

Thanking you for a wonderful year.

By Emily-Rose Pappas

Looking back at 2025, it was a year of fun and a year of new friends. I grew as a writer and met so many new people and made even more new friends.

It was a great year filled with challenges, laughs, hot summer events, and cold events

that I wanted to be inside for.

Even through the difficult times, like when I fell and tore my ACL and was laid up through February, I found myself grateful for the many connections and friends I made that helped me get the papers done from home by sending me photos and emails.

The people in the towns of Belchertown, Granby, and South Hadley are wonderful, and I felt truly blessed to be able to represent and share the stories of these towns this year, and I look forward to the future and what other stories I will be able to tell.

Thank you all for a wonderful year.

JANUARY 2025



Residents are freezin' for a reason

By Emily-Rose Pappas
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BELCHERTOWN – Many worthy causes warrant a jump into freezing water on a cold day, and it is this commitment to such an uncomfortable situation that truly makes a difference.

Saturday was a brisk 27 degrees, and the water in the Mobile Plunge was a staggering 12 degrees, but 20 people came together for one reason: to jump in to raise funds for the Special Olympics.

The Massachusetts Special Olympics came to Belchertown to hold a Polar Plunge for the first time, and it was a great success, raising just over \$8,000 for the organization.

The Special Olympics is dedicated to providing sporting opportunities to individuals with intellectual disabilities, to “[make] a more inclusive Massachusetts, one game at a time”, according to the website.

The Athlete Oath at the Special Olympics, “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt,”

is a reminder that the very idea of trying something is an attempt worthy of recognition.

The Special Olympics hosts Polar Plunges all across the state, and the money raised goes towards providing sporting opportunities for people of all ages with no limitations.

“There are a million people jumping into freezing cold water to show they’re brave in the attempt,” said Amanda Hulbert, a representative of the Special Olympics.

Arc Point Brewing Co., the Belchertown Police Officers Association, headed by Officer Vinny Daponte, Stop and Shop, McCarthy’s Pub, and more came together to raise funds and take the plunge into the freezing water for this organization.

“This is the first annual, and we are having it next year, and it’ll be even bigger,” said LJ Jedrey, a veteran Belchertown police officer. “I am so happy at how many people came up even today in the cold to jump in that water.”

Special Olympics Athlete and winner of several medals,



Amanda Hulbert, Officer Vincent Daponte, Dave Pare of Arcpoint Brewing Co., and LJ Jedrey of the Special Olympics together in front of the Mobile Plunge.

TURLEY PHOTO BY EMILY-ROSE PAPPAS

and acting Inclusion Director, Nate Myhrum, came up to say, “If you can do the plunge or support the plunge,

you are supporting a lot of people.”

The event was a very successful one for the

Massachusetts Special Olympics, and despite red noses, the freezing cold, and icicles and people’s hair,

there were warm smiles galore, as the community came together to support a worthy cause.

Library finds creative way for youth to ring in the New Year

BELCHERTOWN – For many families, New Year’s can be difficult because late nights can be difficult for little ones, but the Clapp Memorial Library has found an easy solution.

The library hosted a Noon Year’s Party on New Year’s Eve, and kids with their families and friends came for a fun morning of crafts, games, music, and face painting as they waited for the ball to drop at 12:12 noon, that is.

“The Library wanted to offer a fun, local celebration for children to welcome in 2025,” said Jennifer Whitehead, head of children’s services.

Seven family volunteers came to help run the different stations, as well as five teen volunteers, and two face painters. Brian Sterling also came at the end to play Auld Lang Syne on the bagpipes as a perfect ending to the party.

There were many craft stations, and kids could make noise makers with beans in cups on popsicle sticks, uni-

corn frame easels, and a New Year’s paper crown and ribbon streamers.

There was also a photo booth with backdrops and props, and kids could get their photos taken with a Polaroid camera, and there was a station for Pokémon Bingo.

“The party showed just what our community is about. It was wonderful to see children playing, creating, and dancing with each other while the teens and adults all pitched in to help everyone with the activities,” said Whitehead.

About 78 people were in attendance, and they filled up the auditorium space in the Town Hall and are looking forward to the new parties and events the library will hold in 2025.

“We are all looking forward to celebrating the 10th year of artist Scott Fischer designing our summer reading logo,” Whitehead said. “We have many community events coming up this spring that we are excited about.”



(left to right) Jennifer Whitehead, Salem, JenaRose, QP, and Charlotte Cassidy ready for a fun New Year’s Eve Party.

TURLEY PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY EMILY-ROSE PAPPAS

FEBRUARY 2025



Local Eagle Scout earns award for helping those who have passed

By Emily-Rose Pappas
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GRANBY – Eagle Scout Thomas DeWitt, a Boy Scout for the past 11 years, he knew he wanted to help a part of the community not always looked at: the cemetery.

After his Eagle Scout ceremony on January 11 of this year, he was on his way to big things as he started early, earning 46 merit badges and did what was essentially two Eagle projects at once, earning the title of Eagle Scout at 16.

“Once you get it, you’ll have it forever, and once you’re eighteen you can’t get it at all. It reflects on everything- if you can hold up and do this, it shows what else you can accomplish,” said Thomas.

His Eagle Project was based in the West Cemetery in Granby, and the old section had several gravestones

that were crooked or broken, in need of being pulled out of the ground and levelled and reset.

“Whenever I go there, I know that some of my family’s buried there, and I saw the stones were toppled and I didn’t like seeing that. I also know a lot of people water the flowers they put there, so I thought it would be a good idea to put up a shed with a water tank in it.”

Some of the graves are over 100 years old, and some more than 200 years old with dates as old as 1810 written on the stones in the small corner of the cemetery.

“I learned a lot during the project, because each stone was a little different,” said Thomas. “It meant a lot to me, and it made me feel good, and I liked that other people liked it. I got a lot of community support for it.”

Thomas did a lot of research, including the right kinds of chemicals needed to clean the algae and moss

off of the stones, finding D-2 worked the best.

“Originally it was ten, and I ended up doing thirty,” said Thomas. “I also took an old shed that was already standing and we rebuilt the whole thing and moved it to a new spot and put in a well with a 275-gallon water tank in the shed.”

“We also put in gutters on the shed to collect rainwater and installed a pump that pulls water from the well into the tank.”

Some of the stones were even moved and they found where they went and put them back where they were originally, making sure they were levelled and secure in the ground.

Many people worked hard to assist Thomas in his projects, and Amherst Farmers Supply gave discounts for the supplies for the pump and plumbing.

The community came together to support Thomas’ Eagle Projects at the ceme-

tery.

“I would say I’m most proud of how much work he put in, but also the response of the community,” said Rollin DeWitt, Thomas’ father.

Through fundraising with car washes and raffles and donations of money, Thomas was able to raise \$4,000 to put towards the \$7,500 project, where most of it was donated.

The cemetery now stands proudly, and in a much better state, all thanks to a young man who worked hard to maintain the dignity of those who have passed.



RIGHT: Thomas DeWitt proudly standing with the newly rebuilt shed and displaying his merit badges.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS

MARCH 2025



The magic of mushrooms explored at library talk

By Emily-Rose Pappas
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BELCHERTOWN – Figuring out what kinds of mushrooms are out there can be a daunting task, as many look similar, and toxic ones can mimic perfectly edible ones.

For any aspiring mushroom forager, it’s essential to learn how to identify which ones are safe to eat, so you can make sure that you are only eating the safe ones.

Jonathan Krantz, a former park ranger, came to the Clapp Memorial Library last weekend to share a presentation on the Magic of Mushrooms, detailing what kinds of mushrooms there are, as well as the best spots to forage for them.

“Mushrooms are mysterious and beautiful, and there’s never an end to what you’ll discover,” said Krantz. “I started getting interested in walking in the woods, and

then the interest in mushrooms came about, and that’s how the combination started.”

When you think of mushrooms, most people have come to mind the kind you find at the supermarket, but it is actually the same kind of mushroom, only at different levels of growth.

“The important part is that the part you see is just the tip of the iceberg,” said Krantz. “The true body of the mushroom is the mycelium, the true body of the fungus that does the living, the eating, and the growing.”

Fungi have adapted to spread their spores in different ways, whether coming out as dung after an animal eats it, or through the wind, or in other ways.

Fungi make their habitats and substrates in different places, growing on or in dung pies, meadows, in a fairy ring, on decaying matter like wood, on dead or dying mushrooms, in forest

soil, and on moss.

Fungi are often characterized based on how they live: parasitic fungi live off of other living things; some fungi live on decaying things, which in turn helps in creating rich soil for the cycle of photosynthesis; and some have a symbiotic relationship with other plants.

While fungi are not plants and are their own kind of organism, they are truly unique and are often grouped in different species according to the specific characteristics they have.

Any potential mushroom forager needs some tools to hunt for mushrooms, and they include a basket, paper lunch bags, a knife and/or weed puller, a notebook and pen to keep notes, and a camera for photos because colors will fade.

You can learn more about what Jonathan Krantz does on his website at www.krantz.com/mushroom-walks-and-talks.



Jonathan Krantz showing different kinds of mushrooms.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY EMILY-ROSE PAPPAS

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MARCH 2025



Melanie Donovan (center) leading the crowd in a chant, to "Save Our Schools."



Standing out with signs outside town hall to share support for the schools.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY EMILY-ROSE PAPPAS

Standing out with signs outside town hall to share support for the schools

By Emily-Rose Pappas
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BELCHERTOWN – A group of residents organized a stand-out to raise awareness of the funding issues coming with the next fiscal year's budget.

The budget this year brought high anxiety to towns across the state, where they found the difficult task of working with steep budget deficits and complications that would result in cuts.

These cuts, especially within the schools, greatly concerned parents, and a group of them and teachers came together to do some-

thing to address these cuts and learn the future of the schools.

The group created a Facebook page, called S.O.S. Belchertown, Save Our Schools, and organized a stand-out outside the Selectboard Meeting on Monday evening, drawing pictures with chalk, holding signs, and more to fight for their beloved schools.

The School Committee went over the budget for the fiscal year 2026, and after reviewing the effects of inflation, as well as what is being received as a budget from the governor, and then taking into account things like school choice, transportation,

class sizes, and more to fund the year, came up with a list of impacts.

These impacts included reducing performing arts offerings and world language instruction, eliminating an IT Director position, reducing the Food Service Director position, eliminating or reducing after-school clubs, reducing sports programs, increasing the need for grant funding to help professional development, and increasing class sizes.

The school systems have also found other areas of need, and the budget decreases made their goals difficult to obtain, including safety measures, teaching

and learning resources and materials, technology, health and wellness resources, and maintenance needs.

The School Committee provided an overall overview of the total reductions from level service requests from fiscal year 2021 to fiscal year 2026, a total of \$4,784,187 in savings, or 30.5 positions eliminated, and 3.6 full-time employees reduced.

The parents and teachers of the community gathered for the stand-out because they care about Belchertown, their schools, and students above all.

"As long as I have been a school committee member, the district has faced cuts,"

School Committee Chair Heidi Gutekenst. "I know the town hasn't received level service either, but with the schools getting a larger portion of the funding, we get hit harder and it has, unfortunately, been in terms of personnel. I can accept that revenue has not matched the increase in expenses. I like many others, want to know a solution. I would certainly advocate for a 2 1/2 override before reducing non-essential town services, but something has to be done."

Maggie Chen, a fourth grader, spoke about losing special classes from lack of funding.

"Last year, when I was in

third grade, we had specials every day of the week," said Chen. Everyone looks forward to specials, like music, art, library, and gym. This year, because the schools were not fully funded, they had to cut one special. I really miss having that time during the day to get up and run around in gym. If the school can't get the money they need for next year, what else are they going to cut? My older brothers all got to play in the band, run track, and do after-school clubs. Will those things even be there for me when I get older? Please find a way to keep the parts of school that we love so much."

APRIL 2025



Local nonprofit operates in honor of son

By Emily-Rose Pappas
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BELCHERTOWN – Dedicated parents, Glenn and Jennifer Boileau, began a charitable organization here in town called Nick's Waves of Change, which began in 2021 after the passing of their son, Nick, from acute myeloid leukemia.

The Boileaus held their first fundraising event in the spring of 2022 and since then, have hosted fundraisers to raise money for scholarships for Belchertown and now Western MA high school students to go to college.

"It's very personal to us, and it's nice to be able to help the community in this way. He was a special kid, and it helps us cope as well," said Jennifer Boileau.

Nick was a student at Belchertown High School and graduated in 2011. He went to college for psychology and had a strong motivation to get to work and make the world a better place, studying hard.

"He really was a great kid. He never gave us any trou-

ble, and he always followed the rules. All through high school, he was pretty quiet, but after he came out of his shell," said Jennifer Boileau. "Sometimes even the shyest of kids at school can really flower once they find what motivates them."

During his studies, he was accepted into a doctoral program for clinical psychology and published 34 papers before he turned 28, and more were published after he passed.

"Once a year, this gives us a chance to tell everyone who and what he was, and what he accomplished in his brief life," said Glenn Boileau.

"I know that he would be proud of us to do this in his memory because education was important and character was important," said Jennifer.

Nick's Waves of Change works to give a \$1,000 scholarship to a Belchertown resident attending Belchertown High School, and last year it grew to include a scholarship in the same amount for a Western Mass student attending a different Western Mass school.

The scholarship is based

on Nick's blog, "The Battle", and every student applying must read "The Battle", and then complete a writing prompt where they write about how they feel they can make some change in the world.

"No matter how small you think something is, it can create a wave of change without you even knowing it. I am hoping that this charity that we are doing can make an impact," said Jennifer Boileau.

"I hope through this charity we can give back to the world some of the kindness it needs. It doesn't hurt to be nice," said Jennifer Boileau.

You can also read Nick's blog and find more information about the caregiver award, how to donate, and the scholarship application at their website, www.nicks-wavesofchange.org.

The Boileau family, Glenn, Erica, Nick and his dog Loki, and Jennifer enjoying a hike.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS



APRIL 2025



Community comes together to express their artistic talents

By Emily-Rose Pappas
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BELCHERTOWN – Sharing the artistic talents of the community is one of the main goals of the project at the Transfer Station, where

the shipping containers are being painted in magnificent murals.

Creative Economy Coordinator Maude Haak-Frendscho, Clapp Memorial Library Director Cyndi Harbeson, DPW Director Linda Leduc,

and Belchertown Cultural Council and Creative Economy member Molly Robinson all worked together on this project.

“Each of the Transfer Station Container Mural artists- Caoin O’Durgy, Melissa Pandina, and Joshua Smith- are so invested in this project and the themes behind it of community and sustainability,” said Haak-Frendscho.

Muralist Melissa Pandina hosted Belchertown residents of all ages at the Transfer Station on Monday, April 21, to paint on the container together as one community of friends and neighbors.

“We have emphasized community engagement throughout, from early surveys to report-backs, youth participation in a design workshop with Caoin earlier this winter, the paint day with Melissa this afternoon, and the process to be captured and shared over socials by Josh,” said Haak-Frendscho.

The Belchertown Transfer Station Container Mural Project is one such way that the town is looking to enhance and broaden the creativity and artistry of our very own community members.



Painting the container by number as a community.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY EMILY-ROSE PAPPAS



Little Alistair painting his heart out on the container.

“One of the goals of the Transfer Station Container Mural project is community cohesion, forging a sense that we’re in it together when it comes to sustainability and recycling, and I can’t think of a better way to embody that than to take part in making it alongside family, friends, and neighbors,” said Haak-Frendscho.

The Community Paint Night brought out dozens of people ready to paint, sharing their talents and adding

their creativity as a part of one mural.

The Transfer Station Container Mural Project was sponsored by the New England Foundation for the Arts, or NEFA, through their Making it Public for Municipalities program. The program included a training series from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, MAPC, and funding for a pilot project.

“One of the key take-aways of the survey we did

at the Transfer Station this last summer in preparation for putting out a call for artists was how much residents value the sense of community here in Belchertown, that folks are there for one another. We want to celebrate this community spirit throughout the process,” said Haak-Frendscho.

The community paint night was a great success, with dozens of people coming out to put their own unique paint strokes on the containers.

MAY 2025



The traveling quilt comes to town

By Emily-Rose Pappas
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BELCHERTOWN – Members a part of the project include Radically Rural members Julianna Dodson and Lillian Chase, Lisa Stahl, the Cultural District Manager, Jenn Turner, and Library Director Cyndi Harbeson for a project centered around a traveling quilt to share the stories of our town.

“Art weaves a community together in different ways,” said Dodson. “Community and interconnectedness are essential for humans- it’s how we are designed.”

Radically Rural is a grassroots movement that began in 2016 and 2017 in Keene, New Hampshire, by the work of the Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship and the Keene Sentinel newspaper.

The main goal of Radically

Rural is to connect people from different communities through ideas, where leaders of rural towns can come together at their annual summit to learn from one another.

“It’s all about building relationships. It’s another way to meet new people as well,” said Chase.

From there, they turned the organization towards uniting rural towns, and one of the ways they found to do so was through art, and show others that rural is not the same thing as remote.

At last year’s summit, they began making a quilt, coming up with an idea that this quilt, with different embroidery and fabrics, would be a physical representation of the interconnectedness that Radically Rural strives to represent.

“The people who helped make this quilt are bonded,” said Dodson. “It’s really about what you can do to

bond with others and forge relationships during this process that matters most.”

Members of our community, Melanie Donovan, Maude Haak-Frendscho, Lesa Lessard-Pearson, and Jenn Turner, went to the summit and added to the quilt.

“We all got a lot from the conference last year, so when they offered us the quilt to start with, I was so excited,” said Turner. “We want to highlight what we have, and then build on it. We are excited to host the quilt because it allows us to stop and reflect on what the community has to offer.”

The quilt will have its start at the Clapp Memorial Library, and it is the perfect place to start, as the library has the ability to “fill in the gaps in the community and help to provide different areas of need,” said Chase.



Cyndi Harbeson, Lisa Stahl, Jenn Turner, Juliana Dodson, and Lillian Chase holding the beginning of the traveling quilt.

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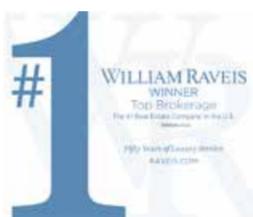
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MAY 2025



High school drama club pays homage to Green Day

By Emily-Rose Pappas
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BELCHERTOWN – With Green Day reaching its 20th anniversary for their album, “American Idiot”, it is only fitting for a musical to commemorate the band and its influence on young people and their music tastes growing up.

The Belchertown High School Dram Club assembled a musical, “Green Day’s American Idiot” at the BHS Veterans’ Memorial Auditorium on May 9 and 10.

“I am most excited to showcase the talented students in the cast and pit band,” said Midge Leighton, director of the musical

“I am excited for the final product. Everyone has been working hard, and it is always a joy to see everything come together. That is what makes doing these productions worth it. Being

able to work with the students and provide a memorable experience,” said Josh Guerraz, music teacher and director of the pit band.

The musical, which ran for just over an hour and a half, featured 22 songs by Green Day that fans of the band enjoyed seeing performed on stage.

Guerraz, fondly called “Mr. G,” knew about the 20th anniversary of the Green Day album and reached out to work with Leighton to put together the musical.

“My favorite thing about my character is that he’s free-spirited,” said Natalie LaRoche, who will be playing Tunny. “He does what he wants and doesn’t take no for an answer.”

“I think [Johnny’s] fun to play because there’s a lot of evolution of his character throughout the play,” said Kian Roy. “He goes through a lot of change, and a lot of growth.”

“I feel like he’s scrappy, and at times I feel like I can be scrappy, too,” said Jack Meyers on his character Will. “My favorite thing has been trying to have his personality shine even though he does so little.”

“I’m most proud of these students for their dedication to making these songs come to life and tell the story of the show,” said Leighton.

“The cast, the band, the crew. This is not a show that is done a lot by high schools, and I hope the people will come and support what we are doing. Especially if they are Green Day fans,” said Guerraz.

With a pit band, talented students, and a chance to listen to music that made a mark on your high school, middle school, or childhood, this musical is an opportunity to celebrate the twenty years of an album of classic music for Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z alike.



Some of the faces of Green Day’s American Idiot musical performance.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY EMILY-ROSE PAPPAS

JUNE 2025



Belchertown hosts its first-ever trash gala

By Emily-Rose Pappas
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BELCHERTOWN – Getting dressed up doesn’t usually involve trash, but for this event, the Belchertown Creative Economy and members of other town departments made trash the required outfit.

The Trash Gala, the first of its kind, was a big party to celebrate the completion of the Transfer Station’s murals, a project months in the making, now complete with three works of art.

“The murals themselves inspired the Trash Gala,” said Maude Haak-Frendscho. “Linda Leduc’s idea of painting murals on the Transfer Station containers was brilliant, and the juxtaposition of investing in making the Transfer Station a beautiful, inspiring, and educational experience inspired the high/low idea of the Trash Gala, and to continue into the community engagement that makes the project so special.”

The Trash Fashion Contest was created in order to bring



Sarah Maronie’s fabulous skirt made out of pages from the Sentinel itself.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY EMILY-ROSE PAPPAS

the community together in a fun way, while showcasing their creativity and ability to

also provided an engaging, hilarious, and fun judging moment for the costumes.

“It’s such a gift from each of the artists and every individual who took part in the processes that led to each of them that we now have these incredible murals in such an unexpected place,” said

Haak-Frendscho. “It’s such a delightful surprise, and sure to turn some heads, and hopefully also make them consider the ideas of sustainability in the process.”

The night was full of fun, and the artists got a chance to see their murals complete and were thanked and con-

gratulated for their hard work and dedication.

With the Trash Gala being a wonderful time, the people who came together are looking forward to doing this again next year and cementing it as a tradition for years to come.



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OPINION



By Russell Gloor

I'm on SS disability, should I switch to regular Social Security?

Dear Rusty:

Should I take my Social Security now at age 62, or wait till I am 65?

I've been collecting SS disability due to health issues and was curious if I should wait or claim my regular Social Security retirement benefits now.

Signed: Disabled but Wondering

Dear Disabled but Wondering:

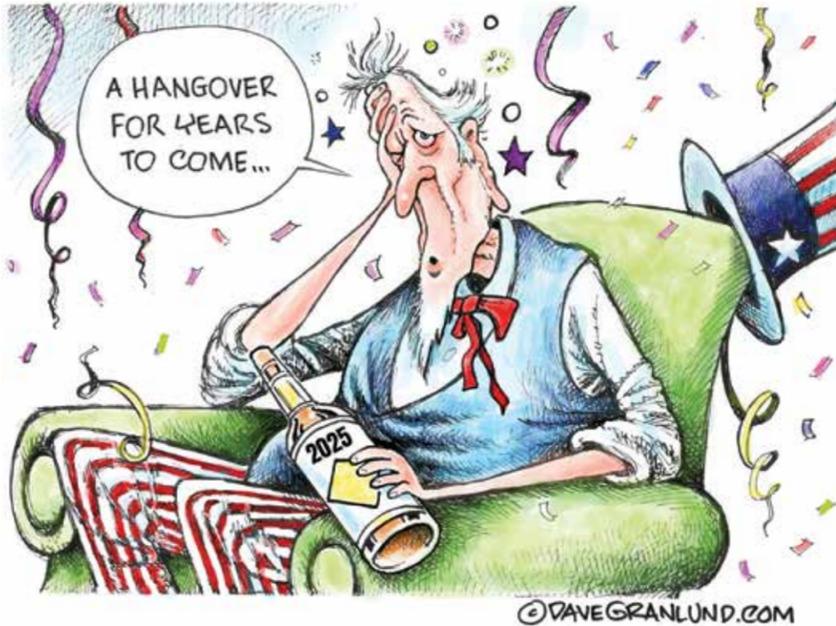
If you are now collecting Social Security Disability Insurance benefits and you are still disabled, it would be a disadvantage to claim your SS retirement benefits at this time age 62 or even at age 65. That's because your SSDI benefit is the same as your Full Retirement Age amount, as calculated for you at the point you became disabled. Born after 1959, your FRA is age 67, but you are already receiving your FRA benefit while on SS disability even though you have not yet reached your full retirement age. That full SSDI benefit will automatically convert to become your SS retirement benefit when you reach your full retirement age.

If you were to claim your normal SS retirement benefit any earlier than your SS full retirement age of 67, the amount you get would be reduced for

claiming early. At your current age, you would likely get between 75% and 80% of what you are now receiving on SSDI (depending on your exact age in the month you claim and at age 65 you would get about 87% of what you are now receiving on Social Security disability.

In other words, as long as your disability continues and you remain eligible for Social Security Disability Insurance benefits, you should not switch to your normal SS retirement benefit, because you would get less money. And the resulting benefit reduction would be permanent.

The Association Mature Citizens Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. This article is intended for information purposes and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the Association Mature Citizens Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association. To submit a question, visit amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.



Testing and taking inventory of seed is a good practice to start the new gardening season off right

I don't know about you, but I have been caught up in spirit of the holidays. It's been fun to indulge in family time and try and get caught up on much-needed rest.

I have given myself this last week of the year to continue to take it easy before I hit the "to do" list.

One of the big things I have been procrastinating on at work is taking inventory of all the seeds I have left from the last couple of years. The box holds a hundred or so different varieties of seeds, mostly heirloom, open-pollinated types.

There is something refreshing about accomplishing this task soon into the new year: a seasonal habit I've had for the last four decades give or take. To me, it means spring is not far behind.

In the Garden

by Roberta McQuaid

be stubborn germinators as far as flowers go.

As a general rule I keep seed that is less than three years old, unless the variety in question is rare. Even spotty germination is better than nothing when it comes to seed that is hard to find.

You can save yourself disappointment at planting time by performing a simple germination test on questionable seed.

Place a few seeds in a moist paper towel. Roll it up and seal it in a plastic bag in a warm location.

Instructions in the seed catalog or on the packet should tell you how long it takes for germination to occur, as well as inform you of the initial germination percentage. Once the necessary amount of time has elapsed unroll the papertow-

I begin by organizing the seeds first by category: vegetable, flower or herb, then alphabetically. After those piles have been made, I go back and decide which packets are no good or no longer of use.

No matter how well they are stored, some seeds won't germinate well past the year in which they are sold for. Based on my experience these include hybrid onions and parsnips. Carrots can be iffy.

In the herb category dill, caraway, parsley, angelica and chives come to mind. Year old garden heliotrope, feverfew and bellflowers can

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Turley Publications Letters to the Editor Policy

Letters to the editor should be 350 words or less in length. No unsigned or anonymous opinions will be published. We require letter writers to include his or her town of residence and home telephone number. We must authenticate authorship prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions deemed to be libelous or contain unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks, defamation of character and offensive language. All unknown or alleged facts and quotations offered by the author need to cite credible, unbiased sources. Send letters to: Sentinel, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069 or via email to sentinel@turley.com. The deadline for submissions is Friday at 5 p.m.

Turley Election Policy

This newspaper will print free self-submitted statements of candidacy only four weeks or more out from the election. All candidates running in both contested and uncontested races are asked to submit their statements to the editor to include only biographical and campaign platform details. Total word count for statements is limited to between 300-500 words maximum. Please include a photo. We will not publish any statements of candidacy inside the four weeks from election threshold. To publish any other campaign publicity during the race, please contact our advertising representatives. We also do not allow personal attacks against other candidates or political parties in statements of candidacy, nor do we publish for free any information about key endorsements or political fundraisers.

Letters to the editor of no more than 250 words from supporters endorsing specific candidates or discussing campaign issues are limited to three total per author during the election season. No election letters will appear in the final edition before the election. We reserve the right to edit all statements of candidacy and letters to the editor to meet our guidelines.

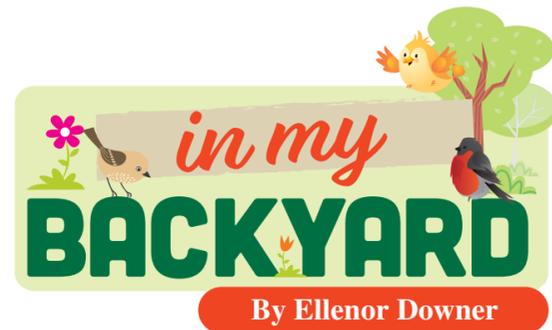
Sighting of a Sora on Nauset Beach

The Massachusetts Audubon Society reported a sighting of a sora on Nauset Beach in Orleans on Cape Cod between Dec. 10 and 16.

Soras are small, chubby, chicken like birds with long toes and between eight to ten inches tall. Their stubby bill distinguished them from other rails in the United States and Canada, which have longer bills. They also frequently hold their short tail cocked up showing their white patch under the tail.

Soras are mottled gray and brown with white-edged feathers, but the feature that stands out the most is their yellow candy-corn bill. Other field marks include a black mask, throat patch and vertical white lines on the sides. Females tend to be less brightly colored than males and have less black on the face and throat. Juveniles also lack the black mask.

Soras have a distinct walk pushing their head forward with every step while nervously flicking the tail upward, exposing the white under tail feathers. They tend to forage in dense vegetation, but also venture into open areas from time to time. Their long toes help them walk on top of floating mats of vegetation. Soras make their homes in freshwater wetlands with emergent vegetation such as cattails, sedges and rushes. During migration and winter, they also use brackish marshes, flooded fields and wet pastures.



By Ellenor Downer

The Sora makes its presence known with plaintive whistles and whinnies rising from the marshes all across North America. Despite its abundance, it is not often seen: As with other rails, it spends most of its time hidden in dense marshy growth or wet meadows. Occasionally it will walk about in full view at the edge of a pond, delighting any birders, who happen to be nearby. Although Soras might seem like weak fliers when seen fluttering over the marsh, they regularly migrate long distances, many going to South America for the winter.

Cape Cod bird sightings

Besides the sora, the following sightings were reported between Dec. 10 and Dec.16. A western tanager was found at Mass Audubon's Wellfleet Bay sanctuary. The male painted bunting continued at a feeder in Brewster. Other bird sightings included a clapper rail

and six western willets in South Chatham, two common terns in North Chatham, a blue-headed vireo and a yellow-breasted chat in South Orleans, a common yellowthroat and for northern shovelers in Harwich and a short-eared owl.

Birds seen at Race Point in Provincetown were a black guillemot, 200 razor-bills, 13 dovebies, three common murrets, 45 black-legged kittiwakes, six Iceland gulls, a red-necked grebe and 75 northern gannets.

Other sightings around the Cape included two continuing Eurasian wigeon in Yarmouth Port, two Barrow's goldeneyes at Loop Beach in Cotuit, a great egret at Mass Audubon's Skunknet River sanctuary in Barnstable, a Nashville warbler reported at a house in Yarmouth, continuing unseasonably large numbers of tree swallows in various places including over 50 in Falmouth, two western willets in Chatham and an American golden plover in North Truro.



Christmas bird count

From Dec. 15 to Jan. 5, the Christmas Bird Count will commence in the U.S., Canada and 18 other countries in the Western Hemisphere. Countries are divided into geographical regions with 35 in Massachusetts and each region will pick a single 24-hour period to count birds. Data from the CBC can be utilized in many ways, including to monitor trends in bird populations, document range shifts over time and examine how climate change may impact the winter distributions of birds.

CBC data has been used in hundreds of analyses, peer-reviewed publications and government reports over the decades.

Birds likely seen in Massachusetts are chickadees, titmice, many species of woodpeckers, bluebirds, Car-

olina wren and many raptors. Migrants from the north include kinglets, some raptors, snow bunting and some sparrows. Waterfowl seen mostly along the coast are dabbling and diving ducks. Irruptive species that are only present in some years are evening grosbeak, red crossbill, white-winged crossbill, redpoll, pine grosbeak and red-breasted nuthatch.

Helping birds

People may help birds by participating in the Christmas Bird Count. It is an important source of data on birds.

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.

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Orioles edged by league rival Tigers

By **Tim Peterson**
Sports Correspondent

South Hadley—It has been more than 10 years since the South Hadley boys' basketball team has won a league title.

The Tigers remained undefeated in league play following a thrilling 71-70 victory over Suburban South Division rival Belchertown before a large crowd at South Hadley's Thomas B. Landers Court on Dec. 22.

"We now have a 3-0 league record, and this is a very big league win for us," said South Hadley junior guard Noah Hambley. "Belchertown is a very good basketball team, and it was a hard fought battle, but we managed to come out on top."

The Tigers, who had a 3-2 overall record, haven't lost to the Orioles on their home court since the 2018-19 regular season.

"This is probably the best high school gym in Western Mass.," said South Hadley head coach Chris Gerber.

"More than just the players parents come watch us play. We always have a large student section. It's a very special place."

The last time that the Tigers won a league title was during the 2012-13 season.

The only other Suburban South Division team that still had an undefeated league record was East Longmeadow (2-0).

Belchertown and South Hadley are both first-year members of the Suburban South Division. They both competed in the Bi-County East league during the past couple of years.

When the Orioles and the Tigers faced each other inside the old South Hadley gym a year ago, Hambley scored 25 points with the help of six 3-pointers leading the Tigers to a 23 point victory.

"This is a very difficult place for a visiting team to play a game," said Belchertown head coach Jim Hart. "It's always loud here and there was a lot of people here tonight."

Hambley, whose aunt,

Jes, is the school's all-time leading scorer with 2,069 points, scored a team-high 29 points in the first meeting of this season between the two squads.

Junior forward Tim Loughrey, whose older brother, Jack, joined the elite 1,000th club last year as a senior, chipped in with 20 points. The Tigers' other double-digit scorer was senior guard Isiah James with 10 points.

"We played unselfish basketball tonight, which led us to the win," Loughrey said. "This is our biggest win so far this year. We're hoping to win the league title."

The Orioles (2-2, 1-2) also had three players reach double-digits led by junior forward Brice Letendre with a game-high 35 points. He missed tying his career-high by two points.

"Brice is an outstanding basketball player," Hart said. "He plays the game with a lot of energy. He dominated tonight's game."

On December 18, 2024, Letendre scored 37 points

leading the Orioles to an 80-68 home win versus Hoosac Valley.

Sophomore guard Andrew Wright made three 3-pointers leading to his 11 points and senior guard Austin Raymer finished the game with 10 points for the visiting team.

The score was tied for the final time at 67-67 with a minute remaining in the fourth quarter.

A Loughrey driving lay-up down the lane gave his team a two point lead with 33 seconds showing on the scoreboard clock.

With 5.3 seconds left, Hambley was fouled following a steal. He made both foul shots, which sealed the Tigers' second home victory.

"It's a lot easier making foul shots late in front of the home fans," Hambley said. "The atmosphere is always great here. It was a fun game tonight and I'm just glad my team won."

Letendre made a 3-pointer at the buzzer, but the visitors came up one point short.



Jake Pacunas goes for a layup.

TURLEY PHOTO BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

ORIOLES | page 8

Pioneers fall to 0-2 with loss

SPRINGFIELD — On Thursday, Dec. 18, Pathfinder girls basketball was defeated at Bay State

Academy Charter 43-17. Pathfinder's offense struggled in the defeat, though Addison Doktor managed

double digits for the Pioneers with 11 points. Pathfinder will next travel to Duggan on Jan. 2 at 7 p.m.



Clockwise from left: Taylor Allen surveys the offensive end; Ciara Green comes up with the rebound; Megan Clark fakes a pass; Hannah Mellor fights to keep the ball.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



T-Birds get big comeback for win over Bridgeport

SPRINGFIELD — The Springfield Thunderbirds (10-12-4-2) overcame a two-goal deficit with less than eight minutes remaining en route to a stunning 4-3 overtime win over the Bridgeport Islanders (11-14-2-1) on Sunday afternoon inside the MassMutual Center.

In desperate need of a pick-me-up, the Springfield power play drew first blood just seven seconds into their first opportunity, as Samuel Johannesson whis-

tled a one-timer over Henrik Tikkanen's blocker arm at 6:33 of the first. Johannesson's second goal of the season, set up by Alek Kaskimaki, was just Springfield's second power-play goal in its last 26 man advantages.

After a relatively quiet opening half of the period, T-Birds netminder Georgi Romanov was far busier in the closing six minutes of the frame, denying all 11 shots that came his way in the first 20 minutes.

Bridgeport's rugged pressure paid dividends at 4:30 of the second as Joey Larson chopped a net front shot past Romanov, tying the game at 1 apiece on Larson's fifth goal in six games against Springfield.

In a period that saw the Isles outshoot Springfield 15-3, the visitors vaulted to the lead at 15:35 as Cam Thiesing intercepted a pass deep in the T-Birds end and whistled a wrister over Romanov's blocker to send the game to the intermission with Bridgeport

in front, 2-1.

Sean Day further buoyed the Islanders' lead at 3:57 of the third, as he picked up a loose puck in the slot off a Thiesing faceoff win and snapped a forehand through Romanov's stick side, ballooning the Bridgeport lead to 3-1.

With the T-Birds in dire need of a jolt, the power play provided just that at 13:03 as Marc-Andre Gaudet gathered a puck inside the right-wing circle and wired home his first AHL goal under the cross-

bar behind Tikkanen, making it a one-goal game with 6:57 remaining.

With Romanov on the bench for an extra skater, the T-Birds got payback on the Islanders, who tied a game last month under similar circumstances. Luff cradled the puck along the right-wing circle and funneled a pass across the crease, where Dillon Dube steered it behind Tikkanen, tying the score with just 1:05 remaining.

As a result, the game went

to overtime, and after coming up short in each of their prior six games that extended past regulation, the T-Birds did not allow a similar outcome this time. Just 43 seconds into overtime, Luff gathered the puck and scooted around a defender down the left wing, drove to his forehand side, and lifted a wrister past Tikkanen, picking up his third point and third game-winning goal to secure the come-from-behind victory.

Rams now a perfect 4-0

GRANBY – Heading into the Christmas holiday, it has been a good run to start the season for Granby High School girls basketball. The Rams improved to 4-0 with wins recent-

ly against Ludlow, Palmer, and Monson. The Rams last played Dec. 23, defeating Monson 68-24. In the big offensive win against the Mustangs, 10 different players scored for the

Rams, with Kalli White leading the charge with 27 points. Brenna Moreno had 12 points. Granby returns to action on Jan. 2 against Amherst Regional at 7 p.m.



Above: Kaitlyn Curran tries to push the ball toward the corner.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



Right: Kalli White hustles down the court.



Brenna Moreno tries to come down with a rebound.



Meredith Bartosz heads for a layup during recent action against Ludlow.



Rowan Cook readies to receive a pass.



Nobody dreams of having multiple sclerosis

Some dreams are universal: hitting a ball over the Green Monster; winning the World Series with a grand slam in the bottom of the ninth inning. Finding out you have MS is not one of them.

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To help make the dream of ending MS come true, call 1-800-FIGHT MS or visit us online at nationalmssociety.org.



ORIOLES ■ from page 7

At the start of the game, Wright sank a 3-pointer from the left corner and Raymer followed with an inside hoop giving the Orioles a 5-0 lead.

South Hadley responded with an impressive 17-2 run during the next six minutes.

The trio of Hambley, Loughrey, and junior guard Chase Pecia (4 points) combined to score all the Tigers points.

The home team built a 17-7 lead with a minute left in the opening quarter following a Hambley lay-up.

Another lay-up from James gave South Hadley a 21-11 advantage a little more than a minute into the second quarter.

The Orioles then put together a 14-4 run.

In the middle of the second quarter, Letendre and Wright buried 3-pointers. That was followed by back-to-back slam dunks by junior forward Shea MacLean (6 points). It tied the score for the first time at 25-25 with 3:20 left in the opening half.

Letendre scored the Orioles final eight points of the second quarter, but the Tigers held a slim 36-35 halftime advantage.

With 7:27 left in the third quarter, the Orioles retook the lead for the first time since the beginning of the game at 38-36 when Wright made a pair of free throws.

The Orioles managed to hold onto the lead for the rest of the third quarter with the help of Letendre, who scored 13 points during that stretch on five inside baskets and a 3-pointer.

After Letendre began the final quarter with another inside hoop making the score



Quinten Chen attempts a block on a shot.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

60-51, the Tigers scored ten unanswered points.

Loughrey began the run with a fastbreak lay-up. Then senior guard Griff Soderbaum (6 points) and Hambley buried 3-pointers, which closed the gap to 60-59 with six minutes remaining.

The Tigers retook the lead (61-60) following another Loughrey lay-up.

The score was tied one final time at 67 before the home team made a couple of clutch shots down the stretch.

South Hadley, who played its final game of 2025, will be looking to sweep the season series for the second consecutive year when they make the 10-mile trek down Rte. 202 to Belchertown High School on Feb. 3.



Andrew Wright makes his way down the court.



JUNE 2025



Artist shares 10th year designing summer reading logo

By Emily-Rose Pappas
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BELCHERTOWN – For the past ten years, the Clapp Memorial Library has trusted and enlisted the services of artist Scott M. Fischer to design the logos for their summer reading themes.

He does so and takes on the challenge with eagerness, getting the chance to design something with the restriction of four colors to be printed on t-shirts.

Fischer is best known for his work in the realm of fantasy art, designing cards for Magic: The Gathering, creatures for the Dungeon Master's guides of Dungeons and Dragons, and illustrating for fantasy novels and series

The Wheel of Time and The Witcher.

"I've always known I've wanted to be an artist," said Fischer.

He then moved into his childhood dream of illustrating for Dungeons and Dragons, where he created the monster, The Beholder, known well by D&D enthusiasts, as well as illustrations for the Ravenswood Manor guide.

"I just worked my butt off and improved and improved my craft," said Fischer. "I knew I wanted to do art that involved the things I loved, like metal, Dungeons and Dragons, and skateboards."

He found inspiration for his art everywhere, including in the shapes of coffee travel mug covers, lettuce, and

more as he found shapes and textures to add to his work to make it his.

He was first asked by Jennifer Whitehead at the library back in 2016, when the library was looking for a way to continue creating t-shirts for the summer reading programs they host.

Whitehead reached out to Fischer, and he eagerly accepted, looking forward to the challenge of creating art with only five colors, including the color of the shirt. Fischer's excitement and creativity hit overdrive as he planned different ways to create art that matched the themes.

"I'm most excited for the theme this year," said Fischer. "For myself as a gaming and fantasy artist, it's almost like

fate wrote this in. A career in art is leveling up and leveling up your craft."

The theme, "Level Up at Your Library", features a raccoon in armor, raising a flaming sword and holding a spell book, a dragon twisting behind him to look at the pages. The design is composed of the colors green, blue, brown, and purple, and captures the essence of a video game character accepting a quest.

"Artists tend to be hermits, and it's through designing these t-shirts that I have found a way to join in with my community," said Fischer. "I really love the concepts and being able to play with the wording. It's like trying to figure out a puzzle."



Scott Fischer and Xavier Maroney, showing off his three cards illustrated by Fischer.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY EMILY-ROSE PAPPAS

JULY 2025



Summer begins with special bike parade

By Emily-Rose Pappas
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GRANBY – With summer here and school out, kids are getting out their bikes, scooters, and skateboards as they are ready for hours of outdoor play and fun.

The Granby PTO, along with members of the East Meadow School, came together to host, judge, and put together a special Bike Parade over the weekend.

The basketball court at East Meadow was filled with kids with their creatively decorated bikes of different themes, and the judges, Superintendent Mary Jane Rickson, former Principal Lisa Desjarlais, and Leslie Baran, were faced with a tough task to pick the winners.

"My favorite part was helping my neighbor, Aubrey, decorate her bike

and then decorating my own. Aubrey had a Granby basketball theme because she likes to play sports, so her bike was a basketball hoop on wheels with a Granby Rams theme," said Baran. "I had a Dr. Seuss theme to inspire people to be kind and remind them to read books while they are on summer vacation."

"My favorite part was watching all the kids riding their bikes around and being so proud of their creations," said Elle LaGuerre, a member of the PTO.

The parade featured bikes of all kinds as elementary schoolers and rising fifth graders competed with their decorated bikes.

Cindy's Drive-In donated gift cards to the top three winners and free ice cream cone coupons as well. Cub Scout Pack 4034, with Cub Master Lucy Schafer and Heather Guzman, also

brought a lesson on bike safety, and James and AJ Guzman set up a mini "bike repair shop" to make sure all bolts were tight and tires had air for a safe ride.

"It was fun setting up the cones, drawing arrows in chalk, and getting the community together. It was great working with Principal Desjarlais, Superintendent Rickson, and Mrs. Baran to judge," said LaGuerre. "It was awesome that we asked the Cub Scouts to help, and they did! I'm also really grateful for Mark Baran doing a coffee run!"

"I enjoyed seeing all the clever ideas. It's amazing how creative people can be! Hopefully the children participating had fun decorating with their families and coming out today," said Baran.

At the end of the parade, all eleven kids got to take home a special certificate for their themed bike.



Maverick with his sister, posing with his first-place winnings of a gift card and a coupon for a free cone at Cindy's Drive-In.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY EMILY-ROSE PAPPAS

Police and fire compete in a battle on the diamond

By Emily-Rose Pappas
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BELCHERTOWN – A little friendly competition is always fun, and for the Belchertown Police and Fire Departments, a game of softball has been their go-to for the past three years, affectionately called the Battle of the Badges.

So far, the Police Department is the reigning champ, with their three wins, and the most recent one this year, with a close 21 to 18 win.

"My favorite part is doing something besides responding to 911 calls with the Fire

Department, because really the only time we get to see them is when we have to respond to calls together," said Jason Robinson, the president of the Belchertown Police Officers' Association.

"My favorite part of the game is seeing all the people I work with engage in a friendly game of softball as well as the fans coming out to cheer us on," said Fire Department Association President Kevin Girard.

The Battle of the Badges raises money to support both associations, the Fire Department's two associations, one for all firefighters and that funds the museum, and the other for the full-time

firefighters, and serves as the union.

"The community has always supported the fire department and association. Whether it be stopping by the station to talk with us, sending thank you cards or attending fundraiser events. This community really does show a lot of support for the fire department," said Girard.

"My favorite part about being a first responder in Belchertown again goes back to being raised in town, giving me a stronger connection to the local area and people. Also, this is a job I really enjoy doing overall," said Robinson.

Community in

Belchertown to me means unity and support. Whether it's the Fire or Police department or even community members who are battling ill-

nesses, this community shows its support and unity. I just like to thank the community for its support," said Girard.

You can find the Police

Officers Association on Instagram and Facebook, and the Fire Department also posts regularly on Facebook with updates and more.



Officer Rivera hitting the ball out for a home run.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY EMILY-ROSE PAPPAS



The Police and Fire Departments together for a match of friendly competition.



AUGUST 2025



40th annual giant tag sale raises funds for new parish

By Emily-Rose Pappas
Staff Writer
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BELCHERTOWN - For over 40 years, the St. Francis of Assisi parish has hosted a giant tag sale after the vision of the late Clare Oberly, who set up a few tables at their annual barbecue that got the tag sales started.

"From those sparse beginnings, it has evolved into 17 Departments," said Kathy Wood, who organized the tag sale this year.

The Giant Tag Sale is usually held on the 4th Saturday of August, and the parish spends time collecting items for the sale for 12 days in early August, where the items are cleaned, sorted, priced, and packed up the day before to bring to the Town Common.

There were several "depart-



The Kitchen Department: Suz, Diane, AnnMarie, Roseanne, Mary, Sue, and Cathy.

ments" located around the common, and volunteers serviced each one with its own checkout counters before you left the tent. They also had items inside the Old Church.

"The best part is the sense of community that is built as it goes. Whether it is making

new friends or strengthening existing friendships," said Wood. "Most volunteers are parishioners, but not all - family and friends are recruited, and it's nice to see the bond that is made as they are welcomed."

There was an over

100-member team of volunteers from the church and community that got together to make the Giant Tag Sale happen.

The parish is working to collect funds, and the proceeds from the Giant Tag Sale will go directly to the fund for



The Knick-Knack Department: Back row, left to right: Louise, Janina, Linda, Kay, Charlene, and Beth, and in the front row Virgel, Patty, and Margaret.

the desperately-needed new Parish Center on the Jabish Street campus.

"We at St. Francis are blessed to be in this wonderful town of Belchertown," said Wood.

The Giant Tag Sale was

a great success, bringing in over a thousand people to the event, and helping the parish one more step of the way to raising the money they need for their new parish.



Adalyn Mongano, Rylee Salem, Halle Kelsen, and Cailin Donah are ready to play.



Abby Canoa, Rylon Fortier, Khloe Shaink, and Karlie Rose are practicing before their game.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY EMILY-ROSE PAPPAS

Soccer jamboree remembers beloved friend, Julia

By Emily-Rose Pappas
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BELCHERTOWN - Every year for the past three years, the Julia's 3v3 Soccer Jamboree has occurred, where players and lovers of soccer can come together to play and support the Julia Haynes Scholarship Fund, a 501c3 nonprofit, which annually awards Belchertown High School Seniors for both students

entering the trades and going to college.

"Julia was an 8th-grade student in Belchertown when she passed away, and she passed away after an 18-month battle with brain cancer," said Julia's mom, Misty Haynes. "After she passed away, four of her really good friends wanted to remember her, so they started the soccer jamboree to raise money for the scholarship fund."

Julia wanted to go to col-

lege to be a specialist to help other kids with cancer, and loved playing soccer for the former Cold Spring Soccer Club with her friends. Since her passing in 2023, her friends and family have made sure to keep the jamboree going

"It means a lot, and it's a way to remember her and keep her memory alive, but also to be with the community. It's wonderful because there's so much support," said Haynes.

The Julia Haynes Scholarship Fund committee is expecting this year to be successful, as last year raised over \$50,000.

The jamboree had both a girls' division and a boys' division, and there were 56 teams this year. The ages for the players range from third grade all the way up through high school.

"It always takes my breath away to know people are remembering her and having a day that is fun, and it's

so impactful," said Haynes. "Even the younger ones, they may not have known Julia, but the spirit they bring and the fun they have is just really special."

There were over 100 volunteers, including referees, people at the stands, and the DJ volunteered his time to support them.

People can donate to the scholarship by writing checks or through Venmo, and all information on how to apply for the scholar-

ship, deadlines, and options for donations can be found on their Facebook, Julia's 3v3 Soccer Jamboree, and Instagram, @julias3v3jamboree. You can reach out through direct messaging to the profiles.

The event was a great success as people from all over came together to cherish and remember Julia, playing soccer and getting goals just for her, as she was with them all in spirit.



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SEPTEMBER 2025



The Belchertown Fair's 166th year is a great success



The Belchertown High School Marching Orioles are making their way down Main Street. TURLEY PHOTO BY EMILY-ROSE PAPPAS

By Emily-Rose Pappas
Staff Writer
epappas@turley.com

BELCHERTOWN — For the 166th year, the Belchertown community has gathered for what many refer to as a “big family reunion”, where friends come together to reconnect and celebrate together.

The fair, which goes for a three-day weekend, is full of vendors, games, food, and fun rides, and memories are sure to be made that will last a lifetime.

Hundreds of volunteers come together to make the events of the fair possible, and thousands come together to enjoy their time with the community.

From the delicious, deep-fried Oreos and dough to kettle corn, and the crowd-favorite brownie sundaes from Hope United Methodist Church.

“People come to see what’s new in town,” said Cindy Brown, a member of the Belchertown Fair Committee.

The theme this year,

Shake, Cattle, and Roll, celebrated the fun and boot-stomping that can be had at the Fair, with music and more to enjoy.

The days are filled with neighbors reuniting, kids coming to play, and people who moved from Belchertown returning to their hometown for a time of fun and community.

“The people are my favorite, because everyone knows everyone,” Brown said. “It’s a family thing, and everyone comes to enjoy one another’s company.”

The school sports teams come to hold fundraisers, including the high school marching band, and the classes of 2027 and 2028, and the Belchertown High School and Jabish Brook Middle School Marching bands joined the parade.

People could come to get their face painted, see and pet animals of all kinds, and people lined up Main Street to watch the parade on Saturday morning with their lawn chairs, blankets, and snacks.

Hundreds of people sent in pieces of art, vegetables, honey, eggs, or anything else



Above: Claire stands proudly with her chicken named Marshmallow.

TURLEY PHOTO BY MURPHY FITTS

built, grown, glued, or crafted with their hands to enter the exhibit hall to highlight the town’s agricultural and creative roots that trace back for centuries.

The Belchertown Fair is truly a time for celebration of the community and those who make up this fun and close-knit town.



Right: A family is going down the big slide together.

TURLEY PHOTO BY EMILY-ROSE PAPPAS

National Library Card Month calls people to the library

By Emily-Rose Pappas
Staff Writer
epappas@turley.com

BELCHERTOWN - The American Library Association created National Library Card Sign-Up Month to happen in September to encourage the public, especially children, to sign up for a card as the school year begins.

The National Month was first celebrated in the late 80s and has since grown into a

beloved month for libraries every year.

“I love the library, and I love reading,” said Gwen Griffin, a 9-year-old who says the library is “the best place ever.”

Signing up for a library card is easy, and all you have to do is go to the library’s front desk, and one of the librarians can help you set one up during their open hours.

“September is the best month of the year to sign up

for library cards,” said Ruthie Sterling, the Teen Services Librarian.

The library has thousands of resources, from computers to chapter books, to audio books and comic books, there’s something for everyone, and can help you get your reading done through the year, completely free.

“I love the free resources available to the entirety of the public,” said Charlotte Cassidy.

“I love that I get to be

surrounded by books,” said Sterling.

Whatever the reason to enter the library, a library card truly opens the doors to allow to you take out your next read, movie, or even a game to enjoy.

“Get a library card because the Clapp Memorial Library has so many varieties of books for you to choose from,” said Griffin. “I love most the books because you can imagine you’re in the book with the characters.”

If you don’t have a card yourself yet, now is the perfect time to get one, and add it in to your collection of resources this National Library Card Sign-Up Month.

So, be like Gwen, and grab a card so that you, too, can disappear into a book whenever you want to, and spend the time you have indoors as the weather gets colder, to read something or learn something new.



Gwen Griffin, age 9, proudly showing off her library card and new book to read.

TURLEY PHOTO BY EMILY-ROSE PAPPAS

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OCTOBER 2025



Lake Wallace hosts very first and successful Fall Fest

By Emily-Rose Pappas
Staff Writer
epappas@turley.com

BELCHERTOWN — Lake Wallace is a beloved spot to not just residents of Belchertown, but also Springfield, Holyoke, Wilbraham, Granby, Palmer, and beyond.

The Lake is fitted with beautiful scenery and several trails, and a new Sensory Trail that is accessible to all who would like to experience it. The stunning scenery was made to be admired, and the people do, whether it's to attend a Critter Sampling event or just to spend some time admiring the nature for a pleasant solo walk.

Over the weekend, the Friends of Lake Wallace put together, for the first time, a special Fall Fest to celebrate the beauty of the Lake and the community as a whole.

"An amazingly broad representation of the community showed up, vendors, musicians, and community partners, spreading the word far beyond the folks who normally use the Trail," said Louise Levy. "People love the idea of a Trail run, and



Charlotte Cassidy providing a magical experience with her stunning handmade fairy wings and bubbles.

lots of folks are willing to sweat through a Trail run if it means supporting Lake Wallace, which they love."

The day featured an All-Abilities Roll and Stroll where people could run, jog, walk, or ride along the Sensory Trail of Lake

Wallace, enjoying the scenery and the gorgeous weather.

"Four more sections of the Trail were adopted, and at least 30 people approached me asking how they could help," said Levy of the support that was



Marley Winship with her handmade body care items, photos that won the Lake Wallace photo contest, and her blue ribbon from the Fair.

brought to the event for this special Trail.

Larry Spotted Crow Mann came to give his storytelling and rhythm-capturing performance at the Fall Fest, as we

look at how to look towards the native people who walked these lands before us.

In total, there were 30 booths with the Belchertown Police and Fire Departments,

TURLEY PHOTOS BY EMILY-ROSE PAPPAS

craft vendors, including Youth Vendors, and there were 15 sponsors and donors in total who helped make this first Fall Fest a success.

NOVEMBER 2025



Pam and Annabelle Tarnawa and Ruby and Beth Stapert are having some mother/daughter bonding time while making their glass pieces.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY EMILY-ROSE PAPPAS

Glass comes to life at the library

By Emily-Rose Pappas
Staff Writer
epappas@turley.com

BELCHERTOWN — Art is how we tell stories, share our culture, and express ourselves, and hosts countless mediums, including working in glass.

For artist Deenie Pacik Giuliano, glass has become a huge part of her life, and has allowed her to explore with light, color, and more in a unique medium.

"I think that the color and the light, the translucency of the color, is very beautiful, and the thing that

I love about it is that it is very alive and vibrant, and it changes. It's not like a painting in watercolor, and I love watercolor because of its translucency," said Pacik Giuliano. "The glass inspires me to do more and explore more, and I just love how beautiful the pieces can come out."

Pacik Giuliano got an apprenticeship and achieved a Master of Fine Arts in Visual Arts, where she has grown to take her love for the art of glasswork everywhere she goes.

Pacik Giuliano started her studio classes at the age of 28 and has been teach-

ing the art for more than 20 years. She began teaching when her children were babies, and her friend, a children's librarian, asked her to lead a drawing class for a summer reading program in 2013. After that day, she translated her teaching into her love for working with glass.

Pacik Giuliano led a workshop at the Clapp Memorial Library last week, with one session for adults and another for teens, and the room filled with people at both sessions, ready to learn and create their own piece of glass.

"Over the years, I've

learned so much from my students, and people do all these different things, and one of the things I really love is taking people who have never done art get excited about," said Pacik Giuliano. "Glass is different, and for me it's really rewarding because I've gotten so much out of working with glass, and I just love getting people excited, too."

Deenie Pacik Giuliano's patience, calmness, and passion for working with glass translate into her work and workshops. You can find out more about her and her work at her website, <https://www.deeniepacik.net/>.

Young boy raises \$700 through lemonade stand

By Emily-Rose Pappas
Staff Writer
epappas@turley.com

GRANBY — With the world and life being unpredictable, and tragedies happening left and right, it is important to highlight when communities come together to support people in need.

One little girl, named Kinsley, is a six-year-old currently battling cancer, and one little boy, ten-year-old Erick Sacco, heard about her story and her situation and decided he wanted to help.

"I decided to do a lemonade stand for her with iced tea and chips," said Erick Sacco.

Erick went out with his dad, Louis Sacco, last Sunday to set up a lemonade stand, with homemade signs reading "Sips for Hope."

Dozens of people came by to buy some lemonade, tea, or chips from Erick's stand, and by the end of the day, he raised \$700 for Kinsley to help with her medical expenses.

"My favorite part was raising the money for her. It made me really happy so many people came. I want to do another one," said Erick.

"He's a really caring kid, and he came up with this idea himself, and it shows how good of a kid he is and how big his heart is," said Louis Sacco.

Louis met Kinsley's dad through a community group that does charity work for the community called Beer Bros, and became close as a result of being a part of the group.

"Me and a bunch of people shaved our heads for her, and



Ten-year-old Erick Sacco with his lemonade and iced tea stand, Sips for Hope, where he raised \$700 for a local friend battling cancer.

SUBMITTED PHOTO she thought it was so funny and told us we were so brave, even though she's the brave one," said Louis Sacco.

Erick, seeing his dad do something to stand in support of Kinsley and her family, wanted to do something, too, so he took on the challenge to create the lemonade stand and see how much he could help her.

"Find a friend who needs help, and then do a lemonade stand in order to help them out," Erick said, sharing how others can also put together a lemonade stand.

Erick went to his schoolmates and collected cards from grades Kindergarten through 4th grade to bring to Kinsley, whom he is planning to visit this weekend.

No matter how small your contribution may seem, gathering together as a community to help someone in need is always an admirable task, and shows others that they are cared for, and is as easy as setting up a table, decorating some posters, and mixing up some lemonade.

DECEMBER 2025



Local students work on outreach to ‘Granby to Go’

By Emily-Rose Pappas
Staff Writer
epappas@turley.com

GRANBY – With the rising costs of living and the recent challenges surrounding SNAP and EBT benefits access, it has been an important need to donate to local pantries to help our communities and the families who need them.

A local youth group and scouts group decided they wanted to do something themselves to help, and so they did.

“We’ve seen a huge need in the community, especially as EBT has been threatened and costs have skyrocketed,” said Tasondra Jardine, the Granby Church of Christ Congregational youth leader.

The youth group students worked hard and created mobiles to collect food donations, and the scouts collected donations of kids-sized hats, mittens, and scarves, to donate to Granby to Go

and Neighbors Helping Neighbors in South Hadley, which also offers its services Granby residents.

“The donations mean a lot not just for our program but for the students in general. Some people may take for granted having the simple means of having hats and mittens; some go cold due to the money being used elsewhere to keep the household going,” said Judy Delong, Granby to Go’s Manager.

“Helping provide gloves, hats, and mittens for children through Granby To Go is deeply important to me,” said Scout Pack Leader Elle LaGuerre. “It feels good to be part of something that directly supports local families and ensures kids feel warm, safe, and supported when they need it most.”

The mobile is a place with plenty of parking, lighting, and visibility, and is a way for the church’s youth to directly stand as a Segway in between both Granby to Go and Neighbors Helping

Neighbors to serve as many people as possible.

“These kids are an absolute blessing, and as a CE director, teacher, mentor, and mom, I couldn’t be more proud of all their accomplishments and even more the love they have for their fellow man. The future is bright with them at the helm,” said Jardine.

“What makes me most proud is the way the Scouts showed empathy and responsibility by recognizing a need and taking action. They worked together to help ensure other children feel cared for and supported, and that speaks volumes about their character,” said LaGuerre.

The holiday season is not only a time for family and giving gifts, but also a time of giving the basic essentials, and making all the difference in the world for the people in our own communities, so that no one is hungry, or cold, or without presents on Christmas morning.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Teens at GUCC are helping hand out bags of food to all who came to the mobile spot.

Winter Light Night brings community together as one

By Emily-Rose Pappas
Staff Writer
epappas@turley.com

BELCHERTOWN – The annual tradition of the tree lighting was added eight years ago when the Belchertown Cultural Council created the Winter Light Night celebration.

Taking place on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, Small Business Saturday, the event features a vendor fair and a chance for people to explore and buy from local businesses, as Christmas gifts are on the minds of people all over.

Winter Light Night also featured a gingerbread house contest, a horse-drawn carriage ride, and donated treats like kettle corn from Kettle and Pine in West Brookfield and maple cotton candy from Shattuck’s Sugar House here in town.

“I love that this has become a tradition for our town. It’s something that my family and I look forward to every year. My kids have been coming to Winter Light Night as long as they can remember. It means a lot to me to be able to help keep this tradition going,” said Melanie Donovan, Chair of the Cultural Council.

The Belchertown Fire Association served hot chocolate with mix-ins, and the Belchertown Police began

collecting donations for their annual toy drive.

Students from the high school helped run the s’mores station, back this year in consolidated and safe fire pits. There was also a luminaries station where people could come to the table and decorate a bag, add a candle, and watch it glow as the sun set and light up the Common.

“And that’s one of the things that I love about Belchertown, we have a community that always gives back,” said Donovan. “Winter Light Night could not happen without the support of our local businesses, who sponsored all the activities and stations on the common, and our amazing group of volunteers who spent hours putting it all together and then cleaning up afterwards.”

The community truly comes together on this day every year, and it has become a wonderful tradition for the residents of Belchertown, as they come to not only see their tree light up, but also each other, despite the temperature being in the twenties and the cocoa going cold in insulated cups.

And this evening is magic, indeed, as it sets the tone for the holiday season and what it truly means: gathering with your community, smiling, laughing, and giving back.



Above: The tree lit up beautifully for all to see. Left: Kids roasting their marshmallows and warming up at the fire.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY EMILY-ROSE PAPPAS

GARDEN ■ from page 6

el and determine how viable your seeds are by observing the sprouting that has occurred.

Based on the results you may decide to sow the seed more thickly or just start over with a fresh batch.

Last year I did my own version of a germination test by sowing few seeds of questionable varieties in pots, and placing them on a shelf near my wood stove. I learned which seeds were worth the effort of sowing in the garden and which I needed to discard and order new.

Although viability decreases as seeds age,

proper storage can insure that you will get at least three years worth of sprouting out of many of your favorites. It is important to fold over used seed packets and seal them with tape after use, and if you are just getting to it now, it’s better late than never. Put them in a location that is cool and dry.

Since temperatures around 37-41 degrees are ideal, many people assume that storage in the refrigerator is preferred. It is, as long as the seeds are first placed in an airtight container along with a desiccant to absorb moisture. Desiccants such as silica gel are available in the floral section of craft shops, or you can reuse the pouches

of silica that come in vitamin bottles or shoe boxes.

If you’d rather not take up space in your fridge, storing the container of seeds in a cabinet in a dry part of the house will also work.

Whatever you do, don’t put them in a hot attic or damp basement! It is also not a good idea to purchase seeds from stores that have their seed displays in greenhouses. Temperature and moisture extremes can affect viability even if the seeds are brand new!

Some seed companies sell their seed in foil-lined packets. These are very good at keeping them fresh for the longest amount of time – especially if they are

unopened.

Now that you have inventoried your seeds, it will be a whole lot of fun to order exactly what you need. That’s what I will be doing after one more family game night and that last Christmas movie!

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

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OBITUARIES

George Lee Trusz

NORTHAMPTON — George Lee Trusz, 78, formerly of Belchertown, passed away December 18, 2025. He was born on January 6, 1947, in Lockhart, Texas, to the late John M. and Vida E. (Sanford) Trusz. George spent his formative years in Ludlow, MA, and graduated from Ludlow High School. As a natural athlete, George had a notable high school football career, one of which he was very proud, and his mother was his greatest supporter and fan.

He furthered his education at UMASS and earned his master's in social work at Smith College. George dedicated his life to helping others and worked as a therapist for Children's Study Home, Greenfield Public Schools, and Baystate Wing Griswold

Center before working in private practice in Northampton. During his career, he made sure to never stop learning and became certified in Hypnotherapy, among other things.

George was an outdoor sports enthusiast. He was an avid cyclist, hiker, tennis player, downhill and cross-country skier, and runner. Above all else, he loved his family, friends, and especially his pets and dogs.

George was preceded in death by his parents. He will be forever missed by his wife, Judy (Reinbold) Trusz; children, George Lee Trusz, Jr. (Debbie Vargo) and Zoë Riley (Kenneth Riley); grand-



daughter, Olivia Grace Trusz; siblings, Stephen Trusz (Sharon Larson), Jana Trusz (Laura Davis), Elizabeth Courtney (Dan), and Stephanie Trusz; as well as many nieces, nephews, and very dear friends.

Visitation will be held on Sunday, December 28, 2025, from 1 to 3 p.m., with a celebration of George's life to begin at 3 p.m. at the Beers & Story Belchertown Funeral Home. Burial will be held at the family's convenience. In lieu of flowers, and fulfilling George's love for animals, donations in his memory can be made to Dakin Humane Society by visiting www.dakinhumane.org.

Richard A. Bannister

Richard A. Bannister, known to all as Dick, was born on June 27, 1937, in Brooklyn, New York, the son of Robert C. and Ruth (Allen) Bannister, and was raised on Long Island. He died of heart failure on December 18, 2025, after a brief hospitalization at Baystate Wing Memorial.



As a boy, he was totally devoted to the Brooklyn Dodgers; when they left Brooklyn, he moved on to the Mets, and in New England, he added the Red Sox. His knowledge of baseball was total and

inclusive. He could swap stories and stats endlessly with anyone who liked baseball as much as he did.

After he completed his AB and MA degrees at Yale, Columbia, and Hofstra universities, he and his wife, Judy, moved up to Massachusetts where Dick taught at Berkshire Community College before enrolling at UMASS to pursue his PhD in literature. He taught briefly at Holyoke Community College, then began his lifelong career as a stamp specialist, both here and in New York City. He was a scholarly man who loved

reading history and literature. Stamps were his professional interest, and when he wasn't watching baseball, he devoted much of his time to them, too.

Dick was predeceased by his only brother, Robert, who died earlier this year in Florida. He is survived by his wife, the former Judith Tillotson; his son Jared and wife Nancy; and his daughter Cassandra and her husband Bill Fitzpatrick, and their children Brendan, Deirdre Savoie, and Sinead. He was especially proud to be a great-grandfather to Deirdre's children with Cam Savoie, Maggie and Molly.

Dick's family will hold private services.

William "Bill" A. Mont

It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of William "Bill" A. Mont, a beloved son, husband, father, and brother, who departed this life on December 24, 2025, at the age of 65.



Born in Worcester, MA, Bill spent his formative years in Springfield, where he cultivated his passions and developed a keen sense of humor that delighted those around him. Bill proudly attained two associate degrees and built a successful career as a Maintenance Technician,

working for various companies, including KidderPress and Coca-Cola, before retiring in 2022.

His work not only included local contributions but took him around the world, allowing him to build connections and friendships that would last a lifetime. He established his home in Belchertown 25 years ago, where he shared a wonderful life with his wife, Diane, whom he adored. They celebrated 25 years of marriage filled with laughter, love, and memorable moments, including their cherished tradition of

hiking every anniversary and enjoying peaceful evenings together by the fire.

Bill was known for his great sense of humor and his ability to light up a room with his goofy antics. He was also a talented artist and musician, having taken art classes at UMass and played bass guitar in several bands, most notably the group "The Memories" for a decade. Music brought him joy, and he often enjoyed it with Diane in their backyard.

Bill also enjoyed watching football and hockey with his wife and cherished the annual winter vacations in VT with Diane, Tommy, Ashley, Kyle, and in-laws, Debbie

and Pete Oyer and nephew, Kyle. They made memories filled with laughter, skiing and time together.

Bill leaves behind a loving family, his mother, Eileen Santer, his wife, Diane, their son, Thomas Mont, stepson David Burnham, and his wife, Danielle as well as stepdaughter, Ashley Burnham and her longtime significant other, Kyle Ray. Bill's memory will also be forever cherished by his brother, George Mont and his wife, Lois, sister Susan Ciantra and her husband, Nick, as well as his step-grandchildren Cameron and Kylee Burnham. His niece, Emily and nephew, Charlie Ciantra

along with brother-in-law, James Lemarier, the Williams family and many other nieces and nephews will also fondly remember him.

He was preceded in death by his father George Mont, stepfather Owen Santer, and sister Jennifer Lemarier.

Visitation will be held on Tuesday, January 6, from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Beers & Story Belchertown Funeral Home, followed by a service to begin at 4 p.m. In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests that donations be made to Shriners' Hospital or the Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Bill's memory, honoring his spirit of kindness and generosity.

DEATH NOTICES

Bannister, Richard A.
Died Dec. 18
Services private

Mont, William "Bill" A.
Died Dec. 24
Services Beers & Story, Belchertown

Trusz, George Lee
Died Dec. 18
Services Beer & Story Funeral Home, Belchertown

The Sentinel
OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.

One is a free, brief **Death Notice** listing the name of deceased, date of death and funeral date and place.

The other is a **Paid Obituary**, costing \$275, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice and may include a photograph. **Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com.

Exceptions will be made only when the family provides a death certificate and must be pre-paid.

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The Sentinel

PUBLIC NOTICES

Belchertown Conservation Commission LEGAL NOTICE

Pursuant to the authority of the Wetlands Protection Act (M.G.L. Ch. 131, Sec. 40, its Regulations (310 CMR 10.00) and the Belchertown Wetlands Protection Bylaw (Chapter 139), the Belchertown Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing on **Monday, January 12, 2026 at 7:00 PM in the Lawrence Memorial Hall Auditorium, located at 2 Jabish Street in Belchertown, MA 01007** to review a **Request for Determination of Applicability** permit application submitted by David Lafleur c/o J & P Engineering Services for the proposed work to construct a single family home and associated facilities at Lot 12 Cold Spring Street (Assessor's Map 260-36) in Belchertown. Work is proposed to occur within the 100-foot Buffer Zone to Bordering Vegetated

Wetlands. Anyone interested in this matter should appear at the time and place designated. 01/01/2026

Belchertown Conservation Commission LEGAL NOTICE

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(Assessor's Map 260-36) in Belchertown. Work is proposed to occur within the 100-foot Buffer Zone to Bordering Vegetated Wetlands. Anyone interested in this matter should appear at the time and place designated. 01/01/2026

SALE OF MOTOR VEHICLE

This ad is pursuant to MA Gen. Law Ch.255, Sec. 39A as of January 16, 2026 the following motor vehicle will be for sale to satisfy a garage keepers lien:

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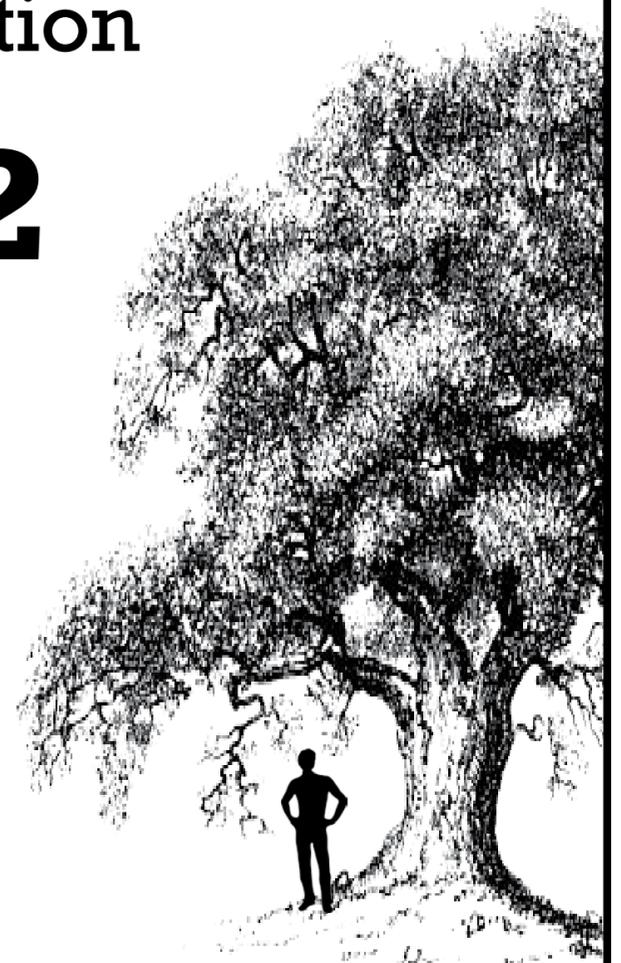
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