

# Chicopee Register

A TURLEY PUBLICATION | www.turley.com

January 5, 2024 | Vol. 25, No. 39 | FREE

www.chicopeeregister.turley.com

COMMUNITY

## City celebrates Kwanzaa in Chicopee Center

*Ceremony includes flag-raising, dancing and reflections on unity*

By Kristin Rivers  
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CHICOPEE - Residents, community members and local and state elected officials gathered at the City Hall Auditorium on Dec. 26 to celebrate Kwanzaa.

Kwanzaa is an African-American and Pan-African holiday observed for seven days from Dec. 26 to Jan. 1 celebrating African heritage and African-American culture.

Founded in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, Kwanzaa focuses on seven principles: Umoja (Unity), Kujichagula (Self-Determination), Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility), Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity) and Imani (Faith).

Throughout the celebration, attendees enjoyed dance performances, learning about the history of Kwanzaa and its principles, a flag-raising, a ceremonial lighting of the kinara and more.



TURLEY PHOTO BY KRISTIN RIVERS

From the left, Chloe Soto, communications and special projects manager for the City of Chicopee, Kwanzaa Collective member Sister Anna Gilbert-Muhammad, Jeannette Rivera, 2023 Kwanzaa Chair, Ayanna Crawford, president of the Kwanzaa Collective, Kwanzaa Collective member Maria Del Carmen Rodriguez, and drummers Trevor Pitts and Kenneth Grimes pose for a group photo during Chicopee's Kwanzaa Celebration at City Hall on Dec. 26. Soto helped organize the event in partnership with the Chicopee Cultural Council and the Kwanzaa Collective.

Additionally, Charles "Charlie" Laboy, founder and program director of One Strong One Community and Chicopee Cultural Council President, and the city's Health Director Lisa

Sanders were honored for embodying community and the values of Kwanzaa.

Mayor John Vieau said, "Although Kwanzaa was made for African-Americans, it celebrates values that all humans should embrace."

"It can also be an opportunity to learn more about African-Americans and about the African-American heritage and culture. So, I'm excited to – for a second time in the city's history – kick off Kwanzaa, and we're going to do it in style today," Vieau said.

State Sen. Jacob Oliveira (D-Ludlow) reflected on the country's history of slavery and how the colors, food and celebrations around Kwanzaa "comes

See **KWANZAA** page 5

COMMUNITY



Turley photo by Dalton Zbierski

Mayor John Vieau, centered, surrounded by newly sworn in members of the City Council as well as city employees.

## Mayor John Vieau sworn in on New Year's Day

*Offers insight into direction city will take in 2024*

By Dalton Zbierski  
Editor  
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CHICOPEE - Mayor John Vieau was sworn in for his third consecutive term during a well-attended ceremony on New Year's Day.

"It really is a beautiful morning in the city of Chicopee," he said.

Much has changed since Vieau first entered office in January 2020, and the most recent change involved the location of the inauguration, which occurred in the City Hall Auditorium for

the first time in decades.

Vieau estimated that the previous 10 inauguration ceremonies were held in Berchmans Hall on the nearby campus of Elms College. He was thrilled to be inaugurated as mayor in the City Hall Auditorium for the first time after the renovation of the third-floor space.

"I don't think it gets much better than this," he said. "This beautiful, state-of-the-art, multi-functioned space hosts City Council and School Committee meetings and special events. Now, once again, it's capable of hosting our municipal inauguration ceremony."

During his speech, Vieau thanked Elms College for its hospitality.

He said the day was about

honoring past traditions in the room where Chicopee's first city government held its inauguration ceremony on Jan. 5, 1891.

Vieau spent several minutes thanking the elected state officials that were on hand as well as city employees such as Treasurer Marie Laflamme and Police Chief Patrick Major, as well as those who attended virtually such as Fire Chief Dan Stamborski and Superintendent Dr. Marcus Ware.

Vieau extended his congratulations to the members of the City Council and the School Committee, who were also sworn in during the Jan. 1 ceremony, and thanked members of Team Vieau, his campaign committee.

"As I was preparing for to-

See **VIEAU** page 6

COMMUNITY

## Outgoing councilors say farewell

*have remarks at end of final City Council meeting*

By Dalton Zbierski  
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CHICOPEE - Three outgoing City Councilors said goodbye to their colleagues and to the public during the Dec. 19, 2023, meeting of the board, the last of the year.

Those who said farewell included Ward 1 Councilor Joel McAuliffe, Ward 3 Councilor Delmarina López and Ward 6 Councilor Derek Dobosz.

### Joel McAuliffe - Ward 1

After being voted onto the City Council in the fall of 2017, outgoing Councilor Joel McAuliffe spent six years representing Ward 1 before running unsuccessfully for councilor-at-large this past November.



Joel McAuliffe

"This is the end for me of nine years of direct involvement with the City of Chicopee from my time in the Mayor's Office until now,"

McAuliffe said.

McAuliffe thanked his wife Deanna Rousseau, who was sworn in as the Ward 1 School Committee member on Monday, for her unconditional support over the years and sharing with him a love for the city. He wished Rousseau good luck in her new position.

McAuliffe also thanked his fellow councilors and called it a privilege to serve with them, especially the experienced members.

"To be able to serve with the Tillotson's and the Zygarowski's of the world, people I looked up to growing up, has been a great honor, especially serving with the late Jim Tillotson, which is something I will never forget. (Tillotson) was the first person I ever felt could go toe to toe with me in a debate. He had the same fire in the belly that I had, and it was a tremendous honor to serve with him," McAuliffe said.

McAuliffe thanked Councilor-at-Large Frank Laflamme, calling him a mentor and one of the hardest workers he's met. He also thanked his old boss, former State Sen. Eric Lesser, for believing in him when few did, instilling in him a work ethic and showing him what's possible.

He thanked his family and

See **COUNCILORS** page 9



# Theory Wellness becomes 100% employee-owned



SUBMITTED PHOTO THOMAS WINSTANLEY

From the left, Theory Wellness cofounders Nick Friedman and Brandon Pollock. Friedman is currently the Chief Strategy Officer and Pollock as the Chief Executive Officer for the company.

**By Kristin Rivers**  
Staff Writer  
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CHICOPEE - Theory Wellness, a cannabis-based company on Fuller Road in Chicopee, announced on Dec. 21, 2023, they are now 100% employee-owned.

The announcement makes Theory Wellness, which has four retail locations throughout Massachusetts, the first employee-owned company in the state and the largest in the cannabis industry.

Theory Wellness opened its doors in early 2020 and was co-founded by Chief Strategy Officer Nick Friedman and CEO Brandon Pollock back in 2015, offering wholesale and in-house cannabis products, including vaporizers, cannabis-infused seltzer beverages, pre-rolls, edibles, extracts and more.

The business' hours are Mondays through Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Sundays.

Chief Marketing Officer Thomas Winstanley explained the Chicopee location is the company's centralized hub and main flagship store, including the only one with a drive-through window.

Winstanley said becoming 100% employee-owned means a lot to the employees.

"Cannabis funding is difficult. Cannabis is a challenging industry. It's very hard to operate because you don't have a lot of traditional systems to support you because it's not federally legal. And so, to take a step like this, I think is a signal from our owners of really what kind of a brand they want to be and how they

want us to be seen and because they care at the end of the day," Winstanley said. "They didn't need to do this, but they did and they're doing it for the future success of all of these folks."

Winstanley shared the transition comes through the Employee Stock Ownership Program, which provides many benefits from increasing retention rates to motivating employees.

"It doesn't take away what we've built today. Our management is still the same. We're still Theory Wellness. The only difference is that the employees now have the reins of the future success of the company, which is a very powerful thing," Winstanley said.

Winstanley said the credit for the announcement goes to Friedman and Pollock.

"They've been doing this a long time and I give them a ton of credit, specifically, to make a decision like this to say 'You know what, we've been positive. This has been a successful run. We want to give that success back to the people who made it, and that is a very noble thing,'" Winstanley said.

In addition to providing cannabis products, Winstanley said Theory Wellness also focuses on giving back and connecting with the community.

"I think cannabis is still new. People are still trying to understand what it means in a community and in a social fabric, and we always want to be a positive influence on what that can be," Winstanley said. "And so, specifically in Chicopee, it's been powerful to learn more about the people here. It's been powerful to learn about the business community



TURLEY PHOTOS BY KRISTIN RIVERS

An exterior shot of Theory Wellness on Fuller Road in Chicopee. The cannabis company announced on Dec. 21 they have become the first 100% employee-owned cannabis company in the state and the largest in the industry.



An interior shot inside the recreational and medical dispensary for Theory Wellness in Chicopee.

and to really try to be a good partner."

Winstanley wants the community to know that employee ownership helps drive company success for all.

"We've made that decision because we also know that the staff here have created the success for us and they have been a driver of that," Winstanley said. "It's just as much their ownership as it is mine and as it is to our founders."

Winstanley thanked the residents for their support.

"We couldn't have done it without the support of the Chicopee community, we couldn't have done it without residents coming and shopping with us," Winstanley said. "This is a time, especially going into the holidays, where we're just exceedingly thankful for what opportunities have been presented to us



Spot the dog, the mascot for Theory Wellness in Chicopee, poses for the camera.

and what future opportunities we hope to present to others through our operations."

To learn more, call (413) 595-2011, visit [theorywellness.org/ma](http://theorywellness.org/ma) or check them out on Instagram at @theorywellness.

Have Something to Share?  
Send your stories and photos to [dzbierski@turley.com](mailto:dzbierski@turley.com)

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## Rotary gives back!



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN ARTHUR

CHICOPEE – Once again, the Chicopee Rotary Club is giving back to the community! Pictured donating a \$500 sponsorship to Stephanie Shaw, director of Veteran Services, are Rotary Club Co-Presidents John Arthur and Lou Arasate. The Chicopee Veterans' Services sponsored a Veterans' Informational Fun Night held at the American Legion 452 on Dec. 28.



# Hot Oven Cookies holds soft opening downtown

By Kristin Rivers  
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CHICOPEE - The line was out the door on Dec. 21, 2023, as Hot Oven Cookies held its soft opening on Center Street in Chicopee.

The bakery, also on Parker Street in Springfield, offers a huge variety of gourmet cookies, with signature offerings including Lemon Drop, Boozy Cake Batter Sugar, Dark Chocolate Sea Salt Chip, Coquito Snickerdoodle, Guava Cheesecake and more.

Additionally, there are vegan and gluten-friendly cookie options, cookie pies and Take & Bake Dough.

"The Westfield location recently closed

The business' hours are Tuesdays through Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. or until they sell out. They are closed on Sundays and Mondays.

During the soft opening, Founder and Chief Baker Sheila Coon was hard at work with Allyssa Kemp making cookies, including their traditional Grinch cookies and Pineapple Rum Cake cookies, to greet many hungry customers waiting outside.

When asked how many cookie recipes she has, Coon shared Hot Oven Cookies has over 1,000 flavors.

"We've actually made 750-something so far and what we do is every week we rotate, and we have three brand new ones," Coon said.

Coon stressed Hot Oven Cookies does not answer the phone.

"We stopped answering the phone about three years ago. It's not just because of volume, but it's just for verification purposes, right? We want to make sure everybody has the right information," Coon said.

Instead, residents are encouraged to pre-order online, especially before the cookies sell out.

"Pre-orders are great. If you have a problem or a cookie emergency, go on the contact us form," Coon said. "We actually prefer O.G. style because we like to have that connection with our customers. We always say around here that you pay for the cookies, you come for the conversa-



An exterior shot of Hot Oven Cookies on Center Street in Chicopee. The new location opened on Dec. 21.

tion for free."

She stressed cookie orders should not be placed on the Contact Us form.

"Place them on the website," Coon said.

Mayor John Vieau welcomed Coon and Kemp to Chicopee, expressing excitement for their cookies.

"Thank you for choosing Chicopee, and we're excited, as a community, to have Hot Oven Cookies here in Chicopee," Vieau said. "I think that we're going to have a great partnership because people love cookies."

State Rep. Shirley Arriaga (D-Chicopee) shared she had cookies from Hot Oven Cookies in Springfield during the summer and was thrilled to welcome them to Chicopee.

"These cookies are amazing, so I'm excited to have you guys here," Arriaga said.

Ward 9 City Councilor Mary Beth Costello was also excited, later getting her own bag of cookies.

"Thank you for coming. This is a great treat!" Costello said.

Coon was also excited about her re-

cent appearance on "The Tamron Hall Show," where she was joined by her daughter, Jenei Rivera, to share her story of overcoming homelessness to become an entrepreneur and support fellow women of color business owners.

Hall came across a photograph Coon posted on social media in May 2023 where her company's catering trailer was parked outside the homeless shelter where she and her family stayed; also, the place where she decided to start Hot Oven Cookies. From there, Hall and her team reached out to Coon to have her on her show.

"It was really great and we're actually interviewing - can't say for what - but a casting director for another show next week that is yet to be announced," Coon said.

Kemp and Coon expressed their thanks to the community for its support.

"We're excited to be here. We are so happy to be here, so we can't wait to share it and everything," Kemp said.

"We're happy to be open," Coon said.

To learn more, visit [hotovencookies.com](http://hotovencookies.com) or check them out on Facebook and Instagram.



Allyssa Kemp fills an order for a customer during the soft opening of Hot Oven Cookies on Center Street in Chicopee on Dec. 21.



A close-up shot of signature gourmet cookies available at Hot Oven Cookies, including Snacktime Vibes Brookie, O.G. Oattie, Dark Chocolate and Sea Salt Chip, Blueberry Cream Pierogi, Boozy Cake Batter Sugar and Lemon Drop at the Hot Oven Cookies' soft opening on Dec. 21.



Founder and Chief Baker Sheila Coon talks about Hot Oven Cookies during the soft opening of Hot Oven Cookies on Center Street in Chicopee.

## Harmony House schedules Open House for new volunteers

CHICOPEE - Harmony House of Western Massachusetts is continuing to invite potential volunteers to stop in at a Volunteer Recruitment event to learn more about who we are and to tour the new home at 66 View St. in Chicopee.

Harmony House of Western Massachusetts is a home for the terminally ill. After closing our original home in 2019 and purchasing a house in the Aldenville section of Chicopee for renovation, COVID-19 struck and the plans were on hold for a time. After a massive reconstruction, Harmony House is planning on reopening in the near future in the beautiful new home.

Opportunities exist for direct health care professionals, home health aides, people who enjoy visiting with others, cooking, cleaning, yard work, administrative help, fundraising and more. Whether it's a few hours a week or a few hours a month, Harmony House is a welcoming place for people looking to help people. There are two Open Houses scheduled. The first is Saturday, Jan. 13 from 10 a.m. to Noon; the second will be on Wednesday, Jan. 31 from 10 a.m. to Noon.

Current volunteers and members of the Board of Directors will be available to answer questions. Please stop by either day at your convenience; it is not necessary to confirm your attendance. Harmony House is a local, non-profit organization whose mission is to provide a loving home



Harmony House, located in Chicopee, is opening its doors to volunteers.

providing compassionate care for the terminally ill who have limited or no resources for special care in their final stages of life. Harmony House is primarily staffed by trained volunteers including licensed nurses, caregivers, companions, and others.

If interested in learning more or becoming a volunteer, please contact Harmony House at 413-315-9784 or by email at [harmonyhousewma@gmail.com](mailto:harmonyhousewma@gmail.com).

## FREE FLY TYING CLASSES

Sponsored by the Western Mass Fly Fishermen, the Ludlow Elks Lodge 2448 and Turley Publications are starting January 11th, 2024.

Held at the Ludlow Elks Lodge located at 69 Chapin St. Ludlow Mass.

Thursday nights for eight weeks from 7PM to 9PM.

The classes are open to the public with children 8 years and up accompanied by an adult.

Classes are geared to the beginner or novice.

Course materials and tools will be supplied.

Should you have your own tools, feel free to bring them.

**No Registration is Necessary!**

Should there be Bad weather please contact the Ludlow Elks after 4:00 PM for any cancelations at (413) 583-2448 or check our website <http://www.wmffclub.org>



## GUEST COLUMN



By Ellenor Downer

Female Bufflehead



I received an email from a Brimfield resident, who along with his wife, participated in the Allen Bird Club's Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, Dec. 16.

One unexpected species they saw were three female buffleheads at the Springfield Reservoir.

The bufflehead is a small duck about 14 inches long. It has a distinct, large rounded head.

The male has a white wedge behind its black head. The male also has white flanks and breast. The female is gray brown with a small patch of white behind the eye.

They are diving ducks and feed on mollusks, fish, snails and crustaceans. They summer on wooded lakes, rivers and winter on lakes and coastal waters.

The female lays eight to ten ivory to buff eggs in a tree cavity or nest box. There courtship begins in January and these ducks show a high level of aggression during that time.

Buffleheads are generally silent. However, the female makes guttural sounds during courtship.

### Bird count

In his email, the Brimfield resident said he did his first Allen Bird Club count in the late 1970s. He said, "We have been covering the town of Ludlow, excluding the Westover Conservation Area covered by others, since 1989. The club's count circle center is in Springfield and includes adjacent towns.

He also said, "We had an excellent day weather wise, but the songbirds were hard to come by. With all the water ice free, we had high number of Canada geese (93), common mergansers (170, mostly males) and mallard (115). The common mergansers and many of the mallards were at the Springfield Reservoir."

He reported 20 ring-necked ducks at a pond near the Ludlow Country Club was another unexpected species in the count. In all, they had 32 species on their list, slightly more than the average of 29 species. Following the time in the field, the participants held a zoom meeting to discuss the results. No one mentioned seeing any winter finches i.e. redpoll, siskin or evening grosbeak.

### Large flock of Canada geese

Recently, I saw a large flock of Canada geese in a cornfield in Spencer. There must have been at least 100. I did not stop to take an accurate count, but it was the largest flock I've seen.

### Christmas card count

Years ago, Thelma Crawford, told me she kept a Christmas card bird count every year. While she was alive, we would share our card counts. Often the bird fell into the unspecified species category. I wven received a Christmas card one year with a loon with an evergreen wreath around its neck.. This was the first year I did not receive any Christmas cards with birds even one perched off in a distant tree in the background.

### Suet feeder

I now have my suet feeder out all the

## GUEST COLUMN



### Will my friend's fiancée be entitled to a survivor benefit?

Dear Rusty

I have a very good friend who has cancer and will begin chemotherapy this week. He is 71 years old and is currently receiving Social Security benefits. He has been living with his fiancée for a little more than 2 years, but they have been a couple for about 15 years and will be married in the next few weeks. She is 60 years old.

I am naturally concerned about his and her, future so my questions are:

What, if anything, should he and his wife do to ensure that she gets his Social Security benefits?

What benefits will she be entitled to and how soon will she be able to begin receiving them after his death?

Signed: A Friend with Questions

Dear Friend

You are kind to be concerned about your friend and his fiancée. Here's what you need to know:

Social Security goes by state rules when it comes to what is often referred to as "common law marriage." That means that whether your friend's fiancée will receive any benefits as a surviving spouse in a "common law" relationship depends on whether they live in a state, which recognizes common law marriage.

Most states do not, but state laws have changed over the years and many states which once recognized such unions as "marriage" no longer do. Although they may have "been a couple" for 15 years, if your friend and his fiancée have been living together for only two it is likely only the last two years will count for Social Security benefit purposes. So, whether your friend's fiancée will get anything when your friend dies depends on where they live, unless they get married, in which case the rules are different.

In order for a married widow(er) to receive surviving spouse benefits, the couple

must have been married for at least nine months. If they marry and your friend lives longer than nine months thereafter, then his wife will be entitled to a surviving spouse benefit from her husband. The amount of his wife's benefit will be based upon the amount your friend is receiving at his death, adjusted for her age when she claims her surviving spouse benefit.

A surviving spouse can claim benefits from the deceased as early as age 60, but those benefits will be reduced for claiming before full retirement age (FRA). Taken at age 60, the wife's benefit would be 71.5% of your friend's SS benefit at his death. The wife need not claim the survivor benefit immediately; she could opt to delay claiming in order to get a higher percentage of the husband's amount. Survivor benefits reach maximum, 100% of the deceased's benefit amount, at the recipient's FRA.

So, if your friend and his fiancée now live in a state which currently recognizes common law marriage (Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Montana, New Hampshire, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Rhode Island or in the District of Columbia), then your friend's partner will be considered his "wife" and entitled to survivor benefits as normal (the fiancée would need to prove they cohabitate in a marriage-like relationship to claim benefits).

If they do not live in one of those states, but they get married and the marriage lasts for at least 9 months, then the wife will be entitled to normal benefits as a surviving spouse as described above.

But if the couple do not live in one of the above states which recognize "common law" relationships or if their soon-to-occur marriage doesn't last at least 9 months or if they do not get married, I'm afraid your friend's partner will not be entitled to any survivor benefits from your friend.

*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.*



time as I have not seen any sign of wandering black bears in awhile. I also feed a combination of mixed bird seed, black oil sunflowers and shelled peanuts, which I mix together to put out daily. I have the usual juncos, chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, blue jays, mourning doves and of course, squirrels. I have not seen the cardinal pair yet, but then I don't have a lot

to time to spend watching my feeders.

*People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by calling me at 413-967-3505, leaving a message at extension 100, emailing [mybackyard88@aol.com](mailto:mybackyard88@aol.com) or [edowner@turley.com](mailto:edowner@turley.com) or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005.*

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The *Chicopee Register* welcomes submissions of news in or related to Chicopee and its residents. Our "People News," is filled with submitted engagement announcements, wedding announcements, birth announcements, your new baby or news about your 25th or 50th anniversary celebrations. Please e-mail correspondence along with a photo to [chicopeeregister@turley.com](mailto:chicopeeregister@turley.com) or send it to: Chicopee Register, c/o Turley Publications, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069.

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The *Chicopee Register* is published every Friday by Turley Publications, Inc., 24 Water St., Palmer, Mass. 01069. Telephone (413) 283-8393, Fax (413) 289-1977.



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# Parks Department to receive Boss Snowrator sidewalk vehicle

By Dalton Zbierski  
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CHICOPEE – The Department of Public Works Parks Department scored big during the first City Council meeting of the new year, as the council unanimously appropriated funds to purchase a Boss Snowrator sidewalk vehicle to plow and salt sidewalks.

The piece of equipment will cost \$29,958 and be used to clear sidewalks of snow and ice and treat them in one pass following winter weather events. Parks Superintendent Benjamin Strepka said he would order the machine the morning following the Jan. 2 meeting.

“We are responsible for close to 11 miles of sidewalks throughout the city. A lot of them are along main drags where a lot of the snow from the road gets thrown onto the sidewalk. It needs to be cleared,” Strepka said.

Mayor John Vieau said he was recently approached by a city employee

as he walked his dog early in the morning. The individual said the Parks Department could really use the piece of equipment and pointed out the specs for it.

“I went back to my office, looked at it, always keeping an open mind and having an open-door policy,” Vieau said. “I thought certainly this could help tremendously with efficiency considering how we’re short staffed at Parks and Rec.”

Currently, 17 people work in the Parks Department. For each storm, there are five lists of sidewalks that must be completed, each list containing about 10 to 12 sidewalks.

“There are about 10 to 12 pushing snowblowers around the city and then following back up with salt. Plus, the width of a sidewalk, you have to hit it twice; two passes up and down to completely clear it and then (two passes) to salt and sand it,” Strepka said.

Strepka confirmed that staff levels have not been full for quite some time,

noting that it puts a strain on the staff when it does snow, as the department’s mission is to remove all snow within 24 hours of the weather event.

The department also has a plow route it must complete after each storm before it treats the sidewalks.

The new piece of equipment will be hauled around using a truck and trailer combination that the department already owns. Strepka looks forward to the addition of the machine, noting that students use some of the sidewalks that the department is responsible for treating.

“An example of a very long sidewalk we maintain is along Seymour Drive from Bellamy (Middle School) all the way down to the bottom of the hill there,” he said. “So, we have these very long stretches that need to be cleared in a very timely fashion. Also on hills, salting them as quickly as possible helps to prevent ice buildup and all that.”

Strepka said certain areas that the department maintains are city proper-

ties. A lot of them are parks.

“An example is in front of Szot Park. It’s a very small stretch, but there’s a sidewalk that goes in front of there,” he said.

Strepka said one Boss Snowrator has a 10-year lifespan and should be enough for now, but the department will monitor its effectiveness and see where to go from there. Noting that the new machine will clear and salt the sidewalks, Strepka said when purchasing equipment, the department is emphasizing multi-use capabilities.

“We’re also switching away from the traditional mower, looking at different options; stand on blowers, stand on mowers, a lot of more compact machinery that has the same amount of power for less cost, so we’re able to bring two pieces of machinery out to a particular park or wherever as opposed to just one. We are continuously looking at the newest technologies in these types of equipment and try to bring them forward such as this,” Strepka said.



From the left, Charles “Charlie” Laboy, founder and program director at One Strong One Community and Chicopee Cultural Council President, Mayor John Vieau, Bedel Abdullah Omar, Ayanna Crawford, president of the Kwanzaa Collective, Kwanzaa Collective member Sister Anna Gilbert-Muhammad, Jeannette Rivera, 2023 Kwanzaa Chair and Kwanzaa Collective member Maria Del Carmen Rodriguez reflect on Kwanzaa.



From the left, Mayor John Vieau, Ayanna Crawford, preside of The Kwanzaa Collective, Charles “Charlie” Laboy, founder and program director at One Strong One Community and Chicopee Cultural Council President, Jeannette Rivera, chair of the 2023 Kwanzaa Celebration, Kwanzaa Collective member Maria Del Carmen Rodriguez and State Sen. Jacob Oliveira (D-Ludlow) take a group photo during Chicopee’s Kwanzaa Celebration on Dec. 26. Laboy and Lisa Sanders, the city’s health director, were honored for their efforts to unite the community.

**KWANZAA** from page 1

together to shine light on that troubled past but also to celebrate our future.”

“Collectively, as we remember that storied history, we need to take stock of the fact that many populations were marginalized over time, and so when we come together to places like here in Chicopee, I’m just so proud to partner with the mayor, City Council and community that always invests in the cultural patchwork that makes up the United States,” Oliveira said.

Laboy expressed gratitude to everyone who came to the celebration, hum-

bled by being recognized for his work in the community. He also received the mayor’s proclamation from Vieau celebrating Kwanzaa in Chicopee.

“It’s really nice to see residents like all of you who are here today to support these efforts, support these community events and continue to make them happen, and however we best can come together, that’s what I hope to ultimately do for residents of Chicopee,” Laboy said.

Reflecting on Umoja (Unity), Crawford greatly emphasized how important it is for everyone to put aside their differences and work together, especially

during these troubled times.

“We have to bring the peace, we have to bring the unity so that we can live in harmony in this world and healthy for generations to come,” Crawford said. “Because if we don’t, we’re eroding the essence of who we are as human beings, as Americans, as people in general and so we have to find a way to come together. So, Unity is the first principle that sets the tone for the rest of the week.”

Crawford also hopes to bring more attention and awareness to Kwanzaa throughout the state.

“We want Kwanzaa to be known and

we want it to be celebrated for those that choose to celebrate it and for those who want to learn about it,” Crawford said.

This was her message to the community for Kwanzaa.

“My message to everyone is to strive for unity. To strive to create the peace in your own household, in your community, in your family, even at your job and that you are the connector or you’re the ambassador,” Crawford said. “We’re saying to all the residents of Chicopee that we’re making you guys the ambassadors of Kwanzaa. That you’re going to go out and spread the love and spread the culture around Kwanzaa.”



TURLEY PHOTOS BY KRISTIN RIVERS

From the left, State Sen. Jacob Oliveira (D-Ludlow) watches in excitement as Ayanna Crawford, president of The Kwanzaa Collective, Bedel Abdullah Omar, raise the flag to celebrate Kwanzaa as Maria Del Carmen Rodriguez, Jeannette Rivera, chair of the 2023 Kwanzaa Celebration, and Mayor John Vieau watch.

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**More information on Carter Janik recognition story**

In a follow-up to the Register's Dec. 7 story recognizing Chicopee Comprehensive High School student Carter Janik for his achievements at SkillsUSA, the Chicopee Register learned the ceremony was organized by Monica Torres, the city's community & constituent liaison. This note is to acknowledge Torres' contributions to the ceremony along with organizing it to recognize and celebrate Janik's achievements.

**Chicopee Community Band seeks members for the 2024 Spring Concert Season**

CHICOPEE – The Chicopee Community Band is seeking members for the 2024 Spring Concert Season. There are no auditions to join the group, but prospective members should be able to read music and own a concert band instrument. There are no fees to join.

The band is an all-volunteer, all age, ensemble that rehearses in a friendly setting and performs a variety of music. Our members represent many communities in the greater Chicopee area.

The band meets Wednesday evenings from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. in the band room of Chicopee Comprehensive High School at 617 Montgomery St., Chicopee. Our schedule coincides with the Chicopee



COURTESY PHOTO

The Chicopee Community Band meets Wednesday evenings from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at Chicopee Comp.

Public Schools calendar.

Please consider joining our band. For more information, email Sally Dupuis at

ChicopeeAreaBand@gmail.com or visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/ChicopeeAreaBand>.

**VIEAU from page 1**

day, I reflected on how I got here. When you run for mayor, you need a team. My team started with family and friends and has grown into something very special," Vieau said. "I am thankful and blessed to have the support of the most talented and incredible people who hold the same vision of our city that I do. Thank you for believing in me."

Vieau gave a special shout out to his Chief of Staff, Michael Pise, who he called "an incredible person," and celebrated executive assistant Janice Olbrych, Special Projects and Communications Director Chloe Soto and Constituent Liasson Monica Torres.

Vieau also shared advice he received from U.S. Congressman Richard Neal.

"A very wise man once shared with me that the highs and lows of being mayor come very quickly. Enjoy the highs and challenge yourself with the lows. The man also told me being mayor was the most gratifying position he ever held. Boy was he right," Vieau said.

As mayor, Vieau said you must have passion to help make the community the best it can be, as the occupation is "so much more than just a job."

He said you must believe in yourself and trust others for the city to be successful and added you must have a vision and recognize its potential.

"Being mayor is a 24/7 job; it's a way



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHLOE SOTO, MAYOR'S OFFICE

Mayor John Vieau gives his signature on New Year's Day, entering his third term as mayo

of life. One thing I've learned is it can't be done alone," Vieau said.

The third term mayor shared a statement he uses often for moral building: "Our collective success depends on everyone."

Vieau acknowledged that there are challenges ahead but is convinced Chicopee is a safe, happy place to work, live and raise a family. He said his goal for 2024 is to simply work together.

Vieau said Chicopee is fortunate to be represented in Washington D.C. by federal legislators Neal, Ed Markey and Elizabeth Warren. He looks forward to working with Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey, Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll and believes strongly in the capacities of the six-person delega-



Clerk Keith Rattell swears in John Vieau as mayor on Jan. 1.

tion of state legislators representing Chicopee on Beacon Hill.

When working with City Council and the School Committee, Vieau stressed the importance of listening, collaborating and keeping each other informed as there are many important projects occurring in the future.

These include reactivating the central library, getting the Uniroyal property back on the tax roll, Phase II of City Hall improvements, the opening of the Post-9/11 and Service Dog Memorial Park, improvements to Szot Park and the building of a new Barry Elementary School, which Vieau considers to be a legacy project.

Vieau thanked his financial team for its responsible management, as the city is "in excellent financial shape with a robust stabilization account and one of the highest bond ratings in the area."

Vieau said the city is always working on creative ways to fund projects and grant write and added that the Fiscal Year 2024 budget was \$8 million below the levy limit with an additional \$3 million added from the stabilization account for tax relief.

"We'll continue to make progress at a pace we can all afford. My goal is to keep the

city of Chicopee affordable for all," Vieau said.

Vieau said public safety is paramount to the city's success, as many first responders were hired during his first two terms.

"When you call, I want you to know that Chicopee's finest and bravest are on their way," he said.

Vieau noted that the Department of Public Works and city engineers are developing strategies to improve public and pedestrian safety. In 2023, flashing crosswalk signals and flashing stop signs were added, speed tables were added, roads were repainted and over 6,000 citations were issued.

Moving forward, more speed tables could be added, and other solutions are under consideration as a street-by-street review of problem areas is being conducted.

Under the leadership of the new superintendent, Vieau feels that Chicopee Public Schools has a "whole new dynamic."

He also said the city has a senior center, the RiverMills Center, that is world class with services ranging from health and fitness to socialization and transportation among others.

"It's the envy of many cities and towns in our state. We're going to continue to expand those services for our older adults," Vieau said.

Regarding veterans' services, Vieau said the city is what it's always been: veteran proud. Approximately 4,500 veterans call Chicopee home, and Vieau said the city will always honor and respect their sacrifices.

In 2024, the city will continue to address issues pertaining to housing, education, taxes, seniors, public safety, parks and recreation and more. Vieau is honored to serve two more years as mayor and pledges to give his best.

"My promise is simple. I will work hard and do what's best in the best interest of those who live here, popular or not, with the taxpayers always in mind," he said.

Following the ceremony on Monday morning, Vieau said "the emotions are real."

He was proud that his children took part in the event, even his daughter Alyssa, who sang the National Anthem virtually from San Francisco.

For those who didn't vote for him, Vieau hopes to earn their trust in the next two years.

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## Co-op remains winless



TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM

Connor McDonnell catches up with the loose puck.



Caleb Lundgren looks to flick the puck into the offensive zone.



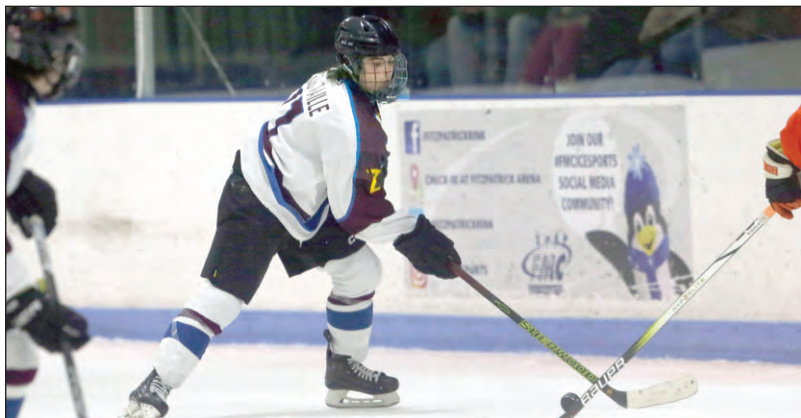
Stephen Samson heads up the ice.



Braydon LaDuke, of Granby, tries to get around an opponent.



Chris Walczak possesses the puck near the boards.



Nathan Robitaille heads up the side.

HOLYOKE – Last week, Chicopee’s co-op hockey team, which includes Granby among five teams as part of the team, hosted its Winter Holiday Classic mini-tournament.

Unfortunately, the Pacers would lose consecutive games, falling to Agawam and Greenfield to suffer a sweep in the event. Both were 5-0 defeats.

Following six days off, Chicopee returned to action to face Ludlow on Wednesday, and next faces Saint John Paul II on Jan. 6 at 3:30 p.m. on the road.

## Knights defeat Pacers



TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Nadir Johnson comes down with a rebound.



Jeremy Rodriguez makes a pass on the run.

CHICOPEE

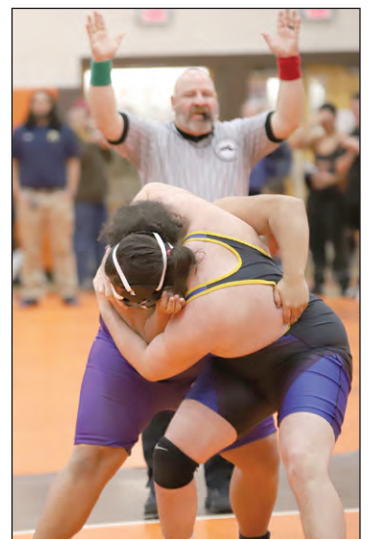
– Last Wednesday night, Holyoke High School boys basketball continued its hot streak and defeated host Chicopee 65-44. The Pacers were able to rebound and defeat Putnam two days later 63-59, but a four-game losing streak has Chicopee at 2-5 heading into the start of 2024. Holyoke improved to 5-2 with the win and face Putnam on Friday, Jan. 5.

## Chicopee competes at Agawam tournament

AGAWAM – Chicopee wrestling took part in Agawam’s Phil Tomkiel Holiday Tournament last Thursday. As a team, Agawam took the crown with an impressive 274.5 points. Natick placed second with 234 points.

Also competing was Chicopee, which placed ninth with 68 points, South Hadley (12th) with 56 points, Holyoke (13th) with 53 points, and Quabbin Regional (14th) with 46 points. Agawam also placed a “B” squad in the meet, and their squad came in eighth with 79.5 points.

Agawam would crown three individual champions and five runner-ups. Holyoke had an individual champion as well. Holyoke’s Steven Santiago was a champion at 113 pounds, while Agawam was led by Jordan Agosto (120), Nicholas Ugolini (132), and Ilya Shlemanov



TURLEY PHOTO BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Ben Tougas locks up in a heavy-weight match for Chicopee.

(150) led Agawam.

There was also a girls tournament that several teams sent competitors to.

## Thunderbirds fall hard against Bruins

SPRINGFIELD – The Springfield Thunderbirds (16-10-3-1) had few answers for a confident opposing attack, falling 8-2 to the Providence Bruins (17-12-2-2) on Saturday night in front of a sold-out MassMutual Center crowd of 6,793.

The Bruins were opportunistic off a self-inflicted T-Birds mistake to jump to a 1-0 lead at 3:44

of the opening period. Will Bitten directed a pass back toward the Springfield bench, where a pair of defenders were in the process of a line change. Out of the confusion, Anthony Richard jumped on the loose puck and quickly snapped a wrist shot through Vadim Zherenko to give Providence the game’s opening goal.

Rookie Bruins blueliner

Ethan Ritchie would add his first career AHL goal just 60 seconds later, jumping up into a 3-on-2 rush and ripping a shot through Zherenko at 4:44 off a drop pass from Jesper Boqvist. Providence also made life difficult on the T-Birds’ offense, as the Springfield attack mustered only five shots in the opening 20 minutes.

After going unsuccessful on

a power play early in the second, the T-Birds saw a familiar bout of adversity when Justin Brazeau whipped a turnaround wrist shot through Zherenko at 6:21 to make it 3-0 for Providence.

The T-Birds gave the sell-out crowd a glimpse of another comeback bid when Jakub Vrana extended his point streak to four games with a beautiful wrist shot

under the crossbar behind Brandon Bussi, cutting the lead to 3-1 just 18 seconds after the Brazeau goal.

The two-goal deficit proved only temporary, though, as Jesper Boqvist scored on the front end of a four-minute power play, one of his three points on the night, at

See T-BIRDS page 8



## New modifieds event announced for early February

AUBURNDALE – After discussion with race teams, competitors and fans, Showdown Series officials have decided to update the schedule for the upcoming events at Auburndale Speedway in February during Speedweeks. With the new adjustments, the 602 Modifieds and Tour-Type Modifieds will compete in racing action at Auburndale on Thursday, Feb. 8 and Friday, Feb. 9 only.

The Tour-Type Modifieds will run two feature races - one Thursday and one Friday. Tour Modified events pay \$2,000 to win, \$1,000 for second and \$750 for third. The 602 Modified division will pay \$500 for the winner of each race, \$350 for second and \$300 for third. The 602 division will run double-feature events on Thursday and one on Friday. The 602 Modified features will be 30 laps and the Tour-Type Modifieds 50 laps.

"We're getting more and more phone calls and momentum is building surrounding these Modified races and we wanted to do everything possible to avoid conflicts with the New Smyrna Speedway Modified events," Brad Hockaday, owner of Professional Motorsports Solutions, said. "Seeing Modifieds on Auburndale Speedway is going to be something special that fans and competitors are not going to want to miss. Extending Speedweeks a few days earlier is a great opportunity for everyone to enjoy some more time in the sunshine state."

For the 602 Modified division, unlike some other events, there is no age limit on the races. Teams are asked to be responsible with their drivers age and experience level to compete in this event. No NASCAR licenses are required for either division.

New Smyrna Speedway has also adjusted the times for their parking times

for Modified teams. No Modified teams (excluding the Whelen Modified Tour) will be able to park until early on Sunday morning. This means that teams can compete in the Auburndale Speedway events and have plenty of time to make it across the state, which is just over a two-hour ride. The Tour-Type Modifieds have been adjusted to go out early in the schedule for Friday and will be able to exit the track by approximately 9 p.m. The 602 Modifieds will race earlier in the night.

The tire rule for the event is posted online. The rule will be six race tires for the 602 Modifieds with the F45 by Hoosier, and eight race tires for the Tour-Type Modifieds running the M20 & M30. Practice tires allotment is unlimited for the event, but teams need to let the management know in order for Hoosier to have a proper amount on site for the event.

Race teams with questions about the event are encouraged to email [wntshowdown@gmail.com](mailto:wntshowdown@gmail.com). There are practice nights available on Tuesday and Wednesday. Each night has a session from 4-7 p.m. and another from 7-10 p.m. Each session is \$50 per car running.

Teams are also encouraged to register as soon as possible so the promoters can prepare for the race. For more information on the Showdown Series events at Auburndale Speedway, everyone is encouraged to visit <https://linktr.ee/seriesshowdown>. There, you can find the event tickets, registration forms, event schedule, event flyers, technical rules, general information and more. Auburndale Speedway will see the rumble and roar of Modifieds in February for the first time in the history of the Florida oval.

## Railers edged in one-goal loss to Reading

READING, PA – The Worcester Railers HC (12-11-3-2, 29pts) lost in a close one against the Reading Royals (11-13-1-1, 23pts), on Saturday night, Dec. 30 by the final score of 4-3 in front of 3,233 fans at the Santander Arena.

The game started right where they left off last night: physical. The Royals would do most of the heavy lifting in this department as they committed their 8th and 9th penalty of the weekend with a tripping minor penalty by Royals Forward Kenny Johnson (0-0-0) and a bench minor by Forward Tag Bertuzzi (1-0-1) committed while he was on the bench. The Railers offense would make them pay on the Bertuzzi minor penalty. Joey Cipollone entered the offensive zone with the puck in the middle of the ice where he found Zach White open on the right wing of their offensive zone. White quickly sent a cross-ice pass to an open Daylan Kuefler on the left side dot and sniped it past Royals goaltender Parker Gahagen's blocker side. Bertuzzi came back the other way three minutes later for Reading and tied the game 1-1 going into the second period. The Railers led the period in shots on goal 13-11.

The Railers struggled to find many scoring chances in the second but relied

on their defense and goaltending to get them through the period and deny the Royals from scoring. The Railers were disciplined and managed spacing well throughout the period until they would get a power play opportunity late in the second period. Towards the end of the power play, Copeland drove the puck past Gahagen in net for the Royals to put Worcester back ahead, 2-1. The Royals answered back not much later with a power play goal by Forward Shane Sellar to beat Fulcher and tie it 2-2. The Royals led shots on goal in the period, 12-5.

Reading grabbed their first lead of the night when Matt Brown shot one blocker side to beat Fulcher and make it a 3-2 game. Late in the third, the Railers got another power play and did a great job keeping the puck in the zone and battling down low. Jenkins quickly fired the puck past Gahagen's low blocker side to tie the game up once again. Both sides would get chances on the net but nothing came out of it in the box score where this game would head into overtime. The Railers led the period in shots on goal, 14-13.

In overtime, the Royals worked their way down ice in a 2-on-1 3:18 into the frame with Brown and Bertuzzi to score and give the Royals the 4-3 win at home.



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## City Council approves favorable reports from Human Resources Committee

By Kristin Rivers  
Staff Writer  
[krivers@turley.com](mailto:krivers@turley.com)

CHICOPEE - City Council approved on Dec. 19, 2023, two favorable reports from the Human Resources Committee.

First was the mayoral appointment of Rajesh Sanghvi to the Planning Board.

After Ward 8 Councilor Gary Labrie explained Sanghvi was interviewed and received a unanimous vote, Ward 4 Councilor George Balakier expressed his approval.

"Raj is an outstanding businessman in the city. He's experienced, he's well-educated, qualified, and I think he would be an asset for the Planning Board, so I'm going to recommend that he be on the Planning Board tonight," Balakier said.

Vice President/Councilor-at-Large Robert Zygarowski also approved of Sanghvi's appointment.

"It's nice to see a businessman taking interest because sitting on the Zoning Committee, a lot of times we deal with a lot of the orders that come down from the Planning Board, and I think Mr. Raj will certainly give it a business perspective on this and I wholly support this," Zygarowski said.

Ward 1 Councilor Joel McAuliffe commended Sanghvi for his willingness to serve, calling him "a tremendously civically engaged individual and "someone who's deeply rooted and invested in the community."

McAuliffe shared this advice for Sanghvi: "Never forget the job of the Planning Board, which is to follow the law."

"There are a lot of times people come before you and before this board and ask us to do things other than that because they're trying to make decisions based on emotion. That's not the job," McAuliffe said. "The job is to not put the city in a position to be sued. You simply follow the law, make the judgment in the best interest of the law and let the City Council handle what the political side of things is."

Additionally, he added this.

"I know that there will be difficult votes that you'll have to take, but if you stay tried and true to the law and the oath that you will take, it will guide you in the right direction. Thank you for your willingness to serve," McAuliffe said.

Ward 2 Councilor Shane Brooks said he "heartily supports Raj's efforts to join the Planning Board," sharing how he first came to the United States as an immigrant 12 years ago and the impact Chicopee had on him.

"Most particularly, the schools had on his son, who is now a doctor, and I know Raj is very proud, so I think it's his very small way of giving back to the city that has given him and his family so much," Brooks said. "Not only does he own two businesses, but he is very, very involved in the community, and it's just nice to see some new faces getting involved and wanting to make an impact on the City of Chicopee in a positive way."

The favorable report passed 11-0, approving Sanghvi to the Planning Board for a term expiring December 1, 2028.

Next was a favorable Human Resource Committee report to postpone the appointment of Yadira Medina as a member of the Housing Authority.

Labrie said the motion was postponed to the call of the chair.

"This appointment did not show up. It was her third time that she missed it, so it'll die in committee at the end of the year," Labrie said.

The motion to postpone to the call of the chair passed 11-0.

Lastly, the council approved 11-0 to send a letter of congratulations to Chicopee Comprehensive High School student Carter Janik for his achievements at SkillUSA.

Ward 9 Councilor Mary Beth Costello said, "This is something Chicopee can and should be proud of... This is a tremendous honor for our city and I appreciate the hard work of Carter Janik."

## IN THE CLASSROOM

### Shaikh inducted into WNEU Chapter of Epsilon Iota Honor Society

SPRINGFIELD – Epsilon Iota, the Western New England University chapter of Rho Chi Pharmacy Honor Society, celebrated the induction of nine outstanding members from the PY3 Pharmacy Class at an event held on Thursday, Nov. 16, at the Munich Haus in Chicopee. Maherah Shaikh, of Chicopee, was inducted.

The Rho Chi Society, established in 1922, is an international honor society dedicated to fostering high scholastic achievement, fellowship among students in pharmacy, and the promotion of pharmaceutical sciences.

The ceremony was presided over by Marissa L. Ostroff, Clinical Associate Professor of Ambulatory Care at Western New England University's College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. Dr. Ostroff, also the

Faculty Advisor, served as emcee for the event.

The keynote address was delivered by Allissa Long, a distinguished alumna of Western New England University from the Class of 2019. Currently, she holds the position of Assistant Professor at the University of Saint Joseph's. Notable speakers at the event included Dr. John Pezzuto, Dean of the WNE College of Pharmacy, and Dr. Ostroff.

Western New England University's College of Pharmacy prepares students for their role of "Pharmacist as Educator." The cross-disciplinary approach to teaching includes the theoretical and practical aspects of pharmacy, and also promotes the development of leadership, professionalism, advocacy, and a commitment to community service.

### T-BIRDS from page 7

8:40 to make it 4-1.

Zach Bolduc had the opportunity to give the T-Birds another jolt when he was awarded a penalty shot with Springfield down a man at the 10:46 mark. However, Bussi had the answer with the leg pad, shutting the rookie's bid down and keeping Providence ahead by three.

The Bruins rewarded their goalie in kind with back-to-back power-play goals from John Farinacci at 11:31 and Trevor Kuntar at 15:11, upping the margin to 6-1

before Bitten finally got Springfield on the board again with a power-play tip-in at 19:27 of period two.

Patrick Brown would add to the Providence lead with a rush up the left side at 7:17 of the third, and Jayson Megna capped off the scoring by netting the first short-handed goal against Springfield all season at 18:00.

The T-Birds finish up the homestand as they begin a 3-in-3 weekend against the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins on Friday at 7:05 p.m. at the MassMutual Center.



# Chicopee Public Library hosts programs for kids and families

CHICOPEE – Each month, the Chicopee Public Library hosts a variety of programs for children and families. The Youth Services Department seeks to provide opportunities for entertainment and enrichment that explore literacy and promote creativity. Here is the slate of events for January 2024.

Little Movers will be held in the children's program room on Fridays, Jan. 5 and 19 at 11 a.m. Babies crawling to 24 months and their caregivers are invited to join us for free play followed by circle time exploring songs, fingerplays and movement!

The Library's All Ages Playgroup will be held in the children's room on Saturday, Jan. 6 from 1-2 p.m. While the children's

room playspace is always available to kids and families visiting the library, during playgroup there are extra toys to explore. It is a great time for families to meet up and play.

On Tuesdays, Jan. 9 and 23 at 10:30 a.m. in the Community Room, the library will have a Little Kid Dance Party geared for kids ages five and under and their caregivers. Older kids are welcome, as well. There will be songs, dancing and big movement.

Storytime will be held in the children's program room on Wednesday, Jan. 17 and 31 at 10:30 a.m. Storytime is based loosely around the early childhood literacy skills: sing, talk, read, write and play. It is a great

way for preschool aged kids to practice skills they will need for school. Library staff lead a circle time where they read picture books and lead the children in song and movement, afterwards they do a craft or activity. Kids ages six to nine are invited to come to the Maker Zone for projects, crafts and experiments focused on Science Technology Engineering and Math. Maker Zone will be held on Thursday, Jan. 18 at 4 p.m. in the children's program room.

This month, the library will be holding a new program called Story Arts. This program is for kids ages five and up to explore picture books. Story Arts will meet on Tuesdays at 4 p.m. for four weeks, Jan. 23 – Feb. 13. Each week will focus on a

different artist – Eric Carle, Oge Mora, Dan Santat and Phoebe Wahl. The group will read books and look closely at the artwork, then make a project inspired by that artist's work.

The Anime Club, for middle and high school students, will meet on Thursday, Jan. 25 at 3 p.m. They will be discussing the Crunchyroll Anime Awards.

There are Games every day in the Teen Space after school. Hang out in the Teen Space after school and enjoy one of our many games. We have all different kinds to play and even some challenging puzzles.

For more information about the Chicopee Public Library, go to [www.chicopee-publiclibrary.org](http://www.chicopee-publiclibrary.org).

## COUNCILORS from page 1

friends and specifically the residents of Ward 1. McAuliffe said he is profoundly grateful they trusted him to serve on the City Council in the neighborhood where his dad grew up, where he would visit his grandparents and where he and his wife bought their first home.

"Together, we accomplished big things like Crossroads Fiber and a new post-9/11 park," McAuliffe said. "We paved roads and sidewalks, funded our police and fire and made our little corner of the world just a little bit better. You placed your trust in me, and I never forgot every time I stepped foot in this building, I was your advocate here in City Hall."

While his time on the board has come to an end, McAuliffe said the hope still lives and the dream shall never die.

"Thank you all for this honor," was McAuliffe's final meeting comment as a City Councilor, for now.

### Delmarina López

During her lone term as a City Councilor, outgoing Ward 3 Councilor Delmarina López became one of the strongest voices in the city. She chose not to run again, as she contested John Vieau for mayor and lost last November.



Delmarina Lopez

As she began her closing remarks, López said it was most important to thank the Ward 3 residents who elected her to the council. She said she served them proudly for two years.

"Thank you to every single resident across the city who entrusted me to serve them with transparency and integrity. Thank you for every call, every email, every note you sent after tough meetings to keep me up and keep my spirits up," she said. "Thank you for showing up and making your voices heard, and I think that part is most important. Your voices being heard were an integral part to me being able to do my job for you."

López described her final council meeting as being "bittersweet" because it has been "a point of pride to zealously fight for the residents and what I have believed to be the right course of action."

López is delighted that Sue Goff will take her place on the council, noting that there are now three female councilors, also including Ward 1 Councilor Abigail Arriaga and Ward 9 Councilor Mary Beth Costello. When López and Costello were sworn in back in 2022, it was the first time there had even been two female councilors.

López pointed out that she is the first and only person of color ever elected to represent Chicopee at a municipal level and the first Latina woman to serve Chicopee on any level. She hopes this, and the addition of Arriaga and Goff to the council, will inspire others.

"The beauty of being the first is that the path has been paved, and I know that there will be more. To the young girls watching my leadership, you can do it too. There were two, there will be

three and hopefully one day there will be four," she said.

The outgoing councilor wore "López purple" to thank the 42% of voters who voted for her in the mayor's race as well as her family and friends. She thanked all those who supported her during her time on the council, appreciating them for understanding her commitment to the community.

"Thank you for bearing with me during long nights of meetings, missed gatherings – there were many of those – and missed birthdays," she said.

Lastly, López thanked Chicopee for showing its love. She spoke about how much Chicopee has given her and said every single sacrifice and opportunity to serve as been an opportunity to give back.

"It has been more than a duty I took an oath to fulfill but rather a pleasure," she said. "For those of you have asked what's next for Delmarina López, stay tuned. I'll tell you what though, I'm certainly not going to stop watching closely, and my hope is neither do you. Stay engaged Chicopee and keep your elected officials accountable. I never forgot during my tenure and no public official should ever forget that we serve you."

### Derek Dobosz

Derek Dobosz passionately said goodbye to the City Council on Dec. 19. After a successful six-year stretch on the council, Dobosz has elected to pursue other ventures.



Derek Dobosz

"I've given most of my 20s to the City of Chicopee. I was 21 years old when I was elected and 22 when I took office. I want to thank the voters who took a chance on me despite my young age," Dobosz said, noting that he earned 71% of the vote in 2017 and was never challenged again.

Dobosz said he believes people elected him because they trusted him to tell the truth and trusted that he cared about Ward 6 and the city. He said he always took it seriously when a constituent called, making their issue his issue.

"I really tried my best to do a good job and completely fill the role," Dobosz said. "I always told the truth, possibly to the point where it made me a less effective politician."

Dobosz said even those who don't support him know he put in countless hours, above what is expected or required. He is proud to have brought many people into the political process by calling for hearings on a variety of issues from water bills to traffic and everything in between.

Dobosz said everything he advocated for was for the city's betterment and that he was never interested in personal gain or moving up the ladder. He said he made it his personal mission to bring honor and credibility to the board and added that he secured countless improvements and upgrades for Ward 6 ranging from road repair to quality of life.

However, Dobosz believes he will best be remembered for the items he blocked from coming to fruition in Ward 6. He joked the stress of each proposal took years

off his life.

"I became a gatekeeper for Ward 6. I've blocked a massive business development, I blocked low-income housing, I blocked the proposed Burnett Road truck stop, the massive and secretive proposed Slate Road development, and I've successfully protected both sides of the state park," Dobosz said.

He also voted against the purchase of the Mass Mutual building for the School Department and voted twice against the James Street zone change.

"Ultimately, my time on the City Council will be defined by Slate Road," Dobosz said. "I challenged the political establishment, the municipal airport and the city. Thousands of city residents signed various petitions opposing the Slate Road development, a proposed million-square foot warehouse on land most people consider state park land."

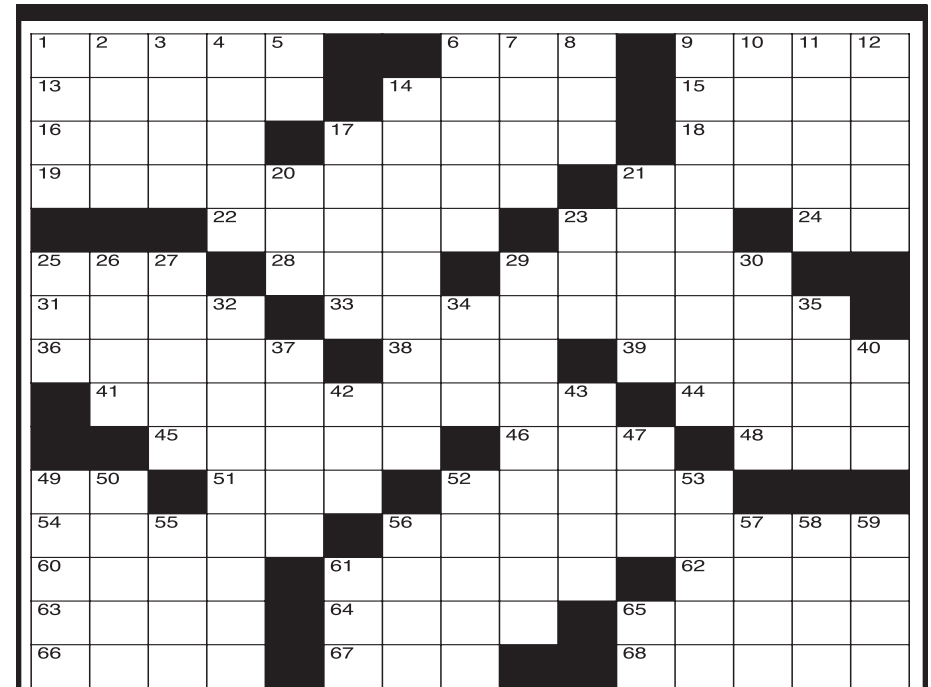
Dobosz said he was heavily pressured to change his vote, including political attacks, threats to get him in trouble at work,

threats to sue him and threats that were made against his personal safety.

"These people cannot intimidate me," he said. "These people cannot affect my character. I represented the people who elected me, and I stand tall leaving office. I regret nothing. I want people to know about this issue and how I was treated for doing my job."

Concluding his speech, Dobosz thanked his family for its support and his business partners for allowing him to finish his third term. Acknowledging he wasn't perfect, Dobosz shared this message for his colleagues on the council

"Finally, a quick message for the board. I think some of you despised me, which I think is unfortunate because I really don't despise any of you. It was a great honor to work on this board with all my colleagues. Nothing was personal. I did what I thought was right and did what I thought was in the best interests of the people I represented," Dobosz said.



### CLUES ACROSS

- |                                      |                                    |                                       |  |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Bleated                           | 38. Move one's head slightly       | 1. Curved segment                     | in L.A.                                |
| 6. Snakelike fish                    | 39. Secret rendezvous              | 2. Wings                              | 29. An act of undue intimacy           |
| 9. Database                          | 41. Improved management system     | 3. From pentane (Chemistry)           | 30. From which a later word is derived |
| 13. Russian-American violinist       | 44. A place to exercise            | 4. Gradually gets into (abbr.)        | 32. Equal to 10 meters                 |
| 14. Wendy's founder Thomas           | 45. 18-year astronomical period    | 6. Overhang                           | 34. Neither                            |
| 15. Ancient Italian-Greek colony     | 46. Automobile                     | 7. Christmas and New Year's have them | 35. Computer language                  |
| 16. Negatives                        | 48. You can take it                | 8. Type of bulb                       | 37. Sacred book of Judaism             |
| 17. Rescued                          | 49. A radio band                   | 9. Lacking a plan                     | 40. A woolen cap of Scottish origin    |
| 18. Self-immolation by fire ritual   | 51. Jaws of an animal              | 10. Tattle                            | 42. A way to dedicate                  |
| 19. Assigns tasks to                 | 52. Short-billed rails             | 11. Rockers like it "heavy"           | 43. Challenges                         |
| 21. Island nation native             | 54. Chinese province               | 12. One who's been canonized          | 47. British Air Aces                   |
| 22. Trade                            | 56. Shameless and undisguised      | 14. Indicate time and place           | 49. Large, influential bank            |
| 23. Detergent brand                  | 60. Horizontal passage into a mine | 17. Nobel Prize winner in physics     | 50. Portended                          |
| 24. Famed NY Giant                   | 61. Adult males                    | 20. The voice of Olaf                 | 52. Cavalry-sword                      |
| 25. Before                           | 62. Fail to entertain              | 21. Fragmented rock                   | 53. Vaccine developer                  |
| 28. Split pulses                     | 63. Dried-up                       | 23. They ___                          | 55. Napoleonic Wars general            |
| 29. Extremely angry; highly incensed | 64. City in north-central Utah     | 25. Master of Philosophy              | 56. Italian Seaport                    |
| 31. Body part                        | 65. Southern U.S.                  | 26. Backside                          | 57. Hip joint                          |
| 33. American state                   | 66. German river                   | 27. Landmark house                    | 58. ___ Clapton, musician              |
| 36. David __, US playwright          | 67. Oxygen                         |                                       | 59. Insect repellent                   |
|                                      | 68. Make law                       |                                       | 61. Decorative scarf                   |
|                                      |                                    |                                       | 65. Delaware                           |

### CLUES DOWN



# Dance Dynamics special permit application postponed to Jan. 31

**Zoning Committee:**  
Postponement is to help tie 'loose ends'

By **Kristin Rivers**  
Staff Writer  
krivers@turley.com

CHICOPEE - The Zoning Committee approved on Dec. 20, 2023, to postpone a special permit application for Dance Dynamics to Jan. 31, 2024.

The special permit application focuses on the purpose of a property becoming a mixed-use property by creating one residential unit in a business building at 386 Chicopee St.

The applicant, Angela Klusman, owner of Dance Dynamics, explained how the committee asked her to do a few things the last time she met with them, which she has since done, including talking with the Assessor's Office about the real estate taxes on the building being reconciled, paying a bill to the Water Department, a bill for 29 White Birch Plaza and an engineer constructor request from the fire and building departments.

"It's \$1,700 for them to walk on the property and just to look at it and it's another \$1,600 for them to stamp it," Klusman said.

Klusman said she did not plan to make any changes as she already had much replaced, including the fire doors. She expressed concern about the amount of money she's spending.

"Basically, I'm spending more money when I've put so much into this building already and I'm really just trying to do it to go ahead and be able to purchase the building through the banks," Klusman said. "Right now, I'm just asking to basically see if we can get those done and if not, I'm going to have to figure a way out to go ahead and get the stamp. It's \$3,300, and I try to keep my dance studio for low-income families."

Ward 8 Councilor Gary Labrie agreed \$3,300 was a lot but also was concerned about the taxes not getting paid.

"I don't think we've ever issued a special permit without having the taxes paid, even though they say it's going to be paid when the building is going to be (purchased)," Labrie said.

When Vice President/Councilor-at-Large Robert Zygarowski asked what her proposed project date was, Klusman said the dance studio has been open the last three years. Additionally, she's helping the assessors as they learned the owners are a nonprofit and never paid taxes on the building.

Also, prior to that, she was told "that

it's been at least vacant for five to six years."

"And he turned around to me and said that any nonprofit, if there is nothing going in on that building, then we should have been charging property taxes right along," Klusman said.

When Ward 4 Councilor George Balakier later asked if any neighbors or abutters had issues or concerns with the property, no one spoke.

After having Balakier read the application into the record, Ward 3 Councilor Delmarina López provided her perspective, with Attorney Kevin Corridan providing additional thoughts about the owner listed on the application and the procedural process.

López said she wanted to make sure the committee was following the procedures.

"My own suggestion would be to postpone this until those matters get resolved and until we have letters from the departments that the tax liabilities that were listed are being taken care of," López said.

López also advocated on behalf of Klusman, saying she's never received any complaints from the residents.

"I think it's a great service for our community. They are in my ward, and they do a lot for the community. They

show up for events and they sponsor a lot of our city events and they're active members of our community, which I very much appreciate," López said. "I just want to make sure that we dot our i's and cross our t's here and to me, this seems like there are still some loose ends that we usually don't set the precedent of letting permits like this go through without all of our i's dotted and t's crossed."

Ward 9 Councilor Mary Beth Costello said Klusman "has been very good to the community" but the issues need to be resolved before moving forward on the application.

"I'm in agreement with Councilor López that it's in the best interest to postpone," Costello said.

Balakier stressed that the committee is pro-business and wants to support and help all applicants.

"Again, the other side of the equation is we have to be in compliance with all rules and regulations," Balakier said.

The motion to postpone the special permit application to honor before the January 31, 2024, Zoning Committee meeting at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall with the following condition: the applicant work with the fire, building and engineering departments regarding the property passed 5-0.

## PUBLIC NOTICES

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
The Trial Court  
Probate and Family Court  
Hampden Division  
Docket No. HD23P2518EA  
Estate of:  
Lawrence R Duval  
Date of Death:  
October 2, 2023**

**INFORMAL PROBATE  
PUBLICATION NOTICE**

To all persons interested in the above captioned estate, by Petition of Petitioner **Lisa C. Lacosse of Chicopee, MA**

**Lisa C. Lacosse of Chicopee, MA** has been informally appointed as the Personal Representative of the estate to serve **without** surety on the bond.

The estate is being administered under informal procedure by the Personal Representative under the Massachusetts Uniform Probate Code without supervision by the Court. Inventory and accounts are not required to be filed with the Court, but interested parties are entitled to notice regarding the administration from the Personal Representative and can petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including distribution of assets and expenses of administration. Interested parties are entitled to petition

the Court to institute formal proceedings and to obtain orders terminating or restricting the powers of Personal Representatives appointed under informal procedure. A copy of the Petition and Will, if any, can be obtained from the Petitioner.  
01/05/2024

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
The Trial Court  
Hampden Probate and Family Court  
50 State Street  
Springfield, MA 01103  
(413)748-7758**

**Docket No. HD23P2653EA  
Estate of:  
Edward Stanley Midura  
Date of Death: 03/23/2010  
CITATION ON  
PETITION FOR  
FORMAL  
ADJUDICATION**

To all interested persons:  
A Petition for **Formal Adjudication of Intestacy and Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Lauralyn J Carlson of Hampden, 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: **Lauralyn J Carlson of Hampden, MA** be appointed as Personal Representative(s)

of said estate to serve 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 01/30/2024.**

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: December 29, 2023  
**Rosemary A. Saccomani**  
Register of Probate  
1/05/2024

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
The Trial Court  
Probate and Family Court  
Hampden Division  
Docket No. HD23P2612EA  
Estate of:**

**Jeannette S. Provost  
Also Known As:  
Noella Jeannette Provost,  
Jeannette Sylvia Provo  
Date of Death: 11/12/2023  
INFORMAL PROBATE  
PUBLICATION NOTICE**

To all persons interested in the above captioned estate, by Petition of Petitioner **Rosemarie N Sullivan of Chicopee, MA**

a Will has been admitted to informal probate.

**Rosemarie N Sullivan of Chicopee, MA** has been informally appointed as the Personal Representative of the estate to serve **without** surety on the bond.

The estate is being administered under informal procedure by the Personal Representative under the Massachusetts Uniform Probate Code without supervision by the Court. Inventory and accounts are not required to be filed with the Court, but interested parties are entitled to notice regarding the administration from the Personal Representative and can petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including distribution of assets and expenses of administration. Interested parties are entitled to petition the Court to institute formal proceedings and to obtain orders terminating or restricting the powers of Personal Representatives appointed under informal procedure. A copy of the Petition and Will, if any, can be obtained from the Petitioner.  
01/05/2024

**SALE OF  
MOTOR VEHICLES  
Under G.L. c.255 Sec. 39A**

Notice is hereby given by Interstate Towing, Inc. pursuant to the provisions of G.L. c. 255, section 39A, that on January 22, 2024, at Interstate Towing, Inc the following Motor Vehicles will be sold at private sale to satisfy our garage keeper's lien thereon for storage, towing charges, care and expenses of notices and sale of said vehicles.

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VIN:WBAEP33403PF02679  
Bruce Alvarez  
21 Kenway Dr.  
Springfield, MA 01104

2003 Honda Accord  
VIN:1HGCM66503A080004  
Tania Ortiz  
53 Andrew St. #1  
Springfield, MA 01109

2005 Acura TSX  
VIN:JH4CL96895C003912  
Carmen Martinez  
27 Deerfield Ave., Floor 3  
Hartford, CT 06112

2005 Ford Explorer  
VIN:1FMZU74E15UA44871  
April Cullinane  
77 Hollis St  
Lowell, MA 01852

2005 Ford F150  
VIN:1FTRF12W65NB40383  
Le Grand Bello Trans. & Shipping  
63 Joliette St. #4  
Manchester, NH 03102

2005 Volkswagen Touareg  
VIN:WVGGBG77L75D012042  
Yaritza Batista  
350 Liberty St., Apt. 3L  
Springfield, MA 01104

2006 Audi A4  
VIN:WAUDF78E56A007079  
Tatyana Rios  
18 Coomes St. Apt. 1R  
Springfield, MA 01108

2007 Honda Pilot  
VIN:2HKYF18456H510614  
Stephen Elijah Jahred  
362 Dixwell Ave.  
New Haven, CT 06511

2006 Lexus RX330  
VIN:2T2HA31U26C106401  
Sean Menard  
PO Box 225  
Haydenville, MA 01039

2006 Nissan Pathfinder  
VIN:5N1AR18W36C610115  
Rachel Mello  
6 Independence Way Apt. 203  
Franklin, MA 02038

2010 Ford Taurus  
VIN:1FAHP2DW7AG136181  
K'ly Ro'land  
1883 Main St. Unit 3633

Springfield, MA 01101

2010 Nissan Murano  
VIN:  
JN8AZ1MW4AW125942  
Lisa Roix  
63 Esther St. Apt. 3  
Worcester, MA 01607

2012 Ford Focus  
VIN:1FAHP3H22CL229875  
Connor Howe  
6931 Robert Dr.  
South Easton, MA 02375

2012 Honda Pilot  
VIN:5FN9F4H21CB053911  
Luke Andrews Higgins  
986 Longmeadow St.  
Longmeadow, MA 01106

2013 Mercedes-Benz Sprinter  
VIN:WD3PE7CC1D5737435  
K & River Construction Corp  
25 Jaques Ave.  
Worcester, MA 01610

2018 Ford Transit T-350  
VIN:1FTBW3XG9JKA96115  
Desmond Pesima  
152 Cascade Lake St.  
Las Vegas, NV 89148

2019 Benson Flatbed 524A  
VIN:1TTF483A6K3136043  
Center Transport Inc  
523 Houlton Rd.  
Easton, ME 04740

2019 Hino 258/268  
VIN:5PVN8JV4K4S74874  
Rentex Inc.  
110 Shawmut Rd.  
Canton, MA 02021

2019 Volvo Vn Vnl  
VIN:4V4NC9EHXKN872292  
Big Eagle Express LLC  
14433 Triskett Rd. 301W  
Cleveland, OH 44135

2021 Wabash Trailer  
VIN:1JJV532D0ML253839  
Big Eagle Express LLC  
14433 Triskett Rd. 301W  
Cleveland, OH 44135

01/05, 01/12, 01/19/2024

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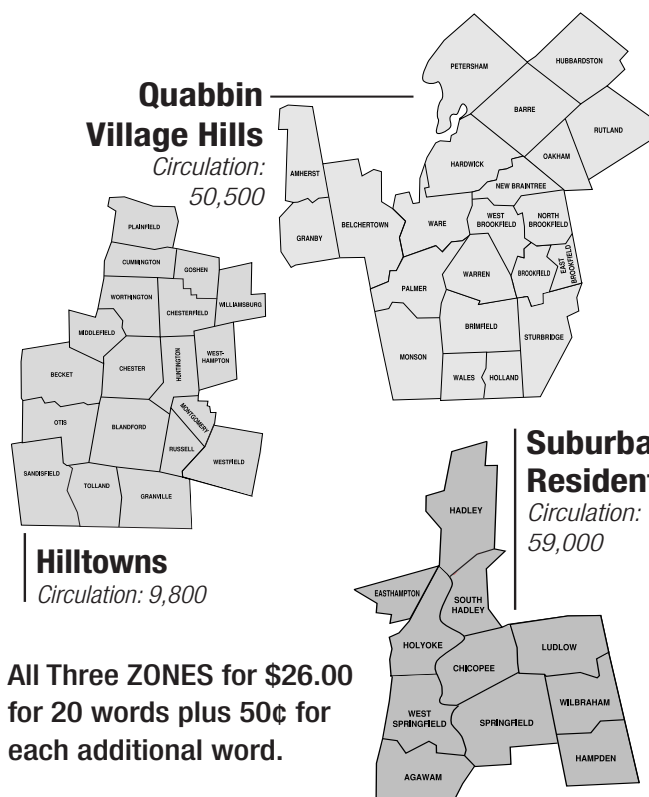
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# Habitat breaks the mold

Offers affordable homeownership despite rising costs

By Brandice J. O'Brien

SPRINGFIELD – Yes, Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity builds houses. But, there's so much more to the nonprofit organization. Simply put, Greater Springfield Habitat offers the limited-income population of Hampden County an opportunity to create better lives and generational wealth for their families. GSHFH operates using a three-pronged approach as a construction company, social service agency, and mortgage provider. In fact, Greater Springfield Habitat's construction projects are built despite the rise of inflation, financial challenges, and changes in the local housing market.

GSHFH primarily constructs three- and four-bedroom single-family homes that measure approximately 1,500 square feet. GSHFH helps families purchase homes that they construct in partnership with the organization, by requiring sweat equity contribution in lieu of down payment from partner families and providing low-to-zero-interest mortgages and subsidies to purchase homes at below market rate. Greater Springfield Habitat mortgages are based on the family's income and set to not exceed 43% of their total household debt when combined with all financial obligations.

"GSHFH works with families that earn 45% to 60% of the area median income level. For a family of four, that's a household income of \$35,000 to \$59,000 per year," said Aimee Giroux, GSHFH executive director. "Traditional first-time home buyer programs require a minimum income of 80% or



PHOTO SUBMITTED BY BRANDICE J. O'BRIEN

Juan Gonzalez and Ireydiza Perez's finished house

\$80,000 AMI and the family must have 3% to 10% down payment to qualify."

By comparison, Aimee said, imagine a family of four earning \$50,000 (50% AMI) is trying to secure a \$150,000 mortgage. They have a current debt of \$700 per month for a student loan, credit card and car loan. By partnering with GSHFH, they can afford up to a 2.5% interest loan. Their maximum payment with escrow would be \$993 per month with an overall debt to income of 40%. At the current 6.5% interest rate, their payment would be \$1,348 per month, and their debt to income would be 53%, which would make them in-

eligible for traditional funding.

Juan Gonzalez said just before he and his wife showed up to the January 2023 closing of his new home in Holyoke, he ran the numbers one last time to make sure the home was within their financial means. Looking over the math, he was worried. Unnecessarily so. Juan forgot the loan was interest-free. When he heard that he exhaled a big breath and said, "Disregard my math. Thank you, Lord. This home is more affordable."

"Habitat made the process easy and with a no-interest loan in this economy, we couldn't have asked for anything better," said Karina Dise, Habitat homeowner

in Monson, who with her husband, purchased their home in November 2007. "We are blessed to own a house and have land that goes with it. We can enjoy the outside when the weather is nice and we don't have to hear our noisy neighbors who used to live right next door to us. My husband likes to grill outside too, so that's definitely a plus."

Greater Springfield Habitat realizes everyone deserves simple, decent, affordable housing. Period. Habitat aims to close the racial wealth disparities by providing subsidies and affordable mortgages to help families break the cycle.

"We had debt, we cleaned it up and went to the bank to see if we qualified for a mortgage. We were told we didn't have enough money," said Lori Holt, who with her husband purchased a Springfield Habitat home in May 2014. "Our daughter told us about Habitat and encouraged us to apply. I didn't think we had a chance."

Eventually, Lori and her husband applied and were accepted. "It was such a blessing for us," Lori said. The couple has five children, four of whom are now adults. "We pay for mortgage what a lot of people pay for rent. Habitat helped our family a lot."

Kim Rivera, who experienced homelessness, on and off since her 18th birthday before owning a Habitat home, said she appreciates what Habitat has done for her. Kim purchased her home in December 2009.

"Habitat gave people like me the ability to get the American dream. I have stability. My children and grandchildren have a safe haven," Kim said. "I'm never selling this house. I'm going to keep it in the family. I want other generations to know they won't be home-

less. I have three kids, and they've all seen the benefits of having a home."

Studies have shown children of limited-income homeowners are 11% more likely to graduate from high school and are 4.5% more likely to complete post-secondary education than children of low-income renters, Aimee said.

Since its inception in 1987, GSHFH has constructed 74 homes throughout Hampden County.

Habitat chooses partner families based on need, their willingness to partner with us, and their ability to repay a mortgage for the purchase of their home. In many instances, a family's current living situation is less than ideal with issues of rodents, limited electricity, no heat, and/or the apartment is in a dangerous location. For many families, gunfire, drugs and vandalism are frequent. Families who face these realities often have challenges breaking the cycle for their children.

To ensure selected families understand the "hand up" versus a "hand out" ideology, prospective and have tools to manage the responsibility of homeownership, Habitat partner families must also attend first-time homebuyer education, financial literacy classes, good neighbor and home maintenance classes.

To keep the mission moving forward, GSHFH relies on donations. Most funding comes from individual donations, local businesses, and grants.

To learn more about Greater Springfield Habitat and its mission, visit [habitatspringfield.org](http://habitatspringfield.org).

## BUSINESS

### Freedom Credit Union donates more than \$4,000 to Westover Galaxy Council

CHICOPEE – Throughout the month of November, Freedom Credit Union collected cash donations at all its branches on behalf of the Westover Galaxy Community Council to support military service members and their families at Westover Air Reserve Base in Chicopee. A total of \$2,032.83 was collected from members, staff and the community, which Freedom matched for a total donation of \$4,065.66.

"Throughout the year, our monthly giving campaigns are met with terrific support, for which we are grateful," Freedom Credit Union President Glenn Welch said. "We really wanted to close out the year with a bang, so we matched the donations we received for this worthy cause. The holidays can be particularly hard for our military members and their families, especially when they are separated. The Westover Galaxy Community Council works to ease this difficulty by offering special events and resources."

Formed in 1988 as a committee within the Chicopee Chamber of Commerce and incorporated as an independent organization in 1989, the Westover Galaxy Community Council is an organization made up of veterans, local businesspeople and other citizens who support the men, women and mission of Westover ARB. Within Department of Defense guidelines, Westover Galaxy Community Council raises funds to contribute to events and special needs at Westover, the



COURTESY PHOTO

In December, Freedom Credit Union donated more than \$4,000 to the Westover Galaxy Council.

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