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PALMER



Submitted photo:
Local officials cut the ribbon outside the playground.

Old Mill Pond School playground renovated

By Kevin Flanders
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PALMER – Local leaders joined school officials last week to unveil the newly renovated playground at Old Mill Pond School.

Held on Aug. 27, a ribbon cutting ceremony and tour showcased the accessibility upgrades made possible by \$30,000 in Fair Share funding secured by State Senator Jake Oliveira.

“Every child deserves the opportunity to play,

learn, and spend time with their classmates in a space designed with them in mind,” Oliveira said. “Investments like this are exactly what Fair Share is about – putting resources back into our communities and making a meaningful difference for

students and families.” Oliveira was joined at the ceremony by State Representative Todd Smola, who grew up near the school and played an integral role in securing House support for Oliveira’s amendment filed on the Senate side.

“Without Rep. Smola, who understands this community as well as anyone, this wouldn’t have been possible,” Oliveira added. “Any project like this one is about teamwork to improve the quality

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MONSON

Legislators support Monson students

By Kevin Flanders
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MONSON – As students and staff kick off a new school year, they’ve got plenty to celebrate thanks to the support of local legislators.

On Aug. 24, officials presented Monson school leaders with a check for \$70,000 secured in the FY27 budget. The state funds supported the purchase of 200 Chromebooks to be used by students throughout the year.

During the check presentation held at Monson High School, State Representatives Brian Ashe and Angelo Puppolo were joined by District Director Amanda Hellyar, of Senator Ryan Fattman’s office.

“We are very grateful for this support for the pur-

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PALMER

Picture book honors special bond

By Kevin Flanders
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PALMER – With the release of her new picture book, author Mary Outhuse is sharing with young readers the joys of a close-knit family on a rural farm.

“The Adventures of Glady-Lu and Peg: Meeting a Moose” captures the special relationship between Glady-Lu and her older sister, Peg, as they experience both the excitement and the simple pleasures of life on their rural Maine farm.

“I wrote this book to honor my mother and her special bond with her sister,” said Outhuse, a retired bank-

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PALMER

Pathfinder Tech welcomes new principal

By Marcelo Gusmão
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Jay Taylor

PALMER – As Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School reopens for the new year, the community welcomed Principal Jay Taylor to the staff.

Taylor has a diverse background in education, which has involved working in multiple roles as both a teacher and an administrator. He described himself as feeling honored and excited to be joining Pathfinder Tech.

“Each role taught me something different and helped shape who I am as

school leader,” Taylor said. This week, Taylor is coming off of the late-week Professional Development ahead of students arriving at Pathfinder this past Monday. This served as Taylor’s opportunity to introduce himself to the staff, and discuss all the opportunities the school has to offer and why he loves technical vocational education.

“People see relevance in their learning,” Taylor said. “Schools like Pathfinder Tech have the opportunity to change the trajectory of people’s lives.”

“Above all I have an

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MONSON



Photo by Marcelo Gusmão
Eighth graders Mia, Maddie, Ashley, Aleksa and Ani enjoyed the food while watching the school’s presentation.

Back-to-School BBQ

Monson High School kicks off new year

By Marcelo Gusmão
Staff Writer
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MONSON – This past Thursday, the school district invited incoming seventh graders to tour the school in a school-sponsored barbecue.

“We got a great turnout,” said Superintendent Paul Foster. “This is for our new students, so these are mostly

seventh graders, because the high school is seventh to 12th

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SOCCKER

Girls soccer back on the turf

SOUTH HADLEY – It was not their own home field at Dr. Rogers, but Monson High School girls soccer was back on the field last Saturday afternoon. The Brownies participated in multiple short scrimmages in a play day at South Hadley High School. The Mustangs are getting ready to open the regular season on Tuesday, Sept. 8 against Southwick Regional at 4 p.m. They also had another scrimmage scheduled against Chicopee this week.

Right, Chelsea Hull navigates up the field.



Audrey Gregoire makes her way up the field.



Avery Beaudoin brings in a pass.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com
Ema Mazare tries to corral a header.



Makayla St. George sends a quick pass away.



Lila Castonguay makes a quick touch.

SOCCKER

Familiar face takes helm of MHS girls soccer

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

MONSON – A little bit of history will be made when the Lady Mustangs kick off the 2026 regular season with a home matchup against Central Division foe Southwick on Sept. 8.

On that afternoon, Brooke Murphy, who was one of the most prolific scorers in Monson High School history, will become the first woman to coach the Lady Mustangs soccer team.

“It’s a very special honor to be the first woman to coach the girls’ soccer team,” said Murphy following a recent preseason practice. “I played for this team for six years, so it feels good to give something back. I was an assistant coach last year, and it’s a great group of girls.”

Murphy joined the varsity soccer team when she was in the seventh grade.

That year, the Lady Mustangs defeated Sabab, 5-3, in the Western Mass. Division 3 finals at Snot Park in Chicopee. It marked the first time that the Monson girls’ soccer team took home the Western Massachusetts championship title.

“Being a member of the first girls’ soccer team to win the Western Mass. title in school history was a cool experience,” Murphy said. “The boys team played before us and they also won, so it was a very memorable night for our school and community.”

Five years later, the Lady Mustangs celebrated a thrilling 1-0 victory over Gateway High School in the Western Mass. Division 4 championship match, which took place at Westfield State University.

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FOOTBALL



Jarett Skowrya takes the return toward the right sideline.



Grayson Griswold takes the snap for Pathfinder.



Cassian Kowalik lumbers through the crowd on a carry.

Pioneers set to represent Palmer for 2026

PALMER – The Palmer High School football team is not fielding a varsity team this season due to lowering numbers.

The team hopes to have a JV team this year and rebuild its varsity roster for next season.

Meanwhile, Pathfinder will be representing the town in the varsity ranks by itself this year. The Pioneers were scheduled to be in scrimmage action this week, but rain threatened that matchup. Pathfinder’s schedule was

slightly changed by some of the matchups being moved around this year.

The season opener for the Pioneers will not be far away, however, as Pathfinder will make a very short trip to Ludlow to take on the Lions

on Friday, Sept. 11 at 6:30 p.m. Their season opener will take place on Friday, Sept. 18 against Commerce.

The Pioneers will be using Legion Field as their home field once again this season.



Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli
The Pathfinder defense comes up with a big stop during last year’s final game with Belchertown on Thanksgiving



Aiden Girard makes a great block.



Trevor Alexander makes a carry for the Pioneers.

UA awards scholarship



Submitted photo
Western Massachusetts Baseball Umpires Association Board Member Chris Anderson awards a \$500 scholarship earlier this summer Sean Krol. The umpires’ association funds the scholarship through dues paid by its members. Anderson hopes in the future to fund more scholarships either through fundraising or donations, saying its important to give back to the sport they love, and promote education for high school seniors who play. Applications for next year’s scholarship will open up early in 2027.