

Chicopee Register

A TURLEY PUBLICATION | www.turley.com



December 30, 2022 | Vol. 25, No. 40 | FREE

www.chicopeeregister.turley.com

2022 Year in Review

Just like that, in the blink of an eye, another year has come to pass

As 2023 nears, we at the Chicopee Register would like to thank our readers for supporting this publication over the past 12 months.

It's been a year of many highs and lows, but we hope our paper has lived up to the standard of consistency our

readers expect.

If there are any news or community items you feel deserve greater coverage in the new year, please don't hesitate to send an email to dzbiwski@turley.com.

However, before you move forward, we hope you take the time to enjoy our special 2022 Year in Review Edition. Thank you, and be well.

-Dalton Zbiwski, Editor

Arriaga all the way

Shirley Arriaga elected to serve 8th Hampden District

By Dalton Zbiwski
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CHICOPEE (Nov. 11, 2022) – It's official; Shirley Arriaga will be the next state representative for the 8th Hampden District.

On Nov. 8, Arriaga, a Democratic candidate, defeated unaffiliated candidate Sean Goonan by a total of 8,112 to 4,412 votes.

Arriaga, of Puerto Rican heritage, not only became the first Latino to earn the seat; of the 17 representatives who preceded her, she is the first female elected to serve the district in that capacity.

"There are a lot of firsts with this victory, which is pretty exciting to say the least," Arriaga said on Nov. 9. "It's okay for you to be the first to do something. It's scary. Sometimes, it seems daunting, and you will have some people tell you not to do it or not to try it for different reasons, whether it's your background, your experience, your age, your sex, you name it, but that shouldn't deter you."

Arriaga will fill the seat held by state Rep. Joseph Wagner for the past three decades. Wagner is set to retire and endorsed Arriaga's campaign.

The 8th Hampden District is unique in that it exists entirely in Chicopee.

Arriaga's ties to the city run deep. She went to elementary school, middle



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHIRLEY ARRIAGA

Shirley Arriaga, the next state representative for the 8th Hampden District.

school and high school in Chicopee and was stationed at Westover Air Reserve Base during her time in the military.

All summer, Arriaga was considered by many to be an underdog, as she had no prior political experience.

After defeating Ward 1 City Councilor Joel McAuliffe in the Democratic primary in September, she acknowledged that the narrative fueled her drive.

Arriaga said naysayers are one of society's harsh realities; she learned long ago not to let them detract from her momentum. Staying genuine and transparent

kept her on course.

"Some people will not be your cheerleaders," she said. "However, that should not determine your outcome. If you want to pursue a goal and a dream, you do just that. Set your mind to it, make a plan and execute it. Sometimes things get extremely hard, but we don't quit. We don't give up."

As a state representative, Arriaga will advocate for affordability, secured and safe neighborhoods, improvements

See **ARRIAGA** page 6

Counselor of the Year!



STAFF PHOTO BY DALTON ZBIWSKI

Litwin School Counselor Tama Lang has been named the 2022 School Counselor of the Year in Massachusetts by her peers.

Tama Lang of Litwin School named state's top counselor

By Dalton Zbiwski
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CHICOPEE (Feb. 4, 2022) – A surprise of the best kind awaited Counselor Tama Lang when she was called to the Sgt. Robert R. Litwin School cafeteria on the morning of Feb. 2. Students, staff, administrators and political figures gathered to celebrate Lang, who was honored as the 2022 School Counselor of the Year by the Massachusetts School Counselors Association.

"I was genuinely shocked and overwhelmed but pleasantly very surprised, happy and honored," said Lang, who was radioed to the cafeteria by Litwin School Principal Elizabeth Masse, who requested her assistance with a student.

Lang has worked at Litwin School for the past two decades, where she implements a school counseling program that includes advocacy, leadership, systemic change and collaboration. In her position, Lang serves more than 350 students.

MASCA consists of nearly 1,700 members, and Lang will represent each of them next February in Washington D.C. at the National School Counselor of the Year Gala. There, she will compete with other state winners for the 2023 American School Counselor Association's School Counselor of the Year Award.

Lang was nominated by her colleague, Beth DiStefano, the School Counselor at Lambert-Lavoie Elementary School. DiStefano has worked along-

See **COUNSELOR** page 6

Milestone moment

Cote becomes city's first female police captain

By Dalton Zbiwski
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CHICOPEE (June 24, 2022) – History was made on Wednesday afternoon when Holly Cote was pinned as the city's first female police captain.

Cote, a 1991 graduate of Chicopee Comprehensive High School, returned to the school for the June 22 ceremony. Since joining the department at age 23, Cote slowly worked her way up the ladder; she held the rank of lieutenant prior to her promotion.

For Cote, years of hard work culminated in Wednesday's ceremony, but she credited a select few "trailblazers" for making the moment possible.

"It's not just about me. It's about all the women who have come before me," Cote said. "A lot of people work really hard to get promoted, but out of the (approximately) 500 officers that have ever been hired for the police department, only (about) 20 have been women."

When Cote discovered that she would be promoted, she reached out to



PHOTO BY RACHEL BEAULIEU, MAYOR'S OFFICE

Holly Cote is the first ever Chicopee Police Captain.

the female officers who worked in the department prior to her own tenure. Cote said they endured many difficulties in the process of creating the path she would follow.

"Female officers were not a thing until the '70s. They were actually called 'police women' and got paid a different amount. They wore a badge that said 'police woman,' and they got paid less than the men," Cote said.

Times have changed. Cote is now tasked with leading the department's Traffic and Patrol Divisions becoming the first captain to oversee both divisions at

the same time.

In the Chicopee Comp auditorium, dozens of friends and family members arrived to support Cote as she took to the stage alongside several other department members who were promoted, who are listed in a separate story in this edition.

After the ceremony, Cote entertained a line of well-wishers looking to congratulate her on the achievement and take photos.

Cote was most thrilled to celebrate the occasion in the company of her husband Mark, a school resource officer, and sons Hunter and Connor, who grew up around the police station. Cote credits her family for supporting her dream at all times.

"It's hasn't been easy. A lot of studying, a lot of putting personal stuff aside and family trips and things like that. My kids had to sacrifice, my husband had to sacrifice, and my friends and family probably hadn't seen me in a while when we actually took the test back last year," Cote said.

Cote is a lifelong resident of Chicopee and is proud to make history in her home city.

See **COTE** page 6

JANUARY

City officials inaugurated at Elms College

Mayor updates city on 2022 goals

By Dalton Zbierski
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CHICOPEE – The city of Chicopee’s inauguration ceremony on Jan. 3 made a Monday morning worthy of excitement. A total of 30 men and women were sworn in at the Veritas Auditorium on the campus of the College of Our Lady of the Elms.

The program was hosted by Chicopee Public Schools Grants Administrator Kris Theriault. He welcomed the bands from Chicopee Comprehensive High School and Chicopee High School, the Color Guards from the Chicopee Police Department and Fire Department, as well as the Comp chorus.

Also in attendance were State Sen. Adam Gomez [D-Springfield], State Sen. Eric Lesser [D-Longmeadow], State Rep. Jake Oliveira [D-Ludlow], State Rep. Joseph Wagner [D-Chicopee] and State Rep. Carlos Gonzalez [D-Springfield].

The list of individuals sworn in on Jan. 3 includes Mayor John Vieau, Treasurer Marie Laflamme, City Collector Stanley Iwanicki, City Clerk Keith Rattell and City Assessors Laura McCarthy and Brian Suchy.

City Council now consists of At-Large Representatives Frank Laflamme, James Tillotson and Gerard Roy, and Joel McAuliffe of Ward 1, Shane Brooks

of Ward 2, Delmarina Lopez of Ward 3, George Balakier of Ward 4, Frederick Krampits of Ward 5, Derek Dobosz of Ward 6, William Courchesne of Ward 7, Gary Labrie of Ward 8 and Mary Beth Pniak-Costello of Ward 9.

Laflamme was voted by his peers as the President of City Council, taking over for Brooks.

Moving into 2022, the School Committee consists of At-Large Representatives Chester Szetela and Susan Szetela-Lopes, Timothy Wagner of Ward 1, David Barsalou of Ward 2, Saulo DePaula of Ward 3, Sandra Peret of Ward 4, Grace Schofield of Ward 5, Samuel Shumsky of Ward 6, Donald Lamothe of Ward 7, Doug Girouard of Ward 8 and Ronald Bernard of Ward 9.

Vieau remains School Committee Chair.

Vieau offers 2022 preview

On Jan. 3, Vieau discussed what will lie ahead for the city of Chicopee over the next two years. He began his second term by thanking residents for the opportunity to serve as Mayor and commended city employees for performing admirably during the pandemic.

“My goal is the same. Continue to do what’s right and focus on the best interests of the city of Chicopee,” said Vieau.

Acknowledging COVID-19 and the Omicron variant, Vieau noted that the city will continue to progress and adjust to life with the novel coronavirus in the months and years that lie ahead. He noted that the pandemic is one of many challenges that have faced the city during its existence.

“Many mayors before me were challenged with massive flooding, financial difficulties and even a Great Depression. In 2020, we too were tested. The city was placed on pause by a global pandemic, but Chicopee always

remains resilient,” said Vieau.

In 2022, Vieau will continue to focus on protecting older adults and keeping the city safe, as he said he stands by the city’s record. He also said that Chicopee has been fiscally responsible enough to “maintain one of the [state’s] highest bond ratings and a robust stabilization account.”

In 2021, Phase I of the City Hall Revitalization project reached substantial completion. In 2022, the city will embark on Phase II, as it looks to continue improving the building before shifting focus to the old library on Springfield Street.

Most notably, the city will continue to take advantage of American Rescue Plan Act money, which Vieau considers to be “a once in a lifetime opportunity.”

Elms College

Hosting the inauguration ceremony on the campus of Elms College is a Chicopee tradition. On Jan. 3, the college’s Vice President of Academic Affairs Walter Breau welcomed guests and thanked Chicopee’s elected officials for taking on leadership responsibilities.

“Thank you for ensuring that the decisions you make as leaders of the city are always made with the best interests of the residents of Chicopee,” said Breau.

Breau noted that Chicopee is strong because of community partnerships that include businesses, Westover Air Reserve Base, local government and civic, religious, community and educational organizations.

During the pandemic, Breau observed those partnerships succeed when put to the test, although he said his “hair suffered a bit” when Dino’s European Hair Styling on Cabot Street closed temporarily.

Elms College prioritizes educating the local community. Approximately 75% of students come from Massachusetts, and more than 70% of graduates remain in the state.

“Our graduates live and work in the communities. They live and work in Chicopee. They’re moms and dads, teachers and nurses, coaches, community leaders and taxpayers,” said Breau, adding that the college is proud to be Chicopee’s only institute of higher education.

Down and dirty: ‘Wastewater never stops’

By Dalton Zbierski
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CHICOPEE – Perhaps, Chicopee’s most unheralded city employees work for Water Pollution Control. When it comes to getting their hands dirty, the men and women who work out of the Chicopee Water Pollution Control Facility on Medina Street never shy away from a challenge.

Lately, however, the challenges are becoming more difficult and oft-occurring, as residents continue to flush items down toilets that were never meant to see the sewer.

Please be advised, toilet paper, liquids and human waste are the only tangi-

ble items that should ever be flushed.

“A lot of wastewater operators and treatment plants have seen an increase during COVID of wipes, gloves, masks and you name it. Just because it makes it down a toilet, doesn’t mean it should go down a toilet,” said Quinn Lonczak, Project Supervisor for Water Pollution Control.

The city of Chicopee has 22 pumping stations that help convey wastewater to the wastewater treatment plant. Across the city, complications are arising, as countless individuals flush “undesirables.”

“Wastewater never stops,” said Lonczak. “When these things build up, it causes problems, there’s downtime, and guys have to go in and literally pull these things out. It’s pretty nasty.”

Depending on the station, backups can range in length from several hours to several days. For severe backups, the city must roll out one of its \$400,000 vector trucks to pump out the buildup of waste and other items preventing the pump from spinning properly.

If the vector apparatus is unable to unclog the pump, employees must venture down into the manhole to take apart the pump and fix the jam by hand. Regardless of how unfavorable the task is, the maintenance teams never put up a stink.

“They don’t complain about anything. They’re the hardest working guys,” said Lonczak. “If it goes down the toilet instead of going in the trash, it has to come out somewhere so either we take it out at the treatment plant at our bar screen, and there’s machines that do it, or a human being has to get it out.”

When waste reaches the treatment plant, it’s nearly impossible for it to clear the entire system and get discharged back into a body of water. Upon entering the treatment plant, the waste is screened for solids by a fine bar screen, which consists of a collection of vertical bars that are spaced tightly together.

Prior to entering a pump, wastewater must pass through the bar screen at a level center, which features a sensor that monitors the water level. It is ideally at this point when solid items are removed from the flow.

“We have a sensor that reads the level of the water, and it rakes all of that stuff out of that bar screen and disposes of it into a dumpster in the proper place. It does get taken out,” said Lonczak.

Unfortunately, large buildups can allow solid items to clear the screen. When those items enter and disrupt a pump, physical maintenance is required if the clog cannot be removed completely by the vector truck.

To individuals who aren’t bothered by inconveniencing Water Pollution Control, Lonczak said that the first person to suffer from a solid item being flushed down a toilet is the often individual who flushes it. A toilet is more easily clogged than the pumps at the treatment plant, and it can cost approximately \$250 to hire a plumber, said Lonczak.

“It’s better to take it out at the source and put it in the trash. It will hit you one way or the other in the wallet,” said Lonczak. “If it does make it here, it causes maintenance problems, and all that will eventually cost you more as the rate payer. If things are breaking down more, we have to spend more to keep them fixed and running.”



STAFF PHOTO BY DALTON ZBIERSKI

Mike Sklarski, Jeff Jarvis and Albert Wahlgren of Chicopee Water Pollution Control pose next to a vector truck on Jan. 12.



An Important Update for Our Communities

The local 24/7 response system for behavioral health crisis is changing on January 3rd.

Starting January 3rd, if you need urgent access to behavioral health services in the following communities, please call 1-833-CHD-TALK.

Belchertown, Chicopee, Granby, Holyoke, Ludlow
Monson, Palmer, South Hadley, Southampton, Ware

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YEAR IN REVIEW

FEBRUARY

A perfect partnership

Chicopee's coolest cat teams up with TJO

By Dalton Zbierski
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CHICOPEE – Two years ago this month, Chicopee resident Bob Pandoli's life took a turn for the better when Maxwell Edison, a feral cat, arrived at his doorstep. Over the past 24 months, Maxwell not only escaped the street and became accustomed to life indoors; he's become as symbol of hope for feral cats across the Pioneer Valley.



COURTESY PHOTO

Maxwell Edison, Chicopee's coolest cat since 2020, is an official ambassador for TJO.

"He's not like a cat. He's like a person. He's got this personality," said Pandoli.

Not long ago, Maxwell struggled for every meal and hissed at anyone who approached him.

Today, he is an official ambassador for the Thomas J. O'Connor Animal Control & Adoption Center, a Springfield-based operation that also offers urgent field services seven days a week in Chicopee and Holyoke.

Just weeks prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic locally, Pandoli established "The Journey of Maxwell Edison," a Facebook page chronicling Max's every move. Today, the page is liked by more than 1,150 people and is followed by fans in at least seven countries.

For Pandoli, who had never before considered himself as a cat enthusiast, sharing Maxwell's story has become a favorite pastime. He was ecstatic to discover that promoting Maxwell's journey raises awareness for other animals who lack a home and face similar struggles.

Jill Carra is the Communications and Marketing Manager for the Foundation for TJO Animals, a nonprofit organization

that fundraises to support TJO. Carra outlined how significant Maxwell's impact has been; his picture can even be found on TJO merchandise.

"We consider Max a foundation ambassador at this point because his story is just amazing in and of itself," said Carra. "He has brought such awareness to the whole feral cat program. We've raised nearly \$4,000 just from Max's story. That is a big, big achievement."

On Monday, Jan. 17, Pandoli and Maxwell participated in the Betty White Challenge, a national initiative to honor the late entertainment icon, who dedicated countless hours to helping animals in need. Pandoli was thrilled to partake in the challenge that requested individuals donate to their local animal shelter.

"Well, TJO, just on that day, got over \$34,000 in donations. Over 1,000 people donated," said Pandoli, who urges animal enthusiasts to make a difference by donating to TJO.

"Any little amount can help. There are constantly animals being brought in," he said. "The first thing [TJO does] is check for a chip. Then, they hold them for a little while hoping people will come in and claim them. Then, they put them up for adoption. They have a pretty big success rate with finding homes for animals."

When Pandoli first adopted Maxwell, he was informed by "experts" that feral cats are rarely domesticated and are nearly incapable of settling down. Sure enough, Maxwell proved the pundits wrong.

In light of the success, TJO reports that additional people in the region have taken a chance and adopted a feral cat. Carra is endlessly inspired.

"Bob and Max have the most incredible bond now," she said. "It's one of those once in a lifetime bonds. It's unbelievable. His whole story has brought a huge awareness just to that whole [feral cat] effort. It's incredible."

The adventure isn't over yet. On a daily basis, Pandoli continues to photograph Maxwell and upload the images to Facebook. Needless to say, Maxwell loves the camera.

"I really think that he associates the camera on the tripod with being taken off the street. Even to this day, when he walks by the camera, he starts rubbing his head on it. When a cat rubs its head on either a person or an object, that's their way of communicating," said Pandoli.

Currently, Maxwell is competing to be named America's favorite pet. If he wins, \$5,000 will be donated to TJO; one can vote at https://americasfavpet.com/2022/maxwell-667a?fbclid=IwAR1UqVwBmyUa8wBnBTHuxTuG-6jcIyx37-w530v_1rKApJScgjl4tiQ_ZQw.

More information on TJO can be found at <http://www.tjoconnoradoptioncenter.com/tjo/>.



STAFF PHOTO BY DALTON ZBIERSKI

2022 Colleen Ashley Terron, center, is surrounded on the right by [L to R] Brielle Los and Chloe Pugh and on the left [L to R] by Alivia Mendes and Morgan Patla.

MARCH

A new Colleen is crowned

By Dalton Zbierski
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CHICOPEE – On a Saturday evening that featured both triumph and heartbreak, a new Chicopee Colleen was crowned. The 68th Colleen Coronation Ball at the Knights of Columbus on Granby Road on Feb. 26 carried on a city tradition.

Ashley Terron was named as Chicopee's 2022 Colleen and will be joined on her court by finalists Brielle Los, Alivia Mendes, Morgan Patla and Chloe Pugh. A total of 14 Chicopee women aged 17-20 competed for a spot on the court.

Terron, a 20-year-old student at Holyoke Community College, was shocked to hear her name announced as the pageant's winner.

Following the event, Terron expressed her excitement; she looks forward to spending the next year alongside Los, Mendes, Patla and Pugh, as the court appears at a variety of city and regional functions, including the upcoming Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Parade and Chicopee Day at the Big E in September. Already, the group is hitting it off.

"As soon the top five were announced, immediately right after we went to the room, we started playing Uno together," said Terron. "I feel like we have such a strong bond already, and the entire year is going to be just like that."

Terron hopes to one day practice pediatric medicine and serve lower income communities to offer individuals better access to health care.

Joining Terron on her court is Los, an 18-year-old student at Chicopee High

School. Los has her eyes set on attaining a four-year bachelor's degree in Exercise Science; she then will study to become a physician assistant. Eventually, Los plans to become a licensed personal trainer.

In the minutes following the pageant, Los described the moment as "surreal." She credited the Chicopee St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee for organizing the event and thanked all those who attended for sharing their enthusiasm.

Los encourages all young women in Chicopee to participate in the contest if it is a dream of theirs. As a court member, she is most looking forward to the March 20 parade in Holyoke.

"I'm really excited to get out there and go on the float with the girls and to go to the St. Patrick's Day Parade. I've been going since I was little so it will be nothing new, but I've always looked up to the Colleen and her court so I'm honored to actually be in it," said Los.

Also representing Chicopee High School on the court is Alivia Mendes, 17. She acknowledged that she felt the pressure of participating in the tradition but shared how she, and her fellow contestants, eased their fears backstage.

"Honestly, I was a little bit nervous, and when it came to ball night, I was super nervous, but we had dance parties downstairs, we had so much fun, we all played games and we all had good conversations so it kind of calmed the nerves down," said Mendes.

Mendes aims to work professionally as a nurse, where she will give back to others and be there for those who need her support.

Representing Chicopee Comprehensive High School on the court is 17-year-old Morgan Patla. Following her graduation, she will set her focus on pursuing a career in psychology.

"Once I complete college, I hope to be a child psychologist," said Patla.

See **COLLEEN** page 5

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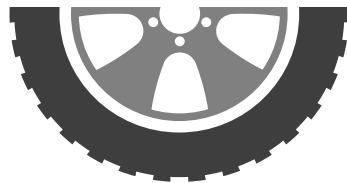
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GUEST COLUMN



Sustainable in the New Year

I was paid a nice compliment recently when my mother called my family and I “sustainable.”

While a little chuckle slipped out of my mouth at first because I thought the word usage was a little funny, the more it sunk in, the happier I was.

She chose that particular word mostly because of how crafty we are. We made a number of our own gifts to compliment store-bought this Christmas.

Mom also knows how important it is to me to grow a lot of our own vegetables each summer.

As the seed catalogs start to pour in, I have to keep my New Year’s “less is more” mantra going while not sacrificing the importance of some self-sufficiency.

As you plan your own vegetable gardens these next few winter weeks, consider the following questions.

Which vegetables do I really appreciate fresh?

To me, there is nothing like a salad composed of home-grown vegetables. I had success with lettuce last year, grown from transplants, not seeds.

Of the two dozen or so plants, I trimmed leaves for hearty salads for a good six weeks before the plants began to bolt in the heat.

It was definitely worth the effort. For that reason, I’ll grow lettuce again, and I’ll try to extend my harvest by buying a seed packet of mixed varieties that do well as temperatures climb.

Nothing beats a home-grown tomato, still warm from the sun.

I will always devote space to cherry tomatoes in particular. The last few years I have not had a much success with paste types, so those I’ll probably nix, but cherries, no way.

Orange, yellow, red, they all look so pretty and taste great in a salad.

Which vegetables store well or are easy to process for later use?

I will always feel highly accomplished when I’m able to harvest and store winter squash.

Today we used some of our own in our celebratory Christmas butternut lasagna. Kind of neat.

When choosing winter squash varieties, I like to keep it simple.

The “moschatas” seem to withstand bugs and disease better than other types. This includes butternuts, cheese, neck pumpkins and sweet potato squashes.

These are the only types I grow these days.

After a good curing outside, they will last in a 50-degree mudroom, basement or closet most of the winter if not longer.

In addition to winter squash, kale tops my personal list of easy to process veggies.

I smartened up a few years back and began growing kale under a floating row cover, to keep cabbage moths away. I harvest the outer leaves first, and in abundance.

After a quick wash in the sink, and a shake dry, the leaves are shredded into small pieces, discarding the mid-rib. About six good-sized leaves fit in a sandwich bag.

I press the air out and pop them into the freezer. My husband makes juice and vegetable soups and stews a lot, so having this ready to use portion handy is economical.

Which vegetables bring me joy in the growing process?

This may sound like a funny thing to ask yourself, but consider it for a moment.

Some vegetables are picky.

They require a little more work, but you love to face the challenge and reap the rewards for your effort. There are a couple of vegetables

GUEST COLUMN



Red-breasted nuthatch

An Oakham resident said she had a pair of red-breasted nuthatches at her feeder.

The red-breasted nuthatch is a smaller version of its cousin, the white-breasted nuthatch and is 4 ½ inches long.

It creeps headfirst down tree trunks searching for insects. It also eats seeds of conifers and will come to bird feeders for sunflower seeds and suet.

It has a white eyebrow, which separates its dark cap from the black eye line. Its underparts are rusty colored.

The male has a black cap and richly colored underparts. The female has a gray cap and more lightly colored underparts.

The female lays five to seven white or slightly pink eggs with brown speckles in a nest of rootlets, grasses, mosses and shredded bark.

She nests in an excavated hole in a tree, a birdhouse or abandoned woodpecker hole. Red-breasted nuthatches smear pitch around the entrance to its nest cavity to deter predators.

As a result, it often has pitch smeared on its feathers. It uses birdhouses and nest holes to roost as well as to raise its brood.

Its call is a nasal “nyEEP, nyEEP” and a short “tsip.”

Red-breasted nuthatches have periodic eruptions south in winter in years with scarce cone crops in northern regions.

White-breasted nuthatches are daily visitors to my feeders and suet. I see red-breasted nuthatches less frequently.

They are one of my favorite winter birds.

Christmas Bird Count

The Massachusetts Audubon Society reports a Western Grebe found on Mashpee-Wakeby Pond as the highlight of the Buzard’s Bay Christmas Bird Count.

Other highlights from the count, which covers town on both sides of the bay including Falmouth and Marion included three redheads, a hybrid Barrow’s x common goldeneye, 350 American Coots, an eastern phoebe, several red crossbills and two palm warblers.

The Cape Cod Christmas Bird Count was held on Sunday, Dec. 18 with sightings including a grasshopper sparrow in Eastham, two blue-winged teal in West Harwich, several red crossbills, nine orange-crowned Warblers in Orleans, several yellow-breasted chats and a painted bunting in Chatham.

Audubon Society sightings

Massachusetts Audubon Society bird sightings in Worcester County included a late brown thrasher at the Wildlife Management Area in Westborough and 13 red crossbills in Princeton.

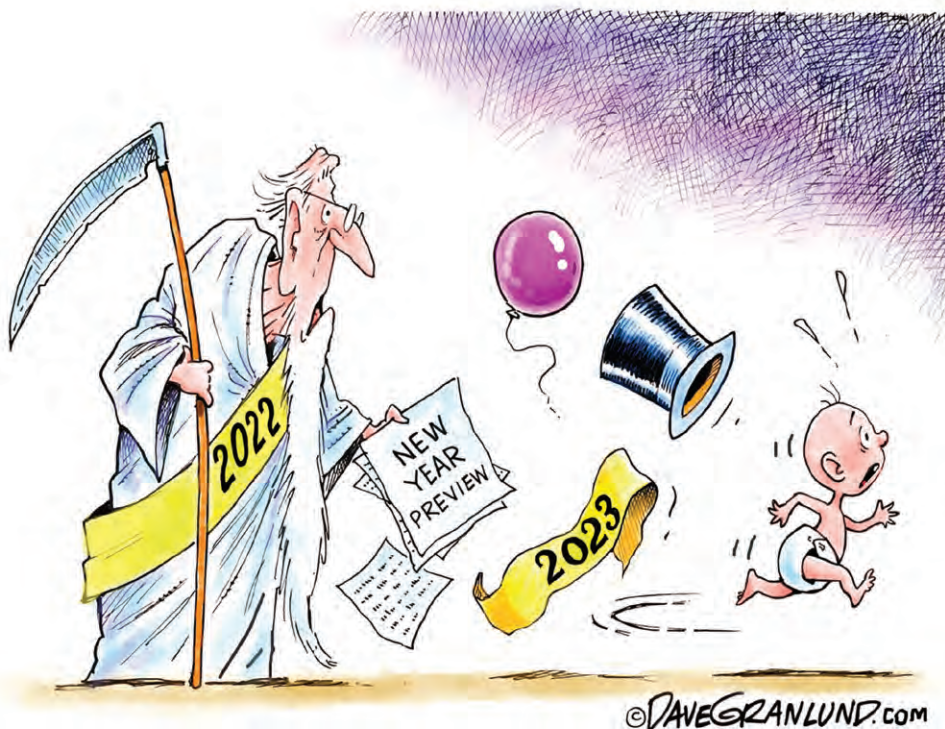
In Berkshire County there were three cackling geese at Baldwin Hill in Egremont, five canvasbacks at Lake Onota in Pittsfield and two Iceland gulls and a lesser black-backed gull at Lake Pontoosuc in Pittsfield.

Franklin County has a rufous hummingbird, which continues to come to a feeder on Highland Street in Millers Falls; a cackling goose at Turners Falls; a canvasback at Barton’s Cove in Gill and four white-crowned sparrows in Sunderland.

Hampshire County residents reported five black vultures in Granby and three in Easthampton, a late Baltimore Oriole at the Hadley Transfer Station in Hadley and nine red crossbills on North Road in Westhampton.

Hampden County also had three black vultures in Stanley Park in Westfield.

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



I will always grow even though they aren’t the easiest.

Peppers and onions come to mind. I chuckled as I typed that, since it was dad’s all-time favorite pizza combo!

Peppers are demanding. They like warm soil, so we lay down black plastic to pre-warm the earth.

The fruit can scald easily, so we plant them a little closer than you’d think.

Oh yes, although they appreciate the heat of my raised beds, they will require water each and every day if Mother Nature does not provide.

Lastly, patience is required, especially as you wait for them to turn from green to red, orange or yellow. But it’s worth it.

Onions too require patience.

Starting the seeds indoors in February to yield a harvest in September is a long-term

commitment that is not for the faint of heart.

Weed the bed and weed it again. Water, water, water- onions don’t have long roots to support the tops needed to make big bulbs.

Make sure you provide enough nitrogen, but not past the summer equinox.

It’s all too much, but when that soft-ball sized Alsa Craig wins you a blue ribbon at the local fair you’ll be the envy of your neighbor!

A few onion braids in the pantry feels good too, that is, if you are the sustainable type.

Happy New Year everyone!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 30 years she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to pouimette@turley.com with “Gardening Question” in the subject line.

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.

Chicopee Register

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

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YEAR IN REVIEW

COLLEEN from page 3

“COVID really did a number on children during quarantine, and kids are suffering with mental illnesses insanely today. I just hope to be that positive person in these children’s lives.”

Pugh, 17, is also a student at Comp. Being named as a court member took her by surprise; it was an honor she never expected, even while participating in the pageant.

“I really was not expecting it; I wasn’t,” she said.

Pugh has chosen forensic psychology as her future field. She did her best to calm her own mind when each finalist was called to the stage to answer a question regarding their future goals.

“It was so nerve-racking; I was so anxious. We don’t know what question we’re being asked, and there were five options; any one of them could be chosen,” said Pugh.

Feb. 26 ended the two-year reign of 2020 Colleen Ava Baron and her court, which attended the coronation ball. For more information regarding the court and where it will appear in 2022, one can visit <https://chicopeespc.com/>.

Student: Comp dress code ‘targets feminine students, promotes rape culture’

By Dalton Zbierski
Editor
dzbierski@turley.com

CHICOPEE – The Chicopee Public Schools dress code has again come under fire for discriminating against students. The March 3 School Committee meeting marked at least the second occasion this academic year that a female high school student has complained to the board.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHICOPEETV

On March 3, a Chicopee Comp student named Aresha complained to the School Committee about her school’s dress code.

“I think dress codes target feminine students and promote rape culture,” said Aresha, a Chicopee Comprehensive High School student who did not provide her last name during the March 3 meeting.

On Oct. 20, 2021, the district’s Student Advisory Council aired out grievances related to a dress code that allegedly discriminates against students of different races and body types. Natalie Maldonado, a Chicopee High School junior, represented the Council on the podium last fall.

“As it stands, the current dress code has created an environment of hostility through restrictions that disproportionately target people of color, those who present femininely and those who are plus-sized,” said Maldonado.

On March 2, Aresha provided the School Committee with a petition that included 157 signatures, which were collected in only two days. She offered to come back with more.

During the public speaking segment of the meeting, Aresha spoke specifically on the dress code’s ill effect on female students. She said that a dress code should only prohibit students from wearing vulgar clothing meant to harass others; she

believes that any other interference is unwarranted.

Aresha expressed her opinion that dress codes favor male students. She noted that many female students have reported being followed around by administrators looking for violations, an experience that makes students feel uncomfortable in school.

“It’s no surprise that feminine students are almost always the ones getting attacked as a result of these rules; not because they’re the ones most likely to break them but because the rules are made to oppress them in the first place,” said Aresha.

Aresha repeated that dress codes in school are “an introduction to rape culture on young and impressionable teenagers,” adding that they “further the ideology of blaming the victim, and [dress codes] trivialize sexual assault.

The Comp student acknowledged that some may argue that dress codes are necessary to foster a safe environment, a stance she staunchly disagrees with. She believes that administrators who enforce the dress code are on a “witch hunt,” noting that they are “preying” on female students.

“The student appearance policy declares that dresser appearance that is disruptive of the educational process will not be permitted. This shows both the unfairness and hypocrisy of the dress code, and it’s also just blatantly sexist and puts more priority on men’s education than women’s,” said Aresha.

Aresha called upon the School Committee to realize how “malicious” dress codes are. In a district that “prides itself on an equitable education environment,” she hopes that the board will review the dress code, “which undoubtedly sexualizes teenage bodies and objectifies women.”

As stated by Aresha, the district’s personal appearance policy notes that the dress code is established in accordance to Massachusetts state law, which mandates that students “dress and groom in a manner that conforms to reasonable standards of health, safety and cleanliness and that will not cause disruption of the educational process.”

The policy further states that dress or appearance that is unclean or constitutes a threat to others will not be permitted.

Clothing is deemed inappropriate if it exposes midribs or backs, is shorter than mid-thigh, is overly revealing, is intended to serve as an undergarment or reveals undergarments. District policy states that students whose dress or appearance is not suitable for school will be asked to change.

“Other disciplinary consequences may be imposed in accordance with the Students’ Rights and Responsibilities Handbook for repeated failure to meet these standards,” reads the policy, which is available online at <https://comp.chicopees.org/en-US/resources-and-documents-4288e68b/student-appearance-policy-f494bcfb>.

APRIL

Aiding Ukraine from far away

High school students collect donations for refugees

By Dalton Zbierski
Editor
dzbierski@turley.com

CHICOPEE – Nearly 5,000 miles and the Atlantic Ocean separate Chicopee from Ukraine, but distance didn’t discourage local teenagers from collecting donations for refugees in need.

In mid-March, students at Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School on Springfield Street collected non-perishable food, clothing and other essential items for Ukrainians affected or displaced by the Russian invasion.

Sophomore Brianna Rivera organized the donation drive and was assisted by classmates Tyler Jones and Tevaughn Smith. She was inspired to take action when the situation was discussed by members of her podcast group, who contemplated creating a podcast on international conflicts.

To promote the drive, Rivera spoke with numerous media outlets and distributed flyers alerting the school community. Donations were delivered on March 18; the initiative was far more successful than Rivera anticipated.

“I was amazed. I didn’t think it would get as much attention that it did,” said Rivera. “It’s a huge accomplishment that we’re all proud of. It showed how much people really care and how much we can do with what we have. It’s definitely touching.”

Rivera had hoped that students would be able to deliver the donations to the entity that later sent out the items to Ukraine. Unfortunately, time constraints prevented that from occurring, but students were able to witness the sheer magnitude of the donations.

“We have our little Paulo Freire buses here, and all that stuff filled up a bus,” said Rivera. “It took us a few minutes, going back and forth, in and out, loading the bus. After the entire bus was full, Tyler, Tevaughn and I thought it was crazy. We didn’t think we would be able to do as much as we did.”

Rivera was impressed by the concern that local teenagers have for individuals being affected by a conflict across the world.

Perhaps, she is most proud of the fact that the initiative was entirely student-led. Rivera initially asked a school advisor for help making phone calls, but he encouraged the students to complete the task independently.

Making the phone calls offered Rivera a prime opportunity to go beyond her comfort zone.

“Me and the kids I work closely with, we get nervous when talking to people. I wrote out what I would be saying and I got in contact with people and left them voicemails,” she said.

Speaking from personal experience, Rivera encourages others to launch similar donation drives or partake in other charitable actions because “you just have to put your mind to it and get organized.”

Rivera thanked the teachers and staff at her school for allowing the students to complete such an incredible endeavor. She reiterated that making a positive difference is less daunting than



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRIANNA RIVERA

Tevaughn Smith, Brianna Rivera and Tyler Jones led a recent donation drive to benefit Ukrainians.

one may realize.

“It’s definitely going to be nerve-racking and scary to do at first, but with the right people and right support, you’ll definitely be able to get comfortable doing things outside of your comfort zone to get done what you want to get done,” said Rivera.

Clark charged

Chicopee Superintendent arrested for lying to FBI about extortion attempt

By Dalton Zbierski
Editor
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CHICOPEE – April 6, 2022 is a day that will long be remembered in the city of Chicopee, for all the wrong reasons. Superintendent Lynn Clark was arrested and charged with lying to the Federal Bureau of Investigation about her involvement in an extortion attempt she orchestrated.

Clark, 51, has been placed on paid administrative leave effective immediately after it was discovered that she allegedly sent 99 intimidating messages to a candidate for Chicopee Police Chief late last year. She sent the texts using anonymous numbers that she purchased from a “burner app” that disguises the origin of messages.

Clark also sent messages to the candidate’s spouse and to her own work phone. She informed the candidate that she had received threatening texts, leading him to believe that she was also being victimized.

The situation was reported to the FBI by Mayor John Vieau last December, and the search for a Police Chief was temporarily halted after the candidate removed his name from the race. It is worth noting that candidates Capt. Donald Strange and Capt. Richard Henry both dropped out of contention.

During the investigation, Clark told the FBI she was not responsible and that

See **CLARK** page 6

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YEAR IN REVIEW

CLARK from page 5

the messages likely came from another city employee or member of her family. The messages were ultimately linked back to her home IP address.

When confronted with evidence, Clark admitted to sending the messages, according to U.S. Attorney Rachael Rollins and Special Agent Joseph Bonavolonta, who heads the FBI's Boston office.

Clark was arrested at her Belchertown residence on Wednesday morning for lying to the FBI and obstructing its investigation. She appeared at the U.S. District Court in Springfield on Wednesday and will appear again in federal court on April 27, said Vieau.

In the messages, Clark threatened to release sensitive information about the candidate if he did not "bow out" of the selection process. The threats were personal in nature; one message included an image of a wedding photo that only existed in physical form and was locked in the candidate's office.

Clark has been in her position for more than two years and earns an annual salary of approximately \$175,000. The Chicopee Comprehensive High School graduate has served the district in various positions over the span of multiple decades, including time spent as Asst. Superintendent and principal of numerous schools.

Clark served as a model employee, and earned the respect of countless residents. Considering her stellar reputation, Wednesday's development was all the more unforeseen.

"We are blindsided today by what has happened and we have spent most of the day trying to do what's right and what's in the best interest of the city of Chicopee and our school district," said Vieau.

The April 6 development shocked many but may substantiate widespread rumors from earlier this year regarding the presence of the FBI at the Chicopee Police Department. During Wednesday evening's meeting of the School Committee, Asst.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHICOPEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Superintendent Lynn Clark reads to Chicopee students on Jan. 28, months after she allegedly began extorting a Chicopee Police Chief candidate.

Superintendent Alvin Morton addressed the room.

"As disturbing and devastating as [these developments] are, I want to reassure families that our priority continues to be providing a safe and secure environment for teaching and learning to continue in our schools regardless of the situation, and we'll do our best to maintain that we ensure families that mission is still in the forefront of everyone's minds," said Morton, who has taken over as interim Superintendent.

Vieau considered the situation to be a "sudden, unexpected occurrence demanding immediate action," and noted that Clark's actions are not affiliated with school district operations.

The School Committee voted 8-3 on Wednesday, with one member absent, to put Clark on administrative leave. Clark will also be asked to resign. She will continue to be paid, pending the release of more information or an indictment.

Ward 2 School Committee representative David Barsalou was displeased with the fact that Clark will continue to receive a paycheck.

"I feel uncomfortable paying her. The Department of Justice and the FBI rarely, if ever, arrest someone unless they have over-

whelming evidence for conviction. Usually, they have a 100% conviction rate," said Barsalou.

Barsalou asked if the district will be reimbursed for the money it pays Clark during her leave; the answer was unclear. He was informed by the district's legal representation that the decisions made on April 6 are only "preliminary actions."

On Wednesday evening, members of the School Committee took turns sharing their sentiments of disappointment and outrage. Ward 1 representative Timothy Wagner had strong words.

"She made a disgrace of the school district," he said. "That's no small deal. We're the second biggest city west of Worcester. We're not acting like it."

If convicted, Clark could face a sentence of up to five years in prison, up to one year of supervised release and a fine of up to \$10,000. The case is being prosecuted by Asst. U.S. Attorney Neil Desroches.

MAY

Back on the Bike

Chicopee law enforcement personnel ride in Police Unity Tour

By Dalton Zbierski
Editor
dzbierski@turley.com

CHICOPEE – Earlier this month, thousands law enforcement personnel participated in the Police Unity Tour, a four-day fundraising bicycle ride from northern New Jersey to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington D.C.

Among the riders were Chicopee School Resource Officer Mark Hammond and retired Chicopee Police Officer Tom Lamica. As part of Team Western Mass.,



PHOTO COURTESY OF SRO MARK HAMMOND

SRO Mark Hammond, holding the camera, is pictured riding in the Police Unity Tour with his Team Western Mass teammates.

they rode alongside Officer Todd Joseph and Officer Andrew Beaulieu of Easthampton and Officer Jhon Wielblad of Ludlow.

"It's over 300 miles that we're riding in four days so it takes a lot, but we're dedicated," Hammond said. "There's a whole gamut of emotions. I think it's more excitement. You hope that you've trained enough and believe that you've trained enough, but once you get down (to New Jersey), the excitement of being with other police officers gets you pretty pumped up."

Each team member was required to raise \$2,500 to participate in the event. The purpose of the ride is to raise awareness of law enforcement officers who have died in the line of duty, but the money goes towards upkeeping the memorial in Washington D.C.

Hammond began preparing for the ride last fall by biking for 30 minutes to

See **BIKE** page 9

ARRIAGA from page 1

in transportation and infrastructure and ensuring that students of all ages have the resources to succeed, among other items.

By Arriaga's side through it all will undoubtedly be her eight-year-old daughter Winter. Arriaga considers parenthood to be her greatest responsibility and is proud that Winter was able to experience the highs and lows of the campaign firsthand.

"I'm hopeful if nothing else that my daughter sees that hard work does pay off," Arriaga said.

Throughout the journey, Arriaga said she told Winter time and time again that was she was exhausted and that she couldn't take any more.

Reasonably, Winter would ask her mother why she continued to knock on door after door. On each occasion, Arriaga shared the following message.

"We have a goal, and this is how we're going to get there. When you're tired, you dig deeper. It's not always easy, but that's okay," Arriaga said. "In life, you're going to have situations or moments where you're going to want to give up. It will be easier to give up, but we can't do that... Are you going to let fear, anxiety, tiredness, hunger stop you or are you going to overcome that? What we do with that is the difference."

Now that election results are official, Arriaga can fully commit to her transition to the State House. She has already toured Beacon Hill and met with future colleagues.

Regardless of what comes next, Arriaga will continue to act "on my merits and on my terms."

One can be sure that she will bring an aura of positivity to Boston in January.

"I think the world needs a little bit more positivity. You can turn on the TV

at any given moment and see devastating news... That's unfortunately part of life, but we can't concentrate on the negative. We have to concentrate on the good," she said.

"We can sit here and complain about how things are unfair or difficult, or we can decide to do something about it. That's the way I like to approach life. What can I do?

How can I make things better? What can I control?"

Whether it's entering politics, opening a business, teaching, going back to school or purchasing your first home, Arriaga believes anything can be accomplished if you break it down and take it step by step.

When she enters the State House in two months, that will be her exact strategy.

COUNSELOR from page 1

side Lang for more than 10 years; she explained why the Litwin School Counselor is worthy of the prestigious award.

"To me, [Lang] is the point person for the elementary school counselors in the district," said DiStefano. "At the secondary level, you have more than one counselor in each building, but for elementary schools, we're all individual, but because we're such a small group, we do work collaboratively so we're our own department within the district."

On a regular basis, Chicopee students move throughout the district. For that reason, it is extremely important for elementary school counselors to communicate and cross reference information pertaining to family support, community resources and social-emotional learning.

Lang is a member of the district's Integrating SEL Into Academics Committee, where she is partially responsible for ensuring all Chicopee students have access to counseling program support. She is also a member of the Social and Emotional Learning Indicator Systems Committee and reviews SEL data for the entire district.

Additionally, Lang is a part of the African-American, Latino, Asian American and Native American educators group, which focuses on systematic changes that are necessary for students, especially those of color, to feel supported and safe in school. She endeavors to make systematic changes by examining policies and procedures currently in place and determining if equitable practices are occurring.

On Wednesday morning, Lang was also recognized by the Massachusetts Senate and House of Representatives. She deflected credit for the recognition she received and considers it an honor to be nominated by DiStefano.

Lang praised the professionalism of the educators and staff affiliated with Litwin School and the district as a whole.

"The educators work extremely hard in this building. Our administrators are supportive of the counseling program and of all educators as well," said Lang. "We work as a team. If anyone needs anything, we're always there for each other and always there to cover each other. We're really here to lift each other up as well in hard times, especially now."

COTE from page 1

Decades ago, Cote planned to follow in her mother's footsteps and become a nurse, but it was her mother who encouraged her to go her own way. It was only fitting that Cote's mother was in the auditorium on June 22 to enjoy

a day that will be long remembered by anyone in the city who appreciates progress.

"She is the strongest woman I've ever met in my life and also the most supportive," Cote said. "I hope that I am like that for other girls and young women. I hope to be a role model."

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Luke Theroux sees pressure as he eyes a shot.



Garrett Gauthier fakes as he looks to move the ball around the arc.

Colts fall to visiting Chaug

CHICOPEE – Last Monday night, Chicopee Comprehensive boys basketball suffered a tough loss in overtime against Minnechaug 64-55. The Colts were able to draw even at the end of

regulation, but were shut out 9-0 in the four-minute overtime period. Comp was led by Brady Fay with 14 points. Jayce Pike had 13 points and Tineus McCluster had 11 points. The Colts are 2-2.



Jacyion Cox eyes the perimeter as he crosses midcourt.



Justin Martinez is overwhelmed by Minnechaug guards as he approaches the hoop.



Tineus McCluster looks to pass.

STAFF PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Chicopee falls to West Springfield

CHICOPEE – Last week, the Chicopee High School wrestling team, which co-ops with Chicopee Comprehensive, was defeated by West Springfield in a dual meet held at Chicopee High. The Pacers are scheduled to take part in the Phil Tomkiel Holiday Tournament at Agawam High School on Dec. 30.



Dimonie Bermudez gets ready to lock up in a 182-pound bout.

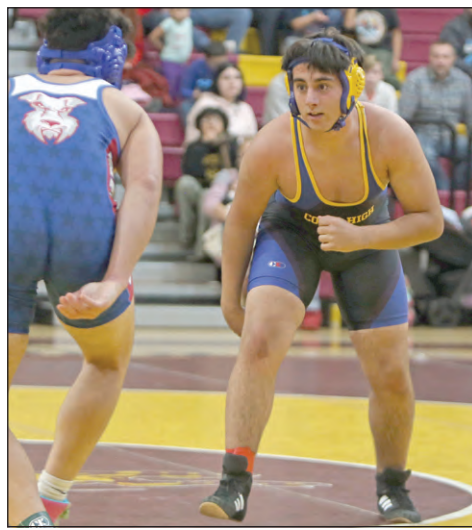


Deven Macy tries to get the leverage in a 160-pound match.

STAFF PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM



Jendea Torres starts her matchup at 106 pounds.



Michael Ryder goes for a takedown in the 195-pound match.



Nathan Flathers attempts to get the win at 120 pounds.

Western Mass. referees officiates first state final game

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

LEOMINSTER — The Monson girls and the South Hadley boys were the only two high school soccer teams from Western Massachusetts that played in this year's state finals.

Their state final matches took place at Doyle Field in Leominster on Nov. 19.

Joe Bielin, a Belchertown resident, also made the trek to Northern Worcester County on the same day. He was the referee in the Division 4 girls state final match between the Cohasset Skippers and the Northbridge Rams at Doyle Field. The Skippers players celebrated a 2-0 shutout victory.

"I've been an assistant referee in several previous state finals, but this was the first time that I was the center referee in a state final match," Bielin said. "It was very nice doing the Division 4 game between two quality teams."

During the regular season, there are only two referees at varsity soccer matches. Each referee runs half of the field

See REFEREES page 8

T-Birds drop nail-biter to Phantoms

SPRINGFIELD - The Springfield Thunderbirds (11-13-1-4) registered 31 shots but could not find enough offense in a 2-1 loss to the Lehigh Valley Phantoms (13-11-2-1) on Friday night inside the MassMutual Center.

Things did not start on the right foot for the T-Birds, as a puck skittered into the middle of their own zone just 23 seconds into the contest, and veteran Artem Anisimov was the beneficiary of a slick between-the-legs pass from Olle Lycksell for a slam dunk goal at the side of Vadim Zherenko's cage, giving Lehigh Valley the 1-0 advantage.

The rest of a penalty-free first period saw

lots of stoppages anyhow, but the two clubs each managed to fire 12 shots on goal, with Zherenko stopping 11 straight following the Anisimov goal. 35-year-old Phantoms backstop Pat Nagle denied all 12 Springfield shots on the net through 20 minutes. In the last meeting between the clubs, the T-Birds power play diced the Phantoms penalty killing unit for four power-play goals.

However, in the middle period of this affair, the Lehigh Valley shorthanded group had a standout performance, turning away three separate Springfield advantages. Zherenko's middle stanza was less hectic, as he made all seven stops asked of him.

A quiet third period brought about an insurance marker by Phantoms captain Cal O'Reilly at the 12:28 mark to make it 2-0. Springfield battled and finally cracked Nagle as Kean Washkurak funneled a wraparound into the crease, where Mitchell Hoelscher deposited his second goal in two nights to cut the lead to 2-1 with 4:34 to play.

The Thunderbirds were granted a power play when Jordy Bellerive flipped the puck out of play with a minute to go, but the Lehigh Valley penalty kill survived the final moments to bring home their second win in three tries over Springfield so far this season.

Hall-eligible candidates named

SPRINGFIELD - The Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame announced the list of eligible candidates for the Class of 2023, including several high-profile, first-time nominees including Pau Gasol, Dirk Nowitzki, Tony Parker, Gregg Popovich, Dwyane Wade, and the 1976 U.S. Olympic Women's Basketball Team.

A first look at the list of eligible nominees was provided by "NBA Today" on ESPN, hosted by Malika Andrews, Richard Jefferson, Chiney Ogumike, Kendrick Perkins and Zach Lowe. A complete list of eligible candidates can be found below.

Finalists from the North American and Women's committee for the Class of 2023 will be announced on Friday, Feb. 17, at 5:30 p.m. ET in Salt Lake City, Utah, during NBA All-Star Weekend.

The entire Class of 2023, including those selected by the direct-elect committees, will be unveiled during the NCAA Final Four in Houston, Texas, on Saturday, April 1, in a nationally televised broadcast at 11 a.m.

Enshrinement weekend will begin at the Mohegan Sun on Friday, Aug. 11, with the Tip-Off Celebration and Awards Gala, followed by the Enshrinement ceremony on Saturday, Aug. 12, at Springfield's historic Symphony Hall.

VIP Packages for the Hall of Fame Enshrinement Weekend will go on-sale on Friday, Feb. 17. All single-event tickets to the Ceremony, Tip Off Celebration and Awards Gala, as well as other ancillary events, will go on-sale on Saturday, April 1 at 12 noon. All packages and tickets will be available for purchase at hoophall.com.

The complete listing of events and pricing will be released by Feb. 1.

For the latest news and updates, follow @hoophall on Twitter and Instagram.

Railers suffer shutout against Thunder

GLENS FALLS, NY - The Worcester Railers HC (18-9-1-0, 37 pts) lost to the Adirondack Thunder (6-14-3-1, 16 pts) on Friday evening by the final score of 7-0 in front of a crowd of 2,476 at Cool Insuring Arena in Glens Falls, NY.

A former Railer got things going in the first period as Grant Jozefek (1-0-1) tipped a shot in front on the power play to beat Henrik Tikkanen in net for Worcester and make it 1-0 Thunder as the teams headed into the first intermission. Isaac Poulter in net for Adirondack and Tikkanen in net for Worcester each stood tall in the second, with neither team conceding a goal. This was just the second time all season Worcester had been held scoreless through two. Adirondack then opened the floodgates in the third, with goals coming from Ryan Smith (1-1-2), Xavier Parent (3-1-4), and Sebastian Vidmar (2-0-2) to make it 7-0 Adirondack by the game's end.

Grant Jozefek (5th), who once scored a goal for the Railers during the 2021-22 season, did so against the Railers for Adirondack to open the score at 1-0 Thunder 7:19 into the first. It came as an Adirondack power play expired, which freed two Railers from the penalty box simultaneously in Bobby Butler and Phil Beaulieu. The two had yet to rejoin the flow of play, which enabled the Thunder to score on what was effectively a five-on-three. Neither team scored the rest of the frame, sending the game into the intermission at 1-0 Adirondack. Worcester was outshot 16-9 through the first.

It was a scoreless second period for just the third time all season, as neither team found the back of the net through two periods. Henrik Tikkanen had been lights out for Worcester, stopping 29 of 30 shots faced for the Railers through two stanzas. Worcester continued to get outshot by Ad-

irondack, 14-7 in the second, and 30-16 for the game.

Adirondack then poured on the offense in the third period, scoring the most goals they've scored in a single game this season at seven total on the night. Worcester conceded six goals in the third period, the most that they've allowed in a single frame all season long. Xavier Parent (5th, 6th, 7th) scored a hat trick for the Thunder all within the third period, but not everyone realized it at first.

Only one hat was thrown onto the ice as Parent scored his third of the night. The rest of the hats ended up making their way out once Parent was announced as the first star of the game, postgame. Sebastian Vidmar (5th, 6th) added a pair of goals while Ryan Smith (1st) notched his first of the season, all contributing to the game's 7-0 final. Worcester was outshot 15-5 in the third, and 45-21 on the game.

REFEREES from page 7

along the sideline, which gives them a good angle to call offsides and see what other fouls are being committed.

During the postseason tournament, the MIAA uses a three-person crew. There are two assistant referees, who waves a flag whenever a player is offsides or when the ball goes out of bounds. The head referee controls things in the middle of the field. Some referees use headsets to communicate with their AR's during the course of the match, which lasts 80 minutes at the varsity level.

"A three-person crew is a lot easier, as long as you have experience with that system," Bielin said. "I did the best that I could in today's game."

Bielin, who graduated from West Springfield High School, is one of the veteran referees on the Pioneer Valley Soccer Officials Association board. He's been refereeing soccer matches in

Western Mass. for the past 25 years.

"I became I soccer referee when I was in high school because I thought it would be a good way to stay in shape," he said. "The money was okay, and it was a lot better than working at McDonald's."

Dave DelBuono, who's currently the Vice President of the P.V.S.O.A, was the person that convinced Bielin to start refereeing matches at the high school and college level.

"I began my refereeing career by doing Park and Rec games. Then I moved up to U.S. soccer," Bielin said. "Dave DelBuono is one of my mentors. He was the person who got me interested in doing high school and college games. The game is a lot more intense now than when I began refereeing."

Bielin enjoyed working the state final match because he didn't know any of the players or coaches on either team.

"I prefer not knowing anything

about the two teams," he said. "That way I don't have a bias going into the match. I just call what I see taking place on the field. I do like working both a girls game and a boys game. It's a good change of pace to me."

Just like in most high school sports, there aren't enough soccer referees to cover all of the games in the state.

"There is an extreme shortage of high school soccer referees," Bielin said. "A major problem is there is a lot of referee abuse by the coaches and parents. I began refereeing when I was 16 years old and there aren't very many young referees anymore. As the older you get, the better you become at dealing with adults. Another issue is most varsity soccer games start at 4pm."

Bielin is hoping more high school players become referees in the future.

"Being a soccer referee is a good way to stay involved with the sport," Bielin said. "It's also a lot of fun being out on the field with the players."

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YEAR IN REVIEW

BIKE from page 6

an hour each day on his stationary bicycle. The group left New Jersey on May 9 and arrived in the nation's capital on May 12.

This year, Team Western Mass rode in honor of the late Chicopee Police Detective Michael J. Dion, who suffered a fatal heart attack while on duty last November.

"I learned a lot from Mike when I worked down in Willimansett when I first got on," Hammond said. "Who better to represent our home department in Chicopee than Mike?"

Hammond got chills when describing his team's arrival at the memorial in Washington D.C. More than 600 names were added this year.

"I don't think a law enforcement officer really, truly knows how big the blue family is until you get down there," Hammond said. "This ride is like no other. It's an education. I couldn't wait to get back and ride in on the fourth day to support the families (of fallen officers) who were there."

Hammond said that officers participating in the ride came from beyond the United States. He was thrilled that he had an opportunity to trade patches with officers from Israel.

Even prior to reaching Washington D.C., the ride itself serves as a special experience. Hammond enjoyed interacting with residents in small towns and cities on his way to the ultimate destination.

He also made an effort to speak with and learn from law enforcement personnel from around the country.

"You're riding amongst other police officers; men and women in law enforcement. Sometimes there's survivors family members in there, and you get to talk along the way about their departments, what they're doing, who they're riding for," Hammond said.

Now that the ride is over, Hammond joked that he's indulged in some of his favorite foods. Nonetheless, he will continue to training in hopes of riding again next year and will raise further awareness for the contributions made by this country's fallen officers.

"The biggest motto is 'never forget our fallen.' Never forget our fallen heroes. If we can continue to do that, we are still going to be active with talking to people if there is a fallen officer locally. We will represent and be there to support them," Hammond said.

JUNE

Chicopee High School's class of 2022 graduates

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

CHICOPEE – Chicopee High School's Class of 2022 gathered together on June 4 for their graduation ceremony. Approximately 220 seniors celebrated alongside their friends, families and teachers as they received their high school diplomas.

Director of Veteran Services Stephanie Shaw gave an inspiring speech to the Chicopee alumni planning to go into the Armed Forces. She offered words of encouragement and commended their decision to serve.

"Basic training will be hard, but worth it. Please remember it is all a head game. They are breaking you down to build you up, to give you the right skills. You are going to get a new family of brothers and sisters. Rely on them, trust them, and be someone they can trust in return," Shaw said.

Following Shaw's speech, interim superintendent Alvin Morton gave a speech of his own, his very first graduation speech for Chicopee High. He warned the class of 2022 of the challenges they would face in the years to come, but expressed his confidence that they would make it through, so long as they kept working toward their goals and always had a plan in



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHICOPEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A Chicopee High School graduate of the Class of 2022 celebrates receiving her diploma on June 4.

place, even if the plan was foiled.

"I know it simplifies things, but life is like a football game because sometimes you move forwards, sometimes you move backwards, sometimes you punt because things are not right for you. Sometimes you play defense to protect field position, but no matter what you keep trying to advance personally and professionally in life until your clock hits zero," Morton said.

Class President Brielle Los also had the opportunity to speak. She cited her classmates as one of her biggest motivators for getting through high school and to where she is today.

Los also advised her classmates not to let one moment define them, but to rather remember that each moment was but a snapshot in the larger picture of their lives.

"Every moment in our lives is significant. However, each and every one of us are not defined by one single moment, good or bad," Los said.

Class Valedictorian Jarrett Madru and class Salutatorian Jack Ryczek each gave a brief speech as well, thanking their classmates, their families, and the faculty and staff of Chicopee High School for all that they've done to get the class of 2022 to where they are today. They each also expressed pride in their classmate's achievements, both in and outside of the classroom.

In the words of Ryczek, "once a Pacer, always a Pacer."

Chicopee High School Principal Carol Kruser also expressed her pride in the Class of 2022. When this class came in as freshmen, it was Kruser's first year as principal of Chicopee High, and she left this special class with a few words of advice for the future.

"You do not have to have everything figured out because even if you do, the world has other ideas. This isn't to scare you, but to say 'keep an open mind.' Work diligently at everything you do, because that keeps a positive reputation and can help open opportunities for you. Be a good person, be kind, follow through on your promises, and take some risks. These past few years have been tough, but all of you are tougher. Go out in the world and write your story," Kruser said.

Bringing the ceremony to a close, Mayor John Vieau advised the class to take the lessons they have learned over the past several years, not only the ones learned in school but in life, and to apply them as they made their way forward. He warned them against postponing or procrastinating, and encouraged them to fulfill their dreams and to establish themselves in their careers and livelihoods.

Before presenting the diplomas, Vieau had a few words of advice for the class of 2022.

"Be yourself, believe in yourself. Class of 2022, you have what it takes to be successful, the drive to do something meaningful and to impact not only your life but the lives of others," Vieau said.

Salute to the Comp Class of 2022

By Dalton Zbierski
Editor
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CHICOPEE – The evening of June 3

was magical for the Chicopee Comprehensive High School Class of 2022, as several hundred students



STAFF PHOTO BY DAVID HENRY

Chicopee Comp Principal Andrew Lamothe shakes hands with a member of the Class of 2022.

celebrated their graduation.

On the Comp football field, the bleachers were filled, as proud friends and family members attended the Friday ceremony.

Class President and Valedictorian Joshua O'Brien graduated with a cumulative GPA of 104.42. He spoke twice on June 4.

"Some of you have been counting down to this day since freshman year. A couple of you will be dreading going into the real world. Others may have forgotten graduation was today," O'Brien said. "Whatever position you're in, let's take a moment to remember what our class has endured and what we have accomplished these past four years."

O'Brien listed multiple challenging events that the Class of 2022 endured, beginning early freshman year on Aug. 31, 2019 when a student falsely reported that an armed intruder entered the school.

The following July, Comp rising sophomore Alex Ortiz was killed in a car crash. O'Brien fondly remembered his fallen classmate, who would have received his diploma on June 3.

"I wouldn't be able to give this speech without first honoring the life of our classmate Alex Ortiz. Loved by everyone, his passing was heartbreaking for us all," O'Brien said.

Later that year, the school district was rocked by a ransomware attack on its computer systems. The following March the COVID-19 pandemic made its initial impact on Chicopee and altered the way students were able to learn for nearly two years.

Mayor John Vieau complimented the Class of 2022 on its ability to weather the pandemic, virtual learning and the loss of countless activities. He called their effort historic.

"Your resiliency and commitment to your education will open those doors in your future. After all, you'll go down in history as the high school class that was challenged by the most unprecedented of times in over 100 years. For that, you should be very proud," Vieau said.

Salutatorian Victor Canavan spoke on the importance of establishing healthy priorities. During his first two years at Comp, Canavan obsessed over his grades to the point that it negatively affected his life.

"For about half of my high school career, I let my days be dictated by the grades I got back that day. (The happiness of a good grade) only lasted until the next bad grade," Canavan said.

Fortunately, Canavan was able to detach his "own self-identity from the grades."

While Canavan still cares deeply about academics, he is proud to have found balance.

"Had I not found a sense of balance, I would have missed out on everything that made this year memorable, from the best hockey season of my life to a full year of golf without one straight tee shot, all would have slipped by if I hadn't changed my priorities," Canavan said.

Canavan fully expects his priorities to change as the years pass by. This fall, he will attend Northeastern University to major in Business Administration and Management.

O'Brien will attend UMass-Amherst, where he was accepted into the Eisenberg School of Management and will major in Operations and Information Management.

Like Canavan, O'Brien spent ample hours consumed by his grades. When he discovered he was second in his class after freshman year, he made it a goal to be named Valedictorian; one that he realized.

"I've wondered many times; was it all worth it? If you asked me last night when I was trying to get this speech done on time, I'd definitely say 'no,'" O'Brien joked.

In all seriousness, he listed three lessons he learned along the journey. He advised the Class of 2022 to practice gratitude, discover what success means to you and avoid regret more than anything in life.

JULY

For the Love of Good

Remembering Kevin Joslyn

By Dalton Zbierski
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CHICOPEE – Chicopee resident Kevin Joslyn passed away on Feb. 28, but his legacy of giving will inspire others in and around the city for years to come.

Joslyn, a 62-year-old U.S. Air Force veteran and retired Hampden County Sheriff's Department Corporal, launched the "For the Love of Good Foundation" in 2018, a nonprofit designed to help neighbors in need.

Five months after his passing, the foundation continues to make a difference in Chicopee and Holyoke. Deb Maisonave, Joslyn's partner and co-administrator of the foundation, recalled his strong sense of



STAFF PHOTO BY DALTON ZBIERSKI

(L to R) Kevin Joslyn was remembered on July 22 by his daughter Kaitlin Grenon, partner Deb Maisonave and son Erik Joslyn.

purpose.

"It didn't matter what walk of life you were, he touched everybody. He always motivated people to give back," Maisonave said. "He lived that way; very simplistically, yet anything he had, if you needed it, it was always available. It didn't matter what, and he would even know you needed it before you did."

Joslyn launched the foundation to help struggling and disadvantaged individuals meet their everyday needs. Joslyn's generosity revealed itself in many forms, but he was perhaps most passionate about helping others pay for life-sustaining bills.

On July 22, dozens of people attended a comedy show at the Chicopee Moose Lodge 1849/Chapter 1489 on Fuller Road to support the foundation's efforts to aid the homeless in Chicopee Center and parts of Holyoke.

Most importantly, they arrived to celebrate the life of Joslyn.

"He was always very altruistic; always giving of himself. He had real zeal. I feel his spirit every day so I try to live the way he lived every day in my life," Joseph Violette, a longtime friend of Joslyn's, said.

As the room filled up last Friday, Joslyn's close friends and family were moved by the show of love and support.

Kaitlin Grenon, Joslyn's daughter, said her father's mission was to grow and expand the foundation to help as many people as possible. She said his humble roots helped shape the person he became.

"My dad grew up poor so he always had a bleeding heart for others who couldn't make ends meet, the way his life was when

See **REMEMBERING** page 10

YEAR IN REVIEW

REMEMBERING from page 9

he was younger," Grenon said. "What he did have, he would give to anyone who needed it. More, so he always dreamed of helping others in a big way. (The foundation) was his way and his vision of being able to help people who cannot make ends meet, the poorest of the poor, the needy and also the homeless in our area who have nothing."

Currently, the foundation is growing as it follows the direction set by Joslyn. Beyond western Massachusetts, the foundation delivers food and money to two community partners in Haiti.

Locally, a recent outreach event drew 45 volunteers. Maisonave is confident that the foundation has potential to further expand its impact.

"People call us that have emergencies where they need financial support immediately. We don't have any red tape," Maisonave said. "By serving others and getting out of your own self, everything that you were going through can change. It just got better. By (Joslyn) serving others, he brought positive energy and got positive energy back."

When asked what her father would have made of last Friday's fundraiser, Grenon expressed her belief that he was present in spirit.

"He's with us always, and he makes it very known. I know that he's smiling so big right now seeing how things are coming to fruition even though he's left the world," Grenon said.

AUGUST

National Night Out, bigger than ever

By Dalton Zbierski
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CHICOPEE – An estimated 3,000 people travelled Sarah Jane Park on Monday to enjoy National Night Out 2022.

By evening's end, there was no question that the event drew the largest attendance in its history, locally.

"It's an amazing success. We are so proud of our city. All of our city departments stepped up and helped us tonight. It's about building relationships with our community, our kids and our families and really getting back out there after COVID," Police Captain Holly Cote said.

Cote organized the event alongside



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Reynaldo Caraballo, 6, hopped aboard a city vehicle at National Night Out.

Fire Lt. Katie Kalbaugh and Rachel Beau-lieu of the Mayor's Office.

National Night Out is an event held all throughout the country on the first Tuesday of August each year. The annual gathering was introduced nationally in 1984 and has evolved into a community-building campaign, building camaraderie between the police and public.

Chicopee has celebrated National Night Out for a number of years, but the event was impacted in 2020 and 2021 by the pandemic. On Aug. 1, National Night Out did more than return to normal; it was bigger and better than ever.

"I look at it as being post-pandemic right now, and it's the feeling. As much as COVID is still out there, we've learned to live with it. People understand that we can do that. Chicopee loves to gather, and we're a very social city so tonight's just the epitome of what we do well," Mayor John Vieau said, after estimating the attendance.

The majority of the city's departments were on hand Tuesday, as were several nonprofits and members of the business community.

Law enforcement and public safety personnel arrived from across the state. The State Police, Hampden County Sheriff's Office and Westover Police and Fire all presented vehicles and equipment; the State Police helicopter even landed on the football field adjacent to the park.

Ward 1 City Councilor Joel McAuliffe declared the event the largest it has ever been. For an event designed to break barriers of communication, he was excited to see such diverse community participation.

"Chicopee has been historically known as a melting pot, and it continues to be so," McAuliffe said. "Our demographics continue to change. It's something that we're embracing as a community. No matter your background, where you come from

or the language you speak, you're all part of the Chicopee community, and you're seeing it tonight."

Fire Chief Dan Stamborski described the night as "beautiful."

He said that the kids love to climb aboard the fire trucks and try on the equipment. He considered National Night Out to be a great experience all around, one that can prove beneficial in the future.

"I'd rather meet (kids) in this type of environment than in an emergency situation. Maybe if they meet us here tonight, the police and fire, maybe when we do have to come to their house, they're not nervous and maybe a little more comfortable," Stamborski said.

SEPTEMBER

Contributions recognized at RiverMills Center

By Dalton Zbierski
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CHICOPEE – City officials joined residents at the RiverMills Center on Sept. 8 to remember several outstanding community members who helped lay the foundation for the new facility on West Main Street. .



STAFF PHOTO BY DALTON ZBIERSKI

Family and friends of Frances Wilkins helped unveil a plaque in her honor at the RiverMills Center on Sept. 8.

The well-attended ceremony recognized the contributions of Frances Wilkins, Adele Tawrel, Sandra Lapollo and Marjory Lafleur.

Last Thursday, the Frances Wilkins Garden Patio was officially dedicated.

Through the Frances Wilkins Charitable Fund, the Friends of Chicopee Senior

Citizens, Inc. was given \$40,218, which was used to create the patio behind the senior center.

Born in 1924, Frances Wilkins was a 1941 graduate of Chicopee High School. A dedicated wife, mother and member of the PTA, Wilkins came to love the senior center later in life.

"She went to the (facility) in Aldenville. Her favorite activity was line-dancing. She loved to do that," Dr. Carol Wilkins Kuralt, Frances Wilkins' daughter, said.

Steve Wilkins, Frances Wilkins' son, spoke on how important the senior center was to his mother.

"My mother often talked about this facility here, and it meant a lot to her that she was able to do something for the community by donating some money here for this patio," he said.

Speaking on behalf of Mayor John Vieau, Mike Pise, Vieau's Chief of Staff, spoke highly of Frances Wilkins' contributions and praised the dynamic of the outdoor patio space.

"It's a place for individuals to meet, take a break, gather, socialize and enjoy the outdoors as we are today. It's a great spot to relax, recharge and refresh yourselves. We're thankful she was able to do this for us," Pise said.

Adele Tawrel came to the center as a volunteer in 1993 and became President of the Friends the following year. She served in the position until 2016 and led the Friends as it worked to raise \$2 million towards building the new facility.

A tree and plaque honoring Adele Tawrel was placed in the garden near the patio. She will long be remembered for helping make the new facility a reality.

"Starting as a receptionist and going on to be President of Friends, she found her happy place, but she, as well as many others, knew they needed a new and bigger home away from home. Asking the Friends to pledge \$2 million towards this goal was always a 'can do.' So began the journey and fulfillment of a dream," Susan Tawrel, Adele Tawrel's daughter, said.

A fountain and plaque were dedicated to Lapollo on Sept. 8. Lapollo served as Executive Director of the senior center for 27 years before retiring in 2017.

Pise said Lapollo "was committed to the seniors and wanted to make sure that the city built a center like RiverMills that had all of the amenities and all of the offerings we have today that we're all very proud of."

See RIVERMILLS page 12

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LECTOR** The Town of Blandford
seeks candidates for part-time Assis-
tant Treasurer-Collector position re-
sponsible for administrative and super-
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collection of all money due. Candidates
must have minimum of one to three
years' experience in municipal finance
and bachelor's degree in finance or ac-
counting. Compensation range for this
19.5-hour-a-week position is \$23.00 to
\$24.00 an hour. The right candidate will
have the opportunity for promotion to
Treasurer-Collector within six months;
salary range of \$26.00 to \$35.00 an
hour. Closing date for all applications
is Thursday, January 5, 2023, by
3:00pm. Visit **TownOfBlandford.
com/job-openings/** for detailed job
description and instructions on how
to apply. The Town of Blandford is an
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mative Action Employer.

HELP WANTED

FIRE CHIEF The Town of Blandford
is seeking candidates to fill a part-time
Fire Chief position who will oversee
the operation of the all-volunteer de-
partment, pursuant to Massachusetts
General Laws, Chapter 48, Section
42. Candidates must have three to five
years' experience, with minimum of
two years in supervisory position, in
fire/EMS service. The compensation
for this 19.5-hour-a-week position is
\$23.00-25.00 an hour. A full job de-
scription with submission of applica-
tion guidelines can be found at **www.
townofblandford.com/job-open-
ings/**. Closing date for all applications
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9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20 Base Price \$26.00
21 Base Price \$26.50	22 Base Price \$27.00	23 Base Price \$27.50	24 Base Price \$28.00
25 Base Price \$28.50	26 Base Price \$29.00	27 Base Price \$29.50	28 Base Price \$30.00
29 Base Price \$30.50	30 Base Price \$31.00	31 Base Price \$31.50	32 Base Price \$32.00
33 Base Price \$32.50	34 Base Price \$33.00	35 Base Price \$33.50	36 Base Price \$34.00
37 Base Price \$34.50	38 Base Price \$35.00	39 Base Price \$35.50	40 Base Price \$36.00

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OUR CLASSIFIEDS REACH 50 COMMUNITIES EVERY WEEK!

YEAR IN REVIEW

RIVERMILLS from page 10

Charles Desmarais, a longtime friend of Lapollo, recalled how fiercely she lobbied for the new center, as she knew the city's senior population was deserving of a more adequate facility than its previous one.

"She took that dream of a new center and ran with it," Desmarais said. "You simply could not ignore this little woman. She kept coming at you. As to where it would be built, she visited every empty lot in Chicopee until she found the right one right here."

Lafleur was also remembered last week for baking pastries and making lollipops that she sold at the senior center each week.

OCTOBER Comp Yondr program met with mixed reviews

By Dalton Zbierski
Editor
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CHICOPEE – Chicopee Comprehensive High School rolled out the Yondr program on Sept. 26, and students are now required to lock their cellphones in pouches for the entirety of the school day.

The program was implemented so that students spend less time on their phones in class. Chicopee High School committed to the program this past spring.

ChicopeeTV was at Comp on the day the program debuted and interviewed students and staff as part of its "Bell to Bell" video series.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHICOPEETV

Chicopee Comp implemented the Yondr program on Sept. 26.

"I like my phone, obviously. I think every kid does," Izayah Santana, a junior, said on Sept. 26. "It's obviously a sad day for the students, I'm not going to lie. I came to school this morning not wanting to be at school for the first time this year."

Principal Andrew Lamothe said that the school had been notifying students and parents "for quite some time," and he hopes the program puts the focus back on what is happening in class.

"What we are seeing is, on a daily basis, teachers are spending a lot of time reminding students to put their phones away and not wanting to argue with students," Lamothe said. "It's not a positive experience."

Victoria Poutre, a junior, said that the school was tense on the morning the pouches were distributed. She said none of the students wanted to put their phones in the pouch.

"(This is all) because nobody can get off their phones and nobody is listening, which sucks, because there are people who are listening," Poutre said. "It might be a good idea, but at the same time, it is very nerve-racking to have your phone in a pouch all day when you're used to having it every single day."

Matt York, Yondr's New England Partnership Lead, was at Comp on Sept. 26 to offer his assistance. He shared with ChicopeeTV how Yondr pouches came to be found in approximately 1,200 U.S. schools.

"Yondr (established in 2014) was really started in the entertainment industry for adults because adults have a huge problem putting their phones away during a comedy show or a music show. Artists like Chris

Rock have decided to take that distraction away from adults," York said.

York said that teachers and principals who attended shows thought the idea could be adapted in schools. He said statistics support a smooth transition.

"We typically see a 90-98% compliance within the first two days. Then, after that, the compliance usually shoots up to about a 98%. It's really the fact we're dealing with phones and that students are going through a real change," York said.

Vice Principal Ryan Martin acknowledged that the classroom environment would be different moving forward. He understood that there would be a "withdrawal period," as students adapted to the new rule.

Not complying, however, is not an option.

"If they tamper with the bags, there are consequences for that. It's essentially vandalism or destruction of property, and there are protocols in place to handle those," Martin said.

Martin said he hopes the school becomes louder, as students begin engaging teachers and each other more. He said that creating a communal environment will benefit the students.

"After the pandemic, this is almost a skill that was lost by a lot of kids this age, so we'll be happy to get it a little bit louder because they're talking to one another," Martin said.

Kennedy James, a junior, was not convinced.

"I don't think it's going to really make a difference," she said. "Their whole logic is to get students to focus and up their grades and work on school instead of focusing on the phones."

Sophomore Kayla Inacio understood both sides of the argument, admitting that it can be disruptive when students interrupt class with their phones. However, she doesn't feel as though it should be forced on everyone.

"I think they should have used it as three strikes and you're out instead of making us all have the Yondr bags... (but) when we're all used to it, we're probably going to be a lot more focused on class."

School Resource Officer Mark Hammond said that with change always comes with stress and anxiety, but he pointed out that the program has been successful at Chicopee High.

"Yes, there's going to be some stress. There's going to be some anxiety because you can't get to your phone, but I think it's going to help them interact more with their classmates," Hammond said.

Content from ChicopeeTV can be viewed on its Facebook or Vimeo pages or by watching Channel 191 on your cable box.

NOVEMBER Spooktacular draws thousands to Szot Park

By Dalton Zbierski
Editor
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CHICOPEE – Several thousand people made their way to Szot Park on the evening of Oct. 27 to enjoy the city's annual Spooktacular trick-or-treat event.

City departments joined local nonprofits and businesses in handing out candy to the many children who made their way through the park during the event.

"This is the biggest party in town for the month; I have no doubt," Rachel Beaulieu, the public library's bookmobbriarian, said. "It's so great to be here at Szot Park in particular. It's super easy for anyone to park, get in line, come all the way down. We have so many vendors here."

Melissa Breor, executive director of the Chamber of Commerce, partook in her biggest event since she entered the position over the summer. She was "amazed" by the turnout.



STAFF PHOTO BY DALTON ZBIERSKI

The police department came out in full force at the Spooktacular.

"It's very festive. Lots of great costumes. I'm very happy to see this family-friendly event happening. It's great to see the kids come out in a safe environment on a sunny day," Breor said.

Numerous city councilors were present at the Spooktacular, handing out food items to families passing by.

Ward 2 City Councilor Shane Brooks said volunteering at community events is an important aspect of serving as an elected official. He credited Council President Frank Laflamme for organizing the appearance and explained the value of being there.

"It's good to connect with the community. It really just helps us relate to people who we don't get to see on a day-to-day basis," Brooks said. "The core of the City Council has been together for so long. We all volunteer. It's not one person's effort. It's a concerted effort on all our parts to give something back. It's the least we can do."

2022 Chicopee Colleen Ashley Terron joined members of her court at the Spooktacular. She enjoyed speaking to community members and witnessing local businesses, agencies and city departments working together.

"I absolutely love these types of events," Terron said. "I wish that when I was younger we had more of these. I think this is a safer alternative than just going to houses, and it also gives the kids an extra chance to get a few more buckets of candy before Halloween."

The police department was also well represented at the event. Sgt. Tom Gazda, the department's new community liaison, said making public appearances throughout the city is significant.

"It's always great to get out in the community and build relationships with residents in the city. We always try to get all our officers out here," Gazda said.

DECEMBER City Hall ushers in the holidays

Event showcased building's
auditorium

By Dalton Zbierski
Editor
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CHICOPEE – The holiday season officially arrived in Chicopee last Friday when a tree lighting ceremony was held outside of City Hall. Festivities continued inside of the building.

"This is amazing. I was just telling (several children) they're lucky to grow up in a city that does this. Not every city does

so much for the kids and the families, and it's a lot of fun to do this thing," city resident Tonya Alicea said.

The evening began outdoors at dusk when families assembled near City Hall's front entrance.

As carolers sang, Santa Claus arrived on a fire truck with Mayor John Vieau. They were joined by members of the Girl Scouts, as they all switched on multiple light displays in front of the building.

The celebration then shifted indoors, as residents funneled into the City Hall auditorium. There, they enjoyed more holiday music, including carols from the Girl Scouts and members of the Victory Chapel Christian Fellowship Church.

Dancers from the Vibe Dance Center also performed.

Several elected officials were on-hand, giving out holiday themed snacks. Among them was Ward 4 Councilor George Balakier.

Balakier described the event as extremely festive, adding that the weather was cooperative too. He was also pleased to see so many young people inside of the newly-refurbished auditorium.

"It's fantastic, and you never know where it's going to lead them," Balakier said. "Sometimes, down the road, they might become the leaders of this city so it's great to see them. They're going to talk about this fantastic room and the festive occasion we had; the food, the music, the dancing. It's great. It really is."

Vieau was excited to welcome residents of all ages into the auditorium, noting that the work on the space was finally completed last year as part of Phase I of the building's overall revitalization project.

"It's a long time coming, and this is what the intention is for the space. It's really nice to see such a huge crowd celebrate the holiday season and have the opportunity to bring them inside this beautiful auditorium space that we should all be proud of," he said.

Vieau said the city planned to celebrate City Hall's 150th anniversary on Dec. 22, after postponing a celebration last December.

The building opened on Dec. 21, 1871, but residents must wait several more months for the official 150-year commemoration.

"In evaluating where we're at, we've decided we're going to do a rededication in the spring. I think it's more appropriate. That way everyone can walk through in tours and really get an idea of where their tax dollars are being spent," Vieau said.

Regarding the auditorium, he pointed out that the space was unused for more than two decades until it reopened last March.

"I could tell you, most people look around and are just impressed when I tell them (the auditorium) sat dormant for over 20 years. It was time," he said.



STAFF PHOTO BY DALTON ZBIERSKI

Teens representing Vibe Dance Center in Chicopee performed in City Hall.