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AGAWAM

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School project nearing approval vote from state

By Quinn Suomala
 Staff Writer

AGAWAM – The Agawam High School Building Project is now waiting for approval from the MSBA to move forward in their next steps.

The final community forum was held in the Agawam High School Library on Monday, Nov. 27.

Superintendent Sheila Hoffman and AHS Principal Jim Blain also presented to the MSBA Facilities Assessment Subcommittee on Nov. 15.

The goal of the meeting with the MSBA FAS was to gain their approval of the project so they would make the recommendation to present to the MSBA Board of Directors meeting on Dec. 13.

The hope is that the MSBA will approve of the project at this Dec. 13 meeting so that Agawam can continue forward with this proj-

ect. The next step will be to enter the schematic design phase.

In the schematic design phase they will focus on refining the details of the decided upon design structure and finalizing details of the budget.

Ideally, this phase will be complete by May, so that they can secure funding for the project in June when the MSBA meets again.

The favored option proposed to the MSBA is Construction Option 1C, which involves new construction of a school building.

“It was chosen from feedback we got from stakeholder groups,” Hoffman said. “It seemed to meet the needs that the teachers, parents, community members and students were saying they wanted in a new building.”

The construction for this option would occur in two phases, with the gym, auditorium and



Town and school officials have expressed new construction as the best option for addressing the needs of Agawam High School. TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



Construction would take place in phases with some new construction taking place next to the current building.

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Hendrickson addresses controversies

By Gregory A. Scibelli
 gscibelli@turley.com

AGAWAM – An Agawam City Councilor is taking critics head-on following the November election that saw him face accusations of running a campaign that bribed voters as well as personal attacks of antisemitic tweets and postings.

Last month, Thomas Hendrickson was elected to the Agawam City Council for the first time. Hendrickson has been on the council for the past 18 months, taking over the seat occupied by Gina Letellier. Letellier passed away in early 2022.

Hendrickson was the 12th vote-getter in the 2021 election. This time, Hendrickson was seeking to be in the top 11 for the first time, running in a field of 12 candidates.

During the latter part of the campaign Hendrickson was the subject of attacks from State Republican member Marty Lamb, who accused Hendrickson of making antisemitic tweets and postings regarding Israel and Palestine, which are in an ongoing conflict.

The councilor also was the campaign manager for mayoral candidate and Springfield City Councilor Justin Hurst. The campaign was accused of attempting to bribe voters at the primary after a surveillance photo and video showed what appeared to be a Hurst campaign worker giv-

ing money to a voter coming out of the polls during the mayoral primary.

Hendrickson decried both controversies, and issued statements on both issues.

“I’ve recently been made aware of allegations made by Marty Lamb, a member of the Massachusetts Republican State Committee, falsely accusing me of making a litany of past statements in relation to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East,” Hendrickson stated. “Most of the allegations are completely untrue fabrications, and the few that are technically true are taken wildly out of context in a way that is intentionally deceptive. It goes without saying that I do not, nor have I ever, held any sympathies for the Taliban, Hamas, or any other terrorist organizations. Furthermore, I do not, nor have I ever held any antisemitic beliefs or sentiments, and I have devoted my life and my career to combatting all forms of bigotry and discrimination, including antisemitism. As I’ve said from the beginning, the events in the Middle East since October 7th are tragic and horrible, and I am desperately hoping that the ongoing violence in Israel-Palestine can be deescalated and that a resolution can be achieved that ensures safety, justice, peace,



Thomas Hendrickson

freedom, and human rights for all people in the region.”

He further stated he believed the attacks were generated by Lamb because he openly supported fellow councilor and Mayor-Elect Christopher Johnson. Johnson’s general election was Councilor Cecilia Calabrese. While mayoral races are non-party elections, Calabrese is a known Republican and Hendrickson believes party politics played a part in the attack from Lamb.

Lamb emailed the Agawam Advertiser News photos and links to numerous posts made by Hendrickson. Hendrickson went post-by-post addressing each one Lamb sent to the AAN. He did express that he took positions on the conflicts, but was steadfast that none of his postings or opinions are antisemitic or pro-Hamas.

Addressing accusations against the Hurst campaign in Springfield, Hendrickson denied that the campaign paid for any votes and denied that the campaign directed anyone to pay for votes on Hurst’s behalf.

“During the days leading up to Springfield’s mayoral election, the Hurst for Mayor campaign

HENDRICKSON | page 10

AHS presents curriculum plans for next school year

The plan includes some new course offerings

By Quinn Suomala
 Staff Writer

AGAWAM – Algebra One is being combined back to just one course.

High School Principal Jim Blain, Common Core Facilitator in Mathematics Nikali Benkert and Common Core Facilitator in Science Shawn Rumpalik presented the proposed updates to AHS’s program of studies for next year to the school committee.

This proposed plan included the removal of a two-part algebra one course the school offers and to make it one course, with an additional math essentials course for students in need of more support.

Therefore, instead of having Algebra One Part One and Part Two as a two-year mathematics course, both sections would be combined into one. Students who need further support would take the Math Essentials course.

Therefore, students would come in and take Algebra One in their freshman year or they could take Geometry, depending on their math level coming into high school.

Those who need the Math Essentials course would take it concurrently with Algebra One.

By combining the two Algebra One courses into one, it guarantees that all students could take geometry by their sophomore year, which would better prepare them for MCAS testing.

“On the math MCAS 21 out of the 0 possible points on the 2023 MCAS were from the geometry standards,” Blain said. “For our students taking a two-part algebra, that means they are not getting a third of the standards taught to them.”

AHS wants to ensure that all students receive the support they need in order to succeed on the crucial MCAS testing.

The plan also included changing the science offerings for ninth grade to just biology, in order to offer students more opportunities in the future.

Currently, students are able to take a physical science class or biology in their freshman year. Blain and Rumpalik feel that pushing for just biology in freshman year will allow students to do better on MCAS testing.

“Most schools are moving to a biology class in ninth grade, it provides a more seamless tran-

CURRICULUM | page 9



December library events available for kids and teens

AGAWAM – The Agawam Library is the place to be. Please be aware some events do require registration. To register, go to agawamlibrary.org or call 413-789-1550 ext.3.

Snow Themed Scavenger Hunt & Riddle For all ages. All Day during week of Dec. 11 to 16. Stop by any time during the week to do a Snow-themed Scavenger Hunt & Riddle. Winners will be chosen and will each get a \$5 Barnes & Noble Gift card and a sheet of Marvel stickers.



Toddler Time

Ages 19m – 36m. Monday Dec. 11 at 10 a.m.
Join as we read stories, sing, and play together.

Werewolf

Grades 5-8 Monday, Dec. 11, 4 to 5 p.m.
Werewolf is an exciting and suspenseful game involving secret identities, false accusations, and, of course, werewolves. Registration required.

Story Time

Ages 3-5 Tuesday, Dec. 12 at 10 a.m.
Join for reading stories, do activities, play together, and do a simple craft.

Yoga With Lisa K. For Ages 2-5 Wednesday, Dec. 13 at 10 a.m.

Registration is required. Songs, stories, games and crafts help bring the practice of yoga to young children. Participants will learn how to use large muscles to support self regulation, all while bending, breathing, stretching and practicing mindfulness. This program is brought by Pathways for Parents.

STEAM

Ages 3-6 Wednesday, Dec. 13 at 3:30 p.m.
Registration is required. This program will include an activity that explores the concepts of science, technology, engineering, art, and math. Children will work together to plan, draw and create. This program is brought to us by Pathways for Parents.

Winter Party

Grades K-4 Wednesday, Dec. 13 at 6:30 p.m.
Registration is required. Come celebrate winter with winter themed activities, crafts, and snacks.

Baby Story Time

Birth – 18 mo. Thursday, Dec. 14 at 10 a.m.
Join us as we learn a little American Sign Language, read stories, sing fun songs, and play together.

Open Switch Gaming

Grades 5-12
Friday, Dec.15, from 2:30 to 4 p.m.
Drop in and play games on the library's

Nintendo Switch. Bring a controller if you have one, or use ours. Board games will also be available. No registration necessary.

Family Reception For Festival Of Trees

Monday, Dec. 18 at 6:30 p.m.
Join for fun winter-themed activities and crafts before going to take a look at the Festival of Trees.

Penguin Drop-In Craft

All ages Dec. 26 to Dec. 30 All Day.
Stop by any time this week to make a penguin craft at the craft table.

Catch The Gingerbread Men

All ages Dec. 26 to Dec. 30 All Day.
Come to the Children's Room and see if you can find all the Gingerbread People hiding around the library. Winners will be chosen and will each get a \$5 Barnes & Noble Gift card.

For more information about these, or other programs at the Agawam Library take a look at our website : agawamlibrary.org. Or call 413-789-1550 ext. 3.

Penguin Plunge to be held this January at Amelia Park

WESTFIELD – Amelia Park Children's Museum is announcing the 20th annual Penguin Plunge to be held at Hampton Ponds State Park, on Saturday, Jan. 27, 2024. Check-in begins at 11:30 a.m. and the plunging starts at 1 p.m. All proceeds from the Penguin Plunge will benefit Amelia Park Children's Museum.

Amelia Park Children's Museum and the Penguin Plunge have been a longstanding institution and tradition respectively in Westfield. Through the years participants and sponsors of the Plunge have helped to raise over \$350,000 to support Amelia Park Children's Museum.

"We are striving to attract more plungers to this event," says Diane Chambers, executive director. "It's a fun outing for the whole family or a group of friends whether they are plunging or watching. We're adding new activities and entertainment, plus incentives to entice more plunge participants in 2024."

New this year is the Petite Plunge for children ages 2 - 6. Little ones will have the

opportunity to dip their toe or boot into a kiddie pool. Fun games like cornhole and a "snowball" toss will be added to the activities. S'mores and other refreshments will be available. Lively musical entertainment will be provided by Jay Pagluica of JP Lighting and Sounds.

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. Full time students will receive a registration discount of \$25 with valid school ID and pledge to raise at least \$50. The registration fee for the Petite Plunge participants is \$25.

The following prizes will awarded dependent on amount of money raised per individual:

Penguin Plunge 2024 T-shirt to those



adults that raise \$75 - \$149 (* \$25 for those 2 - 6, \$50 for those 7 - 18); Penguin Plunge 2024 hat and T-shirt for those that raise \$150 - \$299; Penguin Plunge 2024 drinkware, hat and T-shirt for those that raise \$300 - \$499; Penguin Plunge 2024 jacket, drinkware, hat and T-shirt for those that raise \$500 or more; Monetary prizes of cash for the top 3 individuals or teams that raise the most money; 1st Place - \$300, 2nd Place - \$200, 3rd Place - \$100.

A costume contest is part of the fun, and there are prizes for Best Individual Costume and Best Team Costume.

Register in advance online or the day of the event from 11:30 am to noon. All participants will receive a free 2024 Penguin Plunge T-shirt.

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. Penguins may also use the Fundly page to collect sponsors: <https://fundly.com/penguin-plunge-2024>.

The money raised by the Plunge goes to providing playful learning for area children and their families. This event is crucial in supporting the work of Amelia Park Children's Museum

Amelia Park Children's Museum is located at 29 South Broad St. and is open 9 a.m to 4 p.m. Thursday-Tuesday. The museum offers hands-on learning for children ages 1-7 in a safe and welcoming environment. Cost of admission is \$8 per person; grandparents have a reduced rate of \$4. Admission is \$2 per person on Thursday afternoons from noon 4 p.m. Call us with questions at (413) 572- 4014 or email questions to: fun@ameliaparkmuseum.org. Learn more about the museum at www.ameliaparkmuseum.org.

Free photos with Santa

AGAWAM – Heritage Woods Senior Living is offering free photos with Santa Claus on Saturday, Dec. 16 from 2 to 3 p.m.

Parents will use their own cameras to take photos of their children with Santa.

The event will take place at 462 Main St. For more information call 413-786-9704.

Holiday fair to be held Dec. 9

FEEDING HILLS – Community Grange #382 will hold its annual Holiday Bazaar on Saturday, Dec. 9, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Grange Hall located at 47 North West St.

Featured will be a bake sale, soup and baked beans to go, ornaments, wreaths, décor, S & S Handmade Soap, Trudi's Sewing Creations, Joelle and Pat's knitted hats, mittens, scarves, Paws-a-tively Delectable and Kathy's hand-sewn items. New this year will be plushies,

crocheted blankets and items for infants. There will be a basket raffle and the fair is open to the public.



Positions open on Board of Appeals

AGAWAM – Please be advised that there are two openings on the Agawam Zoning Board of Appeals effective January 2024. One opening is for a regular position and the other for the alternate position. Interested parties should contact Barbara Bard in the City Council Office at 726-9716 or send in a letter of interest to bbard@agawam.ma.us as soon as possible.

EARLY DEADLINE For All Advertising & CLASSIFIEDS

All Papers Will Deadline Thursday, Dec. 21 at Noon for Publication Dec. 25-29

All Papers Will Deadline Thursday, Dec. 28 at Noon for Publication Jan. 1-5



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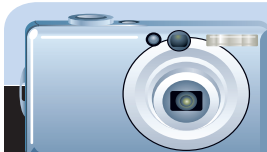
Agawam Community Artists and Artisans exhibit on display at library this month

AGAWAM – The Agawam Public Library welcomes back the Agawam Community Artists and Artisans for their yearly December exhibit. The ACA's mission is to promote and encourage community participation in and develop an awareness and appreciation of the arts. They offer educational opportunities to local artists and artisans, and provide connections and camaraderie among artists in the area.

Meetings for the ACA are held at the Agawam Public Library on the second Wednesday of the month, where artistic demonstrations are exhibited. For

more information on the ACA, visit agawamarts.com. Art from a variety of local artists and a variety of mediums will be displayed on the main floor gallery walls, in the Johnson Case, and in the cases leading to the Youth Room.

Visitors are welcome at the Agawam Public Library during regular open hours: Monday through Thursday 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Fridays and Saturdays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Please contact Adult Services Library Associate, Erica LeFebvre at (413) 789-1550 x8858 or elefebvre@agawamlibrary.org if interested in displaying artwork at the library.



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Velis: Federal funding needed to help with shelters

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer



John Velis

AGWAM – Following an activation with the National Guard, State Sen. John Velis, D-Westfield, is looking to see more federal funding for homeless migrants who are coming into Massachusetts.

He said it is something affecting his district in Western Massachusetts, and while state funding is needed, it's not going to cover everything.

"One of the biggest issues in MA right now is that we are doing this all with state funds," Velis said. "The federal government, and I can't stress this enough, has been an absolute no-show on this...since the early to late 19th century the United States Supreme Court made it really clear that immigration is a federal issue and the federal government has just been a no-show on this."

Funds for the work permit program and a number of other programs have been historically done by the federal government, yet recently, according to Velis, Massachusetts has been completely on their own for funding.

Governor Maura Healey has put forward a supplemental budget with an additional \$250 million to fund this program, but this model is unsustainable.

"We're having to get real innovative at the state level," Velis said.

Velis is working with Healey and other

members of the state government to continue to push forward policies to support these people, but without funds from the federal government they are continually hitting roadblocks.

"The federal government is not doing anything on this at all, funding or expediting work permits, so what's happening is inadvertently the states are being left on the hook to fund this endeavor," Velis said. "This is insane because we've got such a

long time period that these individuals who want to work, cannot work, are not self-sufficient, so for all intents and purposes it is going to be entirely based on state funding."

Essentially, with the migrants unable to work, they are forced to stay at the emergency shelters where the state has to continue to send funds to support them.

Velis argues that should the government assist in funding and expediting these processes, the immigrants will be able to begin working and move out on their own.

"If you follow the logic, if people are granted work visas sooner than they can move out of the hotels and we can stop spending all this state money," Velis said.

Currently, acquiring a court date for their asylum claim alone can take years. Velis met one person who didn't have a date until 2027.

"Let's take that person who doesn't have a court date until 2027," Velis said, "They're here for 150 days before they can even put in for their work permit and then that work

permit takes an incredibly long time period. So what does that leave folks with?"

Due to this, without the federal government expediting the process, many of the migrant people are unable to get themselves on their feet.

This leaves, as stated by Velis, the state to entirely fund the process.

"It is a broken model that is not sustainable," Velis said. "So I'm saying to myself even if work permits are something governed entirely by the federal government, I'm of the opinion that we should look beyond that."

Velis wants to try to push for getting the migrants a state right to work so that they are able to get on their feet and start earning their own money.

"So it's less tax-payer funded money and it's better for the individuals in question," Velis said. "And it's completely consistent with what the migrants want, they want to work."

He is going about doing this by talking to the Healey administration, talking to legislative leadership and giving his observations and insights on the flaws he has seen.

However, there is only so much he can do as a state senator.

"I'm trying to come up with creative solutions but every one of my solutions that I come up with again runs into that same road block of we can't do this without the feds," Velis said. "It's really a clarion call, 'federal government help us out.'"

Velis and many other state officials have repeatedly requested aid from the federal government in regards to this issue. In fact,

they sent a letter that was signed by nearly the entire legislature to the government asking for assistance.

Velis promises to continue working hard on this issue. He was dedicated to the cause prior to activation, but speaking with the different families has moved him to work harder.

"Just hearing some of their stories and their journeys to get here really just tugs at the heartstrings," Velis said.

He will continue providing his insights and drafting legislation to try to assist those in need.

Velis asks for support from everyone in the Commonwealth with this issue.

"We need to find a way to try to get everybody to help out as much as we can," Velis said. "Without the federal government weighing in on this, this isn't going away."

So many people have already been donating their clothes and food to assist those in need. Velis found that to be one of the most moving things while he was activated.

"I really saw some of the best of humanity, all on a volunteer basis," Velis said. "Even people who were vehemently opposed to everything that is going on with immigration...would come and drop off a diaper."

Velis just asks that people keep that giving spirit and that they keep pushing for the federal government to begin to assist with this issue.

Holyoke has been among the community to welcome migrants and attempt to find shelters for them. But capacity has run out throughout the state.

Blue Christmas service to be held Dec. 21

FEEDING HILLS – Feeding Hills Congregational Church, 21 North Westfield St., invites the community to a Blue Christmas Service on Dec. 21 at 7 p.m. This may be the first holiday season after a loss or perhaps 2023 has been a difficult year. All are welcome to seek out hope together in a supportive worship service. Come as you are, to join for prayer, songs, a special Advent wreath ceremony and reflection. For more information call the church office 413-786-5061.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO RECYCLE THIS NEWSPAPER

Dakin Humane Society announces property sale

SPRINGFIELD – Dakin Humane Society has announced the sale of its property located at 163 Montague Road in Leverett, to Better Together Dog Rescue, an organization based in western MA and northern CT.

The 3,480 square foot building in Leverett is located on five acres of land. It had been operated by Dakin Humane Society until March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, and the organization consolidated its operations in its Springfield location to operate at maximum efficiency.

According to Meg Talbert, executive director at Dakin Humane Society, "Before the pandemic, more and more animals were being placed in foster homes, since they simulate a home environment, are less stressful for animals, and can accommodate those pets who have additional needs. Thanks to so many dedicated foster caregivers, we reduced our need for the

additional shelter space that the Leverett property provided. We are pleased to see that the property will be owned by another non-profit organization. The building's structure and surroundings are especially ideal for an animal welfare organization."

Talbert said "Dakin remains committed to providing much-needed services in Hampshire and Franklin Counties, like supplying pet food to the Northampton and Amherst Survival Centers, assisting pet owners and animal control units by taking in cats and dogs when hoarding or other pet emergencies arise, and arranging 'Snip Trip' rides to our Community Spay/Neuter Clinic for pets whose people cannot make the drive to Springfield. We are eager to explore additional partnerships and opportunities to provide Dakin's services and resources to Upper Valley pets and their people in the future."

"Better Together Dog Rescue is thrilled

to finally have a home," stated Jenny Franz, founder of the organization. "Our mission to support dogs and the people who love them will continue to grow within the facility. We cannot wait to open our doors to the public."



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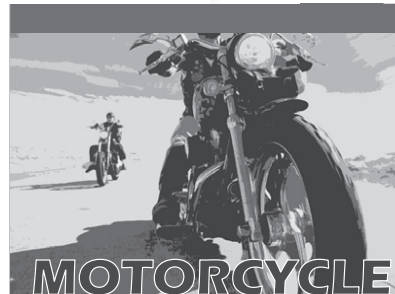


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Opinion

Guest Column

in the Garden

by Roberta McQuaid



Seventy-five years and going strong

I was opening the curtains in my bedroom this morning to find that my Babi's Christmas cactus had burst into bloom!

How exciting for an indoor plant to live for seven plus decades, never mind that the last two have been under my care. It's no secret that I am not an indoor plant aficionado, but I do have my favorites, and this is one of them.

Read on to learn about this beloved plant, straight from the archives.

One horticulture related Christmas memory involves my mother's Christmas cactus. I remember the arching, woody stemmed plant on an iron stand in her bedroom; before that it lived in my Babi's house.

Every year, just in time for the holiday, it would flower, putting on quite a show, beautiful and exotic in hot fuchsia-pink.

Today, only five original branches remain. But if you look closely within the base of the plant, you'll see lots of new growth.

Perhaps if I follow the advice, I have outlined below this heirloom will be blooming in the home of my future grandchildren!

The Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera bridgesii*) is an epiphyte, native to South America where it happily grows hanging from trees in the jungle. Inside, it prefers a location with indirect light. Positioning it in front of a north or east

facing window is best.

During the summer months many people prefer to move the plant outdoors. I have had good luck placing it under the shade of a tree; too much sun will burn its leaves.

When night temperatures begin to dip into the forties it is time to bring the Christmas cactus indoors. Gradually acclimatize the plant to its winter home by increasing the number of hours spent inside each day.

It is very important that the Christmas cactus be planted in a well-drained growing medium. For this reason, either coarse sand or perlite should be added to any homemade potting soil.

A recipe that combines equal parts of either of these along with garden loam and leaf mold or compost should work out just fine. Christmas cactus like to be somewhat pot bound, but if the plant has been growing in the same pot for several years its soil is likely exhausted of nutrients.

Repot by gently teasing away some of the soil from the plant's roots. Replace it with the new soil mixture. Choose a pot that is a single size bigger than the existing root ball, or reuse the old pot.

Many people hear "cactus" and think that the plant is drought tolerant. With the Christmas cactus this is only partly true.

Although its leaves are succulent and can retain a fair amount of water, it is not a true cactus. As a general rule you should water Christmas cactus when the potting soil is dry to the touch.

Adequate moisture is especially necessary during the spring when it begins its growth and once buds are set. A diluted amount of liquid fertilizer can be added then as well, especially if the soil hasn't been refreshed in many years.

When the plant is done flowering, it will go into a period of rest; almost no water is neces-

sary for nearly two months. Just prior to bud set it will rest again but this time the soil shouldn't dry out completely.

Two environmental factors are responsible for coaxing a plant into bloom. The first is temperature and the second is light.

If temperatures at night range between 55 and 60 degrees for a six week period, the plant will set buds regardless of day length. If temperatures run higher than that, thirteen hours of uninterrupted darkness will bring about buds.

Simply put the plant to bed each night from 6 p.m.-8 a.m. until buds form. My luck has been temperature related; because I leave the plants outside until early fall its temperature requirements are met and I am delighted with blooms come Christmas time.

If your plant sets buds and then drops them prior to full bloom it is likely due to overwatering or exposure. For this reason, keep it away from drafty windows, doorways or radiators.

If you don't already own Christmas cactus, consider purchasing one this holiday. Better yet, start a plant.

Simply get a leaf - no longer than two or three segments, from a friend. They are easy to root in regular potting soil.

Two or three of these per four inch pot is perfect. By year two you should be delighted with some beautiful flowers and maybe the start of your own family tradition.

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

We're planning to claim at 62; what do we need to know?



Dear Rusty

My wife (born May 1962) and I (born April 1963) are retired and will soon be looking to start collecting our Social Security as we each hit 62. As this is new to us, I'm wondering what things we may need to be aware of or consider as we get closer to her 62 birthday in May. Any advice or information will be appreciated.

Signed Planning Ahead

Dear Planning

If you and your wife are both retired from working and have decided to start your (reduced) Social Security as soon as you are eligible at age 62, then there is nothing you need to do in advance of applying. The Social Security retirement benefit amount for each of you will be determined by your individual lifetime earnings

record and your age when you claim. If either of you will be eligible for a spousal boost from the other, that will be automatically applied when both of you are collecting.

If your wife plans to claim her Social Security as soon as she is eligible, she should apply for her benefits about three months in advance and choose the option on the application which states "I want benefits beginning with the earliest possible month and will accept an age-related reduction."

For information, an applicant must be 62 for an entire month to get benefits, so your wife's first month of eligibility will be June 2024. Social Security deals only in whole months and pays benefits in the month following the month earned; so if your wife's birthday is between the 11th and 20th of the month her first Social Security payment will be received in her bank account on the third Wednesday of July. All subsequent payments will be on that same schedule.

Then, when it's time for you to claim, you should follow the same process as your wife and, if either of you is entitled to a higher amount as a spouse, it will be automatically applied when your benefits later start.

Applying for benefits is a relatively simple

process if done online at www.ssa.gov/apply. Note that to apply online your wife will need to first create her personal "my Social Security" account, which is easy to do at www.ssa.gov/myaccount.

To prepare for applying later, you can also create your personal online account now (it's required to apply online), at which you will see what your estimated benefit will be at different ages. Of course, your wife first (and later you) can also call Social Security at 1-800-7721213 to request an appointment to apply for SS retirement benefits in person. Applications which are not done online are usually taken over the phone vs. requiring a visit to your local Social Security office, but applying online is, by far, the most efficient method; you can link to the application process from your online account.

One important thing to be aware of: By claiming at age 62, the monthly payment for each of you will be 70% of what it would be at your Full Retirement Age and that is a permanent reduction.

If you expect at least average longevity about 84 for you and 87 for your wife and if it is financially feasible, then waiting longer to claim would yield a higher monthly amount as well as the most in cumulative lifetime benefits. For those with an FRA of 67, SS retirement benefits claimed at FRA are 30% higher than at 62 and, if claimed at 70 are 75% more than at 62. And, although the decision on when to claim is always personal, a married couple should also evaluate their joint needs when deciding.

One final word of caution: although you and your wife are now retired from working, be aware that if you claim SS benefits before your FRA and return to work, Social Security has an earnings test which limits how much you can earn before some benefits are taken away. The earnings test lasts until you reach your full retirement age.

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



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Schools & Youth

Agawam Junior High School announces First Term Honor Roll

AGAWAM – These students have been named to Agawam Junior High School's Honor roll.

Honor Roll, 7th Grade:

Maria Adeel, Elsona Ajeti, Kseniya Anisimova, John Anthony, Natalia Asencio Vera, Anna Auger, Erdonit Avdyli, Deliana Banaru, Mason Basile, Jackson Bates, Edmond Berisha, Frank Bond, Colin Bonesteel, Cole Boneu, Chelsea Brennan, Taeva Brogan, Ashleigh Brown, Gianna Cardaropoli, Arianna Castro, Caitlin Caucey, Avery Charest, Evan Chateauf, Bryce Chateauf, Evan Chateauf, Patrick Chechile, Faith Chiba, Aiden Chirgwin, Jasmine Chitu, Thomas Christopher, Elizabeth Ciollaro, Kalli Comee, Aleksander Cook, Kenna Cookish, Robert Cooney, Olivia Cordis, Logan Cormier, Connor Cross, Ronan Cullen, Grace Curto, Jacoby Daris, Aidan Dasilva, Hunter Dean, Alessandro DeCaro, Emmalina DeCaro, Vincent DeCaro, Bodie DeFilipi, Ryan Delnickas, Maxim Demchuk, Gianna DePalma, Bryce DePratti, Jacob Despard, Jacob Doan, Alexis Dolman, Briahna Dupre, Benjamin Elwell, Kendall Estremera, Dylan Evangelista, Mckenzie Favolise, Alexi Federico, Kasey

Fillion, Dominic Forcier, Noella Frascotti, Emmeline Gallerani, Tyler Gamache, Skylar Gamblin, Francesca Gauthier, Grace Giberson-Guzman, Jackson Glisson, Reese Glynn, Lillian Grimaldi, Gavin Gristwood, Rachel Haire, Jose Herrera, Logan Holloway, Sophia Ieraci, Benjamin Izoita, Olivia Izzo, Muhammad Jallad, Evan Jedrykowski, Mia Kellogg, Peyton King, Caleb Kirilovich, Jillian Kislus, Joseph Kosinski, Jasmine Kot, Tessa Kowarsky, Derya Kupuc, Aiden Lamontagne, Aubrey Lamontagne, Austin Landry, Alexander Lazarev, Adriana LeCours, Jack Leverson, Bella Liberato, Cecilia Litz, Danny Loban, Bridget Loughlin, Abby Lukin, Tristan Maggs, Heidi Mandour, Amelia Marosits, Brody Martin, Leo Mayo, Elijah McCarthy, Rozana Melnichuk, Ella Mihalicenco, Mia Milidakis, Timothy Mullen, Emily Murphy, Julia Musselwhite, Vera Nesen, Alaysia Newcomb, Victoria Nguyen, Violet Noe, Dawson Noga, Ryan Outhuse, Kaelynn Paquette, Mason Pare, Mark Parfeniuk, Logan Parker, Ayla Parrott, Shriya Patel, Alexandra Pederzani, Alyssa Perry, Ty Perry, Mariia Pikulska, Isabelle Pimentel, Nina Pisano, Jackson Presz, Leon Prive-denyuk, Lillian Pudelko, Payton Ramirez, Alyssa Rondinelli, Fred Ryczek, Pedro San-

chez, Camryn Saroglou, Kylie Savio, Adrian Sefa, Ellina Shevchuk, Katrina Shively, Anthony Silva, Vincent Silva, Eden Sivongxai, Jillian Sotnick, Emma Souza, Filomena Stellato, Valeria Tataru, Ella Terramagra, Mason Toth, Yusuf Turkmen Tanriverdi, Charlotte Vincze, Ainsley Vrijenhoek, Bernard Wangamati, Izabella Webster, Dylan Wood, Carter Woodrum, Trenton Zina

Honor Roll, 8th Grade:

Daniel Abramchuk, Aimen Adeel, Chloe Anderson, Callah Ashford, Yasser Atanane, Henry Baldyga, Justin Barbaneagra, Liam Bartone, Nathan Bassette, Gianna Battista, Bruce Bertone-Gross, Adriana Bistany, Phoenix Bond, Kendall Bovat, Jackson Bryant, Gavin Cardoza, John Carra, Julianna Castro, Jonathan Chechile, Joseph Chianciola, Patrick Chitu, Kerem Cicek, Anthony Circosta, Amy Cleveland, Yasiel Cruz, Yenairis Cruz, Reed D'Ambrosio, Conor Dahm, Katherine Dahm, Romano Daniele, Sage Dargon, Lea Defilipi, Kevin Destin, Sophia DiBella, Declan Eagen, Chase Eggleston, Chloe Fiermonte, Madalynn Fleury, Jonathan Forand, Logan Forcier, Thomas Fox, Sophia Frogameni, Madison Georgina, Evan Gorman, Olivia Govoni,

Nathan Granger-Nunez, Peyton Griffin, Melek Gusenova, Mitchell Haglund, Owen Hebert, Jasmin Hinkley, Dylan Jorgensen, Fiona Kellogg-Brodeur, Minji Kim, Julia King, Cullen Kirk, Morgan Kriebel, Chance Land, Luke Latulippe, Frank Lawler, Madison Lichwan, Michael Lichwan, Skylar Lopes, Eli Lukin, Jack Lynch, Isaiah Maldonado, Mackenzie Mapua, Nolan Mapua, Jacob Marino, Haylee Marsili, Aubrey Maynard, Olsa Mirena, Jason Morace, Lauren Moriarty, Jacob Morton, Madison Mularski, Matilda Nakabiri, Vy Nguyen, Bretton O'Connor, Efe Ozkay, Kayla Paquette, Drake Peabody, Emma Pellegriano, Olivia Polevoy, Oceana Pratt, Kaleb Progulsk, Cayden Quinby, Andrew Radionov, Brianna Ramos, Gabriella Ramos, Jack Reading, Micah Rivera, Caeden Roeder, Jordyn Rosario, Alanna Rose, Sofiya Rotina, Jacob Roy, Darina Rushchak, Ruvim Salagornik, Sophia Sarnelli, Deanna Savonin, Brody Sheehan, Polina Siarheyeva, Franco Sabilia, Michael Sloma, Charlotte Smith, Colin Soucy, Mark Stepchuk, Jayda Strauss, Jack Sullivan, Jada Sullivan, Kayleen Sullivan, Joseph Uneegar, Dominic Vassallo, Jace Wayte, Angelina Wells, Marie Wells, Payton White, Samuel Wolfe, Santino Wrisley

HCC opens registration for Wintersession and spring 2024 classes

HOLYOKE – Registration is now open for Wintersession and Spring 2024 semester classes at Holyoke Community College.

HCC's 11-day Wintersession term begins Friday, Dec. 29, and ends Friday, Jan. 12. The spring 2023 semester begins Tuesday, Jan. 16.

With the exception of one environmental science lab course, all Wintersession classes are online. HCC's spring offerings include a mix of on-campus, online, and hybrid courses.

"Wintersession provides a wonderful opportunity for students to add a course they couldn't fit into their schedules in the fall or to get ahead for the spring by taking up to four credits in just two weeks," said

Mark Hudgik, interim dean of strategic recruitment initiatives, admissions, and financial aid.

Wintersession classes are offered in anthropology, business law, conflict resolution and mediation, economics, environmental science, geography, management, math, nutrition, sociology, social problems and statistics.

In addition to full-semester, 15-week classes in spring, HCC also offers three accelerated, Flex Start Sessions: Flex 1 (Jan. 16-March 7), Flex 2 (Feb. 5-May 8), and Flex 3 (March 18-May 7).

"The spring semester at HCC is designed to help students go to college in the way that works best for them," said Hudg-

ik. "Classes are offered on campus and online in 15, 12 and seven-week sessions, so students can find what fits best for their busy schedules."

To sign up for a Wintersession class, please visit hcc.edu/wintersession.

To sign up for Spring 2024, go to hcc.edu/admissions.

In addition, HCC will be hosting a regis-

tration express event on Sat., Jan. 6, when prospective students can apply for admission, take the college placement test, meet with an academic adviser, register for classes, set up financial aid, all in one day, as well as learn about MassReconnect, the state's new free community college program for Massachusetts residents 25 and older.

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<p>CLUES ACROSS</p> <p>1. Spiritual leaders</p> <p>7. Salt</p> <p>13. Fortified wine</p> <p>14. Edible mollusk</p> <p>16. It begins with them</p> <p>17. A way to compare</p> <p>19. Government lawyer</p> <p>20. Back parts</p> <p>22. 8th month (abbr.)</p> <p>23. Very willing</p> <p>25. ___ ex machina</p> <p>26. Satisfies</p> <p>28. Quebec river</p> <p>29. A doctrine</p> <p>30. Popular pickup truck</p> <p>31. Dekagram</p> <p>33. Naturally occurring solid material</p> <p>34. Company officer</p> <p>36. Villains</p> <p>38. Cricket frogs</p> <p>40. German founder of psychology</p> <p>41. Endured</p> <p>43. A female domestic</p>	<p>44. A "place" to avoid</p> <p>45. Cigarette (slang)</p> <p>47. Canadian politician Josephine</p> <p>48. French ballet/acting dynasty</p> <p>51. Employee stock ownership plan</p> <p>53. Belonging to the bottom</p> <p>55. Sound Judge</p> <p>56. Yankees' slugger</p> <p>58. Dickens character</p> <p>59. More wise</p> <p>60. Flash memory card</p> <p>61. Exposing human vice or folly to ridicule</p> <p>64. Atomic #79</p> <p>65. Longtime Braves pitcher Julio</p> <p>67. Humor</p> <p>69. Shawl</p> <p>70. Preliminary assessment of patients</p>	<p>CLUES DOWN</p> <p>1. Animal disease</p> <p>2. Commercial</p> <p>3. Craft supply</p> <p>4. Storage units</p> <p>5. Investment vehicle</p> <p>6. Colorado Heisman winner</p> <p>7. In a way, sank</p> <p>8. Post-birth brain damage (abbr.)</p> <p>9. Lay about</p> <p>10. Intestinal</p> <p>11. The opposite of yes</p> <p>12. Caused to be loved</p> <p>13. Messianic in Islamic eschatology</p> <p>15. Showing since conviction</p> <p>18. Not safe</p> <p>21. The number above the line in a fraction</p> <p>24. Yard invader</p> <p>26. Pouch</p> <p>27. Swedish krona</p> <p>30. Start anew</p> <p>32. While white or</p>	<p>yellow flower</p> <p>35. Fourteen</p> <p>37. Graphical user interface</p> <p>38. Up-to-date on the news</p> <p>39. Campaigns</p> <p>42. Touch softly</p> <p>43. "Boardwalk Empire" actress Gretchen</p> <p>46. Violent seizure of property</p> <p>47. One who supports the Pope</p> <p>49. Anxiety</p> <p>50. Body fluid</p> <p>52. Phony person</p> <p>54. Title of respect</p> <p>55. Chilean city</p> <p>57. City in central Japan</p> <p>59. Silk garment</p> <p>62. Draw from</p> <p>63. Automobile</p> <p>66. Man</p> <p>68. Legal bigwig (abbr.)</p>
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Schools & Youth

WSU students launch campaign for Rick's Place

WESTFIELD – Westfield State University Advanced Public Relations students are launching a campaign, “Stick Together with Rick’s Place Where Hope Scores Big,” to raise awareness and funds for Rick’s Place. The non-profit has been a source of comfort for grieving children, teenagers ages five to 18, and their families, since it was founded in 2007.

Headquartered in Wilbraham, Rick’s Place provides grief support programs for families throughout Western Massachusetts and Northern Connecticut.

The campaign will feature multiple events aimed at creating awareness for the organization and collecting donations for a Cricut Maker and Foldable Floor Chairs enhancing the aid provided to youth who need support.

In order to meet their goal, students are inviting the community to join events featuring games and raffles with prizes including a Stanley Cup tumbler, Apple AirPods, and other items. The last event is on Saturday, Dec. 9, from noon to 5 p.m., outside Target in the Holyoke Mall at Ingleside.

The social media public awareness campaign will take place via @hopescoresbig and hashtags #hopescoresbig and #goalsforsupport.

“We extend our sincere gratitude to Westfield State University’s Communication Department for choosing to collaborate with Rick’s Place. Working with such engaged and forward-thinking students has been a pleasure. Their efforts to raise awareness about the impact of grief on youth and families and our free services are invaluable. We believe that together we can make a meaningful im-



Westfield State University class of Advanced Public Relations pose in front of a poster design for “Stick Together with Rick’s Place Where Hope Scores Big,” campaign. SUBMITTED PHOTO

pact on the lives of those in need of grief support,” shared Therese Ross, executive director for Rick’s Place. “We look forward to a continued partnership and the positive outcomes that their efforts will bring to those navigating the challenging journey of grief.”

Rick’s Place was founded in honor of Rick Thorpe, who grew up in Wilbraham and lost his life in the World Trade Center on 9/11. By providing a comforting place where people may process their loss, pay tribute to their loved ones, and get specialized support, the organiza-

tion strives to connect with a wide range of people.

The organization provides a variety of services, such as read-aloud programs at local schools, grief support groups, evening caregiver support groups, child support groups for kids ages five to 18, and training for teachers and mental health professionals.

Donations to the campaign can be made by Venmo @hopescoresbig or by visiting <https://ricksplacema.org/donate/>.

Scholarship applications are now being accepted

AGAWAM – The Polish Junior League of Massachusetts welcomes area college students of Polish heritage to apply for one of the annual academic scholarships. Students must have a permanent address in one of the four Western Massachusetts counties: Hampshire, Hampden, Franklin or Berkshire. Application forms with related information are available at www.polishjuniorleaguema.org/applications.

The deadline for all applications and related materials is May 1, 2024.

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Scholarships available at HCC

HOLYOKE – Students enrolled in chemistry, biology, engineering, mathematics, physics, or other STEM fields at Holyoke Community College can apply now for a National Science Foundation scholarship of up to \$10,000 a year for tuition and fees.

Through HCC, the National Science Foundation Scholarship offers on average \$6,500 per year to qualified full-time students and prorated amounts for part-time students. Both new and returning HCC students are encouraged to apply.

The application deadline for the spring 2024 semester is Jan. 7, 2024. Students will be notified by Jan. 12.

Students chosen for the NSF scholarship become members of HCC’s STEM Scholars 2.0 Program, also known as SCoRE.

STEM Scholars are expected to maintain enrollment in a STEM program, be in

good academic standing, complete an associate degree at HCC, and/or transfer to an accredited STEM degree program at a four-year institution. The scholarships are renewable every year students continue to meet the eligibility criteria.

Beside the financial awards, STEM Scholars become part of a learning community that fosters a sense of belonging and academic success, and includes mentoring, research, and honors experiences, community service, and internships.

STEM disciplines include biological sciences, physical sciences, math, computer and information services, geosciences, and engineering, among others.

Eligibility guidelines for the National Science Foundation Scholarship in STEM can be viewed at hcc.edu/stem-scholarship. For more information, please email nsfstem@hcc.edu.

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SPORTS

PVSOA presents year-end awards

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

LUDLOW – The Pioneer Valley Soccer Officials Association (PVSOA), which was formed in 1946, held its annual banquet at the Polish American Citizens Club in Ludlow on Dec. 1.

One of the highlights of the evening was the buffet catered by Tony & Penny's Restaurant.

There was also an awards ceremony.

Ludlow junior Thomas Wadas is the 2023 George E. Russell Award (Boys Large School MCP award) winner.

"Thomas falls in line with all our former Ludlow players who have won the George Russell Award," said longtime Ludlow boys soccer coach Greg Kolodziej, who won his 200th career game this fall. "He's a very talented player who has worked extremely hard to get what he has achieved."

Wadas is the 24th Ludlow boys' soccer player to receive the Russell award, which is named in memory of the former Ludlow High School principal, since 1965. The first Ludlow boys' soccer player to win the prestigious award was Bob Duarte.

Wadas, who's a three-year varsity starter, didn't attend this year's PVSOA banquet because the Ludlow High School



Peyton Buffum was a key member of last year's team on offense.



David Newsome will be a senior this season with the Brownies.



Drew Scherban clears the puck during a game last year.



Brett Eggleston works during a game last season.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY

AWARDS | page 8



Donna Carrier swims for the Brownies at a meet last season.



Hannah Newsome looks to lead Agawam this season.
TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPOTOS.COM

Agawam girls swimming prepares for season opener

AGAWAM – Agawam High School girls swimming is preparing for its regular season opener, set for Friday, Dec. 8 at home against Easthampton High School.

Agawam has had a younger

team in recent years, but had several competitors make big strides last season. The Brownies hope to win more meets this season with a more experienced group.

Following their opener against the Eagles, Agawam will face Ludlow on Tuesday, Dec. 12.



Elina Michaelakis participates in meet against Minnechaug last season.

Brownies look to improve

AGAWAM – After struggles for the past several years, Agawam High School hockey won 11 games and participated in the state tournament for the first time.

Agawam would face off with Medford High School in the first round of the tournament on the road and was defeated. Agawam benefited from being back in the Fay Division with several teams from the former Division 3A. This year, the Brownies will see some different competition now that both South Hadley and Chicopee Comprehensive's teams have combined with Chicopee to form a 5-school co-op which includes PVCIC and Granby. Agawam will be a part of the Chicopee Holiday tournament as well on Dec. 27 and 28.

The Brownies open the season with Ludlow on Saturday, Dec. 9 at 4:30 p.m. at Olympia Ice Center.

Sports

AHS 2023-2024 winter varsity schedule

BOYS BASKETBALL

Monday, Dec. 11	Away	Westfield	7 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 15	Away	Minnechaug	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 18	Home	Commerce	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 20	Away	Putnam	7 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 22	Away	Chicopee	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 27	Home	Chicopee Comp.	4:30 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 29	Home	East Longmeadow	7 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 5	Home	Wahconah	7 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 8	Away	West Springfield	7 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 11	Home	Pittsfield	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 16	Away	Taonic	5:30 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 19	Home	Westfield	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 23	Away	Wahconah	7 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 25	Home	West Springfield	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 30	Away	Pittsfield	7 p.m.
Friday, Feb. 2	Home	Taonic	7 p.m.
Monday, Feb. 5	Away	Belchertown	7 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 10	Away	East Longmeadow	7 p.m.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Tuesday, Dec. 12	Home	Drury	7 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 15	Away	Pope Francis	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Dec. 19	Home	Belchertown	7 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 22	Home	Monument Mountain	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 27	Home	East Longmeadow	6 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 29	Home	Minnechaug	4 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 5	Away	Mt. Greylock	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 9	Away	Drury	7 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 12	Home	Pope Francis	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 17	Away	Southwick	7 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 18	Away	Belchertown	7 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 22	Away	Monument Mountain	7 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 26	Home	Mt. Greylock	7 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 29	Away	Monson	7 p.m.
Friday, Feb. 2	Away	West Springfield	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Feb. 7	Away	Easthampton	7 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 10	Away	East Longmeadow	5 p.m.
Monday, Feb. 12	Home	Westfield	7 p.m.

ICE HOCKEY

Saturday, Dec. 9	Away	Ludlow	4:30 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 14	Away	Amherst	8 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 16	Home	Taonic	12:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 20	Away	McCann Tech	7 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 23	Home	Chicopee	3:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 27	Away	Chicopee Holiday Tournament	TBD
Thursday, Dec. 28	Away	Chicopee Holiday Tournament	TBD
Saturday, Dec. 30	Home	Amherst	6:30 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 6	Away	Taonic	7:30 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 13	Away	Southwick	3:20 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 20	Home	Easthampton	6 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 24	Away	Chicopee	4 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 31	Away	Easthampton	7 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 3	Home	Ludlow	2 p.m.
Tuesday, Feb. 6	Away	Longmeadow	TBD
Sunday, Feb. 11	Away	West Springfield	TBD
Monday, Feb. 12	Home	Southwick	TBD

BOYS AND GIRLS SWIMMING

Friday, Dec. 8	Home	Easthampton	4 p.m.
Tuesday, Dec. 12	Away	Ludlow	4 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 15	Away	Central	4 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 21	Home	Turners Falls	4 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 23	Home	Palmer	4 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 5	Home	Westfield	4 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 9	Away	Longmeadow	4 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 12	Home	Minnechaug	5 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 19	Away	Chicopee Comp.	4 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 23	Away	Belchertown	4 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 26	Home	East Longmeadow	4 p.m.

WRESTLING

Saturday, Dec. 9	Away	Granby	9 a.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 13	Home	Central	7 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 16	Away	Guilford Tournament	9 a.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 20	Away	Ludlow	6 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 23	Away	Lowell Tournament	TBD
Thursday, Dec. 28	Home	Phil Tomkiel Tournament	9 a.m.
Thursday, Jan. 4	Away	Minnechaug	6:30 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 6	Away	Red Hawk Tournament	TBD
Sunday, Jan. 7	Away	Girls Wrestling Tournament	TBD
Wednesday, Jan. 10	Home	West Springfield	7 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 13	Away	Woburn	TBD
Monday, Jan. 15	Away	Mahar Girls Tournament	TBD
Wednesday, Jan. 17	Away	Holyoke	7 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 20	Away	West Springfield	10 a.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 24	Away	Chicopee	7 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 27	Away	Suffield	7 a.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 31	Home	Longmeadow	7 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 3	Away	Algonquin	10 a.m.

Railers fall in physical battle

WORCESTER – The Railers played a spirited game here Friday night but it had a dispiriting result, another loss on home ice.

Worcester was beaten by the Norfolk Admirals, 5-2, with the last opposing goal coming into an empty net. The Railers had a 40-29 edge in shots on goal and had leads of 1-0 and 2-1 they could not protect as the Admirals scored four goals in the third period.

The difference was special teams. Norfolk converted three of nine power plays while Worcester was 0 for 6.

Referee Austin O'Rourke was unusually busy, calling 21 minor penalties. Some of them were double minors for roughing that, a few years ago, would have been fighting majors.

Nowadays, if a player has a pulse after engaging in a bout, the penalty is roughing, not fighting.

There was plenty of roughing. Seven of those penalties were called and Railers' rookies Artyom Kulakov and Riley Piercey were both involved in some serious jousting.

To no avail, as it turned out.

Worcester got goals from Ashton Calder and Keegan Howdeshell. Norfolk was paced by Carson Golder's two goals. Simon Kubicek, Danny Katic and Mathieu Roy had the other Admirals goals.

Calder's goal was his 10th of the season. It came in Worcester's 19th game. The last Railer to score 10 goals in the first 20 games of the season was Jordan Smotherman, who did it at the beginning of the 2021-22 campaign.

The Railers were constantly thwarted by Norfolk goaltender Thomas Milic, who had 38 saves. A lot of them

were good ones. Worcester had reams of good chances that wound up with shots on net, but only two shots in net.

Calder put Worcester ahead at 11:44 of the first period by beating Milic with a quick wrist shot from between the circles. The Railers were still ahead, 1-0, with the game more than half over but the Admirals changed that with their first power play goal.

Kubicek got it at 15:06 of the second period. He drilled a low slap shot through traffic and past goalie Tristan Lennox for his third of the season.

Worcester responded well, though, and retook the lead before the period was over. Howdeshell got his second of the year at 17:38 via a snap shot from about 20 feet out. He was set up by a fine pass from the right wing by Joey Cipollone.

Norfolk regained the momentum early in the third period, however, with two goals just 52 seconds apart, both by Golder, both on the power play. The first one was a rebound at 3:54, the second a tap in from just outside the crease at 4:42.

The first power play came with Jake Pivonka in the penalty box for high sticking. The second happened when Worcester was called for two roughings, Norfolk one, on the same altercation.

Piercey was involved at the beginning then Connor Welsh wound up getting a minor as well.

The Railers had power play chances after that and eventually pulled Lennox but could not beat Milic. In those final 20 minutes, Worcester had 14 shots on net and no goals. Norfolk had eight shots and four goals.

UMass hosting Pioneer Valley Tip-Off

AMHERST – The Pioneer Valley Tip-Off is a student-run high school basketball showcase featuring some of the best talent in Central and Western Massachusetts. The PVTO was started in 2011 by Scott Moses and Pat Salle, both students at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and it continues to be entirely student-run by the McCormack Student Leaders Club today. The PVTO is

held each December on the University of Massachusetts Amherst campus, where we strive to create a professional environment for fans and players alike. This year's event will be held on Dec. 9 and 10 and will feature teams from throughout the region. A schedule is online at www.pioneervalleytip-off.com. All games will be held at the Mullins Center on the UMass-Amherst campus.

AWARDS ■ from page 7

soccer banquet was held on the same night.

In his first three seasons as a member of the varsity soccer team, Wadas, who's a midfielder, scored 15 goals and 15 assists. He also helped the Lions (18-2-2) capture the Western Mass. Class A title for the third consecutive year. The Lions also competed in the Division 1 state tournament.

Pathfinder Tech senior Riley Sanderson received the Henry O. Holly/Dave Grieve (Boys Small School MVP award).

"I received an email from my soccer coach (David Wilson) telling me that I had been selected for the MVP award for small schools," said Sanderson, who led his team with 11 assists this past fall. "We weren't able to win any banners this year, but this is a nice way to cap off my high school soccer career."

Sanderson, who missed his junior season due to an injury, also scored 11 goals as a senior.

"Riley has an outstanding right foot, and he could've taken a lot more shots on goal for us, but he would always pass the ball to one of his teammates," Wilson said. "He always plays the game very hard and I'm very proud of him."

Junior Evan Costa led the Pioneers with 34 goals.

The Pioneers, who qualified for the vocational, Western Mass. Class C. and Division 5 state tournaments, finished the 2023 campaign with a 15-5 overall record.

The only other boys' soccer player from Pathfinder Tech to receive the MVP award was Josh Sikorski in 2010.

Minnechaug senior Kylie Ray received the John Kalloch Award (Girls Large School MVP award).

"This is a very special award, especially from the referee's association," said Ray, who'll be playing college soccer at Seton Hall University next year. "I was teammates with Reighan Demers, who received this award last year. It's nice to join her and the other previous MVP award winners from Minnechaug."

Ray is the seventh Minnechaug girls' soccer player coached by Nundi Goncalves to be selected for the MVP award since 2005.

"I've been fortunate to coach many talented soccer players at Minnechaug," Goncalves said. "Kylie is one of them."

The Lady Falcons, who qualified for the Western Mass. and state tournaments, finished their season with a 13-5-2 overall record.

Pope Francis senior Isabella Meadows, who didn't

attend the banquet, received the Robert C. Smith/ Stan Berntowicz Award (Girls Small School MVP award).

Minnechaug Regional also received the Bob McIntyre Sportsmanship Award (Girls Large School).

The Lady Falcons have only received two yellow cards during the past two seasons.

"It always feels good when your teams gets recognized for doing something well," said Minnechaug sophomore Ava Kearney. "Coach Goncalves never wants us to get a yellow card during the game."

Palmer High School received the John Kurty/Benny Santos Sportsmanship Award (Girls Small School)

"It feels very nice to receive the sportsmanship award from the referees," said Palmer senior Grace Burke. "We're always very respectful to the referees and to our opponents."

Burke attended the banquet with teammates Nye-la Dupre, Vaness Baer, and Jordan Bigda, who are also members of the senior class.

It was the first time that the Palmer girls' soccer team has received the sportsmanship award.

"I was very surprised when I was informed that my soccer team has been selected for the sportsmanship award," said Palmer head coach Celso Sandoval. "We only had a couple of yellow cards this season and I'm very happy that the soccer officials recognized us. We had a great season and I'm looking forward to doing it all over again next year."

The Lady Panthers (12-8-1) defeated Granby, 3-1, in the Western Mass. Class D finals.

The Pathfinder boys' squad, which co-ops with Palmer, received the Carl Erickson Sportsmanship Award (Boys Small School).

The Bruno Rumpal Sportsmanship Award (Boys Large School) was given to Westfield High School.

The MISOA PVSQA inductee is Alex Goncalves, who's from Ludlow.

The Paul Bogan Service Award was given to Peter Manolakis, who's from Wilbraham.

The Jimmie Downie Award recipient is Tomasz Ludkiewicz, who lives in Granby.

The Larry E. Briggs Award winner is John Voight, who currently lives in East Longmeadow, but grew up in Hampden. He graduated from Minnechaug Regional.

Former Ludlow girls' varsity soccer coach Jose Anselmo, along with Chris and Diane Kolodziej, who do an outstanding job of running the Pioneer Valley Summer Soccer League, received Letters of Commendations.

The association is always looking for new referees.

Sports

Springfield Thunderbirds grab OT win over Penguins

WILKES-BARRE, PA – The Springfield Thunderbirds (11-8-2-0) got the last laugh in a wild, back-and-forth game, 4-3, over the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins (10-8-3-0) in overtime on Saturday night inside Mohegan Sun Arena at Casey Plaza.

As was the case in each of the first two games in the season series, the first period came and went with goaltenders remaining perfect. On this night, Vadim Zherenko and Joel Blomqvist turned in all the stops, with Zherenko the busier of the two with nine first-period stops, while Blomqvist stopped six. Zherenko had the two best saves of the frame in two minutes, denying both Sam Houde and Jagger Joshua with the leg pad on in-tight scoring chances.

Each team also had two power plays in the first period, but the man-advantage units could not generate much offense, and the 0-0 deadlock remained into the intermission.

After quiet opening periods, the power plays came to life in the second, and it took the Penguins just 1:14 to get on the board first. Sam Houde got his stick on a loose puck in the slot and bounced a fluttering shot toward Zherenko's cage, getting a helpful tip

from Peter Abbandonato for the game's opening goal, which doubled as Abbandonato's first as a Penguin.

Despite the deficit, the T-Birds rallied on a chance of their own after two penalties in a 1:16 span were called against Wilkes-Barre/Scranton. With the 5-on-3 advantage, rookie Zach Bolduc took advantage, rifling home a one-time slapper through Blomqvist, tying the game at 7:49. Calle Rosen and Hugh McGing earned the helpers on Bolduc's fourth goal of the season.

After the equalizer, both teams had more power play chances to take leads, but the penalty killing strengthened, along with continued good work from Zherenko and Blomqvist.

The game took on a truly chaotic feel in the third period. After the T-Birds failed to convert on two separate power play chances, it was the fourth line that got Springfield its first lead. Mathias Laferriere deked around a fallen defender and took a shot from the left circle that plopped down behind Blomqvist. Drew Callin was in the right place to tap it across the line for his third of the season, giving the T-Birds the 2-1 lead at 4:31.

Unfortunately for the T-Birds, it was just the beginning of a see-saw 20-minute period, as the Penguins equalized during a delayed penalty just 1:05 later, as Valtteri Puustinen rammed home a loose puck after Zherenko and the defense made two sprawling saves earlier in the sequence.

With the game back even, 2-2, the T-Birds faced their toughest challenge of the night when Hunter Skinner was ejected and given a match penalty for a hit to the head of Penguins' forward Sam Houde. Wilkes-Barre/Scranton had three minutes of uninterrupted power play time, but could not solve the PK nor Zherenko.

After surviving the major, the T-Birds then got their power play chances as the Penguins took a too-many-men minor, as well as a tripping call to Jack St. Ivany. With time waning on the club's 8th power play of the evening, the T-Birds finally broke through as Matthew Peca snapped a wrist shot through Blomqvist at 16:38 to make it a 3-2 game.

Once again, though, the Penguins had a rebuttal, as Abbandonato scooted into the slot, took a pass from Will Butcher, and slipped it through Zherenko's legs to tie the

game, 3-3, with just 1:39 to go in regulation, setting the stage for the second overtime in as many nights between the division foes.

Overtime was a riveting, back-and-forth affair with both goaltenders answering the bell on multiple occasions. Adam Gaudette had a breakaway with the game on his stick, only to see Blomqvist turn him away, while Ty Smith had perhaps the Penguins' best chance with the T-Birds' defense out of sorts, but Zherenko had the denial.

At last, with less than a half minute left separating the teams from a shootout, Laferriere circled the offensive zone to the right side before slipping a puck near the crease. Matt Kessel had moved up on the play and put himself in the perfect position to get a piece of it and beat Blomqvist, giving Springfield the 4-3 overtime triumph. It was just Kessel's second goal of the season, and it gave the T-Birds their first home win since Oct. 29.

The T-Birds get some time to rest before a rare single-game weekend next Saturday as they welcome the Bridgeport Islanders to the MassMutual Center for the annual Teddy Bear Toss.

CURRICULUM | from page 1

sition, it is a more test-friendly opportunity for our students," Blain said. "In biology vs physical science we tend to have better results."

"This would line up biology with the biology test, so everybody would be onboard," Rumpalik said. "We figured that by giving everyone bio, we're getting everyone to take the same exam, it's easier to analyze the data and it's easier to help the students that need help."

They also feel this will open up more opportunities to them in the remainder of their high school career.

"It also opens more opportunities for students down the road," Blain said. "With your physical science students that walk in taking physical science, the next technical course is typically biology because students have to take that and then they're at their junior year before they're really starting to explore some of the other options. By giving the students the opportunity to take chemistry or environmental science as a sophomore year we're actually giving them more options."

The proposed curriculum update also included several new courses. They want to add offerings for AP Studio Art, "Learn to Jam", Music and Sound in Film, and Heritage Spanish.

"Learn to Jam" is a new music course that would allow students to engage in non-traditional methods of making music.

"Learn to Jam is a course for any type of musician—beginning, intermediate or advanced—centering on non-traditional methods," Blain said. "Whether it be bucket drumming, which has become increasingly popular, whether it be boom sticks. It's just a way to increase our offerings in our music department."

The school wants to offer students a

wider variety of course choices in music so that each student can find a course they truly enjoy.

"We really want to expand our offerings to give students more opportunity to explore the music in ways that they see fit," Blain said.

The new Spanish class, Heritage Spanish, is geared toward native Spanish speakers.

With 9.3% of the AHS student population being hispanic or latinx, AHS wants to make sure those speakers are fully supported within the school.

"Our Spanish classes are very traditional, we teach them for students without a spanish background," Blain said. "Our spanish-speaking students come from different dialects and they often struggle the most in a spanish class. The native speaking course...allows for that experience and we actually support them with their writing."

This course will include a cultural aspect and allow for native speakers to be able to fully succeed within a Spanish class, where the structure in a traditional course often impedes their success.

"This makes a lot of sense, it's like Spanish One but for the native Spanish speakers," Committee Member Wendy Rua said.

The Heritage Spanish course or courses similar to it are offered in most school districts with a high spanish-speaking population. Agawam wants to get ahead of the curve by starting with this course now.

The goal would be to, in the following year, offer a part two of this course so those interested can continue to advance in this field of study.

The school committee will discuss their decision on approval or disapproval of this proposed plan at their next meeting.

Public Notices

AGAWAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS PUBLIC HEARING Renaming of School Petition

According to the provisions of the Agawam Charter, Article 8, section 8-1 (b), a public hearing shall be held to act by taking a vote on the merits of every petition which is addressed to the School Committee and which is signed by at least 50 voters. The public hearing regarding the name change from Robinson Park School to the William P. Sapelli School is scheduled for **December 12, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.** in the **Agawam Junior High School auditorium** located at **1305 Springfield Street, Feeding Hills, MA 01030.** 11/30, 12/07/2023

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Hampden Probate and Family Court 50 State Street Springfield, MA 01103 (413)748-7758 Docket No. HD23P2429EA

Estate of: Joseph Anthony Minella Also known as: Joseph A. Minella, Joseph D. Minella Date of Death: 11/10/2023

CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION
To all interested persons:
A Petition for **Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal**

Representative has been filed by **Gail A. Nadok of Agawam, MA** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that: **Gail A. Nadok of Agawam, MA** be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without Surety** on the bond in **unsupervised administration.**

IMPORTANT NOTICE
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 12/27/2023.

This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)
A Personal Representative appointed under the

MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.

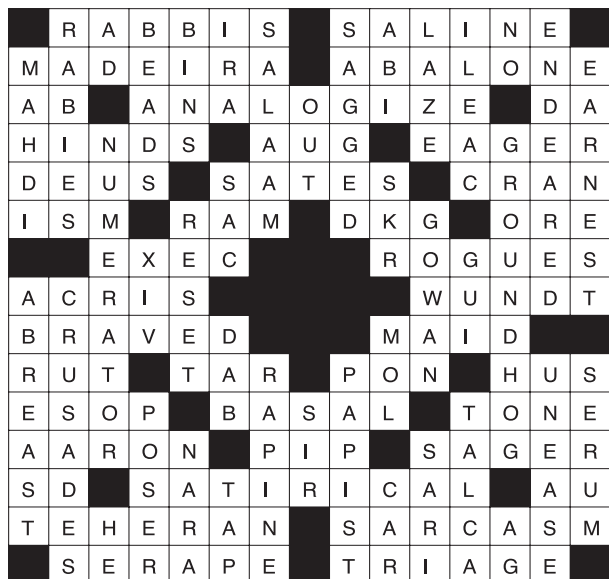
WITNESS, Hon. **Barbara M Hyland**, First Justice of this Court.

Date: November 29, 2023
Rosemary A. Saccomani
Register of Probate
12/07/2023

Legal Ad AGAWAM CONSERVATION COMMISSION

The Agawam Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing on **Thursday, December 14, 2023 at 6:00 PM** at the Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, MA. The purpose of this hearing will be to hear the Notice of Intent Application of DePalma for work to be performed at South Westfield Street (Parcel ID E4 2/10 & E4 2/2), subject to the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act.

By Order of
Henry A. Kozloski,
Chairman
AGAWAM CONSERVATION COMMISSION
12/07/2023



Agawam Advertiser News
OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.

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

The other is a **Paid Obituary**, costing \$225, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice and may include a photograph. **Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com.

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

Early Deadlines
for all LEGAL NOTICES...

All Papers Will Deadline
Thursday, Dec. 21
at Noon for Publication
Dec. 25-29

Happy Holidays!

Happy New Year!

All Papers Will Deadline
Thursday, Dec. 28
at Noon for Publication
Jan. 1-5

Obituary

Frances "Cookie" Albro

On December 3, 2023 Frances "Cookie" Albro was reunited with family and friends in Heaven. She was a longtime resident of Agawam. She graduated from Agawam High School in 1960 and still remained close with several friends whom she graduated with. Cookie worked as an Office Manager for Superior Printing Inks for more than 25 years and then as a Bus Monitor for the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative for over 15 years before retiring in 2022. A woman of great faith, she was actively involved as a parishioner of Sacred Heart Church. Cookie was a board member of the Catholic Woman's Club and would always volunteer to participate in their annual Christmas Bazaar. She enjoyed creating delicious baked goods in her kitchen including cakes, candy and mountains of her special Italian cookies. Cookie loved her family and friends deeply and would gladly give everything she had to help wherever and whenever she was needed. Frances leaves her sister-in-law and friend Kathleen "Kate" Albro, her two nephews; Mike Albro and his wife Becky, and Tony Albro and his wife Jes-



sica, and three beautiful and beloved grandchildren Jason, Nicholas, and Emma Albro. She also leaves cousins Keith and Lynn David, Bob and Deb Griffin, Linda Mariani and Butch Mariani and many other family members. Cookie was predeceased by her parents Cosmy and Clementina (Mariani) Albro, and her brothers Al, Tony and Bobby Albro. She will be missed beyond what words can describe. The family wishes to thank the staff at Baystate Medical Center and JGS Lifecare/Spectrum Hospice for their wonderful commitment to her care. Friends and family are invited to the funeral on Saturday, Dec. 9, 2023 9 a.m. at the Agawam Curran Jones Funeral Home, 745 Cooper Street followed by a Mass at Sacred Heart Church at 10 a.m. The burial will follow in St. Michael's Cemetery. Calling hours will be Friday, December 8, 2023 from 4 to 8 p.m. In lieu of flowers, please send donations to Sacred Heart Parish, 1061 Springfield Street, Feeding Hills, MA 01030 or the Catholic Women's Club of Agawam, 833 Main Street, Agawam, MA 01001. For online condolences please visit www.curranjones.com

Donald I. McLean

Donald I. McLean, husband of Joyce Piper McLean, died Saturday, December 2, 2023 after a long illness. Donald was born February 3, 1939 in Lexington, MA, but while he was a young boy, his family moved to first Agawam and then to West Springfield. Early on his father would pick him up after school and take him to his workplace to put together lawnmowers and other related equipment. He grew up working at the family business, Allen Lawnmower and eventually became part owner. He was a hardworking man, who always did that "little extra" to please his customers. Don spent weekends with the Army Reserves for many years while also meeting his wife "to be" Edie Yarmac at Friendly's and marrying her in 1965. He helped build his house in Feeding Hills where his two daughters Susan and Kathy were born. As a family, they visited Disney many times and also, purchased a Cape house in S. Yarmouth, where they spent their summers. Donald's real love was cars and NASCAR. He and Edie spent many years attending Daytona races and he and his friends visited many other race-tracks. His love of cars led to purchasing both a 1960 red and white Corvette and a 1969 Camaro pace car. He and Edie traveled to many countries on business trips until Edie died tragically in 1998. Donald was devastated and later incurred a major heart attack. Several years went by and in 2004 he met Joyce Piper and they were a couple for 17 years, traveling and enjoy-



ing life together. In October of 2021 they were married in the First Baptist Church in West Springfield (Don's church) and eventually went on their honeymoon to Alaska. Unfortunately, Don's dementia became much more of a struggle and after a few years, he spent time at both Armbrook Village and the Atrium. His last days were spent at Baystate Hospital where he died fighting an infection and advanced dementia. He will be sadly missed by his wife Joyce, their families and their friends. Don was predeceased by his parents, Eugene and Clara McLean, his first wife Edie (Yarmac) McLean, his brother Albert McLean and a sister Mabel Lombard. He leaves his loving daughters, Kathy McLean and Susan Alves and her husband John and their children, Tyler, Dalton, Paige and Lenny, and brother Eugene "Sonny" McLean and his wife Anne and family, a sister Marcia Duval, a niece Clara and Patrick Rowan and their children Tony and Maria (Nathan), and niece Cindy (Kevin) Sears and their daughter Elizabeth, his devoted wife Joyce Piper McLean, stepdaughter Karen (Rick) George and their sons, Seth, Matthew and Andrew and stepson Jeffrey (Tracy) Piper and their sons Dustin and Tyler. Visiting hours were held for Don on Wednesday, December 13, 2023 from 10 to 11 a.m. in the Firtion Adams Funeral Service, 76 Broad St. Westfield, followed by a Funeral Home Service at 11 a.m. Burial followed in Pine Hill Cemetery, Western Ave. Westfield. www.firtionadams.com

DEATH NOTICES

Albro, Frances "Cookie"

Died Dec. 3
Funeral Dec. 9
Agawam Curran Jones
Funeral Home, Inc.

McLean, Donald I.

Died Dec. 2
Funeral Dec. 13
Firtion Adams Funeral Services

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HENDRICKSON ■ from page 1

was accused of committing voter fraud by allegedly paying voters to vote for Justin Hurst," Hendrickson stated. "Video emerged appearing to depict one of our campaign volunteers giving money to two people exiting a polling location. As the campaign manager, I unequivocally deny that the campaign paid for votes, or that we directed anyone to pay for votes

on our behalf.

The individual in the video allegedly giving money to voters leaving the polling location was not a 'campaign worker' as has been incorrectly reported by some media outlets; he was a volunteer that was helping our campaign by giving rides to voters who were unable to drive to the polling location on their own. I was not present during the incident in question, and I have not spoken to the volunteer about the in-

cident, so I cannot say for certain exactly what happened. What I can say for certain though, is that our campaign did not pay for votes, nor did we instruct or direct anyone to do so on our behalf."

Hendrickson was pleased to address both issues for his constituents who elected him to the city council in Agawam, and said he is a strong advocate for the election process.

"As a seasoned political campaign op-

erative and a lifelong advocate for democracy," Hendrickson said. "I hold the importance of election integrity in the highest regard. I have always held myself to high ethical, moral, and professional standards throughout my career. As the campaign manager of the Hurst for Mayor campaign, I unequivocally deny any involvement in alleged vote-buying schemes, or any other attempts to undermine the integrity of the Springfield mayoral election."

SCHOOL ■ from page 1

cafeteria all built in phase one in order to ensure continuous use.

Other construction options would have caused at least one of these areas to be unavailable for a long period of time, which many involved in the project were not in favor of.

The option of construction of a new building is also favored due to the benefits it can provide to the community.

"There are two distinct areas in this particular design," Hoffman said. "One is the community wing and one the academic. So it really puts the community wing closer to our fields and more accessible, we're hoping, to the community throughout the days and times when students aren't in school."

These benefits also include improved air quality, increased accessibility and even a positive environmental impact. There will also be outdoor dining and classroom spaces.

Additionally, this option includes the

building of a new preschool building. By including the preschool building in the AHS building project, it reduces the costs of redoing the preschool on its own.

According to estimates done in 2016, the preschool redone as its own project would cost \$26.5 million. Based on inflation, the costs of this project in 2024 would be \$47.2 million.

Including the preschool in the AHS project reduces this cost to \$11.2 million to add to the project.

Moreover, as having it part of the AHS project, AHS could have programs for students interested in working in early education and the building itself can be placed in a convenient location for the community.

The project in total is estimated to be complete, should everything go as planned, in 2028.

The total project is estimated to cost \$231.5 million. The MSBA, should it approve the project, is expected to reimburse 43% of the project costs. Due to this, the town's share is anticipated to amount to

about \$132 million.

The initial reimbursement rate from the MSBA was estimated to be 28%, but thanks to a recent increase in the MSBA participation cost limits on budget specifics allowed for the 15% increase to get it to 43%.

However, project costs are not set in stone at the moment. Hoffman hopes that they will have a better idea of how this project will affect taxpayers in the next two to three months.

"It's too early to tell, the footprint isn't exact yet, it's approximate, so the budget is approximate," Hoffman explained.

In the meantime, Hoffman encourages people to continue learning about the project and supporting its development.

Without the new building the district faces de-accreditation as a result of the inability of the current building to support the students' needs. They are currently on probation due to their facilities.

"We have outgrown our facilities," Hoffman says. "We have so many ideas and a vision for what we want our students to be

able to do that they're limited in doing because of the facility."

For example, the current science labs in the building do not meet ventilation requirements and therefore prevents students from being able to conduct lab experiments. The safety equipment in the labs is also not designed appropriately for what they want the students to be able to do.

Hoffman urges community members to really consider how important this new building will be for the community, should it be approved.

"Not only have we outgrown our facilities but our kids deserve more and better than they're getting because of the building," Hoffman said. "Our teachers are working really hard in spite of the building and they've been really patient but a new facility would be able to bring the potential of our students and their abilities and our teachers and their knowledge all together into a really high level of a learning experience."



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Local Honor Guard at Festival of Trees

AGAWAM – Several members of the honor guard at the veterans’ cemetery in Agawam were invited by the Boys and Girls Club of Springfield to enter a tree with a military theme in the Festival of Trees at the Mass Mutual Center in downtown Springfield. The seven-foot tree was donated to the honor guard by the management of Rocky’s Hardware.

The tree’s decorations include red, white and blue ornaments and military items procured by members of the honor guard including several purchased at Pearl Harbor and Guam by honor guard member Stephen Estee of earlier this year.

Also participating in this event were honor guard President Allan Ardito of Westfield and Marvin Howard and Dianne Vecchiarelli, both from Agawam. Ardito commended the group’s effort in coordinating the ornamentation and arrangement of the tree.

The Festival of Trees is open to the public on the lower level of the Mass Mutual Center through Dec. 10, Wednesdays through Sundays. On Dec. 12, each decorated tree, including the honor guard’s tree, will be raffled off based on tickets purchased by visitors to the Festival. Hours of operation and additional information can be found at treeraffle.com or on the Mass Mutual Center website www.massmutualcenter.com.

All veterans interested in joining the honor guard may call the cemetery at 413 821-9500 for details and to be invited to meet members of the firing detail and observe a service in progress. Honor guard volunteers are honorably discharged veterans of all branches of the military who attend services convenient to them to fire a live rifle salute for every deceased veteran being interred at the cemetery.



Pictured at the Festival of Trees are Allan Ardito (Westfield) and Stephen Estee, Marvin Howard and Dianne Vecchiarelli (all of Agawam) as the Honor Guard tree was being decorated. SUBMITTED PHOTO

Agawam Day to be celebrated in Florida March 6

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

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

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

Rotary Club to host Holiday Concert on Dec. 14

AGAWAM – The Agawam Rotary Club will present a holiday concert featuring Richie Mitnick and Friends on Thursday, Dec. 14, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main St.

A suggested donation of \$5 will be used to help fund the club’s community service projects. In addition, the club will be accepting non-perishable food items to help support the Parish Cupboard.

Mitnick and his talented Friends are well known in the area for their excellent performances.



Photography submissions needed

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

The show is divided into four categories of photography: creative, nature, photo-journalism and pictorial. The entry fee is \$25 per entry. Deadline for submissions is

Feb. 15, 2024. If we have not received sufficient entries, the show will be cancelled and all fees returned.

All images must be original, made by the photographer, captured by film or digitally, and cannot be previous entries in our show.

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

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

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June 5, 2022
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John & Pamella Kosnicki, Palmer

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Deadline for photos and forms is Friday, December 8, 2023

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