



REGION
Income tax reduction
PAGE 3



LIBRARY
Friends Fundraiser
PAGE 3



SPORTS
Boys LAX wins
PAGE 6

AGAWAM

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Rivers celebrates 100th

AGAWAM – A hundred years of a life well lived was celebrated last Saturday, March 14, by Robert R. Rivers of Feeding Hills.

He was born in North Agawam, and as a lifelong resident had been educated in its public schools and worked in the paper mills as a boy. He fondly recalls swimming in the Agawam River with his friends and playing football near its banks off Walnut Street.

Bob is a veteran of WWII having volunteered with his twin brother, Earl, at age 17. He served in the US Navy in the Philippines. A welder by trade, his career took him from years at the Springfield Armory until its closure, to Westover AFB then to his retirement.

He has enjoyed a hobby of refinishing antique trunks and maintaining his home that he shares with his wife, Jessie, who will be 95 in May. They have just celebrated their 75th Wedding Anniversary this past January.

A large family celebration was held earlier this month.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

NEED OUTLINE

Sacred Heart's Parish Center starts new walking group

By Christina Gioscia
Correspondent

AGAWAM – On Wednesdays and Thursdays at 9 a.m. at Sacred Heart's Parish Center their walking group meets. The group is led by Gina Smus and Sue Scantlen, they are both members of St. Martha's Guild at Sacred Heart Parish. Their group is fairly new, but they hope to welcome more community members into the group and continue regular meetings. The group's activity is dependent on the weather, although Smus shared that a slight drizzle won't stop her and Scantlen from walking.

Smus shared how the group got started out.

"So, this is probably going to be a month now. I started with Sue, because I needed somebody, just in case, like I can't be here, she's here. So, we work together. And, about a month ago, I have to say, what we did, we started Wednesday and Thursday, just until we

can get it going. Some days we have like six of us and some days there's two of us. It varies. And what I'll try to do is I always put on the Sacred Heart Parish website, 'Hey, we're walking today.'

Smus shares why having a group to walk with is important and often more enjoyable than doing it alone.

"So, it supports them. We

talk. Especially when we're with Sue, and she'll stop at a gravesite and talk about the family member. So, it's very educational. We communicate as we go, so your kind of are that person they can bounce things off of, what's going on in their life. At the end of the walk, you

WALKING | page 10



TURLEY PHOTO BY CHRISTINA GIOSCIA

Sacred Heart Parish's Walking Group leaders, Gina Smus and Sue Scantlen.

Community rallies behind softball team, forced to forfeit potential finals spot

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

AGAWAM – Due to a small data entry error that took place in the Agawam High School Athletics office,

Agawam High School's varsity softball team had one less placeholder than needed on its schedule required to allow Agawam full participation

in the Western Massachusetts Class A Tournament.

While the Pioneer Valley Interscholastic Athletic Conference puts on the sec-

tional tournament now, the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Conference rules on such issue because they oversee a team's overall schedule.

As of

press time, the PVIAC had ruled that Agawam softball could participate in the quarterfinals and semifinals, but even if Agawam advances to the finals, they would have to forfeit their spot in the tournament to their semifinal opponent.

As of press time, Agawam had defeated Central in the quarterfinals and were scheduled for participation in the semifinals later in the week. Their opponent was not known as of press time.

Since the issue was made public late last week, there has been an outpouring of support from the community, including several officials who have written to the MIAA asking for their ruling to be reversed so Agawam can participate in the finals

if they are able to win their semifinal game.

Mayor Christopher Johnson, who also chairs the Agawam School Committee, and Agawam's legislative delegation, State Rep. Nicholas Boldyga, and State Sen. John Velis, all wrote letters to the MIAA seeking for them to allow Agawam's participation in the finals.

On social media late Monday, AHS Athletic Director Karen Gomez said she was meeting with the MIAA on Tuesday morning to discuss the situation.

"While the school has acknowledged and accepted responsibility for the scheduling oversight, I respectfully ask the Board to consider

SOFTBALL | page 10



TURLEY PHOTO BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

The Agawam High School softball team competes in the Western Massachusetts Class A quarterfinals on Monday. See this week's editorial about the issue on page 4.

FY2027 operating budget submitted to city council

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

AGAWAM – In early June, the Agawam City Council is set to hold a public hearing for the fiscal 2027 operating budget.

The town's operating budget, which includes funding for the Agawam Public Schools, is proposed to increase by 3.3% overall, going from about \$119.3 to about \$123.3 million, according to the proposal submitted to the council by Mayor Christopher Johnson.

The budget for the Agawam Public Schools will increase by less than \$2 million, but does account for one of the largest chunks of the increase in the budget. Costs continue to

climb for various cost centers, including health insurance, energy, and contractual obligations. Both the police and fire department budgets will also have nominal increases in their budgets, according to the proposal.

Also being voted on are the three enterprise funds for the town. The water department, wastewater department, and municipal golf course are self-sustaining funds that have budgets provided by user fees, and business revenue in the case of the golf course.

Residents who want to be heard on the operating budget can attend the city council's public hearing on Monday, June 1. The council meeting takes place at 7 p.m. at the Agawam City Council

High school holds art show



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Students from advanced art classes showcased their many works of art in the rotunda at the Spring Art Festival held on Thursday, May 7 at Agawam High School.



Historical Association to hold annual meeting

AGAWAM – The public is invited to the historic Captain Charles Leonard House, 663 Main Street, Agawam, for the annual meeting of the Agawam Historical Association at 6:30 pm, Thursday, May 28. Following the election of officers & directors, announcement of the Agawam Historical Association-Marilyn P. Curry Memorial Scholarship recipient, and a short business meeting, will be the featured presentation “Meet John Adams – A Lively and Revolution ary Conversation with America’s Second President.”

Acclaimed John Adams playwright George Baker will transport audience members to the Revolutionary era with his engaging and entertaining portrayal of America’s

second president. Wearing historically accurate clothing and per forming songs from the period,

Baker will capture the Massachusetts native’s sharp wit, principled leadership, and deep commitment to the American experiment. Baker’s portrayal is part of the association’s year-long celebration of the United States Semiquincentennial. Sheryl Faye’s one-woman show “Abigail Adams - Liberty & Legacy” was presented to a capacity crowd at the group’s March meeting. An 18th century encampment is among activities planned for a July Fourth event at the association’s historic Thomas Smith House in Feeding Hills.

Baker has performed his one-man show throughout

the country, at venues such as the New York Historical Society, the Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and George H. W. Bush Presidential Libraries, and was featured on Na tional Public Radio’s weekend program, Studio 360. A lawyer by profession, Baker brings clarity and credibility to Adams’s ideas through a blend of history, music, and storytelling, making Adams feel immediate and human, rather than distant and monumental. The program concludes with time for thoughtful audience questions and conversation.

This event is free and open to the public, but registration is suggested. Please send the names of those attending to 1855@agawamhistory.org with “Annual Meeting” in the

subject line. Due to limited seating, preference will be given to Agawam Historical Association members. Membership information can be found at agawamhistory.org. This program is supported in part by a grant from the Agawam Cultural council, a local agency which is supported by the mass cultural council, a state agency.

The private, non-profit, all-volunteer Agawam Historical Association preserves and presents Agawam and Feeding Hills history at its two locations and provides educational opportunities at its quarterly meetings. The association ar chives and displays artifacts pertaining to the Town of Agawam and its Fire Department in the Marilyn P. Curry History Room and

Chief Russell “Rusty” Jenks Apparatus Room of the Agawam Historical & Fire House Museum, located in the former Elm Street Fire Station at 35 Elm Street in Agawam Center. The association has preserved the ca. 1757 Thomas Smith House, at 251 North West Street in Feeding Hills, in largely original, unrestored condition; the property was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2005. The association also offers an annual scholarship to an Agawam senior pursuing higher education in a history-related field. For more information, please visit agawamhistory.org or follow the Agawam Historical Association on Instagram and Facebook. Volunteers and new members are always welcome.

Memorial Day Parade announced

AGAWAM – The Agawam Veterans Council is having their annual Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony on Monday, May 25.

Please join us at the new Veterans Memorial in School Street Park. Parade starts at 10 a.m. at Bethany Assembly of God enters onto Main Street, turns down School Street and continue on to the new Veteran Memorial in School Street Park with the ceremony immediately following. There will be a picnic for those who wish to join the Veterans Council after the ceremony.

Golf Tournament to support Wreaths Across America

AGAWAM – The Friends of the Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Agawam and the Friends of the Agawam Veterans Council proudly announce their Second Annual Golf Tournament in support of Wreaths Across America, a national effort to honor and remember our fallen veterans during the holiday season.

This exciting event promises a day of camaraderie, remembrance, and community support. Golfers, sponsors, and community members are invited to participate and help lay wreaths at the graves of veterans resting at the Agawam Veterans Memorial Cemetery

this December.

The Tournament will be held on June 28. Registration begins at 10:30 a.m. and golfing starts at 12 noon at Agawam Municipal Golf Course. The costs are \$135 for an individual golfer, \$540 for a team of four, \$30 for dinner only, and \$100 to sponsor a tee. Other sponsorships are also available.

To Register or Sponsor, contact Marline Claremont at 413-221-9548 or email wreathfriends@gmail.com. Registration forms are available upon request. Join us in honoring those who served with a round of golf, good food, and great company—all for a noble cause.

Class of 1967 needs reunion help

AGAWAM – Agawam High School Class of 1967 will be holding its 60th reunion sometime in calendar year 2027. We are seeking our classmates that have not been contacted recently. Please contact John DeVecchi with your name, address and phone number(s) to agawam67@aol.com.

Feline Friends expresses appreciation for donations

AGAWAM – We were grateful to have the opportunity to hold a donation drive at the vendor craft supply sale at the Community Grange #382 in Feeding Hills on April 18. Thanks to those who donated on that date: Pauline & Betty Sosnowich, Trudi Calberg, Crystal Mengele, Ann Hall, Carl & Cheryl Kaufman, Michael & Karen Dolan and Ken Kurowski.

We are incredibly grateful for the response to our appeal for help with supplies. We have received packages at the professional office at 532 Springfield St. (at the corner of Cleveland St.) in Feeding

Hills and at the Agawam Public Library. Please include your name and contact information for acknowledgment. Financial donations have arrived by check at P.O. Box 174, Feeding Hills 01030 as well as PayPal and Venmo.

Thank you to those who donated in late April and the first 2 weeks of May: Jean Guzik, Sue Borgatti, Ken Kurowski and Irene Fisher, Judy Clini, Wynter Manyak, Karen Davis, Sandra Robb, Susan Brandon, Denise Broderick, Valerie Schumacher (proceeds from hand-made cards), Susan Whitney, Sheila Kida (from Betty), Lydia Klimczuk, Jo-

anne Daurizio, Joan Eckert, Elizabeth Strole, Barbara Bosworth, John Murphy, Dawn Struck, Katie Heald and the Kaufman kitties.

Feline Friends Inc. is a community-based, nonprofit sanctuary that does not discriminate against any cat based on age, gender or disability.

More information about our sanctuary may be found on our website at felinefriendsinc.org or our Facebook page at Feline Friends Cat Sanctuary. Contact us with questions at info@felinefriendsinc.org or by phone at 413-786-5019.

One remaining Yard Waste collection week before summer

AGAWAM – Yard Waste Collection will take place on scheduled recycling days during the weeks listed below.

**Yard Waste must be out by 6:30 a.m. of collection day*

Yard Waste is defined as:

- Grass clippings, leaves, weeds, shrub trimmings, and brush or limbs under 3” in diameter.

Acceptable Yard Waste preparation:

- Brown kraft bags or 30 gallon barrels with handles may be used.
- Barrels must be labeled as Yard Waste, no heavier than 40lbs.
- Loose brush/branches, under 3”in diameter and 3’

in length, must be tied in bundles with biodegradable twine, weighing no more than 40lbs.

Not acceptable:

- Loose brush or branches
- Bundles tied with wire, nylon or plastic (these items harm grinding equipment)
- Bundles heavier than 40 lbs
- Brush and limbs greater than 3” in diameter
- Yard waste bags contaminated with rocks, soil, or wood chips
- Yard waste in plastic bags

A Week
June 22-26
B Week
June 15-19

Agawam Community Artists and Artisans ‘Call for Art’

AGAWAM – Agawam Community Artists and Artisans (ACAA) is inviting artists and artisans to participate in its Sixth Annual Pioneer Valley Art Festival.

The Art Festival will be held on Friday, Aug. 21, and Saturday, Aug. 22 at the Polish American Club in Feeding Hills. Show hours are from 2 to 8 p.m. on Friday, and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday.

The ACAA is encouraging artists, artisans, and writers to submit their work for review. Among the artistic mediums included are watercolor, acrylic, oil, mixed media, sculpture, photography, ceramic, stained glass, wood, fashion, textile, and

jewelry.

All work must be original and handmade by the artist or artisan, of professional quality. Prints and giclees will be accepted. No kits, food, soap, candles, or

AI-generated work will be accepted.

Tent space is available on the paved parking lot for \$50.

Students from any area high school are accepted

free of charge, and must have a tent set up.

The Pioneer Valley Art Festival is highly promoted through local TV stations; Agawam Media Channel 15 and 1074HD; Agawam Cultural Council website; newspapers; town forums; Mailchimp; the ACAA website, www.agawamarts.com; and the ACAA Facebook page, that has over 850 followers.

The week before the festival, there will be over 20 street signs placed around Agawam.

Further information, including registration forms, can be obtained by contacting Ceil Rossi at email: tocarefree2@hotmail.com.



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\$3.99 lb

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\$9.88 lb

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\$2.99 7 OZ ea

USDA INSP. STOREMADE FROZEN HAMBURGER PATTIES 80% LEAN 20 CT BOX.....

\$17.50 ea

USDA INSP. FRESH CHICKEN WINGS 10 LB BAG.....

\$1.55 lb

USDA INSP. FRESH CHICKEN LEG 1/4s 40 LB BOX.....

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\$4.79 ea

USDA INSP. FROZEN JUMBO APPLE PIE LATTICE CRUST 60 OZ.....

\$6.99 ea

USDA INSP. FROZEN KAYEM OLD TYME NATURAL CASING HOT DOGS 2 1/2 BOX.....

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Mayor speaks at state house on income tax reduction

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

HOLYOKE – Mayor Joshua Garcia was among a contingent of Massachusetts municipal leadership, which recently spoke out against a



Holyoke Mayor Joshua A. Garcia, speaking on the State House steps Tuesday, May 12, expressed his opposition to a ballot initiative that he says will reduce state aid to cities and towns.

ballot initiative that would cut the state income tax rate. There is currently an initiative to reduce the income tax rate, and Garcia, among the leaders opposing the ballot question, say the reduction in income tax collected in the Commonwealth would adversely affect communities like Holyoke. Garcia, who earlier this year was named president of the Massachusetts Mayor's Association, said in a press event that "mayors and municipal officials 'immediately understand' the implications when a reduction of state revenue is proposed. According to the press release from Garcia, a reduction in state-collected revenue would create a lot of anxiety among officials because there may not be enough funding to cover needed programs throughout the state. "It means uncertainty," Garcia said. "It means jeopardizing or reversing progress that residents already see in their neighborhoods. And for gateway cities and communities with significant needs, the impact can be even more severe. "We cannot afford to pull resources away from education, transportation, public safety, and local government at a time when residents are asking us to do more, not less," he said. Garcia spoke at the State House on the front steps on Tuesday, May 12 to represent the mayor's association on Beacon Hills His press release states the proposed cut in the state income tax rate "would result in a projected \$5 billion reduction of revenue collections which cities and towns would feel in reduced state aid." Garcia emphasized that every dollar that goes to a city like Holyoke is not bonus funding or surplus, but is part of the bare bottom

line the city needs to function. "State funding is not 'extra' for communities like ours," Garcia said. "It is foundational support that allows us to deliver core services and make long-term improvements as prudently as possible." "For residents," he said, "this debate is ultimately about what kind of communities we want to live in. Do we want communities with strong schools? Safe neighborhoods? Reliable emergency services? Maintained roads? A responsive local government? "If we do, then we must strongly oppose this ballot question," Garcia said. Also gathered on the State House steps to voice opposition were Massachusetts Municipal Association Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine. "When municipalities lose state support," Chapdelaine said, "there are only a few options available: significantly reduce services, delay investments, or shift more pressure onto local property taxpayers." Amesbury Mayor Kassandra Gove, president of the Massachusetts Municipal Association, said a significant reduction in state income tax revenues "deeply jeopardizes progress" in her city and across the state — threatening critical services and adding to the burden on local property taxpayers. "This adds insult to injury at a time when communities are already facing inflationary pressures, rising construction costs, health insurance increases, workforce challenges, and so much more," she said. "Municipal leaders are not asking for luxuries. We are asking for stability, predictability, and the ability to continue providing the services our residents depend on."

Joslyn Fox to headline PrideFest

More Pride Month events are scheduled

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Pride is proud to announce that Massachusetts drag performer Joslyn Fox will headline Holyoke PrideFest 2026, taking place on Saturday, June 27, 2026, at Veterans Park in downtown Holyoke. Known for her humor, heart, and unforgettable personality from Season 6 of RuPaul's Drag Race, Joslyn Fox brings hometown New England energy to what organizers say will be the biggest Holyoke Pride celebration yet. Holyoke Pride has grown from a grassroots community gathering into a month-long citywide celebration of LGBTQIA+ visibility, culture, and joy, drawing thousands of attendees from across Western Massachusetts and beyond. PrideFest itself has become one of the region's fastest-growing Pride events, featuring live performances, local artists, food vendors, community organizations, family activities, and nightlife events throughout the city. The 2026 celebration begins with the annual Pride Flag Raising Ceremony at Holyoke City Hall on Monday, June 1, followed by a full calendar of events throughout the month, including:

- June 1 – Pride Flag Raising 5 p.m. at Holyoke City Hall
- June 5 – House of Colors Youth Queer Prom
- June 7 – Buen Provecho Drag Brunch
- June 13 – Holyoke Pride Rainbow Run 5K & 1-Mile Walk at Ashley Reservoir
- June 25 – Drag Story Hour at Holyoke Public Library
- June 27 – Holyoke PrideFest 12 to 6 p.m. at Veterans Park
- June 27 – Holyoke Pride After Party 6 to 11 p.m. at The Wauregan

- ity becomes powerful. Holyoke continues to show that our city stands proudly with the LGBTQIA+ community," Holyoke Pride organizers are also inviting local businesses, organizations, and community members to become sponsors, volunteers, and partners for the 2026 season. According to organizers, sponsorship support helps keep many Pride events free and accessible to the public. "What began as a one-day event has become a citywide movement centered on community, creativity, and connection. Every sponsor, volunteer, performer, and attendee helps make Holyoke Pride possible," said Anderson-Burgos. Additional announcements regarding performers, entertainment, vendors, and special guests will be released throughout the spring. Holyoke Pride organizers also wish to thank lead sponsor Holyoke Community College and the Holyoke Local Cultural Council for their continued support over the years, helping expand LGBTQIA+ programming, visibility, and community celebration throughout the City of Holyoke. For event information, sponsorship opportunities, volunteer signups, and updates, visit www.holyokepride.org.



Organizers say the expanded lineup reflects Holyoke's continued commitment to building visible, welcoming, and inclusive spaces for LGBTQIA+ residents and visitors alike. "Now more than at any point in recent memory, it is important that LGBTQIA+ people know they are not alone," said Holyoke City Councilor and longtime Holyoke Pride organizer Juan Anderson-Burgos. "Pride is more than a celebration — it is visibility, solidarity, and a public declaration that every person deserves the right to exist openly, safely, and without fear. When communities come together in support and love, especially during difficult moments in our country's history, that visibility becomes powerful. Holyoke continues to show that our city stands proudly with the LGBTQIA+ community," Holyoke Pride organizers are also inviting local businesses, organizations, and community members to become sponsors, volunteers, and partners for the 2026 season. According to organizers, sponsorship support helps keep many Pride events free and accessible to the public. "What began as a one-day event has become a citywide movement centered on community, creativity, and connection. Every sponsor, volunteer, performer, and attendee helps make Holyoke Pride possible," said Anderson-Burgos. Additional announcements regarding performers, entertainment, vendors, and special guests will be released throughout the spring. Holyoke Pride organizers also wish to thank lead sponsor Holyoke Community College and the Holyoke Local Cultural Council for their continued support over the years, helping expand LGBTQIA+ programming, visibility, and community celebration throughout the City of Holyoke. For event information, sponsorship opportunities, volunteer signups, and updates, visit www.holyokepride.org.

Library fundraiser with Gary 'The Gold Guy' on May 23

AGAWAM – The Friends of the Agawam Library is pleased to announce a special fundraising event to benefit the library and its programs. On Saturday, May 23 from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Gary "The Gold Guy" will be on-site at the library to purchase a variety of precious metal items from the public. Community members are invited to bring gold jewelry (including broken or unwanted pieces), silver jewelry and coins, sterling flatware, dental gold, as well as scrap gold and silver. This is a unique opportunity to turn

unused or forgotten items into cash while supporting a valuable community resource. Gary will evaluate items and make offers on the spot. If an offer is accepted, payment will be issued immediately by check. Everyone will be attended to on a first-come, first-served basis. This event is a great way for residents to discover hidden value in items they

no longer use, while also contributing to the continued success of the library. Everyone is encouraged to look through your jewelry boxes, drawers, kitchen cabinets, etc. for items that may be tucked away and bring them in for appraisal. All proceeds from the fundraiser will support library programs, services, and community initiatives. For more information, please contact the Agawam Library.



Craft Beer Tasting and BBQ event to be held at Captain Charles Leonard House

AGAWAM – The popular Summer Craft Beer Tasting and BBQ fundraiser will return to the historic Captain Charles Leonard House, 663 Main Street, Agawam, on Friday evening, June 19, 2026. The event will take place rain or shine, from 6 to 9 p.m., and will benefit preservation efforts at the 1805 former stage tavern, which has served as Agawam's Community House since 1939. The event, sponsored by McCarthy's Liquors of Agawam and Phipps Discount

Liquors of Feeding Hills, will feature a wide variety of local and craft beers, live music, raffles, and food. Joey's Deli & Market will provide barbecue and Captain Leonard House Trustees will grill hot dogs and ham burgers. Advance tickets are \$50 per person, available at McCarthy's Liquors, 430 Main Street, Agawam, (413) 786-9537, and Phipps Discount Liquors 1350 Springfield Street, Feeding Hills, (413) 786-8471. Ticket includes food. Tickets will also be available at the door for \$55 per person. Guests must be at least 21 years old with a valid ID to attend this event. This program is supported in part by a grant from the Agawam Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a State agency. More information about the Captain Charles Leonard House can be found at [Facebook.com/captainleonardhouse](https://facebook.com/captainleonardhouse).



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Opinion

Guest Column



Social Security's 'First Year Rule' and Withdrawing

Dear Rusty:

I am 63 years old, and about to apply for my Social Security benefits.

I am self-employed but only working part time. I know about Social Security's annual earnings limit but recently I learned I must also be concerned about a monthly earnings limit of \$2,040. My questions are:

1) How do I find out if I will be subject to a monthly earning limit of \$2,040 per month? I thought it was only evaluated annually.

2) If I choose to cancel Social Security within the first year or after, what are the penalties? Would I have to pay them back for the whole amount for the whole time that they paid me? Which makes no sense, since I have been paid into SS since I was 13 years old.

Can you help me understand this?

Signed: Claiming Early and Still Working

Dear Claiming Early:

It can get tricky if you are still working after claiming your Social Security before your SS Full Retirement Age, especially during your first year collecting. I'm happy to answer your specific questions:

1. There is a special rule which applies during your first year collecting early Social Security benefits (e.g., before your Full Retirement Age or "FRA," which for you is age 67). What will happen is this: when the IRS provides SSA with your 2026 earnings (in 2027), SSA will review to see if your total 2026 net earnings from self-employment exceeded the 2026 annual limit of \$24,480.

If not, no further action is necessary. But if you did exceed the full year 2026 earnings limit, SSA will contact you and ask you to provide them with details about your monthly 2026 net earnings. If you have exceeded the monthly limit in any 2026 month after your SS benefit started, you will not be entitled to SS benefits for that month.

Essentially, if you have exceeded the annual limit, you cannot exceed the monthly earnings limit in any remaining month during your first year of collecting. If you exceeded the annual limit and also any monthly limit, SSA will send you an overpayment notice saying you must repay them for the benefits you were not entitled to receive because you exceeded the monthly earnings limit.

2. You can, within 12 months of applying for Social Security, ask SSA to withdraw your application for SS retirement benefits. They will do that for you, but you will also be required to repay them all SS benefits that they have already paid to (or for) you.

This essentially would "wipe the slate clean" and enable your SS benefit to continue growing, allowing you to apply for a larger monthly benefit later. But if you wait longer than 12 months after you first apply for SS benefits, you can no longer withdraw your application for Social Security. Thereafter, you would

be subject to the annual earnings limit (the monthly earnings limit would no longer apply).

FYI, after you reach your FRA, there is no limit on your earnings and you could choose to suspend your benefit payments and earn Delayed Retirement Credits (DRCs) to get a higher monthly benefit. Also at your FRA, if SSA withheld any of your benefits because you exceeded the earnings limit before reaching your FRA, you would get time credit for the number of months your benefits were withheld. Essentially, they would advance your benefit-start month by the number of months your benefits were withheld, yielding a slightly higher monthly amount after your FRA.

Finally, it's important to know that the contributions you made to Social Security from payroll taxes (FICA/SECA) over your lifetime are not what determines your monthly SS benefit amount. Your monthly SS benefit is based on two main factors: a) your average monthly earnings (indexed for inflation) for the highest earning 35 years over your lifetime as reported to the IRS, and b) the age at which you claim your SS benefits.

Your contributions to Social Security while working only provide you with eligibility to collect SS benefits; the contributions aren't put into a separate account for you and are not used to calculate your monthly SS benefit.

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.



Guest Column

Why do we wait until Memorial Day to plant?

For as long as I can remember, the "safe date" for planting tender crops was always Memorial Day.

This year in particular the holiday is on the early side, the 25th of May, as opposed to the 30th or 31st. Here in New England, five or six days can make all the difference in the world.

Sure, as I write, the mercury is set to rise well into the high eighties for three or four days, then become more seasonable again. It's a wonder the plants know what to do.

Anyhow, read on to learn about some tender plants and how they respond better when soil or air temperatures have warmed.

Although cool loving peas and warm loving beans are both legumes, bean seeds in particular crave seventy to eighty degree soil in which to germinate. This is particularly evident with white seeded bean varieties, since the white seeds reflect the heat instead of holding on to it like dark seeds do.

Oftentimes, white seeds will rot before they sprout if planted too soon. If you are in the mood to gamble and desire an early sowing of beans, use a dark seeded variety.

Untreated corn seeds will not germinate in soil below 60 degrees. We are advised to be patient and trust that seed planted in warm soil will make up for lost time,

and they typically will, in no time flat. Those of us who plant only a small plot have luck starting corn seeds indoors then transplanting the seedlings outside. I sowed my corn two seeds per six pack a few days back and have it on heat along with a sowing of winter squash and melons and all are popping up nicely.

I usually pick the best of the two in the cell of the pack and pinch away the slower one so there is no competition, giving the stronger seedling all of the room to grow nicely. Never pull out when thinning; roots may be disturbed.

Speaking of seedlings, it's also important not to shock our home grown pepper or tomato seedlings by transplanting them into cold soil or cold air. Night temperatures should be a consistent 50 degrees before planting out peppers.

I typically preheat the soil my peppers are to be planted in with black plastic, laying it right down in the garden bed for a week prior to planting. I cut holes into it at transplanting time, amending each hole as I go.

For added warmth, some gardeners looking to get a head start often use a row

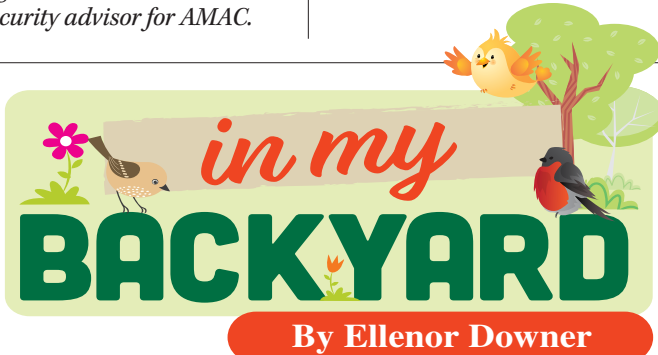
cover to add a few degrees of warmth and protect plants from the wind.

Tomatoes are planted outside after all danger of frost has passed. Typically on Memorial Day! In fact, I think the whole "safe date" theory came to be because of tomatoes! When I was just getting started in horticulture I remember all sorts of contraptions people used to use to try and get the first ripe tomato in the neighborhood.

By planting tomatoes transplants earlier you could get earlier fruiting. Cloches or wall-o-waters were popular before the floating row covers became the rage.

I typically wait to transplant my tomatoes. Mine are huge this year. Remember, if your plants get big and your are still a few weeks away from getting them from the six pack into the ground, "pot them up." It's a term for going up a size, say from a cell to a four inch pot, so roots don't get bound before they get the chance to live happily ever after in the garden. Soon enough, for sure.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For the last 34 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.



A Western Massachusetts resident spotted this brown thrasher in the Berkshire foothills.

Sometimes they visit feeders like the one in the attached photo. Brown thrashers blend in with their surrounding and are tricky to spot.

They are fairly large, slender songbirds with long proportions: the legs are long and sturdy, the bill is long and slightly down curved and the tail is long.

They often cock the tail upward in the manner of wrens. A bright yellow eye,

gray brown face and black and white wings bars are other identifying features.

Thrashers are reddish brown on the head, back, tail and wings. They have a white breast and belly with darker speckling.

They are 9.1 to 11.8 inches long or slightly smaller than a blue jay. The brown thrasher is the only thrasher species found east of Texas.

Thrashers have one of the largest repertoires of any North American songbird over 1,000 different songs. Since they rarely venture far from thick undergrowth,



PHOTO BY CONNIE SCHWAIGER
Brown thrasher

there singing give their location away especially when perched in a treetop or shrubs.

Their songs are a complex string of many musical phrases, many copied from

other birds' songs with each phrase typically sung twice. They also make a distinctive, harsh "tsuck" note.

They imitate other birds including Chuck-will's-widows, wood thrushes and northern flickers.

Both males and females incubate the eggs and feed the young. Nestlings sometimes leave the nest fully feathered within nine days of hatching, earlier than either of their smaller relatives, the northern mockingbird and gray catbird.

An aggressive defender of its nest, the Brown Thrasher is known to strike people and dogs hard enough to draw blood.

Shrubby habitats are popular hideouts for nest predators, which may explain why the thrashers fledge so quickly for birds of their size.

AGAWAM ADVERTISER NEWS

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Opinion

Editorial

Punishment surely does not fit ‘the crime’

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

The buzzworthy subject on social media during the past week has been the controversy surrounding Agawam High School softball’s disqualification from the Western Mass. Class A championship game should they be victorious in the semifinals.

I’m going to break down a few of the issues on this issue, which is featured on the front page of this week’s Agawam Advertiser News.

First and foremost, the punishment absolutely does not fit the crime. A very simple, honest, clerical mistake is the cause of this. It was an error on data entry that the Athletic Department has taken full transparent responsibility for. So a simple clerical error that occurred two months ago is punishable by telling more than a dozen student-athletes they have worked hard all season long that they cannot go after a championship because another person, who is not them, had a very small oversight. Completely wrong and sends a horrible message to young people who spend 5 to 6 days a week practicing and working hard to improve, playing in games, traveling, balancing their school work, and that is their consequence. Completely unfair and completely unjustified.

The second issue is that the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association is placing incredibly harsh consequences that are negatively affecting hard-working student-athletes who have absolutely nothing to do with filling out forms, putting games on the Arbiter website, and any other clerical responsibilities the athletic administration has. Now, accountability is important, for sure, but its on the MIAA to come up with a proportional consequence when an administrator makes an error. Punishing kids for adult mistakes should not ever be that consequence. It might be hard, but that’s on the MIAA to come up with a more appropriate consequence that sends the right message to athletic depart-

ments, but leaves the kids out of it.

Now, I’d like to shift focus to this community.

It is great that Mayor Christopher Johnson, State Sen. John Velis, and State Nicholas Boldyga all wrote letters of support and that many members of the community turned out to the Western Mass. quarterfinals to support the team. Supporting these young women is great. The positivity is great because they don’t deserve what their current situation is.

What is not helpful is some of the online negativity being thrown at the athletic administration, which has been nothing but upfront, transparent, and especially apologetic for this. If you look on the Arbiter website, all of Agawam’s contests and rosters are properly filled in consistently by the athletic department. As sports editor at Turley Publications, which covers sports at 17 high schools including Agawam, the athletic administration is exemplary in their updates of the Arbiter website as well as completing schedules and team rosters. Several schools never fill in their team rosters.

What occurred was nothing more than a mistake. Mistakes happen. And the administration feels terrible and takes it both seriously and to heart. And calls for “action” to be taken or a resignation or firing to take place are both short-sighted and completely ridiculous. And I would challenge anyone who has never erred before to say why you make such a claim. A little bit of perspective is really needed in this situation. It sends a better message to the student-athletes on how you handle these situations.

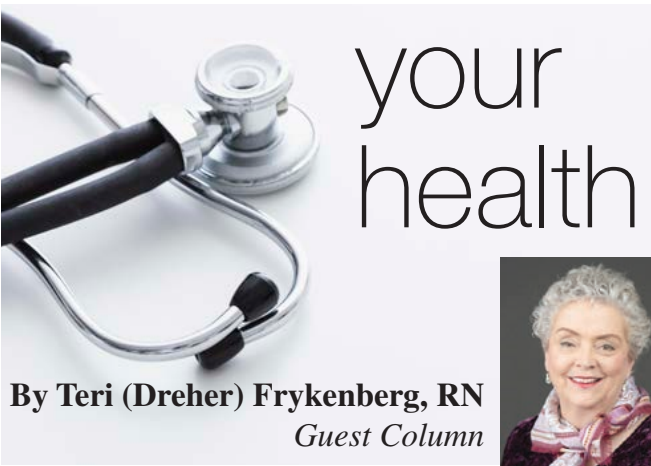
I’m pulling for the softball team to be able to take part in the finals, just like everyone else. Please keep sending positivity their way.

Do you have a take on this issue. Please send a letter to the editor at aan@turley.com.

The opinions expressed in this column are that of the writer and is not the stance of the Agawam Advertiser News.

Guest Column

Nurse advocate advises on care at home after the hospital



It’s usually good news when the doctor says you or a loved one can come home from the hospital. Sometimes, though, it’s a mixed blessing.

Hospital discharge sometimes means that further hospital care won’t improve someone’s health condition, and the hospital is eager to get someone else in that bed. People are discharged faster these days, often with significant lingering health issues that have to be seen to.

In the hospital, there’s a staff of nurses, nurse aides, therapists and others to care for you or a loved one. When you get home, though, it’s just you and maybe a spouse or other family member. That’s why the home health industry is booming.

In 2020 (the most recent data available), approximately 3 million patients received home health care services in the U.S., often following a hospitalization or skilled nursing facility stay. They are being cared for by some 12,000 home health agencies, more than 80 percent of which are for-profit companies.

Home health is something patient advocates know a lot about – and there’s a lot to know. Here are some of the things I’ve learned over my years as

an RN and nurse advocate. **Prepare in advance if you can**

A best-case scenario is that you know you’ll need some help when you get home. For every day you spend in a hospital, you lose a month of muscle tone and mobility, so depending on how long you’ve been hospitalized, you may need considerable help.

Will you need a walker or wheelchair? Shower chair? A first-floor sleeping arrangement? A bedside commode? These are all things that can be planned for if you know they’re coming. Very often, hospitals have social workers who help patients navigate after-hospital care. Medicare has a thorough discharge planning guide on its website; search Medicare Publication No. 11376 in your browser.

Other things to think about are trip hazards like small pets and throw rugs and having some ready-made or frozen meals on hand.

Arrange for help in advance, too

A spouse may be standing by, but they may need help themselves. Adult children, friends or neighbors may be able to pitch in. If there’s no one you can call on for help – and more

than 50 million Americans over 50 are aging on their own – it’s time to contact a home health agency. A patient advocate, who is likely familiar with the home health landscape in your area, is a good resource and go-between.

The cardinal rule is: Ask for assistance when you need it to avoid further complications from falls, lack of nourishment or lapses in personal care.

Understand what Medicare covers

Home health care spending grew at an annual rate of more than 10% in 2024 and shows no signs of slowing down. A significant chunk of the spending in 2023 – \$148 billion – was by Medicare. But Medicare doesn’t cover everything, so you may have out-of-pocket expenses.

Medicare-covered home health services include skilled nursing care, physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech-language pathology services when ordered by a doctor. Part-time or intermittent home health aide care is covered only if you’re also getting those services at home.

Skilled nursing care can include wound care, injections, nutrition services and monitoring unstable health conditions. Medicare also covers durable medical equipment when prescribed by a doctor, such as beds, walkers, wheelchairs, pumps and oxygen.

Medicare doesn’t pay for 24-hour a day care, meal delivery, homemaker services or personal care services that help with bathing, dressing, grooming, etc.

Questions to ask a home health agency

There are a zillion questions you could ask, but I think these are among the

most important:

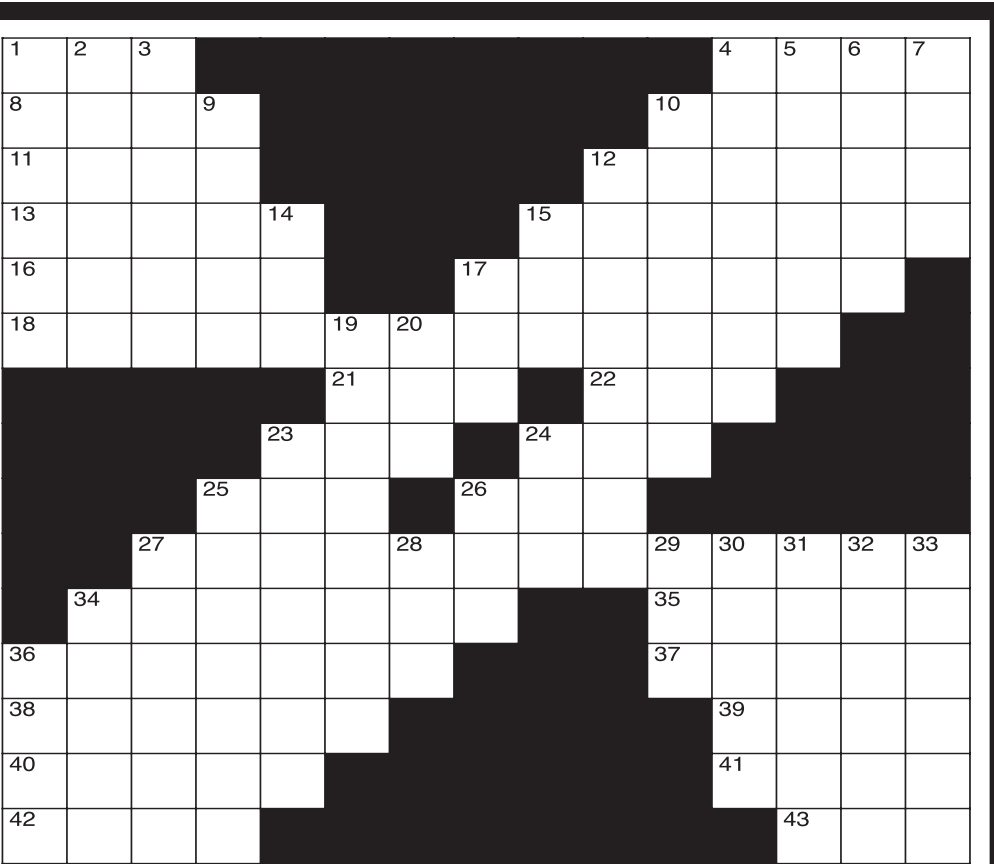
- How long has this agency been in business and is it licensed to perform home health care?
- Can you provide references, or can I speak with previous clients?
- Do you accept long-term care insurance, Medicare or Medicaid? If so, do you bill insurance, or do clients pay you and then file for reimbursement?
- How do you recruit and select caregivers, and do you perform background checks?
- Are your caregivers employees or contractors? Are they bonded?
- Can I meet caregiver candidates and select the ones I want?
- What should I do if my caregiver doesn’t show up as scheduled?
- How often is the care plan reviewed?
- How do I communicate concerns and questions to you?

Research has found that patients who recover at home have better outcomes, which is why the hospital-at-home movement is growing. So if you’re going to be recuperating at your place, don’t go it alone.

Teri (Dreher) Frykenberg, R.N., a registered nurse and board-certified patient advocate, is the founder of www.NurseAdvocateEntrepreneur.com, which trains medical professionals to become successful private patient advocates. A Monson, MA resident, she is the author of “How to Be a Healthcare Advocate for Yourself & Your Loved Ones” and her new book, “Advocating Well: Strategies for Finding Strength and Understanding in Health Care,” available at Amazon.com. Contact her at Teri@NurseAdvocateEntrepreneur.com to set up a free phone consultation

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1. Government lawyers
4. The back of a person’s neck
8. Mild yellow Dutch cheese
10. In a less flashy way
11. Living room piece
12. Shepherd dog
13. A citizen of Iran
15. Moved slowly
16. Small finch
17. Previously
18. What a kid does on Halloween
21. Monetary unit
22. Using dry humor
23. Ocean

24. Greek goddess of the dawn
25. Not close
26. NHL legend Bobby
27. A ballplayer would love to do this
34. Charity
35. City in Finland
36. Loomed over
37. Vaccine developer
38. Avoids capture
39. We all need it
40. Openwork fabrics
41. Get away
42. Something you might hit
43. Soviet Socialist Republic

CLUES DOWN

1. Abstain from
2. Admirer
3. Expedition to observe animals
4. Act that is legally void
5. WW2 combatants
6. A tool
7. Looked at
9. Showing wild excitement
10. Banknotes
12. Tired
14. Printers need it
15. Women’s patriotic group
17. When you anticipate getting somewhere

19. Functions
20. Breed of sheep
23. Mocking pieces
24. A major division of geological time
25. Andiron
26. Many not ands
27. Cuban city
28. He voiced “Olaf”
29. Criticize
30. “Thundercats” character
31. Markings
32. Gets up
33. MLB lefty reliever A.J.
34. An assembly of witches
36. High energy lasers (abbr.)

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SPORTS

LACROSSE

Brownies offense keeps shining

BELCHERTOWN – Last Friday evening, Agawam High School boys lacrosse continue its trend of high-scoring games as they defeated host Belchertown 16-6 to improve to 11-3 on the regular season. The Brownies had one game left in the regular season as they were scheduled to face Pope Francis. Agawam will then likely have a spot in the Western Mass. tournament before participating in the Division 2 state tournament the following week.



Casey Thomas passes the ball away.

Brayden Federico makes a centering pass.



Liam Grealis looks for the open teammate.

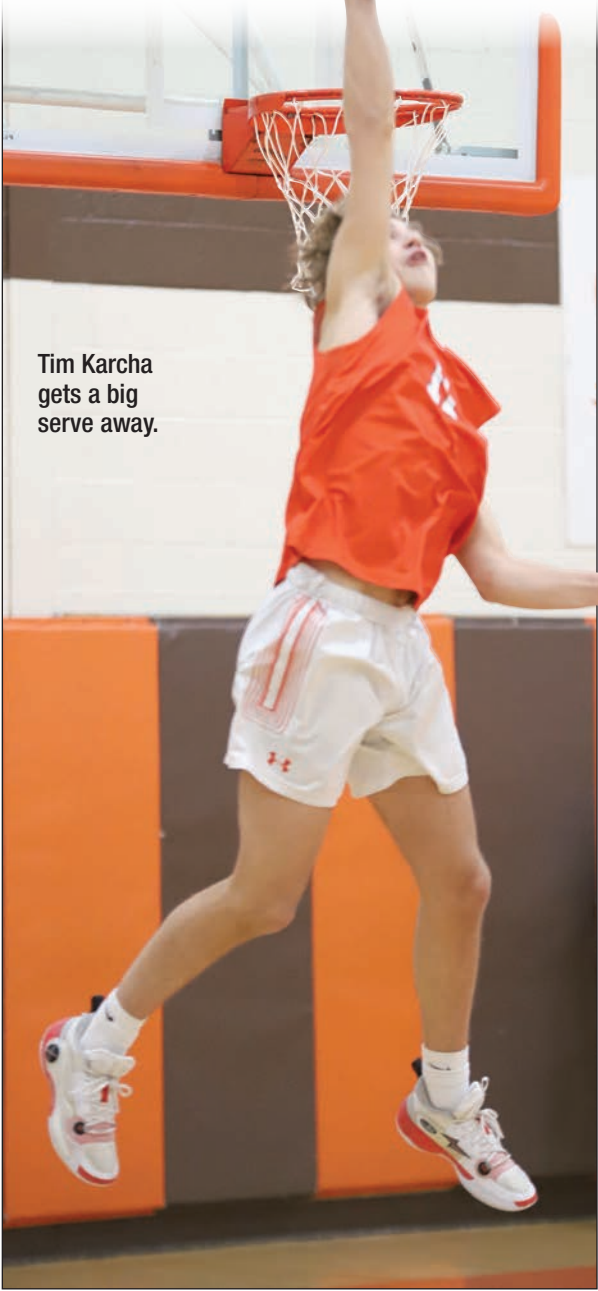


Jason LaRocque makes a pick-up on defense.



Justin Lareau fights for a loose ball.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



Tim Karcha gets a big serve away.

VOLLEYBALL



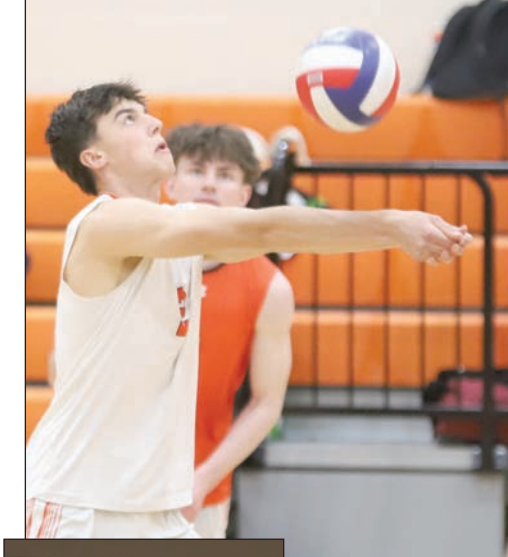
Michael Lumkoski sets near the net.

Volleyball completes regular season

AGAWAM – Last Friday evening, Agawam High School boys volleyball completed the regular season with a 3-0 win over Milford High School. Chase Gerani and Tim Karcha had 10 kills each while Elijah Ramos had 17 assists. Agawam finishes the regular season at 13-5 and entered the Western Mass. tournament earlier this week, drawing a semifinal matchup with Chicopee Comprehensive.



David Zhmaidziak gets a set from the back line.



Above, Jacob Nesen gets an easy bump. Right, Jason Mihalicenco goes for the block.



TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

BASEBALL

Brownies baseball team draws first round playoff matchup

AGAWAM – Last Monday afternoon, the Agawam High School baseball team closed out the regular season with a tough loss against Belchertown High School. The Orioles defeated Agawam 8-4 thanks to five runs in the middle innings to break a 3-3 tie.

Agawam was led by Cole Ingham with two hits. Aiden Lavelle had a hit and two RBI. Agawam baseball finishes the regular season with a 5-11 record. While they made the Western Mass. tournament, the Brownies are too far out of the top 32 in Division 2 to make the state tournament.



Elijah Ramos sends a hit over the net.

Sports

SOCCER

Pioneers get 2026 campaign underway with win

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

LUDLOW – Since joining USL League Two in 2019, the Western Mass. Pioneers have qualified for the league playoffs each season. A new group of Pioneers players are hoping to continue the postseason tradition this spring.

In front of a large crowd at historic Lusitano Stadium in Ludlow, the Pioneers began the 2026 campaign with a 4-2 victory over the Albany Rush, last Friday night.

“Most of the players on last year’s team graduated from college, so we do have a lot of first-year players this season,” said Pioneers head coach Federico Molinari. “I thought we played well in tonight’s game. We had a lot of opportunities, especially in the first half.”

The Pioneers posted a 10-1-3 regular season record a year ago. They lost to FC Motown STA, 2-1, in the Eastern Conference quarterfinals.

A couple of the Pioneers players from last year’s squad have signed with professional soccer teams.

“It’s really nice to see your players playing soccer at a high level,” said Molinari, who’s been leading the Pioneers since 2012. “That’s our main goal every year.”

One of the local players listed on the 2026 Pioneers roster is Thomas Wadas, who’s played soccer for the Ludlow Lions and is currently a member of the UMass-Amherst men’s soccer team.

Wadas has been listed on the Pioneers roster for the past several years. He made his first start for the Pioneers in the season opening match.

“I used to watch the Pioneers games from the stands, so I’ve been looking forward to this moment for a long time,” said Wadas, who’s a midfielder. “Being a starter in the season opener is a very special thing to me. We played hard for the whole 90 minutes of tonight’s game. When we come together as a cohesive team, we can look forward to another strong season. Anything less than making the playoffs seems like a failure.”

Wadas was a starter in ten of the 15 games that he



Sam Montalto looks to pass.

played in for the Minutemen as a freshman last fall. He finished the 2025 season with two goals and three assists.

“It was a big adjustment going from the high school level to the collegiate level,” Wadas said. “All of the players are bigger and stronger in college. The game is also a lot more physical. I’m just glad that I was able to contribute as a freshman. Playing for the Pioneers is only going to help me prepare for my sophomore season at UMass.”

A first-year player member of the Pioneers is Michael Gouvin, who’s from Monson. His older sister, Laura, played for the New England Mutiny several years ago.

Gouvin, who comes from a soccer family, attended Avon Old Farms before playing two seasons for the men’s soccer team at the University of New Hampshire. He decided to transfer to Bentley University before the start of last season.

“I used to play youth soccer games on this field. It feels awesome to be back here playing again,” said Gouvin, who’s a starting defender. “I’ve never played a game in this type of environment before. Winning our first game of the season feels incredible.”

The Pioneers have won ev-



Fernando Delgado dribbles up the field.



Thomas Wadas, of Ludlow, is new to the Pioneers this season.

ery match that they’ve played against the Rush since 2022. They outscored them, 11-0, in both matches last season.

Prior to the start of the match, third grader Brooke Lamothe did an outstanding job of performing the National Anthem.

The Rush ended their scoreless spell against the Pioneers when Lucas Horja fired a shot into the back of the net past Western Mass. goalie Ben Alexander for an unassisted goal during the 11th minute of the opening half.

The Pioneers quickly took over the momentum.

The home side had five corner kicks before scoring the equalizer in the 37th



Michael Gouvin, of Monson, sends a pass away.



Jaiden Williams, of Belchertown, competes with an opponent.



Pearse O'Brien advances the ball.

“It’s really nice to see your players playing soccer at a high level. That’s our main goal every year.”

– Pioneers head coach Federico Molinari

minute.

An Albany player fouled Wadas, which gave the Pioneers a free kick. Pearse O’Brien booted the ball into the box and Matiwos Rumley managed to score the tying goal.

Two minutes later, an Albany player fouled O’Brien inside the box resulting in a penalty kick.

De Andrade, who had just entered the match as a sub, headed the ball into the net.

“I saw that Felipe was open and I just sent him the ball,” Gouvin said. “It was a perfect play. My main goal in every game is to make an impact.”

The duo of Alfred Baafi and Martin Echarren, who also came off the bench, hooked up on the Pioneers final goal during the 82nd minute. Echarren flicked a shot into the net for his first goal as a Pioneers player.

The Pioneers are scheduled to play a road game against the Seacoast United Phantoms on Wednesday night before returning home to face NEFC at 7:30 on Saturday night.

T-Birds steal Game 2 over the Penguins

WILKES-BARRE, PA – The Springfield Thunderbirds authored one of the most remarkable comebacks in team history, storming back from three behind to shock the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins in overtime, 4-3, on Thursday night in Game 2 of the Atlantic Division Finals inside Mohegan Arena at Casey Plaza. With the win, Springfield evened the series at one win apiece and stole home ice advantage.

The Penguins’ newest offensive weapon again proved to be a thorn in the T-Birds’ sides at the 8:42 mark of the first. With Wilkes-Barre/Scranton operating on its first power play of Game 2, Bill Zonnon parked himself just outside Georgii Romanov’s goal crease and deflected a Mikhail Ilyin shot behind the Springfield goalie to make it a 1-0 Penguins lead.

Romanov was the far busier netminder in the first 20 minutes, with the Penguins heftily outshooting the T-Birds 14-4 in the frame, but the Springfield goalie continued his stellar work to keep the deficit at just a single goal heading into intermission. Sergei Murashov had little work to do in the first himself, needing to stop just four Springfield attempts.

Springfield’s deficit grew almost instantaneously in the middle period, when Ilyin freed up a loose puck in the right circle, allowing Tristan Broz to rip it home just 16 seconds into the second, making it 2-0.

Springfield’s power play received two chances to try to take a bite out of the two-goal hole, but Murashov and the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton penalty kill answered the bell with successive dispatchings.

Then it was the Penguins’ turn to return to the power play late in the period, and Avery Hayes made no mistake, taking a cross-ice setup from Rutger McGroarty and whipping a forehander past Romanov’s blocker at 18:16.

The Penguins began the final period with another power play and a chance to put the T-Birds away. Instead, Springfield began their comeback for the ages when Hugh McGing rifled home a one-timer, short-handed, past Murashov just 55 seconds into the period to make it 3-1.

Springfield tilted the ice heavily in their favor for the entirety of the final period, unleashing 20 shots in 20 minutes on Murashov. Still, it would take the T-Birds until the final four minutes to get

closer when Dillon Dube deflected an Alek Kaskimaki attempt behind Murashov with 3:24 remaining to cut the margin to 3-2.

The veteran forward was far from finished, as Dube picked up his second 6-on-5 goal with 1:50 remaining, parking himself off the right post and jabbing a loose puck behind a helpless Murashov following a Calle Rosen slapper to make it a 3-3 tie and force an improbable overtime period.

The T-Birds carried the overtime period as well, as the visitors finished the night with 31 of the game’s final 43 shots on net. Finally, it was Akil Thomas who ended the festivities with a fortuitous bounce at 13:44 of the overtime. Thomas was spilled on a breakaway down the slot area, but still got a shot away that rocketed off the end boards, careened back to the net front, bounced off Murashov’s back, and squeaked across the line to win it for Springfield.

The magical third period and overtime marked Springfield’s largest third period comeback win in their post-season history. Romanov improved to 6-2 in his postseason run, making 39 saves in the win. Murashov finished with 41 stops for the Penguins.

Racing season opens up at Stafford Speedway

STAFFORD SPRINGS, CT – Stafford Speedway returned to action with its first Friday night weekly racing program of the 2026 season on Friday, May 8. Feature winners on the night included Keith Rocco in the SK Modified feature, Adam Gray in the Late Model feature, Robert Bloxsom, III in the SK Light feature, Gary Patnode in the Limited Late Model feature, and Brandon Warren in the Street Stock feature.

In the 40-lap SK Modified feature, Troy Talman took the lead at the drop of the green flag with Dylan Kopec, Keith Rocco, Dylan Izzo, and Matt Vassar all lined up behind him. Kopec took the lead from Talman coming out of turn 4 on lap-3 before the caution came out for Chase Cook, who spun and came to a stop in turn 2.

Talman took the lead back on the restart with Kopec in second. Rocco and Izzo were side by side for a lap fighting for third placed before Izzo got loose in

turn 2 and slid back several spots. Vassar was fourth with Mikey Flynn in fifth. Flynn took fourth from Vassar on lap-6 while Kopec took the lead before surrendering the lead to Rocco on lap-9. Talman was now third behind Rocco and Kopec with Flynn fourth and Glen Reen up to fifth.

Marcello Rufrano was on the charge as he took fourth place from Talman on lap-12 as Rocco continued to lead Kopec and Flynn. Anthony Flannery was now sixth with Reen, Alexander Pearl, Izzo, and Jon Puleo making up the top-10. Rufrano charged his way past Flynn on lap-15 to move into third and now he was challenging Kopec for second place.

Rufrano took second from Kopec on lap-19 and now set his sights on Rocco in the lead. The caution flew with 24 laps complete as Meghan Fuller spun in turn 2 with Chase Cook. Cook was black flagged by Stafford officials for making contact with Fuller.

Rocco took the lead back under green with Rufrano taking second. Kopec was third with Flannery fourth and Flynn fifth. Pearl was sixth with Izzo, Talman, Michael Christopher, Jr. and Puleo making up the top-10. Rufrano nearly took the lead from Rocco on lap-28, but Rocco was able to fend off his challenge. With five laps to go Rocco was still leading Rufrano with Kopec, Flannery, and Pearl making up the top-5.

Rocco led Rufrano to the checkered flag to pick up his first win of the 2026 season. Kopec finished third with Flannery and Pearl rounding out the top-5. Following post-race inspection, the car of Kopec failed to meet the minimum ride height requirement and the car of Flannery exceeded the maximum allowable left side weight and both cars were disqualified from the feature finish. This moves Pearl into third with Christopher and Flynn rounding out the new top-5 behind Rocco and Rufrano.

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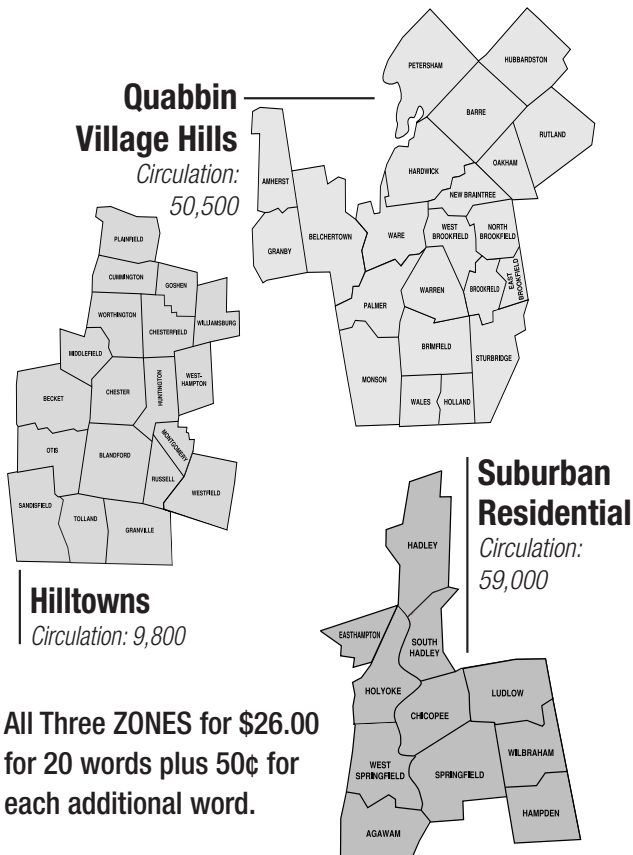
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Opinion

BIRDS ■ from page 4

Brown Thrashers are the largest common host of parasitic brown-headed cowbirds.

The oldest Brown Thrasher on record was at least 10 years, 11 months old. It was found in Florida in 1978 where it was banded in 1967.

Rose-breasted grosbeak
A Worthington resident saw a rose-breasted grosbeak showed up at his feeder earlier than usual on May 1. He said they always arrive the first week of May. Last year it was not until May 7.

Belchertown birds
A Belchertown resident sent an email reporting birds seen and heard on his property. They included Baltimore oriole, grey catbirds, a Blackburnian warbler in the maple tree, and he heard, but not seen, a northern parula. He also has a pair of eastern phoebes nesting under an eave of the house.

At nearby Lake Wallace,

he took photos of yellow warblers and a green heron catching fish.

Red-shouldered hawk
A Montgomery resident saw a red-shouldered hawk recently.

Nesting sparrows
A Belchertown resident said she had sparrows using a nest box in her yard. She found a few of their babies on the ground. At first, I thought something got into the nest, but today a found another one. I think the nestling had died and the parents got them out. She said she may remove the nest box and replace it with a new one in case the sparrows succumbed to disease.

Brimfield birds
A Brimfield resident said he put up the hummingbird feeders in late April when he learned of a ruby-throated hummingbird in Ware. A couple days later he had an adult male ruby-throated hummingbird and a few



Red-shouldered hawk
days later he saw a female. He said, "One each gray catbirds, male Baltimore oriole and males rose-breasted grosbeak showed up last week. This week a second male oriole and two more grosbeaks show up, another male and a female. He also has a male eastern towhee in his yard. He said, "A couple of years ago we had two male towhees in the yard and one spent the summer attacking its reflection in

the many windows despite best efforts to dissuade it." He said elsewhere, in Warren on South Street there are three occupied great blue heron nest and two others he was not sure if they were being used. The osprey pair has been around for awhile. The nest has gotten deeper over the years and on a recent visit he could only see the tail or maybe wing feathers barely showing above the nest. I think incubation has started, but can't be sure. He also has a male common yellowthroat and house wren in his yard. He said, "House wrens have nested in nesting boxes in the yard several times and I saw feathers near the entrance hole on a box they have used before. The wrens have a habit of building false nests in a couple of boxes that hey never use." He also said, "A male yellow-bellied sapsucker spent

some time on a native dogwood and today a sapsucker, probably the same one, spent several hours tapping away at the same tree." **Geese in a pavilion**
On May 12, I drove by Camp Putnam in New Braintree and saw four geese under their pavilion near the pond. I see many Canada geese in fields or ponds, but I have never

seen them in a pavilion. **Other birds**
On May 8 I received an email reporting a scarlet tanager, grosbeaks and hummingbirds. *People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by emailing mybackyard88@aol.com or edowner@turley.com or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005.*



Scarlet tanager

Public Notices

Agawam Zoning Board of Appeals Legal Notice
The Agawam Zoning Board of Appeals will conduct a public hearing on **Monday, June 8, 2026 at 6:30PM** for all parties interested in the request of Joseph J Davis who is seeking a Variance from the Town of Agawam's Zoning Ordinance, Ch.180-27 to allow a buildable lot with less than the required frontage at the premises identified as Lot #0, North Street. Doreen A. Prouty, Chairperson
Agawam Zoning Board of Appeals
05/21, 05/28/2026

Agawam Conservation Commission LEGAL AD
The Agawam Conservation Commission will meet on Thursday, May 28, 2026 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 Dargie for property located on 15 Two-If-By St.
By Order of
Henry A. Kozloski, Chairman
Agawam Conservation Commission
05/21/2026

Agawam Zoning Board of Appeals Legal Notice
The Agawam Zoning Board of Appeals will conduct a public hearing on **Monday, June 8, 2026 at 7PM** for all parties interested in the request of Vadim Solokhin who is seeking a Special Permit from the Town of Agawam's Zoning Ordinance, Ch.180-37 (B) and 180-8.1 to allow for the keeping of hens at the premises identified as 32 Marlene Dr. Doreen A. Prouty, Chairperson
Agawam Zoning Board of Appeals
05/21, 05/28/2026

Agawam Conservation Commission LEGAL AD
The Agawam Conservation Commission will meet on **Thursday, May 28, 2026 at 6:05PM** 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 Tirone for property located on 130 South Westfield Street
By Order of
Henry A. Kozloski, Chairman
Agawam Conservation Commission
05/21/2026
PUBLIC AUCTION
The Salt Lake County Constable's Office will sell to the highest qualified bidder in public, the property described below, on **6/2/2026 at 10:00 am (Mountain)** at the following location: The courthouse front steps of the Third District Court, 8080 S Redwood Road, West Jordan, UT 84088. The opening bid, by the Lender / Secured Party, will be \$1,000.00 or such other amount Lender / Secured Party deems sufficient and appropriate. Winning bidder must pay non-refundable deposit of \$5,000.00 in the form of certified funds (bank cashier's check/money order), payable to Lender: DHM Industries, Inc., with remainder of sale proceeds paid by electronic funds transfer (EFT) or wire on or before 6/3/2026 at 2:00 pm (Mountain). Upon such sale, you will no longer have any right to the property sold and the proceeds from such sale will be used to reduce the obligations owed to the lender and secured creditor DHM Industries, Inc. until such obligations have been satisfied in full. You may request information or accounting by calling or sending an email to Spencer Macdonald, 801-709-1824, spencer@dohardmoney.com, attorney for the Lender. The property to be sold is: All rights, titles and interests in and to the limited liability company membership interests in: 171 OAK STREET INDUSTRIES, LLC, held by debtor and all proceeds therefrom. The limited liability company 171 OAK STREET INDUSTRIES, LLC, owns the real property located at: 171 OAK STREET, EAST HARTFORD, CT 06118.
05/14, 05/21/2026

Legal Ad Agawam Conservation Commission
The Agawam Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing on Thursday, May 28, 2026 at 6:10 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 O'Malley for work to be performed at 365 Main St, subject to the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act.
By Order of
Henry A. Kozloski, Chairman
Agawam Conservation Commission
05/21/2026

Legal Notice Town of Agawam
The **Agawam Planning Board** will hold a public hearing on **Thursday, June 4, 2026 at 6:00pm** and the **Agawam City Council** will hold a public hearing on **Monday, June 15, 2026 at 7:00pm**, both in the Veterans Hall at the Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, MA. The purpose of these hearings will be to hear the petition of Chanda Care, Inc for a zone change request for **430 North West Street** from Business B to Residence A-2. City Council's public hearing will be livestreamed on the Town of Agawam's website at www.agawam.ma.us and will also be televised on Cable Access Channel 15 or Channel 1074. Copies of the proposed zone change can be obtained from the Planning Department between the hours of 7:30am and 3:30pm at the Agawam DPW, 1000 Suffield Street, Agawam, MA or by emailing the Office of the City Clerk for an electronic copy at vgioscia@agawam.ma.us
By Order Of:
Violet Baldwin, Chair
Agawam Planning Board
Anthony Russo, President
Agawam City Council
05/21, 05/28/2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Division Docket No. HD26P1002EA Estate of: Lindelee Ann Davis Also Known As: Lindelee A. Davis Date of Death: March 9, 2026 INFORMAL PROBATE PUBLICATION NOTICE
To all persons interested in the above captioned estate, by Petition of Petitioner **Matthew Davis of Granby, VT.**

Matthew Davis of Granby, VT has been informally appointed as the Personal Representative of the estate to serve **without surety** on the bond.
The estate is being administered under informal procedure by the Personal Representative under the Massachusetts Uniform Probate Code without supervision by the Court. Inventory and accounts are not required to be filed with the Court, but interested parties are entitled to notice regarding the administration from the Personal Representative and can petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including distribution of assets and expenses of administration. Interested parties are entitled to petition the Court to institute formal proceedings and to obtain orders terminating or restricting the powers of Personal Representatives appointed under informal procedure. A copy of the Petition and Will, if any, can be obtained from the Petitioner.
05/21/2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Probate and Family Court 50 State Street Springfield, MA 01103 (413)748-7758 Docket No. HD26P0948EA Estate of: Susan A O'Hare Also known as: Susan A Gosselin Date of Death: 04/04/2026 CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION
To all interested persons:
A Petition for Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative has been filed by **Gerry Gosselin of South Hadley MA** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.
The Petitioner requests that **Gerry Gosselin of South Hadley MA** be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without Surety** on the bond in **unsupervised administration.**
IMPORTANT NOTICE
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the

Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 06/02/2026. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.
UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)
A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.
WITNESS, Hon. **Claudine T. Stoudemire**, First Justice of this Court.
Date: May 04, 2026
Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate
05/21/2026
Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Probate and Family Court 50 State Street Springfield, MA 01103 Docket No. HD25P2435PM In the matter of: Olivia Jane Rudd Of: Feeding Hills, MA RESPONDENT (Person to be Protected/ Minor) CITATION GIVING NOTICE OF PETITION FOR APPOINTMENT OF CONSERVATOR OR OTHER PROTECTIVE ORDER PURSUANT TO G.L. c. 190B, §5-304 & §5-405
To the named Respondent

and all other interested persons, a petition has been filed by **Brian Rudd** of Feeding Hills, MA
Samantha Rudd of Feeding Hills, MA
in the above captioned matter alleging that **Olivia Jane Rudd** is in need of a Conservator or other protective order and requesting that **Brian Rudd** of Feeding Hills, MA
Samantha Rudd of Feeding Hills, MA
(or some other suitable person) be appointed as Conservator to serve **Without Surety** on the bond.
The petition asks the court to determine that the Respondent is disabled, that a protective order or appointment of a Conservator is necessary, and that the proposed conservator is appropriate. The petition is on file with this court.
You have the right to object to this proceeding. If you wish to do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance at this court on or before 10:00 a.m. on the return date of **06/09/2026.** This day is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline date by which you have to file the written appearance if you object to the petition. If you fail to file the written appearance by the return date, action may be taken in this matter without further notice to you. In addition to filing the written appearance, you or your attorney must file a written affidavit stating the specific facts and grounds of your objection within 30 days after the return date.
IMPORTANT NOTICE
The outcome of this proceeding may limit or completely take away the above-named person's right to make decisions about personal affairs or financial affairs or both. The above-named person has the right to ask for a lawyer. Anyone may make this request on behalf of the above-named person. If the above-named person cannot afford a lawyer, one may be appointed at State expense.
Witness, Hon. **Claudine T. Stoudemire**, First Justice of this Court.
Date: May 04, 2026
Rosemary A. Saccomani Register of Probate
05/21/2026

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Agawam Advertiser News

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

Schools & Youth

COLLEGE NOTES

SNHU announces Spring 2026 President’s List

MANCHESTER, NH – It is with great pleasure that Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) congratulates the following students on being named to the Spring 2026 President’s List. The spring terms run from January to May.

Full-time undergraduate students who have earned a minimum grade-point average of 3.700 and above for the reporting term are named to the President’s List. Full-time status is achieved by earning 12 credits over each 16-week term or paired 8-week terms grouped in fall, winter/spring, and summer.

Elham Sayed
Agawam

Connor Montagna
Feeding Hills

Madison Belmer
Feeding Hills

Sarah Gay
Agawam

Student receives scholarship from Garden Club



Agawam Garden Club Scholarship recipient, Tyler Saroglou, pictured with his parents and club member Luann Nowill.

Library announces new kids, teen activities available this month

AGAWAM – April shows bring May flowers, which works beautifully for us at the Agawam Library, as we have just rolled out our brand new plant inspired logo.

We are also rolling out a slightly smaller program roster this month as we begin our Summer Reading Challenge preparations.

Our Summer Reading Challenge will begin Monday, June 29 and go through Aug. 8.

During the Summer Reading Challenge there will be lots of activities, games, and prizes to keep kids of all ages reading throughout the summer. But we still have some fun activities planned before that.

Below is a listing of every-

thing that’s going on for kids & teens this month. Some events require registration. To register, call 413-789-1550 ext. 3 or go to our website agawamlibrary.org.

Art and Stories - For ages 3 – 5
Tues. May 26 at 9:30 a.m. - Drop-in

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

Baby Story Time - For birth – 18 mo.
Thursday, May 28 at 9:30 a.m. - Drop-in

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

Family Movie: Lilo & Stitch (2002) – For all ages
Thursday, May 21 at 6 p.m. - Drop-in

Join us for a showing of the original Lilo & Stitch film. Bring a small (not messy) picnic to eat during the movie. We’ll have some snacks and coloring sheets available during the movie.

Family Take and Make Crafts – For all ages
First Day of the Week & Thursdays - While supplies last - Drop-in & pick up

A new Take & Make craft will be available the first day of each week and again on Thursdays. Butterfly Hand Puppet May 18 and 21: Construction Site Scene May 26 and 28: Robot Mask

Grow, play and Learn -

For Ages 0-2 at 9:30 am
Ages 3-5 Wednesdays and Fridays at 10:30 a.m. - Drop-in.

Stories, songs and skill building, led by an Early Childhood Developmental trained staff member, guiding caregivers in strengthening interactions with their child. This program is provided by Pathways for Parents.

Polymer Clay Crafting - For students in grades 5-6
Wednesday, May 27 at 6 p.m. - Registration is required

Come craft small trinkets out of polymer clay! We’ll be able to bake it in our mini oven to set it for you.

Pre-K Pals - For ages 3 - 5
This program is provided by Pathways for Parents. Mondays in May at 11 a.m. -

Registration is required
No class Monday, May 25 Each week, we will focus on an area of development and provide fun activities to support your child to learn through play.

Special Saturday Drop-in Craft: Dogs in Rain Gear Craft - For All Ages
Saturday, May 30 All Day - While supplies last - Drop-in and pick up

These pups are playing in the rain. This craft kit features two different designs that show images of dogs in colorful rain gear holding umbrellas and grinning while standing in the falling rain.

Teen After School Drop-in - For grades 9-12
Every Monday the Agawam Public Schools

are in session at 2 p.m.
Stop by the library after school and visit the Activity Room. Play our Nintendo Switch, try out the air hockey table, eat snacks, or just hang out. No registration necessary. Note: there is no drop-in on Monday, May 25.

Teen Take and Make Craft – For grades 7-12
Stop by the Teen Space to pick up a Take & Make Craft kit! They’ll be available until we run out of supplies. No registration necessary.

Teen Trivia Thursday – For grades 7-12
Every Thursday the Agawam Public Schools are in session 2 to 3:30 p.m.

Visit the Teen Space and answer a trivia question to get a small prize.

WALKING ■ from page 1

feel good. Because you were there for somebody who needed somebody’s ear to listen to them.”

Smus explains that the benefits of joining the walking group don’t stop at getting exercise but continue into meeting new people and learning more about the history of the town of Agawam.

Smus says the pace the group walks at varies depending on how slow or fast the people joining the group that day wish to go. It varies every day, as Smus and Scantlen take into consideration everyone’s comfort throughout the walk. Smus then explains the schedule

of the group and if she’d be open to walking at a different day or time, “I’ve offered that as well, but nobody’s really come forward to say that, yes, like for example Tuesday at 6 p.m. that works best for me. That would be open for Sue and I as well. We would be more than happy to, you know, add days in.” She also tells us she’d be willing to have the group walk at different locations if a request was made.

Smus believes the walking group is not just a good idea for exercise but also to form friendships and connections with others in the community, “People want to be amongst people. They want to be helpful. And that’s

what life’s about. You got to fulfill yourself, but you want to also want to help others.”

Information about meeting dates and times for the brand-new Sacred Heart Parish walking group can be found on their website. Or information about the walking group can also be found on the Agawam Forum. Anyone looking to find a group to talk with and walk with is welcome to join the group, being a member of St. Martha’s Guild and Sacred Heart Parish is not a requirement. It’s clear that both Smus and Scantlen are dedicated to the community having a casual exercise space where everyone is welcome and keeping a regular schedule.



TURLEY PHOTO BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Appeals are in process to allow Agawam to participate in the Western Mass. finals after a clerical error in scheduling led to the MIAA disqualifying Agawam from participating in the championship game if they win in the semifinals.

SOFTBALL ■ from page 1

the broader impact the decision will have on the student-athletes who committed themselves throughout the season and had no role in the administrative error. By all accounts, these young women have represented Agawam High School and our community with integrity, discipline, and sportsmanship, and they should not bear the full consequence of a mistake beyond their control,” Boldyga’s letter states.

Velis, in his letter to the MIAA, expressed the

important of the Western Mass. tournament, something the region has tried to preserve since the MIAA went to a statewide-sanctioned tournament instead of having four sectional tournaments. That change occurred in 2021.

Velis said the Western Mass. tournament is important to schools and the students.

“If this season is to end, let it end between the lines, on the pitcher’s mound and in the batter’s box, not because of a clerical error,” Velis said.

Johnson says the athletic department accepted responsibility for the error, but believes the athletes should not be punished.

“The young women on the Agawam softball team represent the absolute of foundation of educational athletics,” Johnson stated. “They have worked tirelessly and competed with the highest level of sportsmanship. They did everything right. To disqualify them from postseason contention over an administrative error made by adults cuts against the very core of why high school sports exist.

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