everyone comes prepared to vote, instead of seeing the questions for the first time on election day. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the Town Clerk’s Office at 413-323-0281 or email clerk@belchertown.org. Be sure to follow us on Facebook for up-to-the-minute information.”



St. Nicholas Craft Fair to take place Nov. 14

LUDLOW—Christ the King Rosary Sodality’s St. Nicholas Craft Fair will be held Saturday, Nov. 14 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Christ the

King Parish Center located at 41 Warsaw Avenue in Ludlow. They will be hosting talented vendors along with a 50-50

Raffle and various gift raffles. A light luncheon, drinks and desserts available for sale. All are welcome to join the festivities.

EXCESS FUNDS

from page 1 available and outlined several possible destinations: free cash, reserves, capital projects or operating expenses. The board reached a decision on one point: the money would not go toward operating expenses. But members did not settle whether the full amount should go into reserves, be directed to capital or be divided among those options. The discussion reflected different concerns about keeping funds flexible versus dedicating them to long-term needs. Select Board member Nicole Miner said she had previously favored sending the money to capital projects but was reconsidering

after hearing from the town accountant and Finance Committee Chairman Brian Gibbons. She said the town could not assume it would have another year like the most recent one. Miner said she was concerned that putting all the money into reserves could make it harder for the town to build up its capital funding. “I’m worried about putting everything into reserves because I feel like once it’s there, it just stays there so that we can meet our percentage,” she said. “I feel like we’ll never make a true effort to start funding the capital account that we created.” She also noted that the schools had returned money to the town after a reduction in health insurance costs and said their needs should be

part of the discussion. Williams said a general stabilization reserve could be used for capital or other town needs, while money placed in a capital stabilization fund would be restricted to capital purposes. Gibbons described that flexibility as a reason to favor general stabilization. “My personal feeling is, if we put it all in capital stabilization, it’s handcuffed to capital stabilization,” he said. “If it goes to stabilization, it can be used for capital, or it can be used for whatever else the town needs.” The town already has other sources for capital projects, Williams said, including \$500,000 annually from the override and a portion of free cash. He clarified that the proposed use of the excess

cherry sheet funds would be separate from those commitments. A capital reserve, he said, could help the town save toward larger projects or reduce the need to borrow. Williams also outlined potential town expenses for board members to consider, including replacement radios for police cruisers and a compensation and job-description review. He said the police radios could become obsolete and that delaying a vehicle purchase could increase its cost. The compensation review, estimated at \$42,000, would not qualify as a capital expense under the town’s guidelines. Those items were presented for discussion, not approved for funding. Williams said the board needed to consider the

schools’ requests before deciding. He suggested that school officials could identify an emergency capital need, such as a boiler failure, and that the board could then decide whether some money should be set aside for immediate needs. Members also discussed how much the town’s stabilization balance would change if the funds were added. Town Accountant Jill Messier said the town’s general stabilization fund would be at about 4.7% under one scenario. The board asked questions about how stabilization and capital stabilization accounts are managed, including how interest is handled. By the end of the discussion, members agreed to wait for the schools’ information

and continue the conversation at the Oct. 5 meeting. Williams said he would be prepared to discuss the police radios and compensation review in more detail. The November special town meeting warrant includes an article related to the funds, but its details were expected to depend on the board’s later decision. The board’s agreement not to use the money for operating expenses narrowed the options, but the allocation itself remained unresolved. Chair Whitney Jorns-Kuhnlenz summarized the decision. “It sounds like we are tabling, waiting for the schools to come back with their emergency needs, and then we will make plan and vote on it,” she said.

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The Granby Cultural Council Sponsors Granby Preservation Society's Ms. Valentine Memory Tree Ornament Event

Come help us make ornaments for Kellogg Hall former teacher Ms. Valentine Gallup's Memory Tree on the front lawn. This event is for all ages.

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Info: fundraising@granbypreservationsociety.org

■ GRANBY

Craft fair set for Oct. 12

GRANBY—Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Granby, Mass. is having a Craft Fair on Monday, Oct. 12 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

In addition to over 50 vendors, there will be basket raffles, a Lottery Tree Raffle, as well as breakfast & lunch available.

Stop in, say hello & support small local businesses, and get some Christmas shopping done. Immaculate Heart of Mary is located at 256 State St. in Granby, Mass.

Granby Free Public Library’s new afternoon book club

GRANBY—Join us for a friendly, relaxed, afternoon book club at the Granby Free Public Library. The group will meet monthly, every third Tuesday of the month at 2 p.m. to discuss various genres of fiction.

Group members will vote on titles they would like to read in advance.

Upcoming books are made available at the library in multiple formats - regular print, large print and audiobook. For the Oct. 20 meeting, the book choice is “The Briar Club” by Kate Quinn, stop by the library for a copy.

Afternoon book groups combine the joy of reading with the benefits of conversation, community, and personal enrichment, making them a rewarding way to spend time and connect with others.

The Granby Free Public Library is located at 297 E State St., Granby, MA 01033.

Visit www.granbylibrary.org for more information.

October happenings at the Granby Free Public Library

- Sci-Fi and Fantasy Book Club**

Thursday, Oct. 1 at 5 p.m.

Join our discussions on the first Thursday of every month! Red City by Marie Liu for October.

Vincent van Gogh’s Iris: Learn to Pastel Paint with Gregory Maichack Saturday, Oct. 3 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

No experience required! Learn to pastel paint with us. Space is limited – Sign-up!
- Adult Book Group**

Thursday, Oct. 8 at 6 p.m.
- Tabletop Games Club**

Thursday, Oct. 8 at 5 p.m. and Saturday, Oct. 17 at 10:30 a.m.

Players of all ages 8 and up to are invited gather and enjoy a variety of board, card, dice, tile, and other in-person tabletop games with us!
- The Trial of Lizzie Borden**

Thursday, Oct. 15 at 5:30
- Knitting Group**

Every Wednesday afternoon at 2 p.m.

Bring your latest project and join us for conversation, tips and tricks.
- Halloween Family Book Bingo**

Thursday, Oct. 22 at 6 p.m.
- All ages are welcome! Come play bingo to win free books and enjoy some spooky treats.
- Sourdough Starter Workshop with Sourdough Brandon**

Thursday, Oct. 29 at 6 p.m.

Space is limited – Sign-Up!

Friends of the Granby Library Meeting Thursday, Oct. 22 at 4:30 p.m.

Visit our website for more information and to sign up for our programs! www.granbylibrary.org

PROJECT from page 1

Joyce stated they secured “supplemental vendors” for necessary information technology work, such as running data cables and computer “head-end equipment” installation within the dedicated IT room, which installations scheduled to start within the “next 30 days” and expressed hope for project conclusion in December.

“We’re sort of staring down the barrel of the finishes aspect of the project,” Joyce said.

Joyce mentioned site work still required a “little bit of prep work.” Current projections expect paving to take place between “now and the middle of October.” Preparations include spreading loam, seeding and handling “disturbed areas.” Restoration work is expected to complete by the either the first or middle of November, with everything “buttoned up and ready to go for December.”

“As a cost savings, their highway [department] is going to be doing the paving but they will probably only get a rough coat in until the spring,” Joyce said. The coat in question is what’s referred to as a “binder coat,” which serves as the structural load-bearing asphalt layer.

Joyce reported the construction team has installed new windows, which are now visible from outside the premises. Paint work is also completed, a recent development Joyce said “looks really good up.”

“We have pretty much isolated and selected all of the technology vendors for the project,” Joyce said. “We did



The building is nearing completion of its renovations.



Tech installations will be starting soon on the project.

a transfer of contingency of \$61,185 to cover the expected shortfall in what was originally budget versus what will actually be spent at the conclusion of the work.”

The operations project manager stated the change was already reflected in the budget and provided additional construction figures. There have been seven change orders with the contractor to date, with a total cost of just under \$300,000 as of this writing. With

\$2.8 million left in the project budget, Joyce reported

they expected to use all of it “when the time comes.”

“It reflected modifications and changes to the electrical, as well as some minor structural repairs that were done inside the building,” Joyce said.

Cited structural repairs and modifications included electrical baseboard heating provisions in the electric room, provisions for the fire pump exhaust, power and data work performed at the mill work service counters.

“I’m pretty proud of this project,” Joyce said.

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OPINION

SOCIAL SECURITY Matters

By Russell Gloor

Mom worries daughter making bad Social Security decision

Dear Rusty:

My question is not for me, but for my daughter who is 62 years old.

She does not want to take her Social Security now. Her husband was a doctor and passed away recently. She had been married to him for more than 10 years and, in the meantime, he married someone else.

I thought the President erased taxes on earned money so that people could collect what was due them no matter what they earned.

My daughter keeps telling me she has already earned too much this year and cannot collect her widow's benefits until next year. I don't understand what no tax on Social Security means then.

Also, she wants to wait until she is 67 before she collects her own money. She has been a nurse and believes her own benefits may be larger than her widow's benefits. Is she correct to wait for that long? Signed: Worried Mom

Dear Worried Mom:

Your daughter is likely correct. There are two factors which come into play in your daughter's circumstance – one is the Annual Earnings Test (for those collecting early SS benefits), and the other relates to Federal income tax on SS benefits received. I'll try to clarify both of these for you:

If your daughter claims her widow's benefit at age 62, her benefit will be significantly reduced by approximately 20+% from what she would get at her SS full retirement age, and that would be a permanent reduction.

And, if she works, which you imply she does, she would also be subject to Social Security's Annual Earnings Test which limits how much she can earn by working prior to reaching her SS Full Retirement Age, which is age 67).

The earnings limit for 2026 is \$24,480 (changes yearly) and, if her annual 2026 earnings exceed that amount, Social Security will take away \$1 of benefits for every \$2 she is over the annual limit.

For example, if she is \$25,000 over the limit, SS would take way benefits equal to \$12,500. That would mean she wouldn't get any SS benefits for the remainder of this year and likely some of next year also. And, if her earnings are significantly more than the annual limit, she may even be temporarily ineligible to receive a widow's benefit (until she either reaches her FRA or earns less money).

FYI, the Annual Earnings Test will go away when your daughter reaches age 67 but, until then, the AET will likely restrict her ability

to receive Social Security benefits if she continues to work full time.

The next factor to be aware of is the so-called "One Big Beautiful Bill," which the President claimed means "no tax on Social Security." This is an entirely different factor than the Annual Earnings Test described above.

The above AET discussion dealt with SS earnings limits while taking benefits before FRA, whereas the OBBB deals with income tax on Social Security benefits actually received.

The OBBB (enacted last year) provides an extra \$6,000 deduction per person on the tax return filed with the IRS for those 65 years of age or older. That extra IRS deduction is expected to offset either totally or partially any income tax which is levied on Social Security benefits received by those age 65 or older. It's also important to know that the OBBB only provides temporary income tax relief, because the law expires after the 2028 income tax year.

All of which leads me to conclude that your daughter's decision to wait longer to claim her widow's benefit from her deceased ex-husband is a prudent choice. As long as she is working and earning more than the annual earnings limit before age 67, the AET will restrict how much Social Security she is able to receive. If she later stops working or goes to part-time employment, she can revisit her decision at that time. And, depending on her own personally earned Social Security benefit amount at age 67 (vs. her widow's benefit), she can assess whether to claim her personal SS retirement benefit or to, instead, claim her benefit as her ex-husband's widow if that amount is larger than her own SS retirement. And, unless Congress later extends the OBBB prior to 2029, she will, at that time, likely need to pay income tax on the Social Security benefits she receives.

The Association Mature Citizens Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. This article is intended for information purposes and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the Association Mature Citizens Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association. To submit a question, visit amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.



COLUMN

Reclaiming peace in the forest

By Julie Midura

I recently went on a solo backpacking trip.

Not by choice. Not to face my fears or challenge my courage.

Rather, because my favorite hiking partner is temporarily sidelined due to a torn rotator cuff. And with several grandchildren going through significant health challenges, the worry, helplessness, and endless stream of uncertainty was beginning to feel heavier than my heart could carry.

I found myself needing the quiet that only an overnight stay in the forest can provide. I needed the fresh air. The company of trees. The steady rhythm of my feet hitting dirt.

So in spite of my hesitation at spending a night alone in the woods, I packed up the gear that Tom and I would normally split between the two of us, and I drove to the Berkshires.

When I arrived at the trailhead on the Appalachian Trail, I shouldered my heavy backpack and began walking.

For seven hours I moved with purpose. With the urgency of someone trying to outrun something.

And perhaps I was. Each step was taking me further from the noise of the world and inviting me into a

place where harmony reigns.

A place where the air feels lighter and the earth feels softer. A place where nature holds me as surely as the

heavens hold the sun in its rightful place in the sky.

I chose to do this trip solo not to feel strong or capable. Rather, to give myself space to breathe...and maybe even to heal some of the parts of me that feel broken.

For the short time I am here, I will allow nature to carry the things I can no longer bear.

At 5:30 p.m. – after hiking 12 miles – I stopped and pitched my tent. Filtered water. Sat beneath the trees with my feet immersed in a cold stream and watched the water curl around my toes.

I ducked into my tent just as the skies opened up in a deluge. I read a book while droplets of water exploded on the rain fly.

When darkness settled in, I prayed for my family. I wept. Then I fell asleep from exhaustion.

It's now 6:30 a.m. I'm lying on my back in my orange two-person tent. A crow is screeching overhead.

Morning light is filtering through the swaying canopy of trees above me, causing leaf-shaped shadows to dance on the fabric of my tent.

I lie still in the warmth of

my bright green, down sleeping bag. Outside of my tent, the forest is alive and breathing.

Unconcerned. Unhurried. Unworried. Simply existing.

For a moment, I close my eyes and allow myself the freedom to do the same.

I know that my wet and muddy tent will be heavier on the hike out. But my heart already feels lighter.

Sometimes being strong for everyone else means recognizing when you need to step away for a little while and take care of your own heart, too. Because you can't pour from an empty cup.

I've taken these days for myself not because I don't care, but because I care so deeply that I needed somewhere to put all of these emotions for a little while.

Be assured, going into the woods doesn't erase every burden. But it does reframe them.

I will most assuredly come home with the same circumstances I left with. But perhaps I will carry them differently.

Perhaps my thoughts will be clearer and a bit less crowded.

At the very least, maybe I will return home with a little more peace, a little more strength, and a heart that feels somewhat more prepared to face whatever comes next.

Onward!

Follow Tom and Julie's hiking adventures on Instagram @morethanthe-mountain.



Garden scurrying

The forecast of a September nor'easter certainly had everyone scurrying about.

Instead of running to the grocery store for necessities, I headed straight to the garden to tidy up a few things. With visions of air-borne pots, soggy containers of compost and ruined produce dancing in my head I got right to work.

First to check off my list was digging up the potatoes. The stems had died down on two of my three rows over two weeks ago and I didn't want the spuds sitting in impending mud when they could be curing somewhere safe and sound.

Speaking of curing, it is important to be intentional with this step, so that your potatoes will be edible well into the winter months. Curing potatoes properly will help to prevent rot, premature sprouting, and toxic greening of the skin and flesh.

By waiting a week or more after the plant has died before digging up the tubers, the skins will thicken and be



less prone to injury during harvest. Once they are dug, a week spent in a cool and totally dark space will further firm their skin and change sugars to starch, completing the ripening process.

Never wash potatoes prior to storage! Gently brush off dirt and store in a single layer in the darkness at 55-60 degrees.

Darkness will prevent greening, which renders potatoes inedible. Use any pitch-forked or shovel-marked spuds first, as damage to the skin will invite rot.

Once the potatoes were out of the ground, I applied a two-three inch layer of composted manure and lime to the plot, then worked it in to the soil.

I won't be planting potatoes there next year other

wise I would have stayed away from both amendments.

After that, I got to task number two, planting a cover crop in the empty ground. I figured with rain coming over the course of three days it would be off to a great start. In the big garden, where I can use my tiller, I sow winter rye.

It will start growing now, hold the soil in place over the winter, then, as spring ensues, it will grow tall and go to seed. Typically you mow it down or incorporate it into the soil before it gets too big.

Winter rye adds so much organic matter to the garden. Be sure to give the grass time to break down before planting into it; chopping it up/

Please see GARDEN, page 15

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This newspaper will print free self-submitted statements of candidacy only four weeks or more out from the election. All candidates running in both contested and uncontested races are asked to submit their statements to the editor to include only biographical and campaign platform details. Total word count for statements is limited to between 300-500 words maximum. Please include a photo. We will not publish any statements of candidacy inside the four weeks from election threshold. To publish any other campaign publicity during the race, please contact our advertising representatives. We also do not allow personal attacks against other candidates or political parties in statements of candidacy, nor do we publish for free any information about key endorsements or political fundraisers.

Letters to the editor of no more than 250 words from supporters endorsing specific candidates or discussing campaign issues are limited to three total per author during the election season. No election letters will appear in the final edition before the election. We reserve the right to edit all statements of candidacy and letters to the editor to meet our guidelines.

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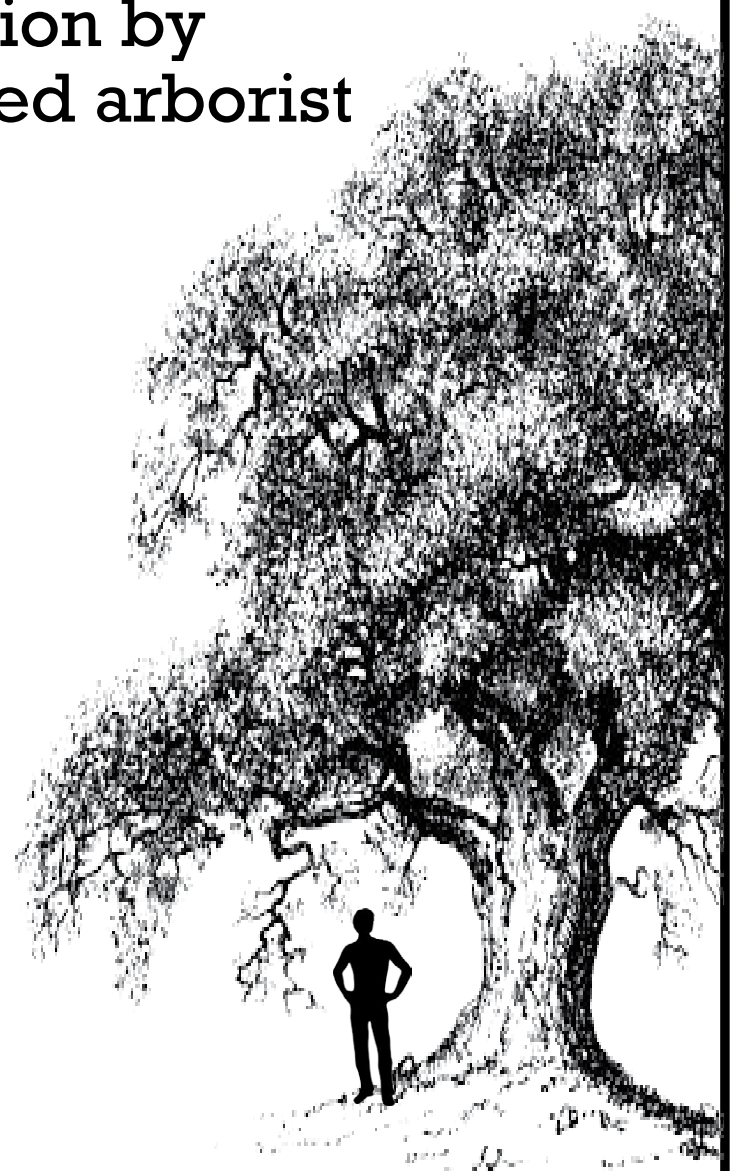


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INSURED AND CERTIFIED

■ BUSINESS

Local candle business opens store

By Ben Hernandez
Staff Writer

BELCHERTOWN – Barton Beeswax Candles company owner Melissa Hibler is no stranger to candles. A lifelong candle enjoyer, Hibler stated the business idea was born after the family identified a need for cleaner-burning candles after making major household lifestyle changes prompted what they used at home.

“I would light a candle after cleaning the house, give them as gifts for the holidays and almost always had one burning at home,” Hibler said. “Over time, though, I started noticing black smoke and marks on the ceiling. It made me stop and think; we were making all these other changes, but what were we actually breathing in the air inside our home?”

Determined to create cleaner-burning and more hygienic candles, the family-owned business began in December 2023. By the middle of January 2024, the family began experimenting with different waxes and wick sizes to determine the ideal formula.

“I enjoyed it so much I decided to turn it into a business,” Hibler said.

After several years working farmer’s markets, the Belchertown resident is now opening a brick-and-mortar location for her candle-making business. The store is projected to open between late October and early November. A 20-year resident of Belchertown, Hibler reported the brand’s name was created by her family to capture their love for Belchertown. Barton is a ref-



A selection of wax and wicks for more hands-on customers.

erence to Barton Avenue, the street on which her family lives.

“We truly love our town,” Hibler said. “So it felt right to have that connection be part of our name.”

The family joined Belchertown and Amherst farmer’s markets as full-time vendors in 2024 and became a staple booth in both the summer and fall seasons. She reported the company is also a full-time vendor in both the Forest Park and Easthampton markets during the winter.

“Giving back and supporting our community has always been important to us,” Hibler said. “We have used our business to support Fall Fest and projects like Lake Wallace by creating special candles and donating proceeds from them last year.”

Since beginning the busi-



An assortment of sand for sand art candle creations sold at the Belchertown Fair.

ness, Barton Beeswax Candles has participated in hundreds of craft events and vendor fairs around the area. Hibler stated she divides her weekends between herself and her husband to attend more than 12 events a month, including the annual Belchertown fair. 2026 will mark their third year in attendance as a vendor.



Business owner Melissa Hibler poses with her creations.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY
BEN HERNANDEZ



Examples of handmade candles.

Barton Beeswax Candles has also supported Better Together Dog Rescue and to help ease financial hardships for two local Belchertown families battling cancer. Candles are also held at Rannsaka’s in Belchertown, with 100% of the proceeds going back to fund the gift shop’s (verify) charity work.

“One of our first local collaborations was with

Shattuck’s Sugarhouse here in Belchertown,” Hibler said. “And it remains especially meaningful to me. We went back and forth trying to create the perfect fragrance, one that truly captured that wonderful maple smell you experience when you walk in.”

The newest brand project is to create a small candle shop on the family’s proper-

ty. The shed on location will be transformed into a “little store,” with most of the necessary work performed by the family themselves. The new shop will carry more than 50 fragrances and will allow a new way for people to experience their products.

“Working on it together has made the process even more special,” Hibler said.

NEW COA from page 1

ing to be a “vibrant place.” Older adults, Hannigan stated, brought a vast array of knowledge to the community.

“It’s really important that the space is theirs, that they are able to come here for socialization, for programming and for meals,” Hannigan said. “It’s just a really great place.”

Just a month into the position, Hannigan has already hit the floor running. She’s in the works of planning an upcoming Oktoberfest, complete with music and food, as well as a vaccine clinic scheduled for October. She also has a hand in the local senior center newsletter, which is slated for an October release as well.

“This is my first time act-

ing as a director,” Hannigan said. “So I feel like I’m going to learn as I go.”

This is not to say she doesn’t have extensive experience in executive administration. A seasoned outreach and transportation coordinator in Hadley, she was responsible in tackling difficult responsibilities, such as navigating supplemental food services and handling transportation logistics.

“I did a lot with Mass Health, SNAP, which is what we now call Food Stamps,” Hannigan said. “I worked with a couple of different food programs and a lot of housing concerns.”

Hannigan has always worked in social services. She’s been a Massachusetts since 2018 and is a University of Massachusetts graduate. With a spouse



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Front shot of the Granby Senior Center, which is also the Council-on-Aging building.

from Western Massachusetts, the new director reported she always had ties with the local community.

“I really want to be available to the Granby

Senior Center community,” Hannigan said. “I want people to feel like their voices are heard and that they will get support with their needs. Social services have always been important to me

because I am a firm believer in aging in place.”

She intends to be a support system for older adults, as well as serving to make the Council on Aging an invaluable service to those wishing to age in place. Hannigan also took the opportunity to mention a number of classes provided by the CoA designed to promote healthy advanced aging. She also mentioned there were Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone program resources available at the senior center.

“There are social events like quilting, Canasta, cross-stitching; places for the 60 and over community to come in and be a part of,” Hannigan said. “We have a SHINE and outreach counselor here who helps with things like health insurance

and guides people through processes that might be new and challenging to them.”

Her long-term goals are to foster a comfortable and welcoming environment which allows residents to feel they can reach for help. In addition, she wants to further education of available resources and to ensure those resources are available for those who need them.

“I would like the Granby Council on Aging to continue to be a welcoming place where people 60 and over can come to get the services they need. I want them to feel like their voices are heard,” Hannigan said. “If there are people who have never been to our building, I would love for them to check it out, stop by and say hi.”

NOTICE

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MASSHEALTH ACCEPTED

TAX WORK-OFF

from page 1

their community service on January 1st. Those eligible for the position may submit a filled out application to the Granby Select Board by December 2nd for consideration.

Eligible seniors must be

at least 60 years old at the time of application and must provide a certified copy of their birth certificate to be considered for the program. Veterans must provide a proof of military service to be considered eligible. All applicants must pass a Criminal Offender Record Information check to receive

a position and also provide two references in addition to their application.

Seniors or veterans must also be a Granby resident and homeowner residing in town limits for a minimum of five years, with only one abatement allowed per fiscal year for the property. Applicants must not make

above a certain limit based on the number of people living in their household, which are listed below:

- 1 Person: \$63,840 (Monthly limit: \$5,320)
- 2 People: \$86,560 (Monthly limit: \$7,213)
- 3 People: \$109,280 (Monthly limit: \$9,107)
- 4 People: \$132,000 (Monthly limit: \$11,000)
- 5 People: \$154,720 (Monthly limit: \$12,893)
- 6 People: \$177,440 (Monthly limit: \$14,787)
- 7 People: \$200,160 (Monthly limit: \$16,680)
- 8 People: \$222,880 (Monthly limit: \$18,573)

An additional annual limit of \$22,728 is added for each subsequent person above an eight person household, with a monthly limit of \$1,894 also added per person. For further information on this program, please contact the Council on Aging in Granby for the application or print the application from the website at <https://www.granby-ma.gov/formsandpermits>.

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Orioles offense explodes at Ludlow



Coleman Longley attempts a pass.

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

LUDLOW—Belchertown football coach Keith LeBeau was expecting his team to perform well in last Thursday night’s non-league game at Ludlow. It wound up being the type of performance that every coach dreams about.

The Orioles offense scored six touchdowns, and the defense posted its second shutout of the season leading to a 53-0 victory over the Lions at the Ludlow Sports Complex.

“We had a short week of practice, but everything just clicked for us in tonight’s game,” said LeBeau following the game. “We just need to continue to keep improving each week.”

The Orioles (3-0), who have outscored their first three opponents, 135-12, posted a 48-26 home win against the Lions (0-3) a year ago.

“We have a swarming defense this year,” LeBeau added. “Last year, our defense gave up a lot of big plays, which we’re trying not to do this year. Ludlow likes to throw the ball a lot, but we didn’t allow them to get very many yards.”

Belchertown won the pre-game coin toss and elected to receive the opening kickoff. The Orioles opening



Raiden Drouin looks to get around a Ludlow defender after getting a reception.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

series lasted just five plays. The drive, which covered 70 yards, ended when senior quarterback Coleman Longley completed a 14-yard touchdown pass to junior Grayden Kendall, who made a diving catch in the right corner of the endzone with 7:56 left in the first quarter.

The extra point attempt by junior Killian Olszewski was blocked.

Olszewski recovered a fumble at midfield on the ensuing kickoff leading to a seven play scoring drive, which was capped off with a one yard TD pass to junior Chase Ptaszkievicz.

This time, Olszewski made the first of his four PAT’s giving the visiting team a 13-0 advantage with 3:38 left

Please see **ORIOLES**, page 10

B-Town girls soccer edged by visiting Chaug

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

BELCHERTOWN— One of the seven seniors for Minnechaug Regional girls’ varsity soccer is Ainsley Holden. She was a starting defender in the first five matches of the regular season.

When the Lady Falcons faced Coombs Division rival Belchertown for the first time this fall, Holden found herself in a new starting role, moving from defense to the center midfield position.

The decision, which was made by longtime Minnechaug head coach Nundi Goncalves, paid off in the end.

The contest was tied with a little more than 10 minutes remaining in regulation when Holden scored a corner kick goal lifting her team to a thrilling 3-2 road victory over the Lady Orioles, last Tuesday afternoon (Sept. 22).

“I wouldn’t have been able to score the game winning goal without the help of my teammates,” said Holden, who scored the second goal of her varsity career. “This is a very big win for us, especially after we lost at Pope Francis last week.”

The Lady Falcons game winning goal began with sophomore Brooklyn Manning taking the kick from the left corner. The ball was headed inside the box by Minnechaug senior Katelyn Hoar before it deflected off a Belchertown player. It then bounced to Holden who poked a shot into the back of the net past freshman goalie Ava Stelmokas (4 saves).

“I’ve been playing defense so far this season, but I was

switched to center mid for today’s game,” Holden added. “I was just in the right place to score the goal. I also scored a corner kick goal last season against Douglas.”

It was the first time that the Lady Falcons (5-1) played a match on a grass field this season.

“Soccer is a completely different game on a grass field,” Holden said. “The ball bounces less and it’s a lot slower. Our only other game during the regular season on a grass field is at Longmeadow. I prefer playing on a turf field.”

Holden, who also plays basketball and tennis, is planning to join the Springfield College women’s team next year. This past summer Holden played soccer for the Worcester Wanderers, who are members of the United Women’s Soccer League. The New England Mutiny, who play their home matches at historic Lusitano Stadium in Ludlow, are members of the same league.

“Ainsley has been playing very well, so far this season,” Goncalves said. “I thought she was the best player on the field in today’s game.”

The last time that the Lady Falcons won a soccer match at Belchertown High School was a 1-0 victory in 2023. That contest took place on the upper field where the junior varsity games normally take place.

The two squads played a 2-2 tie and a scoreless tie a year ago.

“I can’t remember the last time that we won a game on this field,” Goncalves said.

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Ellyana Lavalley sends a shot away.



Josephine Boyko chases down a loose ball.



Aubrey Ortiz tries to steal the ball away.

Pioneers split another pair

PALMER – The Pathfinder Regional High School girls soccer team remains at .500 after scoring a win and a loss during

the past week. Last Monday afternoon on the grass behind Pathfinder, the Pioneers edged Putnam 2-1. Lee would defeat Pathfinder

last Tuesday 4-0 for a 2-2 overall record. The Pioneers will travel to Gateway for a Friday evening game on Oct. 3 at 6 p.m. The

Pioneers are back home to face Commerce at 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 6.



Gloria Gern fights for the ball.



Evelyn Wood looks to cut the ball off on defense.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI
Madison Boulrice punts the ball away.

SPORTS

Pioneers take down Ware

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

WARE— Three of the previous four meetings between the Pathfinder Tech and Ware boys' soccer teams ended in draws. Unlike their recent clashes, the first meeting of the 2026 campaign between the Bi-County East foes was far less suspenseful.

The Pathfinder Tech Pioneers held a 7-0 halftime lead and cruised to a 10-0 victory over the Ware Indians on a cool night at Veteran's Field in Ware, last Tuesday.

"We're hoping to challenge for the league title this year, so this is a very big-league win for us," said Pathfinder Tech head coach David Wilson. "Winning the league title is our first goal. We also want to qualify for both the Western Mass. and state tournaments."

Pathfinder Tech entered this week's action with a 5-1-1 overall record and a 3-0-1 mark against league opponents. The last time they captured the league title was in 2022.

The first meeting of last season between the two squads ended in a 2-2 draw.

It was their first meeting on the soccer pitch since playing a pair of ties in 2022.

Pathfinder Tech, who posted a 4-0 home shutout victory over Ware in the second meeting of last season, was scheduled to host Southwick at Legion Field on Monday night. The winner of that contest took over sole possession of first place in the Bi-County East standings.

The Indians had a 1-4 overall record and a 1-3 league record following last Tuesday's home loss.

"We're a young team this year," said Ware head coach Charlene Vallee. "I just want my players to keep getting better in every game that we

play."

The last time that the Indians defeated the Pioneers on the soccer pitch was a 4-3 win during the 2015 regular season.

Two of the players listed on the Pathfinder Tech soccer roster are from Ware. They are freshman Noah Lane and junior Ian LaPete. The duo are reserve defenders, and they saw some action during the second half.

"This was a home coming game for both Noah and Ian," Wilson said. "They enjoyed playing in front of their family and friends."

The Pathfinder Tech boys' soccer team has maintained a co-op with Palmer High School for the past several years. The three players from Palmer High are sophomore Abees Castillo-Clotter, senior captain Owen Pear, and senior Dylan Holbrook, who's a first-year member of the team.

During the past three years, Holbrook was a member of the Palmer football team.

The Panthers football team celebrated a 21-6 home victory over Ware last year.

Because the Panthers only fielded a j.v. football team this fall, Holbrook decided to join the soccer team.

"I was disappointed when I found out that we weren't going to have a varsity football team this year," said Holbrook, who's a starting defender. "I decided to try something new, and these guys have welcomed me in. It feels very nice to win another game against Ware."

Holbrook also plays basketball and baseball for Palmer High School.

"It's going to be a lot of fun playing basketball and baseball against Pathfinder," Holbrook said. "I'm really looking forward to it."

During the fourth minute

of last Tuesday's match, the Pioneers scored a free kick goal.

The kick was taken from the right sideline by Pear and Holbrook headed the ball into the left corner of the net past Ware freshman goalie Mason Gagne (23 saves).

It was Holbrook's first goal of the season.

"Dylan is a very coachable kid," Wilson said. "He plays defense, which seems to be a good fit for him. He's back there with his buddy Owen Pear."

The other two Pioneers starting defenders are senior captain Ian Sauri-Nieves and senior William 'Carl' Wright.

Pathfinder Tech sophomore goalie Elijah Hodge made eight saves in posting his third consecutive shutout.

The visitors from Palmer took a 2-0 lead five minutes later when senior captain Cayden Bousquet bounced a shot into the left corner for an unassisted goal.

Bousquet, who lives in Belchertown, has accounted for 16 of the Pioneers' first 25 goals this season.

He scored two more goals during the first half and recorded his fourth hat-trick.

"We've been playing very well as a team so far this year," said Bousquet, who finished the match with a season-high five goals. "I've been on a roll offensively and I'm hoping to keep it going. We've never lost against Ware."

The Indians closed out the opening half with two goals by Pear and another one from sophomore Weston Letendre.

Bousquet added two second half goals before a goal from Christian Ribeiro in the 72nd minute gave the Pioneers a double digit lead.

The two rivals are scheduled to play another night game at historic Legion Field in Palmer on October 15.

T-Birds drop preseason finale

PROVIDENCE, R.I. - The Springfield Thunderbirds dropped a 4-1 decision to the Providence Bruins on Saturday night in the back half of a two-game exhibition set.

Will Cranley drew the net for Springfield for the exhibition finale and proved to be busy in the opening period, denying all 10 Bruins shots. Providence would open the scoring just 21 seconds into the second as Robert Cronin tallied his second goal in as many nights to make it 1-0 Bruins.

Not to be outdone, Springfield captain Chris Wagner also tallied his second goal in two nights in the period's final minute, picking up a short-handed tally at 19:52 and sending a 1-1 tie into the third period.

However, the Bruins would regain the lead when Wyatt Bongiovanni beat Cranley at 6:58 of the third, making it a 2-1 game. Springfield would not get any closer, with Loke Johansson and Ben Allison adding empty-netters with less than two minutes remaining to ice the game.

Springfield begins the 2026-27 regular season in Wilkes-Barre for a rematch of the Atlantic Division Finals against the Penguins. The puck drops at 6:05 p.m. on Saturday, October 3.

Owls edge rival Worcester State

WESTFIELD — Westfield State controlled the ball with the ground game and got several key defensive stands as the Owls rallied, then held on for a 24-21 over Worcester State to wash out the Lancers' homecoming in inclement weather at Coughlin Field in Worcester on Saturday.

Westfield fell behind 14-0 midway through the second quarter, as the Lancers scored their second TD of the day with a short drive after the Worcester's Gio Roman scooped up a fumble and returned it 41 yards to the Westfield 5-yard line, with Gavin Hatfield carrying it in from a yard out three plays later.

The Lancers had a golden opportunity when the Owls fumbled again on the next play from scrimmage, setting Worcester up 1st and 10 at the Westfield 24-yard line. But the Westfield State defense promptly forced a 4-and out scenario, with Chase Goldberg sacking Worcester State's MJ Bakaysa to end the threat.

Buoyed by the defensive stop, Westfield's offense marched 73 yards on 13 plays. Quinn Sumner completed a 25-yard pass to Malachi Hymes on third down to keep the drive alive, and Manny Mengata battered his way into the endzone from two yards out to cap the drive and trim the lead to 14-7 after Andrew Currier's extra point, and the teams went to the half with that score.

Worcester received the ball to start the second half, but the Owls defense forced a three and out inside the Lancers' own 10-yard line, and a short punt gave the Owls the ball on the Worcester State 19-yard line. Four plays later, Mengata again scored from two yards out and tied the game at 14-all.

Westfield grabbed a 21-14 lead before the third quarter was out, using a

12-play, 67-yard drive over 6:18 that Mengata capped with an 8-yard touchdown run.

The Owls added a 21-yard field goal from Currier midway through the fourth quarter that would prove valuable insurance.

Worcester immediately answered with a 67-yard TD toss from Bakaysa to Jack Poirer, finding Poirer wide open deep down the left sideline for the score, trimming the lead back to 24-21.

Westfield's defense needed one more stand late, as the Lancers got to the Owls 33-yard line in the final minute, but three straight incompletions included passes broken up by Westfield's Tedi Hunt on second down and then Tom Cascio on the final hail mary to seal the win for Westfield, which improves to 2-2 on the season and 2-1 in MASCAC play. Worcester slips to 1-3 overall and 1-1 in the MASCAC.

Westfield was led by 125 yards rushing and three TD's from Mengata on 25 carries, with Cole Ingham adding 57 yards on the ground. Sumner completed 4-10 passes for 65 yards on a tough passing day, as a nor'easter rolled through southern New England with alternately heavy winds and rain. Westfield controlled the time of possession battle with nearly 36 minutes to Worcester's 24.

Nick Gauger led the Owls with eight tackles, with Mark Wright-Woodhouse adding seven. Goldberg and Preston Jacoski each had a sack.

Worcester was led by 95 yards on the ground from Gavin Hatfield. Bakaysa finished 15-30 passing for 204 yards.

Westfield will have its bye weekend next, before returning to action with a non-conference game against Mass Maritime on Oct. 10 at Alumni Field.

Six champions crowned in season finale

WINCHESTER, NH – On Saturday, Sept. 19, six champions were crowned at Monadnock Speedway as the 2026 racing season came to an exciting conclusion.

Two of the closest championship battles entering the season finale belonged to the Brattleboro Towing & Recovery Pure Stocks and the All States Materials Group 604 Modifieds, with both titles coming down to the final race of the season.

In the Brattleboro Towing & Recovery Pure Stocks, a full field of cars packed the 1/4-mile high-banked facility for the finale. Jimmy Zellmann entered the night holding just a five-point advantage over rookie Joshua Brigham.

The championship battle took a dramatic turn on lap one when a scuffle sent both contenders spinning, forcing Zellmann and Brigham to restart from the rear of the field. With the title on the line, both drivers began working their way back through traffic.

At the checkered flag, Brigham completed an impressive charge through the field to capture the feature victory, with Zellmann finishing second. Zellmann's runner-up finish proved to be just enough to secure the 2026 Brattleboro Towing & Recovery Pure Stock Championship.

The All States Materials Group 604 Modified championship battle was just as

intense.

Andrew Brousseau entered the night holding a narrow two-point advantage over Tyler Leary. From the drop of the green flag, the two championship contenders remained close, each waiting for an opportunity to make the move that could decide the title.

Leary eventually slipped ahead of Brousseau and moved into second place. Eddie Gomarlo, competing in Brian Robie's borrowed #25NH, ran between the two championship contenders in third.

Brousseau repeatedly attempted to work underneath Gomarlo, knowing that gaining just one more position could make the difference in the championship standings. Despite several attempts, Brousseau was unable to make the pass.

When the checkered flag waved, Leary held onto second place with Gomarlo finishing third and Brousseau behind him. The finishing order left Brousseau just two points short of earning his first championship, allowing Tyler Leary to capture the 2026 All States Materials Group 604 Modified Championship.

In the Twin State Truck Services Limited Late Models, JD Stockwell entered the final event with a more comfortable advantage. The number of

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in the first quarter.

After the Lions offense, which is led by Ludlow junior QB Connor Sylvestre, was forced to punt, Kendall scored a three yard rushing touchdown pushing the Orioles lead to 20-0.

Junior Miles Sheldon recovered another fumble on the kickoff.

One play later, senior Avery Cote scored a 21 yard rushing touchdown for the Orioles.

Ptaszkiewicz recovered a fumble leading to a 10-yard TD run by junior Brogan Bottari in the first play of the second quarter.

Less than a minute later, a Sylvestre pass was tipped by Ptaszkiewicz and Kendall caught the ball at the Lions 43.

Eleven plays later, Longley threw a 38-yard touchdown pass to Cote with 7:59 remaining in the first half.

The Lions picked up a couple of first downs when Sylvestre completed passes to senior Giovanni Perez and sophomore Mason Bartolucci. The drive eventually stalled and the Lions turned the ball over on downs.

With 2:15 left on the scoreboard, a 28-yard rushing touchdown by Cote closed out the Orioles first half scoring.

Because Belchertown held a commanding 46-0 halftime lead, the clock kept running throughout the entire second half.

Junior Ronan Mosher wrapped up the Orioles scoring with a 25-yard rushing touchdown in the middle of the third quarter.

The Orioles will be looking to continue their winning ways in their first Tri-County League game at Monument Mountain on Friday night.

The Lions will be looking to get into the win column



Grayden Kendall takes a handoff.



Killian Olszewski gets a point-after for the Orioles.



Brogan Bottari tries to power through a defender.

when they battle Intercounty South rival Northampton in a road contest on Friday night.



Avery Cote goes on a carry.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Please see **FINALE**, page 11

SENIORS

Belchertown Senior Center announces October 2026 Programs

Country Comfort Luncheon

Friday, Oct. 16th at 10:30 a.m. Enjoy cinnamon apple/ grape salad, garlic butter beef, roasted potatoes, rolls, and pumpkin dump cake for dessert! Doors open at 10:15 for “Classic Country” with Roger Tincknell, featuring songs by Johnny Cash, Patsy Cline, Willie Nelson, and more! Thank you to TruNorthBank for sponsoring the entertainment, and volunteering at the event! We appreciate you! Call Stephanie 323-0420 ext 501 starting October 1st at 9am to reserve a seat for this \$5 meal! Please leave a voice-mail including your name and the name of one guest.

Introduction to EFT Meridian Tapping

Monday, Oct. 5 at 10 a.m. Learn more about this simple self-help technique, which utilizes the same science as acupuncture, to improve physical and mental health! Facilitated by Marianne Reiff, Ph.D. Certified Level 3 EFT Practitioner and GISC Certified Wellness Coach! Call Stephanie 323-0420 ext 501 to sign-up!

Alzheimer’s Disease Presentation

Wednesday, Oct. 14 at 10 a.m. The Alzheimer’s

Association and Fallon Summit Eldercare PACE are partnering to provide an informative program to help you navigate memory loss as a caregiver. Join them to learn more about the disease, warning signs, and resources in our community. Light refreshments to be served. Call Stephanie 323-0420 ext 501 to sign up!

8-Week Introduction to Meditation Course

Fridays at 1 p.m. starting Oct. 2 (10/2-11/20) Mindfulness meditation skills teach us to be fully present in the moment, and, when practiced regularly, help decrease stress levels and improve general well-being and health. This course will be taught by Magda Bechar, retired nursing professor, who has taught meditation and stress reduction skills to diverse groups for many years. FREE to attend, but space is limited. Please call Stephanie to sign up 323-0420 ext 501

Sand for Seniors

Winter weather will be here soon! TRIAD volunteers will deliver buckets of salt/sand mixture to participants on Wednesday, October 7th from 10am-12pm. To sign up for the program, please call 323-0420 ext 504 no later

than 10/2.

Halloween Brunch

Join the fun on Friday, Oct. 30 at 11:30 a.m. for Mariah’s famous “BOO”berry French Toast! Wear a costume and get a FREE lunch ticket to use another day! Call Kim 323-0420 ext 508 to sign up for this \$3.00 meal!

Chasing Spirits

Wednesday, Oct. 28 at 2 p.m. Join East Coast Spirit Chasers NE for a dive into the world of the paranormal. Hear about the different types of haunts, see equipment used in an investigation and see what a command center set up looks like. Also see clips of potential evidence collected from multiple locations including the SK Pierce Mansion in Gardner MA, Warren House in CT and many residential cases. Free to attend, but space is limited. Call Stephanie 323-0420 ext 501 to sign up!

Flu Vaccine Clinic

Our friend, John Ochs from Belchertown Stop and Shop, will be offering a flu vaccine clinic at the Senior Center on Tuesday, Oct. 6th from 9-11:30 a.m. Call Stephanie 323-0420 ext 501 to make an appointment, and to obtain required paperwork.

*Walk ins welcome with the understanding that there may be extended wait times.

Wholefood Plant-Based Group

Oct. 15 at 10 a.m., Wholefood Plant-Based Group will welcome special guest, Julie O’Connor! Julie will present “The Power of Your Plate”, which will include a cooking demonstration and samples! Julie is a licensed Food for Life instructor with the Physician’s Committee for Responsible Medicine. All of the recipes discussed and prepared are strictly wholefood, plant-based and low fat.

Old Photos on Display

During some recent closet clean-out, we found stacks of photo albums, containing photos of our Senior Center activities, dating back to the early 1980’s. We’ll have these photos on display in our main lobby during our Open House on September 25th, and for the entire month of October. We welcome you to flip through them, and take a walk down memory lane!

Exercise/Health Classes

NO Sign-Up required for Tai Chi, HBB, Bootcamp or Line Dancing! Tai Chi Tues/Fri 10 a.m. (outdoors)

Suggested Donation \$.50 Healthy Bones & Balance Tues and Thurs 9:15 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Suggested Donation \$.50 Boomer Bootcamp Mondays at 3 p.m. \$5/class– (paid weekly) Beginner Line Dancing Wednesdays at 12:30 p.m. \$5/class-(paid weekly) Sign-up required for Yoga. Call 323-0420 ext 501 or email SFraleigh@belchertown.org Yoga Mon/Wed/Fri 9:30 a.m. \$5/class (paid monthly)

Giving Tree

Again this year, the Senior Center will be offering a Giving Tree program, where community members will have the opportunity to select a gift request from the holiday tree in our lobby to purchase gifts for older adults in need. To nominate yourself or a loved one to be the recipient of holiday gifts, call Stephanie at 323-0420 ext 501, stop by the Senior Center, or email SFraleigh@belchertown.org no later than Nov. 21. We will need the name, address, and phone number of the recipient, as well as a short wish list. Nominations should be for older adults living in Belchertown only. Receipt of gifts is not guaranteed, and will be dependent on community support.

Belchertown Senior Center Menu

Congregate meals are served daily Monday-Friday at 11:30 a.m. There is a voluntary, confidential, suggested meal donation of \$3 for Age 60+, and a required charge of \$6 for those under 60 (\$8 for large parties) Anyone under 60 is required to check in, and pay Katy Martin upon arrival. Call Kim 323-0420 ext 508 to sign up or cancel.

- 1 American Chop Suey
- 2 Broccoli Quiche
- 5 Chicken Cordon Bleu
- 6 Lasagna
- 7 Salisbury Steak
- 8 Sloppy Joes
- 9 Dijon Chicken
- 12 CLOSED- Indegenous People Day
- 13 Chicken Broccoli & Cheese
- 14 Spaghetti
- 15 Beef Pot Pie
- 16 Country Comfort Luncheon (MOW Hot Dog)
- 19 Mac & Cheese
- 20 Sweet & Sour Pork
- 21 Chicken Pot Pie
- 22 Kielbasa
- 23 Cranberry Chicken
- 26 Teriyaki Chicken
- 27 Chili
- 28 Pork Roast
- 29 Cheese Pizza
- 30 “Boo”berry French Toast

Irish Comedy Show coming to Wilbraham

WILBRAHAM—The Friends of Wilbraham Seniors will be sponsoring popular comedy show “JOKES MY IRISH FATHER TOLD ME” on Friday evening Oct. 2.

Come relax and enjoy an evening from a much-needed break from everyday routines. Comedian Dave Kane, who portrayed Fr. Patrick Aloysius in the comedy show “Misgivings” last year will have you laughing at his one lines and jokes.

Last year this show was a sellout, and this one is expected to as well.

Tickets are only \$20 and are on sale at the Wilbraham Senior Center, 250 Springfield St, Wilbraham, MA. Doors open 6:30 p.m. Limited seating.

All tickets must be purchased in advance. Stop in today. No reservations. No holds.

For more information on either event, contact Matt Villamaino 413-896-2206 or visit the

FINALE from page 10

cars competing in the finale worked in Stockwell’s favor over championship challenger Robert Hagar.

Stockwell capped off an impressive season by securing his first Twin State Truck Services Limited Late Model Championship.

The Keene Towing & Recovery Mini Stock championship also entered the finale with Tim Paquette holding a comfortable advantage in the standings. Craig Chaffee remained mathematically in the hunt but needed a larger field of cars to improve his chances of overcoming the points deficit.

Paquette finished his season in style with his first of the season feature victory and was crowned the 2026 Keene Towing & Recovery Mini Stock Champion.

Rob Richardi entered the final event of the season with little pressure in the LaValley Building Supply Pro 4 Modified championship battle. Holding more than a 50-point advantage going into the feature, Richardi had already put himself in a commanding position.

Although Richardi did not earn the victory in the season finale, his strong season was more than enough to secure the 2026 LaValley Building Supply Pro 4 Modified Championship.

The Beck’s Automotive Pro V8 Sportsman Series championship was another close battle, with only 16 points separating the top three drivers entering the finale.

Aaron Thompson held the points lead, with Chris Kingsley and Stephen Dubois close behind and still in championship contention. During practice, Kingsley suffered a mechanical failure that ended his championship hopes, leaving Dubois as the remaining challenger attempting to chase down Thompson.

Thompson delivered when it mattered most, finishing second in the feature and earning enough points to secure the 2026 Beck’s Automotive Pro V8 Sportsman Series Championship.

In the Doug’s Auto Body Young Gun Divisions, the field does not compete for points. Staiti topped the season with 15 victories. It was great season for the

Young competitors with each sharing podium finishes. We can’t wait for these up-and-coming races to be back next season along with quite of few fresh faces joining the Young Gun Division. Great job Dylan Staiti, Maeve Barry, Masoon Bezio and Eli Elliot.

After a season filled with close racing, memorable victories and championship battles that came down to the final laps, six drivers left Monadnock Speedway as 2026 champions.

Congratulations to the 2026 Monadnock Speedway Champions:

- All States Materials Group 604 Modifieds Tyler Leary
- Twin State Truck Services Limited Late Models JD Stockwell
- Keene Towing & Recovery Mini Stocks Tim Paquette
- LaValley Building Supply Pro 4 Modifieds Rob Richardi
- Brattleboro Towing & Recovery Pure Stocks Jimmy Zellmann
- Beck’s Automotive Pro V8 Sportsman Series Aaron Thompson

GIRLS from page 9

“I’ve watched Belchertown play a couple of games this season and they’re a very good team.”

The Lady Orioles had a 4-2 overall record following the home loss. They also lost at Pope Francis.

“We didn’t play our best during the first half of today’s game,” said Belchertown head coach Kyle Thibeault. “We battled back during the second half and managed to tie the score, but they wound up scoring the game winning goal.”

The Lady Falcons scored their first goal in the middle of the opening half. Hoar delivered a forward pass to senior Makenna Sacco at midfield. She then scored a breakaway goal after weaving around the goalie.

A little more than ten minutes later, a shot attempt taken by Minnechaug senior Isabella Usher bounced across the goal line making the score 2-0. Manning was credited with the assist.

The Lady Orioles got on the scoreboard ten minutes into the second half when

junior Aubrey Klingensmith received a pass from senior Madelyn Philpott before lofting a high shot over sophomore goalie Isabel Horne (7 saves) into the right corner of the net.

Horne, who was looking into the bright setting sun during the second half, couldn’t make the save on another shot attempt by Klingensmith during the 52nd minute. It was Klingensmith’s team-leading fifth goal of the regular season.

“Aubrey is an outstanding high school soccer player just like her older sister, Avery, was,” Thibeault said. “They do play different positions.”

Senior Morghan Litz, who has verbally committed to playing college soccer at Franklin Pierce University, was credited with the assist on the Lady Orioles tying goal.

The match remained tied until Holden netted the game winning goal during the 67th minute.

The two rivals are scheduled to face each other for the second time on the turf field at Minnechaug Regional on October 15.



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Stars, Stripes & Fair Nights



Green Acres Equestrian Center LLC walked in the parade as did some of their horses.



Buck, a mascot for Country Bank and representing the Woo Sox, walked and greeted the crowd during the parade.



Cub Scouts from St. Francis Pack 507 are shown during the parade.



Footloose School of Dance celebrated its 30th anniversary during the Belchertown Fair and Parade.

FAIR from page 1

The Belchertown Fair is coordinated by volunteers and Friends of the Fair, a non-profit organization designed to raise funds for the fair and the parade.

The parade took place on Saturday, highlighting town departments, businesses, organizations, schools from Belchertown and beyond. Many floats showed both Belchertown Fair and America250 spirit.

Parade participants waved and handed out candy to the crowd who surrounded Main Street to witness the attraction that has been an essential piece of the annual fair.

The Exhibit Hall across the common was open with a wide variety of categories featuring the work of youth and adult entrants. There were over 1,000 entries featured.

The Belchertown Fair started as an agricultural gathering over a century and half ago. It continues to feature new and returning vendors on the common as well as agricultural booths, food tents, attractions, games and amusement park rides.

The fair counts on its volunteers for support. To become a volunteer, visit www.btownfair.com/volunteers/.



A miniature tank represented Aqua Vitae Woodworks.



Tall Tree Landscape LLC marched in the parade with several of their trees on a float. A lumberjack waved from the top of one of the trees.



The wagon of **Austin Ridge Acres** rolled down Main Street with riders handing out candy to the crowd.



Riders from the Mill Valley Snowmobile Club arrived at the parade and were ready for the snowfall.



A parade of tractors made its way toward the common.



Country Bank employees marched in the parade with their branded truck following.



A dance performance was given by the **BGA Eagles Youth Football and Cheer** during the Belchertown Fair parade.



Alegria Dance & Fitness of Ludlow participated in the parade.



Students represented the Belchertown High School Class of 2028 during the Belchertown Fair.

Stars, Stripes & Fair Nights



The exhibit hall displayed entries at the 167th Belchertown Fair.



Friends of the Clapp Memorial Library walked in the parade.



The Belchertown Fire Department marched in the parade with the vintage fire engine truck leading the way.



As part of celebrating America's 250th anniversary year, this year's fair theme was Stars, Stripes & Fair Nights.



LEFT: Complete Septic Service LLC of Belchertown drove during the parade with one member launching T-shirts into the crowd.



The Melha Shriners' miniature rigs found their way down Main Street.



A float by Ludlow Hockey was decorated with stars, stripes, sticks and dreams. Parade participants tossed candy into the crowd.



Dogs from Harmony Acres Personalized Dog Training marched in the parade along with their handlers.



The school band of Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School performed during the parade and showed Pioneer spirit.

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