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AGAWAM

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Domestic partnership ordinance defeated

By Gregory A. Scibelli
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AGAWAM – City councilors Monday night defeated a proposal from Councilor Thomas Hendrickson to allow domestic partnerships, something he proposed to help town employees who may be in living situations with oth-

er individuals without going through the step of getting married.

It was a lively crowd not just at the regular city council meeting, but at the Legislative Sub-committee meeting that occurred prior to the meeting with residents who showed up a speak out, mostly against Hendrickson's proposal.

In the second, only Hendrickson and new City Councilor Christine Rickmon, citing that it would benefit town employees, voted in favor of the ordinance. Eight councilors voted against it, with one councilor absent from the meeting.

The sub-committee meeting was attended by Mayor

Christopher Johnson, who was not in favor of the proposal. He cautioned the councilors about the additional costs allowing domestic partnerships among people who are not married to enjoy employment benefits.

"It would be a substantial cost to the taxpayers," Councilor Dino Mercadante said

during discussion.

During discussion on the full council floor, a lot of focus was placed on two areas.

First, most of the councilors were unhappy with some of the ambiguous language contained in the ordinance, including language that suggested that that an individual could have more than one do-

mestic partner.

The second issue was simply over being married versus not being married. Several councilors who spoke against the ordinance believed that individuals wanting to enjoy the benefits of being married

ORDINANCE | page 10



Mayor brings history lesson to Granger

Last Friday, Mayor Christopher Johnson visited Granger Elementary School and made a presentation to students there about the history of the Town of Agawam. He engaged with the students and showed them historical artifacts from the town's past.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS



Town officials looking for sidewalk to be cleared in residential areas

By Gregory A. Scibelli
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AGAWAM – While there is some town responsibility on main arteries or near schools where students, homeowners or tenants, where applicable, are responsible for snow removal on sidewalks that are in front of the property they occupy.

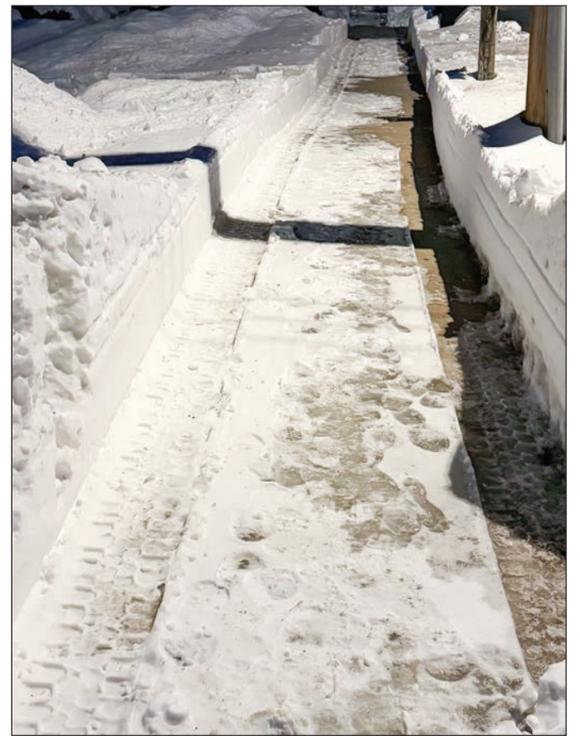
According to the municipal code for the Town of Agawam, Chapter 155, Section 10 lays out the responsibilities of residents and the town as it relates to snow and ice removal.

Mayor Christopher Johnson, earlier this week, asked for the townspeople's help as the Department of Public Works continues to chip away at snow removal and snow pile mitigation efforts throughout the community.

On Sunday, Jan. 25, the town was dumped with nearly two feet of snow. Johnson last week said the town has two-thirds less the additional manpower in the form of contract plow drivers. They were typically charged with plowing and clearing up smaller side streets and rural areas. Town plows typically handle the larger main roads.

With less manpower and the massive snowfall the town received, it took plow crews longer to snow cleared on side streets. Crews worked feverishly, but found themselves working to play catch up all last week, including with snow removal using a large snowblower.

According Chapter 155-



TURLEY PHOTO BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Town officials are calling on residents to get their sidewalks cleaned up as soon as possible.

10, "The tenant or occupant and, in case there is no tenant or occupant, the owner or persons having the care of any estate abutting upon any street, lane, court or square within the town where there is a sidewalk which now is established or set apart as such shall remove, within 24 hours after the ceasing to fall, any snow thereon.

Additionally, ice removal or intervention is the responsibility of the residents as well, as described by another

subsection.

"The owner or persons having the charge of the estate abutting upon such sidewalk to cause such sidewalk to be made safe and convenient for transit by removing the ice therefrom or by covering the same with sand or some other suitable substitute within 24 hours after such sidewalk shall become so encumbered."

According to the code,

SIDEWALKS | page 10

Recent veterans invited to be part of new memorial monument

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

AGAWAM – The Agawam Veterans Services Office is now taking nominations for a brand-new veterans' monument at School Street Park.

Last year, Mayor Christopher Johnson worked with the Veterans Service Office to move the Veterans Memorials and the memorial green from its old location in front of Phelps Elementary School off Main St., to new space adjacent to the band shell at School Street Park.

On Veterans Day last year, the first ceremony at the new green was held. However, the town was still putting the finishing touches on the new memorials.

Late last week, the Veterans Service Office requested help from residents to honor the newest veterans at the new location.

"Since our inception, it has been our mission to honor all local heroes by memorializing their names on a bronze plaque on their monument of conflict," the office stated. "This has meant that we needed to gather funds in order to achieve these worthy goals. Over the last several years, we have received generous donations from an anonymous donor, The Massachusetts SCHRAB grant, The West Springfield Fish/Game Club, and The Westfield Marine Corps League that has brought us over the finish line. We are now ready

to erect our fifth and newest monument. While we did get a brand new space, with many upgrades to our new location, our quest is not yet complete.

"This adventure has taken us much longer than we anticipated, but we are in the next stage of this process: name gathering. We need your assistance. Please read the requirements carefully to see if you or a family member qualifies for consideration of name placement. We realize some of our brave veterans have passed away, please submit an application, copy of DD214 (or service records), and proof of campaign/conflict/operation on their

VETERANS | page 10



TURLEY PHOTO BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

With the opening of the new veterans memorial at School Street Park, a new monument is being erected and recent veterans are invited to have their names placed on it. The new memorial monument is set to be erected this year.



Programs and activities for kids, teens at the Agawam Library

AGAWAM – Our Winter Reading Challenge has begun, but it's not too late to join and earn raffle tickets to enter to win prizes! The Winter Reading Challenge goes through Feb. 21. The last day to enter to try to win prizes is Saturday, Feb. 21. Track your reading, and earn your raffle tickets at agawamlibrary.beanstack.org. We are also challenging the community to log a combined total of 1,500 hours of reading. So far we've logged a cumulative 154 hours. We need everyone to work together to meet this goal.

During the winter months, any closings or late openings will be reported to local TV stations 22 and 40, as well as their websites. Inclement weather closings or delays will also be posted on our social media platforms. If you're unsure, call ahead at 413-789-1550 ext. 3.

Below is an alphabetical list of programs and activities for February. Some activities require registration. To register go to agawamlibrary.org or call 413-789-1550 ext. 3.

Art and Stories - For ages 3 - 5
Tuesday, Feb. 17 at 9:30 a.m. - Drop-in.

Join us for a short story time followed by an art project. We will explore simple art concepts and experiment with materials. Please wear clothing that can get messy!

Baby Story Time - For birth - 18 mo.
Thurs. February 5 and 19 at 9:30 a.m. - Drop-in.

Join us as we learn a little American Sign Language, read stories, sing, & play to-

gether.

Chip Challenge - For grades 3-4
Wednesday, Feb. 18 at 6 p.m. - Registration is required

Which chip reigns supreme? Come participate in a chip taste test challenge to determine the best flavor!

Chip Challenge - For grades 5-6
Wednesday, Feb. 18 at 7 p.m. - Registration is required

Which chip reigns supreme? Come participate in a chip taste test challenge to determine the best flavor!

Family Take and Make Crafts - For all ages

First Day of the Week and Thursdays - While supplies last - Drop-in and pick up.

A new Take and Make craft will be available the first day of each week and again on Thursdays. Feb. 5: Heart Bracelets Feb. 9 and 12: Corgi Heart Balloon Craft Feb. 17 and 19: Chinese Paper Lanterns Feb. 23 and 26: Movable Horse Puppet

Grow, Play, and Learn - This program is provided by Pathways for Parents.

Wednesdays & Fridays
Ages 0-2 at 9:30 am
Ages 3-5 at 10:30 am - Drop-in.

Stories, songs and skill building, led by an Early Childhood Developmental trained staff member, guiding caregivers in strengthening interactions with their child.

Music with Mr. Liam - All Ages

This program is provided by Pathways for Parents.
Saturday, Feb. 21 at 9:30 a.m. - Registration is required

Join us for an energetic show filled with drums, the ukulele, puppets, and comedy as Mr. Liam (Liam Hurley) plays old favorites & silly parodies!

Open Lego Building - For grades 1-4

Tuesday, Feb. 24 at 4:30 p.m. - Registration is required

Show off your Lego building skills! Use Legos to build something awesome. Creations will be put on display in the Children's Room.

Pre-K Pals - For ages 2 - 5
This program is provided by Pathways for Parents.

Mondays in February at 11 a.m. - Registration is required

There will be no class on Monday, Feb. 16. Each week, we will focus on an area of development and provide fun activities to support your child to learn through play.

Special Saturday Drop-In Craft: Snail Craft - For All Ages

Saturday, Feb. 28
All Day - While supplies last - Drop-in & pick up.

Kids can build the snail's body and decorate its purple shell with brightly colored hearts.

Stroller Strides with FIT4MOM - For parents & their child ages 1 month - 10 years old

Saturday, Feb. 7 at 9:30 a.m. - Registration is required

This program is brought to us by FIT4MOM. Stroller Strides is a 60-minute total-body workout with strength, cardio, and core training, all while engaging the little ones in a stroller.

Tea Party Story Time - For grades K-2

Wednesday, Feb. 25 at 6 p.m. - Registration is required

Come dressed to impress for our tea party! We'll have stories, songs, a craft and light refreshments! (Rescheduled from January)

Teen Advisory Board - For grades 7-12

Wednesday, Feb. 11 from 6 to 7 p.m.

Make plans for teen library programs and the Teen Space, and eat pizza! Members of the Teen Advisory Board can earn community service hours for their participation. If you'd like to join, contact Evan at edelano@agawamlibrary.org or 413-789-1550 extension 3.

Teen After-School Drop-In - For grades 9-12

Tuesdays, February 3, 10, and 24 from 2 to 3 p.m.

Stop by the library after school and visit the Activity Room. Play our Nintendo Switch, try out the air hockey table, eat snacks, or just hang out! No registration necessary. There is no Drop-In on Feb. 17

Teen Dungeons and Dragons - For grades 7-12

Thursdays, Feb. 5 and 12, 6 to 8 p.m., Activity Room Grades 7-12. Registration Required

Stretch your creativity as you journey through a magical world full of beauty and danger! Join Dungeon Master Anna for 4 sessions of dice-rolling, roleplaying, and imaginative adventuring. No D&D experience? No problem. This is a beginner friendly program. Feel free to bring your own (level 3) character sheet with you to the session, or use of the pre-rolled versions that will be available when we meet. Register once for all 4 sessions.

Teen Polar Bear Scavenger Hunt - For grades 7-12

Monday, Feb. 2 - Saturday, Feb. 14 Grades 7-12

Complete the scavenger hunt in the Teen Space and enter a raffle for a chance to win a cozy throw blanket.

Teen Take and Make Craft - For grades 7-12

Available now. Grades 7-12 Stop by the Teen Space to pick up a Take and Make Craft kit. They'll be available until we run out of supplies. No registration necessary

Teen Trivia Thursdays - For grades 7-12,

February 5, 12, and 26 from 2 to 3 p.m.,

Visit the Teen Space and answer a trivia question to get a small prize. There is no Trivia on Feb. 19.

Teen Winter Pride Meet-up - for grades 7-12

Saturday, Feb. 7 3:30 to 4:30 p.m., Activity Room Grades 7-12

Celebrate LGBTQ+ Pride all year round. Mark your calendars for our Winter Pride Meetup. We'll be playing a Pride trivia game. There will also be snacks and crafts available. Registration on our website is optional, but appreciated. All are welcome, whether or not you've registered.

Join us as we read stories, sing and play together.

For more information about any of these programs, or to register, go to agawamlibrary.org, or call 413-789-1550 ext. 3. We hope to see you soon at the library.

FHCC Cupboard open house set for Feb. 14

FEEDING Hills - Feeding Hills Congregational Church invites the community to join us for a Church Cupboard Open House on Feb. 14 at 9 a.m. Stop by and visit to see the Cupboard, learn about what we do, drop off a donation, sign up for a future food drive and enjoy refreshments!

A year ago, the Church decided to open the Church Cupboard, a place where anyone in need could come once a month to receive supplemental food. The congregation hoped that it would become a true community endeavor. Thanks to the support of many local organizations and individuals, it has become just that. The Cupboard serves more than 108 individuals, 33 of whom are children. 66% of those served reside in either Agawam or Feeding Hills. Please

reach out and support the following organizations, as they truly make our community a great place to live and work: The Agawam Rotary Club, the Agawam Lions Club, Hope Community Church, the REALTOR® Association of Pioneer Valley, The Agawam Garden Club, the Hampden County 4-H Fair Association, Roots Soccer League, Agawam Soccer Association, the Agawam Public Library, the Parish Cupboard, ACE Precision, Banana Composting, the Peace Valley Foundation, and the Department of Veterans, along with countless individuals. To date, more than 4,550 food or self-care items have been distributed to those in need. Call 786-5061 for more information.

Please celebrate with us on Feb. 14, as we continue to love and serve our neighbors

Exhibit from Rick's Place at the Agawam Public Library

AGAWAM - Agawam Public Library is honored to once again welcome pieces from Rick's Place in the main floor gallery walls and cases. The exhibit is titled "Colors of Grief: Shades of Love and Loss."

Originally created in recognition of Children's Grief Awareness Month and displayed at the William Blizard Gallery at Springfield College, this exhibit continues its journey by highlighting the ways love endures beyond loss. Through artwork created by children, teens, and adults participating in Rick's Place grief support programs, the display explores themes of love, remembrance, connection, and the ongoing bonds we carry with those who have died.

February is often associated with love and relationships, and this exhibit invites viewers to consider love in its many forms - including the love that remains after a death. The artwork reflects how grief is not only about what was lost, but also about what continues: memories, traditions, and meaningful connections that shape our

lives moving forward.

The exhibit will also feature a curated selection of children's and adult grief-related books, offering visitors additional opportunities for reflection, learning, and support.

Rick's Place is a nonprofit organization based in Wilbraham that provides free peer grief support programs for children, teens, and families grieving the death of a parent, caregiver, or sibling. Programs are offered at no cost and create space for connection, understanding, and hope. More information is available at ricksplace.org or call (413) 279-2010.

Visitors are welcomed to explore these art exhibits throughout February during the regular hours of the library.

The library will be closed Feb. 16 for Presidents Day. Any questions about the exhibits can be routed to the Information Desk at 413-789-1550 x4. Please contact Adult Services Library Associate, Erica LeFebvre at (413) 789-1550 x8858 or elefebvre@agawamlibrary.org if you are interested in displaying artwork at the library.

Irish Night 2026 - Feb. 28

HOLYOKE - The Hibernians of Hampden/Hampshire Counties and Ladies Order invite the public to attend Irish Night in Holyoke 2026 on Feb. 28 at the Log Cabin 500 Easthampton Rd. Holyoke, Mass. Doors open at 5 p.m. and dinner is at 6:30 p.m.

The night will feature the Keohane and Kenneally Irish-American band and a corned beef and cabbage dinner with ribs. The price is \$50 per person and valet parking services will be

available.

For reservations by Feb. 24 call Joe O'Connor at 413-627-7148, or Fran Hennessey at 413-785-5687 or online at eventbrite.com.

Additional entertainment by the Cassin School of Irish Dance and Piper Matt O'Connor. The night is in memory of Hibernian Daniel P. Curran and will benefit the Maurice A. Donahue Memorial Scholarship.

The Hibernians wish a Happy St. Patrick's Day to all.

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Felting artist to be featured at ACAA meeting Feb. 11

AGAWAM – On Wednesday, Feb. 11, the Agawam Community Artists and Artisans will host Diane Caswell Christian, known for her artistry in felting.

The demonstration will take place at the ACAA's monthly meeting at the Agawam Public Library, 750 Cooper Street, Agawam, beginning at 6 p.m. It is open to the public, free of charge.

Christian lives and teaches in Suffield, CT., at her Felt Inspiration studio.

While Christian is also an acrylic and oil painter, her focus is on felting.

"Serendipity brought felt making into my life at a time when I needed to reconnect with the past and

find a way to express my artistic

Side," she said. "The softness of the fibers, the feel of the soapy water, the magic moment when the loose fibers become felt appealed to me.

"It often feels as though I am just a facilitator for the art as though the pieces have their own need to be created," she continued. "My landscapes reflect a sense of peace: creating worlds that invite the viewer to enter and rest in materials is very grounding for me."

Further information can be obtained by emailing Ceil Rossi at tocarefree2@hotmail.com or by visiting www.agawamarts.com.

Felt artists Diane Caswell Christian will be demonstrating her work at the next ACAA meeting on Feb. 11.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS



Diane Caswell Christian ©



HMC gets advanced spine surgery certification

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Medical Center announced that it is one of the first hospitals in Massachusetts to receive Advanced Spine Surgery Certification from DNV. This certification affirms excellence in the treatment of musculoskeletal spine and lower back problems at The Institute for Minimally Invasive Spine Surgery at Holyoke Medical Center, led by neurosurgeon Dr. Frederik Pennings. The scope of the Advanced Spine Surgery Certification is inclusive of inpatient, outpatient, and same-day elective surgery, including minimally invasive spine surgery (MISS), procedures.

"We are proud to be one

of the first hospitals in Massachusetts to achieve DNV's Advanced Spine Surgery Certification. This is yet another example of the commitment we have to providing our community with the best possible care," says Spiros Hatiras, President and CEO of Holyoke Medical Center. "Achieving advanced certification validates all the effort we have put into this program since opening in April of 2023 to ensure the health and safety of our patients."

The DNV Advanced Spine Surgery Certification requirements are informed by the ERAS Society Lumbar Spinal Fusion and Orthopaedic guidelines, the guidelines of

the North American Spine Society, and relevant requirements of the CMS Conditions of Participation for Hospitals. The certification also incorporates a Quality Management System to develop, implement, and maintain an ongoing system for measuring, monitoring, and managing quality and patient safety to continually improve the care of patients.

"Achieving Advanced Spine Surgery Certification demonstrates a commitment to excellence," says Kelly Proctor, President of DNV Healthcare USA Inc. "And, it helps demonstrate to your community that you are performing at the highest level."

Senior Center announces exciting February activities and programs

AGAWAM – Here are some upcoming activities happening at the Agawam Senior Center. Some require registration or confirmation. Information in the details below:

Memory Café

A memory café is a welcoming, social gathering for people with memory loss (like dementia or Alzheimer's) and their family, friends, or caregivers, offering a safe, stigma-free space for connection, enjoyment, and support through activities like music, art, games,

and conversation, focusing on abilities rather than limitations. These informal get-togethers provide a positive environment to make friends, share experiences, and reduce isolation, often featuring facilitated programs in community settings like libraries or coffee shops.

Cherished Memory Café

held on Feb. 10 from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. in the Seminar Hall. We will limit it to 5-6 families participant meaning one person with Alzheimer's and one caretaker. Sign up is required. Please call the

senior center at 821-0604 to register.

Trivia with Cindy and Kristina

Tuesday, Feb. 10 at 5:30 p.m.

Candid Conversations with Cindy and Kristina

Wednesday, Feb. 11 at 12:30 p.m.

Join Cindy and Kristina in the dining room at 12:30 p.m. to chat about what is working for you at the Senior Center ~ what you love, and what you want to have happen.

Senior Center to offer CPR, AED training Feb. 20

AGAWAM – The Agawam Senior Center is extremely excited to offer this potentially 'life saving class' to our staff and any senior interested in joining us. On Friday, Feb. 20 from 1 to 3 p.m. in the Veterans Hall we will be offering CPR and AED training with Marsha Chappel from Baystate Hospital. Marsha is the certified AED and CPR trainer at

Baystate Hospital and has kindly offered her training to the Agawam Senior Center. The cost is a \$20 donation due on the day of the class, all monies collected on that day will be donated to the American Heart Association. If you are interested in joining this class, Please call Kristina at 413.726.2836 to reserve your spot. Spaces will be limited to 25.

Women artists wanted for exhibit at Wistariahurst Museum

HOLYOKE – Wistariahurst Museum is seeking artist submissions for the Fourth Annual Women's History Month juried art showcase for the month of March. This year, the theme is women's labor and community.

"Liberty and Labor" is an exhibit that corresponds with Massachusetts' 250th anniversary and Liberty and the Learning initiative. This exhibit urges artists to consider the efforts women have made throughout history through

labor and community building. Historically, Women's labor has been undervalued and overlooked. Oftentimes, the work women have done in areas such as homemaking, community building, and parenting, has not even been viewed as work. "Liberty and Labor" aims to highlight these efforts, and others, that showcase the hard work and dedication of women throughout history.

All mediums are welcome for submission. Submissions

are open to anyone who identifies as a woman and non-binary artists of any age. Artists are welcome to submit 3-4 pieces, with high-quality images. Artists can submit their work through the online submission form linked below. Submissions are being accepted through Feb. 10.

Wistariahurst is an artist-friendly space that encourages creativity and supports the growth of this region's artists. All questions are welcome and encouraged. Up to

five artists will be selected as featured artists and will be awarded a \$100 stipend. This program is funded in part by a grant from the Holyoke Local Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency. Submissions are accepted through the submission form: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLS-fj4Hj4eiWOEXmRZnC-d_23WGA8WQAW-6otMFLYCFXzH5BUNew/viewform?usp=publish-editor.

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Opinion

Guest Column



Am I entitled to more Social Security as a Veteran?

Dear Rusty:

I served in the U.S. Army from July 1964 to July 1967. Am I eligible for a higher Social Security payment?
Thank you.

Signed:
Vietnam Era Army Vet

Dear Army Vet:

Please accept my sincere thanks for your military service. I believe you are referring to the "Special Extra Credit for Military Service," which has been the subject of many published articles. That refers to a special Social Security accommodation available only to those who served in the military during specific periods of time, but it does not add to your monthly Social Security payment. Rather, it adds to your military earnings record for the years you served, which may or may not result in a higher Social Security benefit when you later claim Social Security.

Here's how it works in your case:

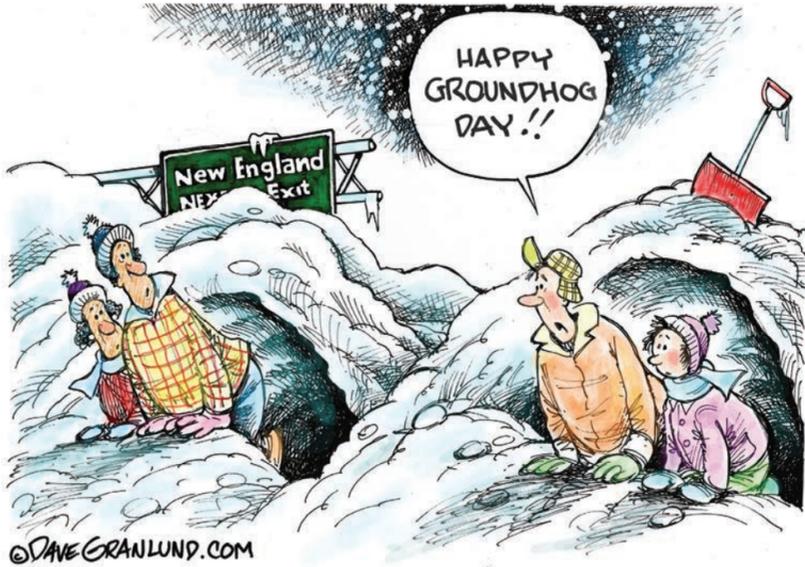
Serving between 1964 and 1967, if you told Social Security of your military service when you applied for Social Security benefits or gave them a copy of your DD-214, they would have added up to \$1,200 per year to your military pay record. FYI, those who served after 1966 were automatically given earnings credit for their military service years. However, whether those special extra credits would affect your monthly Social Security benefit depends on your lifetime earnings record when you later claimed Social Security.

When you applied for benefits, Social Security reviewed your lifetime earnings and used the highest earning 35 years of earnings over your lifetime (adjusted for inflation) to calculate your "Primary Insurance Amount" or "PIA," which is what you get if you claim benefits to start at your Social Security full retirement age. If, after your military service, you had 35 or more years of earnings which were higher than your earnings while serving in the military, Social Security would have used your later higher earning years to calculate your benefit, and your military earnings

would not have had an effect on your Social Security benefit. However, if any of your military earnings including the "special extra credits" were among the highest over your lifetime, then those higher military earnings would be included when calculating your Social Security benefit.

So, whether you would benefit from these "special extra credits for military service" depends largely on your earnings history after you were discharged from active duty. If your military earnings were among the highest earning years over your lifetime, and you provided SSA with a copy of your DD-214 when you applied for Social Security, then your current SS benefit already includes consideration of your military service. FYI, Social Security should have asked about your military service when you applied. If you didn't tell SS about your military service when you applied for Social Security, or if you aren't sure, you should contact the SSA at 1.800-772-1213 and ask if you were given those "special extra credits for military service" for your 1960s military service years when you applied for Social Security. But if you had at least 35 years of higher earnings after you left military service, your current SS benefit is already based on those later higher earning years, and you will not get any additional Social Security benefit because of the "special extra credits" for your military service years.

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,



Sow onion seeds to get the season started

If you are sick and tired of winter, and want to get the gardening season going already, why not sow some onion seeds?

Onions are the first seeds I sow each year and I always welcome this task as a true harbinger of spring! Many gardeners only know of growing onions from sets, but you can indeed start them from seed, both indoors in the garden.

Read on for more information on growing onions from start to finish, right out of the archives.

First it's important that we "understand the onion," in other words, come to know its life cycle. Onions are biennial.

We are all familiar with biennial flowers like foxglove, hollyhock and Canterbury bells, who develop foliage the first year of their lives and bloom and set seed in the second, but few gardeners today ever experience a biennial vegetable. That wasn't always the case. Just visit the Freeman Farm at Old Sturbridge Village where in the summer you will see beets, parsnips, onions and more in year two of their life cycle,

thesizing, drawing in all of that wonderful energy from the sun and turning it into a big, fat onion! Luckily, we gardeners can provide just the right conditions for lush top growth.

Get an early start

All onions have a built-in mechanism that triggers "bulbing up" in response to warmer temperatures and increased daylight hours. Likewise, as daylight begins to decrease, the onion is cued into dormancy.

If lush tops are our first goal, we have to get our onions in early, so that they achieve lots of top growth before being prompted to bulb up. Those of us who garden in the north choose "long day" onions, while southern gardeners opt to grow "short day" types.

Long day onions bulb up when day length reaches 14-16 hours per day; short day begin at 12-13 hours. If we plant short day in our locale we'd end up with fat scallions, but not much more, so choose accordingly.

Reputable seed companies will list the type of onion it is next to the variety name,

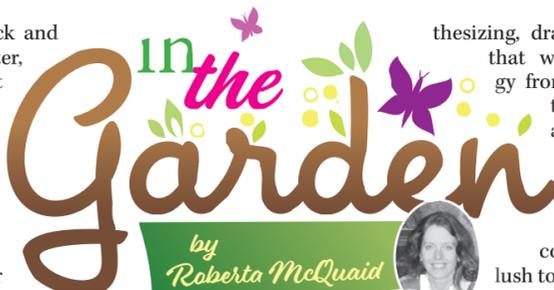
Just imagine the green part of the plant photosyn-

complete with seed heads. As the seeds ripen, 19th century gardeners would have stored them away for use the following spring. So then, if the onion is a biennial and its goal is to make seeds the second season of its life, what is it trying to accomplish in its first? Exactly what you and I want: a big bulb!

The bulb is the food storage unit for the plant during its dormancy period—the winter between years one and two. A big bulb gives the second year plant a good head start and almost always directly relates to increased seed production as compared to smaller bulbs.

For me, understanding this concept was one of those "ah ha" gardening moments. It all really came together when I recognized that big bulbs are a direct result of lush topgrowth.

Just imagine the green part of the plant photosyn-



by Roberta McQuaid

Club grateful for community support

Dear Editor:

As we closed out 2025, the GFWC Agawam Junior Women's Club continues to be grateful to the community for their support. We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to those who helped us this year.

Those who made monetary donations include: Westfield Bank, E.Cecchi Farms, Clinical Research Management Group (CRMG), Fitness First Health Club, Liberty Package Store, Murphy's Pub, and OMG, Inc. We also thank EB's (Dine out Give Back) and Springfield Thunderbirds for their work with us on our fundraisers. Thank you to the Agawam Garden Club for their help with our April

Meeting project.

We especially want to thank the Agawam Cultural Council for awarding us a grant that helped with our SpringFest 2025 event.

For 69 years, AJWC has been committed to the betterment of our community through special projects supporting the GFWC Special and Community Service Programs: domestic and sexual violence and awareness, advocates for children, education and libraries, arts and culture, environment, health and wellness, and civic involvement and outreach.

The GFWC Agawam Junior Women's Club is especially proud of its continued donations. In 2025 The AJWC

donated \$4,571.00 including \$3,000.00 in scholarship monies to graduating seniors. In 2025 the AJWC made in-kind donations worth \$7,350.00 including the purchase of grocery gift cards and Old Navy gift cards worth \$4,093.00 through their Holiday Baskets program. This program will post a thank you next week to their specific donors.

We could not have done it without you.

This group of thoughtful caring women are always looking for new members.

Check us out on social media.

Sincerely,
Kathy Mounimeh and Donna Shibley, AJWC Co-Presidents



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All letters are subject to editing for content and length. The deadline is Monday at noon. Please send letters to Agawam Advertiser News, care of Turley Publications Inc., 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, or e-mail aan@turley.com.



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Agawam Advertiser News welcomes letters to the editor

The Agawam Advertiser News welcomes readers to participate in this year's election campaigns by writing letters to the editor for publication on these pages. Letters of up to 250 words from local residents endorsing candidates on the ballot or discussing campaign issues should be sent to the Agawam Advertiser News, care of Turley Publications, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, faxed to 413-289-1977 or emailed to aan@turley.com. Please include a daytime telephone number for verification purposes (it will not be printed). Letters must be received by noon Monday to be considered

for that Thursday's newspaper. No attack letters will be printed. No letters written by candidates supporting their own candidacy will be printed. If the volume of letters received is larger than the space available in the newspaper, or if the letters become repetitive, the newspaper reserves the right to print a representative sample. No endorsement letters will be printed in the last edition before the election. For more information, call 413-283-8393.

Campaign news

As part of its election coverage, the newspa-

per plans to print stories about contested races for Congress, state Senate, state House, district attorney and Governor's Council during the weeks leading up to the election, as well as a question-and-answer voters guide. In order to ensure fairness to all candidates, no political press releases will be printed, nor will reporters cover political rallies or fundraisers.

Candidates who wish to further publicize their candidacy, beliefs and events may contact advertising, 413-283-8393 about paid advertising in the Agawam Advertiser News.

Schools & Youth

COLLEGE NOTES

Leverson makes fall 2025 Dean's List

WILLIMANTIC, CT – Eastern Connecticut State University recently released its Dean's List for the fall 2025 semester, in which 1,311 students were recognized for maintaining high GPAs.

Among them is Max Leverson of Agawam, a full-time first-year who majors in Business Administration. To qualify for Dean's List, full-time students must complete a minimum of 12 credits in letter-graded

courses with an average GPA of 3.5 or higher in the semester. Part-time students are eligible if they've accumulated 15 or more credits of letter-graded coursework with an average GPA of 3.5 or higher.

Barber earns Dean's List honors

BRISTOL, RI – Jacob Barber, of Feeding Hills, MA 01030 has been named to the Fall 2025 Dean's List at Roger

Williams University, in Bristol, R.I. Full-time students who complete 12 or more cred-

its per semester and earn a grade point average of 3.4 or higher are placed on the Dean's List that semester.



Participants in the Advanced Manufacturing program. Shown are (l-r): Apoorv Krisna, Niv Patel, Lucas Fillion, Tyler Sarogiou, Michael Bitgood, Sam Preye, Nazar Siarheyev, Matvii Stetsiuk, Wendy Rua, Mayor Christopher Johnson, Christophe Huestis, David Palermo.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

AHS students complete Advanced Manufacturing Design Challenge

AGAWAM — Students in Agawam High School's Advanced Manufacturing program, part of the Innovation Pathways initiative, successfully completed a real world engineering design challenge in collaboration with local manufacturer Governors America Corp. (GAC).

The challenge involved designing and constructing a test fixture for a large electromechanical actuator, a project that required technical precision, teamwork, and adherence to engineering design standards. They began the project with a facility tour and hands on introduction to actuators and test fixtures at GAC, where they received engineering drawings and testing requirements to guide their work.

Mayor Christopher Johnson and Chief of Staff Barbara Bard attended the final student presentations, alongside family members and community supporters. Wendy Rua of the Agawam School Committee praised the students' efforts, stating, "Watching them rise to the challenge is terrific."

"Each group went about the design very methodically, and all the ideas are workable," said Dave Palermo, Senior Manufacturing Engineer at GAC, working with their engineering and technology teacher, Christophe Huestis and the students. "I liked that they considered the cost to build the design and what they saw when looking at fixtures at GAC when they visited."

"They thought this was going to be easy," said Mr. Huestis. "The students soon discover they have to ask questions, lots of questions. They each came to me at some point saying, 'Oh wait – that didn't work!' So how do I do that? 'Learning to ask good questions is one of the best things they all learn,'" said Huestis.

Each student came away with a favorite part of the challenge, some loving design process, and others the modeling and building. They all said they never expected "so much measuring." "The presentation was their most avoided part of the project, said Huestis. "But a necessary lesson for an engineer. You need to be able to describe what you did to others."

HCC scholarship season open

HOLYOKE — The Holyoke Community College Foundation is now accepting scholarship applications for the 2026-2027 academic year.

The application deadline is Friday, March 13, 2026.

Last year, the HCC Foundation awarded 410 scholarships worth about \$364,000 to 379 incoming, current, and transferring HCC students. Some students received multiple scholarship awards. The average scholarship award is typically around \$900.

"The scholarship program is the flagship initiative of the HCC Foundation, and it reflects the incredible generosity of our donor community," said Amanda Sbriscia, vice president of Institutional Advancement and executive director of the HCC Foundation. "Every scholarship tells two stories – one of a donor who believes in the power of education, and one of a student whose path forward is made

possible by that belief."

Students must be currently enrolled at HCC or have been accepted for the upcoming academic year to be eligible for scholarships.

Applicants only need to fill out a single online form to be automatically matched with the scholarships they are most qualified to receive. There are scholarships for new students, current students and students transferring to other institutions, scholarships based on financial need, scholarships for students in specific majors, scholarships for residents of certain communities, and scholarships that recognize academic achievement.

"Last year's 410 scholarship awards represent 410 opportunities for students to focus on their studies rather than financial stress," said Sbriscia. "We're proud to continue this tradition of supporting HCC students as they work toward their goals."

To view scholarship op-

portunities and begin the application process, please go to: www.hcc.edu/scholarships.

The HCC Scholarship Resource Center, on the first floor of the Donahue Building (Room 158), is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., to help current and incoming students navigate the process of applying for scholarships.

The HCC Foundation is a 501(c)(3) that works to advance the college's mission, vision, and values. Founded in 1968 as the Friends of Holyoke Community College, in response to a devastating fire that forced the college to rebuild on a new campus, the Foundation now manages assets of more than \$20 million, the largest community college foundation endowment in Massachusetts.

Questions should be directed to the HCC Foundation office at 413-552-2182, or by email to scholarships@hcc.edu.

GARDEN ■ from page 4

or feature them under appropriate headings.

Choose your method

There are three ways onions can be grown: by seeds sown directly in the garden, from transplants started indoors, or from sets, which are tiny onions. One huge advantage of utilizing seeds is the variety at your disposal as compared to sets.

They are also less expensive. Some folks even argue that onions sown from seed store longer. The rest of this article will be devoted to starting onion seeds indoors, which is best accomplished in late January through Valentine's Day-good news for those of you itching to get your hands "dirty!"

Onion seeds are sown indoors in small flats filled with moist soilless growing medium. Spacing can be a

little closer than prescribed for outdoor germination, with sowing at ¼" apart. The use of heat mats set at 72 degrees is helpful, but not entirely necessary; regular room temperatures will also encourage sprouting.

Supplemental lighting is vital, however, so that the onions grow straight and strong. Once onions are up, thin seedlings ½" to 1" apart from one another – onions hate competition, so this step is important!

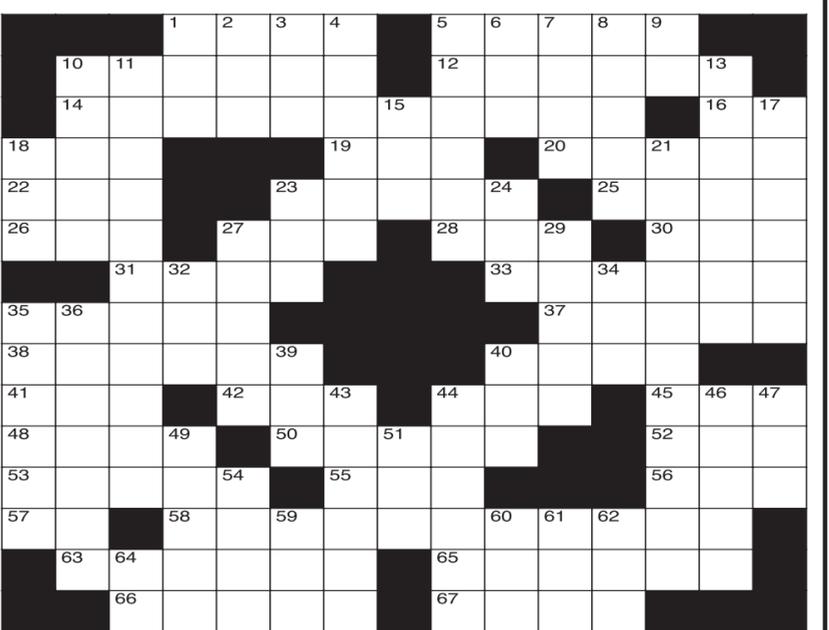
I generally cut out the extras using scissors, right at the soil line so as not to dislodge the roots of those we are growing on. As the seedlings continue to grow, keep them trimmed at 3" tall; this will encourage strong roots and a straight, bulky plant.

About a month prior to the last frost, the transplants should be hardened off for a week by gradually acclimatizing them to out-

door conditions. When they are ready, seedlings are sunk into 1" furrows 3-4" apart and watered carefully; they can be protected from sun and wind off and on for the first week should it seem necessary; here a floating row cover supported by wire hoops would come in handy, but old pots or trays would work fine too. Additional rows should be one foot apart.

Stayed tuned for part two of this column next week, and extra-large onions will be yours come fall!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 33 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 pouimette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.



CLUES ACROSS

- Native American group of N. California
- Geological times (Brit. sp.)
- Tool to remove
- Rods
- One who renews
- They precede C
- Chatter incessantly
- ___ King Cole, musician
- Insect parts
- One from Utah
- The world of the dead
- Singer Redding
- NBA legend Nelson
- Indicates wrongly
- Unhappy
- Anger
- Dark brown
- Some are in kitchens
- Made a mistake

CLUES DOWN

- Damp
- Type of fuel
- Actor Damon
- What thespians do
- One's mother
- Disallow
- Swiss river
- A banana has one
- Philippines lake and volcano are two
- Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
- Agave
- Journalist Tarbell
- One-time tech giant
- Indicates upon
- Intestinal bacteria
- NBA legend Nelson
- Indicates wrongly
- Unhappy
- Anger
- Dark brown
- Some are in kitchens
- Made a mistake
- Witch
- Utilize
- Writing utensil
- Where rockers go to work
- Subsides
- Consume
- Greek mythological figures
- California mountain town
- Tin
- Muse of lyric and love poetry
- Animates anew
- Humorous criticisms
- Cool!
- Worst
- Wet dirt
- Designed to be useful
- Hebrew unit of liquid capacity
- High schoolers' test

- Computer device
- Indian territory ___ and Diu
- A place to sleep
- AI tool
- Pass or go by
- Indicates a purchase
- A digital tape recording of sound
- More (Spanish)
- Disfigured
- White (Spanish)
- Church building
- Georgia rockers
- Type of surgery
- Much ___ about nothing
- Make by braiding
- Local area network
- Unit of work or energy
- Member of indigenous people of Thailand
- Liquefied natural gas
- Distance to top

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SPORTS

Knights pull away from Brownies



AGAWAM – The Holyoke High School boys basketball team was able to pull away late, defeating host Agawam 65-52 last Friday night. The Brownies and Knights played a fast-paced physical game, and while Agawam kept scoring late, Holyoke did not stop scoring either, and the Knights were able to hold to their double-digit lead. Agawam lost its third straight, and fell to 7-8 on the season. Holyoke picked up just its third win of the year, and the Knights are 3-9 now.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Left: Gavin Cruz enters the paint under pressure.

Right: Aiden Lavelle takes the three-point attempt.



Brody Sheehan goes for the one-hand layup.



Trevor Moynihan works around the perimeter.



Dylan Jorgensen heads into the arc looking shoot.



Michael Dilizia passes on the run.

Springfield Thunderbirds get better of Hartford Wolf Pack

SPRINGFIELD – The Springfield Thunderbirds (16-20-4-2) muscled their way past their I-91 rivals, the Hartford Wolf Pack (16-21-4-1), capturing a 4-1 win on Saturday night before a sell-out crowd of 6,793 inside the MassMutual Center.

For a second straight night, Steve Ott's team got off to a quick start as Marc-Andre Gaudet jumped up through the slot area, received a drop feed from Matthew Peca, and picked the glove side on Dylan Garand to give Springfield the 1-0 jump at 6:55 of the first. After a 2-for-3 night on the power play on Friday, the T-Birds man advantage did

not get off to a strong beginning on Saturday, as back-to-back penalties brought an early end to a Springfield advantage and, instead, handed Hartford a 5-on-3. Brendan Brisson cashed in from there, one-timing a Justin Dowling pass through the wickets of Georgi Romanov at 13:20, equalizing the score, 1-1.

The T-Birds settled into the game as the second period began and, once again, a blueliner had the tone-setting goal for Springfield as Hunter Skinner glided down the left circle and snapped a bar-down wrister over Garand's glove at 3:38 of the second, restoring the T-Birds lead, 2-1.

Just over four minutes later, Otto Stenberg made a savvy play, sneaking behind the net to steal a drop pass from Garand and setting up Dillon Dube for a wide-open net at the edge of the crease, extending Springfield's advantage to 3-1 at 8:13 of the period. Like Friday night, the

Springfield defense and goaltending locked things down in the final period, as the penalty kill successfully thwarted a pair of Hartford advantages, and Chris Wagner added his fourth goal in as many games played into an empty net with 3:00 remaining to seal the T-Birds' second straight win.

Sports

Brownies finish strong against Chicopee Comp

AGAWAM – Last Thursday night, a strong second half helped propel Agawam High School girls basketball to its fourth win of the season, a 43-21 win over Chicopee Comprehensive.

In the win, Sophia Laprise had 11 points to lead all scorers. Alanna Rose had eight points and Carlina Calabrese and Isabella Laprise had seven points each. Comp was led by Sheyenne Santiago with nine points.

Agawam improved to 4-10 for the season while Comp fell to just 1-13 on the season.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Sophia Laprise hustles down the court.



Above: Maya Gingerhwa passes on the run.



Right: Alanna Rose takes a free throw.



Olivia Izzo heads down the court after a defensive rebound.



Above: Isabella Laprise tries to regain her balance as she takes possession of the loose ball.



Right: Carlina Calabrese tries to bring in a rebound.

Registration now underway for Quabbin Valley Baseball League

SOUTH HADLEY – Registration has opened for the Quabbin Valley Baseball League, an over-28 recreational league, held its first meeting of 2026 to prepare for the upcoming season.

For the 2026 season, the cost will be \$215 and will include a 16th game added to the regular season schedule.

During the 2025 season,

the league experimented with playing on Mother's Day Saturday as well as a weeknight game to allow players an opportunity to play under the lights. While the night games were very successful, the Mother's Day Saturday games were rained out.

Those elements will return along with a 16th game

with an opponent to be determined as the league's board explores possibilities for interleague matchups with another league in the region.

For returning players to the league, the deadline is Mar. 22 at 12 noon to be registered for the 2026 season in order to be guaranteed a roster spot. There will be open

practices for all players but specifically targeted at new players scheduled for March 29 and April 4 at times and locations to be announced. The draft is currently scheduled to take place on April 4 following that practice.

The season is currently slated to start on Sunday, April 19 and following the success of the six-team fall

league last year, the league will also have a fall league in September and October this season.

The registration is live at www.quabbinvalleybaseball.org. Players must register and then pay the league dues via Venmo or contact the league leadership if an alternate form of payment is needed.

Aside from the weeknight and Mother's Day games, other games take place Sundays at 10 a.m. outside of Mother's Day, Memorial Day and July 4 weekends. Playoffs will be in August.

This is the 30th season for the league and league officials are looking to celebrate the anniversary with a couple of events.

Sports

Brownies offense breaks out, beats Chicopee

WEST SPRINGFIELD – Last Saturday evening, Agawam High School ice hockey defeated the Chicopee co-op team 8-5 at Olympia Ice Center. Agawam, which

had a great offensive effort, got a great game from Andy Holton and Braden Parrelli with three goals each. Chicopee was led by Aidan Na-deau with two goals. Brennan

Corcoran, Anthony Bonafilia, and Owen Buchanan all had single goals for the Pacers. Agawam is 2-11 while Chicopee is 1-10-2.



Braden Parrelli reaches out to grab the puck.



Brady Klinakis tries to pass the puck ahead of pressure.



Ivan Gonzalez goes after the puck.



Nicholas Brown turns toward the goal.



Jackson LaRiviere prepares to take a shot.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGFOTOS.COM

Public Notices

Agawam Conservation Commission Notice of Public Hearing
 The Agawam Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing on **Thursday, February 12, 2026 at 6:00 PM** at the Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, MA. The purpose of this hearing will be to hear the petition of Serge Nakhabenko for an Amendment to the Order of Conditions for the work at 248 River Rd & 56 Forest Ridge Ln, subject to the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act.
 By Order of
 Henry A. Kozloski, Chairman
 Agawam Conservation Commission
 02/05/2026
AGAWAM ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS LEGAL NOTICE
 Notice is hereby given that the Agawam Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing at the Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main St., Agawam, MA, on **Monday, February 23, 2026 at 6:30PM** for all parties interested

in the request of Arkadzi Tsimoshak, who is seeking a Special Permit in accordance with the Town of Agawam's Chapter 114-5 and Chapter 180-55 (35) to allow the petitioner to seek a Class II auto sales license at the premises identified as 371 South Westfield Street.
 Doreen A. Prouty, Chairperson
 Agawam Zoning Board of Appeals
 02/05, 02/12/2026
Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Division Docket No. HD26P0172EA Estate of: Joseph W. Weibel, Jr. Also Known As: Joseph W. Weibel Date of Death: 12/20/2025 INFORMAL PROBATE PUBLICATION NOTICE
 To all persons interested in the above captioned estate, by Petition of Petitioner **Michael R. Weibel of Chicopee, MA** a Will

has been admitted to informal probate.
Michael R. Weibel of Chicopee, MA has been informally appointed as the Personal Representative of the estate to serve **without surety** on the bond.
 The estate is being administered under informal procedure by the Personal Representative under the Massachusetts Uniform Probate Code without supervision by the Court. Inventory and accounts are not required to be filed with the Court, but interested parties are entitled to notice regarding the administration from the Personal Representative and can petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including distribution of assets and expenses of administration. Interested parties are entitled to petition the Court to institute formal proceedings and to obtain orders terminating or restricting the powers of Personal Representatives appointed under informal procedure. A copy of the Petition and Will, if any, can be obtained from the Petitioner.
 02/05/2026

Railers score weekend sweep over Wheeling

WORCESTER – The Railers are two points richer today thanks to a generous donation by Parker Gahagen.
 He turned in one of the best goaltending performances in team history Sunday. Gahagen stopped 34 shots to blank the Wheeling Nailers, 1-0. The victory allowed Worcester to sweep a 3 in 3 weekend against the team with the best record in the North Division.
 The Railers have won five straight games overall. It is their longest winning streak since they won the first nine games of the 2022-23 season.
 The game's only goal was scored by Anthony Callin at 12:05 of the first period. He was set up nicely right in front by Riley Ginnell, who slid a pass to him from behind the goal line. All things considered, there seemed to be no way that 1-0 score would stand up for about 48 more minutes.
 In fact, Wheeling dominated play for the next half

hour. The Nailers had a 12-5 edge in shots after one period, then outshot the home team by 15-2 in the second period. Gahagen's goaltending allowed Worcester to survive that onslaught.
 It was his first Railers shutout, the third this season by a Worcester goaltender. It was just the fourth Railers 1-0 victory of all time, the second ever at the DCU Center, the first here since Mitch Gillam beat Reading on Dec. 17, 2017.
 Gahagen was in net for his team's 6-3 victory on Friday night, a match with an entirely different feel to it. Score almost doesn't matter, Gahagen said, although the shutout was very nice.
 "My mindset is to keep them wherever they are, whether it's zero or two," he added. "Keep them there and keep the momentum in our favor."
 The whitewash was his 14th pro shutout covering three leagues, the AHL,

ECHL and SPHL. They don't count for any more points than a 6-5 game, but they are relatively unique.
 "It doesn't happen that often," Gahagen said. "A lot of factors, a lot of pieces have to fall into place. So it is a little more special when it happens because it doesn't happen that often."
 Gahagen has been good wherever he has played but there seems to be something about the DCU Center. He is perfect in seven starts here including six wins with the Railers and one against the Railers, with Reading in October of 2024.
 "It takes a lot of patience and confidence in their game," coach Nick Tuzzolino said of the triumph, "and also understanding that their defense can win the game. I think that was the big lesson. I said to them after the game — did we have our best stuff all night, and
RAILERS | page 10

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 Mondays at noon, Fridays noon for Monday holidays.

visit www.publicnotices.turley.com

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Agawam Advertiser News

OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.

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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.

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The Resident Care Facility at Saint Joseph's Abbey, 167 North Spencer Road, Spencer, MA has an opening for a **PART TIME FACILITY COOK.** Hourly wage negotiable depending on experience and related skills. Requirements: High School Diploma or GED. Ability to speak and read English required. Must be able to understand written policies and procedures. Must be able to work unsupervised while following food safety protocols.

For more information and to apply, contact **Wally Connor, Facility/HR Manager** at **(508) 885-8700 Ext. 550** or by email: wally@spencerabbey.org

The Town of Huntington is seeking a part-time Town Hall **Floater/Selectboard Administrative Assistant/Assistant Town Clerk.** \$20-\$22 per hour based on experience. 15 hours per week. Application and complete job description are available online at www.huntingtonma.us or by emailing admin@huntingtonma.us. Position is open until filled. *Town of Huntington is an Equal Opportunity Employer.*

Wilbraham United Church is hiring a part-time, experienced **ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT/BOOKKEEPER.** Apply to **Wilbraham United Church, Attention: Alesia; 500 Main Street; Wilbraham, MA 01095.** More information at www.wilbrahamunitedchurch.org/about-us-2/

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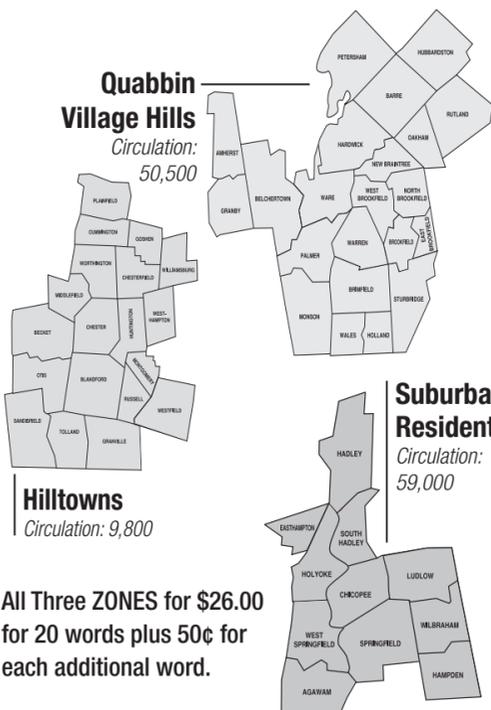
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Women empowerment brunch

HOLYOKE – At a time when women are balancing rising economic pressure, caregiving responsibilities, and increasing burnout, The Becoming Initiative is bringing women together for something many say they rarely experience. A moment to pause, reconnect, and be supported.

On Sunday, March 1, The Becoming Initiative will host the She Decides Women's Empowerment Brunch at Wyckoff Country Club in Holyoke. The event is expected to serve more than 200 women from across Western Massachusetts and will launch a yearlong series of empowerment and personal development programming.

She Decides was created in response to what organizers describe as a growing need for spaces that support women beyond the workplace. Many women are leading families, contributing to the workforce, and holding communities together while quietly carrying emotional, financial, and personal burdens. The brunch creates a space where women can

be seen, supported, and reminded of their value.

Last year's event sold out within two weeks. Attendees shared stories of renewed confidence, meaningful connection, and a sense of clarity they had been missing. The response revealed a clear demand for continued programming focused on growth, leadership, and wellness.

This year's event will serve as a cornerstone fundraiser for The Becoming Initiative, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing skill-based training, personal development, and transformational experiences for individuals at all stages of life. Funds raised will directly support workshops, community gatherings, and leadership focused initiatives throughout the year.

Women attending the brunch will participate in guided conversation, storytelling, and moments of reflection designed to encourage personal growth and connection. Organizers say the goal is not just inspiration, but impact that extends

long after the event ends.

"We created She Decides because women are constantly giving to everyone else and rarely have space to be poured into," said Nicole Polite, Founder and Executive Director of The Becoming Initiative. "This brunch is a reminder that women matter, their stories matter, and when women are supported, entire communities are strengthened."

The Becoming Initiative is currently seeking community partners, sponsors, and supporters who want to invest in women and help expand access to these experiences. Sponsorships help offset the cost for women who may not otherwise be able to attend and ensure the organization can continue its programming throughout the year.

Tickets and sponsorship opportunities are now available.

For more information about the She Decides Women's Empowerment Brunch or partnership opportunities, visit: <https://www.thebecominginitiative.org/events>.

Holyoke Mayor named president of Massachusetts Mayors' Association

HOLYOKE – Mayor Joshua A. Garcia on Saturday assumed the post of President of the Massachusetts Mayors' Association. His appointment was announced at the annual meeting of the Massachusetts Municipal Association held at the Menino Convention & Exhibition Center in Boston.

Forty-seven of the Commonwealth's 351 municipalities are administered by mayors. The Massachusetts Mayors' Association, established in 1945, helps mayors network and share ideas, pursue educational opportunities, meet with state leaders and participate in the

advocacy work of the MMA.

In the role of President, Mayor Garcia will plan the agendas and lead the monthly meetings of the association over the course of year. He will also continue his service on the MMA Board of Directors by virtue of his role serving as President of the Mayors' Association.

Adam Chapdelaine, Executive Director & CEO of the MMA said he looked forward to working with Mayor Garcia.

"I am excited to have Mayor Garcia assuming this important role within the governance structure of MMA. Mayor Garcia is a tire-

less advocate for the needs of cities and towns and brings a great perspective from Western Massachusetts that will serve the association well in the year ahead."

Garcia said he appreciates the opportunity to work with the state's mayors to address their common interests.

"This is an honor and a significant opportunity for me to share information about Holyoke's experiences and initiatives with my fellow mayors, and to learn about their strategies to best serve their constituents," Garcia said. "We're all in this together."

HMC to offer bilingual diabetes education and support group

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Medical Center will host an ongoing bilingual Diabetes Education and Support Group for community members with diabetes.

Diabetes education will be provided at each meeting with a Certified Diabetes Care and Education Specialist or member of the HMC Endocrinology & Diabetes Center team.

The group will meet every

Wednesday from 9am – 11am in the Holyoke Medical Center Medical Office Building Conference Room located at 11 Hospital Drive, 3rd Floor, in Holyoke.

"Being educated and having a better understanding of diabetes enables people to be more successful in controlling or even reversing the progression of their disease. Support group members will be able to discuss strug-

gles and solutions they have found while managing their diabetes with others going through similar experiences," said Corina Valvo, RN, BSN, CDCES, Diabetes Program Coordinator for HMC Endocrinology & Diabetes Center.

For more information or questions regarding the Diabetes Education and Support Group, please contact the HMC Endocrinology & Diabetes Center at 413.534.2820.

Chamber holding mayoral breakfast

AGAWAM – The VIP Mayoral Breakfast will be held on Mar. 4 from 7:30 to 9 a.m. at Tansey's Catered Table. The event is put on by the West of the River Chamber of Commerce.

The chamber believes the breakfast ought to be a celebration of flavors and a fun way to start the day with the mayors of Agawam and West Springfield. The event will feature updates from

both mayors and questions can be submitted to rob-in@westoftheriverchamber.com for a Q&A part of the event. Go to the West of the River's website to register for the breakfast.

Love starts with you: MiraVista's call for self-love this Valentine's Day

HOLYOKE – When Valentine's Day arrives each February, chocolates, dinner reservations, and flowers naturally come to mind—especially flowers, as Valentine's Day is the biggest day of the year for floral sales in the U.S., with Americans spending nearly \$3 billion on blooms alone. These gestures are often how we show love to others. But what if this year, Valentine's Day became just as much about showing care and compassion for yourself as it is about celebrating someone else?

Self-love is not a trendy buzzword—it's a foundational element of mental and emotional wellness. This February, MiraVista Behavioral Health Center is using the holiday to remind us that loving yourself deeply and intentionally is as important as any romantic relationship. Rather than seeing Valentine's Day only as an outward-facing celebration of partners, MiraVista encourages the community to pause, reflect, and honor the relationship we have with ourselves.

At its core, self-love means giving yourself the same compassion, patience, and care that you freely give others. It means acknowledging your worth not because someone else validated it, but because you recognize it. Mental wellness experts agree that this inner kindness fuels resilience, supports emotional balance, and strengthens our ability to connect with others. For example, practices like mindful self-compassion are shown to diminish harsh self-judgment and support emotional well-being.

For many, this Valentine's Day is an invitation to shift perspective. Instead of fo-

cus solely on outward expressions of love, we can look inward and intentionally choose to nurture our own mental and emotional needs. After all, how we treat ourselves sets the tone for all other relationships in our lives.

Karyn Rossacci, Chief Nursing Officer at MiraVista and TaraVista Behavioral Health Centers, knows well the connection between self-care and overall wellness. In her role leading nursing practice across the behavioral health facilities, she has seen firsthand how self-attunement can be transformative.

"Self-love isn't selfish," Rossacci says. "It's a vital part of staying mentally well. When we honor our own needs—our thoughts, emotions, boundaries, and health—we cultivate strength and clarity that radiate outward into every part of our lives."

Rossacci emphasizes that self-love doesn't mean perfection or constant happiness. Rather, it's about acceptance—recognizing that you are worthy of care even on your hardest days.

"True self-love begins with listening," she explains. "Listen to your body when it needs rest, your mind when it needs calm, and your heart when it needs reassurance. Those are not signs of weakness—those are signs that you are human and deserving of care."

So just how does one practice self-love this Valentine's Day? Here are a few tips grounded in mental wellness principles:

1. Start with Kind Self-Talk

Instead of focusing on flaws or failures, rehearse affirmations that acknowledge your strengths. For ex-

ample: "I am worthy of peace and joy." This shifts internal dialogue from criticism to compassion. Reinforce all those characteristics that make you, you and what it is you love about yourself.

2. Prioritize Your Well-Being

Schedule time for activities that restore and nurture you—whether that's a walk outside, journaling, meditating, or simply sitting quietly with a warm cup of tea or cocoa. Making time for these things isn't indulgence—it's self-respect.

3. Set Healthy Boundaries

Self-love means protecting your energy. Saying "no" to extra obligations when you're overwhelmed is not rude—it's necessary. Respecting your limits helps prevent burnout and preserves your emotional reserves.

4. Connect Authentically

Reach out to friends, family, or a community that supports you—but do so in ways that feel nourishing. Genuine connection matters, but it should uplift, not drain, your spirit.

5. Celebrate Small Wins

Maybe today you woke up on time. Maybe you reached out for help. These small actions are worthy of acknowledgment. Self-love happens in the everyday as much as in the big moments.

Rossacci reminds us that caring for ourselves is not a one-day event but an ongoing practice.

"Loving yourself is like tending a garden," she reflects. "It needs steady attention, patience, and trust that what you're doing feeds growth. Some days will bloom beautifully—and some days will not. And that's okay. Love remains."

VETERANS ■ from page 1

behalf. Make sure the application has a current phone number of a family member we can call for verification if needed."

There are four requirements an individual must meet in order to be eligible: Their service dates must on May 8, 1975 or after, and end before Dec. 31, 2025. Second, an individual must meet the state's definition of a "veteran." They must be discharged under honorable conditions, and their home of record must be in Agawam or Feeding Hills.

The deadline to submit an application May 31 and applications can be sent to the Agawam Veterans Service Office located at 954 Main St., Agawam, emailed



TURLEY PHOTO BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

The new memorial monument is set to be erected this year.

to veteranscouncil@agawam.ma.us, or can be brought to the Veteran Services Dropbox at 954 Main St., which is the Agawam Senior Center. It is

possible a person is already on the Veterans Office's approved names list. That can be found at www.agawam.ma.us/296/veterans-services

ORDINANCE ■ from page 1

should do just that, be married.

Massachusetts was the first state in the country to allow same-sex marriages, which allows for any two individuals to enter into a marriage regardless of gender.

One Councilor, Robert Rossi, voted against the ordinance because of how the language was presented, but sympathized with the concept of domestic partnership.

"People have earned the right live the way they want to live," Rossi said. "Sometimes marriage is not the right situation for two people."

Hendrickson complimented the town for having wonderful employees throughout all of the various departments and the public schools. As

the sponsor and main proponent of the ordinance, he wanted to see the ordinance pass to help town employees who want to share their benefits with a domestic partner without having to enter into marriage.

Rickmon echoed his comments, and said she would be willing to support the proposal.

Some councilors spoke about reasons individuals do not get married, many of them financial such as student loans or other tax situations.

Councilor Ed Borgatti, who said he was in a domestic partnership situation, said the ambiguous language was a big reason he could not support the ordinance at this time.

SIDEWALKS ■ from page 1

violations, those who do not remove snow can be fined up to \$25 per day.

According to the mayor's office, the town has been understanding of how bad this

particular storm has been, and residents have not been getting fined as of early this week. Johnson is hopeful residents who are responsible for sidewalk snow or ice removal will act in short order so that fines are not

necessary. For anyone with sand needs, there is a pile located behind town hall for residents.

Residents are also encouraged to help elderly and other residents in need of assistance with snow removal.

RAILERS ■ from page 8

the answer was no.

"That's not gonna happen with a 3 in 3. But when it came to crunch time we were able to make the right plays and be smart and that's what we

were able to do."

This was the third straight game in which the Railers scored first and they never trailed throughout the entire 180 — make that 182-plus — minutes of hockey. They got off to a strong start

Sunday and given how tired both teams were, a wide-open game was a definite possibility.

Callin never thought his early one would be the only goal.

"I was hoping we'd get

more of the same," he said.

Wheeling goaltender Taylor Gauthier was not as busy as Gahagen but as the Railers regained the momentum in the third period, Gauthier same excellent saves. He wound up with 17 for the day.

This a major step for the Railers in their push for a playoff berth but they are in a pack of teams that are in contention.

"It definitely makes us feel good," Tuzzolino said of the sweep, "but it is kind of short

lived. If you look at our division, everybody's winning."

If they keep getting the goaltending they've been getting from Gahagen and Tristan Lennox, the Railers may not win every game, but they will have a chance to.