



**LIBRARY**  
December activities  
PAGE 2



**LOCAL**  
Open House  
PAGE 3



**SPORTS**  
Boys soccer  
PAGE 8

# AGAWAM

## ADVERTISER NEWS

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### Chamber hosts Food Fest

Lori Chaffee shows off her mobile kitchen at the West of the River Chamber of Commerce Food Fest Nov. 13. See more photos on page 7.

TURLEY PHOTO BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

## VOICE: Creating a way for veterans of Western Mass.

By Emily-Rose Pappas  
Staff Writer  
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REGION – The Veterans Outreach Into Community Engagement, or VOICE, is a group of members of Western Massachusetts dedicated to helping veterans.

Composed of Veterans Agents, veterans, nonprofits, small businesses, and beyond, VOICE is a group that prioritizes the veteran living in the Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin, and the Berkshires Counties.

“It started with a veteran employment and opportunity approach, and it’s really blossomed into something more for all veterans. It’s such an amazing network, and its intended for any program, whether a governmental department, business, or nonprofit that has a veteran program that they administer, and it’s to collaborate,” said Stephanie Shaw, Chair of VOICE and Director of Veterans Services in Chicopee.

VOICE has been going on for at least 20 years, focusing on cross-sharing resources between veteran agencies, small businesses, and non-profit organizations that work to serve the veteran in many different ways.

Shaw has been engaging with VOICE for the past fifteen years, since 2010, and has seen organizations like Encompass, Compassion Care, Veterans’ Inc., and Project New Hope come together to sit in person at their meetings to collaborate.

“It’s about ensuring that veterans are prioritized. We look at it as it’s about the veterans, and I think that really helps make us unique. There really is something unique about our cohesiveness and the bonds that these representatives have,” said Shaw. “These people are consistent and show up, and after doing this for so long, it’s invigorating to sit down once a month to collaborate and support one another.”

VOICE works hard to cre-

ate ways to ensure that veterans across all four counties in Western Massachusetts can access care and resources like fuel assistance, employment help, connections to food pantries, and also enjoy events for veterans and coffee hours at different places in towns all over.

“It’s so that any veteran we come across can have access to more, and be able to access more from neighbors,” said Shaw.

75 to 80 different entities offer a full program or have specific offerings for veterans to access, and take part in working alongside VOICE so that all representatives of veterans can access this essential information.

“Not everyone in that room is a veteran, but they really care about veterans, and that’s what makes this perfect,” said Shaw.

Alongside their regular meetings, VOICE brings in a guest speaker, and this

VOICE | page 12

## Keys in hand, moving process begins for Agawam Police

By Gregory A. Scibelli  
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AGAWAM – In just two weeks, the Agawam Police Department will embark on a new era when it opens the doors, well, a couple of them, on its newest headquarters.

For the last two years, the Town of Agawam has been working to acquire, refurbish, renovate, and reinforce a building at 1070 Suffield St. previously occupied by HUB Insurance.

On Saturday, Dec. 13, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., the public can get a first-hand look at the new police headquarters during an Open House event hosted by the Police Department

and Mayor Christopher Johnson.

“I am hoping the public will come and look at what we have done with this building,” Johnson said.

It will be one of few times the public will have access to many of the secure areas of the building, because once regular operations begin, very few parts of the building will be accessible to the public.

The town spent about \$14 million to acquire the building and do renovations, which are complete.

Johnson said the arduous process of moving the oper-

PD | page 10



The new Agawam Police Headquarters located at 1070 Suffield St. is ready to be moved into.

TURLEY PHOTO BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

## Applications now open to become next Agawam Colleen

By Gregory A. Scibelli  
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AGAWAM – Applications are now available for the 2026 Agawam Colleen contest. The contest is open to young women of Irish heritages age 17 to 22. Applications are due Dec. 20 and can be found at the new St. Patrick’s Committee website, www.agawamstpatricks.com.

At that link you can find the application as well as information on the upcoming events sponsored by the committee and the entire Irish season calendar.

Applications for the colleen competition will be invited to attend an information meeting at Agawam Public Library on Jan. 3 at 11

COLLEEN | page 12



Teagan Fullam and Samantha Machos, members of the 2025 Colleen Court, ride in the float at the 2025 St. Patrick’s Day Parade in Holyoke. The time has come to start the process of naming the 2026 Agawam Colleen and court. Applications are now open at the St. Patrick’s Committee website. TURLEY PHOTO BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM

## Small garage fire quickly contained

AGAWAM – At approximately 4:18 a.m. on Nov. 19, the Agawam Fire Department responded to Marlene Drive for a report of smoke in a residential garage. Police units arriving first located several small, smoldering fires in the garage and used extinguishers to contain them until fire crews arrived. Firefighters conducted a full extinguishment, removed debris, and verified that no additional hot spots remained. No injuries were reported.

The fire originated in the garage where the homeowner had been charging a homemade lithium-ion battery module. The resident was awakened by smoke alarms and the sound of exploding batteries. Attempts were made by occupants to control the fire before emergency responders arrived.

“This incident is a reminder that lithium-ion batteries are typically safe when used as designed, but extremely hazardous when they’re modified, repurposed, or built at home,” said Fire Chief Alan Sirois. “When these batteries are tampered with, damaged, or charged improperly, they can fail violently with little warning.”

Off-the-shelf lithium-ion batteries from reputable manufacturers are typically safe when used in the correct devices and charged with manufacturer recommended equipment. Lithium-ion batteries are used every day in laptops, smartphones, tools, toys, vehicles, and countless other devices without incident.

Lithium-ion batteries

FIRE | page 12



# Lots of holiday happenings at Agawam Public Library

AGAWAM – Snow is falling and Agawam Public Library is calling! Join us for a great lineup of events for December that will keep you mindful and joyous this holiday season.

Our annual Festival of Trees is back and you won't want to miss out. The Festival of Trees is a community-wide holiday gallery of hand-made trees displayed throughout the library. Create something truly unique by building a tree out of unusual materials like soda cans or egg cartons. Families, friends, coworkers, classes – everybody is encouraged to join in on the fun. Completed trees should be dropped off at the library by Dec. 18. For more information and guidelines for submission, please visit the library Information Desk or go to [agawamlibrary.org](http://agawamlibrary.org). Trees will be on display at the library from Dec. 18 through Jan. 5, beginning with our Opening Reception on Thursday, Dec. 18 at 6:30 p.m. in the Clini Community Room. Come view the creative trees, enjoy the sounds of the season and indulge in some holiday treats! Please register to attend.

Take time for yourself this holiday season to nurture your mind, body, and spirit. Join us on Monday, Dec. 1 at 6:30 p.m. for Winter Pause with Siubhan Geery Clark, a gentle, meditative sound bath that will guide you into

a peaceful state of relaxation through the soothing tones of the crystal singing bowls, gongs, chimes and other therapeutic instruments. Bring a yoga mat, blanket or anything else you need to be comfortable. Please register to attend this event. Fall Qigong concludes with three classes this month as autumn wanes and winter settles in. Related to the elements of Metal and Water in traditional Chinese medicine, our Qigong practice will focus on strengthening the lungs and immune system, increasing circulation, and nourishing the kidneys and joints. Classes are drop-in and will take place on Tuesday, Dec. 2, 9, and 16 at 10:30 a.m. in the Clini Community Room. Instructor Heidi Taberman will lead participants in an hour of gentle Chair Yoga on Wednesday mornings at 9:05 a.m. Classes are drop-in; please note that there is no class on Dec. 24. Have you been looking for ways to increase your daily step count? Try out our Walking Group. This group will meet at the pavilion at Robinson State Park on Saturday, Dec. 6 at 9 a.m.; hiking shoes or sturdy sneakers are recommended. Registration is required so we know how many walkers to expect.

Get in the spirit of the season and learn about holiday traditions of yesteryear. The Mark Twain House & Muse-

um will present Christmas Charity in the Gilded Age. Erin Bartram from the Mark Twain House & Museum will explore how the holidays were celebrated in this prominent family. As Clara Clemens recalled years later, one of the most important Christmas traditions for the Clemens family was assembling and delivering baskets of food and gifts to poor families in Hartford. This program explores the family's charitable efforts in historic context: increasing prosperity for some, increasing poverty for many more, and a society torn over what to do about it. With echoes of today's world in mind, this program is one you surely do not want to miss! This event will take place on Monday, Dec. 9 at 6:30 p.m. in the Clini Community Room; please register to attend.

Celebrate the Winter Solstice and the return of the sun at our Lantern Making & Winter Singalong event on Tuesday, Dec. 16 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Participants will craft a wax paper lantern and illuminate the night sky with an outdoor singalong. This intergenerational program is open to all ages and craft materials will be provided. Please be sure to dress warmly for the outdoor portion of this event! Registration is required as space and materials are limited.

Looking to have some fun

and indulge in the music of the season? Join us for Holiday Music Bingo on Monday, Dec. 22 at 6:30 p.m. Get in the holiday spirit as we play bingo and enjoy some seasonal treats. Prizes will be awarded to those who have a winning bingo card. Our Adult Craft Night this month will take place on Monday, Dec. 29 at 6:30 p.m. and participants will make a cute hand painted snowman ornament. This craft features acrylic paint, a wooden round, fabric and pompoms. Make a sweet snowman friend to keep around all winter long! Please register to attend these events.

Our monthly programs are an excellent way for folks to pursue their interests or try out something new! If you're a fan of board games and card games, then our monthly Game Night is perfect for you. Stop by on Wednesday, Dec. 3 at 6:30 p.m. for a fun evening of playing games like Settlers of Catan, Ticket to Ride, Munchkin, and more. Have a favorite game you'd like to share? Bring it along. This is a drop-in event for adults ages 18 and older, and light refreshments will be served. Are you a writer looking to connect with other writers? Join our Writers Group hosted by Katherine Anderson on Thursday, Dec. 18 at 6 p.m. This in-person workshop is open to writers of all levels and genres. There

will be opportunities for peer and host feedback, finding opportunities for submission to magazines, literary journals, and presses, and more. Registration is required.

If you're not able to stop by the library in person this month, check out our virtual offerings! We have one Virtual Author Talk in December and it's sure to be a wild ride! Join us for an online chat with debut author Sue Hincenbergs to discuss her novel *The Retirement Plan*, in which murder is the name of the game. When the only thing standing between three best friends and a sunny beachfront retirement condo are their husbands, what ensues is a diabolical plan to collect on their spouses' life insurance policies. This virtual author talk is on Tuesday, December 2 at 2PM; register online at [library.org/agawamlibrary](http://library.org/agawamlibrary). Our Career Workshops and Networking Group is a great way for mature job seekers to access career and networking resources. Our two Zoom sessions this month include Second Act Careers on Wednesday, Dec. 3 and Marketing Plan on Wednesday, Dec. 17. Both presentations are from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m., but there is an opportunity for informal networking at 9 a.m. Registrants can sign up online to receive the Zoom meeting links.

Professional wrestling fans take note. We have an

extra special event coming up in the new year that you won't want to miss. Author, podcaster and former WWE media journalist Brian R. Solomon will host a presentation and book signing for his latest book, *Irresistible Force: the Life and Times of Gorilla Monsoon* on Saturday, Jan. 24 at 10 a.m. Brian's encyclopedic knowledge of professional wrestling is clearly displayed in his biography of Gorilla Monsoon, one of the original character wrestlers in the early days of the WWF/WWF and later the "voice" of the WWF events. Don't miss this amazing opportunity to connect with this prolific chronicler of the professional wrestling world! Registration to attend this event will open on Dec. 22.

Thank you to the Agawam Center Library Association for sponsoring select library programs. The library will continue collecting non-perishable food items throughout December. Upcoming holiday closings include: closing at 12:30 p.m. on Dec. 24, closed on Dec. 25, closing at 5 p.m. on Dec. 31, closed on Jan. 1. During the winter months, any closings or late openings due to inclement weather will be reported to local TV stations 22 and 40, as well as their websites and the library's social media platforms.

## Agawam DPW hosting used, broken holiday light collection

AGAWAM – Frustrated with broken holiday lights, or just have a bunch that no longer suits your needs? No matter what the reason, resist the urge to throw old holiday lights in the curbside trash or recycling collection cart. Holiday light strings are known as "tanglers" in the recycling industry. Tanglers are things

like plastic bags, ropes, cords, hoses, wires, and light strings that jam sorting machinery by wrapping around the equipment, which is dangerous for workers.

Light strings may be delivered to the Department of Public Works front office from Dec. 1 to Jan. 16. This program is for light strings

only: incandescent, LED and "icicle" light strings with wires and attached bulbs. Boxes, bags, and packaging must be removed before placing lights in the recycling container. Alternative options for recycling light strings would include mail back programs such as [HolidayLEDs.com](http://HolidayLEDs.com) or [Christmas-light-source.com](http://Christmas-light-source.com)

## Community invited to help chart future of Holyoke Community College

HOLYOKE — Regional leaders from diverse sectors of the Pioneer Valley economy will gather at Holyoke Community College on Tuesday, Dec. 2, for a discussion that will help create the next chapter in the college's 80-year history.

The general public is also invited to attend this breakfast event, "Shaping the Future: A Community Conversation," from 7:30 to 10 a.m. in the PeoplesBank Conference Room (301/303) in the Kittredge Center for Business and Workforce Development, on the main HCC campus, 303 Homestead Ave.

The panelists include: Megan Burke, president of the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts; Anne Kandilis, director of Springfield WORKS; Frank Martínez López, executive director of Enlace de Familias; Jason Pacheco, director of workforce planning and analytics at Baystate Health; Javier Reyes, chancellor of the University of Massachusetts Amherst; and Aaron Vega, director of the Office

of Planning and Economic Development for the city of Holyoke, and incoming president and chief executive officer of the Western Mass Economic Development Council.

Among the other attendees will be state Rep. Pat Duffy, John Reiff, director of civic learning and engagement with the Mass. Dept. of Higher Education, and representatives from MassHire Holyoke, Way Finders, Holyoke Health Center, Tech Foundry, Holyoke Public Schools, Dean Tech, Nuestras Raices, and the Public Health Institute of Western Mass.

President Timmons will kick off the event and set the stage for this community conversation. A question-and-answer session will follow the panel discussion. "At Holyoke Community College, student success is a community effort," said President George Timmons. "When our students thrive — when they graduate, transfer, gain new skills, launch careers, and become leaders — our entire region

benefits. These leaders, our education partners, and others will share perspectives on the opportunities and challenges facing our community, sparking table conversations that will inform how we write the next chapter for HCC — and for our region."

The event is part of "SP 3.0," the third iteration of the college's strategic planning process, which began with the start of the fall semester. The college drafted its first strategic plan in 2018. That plan was refreshed in 2021.

So far, emerging priorities for Strategic Plan 3.0 include collaboration and partnerships, and workforce and post-graduation success.

"Together, we've achieved many of the ambitious goals of our previous strategic plans, creating pathways and opportunities that have transformed lives and strengthened our community," said President Timmons. "Strategic Plan 3.0 is the next chapter in that shared work, and we need to hear as many voices as possible to help us chart the course ahead."

## Wreaths Across America holding event at Veterans Cemetery Dec. 13

AGAWAM – On Saturday, Dec. 13 at 10 a.m., the Friends of the Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Agawam will join Wreaths Across America in our annual mission to Remember, Honor, and Teach.

Together, we will lay Remembrance wreaths on the graves of our nation's heroes at the Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemetery, located at 1390 Main Street, Agawam, MA.

Parking and Shuttle Information: Parking will be available at Six Flags New England, with shuttles running to the cemetery beginning at 8 a.m. Please plan to arrive early to allow for shuttle transport and seating before the ceremony begins.

The Friends of the Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Agawam is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to honoring those who have served, com-

forting their families, and enhancing the beauty and dignity of this eternal resting place.

By sponsoring a wreath through the Friends, you help ensure that every veteran resting at the cemetery is remembered with a wreath of honor and gratitude.

For more information or to sponsor a wreath, please visit our website at [agawam-friends.org](http://agawam-friends.org) or email us at [wreathfriends@gmail.com](mailto:wreathfriends@gmail.com).



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# December events offered for kids and teenagers at the library

AGAWAM – There is a lot to celebrate at the Agawam Library this December. We will have fun, free programs for kids and teens, including a Lantern Making & Winter Sing-along for all ages. At the Lantern Making and Winter Sing-along we will make lanterns together and sing together to celebrate the Winter Solstice. To register for this event, or any of our other December events go to our website: [agawamlibrary.org](http://agawamlibrary.org) or call 413-789-1550 ext. 3.

Programs are listed in alphabetical order.

Art and Stories - For ages 3 - 5

Tuesday, Dec. 9 and 23 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 Dec. 11 at 9:30 a.m. - Drop-in.

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

Family Game Night - For All Ages

Wednesday, Dec. 17 at 6 p.m. - Drop-in. No registration required.

Bring the family and play board games together. We will have many options available, but you are welcome to bring your own.

Family Take and Make Crafts - For all ages

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

A new Take and Make craft will be available the first day of each week and again on Thursdays.

Dec. 1 and 4: Hot Cocoa Ornament, Dec. 8 and 11: Penguin Bookmark,

Dec. 15 and 18: Frosty the Snowman Sign, Dec. 22 and 24: Deer Hand Puppet,

Dec. 29 and 31: Fireworks Paper Cup Craft

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

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

No class Dec. 24 through Dec. 31

Stories, songs and skill

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

Lantern Making and Winter Sing-Along - For all ages

Tuesday, Dec. 16 from 6 to 7 p.m. - Registration is required.

Celebrate the Winter Solstice and the return of the sun! Participants will craft a wax paper lantern and illuminate the night sky with an outdoor singalong. This intergenerational program is open to all ages and craft materials will be provided.

Please be sure to dress warmly for the outdoor portion of this event.

Music With Mr. Liam - All Ages

This program is provided by Pathways for Parents.

Saturday, Dec. 13 at 9:30 a.m. - Registration is required

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

Open Lego Building - For

grades 1-4

Tuesday, Dec. 16 at 4:30 p.m. - Registration is required

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

Pre-K Pals - For ages 3 - 5

This program is provided by Pathways for Parents.

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

No class on Monday, Dec. 29. We will provide activities to help your child to learn through playing.

Silent Book Club - For grades 5-6

Monday, Dec. 1 at 6 p.m. - Registration is required.

Bring your current or new read and join us in a chill read session. Afterwards we'll have time to share snacks and talk books.

Special Saturday Drop-In Craft: 3-D Winter Ornament

Join us for All Ages

Saturday, Dec. 27, All Day - While supplies last - Drop-in and pick up.

Create snowy scenes you'll be proud to display. Great for winter crafts, these

3D ornaments feature either a smiling snowman or cheerful reindeer.

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

Saturday, Dec. 20 at 9:30 a.m. - Registration is required

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

Teen Advisory Board - For grades 7-12

Wednesday, Dec. 10 at 6 p.m.

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

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

Tuesdays, Dec. 2, 9, 16, and 23 at 2 p.m.

Stop by the library after school and visit the Activi-

ty Room. Play our Nintendo Switch, try out the button maker, eat snacks, or just hang out. No registration necessary. There is no Drop-in on Dec. 30.

Teen Take and Make Craft - For grades 7-12

Available starting Monday, Dec. 1

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

Teen Trivia Thursday - For grades 7-12

Thursdays, Dec. 4, 11, and 18 from 2 to 3:30 p.m.

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

Toddler Time - For 19 mo. - 36 mo.

Monday, Dec. 8 and 22 at 9:30 a.m. - Drop-in.

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

Winter Bingo - For grades K-4

Tuesday, Dec. 30 at 6 p.m. - Registration is required.

Come play winter themed bingo. Prizes will be awarded every round.

## Scholarship and Fellowship funds available for local residents

WESTFIELD – The Horace Smith Fund, located in Westfield, Massachusetts has scholarship and fellowship money available for residents of Hampden County, MA. Graduating high school seniors and students already in college may apply for Scholarships of up to \$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 merit. 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, \$297,000 was awarded to 24 individuals. Scholarships were given to 18 graduating seniors from 11 Hampden County high schools. Three scholarships were also awarded to current college students to assist them in completing their undergraduate degrees, and three 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, 2026. Applications will also be available at local high school guidance offices, college financial aid offices, online at [www.HoraceSmithFund.org](http://www.HoraceSmithFund.org) or by phoning (413) 739-4222.

## Santa Claus heads for Holyoke Mall

HOLYOKE – Santa Claus is set to make his return from the North Pole to Holyoke Mall on Friday, Nov. 21, with a special arrival event this Saturday, Nov. 22. The magic begins at 11 a.m. on Saturday with a fire truck arrival, at the mall entrance next to Pickleball Kingdom, near JCPenney.

Guests are encouraged to arrive before 11 a.m. to gather for Santa's arrival to make sure they don't miss his grand entrance with the Holyoke Fire Department. Santa Claus will be escort-

ed to his village in Café Square by the Colby Academy of Dance, followed by a special holiday performance from the group.

The holiday festivities continue with free face painting and balloon twisting by Dazzle Day Face Painters.

Photos with Santa are available in Café Square immediately following his arrival until Christmas Eve. Babies, children, families, and even pets are invited and more details are available here. Reservations are strongly encouraged and

can be made by visiting [whereissanta.com](http://whereissanta.com).

Along with Santa comes the start of the holiday shopping season, and Holyoke Mall is announcing special hours to ensure that guests can shop in-store at their convenience. The center will be closed on Thanksgiving, Thursday, Nov. 27, and re-open on Black Friday, Nov. 28 at 7 a.m. and will close at 9 a.m. Click here for a complete calendar of Holyoke Mall's holiday shopping hours scheduled for the 2025 season.

## St. Patrick's Committee hosting painting event

AGAWAM – Join members of the Agawam St. Patrick's Committee on Tuesday, Dec. 2 from 6 to 9 p.m. for a holiday gourd painting event. Gather your friends for some holiday painting therapy. The

cost to participate is \$35 and tickets are available at [zeffy.com/en-us/ticketing/holiday-gourd-painting](http://zeffy.com/en-us/ticketing/holiday-gourd-painting). You can also email [agawamstpatricks37@gmail.com](mailto:agawamstpatricks37@gmail.com) or call 413-244-2610. The event will take place

at Take 5 Restaurant on Springfield St.

## Open house to be held Dec. 12 at Captain Charles Leonard House

AGAWAM – A free open house in celebration of the season will be held at the Captain Charles Leonard House, 663 Main Street, on Friday evening, Dec. 12, from 6 to 8 p.m. The event is hosted by the Trustees of historic property and will feature tours of the house, seasonal refreshments, and good cheer. On display that evening will be the collection of Agawam resident and detectorist Chris MacNeil, the majority of which were discovered in town, and includes musket balls, coins, rings, and other relics, some of which date to the early 18th century. Seasonal music performed during the event 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. Built in 1805 as a stage tavern to service travelers on the Hartford/Boston/Albany route, the Captain Charles Leonard House is considered Agawam's finest Federal-era building. The house was restored by Mrs. Minerva Davis, who established a Board of Trustees to oversee the operation of the house as Agawam's Community House, the role it has served since 1939. The Captain Charles Leonard House was featured in/photographed for The White Pine



The Captain Charles Leonard House is decorated for the season and ready to host the public at a free open house on Friday, Dec. 12 from 6 to 8 p.m.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Series, Vol. XI, No. 4 (1925); recorded by the Historic American Buildings Survey (1934); and featured in Some Old Homes of the Lower Connecticut Valley (1988). The Captain Charles Leonard House was listed in the National Register of Historic

Places in 1975. The Captain Charles Leonard House is available for holiday parties, business functions and social events. For rental information, please call 413-786-9421. Please follow us on Facebook.

## Blue Christmas Service on Dec. 21

AGAWAM – Feeding Hills Congregational Church, 21 North Westfield St. invites the community to a Blue Christmas Service on Sunday, Dec. 21 at 7 p.m. This

may be the first holiday season after a loss, or perhaps 2025 has been a difficult year. All are welcome to seek hope together in a supportive worship service. Come

as you are, to join for prayer, songs, and an Advent reflection. Join us as we seek hope and healing together. For more information call 413-786-5061.

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## Opinion

## Guest Column



By Russell Gloor

## If we both collect Social Security, will our benefits be affected?

### Dear Rusty:

I reached full retirement age back in June, but I have not yet filed to collect Social Security. My husband currently collects SS funds, and he waited until he had reached full retirement age a few years ago. I am considering signing up now to receive my funds, but I am a little confused about whether I will receive my full benefit or is there some kind of adjustment made based on both of us collecting?

We are a simple case. We have been married for 46 years, so there are no other exes involved in this equation. He did everything online when he was ready to start receiving his funds, but we didn't consult with any advisor when my husband claimed. Now I think that adding me as a spouse might trigger some other things I should consider. Thank you for your advice.

Signed: Concerned Wife

### Dear Concerned:

Since you and your husband have both reached your respective SS Full Retirement Age, you are both entitled to receive your full benefits without any reduction. And since you haven't yet filed, you are now accumulating Delayed Retirement Credits at the rate of 667% additional benefit for each month you continue to delay. You will get your full SS retirement benefit plus any earned DRCs when you claim. The only question you need to consider is whether either you or your husband will be entitled to a "spousal boost," an increase when you claim.

If the SS retirement benefit you were entitled to at your FRA is less than 50% the amount your husband was entitled to at his FRA, then you will get a "spousal boost" on top of your own SS retirement amount (the "boost" amount would be the difference between your FRA amount and half of his FRA amount). But if your SS amount at your FRA is more than 50% of your husband's FRA entitlement, then you

will only get your own SS retirement benefit based on your own lifetime earnings record. Spouse benefits are always determined from each partner's FRA entitlement and if one partner's FRA amount is less than 50% of the other partner's FRA amount, then a spousal boost will be given. And that also works if your FRA entitlement is higher than your husband's, if your FRA amount is more than twice your husband's FRA amount, then he will get a spousal boost from you. Otherwise, each of you will get only your personally earned SS retirement amount and both of you collecting SS will not negatively affect each other's individual SS benefit.

FYI, the spousal boost amount stops growing at full retirement age, so if you are eligible for a spousal boost from your husband then you should claim your SS benefits now and ask for benefits retroactive to June (your FRA month). However, if you will not get a spousal boost from your husband, you have the option of delaying even further and earning more DRCs (thus a higher monthly benefit). You can earn DRCs up to age 70, at which time you will get the maximum possible Social Security benefit about 127% of your personal FRA amount if you delay that long.

*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](http://amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory) or email us at [ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org](mailto:ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org). Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.*

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# THANKS for GIVING



DAVE GRANLUND © www.davegranlund.com

## Random Acts of Kindness: Marline Claremont

By Barb Turcotte  
Guest Columnist

It was such a joy being introduced, then chatting with Marline Claremont. At first her sleeves were down but soon it got warmer and she pushed them up revealing several tattoos. She admitted she has over 30, each one having very significant meaning, they aren't just haphazard.

She has a rather diverse background. She worked as a truck driver for over 20 years, explaining in the trucking trade most had tattoos which is when she started getting hers. She explained what some of them meant to her, one in particular that I'll clarify later.

After leaving trucking, she did a stint as a real estate broker then moved on to owning her own mortgage brokerage. Soon after that she was offered a job by the President of a bank because he saw what an incredibly hard worker she was. Claremont then began her next career; banking. She worked for various banks in the area and wound up obtaining the position of the first Vice President of Retail Lending. With a laugh she explained that she always wore long sleeves for that professional look needed in the banking industry.

When I asked about random acts of kindness she'd done, she said she worked so much supporting herself and her family she never had time to volunteer. Then she explained how she would do things monetarily instead and always put charity in her budget. Rather than giving to a big named charity, she prefers making a difference by giving to someone personally. Perhaps seeing someone buying groceries who's struggling so helps them with their bill. She explained how someone she'd heard about was having a

financial difficulty, anonymously, she sent a money order to them for two-hundred dollars. She said she likes to do things quietly knowing she is helping an individual in their time of need.

We agreed, people somehow just cross another's paths whether it's you noticing they need help or sometimes it's like this, our meeting so I'm able to tell her story. She also was a foster mom to a young boy who is now thirty-two and is still very much in her life.

Now that Claremont is retired, she has time to volunteer and is dedicated to making a difference in honoring our local fallen veterans. She became involved with the 'Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Agawam' when she lost her son in July of 2022. He is one of her tattoos. He was a veteran of the Coast Guard and she is now the guardian of his child. This young person made the comment to Claremont, "I lost my dad and that's hard but you lost your son". Quite a comment of maturity and understanding from such a young person.

In order to be on the board of Agawam Veteran's Council, which is a separate organization, you have to be a veteran. Not being a veteran herself, Claremont became a co-coordinator of 'Wreaths Across America' and is serving her second term in that role along with someone from the Veterans Council.

In 2024 a new organization was formed called Friends of the Agawam Veterans Council so non-military people could help and also hold an office. Claremont is on this board. Some of the things they do as "Friends" is cleaning the headstones and hope to help with a digital sign in the future.

One of the big things as president, Claremont is responsible for is fundraising

for 'Wreaths Across America'. On Dec. 13 they will be placing wreaths on each gravesite in the cemetery and I was truly surprised by the number of wreaths it would take to accomplish this mission. In order to do this, they need 10,800 wreaths, and that's just at the Agawam Veteran's Cemetery. Each wreath costs \$17 which means they need a lot of help to accomplish this. Luckily, they do get money from business sponsors and citizen's donations but they still need help to reach their goal of 5,000 wreaths to be able to achieve this feat. To sponsor a wreath you can make a donation at: [www.wreathscrossamerica.org/MA0110P](http://www.wreathscrossamerica.org/MA0110P) and for more information on how to get involved with Friends of MA Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Agawam, the address is PO Box 03, Feeding Hills, MA 01030 or [www.agawamfriends.org](http://www.agawamfriends.org)

Another way you can help is getting involved with 'One Call Away', also located in Agawam. Their mission is to support veterans who suffer from PTSD and also help to prevent suicide. Their website is: [www.onecallawayfoundation.org](http://www.onecallawayfoundation.org) or call 413-301-6026, Local crisis 413-367-8738, National crisis is 988.

Thankfully we have people like Claremont who have this type of devotion and dedication willing to give of themselves. As you can see, it's not always monetary but instead a contribution of time and commitment. Thank you, Marline Claremont.

If you'd like to share a Random Act of Kindness story or if this one has touched you, please contact me at [bdt514@aol.com](mailto:bdt514@aol.com) or 413-575-9385. Who knows, you might see your story, 'Just 'Cause' you witnessed, you did or maybe received something nice being done for you. See you soon with another Random Act of Kindness.

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## Beautification Committee thanks sponsors for barrel campaign

Dear Editor,

The Agawam Beautification Committee's 2025 "Sponsor a Barrel" program was successful again thanks to the following sponsors.

The Committee would like to thank the following sponsors who made our town more beautiful by their commitment and support:

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These sponsorships fund the planting, placement, watering and maintenance of each barrel for the season. In appreciation of their support, the Agawam Beautification Committee had signs made up with the sponsor's name that were displayed in the barrels throughout town.

We plan to offer this tax-deductible incentive program again next year. Anyone interested in participating in this beautification effort may contact the Agawam Beautification Committee by calling the Planning Department at the Agawam Town at 413-786-9245 for more information, or visit our Facebook page.

With thanks and appreciation,  
The Members of the Agawam Beautification Committee

# A different kind of concierge medicine



By Teri (Dreher) Frykenberg, RN  
Guest Column

The rise of concierge medicine shows no signs of slowing down. Frustrated with long wait times for appointments, waiting room delays and only brief conversations with their doctor, those who can afford it are shelling out hundreds of dollars each month for faster care and attention, 24-hour access and personalized health programs.

It's understandable that, in our fractured health-care system, people would start looking for alternatives. There are some drawbacks to concierge care, however.

Many don't accept insurance, in order to keep their own costs low. You will still need to pay for insurance in case a serious illness or injury requires hospitalization or a specialist. And not all concierge docs have hospital privileges, which may complicate care coordination – especially important for someone with multiple chronic illnesses.

It's that coordination, or "wraparound care," that sets private patient advocates apart from concierge doctors. Both offer concierge-style service, but a patient advocate goes above and beyond. When you pay for a patient advocate, you can expect them to be there when you need them, anticipate your needs, cut through red tape and run interference with hospitals and insurance companies.

Here are some scenarios where I think the concierge services of a nurse patient advocate may exceed those of concierge doctors.

When an aging loved one is on their own: Very often, patient advocates are hired by family members trying to care for an elder who lives far away and may not have family close by. We are their

boots on the ground, their eyes and ears, and their go-between with the medical professions caring for their loved one.

When you feel the hospital medical staff isn't hearing you: It's not uncommon for patients and patients' families to feel like their concerns are being overlooked or, worse, dismissed. A medically trained patient advocate speaks the language and can build bridges, mediate conflict and dial back the drama.

When your insurance claim is denied: Insurance documents can be wildly confusing. It helps to have someone on your side who can read through the mumbo-jumbo and explain whether an appeal may be successful. A patient advocate can also help prepare an appeal.

When a "simple" medical procedure turns into a nightmare: One of my clients was a 75-year-old gentleman who developed complications after a procedure. Unfortunately, the hospital and his physicians didn't meet the standard of care, leading him to have a stroke, internal bleeding, dehydration and a host of problems. He became delusional after days in the hospital and was given anti-psychotic drugs. I was able to intervene with the care team, and his condition improved.

When a patient isn't ready for discharge: Hospitals very often want to get chronically ill patients out of their beds and into a nursing facility. Sometimes this is the right thing to do, but sometimes it isn't. A nurse patient advocate can evaluate a patient and work with the care team to make sure it's the proper course, and then help with the transition.

When a college student

with a medical condition is away from home: It's unlikely that the typical 18- or 19-year-old has the maturity to advocate for themselves in a medical crisis. Parents may not be there to give their student the personal attention they may need to understand their treatment, speak with medical staff and schedule tests and appointments. A patient advocate in the student's location can help.

When there's no one to go with you to a doctor appointment: Doctor appointments these days can feel rushed, and often patients are confused about what they're supposed to do next, what medications are changing and what prescriptions need to be filled. Anyone can accompany you to an appointment to take notes, but if you're on your own, a patient advocate can explain the details.

The most important aspect of a patient advocate's "concierge service" is that they work for the patient, their client – not the hospital, not the insurance company. If you need help, find a board-certified patient advocate in your area by visiting Greater National Advocates (gnow.org) or the National Association of Healthcare Advocacy (nahac.com).

*Teri (Dreher) Frykenberg, is a registered nurse and board-certified patient advocate and founder of www.NurseAdvocateEntrepreneur.com, which trains medical professionals to become successful private patient advocates. Teri offers a free phone consultation to Turley Newspaper readers as well as to nurses interested in becoming advocates. Reach her at Teri@NurseAdvocateEntrepreneur.com.*

# Suffield Players announce newest production

SUFFIELD, CT – This December, The Suffield Players invite audiences to laugh their way through the season with 8 Ways to Survive the Holidays, a spirited comedy by Don Zolidis presented as the theatre's annual Holiday Benefit for its Hope-Hearth-Happiness season. Performances will take place December 12, 13, and 14 at Mapleton Hall, 1305 Mapleton Avenue, Suffield, CT.

Directed collaboratively by Becca Coolong, Mary Fernandez-Sierra, Konrad Rogowski, and Kelly Seip, this year's benefit blends heart, humor, and holiday mayhem in a collection of short sketches that celebrate the joy (and occasional chaos) of the festive season.

## Four Directors, One Merry Mission

Each director brings their own perspective to the eight comedic vignettes, which highlight everything from disastrous family photos to impossible gift lists and culinary catastrophes—all threaded together by a pair of narrators trying their best to keep the holiday madness under control.

Director Becca Coolong describes the project as a joyful reunion of creativity and friendship: "I was drawn to this production because I was looking forward to the opportunity to work with so many people I love." Coolong said, "As we head into the holiday season, the thing that is most important to me is connecting and creating with my people. 8 Ways to Survive the Holidays is a collection of silly and light-hearted sketches that allow us to work together in fun and joy!"

For Mary Fernandez-Sierra, the Holiday Benefit is a chance to go "no-holds-barred" with comedy and creativity: "I love directing The Players' Holiday Benefits for the opportunity to direct over-the-top crazy comedy," she shared. "It's pure fun to have so many folks together

in a relaxed atmosphere to laugh and have a wonderful time!"

Fernandez-Sierra also praised the easy collaboration among the directing team: "All four directors have worked together before, so there's a lot of trust in each other's abilities. We're similar in our approaches—we all run a tight-but-fun ship! We communicate constantly and help each other solve potential problems ahead of time—like how to make Proton Blasters from scratch for one of my scenes involving 'The Ghostbusters!'"

## Balancing Humor and Heart

Though each vignette bursts with laughter, the directors agree that heart remains at the center of the show.

Coolong noted, "You can't have humor without heart! We want to make these pieces relatable so everyone can find a bit of themselves somewhere in the stories."

Rogowski added that laughter unites both cast and audience: "These are silly characters doing silly things—and that's the joy of it!" he said. "We all face the same holiday chaos, but humor helps us step back, breathe, and remember the true heart of the season."

Fernandez-Sierra agreed, emphasizing that the scripts themselves strike the perfect balance: "Each script shines a spotlight on the stressful side of our most common holiday experiences—family photos, big meals, decorations, gift-giving—and reveals how those stresses can be handled in humorous, unconventional ways. It's cleverly and insightfully written, so it's easy for all the actors to relate."

## Community and Connection on Stage

In keeping with The Suffield Players' long-standing spirit of community, 8 Ways to Survive the Holidays

brings together a vibrant mix of seasoned performers and newcomers. One cast member shared that his favorite part of the production has been meeting and collaborating with both new and returning actors in a relaxed, low-pressure environment that encourages creativity and connection.

He described the atmosphere as reminiscent of The Players' New Faces Program—a welcoming opportunity for artists to learn, grow, and become part of the larger theatre family. Among his fellow performers is a newcomer appearing onstage for only her second time, inspired to audition by her son, who performed in A Few Good Men last winter. Her enthusiasm and dedication, he noted, have brought an inspiring sense of discovery to the ensemble.

Moments like these highlight how The Suffield Players continue to build connections through creativity—making the Holiday Benefit not only a show, but a celebration of artistic community.

## The Heart of the Benefit

The annual Holiday Benefit is one of The Suffield Players' most beloved traditions—combining laughter, generosity, and community spirit. Proceeds from the event support the theatre's ongoing artistic programming, scholarships, and accessibility efforts as part of its Hope-Hearth-Happiness 2025-2026 season.

When asked how they personally "survive the holidays," the directors were quick to share their own wisdom:

Coolong: "Pie... lots and lots of pie."  
Rogowski: "Remember the real purpose of each holiday and enjoy being with the people with whom you share them."  
Fernandez-Sierra: "Be grateful for everything that happens and throw yourself into it all with a good heart."



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**CLUES ACROSS**

1. Popular wine \_\_\_ Spumante
5. Greatly impressed
11. \_\_\_ and that
12. Uttered with passion
16. Boats
17. Veteran actor Harris
18. Casserole with game
19. Reprehensible acts
24. They precede C
25. Says under one's breath
26. Taxis
27. It transfers genetic info
28. NFL great Randy
29. Where college students sleep
30. Major European river
31. Taco condiment
33. -frutti
34. Polish city
38. Astronomy unit

39. Khoikhoi peoples
40. Bears QB Williams
43. Scrambled, fried, boiled
44. Price indicators
45. One-time world power
49. When you hope to get somewhere
50. Farm building
51. Choose carefully
53. Magnum was one
54. One who combines
56. Nursemaids
58. Partner to Pa
59. Notable river
60. Officially honors
63. Colorless compound
64. A fancy chair
65. Email function

**CLUES DOWN**

1. The central area in a building
2. Religion of Japan
3. Leggings
4. Officially distributes
5. Arabian Sea seaport
6. Spanish doctors
7. It cools your house
8. Currency of Poland
9. Slowly moves into
10. Days (Spanish)
13. Unit of volume
14. Emit
15. With two replaceable hydrogens
20. Title for a man
21. Equally
22. Scarlett's home
23. One-time tech titan
27. Subway dwellers
29. One-tenth of a liter
30. Central European river
31. Distress signal
32. Expression of sympathy
33. The bill in a restaurant

34. Football equipment
35. Dance music
36. Russian river
37. Cosmetics giant Mary
38. Gym class
40. Automobiles
41. Roman honorific
42. Losses in sports
44. Skin tone in summer
45. Distant planet
46. Critical humor
47. Illegally obtained
48. Go back over
50. Home appliance brand
51. Unit of radioactivity
52. Home of the Flyers
54. Short official note
55. Emit coherent radiation
57. Anno Domini (in the year of Our Lord)
61. Most common noble gas (abbr.)
62. Toward

**CROSSWORD SOLUTION ON PAGE xx**



HCC President George Timmons, far left, celebrates with a fall 2024 graduate and her family.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

## Holyoke Community to host annual fall graduate reception on Dec. 1

HOLYOKE — Holyoke Community College will honor its fall semester graduates with a special recognition event on Monday, Dec. 1.

The Fall Graduate Reception will run from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on the HCC main campus, 303 Homestead Ave., beginning in the Leslie Phillips Theater for the official ceremony and continuing with a reception in the Campus Center.

HCC initiated the fall

ceremony in 2023 to engage graduates who complete their degrees and certificates in December by the end of the fall semester.

According to the HCC Registrar's Office, 190 HCC students will be fall 2025 semester graduates. Many of them will transfer to four-year schools for the spring 2026 semester. Although fall graduates are always invited to attend HCC's formal Commencement ceremony in the spring, in the past, many did

not attend.

The goal of the family-friendly event is to celebrate fall graduates and strengthen their connection to HCC in the hopes that they will remain engaged and attend the college's 79th Commencement ceremony on Saturday, May 30, 2026.

During the first part of the event in the Leslie Phillips Theater, Registrar Allison Wrobel and President George Timmons will offer introductory remarks, fol-

lowed by two student speakers: psychology major Sachelys Perez of Ware, and liberal arts major Jamal Cumberbatch of Springfield. HCC alum Trudy Monson '97, also of Holyoke, president of the HCC Alumni Council, will welcome the fall graduates as new members of HCC's Alumni Association.

About 6:15 p.m., students and their families will be directed to the Campus Center for appetizers, activities, and photo opportunities.

## Museum announces return of the 'Penguin Plunge'

WESTFIELD — Amelia Park Children's Museum announces the return of the Penguin Plunge to be held on Saturday, Jan. 24, 2026, at 1 p.m. at Hampton Ponds State Park, Westfield MA. Check-in begins at 11:30 a.m. Proceeds from the Penguin Plunge will benefit the museum.

"The Penguin Plunge is a long-standing tradition in Westfield. We are very excited that we're able to host the Penguin Plunge in 2026," said Diane Chambers, Executive Director of the museum. "We want to make this event a Plunge for the record books!" A member of the founding board, Chambers, explains that interest in the museum is at an all-time high. "We are seeing a tremendous increase in the number of visitors we serve. Please join us as we work to enhance our facility and programs to continue serving our community's growing needs." Through the years participants and sponsors of the Plunge have helped to raise over \$370,000 to support Amelia Park Children's Museum.

Plunge participants may join as an individual or as a team. Each participant pledges to raise a minimum of \$75 from friends and

family and is encouraged to collect as many sponsors as possible. Those under the age of 18 will receive a registration discount of \$25.

There are monetary prizes of "cold hard cash" for the top three individuals or teams that raise the most money; first place - \$300, second place - \$200, third place - \$100.

A costume contest is part of the fun, and participants are encouraged to come dressed creatively. There will be prizes for Best Individual Costume and Best Team Costume.

Register in advance online or at the Plunge on the day of the event from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Participants will receive a free 2026 Penguin Plunge T-shirt (while supplies last).

Sponsorship opportunities, registration and pledge forms are available via the museum website <https://www.ameliaparkmuseum.org/penguin-plunge> or can be picked up at the museum.

Don't want to jump in the water? No worries! Be a spectator and cheer on the brave participants. Hot chocolate, coffee, s'mores and other refreshments will be available to keep everyone warm.

## Holyoke Medical earns 'A' grade for hospital safety

HOLYOKE — Holyoke Medical Center earned an "A" Hospital Safety Grade from The Leapfrog Group, an independent national nonprofit watchdog focused on patient safety. Leapfrog assigns an "A," "B," "C," "D" or "F" grade to general hospitals across the country using evidence-based measures of patient safety focused exclusively on errors, accidents, injuries and infections.

"Holyoke Medical Center is proud to achieve an 'A' grade, providing our community with the safe, high-quality care they deserve," said Spiros Hatiras,

President and Chief Executive Officer of Holyoke Medical Center and Valley Health Systems. "This honor recognizes the dedication of our physicians, nurses, and all staff for prioritizing patient safety."

"Earning an 'A' Grade means Holyoke Medical Center made a true commitment to put patient safety first," said Leah Binder, president and CEO of The Leapfrog Group.

The Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade stands as the only hospital ratings program focused solely on preventable medical errors,

infections and injuries that kill more than 500 patients a day in the United States. This program is peer-reviewed, fully transparent and free to the public. Grades are updated twice annually, in the fall and spring.

To explore Holyoke Medical Center's full grade details and to find valuable tips for staying safe in the hospital, visit [HospitalSafetyGrade.org](http://HospitalSafetyGrade.org). Connect with The Leapfrog Group on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram and stay informed through The Leapfrog Group newsletter.

## Zero Waste Club announces annual toy collection begins

AGAWAM — The Agawam Zero Waste Club, Agawam High School Environmental Club and National Honor Society are hosting the 10th Annual Holiday Used Toy Exchange. This event was created to become a source of holiday gifts for residents on tight budgets, as well as increase the lifespan of consumer goods which are discarded long before their usefulness is waned.

Gently used, clean, working toys may be dropped off at the Agawam Public Library on Friday, Dec. 5, from 12 noon to 4:30 p.m. Gently used toys wanted

include musical instruments, action figures, dolls, sports equipment, books, bicycles, electronics, video games, DVDs, stuffed animals, model kits, art supplies, building toys, creative learning toys, outdoor toys and structures, games, puzzles and baby toys. No dirty, broken or incomplete toys will be accepted. All donations should be inspected before being dropped off.

General public free shopping of these gently used toys will be on Saturday, Dec. 6, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. In order to share with as many families as possible, families will be limited

to an amount they are able to carry in one trip to their vehicle. Shoppers are asked to bring their own reusable shopping bags, as this is a zero-waste event. Any toys remaining will be donated to local charities. Children should not be brought into the shopping area, so that each toy will be an exciting surprise. An activity will be available to children while adults shop. For more information, visit [www.agawam.ma.us](http://www.agawam.ma.us) under the events column or email Nancy Bobskill at [AgawamZeroWaste@gmail.com](mailto:AgawamZeroWaste@gmail.com). The Agawam Public Library is located at 750 Cooper St.

## Mall announces Salvation Army fundraising

HOLYOKE — The Holyoke Mall is proud to partner with The Salvation Army for their annual Red Kettle Campaign Kick Off event. This event signals the start of an initiative which funds programs and services for thousands of families, youth, and senior citizens in our community and across Massachusetts each year.

Bell ringers will be accepting donations at various exterior entrances and

interior locations across the shopping center until Dec. 24. The event will also feature a performance from the Holyoke High School Madrigal Choir.

To complement the Red Kettle Campaign, The Salvation Army is set to host another annual tradition, the Angel Tree. This program provides clothing and toys for children in need.

According to The Salvation Army, each Angel Tree

is decorated with numbered paper angel tags with the first name, age, and gender of a child who is in need of a gift. Contributors remove one, or more, tags from the tree and purchase appropriate gifts for the child or children described on the tags. Guests are encouraged to visit the Angel Tree on the Upper Level near AT&T beginning on Friday, Nov. 14 and until Wednesday, Dec. 24.

## Polish National Alliance Lodge 711 to host Annual Meeting and Christmas Party

CHICOPEE - Lodge 711 Polish National Alliance of Chicopee will hold its annual meeting and election of officers on Sunday, Dec. 7 at 11:30 a.m. followed by the Lodge Christmas party with dinner served promptly at 1 p.m. at the Chicopee Falls Polish Home, 27 Grove Street, Chicopee, MA.

The Christmas party will feature the singing of Polish and English Christmas carols. Refreshments will be available and gifts for members, ages 0-12 will be

distributed by Santa. Assisting the President and Chairman, Joanne Cebula, are Jeannie Zapala and members of Wilbraham PNA Lodge 3276, dinner and refreshments, Teresa Sherman, publicity, and Cindy Kirejczyk, toys, decorations and entertainment. There will be arts and crafts, games, and a hot cocoa station.

We are very fortunate to have volunteers from the National Honor Society at Minnechaug Regional High

School in Wilbraham, MA to assist the committee in preparing and conducting this fun-filled event.

There is no admission fee. Donations for the raffle are welcome to help defray party costs. Please RSVP by Dec. 1.

PNA Lodge 711 is a non-profit organization dedicated to assure an active role in area social, cultural, civic and charitable events. For more information call Teresa Sherman at 413-596-9578.

# Giving Back

with TURLEY PUBLICATIONS

If you are a non-profit please send us your events to add to our calendar section at no charge to your organization.

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## Jammie Jingle 2025 now ongoing

AGAWAM — The Agawam Health Department is collecting new pajamas now through Dec. 5. All sizes infant to 3X (new/with tags).

Pajamas are donated to local charities to give children a new pair of pajamas to wear this holiday season

and throughout the year.

Allison Gaynor is the founder of Jammie Jingle and has been collecting pajamas for over 10 years and hopes to have an awesome turnout this year.

We have been able to donate over 3,000 Jammies to local charities including

Shriners Hospital for Children, CHD for Kids, DCF Springfield and Ronald McDonald Houses of Springfield/Hartford. Contact Pam Franco (726-9722) with questions or donations of pajamas.

Collection box located at Town Hall Health Dept.

## ACC welcoming new members to playgroup

AGAWAM — Come join and grow together. Every Tuesday from 10 to 11 a.m. starting on Tuesday, Sept. 16, Agawam Congre-

gational Church at 745 Main St. Agawam. The group is for all children from birth to five-years-old.

# West of the River Chamber holds annual Food Fest event

AGAWAM – On Thursday, Nov. 13, the West of the River Chamber of Commerce allowed the culinary talents of many local restaurants and entities to shine at its Food Fest event. Visitors to the event were able to get a few samples at some area restaurants, bakeries and even some unique food businesses. Businesses at the event were able to network and promote what they had to offer to various other business-people in the nearby communities. More than a dozen food and restaurant vendors took part in the event.



Crumb Cookies of West Springfield had lots of sweet treats to sample.



Joe Almeida and Brian Day cook up some bacon, chicken, and waffles from Partners Restaurant, which is celebrating its 40th year in business.



Mackenzie Larochelle, Sarah Calabrese-Dunphy, and Laura Mitchell enjoy the event with their drinks and samples.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



Craze, a business that offers charcuterie boards and boxes, shows a ton of different offerings.



Anthony Maspo, a culinary instructor at the Lower Pioneer Valley Education Collaborative in West Springfield, the vocational option for Agawam school students, presents some hors d'oeuvres.



The event was held at Crestview Country Club.



Tables were available for visitors to eat and drink and enjoy the various samples offered.



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# SPORTS

## Brownies shut out in quarterfinals

AGAWAM – Despite a lower seed, Agawam High School boys soccer had a deep run in this year's Division 2 State Tournament. It started with an upset win in double overtime in the Round of 32, then continued with a 1-0 upset of Ashland in the Round of 16 on the road.

But in the quarterfinals,

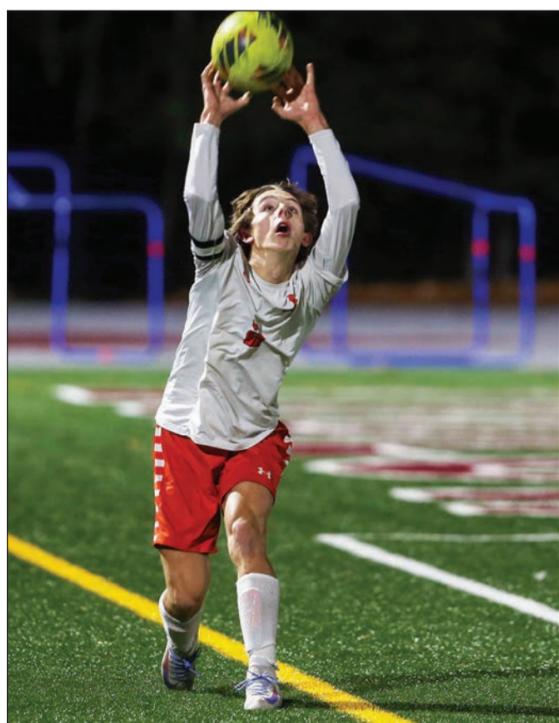
the Brownies finally ran up against an opponent they could not score on, and it happened to be a short ride after two long ones.

Agawam faced Northampton on Nov. 13 at Ludlow High School's turf field in the quarterfinals and was defeated 2-0, ending their season with an overall record of 8-8-7.



Clockwise from left: Connor Glynn takes the throw-in; Jason LaRocque gets a header; Goalie Joey Papadakis punts the ball away; Dawood Atanane heads right to avoid an opponent; Patrick Keating sends away the free kick; John Carra tries to make a stop; Aiden Monaghan tries to avoid being tripped up.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM



### Monadnock set to hold awards banquet

MILFORD, N.H. – Monadnock Speedway is set to close out another thrilling racing season with a night of celebration, recognition, and community. On Saturday, Dec. 13 beginning at 5:30 p.m., the speedway will host its highly anticipated Annual Awards Banquet at the Best Western in Keene, New Hampshire.

The event will spotlight the achievements of the champions and top ten drivers in the regular weekly divisions, while also recognizing the top three in the Six Shooter Division, Teddy Bear Pools & Spas Triple Crown Champions, and competitors in the Young Gun Division for their dedication and commitment to the sport.

In addition, several specialty awards will be presented throughout the evening,

honoring standout performances and contributions both on and off the track.

Fans, drivers, teams, and families are invited to join the festivities as Monadnock Speedway celebrates the close of a competitive season and the community that makes it all possible.

This annual tradition brings together the best of the racing family for an evening of camaraderie, reflection, and excitement for the upcoming season.

To purchase a ticket online go to: <https://square.link/u/jHFglOQf>

Tickets are limited! Event capacity is 200. Seating is 8 to 10 people per table. Requests to be seated with another team may be made by emailing the speedway @ monadnockspeedway@gmail.com.

### T-Birds fall to Wolf Pack in overtime matinee

HARTFORD, CT – The Springfield Thunderbirds (2-10-2-1) could not keep a two-goal lead protected and fell to the Hartford Wolf Pack (4-7-4-0) by a 3-2 final in overtime last Tuesday morning inside PeoplesBank Arena.

For a second straight morning game, the T-Birds got off to a fantastic start, outshooting the Wolf Pack 11-3 in the opening period while holding steady pressure in the Hartford zone. Alek Kaskimaki and Matthew Peca nearly broke the ice with a 2-on-0 in front of Wolf Pack goalie Callum Tung, but the puck wouldn't settle for the T-Birds captain, and the chance came up empty.

The T-Birds' efforts would eventually get rewarded at 13:08 right off a clean draw win by Chris Wagner, who twirled the puck right to a waiting Nikita Alexandrov, who whistled a one-timer over Tung's blocker to give Springfield the 1-0 lead.

3:08 later, the T-Birds' power play unit continued the momentum surge as Logan Mailloux cranked a one-timer past Tung on the glove side off a set-up from Marc-Andre Gaudet, extending the lead to 2-0. Alexandrov got his second point of the stanza with a secondary assist.

Vadim Zherenko barely had to break a sweat in the goal crease in the first, turn-

ing away just three shots in 20 minutes and keeping his team's two-goal lead in tow.

The T-Birds could not do anything with two power plays in the second period, but the Springfield penalty kill rose to the forefront in the back half of the frame, killing off three separate Hartford power plays, including a lengthy 5-on-3 disadvantage to hold the 2-0 score after 40 minutes.

The Wolf Pack used a 4-on-4 situation to make their way back into the game at 3:11 of the third as Casey Fitzgerald patiently walked his way past a pair of defenders before setting Justin Dowling for a back-door finish to cut the margin to 2-1.

After Hartford's power play killed off a Springfield advantage, Brett Berard ended a long scoring drought, beating Zherenko along the ice from the left circle at 6:59 to make it a 2-2 game.

Springfield let another man advantage slip through the cracks in the back half of the third, and the 2-2 tie carried into the extra period.

After both teams traded slashing penalties, with Zherenko making a pair of saves with his team down a man, Fitzgerald ended matters with 33 seconds left in the overtime, slipping to the front of the net to tip a Dowling pass over Zherenko's blocker, completing the comeback for the Wolf Pack.

See page 12 for an update on the MIAA calendar change

# Sports

## Agawam football drops Week 10 game

WESTFIELD - On Friday, Nov. 14, Agawam's Week 10 matchup with Westfield did not go in the Brownies' favor as the host Bombers won 48-22. Agawam's offense struggled heavily in the first half and the Brownies found themselves down by three scores by halftime. Agawam would head on a drive to open the second half, but an interception would end that and Westfield ran away with the game. Agawam's overall record dropped to 5-5 as the Brownies head into their Thanksgiving Day matchup with an even 5-5 record.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



Domenick Pisano takes a snap.



Cole Ingham ranges left for a carry.



Nicholas Iellamo makes a block.



Gavin Cruz looks for extra yardage after a reception.



Ryan Litz goes after a Westfield ball carrier.



Jonathan Forand makes a block on the defensive line.

## Worcester Railers score shutout of Maine Mariners

WORCESTER - It only took 2,187 games.

Finally, though, one of the city's pro hockey teams played one in which brothers scored goals. It happened Tuesday, Drew and Anthony Callin getting the first two goals of what turned out to be a 4-0 triumph for the Railers over the Maine Mariners.

Lincoln Hatten matched the Callin family total by scoring two of his own as Worcester won its third straight game, second straight shutout. The timing was great, too. It was a School Day game, a crowd of 8,512, and the home team probably created some

new hockey fans as the clock passed noon.

It was the fifth-largest attendance in team history. The Railers are perfect when playing before crowds of 8,000 or more at the DCU Center — eight games, eight victories.

The Callins were not the only history makers.

Henrik Tikkanen stopped 29 shots to become the first Railers goalie ever to post consecutive shutouts. Tikkanen is merely the second Worcester pro goalie to do that. It must be a European thing; the other was Austrian Reinhard Divis, who had back-to-back shutouts for the

IceCats nearly 22 years ago in December of 2003.

It marked the first time in Tikkanen's career he had two consecutive shutouts.

"It just feels like, easy now," Tikkanen said. "The pucks are coming in slow, the guys in front are doing a good job creating the lanes and blocking the tough shots, so it's been easy for me the last couple games."

This was Worcester's 12th game of the season, fifth against Maine. By now, everybody has a good idea of everybody else's strength and weaknesses.

"You start to know what the guys are trying to do," Tikkanen said, "and of course if they don't make any changes on their power play and all that stuff, I think the goalie may have a little bit of an advantage."

Tikkanen's best save was one of his first.

The teams played a scoreless first period and the Mariners owned the best chance. Sebastian Vidmar had a shorthanded breakaway at 13:10 and Tikkanen just held his ground until Vidmar got in close and fired the puck into the goalie's torso.

"In every game," Tuzzolino

said, "you're going to have a Grade A chance and it if goes in that keeps the game interesting and if you stop it, that kills confidence. The last couple of nights we've done that."

Anthony Callin made it 1-0 24 seconds into the second period with a 25-footer set up by Anthony Repaci. It was Repaci-to-Callin again at 2:42 with Drew Callin beating Luke Cavallin to the top far corner.

Hatten tipped Matt Stief's shot home on a power play at 13:25 and it remained 3-0 until Hatten hit an empty with 1:35 left in the third period.

Hatten has goals in three

straight games, points in four in a row. Both are career bests. The two-goal performance was the second of his career.

The victory snapped Maine's four-game winning streak versus Worcester this season. The Mariners had won eight of the previous nine games between the teams going back to last season. The Railers had not beaten the Mariners at the DCU Center since last Dec. 21.

The decision also snapped Cavallin's four-game winning streak against Worcester. It dropped his career record against the Railers to 12-6-0.

PD ■ from page 1

ations and materials for the department to function in its full capacity will take several weeks, especially the process of moving evidence in the possession of the police department, currently.

Lt. Edward McGovern confirmed there could be about 40,000 pieces of evidence that must be carefully moved in order to maintain the chain-of-custody necessary to keep it secure.

Prior to the 1980's when police departments were much smaller and often a part of the town offices, parts of the police department were located where the current Assessors offices are in Agawam Town Hall on Main St. In the lower level of the town hall were the city council and other offices are now located, a holding cell and other police functions were housed.

In 1987, renovations from the old Faolin Pierce School at 687 Springfield St. were completed and the police department moved into that building. However, the move was never really ideal.

"When they entered that building," Johnson. "They were basically already at capacity."

Johnson said the building has lot of records and evidence and they were stored in multiple locations that are not ideal.



Above, the current Agawam Police Headquarters at 681 Springfield St. It was used from 1987 and now the town is starting the process to move police operations to 1070 Suffield St. Right, Dispatch was the first of police operations to be moved to the new facility. More operations will move in the coming weeks.

Additionally, the Springfield St. facility does not have adequate space to accommodate the public for certain activities. Johnson said routine things such as fingerprinting for weapon permits and other simple public interaction with police officers involves taking the public into what should be secure areas that the public should really not be in.

"At one point, if we had to do fingerprinting, officers would have to take people into the booking room," Johnson said.

The parking lot also has presented some minor difficulty as the traffic flow does not allow a separate more secure location for police cars and employees versus standard public parking.

"When they moved into the facility, they had a budget and they had to live within that budget," Johnson said.

The town received the keys to the building recently and so far, the dispatchers have had their operations moved to the new building. During a showing of the building for the media, two dispatchers were hard at work answering calls.

Johnson said he hopes to see the patrol officers operations moved next to the building, followed by supervisory staff and police administration, and lastly, the evidence moving.

Johnson is hopefully most of the move will be carried out by the time the open house takes place on Dec.



13. If not, the Springfield St. building should be emptied out by very early in 2026.

In next week's Agawam Advertiser News, we will show you a look at the inside of the new facility the many modernizations that took

place that easy the cramped confines of the Springfield St. the police are departing from.

Hibernian Clothing and Food Drive for Providence Ministries

HOLYOKE - The Ancient Order of Hibernians of Hampden/Hampshire Counties along with the Polish National Credit Union Announce the Annual Clothing and Food Drive for Providence Ministries from September to Dec. 1.

Please drop off gently used clothing, blankets, sleeping bags, and/or non-perishable food items to the Polish National Credit Union 270 Westfield Rd. Holyoke. Make a donation and be entered to win a raffle basket.

Please help those who are experiencing food insecurity and assist Providence Ministries as they continue to transform lives through their life-changing programs. Stop by the PNCU- your efforts will be greatly appreciated.

Wistariahurst to hold open house, holiday festive market

HOLYOKE - There's snow place like Wistariahurst during the holiday season! Wistariahurst's upcoming Holiday Open House and Festive market is perfect for those pine-ing for some holiday cheer, gifts from local businesses and artists, and family fun. The museum will be open Dec. 6 and 7 from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. for this joyous event. The halls will be decked with the splendor of the holiday season, complete with our massive Wistariahurst train set running throughout Wistariahurst's gallery. Visitors will be able to explore the first floor of the museum, listen to holiday-themed music, and dis-

cover one-of-a-kind goodies from local vendors and artists. The festive market will feature a variety of products such as art, jewelry, and other amazing items perfect for your gift exchanges this year. Our Holiday Open House is guaranteed to bring joy to your world with historical fun and holiday cheer.

But that's not all. Guests can enjoy family friendly activities like a holiday storytime, family photos in our historic carriage, and get a holiday balloon animal. There's something for everyone to enjoy- snow-one will be left out of the fun.

Wistariahurst Museum's 5th Annual Holiday Open

House and Festival Market truly offers something for everyone, and we're so excited to welcome the entire community to join us and share in the joy of the season. Our event is a time for celebration and a time to make cherished memories, so we've made sure to make admission to this event free and open to the public. Don't forget to join us at this event on Dec. 6 and 7 from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Wistariahurst Museum! It's the most wonderful time of the year.

This event is sponsored in part by the Adams Foundation of South Hadley, Bank ESB, Duryea Electric, and Holyoke Gas and Electric.

Public Notices

Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
The Trial Court  
Probate and Family Court  
Hampden Probate and Family Court  
50 State Street  
Springfield, MA 01103  
Docket No. HD25P1892GD  
In the interests of Lindsey Renee Kluike of Agawam, MA  
Minor

NOTICE AND ORDER: Petition for Appointment of Guardian of a Minor  
NOTICE TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES

1. **Hearing Date/Time:** A hearing on a Petition for Appointment of Guardian of a Minor filed on 09/12/2025 by Allison F. Vosburgh of Agawam, MA  
Alanna J D'Angelis of Feeding Hills, MA will be held 01/12/2026 08:30 AM Review Hearing. Located: 50 State St. 4th Floor, Springfield, MA 01103.

2. **Response to Petition:** You may respond by filing a written response to the Petition or by appearing in person at the hearing. If you choose to file a written response, you need to:

File the original with the Court; and  
Mail a copy to all interested parties at least five (5) business days before the hearing.

3. **Counsel for the Minor:** The minor (or an adult on behalf of the minor) has the right to request that counsel be appointed for the minor.

4. **Counsel for Parents:** If you are a parent of the minor child who is the subject of this proceeding you have a right to be represented by an attorney. If you want an attorney and cannot afford to pay for one and if you give proof that you are indigent, an attorney will be assigned to you. Your request for an attorney should be made immediately by filling out the Application of Appointment of Counsel form. Submit the application form in person or by mail at the court location where your case is going to be heard.

5. **Presence of the Minor at Hearing:** A minor over age 14 has the right to be present at any hearing, unless the Court finds that it is not in the minor's best interests.

Date: November 18, 2025  
Rosemary A. Saccomani  
Register of Probate  
11/27/2025

Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
The Trial Court  
Probate and Family Court  
Hampden Division  
Docket No. HD25P2385EA  
Estate of:

John A. Schroeder  
Date of Death: 05/19/2025  
INFORMAL PROBATE  
PUBLICATION NOTICE

To all persons interested in the above captioned estate, by Petition of Petitioner Beth Ingham of Agawam, MA

a Will has been admitted to informal probate.

Beth Ingham of Agawam, MA has been informally appointed as the Personal Representative of the estate to serve without surety on the bond.

The estate is being administered under informal procedure by the Personal Representative under the Massachusetts Uniform Probate Code without supervision by the Court. Inventory and accounts are not required to be filed with the Court, but interested parties are entitled to notice regarding the administration from the Personal Representative and can petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including distribution of assets and expenses of administration. Interested parties are entitled to petition the Court to institute formal proceedings and to obtain orders terminating or restricting the powers of Personal Representatives appointed under informal procedure. A copy of the Petition and Will, if any, can be obtained from the Petitioner.  
11/27/2025

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Three Great 2026 Norwegian Cruises

Dec. 7 .....Water for Elephants at PPAC .....\$120  
Dec. 20 ....Cirque Holiday .....\$120  
May 24 ....8-Day Bermuda & Halifax Cruise.....from \$1699  
July 19.....8-Day Bermuda & Halifax Cruise.....from \$1699  
Aug 30.....8-Day Nova Scotia Cruise .....from \$1699

Share the Adventure with us soon!  
For further information call Randall at (413) 436-5357 or email [adventuretours@att.net](mailto:adventuretours@att.net) or go to [www.adventuretoursforwarren.com](http://www.adventuretoursforwarren.com)

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- 3 Find a quick link to the state of Massachusetts' public notice web site to search all notices in Massachusetts newspapers.

Public notice deadlines are Mondays at noon, Fridays noon for Monday holidays.

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Agawam Advertiser News  
OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.

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

The other is a **Paid Obituary**, costing \$275, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice and may include a photograph. **Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: [obits@turley.com](mailto:obits@turley.com).

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

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### Town of Worthington Highway Position Opening

The Town of Worthington is soliciting letters of interest from qualified candidates to fill two full-time Equipment Operator/General Laborer positions in the Town Highway Department.

Valid MA CDL operator, Hydraulic Hoister's licenses and OSHA-10 certification is preferred.

• salary rate range: \$26.49 - \$38.59 per hour  
Further information can be found on the Town's website:

www.worthington-ma.us

Questions will be answered by the Highway Superintendent at 64 Huntington Road, Monday - Friday, 7 AM to 3 PM; the telephone number is 413-238-5830 or send letter of interest, resume and three (3) references with relevant contact information to: highway@worthington-ma.us or to Worthington Highway Department, PO Box 643, Worthington, MA, 01098. This posting will remain pertinent until the position is filled.  
The Town of Worthington is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

### TOWN OF WORTHINGTON INVITATION TO BID SNOW PLOWING SERVICES

The Town of Worthington Highway Department is soliciting bids for seasonal plowing services for the 2025-2026 winter season. Work will include plowing backroads and selected blacktop sections throughout the Town of Worthington.

Minimum equipment requirements:  
• 3/4-ton truck or larger  
• 8-foot plow (minimum)  
Please contact the Worthington Highway Department for bid specifications and route details:

**Worthington Highway Department**  
64 Huntington Road  
Worthington, MA 01098  
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Email: highway@worthington-ma.us  
The Town of Worthington reserves the right to accept or reject any and all bids deemed to be in the best interest of the Town.

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### FOR RENT



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# MIAA makes calendar change to start of fall

FRANKLIN – The Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association recently approved a couple of changes in their calendar, including codifying a practice that is already in place. The biggest change will be the start of the fall season for football pre-season while two other changes were denied.

The Board of Directors voted to set the official start date of all fall sports, including football at two Mondays prior to Labor Day, beginning with the 2026-2027 school year. In recent years, football would begin the Friday prior to that Monday with the rest of the sports beginning two Mondays before Labor Day.

A proposal was denied to delay the start of winter pre-season to the Tuesday following Thanksgiving. Right now, practices immediately begin

on Monday after Thanksgiving. The proposal sought to give an administrative day for schools to prepare for the winter season.

Another proposal denied was for all postseason tournament brackets to be released exclusively on weekdays, with the exception of the football brackets, which are released on the Sunday after Week 8 games conclude.

The final accepted proposal was establishing a firm date for the end of all spring athletic seasons to be no later than the third Sunday in June, to coincide with the end of the academic year. It ensures that all postseason play and championship would take place on a consistent timeline each year. This is the current practice so no noticeable change will be seen on the current MIAA calendar.

## VOICE ■ from page 1

month, Loving Hands and its faithful leaders, Marie Francis and Margie Bacon, who work to sew with love hats, scarves, and mittens, and create blessing bags for the homeless and veterans.

The pair pray and are blessed with donations as they believe in trusting in God to provide for them, as they have seen miracles happen left and right, a testimony of the power of faith, and a tight-knit community willing to help others in need.

The organization is in need of yarn, socks for both men and women, and mittens and gloves in order to put together the blessing bags they hand out to anyone in need.

“In the veterans sphere in western Mass, there is always something happening and we’re always working and we want the veterans to know they aren’t alone,” said Shaw.

For people who work with a veteran-centered mission and services, they can connect on Facebook or through their Gmail, [voicewesternma@gmail.com](mailto:voicewesternma@gmail.com)

You can donate to veteran-centric food pantries which include The Barnes Air National Guard Wellness Center, Project New Hope at Hampden Pond Plaza in Westfield, Ludlow Veterans Services Center, and Belchertown Veterans Services Office.



A collection of the local agencies a part of VOICE that help it reach as many veterans as possible.

## COLLEEN ■ from page 1

a.m. to learn more about the process. Anyone with questions can also email: [agawamstpatricks317@gmail.com](mailto:agawamstpatricks317@gmail.com).

Last year, the event featured just four contestants. Typically, a colleen is chosen along with four court members. In previous years, the contest has featured anywhere from 10 to 20 contestants, giving judges, who are drawn from different communities’ St. Patrick’s Committee to ensure neutrality and objectivity in the selection process, a choice in who is crowned colleen and who else is named to the court.

But in recent years, there have been right around five contestants, making the biggest choice who is named the colleen.

Last year’s court featured just a colleen, and three court members with only four young ladies entering the contest.

The 2025 Colleen was Julia Nicosia. She was joined by Teagan Fullam, Samantha Machos, and Abigail Drumm this year. The foursome attended all the regular events, including the Colleen gather-

ing with all the area colleens and courts held in Chicopee, a corned beef and cabbage dinner held at Agawam Senior Center, and the Annual St. Patrick’s Day Parade in Holyoke, which is the culminating event in the area for the Irish season.

The Colleen Coronation event will be held on Feb. 7, 2026 at St. Anne’s Country Club in Feeding Hills. It will be the 24th in the committee’s history. At that event, Nicosia will hand her crown to the next colleen and watch as the next court is named. Other award winners who will take part in next year’s St. Patrick’s parade will also be recognized at the event.

The St. Patrick’s Committee meets at the library in the second Thursday each month beginning at 6 p.m. The next meeting will be on Thursday, Dec. 11. The committee’s website also had a link for anyone who would like to join the committee as a member. The new website also features the vast history of colleens and courts in Agawam, as well as St. Patrick’s floats.

The committee is also hosting a holiday gourd painting event on Dec. 2.

## FIRE ■ from page 1

should never be disassembled, rebuilt, or altered. Charging systems must match the battery chemistry and be equipped with proper safety protections. The Fire Department urges residents to:

- Only use UL-listed, facto-

ry-built lithium-ion batteries and chargers

- Avoid purchasing or building homemade or modified battery packs
- Purchase replacement batteries for devices from device manufacturer recommended sources
- Charge batteries on non-combustible surfaces

away from sleeping areas

- Immediately and appropriately discard damaged, swollen, or overheating batteries

For more information about the proper disposal of lithium-ion batteries, Agawam residents can visit <https://agawam.ma.us/613/How-to-Dispose-of-Batteries>

Working smoke alarms helped provide early warning in this incident and prevented a more serious outcome. The Agawam Fire Department recommends that residential smoke detectors are checked regularly as they provide the greatest chance of early warning and safe escape from a fire.



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