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SERVING PALMER, MONSON, BRIMFIELD, HOLLAND & WALES

# The Journal Register

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## PALMER

### Supt. presents budget to School Committee

By Marcelo Gusmão  
Staff Writer  
mgusmao@turley.com

PALMER – Last week, the School Committee had a Special Meeting March 6 to discuss the school budget that Superintendent Matthew Francis would present to Town Council the following week.

Francis started his presentation by thanking Principals Susan North and Holly Riopel and her administration teams, as well as the Director of Student Services, directors from IT, transportation, food service, facilities, and Kids' Corner.

"The budget process had been expanded on this year and we asked for more detail. This is Principal North and her admin team, Principal Riopel her admin team, Director of Student Services and all the different directors from IT, transportation, food service, facilities and Kid's Corner.

"This was a different process than last year," Francis said. "This year we expanded it greater, so you're going to see it a little differently this year than in years past. I think you'll like the way that it's presented and compiled but it goes back to all the pre-work that those different individuals and groups of individuals did to get us to this point."

Francis's presentation outlined a number of the costs that the school district is expecting to accrue this fiscal year. This included contract negotiations for paraprofessionals, for nurses, and all individual contracts that are not unionized.

"Although (the budget is) reducing our full-time education positions, as of right now, we are not laying off any individual due to a budget cut," Francis announced. "I want to stress that; we are reducing our FTEs, but we will not, in this budget as it is right now, be laying off due to budget cuts."

There are, however, retiring teachers who will not be replaced according to this year's budget. Francis added that there will be some potential class size increases, but that they are within the contractual numbers and described them as

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Logan and Hannah, play in the Boys Scouts' camping section.

Turley photos by Harrison Giza

## Old Mill Pond Open House



A group of students, teachers, and parents color with Crayola markers.



School Psychologist Shea Conley alongside Special Education Evaluation Team Leader Monique Dubuc.

### Faculty and families celebrate learning with fun

By Harrison Giza  
Staff Writer  
hgiza@turley.com

PALMER - Old Mill Pond Elementary celebrated their annual open house last Thursday to a packed schoolhouse.

From the hallways to the classrooms, each and every place in the school seemed to be decorated or reimagined for the event.

"It really is such a great event," Principal Holly-Beth Riopel said. "We have so much for parents and students to do together. There's a little something for everyone."

One of the biggest highlights of the night was located in the gymnasium, where students could be found playing with an interactive exercise screen. A projection with the caption

"Sit back and relax. The exercise will begin soon" appeared every 15 minutes, inviting all students who walked by to drop in and nestle into the mellow vibes of the room.

Kids were encouraged to stretch and do yoga poses as the bright captions in front of them transformed into images. Yoga mats were distributed throughout the gymnasium.

The instructions read: "Anxious or stressed?" the caption states.

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## MONSON

### Supt. and Counselor filling in

Principal, Assistant Principal are on leave

MONSON – This week, Superintendent Cheryl Clarke confirmed that the Principal Arthur Murphy and Assistant Principal Katie Czarniecki are out on leave.

"Maria Barnes and I are covering the office of the Principal and Assistant Principal while they are out," Clarke said.

Clarke dismissed rumors that the Principal and Assistant Principal were terminated.

"Barnes and I have been and will continue to be at the high school daily until further notice, facilitating the day-to-day operations and ensuring both staff and students are supported," Clarke said.

If you need to get in contact with the high school, you can call them at 413-267-4589.

## MONSON

### Police chief discusses budget increases

By Marcelo Gusmão  
Staff Writer  
mgusmao@turley.com

MONSON – Chief of Police Steven Kozloski appeared before the committee to advocate for an increase to the his department's budget.

The meeting discussed several line items relating to salary increases, International Brotherhood of Police Officers contract increases, with one of the main issues being the transition of part-time officers to full-time.

"In response to evolving police reform requirements over the past years, we've gradually replaced part-time roles that the town could not fill with full-time positions as deemed necessary while balancing fiscal constraints with operational needs," Kozloski said. "To maintain this transition, we had planned to

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## COMMUNITY

### Local Woman organizes safe space for addiction sufferers

By Harrison Giza  
Staff Writer  
hgiza@turley.com

MONSON – Some residents held their first All Recovery meeting this past Friday at The Monson Thrift Shop and Community Outreach Center.

Liz Shaw, a longtime resident, wanted to create something for all in the area who struggle with addiction.

"I'm going to do this every Friday night," Shaw said. "I'd like to get it to a point where it is like an AA meeting. Not always the same person running it. We want to get volunteers who come in and know what the meeting looks like."

Shaw broke down her interests in the community and why she believed it is so important to have someone to speak to about times of



Liz Shaw and Mary Hull discussing plans for their All Recovery Meeting.

personal crisis.

"We will have people go around and introduce themselves," said Shaw. "Kind of like a weekly check in and then after that we will do an open topic discussion, who-

ever is running the meeting will have a list of topics to pull from and then you just go around and you talk about it. Very open and

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## COMMUNITY

### Dress Library proves a successful business venture for two friends

By Marcelo Gusmão  
Staff Writer  
mgusmao@turley.com

THREE RIVERS – With a dream and some serendipitous luck, Natalina Tulik and Michelle Annecchiarico have been able to found a very successful dress thrifting nonprofit.

Second Time's A Charm is located in Building #3 of the Palmer Technology Center on 4 Springfield St. Tulik and Annecchiarico founded it in 2018 after their daughters' prom.

"We had an idea back in the summer of 2018 after our daughters had gone to prom and we realized how expensive prom dresses were," Tulik said. "A classmate of my daughter's who had been asked to prom told her friend that she couldn't go because she couldn't afford it. I said to Michelle one day, these dresses are just hanging in closets, and some girls don't have access to afford these dresses."

The charitable non-profit is run entirely on a volunteer basis. People looking to buy prom dresses are encouraged to come to the store, are given a tour, and then get to try on their dresses, which they can then take for free, with the option of leaving a \$20



Submitted photo

Second Time's A Charm is located in the Palmer Technology Center on Springfield Street.

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# SPORTS

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## BASKETBALL

### Panthers advance in state tournament



Vanessa Baer takes a shot from the free throw line.

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

By Tim Peterson  
Sports Correspondent

PALMER—With Giamorya (Jo Jo) McTier cheering on her former basketball teammates from the bench, the Palmer Lady Panthers didn't have very much trouble advancing into the Division 5 elite eight for the second consecutive year.

The sixth-seeded Lady Panthers, who took control of the round of 16 contest with the help of a 17-0 run in the first half, cruised to a 53-32 victory over the 11<sup>th</sup>-seeded Hopedale Blue Raiders before a large home crowd, last Tuesday night.

"We love the energy that Jo Jo brings to our team," said Palmer senior Vanessa Baer. "She has attended a couple of our practices this week which has really helped us a lot. I learned so much from her during the past couple of years. Everyone has been contributing and we've been playing very well in our past few games."

McTier, who was the Lady Panthers captain last year, recently completed her freshman season as a member of the University of Saint Joseph (Conn.) women's basketball team.

"It's always great when one of your former players comes back," said Palmer co-head coach Denise Levasseur. "Jo Jo was a great captain, and she has helped us at prac-

tice. We've missed her and it's very nice having her back again."

Several other former Lady Panthers players have also come back in the past and have helped the girls' basketball team. A few of those players are Kendall Levasseur, Madison Cole, and Madalyn Theriault, who finished her outstanding high school basketball career with 1,060 points.

Madalyn's younger sister, Charlotte, is a sophomore on this year's varsity basketball team.

In the round of 16 victory, Charlotte Theriault, who has accumulated more than 1,100 career points, scored 16 of her game-high 20 points in the first half.

"We were a little bit nervous coming into tonight's game, but we were able to pull away with a big run in the first half," Theriault said. "We also played very well defensively. It's extremely special to be playing one more home game this season."

About ten minutes after wrapping up their round of 16 victory, the Lady Panthers players and coaching staff found out that 14<sup>th</sup>-seeded Drury had upset third-seeded Lenox, 32-30 in another round of 16 game. That outcome meant the Lady Panthers would be hosting the elite eight game, which raised the excitement level inside Palmer High School a little bit higher.

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## BASKETBALL



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

Richie Gula shoots for the Pioneers.

### Pioneers lose state tourney opener to Panthers

By Tim Peterson  
Sports Correspondent

PALMER—The Palmer Panthers won a preliminary round home game in the Division 5 state boys basketball tournament for the second time in the past three years.

Led by senior Andrew Menard and freshman Taydem Haley, who combined for 48 points, the 23<sup>rd</sup>-seeded Panthers advanced into the round of 32 with a 79-51 victory over the 42<sup>nd</sup>-seeded Pathfinder Tech Pioneers on Feb. 27.

"It's really good for these guys, especially the two seniors, to have a home win in the states,"

said Palmer head coach Missy Rocker said. "As soon as we found out that we would be facing Pathfinder, the kids were very excited about playing against their friends."

Two years ago, Palmer defeated the Hampden Charter School East, 61-40, in a preliminary home game before losing at Hopkins Academy in the round of 32.

This year's postseason journey also came to an end for the Panthers in the round of 32 following a 68-49 road loss to the 10<sup>th</sup>-seeded Douglas Tigers two nights later.

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Jayda Pardo fakes to her left and bounce passes to her right.



Jordan Bigda goes for a layup.



Madison Rathbone passes on the run.



Loretta Petraszewicz holds the ball back before passing into the paint.



Photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

The first wave of harriers are off in the 2023 St. Patrick's Road Race in Holyoke.

### St. Patrick's Road Race set for this Saturday afternoon

By Gregory A. Scibelli  
gscibelli@turley.com

HOLYOKE – The weekend of St. Patrick's Day is synonymous with the popular parade in the streets of downtown Holyoke. But equally tradition is the 10K St. Patrick's Day Road Race.

The road race was disappointingly cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and again in 2021 when COVID-19 rates rose due to the vaccine not being as widely available at the time.

But last year, the race returned to the joy people throughout the region and beyond and Holyoke once again became a hub of activity beginning with "Race Day."

And the sights and scenes of St. Patrick's Day weekend were also back in the Paper City the past

two years as the downtown area around Maple and High Streets were lined with patrons. Bars and restaurants were filled with people going in and out, the Mummers gave their performance, and children and others were able to participate in the Kids Walk and Fun Run prior to the "main event" taking place at 1 p.m.

This year's race, the 47<sup>th</sup> running of the tradition, will take place this Saturday, March 16. Once again, many will be looking to add their name to the list of winners of the 10K.

In 2023, it was the ideal day for Jenna Gigliotti, an Amherst woman who won the 10K Road Race for the second consecutive year. She crossed the finish line at 35:29.

This year's male and overall RACE | page 8

## YOUTH BASKETBALL

### Palmer Suburban 7-8 falls in finale



Cassian Kowalik goes for a shot on the hoop.



Alex Wilkerson fakes and tries to get around an opponent.

PALMER – Last Saturday afternoon, the Palmer 7-8 boys Suburban Basketball team was defeated by South Hadley 51-39 in a game held at Converse Middle School. It

was the season finale for Palmer, and the playoffs were scheduled to begin this week, with Palmer set to take part.

Ibis Castillo-Clotter takes a different path to the hoop.



Liam McKinney makes his way down the court.

