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PHOTO COURTESY OF JOEL RODOWICZ

From the left, Grand Knight Dan Therrien, Ray LeHoullier, president of the Home Association for the Knights of Columbus Elder Council 69, 2026 Chicopee St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee President Aly Sliwa, Woods Award Winner Haley Jarvis and 2026 Parade Marshal Bernie St. George.

Honorees are celebrated at Annual President's Dinner

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
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CHICOPEE - The community gathered at the Knights of Columbus Elder Council 69 on Feb. 7 for the Chicopee St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee's Annual President's Dinner.

This year's honorees are 2026 Parade Committee President Aly Sliwa, Haley Jarvis for the Woods Award, the Atkinson Award to the Knights of Columbus Elder Council 69 and Home Association and 2026 Parade Marshal Bernie St. George.

Parade Committee Vice President Krystenlee Pepin

served as event host while 2024 Parade Committee President Meghan Balakier and Ward 6 City Councilor Samuel Shumsky served as the emcees.

Entertainment was provided by the New England Celi Band featuring Jimmy McArdle and Friends, sponsored by Freedom Cred-

it Union, and Presz-Perry Acoustic, sponsored by KLM Automotive, and the invocation led by Fr. Robert Gentile at St. Rose de Lima Church. Blue Room Café was hall sponsor. Jarvis has been involved with the Parade Committee as a member

See **PRESIDENT'S DINNER** page 3

Understaffed DPW shines during recent snowstorm

By Dalton Zbierski
Correspondent

CHICOPEE - Like much of the Northeast, Chicopee got slammed by a winter storm several weeks ago that left the city with more than a foot of snow.

It was the worst snowstorm the region has experienced in more than a decade, and the Chicopee Department of Public Works faced more challenges than the weather.

Several elected officials identified during the Feb. 3 meeting of the City Council that the DPW is notably understaffed.

Ward 9 Councilor Mary Beth Costello requested that the city provide the board with an updated list of vacancies at the DPW.

She stressed the importance of getting the department back to full staff, as many medical professionals from Baystate Health in Springfield live in Chicopee and must get to work regardless of how much snow there is.

"I want an updated report and make sure that our first responders can get in and out

of their streets and ambulances and fire and police can get down streets and get those nurses into Baystate," Costello said.

Councilor-at-Large Joel McAuliffe said he was equally interested in learning how many vacancies there currently are at the DPW.

"I know it was reported on the news, but I would also be interested," McAuliffe said. "I would request that as however that report looks like, we could get a blurb on what our recruitment and retention efforts are as well by Human Resources."

City Council President/Councilor-at-Large Frank Laflamme said he has been in touch with the proper channels to make the report a reality. He emphasized that the DPW performed well during the storm despite the obstacles.

"Let's keep in mind, everybody knows there's a worker shortage out there for every department, so I don't want to diminish the work the DPW did through this past snowstorm and continues to do.

See **DPW** page 5

Chicopee Parade Committee holds Irish Tea

By Brendan Rooney
Correspondent

CHICOPEE — On Feb. 8, 12 Chicopee Colleen hopefuls gathered inside the Portuguese American Club to partake in a traditional "Irish Tea", which served as an opportunity for the contestants to get acquainted with each other, and take in the 'green season' experience ahead of the grand Coronation Ball later this month on Saturday, Feb. 21, where the title of 2026 Grand Colleen will be bestowed.

The event also featured local dignitaries, including Mayor John Vieau, various representatives from the City Council, and honorary guest speaker, Professor Laura McNeil, PhD, Director of Honors Program and Professor of History, from Elms College, who both provided ample insight into the importance of

Irish culture in the city.

2026 Chicopee St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee President Aly Sliwa reflected on the overall progression of the parade season as it was fast approaching.

"It's going quite well, all of the girls are excited, and like always, we continue to have a great group of girls, and we keep telling them these next couple of weeks are going to be fast, but it will all work out on ball night and see who's crowned," Sliwa said.

Sliwa also discussed the importance of past achievements, such as the reveal of the official Chicopee Tartan in December 2025, and how the Parade Committee continues to push forward and innovate every year.

"I mean, the tartan reveal overall was so special, and unique in its own way, and that was just a great way to



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOEL RODOWICZ

2025 Reiging Grand Colleen Daiana Torres and her Colleen Court. Not pictured but also part of the Court is Meghan Oxley.

kick off the parade season," Sliwa said. "And honestly, the group that did the tartan just spent so much time and ef-

fort into it, and it's truly just a great thing to have."

The current reigning 2025 Grand Colleen, Daiana

Torres, and her court, consisting of Emma Caproni, Hannah O'Neil, Meghan Oxley, and Wilmette Cumba were

also in attendance for the festivities.

Torres shared how a sense of closure and the proverbial moment of passing the torch has started to set in, and has become apparent for each member.

"I'm feeling bittersweet as this past Saturday was the President's Dinner, and that's when it hit that we have two weeks left in our reign, and we also understand that we will forever be marked as the 2025 Colleen and her court," Torres said.

Torres said she is excited to pass the crown down and to see who earns the title and takes the spotlight for 2026.

"I'm truly excited to pass the torch down, pass down the experiences, to the new five girls who can experience it," Torres said

She also explained the

See **IRISH TEA** page 5

Black History Month celebrated in flag-raising

By Kristin Rivers
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CHICOPEE - It was standing-room only inside City Hall Auditorium on Feb. 6 for the Fourth Annual Black History Month flag-raising ceremony.

The festivities included performances by the Chicopee Comprehensive High School and Chicopee High School choirs, remarks from Mayor John Vieau, Superintendent Dr. Marcus Ware, Springfield City Councilor-at-Large Justin Hurst, Dr. Slandie Dieujuste, the vice chancellor for Student Affairs at Springfield College, Elms College President Dr. Harry Dumay, Kiyota Garcia, the assistant vice president of Student Affairs and Chief Equity Officer at Springfield Technical Community College, and Holyoke Community College

President Dr. George Timmons.

Springfield School Committee Member, staff director/ chief of staff for State Rep. Orlando Ramos (D-Springfield) and The Kwanzaa Collective President Ayanna Crawford served as mistress of ceremonies.

Community recognition awards were also given out to Artise Carr, the CEO and founder of The Kidney Advocate LLC and an ambassador for the American Kidney Fund, and Erns Rinvill, the organizer for Toys for Tots in Chicopee. Rinvill also surprised Venus Roman, a local bus driver, for her support of Toys for Tots with a special framed honor and dedicated his award to her.

The mayor's proclamation was presented to Chicopee

See **BLACK HISTORY MONTH** page 7



TURLEY PHOTO BY KRISTIN RIVERS

Local and state elected officials, community members and more gather together for a group photo under the Black History Month flag.

IN THE CITY

Controversial downtown business pushes City Council's buttons

By Dalton Zbierski
Correspondent

CHICOPEE – Despite being told to cease-and-desist by the city, a towing and recovery business in Chicopee Center refuses to go quietly into the night.

Cruise Control Transportation, which operates at 78 West Street under the direction of Sturbridge resident Joshua Roy, previously failed to gain a special permit from the City Council during its meeting on Dec. 11, 2024.

To receive the special permit, the business needed to garner 9 votes in support, but it failed to do so when reviewed in 2025.

However, the board was not at full capacity at that time following the death of Vice President/Councilor-at-Large Robert Zygarowski and the departure of Councilor-at-Large Tim Wagner after his August 2025 resignation from the council.

Due to that anomaly,

Cruise Control Transportation took the city to court, where it was ruled that the City Council would have to revisit and revoke on the item.

Several members of the board voiced opposition to discussing the matter again. Ward 2 Councilor Shane Brooks, who represents downtown, led the outcries.

"This is an active application for a special permit, yet this business has been operating without said required permit for a period of six to eight months," Brooks said. "This is the only business in the city that's required to have a special permit that has basically flubbed its nose to the City Council and all the rules that are required to operate a business with a special permit and continues to operate."

Brooks was hesitant to call it an "application," as he said the business owner doesn't care what the City Council decides. Brooks said Roy's attitude has been proven repeatedly, as the towing

company ignores the order to cease-and-desist.

According to Brooks, Cruise Control Transportation did not receive the special permit originally because it disturbs the way of life in a neighborhood where parking is already at a premium. He also said the wrecked cars there could be dangerous.

"Now, you throw the size of the vehicles that are proposed for a lot that is, in my opinion, not adequate to support the demand it's being put under. There are cars being stored there that are heavily damaged," Brooks said. "We don't know what type of fluids are leaking, what type of environmental impact they're having on that property and that parcel and the surrounding parcels and neighborhood most importantly."

Brooks emphasized that the applicant has done everything exactly opposite of the way a good community partner would handle business. He said that Roy will continue to defy the city.

"It's unfortunate that it's gotten to this point, but the fact of the matter is he was open this morning at seven o'clock when I drove through the Dunkin' Donuts drive thru. He'll be open tomorrow at seven o'clock when I go through the same drive thru, and he just doesn't respect the requirements to operate that type of business downtown," Brooks said.

Brooks added that this sets a terrible precedent for other irresponsible business owners to follow. He said that any other councilor who had a situation like this develop in their ward would feel similarly.

"This is one of the most depressed areas in the city. It's downtown. We don't do enough for the downtown residents, and this will just be another example of failing to meet the call to do the right thing if we don't shoot this down tonight," Brooks said.

City Attorney Tim Riley explained to the board that

it had to hear out the special permit application because the city agreed to do so in court.

"Cruise Control filed suit, a settlement agreement was reached where it was decided that it would be brought back to the council for a brand-new hearing from scratch," Riley said.

Councilor-at-Large Joel McAuliffe was unhappy that the Law Department entered into an agreement with the towing company that stands against the City Council's position.

"This also exposes my years' long issue that the Law Department is the law department for the mayor and for the city and not for the City Council," McAuliffe said. "For the Law Department to enter into an agreement that doesn't represent the views of the subcommittee or the council, which is the legislative body of the city, is a structural problem we won't solve tonight but something I have an issue

with."

McAuliffe noted that he drove by the business, and it's clearly obvious that it is still operating. He warned about the risks of letting the business run with impunity.

"I'm hot as a hornet over the fact that this business decides to operate in violation of the law," McAuliffe said. "It's a Banana Republic situation. If you don't have to follow the rules, and we're not going to court to uphold them, what are we going to do? What is our job if we make laws and nobody follows them? It's got to be figured out, and I don't feel positive in our position as a council yet."

Ultimately, the council agreed to move the discussion to the Feb. 25 meeting of the Zoning Subcommittee.

Agenda item No. 1 will be to start a session of executive session to further the conversation, while item No. 2 will entail the public hearing and vote.

Chicopee Public Library hosts programs for kids and families

CHICOPEE – Each month the Chicopee Public Library hosts a variety of free programs for children, teens, and families. The Youth Services Department seeks to provide opportunities for entertainment and enrichment that promote literacy and explore creativity. Here is the slate of events for February 2026.

Terrific Twos will be held on Tuesdays, Feb. 17 at 10:30 a.m. Terrific Twos is for two-year-olds and their caregivers. This program

features about 25 minutes of structured circle time, followed by about half an hour of semi-structured playtime. During circle time, we will sing songs, do rhymes, do some big movements, and read 1 book. The book choice rotates between either a read aloud picture book or a group read of a board book. Playtime involves a choice of craft, activity, or play.

Saturday Playgroup will be held on Saturdays at 1 p.m. in February. We'll put out some extra toys in the

playspace. It's a great time for families with kids of all ages to meet up and play.

February School Vacation Week is Feb. 17 through 20

The library will be closed for Presidents' Day on Monday, Feb. 16.

Mario Party Celebrate everyone's favorite plumber and his friends! We are turning the Kids Room into a Mario Party game! Come enjoy mini games, crafts and more. For kids and families of all ages,

no registration required. Stop by the library at any point from 2:30 to 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 17.

The library will host a Big Kid Dance Party on Wednesday, February 18 at 10:30 a.m. A bit like our regularly scheduled Little Kid Dance Party, but geared specifically towards elementary age kids. We'll sing and dance and get out the rhythm sticks. Caregivers and younger kids are welcome.

The library will host Bingo for Books on Wednesday, Feb. 18 at 6 p.m. Play bingo for a chance to win books. Fun for the whole family.

Talking Hands Theatre will present their puppet show, Whale Tales, on Thursday, Feb. 19 at 10:30 a.m. Learn about animals under the sea with engaging puppets and original songs. Great for the story-time crowd. Kids of all ages and caregivers are welcome.

No registration required.

Join us for a Craft-ernoon where we will make Pasta Art on Thursday, Feb. 19 at 2 p.m. Create fun art using dyed pasta of all shapes and colors! For kids and families of all ages, no registration required.

On Friday, Feb. 20, stop by the Kids Room any time during the day to contribute to Community Art: Big Coloring. Help us create a mural for our bulletin boards! We will have paper and all sorts of coloring tools available. Stop by anytime! For kids and families of all ages, no registration required.

The Children's Room is a great place to hang out. Coloring pages and board games are always available. There are also some new things you can play with while you visit. Ask us about food toys for the play kitchen, building blocks, or the art cart.

Teens!
Visit the library after

school and enjoy the Teen Space with friends! We've got board games, puzzles, the library's Switch, and coloring to enjoy.

Anime Club will be on Wednesday, Feb. 25 at 3 p.m. We'll be celebrating 30 years of Pokémon! With the franchise's big three-oh only days after Anime Club, we'll be talking about our hopes for big announcements and enjoying plenty of themed activities!

Friday Teen Hang Join us every Friday after school in the Teen Space for some games and crafts! We'll have the Nintendo Switch available to play, coloring pages and paper to doodle, and more!

Teens are invited to join us at LEGO, Sewing Club, and

Visit the library website for more info about all of the library's events! www.chicopeepubliclibrary.org.

Polish Junior League of Massachusetts launches annual scholarship offering

REGION – The Polish Junior League of Massachusetts has announced its annual scholarship program for students of Polish heritage.

The League will be awarding scholarships to undergraduate students, and one scholarship will be granted to a graduate or returning student. In addition to the Undergraduate Scholarship program, there are two memorial scholarships, the Helen Weber Scholarship and the Josephine Karwoski Memorial Scholarship, each offering a focus on specific areas of study.

The scholarships and services provided by the Polish Junior League would not be possible without funds raised through the League's Annual Fashion Show and public donations. By contributing, individuals, businesses and

corporations are helping to expand the level of awards and positively affect students.

Sheryl Mardeusz, president of the Polish Junior League says, "we are proud to continue helping graduate and undergraduate students throughout New England and are extremely pleased to be able to help even more individuals pursue their educational goals."

To be eligible, applicants, in addition to being part of the Polish community, must have a permanent address in the Western Massachusetts counties of Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden or Hampshire. Applications can be received after January 2, 2026 with an application deadline of May 1, 2026 and scholarship criteria can be found on the League's website [polishjuniorleague-](http://polishjuniorleague-ma.org)

ma.org.

For 87 years, the Polish Junior League of Massachusetts, a nonprofit organization of women developed as civic leaders, has made a demonstrable impact on their community. True to its mission, the League has worked diligently to help students obtain the best education, so they may contribute to enhance the social, cultural and political fabric of civil society.

*Scholarship Program Key Information

Applications can be submitted between January 2, 2026 and May 1, 2026

Permanent address in Western MA counties of Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden or Hampshire

Enrolled in sophomore year (36 credits minimum)

SNAP Pop-Up Pantry at Rivermills

CHICOPEE – The Council on Aging will offer a Pop-Up Pantry on Thursday, Feb. 19 at 9 a.m. at RiverMills Center, located at 5 W. Main Street.

RiverMills Center will host two pop-up pantries for SNAP recipients, age 55 and older. As a SNAP outreach partner with the Department of Transitional Services, RiverMills recognizes the need

for additional nutritional assistance. Only Chicopee residents who are current SNAP recipients age 55+ with a valid EBT card are eligible to sign up for the free bag of groceries. Registration for the Feb. 19 pantry opens Tuesday, Feb. 17. Participation is limited to the first 125 participants. Please call Stephanie Tarrant at 534-3698 ext. 120 to register.

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IN THE CITY

2026 Chicopee Colleen Contestants announced

CHICOPEE - 12 young women have submitted applications for the 2026 Chicopee Colleen Contest. They were welcomed at an Irish Tea recently where they learned about Irish culture and customs, as well as the competition process. The Colleen and Court will be selected at the Coronation Ball, which takes place on Saturday February 21, 2026, at the Portuguese American Club on Exchange Street, Chicopee.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JOEL RODOWICZ

Back Row, Left to Right: Mackenzie Bergstrom, Jaydda Reyes, Charlotte Fields, Beatrice Brown, Gracie Houldson. Front Row, Left to Right: Isabel Carpenter, Gracelyn Jarry, Mila Dillard, Shannon Caloon, McKenzie Araujo, Zoey Piedra. Missing from photo: Jahzara Bradley



City of Chicopee Data Collection Program begins

CHICOPEE - The Chicopee Board of Assessors is notifying businesses that data collectors from the assessors' office will be visiting all businesses starting January 27, 2026 to collect personal property information. Each data collector will carry an official photo identification card issued by Real Estate Research Consultants, Inc. and a letter from the Chicopee Board of Assessors.

The Department of Revenue requires the Assessors to visit businesses every five years to re-list the taxable personal property that is used by the business. The data collectors will also confirm the legal owner, business name and mailing address for each location.

Data collectors will have identification and any questions can be directed to the Assessors' office at 594-1430.

PRESIDENT'S DINNER from page 1

since 2017, treasurer of the executive board, chairing the March Money Madness Calendars Fundraiser, the president in 2022 and leading numerous events.

"I'm excited and I'm nervous. I appreciate that they feel that I have held my own and done the work to deserve it," Jarvis said.

She also expressed excitement for this year's parade season, looking forward to getting together with family and friends to enjoy the events.

"It's nice that we keep these traditions alive," Jarvis said. "I'm happy that we're all together and we're moving forward. We still have a committee together that brings Chicopee down the road every March. We have so many events coming up. We have Irish Night, we have the Ball. We're having Mass at Elms College this year, so that's going to be a nice change."

St. George, who received the Atkinson Award in 2007, currently serves as a member and board of director for the St. Patrick's Committee of Holyoke.

The former owner of Bridal Corner and Ron's Formal Wear, he is also a founder and board member of Cigars4Soldiers, a nonprofit organization supporting local military families, veterans and organizations and also ships care packages of cigars overseas to those currently serving.

"It's overwhelming, honestly. It's obviously a true honor. Nothing that I ever expected. I'm hoping that I can make the committee proud," St. George said.

He also reflected on the generations keeping tradition alive, adding how he and his wife, Analia, were part of the Parade Committee for years and sponsored events.

"I love to see the legacies that are left, the kids of the kids of the kids of the families that have been part of this, and you can just see the passion that they have for their heritage," St. George



Ward 4 City Councilor George Balakier, 2024 Parade Committee President and Emcee Meghan Balakier, 2026 Chicopee St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee President Aly Sliwa, Ward 6 City Councilor and Emcee Samuel Shumsky and State Sen. Jake Oliveira (D-Ludlow) in a group photo. Each honoree received a citation from the Massachusetts State Senate and a proclamation from the city.



Ward 4 City Councilor George Balakier, 2024 Parade Committee President and Emcee Meghan Balakier, 2026 Chicopee St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee President Aly Sliwa, Ward 6 City Councilor Samuel Shumsky and State Sen. Jake Oliveira (D-Ludlow) in a group photo. Each honoree received a citation from the Massachusetts State Senate and a proclamation from the city.

said. "It's great to see." Sliwa, a member since 2018, also served as Parade Committee Vice President in 2025 and on several subcommittees.

"This night has been absolutely gorgeous. The venue is great. I'm so glad that everyone's here. A lot of familiar faces. I'm excited as this is the first event that kicks off parade season," Sliwa said.

She also emphasized tradition, whether incorporating new ones or sticking with the roots that began the parade committee.

"Definitely, those traditions and those roots will never change, but we are in more present times, so some things do change a little bit, but it's for good. It's a good change," Sliwa said.

Sliwa praised the Tartan Committee for their work on the official tartan for the Chicopee contingent, which was unveiled in December 2025.

"They spent countless hours getting everything perfected, the shipping from Scotland and everything else. It looks absolutely beautiful. It pretty much goes with everything everyone's wearing. The colors are just great," Sliwa said. "They really did a great job and I'm proud of them."

Grand Knight Daniel Therrien and Home Association President Ray LeHoullier shared the organization has hosted many Parade Com-

mittee events, houses their archives and served as a sponsor for events. Many Knights members have also been part of the Parade Committee.

"It's a strong Irish. Chicopee's strong Irish and there's a lot of French, there's a lot of Polish, so it's all nationalities here and we just basically work together. We work together as a team and that's how we look at it," LeHoullier said.

"It's special for me too because I'm French. My last name's Therrien—so that's French—but also my mother was a Sullivan, so I'm half-Irish. So, when they said it was Irish events and the Parade Committee and all that, it's all Irish. This is special for me because of my mother's side," Therrien said.

LeHoullier added the organization was humbled to host the President's Dinner this year, with him and Therrien wishing everyone a happy parade season.

"I think Chicopee loves this place. They love the Knights, they love just who we are," LeHoullier said.

"The Knights are a nonprofit organization, so we do a lot for the community, especially the Catholic school and Catholic Church and all

that—so, St. Joan of Arc—so it's fitting today for Father Gentile to be here because he's from Sr. Rose and St. Rose is our connecting parish for our Elder Council 69," Therrien said.

Jarvis told her fellow honorees, "It's going to be a good season and we'll have a good time together."

"I'm very grateful for receiving the Woods Award. It's an honor that people I work with for the season think

highly enough of me to give me this award and I'm looking forward to all of us being together, enjoying it, bringing more people out. It's great to see the familiar faces that come to all of the events," Jarvis said.

St. George said he's "a Chicopee boy at heart" and encouraged the community to come out and support all the upcoming festivities.

"They're all very, very deserving. I think we're going

to have a great parade. This is a great season and I am just so very happy to be a part of it. I'm honored," St. George said.

Sliwa shared events are welcome to all and new members are welcome to join the Parade Committee and share their ideas. She's proud of this year's honorees.

"It's great that everyone can support it and we just do love having these events. The city is truly great," Sliwa said.



Members of the Knights of Columbus Elder Council 69 and Home Association in a group photo with Grand Knight Dan Therrien, Ray LeHoullier, president of the Home Association for the Knights of Columbus Elder Council 69, Ward 4 City Councilor George Balakier, Ward 6 City Councilor and Emcee Samuel Shumsky, members of the Atkinson Family, 2024 Parade Committee President and Emcee Meghan Balakier and State Sen. Jake Oliveira (D-Ludlow)

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(Teenager on Feb. 22)
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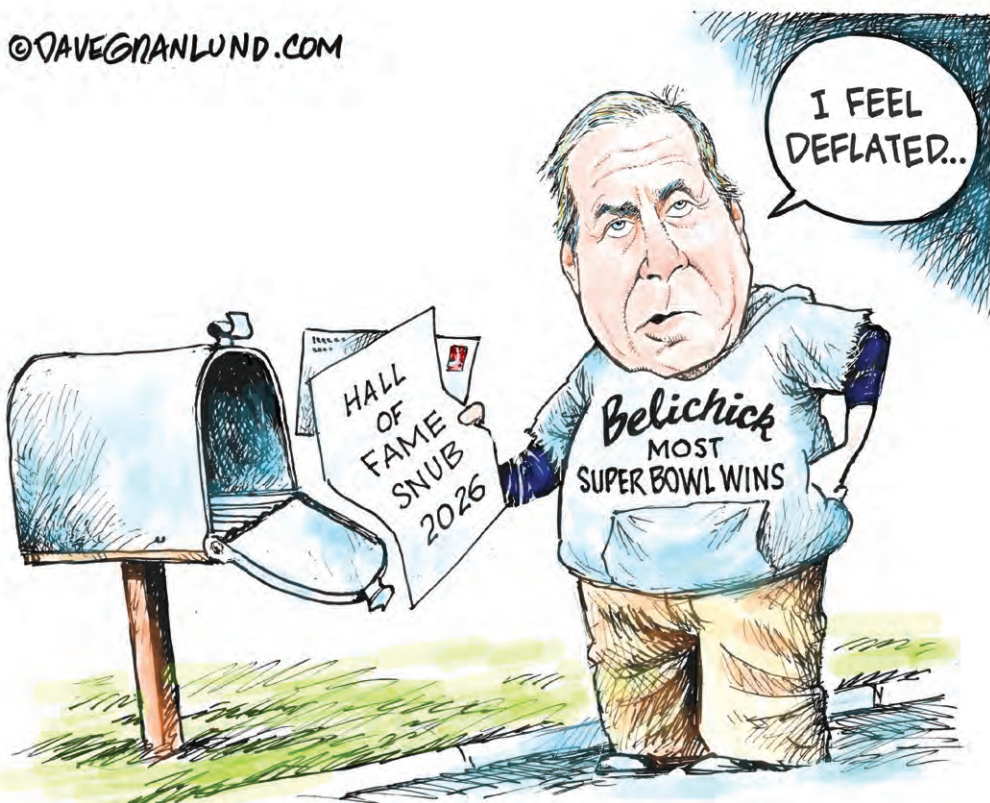
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IN THE CITY

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Game On! GSHFH Pickleball Tournament returns

By Brandice J. O'Brien

Marketing and Communications Manager, Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity

WEST SPRINGFIELD - It's back and it's on! Get your team together and register for Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity's (GSHFH) Pickleball Tournament on Sunday, March 29. The all-day event held at The Picklr in Westfield is sure to serve up kitchen-legal levels of fun.

That's right, we're down with the lingo and we mean this Habitat fundraiser will be all good. How could it not? The round-robin-style event features two-player teams. Play time will be divided into timed sections by skill level to ensure everyone gets worthwhile matchups and court time.

"The game itself is a fun way to get your body moving and is not as intimidating as tennis," said Olga Calligris, GSHFH Homeowner Services manager, who played her first match at last year's tournament. "Players are super welcoming to newbies who don't know what they're doing. It's definitely a community that looks out for one another. I'm still slowly learning the rules, though, because when I played, I just knew I had to hit the ball but not to hit it out of bounds."

We'll start the day at 8



Kids prove pickleball is an all-ages game at Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity's first-ever Pickleball Tournament at the Picklr in Westfield on July 20, 2025.

a.m. with beginners on the courts, roll into intermediate play, and finish strong with advanced matches. Tickets are \$50 per person and pre-registration is required. Snacks will be available and bragging rights are up for grabs. Plus, raffle tickets and merchandise are on hand for purchase.

"Pickleball has a way of bringing people together across ages and experience levels," said Bree D'Amours, a member of GSHFH's Board of Directors who's also part of the planning committee. "I love the idea of being a part of an event that's genuinely fun while still promoting Habitat in a meaningful way. If people leave feeling energized, informed, and more connect-

ed to Habitat's network, then we've done well."

Greater Springfield Habitat's first pickleball tournament held in July 2025, attracted nearly 50 people, including children and Springfield Thunderbirds mascot Boomer. Among the raffle prizes were a tabletop charcoal grill, gift baskets, pickleball swag, and Funko POP dolls.

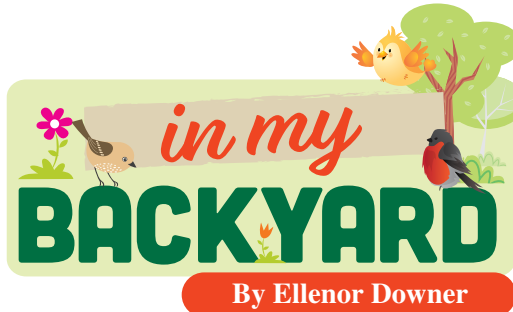
"I had some fun and met some great people," said Andy Szalai via a Facebook comment after last year's tournament. "I'm looking forward to this being a tradition."

GSHFH is a housing ministry dedicated to strengthening communities by empowering low-income families to change their lives and the lives of future generations through homeownership and home repair opportunities. This is accomplished by working in partnership with diverse people, from all walks of life, to build and repair simple, decent, affordable housing. Habitat's mission to provide homeownership opportunities to low-income families is unique as it requires partner families to work alongside the community that is reaching out to help them. GSHFH has helped roughly 100 local families realize their dream of homeownership over the last 39 years.

For more information or to register, visit habitatspringfield.org/pickleball



A pickleball player returns the ball during Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity's first-ever Pickleball Tournament at the Picklr in Westfield on July 20, 2025.



Male gadwall

On Dec. 20, compilers at the Athol Christmas Bird Count recorded a total of 58 species including a Gadwall, a first time for this species during a Christmas count.

Male Gadwall have grayish-brown heads, sometimes showing cinnamon on the forehead and faint purplish iridescence on the crown. Females resemble female mallards, but they have a thinner, darker bill.

Gadwall nest in tall vegetation near water and show a preference for nesting on islands. Their choice of nesting location gives them some protection from predators. Female Gadwall produce an egg a day and lay a clutch of seven to 12 eggs. To meet their demand for protein during this stressful time, female Gadwall eat more invertebrates than males during this period in addition to using reserves of nutrients they've stored in their bodies during the winter.

Their winter habitat is fresh and brackish wetlands with abundant aquatic vegetation on which they primarily forage. Gadwall often snatch food from diving ducks as they surface. Gadwall number have increased in North America since the 1980s. This is partly because of conservation of their habitat, wetlands and adjacent uplands.

The oldest known Gadwall was a male, and at least 19 years, 6 months old. He was banded in Saskatchewan in 1962 and shot during hunting season in Louisiana in 1981.

Christmas Bird Count

The National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Counts take place within a 22-day period, there are many state count circles and volunteers must be available. Despite snowy weather, compiler Jon Skinner said of the Groton-Ayer count on Dec. 14, "I was surprised that we were able to scratch our way to 81 species in such snowy conditions. It has to be a testament to the relentless nature of both our team and the birds." Two new species were added 13 black vultures soaring over Lancaster and a killdeer at Devens. Some of the other

highlights were evening grosbeak in both Harvard and Groton, red crossbills in Townsend, Lapland longspur at Fitchburg Airport and in Ayer, chestnut-collared longspur at Fitchburg Airport,

American kestrel in Groton, two Baltimore orioles in Groton, eastern Phoebe in Shirley, redpoll in Lancaster and a long-eared owl in Devens. Species seen three days before or after the actual count date and noted as such were chipping sparrow, brown-headed cowbird, Peregrine falcon and sandhill crane.

Bluebird

I received an email on Jan. 26 from Jeffrey Landry. He had a visit from a bluebird on Friday, Jan. 23. He thought it was either the male parent or one of its offspring from a previous summer. He said, "For several years I have called him, 'Sunshine' and he arrived at my feeder on a bright beautiful winter's afternoon and this uncalled for visit was icing on my day's cake."

He offered to share this bluebird story. He said, "I was sitting on my meditation cushion yesterday watching my breath emerge from a deep silence and then gently return back into it. There was no counting, no manipulation, only watching, only flow. After some time had passed, I opened my eyes because I felt I was being closely watched."

"I have a bird feeder right outside of my window and sure enough a male bluebird or one of his offspring from a previous summer, was perched and staring directly at me. Two summers ago I named the parent bluebird, 'Sunshine' and last May he returned to the same nesting box in my front yard.

Quizzically, Sunshine leaned slightly forward. He was amazingly close."

"It was beautiful, glorious to see his blue rust colored body outlined by a background of white snow still clinging to frozen lilacs and tall trees. The sight of this sent ripples of love, that became currents of joy, to course through me."

"I felt a smile stretch a mile wide across my whole being. It was like being visited by a long absent friend. Within minutes this made me get up and fill another feeder with dried mealworms because bluebirds

See **BACKYARD** page 7

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The deadline for
submissions is Tuesday at noon.

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.

Election letters to the editor

The Chicopee Register welcomes readers to participate in this year's election campaigns by writing letters to the editor for publication on these pages. Letters of up to 250 words from local residents endorsing candidates on the ballot or discussing campaign issues should be sent to Chicopee Register care of Turley Publications, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, faxed to 413-289-1977 or emailed to journals@turley.com. Please include a daytime telephone number for verification purposes (it will not be printed). Letters must be received by noon Monday to be considered for that Thursday's newspaper. No attack letters will be printed. No letters written by candidates supporting their own candidacy will be printed. If the volume of letters received is larger than the space available in the newspaper, or if the letters become repetitive, the newspaper reserves the right to print a representative sample. No endorsement letters will be printed in the last edition before the election.

For more information, call the editor at 413-283-8393.

Campaign news

As part of its election coverage, the newspaper plans to print stories about contested races for Congress, state Senate, state House, district attorney and Governor's Council during the weeks leading up to the election, as well as a question-and-answer voters guide. In order to ensure fairness to all candidates, no political press releases will be printed, nor will reporters cover political rallies or fundraisers.

Candidates who wish to further publicize their candidacy, beliefs and events may contact advertising, 413-283-8393 about paid advertising in Chicopee Register.

Why is my Social Security Retirement benefit so small?

Dear Rusty:
Can you help me understand?

I have paid into Social Security since I started working in 1978. I did have a lot of tax deductions, but I don't understand why I only receive \$350 a month from Social Security.

Signed: Befuddled Senior

Dear Befuddled Senior:
Your Social Security benefit is based upon your average monthly earnings for the 35 years over your lifetime that you earned the most while contributing to the Social Security program; however, your benefit isn't based on your contributions to SS. Your average lifetime earnings amount is called your Average Indexed Monthly Earnings," which are

adjusted for inflation for years before you turn 60. Your earnings, your net earnings if self-employed, are provided to the SSA by the IRS.

Your AIME is subjected to a formula which calculates your "Primary Insurance Amount," which is the SS benefit you receive if you start benefits in the month you reach your full retirement age. Your personal Full Retirement Age depends on the year you were born which, if you were born in 1960 or later, is age 67. However, if you claim Social Security before reaching your FRA, you will get only a percentage of your PIA, reduced from what you would get if



you claimed at your FRA.

For example, if you claimed at age 62, you would only get 70% of the amount you would have gotten had you waited until age 67, or if you claimed at age 63 you would get 75% of your age 67 benefit. The reduction is less as you get closer to your FRA; if you claimed at age 65, you'd get about 87% of your full retirement age amount.

You can see your lifetime Social Security earnings record at your personal "my Social Security" online account at [www.ssa.gov/myac-](http://www.ssa.gov/myac)

count (you will need to first create that online account), or you can call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 to request an "Earnings Statement" be sent to you. That statement will show your lifetime earnings by year, the 35 highest of which were used to calculate your PIA (your Social Security benefit at your FRA). Generally, your Social Security FRA benefit will be about 40% or less of your average indexed monthly earnings.

So, to recap, your SS retirement benefit isn't based on your contributions to the program; it's based on your average monthly lifetime earnings. If you had less than 35 years contributing to the program,

SS would still use 35 years in the benefit formula by using zero dollars in earnings for some number of years, which would result in a smaller AIME.

Thus, if you claimed before your full retirement age of 67, your SS benefit was reduced because you claimed early. And if you had less than 35 years of SS-covered employment, your AIME was less, resulting in a smaller PIA. And that is likely why your monthly Social Security retirement benefit is low.

One other thought to consider: if you are married and your spouse's monthly SS benefit is considerably more than yours (e.g., more than

See **SOCIAL SECURITY** page 7

IN THE CITY

St. Stanislaus School hosting annual auction

CHICOPEE – The St. Stanislaus School is hosting its Annual Auction in March 2026 as an online virtual event.

The Auction begins on March 7 and ends on March 14.

The Auction is to raise funds for a new stage and Performing Arts Fund. During these challenging times in our world, it is more important than ever to have current and relevant curriculum available in all areas of learning. Our goal is to raise \$15,000 to \$20,000 for our school.

The cost of providing a quality, safe and health environment is higher than ever at this time. Your con-

tribution will help us to continue to provide for the 300 students in our school each day.



In order to reach this goal, we need donations from businesses, parents and individual benefactors. Please consider supporting our event by donating a gift certificate, monetary donation, merchandise or services. Your company will

be listed in the bidding brochure, and your donation will be displayed in the on-line catalogue for bidding.

We hope you will donate an item or make a contribution to help support St. Stanislaus School where we believe that we should “Strive to be Servant Leaders for Today and Tomorrow.”

Please contact Katherine Rorrio at 413-592-5135 or email ststanis@saintstansschool.org if you are able to donate. We will gladly have someone pick up your contribution.

Any donations will be tax deductible and will be given a receipt worth the value of the donation.

CPD lends support at Bike and Coat Giveaway



PHOTO AND CAPTION COURTESY OF CHICOPEE POLICE DEPARTMENT

CHICOPEE - Thank you to Bob “The Bike Guy” Charland for inviting us to his annual Backpack and Coat Giveaway. As you can see from some of the pictures, Bob donated hundreds of backpacks and coats to local Police and Fire Departments to be handed out to those in need in their communities. With the help of several scout troops and officers we were able to make light work of it all. The work that Bob does for our community is amazing and we can’t thank him enough for always thinking of us when he holds these events.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOEL RODOWICZ
Back Row, Left to Right: Mackenzie Bergstrom, Jaydda Reyes, Charlotte Fields, Beatrice Brown, Gracie Houldson. Front Row, Left to Right: Isabel Carpenter, Gracelyn Jarry, Mila Dillard, Shannon Caloon, McKenzie Araujo, Zoey Piedra. Missing from photo: Jahzara Bradley

IRISH TEA from page 1
importance of being able to offer and lend support to the 12 candidates by taking the opportunity to answer any and all questions, because she and her court were once in their shoes.
“I talked to the girls and

told them just breathe, be yourself. That’s one key piece of advice I told them. I also told them that Ball Night will be one of the times you will actually connect with each other, and whether you do place or not, I want them to understand you are a winner regardless of the outcome.”

Torres said. “Because you showed a side of bravery you never knew you had, and to actually come out to a competition like this takes a strong part of you to put yourself out there for this, and I hope they understand, you are going to be an ambassador for the city, and my final piece of

advice, lastly, don’t sell yourself short, and understand you truly have more confidence in yourself than you realize and know they(Chicopee Parade Committee) will take care of you and guide you every step of the way.”
Torres then reflected on what this past year as Grand



Alivia Mendes and Kathy Balakier show the proper way to drink tea.

Colleen meant, while offering a bit of personal experience for what the next generation can expect, while delivering a point of gratitude for her reign.

“I just want to add my personal experience through the entire process has been beyond wonderful,” Torres said. “However, I do admit that the first moment of meeting my court when our reign began, it was one of new beginnings. But as the year went on, it was great to develop a sisterhood, and even now we’re sad to let each other go. We made a pact and decision to carry this memory forward while staying in contact, and I would say for a personal memory, the parade was one

of the best, and I can’t wait to see who earns the crown next, because I know for a fact I will always be a supporter, and I wish them all the best.”

Next up for the contestants is to learn who will garner the crown, and that will happen later this month on Feb. 21 during the Coronation Ball at the Portuguese American Club.

Following that, the next Chicopee St. Patrick’s Day Parade Committee events include Irish Night on March 13 at the Portuguese American Club and, of course, marching in the Holyoke St. Patrick’s Day Parade on March 22.

DPW from page 1
We’ll get this report and then go from there,” Laflamme said.
Costello also requested that the council formally thank the DPW for its response to the snow. She described their hard work during the weather event as being “exceptional.”
According to Costello, the DPW kept the city streets safe at a difficult time.
“We are very fortunate here that we have dedicated people that are the boots on the ground that are getting the job done as far as plowing our streets, picking up our trash,” Costello said. “Without them, we would be in a world of hurt. They’ve helped make Chicopee the great city that it is.”
Councilor-at-Large Jessica Avery also extended her gratitude. She noted that more than a week after the storm,

DPW workers were still clearing snow throughout the city.
“Really, what they’re doing is above and beyond. I think that we need to recognize that the above and beyond is because they are short staffed,” Avery said. “We need to consider what the staffing and funding looks like, so I want to make sure that this order doesn’t sound like a pizza party and we actually take the steps necessary to improve those actions and the department as well.”
McAuliffe joked that he would love to see a pizza party and acknowledged he had never seen an order quite like this one during his time on the board. That said, he was all for it.
“The work that was done, if we analyze and compare it to the cities around us, was second to none,” McAuliffe said.

“They got the job done, they got it done in an efficient way, and people shouldn’t forget that these folks with the DPW are oftentimes working 24-hour shifts, sleeping on a cot so they can get a little bit of rest and get back out there on a plow truck.”
Ward 4 Councilor George Balakier called the storm extraordinary and unlike anything the city had seen in years. He said the timing favored the city though, as it did not occur in the middle of a school day.
“This is a throwback to the old days,” Balakier said. “Some people have never seen snow like this, and kudos to the first responders and plow drivers. They did their best, and fortunately, the brunt of the storm fell on a weekend, so I think that was also helpful for us.”

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CLUES ACROSS	sesame plant	CLUES DOWN	27. Records electric currents generated by the brain
1. Breezed through	38. Disallow	1. Sign language	28. Woman (French)
5. Consumer protection agency	41. Provide greater detail	2. Fashionable	29. Short route aircraft
8. Criminal syndicate	43. Inaccessible	3. Borough in Helsinki	34. Pitching statistic
11. Moves back from	45. Evoke emotions	4. Inability to hear	35. Pointed end of a pen
13. Satisfaction	47. Ancient kingdom near Dead Sea	5. More quickly	36. Popular sports league
14. Feel concern or interest	49. Celtic punk rockers	6. An idea accepted as a demonstrable truth	37. Body part
15. Monetary units	50. A fencing sword	7. Shrewdly	39. Inoffensive
16. Congressman (abbr.)	55. Actor Idris	8. Rooney and Kate are two	40. Yellowish cotton cloth
17. Israeli city	56. Affirmative (slang)	9. Mediterranean port	41. Feline
18. Restaurants	57. Afflicted in mind or body	10. Benedictine monk	42. Does not tell the truth
20. 2,000 lbs.	59. One point north of northeast	12. Midway between south and southeast	44. Seduced
21. Grandmother	60. Born of	14. Town in Galilee	45. Spiritual leader
22. North, South and Central	61. Social media hand gesture	19. Satisfy	46. Abba __, Israeli politician
25. In an early way	62. Hong Kong food stall __ pai dong	23. Mice genus (slang)	47. Repair
30. Foes	63. Opposite of beginning	24. Brass instrument	48. Olive genus
31. Social networking platform	64. Email function	25. Chest muscle (slang)	51. Swiss river
32. Early term for basketball player		26. Transmits genetic information from DNA	52. Prejudice
33. Another name for			53. C. European river
			54. Keep under control
			58. Father

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Comp picks up 15th win as Fay scores 1,000th point

CHICOPEE – It's been a tough go recently for the Agawam High School boys basketball team. The Brownies have lost five straight games, including last Monday evening at Chicopee Comprehensive 68-60. In the match-up, Agawam actually led before a Comp comeback gave the Colts a nine-point lead at halftime. Agawam played stronger in the second half, but could not keep up as Brody Fay scored his 1,000th point late in the game for the Colts, who now have 15 wins for the season and are a lock for both the Western Mass. and state tournaments. The Brownies are 7-10 with one game left in

the regular season. It is not known if Agawam makes the Western Mass. tournament, but it will come down to either winning their final three games and scoring a tournament berth with a .500 record. Agawam is also ranked No. 33 in Division 2, and could still squeeze into the top 32 even if they are below .500. Comp meanwhile is going strong heading for the tournaments. Fay scored 28 points to lead the Colts while Elijah Kleps scored 14 and Xavier Kleps had 12 points. Agawam was led by their own 1,000-point scorer, Trevor Moynihan with 21 points. Brody Sheehan had 15 points and Gavin Cruz had 11 points.



Xavier Kleps dekes the Agawam defender.



Gabriel Pluta winds up to pass.



Brody Fay takes a free throw.



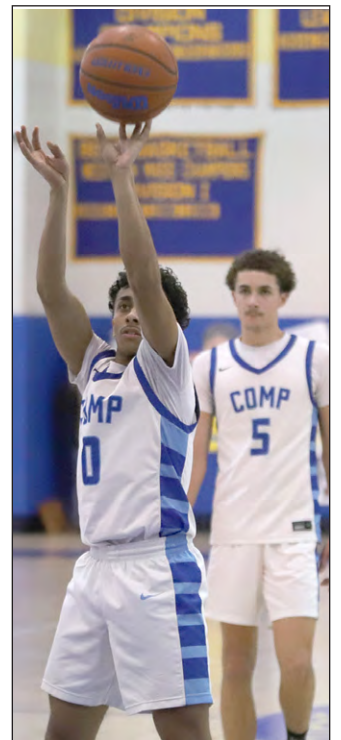
Francis Jordan makes a quick pass after making a rebound.



Brody Fay drives to the hoop. Fay scored his 1,000th point in a win over Agawam last Monday night.



Elijah Kleps is stopped near the sideline.



Modesto Galindrez takes a shot.

New look for sectional hockey tournament this year

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

WEST SPRINGFIELD—The 2026 Western Massachusetts high school hockey tournament is scheduled to take place from Feb. 16-19.

Six of the seven Berry Division teams will qualify for the Class A tournament.

The Berry Division teams, who are looking to qualify for the Class A tournament, are Westfield, East Longmeadow, Greenfield, Minnechaug Regional, Longmeadow, Ludlow, and West Springfield.

The Westfield Bombers are the two-time defending Class A champions. They defeated the Greenfield Green Wave, 7-3, in last year's championship match.

All six of the teams in the Fay-Wright Division will be competing in this year's Class B tournament.

Those six teams are Easthampton, McCann Tech, Amherst, Taconic, Agawam, and Chicopee High School.

Agawam defeated Taconic, 6-1, in last year's Class B championship match.

The top two teams in Class A & B will automatically advance into the semifinals.

Prior to playing the semifinal round, the top-seeded team in Class A will be facing the second-seeded team in Class B. The top-seeded team in Class B will also play the

second-seeded Class A team.

Those games will boost the team's state power rankings.

The other four teams in each of the classes will be playing in the quarterfinals on February 16.

The higher-seeded teams will be hosting the quarterfinal matches.

Any of the quarterfinal games played at the Olympia Ice Center in West Springfield will be held during the daytime. The game times on rink 1 will be 11am and 1:30pm. The games on rink 2 will be at noontime and 2:30pm.

The losers of the quarterfinals will be playing non-playoff games against each other.

The Class A semifinals are scheduled to be played at Olympia on Feb.17. The start times for those two games will be 11am and 1:30pm.

The Class B semifinals are scheduled for Olympia on Feb.18. The start times for those two games will also be 11am and 1:30pm.

Both Western Mass. finals will be played on rink 1 at Olympia on Feb.19.

The Class B finals will be held at 5:30 p.m. followed by the Class A final at 8 pm.

The tickets prices for the semifinals and finals are \$8. Tickets are available through GoFan Only.

There is not a different price for students or senior citizens.

Beavers defeat Pacers ice hockey

HOLYOKE – Last Thursday evening, Chicopee's co-op ice hockey team was defeated by Taconic 8-5. Taconic was paced by a five-goal first period to get out to

a commanding lead early.

Chicopee got two goals from Braydon LaDuke, plus single goals from Logan DeJesus, Owen Buchanan, and Griffin Stefanik.

Chicopee has a rematch with Agawam this Saturday, Feb. 14 at 2 p.m. at Fitzpatrick Rink.



Mason Peters one-hands the puck.



Julian Lee-Choi recovers the puck on defense.



Logan DeJesus avoids a Taconic defender.



Landon Johnson angles toward the goal.



Griffin Stefanik starts up the ice.



Aiden Nadeau tries to pass out of pressure.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM

Horsley Witten Group celebrates City of Chicopee's award-winning Comprehensive Plan

SANDWICH - The Horsley Witten Group, an environmental consulting firm specializing in sustainable and resilient design solutions, applauds the City of Chicopee, whose first-ever comprehensive plan, Envision Our Chicopee: 2040, was awarded the 2025 Comprehensive Planning Award by the American Planning Association's Massachusetts Chapter (APA-MA). The award recognizes the plan's innovation, quality, and impact in guiding

the city's long-term growth. Horsley Witten Group led the planning effort for Envision Our Chicopee: 2040, working closely with the Chicopee Department of Planning & Development, a volunteer steering committee, and the community. Launched in 2019, the process engaged residents and stakeholders through surveys, digital open houses, and other creative approaches adapted for pandemic conditions at the time.

The APA-MA Comprehensive Planning Award is presented annually to outstanding plans, programs, or projects, including comprehensive and master plans, environmental conservation strategies, housing plans, and economic development initiatives. Chicopee's plan received the award in recognition of its contribution to the city's long-term vision. "This recognition underscores the beginning of a renaissance for the City of

Chicopee," said Jeff Davis, Project Planner at Horsley Witten Group. "The plan reflects the city's vision for a more equitable, vibrant, and resilient future, and we're grateful to APA-MA for honoring the work of everyone who contributed to making it possible. "We are honored APA-MA has recognized Envision Our Chicopee: 2040," said Lee Pouliot, Director of Planning & Development. "Today, with the adoption of En-

vision Our Chicopee: 2040, Chicopee now has a vision for its future and a roadmap of priority projects to ensure that vision is realized. I am proud of the work our Planning Team, led by Horsley Witten Group accomplished under trying circumstances, and honored to have watched the Planning Board adopt and the City Council endorse this plan. We look forward to working with all stakeholders as implementation efforts continue."

Envision Our Chicopee: 2040 provides a framework for sustainable growth, economic opportunity, and quality of life. It outlines key priorities, including a complete zoning code update, mixed-use and infill development, preservation of historic and natural resources, and initiatives to maintain equity and inclusion across the city. The plan was unanimously approved by the Chicopee Planning Board and endorsed by the City Council.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH from page 1

ee Cultural Council Members Wilhemina Humphries and Nancy Sheppard-Murray, who helped spearhead the event.

2026 also marks 100 years of Black History Month, which was founded by Carter G. Woodson, a historian, author and the founder of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. The observance originally began as Negro History Week in February 1926 before expanding to Black History Month in February 1976 during President Gerald Ford's administration.

Hurst shared he declined participating in or attending flag raisings and other cultural ceremonies out of principle since 2021 as "too often, these moments are performative, rather than substantive," but he attended this ceremony as he was "cautiously optimistic about Chicopee" and "with a clear understanding of the moment we are living in as a country."

"History shows us that when leadership holds power without inclusion, the power erodes. Trust is lost, communities disengage and progress slows. My presence here this morning is not merely an endorsement of words alone; it is an invitation and a challenge. An invitation to pair cultural recognition with meaningful policy, equitable investment and sustained advocacy," Hurst said. "And a challenge to all of us: elected officials,



Aiden Duval performs at the keyboard.

faith leaders, residents, our young people, to choose courage over comfort and justice over being quiet. I am here because I believe Chicopee can be that city. A city that does not wait for history to judge it, but chooses to stand on the right side of it."

Ware emphasized how "Black History is American History," keeping the image of the students in the forefront of his mind in his work, especially those with different backgrounds.

"Thank you for choosing me as your leader. Thank you for being reminded as I share my words and you see my image that Black History is my history and yours too, and I look forward to celebrating history today and every day with you moving forward," Ware said.

For Dieujuste, she reflected on how "Black History is life-changing history." Orig-

inally from Haiti, she moved to the United States when she was 9 years old and experienced the stereotype of Haitians labeled as bringing TB and AIDs to the country.

A history course called "Eyes on the Prize" at Boston

College changed her perspective and helped her embrace her Haitian identity.

"Folks know this. Folks know that if they can get a people to be ignorant of their history, then they will succeed in getting them to doubt their abilities and their self-worth," Dieujuste said. "Folks know that if they can get a people to not know their history, it means that they will forever struggle to understand their capacity for greatness. It's no coincidence that history is under attack, and so what I advise you—and I hope you do—is take time to learn Black History. Take time to learn your history. Not only do you take time to learn it, but commit to teaching someone else about this history."

Dumay encouraged the community to attend the 9th Annual Black Experience Summit on Feb. 20 in the

Veritas Auditorium at Elms College from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m. to continue the celebrations, which will have a keynote address by Dr. Stefan M. Bradley, panel discussion on Governor Maura Healey's Advisory Council on Black Empowerment, spoken poetry by Lyrical Faith and a song and dance ensemble by Parent Villages Youth Builders.

He also recalled the legacy and words of John Lewis, an activist during the Civil Rights Movement and U.S. Congressman.

"So, on this celebration of Black History Month, let us heed John Lewis's call to love. Let us buck the trend of everything that aims to divide us. Let us work together for the ideals of justice, inclusion, opportunity for all as we advance in our common quest for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in Chicopee and the Pi-

oneer Valley," Dumay said. Carr, after receiving her recognition award, thanked the community for their support.

"I do try tirelessly to help my community. Being African-American, we are always undeserving of recognition sometimes, and our community is awesome. I love being in Chicopee and I want to thank everybody here for this honor," Carr said.

After reading and presenting the mayor's proclamation, Vieau ended the ceremony with this.

"The word has been said throughout many of these different speakers and keynotes: inclusion, and that's what it's about today. Inclusion. The city recognizes the diversity of this amazing, amazing, wonderful place that we call home and I'm thankful for all of you joining us today," Vieau said.



The Chicopee High School Choir performs "Nda Wana."

BACKYARD from page 4

aren't seed eaters like many of the other birds that seek nourishment here. Like my breath, the mealworms disappeared into a well of silence. A contented peaceful silence that then took flight."

Evening grosbeaks

A Cumington resident sent a photo of evening grosbeaks at her feeder. She said they are part of a flock that

come to visit the feeders of ten.

People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by emailing mybackyard88@aol.com or edowner@turley.com or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005. The Palmer office has a new phone system and I will be getting an extension where messages may be left. I will publish the number as soon as it is set up.

SOCIAL SECURITY from page 4

twice as much as yours), you may want to explore your options for spouse benefits.

I hope this explains how your SS benefit is calculated, but if you still question your monthly SS retirement amount, I suggest you first obtain your "Earnings Statement" to review the lifetime earnings SS has on file for you. If there are any discrepancies in your Social Security's earnings record, there are correction remedies available to you. If that is the case, please feel free to contact us again for more information.

The Association Mature

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

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Tree length available
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ALWAYS BUYING ALL ANTIQUES:

Musical instruments, guitars, horns, keyboards, vintage electronics, jewelry, coins, watches, military cameras, sports memorabilia, art, sterling, signs, automotive, hunting, advertising, radios, ham radio equipment, audio equipment, toys, one item or entire estate.

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We load it & take it.
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Matt Marcinkiewicz
muscione@hotmail.com
413-537-0620

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SERVICES

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DL & G TREE SERVICE- Everything from tree pruning, tree removal, stump grinding, storm damage and brush chipping. Honest and Dependable. Fully insured. Now offering a Senior Citizen and Veteran discount. Call today for free estimate (413)478-4212

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DL & G STUMP GRINDING Grinding stumps of all sizes, insured & certified. Senior discounts. Call Dave 413-478-4212

HELP WANTED

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All real estate advertising in this newspaper is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968, which makes it illegal to advertise any preference, limitation or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status (number of children and or pregnancy), national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, or any intention to make any such preference, limitation or discrimination.

This newspaper will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate that is in violation of the law. Our readers are hereby informed that all dwellings advertising in this newspaper are available on an equal opportunity basis. To complain about discrimination call The Department of Housing and Urban Development "HUD" toll-free at 1-800-669-9777. For the N.E. area, call HUD at 617-565-5308. The toll free number for the hearing impaired is 1-800-927-9275.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
(413)748-7758
Docket No.
HD26P0231EA
Estate of:
Francis Cassidy
Date of Death: 10/23/2025
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 Catherine Cassidy-Nunes of Norfolk, VA requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that Catherine Cassidy-Nunes of Norfolk, VA 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 03/04/2026. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE

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

WITNESS, Hon. Claudine T. Stoudemire, First Justice of this Court.

Date: February 04, 2026
Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate
02/13/2026

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
(413)748-7758
Docket No.
HD26P0269EA
Estate of:
Richard Michael Dragon
Date of Death: 11/19/2025
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 Benjamin R Dragon of Belchertown, 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 Benjamin R Dragon of Belchertown, 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 03/02/2026. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and

objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE

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

WITNESS, Hon. Claudine T. Stoudemire, First Justice of this Court.

Date: February 09, 2026
Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate
02/13/2026

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
(413)748-7758
Docket No.
HD26P0268EA
Estate of:
Patrick Thomas Duffy
Date of Death: 08/17/2025
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 Sean P Duffy of East Windsor, CT requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that Sean P Duffy of East Windsor, CT 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 03/09/2026. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE

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

WITNESS, Hon. Claudine T. Stoudemire, First Justice of this Court.

Date: February 09, 2026
Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate
02/13/2026

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
(413)748-7758
Docket No.
HD26P0226EA
Estate of:
Carl Grinuk, Jr.
Date of Death: 12/11/2025
CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL**

ADJUDICATION
To all interested persons:
A Petition for Formal Adjudication of Intestacy has been filed by William Grinuk of Enfield, CT requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that William Grinuk of Enfield, CT 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 03/03/2026. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE

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

WITNESS, Hon. Claudine T. Stoudemire, First Justice of this Court.

Date: February 03, 2026
Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate
02/13/2026

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
(413)748-7758
Docket No.
HD25P2466EA
Estate of:
Gabrielle J Hochrein
Also known as:
Gabrielle Hochrein
Date of Death: 04/09/2025
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 Alisha Marie Fontanez 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 Alisha Marie Fontanez 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 02/27/2026. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE

A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled

to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.

WITNESS, Hon. Claudine T. Stoudemire, First Justice of this Court.

Date: January 30, 2026
Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate
02/13/2026

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 February 13, 2026 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.

2001 Honda Civic
VIN: 1HGEM22221L086515
William French
283 River St., 6
Montpelier, VT 05602

2008 Nissan Altima
VIN: 1N4AL21E98N404033
Joacy Costa De Oliveira
23 School St., Apt. 15
Rockland, MA 02370

2014 Honda Civic
VIN: 19XFB2F52EE234643
Myrna Baehr
112 Santa Barbara St.
Springfield, MA 01104

2023 X Pro Moped
VIN: L2BB9NCC8PB109039
Shaun Guyer
275 Prentice St
Springfield, MA 01104

2011 Hyundai Sonata
VIN: 5NPEB4AC2BH211898
Brianna Monay
23 Connecticut Ave., Apt. B
New London, CT 06320

2006 Honda Accord
VIN: 1HGCM56316A010508
Richard Dickson
30 Bay Meadow Rd., Apt. 30
Springfield, MA 01109

2005 Honda Accord
VIN: 1HGCM56775A140312
Ruth Sanchez
834 Worthington St Apt 2
Springfield, MA 01105

2003 Kawasaki Kx85-A
VIN: JKBKXFAC93A018212
Jomar Yadiel Colon
25 Warner St.
Springfield, MA 01108

2008 Honda Accord
VIN: 1HGCP26358A070462
Malcolm Tiggett
20 Sullivan St.
Springfield, MA 01104
01/30, 02/06, 02/13/2026

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 February 27th, 2026 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.

2013 Jeep Grand Cherokee
VIN: 1C4RJFCT2DC615229
Deylih Teruel
164 Rosseter St., Apt. 5
Boston, MA 02121

2009 Chevrolet Tahoe
VIN: 1GNFK33029R100442
Cardenas-Godinez, Alejandro
13 Coleman St., Apt. D
West Haven, CT 06516

2007 Subaru Outback
VIN: 4S4BP62C177320374
David Wilkerson
204 N Maple St
Enfield, Ct 06082

2007 Audi Q7
VIN: WA1BY74LX7D035446
Anibal Perez
151 Allen St., Apt. F
Springfield, MA 01108

1992 Subaru SVX LS-L
VIN: JF1CX3532NH105487
Pablo Rivera
PO Box 351
Chicopee, MA 01014

2001 Toyota Camry
VIN: 4T1BG22K61U100608
Balbino Navarro
168 3rd Ave.
Woonsocket, RI 02895

2013 Chevrolet Malibu
VIN: 1G11C5SA4DF199998
Jennifer Allsop
38 Continental St.

Springfield, MA 01108
2001 Honda Accord
VIN: JHMCG66591C025637
Isaac Acevedo
60 Church St., Apt. 1
Amsterdam, NY 12010

2010 Chevrolet Cobalt
VIN: 1G1AB1F51A7164088
Brenda Cunningham
21 Branch St.
Rochester, NY 14621
02/13, 02/20, 02/27/2026

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 February 20th 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.

2007 Wabash National Corp Base
VIN: 1JJV532W27L094957
Safety First Trucking LLC
1022 Boulevard 284
W. Hartford, CT 06119

2012 Hyundai Elantra
VIN: 5NPDH4AE4CH112254
Mildred Baez Hernandez
176 Centre St., Apt. 2
Indian Orchard, Ma 01151

2015 Hyundai Tucson
VIN: KM8JTCAF5FU038899
Merlin Alexis
869 Worthington St., Apt. 3
Springfield, MA 01105

2008 Honda Civic
VIN: 2HGFA15858H349787
Luis Gonzalez
580 S Summer St., Apt. 12
Holyoke, MA 01040

2008 Wabash National Base
VIN: 1JJV532WX8L148636
Favoree Services Inc.
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Billerica, MA 01821
02/06, 02/13, 02/20/2026

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
(413)748-7758
Docket No.
HD26P0278EA
Estate of:
Richard Anthony Mekal
Date of Death: 11/19/2025
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 Benjamin Mekal of Milton, 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 Benjamin Mekal of Milton, 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 03/10/2026. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affi-

davit 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

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

WITNESS, Hon. Claudine T. Stoudemire, First Justice of this Court.

Date: February 10, 2026
Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate
02/13/2026

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
Docket No.
HD25P2524GD
In the interests of
Tiana Sahara Rodriguez
of Chicopee, MA
Minor**

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

1. Hearing Date/Time:

A hearing on a Petition for Appointment of Guardian of a Minor filed on 12/04/2025 by Tealysia E Rodriguez of Chicopee, MA will be held 04/27/2026 08:30 AM Guardianship of Minor Hearing. Located: Hampden Probate & Family Court, 50 State Street, 4th Floor, Springfield, MA 01103.

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

File the original with the Court; and

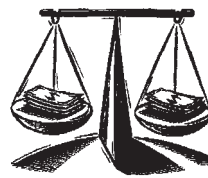
Mail a copy to all interested parties at least five (5) business days before the hearing.

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

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

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

Date: February 2, 2026
Rosemary A. Saccomani, Register of Probate
02/13/2026



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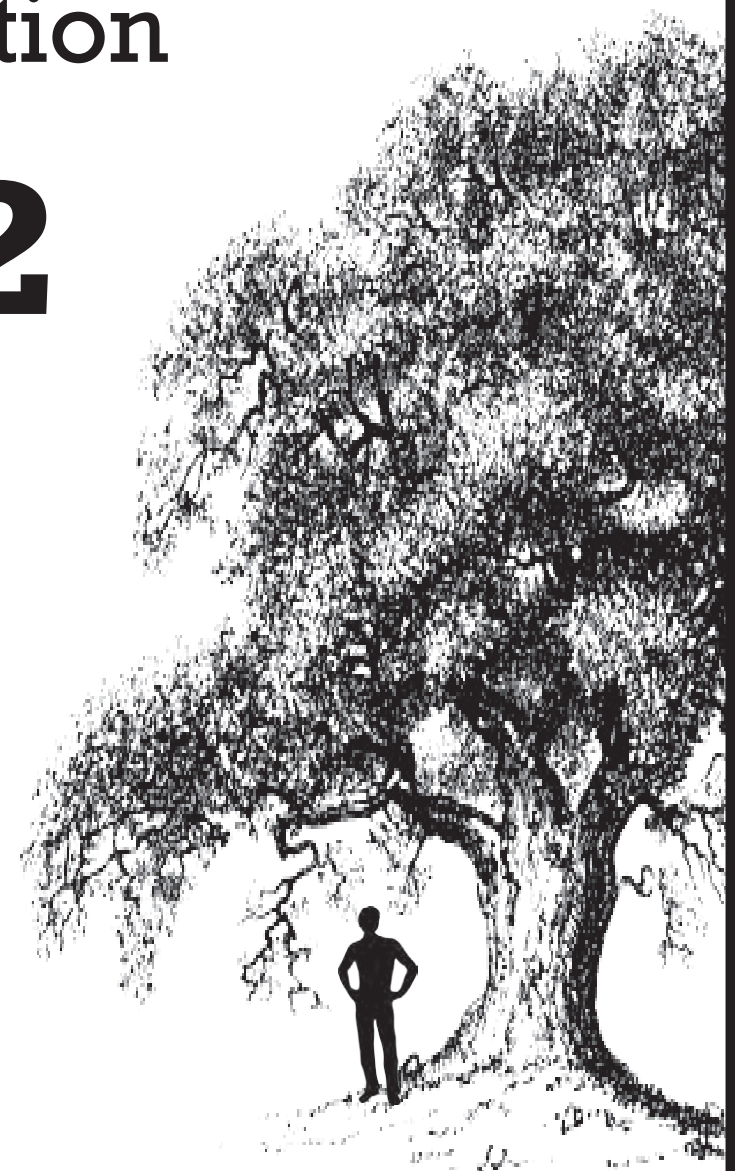
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