

Chicopee Register

A TURLEY PUBLICATION | www.turley.com

February 2, 2024 | Vol. 25, No. 43 | FREE

www.chicopeeregister.turley.com

COMMUNITY



TURLEY PHOTO BY DALTON ZBIERSKI

From left, Chicopee Firefighters Brady Williams, Joseph Martinez, Brendan Fournier and Kevin Waller.

New firefighters poised to make a difference

By Dalton Zbierski
Editor
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CHICOPEE – Chicopee’s four newest firefighters graduated from the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy’s grueling Career Recruit Firefighting Training Program late last month and have joined the fire department full-time.

Brendan Fournier, Joseph Martinez, Kevin Waller and Brady Williams are members of the academy’s Class #S35. They graduated alongside 23 other fire

recruits representing 16 communities in Western Massachusetts.

Fournier, Martinez, Waller and Williams all have deep ties to Chicopee and are excited to serve their home city. As the department’s newest members, they have much to learn, but each man enters the position prepared to make an immediate impact.

Brendan Fournier

Fournier, 24, was inspired to join the department after working as a certified lifeguard. He sought an avenue to make a greater difference and left the

10-week academy confident in his ability to do so.

“It feels good to master the basics of firefighting. I came into it not knowing anything about it so it’s good to get familiar with everything and be confident in your skills,” Fournier said.

Fournier said that throughout the academy, instructors prepared recruits to be ready for a variety of hazards. Fournier, the youngest of Chicopee’s newest class of firefighters, looks forward to applying that knowledge

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COMMUNITY

Children create collages during library’s Story Arts program



TURLEY PHOTO BY KRISTIN RIVERS

Faye and Delaney smile happily as they work on their collages during the Story Arts event at Chicopee Public Library.

By Kristin Rivers
Staff Writer
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CHICOPEE – Families visited the Children’s Program Room from 4 – 5 p.m. on Jan. 30 for a Story Arts event.

The new program, which started Jan. 23, has attendees enjoying readings of picture books to learn more about the artwork of the artist. Afterward, Youth Services Coordinator Erin Daly leads attendees in a craft inspired by the artist.

This week’s artist is Oge Mora, author of the children’s books “Saturday,” “I’m From” and “Thank You, Omu,” with attendees making collages.

The next Story Arts sessions take place on Feb. 6, with a focus on Dan Santat and digital art and on Feb. 13, focusing on Phoebe Wahl and a fairy craft.

Daly expressed excitement about Story Arts, sharing how the library is always interested

in creating new programs.

Last week and this week’s sessions, she said, focused on Eric Carle and Mora as they work with different forms of collages.

“For Story Arts, I am interested in offering an opportunity for school-aged kids to look closely at the illustrations in picture books and create some art inspired by them. Folks in our community seem to really turn out for art programs, and I wanted to tie in some literacy and appreciation of the picture book as an art form,” Daly said.

Daly said the new program “is a bit of an experiment.”

“I wanted to choose artists of a variety of backgrounds and show their pictures to kids and say, ‘This is an artist.’ The idea is to convey that all kinds of people can be artists,” Daly said.

Daly also enjoys the opportunity to read from and

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Mental Health Association is moving HQ to Memorial Drive

MHA is guided by core values: Respect, integrity, compassion

By Dalton Zbierski
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CHICOPEE – The Mental Health Association is relocating its headquarters from Springfield to the former MassMutual Learning Center on Memorial Drive.

MassDevelopment, the state’s land bank and development finance agency, helped MHA secure \$6.5 million in financing to complete the purchase. MHA is scheduled to move from its current headquarters on Worthington Street in Springfield to Chicopee at the end of March.

“We’re very, very excited,” Jen Ducharme, vice president of Development & Community Relations for MHA, said. “Right now, construction is currently taking place at the building on Memorial Drive. There were a lot of conference rooms that we



TURLEY PHOTO BY DALTON ZBIERSKI

The Mental Health Association is moving its headquarters to the former MassMutual building on Memorial Drive.

have to convert into private offices and smaller conference rooms for our purposes and areas to set up workstations.”

Guided by its core values of respect, integrity and compassion, MHA provides residential and support services that promote independence, community en-

agement, wellness and recovery for people with disabilities and other vulnerable individuals.

MHA also helps people navigate the challenges of substance use recovery through a wide range of services and residential programming. Since the 1960s, it has positively impacted people

throughout region.

Ducharme said the facility on Worthington Street has served MHA well but no longer has enough space. Making the move was based solely on operational need.

Searching for a new building, MHA explored options in

Springfield, West Springfield and Holyoke but didn’t identify a perfect fit until it came across the former conference center on Memorial Drive.

“The space in Chicopee, when it presented itself, it was highly desirable because it, first of all, has the amount of room that we need. It’s approximately 80,000 square feet. So that building, in the location where it is on Memorial Drive, it just provides MHA with an optimal balance of scalability, talent supply and general operation,” Ducharme said, adding that it also sits along a bus route.

Across all its programs, MHA employs approximately 700 people and is experiencing exponential growth, as it opens new programs throughout the Pioneer Valley. The move to Chicopee will allow MHA to bring all its teams together under one roof, adding an element of efficiency while promoting collaboration.

See **MHA** page 6

St. Joan of Arc School supports Lorraine's with food drive

The food drive is part of the Souper Bowl of Caring

By Kristin Rivers
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CHICOPEE - Students at St. Joan of Arc School are taking part in a food drive to support Lorraine's Soup Kitchen & Pantry. The food drive, which began Jan. 29, runs through Feb. 9.

So far, the school has collected 138 cans, and the class collecting the most during Catholic Schools Week will receive a pizza party. Catholic Schools Week, which celebrates Catholic Schools, began on Jan. 29 and ends today, Feb. 2.

Hudson Wozniak, a fourth grader, said the most important thing about this event is the opportunity to give back and support those who are less fortunate.

"Sometimes, we might not win like a party or whatever, but I feel good that we're doing a donation to help people because it's one more good thing you can do every single day. You're helping someone out," Wozniak said. "You might not know them, but you're still helping them out. Which it's good to know that you're helping one person out or 1000 people out one day."

Fellow fourth grader Alyssa Morrisette explained that during Catholic Schools Week, the students have a schedule with dress-down days including Superhero Day and Jersey Day/Pajama Day and focus on donating for the Souper Bowl.

"You don't have any homework because you're going to be bringing in the canned goods," Morrisette said.



From the left, St. Joan of Arc School Principal William McDonald, St. Joan of Arc School students Alyssa Morrisette and Hudson Wozniak and Bruce Broyles smile for a group photo during the ongoing food drive at St. Joan of Arc School. The fundraiser runs through Feb. 9 and coincides with Catholic Schools Week.

Bruce Broyles, ambassador for the local Souper Bowl of Caring, said the event is needed "more than ever."

"It's great. This food collection or cash collection for some of the older schools is a great activity, particularly during Catholic Schools Week, to show who they are," Broyles said. "Each organization is collecting (and) makes the decision where it's going to go."

Broyles explained Souper Bowl of Caring began in 1990 in South Carolina when a seminary intern watched a football game with some of his students.

At one point, the intern stopped watching the game and turned to his students.

"He said to them, 'We should say a prayer' and his prayer was, 'Lord, even as we enjoy this Super Bowl football game, help us to be mindful of those who have

not even a bowl of soup to eat,'" Broyles said.

"And from that prayer started the Souper Bowl of Caring, which now raises millions of dollars and millions of items all across the country and even outside of this country."

Morrisette and Wozniak shared the lessons they learned from participating in the food drive.

"We learn how to care for others and stuff like that and we learn how to help out and we just have fun doing it," Morrisette said.

"We participate in this and it's giving us a lesson every time someone brings in cans that we're helping out another person and we're caring and we're being kind and you may not know them," Wozniak said. "But that's the thing. If you don't know them, still help out. It's just the little things that can be good.



A photo of the canned goods collected so far by students at St. Joan of Arc School during their food drive to support Lorraine's Soup Kitchen & Pantry.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY KRISTIN RIVERS

That's a lesson that we can learn."

Janine Dunlea, the school's marketing director, is proud of the students, sharing it "represents who we are as a school."

"Education is obviously important, but it's the whole child. It's a reflection of who we are as a Catholic community. We give back to the community," Dunlea said.

Broyles summed it up best in his message to the community.

"The young people in this kind of situation are really setting an example for their elders and I think making the people who are donating this food and stuff have an opportunity to feel good by participating in this," Broyles said. "I have something I can help, and it doesn't take a lot."

To learn more, visit tacklehunger.org.

'Meet the Chicopee Police Chief' event held at RiverMills Center

Seniors connect with Police Chief Patrick Major

By Kristin Rivers
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CHICOPEE - Seniors stopped by the RiverMills Center on Jan. 29 for a "Meet the Chicopee Police Chief" event featuring members of the police department, led by Police Chief Patrick Major.

Major, joined by Public Information Officer Travis Odiorne, Sgt. Eric Ortiz and Capt. Doug Lambert, discussed the police department and met with residents.

Throughout the event, Major talked about crime statistics from the past few years, current events such as the recent threats at Chicopee High School, pedes-

trian safety, community policing and the importance of law enforcement building relationships with the community.

From there, attendees shared their safety concerns and asked questions about the police department.

Major explained he was invited by the senior center to provide an overview of what he and his officers do, offer safety tips and keep residents informed of current issues.

He stressed the importance of keeping residents informed of what happens in the community and what resources are available to them.

"I thought it was pertinent to give them a heads-up of how the police department is responding to those threats and incidents, what we can do together as a community as well to have better relationships so we can, hopefully, com-

bat some of those issues," Major said.

Major was thrilled with the turnout and interaction with residents.

"This is extremely important for us. Without the input from people like those in the room today, we can't engage the feel for what the community views as the relationship that the police department has with them," Major said. "So, community input is vital for us, for our operation."

Major said seniors also have a liaison in Sgt. Eric Ortiz, who is helping foster a stronger relationship between the police department and the senior center. It's part of the S.A.L.T. program, which involves seniors and law enforcement working together.

"He comes down here. He provides safety instruction, he provides an input between seniors and the police department, so he brings back concerns that we can address or look into," Major said. "As well as provide safety tips that we get not only just from our department but nationwide through the federal law enforcement agencies, state law enforcement agencies, so best practices. It allows two-way communication with us."

Major also addressed staffing during the event, explaining it's an issue also facing other departments in the state and across the country.

"Our department has a lot of opportunities (in) different areas, whether it's investigation, special operations, community policing, advancement of the ranks," Major said. "I think in that aspect we're a bit more fortunate than some of the smaller departments. But this day and age, probably one of the most important things is people want to work either close to home or they want to make sure they have the opportunity to make more wages. That's very intricate as well. All of those things we are working on."

Major hopes that attendees under-



TURLEY PHOTOS BY KRISTIN RIVERS

Police Chief Patrick Major shares his thoughts during the "Meet the Chicopee Police Chief" event at RiverMills Senior Center.

stood that the city's law enforcement officers are approachable.

"I think that's a big part," Major said. "I want people to feel comfortable dealing with our police officers."

Major wants the community to know Chicopee has a fantastic police department.

"I see the officers daily. I know what training they go through. I'm proud of our department, I'm proud of what we've accomplished and what we're going to continue to accomplish, and I hope the community feels the same way about us," Major said.

Major thanked residents for attending and bringing their concerns and questions to him and his officers.

"Thank you for coming. Thank you for being a part of our community. Thank you for allowing us to be part of you," Major said.

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MoMo's Snack Shack at McKinstry Market sources local products

Snack shack offers breakfast, lunch

By Dalton Zbierski
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CHICOPEE – Drive along Montgomery Street and one will find MoMo's Snack Shack at McKinstry Market Garden, a new and healthier option for breakfast or lunch.

With a menu that features delicious, locally sourced treats such as bagels, breakfast burritos, loaded hashbrowns, yogurt parfait, egg sandwiches, avocado toast, poutine, loaded fries, chicken and waffles, homemade soups, cheeseburgers and a variety of sandwiches, one can't go wrong.

Under the direction of McKinstry Farms Field Supervisor Michaela Thomas and owner Nicole McKinstry, MoMo's Snack Shack opened at McKinstry Market Garden last November. Thomas named the snack shack after her dog MoMo.

"The whole idea of it is to source local products," Thomas said. "The most rewarding part is just hearing positive feedback from customers on how great the food is and how fresh they can tell it tastes."

The meat that the snack shack uses comes from a farm in Belchertown, and the bread is made by Bernardino's Bakery on Exchange Street. Come summer, Thomas said they will use their own homegrown vegetables and partner with Mapleline Farm in Hadley.

The snack shack exists in the section of McKinstry Market Garden that has been used to serve ice cream. When the operation opened in November, it began with lunch and dinner.

Now, they've transitioned into breakfast and lunch only, but when summer arrives, they hope to serve food all day.

McKinstry has been impressed by Thomas, a Cornell University graduate who helps the farm with its social media and newsletters in addition to being a field supervisor.

"This is basically a new business (Thomas) started from scratch. She has many hats here at the farm, and we're very proud and happy to keep her on," McK-



MoMo the dog inspired the name for MoMo's Snack Shack at McKinstry Market.

instry said, noting that Thomas instructs employees in the kitchen, designs the food and prepares the menu.

McKinstry takes great pride in sourcing food from other local businesses. She explained the importance of supporting local.

"It's absolutely huge. In this economy today, it's important to support small businesses, and it's great for our city. It's amazing. We are proud supporters and support local. Absolutely," McKinstry said. "We try to get in as much local produce and products here at the store on top of what we grow so it's fabulous. We're one farmer who wants to support other farmers, so I think it comes full circle all the way around."

Currently, the snack shack employs

three people. Thomas had high praise for the staff's strong work ethic and ability to cook delicious meals.

"I really appreciate these girls. They cook the most amazing, authentic street tacos," Thomas said, noting that they started out working in the field. "They're from Guatemala, so it's homemade; homemade tortillas. They don't speak a lot of English, but they learn quick and are willing to learn so it's been great to work with them."

Moving forward, McKinstry and Thomas hope to expand the farm into an agritourism destination this summer, with "you pick" vegetables and fruits. Tours are available, and there are plans to build up the snack shack.

"We really want to expand the restaur-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MOMO'S SNACK SHACK

MoMo's Snack Shack at McKinstry Market is named after MoMo the dog.



MoMo's Snack Shack at McKinstry Market offers a variety of homemade soups such as this bowl of New England Clam Chowder.

rant, have a really nice outdoor seating area and make it like a summer farm destination where you can go and spend half a day and enjoy the farm," Thomas said.

The farm/market will soon expand its parking lot as well. As MoMo's Snack Shack continues to grow, and the historic farm maintains its status, the future is bright at 753 Montgomery St.

"We are in the process of (growing) in incremental stages. Big things are coming to McKinstry Farms, especially being the only real farm here in Chicopee," McKinstry said.

To learn more, visit MoMo's Snack Shack at McKinstry Market Garden on Facebook.

Events and announcements

Hatha Yoga Classes

CHICOPEE – The Chicopee Parks & Recreation Department is offering a Hatha yoga class. The class is being offered on Wednesday evenings from 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. It runs from Jan. 24 – Feb. 28, 2024.

This class series is open to all levels of experience from those wanting to start, restart or maintain an ongoing yoga practice. It is designed to increase strength and flexibility in an accessible way. Focusing on providing a movement-based practice that can be used for stress management, can help boost circulation and will promote overall health and wellbeing.

All classes will be held at Chicopee River Mills Senior Center. Exercise Studio #17 room located on the second floor of the building at 5 W. Main Street, Chicopee. This class is open to ages 15 years and older. Instructor Caitlin Lavin has over 10 years of teaching Hatha Yoga and over 15 years experiencing other various forms of yoga. The cost for a six-week session is \$80/Resident \$90/Non-Resident or a drop-in fee of \$15/Residents \$17/Non-Residents per class. Space is limited so register now! To register go to www.chicopeerec.com.

CPR/AED & First Aid Training Class

CHICOPEE – The Parks Department is offering a certification class in First Aid/cardiopulmonary resuscitation and the use of an automated external defibrillator on Saturday, Feb. 17 from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Chicopee Parks & Recreation

Dept. 687 Front St. This class is open to people ages 11 and up.

The cost for the full class is \$80 for residents and \$90 for non-residents. These are basic certifications & do not apply for daycare providers, lifeguards and nurses. Participants are invited to bring a snack. Class space is limited! To register go to www.chicopeerec.com Deadline to sign up is Thursday, Feb. 15.

Child and Babysitting Safety Class

CHICOPEE – The Parks Department is offering a Child and Babysitting Safety class for youth ages 11-15 years old. The class will be held at the Chicopee Parks office 687 Front St. on Thursday, Feb. 22, 2024, from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The cost is \$80/Residents \$85/Non-residents.

The class will cover such topics as playtime, behavior management, phone skills, common do and don'ts, bathing, feeding, changing diapers and fire safety. Class space is limited! To register go to www.chicopeerec.com.

Open Swim in Chicopee!

CHICOPEE – Open Swim in Chicopee occurs on Sundays from Noon to 2 p.m. at Chicopee Compressive High School at 617 Montgomery St.

The swim season goes through March 10. Please bring ID or Proof of Residence. The cost for Chicopee residents is \$3 and the cost for non-residents is \$5.

Questions? Email Jamey Mercer at jmercer@chicopeema.gov.

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GUEST COLUMN



Will withdrawing from 401(k) affect my Social Security?

Dear Rusty

My full retirement age (FRA) is 66 and 8 months, which I'll reach in September 2024. I'm still working three days a week. I want to cash in my 401K and want to know if I have to wait until my FRA for IRS purposes or can cash it in anytime in 2024. I don't want to affect my Social Security or end up paying taxes on my benefits.

Signed: Seeking to Avoid Taxes

Dear Seeking

We're not experts on IRS matters here at the AMAC Foundation so I can't address 401(k) questions, but we can provide information on your Social Security circumstances and how 401(k) withdrawals may affect your SS. I assume from your question that you are now receiving early Social Security and wish to avoid any tax consequences thereto by cashing in your 401(k), as well as from working. Here's what you need to know:

Since you will reach your Full Retirement Age in 2024, your 2024 work earnings limit will be \$59,520 up to the month you reach FRA. If you were born in January 1958, you'll attain FRA in September 2024. After you have reached your FRA there is no longer a Social Security limit to how much you can earn from working, so your work earnings thereafter will not affect your monthly Social Security benefit regardless of how much you earn. If your part time work between January and August 2024 won't put you over the \$59,520 limit, your work earnings will not negatively affect your gross monthly Social Security benefit.

Assuming you are on Medicare, the premium for which is deducted from your Social Security payment, withdrawals from your 401(k) might affect your net monthly Social Security payment in two years hence. Medicare premiums are based upon your combined income from all sources, including 50% of the SS benefits you received during the tax year. If your 401(k) withdrawal(s) put you over an income threshold for your tax filing status, you may be required to pay an Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amount on top of the standard Medicare premium. That IRMAA supplement would be deducted from your Social Security, which would affect the net amount of your Social Security payment. Your Medicare premium for each coming year is determined by your combined income from two years prior, so if you "cash in" your 401(K) in 2024, it would affect your net Social Security payments in 2026.

Whether you will pay income tax on your Social Security benefits is determined by your combined income from everywhere, which the IRS calls your "Modified Adjusted Gross Income." MAGI is your income from all sources except ROTH IRA withdrawals and includes half of the SS benefits you received during the tax year.

If you file your taxes as a single, and your MAGI is over \$25,000 or if you file your taxes as "married-jointly" and your MAGI is over \$32,000 then 50% of the Social Security benefits received during the tax year becomes part of your overall income taxed by the IRS (at your normal IRS tax rate). But if your MAGI as a single filer is more than \$34,000 – or as a married/jointly filer over \$44,000 – then up to 85% of the SS benefits received during the tax year becomes part of your overall income taxed by the IRS.

So, to recap:

Your part time work earnings in 2024 won't affect your monthly Social Security benefit, unless your 2024 work earnings prior to September 2024 exceed \$59,520.

Depending on the amount of your 401(k) withdrawals, your 2026 net Social Security payments may be impacted by Medicare's IRMAA provision. But your 401(k) withdrawals will not

See **SOCIAL SECURITY** page 8

GUEST COLUMN



Spring thinking questions for the Garden Lady

This question is a common one for this time of year.

Lots of folks get excited about trying their hand at indoor seed starting, only to be disappointed at the outcome.

Kay, who gardens in Barre, has no problem germinating seeds but the growing on part is a little more problematic. "They come up fine and while they get a little leggy indoors, I am not sure why they basically collapse once they get in the ground. I harden them off and everything."

I asked Kay for more details. The part that concerned me was her use of the word "leggy."

She said that she keeps them in one window - south facing, mind you, but in a room where her wood stove is located. Read on to learn my suggestions for success.

Thanks for your question, Kay. It sounds as if that you have the germination part of indoor growing down pat - good for you!

Usually that is the trickier part of the process. If you can do that, the rest will only require a bit of fine tuning.

Although you place your seedlings in a sunny south-facing window, I do think that you would benefit from buying an inexpensive "shop" light, complete with two florescent bulbs. Experts recommend one cool and one warm light to replicate the sun's colors, but I have used two cool lights with success for many years.

As soon as germination occurs, it is important that you position your seedlings within an inch or two of the light. I purposely put the shop lights on a chain so that they can be raised and lowered as needed.

Another thing to keep in mind is room temperature. If the room you are growing in is overly hot, it's going to push growth regardless of the light situation.

I wonder if that is happening because of the wood stove.

It also sounds as if you understand the process of hardening off. This is when you gradually acclimatize seedlings to the outdoors, first by putting them in a protected

spot for a few hours, working up to more exposure until finally they are used to spending the day outside in full sun.

Leggy plants will notably have a harder time adjusting; they simply aren't strong enough to take off as they should once they are planted. Oftentimes they will die within the first few days of being in the elements.

I would invest in the lights and move your seedlings to a cooler location to grow on; this minor tweak is likely all that is needed for you to grow sturdy seedlings that can withstand transplanting into the ground without issue.

Robin never got many of her tulips into the ground this fall. "Is there anything I can do to get them to bloom indoors? I have had them stored in my fifty-agree mudroom for the last month at least."

Tulips do need to go through a chilling process before blooming. We plant them in the ground in the fall and nature takes care of this requirement.

If you missed that window, you could experiment with indoor forcing.

Since your bulbs have been cooling somewhat, pot up the bulbs, two inches apart, within the chosen pots and place them in the coolest part of your house. Try somewhere that doesn't quite freeze but gets pretty close.

Even placing them in a spare fridge would work and provide consistent temperatures. I've heard of people storing them in a cooler in the garage, or in the crawl space of the house or the first few steps up the bulkhead.

How long, you ask? If you hadn't had them cool-ish, I would say a good three months.

But with this scenario we are going to try for two.

One way to tell if they are ready is to look in the drainage holes of the pots for any roots coming through. If so, they are ready to be brought into a warmer part of the house for forcing.

Tulip plants emerge and send up flower stalks very quickly indoors; slow down the process by bringing them into a cooler spot of the house at night when no one is enjoying them. I hope this helps.

It will surely be a fun experiment nonetheless and hopefully you will end up with some flowers a month or more before we'd get them outdoors.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 30 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.



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WE CARE ABOUT YOUR NEWS!

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 or send it to: Chicopee Register, c/o Turley Publications, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069.

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Funding approved for old library renovation project

By Kristin Rivers
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CHICOPEE – During a special Jan. 30 meeting, City Council approved funding to renovate the former Central Library on Springfield Street.

The former library, located in downtown Chicopee, was built in 1913 and later vacated in 2004 when the city built a new library on Front Street.

Planning Director Lee Pouliot presented an overview explaining the history, capital improvements needed and funding.

“We’ve known since early in this project that the roof needs to be replaced. It’s a pretty costly component to this project. In addition to the brand-new mechanical systems, life safety systems, security, fire suppression, none of those systems function in this building right now,” Pouliot said. “We have limited electricity just for emergency purposes, and that was part of our work when we abated hazardous materials. A lot of those systems needed to be addressed by that point as well.”

Pouliot explained the project “envisions this building becoming a highly flexible programming space” intended to allow the city to utilize it for its needs, work with community partners and “have it become familiar again in the neighborhood and throughout the city.”

“It’s been closed for 20 years, and, in some ways, it’s become invisible,” Pouliot said. “And so, if we can at a bare minimum start utilizing it and programming it, then we can start to build a reputation for what the facility can offer and, hopefully, work with community partners and other entities that might want to have a long-term relationship with the city.”

On funding sources, Pouliot said there’s a state earmark of \$500,000 from last fiscal year, \$3.5 million in ARPA Funds set aside, \$125,000 supporting the schematic design and a bid specifications package completed at \$824,068.

A total of \$2,675,932 of project fund-



TURLEY PHOTO BY DALTON ZBIERSKI

City Council approved funding on Jan. 30 to renovate the old Central Library in Chicopee Center.

ing remains.

“And of course, there’s the existing bond of \$750,000 from 2019,” Pouliot said.

The project budget is \$10,778,985, with a shortfall of \$6,853,053.

Pouliot anticipates the project would take 10 months to complete, with two months for project closeout.

“So, we would be looking, at this point, at late winter, maybe early spring of next year when this facility would be ready and available for use and that’s 2025,” Pouliot said.

Mayor John Vieau said a lot of time was spent on how to creatively fund the project.

“You look at how the space has been dormant for so long and using ARPA Funds, one-time funds, for the entire community to benefit, we felt that this is probably the most appropriate way with-

out putting a very large burden on the taxpayers of Chicopee,” Vieau said. “Our goal is to bond for the least amount of money that we can and, ultimately, that’s the goal.”

Ward 4 Councilor George Balakier was pleased with the presentation, saying “I believe we have about \$4 million or so left still for ARPA unless my figures are off.”

“So, I think that’s an excellent use of monies and funds, so this way here we won’t be burdened with either through the taxpayers or through bonding, so I like the idea, mayor and Lee, and I’m in favor of this project,” Balakier said.

Ward 5 Councilor Frederick Krampits asked about the funding, hoping the project succeeds.

“If that doesn’t necessarily become as successful as we would like to see it, could part of the library be used as offic-

es, let’s say for a City Hall extension or something like that? Or if a new department came online?” Krampits said. “Is that something that could be done?”

Pouliot affirmed “yes.”

“Everything that we’re talking about here gets us up and running and actually moves us closer to exactly what you’re talking about if an opportunity comes up in the future,” Pouliot said.

Ward 9 Councilor Mary Beth Costello thanked Vieau and Pouliot and said they’re heading “in the right direction here,” explaining “this is something that the city needs.”

“I wholeheartedly support this, and I want to thank you both for your hard work and your vision to put downtown Chicopee back on track,” Costello said.

Councilor-at-Large Tim Wagner also expressed caution like “Councilor-at-Large Tim Wagner also expressed caution like Krampits, citing the dollar amount, if the project does not succeed and the city acting as a landlord, a reason why City Council rejected the School Department from purchasing the former MassMutual building on Memorial Drive in 2023.

“I’m definitely in support of this, but I think that there are a lot of question marks to this in my mind,” Wagner said. “I’d like to see it redeveloped for sure, but just a lot of questions that got to be asked about it.”

The motion to appropriate \$1.6 million in addition to the \$750,000 previously appropriated by a vote of the City Council on Aug. 6, 2019, to pay costs of making roof and other structural repairs to the former Central Library building passed 12-0.

Next, the motion to have \$2,103,053 appropriated to the Planning Special Amount for renovations of the former library to be taken from available funds in the Stabilization Fund passed 12-0.

Finally, the motion to establish the City Council to recommend seven members to the former Library Building Commission and allow them to appoint members passed 12-0.

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showcase different picture books.

“I think picture books are for all ages. They are beautiful. They are like comics in the way that images and text work together to tell a story. I like art and I like to give kids opportunities to make art,” Daly said. “The sensory experience of art, colors and textures and thinking about what you want to do is very mindful. It puts you in the moment.”

Richard Rogers Jr. attended the event with his grandson, Richard IV, who crafted a black sheep, a volcano and another collage, respectively.

Rogers shared they come to crafts events whenever they take place at the library and have a crafts room in the basement of the Rogers family home.

“Whatever is going on, I like to take him out and spend time with him,” Rogers said. “We do lots of projects together.”

Rogers is also an avid library fan, sharing how he’s always enjoyed the opportunities to learn, read or volunteer his time.

“I always access libraries wherever I’ve been since I was a

little kid. My mom was an avid reader and so I just picked that up,” Rogers said. “In our family, everybody is a reader, so we bring the kids to the library.”

Rogers wants the community to know the importance of supporting their local library.

“You should always not just access a library but support it financially, and there’s ways of doing that. You can donate but also volunteer,” Rogers said. “Be involved, and that’s why the library is so important.”

Rogers urges residents to take advantage of everything the library offers.

“This is the best deal you will find in your community,” Rogers said. “And be thankful of the people that work there. You’ll meet some great people at the library.”

Daly encourages residents to check out this program and other children’s programming the library has going on.

“As always, dear readers, stop by or check our website to see what’s going on at the Chicopee Public Library,” Daly said.



TURLEY PHOTOS BY KRISTIN RIVERS

Erin Daly, youth services coordinator at the Chicopee Public Library, reads from the book “Saturday” by Oge Mora to attendees during the library’s Story Arts event. Mora was this week’s featured artist.

From the left, Richard the IV shows off his volcano while his grandfather, Richard Rogers Jr., shows off his black sheep creation during the Story Arts event at Chicopee Public Library.



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IN THE CITY

FIREFIGHTERS from page 1

and making a difference in the city he calls home.

"I've got a lot of friends and family here, so it feels good that people in the city kind of trust me with that responsibility of protecting and serving them," he said.

Fournier expressed gratitude for the department's senior members for their willingness to help the new firefighters. He said there has been no hazing.

"Everyone's welcoming. It's a great department to be on. They make you feel like you're part of the family right away," Fournier said, as he gets to know the different personalities of his new colleagues.

Fournier looks forward to applying the skills he learned during the academy to real life situations and offered encouragement to others looking to join the department. He said it was hard to get to where he is today and expects it will be equally challenging to stay there.

"Don't give up. I know I was on the list for a couple years before I got an interview, but once you get there, it's not like you get there and you're done. You have to stay in shape, stay on top of your stuff, it's a lifestyle and you have to maintain it," Fournier said.

Joseph Martinez

Martinez, 38, said the academy was physical and intense. It required learning new skills, practicing those skills repeatedly and trying to perfect them every day.

"(I learned) the foundations of being a firefighter," he said. "I also feel like I (developed) some skills in leadership. Also, it's becoming a family, making friends from people you've never met be-

fore and developing a close relationship with them. We're there for each other and there to support one another."

Martinez was motivated to join the department by multiple factors. As an EMT, he worked alongside the city's firefighters for several years, and his brother is also a member of the department.

Coming from Chicopee, Martinez considers it an honor to be able to lend aid to his neighbors on their most difficult days.

"Just being there to support them when they're in need in their most vulnerable time, and you're the one they're calling. You hear it all the time. They can't thank you enough. It's just great to be able to serve and give back to them," Martinez said.

As a new firefighter, Martinez said everyone in the department seems to have his back. Senior members have gone out of their way to answer his questions, and he anticipates getting to know everyone in the department.

For those who want to follow in his footsteps and become a firefighter, Martinez offered the following advice.

"Stay physically fit and don't give up when you get there. It will be tough sometimes. It will be hard, but just keep going and you'll make it through," he said. "Know that you're going to have brothers and sisters who have your back and support you."

Kevin Waller

Waller, 35, hails from Chicopee and served in the Armed Forces at Westover Air Reserve Base. When asked to describe the academy, he detailed what became his routine and complimented his classmates.

"PT in the morning and a lot of hose work, climbing up and down ladders and

putting up ladders. There were a lot of long, physical days pulling hose, but it was a good group, and everybody pulled their own weight," Waller said.

Waller wanted to be a firefighter for a long time and capitalized on the opportunity to become one. Growing up in Chicopee was a positive experience, and he now looks to pay it forward.

"I enjoy serving the community," he said. "It's good to give back. I've gotten a lot from the city. I went to school here my whole life, so I know a lot of the residents. My family lives here so it's nice to give back."

Waller noted that the academy taught recruits about much more than fighting fires. He feels prepared to aid those in need in a variety of emergency situations.

"Obviously, you kind of know that you put out fires, but we do everything from medical to water rescue. If someone's basement is flooding or if there's something they can't figure out, who they're going to call is us," Waller said.

At the department, Waller said there is a lot of camaraderie and members have been very welcoming. Pretty much everyone in the department congratulated him on graduating from the academy, including several Chicopee department members who served as his academy instructors.

"They're more than willing to teach us all the knowledge they have," Waller said. "(Moving forward), I want to build a good rapport with everybody in my group and learn how everyone operates and definitely learn some more skills and get better at the foundational skills we've already learned."

Brady Williams

Williams, 33, was born and raised in

Chicopee. He joined a neighboring call department in 2020, fell in love with the job and decided he wanted to be a full-time firefighter. He is thrilled to be working in Chicopee.

"It's the greatest opportunity you can get," he said. "What better than doing something you love while serving your own hometown?"

Williams described the academy as "10 weeks of rigorous training, physical activity and learning."

Physical fitness was a big portion of the training. He said his class grew close as it made its way through the daunting academy.

"Integrity, comradery; everyone's a brother and a sister to you. It's kind of like your second family. Just kind of being there for each other, and everyone goes home at the end of the day," Williams said.

Williams has also been impressed by his new colleagues, noting that many of the experienced members of the department haven't hesitated to pass along their knowledge. He detailed what lies next.

"In the coming week, we get our group assignments and get going with that," Williams said. "We'll start seeing how our groups operate, kind of meshing with (other firefighters) and seeing how they do things. The next couple months are just kind of bonding with the group and getting to know everybody and how they operate."

Williams lives by the motto "Be prepared to go to work and do your job."

That said, he doesn't consider firefighting to merely be a job.

"It's more like a career or a lifestyle. It's physically demanding of you, but it's a good way to keep in shape. It's a career. It's a lifestyle," Williams said.

MHA from page 1

Currently, MHA operates over 40 residential programs throughout the Pioneer Valley and has four program homes in Chicopee, so a collaborative relationship already exists with the city.

"It just made sense for us to move our headquarters there in a community where we're already serving the needs of people in residential programs. We're just now going to have our administrative offices there as well," Ducharme said.

MHA anticipates that renovations to the Memorial Drive facility will be completed in mid-March. In Springfield, MHA employees are consolidating before the move and will work with A to Z Movers at the end of March to transfer items to the new building.

Ducharme anticipates little interruption to day-to-day operations. She said morale is high as employees prepare for the move.

"It's incredible," she said. "When our staff team realizes that we're making

such a sizable investment in the work that we do, people can't help but be thrilled. We've taken staff on tours to see the space, we've held a couple of meetings there organizationally before construction started, and everybody is so excited. So, morale is great."

Ducharme is confident that the new space will allow MHA to help more people regardless of circumstance. She said MHA meets people where they are and explained why it is important to take action to better your mental health.

"What we really like people to know is that if you have a physical ailment, you have no problem going to the doctor and getting it addressed and getting help. Mental health, those are the ailments that you can't see, and we really need to be treating those sort of ailments just as we would treat a broken arm or an ailment that people can actually see," Ducharme said.

To learn more about the programs and services provided by MHA, one can visit MHAinc.org.



TURLEY PHOTOS BY DALTON ZBIERSKI.

A Mental Health Association van sits in the parking lot of MHA's new facility on Memorial Drive.

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Sports

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Tyler Denison dekes then shoots.



Chris Walczak heads toward the opposing goal.

Pacers co-op falls against Agawam

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

HOLYOKE — Agawam senior Peyton Buffum netted five goals during a 7-3 win against Southwick on January 13. Junior A.J. Robbins nearly scored that many goals eleven days later.

Robbins, who's a defenseman, netted a career-high four goals leading the Brownies to a 10-1 victory over Fay Division rival Chicopee at the Fitzpatrick Skating Rink in Holyoke, last Wednesday afternoon.

"Peyton scored five goals against Southwick, and I think A.J. was trying to match him," said Agawam head coach Todd Rowley. "Not only is A.J. a great defenseman, but he's also an all-around outstanding hockey player. He can do it all. Everything that we shot, went into the net."

It was the second time this season that the Brownies (9-5)

have scored at least ten goals in a game. They scored 12 goals at McCann Tech in December.

"We're here to play hockey for 45 minutes and you don't want to keep passing the puck around when you have a big lead," Rowley said. "We played all of our players and some of them haven't played a lot of minutes this season."

Despite winning almost ten games this season, the Brownies were ranked 38th out of 40 teams in the MIAA Division 2 state tournament power rankings. They can clinch a berth in the state tournament with one more victory.

"They use a couple of different things to determine the power rankings," Rowley said. "The PVIAC makes our league schedule. We can schedule our non-league opponents. We still have non-league games left with Hudson, Longmeadow, and

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TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM

Mason Peters angles around to pick up the loose puck.



Darwin Irschick plays the puck near the boards.

Chicopee girls fall to Chaug

CHICOPEE — Last Monday night, Minnechaug girls basketball got off to a great start, going on a 13-1 en route to a 60-29 win over host Chicopee. The Falcons spread the ball around, with 11 different players scoring points in the game. Lylah Jeannotte, Elizabeth Woytowicz, Lyric Nelson, and Ava Ofcarcik scored eight points each. Chicopee got 11 points from Giana Garcia. The Falcons are now 10-2 and head for tournament while Chicopee fell to 1-11 on the regular season.



Sophia Guzman fights for possession of the ball.



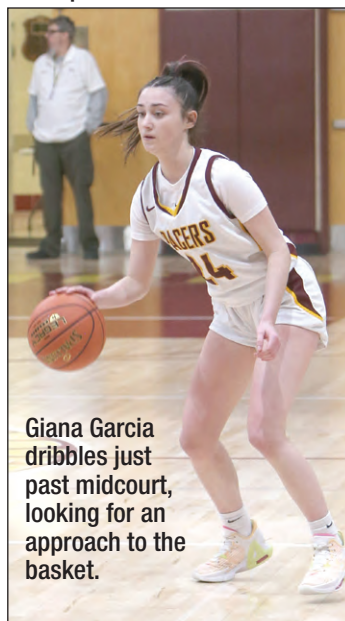
Cassidy Pytel watches her shot head toward the hoop.



Jaylanie Nieves fights to get a shot under the hoop.



Lauren Cross attempts a three-pointer.



Giana Garcia dribbles just past midcourt, looking for an approach to the basket.

Colts still cruising

CHICOPEE — Last Friday evening, Chicopee Comprehensive boys basketball added another win with a 56-50 win over East Longmeadow.

The Colts are now 11-2. They have already qualified for the state tournament and are likely to make the Western Mass. Tournament as well.

In the win over the Spar-

tans, Tineus McCluster had another big game with 18 points while Garrett Gauthier had 11 points.

The Colts look to keep moving up in the rankings for the state tournament. Chicopee Comp currently holds the No. 11 seed, which would earn the Colts at least one home game in the state tournament.

T-Birds offense scores big over Checkers

SPRINGFIELD — The Springfield Thunderbirds (20-17-3-2) dominated for much of the night in a 6-1 win over the Charlotte Checkers (20-17-4-0) on Saturday night before a sell-out crowd of 6,793 at the Mass-Mutual Center.

The T-Birds jumped to a first-period lead for a second straight evening, this time just 3:37 into game action. Mathias Laferrriere spun away from a defender to gain entry on the right-wing side. Mikhail Abramov raced up the middle of the ice, catching a perfect pass from Laferrriere and lifting a shot into the top shelf behind Charlotte netminder Ludovic Waeber, making it 1-0 on his eighth goal of the season.

After not facing much action in the opening half of the period, Springfield goaltender Malcolm Subban got infinitely busier in the closing minutes, as the T-Birds killed off two Charlotte power plays, including 28 seconds' worth of 5-on-3 time.

Subban shined, with point-blank saves off Gerry Mayhew and Rasmus Asplund sticking out in a 10-save opening frame.

After the goal by Abramov, Waeber also settled in, and the Checkers' third-ranked penalty kill also denied Springfield on two power plays as the two clubs' man-advantage units continued to scuffle.

For a second consecutive evening, Charlotte got an equalizer in the early stages of period two. Patrick Khodorenko approached the net and bashed home a rebound through Subban's legs after Patrick Giles had his initial try denied by the goaltender. The goal came just 44 seconds into the period to tie the score, 1-1.

However, like Friday night, the tie score would be short-lived. A Matt Kiersted penalty sent Springfield's power play back to work, and just 32 seconds after the Khodorenko tally,

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Western Mass. Baseball Hall announces new class

HOLYOKE – The Western Massachusetts Baseball Hall of Fame has announced the 11th annual class to be inducted on March 7, 2024 at Twin Hills Country Club:

Jeff Reardon: Reardon is a 16-year MLB relief pitcher, four-time All-Star, and 1987 World Series champion (Twins). He notched 367 saves over the course of his career, ranking 12th on the MLB all-time saves list. He pitched for five different teams during his big league career (Mets, Expos, Twins, Red Sox, and Yankees). Reardon grew up in Western Massachusetts, graduating from Wahconah High School in Dalton.

Mark Simeone: Entering his 28th season as Head Coach of Springfield College's baseball team, Simeone has compiled 484 victories during his tenure. He grew up in Northampton, graduating from Northampton High School in 1982. In addition to coaching at Springfield College, Simeone played outfield from 1982-87 under Charles Roys (Class of 2022 Western Massachusetts Baseball Hall of Fame inductee).

Bob Taylor: A current and long-time resident of Springfield, Taylor played 16 professional baseball seasons. He reached the major leagues in 1970, where he appeared in 63 games for the San Francisco Giants alongside Willie Mays and Willie McCovey. Taylor played for San Francisco's Double-A affiliate, the Springfield Giants, in 1965.

Don Strange: Strange, a Springfield native, played college baseball

at UMass Amherst from 1987-89. He then enjoyed an eight-year professional baseball career, reaching Triple-A while with the Atlanta Braves system. Don joins his brother, Pat (Class of 2021) in the Western Massachusetts Baseball Hall of Fame.

Earl Lorden: Lorden served as Head Coach at Turners Falls before taking the helm as Head Coach at UMass Amherst from 1948-1966. He won 189 games during this span, ranking third on UMass's all-time wins list. Lorden was a continuous supporter of UMass baseball until his passing in 1984 at the age of 87.

1942 Turners Falls State Championship Team: A true underdog team of 15 players that won the 1942 Massachusetts State Championship well before population-based divisions were instituted. Their undefeated regular season was shortened by gas rationing during World War II before defeating Arlington in the championship game at Fenway Park by a score of 5-4. The team induction coincides with the individual induction of their head coach, Earl Lorden.

Ron Chimelis (Garry Brown Sports Media Award): A long time columnist and sports reporter for the Springfield Republican, Chimelis served as Red Sox beat reporter during their 2004, 2007, and 2013 World Series championship seasons. He will be the second recipient of the Garry Brown Award, the first of which was posthumously awarded to Garry Brown in

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West Springfield. Those games should help improve our power rankings. We just need to continue playing well."

The Brownies probably won't be one of the four teams playing in this year's Western Mass. Class A tournament.

Robbins gave his thoughts about his memorable performance.

"Getting my first hat-trick of the season just feels wonderful. It's the first time that I've scored four goals in a varsity game," Robbins said. "We just played very well as a team in today's game."

The Brownies took a quick 1-0 lead a little more than a minute into the opening period when Robbins fired a shot into the net past Chicopee junior goalie Damian Loinaz (10 saves).

Freshman Camden Saltmarsh was credited with the assist.

Senior Devin Carleton (9 saves) and freshman Gabe Loinaz (8 saves) also saw playing time in goal for the Pacers (0-14-1).

Down at the other end of the ice, freshman Dmitri Huey (12 saves) made his third start in goal for the Brownies. Sophomore Frankie DiSanti, who's normally the Brownies starting goalie, posted shutouts in the first two meetings against Chicopee.

"Frankie wasn't here today because he was sick, but we were planning on starting Dmitri anyways," Rowley said. "He's a solid goalie and we have a lot of trust in him. He played a great game."

Robbins second goal came at the 3:41 mark, which was assisted by senior Anthony Buoniconti.

The Pacers did cut the deficit in half when senior Connor McDonell, who's from Granby, scored a power-play goal with 8:30 left in the first period. Caleb Lundgren, who lives in South Hadley, was credited with the assist.

The final goal of the first period was scored two minutes later by Peyton Buffum. Sophomore Thomas Connery was given the assist.

Robbins scored two more goals during the first five minutes of the second period, which gave Agawam a commanding 5-1 lead.

With 5:21 left in the second period, Saltmarsh scored an unassisted goal, which was the first goal of his varsity career.

"Cam has had a couple of assists this season, but he hadn't been able to find the back of the net before today," Rowley said. "Hopefully, he'll be able to score a lot more goals for us now. He has a very bright future."

Junior Trevor Del Barba, who's also a defenseman, netted his first varsity goal in the third period.

"All of the kids wanted Trevor to score a goal," Rowley said. "We moved him forward, and he scored a rebound goal during the third period, which was awesome."

The Brownies, who had a week off between games, other two third period goals were scored by junior Landon Ashford and Peyton Buffum.

Chicopee Public Library February programs

CHICOPEE – Each month, the Chicopee Public Library hosts a variety of free 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 February 2024.

Little Movers will be held in the children's program room on Fridays, Feb. 2 and 16 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!

This month's All Ages Playgroup will be an extra special one in honor of Take Your Child to the Library Day, a local library holiday started by libraries in Connecticut in 2011. Playgroup will be held in the children's room on Saturday, Feb. 3 from 1-3 p.m. There will be extra toys out in the playspace, a simple craft, and light refreshments. It is a great time for families to meet up and play. There will also be a few simple feedback questions posted for parents to respond to as a part of the library's planning process for the year.

On Tuesdays, Feb. 6 and 20 at 10:30 a.m. in the Community Room, the library will have a Little Kid Dance Party geared for kids age five and under and their caregivers. There will be songs, dancing and big movement. Older kids are welcome, as well, especially on the Feb. 20, which falls during February School Vacation.

On Saturday, Feb. 10, Elaine from Made By You Creative will present a Valentine's Day String Art. Children 8-12 are invited to learn how to do a string art craft for Valentine's Day! In this creative workshop, kids will be provided with wooden blocks pre-made with nails shaped as a heart and will be offered various colored string and instructions to make their own unique string art design. To complete this fun project, kids will also have a variety of markers and embellishments to decorate the space surrounding their hearts. Children will leave this workshop with their own unique heart plaques - perfect for displaying or gifting on Valentine's Day! Registration is required for this program. Please contact the Chicopee Library Children's Room to sign up.

Storytime will be held in the children's program room on Wednesday, Feb. 14 and 28 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.

T-BIRDS from page 7

Hugh McGing got his first goal since Nov. 24, ramming home a wide shot from Laferriere that skipped off the end boards right in front of the goal on the left side.

With the lead back in their possession, the T-Birds would not relinquish it. Subban made a crucial 2-on-1 save on Checkers captain Zac Dalpe, and moments after another Springfield penalty kill, at 10:22 of the period, Hunter Skinner stepped into a one-time drop pass from Zach Bolduc and saw it ricochet off a Charlotte stick and behind Waeber to make it 3-1. It was Skinner's first goal as a Thunderbird.

Laferriere's night was far from over, as he stepped over the left-wing side and roofed a heavy snap shot through Waeber at 14:00, and in less than four minutes, the lead grew to 4-1.

SOCIAL SECURITY from page 4

affect your gross Social Security payments. Depending on the amount of your 401(k) withdrawals, some of the Social Security benefits received during the 2024 tax year will likely be subject to income tax. That is, if your annual total income, including your 401(k) withdrawals, exceeds the MAGI thresholds described above.

The Association Mature Citizens Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security

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, Feb. 15 at 4 p.m. in the children's program room.

The second half of Story Arts sessions will be in February. This program is for kids ages five and up to explore picture books. Story Arts will meet on Tuesdays at 4 p.m., Feb. 6 and Feb. 13. Each week will focus on a different artist. The artists for February are 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, Feb. 15 at 3 p.m. This month's theme is mochi. There will be a cute mochi-inspired craft to make and other activities.

During February School Break, the library will have some fun family programs.

On Tuesday, Feb. 20, there will be the aforementioned Little Kid Dance Party at 10:30 a.m. (see above). In the afternoon at 2 p.m., there will be a Watercolor Resist Painting activity. When you draw on paper with a white crayon and then paint with watercolor, the part with the crayon does not absorb paint! It's a fun art activity for the whole family.

On Wednesday, Feb. 21 at 2 p.m., families can play Bingo for Books. Come in for a few rounds of bingo and the winners will take home a book.

On Thursday, Feb. 22 at 2 p.m., an Art Workshop will be presented by Fermata Arts Foundation. Students in grades three to five are invited to hear a brief presentation on art, participate in an instructional drawing exercise and create art that will be sent to children in Uzbekistan. The library will host an exhibit of art from children in Uzbekistan during the month of February. This is a great opportunity for students from different countries to learn about each other. Fermata Arts Foundation encourages intercultural dialogue between countries. Children will learn that they share common values with children all over the world. The Chicopee Cultural Council has provided financial support to Fermata Arts Foundation to present this program.

For more information about the Chicopee Public Library, go to www.chicopeepubliclibrary.org.

Things would not get any better for the Checkers in the third. Ryan Suzuki pounced on a loose puck in the slot after a Jakob Vrana pass to Bolduc caromed off Waeber's pad right into the slot area. Suzuki also found the top corner, advancing the lead to 5-1 on his third goal of the season.

Will Bitten would round out the scoring with his second point of the night, cashing in on a 2-on-1 after an initial shot from Bolduc bounced off Waeber's left pad and right onto Bitten's tape. Subban got himself back into the win column, making 29 saves in securing his ninth win of the year.

Including the postseason, Springfield is now 10-1-0-0 in its last 11 games against Charlotte inside the Thunderdome, and with the two-game sweep, the T-Birds leaped ahead of Charlotte in the Atlantic Division standings.

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

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Docket No. HD24C0012CA

In the matter of:
Lacey Marie Lizardi
CITATION ON PETITION TO CHANGE NAME

A Petition to Change Name of Minor has been filed by Lacey Marie Lizardi of Chicopee, MA requesting that the court enter a Decree changing their name to:

Lacey Marie Bermúdez-Lizardi
IMPORTANT NOTICE

Any person may appear for purposes of objecting to the petition by filing an appearance at: **Hampden Probate and Family Court before 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 02/13/2024.**

This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance if you object to this proceeding.

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

Date: January 26, 2024
Rosemary A Saccomani
Register of Probate
02/02/2024

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court

Hampden Probate and Family Court
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Docket No. HD24C0013CA

In the matter of:
Logan Ryan Lizardi
CITATION ON PETITION TO CHANGE NAME

A Petition to Change Name of Minor has been filed by Logan Ryan Lizardi of Chicopee, MA requesting that the court enter a Decree changing their name to:

Logan Ryan Bermúdez-Lizardi
IMPORTANT NOTICE

Any person may appear for purposes of objecting to the petition by filing an appearance at: **Hampden Probate and Family Court before 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 02/13/2024.**

This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance if you object to this proceeding.

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

Date: January 18, 2024
Rosemary A Saccomani
Register of Probate
02/02/2024

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street

Springfield, MA 01103
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Docket No. HD24C0011CA

In the matter of:
Melissa Marie Lizardi
CITATION ON PETITION TO CHANGE NAME

A Petition to Change Name of Adult has been filed by Melissa Marie Lizardi of Chicopee, MA requesting that the court enter a Decree changing their name to:

Melissa Marie Bermúdez-Lizardi
IMPORTANT NOTICE

Any person may appear for purposes of objecting to the petition by filing an appearance at: **Hampden Probate and Family Court before 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 02/13/2024.**

This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance if you object to this proceeding.

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

Date: January 17, 2024
Rosemary A Saccomani,
Register of Probate
02/02/2024

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
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Docket No. HD24C0019CA

In the matter of:
Silas Ryder Perez
CITATION ON PETITION TO CHANGE NAME

A Petition to Change Name of Minor has been filed by Silas Ryder Perez of Chicopee, MA requesting that the court enter a Decree changing their name to:

Silas Ryder Jackson
IMPORTANT NOTICE

Any person may appear for purposes of objecting to the petition by filing an appearance at: **Hampden Probate and Family Court before 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 02/16/2024.**

This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance if you object to this proceeding.

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

Date: January 19, 2024
Rosemary A. Saccomani
Register of Probate
02/02/2024

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
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Docket No. HD24P0168EA

Estate of:
Edward F Skiba
Also known as:
Edward Skiba
Date of Death: 12/25/2023
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 Ronald Skiba of Chicopee, 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: **Ronald Skiba of Chicopee, 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 02/21/2024.**

This is NOT a hear-

ing 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.

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

Date: January 25, 2024
Rosemary A. Saccomani
Register of Probate
02/02/2024

HEALTH

New Year's resolutions for mental wellness

From Miravista Behavioral Health Center

HOLYOKE – As we approach the dawn of a new year, Miravista Behavioral Health Center is championing the spirit of mental wellness by encouraging individuals to set realistic and attainable New Year's resolutions. Recognizing the importance of fostering positive mental health habits, Miravista is dedicated to empowering individuals on their journey towards overall well-being.

In a world where the pursuit of perfection can sometimes overshadow the significance of self-compassion, MiraVista Behavioral Health Center emphasizes the need for resolutions that prioritize mental health and which are both realistic and achievable. This approach aims to reduce the pressure often associated with traditional New Year's resolutions and promotes a more holistic perspective on personal growth.

So how best to set resolutions which focus on one's mental health and well-being? MiraVista offers these helpful key themes:

Prioritize self-care rituals

Resolve to incorporate daily self-care rituals into your routine. This could include activities like meditation, reading, taking a warm bath, or going for a nature walk.

Establish healthy boundaries

Set clear boundaries in your personal and professional life. Learn to say 'no' when necessary and prioritize activities that contribute positively to your well-being.

Cultivate mindfulness and presence

Make a commitment to being more present in the moment. Practice mindfulness through activities like meditation,

deep breathing exercises, or simply taking a moment to appreciate the present.

Nurture positive relationships

Focus on building and strengthening positive relationships. Invest time in meaningful connections with friends and family, fostering a support system that contributes to your emotional well-being.

Limit screen time

Reduce the time spent on electronic devices and social media. Allocate time for activities to promote mental health, such as reading, engaging in hobbies, or spending quality time with loved ones.

Practice gratitude

Start a gratitude journal and make it a habit to reflect on the positive aspects of your life. Regularly expressing gratitude can shift your focus towards positivity.

Engage in regular physical activity

Choose physical activities that you enjoy and make them a regular part of your routine. Exercise has proven benefits for mental health, releasing endorphins that can boost mood and reduce stress.

Seek professional support

Break down the stigma surrounding mental health by committing to seeking professional support when needed. Therapy or counseling can provide valuable tools for managing stress, anxiety, or other mental health challenges.

Embrace a healthy sleep routine

Prioritize sleep by establishing a consistent sleep routine. Ensure that you are getting enough restorative sleep each night, as it plays a crucial role in mental and emotional well-being.

Learn a new skill or hobby

Engage your mind in positive and creative activities by learning a new skill or picking up a hobby. This can provide a sense of accomplishment and contribute to your overall sense of well-being.

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Local hero returns home

Sailor laid to rest decades after Pearl Harbor attack

By Nick Boonstra
Staff Writer
nboonstra@turley.com

HOLYOKE — Pharmacist's Mate Second Class Merle Hillman received the long overdue hero's welcome he deserved on Saturday, a homecoming that was over 80 years in the making.

Hillman's life was taken on Dec. 7, 1941, aboard USS California when she was torpedoed and bombed during the attack on Pearl Harbor. His remains, however, were only identified within the last year, as part of forensic efforts undertaken by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency to identify the remains of Unknowns from the California and other ships attacked at Pearl Harbor.

Merle Chester Joseph Hill-

man was born in Chicopee on Feb. 7, 1916. He grew up in Holyoke, and listed the Paper City as his hometown when he enlisted in 1937.

Hillman was in the process of preparing the California for an inspection scheduled for the following day when the attack commenced. He served his comrades and his country with honor aboard the California, and was posthumously awarded a Purple Heart medal.

Community members, local leaders and representatives of veterans' organizations gathered at the Barry J. Farrell Funeral Home Saturday morning for a moving memorial service that celebrated the life, service, sacrifice and return of Hillman.

Holyoke Mayor Joshua Garcia said in remarks given during the service that Hillman's decision to list Holyoke as his hometown upon enlistment "brought honor, not only to the city of Holyoke, but to the region, to the

Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and to the United States of America."

State Representative Patricia Duffy also spoke at the service. "As the daughter of a World War II vet, I know how gratified I was, when my father passed away, [for] the opportunity we had to honor him," she said. Addressing Hillman's family, she said, "I am so gratified that you had that opportunity, and that you chose to bring him back to Holyoke — to our home, to his home, to your home."

U.S. Representative Richard Neal remarked that Hillman's story was "also the story of the Valley, and of those men and women who answered the call in the aftermath of that horrific moment in Pearl Harbor."

"The manner in which they transformed the world — Tom Brokaw called it the greatest generation, and indeed it was," Neal said.

Sister Catherine Ormond of the Sisters of St. Joseph read the service at the funeral home and later delivered the committal prayers at St. Jerome's Cemetery, where Hillman was laid to rest with his older brother Donald.

Before she began with the services, Ormond took a moment to reflect on the day. "What a tribute," she said. "Not being a native of Holyoke, I rejoice that this is exactly what Holyoke represents and will continue to represent."

A heartfelt eulogy was given



TURLEY PHOTOS BY NICK BOONSTRA.

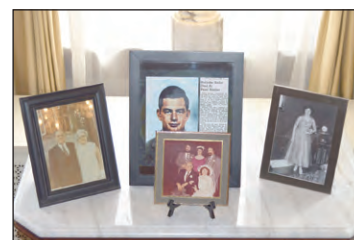
Pharmacist's Mate Second Class Merle Hillman was laid to rest this past Saturday.

by Brendan Quinn, grand-nephew to Hillman, whom Quinn identified as his "very first hero" and an inspiration for his own service to the nation.

"Loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage are values every service member lives by, and my uncle Merle encompasses every one of those values," he said.

At different points in the service, songs were played in the chapel in memory of Hillman, including a recording of Maurice Chevalier's "Louise," Hillman's favorite song. "Anchors Aweigh" and "Taps" were also among the songs played.

Local residents and members of the Holyoke Police and Fire departments lined Northampton Street to pay their respects to the returning sailor during the short trip from the funeral home to St. Jerome's Cemetery. Military honors were rendered at the cemetery, including a flag folding and a firing squad salute.



A tribute to Pharmacist's Mate Second Class Merle Hillman and his family.



Newspaper clippings about Pearl Harbor and Pharmacist's Mate Second Class Merle Hillman.



Many people gathered at the Barry J. Farrell Funeral Home for Pharmacist's Mate Second Class Merle Hillman's memorial service.

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