

Belchertown celebrates Hanukkah

as a community

By Emily-Rose Pappas
Staff Writer
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BELCHERTOWN – Hanukkah, or the Festival of Lights, is a celebration the Jewish community holds in order to commemorate the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem after the Maccabean Revolt. During the celebration, they remember the miracle of oil lasting to light the menorah for eight days, resulting in the Festival of Lights lasting eight days in order to remember and keep the light going.

The first night of Hanukkah was on Sunday, Dec. 14, and the last night will be Sunday, Dec. 21. Members of the Belchertown community got together to host a special Hanukkah cele-

bration open to the community to join in.

Jenn Turner, Lisa Stahl, Sarah Maroney, and Liliana Kualapai hosted the celebration, and Jennifer Whitehead read stories to the children who came, and Cheryl Dutton led an activity, making Hanukkah-themed crafts.

“It was really loosely organized around bring your own menorah, and we did a lighting together, and had extra candles, and then played dreidel and had gelt, which is a chocolate bunny, and there was ornament making with Hanukkah decorations,” said Turner.

They played dreidel, and ate some tasty fried treats as is tradition to eat oil-fried foods throughout the festival,

Please see **HANUKKAH**, page 7



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Having some fun at the Hanukkah celebration, where State Representative Aaron Saunders joined in for the fun.

Creative Economy Committee sets goals for 2026

By Melina Bourdeau
Correspondent

BELCHERTOWN — The Creative Economy Committee’s meeting charted a course for 2026, unveiling new goals to promote local arts, improve signage and foster public engagement—while also hashing out the definition of “artisan sheds” in a wide-ranging debate on local enterprise and zoning.

Committee members spent more than two hours examining project accomplishments, updating their annual report and collaboratively formulating next year’s strategy. The process culminated in a renewed vision for Belchertown’s creative economy and a redefined focus on supporting rural artisans and makers.

That vision gained clarity during the meeting’s most involved segment as committee members debated what constitutes an “artisan shed,” shaping not only local zoning but the spirit of Belchertown’s creative economy.

Goals target culture, trails, partnerships

From expanding public art to supporting local business,

Please see **ECONOMY**, page 7

Students work on outreach to ‘Granby to Go’

By Emily-Rose Pappas
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GRANBY – With the rising costs of living and the recent challenges surrounding SNAP and EBT benefits access, it has been an important need to donate to local pantries to help our communities and the families who need them.

A local youth group and scouts group decided they wanted to do something themselves to help, and so they did.

“We’ve seen a huge need in the community, especially as EBT has been threatened and costs have skyrocketed,” said Tasondra Jardine, the Granby Church of Christ Congregational youth leader.

The youth group students worked hard and created mobiles to collect food donations, and the scouts collected donations of kids-sized hats, mittens, and scarves, to donate to Granby to Go and Neighbors Helping Neighbors in South Hadley, which also offers its services Granby residents.

“The donations mean a lot not just for our program but for the students in general. Some people may take for granted having the simple means of having hats and mittens; some go cold due to the money being used elsewhere to keep the household going,” said Judy Delong, Granby to Go’s Manager.

The students worked hard to collect these necessities and have found joy in the art of helping people in need

Please see **OUTREACH**, page 5



SUBMITTED PHOTO

A table of bread to choose from, as well as yogurt and cheese.

German Christmas traditions celebrated all over the world

By Ellenor Downer
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One did not have to look beyond the Christmas tree to real-

ize the influence of German Christmas traditions.

As Germans migrated to other countries, they brought the tradition of the Tannenbaum or Christmas

tree with them with its display of lights and ornaments. When supplies of evergreen trees diminished due to over cutting, artificial trees made of goose feathers took hold in the 1890s. In the 1930s, a toilet brush company, manufactured artificial trees from brush bristle inventory. Today, these “fake” trees resemble the real thing without the fir tree fragrance.

Christmas tree

The Christmas tree takes center stage during holiday celebrations in Germany, evoking a profound sense of nostalgia and festivity. Within this cultural practice, families come together to partake in the ritual of embellishing the tree with ornaments, garlands and more. This act not only beautifies the tree, but strengthens familial bonds. Children as well as adult family members love to decorate the Christmas tree. In my family, my father always put on the lights and the angel for the top of the tree. My mother then placed her favorite ornament on the tree, followed by me and my brother.

Please see **GERMAN**, page 2



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

A gold adorned nutcracker stands proudly. Christmas pyramids or Weihnachtspyramiden are wooden structures adorned with intricately crafted figurines. The heat from the candles at their base cause them to spin.

Celebrating the birth of Jesus with a living nativity this season

By Emily-Rose Pappas
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GRANBY – For Christians, the Christmas holiday is a time to celebrate the greatest gift of all, the birth of baby Jesus Christ, and it serves as a time to remember and celebrate with one another, sharing gifts and spending time with family.

To celebrate the Christmas Season, the Granby Church of Christ Congregational puts together a special Living Nativity open to the community to come out and enjoy.

“I love watching the story come to life. It’s such a special experience and we’re thankful to Pastor Audrey for reviving the tradition,” said church member Tasondra Jardine.

For the past three years, the church has made the Living Nativity into an annual tradition, and animals come from a neighboring farm in Hadley, who brings adorable newborn lambs you can hold and cuddle.

Several members of the



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Two shepherds holding a pair of adorable lambs.

church volunteer to dress up and act as the different characters of the Nativity story, with Mary, Joseph, shepherds, the three Wise Men, or Three Kings, a baby Jesus, Roman soldiers, and angels.

Other members of the congregation work to pre-

pare the manger, narrate the story, run lights, and provide refreshments for the people who came to visit the living nativity.

“I’d say my favorite is those who have started to

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Granby Lions celebrate Christmas together

Members of the Granby Lions Club gathered to celebrate Christmas and the holiday season together with fun sweaters and laughter.

Town hall holiday closures

BELCHERTOWN – The Belchertown Town Hall and the Select Board’s Office at the Finnerty House will be closing at noon on Wednesday, December 31, 2025, for the holiday. Offices will reopen at 8 a.m. on Monday, January 5, 2026.

Do you need sand? We have sand

BELCHERTOWN – With winter already making itself known after this week’s snow and ice, residents are reminded that free winter sand is available for household use. The sand (no salt mix) is provided for Belchertown residents only;

contractors are not permitted to take sand.

Sand may be picked up at the “Green Shed” located at the DPW Highway Garage, 290 Jackson Street. Residents should bring their own bucket or container, along with a shovel, for

loading the sand.

There is no fee for this service. For full details, visit the Town of Belchertown website or contact the Department of Public Works at 413-323-0415.

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Advent calendars

For young children, the days in December leading up to Christmas seem to take forever. For adults, the shortening days of the year make long nights that never end. Advent calendars, another German Christmas tradition, help make the time pass from the first day of the month to Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Advent, the arrival of a notable person, thing or event, in the Christian tradition noted the four Sundays leading to Christmas.

Advent calendars display the dates, Dec. 1 to Dec. 25 and often have pockets or tiny doors to hold a piece of candy or other small treat. There are advent calendar made of wood or some other durable material other than paper, which can be used year after year.

Embodying the spirit of German precision, the Advent calendars stand as a testament to Germany’s cultural dedication to celebrating the holiday season.

Advent wreath

The Advent wreath is another German tradition adopted by many other countries. Many Christmas churches throughout the world observe Advent with the lighting of a different calendar for the four Sundays leading up to Christmas.

The candle for the first week of Advent is the Hope or Prophet’s Candle. The second week is the Love or Bethlehem candle. The third

week is the Joy or Shepherd’s Candle and is and the final week is the

Peace Candle. The candle in the center of the wreath is lighted on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

Some wreaths have purple candles for the first, second and fourth Sundays and pink or rose colored for the third Sunday. The center candle is usually white. Although some wreaths have candles of a single color such as red, blue or white.

The circular shape of the wreath represents the eternal nature of God. The evergreen branches represents the everlasting life found in Christ.

Christmas Eve candlelight service

Candlelit church services for Christians on Christmas is a cherished tradition for Germans over time. Worshipers gather as the night deepens and hold a lighted candle. Many churches for safety sake use battery powered candles. On church in Central Massachusetts has a crystal candle lite chandelier, which they light on Christmas Eve.

Christmas Eve

Christmas Eve or Heiligabend is known as the “Night of Wonder.” For Germans and Scandinavian countries Christmas Eve, Dec. 24 holds a special place in the hearts of its people, as it marks the cherished tradition of the Holy Evening. This is the big gift-giving day. The eve also includes a feast.

Christmas Carols

Singing Christmas Carols is another German tradition. During the festive holiday season, cherished carols such as “Stille Nacht” (Silent Night) and “O Tannenbaum” (O Christmas Tree) evoke a profound sense of nostalgia and camaraderie among celebrants. Singing is an important part of the holiday season.

Christmas pyramids

Christmas pyramids or Weihnachtspyramiden are wooden structures adorned with intricately crafted figurines. As the candles placed at their base flicker, an age-old mechanism sets these pyramids into gentle motion, creating a mesmerizing dance.

Lebkuchen and Stollen

German Lebkuchen and Stollen are two baked

items that are part of their Christmas tradition. Lebkuchen is a soft, nut filled ginger cookie. Stollen is a rum soaked spice cake.

Traditional Christmas drink

Feuerzangenbowle is another German tradition. This drink concoction involves a theatrical presentation that starts with a sugarloaf, drenched in rum, being set ablaze. The sugarloaf melts and drips into a steaming bowl of spiced wine, resulting in the popular holiday drink.

Christmas Pickle

Incorporating a whimsical touch into the age-old tradition of adorning Christmas trees, some German households infuse a delightful element of surprise by discreetly concealing a pickle ornament



The Advent wreath is made with evergreen boughs shaped in a circular. It has four candles often three purple and one pink candle with a white candle in the middle. Many wreaths use the same color candle such as blue, red or white.

Cozy up with a book

BELCHERTOWN – The Clapp Memorial Library invites adults and teens to cozy up with a good book this winter and play Winter Reading Bingo! The Library is excited to announce our two Winter Reading Bingo Programs - one for adults (ages 18 and up) and one for teens (grades 7-12). It’s easy and fun!

There are book-related activities such as reading a graphic novel or trying a book from a library display. Or choose a cozy activity like bundling up and sipping hot chocolate or listening to music. Earn tickets toward great prizes as you complete the squares.

Adult Prizes: Puzzle Bundle, Cat Lovers Bundle, Gardening Bundle, Shop & Shop Gift Card Teen Prizes: Read with Pride! Bundle, Bookshopping Bundle, Keep Cozy Bundle and more!

Participate now through February 20, 2026. Sign up at clapplibrary.beanstack.org or on the Beanstack app.

Physical Bingo cards are also available for pick-up at the library. Get all the details when you sign up. Thank you to the Friends of Clapp Memorial Library for sponsoring these programs.

The Clapp Memorial Library is open:

Monday 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.
 Tuesday 9:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.
 Wednesday 9:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.*
 Thursday 9:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.*
 Friday 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.
 Saturday 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

*Christmas Holiday: The Library will close at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, December 24, and remain closed on Thursday, December 25. Regular hours resume Friday, December 26th.

*New Year’s Holiday: The Library will close at 1 pm on Wednesday, December 31, and will remain closed on Thursday, January 1. Regular hours resume Friday, January 2.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

The Advent calendar is another German Christmas tradition. It marks the days of December to Christmas Day.

amidst the lush evergreen boughs. This quaint custom, known as the “Christmas Pickle,” has been a cherished holiday practice for generations. Children delight in the hunt to find the “Christmas Pickle.”

Nativity Play

During the Christmas season, children eagerly participate in Krippenspiel, a Nativity play that reenacts the timeless story of Jesus’s birth. They are complete with shepherds, angels and a humble manger. Many Christian churches hold Christmas pageants during the holiday season.

Other Christmas traditions

On St. Nicholas Day (Nikolaustag), Dec. 6 shoes are filled with surprises. St. Nicholas comes bearing

small, but cherished gifts and delectable sweets. The day before, Dec. 5 marks the beginning of Krampusnacht in certain regions of Germany, where the ominous Krampus, the dreaded counterpart of the adored St. Nicholas is unleashed. Krampus roams the streets, punishing misbehaving children who end up on their lists of naughtiness.

Christmas Markets

In the realm of German Christmas traditions, one cannot omit the enchanting Christmas markets, affectionately referred to as “Weihnachtsmärkte.” They offer an array of holiday foods ranging from sizzling bratwurst to sugary roasted almonds as well as handcrafted gifts, carved wooden toys and ornaments

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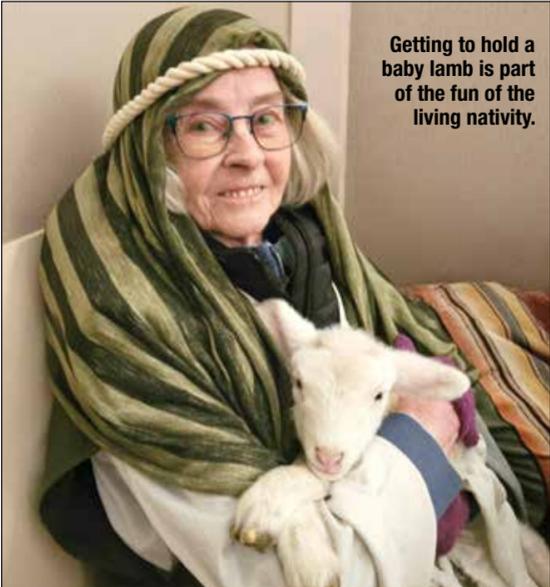
"Angels we have heard on high.."



The Three Wise Men have arrived to bring gifts.



Warming up inside with an adorable little friend.



Getting to hold a baby lamb is part of the fun of the living nativity.

NATIVITY from page 1

make coming a tradition in their families. The idea behind hosting these kinds of events is to demonstrate our faith and spread Jesus' love," said Jardine.

Mary and Joseph were played by Jay Dwinell and Liam Scully, who grew up in the youth group and now serve roles within the church, finding joy in being able to interact with and spread joy within their church family.

"Church Family is an extension of my immediate family in my eyes. We can all count on each other to show up and be there for each other," said Jardine.

The Nativity is a common decoration in households all over the world, from simple figures of just Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus to more elaborate displays with a little barn, animals, and all the figures in the story.

"Something our family does each year is read the Nativity story together a piece at a time while filling our family Crèche," said Jardine. "My grandma and grandpa Marion and Bob Mason have been doing it with us as long as I can remember. That and singing Silent Night by candlelight at Christmas Eve service are some of my favorite family traditions."

Family and holiday traditions are what root us together this time of year and learning the traditions of our neighbors is one unique way

to get closer to the people in our communities.

The church will be hosting its Christmas Eve service at 5:30 p.m. on December 24, and all are welcome to attend.

Baby lambs remind those in the Christian faith of Jesus.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS



Welcome to the manger, where Jesus was laid after his birth.



The angels announcing the birth of Jesus to the shepherds.

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Baby's First Christmas 2025



Cameron Ciesluk

August 30, 2025
 Parents: Clark and Melanie Ciesluk, Belchertown
 Grandparents: Nicole Ciesluk, Deerfield
 Gina D'Amato, Belchertown



Colter David Wold

Birthdate: May 2, 2025
 Parents: Quinn and Kayla Wold, Harrisburg, NE
 Grandparents: Robert and Monica Panek, Belchertown
 Brian and Darci Wold, Harrisburg, NE



Daelin Dominic Mahoney

November 4, 2025
 Parents: Felicia and Patrick Mahoney, Belchertown
 Grandparents: Tricia and the late Dominic Sidari, Chicopee
 Denise and Bill Mahoney, Belchertown



Luke Matthew Sabourin

March 18, 2025
 Parents: Matthew and Amanda Sabourin, Belchertown
 Grandparents: Allan and Joanne Beaugard, Belchertown
 Diane Sabourin, Chicopee
 Trish Sabourin and the late Dave Sabourin, Holyoke
 Great Grandma: GiGi, Holyoke



Wesley George LaPlante

December 21, 2024
 Parents: Krysta and Giles LaPlante, Belchertown
 Sibling: Hayden Theresa LaPlante
 Grandparents: Karin and George Howard, Belchertown
 Judy and David LaPlante, Granby
 Carol and Joseph Remillard, Belchertown



Maeve and Quinn Courtney

December 5, 2025
 Parents: Cait and Tom Courtney, Ware
 Grandparents: Rich and Robin Walker, Belchertown
 Will and Patty Courtney, Belchertown



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Project Bread welcomes Grazioso as Chef Educator

EAST BOSTON/BELCHERTOWN - For Chef Barrett Grazioso, food has always been more than a meal - it's been a way to bring people together, nourish communities, and spark meaningful change. Now, after more than 30 years spent cooking, leading school nutrition programs, and strengthening local food systems, Grazioso is bringing that passion to Project Bread as the organization's newest Chef Educator.



PROJECT BREAD

be a chef. After formal culinary training in Los Angeles, she built a diverse career apprenticing under chefs across the country and abroad, and working as a pastry chef, private chef, executive chef, and school nutrition director.

Most recently, Grazioso led the self-operated K-12 meal program for Belchertown Public Schools, where she first partnered with Project Bread through a Summer Eats Grant to bring free summer meals to local families. Now, she will support schools statewide in elevating meal quality, strengthening food education, and advancing sustainable practices like composting, recycling, and food donation.

"I wanted to share my experience with a wider audience," says Grazioso. "Everyone should have

access to healthy food, and helping schools create nutritious, welcoming meal programs is incredibly meaningful work."

Outside the kitchen, Grazioso enjoys swimming, gardening, and spending time with her family and pets. She previously served on the Massachusetts Farm to School Advisory Committee and continues to support local food donation efforts.

"Barrett's culinary skill, creativity, and dedication to feeding communities with dignity make her an incredible asset," says Sam Icklan, Project Bread's Director of Community Nutrition Services. "Her leadership brings us closer to ensuring every child in Massachusetts has access to healthy, delicious meals each day."

People experiencing food insecurity should call Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline (1-800-645-8333),

which provides confidential, free assistance getting connected to a variety of food resources in 180 languages and for the hearing impaired. Counselors can pre-screen families and help them to apply for SNAP. Learn more at www.projectbread.org/get-help.

About Project Bread

Project Bread is the leading statewide food security organization in Massachusetts. Beginning in 1969 with the first Walk for Hunger, the nonprofit focuses on driving systemic change to ensure people of all ages have reliable access to healthy food. Project Bread works collaboratively across sectors to create innovative solutions to end hunger and improve lives across the Commonwealth. For more information, visit: www.projectbread.org.

OUTREACH from page 1

after hearing that Granby to Go had been putting out requests for more items.

"With the Granby To Go program, our mission is all about helping the kids. The plus is that with Neighbors Helping Neighbors as a parent pantry, we were able to seek a grant to provide more food in the community that can help more than just the kids," said Jardine.

"Helping provide gloves, hats, and mittens for children through Granby To Go is deeply important to me," said Scout Pack Leader Elle LaGuerre. "It feels good to be part of something that directly supports local families and ensures kids feel warm, safe, and supported when they need it most."

"The necessities mean a lot when they are scarce at home. We are very fortunate to have students who are aware of food insecurity in the Granby Schools and are not afraid to step up to the plate to help other students," said Delong.

The GUCC mobiles began as a result of the youth's Missions Board looking for ways to help support the community and so began the annual tradition where they host mobiles to allow for people to have direct access to them and the pantries.

"The most grateful aspect of the generosity of the students is their caring nature for what happens around them and willingness to go the extra step to help our program," said Delong. "The program would not be where it is today without the help, support, and giving of the students in the Granby community. Their involvement is what makes us a success."

The mobile is a place with plenty of parking, lighting, and visibility, and is a way for the church's youth to directly stand as a Segway in between both Granby to Go and Neighbors Helping Neighbors to serve as many people as possible.

"These kids are an absolute blessing, and as a CE director, teacher, mentor, and mom, I couldn't be more proud of all their accomplishments and even more the love they have for their fellow man. The future is bright with them at the helm," said Jardine.

"What makes me most proud is the way the Scouts showed empathy and responsibility by recognizing a need and taking action. They worked together to help ensure other children feel cared for and supported, and that speaks volumes about their character," said LaGuerre.

The holiday season is not only a time for family and giving gifts, but also a time of giving the basic essentials, and making all the difference in the world for the people in our own communities, so that no one is hungry, or cold, or without presents on Christmas morning.



ABOVE: Members of the GUCC youth group, Granby to Go, and Neighbors Helping Neighbors.

RIGHT: Two scouts with boxes for donations of kids-sized hats, mittens, gloves, and scarves for Granby to Go.

BELOW: Teens at GUCC are helping hand out bags of food to all who came to the mobile spot.



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OPINION

Tips for navigating the holidays while grieving

By Rev. Peter-Michael Preble

The holiday season is often described as a time of joy, celebration, and togetherness. But for many people, this time of year also brings an immense sense of grief, loneliness, and longing. When someone we love is missing from the table, the lights seem a little dimmer, and the familiar traditions feel different. If you are grieving this year, you are not alone. There are ways to move gently through the season and even find moments of peace amid sorrow.

Permit Yourself to Feel What You Feel

The pressure to be “festive” can be overwhelming, especially when you are grieving. It is okay, more than okay, to feel sad, tired, or disconnected. You have endured a loss. Grief doesn’t follow a schedule, and it cannot be pushed aside for the sake of holiday cheer. Let go of the expectations you place on yourself and the expectations others may have of you. Allow your emotions to come and go as they need to.

Adjust Traditions Instead of Erasing Them

Traditions can bring com-

fort, but they can also stir deep pain. You are allowed to decide which ones you want to keep, which ones you want to set aside, and which ones you might choose to reinvent. You might find meaning in continuing a loved one’s favorite ritual. Or it may feel right to pause it for a year. You may even begin something new that honors their memory. Remember: if you do something twice, it becomes a tradition.

Set Boundaries with Events and People

Boundaries are essential when grieving. You do not have to attend every gathering or celebration. Give yourself permission to say no without guilt. If you do choose to go, you may leave early or step outside for a moment of quiet if needed. Your wellbeing matters, and it is okay to protect your energy.

Plan for the Hard Moments

Difficult moments will come, but planning for them can help. Identify the days or events that may feel especially heavy and create a gentle plan for how to navigate them. Have someone you trust available to check in with you. Step outside for a walk. Find a quiet place to

pray or meditate. Often, the anticipation of the day is harder than the day itself, so prepare, but don’t overprepare.

Accept Help—Practical and Emotional

Many grieving people struggle to ask for help, especially if they are used to being the helper. But you do not need to carry everything by yourself. If you usually host a holiday gathering, ask someone else to take the lead this year. Let others support you with meals, rides, company, or simply their presence. Isolation can intensify grief; staying connected, even in small ways, can ease the burden.

Create Space to Remember

Remembering your loved one can be healing. Share stories, look through photos, prepare their favorite dish, or set a place at the table in their honor. Some find comfort in lighting a candle or displaying a picture. But if remembering feels too painful right now, you can set it aside. There is no right or wrong way to honor memory.

Care for Your Body and Nervous System

Grief is exhausting, emo-

tionally and physically. Pay attention to your body’s needs: drink water, eat nourishing food, rest when you can. Gentle movement, like stretching or walking, can help calm your nervous system. Listen to what your body is telling you; it often knows what you need before your mind does.

Seek Moments of Comfort, Not Joy

This season is often labeled as “joyful,” but joy can feel out of reach when your heart is heavy. Instead of forcing joy, look for pockets of comfort: a warm cup of tea, soft music, a quiet corner, a pet curled beside you. These small moments of peace are enough. Joy will return in its own time.

Name Your Needs to Someone You Trust

People often want to help but don’t know how. Tell someone you trust what you need, whether it’s a phone call, company at an event, help with meals, or space to talk. Be honest about your struggles. Sharing your needs allows others to show up for you in meaningful ways.

Consider Simple Ritual or Spiritual Practices

Ritual can be grounding in

seasons of grief. Lighting a candle, journaling, praying, reading Scripture, or attending a simple service can offer a sense of presence and connection. Rituals do not need to be elaborate; sometimes the smallest act can be the most comforting.

Seek Support When You Feel Overwhelmed

You do not have to walk this path alone. Counselors, chaplains, and grief groups can offer guidance, tools, and companionship. Don’t wait until you feel overwhelmed, reach out early. Sharing your experience with others who understand can be deeply healing.

Grief does not disappear for the holidays, and it does not need to. But with tenderness, boundaries, and support, you can move through this season with compassion for yourself. May you find moments of comfort, rest, and light as you navigate the days ahead.

Rev. Peter-Michael Preble is the Chaplain for the Hull Fire Department and a Hospice Chaplain with Croi Health (Formerly Norwell VNA) in Norwell, Massachusetts. Follow him at www.peterpreble.net

Turley Publications Letters to the Editor Policy

Letters to the editor should be 350 words or less in length. No unsigned or anonymous opinions will be published. We require letter writers to include his or her town of residence and home telephone number. We must authenticate authorship prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions deemed to be libelous or contain unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks, defamation of character and offensive language. All unknown or alleged facts and quotations offered by the author need to cite credible, unbiased sources. Send letters to: Sentinel, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069 or via email to sentinel@turley.com. The deadline for submissions is Friday at 5 p.m.

Turley Election Policy

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.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Matters

By Russell Gloor

Why won't Social Security give me my benefits?

Dear Rusty:

I called the Social Security office, as well as went with my husband when he went to collect his Social Security. Because I work full-time at about \$800/week, they said I could not file for my Social Security. Yet I seem to read articles all the time about people doing so.

My husband just filed for his benefits and is now collecting them. Out of the two of us, his Social Security will be larger. Please advise me.

Signed: Wanting my Benefits

Dear Wanting my Benefits:

If you have not yet reached your SS Full Retirement Age and you are working full time, you are likely being affected by Social Security’s Annual Earnings Test, which limits how much you can earn while collecting Social Security prior to your FRA. Your FRA is somewhere between 66 and 67, depending on when you were born. The annual earnings limit for those collecting SS benefits prior to FRA in 2025 is \$23,400 (changes yearly) and, if that is exceeded, Social Security will take away benefits equal to \$1 for every \$2 you are over the limit. If you applied for your benefits and are still working, and were denied, it’s likely because Social Security determined that your current annual earnings considerably exceed the earnings limit and, thus, you cannot collect benefits. That’s because the penalty for exceeding the limit would be more than your benefit amount.

FYI, the earnings limit will go away when you reach your full retirement age so, after FRA, you can claim your benefits even if you are still working. Or if you stop working before your FRA you can collect your SS benefits at that time.

None of this means you are losing money, because your monthly SS payment will continue to grow until you later claim (e.g., after

you stop working, or only work part-time), or until you reach 70 years of age. When you later claim, your monthly benefit will be higher and, depending on your longevity, you may recover what you didn’t get now because you are working. And that includes both your own SS retirement benefit and any spousal boost you may be entitled to from your husband.

So, my suggestion is this: as long as you are working full time and exceeding Social Security’s annual earnings limit, continue to wait to claim your Social Security. Then, when you reach your full retirement age – again, between 66 and 67, depending on the year you were born or if you stop working before that, go ahead and apply for Social Security again.

At that time, your application will be approved, and you will be awarded your own earned SS retirement amount plus any additional amount you may be due as your husband’s spouse. To be entitled to a spousal boost from your husband, your own FRA entitlement must be less than 50% of your husband’s FRA entitlement. But the amount you get will be reduced if you claim before your full retirement age.

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.



EDITORIAL

Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus

By Francis P. Church in 1897

Dear Editor,

I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say that there is no Santa Claus. Papa says “If you see it in the Sun, it is so.” Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus? Virginia,

Your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except what they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds.

All minds, Virginia, whether they be men’s or children’s, are little. In this great universe of ours, man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as cer-

tainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to our life its highest beauty and joy.

Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus? You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your Papa to hire men to watch all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove?

Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children

nor men can see.

Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that’s no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders that are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You tear apart the baby’s rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, or even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernatural beauty and glory beyond.

Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else as real and abiding.

No Santa Claus? Thank God he lives and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, maybe 10 times 10,000 years from now, he will continue to make glad the hearts of children.

Voice

YOUR VIEW!

What are your thoughts on issues in town? Voice your view!

Write to us in Letter to the Editor format and we’ll print your opinion on our Op/Ed page.

Email it to sentinel@turley.com. Include your hometown and a phone number at which we can reach you for confirmation.

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ABOVE: Making a Hanukkah craft. **RIGHT:** Learning some new games to play with new friends. **BELOW:** Looking inside the Recreation Center to see the candles lit, and smiles all around.



The four lit menorahs on the table.

HANUKKAH from page 1

and they had donuts at the party. "For me, it was about bringing people together for the first night of Hanukkah, and I had a really good group of people I could rely on and call upon," said Turner.

The party was first hosted two years ago, and was brought back this year when Jennifer Whitehead wanted to do something to bring more cultural events to town, and reached out to Jenn about doing the party again.

"With the rise of antisemitism, and because of the geographical place we live in, there aren't many synagogues close by, it's really nice to be able to gather with other Jewish people or other people that want to learn or partake in that celebration," said Turner.

During the celebration, they said traditional blessings, sang some songs, and enjoyed crafts and time with their neighbors, and of course, the lighting of the menorahs.

"Hanukkah is not a really big holiday, but it's about bringing light into the darkness and community and creating a time to gather together, especially in the cold winter months," said Turner.

The celebration was open to the community, and all were invited to participate, and the members who put this celebration together are looking forward to another celebration next winter, where their light will shine and their joy will be shared.



ABOVE: Lighting the candles and teaching the tradition to the little ones. **LEFT:** A little one giving a high five. **BELOW:** Playing dreidel together at the tables.



ECONOMY from page 1

next year's goals reflect both innovation and community needs.

Key objectives include:

- Continued rollout and implementation of the town seal and new logo
- Enhanced town center wayfinding and signage, in partnership with the Department of Public Works
- Development of the Belchertown Historic Trails program
- Support for marquee events such as the Lake Wallace Fall Festival
- Completion of the "pocket park" project to enliven central green space
- A determined pursuit of a local cultural district designation, even as the state program is paused,

- Flexibility for new community art initiatives as they arise

- Exploration and potential development of a "shed village" supporting artisans and rural enterprise

- Strengthened partnerships with organizations like the Quaboag Chamber of Commerce and the Boys & Girls Club

During the review, Maroney reminded the group, "Planning for Belchertown Historic Trails program, yes, ongoing assessment of wayfinding priorities," as she and committee members refined the goal list.

Growth will also proceed online.

"Growth of creative economy marketing and establishment of the social media channel," said Cheryl Dutton,

underlining how digital outreach is now a key plank in the committee's strategy. Dutton later asked for clarity from the group, "And establishment of social media channels."

Defining an 'artisan shed'

One of the evening's debates centered on the definition of "artisan sheds" structures that committee members see as vital to rural and creative commerce.

The committee aimed to balance expansive opportunity with clear, usable guidelines. "Handcrafted items make it all complicated. So, I totally agree. Just keep it as remote as possible but use some keywords or phrases that you want to see persist," said committee member Louise Levy, who advocated

for focusing on the essentials without introducing rigid requirements.

Throughout, Dutton and Dawn Cote, the town's new grants coordinator, contributed practical input about inclusion and regulatory flexibility.

Dutton emphasized simplicity.

"My philosophy on this is it just based on years' experience, is to keep this as simple as possible. Because I think once it leaves our hands, the recommendation to change the zoning, that's where it's going to get all detailed," she said, noting that zoning specifics would ultimately be handled at the policy level.

The committee ultimately reached consensus on several key elements, with Maroney summarizing: an artisan shed is "an impermanent roadside

display or kiosk on private property...whose primary focus is selling handcrafted goods. These goods must be made by the resident with supplemental knowledge need...may include the addition of handcrafted goods from other artisans to ensure the success of the stand."

Levy highlighted the focus on opportunity and community experience.

"The primary purpose is to sell handcrafted goods. These goods must be primarily... should we be saying something? Any handcraft," she said. "Should we be saying that it's accessible from the road up here?"

Throughout, the spirit was one of collaboration—and inclusion for both artists and food artisans. "Handcrafted and artisanal goods...because

that isn't that the food products that the definitions I looked up artisanal cottage goods," Dutton clarified as the group sought to cover cottage industries, including food.

Ongoing work and community engagement

The committee also reviewed progress on grant-funded projects, including wayfinding signage and a new kiosk at Lake Wallace.

Maroney shared a recent success.

"We did get awarded the Massachusetts office of tourism...we received the grant for some way finding signage and another, not like the sign that's already at Lake Wallace, but a kiosk at Lake Wallace," she said.

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OBITUARIES

Christa M. Garrow

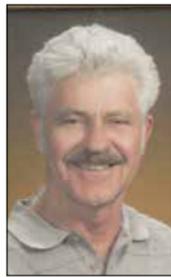
BELCHERTOWN — Christa M. Garrow - At Christmas, when the world glows with lights and warmth, our hearts return to you. Your memory lives in every song, every flickering candle, every quiet moment when we wish you were here. Though time has passed, love does not fade. We carry you with us through this Christmas season - in our traditions, our laughter, and even our tears. You are missed more than words can say, yet forever cherished beyond measure. This Christmas anniversary reminds us that love never ends, and memories are the greatest gifts we hold. Until we meet again, you remain in our hearts, today and always. One year without you, dear Christa. We miss you every day. Forever loved, deeply missed, always in our hearts. My mind still talks to you. My heart still looks for you, but my soul knows you are at peace.



Love always: Rhaelyn, Heidi, Nathan, Mom, Carl, Dad, Uncle Fran, Masy and Grandpa and Hailey.

Homer "Pete" J. Stebbins

With broken hearts we share the passing of Homer "Pete" J. Stebbins, 83, of Pine Valley Plantation, a former mason contractor. He passed away at his home on Monday, Dec. 16, 2025 after a brief illness. Homer worked his entire career as a mason, owning his own business, Stebbins Construction.



Born in Chicopee on February 23, 1942, he was the son of Homer and Marie (Grenier) Stebbins. He lived in Chicopee until 1971, when he and his wife moved to Belchertown, building their first house on George Hannum Road, where they started building their family.

Very athletic and into sports, Homer was very involved in a number of over-30 softball and basketball teams for quite some time. He was an avid fisherman, spending time on Martha's Vineyard fishing for tuna. He often took part in shark tournaments in New York and Martha's Vineyard. He loved to garden, especially fruits and vegetables, and loved sharing the fruits of that labor.

He also enjoyed cooking. Homer had a very playful (almost child-like) personality, and loved to joke and kid around. His favorite saying upon departing was, "catch you on the flip flop".

He was predeceased by his father, Homer Stebbins, his mother, Mary (Grenier) Stebbins, his loving wife Donna (Pomietlarz) of 25 years, as well as his brothers, Russell, Lionel, Donald and nephew, Danny. He leaves behind his son, Derek, and his partner, Jillian Brunell of Belchertown, his loving daughter, Natalie of Belchertown, many nieces, nephews, and friends and childhood buddies, Ray Trombley, Bob Le 'Duc, and Ron Moquin who will miss him immensely!

Services were held on Tuesday, Dec. 23 at Beers & Story Belchertown Funeral Home, 10 Maple St in Belchertown, MA. In lieu of flowers, any monetary donations can be made out to Natalie M. Stebbins for the Donna Stebbins Girls' Athletic Memorial Scholarship.

Baystate Wing Hospital recognized on National Forbes' Top Hospitals List

PALMER - Baystate Health is proud to announce that Baystate Wing Hospital has been named to the inaugural Forbes' Top Hospitals 2026 list, earning national recognition and a four-star ranking for delivering compassionate, quality, accessible care to our communities. "It is an honor for Baystate Wing Hospital to be included on the Forbes Top Hospitals list," said Scott Lichtenberger, MD, Chief Operating Officer, Baystate Health. "This achievement reflects the remarkable dedication and hard work of our caregivers at Baystate Wing Hospital and our unwavering commitment to advancing the health of the communities."

Forbes developed its first-ever Top Hospitals list to provide patients, families, and communities with a clear, evidence-based resource for evaluating hospital performance across the United States. The list identifies general acute care hospitals that demonstrate sustained excellence in clinical outcomes, operational best practices, value, and patient experience.

A central part of the methodology is its strong focus on clinical outcomes - including mortality, survival, infection, and readmission rates - while accounting for social drivers of health to ensure fair comparisons across regions and populations.

Of the 5,400 acute-care hospitals eligible for consideration, less than 15% received a rating of 4 stars or above, placing Baystate Wing Hospital among the top-performing hospitals in the country.

"This recognition affirms the strength of our team and the culture of caring that defines Baystate Wing Hospital," said Karli Barrett, President and Chief Operating Officer, Baystate Wing Hospital. "Every day, our caregivers go above and beyond to ensure our patients receive quality, compassionate care close to home. Being named to this inaugural national list is a meaningful honor and a testament to their unwavering commitment to those we serve."

The Forbes Top Hospitals list was developed in partnership with an advisory panel of clinicians, researchers, health policy leaders, and patient advocates, along with Inovalon, a healthcare data and analytics firm. The methodology emphasizes nationally recognized standards and prioritizes measurable patient outcomes to support consumers in making informed decisions about where to seek care.

Baystate Wing Hospital's inclusion on this inaugural list reinforces Baystate Health's ongoing commitment to advancing the health of the communities it serves.

The Sentinel
OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.

One is a free, brief **Death Notice** listing the name of deceased, date of death and funeral date and place.

The other is a **Paid Obituary**, costing \$275, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice and may include a photograph.

Death Notices & Paid Obituaries should be submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com.

Exceptions will be made only when the family provides a death certificate and must be pre-paid.

DEATH NOTICES

Christa M. Garrow
Belchertown

Homer "Pete" J. Stebbins
Died December 16
Beers and Story
Funeral Home



Window World of WMass. named to Qualified Remodeler HIP 200 for 2025

BELCHERTOWN - Qualified Remodeler, a leading publication serving remodelers and home improvement companies in the U.S., recently ranked Window World of Western Mass. as No. 92 out of the 200 largest home improvement companies in the country—the HIP 200. This places Window World of Western Mass as

No. 1 in Western Mass. Window World of Western Mass. was chosen as a 2025 HIP 200 company by the Qualified Remodeler editorial staff for meeting a set of criteria including installed remodeling dollar volume, total years in business, industry association membership, industry certification, industry awards and community

service. "Our success is a team effort. Being included in the prestigious HIP 200 list isn't just about the numbers—it's about the dedication and hard work of everyone at Window World of Western Mass. Huge thanks to our

Please see **WINDOW**, page 10

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

We invite you to join us Friday afternoons from 1-2:30 pm to explore these topics and more.

This group will be held in zoom, is educational, confidential, and free.

Please contact **Pat James 413-726-8661**.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Town Of Belchertown Notice of Planning Board Hearing Legal Notice Relative to a

Definitive Subdivision Plan
In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 41, Sections 81-T and 81-U, M.G.L., the Planning Board will hold a Public Hearing as follows:

Place: 2 Jabish Street, Belchertown, MA
Date: January 13, 2026
Time: 7:00 PM

This application is for a Definitive Subdivision Plan by applicant Jason Lafleur, 44 Mercier Drive, Belchertown, MA 01007. The plan is entitled "Definitive Subdivision Plan of Meeshie Moon Path," Belchertown, MA, October 24, 2025; the surveyor/engineers Sherman & Frydryk, 3 Converse St., Suite 203, Palmer, MA 01069

The location and description: Jason's Way & Aldrich Street, Assessors Map 248, Lot 2 and Map 248, Lot 45.

The plan is available for inspection during regular business hours at the Town Clerk and Planning Board Office, 2 Jabish St., Belchertown, MA 01007
This meeting will be available

online for the public: <https://meet.goto.com/173538941>

Daniel Beaudette, Chair
Belchertown Planning Board
12/18, 12/25/2025

PUBLIC NOTICES ARE NOW ONLINE

- 1 Email all notices to notices@turley.com
- 2 Access archives and digital tear sheets by newspaper title.
- 3 Find a quick link to the state of Massachusetts' public notice web site to search all notices in Massachusetts newspapers.

Public notice deadlines are Friday at 3 p.m.

visit www.publicnotices.turley.com

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| CLUES ACROSS | 38. Evil spirit | CLUES DOWN | 34. Chemical ring |
| 1. Light cavalry | 39. Monetary units | 1. Two-toed sloth | 36. The bill in a restaurant |
| 5. Coconut palms | 40. Partner to cheese | 2. Fat from a pig's abdomen | 37. Car mechanics group |
| 10. Rounded knob | 41. About Sun | 3. Romanian city | 38. One-time presidential candidate Dole |
| 14. Central Japan city | 42. Group of like-minded people | 4. Specifies | 40. Health care for the aged |
| 15. Sandwiches | 43. After B | 5. Rounded, glaciated valley | 41. Wise persons |
| 16. Shape produced by a curve | 44. Seaside room | 6. Spoke | 43. Passage with access at one end |
| 17. Ancient region in modern-day Syria | 45. Recipe measurement | 7. Collection of sacred books | 44. Make a wound |
| 18. French modernist painter | 46. Partly digested food | 8. Extravagantly theatrical | 46. America's spies |
| 19. Grandmother | 47. Flat-faced dog | 9. Very fast airplane | 47. Roof of the mouth |
| 20. Mammary gland of cattle | 48. People of southern Africa | 10. Forearm bones | 49. Plants of the lily family |
| 22. Rocky peak | 49. Salts | 11. Ancient kingdom | 50. Pinkish-red color |
| 23. Secret plan | 52. Beard lichens | 12. Legitimate: ___ fide | 51. Vaccine developer |
| 24. Songs to one's lover | 55. Sanders is one | 13. Semitransparent gemstone | 52. Mottled citrus fruit |
| 27. More (Spanish) | 56. Fencing sword | 21. Counsels | 53. A place to store garden tools |
| 30. Father | 60. Ethnic group of Albania | 23. Head honcho | 54. Rare goose native to Hawaii |
| 31. Chinese principle underlying the universe | 61. Metric weight unit | 25. Cool! | 57. Popular Hollywood pig |
| 32. Ballplayer's accessory | 63. Italian seaport | 26. Touch lightly | 58. Musician Clapton |
| 35. Together | 64. Longtime late night host | 27. Extract money via taxation | 59. A move exposing one to danger |
| 37. A person's brother or sister | 65. Extremely angry | 28. Dyes | 61. Historic Spanish soldier |
| | 66. Miami mascot | 29. Cloying sweetness | 62. CNN's founder |
| | 67. Mid-month day | 32. Sodas | |
| | 68. Marked for omission | 33. Coastal village in Guam | |
| | 69. Body part | | |

EARLY DEADLINES FOR ADS & LEGAL NOTICES

New Year's will bring early deadlines for all ads & legal notices to run in TURLEY PUBLICATIONS the week of Dec. 29, 2025 - Jan. 2, 2026:

Friday, December 26 at 2 PM for January 1 issue

- Country Journal • The Register • Wilbraham-Hampden Times • Agawam Advertiser News

Monday, December 29 at 2 PM for January 1 issue

- Sentinel • The Journal Register • Ware River News • Barre Gazette

Tuesday, December 30 at 2 PM for January 2 issue

- Quabog Current • Town Reminder • The Holyoke Sun • Chicopee Register

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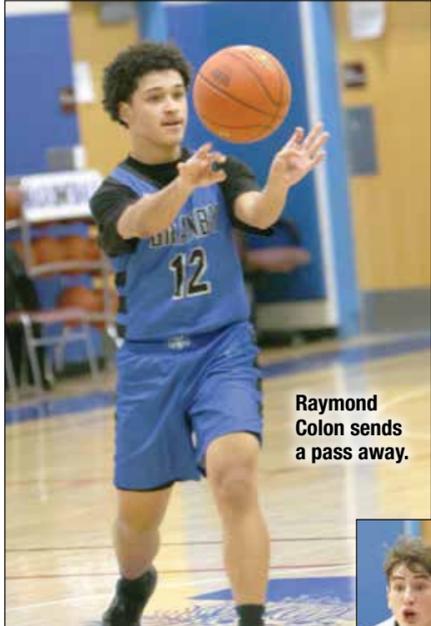
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Raymond Colon sends a pass away.

Rams fall to Monson

MONSON – Last Monday night, it was a tough time for the Granby offense as the Rams fell to Monson 46-32. Monson got a huge game from Austin Meacham, who scored more than half the points for the Mustangs with 31. Granby was led by Zavien Fernandez with 12 points. Anthony Santiago added eight points. Granby would fall to 0-2 on the season while Monson improved to 1-1.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM



Armare Fernandez fakes to his right on a play.



TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM

Morghan Litz gets the layup.



Liam Everson takes a free throw.



Anthony Santiago goes after a loose ball under the hoop.



Zavien Fernandez surveys the court.

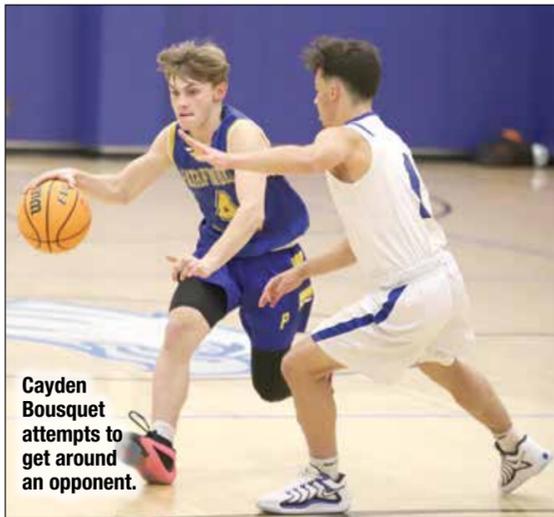


Aubrey Klingensmith attempts the fadeaway.



TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Aiden Girard makes an inbound pass.



Cayden Bousquet attempts to get around an opponent.

Offense struggles in second half for Pioneers

SPRINGFIELD – Last Tuesday evening, Pathfinder had a tough time getting on the scoreboard in the third quarter and allowed Pioneer Valley Christian Academy to pull away with a 55-41 loss for the Pioneers. Pathfinder would fall to 0-2 on the season after opening the season with a loss to Westfield Tech. Pathfinder is back in action on Monday, Dec. 29 against St. Mary's High School at 7 p.m.



Cassian Kowalik drives toward the hoop.



RIGHT: Angelo Rentas one-hands the ball into the hoop.



Gabe Cardenales tries to overcome a block and shoot.



Gabriella Slovack reaches out for the hook shot.

Orioles pick up first win of the season

BELCHERTOWN – Last Tuesday night, Belchertown High School girls basketball had its home opener against Chicopee Comprehensive. The offense had a great night as the Orioles defeated the Colts 60-33. In the win, three Orioles were in double digits led by Aubrey Klingensmith with 16 points. Morghan Litz had 15 points and Gabriella Slovack added 10 points. Comp was led in the game by Trinity McCarthy with 11 points. Sheyenne Santiago had nine points. Belchertown is now 1-1 while Comp is 0-2.

SPORTS

Thunderbirds inch closer to .500 with win at Lehigh

ALLENTOWN, PA – The Springfield Thunderbirds (8-11-3-2) rode yet another phenomenal night of goal-tending and special teams to a 3-1 win over the Lehigh Valley Phantoms (13-10-1-2) last Wednesday night inside PPL Center.

In a first period devoid of scoring on 13 combined shots, Vadim Zherenko carried over momentum from his phenomenal outing 10 nights earlier in Providence with eight first-period denials, including two on a Phantoms power play.

Newest T-Bird Troy Murray quickly warmed himself up to his teammates and fans, as the 28-year-old dropped the gloves with Sawyer Boulton on the first shift of his AHL career following more than 200 professional games across three leagues before his T-Birds debut on Wednesday.

Springfield's penalty kill, which has operated

better than any other road PK in the AHL, continued its remarkable run with a second-period clinic. The T-Birds killed off three disadvantages, and on the third of those, Chris Wagner added his second shorthanded goal of the season, as he circled Aleksei Kolosov's net and stuffed a wrap-around home at 15:57 of the middle period, making it a 1-0 game heading into the final frame.

Zherenko kept up his end of the bargain with nine more stops in the second to make it a two-period total of 17 denials against the Phantom attack.

The Phantoms did not stay quiet forever, though, as Alex Bump ripped a perfectly placed shot over Zherenko's glove hand at 3:19 of the third, tying the score, 1-1.

However, the Thunderbirds once again proved they were not ruffled,

and just 1:58 later, moments after Garrett Wilson committed a delay of game minor for clearing the puck over the glass, Alek Kaskimaki shuffled a rebound past Kolosov following an initial try by Calle Rosen. The second-year Finn's fifth goal of the season restored the Springfield lead, 2-1.

The penalty killers stiffened one more time, completing a perfect 5-for-5 night with a man down, and with the Phantoms' net empty in the final minute, Michael Buchinger lobbed a clear all the way down and into the yawning cage to put the nail in the coffin.

Zherenko completed another magnificent performance with 23 stops to secure the victory. Springfield has now earned points in nine of the last 10 games, and the club has begun this five-game road trip with three consecutive triumphs.

Offense gets going early in Railers win

WORCESTER – Although they are very much alive in the ECHL's North Division playoff race, they were — for one night anyway — the late Worcester Railers.

They beat the Norfolk Admirals 6-2 last Wednesday and scored a goal in the closing seconds of all three periods. Worcester got one with two seconds left in the first, 10 seconds go to in the second and 2.1 ticks remaining in the game.

Worcester's goals were all scored by different players. Ten different players had points. Parker Gahegan continued his wonderful play in net by stopping 31 shots. That included 16 of 17 in the second period when Norfolk desperately tried to get back into a game it trailed, 4-0, after 20 minutes.

That's right. The Railers had a 4-0 lead going into the second period. That had happened only once before in team history, on Jan. 26, 2019 here, in what became a 5-1 victory over Adirondack.

Prior to this game Worcester had spent most of its first periods in survival mode, especially at the DCU Center.

"I think we really tried to channel our road type of mentality," coach Nick Tuzzolino said. "When you get into this amount of games you start pre-scouting yourself and I was pre-scouting us I'd probably say 'pounce on 'em in the first period."

"That seems to be their weakness."

Riley Ginnell, Drew Callin, Anthony Repaci and Michael Suda scored the first period goals. Matt DeMelis got one in the second period, Gleb Veremyev in the third.

Drew Callin was 1-2-3.

Suda was and Repaci were both 1-1-2 and Anthony Callin had two assists.

Jack O'Leary scored both Norfolk goals. The Railers did something unusual to achieve the triumph. They beat Norfolk goaltender Isaac Poulter, a very good one just down from the American Hockey League. Prior to Friday night Poulter had put together a streak during which he allowed the Railers to score just two goals in three full games.

The first period goals were scored by, in order, Ginnell, Drew Callin, Repaci and Suda.

Ginnell converted a 2 on 1 break with a short side wrist shot from the left circle at 5:39. Drew Callin deflected home a shot by his brother at 10:11. Repaci took advantage of a Norfolk turnover and sizzled a wrist shot past Poulter at 12:26, then Suda blasted a low shot home from 55 feet away with just two seconds left in the period.

Norfolk got one back at 8:10 of the second period as the teams traded 2 on 1 breaks. Worcester's came first and when Ross Mitton came down the right side missed to the far post on a wrist shot, that set up the Admirals' 2 on 1. O'Leary scored at 8:10.

The Admirals were all over the Railers for most of the period. Just when it looked like Worcester would escape with the 4-1 lead, DeMelis extended his goals streak to four by putting a 20-footer past Poulter at 19:50 and the Railers were up by four again.

Both teams had someone in the penalty box so it was a 4 on 4 goal.

Rogers recognized by MIAA

FRANKLIN – The MIAA recognized 21 game officials from across the state as the 2024-2025 Game Officials of the Year during a celebratory banquet held Monday, Dec. 15 at the Doubletree Milford.

The MIAA annually recognizes the best game officials from the over 5,000 officials in Massachusetts as nominated by their peers. The following individuals were nominated and ultimately selected as the best in their craft:

Among those recognized was longtime umpire Andrew Rogers from South Hadley. Rogers is also the umpire assignor for Western Mass. high school baseball and multiple adult leagues as well as American Legion summer baseball.

Follow Turley Sports on Instagram

Turley Publications sports department has recently joined Instagram. You can find our account by searching "turleysports." We will regularly feature samples of photos that you will see in our publications on a weekly basis. Please follow and share with your friends and loved ones. We will be featuring photos from all 11 of our sports sections, but as always, you can see all the photos that appear by subscribing to your local paper or picking up a copy in your community.

NBSB celebrates a successful season of giving with food and toy drives

REGION – In the spirit of Season of Giving, North Brookfield Savings Bank (NBSB) is proud to announce the success of its annual Food and Toy Drives, made possible by the generosity of their customers, community members and employees. These initiatives reflect the Bank's ongoing commitment to supporting the communities it serves and making the holidays brighter for those in need.

During the annual Food Drive the Bank's communities came together to donate over 950 non-perishable food items and over \$1,000 in monetary donations to support families in need. These generous donations have had a profound impact this season of giving, providing crucial assistance to individuals facing food insecurity. To further amplify the impact, NBSB contributed an additional \$3,000 in support of the food pantry operations. NBSB's annual Food Drive benefitted the following food pantries:

East Brookfield Baptist Church Food Pantry, Sharing Cupboard Food Pantry - First Congregational Church, St. Joseph's Parish Food Pantry, First Congregational Church of North Brookfield, Trinity Episcopal Church - Jubilee Cupboard, St. Francis of

Assisi Parish Food Pantry and Palmer Food Share, Inc.

The generosity from their communities continued through the annual Toy Drive, where community members, employees and neighbors stepped up to the plate again to donate over 430 toys for children in need, alongside more than \$1,600 in monetary donations. To extend this support further, NBSB contributed an additional \$1,250 to support those who need it the most and bring joy to children in the communities it serves this holiday season. NBSB's annual Toy Drive benefitted the following toy organizations: North Brookfield Police Association's Toys for Joy Program, East Brookfield Toys for Joy Program, West Brookfield Police Association Holiday Toy Program, Ware Police Department "Christmas for Kids" Program, Belchertown Firefighters Association Adopt-a-Family Program and Palmer Lions Club Holiday Toy Program.

"Community is at the heart of everything that we do, and the success of this year's Food and Toy Drives is a testament to the compassion and generosity of our customers, employees and community members," said

Audrey Champine, Marketing Manager at North Brookfield Savings Bank. "We are proud to come together to create a positive difference for those in need during this Season of Giving."

To learn more about North Brookfield Savings Bank's Community giving efforts and the convenient banking products and services offered, visit www.NorthBrookfieldSavingsBank.com.

About North Brookfield Savings Bank

North Brookfield Savings Bank is a mutual savings bank with full-service branches in North Brookfield, East Brookfield, West Brookfield, Ware, Belchertown, and the Three Rivers Village of Palmer. NBSB offers a wide variety of deposit and loan products for individuals and businesses throughout Central and Western Massachusetts and has been a steadfast supporter of the communities it serves since 1854. All deposits are insured by the FDIC and the Depositors Insurance Fund. For additional information, please call 1-866-711-6272 or visit us online at www.NorthBrookfieldSavingsBank.com.

WINDOW from page 8

expert carpenters, outstanding customer service, and every team member who makes this possible! Our mission is to elevate your home improvement experience. We're so grateful for our amazing customers for trusting the process every day," said Tim Drost, Owner of Window World of Western Mass.

Window World of Western Mass. provides superior home improvement solutions that combine exceptional

quality, professional installation, and unbeatable value. For over two decades, they have been serving the community with a wide range of products, including energy-efficient windows, beautiful doors, and durable siding and roofing. They stand by their commitment to customer satisfaction with a focus on clear communication and meticulous craftsmanship on every project, big or small.

"Based on Qualified Remodeler's analysis, the HIP 200 firms tend to share several common attributes,

including strong revenues, a commitment to customer service, insightful sales techniques and strong customer loyalty," says Qualified Remodeler owner and editorial director, Patrick O'Toole. "These attributes helped put the firms on this list and contribute to their success."

Additional information on the HIP 200 can be found in the November/December 2025 issue of Qualified Remodeler and at www.qualifiedremodeler.com.

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EARLY DEADLINE

In observance of **NEW YEAR'S** for Dec. 29-Jan. 2 newspapers there will be an **EARLY CLASSIFIEDS DEADLINE!** Place your advertisement no later than **Friday, Dec. 26 at 3 p.m.**

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Stump
Grinding



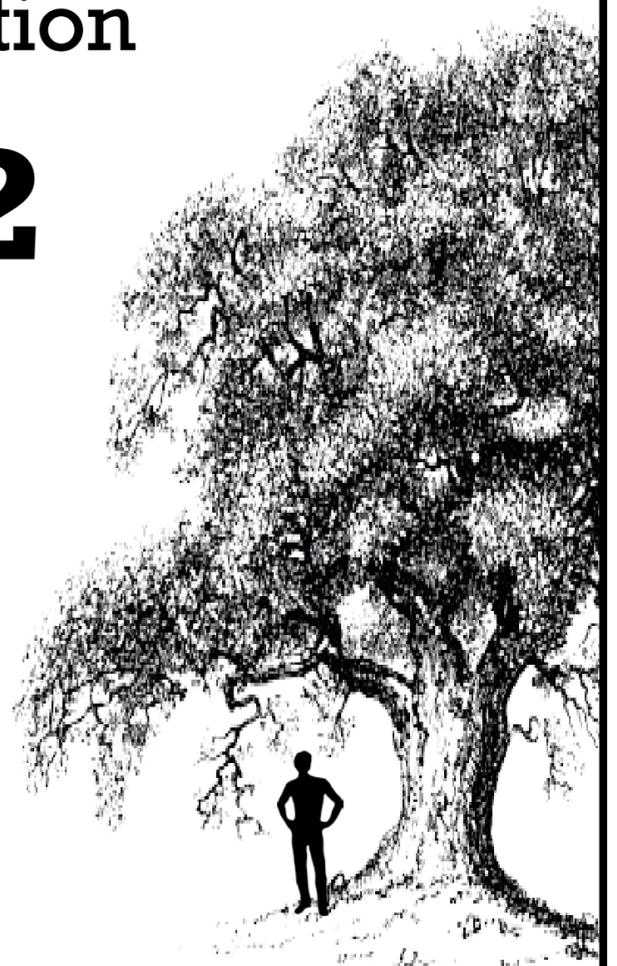
Lot
Clearing



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DL&G TREE



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