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COMMUNITY



TURLEY PHOTOS BY KRISTIN RIVERS

From the left, Marc Gonneville, Maria Duffy and Irene Gonneville take a group photo as they celebrate Valentine's Day with friends during the Valentine's Day Dance at RiverMills Senior Center.

Seniors feel the love at the Valentine's Day Dance

By Kristin Rivers
Staff Writer
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CHICOPEE - It was a packed house at the senior center on Feb. 14 as the community celebrated Valentine's Day with a dance.

The annual event included a variety of sweet treats, with chocolate-covered strawberries donated by Stop & Shop and surprise gifts for attendees who had an orange sticker on their chocolate boxes.

Entertainment, sponsored by the Friends of Chicopee Senior Citizens, was provided by DJ Luis D.

Program Coordinator Casey Conroy was elated by the huge turnout.

"It means a lot because we especially put a lot of time and effort into thinking about programs to see what our partici-



DJ Luis D belts out a song as he mingles with attendees during the Valentine's Day Dance at RiverMills Senior Center on Feb. 14. DJ Luis D, real name Luis "Dancing Machine" Rodriguez, provided entertainment during the event.

pants really enjoy and we always strive to make sure we provide them with any kind of programming from fun things like this to education," Conroy said. "So, we try our best to really see what they like and enjoy so they have a place to come and spend time

with their friends and just enjoy the programs we have to offer."

Conroy said holiday-themed events help create an opportunity to gather and the staff enjoy

See **VALENTINE'S DAY DANCE** page 9

COMMUNITY

City Council approves study for traffic light at Bellamy School entrance



TURLEY PHOTO BY TEDY MAKUCH, CHS SENIOR

The City Council discussed traffic at Bellamy Middle School during its Feb. 6 meeting. Also, discussion of light pollution is going to Ordinance Committee.

By Kristin Rivers
Staff Writer
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CHICOPEE - The City Council approved a study on Feb. 6 for a possible traffic light at the entrance to Bellamy Middle School.

The decision comes after two pedestrian-related accidents last year on Nov. 9 and Dec. 11.

The order calls for the Engineering Department or an outside consultant to conduct the study.

Councilor-at-Large Tim Wagner explained he spoke with City Engineer Douglas Ellis about this and he's also received "quite a few calls" from residents towards the end of his tenure on the School Committee.

"So, Councilor Arriaga and I felt it was necessary to file the order and it's the first step in a long process," Wagner

said.

Wagner said Ellis also sent him extensive 1,000-plus page documents on state and federal requirements "that are going to have to be met" to pursue this.

Ward 1 Councilor Abigail Arriaga said in addition to representing the ward where the school is, her son also attends Bellamy, and she talks to a lot of the parents who have children there.

"It's a growing concern. It's scary. I'm there every morning and every afternoon. I have witnessed a lot of these incidences firsthand," Arriaga said. "I have seen crossing guards almost get hit, parents, students. It's dangerous, and we really need to do something. Even if this doesn't go through, we need to find other steps."

Arriaga hoped the order would pass to "find the solution

See **BELLAMY SCHOOL** page 7

COMMUNITY

Think twice, stay off the ice

By Dalton Zbierski
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CHICOPEE - All throughout the winter, Chicopee's first responders share the same advice, "Think twice and stay off the ice."

In the city of Chicopee, there is no standing water, reports Police Sgt. Joe Conroy. For that reason, it is pivotal that residents of all ages stay off the ice when it forms locally.

"All our water in Chicopee is moving water so ice doesn't form as thickly. Although it may appear to be safe, it's not necessarily safe to walk on. That can really provide a false sense of security. When you walk on it, it could break or crack, so any water in Chicopee's not truly safe to walk on because it doesn't freeze thick enough to provide solid

support," Conroy said.

Conroy is a member of the police department's Underwater Response team, which trains monthly for a variety of possible water emergencies. The team collaborates often with the fire department, which possesses equipment specific for ice rescues.

Capt. Katie Kalbaugh of the fire department reiterated that most of the water in Chicopee is moving, whether it be a river, stream or brook. Even when temperatures dip to the single digits and ice appears to form, bodies of water in the city are not safe to walk on.

"It's really imperative that individuals make the decision to stay off the ice no matter how tempting it looks," Kalbaugh said. "It can become an extremely dangerous situation, and if there is a rescue, it also becomes



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHICOPEE POLICE DEPARTMENT

The police and fire departments keep their rescue boat readily available to be transported to bodies of water all over the city. This photo dates back to November 2018 when the city first received the boat.

a danger to the rescuers."

Kalbaugh said the department trains regularly so that it can deploy and respond to crises quickly. She stressed that ice rescues can be dangerous even for seasoned first responders, espe-

cially depending on the temperature, topography and the location of the individuals in need of assistance.

Kalbaugh said it's best to think over the situation before walking onto ice, but the depart-

ment stays ready for the next emergency to occur, knowing it is difficult to spread the message to everyone.

"We do all sorts of training

See **ICE SAFETY** page 10

Fruit Fair hosts indoor farmers market supporting local vendors

By Kristin Rivers
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CHICOPEE - Fruit Fair hosted its first-ever indoor farmers market from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Feb. 10 to support local businesses and vendors.

During the event, residents sampled essential oils from Botanica, all-natural specialty-made jams from Plum Island Jams, pickles and hot sauces from Paris & Ty's and more.

Local artist Samuel Aviles Jr. also held a live painting demonstration.

Ruth White is an assistant for Plum Island Jams, helping the owner, Ruth Adams, make all-natural specialty-made jams, with flavors including, Cranberry Raspberry Blueberry, Berried Treasures, Tropical Rhubarb, Peach Raspberry Pineapple and Mango Habanero.

White heard about the indoor farmers market when Aviles and Paris Valley of Paris & Ty's reached out to her, the three knowing each other through the Center Fresh Farmers Market in downtown Chicopee.

"It actually is good exposure for business," White said. "The specialty flavors make it a little more interesting I think."

White stressed the importance of farmers markets like this to spotlight not



Paris Valley of Paris & Ty's gets ready to share a sample with a customer during the Fruit Fair Farmers Market event at Fruit Fair Supermarket. Valley provided samples of hot sauce, pickles, an hors d'oeuvres platter and more during the indoor farmers market.

only local businesses and vendors but also local farmers, especially after last summer's floods.

"That's why we try to do as many farmers markets and even some of the craft fairs that we can put the business out there for them," White said.

Sam Newell, who owns Fruit Fair Supermarket alongside her husband, Jared, was excited to hold the indoor farmers market to help spotlight local businesses in Chicopee, having connected with Aviles on the idea.

Newell was thrilled to see customers check it out, hoping to do more indoor farmers markets on Saturdays and have more vendors.

"During winter, you can't really do many activities outside, especially the ones that will last over a couple hours, so that's why the indoor spaces are important," Newell said. "And we're already in a supermarket so there's already people coming through and they're local. So, a lot of local people are very interested in trying out local products."

Newell was also humbled about Fruit Fair being recently recognized as the 2023 Massachusetts Sustainable Business of the Year, emphasizing the power of entrepreneurship and giving back to the community.

"Our strength is in

our unity," Newell said.

For Paris Valley of Paris & Ty's, the indoor farmers market is also an opportunity to give back to Fruit Fair, one of the first places that will sell her products on the shelves.

Valley encourages fellow vendors to take part in the future.

"It's just amazing the amount of people that came in and we're not even halfway through the day. It's great publicity for the farmers market, for Fruit Fair and for all the vendors that are here," Valley said. "And I'm grateful to be part of it."

Valley cherishes taking part in farmers markets whenever she can, sharing the peppers she uses for her hot sauces are purchased from local farmers and markets.

"Being part of the farmers market has been a blessing," Valley said. "It is so much fun. We're all like family and it's just so nice to go somewhere and you have all local things whether it's cookies, power bars, hot sauces, jams. (There are) local artists as well, and it's nice to see the crowd that comes through."



A close-up of all-natural specialty-made jams from Plum Island Jams available for customers to sample during the Fruit Fair Farmers Market event at Fruit Fair Supermarket.



Hot sauces and a jar of pickles from Paris & Ty's that customers got to sample during the Fruit Fair Farmers Market event.

White wants the community to know the indoor farmers market at Fruit Fair "is worth checking out."

"They might find something that they like that they never tried before," White said.

Newell thanked everyone who came by to check out the indoor farmers market while they shopped.

"Thank you for coming by. Thank you for supporting our little market, our farmers market. Thank you for doing that," Newell said.

To learn more, call Fruit Fair at 413-592-1097.



Ruth White, assistant at Plum Island Jams, shows off all-natural specialty-made jams she's selling during the Fruit Fair Farmers Market on Feb. 10. Ruth Adams is the owner of Plum Island Jams.



Sam Newell, co-owner of Fruit Fair Supermarket, tries a sample while Paris Valley prepares her next sample offering during the Fruit Fair Farmers Market event at Fruit Fair Supermarket on Feb. 10. Fruit Fair held its very first indoor farmers market to support other local businesses and vendors in Chicopee while customers shopped.

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City to establish School Department Maintenance Warehouse Building Commission

By Dalton Zbierski
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CHICOPEE – The City Council has been tasked with recommending five members to the School Department Warehouse Building Commission.

The individuals must be community members and have appropriate qualifications or the experience to serve on a building commission, as the School Department looks to build a new warehouse and storage building on Johnson Road.

“Since this project is in excess of \$2 million, it requires the formation of a commission, so we’re asking the honorable council to appoint those commission members and allow them to allow this process to move forward,” Mayor John Vieau said.

The council unanimously approved the item, although it is unclear when the commission will be established. The council is already working to create a commission to steer the renovation of the old library on Springfield Street.

Chicopee Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Marcus Ware said talks of the project proceeded his tenure in the city, but he wants to see it through. He explained that the project is being funded by ESS-ER III money, which terminates before the end of the year.

“That’s why we have OPM already because we are actually trying to fit within those guidelines, so the goal would actually be to break ground by spring so that we could actually have it built, because the project needs to be terminated by the end of September,” Ware said.

Scott Chapdelaine, director of Maintenance for CPS, agreed that the project

has been talked about for a long time. Currently, the district operates out of the Jim L. Stefanik Building at the back of the Chicopee Comprehensive High School campus, which serves as headquarters for all eight craftsmen that work in the district.

That building is about 6,400 square feet. Chapdelaine said problems with the building’s limited space date back to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“When COVID happened, we had a lot of bulk deliveries we had to take in. That kind of tightened up all our storage areas, so this (new) building will actually serve for the craftsmen and be our bulk warehouse for all our COVID supplies, which we still store. We actually store some of the city’s COVID supplies in our warehouse,” Chapdelaine said.

Chapdelaine continued to note that the district plans to move the craftsmen to the new location. Then, the Stefanik Building will be used for the career tech program at Chicopee Comp.

The new building will have a four-bay garage, with one bay being accessible as a drive through, similar to the fire stations, Chapdelaine said.

“Someone who drives the dump truck with the Bobcat can drive right through the building, so you don’t have to back in every time. So, it will speed up some of that (work),” Chapdelaine said.

Council President Frank Laflamme inquired if the craftsmen brought home city vehicles each night because of a lack of space in the Stefanik Building. Chapdelaine clarified that the only employees who bring home vehicles are craftsmen on call.

“We’ve never had to take vehicles home because we’ve had nowhere to store

them because we’ve always had areas to store them at Chicopee Comp,” Chapdelaine said. “So, the people that take vehicles home are the ones that are on call 24/7 for their particular trade. There’s five vehicles that get taken home, and there are eight craftsmen.”

Laflamme informed Ware that he will work with the Superintendent’s Office to get a deadline of when the commission must be formed. He encouraged the councilors to make sure they recommend individuals who are qualified to be on the commission.

“There’s some people that want to be on it just to be on a plaque, but we need people on these types of things that will help with the process,” Laflamme said. “It’s important that we put the right people on when we’re spending the taxpayers’ money and so much of it, so please review that when people call you and ask (them) if they have any (of the qualifications).”

Ward 9 Councilor Mary Beth Costello was happy to vote in favor of a “great project.”

She said she remembers discussing this issue during her time on the School Committee and is happy that the students at Chicopee Comp will benefit from the project.

“It’s (beneficial), especially for freeing up the space at Chicopee Comp for academic use, so I appreciate your efforts. This report is very thorough, and I’m sure the public is excited about this particular project,” Costello said.

If a resident is interested in serving on the commission, they should reach out to any city councilor and express interest so that their names can be submitted at the appropriate time.

Holyoke Chicopee Family and Community Program presents ‘Dads and Kids’

CHICOPEE – Drop in for a free family program “Dads and Kids” on Feb. 17 at Sztela Early Childhood Center at 66 Macek Drive, as dads, grandfathers, uncles and male caregivers and children ages two to five spend time together playing and learning with Learn in Motion.

Learn in Motion gets kids active, socializing and practicing important life skills such as listening, following directions, sharing, taking turns, teamwork and overcoming challenges.

Learn in Motion gets kids moving, learning and having a ball!

The program will occur on Saturdays Feb. 17, March 9, 23 and 30 and April 6 and 20 from 1 – 2 p.m. at the Sztela Early Childhood Center.

Join for one or more Saturdays. For more information, contact Christine at 413-536-0363 x 4536 or email zaskeyc@headstart.org. All are welcome! Children may attend with any adult.

The program is sponsored by the Holyoke Chicopee Coordinated Family & Community Engagement grant from the state’s Department of Early Education and Care.

Victim in Chicopee homicide identified

SPRINGFIELD – On Saturday, Feb. 3, 2024, at 10 p.m., officers with the Chicopee Police Department responded to a shooting in a parking lot in the 0-100 block of Springfield Street.

Officers arrived on scene and discovered an adult male suffering from a gunshot wound. He was transported to Baystate Medical Center where he passed away two days later.

The victim has been identified as Mr. Marquis Newson, 34, of Chicopee.

This investigation is being conducted by the Chicopee Police Department, Massachusetts State Police Detective Unit assigned to the Hampden DA’s Office and the Hampden District Attorney’s Murder Unit.

Hampden District Attorney Anthony Gulluni expresses his sympathies to Mr. Newson’s family.

City Council approves 15 temporary trailers for Walmart

By Kristin Rivers
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CHICOPEE – The City Council approved on Feb. 6 a special permit application and waiver request from Walmart for 15 temporary trailers or SEA BOX container storage.

The temporary storage would run from Oct. 1, 2024, through Jan. 31, 2025, to help Walmart with extra storage for holiday merchandise.

A waiver request would have 14 days permitted and 120 days requested.

Ward 4 Councilor George Balakier explained the application was approved with restrictions around traffic.

“We approved this special permit that this is regarding the speed tables and speed humps and traffic signage in a designated site storage area,” Balakier said. “This is a permit to run with the applicant and this is a new special permit that’s going to be needed annually for seasonal storage.”

Balakier added the committee met with a representative from Walmart to explain the issues, sharing another concern presented.

“We had an issue regarding a report from the Engineering Department that there was a sight obstruction. Therefore, we put conditions of taking care of this particular area that was designated so that we would not have these issues with vehicles traveling southerly and easterly at this designated spot with these trailers,” Balakier said. “So, the committee seemed to feel comfortable by having that condition.”

When Ward 9 Councilor Mary Beth Costello asked what the engineers said, Balakier explained how there was discussion regarding the situation because of the site obstruction, clarifying the representative from Walmart was an engineering consultant.

“He agreed that there would be traf-

fic conditions that we would have with this property. So, in other words, this area and this particular spot of the designated area for putting these trailers that they were going to consider putting in speed tables, speed humps and/or traffic signage in a designated site storage area,” Balakier said. “So, this would help to alleviate this problem.”

When Costello asked if the engineer agreed, Balakier said yes.

Costello replied, “Obstruction is serious.”

Balakier agreed, explaining that’s why the condition is in place.

“This is something they’re going to have to do annually because first of all, we want to make sure that the condition is going to be taken care of,” Balakier said. “And again, with the special permit, this is something that we can call in pretty much any time if we’re not happy with what’s going on over there,” Balakier said.

Ward 6 Councilor Samuel Shumsky echoed Balakier’s statements on the speed tables and signage.

“I think that’s a very big win for not only the neighborhood around Walmart, but for the traffic situation behind it,” Shumsky said.

When Ward 3 Councilor Susan Goff wondered where the trailers would be stored, President/Councilor-at-Large Frank Laflamme and Balakier clarified they would be in the back corner.

“It is in the back. I think most people when they drive in from Memorial Drive, typically, they would be in front of the store. This is kind of in the back; the back of the store. So, it’s not in a, how should I say as such, a common area, and we also did work with our city planner and getting that particular spot, and I believe there was a consensus through Walmart that there was going to be a designated spot that was going to be more towards the back,” Balakier said.

Goff was satisfied with the explanation.

“I just wanted to make sure that it wasn’t going to be near the entrance,” Goff said.

The motion to approve the special permit application, with restrictions, passed 12-0.

The waiver request for the duration of temporary trailers be approved with 14 days permitted and 120 days requested passed 12-0.

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Exquisite Café officially opens its doors downtown

The café is located on Exchange Street

By Kristin Rivers
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CHICOPEE - Downtown Chicopee has welcomed another new business with the grand opening of Exquisite Café on 218 1/2 Exchange St. on Feb. 12.

The café, owned by Chicopee resident Mario Deshazo, offers coffees, teas, lattes, fruit drinks, pastries and more.

The hours are Monday through Saturday from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

During the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Mayor John Vieau said "It's a renaissance happening," with storefronts and businesses filling up the downtown area.

"I just want to say welcome. I wish you many years of success, good health and prosperity and hope you're here for many years. Who knows what the future will bring," Vieau said.

State Sen. Jacob Oliveira (D-Ludlow) presented Deshazo with a citation from the State House and Senate.

"On behalf of the Massachusetts House and Senate, be it known that the Mass Senate and the House hereby extend our congratulations to Exquisite Cafe in recognition of the joyous occasion of your grand opening in the city of Chicopee," Oliveira said. "Let it be further known that the Massachusetts Senate extends its best wishes to your continued success."

State Rep. Shirley Arriaga (D-Chicopee) said, "This is a big moment," thanking Deshazo for choosing Chicopee.

"We are a growing vibrant community. We hope that everyone will feel comfortable and welcome here. We want to see more business owners like you here, who went to schools here in the Chicopee system and you went to invest your dreams and goals here," Arriaga said.

Deshazo's mother, Crystal Cedeno, who also works at the café, said she is very proud of her son.

"I'm grateful that we made this decision," Cedeno said. "This is something that's been on his mind for quite some time, so I think this is the best decision he ever made, so we're going to continue do-



From the left, State Rep. Shirley Arriaga (D-Chicopee) and Mario Deshazo, owner of Exquisite Café, smile for a photo during the grand opening of Exquisite Café on Exchange Street in Chicopee. The café offers pastries, coffees, teas, fruit drinks and more.



An exterior shot of Exquisite Café, located at 218 1/2 Exchange Street in Chicopee. The café officially opened its doors on Feb. 10.

ing and handling our business as usual. But I just couldn't be more proud of him."

Deshazo said he's happy to be part of the community and is a coffee lover at heart, sharing he wanted to do something positive for himself and the community where he grew up.

"The city is doing a great job of building up the community and the area, and I'm just happy to be a part of it somehow, somehow," Deshazo said.

Deshazo was humbled by the support from the elected officials.

"It means a lot just for the support of the city. It shows they really care about the area, about the people," Deshazo said. "Just bring everyone together as one and it helps me a lot, as well, with helping my business grow."

Also, his mother is his biggest supporter.

"I feel like family is important," Deshazo said. "I feel like these days that a lot of families are separated, a lot of families don't believe in each other, so I feel like keeping that family-oriented can do a lot of great things in your family to have a good and strong bond with them."

Looking ahead, Deshazo shared his goals for the first six months are to stay consistent, meet more people and get



Mother and son duo Crystal Cedeno and Mario Deshazo pose with a citation from the Massachusetts State House and Senate recognizing the opening of Exquisite Café during the café's grand opening on Feb. 12 in Chicopee.

more involved in the community.

Exquisite Café now being officially open is surreal for him.

"It's nerve-wracking and I just hope it continues and that it continues to grow," Deshazo said.

Deshazo wants the community to know they are open for business and to

stop by.

"Come on down for some good ole coffee. We're always here, we're always open," Deshazo said. "We'd love to see everybody come and just meet new faces."

To learn more, check them out on Instagram at @exquisitecafe_1 or call 413-389-8676. A website is in the works.

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Events and announcements

Boys & Girls Club of Chicopee announces open registration for George Webb Memorial Basketball Tournament

CHICOPEE – The Boys & Girls Club of Chicopee is happy to announce its 17th Annual George Webb Memorial Basketball Tournament. Registrations are now being accepted and can be completed at the Club or by visiting their website at www.bgcchicopee.org.

The double elimination tournament is open to teams in the following grades for boys and girls: 3rd & 4th, 5th & 6th and 7th & 8th.

All tournament games will once again be held at the Club's Chicopee Savings Bank Gymnasium.

If you are interested in entering a team in the tournament, please call Julius Santos, Athletics Coordinator at the Boys & Girls Club of Chicopee, at 413-206-4107.

The tournament is scheduled to begin Thursday, March 7. The cost is \$300 per team. Full registration is required by Feb. 27.

Books, stories & art Visual art inspired by books with Enchanted Circle

CHICOPEE – Through the Holyoke-Chicopee Family & Community Program, which coordinates services and engages families, join "Books, stories & art: Visual art inspired by books with Enchanted Circle".

Enchanted Circle will lead these hands-on sessions with fun art and literacy projects for families with children ages three to five years old.

Tuesdays through April 2 from 10:30 a.m. to Noon

Informal playtime at 10:30 a.m.

At the RiverMills Assisted Living at 7 River Mills Drive, Chicopee

Register with Christine at zaskeyc@headstart.org or 413-536-0363 x 4536.

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 through Feb. 28.

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, 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.

VOC kicks off 2024 Tax Assistance Program

Offering free tax preparations to eligible residents

CHICOPEE – Valley Opportunity Council, which manages the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program providing free tax preparation to those of low- and moderate-income, began its 2024 tax preparations on Monday, Jan. 29.

VITA in-person tax preparation appointments are available from Jan. 29 through May 15 at 35 Mt. Carmel Avenue, Chicopee, 300 High St., Holyoke and new this year, 20 Lathrop St. in West Springfield.

To schedule an appointment, call 413-612-0206. Those eligible for the VITA program must live in Massachusetts with an income of up to \$60,000. Appointments are available on weekdays, evenings and Sundays.

Certified volunteer tax professionals help qualified individuals prepare and file basic state and federal tax returns and prior year returns. VOC also offers free electronic filing (e-filing) of tax returns, allowing for individuals to receive their refunds much quicker than paper filings.

The core mission and goal of VITA is to assist low- to moderate-income taxpayers in satisfying their tax responsibilities and minimize financial hardships, in turn saving taxpayers thousands of dollars in filing fees.

In 2023, VOC helped 743 individuals file their state and federal tax returns through the VITA program. VOC has been providing the VITA program for 25 years in the communities of Chicopee, Holyoke, and more recently, Westfield.

VOC is the largest and most diverse Community Action Agency in Western Massachusetts with an annual budget of \$45 million. With this Federal designation, VOC has established a powerful network of support and collaborative services intended to encourage community members to actively achieve self-sufficiency for themselves and their families. VOC employs over 250 staff members and has 150 local vendors, providing a significant economic investment in the community.

Chicopee Parade Committee announces 2024 Colleen Candidates



PHOTO COURTESY JOEL RODOWICZ

CHICOPEE – On Sunday, Feb. 11, the Chicopee Parade Committee hosted a traditional Irish Tea for young ladies vying for the title of 2024 Chicopee Colleen. The event was held at the Portuguese American Club. Shown in this photo are the candidates for Chicopee's 2024 Colleen. Top Row, Left to Right: Emma Corridan, Melia Young, Kate Gauthier, Morgan Presnal, Madelyn Rice, Lillian Young, Jordyn Lemelin and Tyina Morales. Front Row, Left to Right: Natalie Dulong, Blakely Fields, Jadalyne Flores, Kinamarie Ayala and Giannalee Beach. The Colleen and her Court will be chosen at the Coronation Ball on Saturday, Feb. 24.

ASSE seeks host families for exchanges students

ASSE International Student Exchange Programs, a nonprofit, public benefit organization, is inviting local families to discover the many rewards of hosting a foreign exchange student.

ASSE students come from more than 50 countries worldwide: France, Denmark, Spain, Italy, Ukraine, Japan and Australia, to name a few. They are between the ages of 15 and 18 years, and they are enthusiastic and excited to experience American culture, family life, school, sports, etc.

Students also love to share their own culture and language with their host families, who welcome the students into their home, not as a guest, but as a family member, giving everyone involved a rich cultural experience. Host families may be single parents, couples and single persons.

The exchange students have pocket money for personal expenses and full health, accident and liability insurance. ASSE students are carefully selected based upon academics and personality, and host families choose their student from a wide variety of backgrounds, countries and personal interests.

ASSE also offers qualified American students the opportunity to learn another language and culture by spending a school year, semester or a summer with a host family in another country.

Those interested in hosting an exchange student or becoming an exchange student abroad should call Alina at 1-800-677-2773, visit www.asse.com or send an email to asseusasouth@asse.com to request more information or start the application process.

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GUEST COLUMN

How is my Social Security benefit calculated?

Dear Rusty

I appreciate your recent article dispelling the myth that politicians have stolen Social Security money.

As a Certified Public Accountant, I dispel this myth repeatedly to clients, who falsely claim SS funds have been raided. But another thing I deal with often is how SS benefits are calculated. I know the formula for determining each person's benefit amount is complex, but I have had to explain numerous times that those, who put the most into Social Security get the lowest rate of return and those who put the least in get the highest return based on the way the benefit formula is structured.

I get tired of people complaining that monthly Social Security payments are higher for retired doctors and other highly paid individuals. Can you please explain how Social Security is weighted in favor of lower income workers?

Signed Tired of the Misunderstandings

Dear Tired

Please don't be frustrated. Because of the program's complexity, Social Security is prone to misunderstanding and educating the misinformed is an important professional duty we share. Here's how each person's SS benefit is determined:

The first thing to know is that each person's SS retirement benefit is not based on their financial contributions to the program. Social Security's purpose is to provide a benefit, which replaces a portion of the person's pre-retirement income, so the SS benefit is based on actual lifetime earnings, not on the payroll taxes withheld from those earnings.

Social Security has your lifetime earnings record, obtained annually from the IRS and that record determines your "Primary Insurance Amount." Your "PIA" is initially determined in your eligibility year usually age 62 and is the amount you will get if you claim for benefits to start exactly at your Full Retirement Age.

To develop your PIA, Social Security first adjusts (indexes) each year of your lifetime earnings up to the annual payroll tax cap to account for inflation. They then select the 35 inflation-adjusted years in which you earned the most, from which they compute your average monthly earnings over your lifetime, this is called your Average Indexed Monthly Earnings. They then break your AIME into three segments, the first of which includes a majority of and possibly all of your AIME.

They then take a percentage of each segment and total those three amounts to determine your PIA. The first segment is the largest and 90% of that first segment contributes most of your PIA. Smaller percentages of the other two segments (32% and 15% respectively if your AIME is higher), are then added to the first computation to arrive at your full PIA - the amount you get if you start benefits in the month you reach your FRA. Note that since most of the PIA comes from the first

See **SOCIAL SECURITY** page 7

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor should be 250 words or less in length. No unsigned or anonymous opinions will be published. We require letter writers to include his or her town of residence and home telephone number. We must authenticate authorship prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions deemed to be libelous or contain unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks, defamation of character and offensive language. All unknown or alleged facts and quotations offered by the author need to cite credible, unbiased sources.

Send letters to: **The Chicopee Register**, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069 or email chicopeeregister@turley.com. The deadline for submissions is Friday at noon.

GUEST COLUMN



Gardening questions that pose a challenge

A recent visit to mom's house prompted the following question about poinsettias.

Now, don't worry, I haven't forgotten what the date is. Sure, the poinsettia hasn't been in it's glory for a few weeks now, but that doesn't mean she is going to give up on it.

You see, my mother likes a challenge, especially when it comes to plants. She wanted some advice on how to encourage new healthy growth before trying to coax it into re-bloom next fall.

Read on to learn how it's done:

In early April cut back the plant to eight inches. Fertilize with an all-purpose house-plant fertilizer once a month. New growth should appear by the end of May.

After the danger of frost has passed, move the plant outdoors. Continue to water but increase fertilization to every two weeks. Pinch plants in late June or early July to promote bushy growth. At this time you may also wish to repot the poinsettia. Select a pot one size larger, filling around the root ball with a good potting soil.

Bring the plant indoors as temperatures fall in late summer.

The poinsettia is photoperiodic, and long nights of uninterrupted darkness encourage it to bloom. In greenhouses, growers go to great lengths to withhold light, as even small amounts can delay or stop the plant from setting bud.

At home, putting the plant in the closet for 14 hours each night is your best bet. Setting a reminder alarm or making a note helps to keep on track.

Most people get on a 5 p.m.-8 a.m. schedule beginning Oct. 1 and continue it for eight-10 weeks until color shows on the bracts. Night temperatures should be no higher than 70 degrees or flowering may be delayed.

This all sounds fairly straight forward. I think the biggest frustration for her over the years has been missing a night of darkness, especially near the end of the routine.

Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. Still fun to try, however.

A friend of mine recently asked what I thought of the cloth grow bags that are all the rage right now. Although I haven't used

them myself, another friend, Chris, has been gardening up a storm the last few years using these bags.

She has an amazing flower border that you would think is growing in the ground, but it is a collection of dozens of bags in various sizes, holding everything from cannas to dahlias, zinnias and marigolds. She has great success with potatoes and other vegetables, too.

Read on to learn about the benefits of these bags.

I guess the one benefit that I never thought of is breathability. Because the fabric is permeable there is good air exchange, the roots grow to the edge, are air-pruned and branch out.

This is altogether different than plastic or glazed ceramic pots that don't breathe and encourage tangles of roots that encircle the pot eventually becoming bound. When a plant is root bound, it suffers until it is repotted; not so with grow bags!

Another pro would be drainage. The grow bags hold only what moisture the soil can hold and the rest of it drains away. Sure, the flip side is that you will need to water often in times of drought, but it's nice to know that if we have another summer like we did last year, the plants won't rot, either.

Other more obvious benefits include portability, heat resistance and ease of storage. If you purchase bags with handles, you can move them around the yard much easier than you could if the plants were in heavy pots.

The bags weigh next to nothing compared to clay or ceramics. Grow bags also do not heat up the way glazed or plastic pots do; roots are cooler and the plants are happier.

When the season is over, you can wash the bags and flatten to store. Most brands say that they last for four-five seasons or longer with good care.

Do some research to pair the size bag you use with the plants you are growing. A quick check gleaned that 10 gallon bags are good for three seed potatoes or a single indeterminate tomato plant. Bush type tomatoes would grow well in a seven gallon pot.

Also research the best potting soil or compost mixes to use; there are many out there. Chris uses a blend and uses organic fertilizers, crediting that to her success.

The apple may not fall far from the tree. Mom likes her challenges, and I like mine. I think trying out grow bags is in my near (gardening) future.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 33 years she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to pouimette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.

WE 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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City Council accepts \$311,500 grant to inventory lead pipes

Police department's request for renovations sent to FinComm

By Dalton Zbierski
Editor
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CHICOPEE – On Feb. 6, the City Council accepted a Lead Service Line Planning Grant in the amount of \$311,500 from the state's Clean Water Trust for the Chicopee Water Department.

The grant money will be spent on engineering services for the development of a lead service line inventory and replacement plan, as the city looks to eventually eliminate or replace lead pipes carrying water.

"This grant is enabling us to work with our consultant and our staff to develop a plan identifying all the houses that could potentially have lead service lines. (It's) going through all of our service cards that date back (many) years; some not having good information," Department of Public Works Superintendent Elizabeth Batista said.

Batista added that none of the city's water mains are lead pipe. She said for a city of Chicopee's age and size, it is not expected that there will be a significant number of water services that are lead.

Mayor John Vieau said the city is in the process of creating a plan that will allow it to evaluate all its drinking water lines and create an inventory.

"I believe that is a mandate that is coming from the state. We're going to be doing this on roughly 17,000 water services in Chicopee; they'll all be available on GIS, the type of pipe, and we'll have to address that once we get the plan completed," Vieau said.

Batista said there may be some exploratory work, exposing some service lines to determine what material they are made of.

"This is a really big push by EPA and DEP to eliminate all lead service pipes being used for drinking water," Batista said.

Ward 9 City Councilor Mary Beth Costello was pleased to see the grant accepted. It will take time, but she knows the money will make a difference.

"This is a great grant. It's going to ensure the city will have clean water, and that's an important part of public health," Costello said.

Last Tuesday, the City Council voted seven to five to send a mayoral request for a \$73,390 police department renovation project to the Finance Committee.

Vieau explained the need for the

renovations, which did not occur when major work was done on the building several years ago.

"It's no secret that we had our safety complex renovated, but what was left out of the renovation were some key components that were not updated," Vieau said. "I believe that is the booking room, storage room, chief's admin office and the investigations office. Those rooms are in need of having the ceiling tiles replaced and the lighting upgraded."

Vieau said the renovations have been pre-planned and are part of the capital budgeting process. He requested using stabilization funds to pay for the renovations.

Police Chief Patrick Major said the ceilings and lighting in the areas of concern have been deficient for many years, but Councilor-at-Large Tim Wagner asked why they weren't completed as part of the prior renovation.

"I believe it was based on limitations on the scope of what could be done at the time. The project was limited to scope that couldn't be exceeded without having extensive more work being done. To the best of my knowledge that's the reason it wasn't done (at that time)," Major said.

Vieau said he had the same question when he discovered the work had not

been previously completed.

"I thought that a comprehensive renovation project had taken place, but there were some things that were left out of that original renovation," Vieau said.

Wagner was not satisfied with the answer. While he said the asking price was relatively small compared to other projects the council has voted on, he wanted more information so that he could better envision what he would be voting on.

"With most of these things, we have detailed plans, photos, sketches and concepts for what we're going to be voting on, but here we got nothing," Wagner said. "So, the mayor suggested setting up a tour in lieu of photos because he didn't know whether the chief would like photos of the rooms of the police headquarters out there, so I intend to set up a tour to look at the rooms that are going to be renovated before voting on the money. I hope the other councilors sort of see it my way. I vote to send it to Finance."

The majority agreed with his request. City Council President Frank Laflamme said he would set up the Finance Committee meeting as soon as possible because he knows it is a pressing issue.

BELLAMY SCHOOL from page 1

that we need to keep our children safe." "School's important, and their safety is very important," Arriaga said.

The motion passed 12-0.

Another meeting highlight concerned an amendment to an ordinance around light pollution.

Ward 9 Councilor Mary Beth Costello explained several of her constituents voiced concerns about lights glaring into their homes "almost 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in some cases."

"So, I'm asking the council if they would approve sending this to an Ordinance Committee for a public hearing," Costello said.

Ward 5 Councilor Frederick Krampits said he "understands the purpose" of the order, but as written, "it's kind of vague."

"I just see the potential for it being abused. That you can have a neighbor calling on another neighbor that the light from his property is going on to mine. I mean, I certainly understand if two homes are close together and there's a spotlight and it's like aimed into somebody's window," Krampits said. "I just worry about the unintended consequences of something like

this in the present form because I think if we radically change how the ordinance is presented, I believe it actually has to come back out and be refiled if you do a drastic change to an ordinance in committee."

Krampits reiterated he understood the purpose.

"I understand the concept of it, like if there's a light shining in somebody's house from a house nearby, but I think it's just too broad to be put into a committee and then it's how do you measure it? How do you say it's too bright? How many feet away should it be?" Krampits said. "I get the purpose and I'm not trying to minimize people who have lights shining into their window by a neighbor directly next door, but in this form, I just can't support it going to committee."

Costello agreed with Krampits' concerns and on looking at the ordinance "as it's worded and maybe improve it" and it's up to the council to decide.

Wagner agreed on the order's vagueness.

"I don't think it's a bad idea, but I think that the language as it stands could use some serious amending if we do send it to committee," Wagner said.

The motion passed 10-2.

SOCIAL SECURITY from page 6

large segment of each person's AIME, lower income workers get a higher percentage of their lifetime average monthly amount.

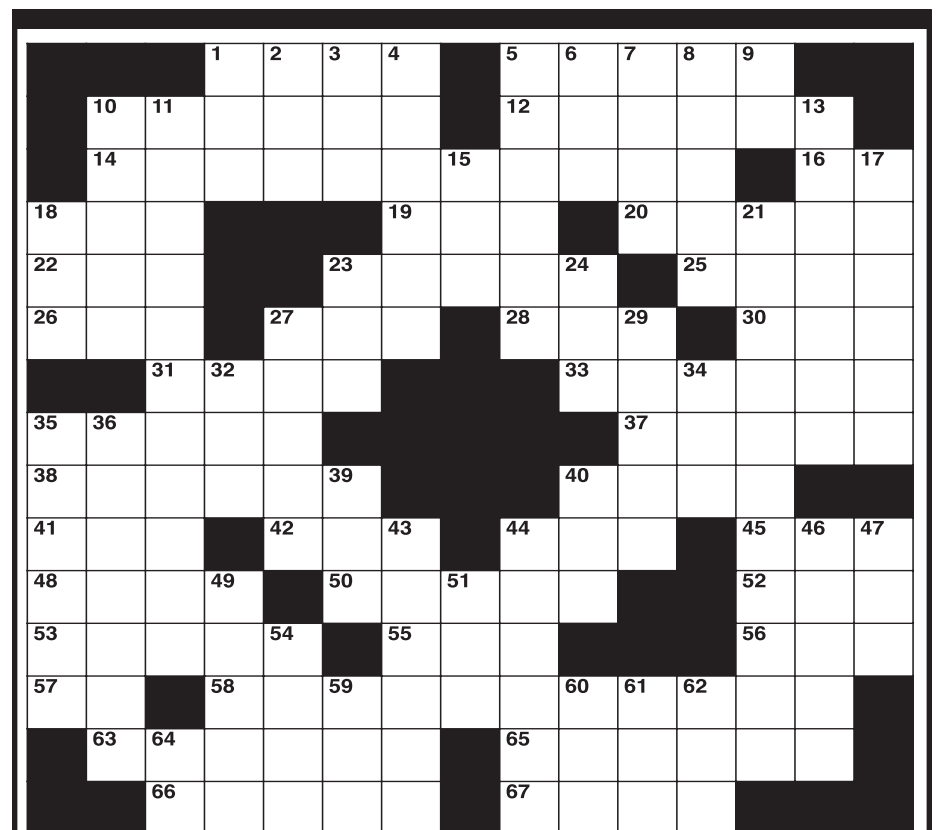
Since benefits are based on earnings, those with lower lifetime earnings do, indeed, get a smaller benefit than those with higher average lifetime earnings, but the percentage of pre-retirement replacement income lower income workers receive is higher than for those with higher monthly average lifetime earnings. The Social Security benefit for lower income workers is typically about 40% of their pre-retirement average monthly income, while those with higher lifetime average earnings may get a benefit as little as 20% of their average monthly pre-retirement earnings.

In that sense, the Social Security benefit formula is progressive and weighted in favor of lower income workers. Nevertheless, albeit a smaller replacement percentage, higher income workers receive a higher monthly SS benefit because of their higher lifetime earnings. Even so, those higher earners did, indeed, contrib-

ute more payroll taxes from their higher earnings.

So, each person's SS retirement benefit amount is a percentage of their pre-retirement income. Coincidentally, those with higher pre-retirement income also contributed more to the Social Security program than did those with lower earnings. But their higher SS benefit amount is based on their higher pre-retirement earnings, not on payroll taxes paid from those higher earnings.

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.



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Gene type
- 5. Persian male given name
- 10. Type of protection
- 12. Cloud
- 14. One who returns to life
- 16. Gym class
- 18. General's assistant (abbr.)
- 19. Baby's dining accessory
- 20. Enchantress
- 22. Prefix denoting "in a"
- 23. Spiritual leader
- 25. Cavities
- 26. Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
- 27. Foot (Latin)
- 28. Sweet potato
- 30. Pharaoh of Lower Egypt
- 31. Land
- 33. More inquisitive
- 35. Dog breed: __ Apso

CLUES DOWN

- 1. DC Comics superhero
- 2. Brew
- 3. Play
- 4. Single-celled animals
- 5. Rough to the touch
- 6. Small island (British)
- 7. Often noted alongside cons
- 8. Preparation of rootstock
- 9. Atomic #44
- 10. Egyptian unit of capacity
- 11. About secretary
- 13. Particular groups
- 15. Poke fun at
- 17. Make certain that something occurs
- 18. Financial term
- 21. Justify
- 23. Arbiter
- 24. 007's creato
- 27. Czech name for Prague

- 29. Groans
- 32. American time
- 34. No seats available
- 35. __ Stahl, journalist
- 36. Cleft lip
- 39. Talk incessantly
- 40. Expresses atomic and molecular weights (abbr.)
- 43. A part of a river where the current is very fast
- 44. Curdled milk
- 46. Running competitions
- 47. A team's best pitcher
- 49. Carthaginian explorer
- 51. World-renowned city
- 54. Most common Japanese surname
- 59. The bill in a restaurant
- 60. They __
- 61. City of Angels football team (abbr.)
- 62. Distinctive practice
- 64. One quintillion bytes

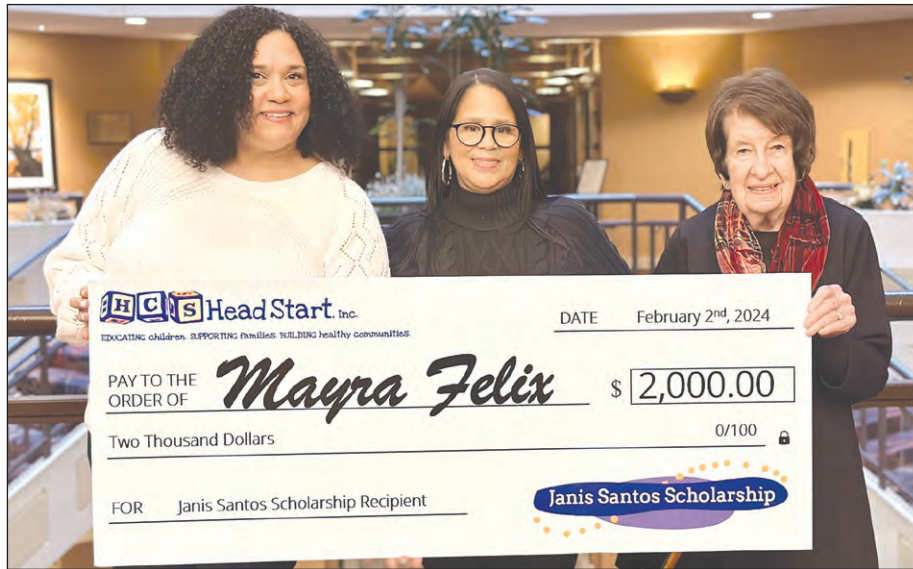
ANSWERS ON PAGE 10

Holyoke, Chicopee, Springfield Head Start announces recipient of The Janis Santos Scholarship

SPRINGFIELD – Holyoke, Chicopee, Springfield Head Start is an area leader in providing early education teachers with professional development. Recently they held a day-long training for over two hundred team members at the Sheraton Springfield. The day included breakout sessions on various topics vital in the rapidly evolving world of early education and a remarkable Keynote Speaker, Dr. Latoya Bosworth, who shared about Selflessness - the importance of self care. This gathering of colleagues was also the ideal setting to announce the first ever recipient of The Janis Santos Scholarship.

The Janis Santos Scholarship was created by Janis Santos, former CEO of HCS Head Start and resident of Ludlow, Mass. Ms. Santos is an avid supporter of early education for children and families. Her calling began when she became very involved in her own children's kindergarten experience. She wanted to be a teacher herself and fell in love with pre-school. Going back to school at age 32, she earned her Early Childhood Education from University of Massachusetts and went on to spend the remainder of her career making sure no one thought early education was just daycare.

The objective of the scholarship she created is to help address the early childhood teacher shortage. As a fierce advocate for the profession, it was established to support current HCS staff, parents, and all Head Start alumni, who are pursuing a degree in early education and care but may be encountering financial hardship.



From left, Nicole Blais, chief executive officer of HCS Head Start; Mayra Felix, scholarship recipient; Janice Santos, former HCS Head Start CEO and scholarship namesake.

Ms. Santos was pleased to attend the professional development event and to personally be able to award the \$2,000 scholarship to HCS Head Start's Mayra Felix. This scholarship will allow Ms. Felix the chance to realize her dream of completing her bachelor's degree.

"I started taking courses in 1996 and had to stop in 2005. Two years ago, I decided to go back to school and that is when I realized how expensive it is, but I knew this time I wanted to finish," shared Ms. Felix. "That is why I applied for the Janis Santos Scholarship, even though I knew many people had applied, it was an opportunity I knew I could not pass up."

Ms. Santos was pleased to attend the professional development event and to personally be able to award the \$2,000 scholarship to HCS Head Start's Mayra Felix. This scholarship will allow Ms. Felix the chance to realize her dream of completing her bachelor's degree.

Ms. Felix, now a teacher, actually began as a Head Start student herself. She realized at an early age the difference a good teacher could make in the life of a child. Facing adversity after losing her father young, she faced challenges in school, and along the way did not always receive needed support. She vowed one day to help others in a meaningful way, choosing to do so in the medical profession, she obtained her Associate Degree in Medical Assistance, before deciding to leave Puerto Rico to come to Western Massachusetts.

With a then pre-school aged son (her children are now 36, 29, and 26 years old) and a lack of English skills, she looked no further than Head Start to help educate her son. She enrolled him and ironically ended up also enrolling herself, taking the little chair beside him in class and mastering the basics of English. Language was not where her learning stopped though, as she quickly realized teaching was her true passion. She began volunteering at HCS Head Start in 1992 and later that year, in November, received her first paid position. With evolving roles over the years, she is currently a Teacher Director (TD) and looks forward to growing within the organization as she advances her education.

"I want to be a different kind of teacher," she exclaimed. "I want to be the best teacher I can be. And for me, being at Head Start allows me to be surrounded by many different teachers, giving me the chance to learn from all of them because they all show me something different. I am just so passionate about these kids. Thank you to Janis Santos for this acknowledgement. Like any dedicated student, I will make you proud and pay it forward."

Ms. Felix is a resident of Chicopee and is currently enrolled at Springfield College working towards her bachelor's degree.

Through the generous donations of many sponsors, the Janis Santos Scholarship \$2,000 award will be given out on an annual basis. All current HCS Head Start employees, parents, and all Head Start alumni (parents, children) pursuing a career in early education and care are eligible to apply.

The next application date will be announced soon online at hcsheadstart.org.

Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity embraces energy-savings initiatives

By Brandice J. O'Brien

Marketing and Communications Manager, Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity

WEST SPRINGFIELD – Energy savings and green products are all the rage right now. Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity, or GSHFH, is working tirelessly to provide their homeowners and prospective partner families with environmentally-friendly products that help them save on utility costs, while keeping expenses low. That's not an easy feat considering inflation and limited resources. Yet, the non-profit organization is able to accomplish this achievement through fundraisers, donations and grants.

Sometimes, it's the small changes that make the biggest difference. GSHFH is now incorporating electric mini split heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems to avoid using fossil fuels. In some instances, based on location and home design, tankless water heaters or air-sourced water heaters are installed.

"Our goal is to provide our partner families with an energy-friendly home that will allow them to save money, while protecting their investment for many years

to come," said Aimee Giroux, GSHFH executive director. "We want them to pass their home to the next generation of family members and provide them with a solid foundation for a better, more stable future."

Energy-friendly products range from solar panel installation, the use of Low-E glass windows, to a plant-based fiber insulation called HempWool; light-emitting diode (LED) fixtures, and the affiliate's first-ever insulated concrete form (ICF) home.

Solar panel installation can help a family significantly cut their electric bill and the use of Low-E glass windows lets in natural light while reflecting inside heat back into the home during the winter months. During the summer, outside heat is reflected away from the home.

LED fixtures reduce energy usage and programmable thermostats provide heating and cooling only during the times it was most needed. Plus, Energy-Star appliances, which are rated for maximum energy efficiency and cost savings, are used.

HempWool is a US Department of Agriculture-certified bio-based insulation that is naturally mold and pest resistant. It's also resistant of volatile organic

compounds and toxins. It's easy to install, doesn't sag, and like the Low-E glass, lowers the energy bills for heat in the winter, cooling in the summer, and general comfort.

"It's a lot less itchy to handle," said Tom Eisenman, GSHFH volunteer.

Additionally, new construction projects are built to meet the Specialized Opt-in Energy Code of Massachusetts Stretch Energy Code. The code sets significantly higher requirements for heating and cooling loads, which can be responsible for 60% of a building's energy use.

In November 2022, GSHFH began its most notable energy-efficient project yet: an ICF home. A dedication ceremony celebrating the completion of construction will be held at 11am on Wednesday, Feb. 14, at 360 Chestnut St. in Holyoke. The project is a collaboration between the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association and Habitat for Humanity International to build 50 ICF homes across the country.

The insulated concrete forms are hollow foam blocks that are stacked into the shape of exterior walls of a building, reinforced with steel rebar, and filled with concrete.

"Doing something different in construction is not easy," said Gregg Lewis, chief communications officer at NRMCA. "Construction is hard enough when you're doing the same thing day in and day out. Try to take on a new way of building and it's really a huge deal."

ICF combines one of the finest insulating materials – expanded polystyrene (EPS) with one of the strongest structural building materials – steel reinforced concrete. The result is a wall system of unmatched comfort, energy efficiency and noise reduction.

"The house will be quiet, even when it's windy and stormy outside and it'll stay nice and toasty inside," said Steve Bogle, an Integraspec local distributor.

Integraspec is the brand name of the foam blocks. Steve and his wife Cheryl,



COURTESY PHOTO

WNEU Pharm Club putting in HempWool at Holyoke.

also an Integraspec distributor, worked with GSHFH in the early stages.

Unlike a traditional wood frame house with sheathing, an ICF home offers several additional benefits to the builder and homeowner. The foam panels are made from recycled material. ICF walls do not off-gas, whereas conventional walls sheathed with oriented strand board (OSB) off-gas through glues and resin. ICF walls are resistant to mold and rot, which provides a better living environment for those suffering from allergens or asthma. Also, due to the rising cost of lumber, this method significantly reduces the need for wood for framing and sheathing the exterior and less trees are cut down.

"We're excited to have built a more energy-efficient, affordable home for one of our Habitat families," Aimee said.

To see pictures from the construction phase of the ICF build, visit habitatspringfield.org/Holyoke.

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Denise Saluk and Steve Danhauser pose for a photo during the Valentine's Day Dance at RiverMills Senior Center in Chicopee on Feb. 14.



DJ Luis D gets the dancers moving during the Valentine's Day Dance at RiverMills Senior Center in Chicopee.

Seniors feel the love at the *Valentine's Day Dance*

VALENTINE'S DAY DANCE from page 1

getting involved in the decorations and organizing them.

"It's nice to see everything come to fruition and see everyone have such a good time," Conroy said.



A photo of a teddy bear and rose wrapped in Valentine's Day themed paper was a surprise gift for some attendees during the Valentine's Day Dance at RiverMills Senior Center.

Joe and Lisa Menino will celebrate 40 years of marriage this April. They enjoyed the treats, time with friends and the dancing.

The couple shared their secrets to a long marriage.

"Never give up. It takes effort, effort, effort, effort," Lisa Menino said. "But the love and family make it a lot stronger. Faith, a lot of faith."

"It's non-stop work," Joe Menino said.

Lisa Menino also enjoys going to events like the Valentine's Day Dance to spend time with people.

"Just talking about life in general, enjoying everything together. There's a lot of old people here that have stories to tell, so it's wonderful to hear their stories," Lisa Menino said.

For DJ Luis D, real name Luis "Dancing Machine" Rodriguez, providing entertainment at events like this has become his purpose.

A DJ since 1988, Rodriguez decided after the pandemic to give back to the seniors and local senior centers.

"This is awesome because you know what? All of these seniors are also people too," Rodriguez said. "People kind of tend to push them to the side after a certain age, but this is awesome. I love coming here. All of the energy they give me, I give it back, you know, so it's awesome."

Rodriguez was thrilled to see so many people on the dance floor, sharing that he loves doing holiday-themed



Linda Salois, cafe assistant, and husband Allan Salois, driver, smile during the Valentine's Day Dance at RiverMills Senior Center.

events to see people come together.

"It fills my heart," Rodriguez said. "I have done everything. I have done huge parties, I've done all the jack and jills, all of the weddings and those are great, but I think this is more important for me because I am giving something right back to the senior centers."

Conroy shared upcoming themed events include the Polish Dinner on Feb. 28 at 5 p.m., the St. Patrick's Day Concert on March 12 at 1:30 p.m. with Banish Misfortune, the Spring Dinner on March 21 at 5 p.m. and the Easter Egg

Hunt on March 29 at 9:30 a.m.

"It's a busy couple of months after the cold weather subsides," Conroy said.

Joe Menino encourages the community to stop by the senior center.

"It's one of the best places to go for seniors and it's the best place to get food," he said. "It's wonderful here."

Conroy thanked everyone for coming out to the event.

"I hope you had a good time. I hope you enjoyed all the food, dancing and all your friends," Conroy said.



A wide shot of attendees dancing to their heart's content during the Valentine's Day Dance.



Couples enjoy a dance during the Valentine's Day Dance at RiverMills Senior Center on Feb. 14.

Freedom Credit Union raised \$1,345, collected 450 toys for Western Mass Toys for Tots

SPRINGFIELD – Freedom Credit Union collected donations of toys and cash at its branches throughout western Massachusetts in December in support of Western Mass Toys for Tots. A total of 450 new, unwrapped toys were collected during the first week of the campaign in time for holiday distribution, and \$1,345 was raised in cash donations throughout the month.

“We wanted to make the holidays shine for children in our community, and our members and staff helped us do just that,” said Freedom Credit Union President Glenn Welch. “We had fun ‘stuffing’ the van with toys at several branches. It was an honor to support such an incredible organization in its mission to spread joy.”

The mission of the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation is to assist the U.S. Marine Corps in providing tangible signs of hope to disadvantaged children at Christmas. In addition to



COURTESY PHOTO

Freedom Credit Union's President and CEO Glenn Welch and Vice President Operations Cheryl L. Podgorski helped collect toys for Western Mass Toys for Tots at several “stuff-the-van” events at Freedom branches.

the toys, funds raised are used for things such as supplementing the collections of local Toys for Tots campaigns, defraying the costs of the campaigns, and providing promotional and support materials.

Western Mass Toys for Tots covers Berkshire, Franklin, Hampshire and Hampden counties.

Freedom Credit Union has branches in Chicopee, Ludlow and Springfield.

ICE SAFETY from page 1

with the special cold-water suits. We do training with the ice rescue sled,” she said. “We have a new boat that inflates very quickly and can be deployed rapidly, so we do a lot of training with that. Then, we also have strategically located boats throughout the city so that we can deploy any of those if there were an emergency. We train with all those things regularly.”

There is a boat at Station 4 that is prepared to respond to incidents on the Chicopee River. Another boat is kept at Station 3 on Cabot Street to respond to accidents on the Connecticut River, and the police and fire departments share a boat at the Public Safety Headquarters on Church Street that can go anywhere in the city or provide mutual aid to neighboring communities.

Conroy encourages parents to educate their children on ice safety. He said there are specific depths and levels of ice thickness required to walk on ice, fish on ice or even drive on ice, but residents won't be able to pursue those hobbies within city limits.

“Unfortunately, in Chicopee we don't have any of those areas, so if kids do want to go out, educate your children, find local areas that are safe, or even an indoor skating rink is the safest,” Conroy said.

Kalbaugh said the department's goals are prevention, risk reduction and educating the community. She agreed that a skating rink is the safest place to experience skating on ice because the environment is controlled and safe for recreation.

Conroy noted that the police department is always out and visible and warns children playing by the river of the risks of going out on the ice. Several years ago, Kalbaugh and Conroy collaborated on a ChicopeeTV video encouraging ice safety.

“I believe after we did that video, we spread it around to local schools to educate the children. But we're always out and interacting with children, and our community policing units are interactive with the schools as well,” Conroy said.

When making an ice rescue, Conroy said the main concerns are water temperature and body temperature. Whether you're a first responder or a child, Conroy said using the buddy system is always key.

“When you have someone there to rely on, you can watch their back and they can watch your back. We, as divers, if we have to go in, we're always with a buddy so if anything happens to us, we have someone there that can help us out or vice versa,” Conroy said. “Then, it's all about timing. In these extremely cold temperatures, hypothermia can set in within minutes, and obviously, we do wear suits to protect ourselves, but that just delays the temperature.”

During his time with the department, Conroy said there have been multiple cold-water rescues. He said they are unfortunate when they happen, but first responders must always stay ready for them to occur.

“Unfortunately, a part of the job is recoveries for drowning victims. It's something that no one wants to happen, and no one wants to do, but for families of victims, it's a closure they may need,” Conroy said.

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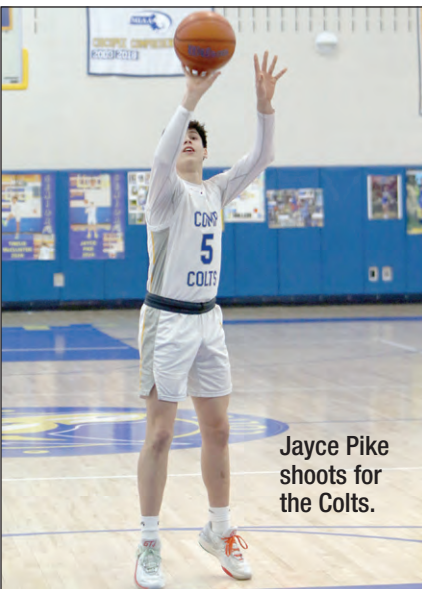
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Comp boys set for tourney

CHICOPEE – Last week, Chicopee Comprehensive boys basketball continued its pursuit of the state tournament as well as a berth in the Western Mass. tournament. Last Tuesday night, the Colts defeated Commerce handily 74-49. In the win, Tineus McCluster had 17 points while Jayce Pike had nine points and four other players had eight points each. The Colts are 13-4 with just a rival matchup with Chicopee remaining before the playoffs.



Kayden Miller eyes his opponent.



Jayce Pike shoots for the Colts.



TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM
Tineus McCluster lines up a long three-pointer.



Xavier Kleps takes a shot from the free throw line.



Evan Lamb goes for the trey.

Pacers fall to Ludlow



TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM

Mason Peters separates from the pack.

CHICOPEE – In the second meeting of the regular season between rivals Chicopee and Ludlow, the Lions got the better of the co-op team, winning 6-2. Chicopee's goals came from Nate Robitaille and Connor McDonnell.

The regular season schedule is completed for Chicopee, though the Pacers could play nonplayoff games once playoff seeds have come out.



Connor McDonnell grabs a loose puck.



Caleb Lundgren tries to clear the puck away.

Comp splits pair

CHICOPEE – Late last week, Chicopee Comprehensive girls basketball had to play back-to-back games, first defeating East Longmeadow at home for its 11th win of the season.

The 55-37 win saw three Colts get double digits. Taryn Carriveau led all scorers with 18 points while Kaitlyn Gilhooly had 17 points. Eliza Burger had 12 points.

The Colts would lose to SICS the following night and Comp had one game remaining against Monson earlier this week before learning if they will make the Western Mass. playoffs.

T-Birds wins on 'Ice-O-Topes' Night

SPRINGFIELD – The Springfield Ice-O-Topes (22-19-3-2) rebounded from a 1-0 deficit to knock off the Hershey Bears (37-9-0-2) by a 6-3 score before a sold-out MassMutual Center crowd of 6,793 on Saturday night.

Neither team could find a firm offensive footing in the opening half of the first period, with both squads going 0-for-2 on their first two power play chances. 20 seconds after Hershey's second man-advantage expired, the visitors finally got the game's opening goal as veteran Garrett Roe crashed the top of the crease to jam a rebound through Malcolm Sub-

ban at 14:02 to make it 1-0 for the Bears.

The Ice-O-Topes' second power play came and went, but like the Bears, continuous offensive pressure paid off less than 30 seconds after the advantage concluded. Adam Gaudette made a quick change of direction at the top of the slot area before funneling a shot toward the goal. Zach Bolduc made himself available for a deflection at the edge of the crease, and the rookie executed to perfection, squeezing it past Clay Stevenson to tie the score at 17:48.

With the game tied at 1 after 20 minutes, the 'Topes

parlayed Bolduc's goal into a firestorm of offense in the middle frame. It began just 2:55 into the second, as Mathias Laferriere dropped a pass in the left circle for Kean Washkurak, who curled the puck to a better shooting lane and snapped a wrist through Stevenson's five-hole to make it a 2-1 game.

1:35 later, Gaudette was in the middle of the action once again. After Hunter Skinner whipped a pass off Gaudette's foot deep in the left-wing corner, Matthew Peca pushed a second-chance shot wide of the goal. With Stevenson still trying to recover back in front of

the net, Gaudette used the opportunity to bank it off Stevenson's pants and into the twine to extend the lead to 3-1. With the tally, Gaudette vaulted himself back to the top of the AHL goal-scoring race with his 25th of the season.

After a quiet stretch of play yielded nothing on the scoreboard, Hugh McGing changed things with a determined rush deep in the Hershey zone. McGing's pressure caused a mishandle between Stevenson and Dylan McIlrath, and McGing was there to jab a backhand through Stevenson, making it a

See **T-BIRDS** page 12

Bonsignore opens season with second-place finish

NEW SMYRNA, FL – Justin Bonsignore drove the No. 51 Phoenix Communications modified to a second-place finish in Saturday's NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour opener at New Smyrna Speedway.

Bonsignore qualified fourth and ran inside the top-five for the duration of the race. After a pit stop in the final 20 laps, Bonsignore raced from fifth up to second, trying to chase down Ron Silk in the final laps. Although he closed in, he had to settle for second.

The run opened the 2024 season for Bonsignore, who will chase his fourth NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour title in the Ken Massa Motorsports machine this season.

"We were just a little bit too snug on both sets of change tires," Bonsignore said. "All in all, it was a really good night to start the year. We have to thank Phoenix Communications for everything they do for our team and Ryan Stone and the pit crew for a great job with a brand new car they built over the winter. It takes a lot to come down here to Florida to open the season. We will try and build off this and get better with this new car."

Justin Bonsignore will return to the track driving the No. 30 for Rette Jones Racing in the ARCA Menards Series season opener at Daytona International Speedway on Saturday, February 17. The NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour is back on track at Richmond Raceway on Friday, March

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Railers pick up win over Mariners

WORCESTER – This season's Railers have been imperfect, but indefatigable.

Twenty-fours after squandering a three-goal lead and losing in overtime to the Maine Mariners, 5-4, Worcester bounced back Saturday night with a strong effort and a 3-2 victory that was not easy.

Games with Maine never are.

The Railers took a 2-0 lead late into the third period on goals by Artyom Kulakov and Anthony Repaci, then Maine closed the gap on William Provost's goal at 12:57. Given the unhappy endings of Worcester's two previous games with the Mariners, things looked shaky; even shakier when Trevor Cosgrove was called for high sticking at 17:50.

However, Jake Pivonka hit an empty net at 18:54. Sigh of relief?

Not quite. With goalie Shane Starrett on the bench and Cosgrove still in the box, Ethan Ritchie made it 3-2 with 37 seconds left. The Railers kept Maine bottled up in its own zone

for the duration, however, and came away with two pure points.

Coach Jordan Smotherman was not surprised with the way his team responded.

"We love our room," he said. "You could tell (Friday) night, even after the game before they left, that the guys were ready to go. That's one of the biggest differences between last year's team and this year's — these guys really want to be here."

The victory extended Worcester's points streak to four games. The Railers have earned seven of eight points in that time and have 48 points overall. That is five more than both Maine and Trois-Rivieres, tied for fifth.

Kulakov gave the Railers a 1-0 lead at 5:52 of the second period as he fired a 35-foot wrist shot past Starrett through a screen. Ashton Calder set him up with a great pass from the right side. Repaci scored shorthanded at 15:04 on a deflection in close.

John Muse improved his record to 9-3-1 with the win. He stopped 26

of Maine's 28 shots. Worcester has earned 19 of a possible 26 points with Muse in goal, a .731 winning percentage.

The triumph sent the Railers off on the longest road trip, time-wise, in franchise history. They will play six games in Florida, three in Orlando against the Solar Bears, then three in Fort Myers against the Florida Everblades. Worcester will be gone for 14 days and does not play another home game this month.

Florida in February — almost every New Englander's dream. Smotherman was asked if he was concerned that the Railers will look at this as a vacation, not a work assignment.

"One hundred percent," he said. "I've been the guy on the Florida trip before. I know how that works, but we trust our group, and that's the other part of it. They are professionals. They need to be professionals. Everything that we've seen so far is that they've bought in and they want to win hockey games."

T-BIRDS from page 11

4-1 game at 15:24. The pesky wing-er now has seven points over his last seven games.

Former T-Bird Jake Massie gave Hershey a much-needed reply with a one-time shorthanded goal at 17:42, set up by Jimmy Huntington, and the defending champs were back within two heading into the third.

Chances heavily favored the Bears in the third to the tune of an

18-5 shot discrepancy, but Subban and the defense bent without breaking, and Will Bitten added some extra insurance, beating Stevenson on a breakaway backhand through the wickets at 10:54 to make it 5-2.

The Bears' power play would not allow the game to end quietly, as Alex Limoges redirected a Mike Vecchione shot through Subban at 13:30 to cut the lead to 5-3. However, in the end, the visitors ran out of

time, and Dylan Coghlan snapped a 15-game goal drought by drilling an empty net with 48.6 seconds to play to make it four consecutive wins on Ice-O-Topes Night for Springfield.

Springfield next takes its game down to Charlotte for a two-game set against the Checkers inside Bojangles' Coliseum next Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 17-18. Puck drop for both games is set for 4 p.m. in North Carolina.

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The benefits of local newspapers

Local newspapers play vital roles in communities across the globe. The Information Age has changed the way many people get their news, but local newspapers continue to serve as valuable resources for readers interested in learning more about and becoming more involved in their communities.

While local publishers continue to adapt to the changes brought about by technology, the following are a handful of benefits unique to local newspapers.

- **Local newspapers keep readers up-to-date on their own communities.** Globalization may be here to stay, but that does not mean local communities are no longer home to newsworthy events. National and international newspapers and 24-hour cable news channels can keep men and women up-to-date on national and world news, but in many instances, local newspapers are the only means people have to learn about what's going on in their own communities. Local politics impact residents' lives every day, and

local newspapers cover local politics extensively.

- **Local newspapers benefit nearby businesses.** Small business owners often connect with community members via local newspapers. A strong, locally based small business community can improve economies in myriad ways, creating jobs in the community and contributing tax dollars that can be used to strengthen local schools and infrastructure. And local newspapers do their part by providing affordable and effective advertising space to local business owners looking to connect with their communities.
- **Local newspapers can strengthen communities.** Local newspapers are great resources for residents who want to become more active in their communities and learn more about community events. Local newspapers often showcase community events like carnivals, local theater productions and projects like park cleanups. These are great ways for readers to become

more active in their communities and build stronger communities as a result.

- **Local newspapers can benefit children.** National newspapers may have little age-appropriate content to offer young children, but local newspapers tend to include more soft news items than national periodicals, and such stories typically are appropriate for young readers. According to Newspapers in Education, students who participated in an NIE group in Florida performed significantly better in spelling and vocabulary than nonreaders.



Additional studies have indicated that students who use newspapers in the classroom perform better on standardized reading tests than those who do not use newspapers in class.

Many local newspapers have played vital roles in their communities for decades, providing a go-to resource for local readers and business owners.

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Colleges announce Dean's and President's Lists

Chicopee students named to AIC Dean's List

SPRINGFIELD – American International College in Springfield is pleased to announce that 451 students have been named to the Dean's List for the fall 2023 semester. Dean's List students attend full-time and have achieved a 3.3 to 4.0 GPA. AIC commends the efforts and accomplishments of the following diligent and hard-working students from Chicopee.

Olivia Allaire, majoring in Occupational Science; Alicia Dugre, majoring in Nursing; Drew Orzechowski, majoring in Occupational Science; Samara Robles, majoring in Psychology; Kayla Romano, majoring in Nursing; Shayliez Rosario, majoring in Undeclared Undergraduate; Shannen Salamon, majoring in Nursing; Hunter Terlik, majoring in Health Science and Christina Valentino, majoring in Nursing.

Chicopee students named to Emmanuel College's Dean's List

BOSTON. – In recognition of their outstanding academic achievement, Emmanuel College in Boston has named more than 900 students to the Dean's List for the Fall 2023 semester. To earn a spot on the Dean's List, Emmanuel students must achieve a grade point average of 3.5 or higher for a 16-credit semester.

The following Dean's List students are from Chicopee: Gwyneth Gagnon, Dafne Burgos and Victoria Lopez.

Chicopee students named to Goodwin University's Dean's List

EAST HARTFORD, Conn. – Goodwin University announces 521 students achieved Dean's List status for the Fall 2023 session. Dean's List inclusion requires a student to earn a minimum 3.5 GPA, the equivalent of an A- average, during a given academic session. The student must also be enrolled in a minimum of six academic credits to qualify.

The following Dean's List students are from Chicopee: Destinee Coulombe, Shiloh Dombek, Tammy Ellsworth, Eliana Febus, Lilian Njoku, Cynthia Roman and Savannah Tardy.

Burgos named to Goodwin University's President's List

EAST HARTFORD, Conn. – Daniel Burgos, of Chicopee, earned a place on Goodwin University's President's List for the Fall 2023 Session. The Fall 2023 President's List includes 367 students, all of whom scored a perfect 4.0 GPA.

Chicopee student named to Dean's List at Stonehill College

EASTON – Sydney Dion, a member of the Class of 2027 from Chicopee, MA, has been named to the Fall 2023 Dean's List at Stonehill College. To qualify for this honor, students must have a semester grade point average of 3.50 or better and must have successfully completed all courses for which

they were registered.

Trigilio named to Le Moyne College Dean's List

SYRACUSE, N.Y. – Robert Trigilio, a freshman Political Science major from Chicopee, has been named to the Le Moyne College Fall 2023 Dean's List. To make the list, students must achieve a GPA of 3.5 or above.

STCC announces fall 2023 Dean's List

SPRINGFIELD – Springfield Technical Community College announces 784 students were named to the fall 2023 dean's list. The following students are from Chicopee:

Alis Masic, Alishia Faber-Stowe, Allyssa Kemp, Amber Maslak, Andy Kolesnik, Angela Cochran, Anthony Grande, Autumn Padilla, Brandon Porter, Brandon Shlaferman, Brent Pieczarka, Carlene Henriquez, Charleen Colon, Cortney Voisine, Daiana Tovtin, Daniel Padilla, Danielle Prost, Daniil Bulatov, Darren Leon Javier, David Kida, David Perevala, Dawn Andino, Desmond Wallace, Diana Nudnaya, Din Masic, Emma Brault, Fiammetta Serio, Gabriel Lemelin, Griffin Quinn, Haley Ladeau, Harrison Atandi, Ian Ogilvie, Isaiah Colon, Ivan Pagan, Jasmine Ryan, Jaylee Lemire, Jennifer Diaz, Joanna Mienkowski, Jonathan Morales, Joshua Shumskiy, Joushua Vazquez Ramirez, Justina Saez

Kaitlin Buckley, Karyn Lawrence, Kate Mahue, Katie-Lynne Powers, Kayla Picard, Kristin Lavalley, Kyle Moriarty, Kyle Kelly, Layna Delgado, Leonora Bajrami, Licy Cruz de Nunez, Madian Medina, Madison Roy, Makayla Burrelle, Makayla Clay, Margarita Nasibova, Mary Brow, Matthew Valentine, Michael Lavalley, Nathan Freitag, Nelson Mendoza, Olivia Wojtaszek, Pavel Tverdokhlebov, Qusay Hawi, Sara Pirog, Sean Cmuchowski, Shania Hoskins, Shawntay Kennedy-Cruz, Shkurte Bajrami, Sofiya Gura, Sophia Curto, Thalia Babetti, Tyler Beach, William Wright, Yvette Turgeon.

Trznadel named to College of the Holy Cross' Dean's List

WORCESTER – Gabriella Trznadel, of Chicopee, was named to the College of the Holy Cross Spring 2023 Dean's List.

A member of the Class of 2024, Trznadel was named to the Dean's List for outstanding academic achievement during the fall semester of the 2023-24 academic year.

To qualify, students must pass four or more letter-graded courses with no failing grades during the semester and earn a GPA of 3.5 or higher.

Chicopee students named to Dean's List at Quinnipiac University

HAMDEN, Conn. – The following Chicopee students were named to the Dean's List for the Fall 2023 semester at Quinnipiac University: Madeline Fournier, Kristin Labrecque, Gracie Martineau and Shreeya Patel.

Dr. Ilyasah Shabazz, daughter of Malcolm X, to speak at STCC

SPRINGFIELD – Dr. Ilyasah Shabazz, the daughter of the late activists Malcolm X and Dr. Betty Shabazz, will speak at Springfield Technical Community College on Feb. 29 at Noon as part of the college's celebration of Black History Month.



Dr. Ilyasah Shabazz

Shabazz, an accomplished educator, author and activist, will share her insights and experiences rooted in the rich legacy of African American history and culture.

Shabazz will speak in the auditorium of Scibelli Hall (Building 2) at STCC. The event is free and open to the public. Attendees are encouraged to pre-register. To register for the event, please visit stcc.io/shabazz.

Shabazz is chairperson of the Malcolm X & Dr. Betty Shabazz Memorial and Educational Center Board of Trustees. In her work to preserve the legacy of her parents, she has dedicated herself to institution-building and intergenerational leadership development with the tenets of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Her books include a memoir, "Growing Up X," and a children's book, "Malcolm Little: The Boy Who Grew Up to Be-

come Malcolm X."

Shabazz has furthered her community impact with the City University of New York's Office of Academic Affairs, where she created a curriculum to encourage higher education for underserved, inner-city and marginalized high school dropouts.

She has worked with the Office of the Mayor in Mount Vernon, as director of Public Affairs & Special Events. She

founded and produced a young adult development program to provide historical context on social justice - encouraging personal empowerment and community service as a way of life.

As president and founder of Ilyasah Shabazz Enterprises, she produces a variety of forums dedicated to power, possibility and sovereignty.

"We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Shabazz to STCC," said Dr. Kiyota Garcia, assistant vice president of Student Affairs and Interim Chief Equity Officer at STCC. "We want our students, staff and faculty and the community to prepare to be enlightened and empowered by Dr. Shabazz. She will illuminate the significance of Black history and its enduring impact on society."

Springfield Garden Club offers \$2,000 scholarship

SPRINGFIELD – The Springfield Garden Club is accepting applications for their annual \$2,000 scholarship awarded to a graduating high school senior, undergraduate or graduate college student majoring in a full-time plant science or environmental studies program, such as horticulture, floriculture, landscape design, conservation, forestry, botany, agronomy, plant pathology, environmental control, land management or other allied fields.

The candidate must be a resident of Hampden County, demonstrate financial need and have adequate academic standing. High school seniors, undergraduate and graduate college students are eligible for consideration.

For additional information and to request a copy of the application contact

Jane Glushik at SGCsScholarship@gmail.com.

Scholarship applications are to be complete and meet the submission deadline of April 1, 2024, to be eligible for consideration.

The SGC has awarded over \$80,000 to more than 50 students during the past 30 plus years. Funds for the scholarship are raised at the annual plant sale held each year in the Spring. The Annual Plant Sale this year will be held at Forest Park on Sumner Avenue on Saturday, June 1 from 9AM to noon.

For more information on the Springfield Garden Club events go to www.springfieldgardenclubma.org or visit them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/SpringfieldMAGardenClub/>

Rotary District 7890 invites applications for \$30,000 scholarship

Rotary District 7890 (Northern CT and Western MA) is inviting applications from qualified candidates for a \$30,000 scholarship to study at the master's level outside the USA in a Rotary country in one of Rotary's Areas of Focus. Candidates must have permanent residency in one of the towns covered by the Rotary District 7890. Eligibility criteria and the Application are available at RotaryDistrict7890.OrgunderDUNNEndowedScholarship.

Rotary District 7890 is also inviting applications for a two-year fully paid graduate level Peace Scholarship program by

the Rotary Foundation for candidates who are working preferably in the humanitarian service-related areas for at least three years. The Rotary Foundation will place the selected candidates in one of the seven designated Universities in different parts of the world including the United States. Details are available at www.rotary.org/en/peace-fellowships.

Family members of current and former Rotarians are not eligible to apply.

Questions may be directed to heathergoetz@me.com or menon7890@gmail.com.

NEWS & FEATURES

As a paper of record, we attempt to cover all general news, personality profiles, and community features that we know about. This includes all selectmen and school committee meetings as well as spot planning board, board of health, finance, and other town meetings determined by the issue's relevance to our readers. There are the annual major community event features that we should always cover, but we are more than open to suggestions of other features to celebrate the fabric of our communities and their many interesting occupants. Our loyal advertisers provide funding for this paid staff coverage.

For more information on news or community features for The Chicopee Register, please email chicopeeregister@turley.com.

PUBLIC NOTICES

CHICOPEE CITY COUNCIL ZONING COMMITTEE LEGAL NOTICE

The Zoning Committee of the Chicopee City Council will hold a public hearing **Wednesday, February 28, 2024 at 6:30 PM*** in the Chambers, 4th floor, City Hall Annex, 274 Front Street., Chicopee, MA 01013 to discuss the following:

Special Permit application under Chapter 275-59 (C) 6 for the purpose of obtaining a beer and wine license for Aesthetic Beauty Revolution located at 20 Center Street. Roxanne Roman, 76 Elmwood Avenue, Holyoke, MA 01040.

The plans/application can be viewed on the City Council website <https://www.chicopeema.gov/880/Pending-Applications>

The February 28, 2024 Zoning Committee hearing shall be available to the public via zoom and in person. Zoom credentials are available upon request by calling (413) 594-1435 M-F 8:30 AM – 5 PM or by email at aczarniecki@chicopeema.gov.

The petition and materials related to this proposal are on file in the Office of the City Council, Chicopee City Hall, 274 Front Street, (plans and applications are also available on the City Council website <https://www.chicopeema.gov/880/Pending-Applications>). You may also call (413) 594-1435 or email aczarniecki@chicopeema.gov. 02/09, 02/16/2024

NOTICE OF MORTGAGEE'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE

By virtue and in execution of the Power of Sale contained in a certain Mortgage Deed, Security Agreement and Assignment of Leases and Rents, given by Alycar Investments, LLC, to Marchionte Capital, LLC, dated April 15, 2022, and recorded at the Hampden County Registry of Deeds in Book 24503 Page 547, for breach of the conditions of said Mortgage Deed, Security Agreement and Assignment of Leases and Rents, the same will be sold at Public Auction at 11:00 a.m. on March 1, 2024, on the mortgaged premises located at 20 – 22 Alford Avenue, Chicopee, MA 01020, a portion of the premises described in said Mortgage Deed, Security Agreement and Assignment of Leases and Rents,

TO WIT:
20-22 Alford Ave., Chicopee, MA 01020

The property located at 20-22 Alford Avenue, Chicopee, Hampden County, Massachusetts, and as more particularly bounded and described as follows:

A parcel of land situated in said Chicopee Falls, bounded and described as follows:

Beginning on the NORTHERLY side of Alford Avenue, formerly called Brown Avenue, at a point distant EASTERLY two hundred ten and 74/100 (210.74) feet from the EASTERLY line of Broadway,

thence running NORTHERLY one hundred nine and 60/100 (109.60) feet to an iron pin on the SOUTHERLY line of land now or formerly of one Charles Hasenjager and distant sixty-two and 41/100 (62.41) feet from the WESTERLY side of Alford Avenue,

thence EASTERLY along the SOUTHERLY line of land now or formerly of said Hasenjager, sixty-two and 41/100 (62.41) feet to the WESTERLY line of Alford Avenue,

thence SOUTHERLY on said Alford Avenue, ninety-two and 52/100 (92.52) feet to an iron pin in the ground at the beginning of a curve in said Alford Avenue,

thence SOUTHERLY and WESTERLY on said curve of fifteen (15) feet radius twenty-two and 82/100 (22.82) feet to an iron pin in the ground on the NORTHERLY line of said Alford Avenue,

thence WESTERLY on the NORTHERLY line of said Alford Avenue, forty and 24/100 (40.24) feet to an iron pin at the point of beginning.

Subject to restrictions of record dated July 20, 1911 as recorded in Hampden County Registry of Deeds in Book 806, Page 570.

Being the same premises conveyed to the Mortgagor herein by deed of BD Asset Co. 5, LLC dated, April 15, 2022 and recorded in the Hampden County Registry of Deeds immediately prior hereto.

TERMS OF SALE:

A deposit of Ten Thousand (\$10,000.00) Dollars by certified or bank check will be required to be paid by the purchaser at the time and place of sale. The balance is to be paid by certified or bank check at Saulino & Silvia, P.C., 550 Locust Street, Fall River, Massachusetts 02720, or by mail to 550 Locust Street, Fall River, Massachusetts 02720, within thirty (30) days from the date of sale. Deed will be provided to purchaser for recording upon receipt in full of the purchase price. The description of the premises contained in said Mortgage Deed, Security Agreement and Assignment of Leases and Rents, shall control in the event of an error in this publication.

Other terms, if any, to be announced at the sale.

MARCHIONTE CAPITAL, LLC,

Present holder of said Mortgage Deed, Security Agreement and Assignment of Leases and Rents,

By its Attorneys,
PETER A. SAULINO,
ESQUIRE
Saulino & Silvia, P.C.
550 Locust Street
Fall River, MA 02720
PH: (508) 675 - 7770
02/09, 02/16, 02/23/2024

CHICOPEE CITY COUNCIL ZONING COMMITTEE LEGAL NOTICE

The Zoning Committee of the Chicopee City Council will hold a public hearing **Wednesday, February 28, 2024 at 6:30 PM*** in the Chambers, 4th floor, City Hall Annex, 274 Front Street., Chicopee, MA 01013 to discuss the following:

Special Permit application under Chapter 275-50 (c)(2)(b) and 275-50 (c)(2) (a) for the purpose of activating a digital sign located at 191 Montcalm St. Waiver requested – relief of setback requirements from 25 feet to +/- 6.3 feet; section 275-50(c) (1). Applicant – Peter Milloy, 74 Pine Grove Dr., South Hadley, MA 01075.

The plans/application can be viewed on the City Council website <https://www.chicopeema.gov/880/Pending-Applications>

The February 28, 2024 Zoning Committee hearing shall be available to the public via zoom and in person. Zoom credentials are available upon request by calling (413) 594-1435 M-F 8:30 AM – 5 PM or by email at aczarniecki@chicopeema.gov.

The petition and materials related to this proposal are on file in the Office of the City Council, Chicopee City Hall, 274 Front Street, (plans and applications are also available on the City Council website <https://www.chicopeema.gov/880/Pending-Applications>). You may also call (413) 594-1435 or email aczarniecki@chicopeema.gov. 02/09, 02/16/2024

CHICOPEE CITY COUNCIL ZONING COMMITTEE LEGAL NOTICE

The Zoning Committee of the Chicopee City Council will hold a public hearing **Wednesday, February 28, 2024 at 6:30 PM*** in the Chambers, 4th floor, City Hall Annex, 274 Front Street., Chicopee, MA 01013 to discuss the following:

Special Permit application under Chapter 275-50(c)(1) & 58 (E)(1) for the purpose of Golden Nozzle is requesting to alter and utilize two pre-existing non-conforming signs to display its operation at its new Memorial Drive location. Golden Nozzle is leasing the site and these signs

will always remain, Golden Nozzle is simply requesting to brand them with its logo for customers. These signs were most recently used to designate the Denny's location formerly at this site located at 467 Memorial Drive. Waivers requested (1) two ground signs instead of one that is allowed (2) both signs height exceed the allowed – Sign A – from 30 ft to 55 ft. and Sign B – from 20 ft to 25 ft (3) size of Sign A's faces exceeds a total area of 80 sq. ft. (4) setback for Sign B would be from 25 ft to +/- 2.8 ft. Applicant Nouria Energy Retail, Inc., (Golden Nozzle), Richard Smith, 326 Clark Street, Worcester, MA 01606.

The plans/application can be viewed on the City Council website <https://www.chicopeema.gov/880/Pending-Applications>

The February 28, 2024 Zoning Committee hearing shall be available to the public via zoom and in person. Zoom credentials are available upon request by calling (413) 594-1435 M-F 8:30 AM – 5 PM or by email at aczarniecki@chicopeema.gov.

The petition and materials related to this proposal are on file in the Office of the City Council, Chicopee City Hall, 274 Front Street, (plans and applications are also available on the City Council website <https://www.chicopeema.gov/880/Pending-Applications>). You may also call (413) 594-1435 or email aczarniecki@chicopeema.gov. 02/09, 02/16/2024

CHICOPEE CITY COUNCIL ZONING COMMITTEE LEGAL NOTICE

The oning Committee of the Chicopee City Council will hold a public hearing **Wednesday, February 28, 2024 at 6:30 PM*** in the Chambers, 4th floor, City Hall Annex, 274 Front Street., Chicopee, MA 01013 to discuss the following:

Special Permit application under Chapter 275-9 (k) (3) and 275-58 (c)(4) for the purpose of granting a liquor license transfer at the business known as TD's Sports Pub located at 699 Grattan St. (a/k/a 697-699 Grattan St. Applicant – TDs Sports Bar, LLC, Michael Murdock, 204 Denver St., Springfield, MA 01109.

The plans/application can be viewed on the City Council website <https://www.chicopeema.gov/880/Pending-Applications>

The February 28, 2024 Zoning Committee hearing shall be available to the public via zoom and in person. Zoom credentials are available upon request by calling (413) 594-1435 M-F 8:30 AM – 5 PM or by email at aczarniecki@chicopeema.gov.

The petition and materials related to this proposal are on file in the Office of the City Council, Chicopee City Hall, 274 Front Street, (plans and applications are also available on the City Council website <https://www.chicopeema.gov/880/Pending-Applications>). You may also call (413) 594-1435 or email aczarniecki@chicopeema.gov. 02/09, 02/16/2024

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Probate and Family Court 50 State Street Springfield, MA 01103 Docket No. HD24P0270GD

In the matter of:
Amelia A Barabani
Of: **Chicopee, MA**
RESPONDENT
Alleged Incapacitated Person

CITATION GIVING NOTICE OF PETITION FOR APPOINTMENT OF GUARDIAN FOR INCAPACITATED PERSON PURSUANT TO G.L. c. 190B, §5-304

To the named Respondent and all other interested persons, a petition has been filed by

Diane Barabani of Chicopee, MA
Zachary Barabani of Chicopee, MA

in the above captioned matter alleging that **Amelia A Barabani** is in need of a Guardian and requesting that **Diane Barabani of Chicopee, MA**
Zachary Barabani of Chicopee, MA

(or some other suitable person) be appointed as Guardian to serve **Without Surety** on the bond.

The petition asks the court to determine that the Respondent is incapacitated, that the appointment of a Guardian is necessary, and that the proposed Guardian is appropriate. The petition is on file with this court and may contain a request for certain specific authority.

You have the right to object to this proceeding. If you wish to do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance at this court on or before 10:00 a.m. on the return date of **03/08/2024**.

This day is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline date by which you have to file the written appearance if you object to the petition. If you fail to file the written appearance by the return date, action may be taken in this matter without further notice to you. In addition to filing the written appearance, you or your attorney must file a written affidavit stating the specific facts and grounds of your objection within 30 days after the return date.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The outcome of this proceeding may limit or completely take away the above-named person's right to make decisions about personal affairs or financial affairs or both. The above-named person has the right to ask for a lawyer. Anyone may make this request on behalf of the above-named person. If the above-named person cannot afford a lawyer, one may be appointed at State expense.

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

Date: February 08, 2024
Rosemary A. Saccomani
Register of Probate
02/16/2024

SALE OF MOTOR VEHICLES

Under G.L. c.255 Sec. 39A Notice is hereby given by Interstate Towing, Inc. pursuant to the provisions of G.L. c. 255, section 39A, that on **February 23, 2024**, at Interstate Towing, Inc., the following Motor Vehicles will be sold at private sale to satisfy our garage keeper's lien thereon for storage, towing charges, care and expenses of notices and sale of said vehicles

2004 Audi A4
VIN: WAULC68E84A084380
Najce Hillman
158 Elm St.
Westfield, MA 01085

2004 Chevrolet Trailblazer
VIN: 1GNDT13S242432831
Kenneth Hart
64 Crestwood Dr.
Southbridge, MA 01550

2012 Chevrolet Impala
VIN: 2G1WB5E31C1137308
Michael Leeming
54 Marshview Dr.
Marshfield, MA 02050

2018 Toyota Rav4
VIN: 2T3BFREV9JW836385
Lashawn Keitt
128 Main St. Apt A
Westfield, MA 01085

2015 Honda Accord
VIN: 1HGCR2F5XFA029253
Arpit Mathur
1550 Soldiers Field Rd.
Unit 502
Boston, MA 02135

2005 Nissan Altima
VIN: 1N4AL11E85C228299
Grace Centeno
91 Federal St. Apt 2B
Springfield, MA 01105

2022 Chevrolet Trax
VIN: KL7CJPSM8NB506705
Valerie Gerhardt
183 1st St. Apt 4
Pittsfield, MA 01201

02/09, 02/16, 02/23/2024

More Legals on page 16

WE'VE EXPANDED OUR WEB SITE PUBLIC NOTICES ARE NOW ONLINE

1 Email all notices to notices@turley.com

2 Access archives and digital tear sheets by newspaper title.

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

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

visit www.publicnotices.turley.com

Please check the accuracy of your legal notice prior to submission (i.e., date, time, spelling). Also, be sure the requested publication date coincides with the purpose of the notice, or as the law demands. Thank you.

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2024 TAX TIME

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PUBLIC NOTICES

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampden Division
Docket No. HD24P0283EA
Estate of:

Theresa A. Levesque
Date of Death:
November 15, 2023
INFORMAL PROBATE
PUBLICATION NOTICE
To all persons interested
in the above captioned estate,
by Petition of Petitioner
Janice McArdle of Granby,
MA

Janice McArdle of Granby, MA has been informally appointed as the Personal Representative of the estate to serve without surety on the bond.

The estate is being administered under informal procedure by the Personal Representative under the Massachusetts Uniform Probate Code without supervision by the Court. Inventory and accounts are not required to be filed with the Court, but interested parties are entitled to notice regarding the administration from the Personal Representative and can petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including distribution of assets and expenses of administration. Interested parties are entitled to petition the Court to institute formal proceedings and to obtain orders terminating or restricting the powers of Personal Representatives appointed under informal procedure. A copy of the Petition and Will, if any, can be obtained from the Petitioner.
02/16/2024

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS THE TRIAL COURT HAMPDEN, Div.

Probate & Family Court
Dept. HD24E0008PP
To: Sean P Olbrych of Chicopee, in the County of Hampden, and to all other persons interested.

A petition has been presented to said Court by Kara Finken of Simsbury, CT, representing that they hold as joint tenants in an undivided part or share of land lying in Chicopee, in the County of Hampden, setting forth that they desire that all of said land may be sold at private sale or public auction for not less than Three Hundred Thirty Thousand (\$330,000.00) Dollars, and praying that partition may be made of all the land aforesaid according to law, and to that end that a commissioner be appointed to make such partition and be ordered to make sale and conveyance of all, or any part of said land which the Court finds cannot be advantageously divided either at private sale or public auction, and be ordered to distribute the net proceeds thereof after full adjudication of the equitable claims contained in said petition and supplemental memorandum filed with the Court.

If you desire to object thereto, you or your attorney, should file a written appearance in said Court at Springfield before ten o'clock in the forenoon on the first day of April 2024, the return day of this citation.

Witness, BARBARA M. HYLAND, Esquire, First Justice of said Court, this first day of February 2024.

Rosemary A. Saccomani
Register
02/16, 02/23, 03/01/2024

SALE OF MOTOR VEHICLES
Under G.L. c.255 Sec. 39A
Notice is hereby given by Interstate Towing, Inc. pursuant to the provisions of G.L. c. 255, section 39A, that on March 1, 2024, at Interstate Towing, Inc the following Motor Vehicles will be sold at private sale to satisfy our garage keeper's lien thereon for storage, towing charges, care and expenses of notices and sale of said vehicles.

2003 Honda Accord
VIN: 1HGCM82683A030042
Stuarts Automotive
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Lowell, MA 01852

2006 BMW X5
VIN: 5UXFA13516LY30240
Michelle Sevinge
44 Taylor St.
Holyoke, MA 01040

2008 Nissan Altima
VIN: 1N4AL21E28C273989
Ramon Guerra Jr
72 Temple St Apt 1
Springfield, MA 01108

2009 BMW 328i
VIN: WBAWB33549P137599
Gina Porcello
86 Spring St
Enfield, CT 06082

2009 Honda Odyssey
VIN: 1JJV532W7YL462728
Jeffrey Hall
49 La Civita Ct Apt 3
Stoughton, MA 02072

2014 Chevrolet Silverado
VIN: 3GCUKSEC3EG286357
Lesaida Diaz
254 Hillside Ave
Hartford, CT 06106

2018 Toyota Rav4
VIN: JTMRFREV9JJ237239
Adianez Torres
23 N East St FL 2
Holyoke, MA 01040

02/16, 02/23, 03/01/2024

HEALTH

Don't risk your health shoveling snow

Each year 100 people die from shoveling snow

SPRINGFIELD – Snow has finally arrived, and shovels are being put to good use once again.

But shoveling sometimes comes with consequences including suffering a heart attack or putting your back out.

“When shoveling snow an individual experiences an increase in heart rate and blood pressure which increases the need for blood supply to the heart. In those with cardiovascular disease or risk factors, this can be dangerous as it can lead to a heart attack,” said Dr. Seth Gemme, FACEP, vice chair of Clinical Operations for Emergency Medicine, Baystate Health.

He noted that signs and symptoms of a heart attack include pressure or pain in the chest, arms or neck; nausea; lightheadedness; sweating or feeling clammy; or unusual fatigue.

According to the National Institutes of Health, each year snow shoveling results in about 11,500 injuries – including 100 fatalities. Data shows that those deaths are generally caused by heart attacks with the most common injuries associated with snow removal being sprains and strains.

Researchers have also found that those over 55 were more than four times as likely as younger patients to suffer heart-related problems while shoveling snow; men were twice as likely as women to develop symptoms.

Even for those in good health, learning the proper techniques for shoveling snow can help prevent injuries.

“If you already suffer from low back pain and are not used to strenuous physical activity, then leave the snow shoveling for someone in good health and physical shape,” said Dr. Julio Martinez-Silvestrini, medical director, Baystate Rehabilitation Care.

“Take time to stretch your lower back muscles with some gentle exercises before shoveling and consider walking for a few minutes or marching in place. You should also drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration and refrain from any caffeine or nicotine, which are stimulants and may increase your heart rate,” he added.

Dr. Martinez-Silvestrini and the American Physical Therapy Association offer the following tips for avoiding back injuries from snow shoveling:

Lift smaller loads of snow, rather than heavy shovelfuls. Take care to bend your knees and lift with your legs rather than with your back.

Use a shovel with a handle that lets you keep your back straight while lifting. A short handle will cause you to bend more to lift the load. Using a shovel that's too long makes the weight at the end heavier.

Because the spine cannot tolerate twisting as well as it can other move-

ments, it is important to avoid this movement as much as possible. Step in the direction in which you are throwing the snow to prevent the lower back from twisting. This will help avoid the “next-day back fatigue” experienced by people who shovel snow.

If possible, push the snow away instead of lifting it.

Take frequent breaks when shoveling. Stand up straight and walk around periodically to extend the lower back.

Standing backward-bending exercises will help reverse the excessive forward bending that occurs while shoveling; stand straight and tall, place your hands toward the back of your hips, and bend backward slightly for several seconds.

Dr. Martinez-Silvestrini noted that there is sometimes confusion over whether to use ice or heat after injuring your back.

“Apply a cold pack as soon as possible after the injury every three to four hours for up to 20 minutes. After two or three days, you can apply heat for 20-30 minutes three or four times a day in order to relax your muscles and increase blood flow,” he said.

Unfortunately, for some, not all injuries are simple strains.

Baystate Medical Center's Division of Neurosurgery sees many patients in the wintertime who suffer from herniated discs which are common to the lower spine. When a disc is herniated or ruptured, it can create pressure against one or more of the spinal nerves resulting in numbness or pain in the lower extremities, often radiating down the leg. Neurosurgeons also see many spinal fractures when people slip while shoveling snow or chopping ice.

To avoid slipping on ice and snow, doctors recommend buying yourself a pair of shoes or boots with good traction or adding snow and ice safety traction devices to your footwear.

If possible, use a snow blower to do the work for you. If not used correctly, however, even using a snow blower can strain or injure your back if you push or force the equipment to go faster.

And using a snow blower may still be too much activity for someone with heart disease. Snow blowers are not light, and it can be heavy to push through a lot of snow.

For some, the best advice may be to leave the shoveling to others by hiring a youngster who wants to make extra money or contracting with a plowing service to clear your driveway and walkways when it snows.

“You know your body better than anyone else. If something doesn't feel right while you're outdoors shoveling, then stop immediately,” Gemme said.

For more information on Baystate Health, visit baystatehealth.org. To make an appointment with Martinez-Silvestrini or a neurosurgeon, call 413-794-5600.

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THE ROAD TO

Financial Wellness

The Benefits of Using a Financial Planner

In today's complex financial world, many investors seek out financial planners to help them navigate the intricacies of personal finance. The benefits of having expert financial help are manifold, including investment advice, retirement planning, tax strategies and estate planning.

Most financial planners collaborate with their clients to choose an asset allocation that melds the client's risk tolerance with their goals. After investments are chosen, often the advisor plays the role of cheerleader. Keeping clients from making rash decisions and veering off course from their financial plan may be one of the most important roles an advisor plays. All advisors have seen clients panic and try to make changes to portfolios in response to political or economic events that soon pass.

Retirement planning may be one of the most important acts that an advisor can perform. Everyone would love a stress-free retirement. A good planner can help calculate how much you will need to save to retire. He or she will also create a

strategy for claiming social security and any pensions in order to meet retirement spending needs.

An often-overlooked benefit of having a good financial expert is tax planning. Should you invest in a traditional 401k or a Roth? When should you begin withdrawing from your taxable accounts? Do you have to pay taxes on social security? When do you need to take Required Minimum Distributions and are you taking the correct amount?

In addition to all the above, proper estate planning is imperative to make sure that your assets end up where you would like them to, with the least amount of hassle. Do you need trust or is your will sufficient? Is your house protected from Medicaid in the future? Hiring a good financial expert can greatly enhance your financial life.

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