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AGAWAM

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Sheriff Shuffle 5k raises more than \$25,000

By Brendan Rooney
Correspondent

HOLYOKE — More than 600 runners and walkers turned out for the Hampden County Sheriff's Office annual Sheriff Shuffle 5K on Oct. 4, raising over \$25,000 for the YWCA of Western Mass, which surpassed expectations and will now bolster the YWCA's outreach and emergency shelter services for those affected by domestic violence, further solidifying a vital partnership as the community continues to rally in pursuit of finding a solution to the ever-growing epidemic.

As usual, the long-standing fundraiser used the Holyoke Elks and Ashley Reservoir as its base of operations, drawing participants of all ages, from seasoned local athletes to families and first-time supporters, turning the crisp autumn morning into a vibrant display of solidarity.

Before the official kick-off, local vendors and resource



Above: HCSO Sheriff Nick Cocchi with athletes from Western New England University.
Right: HCSO Sheriff Nick Cocchi with Boomer from the Springfield Thunderbirds.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY BRENDAN ROONEY

tables buzzed inside the hall, offering everything from crisis support literature to community wellness programs, showing assistance is always available no matter the occasion.

An element HCSO Sheriff Nick Cocchi touched upon, sharing, "We're going to have over 650 people here, all

taking part in an event that shows the public that it's not okay to verbally, mentally, or physically abuse anybody, man or woman," Cocchi said, emphasizing that the community's collective voice grows stronger with every mile walked and run, and that it's time for change."

He then shifted his focus

to the YWCA's mission, noting that the work carried out by CEO Liz Dineen and her staff is of the highest importance.

"The YWCA does an unbelievable job in supporting our domestic violence survivors

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Gravestone Girls haunt library with knowledge

By Christina Gioscia
Correspondent

AGAWAM — Last Monday evening, Oct. 5, Agawam Public Library hosted the Gravestone Girls. Proprietrix Brenda Sullivan spoke about the history of graveyards in America and how the culture around death has developed throughout the years. Agawam has a rich history dating back to pre-colonial times, the tactics to uncover

history presented can help further local knowledge,

Sullivan explained exactly what the Gravestone Girls do.

"We are cemetery educators and artists," Sullivan said. "We do a bunch of different things. We do public presentations, like I did tonight, about the evolution and usage, and history of gravestones and cemeteries. We lead cemetery walking tours. I teach proper tomb-

stone rubbing and gravestone cleaning processes. I also make sculptured art pieces directly from the faces of the original stones. So we make replicas as well. I was here within the last couple of years, doing a program called 'Welcome to the Graveyard' and it's 400 years in 90 minutes, about the evolution of burial ground cemeteries and gravestone art, history and symbolism."

Sullivan shared how this

history connects back to today.

"It's important because we're mortal people," Sullivan said. "We don't know. We kind of forget that in the modern age. So, we don't understand when we go to cemeteries, particularly older ones; we don't understand the creepy artwork on the colonial gravestones. You go to 19th century rural garden cemeteries, and I see signs with rules and regulations at

the front of the gate that include things like no picnicking. Which is a part of what that space was used for in the 19th century/ The folks of the colonial period, and the 19th century were far more in touch with their morality. They were sort of more in touch with their families. For colonials, death was just a face. Omnipresent, inescapable. Be prepared at every moment.

"Because this was the

world where life was hard. And the work you did here determined whether you got rainbows and ice cream and unicorns in the next world, or if you went to warmer climates. 19th century folks were about communing with death, communing with nature. You've got spiritualists and the transcendentalists that are doing the seances and Ouija boards and com-

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Students inducted to Tri-M Honor Society

Last week, 18 new members were inducted into the Agawam High School Chapter of the Tri-M (Modern Music Masters) Honor Society. The list of 2026 inductees includes; Robert Cooney, Katie Dahm, Jacob Doan, Madison Dorval, Briahana Dupre, McKenzie Favolise, Kasey Fillion, Robert Gamble, Rachel Haire, Sophia Ieraci, Lydia Kim, Tessa Kowarsky, Aiden Lamontagne, Amelia Marsotis, Rozana Melnichuk, Mia Miladakis, Nick Nahajlo, Ryan Outhuse. The society also introduced the officers for the 26-27 school year. Emma Hart - President, Cullen Kirk - Vice President, Chelsea Casamento - Secretary, Megan Outhuse - Treasurer, and Charlotte Smith - Historian. SUBMITTED PHOTO

Election letters must be received by Oct. 16

The Agawam Advertiser News welcomes readers to participate in this year's state election by writing letters to the editor for publication.

Letters of up to 250 words from local residents endorsing candidates on the ballot or discussing campaign issues should be sent to the Agawam Advertiser News by email to aan@turley.com or care of: Turley Publications, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, faxed to 413-289-

1977 by 12 noon on Friday, Oct. 16 to be published in the Wednesday, Oct. 21 edition. No endorsement letters will be printed in the last edition before the election.

Letter writers need to provide their name and the town they reside in.

Please include a daytime telephone number (for verification purposes only) when submitting your letter. Your phone number will not be printed.

Resident Stefanie Kesecker spreads care through her writing

By Quinn Suomala
Correspondent

AGAWAM — Agawam resident Stefanie Kesecker published one of her stories in Chicken Soup for the Soul.

Kesecker's story, titled "Santa's Backup Squad" was featured in the recent edition of Chicken Soup for the Soul called That Christmas Feeling.

The story centers around

a true event in Kesecker's life. She used to live in Indianapolis, Indiana and work as a 911 operator.

One night she got a call that a single mom with two kids had returned home from work on Christmas Eve and found that her house had been broken into and all of her things had been stolen, including her Christmas items.

"She was so upset that her

kids weren't going to have Christmas," Kesecker said.

Kesecker quickly took action and spread the story to some of her other dispatchers. Together, they were able to pull together a special Christmas for the mother and her children.

"Working that job was very heavy because we heard a lot of trauma, but that was just a beautiful instance where we were able to take

something bad somebody had done and turn it into something positive," Kesecker said.

The story of that evening stayed with Kesecker. She knew it was a wonderful moment, but it was also a moment she hoped would happen more often.

"I wanted people to know that there's always people we can help out and I think that's what we're supposed

to do as humans: help each other out as much as we can," Kesecker said.

Moving forward, Kesecker had always wanted to be a writer, but had never had the chance to pursue it as a career.

In her spare time she would write stories, one of which was the story of that Christmas Eve. Kesecker shared her stories with some of her friends, who quickly

encouraged her to try and get them published.

"She said, 'I think some of your stories would do well in Chicken Soup for the Soul,'" Kesecker said.

Inspired by her friend's confidence in her, Kesecker gave it a shot and submitted her story about that Christmas Eve to the series.

Six months later she heard

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SPORTS

Brownies field hockey team get to .500 with split

AGAWAM – Last week, Agawam High School field hockey had a pair of games back-to-back to end the week. Agawam came from down 2-0 to defeated West

Springfield 4-3 and then fell to rival Longmeadow 2-0. Agawam is now 5-5-2 with four games remaining on the regular season. The Brownies need two wins to qualify for

the state tournament automatically. They are outside of the top 32 in Division in the most recently power rankings, requiring a .500 finish to make the tournament.



Above: Gianna Battista heads into West Springfield's end of the field.



Right: Olivia Govoni sends a pass away.



Lily Charest takes on a defender.



Above: Alyssa DaSilva tries to get the ball past an opponent.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Left: Ashleigh Brown drags the ball slowly up the field.



Below: Fiona Kellogg-Brodeur tries to get around a West Springfield defender.



Stafford Speedway hosts final Friday race

STAFFORD SPRINGS, CT – Stafford Speedway hosted its final Friday night race program of the 2026 season with NAPA Auto Parts Championship Night on Oct. 2. Feature wins were notched by Anthony Flannery for the second consecutive race in the SK Modified® feature, Josh Wood in the Late Model feature, Nick Anglace in the SK Light feature, Jason Lafayette in the Limited Late Model feature, and Brandon Warren in the Street Stock feature. Track champions for the 2026 season are Keith Rocco in the SK Modified® division, Adam Gray in the Late Model di-

vision, Tyler Barry in the SK Light division, Jeremy Lavoie in the Limited Late Model division, and Ryan Waterman in the Street Stock division. In the 40-lap SK Modified® feature event, Dylan Izzo took the lead at the start with Marcello Rufrano taking second. Ethan Durocher was third behind the two leaders with Jon Puleo fourth and Mikey Flynn fifth. Keith Rocco spun in turn 2 to bring the caution flag out with 2 laps complete. Rufrano took the lead on the restart with Izzo falling back to second. Durocher was still third with Puleo fourth and Troy Talman was now

fifth. Anthony Flannery was sixth followed by Alexander Pearl, Todd Owen, Flynn, and David Arute. As Rufrano was starting to stretch out his lead, Durocher made a move to the outside of Izzo for second and they ran side by side for several laps but Izzo was able to fend off Durocher's challenge. Flannery moved up to third with Todd Owen taking fourth as Durocher slid from third back to fifth on lap-16. Flannery took second from Izzo on lap-19 and that move opened the door for Owen to take third from Izzo one lap later. Flynn spun in turn 2

to bring the caution flag out with 23 laps complete. Durocher got turned into the backstretch wall on the restart and that collected several cars including Puleo, Art Caruso, Matt Vassar, Josh Morrison, Chris Buffone, Wade Gagner, Bryan Narducci, and Cory DiMatteo to bring the caution flag back out before a lap could be completed. Under the caution the car of Josh Morrison ended up spun backwards against the frontstretch wall. Rufrano took the lead on the next restart with Flannery in second. Owen took third with Izzo fourth and

Pearl fifth. Just behind Pearl and Izzo was Rocco, who was recovered from his earlier spin. Pearl took fourth from Izzo on lap-26 just before the caution came out one lap later for Talman and Curt Brainard, who both went around in turn 4. Rufrano and Flannery went wheel to wheel for the lead back under green with Owen third, Pearl fourth, and Rocco fifth. Rufrano cleared into the lead on lap-30 with Owen and Flannery now side by side behind him as well as Rocco and Pearl. Owen took third on lap-31 while Flannery took the lead from Rufrano

on lap-32. Rocco moved into fourth on lap-32 and he took third from Owen on lap-36. Flannery led the field to the checkered flag to pick up his second consecutive victory after claiming his first career Stafford SK Modified® victory back on Sept. 25. Rufrano finished second with Rocco, Owen, and Pearl rounding out the top-5. Rocco clinched his fifth SK Modified® track title one week ago on Sept. 25, which ties him with Bob Potter for the second most SK Modified® championships with 5 each, trailing only Ted Christopher who won 9 SK championships.