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AGAWAM

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Rosie Robotics kicks off a new season

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

AGAWAM – The Rosie Robotics Team has officially started their competition season with the announcement of the rules for this year's competitions on Jan. 6.

At this time the team gathered at Agawam High School in order to watch the livestream where First Robotics announced the game of the year.

This year, the team has to create a robot that has to manipulate a ring-shaped object into a low and high goal and then reach up and hang it from a chain.

Each of these objectives is



Rosie Robotics gathered together for their kickoff event in which the rules for their competitions this year are announced.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS

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Gillis elected as new president of the police chiefs association

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

AGAWAM – Police Chief Eric Gillis was elected as the new president of the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association.

As the new president, Gillis will be the face of MCOPA, acting as a liaison to the legislature, the governor's office, the attorney general and many others.

"Any issues that we have as a group that need to be carried forward to those different entities, I'd be the one to do that," Gillis explained.

Gillis has been police chief since 2014, which also earned him a spot on the MCOPA. Right away, Gillis claims he was very outspoken, causing his colleagues to push him to try for an elected position.

"Folks recognized I wasn't afraid to discuss issues and talk about sensitive matters so they suggested I take a more active role in the association," Gillis said.

In 2019 he was voted in as the Sergeant in Arms for the MCOPA, and then continued to move through the elected chairs until he was installed as president this past December.

He feels his 10 years of experience on MCOPA have helped to prepare him well for the posi-

tion of president.

"I've got quite a bit of experience," Gilis said. "Obviously those positions, those ascending chairs if you will, give you greater exposure to some of the things you don't realize as a law enforcement executive, so that is what has really propelled me and given me the footing that I am going to need here."

While he does not promise to be perfect and acknowledges that it is a new position he will need to adjust to, he does feel he is well equipped to deal with this new position.

"I look forward to the challenges ahead," he said.

Gillis was honored by the opportunity and grateful to everyone who helped him to get to the position.

"I've received overwhelming support from our previous mayor, Mayor Sapelli, I've received support from our current mayor, Mayor Chris Johnson, from the district attorney and, really, most importantly, from the people in Agawam Police Department," he said. "It's been fantastic and I couldn't ask for more."

He also took the time to express his gratitude to his colleagues on the MCOPA who elected him to this position.

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2024 Colleen finalists named

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

AGAWAM – The Agawam Colleen contestants are preparing for the upcoming Irish season.

This year, Agawam has four Colleen contestants. This means all of the girls will be on the Colleen Court at the end of the season.

"All four girls get to participate in all of the festivities," President of the Colleen Committee Abbie Malouin said. "It's nice that we have the four that get to be a part of everything and no one gets left out."

Over the years, the Agawam competition normally gets between four and eight Colleen applicants.

This year's candidates are: Rachel Sills, Gianna Smith, and Des-

tiny Bullock, and Sabrina McBride.

To be a Colleen contestants are expected to submit an application. These applications open in September and have to be completed by the end of November.

"In that application the girls have a couple questions...and then they fill out a resume of all of their accomplishments," Malouin said.

Those interested have to be between 17 and 22 years old, live in Agawam and have claims to Irish ancestry.

Following this there is a Colleen informational meeting in the month of January, where they go over what the Irish season looks like and what events come up.

Then there is Coronation Day. The morning of each Colleen contestant answers a series of questions from three judges who do

not have connections in Agawam. Each contestant gets 10 minutes with the judges.

"The judges ask questions about their resume, their Irish ancestry, just to get to know them," Malouin said. "They're then scored on that."

The contestants will then dress in their gowns and enter the Coronation ceremony room with their biographies being read. They will be asked a final question in front of the crowd, before the award ceremony.

"The judges take into consideration their poise, how they come into the room, their accomplishments on their resumes—they have incredible resumes with all the activities, charities and sports they're involved in—and then we go through our award ceremony and the girls are scored," Malouin said.

The girl who scores the highest is crowned the Grand Colleen. The remaining girls, when there are five or less applicants, are placed on the court. When there are over five applicants, those who place in second through fifth will be on the court.

This year's coronation ceremony will take place on Saturday, Feb. 3 at Oakridge Golf Course. If interested in getting tickets people can reserve them by emailing agawamstpatricks317@gmail.com.

"That's kind of our kick-off to the Irish season," Malouin said.

There will also be the annual corn beef dinner on Mar. 6. At this



Agawam 2024 Colleen contestants, Rachel Sills, Gianna Smith, and Destiny Bullock. Missing from the photo is Sabrina McBride.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

COLLEEN | page 5



Winter reading program full of fun activities

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

AGAWAM – The public library is hosting their winter reading program from Jan. 8 until Feb. 29.

This program is open to people of all ages, whether they live in Agawam or not.

"It's free and it's open to everyone," Children's Librarian Pamela Weingart. "You don't have to live in Agawam, you don't even have to live in MA. It's open to all who are interested."

Adults, kids and teens are all welcome to sign up for this program. To sign up go to agawamlibrary.beanstack.org or stop by the library itself for a pen and paper version of the challenge.

"I really like our game board this year," Adult Librarian Cher Collins said. "For folks who are not interested in using beanstack we have a pen and paper alternative and it looks like a mini game board and I just love it."

This board was designed by Library Associate Charlie Pope, and Collins greatly appreciated their efforts in creating it.

Kids have to read for at least fifteen minutes in one day to earn a raffle ticket to enter into their variety of prizes.

"We have some really cool prizes this year," Weingart said. "We found some great sales and we have some really outstanding things."

Teens need to read for at least thirty minutes to earn the raffle ticket, which they can enter into one of two prizes: a hot chocolate and blanket set or a bluetooth speaker.

Adults will earn a raffle ticket for every one hour they read each day. They can enter their tickets into any of five prizes, which will include pens, a tote bag and more.

Adults also have the option of writing a book review, and for every one of those they will earn one raffle ticket. They can write up to five book reviews.

Built into beanstack, the website where

participants can log their reading, there is also a variety of activities for them to earn raffle tickets. Five activities will add up to one raffle ticket.

"You can create a winter-themed craft, read a book set in winter, ask a librarian for a recommendation, very simple activities," Collins said.

Adults can earn a maximum of 22 raffle prizes to enter into the raffle. Kids and teens can earn up to 52.

Throughout the program there will be drop in events, including crafts and a photo opportunity.

All community members of Agawam, as well as people outside the community, are encouraged to come and try this fun event. While it is not as large as the summer reading program the library does annually, it will still be enjoyable for all who participate.

"We focus a lot of attention in the summer with our summer reading stuff but winter is also a good time because people are stuck inside," Collins said. "So participating

in a reading challenge can make the time pass a little quicker."

"In the winter so many people practice things that make them feel cozy, like curling up on a couch and reading together," Weingart said. "It's a time of finding indoor things to do, those quiet, cozy activities."

The library decided to have this winter reading program not only because winter is the perfect time to cozy up with a good book, but also to help encourage people to read year round.

"People should be reading all the time, not just in summertime, in the wintertime too," Weingart said. "Reading should be a daily habit all year round, this is a little something we do to encourage that."

Weingart and Collins are open for anyone to come in with questions they have and they look forward to seeing everyone enjoying this program throughout the season.

"I think it will be something easy and fun to do for the winter," Collins said.

ACC to hold souper bowl sunday



As of Sunday, Jan. 14, SOUPer Bowl Sunday is underway at Agawam Congregational Church. "Cans of various soups will be collected from members and friends through Super Bowl Sunday, Feb. 11, the day of the big football game," said church Missionary Committee chair Lesley Young. The "Football Stadium" is set up in the Narthex where folks can place their donated cans of soup to be brought to the Parish Cupboard the week of Feb. 12. For more information, contact the church office at 413-786-7111 or office@agawamcong.com.

Virtual support groups offered

WESTERN MA – During a cancer journey patients and their families often benefit from the support of others. Virtual support groups will be held in 2024 by Camille St. Onge, LICSW, and oncology social worker.

For many years, people had to travel to a predetermined location in order to attend addiction support group meetings. As a result of restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic and because of the increasing availability of digital services, these groups now meet online.

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

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

include: General Cancer Support Group, 1st Wednesday of each month, from 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.; Partners in Caregiving, 2nd Wednesday of each month, from 5 - 6:30 p.m.; Expressive Writing through Cancer, 3rd Wednesday of each month, from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.; Breast Cancer Support Group, 4th Wednesday of each month, from 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

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

Scholarship, fellowships available

WESTFIELD – The Horace Smith Fund has scholarship and fellowship money available for graduates of Hampden County public and private high schools. Graduating high school seniors and students already in college may apply for Scholarships of \$12,000. Those in their final year of college and previous college graduates pursuing advanced degrees may apply for Fellowships of \$15,000. Applicants must maintain at least a B average in college and be enrolled as full-time students. Awards are made based on both academic achievement and financial need. Of great importance is a personal written account of why the student feels deserving of financial assistance and their goals in pursuing higher education.

Last year, \$316,000 was awarded to 30 individuals. Scholarships were given to 22 graduating seniors from nine Hampden County high schools. Three scholarships were also awarded to current college stu-

dents to assist them in completing their undergraduate degrees. Five fellowships were given to college graduates pursuing advanced degrees, who had graduated from Hampden County high schools. The Horace Smith Fund was established in 1899 by the successful and generous philanthropist named Horace Smith, co-founder of Smith & Wesson, established in Springfield. The scholarships and fellowships are named for Walter S. Barr, a West Springfield businessman, whose widow left the bulk of the family estate to The Horace Smith Fund in 1950. Completed applications must be received either electronically or by mail to The Horace Smith Fund at 16 Union Avenue, Suite 2K, Westfield, MA 01085 no later than March 15.

Applications are available at local high school guidance offices, college financial aid offices, online at www.HoraceSmithFund.org or by phoning (413) 739-4222.

Paranormal findings to be revealed

AGAWAM – It was an evening last October when members of Agawam Paranormal began arriving at a Feeding Hills farmhouse, soon to be joined by news anchor Chris Pisano and a film crew from Western Mass News.

Case after case of equipment was unloaded, and cameras and sensors set up in every room of the Agawam Historical Association's 267-year-old Thomas Smith House. Working in total darkness, team members took readings and recorded their surroundings for the next several hours. It wasn't until after 1 a.m. that Agawam Paranormal founder and lead investigator Rob Goff Sr. was satisfied all necessary information had been collected and the ok was given for everything to be packed up and the Smith House locked up for the night.

A brief segment of the investigation appeared on Western Mass News on Oct. 30, 2023, but a full assessment of data collected that night has not yet been made public.

That will change on Thursday, Jan. 18 4 at 6:30 p.m. at the Captain Charles Leonard House, 663 Main St., when the Agawam Historical Association invites the public to

attend its first meeting of the new year. Agawam Paranormal will present for the first time the full results of their investigation. Equipment used in the investigation will be displayed and their processes detailed. Findings will be explained and followed by a Q&A session. A raffle will also be held for a chance for two to accompany Agawam Paranormal on a future investigation at the Smith House.

The Thomas Smith House, built c. 1757, remains in largely original condition, without central heat or plumbing. No one has spent the night at the house in decades; the house has not been lived in since the 1960s. The property was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2005 and is a rare, unrestored example of 18th century architecture. The garage was built specifically for automobiles and connects the property's agricultural origins to the Agawam's suburban present.

An interactive virtual tour of the Thomas Smith House, created by photographer Fred Gore, can be found at <https://mls.kuu.la/share/collection/7jq2q?fs=1&vr=1&initload=0&thumbs=1>, and offers basement to attic access.

Photography submissions needed at library

AGAWAM – The Friends of the Agawam Public Library is looking for entries to their 4th Open Judged Virtual Photography Show, to be on display after March 15, 2024. The show provides a platform to recognize and encourage photographers and benefits the Agawam Public Library. Twenty-one awards totaling \$1,540 will be determined by judging done on March 1, 2024. Dave Roback and Tim Donelan, both well recog-

nized photographers, will be the judges.

The show is divided into four categories of photography: creative, nature, photojournalism and pictorial. The entry fee is \$25 per entry. Deadline for submissions is Feb. 15, 2024. If we have not received sufficient entries, the show will be cancelled and all fees returned.

All images must be original, made by the photographer, captured by film or digitally,

and cannot be previous entries in our show.

The Prospectus and Entry Form can be accessed by going to www.agawamlibrary.org, and scrolling down to the Friends of the Library widget. From there you will be able to click on a link to the show's information.

For further information please contact Bob Kadis at r.kadis@comcast.net or at 413-789-4814.

Girl Scout Cookie season is here, order early

AGAWAM – Girl Scouts of Western Massachusetts kicks off the 2024 Girl Scout Cookie season this weekend, the annual event in which Girl Scouts unbox their futures as young female entrepreneurs through the world’s largest entrepreneurial program for girls.

This year’s theme, Unbox the Future, aims to remove social barriers that often keep girls boxed in. When bold, goal-getting Girl Scouts sell a package of cookies, they’re doing much more than what’s seen at face value. Girl Scouts do more than sell delicious treats. They’re entrepreneurial powerhouses creating a more equitable future for themselves and the world. Every box of cookies sold provides invaluable experiences for Girl Scouts such as service projects, troop travel and summer camp.

This season, cookie lovers can enjoy the full assortment of Girl Scout Cookies, including fan favorites such as Thin Mints, Samoas, Tagalongs and Do-si-dos as well as Trefoils, Lemon Ups, Adventurefuls, S’mores, and the gluten-free Toffie-tastic.



reach out to her to find out how she’s selling cookies. If you don’t know a Girl Scout, check out your local council’s Girl Scout Cookie Finder to find a booth and purchase cookies.

Beginning Feb. 16, customers who do not already know a Girl Scout will also be

able to purchase cookies to be shipped directly to their homes by entering their zip code into the Girl Scout Cookie Finder.

Customers can also text COOKIES to 59618 to stay informed about how to purchase Girl Scout Cookies and other exciting Girl Scout news. Learn more about the Terms and Conditions and the SMS Privacy Policy.

For more than 100 years, Girl Scouts and their enthusiastic supporters have helped ensure the success of the iconic annual cookie program—and they’ve had fun, developed valuable life skills and made their communities a better place every step of the way. Girl Scout Cookie season in western Mass runs mid-January to mid-March.

Girl Scouts in grades K-12 can start their journey to fun, friendship and new experiences by joining the world’s largest entrepreneurial organization for girls at any point in the year. Girls can join and adults can become a volunteer at www.girlscouts.org/join.

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Beginning Feb. 16, customers who do not already know a Girl Scout will also be

Parks and Rec announce winter brochure available

AGAWAM – Parks and Recreation Director Christopher Sparks announced last week the Town of Agawam’s Winter Activity brochure is now available online for residents to view and register for activities. Registration for the Father Daughter Dance and Youth Lacrosse is ongoing.

Inaugural social for new mayor

AGAWAM – Newly sworn-in Mayor Christopher Johnson will hold an inaugural social on Friday, Feb. 2 beginning at 5:30 p.m. at Oak Ridge Golf Course. The cost to attend is \$40 per person or \$75 per couple.

There will be a DJ and dress is business casual. Social hour will begin at 5:30 p.m. followed by a buffet dinner at 6:30 p.m.

For tickets, please contact chrisjlaw@comcast.net or call (413) 732-8356.

Big Y names new president/CEO and COO

SPRINGFIELD – The Board of Directors of Big Y Foods, Inc. is pleased to announce the following executive changes starting January 21.

Charles L. D’Amour will become executive chairman of the board as the reins of president and chief executive officer move to Michael P. D’Amour, and executive vice president and chief operating officer move to Richard D. Bossie. These changes reflect the next chapter in the company’s history as they continue to chart a path for growth, collaboration and innovation in the challenging and changing retail environment.

As executive chairman, Charles L. D’Amour will continue to provide oversight, strategic advice and board leadership as this transition manifests. In addition, Charles L. D’Amour will also continue to serve as a member of the real estate and development committee. Charles L. D’Amour, son of co-founder Gerald D’Amour was appointed to president in 2006 and CEO in 2019. He began his career at an early age working through various positions in the supermarket including store director. After completing college and law school, he rejoined the company in 1978 where he served in many capacities including sales manager, vice president of sales and marketing, and COO in addition to his responsibilities for real estate development where he has led Big Y’s strategic direction and growth. Charles L. D’Amour

said “For nearly 90 years, Big Y has been proud to honor the legacy of our founders, Paul and Gerry D’Amour, as a family company focused on our employees, our customers and the communities we serve. It’s been an honor to have been personally connected with our company and to have had the privilege of working alongside my father, uncle, cousin Donald and sister Claire. I have worked closely with Michael D’Amour, other members of our 3rd generation of family members along with the rest of our leadership team who are all well poised to lead our company and continue that legacy of service. I have the utmost trust and confidence in Michael and Rick to continue our company’s growth and success. With their appointment to these roles, I’m pleased that our Big Y Board of Directors holds them in the same highest regard and confidence.”

Michael P. D’Amour has been appointed president and CEO where he will guide the overall direction of the company and drive their strategic initiatives and growth while maintaining the company’s mission. Throughout his career, Michael P. D’Amour has proven to be a thoughtful, passionate and innovative leader both at Big Y and throughout the industry. He currently serves on the board of FMI/The Food Industry Association and the board of Topco Associates an \$18B Food Cooperative based in Itasca, IL. Michael P. D’Amour is the grandson of co-founder Paul D’Amour

and son of Donald, was appointed COO in 2019. After working in the supermarkets in various roles while in his teens, he began his full-time career in 1996. He has worked in all areas of the markets including operations and store director, as well as various corporate areas from buyer and category sales manager to vice president of sales and marketing.

As newly appointed executive vice president and COO, Richard D. Bossie will work with CEO, Michael D’Amour in overseeing all operational areas of the company. Bossie has over 40 years of experience in the supermarket industry beginning as a part time service clerk. He joined Big Y in 1986 and has worked in all areas of store operations including store director and later as a district director until his appointment as director of operations in 2010. In 2019, he was named senior vice president of retail operations and customer experience where in addition to his operations oversight, he also leads other retail banners such as Big Y Express gas and convenience and Table & Vine fine wines and liquors along with teams for asset protection and continuous improvement. Bosse currently serves on the board of Baystate Health, the largest integrated healthcare system in Western MA. Bosse states “I am honored for this tremendous opportunity to work in partnership with Michael to drive innovation and enhance the development of our industry leading teams.

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Opinion

Guest Column

Dreaming of roses, blueberries bushes and more? Get those orders in!



For me at least, a much needed break from the garden has given way to the return of other hobbies this winter.

Quilting for one. I've enjoyed working on a Christmas tree quilt and have plans to start a pumpkin quilt.

I guess when I can't garden, I take horticulture any way I can get it – even in cloth! Quilting is fun in that you can exercise your love of color by playing with different combinations.

I like to see what looks good together and stand back and admire. It seems very similar to the admiration of a thoughtfully planned out flower garden. Well, you didn't start reading to learn about my sewing fancy, so let's get to some garden talk.

Do you dream of expanding your mini orchard or berry patch? Maybe you have a particular rose you are interested in.

If you desire to shop by mail, place your orders early (yes, now) for home delivery in April and early May.

I will start my dreaming with the Nourse Farms catalog (www.noursefarms.com or 413-665-2658). Located not far away in South Deerfield, this company specializes in producing high quality berry plants (and asparagus roots plus).

It would be great to extend my blueberry picking season over a month or more, just like my parents did with their patch. I will plan to order early, mid at late season varieties to accomplish this.

Last year, Nourse switched from selling bareroot blueberry plants to selling them in one liter pots. According to the listing, plants are cut back to just over a foot. They will increase in top growth the first year.

They have found that selling potted plants eases transplant shock and reduces the chance of the roots drying out in shipment. Sounds great to me!

Take care to amend the soil to the proper pH and site the plants accordingly and you could enjoy blueberries for decades. My parents' bushes are still bearing some 70 years later.

Maybe you are in the market for apple trees this year. For well-rooted, hardy Maine grown plants, shop the Fedco Trees Catalog (www.fedcoseeds.com). Fedco Trees offers a great selection of heirloom apple trees, scionwood and rootstocks for home grafting, pears, plums and grapes among other types of nursery stock and ornamentals.

For heirloom apple enthusiasts or those interested in planting a cider orchard, this is an amazing resource. The final order deadline for trees is March 1.

The catalog changes a bit every year, so be sure to check

back or reach out to them if you are looking for a specific variety and you don't see it listed in print.

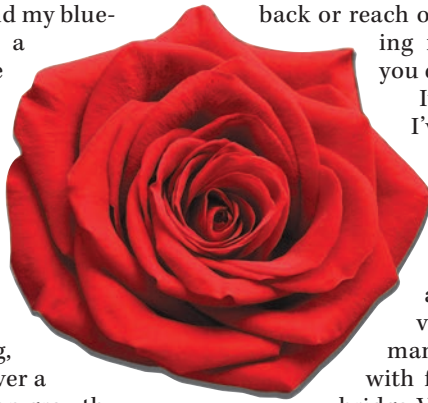
It's been a few years since I've found a reputable mail-order nursery for heirloom roses. Recently, I stumbled upon High Country Roses (www.highcountryroses.com), and I'm impressed with the variety of roses they carry, many of which I am familiar with from working at Old Sturbridge Village: Rosa gallica officinalis and versicolor, Harison's Yellow, Rosa eglanteria and more.

If heirlooms aren't your thing, check out the number of ARS (American Rose Selections) winners for proven success. All of the roses they sell are grown on their own roots by vegetative propagation and are not grafted.

Some arguments in favor of own root roses include better hardiness, increased blooms, vigor and longevity. With over 600 varieties to choose from there is something for new and seasoned rose enthusiasts alike, and a lot of useful information for growers on their website.

Yes, it is the middle of winter and all should be quiet on the gardening front, but it is also a great time to get your orders in to your favorite mail order catalogs. Shop early for the best selection!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 31 years she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to poumette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.



Can someone work while collecting Social Security Disability?



Dear Rusty

If a person is collecting Social Security disability benefits, can they, at any point, work at all? If they can, what is the maximum they can earn and still keep the disability benefit? I am asking because my husband is still young, but his injuries will not allow him to go back to the job he had prior to his injuries and surgeries. He does not just want to sit at home doing nothing.

Signed: Concerned Wife

Dear Concerned:

Actually, the Social Security Administration encourages those collecting Social Security Dis-

ability Insurance benefits to attempt to go back to work and they provide considerable leeway for them to do so. The monthly earnings limit for those collecting SSDI benefits in 2024 is \$1,550 and as long as your husband earns less than the limit while working, his SSDI benefits will not be in jeopardy. Your husband should contact Social Security's Ticket to Work program directly to protect his disability status and discuss returning to work while collecting SSDI benefits.

The Ticket to Work program assists those now receiving SSDI benefits who wish to test their ability to return to work without putting their SSDI benefits at risk. The program provides considerable assistance, including new career training opportunities and connection to potential employers and it is voluntary and costs nothing. Here is a link to Social Security's information on the Ticket to Work program: <https://choosework.ssa.gov/>

It's not mandatory for your husband to enroll

in the Ticket to Work program but, in addition to other available assistance, he can request a Trial Work Period, which would allow for nine months, over a rolling five year period, during which he can earn any amount even over the normal monthly limit mentioned above without risking his SSDI benefits.

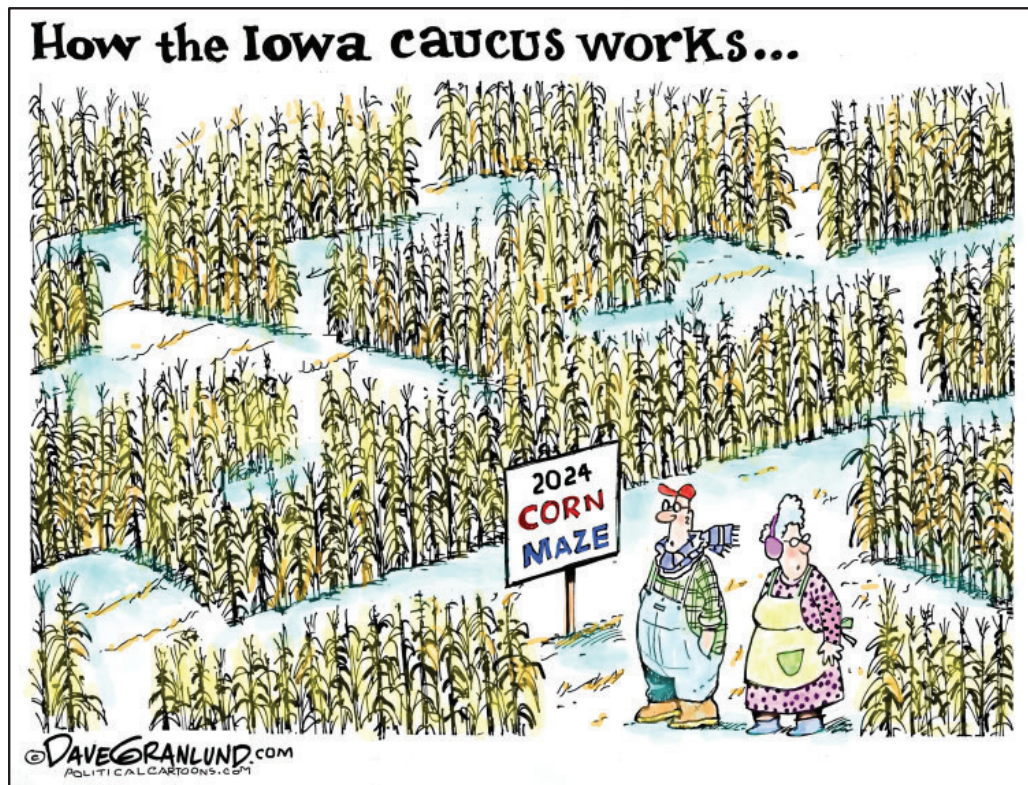
Within the Trial Work Period, only those months he earns over the normal monthly SSDI limit would count as a Trial Work Month. So, for example, your husband could work part time regularly earning under the normal monthly limit and if, in some months (up to nine), he earned more it wouldn't affect

his SSDI benefits. So, your younger disabled husband can, indeed, work while on Social Security disability, for as long as he wishes while earning under the monthly SSDI limit, the SSDI earnings limit changes yearly. He may also wish to enroll in Social Security's Ticket to Work program for assistance with developing a new career. Plus, he can take advantage of using trial work months in the event his work earnings will, at times, exceed the monthly SSDI limit.

If your husband earns over the SSDI limit for more than the nine trial work months and his benefits are consequently stopped, he can within the five-year Trial Work Period have his benefits reinstated (without again going through the full application process) if his disability, once more, renders him unable to work full time.

For starters, I suggest your husband contact Social Security's Ticket to Work program directly at 1.833-889-0108 to discuss returning to work part time. Social Security will guide him through the entire process.

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 ssadviser@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.



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Opinion



I received an email from a Brimfield resident, who along with his wife, participated in the Allen Bird Club's Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, Dec. 16.

One unexpected species they saw were three female buffleheads at the Springfield Reservoir.

The bufflehead is a small duck about 14 inches long. It has a distinct, large rounded head.

The male has a white wedge behind its black head. The male also has white flanks and breast. The female is gray brown with a small patch of white behind the eye.

They are diving ducks and feed on mollusks, fish, snails and crustaceans. They summer on wooded lakes, rivers and winter on lakes and coastal waters.

The female lays eight to ten ivory to buff eggs in a tree cavity or nest box. There courtship begins in January and these ducks show a high level of aggression during that time.

Buffleheads are generally silent. However, the female makes guttural sounds during courtship.



Female Bufflehead

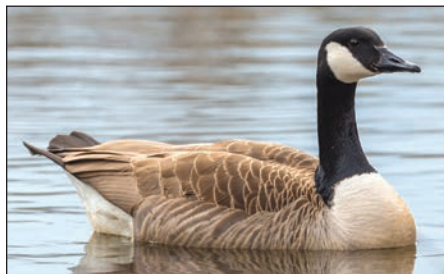
Bird count

In his email, the Brimfield resident said he did his first Allen Bird Club count in the late 1970s. He said, "We have been covering the town of Ludlow, excluding the Westover Conservation Area covered by others, since 1989. The club's count circle center is in Springfield and includes adjacent towns.

He also said, "We had an excellent day weather wise, but the songbirds were hard to come by. With all the water ice free, we had high number of Canada geese (93), common mergansers (170, mostly males) and mallard (115). The common mergansers and many of the mallards were at the Springfield Reservoir."

He reported 20 ring-necked ducks at a pond near the Ludlow Country Club was another unexpected species in the count. In all, they had 32 species on their list,

slightly more than the average of 29 species. Following the time in the field, the participants held a zoom meeting to discuss the results. No one mentioned seeing any winter finches i.e. redpoll, siskin or evening grosbeak.



Canada goose

Large flock of Canada geese

Recently, I saw a large flock of Canada geese in a cornfield in Spencer. There must have been at least 100. I did not stop to take an accurate count, but it was the largest flock I've seen.

Christmas card count

Years ago, Thelma Crawford, told me she kept a Christmas card bird count every year. While she was alive, we would share our card counts. Often the bird fell into the unspecified species category. I wven received a Christmas card one year with a loon with an evergreen wreath around its neck.. This was the first year I did not re-

ceive any Christmas cards with birds even one perched off in a distant tree in the background.

Suet feeder

I now have my suet feeder out all the time as I have not seen any sign of wandering black bears in awhile. I also feed a combination of mixed bird seed, black oil sunflowers and shelled peanuts, which I mix together to put out daily. I have the usual juncos, chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, blue jays, mourning doves and of course, squirrels. I have not seen the cardinal pair yet, but then I don't have a lot to time to spend watching my feeders.

People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by calling me at 413-967-3505, leaving a message at extension 100, emailing mybackyard88@aol.com or edowner@turley.com or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005.



White-breasted nuthatch

Letter to the Editor

Council should support Medicare resolution

To the Editor

The Agawam City Council should pass TR-2024-9, a resolution to urge Beacon Hill to establish Medicare For All, a single payer system for universal health care for every resident of the commonwealth.

Just for the Agawam town government budget alone, Medicare for All would save almost \$13 million per year compared to the Town's annual health insurance premiums we taxpayers pay now. That savings over 10 years could pay the Town's cost for the new high school. How is this possible? Because Medicare For All takes the profit motive out of health care. Under Medicare For All, there are no premiums, copays, or deductibles, because there are no multi-million dollar salaries for executives and no dividends to have to pay to corporate shareholders. The administrative overhead of private health insurers averages between 15% to 30%. The current administrative overhead for Medicare and Medicaid is about 2%.

Medicare For All would be negotiating

with big pharma on behalf of all 7M residents of the commonwealth, giving it powerful leverage to keep prescription drug prices low.

Best of all, Medicare For All eliminates the insurance companies' pencil-pushers from the decision process of who gets what care. If your doctor says it's medically necessary, you get the care. Period. No matter who you are, wealthy, working, disabled, young, or old. If you need the care, you get it. Check out MassCare.org for details of how it works.

Agawam's constituents want Medicare For All. In 2022, 55% of voters in the 6th Hampden district which includes North Agawam supported a non-binding ballot initiative instructing Beacon Hill to create a single payer system of universal health care. After all, if it will save the Agawam town government \$13M in its budget, imagine how much money it'll keeping in our pockets.

Susan Grossberg
Agawam Resident

COLLEEN ■ from page 1

event there will be a raffle and Irish step dancers.

"It's a great night for the community, you don't have to be Irish to come to it, we love being able to celebrate the Irish," Malouin said.

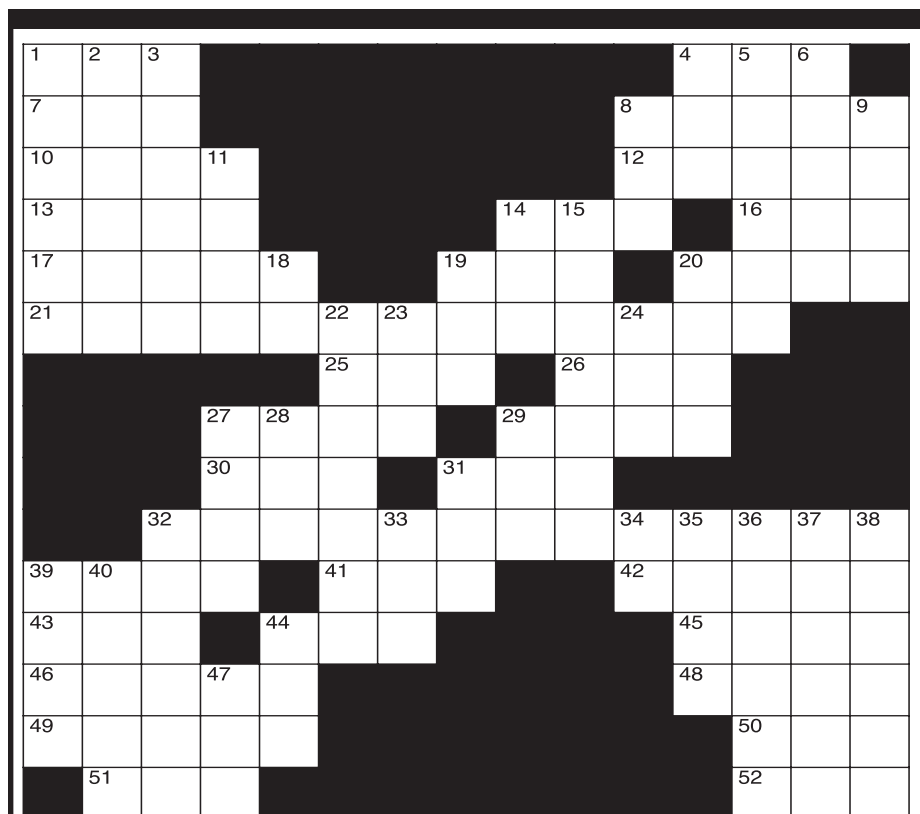
While the Colleens contest is not accepting any more applicants this year, Malouin welcomes anyone interested to apply next year.

"It's a great experience, it's great for meeting new people and getting in touch

with your heritage," Malouin said. "It's a lot of fun and we get to do a lot of really cool things."

Moulin herself was a Colleen contestant in 2016 and she thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

"I love being able to share my Irish heritage, it's really important to me that that continues," Malouin said. "I love being able to share it with younger generations and then they get to go to other towns and share their heritage with the other girls and it's just nice to see this community come together."



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Microgram
- 4. Where golfers begin
- 7. Each
- 8. Warm weather metropolis
- 10. Coat with sticky substance
- 12. Girl's given name
- 13. Myth (Spanish)
- 14. Ultrahigh frequency
- 16. Former NBAer Jeremy
- 17. Where rockers work
- 19. Your consciousness of your own identity
- 20. Soft-finned fishes
- 21. Localities
- 25. Paddle
- 26. Union
- 27. Member of religious
- 29. Small shrill flute
- 30. Small constellation in the Milky Way
- 31. They ___
- 32. College kid on vacation
- 39. de Armas and Gasteyer are two
- 41. Part of the human body
- 42. A progressive grading
- 43. Sound unit
- 44. Noise some birds make
- 45. Abba __, Israeli politician
- 46. Portuguese city
- 48. Be extremely, uncritically fond of
- 49. Resembling old Norse poems
- 50. Ask for out of extreme need
- 51. Sino-Soviet

CLUES DOWN

- 1. An insane person
- 2. ___ Boothe Luce, American author
- 3. Buttock muscles
- 4. Men's fashion accessory
- 5. "Hotel California" rockers
- 6. Electronic communication
- 8. Magnetomotive force (abbr.)
- 9. Hostleries
- 11. A way to resound
- 14. Exclamation: yuck!
- 15. A resident of Indiana
- 18. Exclamation of surprise
- 19. Make a mistake
- 20. Boundary
- 22. Antilles island
- 23. It's used to make furniture
- 24. Clod
- 27. They indicate where places are
- 28. Bobby __, NHL champ
- 29. Prints money
- 31. Honorable title (Turkish)
- 32. Appetizers
- 33. Midway between north and northwest
- 34. Spanish be
- 35. Breezed through
- 36. Grilled dishes
- 37. In a way, excites
- 38. Change mind
- 39. A French abbot
- 40. Popular candy
- 44. Partner to cheese
- 47. Wood or metal bolt

NEWS & FEATURES

As a paper of record, we attempt to cover all general news, personality profiles, and community features that we know about. This includes all selectmen and school committee meetings as well as spot planning board, board of health, finance, and other town meetings determined by the issue's relevance to our readers. There are the annual major community event features that we should always cover, but we are more than open to suggestions of other features to celebrate the fabric of our communities and their many interesting occupants. Our loyal advertisers provide funding for this paid staff coverage.

For more information on news or community features for the Agawam Advertiser News, please email aan@turley.com.



David Mason of Feeding Hills had the winning photo in Mass Audubon's 2023 photography contest. SUBMITTED PHOTO

Feeding Hills resident named winner in Mass Audubon photo contest

LINCOLN – David Mason of Feeding Hills been named a winner in Mass Audubon's 2023 Picture This: Your Great Outdoors photography contest.

Mason took top honors in the contest's Mammals category, 18-and-older age group, for his dramatic image of North American mink seemingly racing toward him.

The statewide conservation organization's photo competition attracted more than 5,000 submissions from hundreds of photographers of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities.

Contest categories included People in Nature, Birds, Mammals, Other Animals, Landscape, and Plants and Fungi. Participants entered in their appropriate age groups: 18-and-Older or Under-18.

All images—photographers could sub-

mit up to 10—must have been shot in Massachusetts or at Mass Audubon's Wildwood Camp in Rindge, NH, but may have been taken any time prior to or during the 2023 contest period.

Hopkinton resident Cheryl Rose's colorful closeup image of a Sundew carnivorous plant was named the contest's Grand-Prize Winner. Rose wins a \$250 gift card for her Grand Prize-winning photo, in addition to being featured in Mass Audubon's member newsletter, Explore.

Mason and other Category winners receive \$100 gift cards, and eight Honorable Mentions receive \$50 gift cards, all of which can be redeemed at a Mass Audubon shop or wildlife sanctuary.

To see all winning photos and Honorable Mentions, visit www.massaudubon.org/picturethis.

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SPORTS

Connery scores game-winner in OT

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

WEST SPRINGFIELD – After closing out 2023 with a two game losing streak, the Agawam hockey team entered last Tuesday night's Fay Division match-up against rival Ludlow with a 4-4 overall record.

One thing that Agawam hockey coach Todd Rowley really didn't want to see his squad do was drop below the .500 mark.

The Brownies, who were trailing, 2-0, at the start of the third period, scored a pair of goals during the final eight minutes of regulation sending the contest into overtime. Sophomore Thomas Connery scored the game winning goal on a breakaway shot 21 seconds into overtime, which gave the Brownies a thrilling 3-2

victory at the Olympia Ice Center in West Springfield.

"This is a huge win for us," Rowley said. "We entered tonight's game with a 4-4 overall record and one of our goals is to stay above the .500 for the entire season. We did dig ourselves a big hole in the first period. We played a little bit better in the second period and I thought we outplayed them in the third period."

The Brownies also defeated the Lions, 5-1, in the season opener before losing their next two games to Amherst and Taconic. It was the only time that the Brownies had been below the .500 mark this season.

The loss snapped Ludlow's (4-4-1) four game winning streak.

Ludlow sophomore goalie Ethan Steigmeyer made 26 saves in his first career varsity start. He

took over the starting duties from freshman Peter LeBorgne, who missed the game with the flu.

The Lions, who outplayed the Brownies during the first 15 minutes of the match, took a 1-0 lead at the 4:54 mark following a goal by sophomore A.J. Stupak, which was assisted by senior Ryan Kurtz.

It was Stupak's second goal of the season. His first goal came in a 6-0 shutout win against Chicopee on January 3.

A little more than seven minutes later, sophomore Tanner Severyn scored his third goal of the season, which was unassisted, giving the Lions a 2-0 advantage.

After a rocky first period, Agawam junior netminder Frankie DiSanti (21 saves) settled down and didn't allow any more goals



Andrew Holton tries to break away with the puck.
TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM

HOCKEY | page 8

Smith, Maldonado pace Agawam to win

AGAWAM – Last Thursday night, Agawam engaged with Pittsfield in a very close contest throughout.

Agawam would hold leads through each frame, but Pittsfield always kept it close before

Agawam prevailed 67-64. Colin Smith had 21 points while Elijah Maldonado had 19 points. The win brought Agawam to an impressive 8-2 on the season. One more win will qualify Agawam for the state tournament.



Elijah Maldonado drives to the hoop.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



Aiden Lavelle takes a mid-range jumper.



Gavin Cruz passes toward the corner.



Melih Tomak fights for the rebound.



Owen Lavelle holds the ball back before driving into the paint.

Brownies nipped by Terriers



Nick Ugolini attempts to lift his opponent.

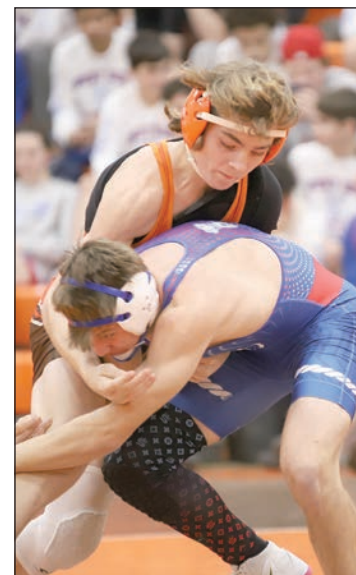


Lincoln Despard goes for the pin at 126 pounds.

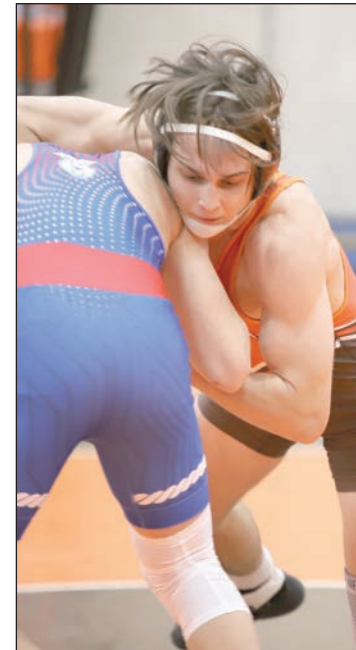


Rhein Ingham gets ready to lock up.

AGAWAM – In a big dual meet matchup between neighbors and league rivals, West Springfield was able to get some late wins and scored and defeated Agawam 33-32 last Wednesday night at Agawam High School. The wrestling team faced Holyoke earlier this week and heads to West Springfield for a series of meets on Saturday, Jan. 20.



Rayn Sexton tries to avoid a takedown.
TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



Ilya Shlemanov attempts a headlock takedown.

Sports

Railers falls at home to Admirals

WORCESTER – It wasn't that the Railers ran out gas Sunday afternoon so much as they never had any in their 3-0 loss to the Norfolk Admirals.

Both teams were on the last leg of one of those dreaded 3 in 3 weekends, but the Admirals played it smarter than Worcester. Norfolk followed the script by jumping out to an early lead and keeping things under control the rest of the way.

It helped that the Admirals got admirable goaltending from Kristian Stead. He made 25 saves to record his first career ECHL shutout in his 11th ECHL game. It was Norfolk's second shutout of the season over Worcester. Thomas Milic beat the Railers, 4-0, on October 29. The game marked the third time this season Worcester has been whitewashed.

Brandon Osmundson, Denis Smirnov and Andrew McLean scored the game's goals. McLean's went into an empty net at 19:15 of the third period.

It was a very good goaltending game overall as Josh Boyko was excellent in the Railers net. He stopped 32 of 34 shots and kept it winnable.

"I thought he played really well," coach Jordan Smotherman said. "He made some great saves...I was really happy with his game."

"Playing from behind three nights in a row; you just can't do that to yourself," Smotherman said.

Although Norfolk had 34-25 edge in shots, the teams had about the same number of great chances. Worcester had two breakaways in the first period. Railers players hit iron twice later on. John Copeland hit a post, Anthony Callin a crossbar.

The breakaways were by Worcester's two top scorers, Ashton Calder and Anthony Repaci. Both players made good moves. Stead made two good saves.

In contrast, when Norfolk scored at 4:57 of the first period to go ahead, 1-0, Os-

mundson's shot went post to post and in, hitting the right one first.

"Over the course of a three-game weekend," Smotherman said, "you're not always gonna get the bounces and you can't rely on them."

The Admirals finished that period with a 14-4 edge in shots on goal. For the weekend, Worcester was outshot by 38-17 in the three first periods.

Smirnov doubled his team's lead early in the second period, scoring at 2:29. Danny Katic set up his teammate with a great pass from the right boards. Smirnov was just outside left post and had an easy re-direct from there.

The Railers lineup included familiar face Blake Jenkins, back from his brief time on the Hartford roster, and unfamiliar face Ryan Dickinson. The rookie defenseman made his professional debut as Zsombor Garat got a break. He had played in 32 of the season's first 34 games.

Bonsignore to do pre-season 'test' at Daytona

WADING RIVER, N.Y. – Three-time NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour champion Justin Bonsignore will compete in the ARCA Menards Series pre-season test at Daytona International Speedway this weekend.

Bonsignore will drive a car prepared by Andy Hilenburg, the 1995 ARCA champion, who also has two Daytona ARCA wins to his credit. The cars are prepared by Fast Track High Performance Racing.

The pre-race test is in preparation for the upcoming ARCA Menards Series opener at Daytona during Speedweeks on Saturday, February 17. The weekend will also include the opener for the NASCAR Xfinity Series and the NASCAR Cup Series Daytona 500.

Seven different drivers have earned the right to take laps around Daytona via the "Road to Daytona" program. Invites include the two regional series that are part of the ARCA Menards Series platform - the three ASA-branded touring super late model series, the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour champion and the NASCAR Advance Auto Parts Weekly Series frontrunners. Although current 2023 champion for the Whelen Modified Tour Ron Silk isn't making the trip, Bonsignore is filling the seat to take laps around one of the fastest and iconic tracks in the world.

The trip will be his first laps on the Daytona high-banks of his career.

"Taking laps at Daytona is definitely something every race car driver dreams of when you start racing," Bonsignore said. "Appreciate the opportunity given by NASCAR, ARCA, Andy and his entire team to be able to get behind the wheel."

For more information on the ARCA Menards Series, visit ARCARacing.com. For the latest updates surrounding Justin Bonsignore, fans are encouraged to visit JustinBonsignore.com and also follow Bonsignore's Athlete page on Facebook for updates, including from the track on race day.

Divisional win streak ends in Utica

UTICA, N.Y. -- The Springfield Thunderbirds (18-13-3-2) saw their five-game win streak against North Division opponents come to an end on Saturday in a 6-3 loss to the Utica Comets (12-13-3-3) at Adirondack Bank Center.

The T-Birds quieted the notoriously noisy "Aud" just 49 seconds into the first period. In his first shift back with the T-Birds since being returned from St. Louis, Jakub Vrana gathered in a puck near the top of the right circle and whipped a pass toward the crease. Nikita Alexandrov deflected the first attempt off the pads of Utica goalie Isaac Poulter, but Alexandrov jammed his own rebound into the twine, giving Springfield a 1-0 lead for a second straight night.

After shutting out the Comets on Nov. 24, Vadim Zherenko had tougher sledding in the first period on this night, as the Comets evened the score, 1-1, at 9:50 on a well-placed wrister from Filip Engaras under the crossbar.

With time winding down, Comet defenseman Michael Vukojevic crept up into the

high slot and was given room to slap one along the ice past Zherenko at 17:51 to give Utica a 2-1 advantage.

With less than a minute to play in the period, the Comets added insurance after a lengthy stretch of zone pressure. It culminated in a funky goal at the 19:29 mark. Ryan Schmelzer arrived for a one-timer from the high slot. The Comets captain muffed the shot, as it badly missed wide of the goal, but glanced off a defender and careened behind Zherenko to give Utica a 3-1 lead into the intermission.

Things took another turn in Utica's favor when Chase Stillman drew a penalty shot when he was hooked on a breakaway chance just 1:21 into the second period. The rookie winger made no mistake from there, as he bested Zherenko with a backhand-to-forehand deke, giving the Comets a 4-1 advantage.

Springfield stopped the four-goal run at 9:25 shortly after the first of three power-play chances that eluded the visitors. After winning puck control in the left corner,

Alexandrov sauced a pass into the middle of the ice for Will Bitten. Bitten's backhand caromed off Poulter's chest and, in turn, found Zach Bolduc, who one-timed the rebound through the Comets goalie to cut the Utica lead down to 4-2, a score that stood to the end of the period.

Dylan Coghlan made things even more interesting when he one-timed his league-leading 11th goal from the blue line at 7:13 of the final period to cut the deficit down to 4-3. However, this time around, the T-Birds ran out of comeback magic. Graeme Clarke scored a momentum-killing goal at 10:02, using a screen to beat Zherenko over the glove from the left-wing circle.

Springfield's power play scuffled on the evening against the AHL's top PK unit, going 0-for-4 and leaving another chance on the table in the final period while trailing 5-3. In the end, the T-Birds ran out of time in this comeback try, and Justin Dowling rounded out the scoring with a tally into an empty net in the final minute.

HOCKEY | from page 7

to be scored against him.

The Lions failed to take advantage of a power-play at the end of the first period, which carried over for the first 49 seconds of the second.

In the middle of the second period, Steigmeyer made the save on a shot attempt taken by senior Drew Scherban.

Late in the middle period, Agawam sophomore Casey Thomas fired a shot from inside the right circle and Steigmeyer made a glove save keeping his shutout bid intact.

That bid came to an end in the middle of the third period when junior Cole Buffum scored a power-play goal cutting the deficit in half.

"I received a good pass from one of my

teammates and I just tapped it in," said Buffum, who netted his team leading fifth goal. "It just gave us the energy that we needed. Ludlow is one of our biggest rivals and this is a very big win for us."

The duo of junior Landon Ashford and senior Brett Eggleston were credited with the assists.

"We knew that once we broke the ice, we would probably keep scoring goals," Rowley said. "The Ludlow goalie did a great job in his first start. He made some key saves in the first two periods. Hats off to him."

The score remained 2-1 until the final minute of regulation when Rowley pulled his goalie.

With the extra skater on the ice, Eggleston scored the game tying goal on a backhand with 47 seconds remaining

on the scoreboard clock. It was Eggleston's first goal of the 2023-24 regular season.

Connery, who assisted on the game tying goal, ended the match with a breakaway goal 21 seconds into the five minute sudden victory overtime period.

"Getting the assist on the game tying goal and then scoring the game winning goal in overtime is just an unbelievable feeling," said Connery, who netted his third goal of the season. "After falling behind in the first period, we knew that we could make a comeback."

Junior A.J. Robbins assisted on Connery's game winning goal.

"After A.J. blocked a shot, I managed to get behind their defense and he found me with a great pass," Connery added. "I was able to stay on the sides and the next thing you know the puck was in the back of the net. It

was very exciting."

The Brownies, who split the series with Ludlow last year, also posted a 5-1 win against the Taconic Braves the following night.



Angelo Robbins reaches out to clear the puck.



Camden Saltmarsh works along the side boards.



Casey Thomas skates up the ice.



Trevor DePalma chases down a loose puck near the boards.

Schools & Youth

STCC announces Dean's List

SPRINGFIELD – Springfield Technical Community College announces 784 students were named to the fall 2023 Dean's List.

These students are from the Agawam area; Alyssa Diaz, Ashley Osowski, Bassam Alugaidi, Brickelle Leidl, Cherif Vilane, Elizabeth Kane, Ellis Gloman, Evelina Lapsova, Gianna Yacovone, Habiba Atanane, Jake Ciarcia, Jeffrey McDonald, Jose Jimenez, Joseph Higgins, Joshua Joubert, Katherine Pawlak, Kaylish Ingham, Khrystyna Melnychuk, Kiera Cooley, Marissa Du-lude, Memphis Acosta, Michelle Gagne,

Mila Zhupikov, Nicholas Skorupski, Peter Rochford, Pilip Kirik, Samuel Ostas, Scott Minalga, Sedy Liquori, Sinem Karaarslan, Sumeyye Kirca, Taha Kiani, Taylor Cauley, Thanawan Greaves, Thuy Nguyen, William White, Yana Lukin, and Zahide Cure.

These students are from the Feeding Hills area; Aleksey Katalnikov, Alexandria Stuetzel, Ali Qureshi, Anastasia Radionov, Danny Nesen, Dina Joubert-Lavoie, Evan Boutet, Jonathan Mitchell, Justin Davis, Lindsey Pattenaude, Melena St. Jacques, Nadiia Zhyhaniuk, Roger Parent, and Vanessa Iodlovskaya.

Providence College Dean's List for fall 2023

AGAWAM – Agawam resident Olivia Barbarini, is a neuroscience major and has been named to Providence College Dean's List for fall 2023.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO RECYCLE THIS NEWSPAPER

Roger Williams University fall 2023 Dean's List

BRISTOL – Select students have been named to the fall 2023 Dean's List at Roger Williams University. Full-time students who complete 12 or more credits per semester and earn a GPA of 3.4 or higher are placed on the Dean's List that semester. These students are from the Agawam and Feeding Hills areas; Arianna Albano, Jacob Barber, Jack Dunn, Bella Rollend, Ethan Timms and Zack Wieners.

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BBB advises to be aware of this smart TV cyber scam

Scammers can target victims through any device connected to the internet, and your TV is no exception.

The Better Business Bureau Scam Tracker has seen an influx of reports about scammers catching people off guard with pop-ups on their smart TVs, according to a news release. Their objective is to steal your personal information and money.

How the scam works:

You open a familiar streaming service on your smart TV. However, you can't log in. Instead, a pop-up appears, telling you there is a problem with your device or your streaming subscription. You need to call a phone number or visit a website to fix it.

Don't fall for it:

If you call the number, scammers pretend to be customer service representatives. They will insist you pay an activation fee or allow them remote access to your smart TV. These con artists will get your credit or debit card number if you pay the fee, the BBB warns. If you give them access to your device or click on a link they provide, the scammers may install malware on your TV and use it to gain access to sensitive personal information.

Sometimes scammers ask you to "fix" the issue by paying them in gift cards. One consumer reported that after calling a number that appeared in a pop-up on their smart TV, a scammer instructed them to

purchase three \$100 Xbox gift cards to add "anti-hacking protection" to their account. After buying the gift cards and contacting the number again, it became clear they were dealing with scammers.

How to avoid smart TV scams:

Double-check any fees you have to pay. If scammers ask you to pay an activation fee, antivirus protection fee, or any other kind of fee, do some research beforehand. For example, scammers claim you need to pay an activation fee to start using your Roku. However, a quick online search reveals that Roku never charges activation or registration fees.

Don't fall for fake websites. Scammers love to create imitation websites using URLs that are just a letter or two off. Fake websites are a threat, even on smart TVs, so double-check the URL. Another way to protect yourself is to avoid clicking on links in pop-ups and, instead, type web URLs directly into your browser.

Check before you call. If a "customer service" phone number appears in a pop-up, double-check it before you call. Contact a streaming service or TV manufacturer's website to find their customer support number.

Never let anyone control your device remotely. Scammers usually ask for remote computer access, but they could also ask for access to your smart TV. Don't ever give control of your device to a stranger.

Choosing meal delivery service

Meal delivery services give consumers a more convenient way to make home-cooked dinners by delivering fresh, pre-measured ingredients and easy-to-follow recipes to your doorstep.

But just like any other service, each company is different.

Pricing, ingredients, and preparation requirements vary greatly between services. You'll need to do some homework to pick the one that best meets your family's needs. If the appeal of a meal delivery subscription is learning new recipes and experimenting with ingredients, you might choose one company. But if your main interest is speed and simplicity, another may be a better fit.

The following tips will help select an ideal meal delivery service for your household:

- **Research the delivery service.** Ask friends and family, read reviews, and check BBB.org to learn about past customers' experiences.

- **Set a budget and check the fine print.** Pricing can vary from one company to the next. Make certain the service aligns with your budget. In addition, not all meal delivery services include shipping fees in their pricing and read the fine print.

- **Know your skill level.** Before committing to a plan, research what kind of cooking techniques you'll need to know. If a company's recipes require searing, roasting, and braising, do you know how? If not, make sure you have the time to learn new

techniques.

- **Consider ingredient quality.** Not all companies offer organic, non-GMO, or free-range meal ingredients. If these are must-haves for your family, make sure the company offers them.

- **Determine how much prep work you want.** Some companies do more chopping and sauce-making than others. This seemingly small difference can make a big difference in how long each meal takes to make.

- **Contact customer service.** If there ever is a problem - a missing recipe card or ingredient, for example - you want to know you can count on customer service. Make sure there are clear, easy ways to contact the company, even late in the evening. Read the company's reviews and keep an eye out for any indication that customer service is lacking.

- **Check the cancellation policy.** Before making a decision to subscribe to meal delivery, understand the cancellation policy. Each company is different and some may have very strict policies.

- **Be careful with personal information.** Most food delivery services process payments online. Make sure the company is legitimate before offering up personal information such as financial information and address.

- **Review BBB tips for shopping online.** Since meal delivery services don't usually have brick-and-mortar storefronts, consider the tips in BBB's tips for smart shopping online.

GILLIS ■ from page 1

"I appreciate the support and confidence they've shown in me," Gillis said. "We've got an excellent group of chiefs here in the Commonwealth."

In this position Gillis hopes to focus on improving recruitment numbers for police within MA. Across the country police departments have been facing difficulties with recruitment, both in getting and retaining officers.

"We've seen a dramatic decline nation-

ally in folks who are interested in becoming police officers and we've seen officers stay less time as police officers," Gillis said. "There's an increased demand for law enforcement nationwide and yet there's an inverse interest in the profession."

Gillis plans to take every opportunity he can to improve outreach and have discussions about recruitment with nearby police departments.

Currently, they are looking at the civil service system that many communities in MA are a part of. According to Gillis, that

system has been dysfunctional in the past few years, so he and others on the MCOPA are working to fix those issues.

"We are working within our group to discuss ways to improve the system," Gillis said.

This system is meant to help with recruitment and the process of obtaining qualified officers. Gillis hopes to be able to smooth out the system and increase its efficacy.

"We've been meeting on the regular with folks from the civil service commission in an effort to improve the process and the

way we do things in an effort to boost our ability to be able to get qualified people in a timely fashion," Gillis said.

Gillis is prepared for the work ahead of him in this position. He hopes that his efforts will work toward improving the system for all involved.

"There's a sense of duty to do more and help out and to try to make a difference," Gillis said. "I think that when you're on a bigger stage like this you have a greater ability to affect the profession in a long-term way."

Public Notices

AGAWAM CONSERVATION COMMISSION LEGAL AD

The Agawam Conservation Commission will meet on **Thursday, January 25, 2024 at 6:00PM** at the Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main St, Agawam, Ma. The purpose of this meeting will be to hear the Request for Determination of Applicability of MassDOT on property located near the Route 5 On-Ramp from Route 57.

By Order of
Henry A. Kozloski, Chairman
AGAWAM CONSERVATION COMMISSION

01/18/2024

Notice of Private Sale

Notice is hereby given by USA Towing, 71 Garden St., Feeding Hills, MA 01030, sale of a motor vehicle pursuant to the provisions of M.G.L. C. 255, Section 39A, that on **February 05, 2024 at 8 a.m.**, at USA Towing, said motor vehicle will be sold at a private sale to satisfy the garage keeper's lien for towing, storage and costs of sale.

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01/18, 01/25, 01/01/2024

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Probate and Family Court 50 State Street Springfield, MA 01103 Docket No. HD24P0063GD

In the matter of:
Richard Gauthier
Of: **Feeding Hills, MA**
RESPONDENT
Alleged Incapacitated Person
CITATION GIVING NOTICE OF PETITION FOR APPOINTMENT OF GUARDIAN FOR INCAPACITATED PERSON PURSUANT TO G.L. c. 190B, §5-304
To the named Respondent

and all other interested persons, a petition has been filed by **Dept Of Developmental Services of Springfield, MA** in the above captioned matter alleging that **Richard Gauthier** is in need of a Guardian and requesting that **Edward J Wojtowicz of South Deerfield, MA** (or some other suitable person) be appointed as Guardian to serve **Without Surety** on the bond.

The petition asks the court to determine that the Respondent is incapacitated, that the appointment of a Guardian is necessary, and that the proposed Guardian is appropriate. The petition is on file with this court and may contain a request for certain specific authority.

You have the right to object to this proceeding.

If you wish to do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance at this court on or before 10:00 A.M. on the return date of **02/08/2024**. This day is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline date by which you have to file the written appearance if you object to the petition. If you fail to file the written appearance by the return date, action may be taken in this matter without further notice to you. In addition to filing the written appearance, you or your attorney must file a written affidavit stating the specific facts and grounds of your objection within 30 days after the return date.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The outcome of this proceeding may limit or completely take away the above-named person's right to make decisions about personal affairs or financial affairs or both. The above-named person has the right to ask for a lawyer. Anyone may make this request on behalf of the above-named person. If the above-named person cannot afford a lawyer, one may be appointed at State expense.

WITNESS, Hon. **Barbara M. Hyland**, First Justice of this Court.
Date: January 10, 2024

Rosemary A. Saccomani
Register of Probate
01/18/2024

Agawam Advertiser News 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 \$225, 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.

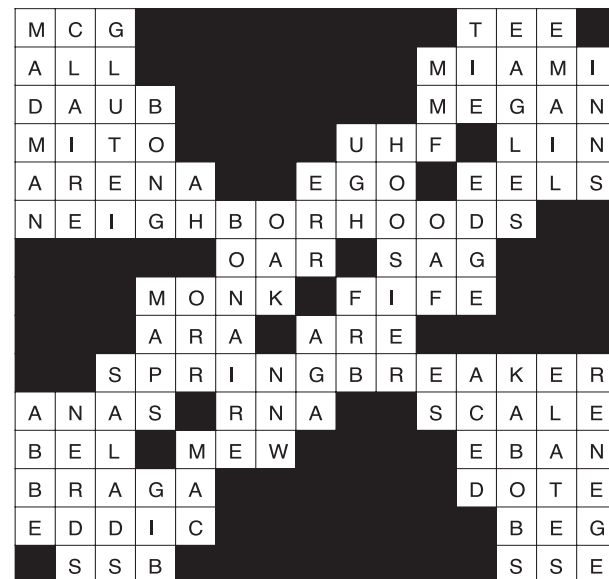
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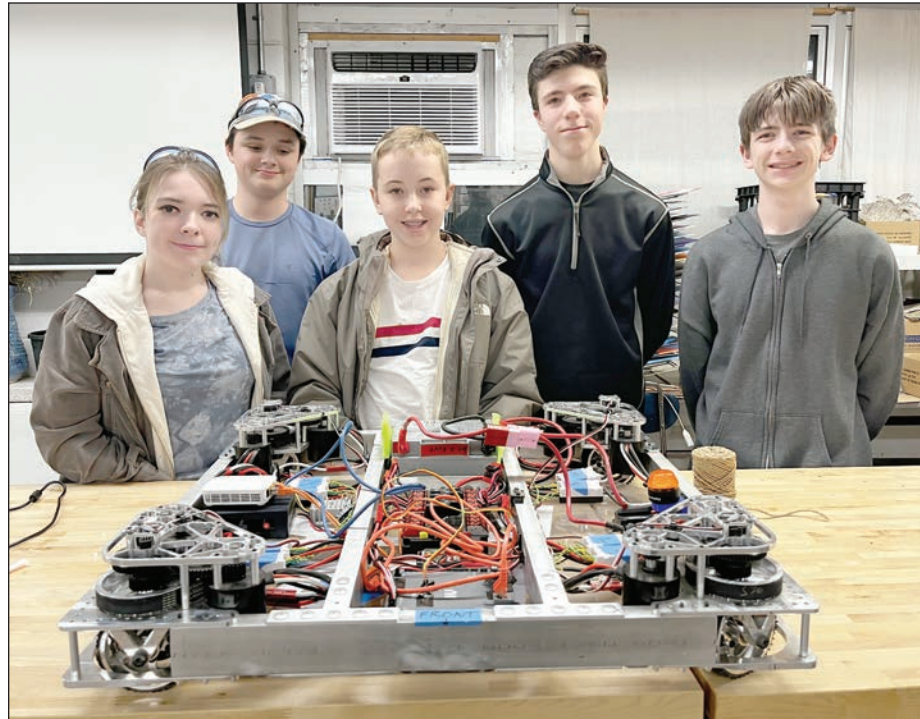
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The Rosie Robotics Team raised \$6,000 in order to purchase the equipment to assemble a swerve drive for them to use in this season's competition.



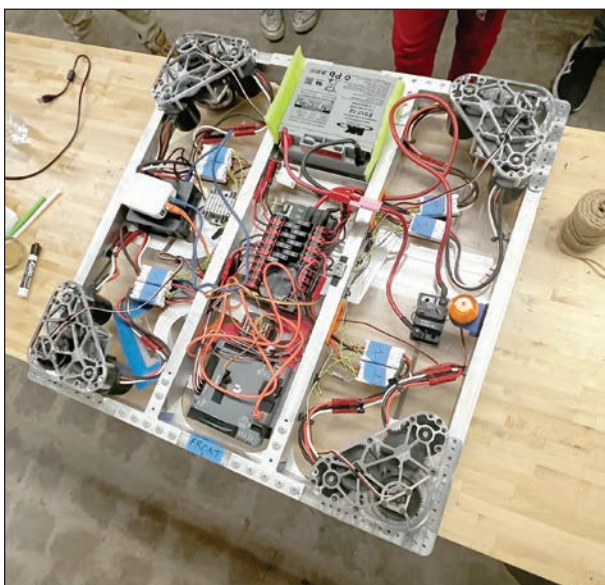
Kylie Henry, Owen Elwell, Thomas Crouss, Tim Rua and Lucas Fillion from Rosie Robotics show off their new swerve drive mechanics.



The Rosie Robotics Team showed off some of their robots from past years at their season kickoff event.



City Councillor Anthony Russo presents a donation to the Rosie Robotics team.



The team works on a variety of projects.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS



In Agawam High School Rosie Robotics has a shop, which includes an area where they keep their old robots and different parts and equipment to use throughout their competitions.



The Rosie Robotics Team has a variety of machinery for them to use in creating their robots.

ROBOTICS ■ from page 1

worth a set amount of point values that the team will earn depending on how well their robot completes each task.

The team will build an entirely new robot for this competition season, and they have to do it by their first competition on Mar. 8.

The team will compete in two initial competitions and, if they do well enough, they will then go to districts and then worlds.

“Based on your performance at each of the two competitions that your registration allows, all 200 plus teams in New England get ranked and then the top 90 teams will play at the New England District Championships,” Team Co-Founded Dana Henry said.

This year the team’s goal is to make it to districts, which would be their first time doing so since before COVID, as the pandemic caused the team to have to halt meetings.

“We’re a rookie team and not a rookie team at the same time,” Team Member Owen Elwell said.

To prepare for competitions, the team meets every Monday through Thursday from 6-9 p.m., as well as 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on

Saturdays and noon to 4 p.m. on Sundays.

“More often than not we’ve ended up staying overtime a decent amount,” Team Member Lucas Fillion said.

It is certainly a large time commitment, but the team finds it more than worth it.

“It’s one of the things that makes the competition special, because you know everybody has put in massive amounts of time to be there,” Team Member Tim Rua said.

“Time just flies by,” Elwell said. “You don’t notice how much time has gone by until you’re a week before the first competition.”

All of these hours are spent preparing to compete. This involves brainstorming, prototyping, machining, wiring and programming for the robot.

In order to do all of this work the team has five different subteams: wiring, programming, machining, designing and marketing.

“The five different subteams work together to make sure that the robot comes together by our first competition date,” Rua said.

The team looks forward to their first competition, in which they will be able to see their, and all the other teams’, robots come to life.

“I love to see ideas that we come up with in the first days be manifested and become reality, that’s the coolest thing for me,” Rua said. “I can put something into a computer and a couple weeks later there’s a robot in front of me.”

“I look forward to watching the brainstorm and seeing what we build from it,” Team Member Kylie Henry said.

As part of their preparations for this year’s competition season, the team spent their off-season fundraising for and designing a swerve drive.

The team had to raise \$6,000 in order to purchase the different parts needed for the swerve drive.

This swerve drive will help them greatly in competition by allowing their robot to move in any direction.

“All of the motors turn on an axis so you can move in any direction while also moving straight,” Rua explained. “It gives us more agility on the field. We should be able to go faster than we have in any previous years.”

The team will have to assemble this swerve drive in a new design for their competition this season, as all robots have to be made from scratch at the beginning of the competition season.

While the team has adult mentors to

help guide them in the process, everything created throughout the season is done entirely by the teens on the team.

“Every piece is manufactured by them,” Mentor Wendy Rua said. “As a great testament to that, as a mentor of the team, I can’t even tell you what some of these machines are called, nor can I run them...so that is a great example of how this is a kid-focused team. The students do the work.”

It is months of hardwork and dedication, and the team looks forward to their first competition.

“The highlight is the experience in general of watching something you build drive around on a field with other robots,” Elwell said.

“The competition is super energetic,” Rua said. “You can feel energy in the air when you walk in the door with thirty teams just at the qualifying events alone. You get to see what everybody else has been working on for the past two months and you get to see how your own creation has racked up to everybody else’s. It’s an exciting way to share science.”

The team mentors would also like to remind the Agawam community that they are always open to donations from the community. It takes about \$15,000 to run a robotics season, so any support is always welcome.