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AGAWAM

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Rachel Sills crowned 2024 Colleen

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

AGAWAM – Rachel Sills has been crowned Agawam’s 2024 Colleen.

A ceremony was held on Feb. 3 at Oak Ridge Golf Course to crown the Colleen and to present awards to various community members for their contributions.

Sills was honored to have been selected as this year’s Colleen.

“It felt really good at the moment,” Sills said. “I wasn’t expecting it, it definitely was a surprise. The whole room being filled with people I know and love, it felt really good to be up there and acknowledged by them.”

Sills and her fellow Colleen contestants, Giana Smith, Destiny Bullock and Sabrina McBride,



The 2024 Colleen and court: Giana Smith, Destiny Bullock and Sabrina McBride and the 2024 Colleen Rachel Sills.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

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Medicare resolution withdrawn

A city councilor is hoping to workshop the issue

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

AGAWAM – During the city council meeting on Feb. 5, several residents came forward to show their support for Medicare for All in Agawam.

All of them thought this system could be greatly beneficial for the town, supporting residents who may be struggling, doctors and small businesses.

“I really do encourage you all to support Medicare for all. It’s

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Residents, business owners encouraged to attend project meeting

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

AGAWAM – Mayor Christopher Johnson and some of the consulting team for the high school building project will be presenting updated information on the project on Feb. 26 at 7 p.m. at the Agawam Senior Center.

During this meeting, Johnson plans to cover the options moving forward for the project.

“It will go through the options that are available right now, which essentially is new construction or, if we say no to building a new school, then what it’s going to take to extend the useful life of the highschool for another 15 or 20 years,” Johnson said.

Johnson will also delve into the anticipated impact on property tax, the timeline is, what the specific phasing for the new facility would be as well as the scheduled date for the special election.

This building project will greatly affect the future of the town, one way or another.

Johnson is of the opinion that the town needs a new high school now. He feels if the town passes up this opportunity, they will not get it for another 15 to 20 years.

“The process that we’re in

is not inexpensive,” he said. “The town has invested a great amount into the feasibility study and this process and the state is also invested. So if the town at this point says ‘we’re not interested’...the MSBA is not going to be so quick to want to invite us back.”

The current high school needs updating, there are repairs that need to be made to the building to keep it going for another 15-20 years.

“It’s not a decision of do we build a new school and it’s going to cost x or do we just don’t do anything and we save x,” Johnson said. “That’s not the case. The reality is that there is a significant investment that has to be made into the existing building to keep it going.”

Due to this, Johnson is committed to ensuring that community members of Agawam are well-informed. He hopes that they will make the vote to fund a new high school.

Johnson hopes to hold several similar meetings in the future. He plans to give the presentation to the school committee and to schedule meetings around town at various locations so all residents and business owners can get all the information they need on this project.

PROJECT | page 15

New plans for sports complex and Hall of Fame facility proposed

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

HOLYOKE – At a press conference at the Volleyball Hall of Fame last Tuesday, Mayor Joshua Garcia and other community members came together to announce an initiative to create a sports complex in Holyoke.

This project was started by Cesar Ruiz, who is the primary investor in the project.

Three years ago, Mayor Joshua Garcia and Ruiz began discussing the sports complex. At the time, Ruiz was focused on building his own company. However, another year or so later, they had a second conversation, and Ruiz was inspired.

“I was on fire,” Ruiz said. “I couldn’t sleep for weeks because of this vision. I said ‘we can do this.’ I told the mayor, ‘we’re going to do this.’”

The goal is to create a sports complex with an indoor and outdoor facility throughout Holyoke, and move the Volleyball Hall of Fame to one of

those locations.

“Holyoke: The Sports Capital of New England,” Ruiz said. “That

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A press conference was held at The Volleyball Hall of Fame to discuss the ideas behind a new sports complex in Holyoke.



One of several renderings of a proposed sports complex.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY QUINN SUOMALA



'Souper Bowl' theme nets donations



Sunday, Feb. 11 was a SOUPer Sunday at Agawam Congregational Church. Church members, friends, and guests showed their true compassion. Several hundred cans and packages of soup were brought and placed, before 10 a.m. services, on the "Football Field" in the Narthex. Soup collections began Jan. 14. The various soups will be brought to the Parish Cupboard in West Springfield for folks in need.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

St. Patrick's Day parade to be held on Sunday, March 17

HOLYOKE – The St. Patrick's Committee of Holyoke is excited to announce the 71st annual Holyoke St. Patrick's Parade will be held on Sunday, March 17. The Parade will air live at noon on WWLP-22News and be live-streamed on WWLP.com.

"The St. Patrick's Committee is thrilled to host the 71st Holyoke St. Patrick's Parade on St. Patrick's Day this year" said 2024 Parade President, Hayley Dunn. "The Committee has been working hard all year to secure phenomenal talent and entertainment for all to enjoy on Parade Day. We can't wait to see you along the Parade Route!"

In order to arrive at Holyoke High

School in time for the noon broadcast, the Parade will step-off at approximately 11:10 a.m. from the former Kmart Plaza. The parade's website, www.holyokestpatricksparade.com, will provide all of the details regarding the parade route and parking information for spectators.

22News Anchors Rich Tettermer and Taylor Knight, along with Sheila Moreau from the Parade Committee, will serve as Parade hosts. Throughout the event, the 22News team will provide interviews from the Parade route with participants and bystanders throughout the coverage.

St. Patrick's Road Race will be held on Saturday, March 16.



The Agawam High School cheerleaders do their routine.

FILE PHOTO

Art festival coming to Agawam

AGAWAM – The Agawam Community Artists and Artisans will present Beat the Winter Blues Art Festival on Saturday March 2, with snow date of March 9. The Art Festival will become an annual event.

The art festival will take place at the Sacred Heart Parish Hall, 1061 Springfield St., from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

There will be food served from the Sa-

cred Heart Parish kitchen. Breakfast and lunch may be purchased.

Artists and artisans will be selling framed original art, prints, pottery, fused glass, jewelry, stained glass, photography, wire art, wood craft, gourds, and more.

For further information please contact Ceil Rossi email at tocarefree2@hotmail.com or call (413) 207-1247.

Million meals donated to food banks from Big Y

SPRINGFIELD – Big Y's annual Sack Hunger campaign provides funds for the four food banks within their 2-state marketing area. In turn, these food banks support local soup kitchens, food pantries, senior food programs, day care centers and many others of the 2,100-member agencies that they help every day.

The goal is to maximize access to nutritious food and other resources that support food security for those at risk of hunger. For \$5, customers supported Sack Hunger at Big Y's supermarkets or Table & Vine Fine Wines and Liquors. Every \$5 donation brings 10 meals to those in need of support.

Big Y has added even more ways to boost this year's efforts with specific proceeds from produce, floral, Smart Chicken, USDA Choice Angus Beef, along with a portion of every one of Big Y's family of brands. Big Y's Sack Hunger campaign started in 2010 where 740

meals were donated.

With this year's 1.5 million meals, the program continues to grow in support of those in need. Big Y's Sack Hunger donation is part of their ongoing support throughout the year including almost daily donations of meat, fresh produce and bakery along with grocery, frozen food and dairy items. The four regional food banks are the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, the Worcester County Food Bank, the Greater Boston Food Bank in Massachusetts, and the Connecticut Foodshare. "Every year our customers and employees join us in supporting others impacted by food insecurity. Our Sack Hunger program provides an easy way to help families across Massachusetts and Connecticut during the holiday season through the tireless efforts of the local food banks. We are grateful to be able to provide this essential support to our community" said Charles L. D'Amour, Big Y's executive chairman.

Connecticut Trolley Museum looking for volunteers

EAST WINDSOR, CONN – Connecticut Trolley Museum will hold a Volunteer Recruitment Day on Feb. 17. There will be two sessions to visit, 10 a.m. to noon and 1 to 3 p.m. Visit alone or bring the family. There will be snacks and refreshments to enjoy. Registration is required at www.ct-trolley.org.

Join the Museum for our Volunteer Open House. The Museum was founded in 1940 and ever since then the Museum has relied on volunteers who are enthusiastic about volunteering. Without volunteers the Museum would not be able to exist and serve the mission of interpretation, preservation, and education of Trolley History. Volun-

teers do not have to specifically be enthusiastic about trolley history to volunteer at the Museum. There are many departments to fulfill your volunteer need such as- Education, Operating, Woodworking, Mechanical Work, Restoration, Grounds Works, Track Work, Signal & Communication Work, Special Events, Clerical Work, Tour Guides and more.

The Connecticut Trolley Museum is located at 58 North Road (Rt. 140) and is a short 15 minutes north of Hartford or a short 15 minutes south of Springfield. For more information, please call our business office at 860-627-6540 or visit our website at www.ct-trolley.org.

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.

Creative writing/publishing workshop offered

WEST BROOKFIELD – With just 26 letters and a handful of punctuation, writers create fascinating worlds and unforgettable stories.

A creative writing and publishing workshop will be held on Sunday, March 10, from 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at the Salem Cross Inn in West Brookfield.

Award-winning author Ed Londergan provides a full day of information. "The workshop will cover the entire writing and publishing, including idea development and sources of inspiration, drawing from storytelling traditions, developing the story, structure and flow, conceiving and bringing characters to life, dialogue, editing, short fiction, writer's block, and the publishing process," Londergan said in a press release. "The publishing process can be confusing and

frustrating. I'll take the group through the various publishing options available. There will also be some fun writing exercises."

"Everyone has a story to tell. The workshop aims to help those who want to write but don't know where to start or have had an idea for a story that's been bubbling in their head for years and finally want to put it on paper. I also help people who have written something and need to know how to move ahead."

Past workshops have been attended by people of all ages and occupations, from 12-year-old students to 75-year-old retirees. "Four attendees have written books and had them published," Londergan said.

"One of the things past attendees have enjoyed and learned from is the

writing exercises," Londergan said. "The writing exercises this year are different than what I've done in the past. I enjoy seeing the creative ideas that come out of them."

"Back-and-forth discussion is always a popular part of the day. Attendees learn from each other. Individual issues or problems anyone has with their writing are discussed, and the group helps them with suggestions and observations. At times, a lot of 'here's what happened to me, and here's what I did.'"

The workshop is limited to 14 participants. The cost is \$110, and lunch is included.

Registration is required. The registration deadline is March 3. To register, email ed.londergan@gmail.com or call 508-864-8685.

Agawam Day in Florida to be held March 6

ST.PETERSBURG, FLA. – Agawam Day will be held on Wednesday, March 6, 2024., from 10 a.m. to noon, at Fort De Soto National Park, shelter #14, in St. Petersburg.

Agawam Day in Florida has been held on the first Wednesday of March since 1981. Each year 40 to 60 former Agawam residents join together for a reunion of friends and family for a picnic, raffles, beautiful scenery, hugs and to share old memories.

For more information contact Hank Drewnowski by cell phone call or text at 860-462-7273 or by email at hdrew2452@gmail.com.

Local woman shares her TAVR success story for Heart Month

PALMER – When Beverly Flamand of Ware visited her doctor about some shoulder pain she was experiencing, little did she know it would lead to two other potentially life-saving procedures. As part of a pre-op visit to have her shoulder repaired, her doctor referred her to a cardiologist to ensure she was healthy enough to undergo the anesthesia and surgery needed to repair her shoulder.

That visit to Grace LaValley, a cardiology nurse practitioner at Baystate Cardiology in Palmer, would help to ensure that she was healthy enough to undergo the anesthesia and surgery needed to repair her shoulder. It was during that pre-op visit that LaValley, a cardiology nurse practitioner at Baystate Cardiology in Palmer, ordered an echocardiogram, a test that uses sound waves to make a moving picture of her heart, due to a murmur heard on the exam.

“Grace explained that because I occasionally experienced shortness of breath, the test was a safe way to see how well my heart was working,” said Flamand. “It was the echocardiogram that showed that my heart valve was not working as well as it should. Grace explained that a TAVR procedure was recommended and that I was a good candidate for the procedure.”

Aortic stenosis is a heart valve disease where the aortic valve narrows, obstructing blood flow from the heart. It is often caused by age-related calcification or fusion of leaflets, congenital heart defects, or rheumatic fever. Common symptoms

include chest pain, shortness of breath, fatigue, and fainting.

“A Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement procedure is a minimally invasive alternative to open heart surgery in patients with severe aortic valve stenosis,” said Flamand. “This innovative treatment option has revolutionized the field of cardiology, providing hope for patients who are not suitable candidates for surgery. The procedure involves a valve that is crimped on the end of a catheter. This catheter is placed in a blood vessel under x-ray. The calcified valve is pushed aside and the new TAVR valve becomes functional.”

“We are now doing more TAVR cases than traditional open-heart aortic valve surgery,” said LaValley. “This is because TAVR has now been approved for low-risk patients as well, whereas traditionally it was originally designed for higher-risk and inoperable patients.”

Many patients still undergo open-heart surgery, often because their valve isn’t anatomically suited for TAVR, and surgery remains an excellent option for some patients.

“I liked that I was going to have a minimally invasive procedure instead of open-heart surgery,” said LaValley. “I was scheduled for the TAVR procedure and was home just one day later feeling great. However, a few days later I experienced some lightheadedness and went to the emergency department to get checked out. The ED was very busy, but they took



Beverly Flamand of Ware shares her TAVR story.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

very good care of me, and my daughter was allowed to stay with me. After a few tests, I was told that my heart was beating too slowly and that I needed a pacemaker. I trusted my doctors and later in the afternoon, I had the pacemaker procedure. Once again, I was back home in one day, feeling even better than before.”

“My recommendation to everyone reading my story would be to get checked out, and the sooner the better. I got the best care ever,” LaValley said. “The doctors and nurses were unbelievable. They saved my life and have helped me to be able to continue doing the things I love to do, like be

with my family and my six grandchildren!”

LaValley, nurse practitioner, joins Dr. Brian Laliberte, chair of Baystate Palmer Cardiology, Dr. Zachry Zichittella, and Elizabeth Jarry, nurse practitioner, the team specializes in both invasive and non-invasive cardiology care, including the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of a wide variety of cardiovascular diagnoses including hypertension, coronary artery disease, heart failure, and valve disease at Baystate Cardiology Palmer. For more information or to make an appointment at Baystate Cardiology in Palmer please call 413-370-7880.

Library announces upcoming news and events for February

AGAWAM – The Adult Winter Reading Challenge is ongoing until Feb. 29. There is still time to register with Beanstack or pick up a paper log and follow along with logging and activities. Each hour read earns readers one raffle ticket and makes them eligible for prizes to be drawn on March 1. Visit our website www.agawamlibrary.org or call the Information Desk for more information (413) 789-1550 X4.

APL will host Sourdough Brandon on Thursday, Feb. 15 at 6:30 p.m. Brandon Cochran will show the audience everything they need to know on how to build, maintain, and store a sourdough starter.

Patrons will even leave with a piece of the sourdough starter. This event is sponsored by the Agawam Center Library Association. Please register for this adult event.

If patrons are curious about eBooks or a free alternative to Audible, come learn how to use Libby. Patrons will be shown how to find and borrow eBooks and audiobooks. Please bring a smart device and/or an e-Reader to the event. Patrons will also need your library card and your PIN/password to set up Libby, so make sure to have those ready to go in advance. The Library Tech Help sessions will be held on Wednesday, Feb. 21 at 6:30 p.m. and

Tuesday, Feb. 27 at 10 a.m. Both sessions require registration and will be held in the Clini Community Room.

Viewers can enjoy a conversation with National Book Award Winning Author Jason Mott on Tuesday, Feb. 20 at 4 p.m.

New York Times Bestselling Author Kim Scott discusses her book *Radical Candor: Be a Kick-Ass Boss Without Losing Your Humanity* on Wednesday, Feb. 28 at 2 p.m. Please visit the website to register for any or all of these virtual author talks. <https://libraryc.org/agawamlibrary>

Adult Craft Night returns on Monday, Feb. 26 at 6:30 p.m. in the Clini Commu-

nity Room. Decorate a ceramic mug with a heart-shaped theme, an initial or just beautiful artwork using oil-based permanent markers. All materials will be provided. This event is sponsored by the Agawam Center Library Association. Please register as supplies are limited for this event. The Agawam Library will be closed Monday, February 19 for President’s Day. Visitors are welcome at the library Monday through Thursday 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Friday and Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. To register for our events, please visit our website www.agawamlibrary.org or call 413 789-1550 X4.

Country line dancing event on Feb 17

AGAWAM – St. John the Evangelist Church, 833 Main St., will be holding a country line dancing event on Saturday, Feb. 17, 5 to 9 p.m. to help support the church in its many programs and ministries.

Instructional line dancing will be provided by Ballroom Outlet. Light snacks and beverages will be provided. Tickets are \$25 per person. Tickets can be purchased online at stjohnagawam.com or call the office Monday through Thursday, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Food donation challenge set for Lent

AGAWAM – Not sure how to give back in this season of Lent? At Feeding Hills Congregational Church we challenge individuals and families to donate 40 non perishable food items in 40 days.

Items can be dropped off at the church weekly or following Easter.

All donations are to benefit the West Springfield Parish Cupboard which services families in need throughout West Springfield, Agawam, and Feeding Hills.

ACC hosting Valentine’s dinner

AGAWAM – A unique dessert will be featured in the Saturday, Feb. 17, Valentine’s Italian night dinner at Agawam Congregational Church, 745 Main St.

Large red velvet cake cupcakes, filled and topped with white chocolate, buttercream icing with a fancy chocolate, two-heart decoration on top will be included. Church member Sharon Christian is making the delectable cupcakes from a family recipe that always delights everyone.

The spaghetti with meatballs and sauce dinner will, also, include a salad

and dressing. Coffee, tea, and water will be included.

Tickets are \$14 with a deadline of Wednesday, Feb. 14 at noon to purchase tickets. The sit-down dinner will be served in the church hall. Take out orders are available, as well.

The church office is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to noon. Call the office at 413-786-7111 or office@agawamcong.com. The church is handicapped accessible with a large, well-lit, parking lot.

Winter reading challenge at APL

AGAWAM – Did you know kids and teens can enter to win prizes just by logging reading online?

The Agawam Public Library’s annual Winter Reading Challenge goes through Feb. 29. During this time kids and teens can log days that they read on the library’s Beanstack website found at, agawamlibrary.beanstack.org.

agawamlibrary.beanstack.org.

On March 4, the prize winners will be announced, so be sure to log all the reading and earn raffle tickets before that day. For more information about this program or other programs at the Agawam Library go to our website agawamlibrary.org or call 413-789-1550 ext. 3.



Agawam Garden Club scholarships now available

AGAWAM – Applications are now available for the Agawam Garden Club 2024 scholarship.

To qualify for the scholarship students must be a graduating senior of Agawam High School or a college student who graduated from Agawam High School and is planning to attend an institution of higher learning in the fall.

Applicants must be majoring in or planning on majoring in one of the following: botany, environmental engineering, environmental science, earths systems, forest management, natural resources, plant soil and insect science, sustainable agriculture, sustainable horticulture or food and farming, turf grass science and management, landscape design and management technology, clean energy, technology studies: waste water or other environmental related studies.

The recipient will be awarded a \$1,000 scholarship at the clubs annual June meeting.

Completed applications along with transcripts and references must be submitted to Denise Carmody, 40 Primrose Lane, Agawam MA 01001 by April 1.

Applications are available through Agawam High School or can be found on our website at agawamgardenclub.com.

Opinion

Guest Column

Gardening questions that pose a challenge



A recent visit to mom's house prompted the following question about poinsettias. Now, don't worry, I haven't forgotten what the date is. Sure, the poinsettia hasn't been in its glory for a few weeks now, but that doesn't mean she is going to give up on it.

You see, my mother likes a challenge, especially when it comes to plants. She wanted some advice on how to encourage new healthy growth before trying to coax it into re-bloom next fall.

Read on to learn how it's done:

In early April cut back the plant to eight inches. Fertilize with an all-purpose houseplant fertilizer once a month. New growth should appear by the end of May.

After the danger of frost has passed, move the plant outdoors. Continue to water but increase fertilization to every two weeks.

Pinch plants in late June or early July to promote bushy growth. At this time you may also wish to repot the poinsettia. Select a pot one size larger, filling around the root ball with a good potting soil.

Bring the plant indoors as temperatures fall in late summer.

The poinsettia is photoperiodic, and long nights of uninterrupted darkness encourage it to bloom. In greenhouses, growers go to great lengths to withhold light, as even small amounts can delay or stop the plant from setting bud.

At home, putting the plant in the closet for 14 hours each night is your best bet. Setting a reminder alarm or making a note helps to keep on track.

Most people get on a 5 p.m.-8 a.m. schedule beginning Oct. 1 and continue it for eight-10 weeks until color shows on the bracts. Night temperatures should be no higher than 70 degrees or flowering may be delayed.

This all sounds fairly straight forward. I think the biggest frustration for her over the years has been missing a night of darkness, especially near the end of the routine.

Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. Still fun to try, however.

A friend of mine recently asked what I thought of the cloth grow bags that are all the rage right now. Although I haven't used them myself, another friend, Chris, has been gardening up a storm the last few years using these bags.

She has an amazing flower border that you would think is growing in the ground, but it is a collection of dozens of bags in various sizes, holding everything from cannas to dahlias, zinnias and marigolds. She has great success with potatoes and other vegetables, too.

Read on to learn about the benefits of these bags.

I guess the one benefit that I never thought of is breathability. Because the fabric is permeable there is good air exchange, the roots grow to the edge, are air-pruned and branch out.

This is altogether different than plastic or glazed ceramic pots that don't breathe and encourage tangles of roots that encircle the pot eventually becoming bound. When a plant is root bound, it suffers until it is repotted; not so with grow bags!

Another pro would be drainage. The grow bags hold only what moisture the soil can hold

and the rest of it drains away. Sure, the flip side is that you will need to water often in times of drought, but it's nice to know that if we have another summer like we did last year, the plants won't rot, either.

Other more obvious benefits include portability, heat resistance and ease of storage. If you purchase bags with handles, you can move them around the yard much easier than you could if the plants were in heavy pots.

The bags weigh next to nothing compared to clay or ceramics. Grow bags also do not heat up the way glazed or plastic pots do; roots are cooler and the plants are happier.

When the season is over, you can wash the bags and flatten to store. Most brands say that they last for four-five seasons or longer with good care.

Do some research to pair the size bag you use with the plants you are growing. A quick check gleaned that 10 gallon bags are good for three seed potatoes or a single indeterminate tomato plant. Bush type tomatoes would grow well in a seven gallon pot.

Also research the best potting soil or compost mixes to use; there are many out there. Chris uses a blend and uses organic fertilizers, crediting that to her success.

The apple may not fall far from the tree. Mom likes her challenges, and I like mine. I think trying out grow bags is in my near (gardening) future.

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.



PHONE
413.283.8393
Fax: 413.283.7107
Subscriptions: 413.283.8393

EMAIL
Advertising Sales
Wendy Delcamp
wdelcamp@turley.com

Editor
Gregory Scibelli
aan@turley.com

Subscriptions
cgriuswold@turley.com

\$35 per year pre-paid
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www.agawamadvertisernews.turley.com

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How is my Social Security benefit calculated?



Dear Rusty

I appreciate your recent article dispelling the myth that politicians have stolen Social Security money.

As a Certified Public Accountant, I dispel this myth repeatedly to clients, who falsely claim SS funds have been raided. But another thing I deal with often is how SS benefits are calculated. I know the formula for determining each person's benefit amount is complex, but I have had to explain numerous times that those, who put the most into Social Security get the lowest rate of return and those who put the least in get the highest return based on the way the benefit formula is structured.

I get tired of people complaining that monthly Social Security payments are higher for retired doctors and other highly paid individuals. Can you please explain how Social Security is weighted in favor of lower income workers?

Signed Tired of the Misunderstandings

Dear Tired

Please don't be frustrated. Because of the program's complexity, Social Security is prone to misunderstanding and educating the misinformed is an important professional duty we share. Here's how each person's SS benefit is determined:

The first thing to know is that each person's SS retirement benefit is not based on their financial contributions to the program. Social Security's purpose is to provide a benefit, which replaces a portion of the person's pre-retirement income, so the SS benefit is based on actual lifetime earnings, not on the payroll taxes withheld from those earnings.

Social Security has your lifetime earnings re-

cord, obtained annually from the IRS and that record determines your "Primary Insurance Amount." Your "PIA" is initially determined in your eligibility year usually age 62 and is the amount you will get if you claim for benefits to start exactly at your Full Retirement Age.

To develop your PIA, Social Security first adjusts (indexes) each year of your lifetime earnings up to the annual payroll tax cap to account for inflation. They then select the 35 inflation-adjusted years in which you earned the most, from which they compute your average monthly earnings over your lifetime, this is called your Average Indexed Monthly Earnings. They then break your AIME into three segments, the first of which includes a majority of and possibly all of your AIME.

They then take a percentage of each segment and total those three amounts to determine your PIA. The first segment is the largest and 90% of that first segment contributes most of your PIA. Smaller percentages of the other two segments (32% and 15% respectively if your AIME is higher), are then added to the first computation to arrive at your full PIA - the amount you get if you start benefits in the month you reach your FRA. Note that since most of the PIA comes from the first large segment of each person's AIME, lower income workers get a higher percentage of their lifetime average monthly amount.

Since benefits are based on earnings, those with lower lifetime earnings do, indeed, get a smaller benefit than those with higher average lifetime earnings, but the percentage of pre-retirement replacement income lower income workers receive is higher than for those with higher monthly average lifetime earnings. The Social Security benefit for lower income workers is typically about 40% of their pre-retirement average monthly income, while those with higher lifetime average earnings may get a benefit as little as 20% of their average monthly pre-retirement earnings.

In that sense, the Social Security benefit formula is progressive and weighted in favor of lower income workers. Nevertheless, albeit a smaller replacement percentage, higher income workers receive a higher monthly SS benefit because of their higher lifetime earnings.



AGAWAM ADVERTISER NEWS TEAM

EDITOR/SPORTS
Greg Scibelli
aan@turley.com
sports@turley.com

ADVERTISING SALES
Wendy Delcamp
wdelcamp@turley.com

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PATRICK H. TURLEY
CEO

KEITH TURLEY
President

DEANNA SLOAT
Graphics Manager



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Schools & Youth

WNEU fall School of Law Dean's List

SPRINGFIELD – Western New England University recognizes the outstanding academic achievements of 60 students who have been named to the Western New England University's School of Law dean's list for the fall 2023 semester. The following students are from Agawam and Feeding Hills.

Rachel Knauerhase is working toward a Juris Doctor and Stephen Depalma is working toward a Juris Doctor.

Fall 2023 President's List at WNEU

SPRINGFIELD – Western New England University announces that Antonio Russo of Agawam, has been named to the Western New England University's president's list for the fall 2023 semester. Russo is one of 26 students to achieve this mark of academic excellence.

Russo is working toward a Doctor of Pharmacy degree.

UT Dean's List honors

TAMPA – Kaitlin Winters, of Agawam, earned dean's list honors at The University of Tampa for the fall 2023 semester. Winters is a Junior majoring in Marketing BS.

Naylor named to Goodwin University President's List

EAST HARTFORD – Sarah Naylor of Agawam, earned a place on Goodwin University's president's list for the fall 2023 Session.

Opinion

Don't risk your health shoveling snow

Each year 100 people die from shoveling snow

SPRINGFIELD – Snow has finally arrived, and shovels are being put to good use once again.

But shoveling sometimes comes with consequences including suffering a heart attack or putting your back out.

"When shoveling snow an individual experiences an increase in heart rate and blood pressure which increases the need for blood supply to the heart. In those with cardiovascular disease or risk factors, this can be dangerous as it can lead to a heart attack," said Dr. Seth Gemme, FACEP, vice chair of Clinical Operations for Emergency Medicine, Baystate Health.

He noted that signs and symptoms of a heart attack include pressure or pain in the chest, arms or neck; nausea; lightheadedness; sweating or feeling clammy; or unusual fatigue.

According to the National Institutes of Health, each year snow shoveling results in about 11,500 injuries – including 100 fatalities. Data shows that those deaths are generally caused by heart attacks with

WNEU fall 2023 President's List

SPRINGFIELD – Western New England University recognizes the outstanding academic achievements of over 500 students who have been named to the president's list for the fall 2023 semester. These students are from Agawam and Feeding Hills.

Julia Lescarbeau majoring in Biomedical Engineering; Emmerson White majoring in Civil Engineering/Environmental Engineering Concentration; Abel Barbaneagra majoring in Computer Science; Athena Trench majoring in Computer Science; Ertugrul Demirhan majoring in Computer Science; Payton Lemke majoring

in Criminal Justice; Matthew Flag majoring in Electrical Engineering; Nolan Chamberland majoring in Finance; Livia Gavelis majoring in Health Sciences; Mackenzie Douglas majoring in Human Resource Management; Alexandra Shur majoring in Law & Society; Anthony Kelliher majoring in Management & Leadership; Jayden Montagna majoring in Mechanical Engineering; Sydney Dietrich majoring in Philosophy; Gavin Scannapieco majoring in Secondary Education/Math Science; and Vincent Martin majoring in Sport Management.

WNEU announces fall Dean's List

SPRINGFIELD – Western New England University recognizes the outstanding academic achievements of over 700 students who have been named to the dean's list for the fall 2023 semester. The following students are from Agawam and Feeding Hills.

Alexandra Seibert is majoring in Political Science; McKenna Gilroy is majoring in Psychology; Lauren Plakias is majoring in Psychology; Matthew Stickles is majoring in Psychology;

Sophia Longo is majoring in Chemistry; Hanan Sarrar is majoring

in Health Sciences; Hannah Richter is majoring in Health Sciences; Kyle Ma is majoring in Health Studies; John Manale is majoring in Neuroscience; Vincenzo Romeo is majoring in Finance; Connor Adamczyk is majoring in Finance; Katherine Gauthier is majoring in Finance; Caleb Banaitis is majoring in Marketing; Ahmed Elbakri is majoring in Marketing Communication/Advertising; Evan Danek is majoring in Civil Engineering; Joseph Russo is majoring in Mechanical Engineering; and

Jason Breton is majoring in Mechanical Engineering.

Goodwin Dean's List for fall 2023

EAST HARTFORD – Alyssa Riley has earned a spot on the Goodwin University dean's list for fall 2023.

Riley, a student from Feeding Hills, is one of 521 students to make the dean's list, reserved for those who demonstrate great academic performance.

Fall 2023 Dean's List at WNEU

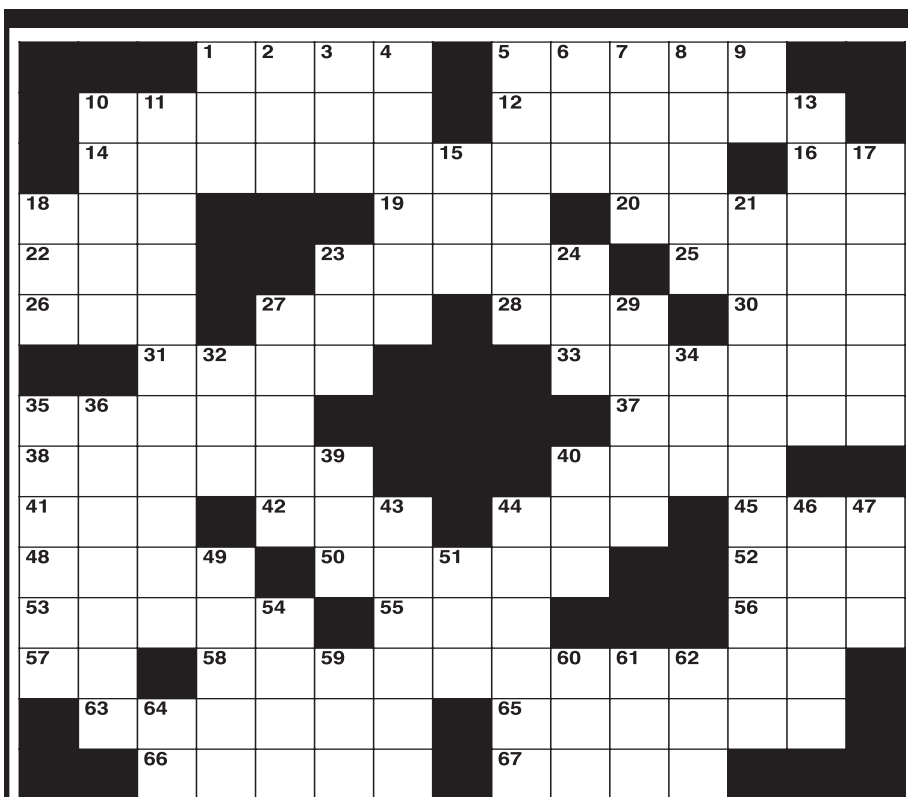
SPRINGFIELD – Western New England University recognizes Hailey Emmons of Feeding Hills, has been named to the Western New England University's dean's list for the fall 2023 semester. Emmons is one of 15 students to achieve this mark of academic excellence.

Emmons is working toward a Doctor of Pharmacy degree.

Emmanuel College 2023 Dean's List

BOSTON – Emmanuel College in Boston has named more than 900 students to the dean's list for the fall 2023 semester. To earn a spot on the dean's list. The following students are from Agawam and Feeding Hills. Delaney Brown and Olivia Frogameni.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO RECYCLE THIS NEWSPAPER



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Gene type
- 5. Persian male given name
- 10. Type of protection
- 12. Cloud
- 14. One who returns to life
- 16. Gym class
- 18. General's assistant (abbr.)
- 19. Baby's dining accessory
- 20. Enchantress
- 22. Prefix denoting "in a"
- 23. Spiritual leader
- 25. Cavities
- 26. Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
- 27. Foot (Latin)
- 28. Sweet potato
- 30. Pharaoh of Lower Egypt
- 31. Land
- 33. More inquisitive
- 35. Dog breed: ___ Apso
- 37. Stood up
- 38. Direct and uninhibited
- 40. Authorless
- 41. Blocking type of drug (abbr.)
- 42. Retrospective analysis (abbr.)
- 44. Root mean square (abbr.)
- 45. Macaws
- 48. Actress Remini
- 50. Polynesian wrapped skirt
- 52. City of Angels hoops team (abbr.)
- 53. Fitzgerald and Baker are two
- 55. Bowling alley must-have
- 56. A way to cool down
- 57. Ethnic group in Asia
- 58. A way to alter
- 63. Set of five
- 65. Removes from the record
- 66. Dummies

CLUES DOWN

- 1. DC Comics superhero
- 2. Brew
- 3. Play
- 4. Single-celled animals
- 5. Rough to the touch
- 6. Small island (British)
- 7. Often noted alongside cons
- 8. Preparation of rootstock
- 9. Atomic #44
- 10. Egyptian unit of capacity
- 11. About secretary
- 13. Particular groups
- 15. Poke fun at
- 17. Make certain that something occurs
- 18. Financial term
- 21. Justify
- 23. Arbiter
- 24. 007's creato
- 27. Czech name for Prague
- 29. Groans
- 32. American time
- 34. No seats available
- 35. ___ Stahl, journalist
- 36. Cleft lip
- 39. Talk incessantly
- 40. Expresses atomic and molecular weights (abbr.)
- 43. A part of a river where the current is very fast
- 44. Curdled milk
- 46. Running competitions
- 47. A team's best pitcher
- 49. Carthaginian explorer
- 51. World-renowned city
- 54. Most common Japanese surname
- 59. The bill in a restaurant
- 60. They ___
- 61. City of Angels football team (abbr.)
- 62. Distinctive practice
- 64. One quintillion bytes

CROSSWORD SOLUTION ON PAGE 13

SECURITY ■ from page 4

Even so, those higher earners did, indeed, contribute more payroll taxes from their higher earnings.

So, each person's SS retirement benefit amount is a percentage of their pre-retirement income. Coincidentally, those with higher pre-retirement income also contributed more to the Social Security program than did those with lower earnings. But their higher SS benefit amount is based on their higher pre-retirement earnings, not on payroll taxes paid from those higher earnings.

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

SHOVELING ■ page 6

COLLEEN ■ from page 1

had participated in a series of interviews the morning of the coronation.

Each Colleen contestant answered a series of questions from three judges who did not have connections in Agawam. Each contestant had 10 minutes with the judges for their interviews.

Then, during the coronation ceremony itself, they were asked another random question by the judges in front of the crowd, before the award ceremony.

These questions included things such as: "who is your role model?," what charity do you support?" and "how does your Irish heritage influence you?"

"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," President of the Colleen Committee Abbie Malouin said.

Sills felt one thing that may have made her stand out for the judges was the personal discussions she had during her interview.

"I really connected with the judges," Sills said. "And I talked about my Irish heritage and how much it meant to me, and that stood out to them, I think."

Sills did an Ancestry DNA kit and learned how Irish she was and where in Ireland her ancestors are from. After she found out those specifics, she delved into learning about traditions her family had.

She hopes to share her love of her Irish heritage with other community members throughout her time as Colleen.



The Colleen court poses with the 2024 St. Patrick's Committee Award winners.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

"I love getting to celebrate my Irish heritage in general with my friends and family there, and seeing how amazing the community is," she said. "It's a perfect opportunity to reach out to the Irish community, meet new people and share new experiences."

During the Colleen Coronation, a few community members were also acknowledged.

Moulin herself was the recipient of the Anne Sullivan Award. This award is given in honor of Anne Sullivan, the teacher of Helen Keller.

It is given to a female parade committee member who made an impact on the committee.

"I'm incredibly excited [to have received this award]," Moulin said. "Being a teacher myself, it felt very appropriate that the award for a teacher was given to a teacher."

City Councilor Anthony Russo also received the Vera Conway Citizenship Award.

"It is given to someone in the community who goes above and beyond outreach for the community," Moulin said. "Because of Anthony's influence in the town and how much he gives back; he just goes above and beyond what is expected of him."

Additionally, Smith was awarded the William Pfau award, an award given to a Colleen contestant who writes the best essay about someone with Irish heritage who has had a large impact on them.

This award is given in honor of William Pfau, an original member of the Agawam St. Patrick's Committee. His family selects a winner of this award on his behalf.

In the upcoming weeks there will be many different events focused on celebrating Irish heritage. One such event is the annual corn beef dinner on Mar. 6. At this 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.

There will also be the Bishop's Luncheon on Friday, Mar. 15.

"It's always a really fun event that the girls and the award winners get to go to," Malouin said. "It's a really nice celebration."

Of course, there is also the Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Parade, which is scheduled for Sunday, Mar. 17. Everyone looks forward to this fun-filled community event.

SHOVELING ■ from page 5

can Physical Therapy Association offer the following tips for avoiding back injuries from snow shoveling:

- Lift smaller loads of snow, rather than heavy shovelfuls. Take care to bend your knees and lift with your legs rather than with your back.
- Use a shovel with a handle that lets

you keep your back straight while lifting. A short handle will cause you to bend more to lift the load. Using a shovel that's too long makes the weight at the end heavier.

- Because the spine cannot tolerate twisting as well as it can other movements, it is important to avoid this movement as much as possible. Step in the direction in which you are throwing the snow to prevent the lower back from twisting. This will

help avoid the "next-day back fatigue" experienced by people who shovel snow.

- If possible, push the snow away instead of lifting it.
- Take frequent breaks when shoveling. Stand up straight and walk around periodically to extend the lower back.
- Standing backward-bending exercises will help reverse the excessive forward bending that occurs while shoveling; stand straight and tall, place your hands toward the back of your hips, and bend backward slightly for several seconds.

Dr. Martinez-Silvestrini noted that there is sometimes confusion over whether to use ice or heat after injuring your back.

"Apply a cold pack as soon as possible after the injury every three to four hours for up to 20 minutes. After two or three days, you can apply heat for 20-30 minutes three or four times a day in order to relax your muscles and increase blood flow," he said.

Unfortunately, for some, not all injuries are simple strains.

Baystate Medical Center's Division of Neurosurgery sees many patients in the wintertime who suffer from herniated discs which are common to the lower spine. When a disc is herniated or ruptured, it can create pressure against one or more of the spinal nerves resulting in numbness

or pain in the lower extremities, often radiating down the leg. Neurosurgeons also see many spinal fractures when people slip while shoveling snow or chopping ice.

To avoid slipping on ice and snow, doctors recommend buying yourself a pair of shoes or boots with good traction or adding snow and ice safety traction devices to your footwear.

If possible, use a snow blower to do the work for you. If not used correctly, however, even using a snow blower can strain or injure your back if you push or force the equipment to go faster.

And using a snow blower may still be too much activity for someone with heart disease. Snow blowers are not light, and it can be heavy to push through a lot of snow.

For some, the best advice may be to leave the shoveling to others by hiring a youngster who wants to make extra money or contracting with a plowing service to clear your driveway and walkways when it snows.

"You know your body better than anyone else. If something doesn't feel right while you're outdoors shoveling, then stop immediately," Gemme said.

For more information on Baystate Health, visit baystatehealth.org. To make an appointment with Martinez-Silvestrini or a neurosurgeon, call 413-794-5600.



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SPORTS

Boys get back on track with win

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

BELCHERTOWN – Following back-to-back losses to Suburban North League rivals Pittsfield and Taconic, the Agawam Brownies really didn't want to experience another setback in a non-league game at Belchertown High School.

Belchertown, who were trailing by seven points at halftime, scored the first ten points of the second half, and retook the lead in the middle of the third quarter. The Brownies managed to pull away during the final four minutes of the third quarter and in

the fourth quarter enroute to a 78-61 road victory, last Monday night, Feb. 5.

"We're coming off back-to-back losses, so it feels great to come here and get a win," said Agawam junior Elijah Maldonado. "The only other time that I played a basketball game in this gym was when I was a freshman. We came ready to play in tonight's game."

The Brownies, who had an 11-5 overall record following their road victory, haven't lost to the Orioles (7-9) on the hardwood in at least the past ten years. They won last year's contest, 73-52, at home and squeaked out a 55-50

road win two years ago, which was Maldonado's freshman season.

Maldonado, along with senior Colin Smith combined for 53 of the Brownies 78 points.

Smith scored 17 of his game-high 27 points during the second half, while Maldonado provided the spark offensively in the first half scoring 16 of his 26 points. Maldonado had a total of four 3-pointers, while Smith made a pair of shots from beyond the arc.

Watching Maldonado and Smith perform was worth the price of admission, especially for

BASKETBALL | page 8



Melih Tomak goes after a jump ball.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY



Elijah Maldonado goes for the layup under pressure.



Andrew Regnier looks to pass outside of the paint.



Aiden Lavelle gets the short-range jumper.



Colin Smith eyes the basket as he looks for a hook shot.

Brownies pick up win

AGAWAM – Last Saturday evening, the Agawam High School girls basketball team picked up a 41-34 win over the Spartans in East Longmeadow. The win brings Agawam to 11-6 and the Brownies are definitely a lock for the state tournament. The Brownies also could qualify for Western Mass. for the first time. In the win over the Spartans, Marlee Montagna led the team with 12 points and Isabella Laprise had 11 points. Agawam had one last regular season game against Westfield earlier this week.

Agawam hockey headed for tournament

WEST SPRINGFIELD – The Agawam High School hockey team is headed for the state tournament and continues to improve its position as the regular

season nears its close.

Last Thursday night, Agawam picked up its 11th win of the season with a narrow 2-1 win over West Springfield.

In the victory, Anthony Barbarini and Jake Parolo had the goals for the Brownies. Goalie Frank DiSanti got a big win with 23 saves on 24 shots.



Thomas Connery sprints up the ice.



Frankie DiSanti deflects the puck away.



Peyton Buffum is pursued by an opponent.



Angelo Robbins goes after a puck near the boards.



Trevor DePalma takes possession of the puck and heads up the ice. TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM

Sports

Bonsignore opens season with second-place finish

NEW SMYRNA, FL – Justin Bonsignore drove the No. 51 Phoenix Communications modified to a second-place finish in Saturday's NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour opener at New Smyrna Speedway.

Bonsignore qualified fourth and ran inside the top-five for the duration of the race. After a pit stop in the final 20 laps, Bonsignore raced from fifth up to second, trying to chase down Ron Silk in the final laps. Although he closed in, he had to settle for second.

The run opened the 2024 season for Bonsignore, who will chase his fourth NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour title in the Ken Massa Motorsports machine this season.

"We were just a little bit too snug on

both sets of change tires," Bonsignore said. "All in all, it was a really good night to start the year. We have to thank Phoenix Communications for everything they do for our team and Ryan Stone and the pit crew for a great job with a brand new car they built over the winter. It takes a lot to come down here to Florida to open the season. We will try and build off this and get better with this new car."

Justin Bonsignore will return to the track driving the No. 30 for Rette Jones Racing in the ARCA Menards Series season opener at Daytona International Speedway on Saturday, February 17. The NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour is back on track at Richmond Raceway on Friday, March 29.

Worcester Railers pick up win over Maine Mariners

WORCESTER – This season's Railers have been imperfect, but indefatigable.

Twenty-fours after squandering a three-goal lead and losing in overtime to the Maine Mariners, 5-4, Worcester bounced back Saturday night with a strong effort and a 3-2 victory that was not easy.

Games with Maine never are.

The Railers took a 2-0 lead late into the third period on goals by Artyom Kulakov and Anthony Repaci, then Maine closed the gap on William Provost's goal at 12:57. Given the unhappy endings of Worcester's two previous games with the Mariners, things looked shaky; even shakier when Trevor Cosgrove was called for high sticking at 17:50.

However, Jake Pivonka hit an empty net at 18:54. Sigh of relief?

Not quite. With goalie Shane Starrett on the bench and Cosgrove still in the box, Ethan Ritchie made it 3-2 with 37 seconds left. The Railers kept Maine bottled up in its own zone for the duration, however, and came away with two pure points.

Coach Jordan Smotherman was not surprised with the way his team responded.

"We love our room," he said. "You could tell (Friday) night, even after the game before they left, that the guys were ready to go. That's one of the biggest differences between last year's team and this year's — these guys really want to be here."

The victory extended Worcester's points streak to four games. The Railers have earned seven of eight points in that time

and have 48 points overall. That is five more than both Maine and Trois-Rivieres, tied for fifth.

Kulakov gave the Railers a 1-0 lead at 5:52 of the second period as he fired a 35-foot wrist shot past Starrett through a screen. Ashton Calder set him up with a great pass from the right side. Repaci scored shorthanded at 15:04 on a deflection in close.

John Muse improved his record to 9-3-1 with the win. He stopped 26 of Maine's 28 shots. Worcester has earned 19 of a possible 26 points with Muse in goal, a .731 winning percentage.

The triumph sent the Railers off on the longest road trip, time-wise, in franchise history. They will play six games in Florida, three in Orlando against the Solar Bears, then three in Fort Myers against the Florida Everblades. Worcester will be gone for 14 days and does not play another home game this month.

Florida in February — almost every New Englander's dream. Smotherman was asked if he was concerned that the Railers will look at this as a vacation, not a work assignment.

"One hundred percent," he said. "I've been the guy on the Florida trip before. I know how that works, but we trust our group, and that's the other part of it. They are professionals. They need to be professionals. Everything that we've seen so far is that they've bought in and they want to win hockey games."

Thunderbirds wins on 'Ice-O-Topes' Night

SPRINGFIELD – The Springfield Ice-O-Topes (22-19-3-2) rebounded from a 1-0 deficit to knock off the Hershey Bears (37-9-0-2) by a 6-3 score before a sold-out MassMutual Center crowd of 6,793 on Saturday night.

Neither team could find a firm offensive footing in the opening half of the first period, with both squads going 0-for-2 on their first two power play chances. 20 seconds after Hershey's second man-advantage expired, the visitors finally got the game's opening goal as veteran Garrett Roe crashed the top of the crease to jam a rebound through Malcolm Subban at 14:02 to make it 1-0 for the Bears.

The Ice-O-Topes' second power play came and went, but like the Bears, continuous offensive pressure paid off less than 30 seconds after the advantage concluded. Adam Gaudette made a quick change of direction at the top of the slot area before funneling a shot toward the goal. Zach Bolduc made himself available for a deflection at the edge of the crease, and the rookie executed to perfection, squeezing it past Clay Stevenson to tie the score at 17:48.

With the game tied at 1 after 20 minutes, the 'Topes parlayed Bolduc's goal into a firestorm of offense in the middle frame. It began just 2:55 into the second, as Mathias Laferriere dropped a pass in the left circle for Kean Washkurak, who curled the puck to a better shooting lane and snapped a wrister through Stevenson's five-hole to make it a 2-1 game.

1:35 later, Gaudette was in the middle of the action once again. After Hunter Skinner whipped a pass off Gaudette's foot deep in the left-wing corner, Matthew Peca pushed a second-chance shot wide of the goal. With Stevenson still trying to recover back in front of the net, Gaudette used the opportunity to bank it

off Stevenson's pants and into the twine to extend the lead to 3-1. With the tally, Gaudette vaulted himself back to the top of the AHL goal-scoring race with his 25th of the season.

After a quiet stretch of play yielded nothing on the scoreboard, Hugh McGing changed things with a determined rush deep in the Hershey zone. McGing's pressure caused a mishandle between Stevenson and Dylan McIlrath, and McGing was there to jab a backhander through Stevenson, making it a 4-1 game at 15:24. The pesky winger now has seven points over his last seven games.

Former T-Bird Jake Massie gave Hershey a much-needed reply with a one-time shorthanded goal at 17:42, set up by Jimmy Huntington, and the defending champs were back within two heading into the third.

Chances heavily favored the Bears in the third to the tune of an 18-5 shot discrepancy, but Subban and the defense bent without breaking, and Will Bitten added some extra insurance, beating Stevenson on a breakaway backhander through the wickets at 10:54 to make it 5-2.

The Bears' power play would not allow the game to end quietly, as Alex Limoges redirected a Mike Vecchione shot through Subban at 13:30 to cut the lead to 5-3. However, in the end, the visitors ran out of time, and Dylan Coghlan snapped a 15-game goal drought by drilling an empty net with 48.6 seconds to play to make it four consecutive wins on Ice-O-Topes Night for Springfield.

Springfield next takes its game down to Charlotte for a two-game set against the Checkers inside Bojangles' Coliseum next Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 17-18. Puck drop for both games is set for 4 p.m. in North Carolina.

How to contact the Sports Editor

Have the scoop on a local sports story? Want to submit a team photo, pass along a potential story idea, or just find out how to get a copy of that great photo of your young athlete? Please send all sports-related press releases and information to Sports Editor Greg Scibelli at: sports@turley.com or call, 1-413-283-8393.



BASKETBALL ■ from page 7

the Agawam supporters, who made the trip north to Belchertown.

"Both of them are very talented basketball players," said Agawam head coach Tim Sheehan, who was previously the boys' varsity basketball coach a couple of miles down Rte. 202 at Granby High School. "They always play very well off one another. We also had some other guys play well and it was a much needed win for us tonight."

The Brownies also received key contributions from junior Melih Tomak (6 points), freshman Gavin Cruz (6 points), junior Owen Lavelle (4 points), junior Riley Jorgensen (3 points), sophomore Aiden Lavelle (2 points), senior Andrew Regnier (2 points), and freshman Matt LeTellier (2 points).

Agawam should be one of the teams who'll be competing in the upcoming Western Mass. Class A tournament. They've already qualified for the Division 2 state tournament.

Leading the way offensively for the home team was junior Ian McDonald, who scored 11 of his team-leading 14 points in

the first half. Nine of McDonald's points came on 3-pointers.

"We received a nice offensive effort from Ian in tonight's game. He made a couple of huge 3-pointers in the first half," said Belchertown head coach Matt Stenius. "We've had a different leading scorer in almost every game this season."

The other three double digits scorers for the Orioles were senior Tyler Marino (13 points), sophomore Shea MacLean (11 points), and senior Cal Orzech (10 points), whose father, Mike, is the longtime boys' varsity basketball coach at Minnechaug Regional.

Marino also posted a double-double with 12 rebounds.

The Orioles, who have lost back-to-back games four times this season, are also hoping to play in both the Western Mass. Class B tournament and the Division 3 state tournament.

The opening quarter was a back-and-forth affair with six lead changes and two ties.

MacLean and McDonald combined to score 12 of the Orioles 15 first quarter points.

Maldonado, along with Tomak and

Cruz, each scored four points for the visiting team during the opening eight minutes.

A Smith lay-up hoop with 20 seconds left in the first quarter gave the Brownies a slim 16-15 lead.

The score continued to switch sides at the start of the second quarter.

Belchertown took a 25-24 lead with a little more than four minutes left in the first half when Orzech banked home a 3-pointer from the right side.

Maldonado responded with a 3-pointer before MacLean was fouled making a lay-up with 3:40 remaining in the second quarter. He made the bonus free throw giving his team a 28-27 lead.

The Brownies then built a 12-point lead with the aid of a 15-2 run.

Smith began the spurt with a 3-pointer before Maldonado made back-to-back steals resulting in a reverse lay-up and another lay-up basket after making a spin move in the lane.

"Elijah does things on the basketball court that amazes me sometimes," Sheehan said. "He always works very hard out there."

Lavelle added a short jumper before

3-pointers from Maldonado and Smith increased the Brownies lead to 42-30 with 1:30 left on the scoreboard clock.

The Orioles closed out the first half with a Marino lay-up and a 3-pointer from sophomore Jacob Pacunas (5 points).

Orzech, who did an outstanding job of organizing a preseason basketball tournament with a couple of his teammates, buried a 3-pointer from the left corner 30 seconds into the third quarter.

The Orioles then made five of six shots from the free throw line before a MacLean put-back hoop gave his team the lead back at 45-42 with five minutes left in the third quarter.

"I've faced Belchertown many times over the years and those kids never quit," Sheehan said. "I knew that they would make a comeback against us."

The Brownies answered back with a 12-0 run. Smith scored nine of those points.

Maldonado hit a 3-pointer at the buzzer giving Agawam a 59-49 lead entering the final quarter.

The Brownies, who outscored the Orioles, 19-12, during the final eight minutes of the contest, held onto their double digit lead the rest of the way.



MONEY MATTERS

BUILDING FINANCIAL FUTURES:

PV Financial Group's Commitment to Trust and Personalized Service

In the ever-evolving world of finance, PV Financial Group looks to stand out for its unwavering dedication to building lasting relationships with its clients. At the core of the firm's philosophy is the belief that true financial success is rooted in trust, communication, and a personalized approach.

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PV Financial Group takes a refreshing departure from the transactional norms of the financial industry. Instead of focusing solely on transactions, the firm's financial advisors prioritize cultivating strong relationships with their clients. This commitment ensures that every interaction is characterized by a delicate balance of care, skill, diligence, and objectivity.

Communication as the Cornerstone

The firm firmly believes that effective communication is the bedrock of a thriving client-advisor relationship. PV Financial Group's comprehensive process involves open and transparent communication to understand each client's unique financial situation, goals, and preferences. This commitment to communication extends through every step of developing and managing clients' financial lives.

A Team of Professionals

PV Financial Group boasts a team of trained and courteous financial profes-

sionals who collaborate seamlessly to provide clients with the highest level of personalized service. Through continuous training, the team stays well-informed and equipped to navigate the complexities of the financial landscape. The courteous approach reflects the firm's commitment to treating clients with respect and professionalism.

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The firm's comprehensive process involves a meticulous examination of each client's financial needs and aspirations. Financial advisors exercise balance, care, and skill in crafting personalized financial plans, considering factors such as risk tolerance, financial goals, and market conditions. Diligence is a hallmark of PV Financial Group's approach, ensuring thorough research, analysis, and ongoing monitoring of clients' portfolios.

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Objectivity is a guiding principle in decision-making at PV Financial Group. Financial advisors maintain a clear and objective perspective, always acting in the best interests of the clients. This commitment ensures that recommendations align with each client's unique circumstances and financial objectives, fostering a relationship built on trust and integrity.

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ent-centric approach, aims to be a reliable partner on the journey toward financial success for every client. With a focus on trust, effective communication, and a team of dedicated professionals, the firm is making waves in the financial landscape by prioritizing relationships over

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THE ROAD TO

Financial Wellness

The Benefits of Using a Financial Planner

In today's complex financial world, many investors seek out financial planners to help them navigate the intricacies of personal finance. The benefits of having expert financial help are manifold, including investment advice, retirement planning, tax strategies and estate planning.

Most financial planners collaborate with their clients to choose an asset allocation that melds the client's risk tolerance with their goals. After investments are chosen, often the advisor plays the role of cheerleader. Keeping clients from making rash decisions and veering off course from their financial plan may be one of the most important roles an advisor plays. All advisors have seen clients panic and try to make changes to portfolios in response to political or economic events that soon pass.

Retirement planning may be one of the most important acts that an advisor can perform. Everyone would love a stress-free retirement. A good planner can help calculate how much you will need to save to retire. He or she will also create a

strategy for claiming social security and any pensions in order to meet retirement spending needs.

An often-overlooked benefit of having a good financial expert is tax planning. Should you invest in a traditional 401k or a Roth? When should you begin withdrawing from your taxable accounts? Do you have to pay taxes on social security? When do you need to take Required Minimum Distributions and are you taking the correct amount?

In addition to all the above, proper estate planning is imperative to make sure that your assets end up where you would like them to, with the least amount of hassle. Do you need trust or is your will sufficient? Is your house protected from Medicaid in the future? Hiring a good financial expert can greatly enhance your financial life.

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A Personal Representative of an estate will have to navigate a daunting the list of responsibilities and tasks. For an inexperienced family member, this can result in missed deadlines, increased tax liabilities, and long delays that can draw the ire of other family beneficiaries. In some cases, the situation can end up in costly, wasteful legal battles between family members over the disposition of the estate.

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Estate Settlement Tasks

- Entering the Will into probate, and handling other legal requirements.
- Gathering all of the personal property and arranging for support of the family.
- Obtaining appraisals of required property for tax purposes.
- Reviewing real estate records to assure timely payment of taxes and collection of rents.
- Evaluating contracts and leases to comply with all requirements, including giving necessary notices.
- Investigating and handling all claims against the estate.
- Collecting all life insurance, rents, and other amounts due to the estate.
- Preparing and filing estate and inheritance federal and state tax returns.
- Paying related estate and inheritance taxes.
- Preparing a final accounting of the estate.
- Distributing the estate to the beneficiaries as directed by the Will.



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Public Notices

AGAWAM CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Legal Ad

The Agawam Conservation Commission will meet on **Thursday, February 22, 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 McGill on property located at 2 Colonial Ave.

By Order of
Henry A. Kozloski, Chairman
AGAWAM CONSERVATION COMMISSION
02/15/2024

Legal Ad
AGAWAM CONSERVATION COMMISSION

The Agawam Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing on **Thursday, February 22, 2024 at 6:05 PM** at the Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, MA. The purpose of this hearing will be to hear the Notice of Intent Application of the Agawam Junior High School for work to be performed at 1305 Springfield Street subject to the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act.

By Order of
Henry A. Kozloski, Chairman
AGAWAM CONSERVATION COMMISSION
02/15/2024

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
Hampden, s.s.

TRIAL COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH SUPERIOR COURT CASE NO. 2379CV-00383

CHARLENE DEGRAY AND TODA. DEGRAY Plaintiffs vs. ETHEL E. (SMITH) SLATER, deceased, her heirs, devisees, assigns and successors in interest, et als THERESA (SMITH) MAY COOK, deceased, her heirs, devisees, assigns and successors in interest WILLIAM I COOK, and/or his heirs, assigns, and successors in interest Defendants

This case came on to be heard upon the motion of the Plaintiffs, praying for an Order of Notice and thereupon consideration thereof, it is

Ordered and Adjudged that an Order of Notice issue to said Defendant, THERESA (SMITH) MAY COOK, deceased, her, heirs, devisees, assigns and successors in interest, and to said Defendant, WILLIAM I. COOK, and/or his heirs, devisees, assigns and successors in interest by publishing an attested copy of this order once each week for three consecutive weeks in the Agawam Advertiser, a newspaper published in the Town

of Agawam at least fourteen (14) days before the day of March 7th next, and that said defendants and/or their heirs, devisees, assigns, and successors in interest do cause their written appearance to be entered and their written answers or other lawful leadings to be filed in the office of the Clerk of said Court at Springfield in said County of Hampden on or before the said 7th day of March next. If THERESA (SMITH) MAY COOK deceased, her heirs, devisees, assigns and successors in interest, and WILLIAM I. COOK, and/or his heirs, devisees, assigns and successors in interest fail to do so, judgment by default will be taken against you for the relief demanded in the complaint.

Unless otherwise provided by Rule 13 (a) your answers must state as a counterclaim any claim you have against the Plaintiffs, Charlene DeGray and Tod A. DeGray, which arises out of the transaction or occurrence that is the subject matter of the Plaintiffs' claim or you will thereafter be barred from making any such claim in any other action.

Entered: 1/20/2024
By the Court:
Manitsas, J.
Clerk/Magistrate

02/08, 02/15, 02/22/2024

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
WILLIAM FRANCIS GALVIN
SECRETARY OF THE COMMONWEALTH
WARRANT FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARIES

SS.
To either of the Constables of the Agawam
GREETINGS:

In the name of the Commonwealth, you are hereby required to notify and warn the inhabitants of said city or town who are qualified to vote in Primaries to vote at

- Precinct 1:** William P. Sapelli, School, 65 Begley Street
- Precinct 2:** Clifford M. Granger School, 31 South Westfield Street
- Precinct 3:** Agawam High School, 760 Cooper Street
- Precinct 4:** Roberta G. Doering School, 68 Main Street
- Precinct 5:** Benjamin J. Phelps School, 689 Main Street
- Precinct 6:** James Clark School, 65 Oxford Street
- Precinct 7:** Agawam Junior High School, 1305 Springfield Street
- Precinct 8:** James Clark School, 65 Oxford Street

on **TUESDAY, THE FIFTH DAY OF MARCH 2024**, from 7:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. for the following purpose:

To cast their votes in the Presidential Primaries for the candidates of political parties for the following offices:

- PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE FOR THIS COMMONWEALTH
- STATE COMMITTEE MAN HAMPDEN & HAMPSHIRE SENATORIAL DISTRICT
- STATE COMMITTEE WOMAN HAMPDEN & HAMPSHIRE SENATORIAL DISTRICT
- TOWN COMMITTEE TOWN OF AGAWAM

Hereof fail not and make return of this warrant with your doings thereon at the time and place of said voting.

Given under our hand this 6th day of February, 2024.
Vincent F. Gioscia, City Clerk

02/15/2024

think OUTSIDE of the BIG BOX SUPPORT COMMUNITY BUSINESSES

Obituary

Carmela Marzano



Carmela "Mela" Marzano, 89, of Agawam, MA, passed away on February 7, 2024, surrounded by her loving daughters. Born in Calabria, Italy, she moved to Sudbury, Ontario, Canada when she was 4 years old.

When she was 16, she met Salvatore when he was visiting family in Canada. She moved to Springfield, MA after they were married and ended up in Agawam to raise their family.

When they moved to Agawam in 1963, Sal and Mela open Sal's Beauty Salon where they work side by side until Mela found her passion for real estate in the mid-1980's. She opened her own real estate business, Carmela & Company in the 1990's where she helped countless people fulfill their dreams of home ownership.

Carmela was predeceased by her husband Salvatore Marzano, Jr. in 1996 after 42 years of marriage. She is also predeceased by her brother Tony Fragomeni of Sudbury, Ontario and her sister Teresa Urso of Sudbury, Ontario.

Carmela is survived by her daughters, MaryAnn Marzano (Ron) of Agawam, Linda Marzano (Julie) of Seattle, WA, Josephine Smith (Bruce) of Agawam, Carmela Kirk (Tom) of Port St. Lucie, FL, and Elizabeth Marzano of Agawam.

She is also survived by her brother Dominic Fragomeni of St. Paul, MN; her eight grandchildren; her eight great-grandchildren; one great-great granddaughter as well as many nieces and nephews who she had a unique and loving relationship with every single one.

Carmela loved golfing, playing cards, cooking for people, making capicola and soppressata with whoever wanted to help, going to shows at Good-speed Opera House, spending time at her home in Ogunquit, ME and our yearly trips to Canada.

Overall, nothing compared to the love that she felt for her family. She taught us what it was like to be loved more than life itself.

Family and friends are invited to gather on Saturday, Feb. 17, 2024 from 1 to 4 p.m. at Colonial Forastiere Funeral & Cremation, 985 Main Street, Agawam. A service will take place at 4 p.m. Burial will be held privately at St. Michael's Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Dana Farber Cancer Institute, P.O. Box 849168, Boston, MA 02284 or online at dana-farber.org/gifts. For more information or to leave an online condolence, please visit www.forastiere.com.

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 \$89, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice and may include a photograph. Death Notices & Paid Obituaries should be submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com. Exceptions will be made only when the family provides a death certificate and must be pre-paid.

DEATH NOTICE

CARMELA "MELA" MARZANO
Died: Feb. 7, 2024
Calling hours:
Feb. 17 1 to 4 p.m.

Pioneer Valley Conference for Womento be held on May 9

SPRINGFIELD – The third annual Pioneer Valley Conference for Women will be held May 9 at the Marriott Springfield Downtown from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. The conference will be held in person and virtually. This year's theme is Unleashed. Sponsors include M&T Bank and USI.

Dr. Christina Royal will serve as emcee for the conference. The former president of Holyoke Community College, Royal is now president and CEO of Infinite Unlearning, LLC, a woman, BIPOC, and queer-owned executive coaching and consultancy service supporting mid to senior leaders and their organizations. Her goal is to educate leaders on a new paradigm of the future of work and help them shed their limiting beliefs and lead from a place of potential.

Keynote speakers are Meghan Rothschild, president, and owner of the marketing and public relations firm Chikmedia, and Jessika Rozki, founder of Rozki Rides, a transportation service focusing on children and seniors.

Rothschild is an award-winning business owner, public speaker, and social influencer. As a speaker, she is known for engaging audiences on topics such as social media, marketing strategy, public relations, women in business, melanoma survivorship, and living with endometriosis.

Rozki's career in transportation began 15 years ago as a school bus driver in Chicopee. In 2019, with the resolve to balance her professional aspirations and family life, Rozki launched Rozki Rides. Based in Greater Springfield, the company started as a professional transportation service catering primarily to families.

In addition, there will be 10 different panels that women can choose to attend in the morning and afternoon. Panelists, all local women, will be announced in the coming months.

For more information, visit <https://sheslocal.org/pioneer-valley-conference-for-women/>.

Agawam Advertiser News
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Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.

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Welcome Monsoon Bistro to Holyoke

HOLYOKE – City and State leaders gathered this afternoon to welcome Holyoke Mall’s newest restaurant, Monsoon Bistro, to Western Massachusetts’ largest shopping destination.

“Monsoon Bistro is more than just a culinary venture, it’s a testament to the vibrant spirit of our community and a celebration of the diverse flavors that make our city unique,” said owner, Tommy Chang.

The Grand Opening celebration featured a ribbon cutting, champagne toast, and menu sampling, with Massachusetts State Rep. Patricia Duffy, Holyoke Mayor Joshua Garcia, Holyoke City Council President Tessa Murphy-Romboletti, Holyoke City Councilor Juan Anderson-Burgos and Greater Holyoke Chamber Executive Director Jordan Hart in attendance.

The locally owned and operated bistro opened in January and celebrates Southeast Asian cuisine through their offerings like Dim Sum, Mongolian Beef, and Drunken Noodles.

Monsoon Bistro is located on the upper level near Macy’s and is available for dine-in, take-out, or delivery via DoorDash, GrubHub and UberEats.

More information about Holyoke Mall stores, restaurants, and entertainment venues can be found at Holyokemall.com.

STCC gallery exhibit explores issues

SPRINGFIELD – The Amy H. Carberry Fine Arts Gallery at Springfield Technical Community College presents “Reclaiming Our Heritage,” a selection of 2D and 3D artwork, art projects, video and text by students from Springfield Honors Academy and Springfield Conservatory of the Arts.

The exhibit by Springfield Public Schools students from these two schools is on view Feb. 5 through Feb. 29. A public reception will be held Feb. 17, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., with a snow date of Feb. 18. Light refreshments will be served, and everyone is welcome.

In response to Black History Month, this celebration of BIPOC student artwork focuses on issues of identity with all work created since the beginning of the school year.

The inspiration for the exhibition came last spring from STCC fine arts major Simba Smith ‘21, a graduate of Springfield Honors Academy. “Reclaiming Our Heritage” was installed by STCC first year-gallery work-study students Alexavier Arroyo, Cassandra Nowak, and STCC gallery work-study students Enaya Ogletree and Elizabeth Bess in their final semester pursuing their associate in arts.

“This exhibition importantly gives not only STCC students curatorial experience,

but also gives young aspiring secondary school artists a platform to showcase their talent and artwork in a gallery setting for family, friends, and the community at large to see,” said Sondra Peron, professor and coordinator for the Amy H. Carberry Fine Arts Gallery.

Springfield Honors Academy focuses on developing the intellectual curiosity and emotional maturity of its students, strategically supporting them in their quest for becoming their best selves. Springfield Honors Academy students are guided by art teacher Melissa Lynn Barbeau. The art program at Honors Academy offers courses in Foundations of Art, Sculpture, Printmaking, Advanced Drawing and Painting, and AP Art and Design, among others.

Springfield Conservatory of the Arts, a city-run magnet school focusing on the performing and visual arts, opened in 2014. Students are guided in their creative efforts seen in this exhibition by art teacher and department chair April Wesley, who has lived in and worked as a Springfield visual art teacher for more than 20 years.

“I’m excited to have been invited to work with the Springfield Honors Academy, Sondra Peron and STCC student curators to create art with our Conservatory

students focusing on heritage and identity during Black History Month,” Wesley said.

Both secondary schools are located across from the campus of STCC on State Street in Springfield. STCC has a dual enrollment agreement with the Conservatory of the Arts and the Honors Academy.

Additionally, STCC’s Early College Career Pathway program allows students in grades 10, 11 and 12 at Springfield’s High School of Commerce and the Springfield Honors Academy to launch their college careers at STCC in six different pathways to a certificate or associate degree.

For more information about STCC’s Fine Arts program, visit stcc.edu/explore/programs/fine.aa

The Amy H. Carberry Fine Arts Gallery, located on the campus of STCC in B28, is open Mondays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Tuesdays 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Wednesdays 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Thursdays 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Fridays 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and closed Sunday. The gallery includes a camera obscura room. Parking is available in K Lot. Use Pearl Street gate for easy access. The gallery and all events are free to the public.

This exhibition and associated events are supported in part by the School of Liberal and Professional Studies (LAPS) and the Fine Arts (A.A.) program.

MEDICARE | from page 1

going to help our families, it’s going to help our workers, it’s going to help everyone because all of us need insurance,” Resident Caroline Qvistgaard said.

Many of the residents who came forward focused on how this could be personally beneficial for them or how it could help local doctors in town.

Resident Susan Grossberg spoke on how this system could be beneficial for medical professionals.

“I want you to imagine that you’re a business offering a service to people, but neither you nor the people you help, get to decide how much you get paid,” Grossberg said. “Someone else does. Actually about 200 someone elses. They each pay you a different amount for the same service.”

Grossberg described how different insurance companies have different formats for filing insurance, and how the process of understanding what a doctor will be paid through different companies for the same service can be difficult to understand.

She also mentioned that many insurance companies also have shareholders

that they may prioritize in paying over doctors.

“Horrible business model, isn’t it?” Grossberg said.

Using Medicare for All, all payments and forms would be in a unified system, and the patients of the doctors would be guaranteed coverage for services deemed medically necessary, so doctors would not need to worry about turning down a patient in need.

“You would know exactly how much you’re going to get paid for each service you offer,” Grossberg said. “You get paid immediately with just a few keystrokes... single payer, predictability, certainty.”

Doctors would also have a say in how much they get paid, as the trust for Medicare for All would set reimbursement rates, and it would be made up of doctors and other medical professionals as trustees.

“The trust is answerable to doctors and patients regarding reimbursement rates,” Resident Nancy Bobskill said.

Overall, the system could be greatly beneficial for doctors, as well as residents.

Councilor Tom Hendrickson had initially put this matter on the agenda for the

Feb. 5 meeting

Hendrickson made the decision to remove Medicare for All from the council agenda in order to organize a workshop on the matter in order to address any questions council members have on the matter.

Grossberg supported the idea that the councilors should do a workshop in order to gain a better understanding of this topic.

Councilors had raised questions during their legislative subcommittee meeting regarding how Medicare for All would function in Agawam, as well as the legislation behind it.

Grossberg suggested that they contact Gerald Friedman, an economics professor from University of Massachusetts who has knowledge on the subject, for a workshop.

“He’s been working on this stuff for about ten years,” Grossberg said. “He would be happy to come in and answer all of your questions.”

Once this matter is brought back onto the city council, if the resolution passes it will go to the state representatives and the state senator to let them know of Agawam’s support of this bill.

PROJECT | from page 1

“Basically anywhere that someone wants information on the project, I will do my best to be there and present that information,” Johnson said.

Additionally, any new information, including Johnson’s presentation, will go on the school building project website. Also, the meeting on Feb. 26 will be broadcast for community members to watch from their homes.

Johnson strongly encourages all Agawam residents to attend at least one of these meetings so they can be fully informed.

“This project is the largest capital improvement plan in the history of the town,” he said. “It will have a significant impact on our public education going forward and it will have an impact on our taxes. So I encourage all the residents and any business owners that want information to come.”

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If interested mail or email your resume to: Multicultural Community Services 1000 Wilbraham Road, Springfield, MA 01109 or Lisapodworsi@mcsnet.org.



Executive Director of the Volleyball Hall of Fame George Mulry welcomed all attendees to the press conference on the sports complex in Holyoke.



Director of Planning and Economic Development Aaron Vega discussed the financial opportunities the sports complex could bring to Holyoke.



Mayor Joshua Garcia showed his support for the sports complex.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY QUINN SUOMALA

COMPLEX ■ from page 1

is our tagline to bring the Volleyball Hall of Fame to a new home and make Holyoke a domestic and international volleyball tournament center, right here in New England.”

The plan is to bring an Olympic-style venue to Holyoke, and to use various present and new assets of the area to bring the complex and the city to life.

There will be entertainment areas, hotels, volleyball tournaments, fields, bowling and more.

“We’re going to create a facility and a complex that is going to draw not only youth but also seniors,” Ruiz said.

The indoor facility alone is estimated to be 140,000 square feet, with 16 courts for volleyball, family activities, such as an arcade and rock climbing, and candlepin bowling.

This facility is estimated to bring in

30,000 room nights a year.

“We’re going to need another three to four 3-star, 4-star hotels here in Holyoke,” Chief Operating Officer of the Project Andrew Melendez said.

Additionally, it is estimated that each visitor to the complex will bring in \$147, between going out to eat, visiting the children’s museum in Holyoke and otherwise supporting the local economy.

Overall, Ruiz estimates that this will be about \$100 million of privately invested funds into the city of Holyoke, and that it will generate millions of economic impact for the community.

“Holyoke is going to have a renaissance with this initiative,” Ruiz said.

The indoor facility should bring in \$15 million in economic engine yearly and the outdoor facility will bring in \$26 million, making the complex to have an estimated \$41 million economic drive.

It will also bring many new jobs to the

city. Just in the first year of the indoor facility, it should bring in 12 full-time staff and 30 part-time staff.

“This is staff that will be making \$100,000; \$70,000; \$80,000; \$90,000,” Melendez said. “These aren’t low paying jobs.”

Melendez also mentioned that they plan to work with Holyoke Public Schools to ensure that students have access to the facility for their training and games.

Holyoke is a great city for a sports complex. With its connections to volleyball, Holyoke already draws a lot of attention for athletics. This complex will capitalize on that.

“Having a sports complex has been a desire of many Holyokers from every corner of this city since I was a kid, simply because we are a sports city,” Garcia said.

To ensure this project would stay on the right track, Ruiz brought in Sports Facility Company, based out of Clearwater Florida.

“They eat and breathe sports complexes,” Ruiz said. “From 30,000 square feet to 200,000 square feet across this country.”

This company has built at least 70 sports complexes throughout the United States, and Ruiz has faith in their ability to help bring the best to Holyoke.

“We’ve selected the gold standard of the industry,” Ruiz said.

Ruiz’s goal moving forward is to finalize the sites for the locations of the complex, ideally by March in time for this presentation with the Massachusetts Development in mid-March.

Then he hopes to have a beginning date of construction in early 2025.

Ideally, Ruiz hopes to have the first ribbon cutting for one of the locations by the end of 2026.

In the meantime, Garcia and others working on the project hope to get a stakeholder group together so community members can weigh in on the topic.



Agawam West Springfield
West of the River Chamber
Connect & Grow



**★ MAYORAL ★
BREAKFAST**

February 27, 2024
7:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.
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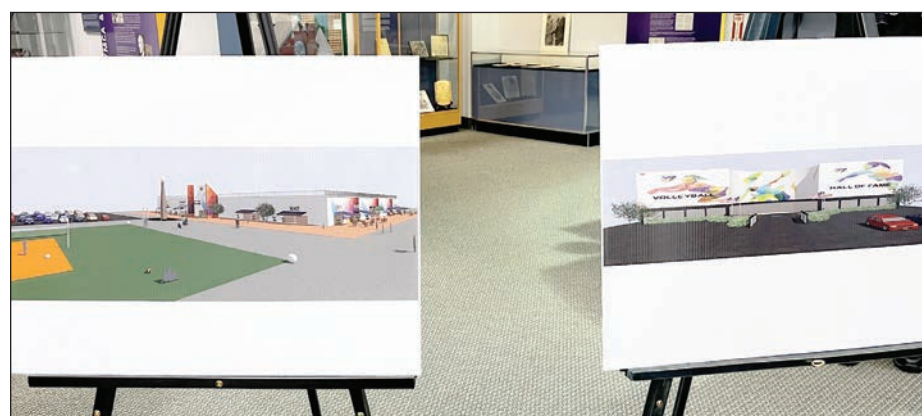

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The drawings were available to view at the press conference.



The complex would have multiple sports facilities and plenty of parking.



A rendering of the indoor facility being proposed.