

# TOWN Reminder

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## Seniors challenge students to volleyball rematch



Turley photos by Emily-Rose Pappas

The winners of the Chair Volleyball competition: the Seniors.

By Emily-Rose Pappas  
Staff Writer  
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SOUTH HADLEY – The Seniors at the South Hadley Council on Aging called for a rematch challenge to the MacDuffie high schoolers

for a Chair Volleyball Tournament.

The game was a close one, and students accepted the challenge and served up some real competition for the seniors.

“I love their enthusiasm about playing together.

They have such a good time playing with the seniors and coming here,” said Jill Skibel, the Community Service Coordinator at MacDuffie. “I think it’s the fact that they are so welcoming and want us to come and be involved with their community.”

The net was put up, and there were six chairs set up on either side, and one of the players on the seniors’ side was 93, but that didn’t stop the seniors from stealing the trophy back.

Please see **SENIORS**, page 10

## Voters faced with decision on potential \$6-11M override

“A deficit budget would require reductions that directly affect students and families. It’s important to have accurate information, ask questions, and engage in the public process as the community considers the best path forward.”

– Superintendent Jenn Voyik

By Emily-Rose Pappas  
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SOUTH HADLEY – The upcoming Special Town Meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 25, will provide town meeting members the opportunity to vote in favor of or against an override to address the current and giant budget deficits.

“Right now, the Budget Task Force recommended \$11 million to cover all we need, but there are \$6 and \$9 million options the Selectboard will be voting on,” said Town Administrator Lisa Wong. “It is a common practice for the Town Meeting to weigh in, as the Selectboard will be able to see where their support would lie at different budget levels.”

The Selectboard created a Budget Task Force to analyze the current budget situation, with climbing rates in health insurance and utilities, and

decreasing state and federal aid, and the effects this will have on the town in the coming months.

“First and foremost, we know that this is an incredibly difficult ask during a time when a lot of our residents are feeling squeezed in many areas of their lives, and I want to stress the importance that this is about bringing choice to the voters,” said Wong. “... This is something we want people to choose as we have to limit the services offered to the community, and we want to ask folks about what they value and what they want to support with the precious resources that they have.”

“South Hadley is facing a structural deficit, and the override discussions are about stabilizing core town and school services over the next several years,” said Superintendent Jennifer Voyik. “This is not unique to South

Please see **VOTERS**, page 9

## Tasting the world of chocolate

By Emily-Rose Pappas  
Staff Writer  
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SOUTH HADLEY – Many people would say that chocolate is their favorite food, and the sweet treat comes in enough forms, including donuts, cake, cookies, chips, bars, ice cream, and milk, that anyone can find something to enjoy.

The art of tasting chocolate, however, is an art, and Chocolate Expert and Enthusiast, Dede Wilson, prepared a special presentation about chocolate and the art of tasting it to the South Hadley Public Library, sponsored by the Friends of the South Hadley Public Library.

“The presentation changes every year, because I source new chocolates, but I’ve been teaching some version of this for over 30 years for both professionals at cooking schools and lay people,” said Wilson.

Wilson has worked with chocolate for years, is a cookbook author, having published 17 books, and is a former editor of the Bon Appétit magazine. She has also shared her expertise on television shows and brought her presentations to the seas on cruises.

“Chocolate is my favorite food. Desserts and chocolate have always been my thing. I attended a chocolate tasting at a conference, and I wanted to do it myself, and have been doing it for 30 years, and come to libraries and other places all over the state.”

The presentation was split into three parts, with an educational section to explain and share how the ca-



Turley photos by Emily-Rose Pappas

Dede Wilson ready to teach the room about her chocolate expertise.

cao is grown, where it comes from, and where it comes from and how its growth can affect the final taste of the chocolate.

“You can hold two bars with the same ingredients, and they’ll be completely different from one another.

The chocolates we are tasting don’t have filling or nuts; it’s about tasting the chocolates and how they taste different from one another,” said Wilson.

Please see **CHOCOLATE**, page 10

## Passing the Gavel: Andrea Miles looks back on nearly a decade of service

By Tina Lesniak  
Correspondent

SOUTH HADLEY – For nearly a decade, Andrea Miles has brought a steady hand, a curious mind, and a deep sense of respect for her neighbors to the South Hadley Selectboard. As she prepares to wrap up her service this spring, Miles leaves behind a record defined by long-term thinking, collaborative leadership, and an abiding commitment to making local government more transparent and accessible.

Miles was first elected to the Selectboard in April 2017, at a moment when national politics had sparked a renewed interest in civic engagement for many Americans. “In November of 2016, I was looking to get involved in democracy at any level,” she said. That energy quickly found a local outlet. With her mother already serving on the Belchertown Board of



Submitted photo  
Andrea Miles

Selectmen, Miles understood how much influence municipal government could have on everyday life. After attending a meeting of the South Hadley Democratic Town Committee with her husband Charles Miles,

she saw how local issues—from water quality to immigration—were being debated and shaped close to

Please see **GAVEL**, page 9

## New business donates \$3,000 to NHN



Submitted photo

The newest member of the Chamber of Commerce is Signature Reality and we were there to help give them a big start. It was their party, but they gave us a big donation and others followed their lead, so we ended up with \$3,000! Thank you, and welcome to South Hadley!

*A beautiful bird perched proudly*



A beautiful bald eagle took a rest on a tree in Granby resident Jill Skibel's yard.

# Loomis Communities to host the Chowder Bowl Friday; event to benefit Food Bank of Western MA

Loomis Communities will hold a fun, friendly competition to select the favorite chowder at each of the Loomis Communities on Friday, Feb. 13

REGION – The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts will be the beneficiary of a fun competition to select a favorite chowder hosted by The Loomis Communities—the CHOWDER BOWL—on Friday, Feb. 13 at noon, free to the community with the suggested donation of a non-perishable food item to the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts.

The CHOWDER BOWL will take place simultaneously at all three Loomis Communities the Friday following the Super Bowl with attendees participating in the taste testing event at Loomis Lakeside at Reeds Landing, 807 Wilbraham Road in Springfield; Loomis Village, 20 Bayon Drive in South Hadley; and Applewood, 1 Spencer Drive in Amherst.

This is a reservation-based event in order for each community to plan attendance accordingly, and RSVPs can be made at [www.LoomisCommunities.org/chowderbowl](http://www.LoomisCommunities.org/chowderbowl).

Each community will create their version of a chow-

der, with all three being offered for sampling at each of the Loomis Communities. Attendees will vote for their favorite chowder, votes will be tallied at all three communities, and the favorite will be announced.

The Loomis Communities, the longest-serving provider of senior living in the Pioneer Valley, has a reputation for its culinary offerings. The Executive Chefs at each of the three communities have created their own chowder recipes, to be presented at the CHOWDER BOWL: Loomis Lakeside at Reeds Landing will present Nova Scotia Seafood Chowder; Loomis Village will present New England Clam Chowder; and Applewood will present Mexican Street Corn Chowder.

According to Margaret Mantoni, President and CEO of The Loomis Communities, "It's football bowl season and with our beloved Patriots making it to the Super Bowl, we felt this was the ideal time to host the community in a friendly competition to find our favorite version of chowder while benefiting another beloved institution, the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts."

"Food insecurity contin-

ues to demand our attention in the region and we hope through the Chowder Bowl to raise awareness of the great work of the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts and address in a small way the needs of individuals and families who are confronting many economic challenges at the peak of the winter season. We hope to warm hearts and help fill a few bellies by this friendly competition that will engage our entire community," she said.

While no one will be denied admission to the free chowder competition, attendees are strongly encouraged to bring a nonperishable food item to be donated to the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. Headquartered in Chicopee, the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts has been partnering with the community to end hunger in the region for more than 40 years. As the Food Bank for the four counties of Western Massachusetts, the organization, stores, and provides over 17 million pounds of food a year—the equivalent of more than 14 million meals.

According to Andrew Morehouse, Executive Director of the Food Bank, "More than 135,000 people seek

food assistance every month across the four counties of Western Massachusetts. We carry out our mission to build lasting food security by providing nutritious food and partnering with communities to end hunger. We are grateful to Loomis Communities for their partnership."

The Loomis Communities aired its own Super Bowl commercial on February 8 raising regional awareness about the event and encouraging attendance at the CHOWDER BOWL. The Super Bowl consistently draws one of the largest viewing audiences both nationally and regionally. Last year's Super Bowl set a record with 127.7 million viewers in the U.S. across broadcast and streaming, making it the most-watched single TV broadcast in American history.

The Loomis Communities is the longest serving, most experienced provider of senior living in the Pioneer Valley. As a not-for-profit organization, Loomis' mission is to open doors to worlds of positive aging on three campuses: Applewood in Amherst, Loomis Lakeside at Reeds Landing in Springfield, and Loomis Village in South Hadley.

## Lenten Lunches return to South Hadley

SOUTH HADLEY – For 54 years, the All Saints' Church Lenten Lunch Committee has been welcoming diners from the area communities to meatless lunches during the Lenten season. In recent years, All Saints' has been alternating Friday luncheon sites during Lent with St. Patrick's Church in South Hadley Falls.

This year, the dates at All Saints' Church are Fridays: February 20, March 6, and March 20. At St. Patrick's Church, lunches will be available on alternate Fridays: February 27, March 13, and March 27. Remember these dates and locations, and bring a friend for lunch, or take home your favorite choice for supper.

At All Saints' Church, Lenten Lunch chairperson Laura Marsh says, "Lunches should be ordered in advance by calling the Parish Administrator's Office at 413-532-8917, Monday through Thursday between 1 and 5 p.m."

Prices for each of the three

luncheon offerings will be available upon request. Orders can be paid for by cash or check when lunches are conveniently picked up on Fridays in the church parking area located off Route 116 behind the church on Dunlop Place. Drive up, pick up, and enjoy our famous lunches made in our church kitchens on Fridays.

Committee members are Mary Ann Bail, Joe-Ann Bourguignon, Cammie Daigle, Miretta Campbell, Sue Frazier, Michele Pietras, and Cindy Steinbock. Publicity: Marilyn Gass and Don Marsh.

This year, the All Saints menu offers three choices: a lobster roll, chips, a choice of clam chowder or vegetable soup, crackers, and a brownie; a tuna salad roll, chips, a choice of clam chowder or vegetable soup, crackers, and a brownie; and a choice of clam chowder or vegetable soup, crackers, and a brownie.

Proceeds benefit area mission projects.

## 'The Big Broadcast!' Celebrates 21st Year

Mount Holyoke Students Recreate 1940s Radio Show

SOUTH HADLEY – "The Big Broadcast!," a popular musical tradition and signature Mount Holyoke College event, will present its 21st anniversary concert Saturday, March 7 in Chapin Auditorium on the college's campus. There will be two performances - 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Snow date is March 8.

"The Big Broadcast!" is a unique recreation of a 1940s-style radio show, complete with news, commercials, popular songs, and a radio play in the old Western serial style.

Sponsors are Mount Holyoke College, Loomis Communities, 22News, PeoplesBank, NEPM, Reminder Publications, The Republican and MassLive.

22News meteorologist Brian Lapis returns to "The Big Broadcast!" in his role as the show's host, Fred Kelley. Mark Gionfriddo, director of

the Mount Holyoke College Jazz Ensembles, is the show's creative director. "The Big Broadcast" is a production of the Mount Holyoke College Big Band, Vocal Jazz, and Chamber Jazz ensembles. Part concert, part theater, the show is produced by students with Gionfriddo playing the role of band leader Matt Morgan.

Some of this year's musical selections include "One Night Stand" by Artie Shaw; "Nice Work If You Can Get It" from George and Ira Gershwin; "Anything You Can Do (I Can Do Better)" from Irving Berlin, made famous by Bing Crosby, Dick Haymes and the Andrews Sisters; and Glenn Miller's "A String Of Pearls."

"One of the amazing secrets of Chapin Auditorium is that Miller and his orchestra appeared there at an MHC Senior Ball in February of 1939, three months before they became famous on the radio. We're going to pay tribute by performing one of the songs Marion Hutton sang on stage that night: "But



Submitted photo

Mark Gionfriddo and Brian Lapis at a performance of "The Big Broadcast!"

It Didn't Mean A Thing,"

Gionfriddo said. The event will also feature Gionfriddo's arrangement of the Andrews Sisters hit, "Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen," as performed by the trio with Mill-

er's band in a special 1940 radio broadcast.

Tickets are available at the Odyssey Bookshop in South Hadley and online at [mhc.ludus.com](http://mhc.ludus.com).

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<b>Saturday, Feb. 14th</b> 6-9pm <b>Frank Serafino</b>	<b>Saturday, Feb. 21st</b> 6-9pm <b>Jeff Blaney</b>	<b>Sunday, Feb. 22nd</b> 2-5pm <b>Jim McArdle &amp; Jerry Murphy</b>
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## Chief Gundersen's Office Hours

SOUTH HADLEY – Police Chief Jennifer Gundersen will be hosting several office hours around town between now and the end of March.

- February 16, 10:30 a.m. to noon, at the South Hadley Council on Aging
- February 24, 5 to 6:30 p.m., at the South Hadley Public Library
- March 6, 10:30 a.m. to noon, at the South Hadley Council on Aging
- March 25, noon to 1:30 p.m., at Newton Manor

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USDA INSP. FRESH BONELESS PORK BUTT STRIPS.....	<b>\$2.98</b> lb	USDA INSP. FROZEN RIGHT NOW ASST. PASTA MEALS 16 OZ.....	<b>\$2.99</b> ea	USDA INSP. FRESH CHICKEN THIGHS 10 LB. BAG.....	<b>99¢</b> lb
USDA INSP. TURKEY BREAD.....	<b>\$3.99</b> lb	USDA INSP. FROZEN COOKED SNOW CRAB CLUSTERS.....	<b>\$9.99</b> lb		
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# Public school teacher pulls papers to challenge Corporate Dem

*Jeromie Whalen seeks to primary 37-year incumbent Richard Neal in MA-01*

REGION – On Tuesday, Feb. 10 public school teacher Jeromie Whalen will formally pull papers to begin his campaign to challenge longtime incumbent Congressman Richard Neal in a bid to represent the people of Massachusetts' 1st Congressional District.

A proud product of Western Massachusetts, Whalen grew up in Belchertown, built a life with his wife in South Hadley, and earned three degrees from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, most recently his Ph.D. in Mathematics, Science, and Learning Technologies in 2025. He has spent over a decade as a high school teacher in the Pioneer Valley.

"I'm coming from outside the traditional political world, and I think that's exactly what we need right now," said Whalen. "Old-school establishment thinking and the corporate greed that has seeped into our campaign finance system have pushed this country in the wrong direction. The way

forward is electing real people from our communities who are not tied to those entrenched systems and who will actually fight for the policies we need to create change."

Massachusetts' 1st Congressional District represents 83 cities and towns across Western and Central Massachusetts, including communities in Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin, Worcester, and Berkshire counties. The district spans a wide range of urban, suburban, and rural areas. Neal, who has held the seat since 1989, once served as chair of the House Ways and Means Committee.

"Some worry about losing perceived influence in the halls of Congress," said Whalen. "But when I hear about the power our current congressman is supposed to have, I can't help but ask who he's actually using that power for. When nearly all of our funding comes from corporations and large donors, it means Congressman Neal is motivated to support policies that benefit those contributors rather than the people in his district. What you're left with

is a congressman who's rarely around, out of touch with the communities he represents, and advocating for corporations instead of constituents."

Jeromie Whalen has a strong record of civic activism and has dedicated his career to helping future generations gain both the educational opportunities to succeed and the social skills to grow into caring, compassionate members of the community.

"I'm putting in the work to meet people where they are and hope to earn the support of voters across Western and Central Massachusetts in the Democratic primary on September 1, 2026. This grassroots campaign is building a new political infrastructure, and I'm proud of the authentic, honest relationships we've built with community stakeholders along the way. At its core, this campaign is about connecting the dots between municipal, state, and federal government and bringing real relief to local communities grappling with shrinking budgets and skyrocketing costs," said Jeromie Whalen.

Previously, Whalen served as communications director and building delegate for the Northampton Association of School Employees (NASE). He has also served as vice president of the board of directors for Northampton Open Media.

As an educator and community media advocate, Whalen led a team of students and local volunteers in the Emmy Award-winning production of "Young@Heart." This Boston/New England regional award was given by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

As an academic researcher, he has published numerous studies that have garnered over 1,800 scholarly citations on the impact of technology in education, including examinations of emergency remote teaching and artificial intelligence.

*For more information about the campaign to elect Jeromie Whalen to Congress, visit [whalenforcongressma.com](http://whalenforcongressma.com), or follow along on Facebook, X, Instagram, YouTube, or TikTok.*

*Kids can enjoy the trend, too!*



Turley photo by Emily-Rose Pappas

**Come to the Granby Free Public Library, where kids can check out a wrapped book to have a "blind date" with. The books have the codes written on the front so kids can be surprised when they get home to open their new book to read.**

# Rocky's Ace Hardware customers rally, raising \$113,930 through Round Up for Kids

SPRINGFIELD - A few cents at the register turned into a powerful show of community support as Rocky's Ace Hardware customers once again stepped up for children's health. This year's Round Up for Kids campaign raised \$113,930 across Rocky's locations, directing critical funding to Children's Miracle Network Hospitals serving the communities where customers live and shop.

The fundraiser ran during

two high-traffic periods, one in the spring and another during the late fall and holiday season, giving customers multiple opportunities to round their purchase totals up to the nearest dollar. Those small contributions added up quickly, with Baystate Children's Hospital receiving more than \$23,925 from participating Rocky's stores in western Massachusetts.

"Round Up for Kids shows what happens when local communities come togeth-

er around something bigger than a single transaction," said Rocco Falcone, president of Rocky's Ace Hardware. "Our customers understand that these hospitals are there for families on their hardest days, and they're proud to support care that can change a child's future."

Eight Rocky's locations in eastern Massachusetts took part in the campaign. One hundred percent of the funds raised at those locations were directed to Baystate Children's

Hospital to support pediatric care, medical innovation, and family-centered services.

"This campaign continues to grow because people believe in it," Falcone said. "Looking ahead, we're excited to keep building on this momentum and finding new ways to support the hospitals that do so much for our communities."

Children's Miracle Network Hospitals has raised nearly \$10 billion since 1983, helping fund vital treatments,

research, and programs that improve the lives of children nationwide.

### About Rocky's Ace Hardware

Rocky's Ace Hardware, your neighborhood store for paint, hardware, lawn and garden, and grilling, has been in continuous operation, under the same family ownership, since opening its first location in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1926. From one modest store to now 51 con-

venient locations throughout Connecticut, Florida, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island, Rocky's has become one of the country's largest Ace Hardware dealers, noted for its exceptional customer service and vast product selection. For more information, visit [rockys.com](http://rockys.com).



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# Opinion

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Matters

By Russell Gloor

#### Why is my Social Security Retirement benefit so small?

Dear Rusty:

Can you help me understand?

I have paid into Social Security since I started working in 1978. I did have a lot of tax deductions, but I don't understand why I only receive \$350 a month from Social Security.

Signed: Befuddled Senior

Dear Befuddled Senior:

Your Social Security benefit is based upon your average monthly earnings for the 35 years over your lifetime that you earned the most while contributing to the Social Security program; however, your benefit isn't based on your contributions to SS. Your average lifetime earnings amount is called your Average Indexed Monthly Earnings, which are adjusted for inflation for years before you turn 60. Your earnings, your net earnings if self-employed, are provided to the SSA by the IRS.

Your AIME is subjected to a formula which calculates your "Primary Insurance Amount," which is the SS benefit you receive if you start benefits in the month you reach your full retirement age. Your personal Full Retirement Age depends on the year you were born which, if you were born in 1960 or later, is age 67. However, if you claim Social Security before reaching your FRA, you will get only a percentage of your PIA, reduced from what you would get if you claimed at your FRA.

For example, if you claimed at age 62, you would only get 70% of the amount you would have gotten had you waited until age 67, or if you claimed at age 63 you would get 75% of your age 67 benefit. The reduction is less as you get closer to your FRA; if you claimed at age 65, you'd get about 87% of your full retirement age amount.

You can see your lifetime Social Security earnings record at your person-

al "my Social Security" online account at [www.ssa.gov/myaccount](http://www.ssa.gov/myaccount) (you will need to first create that online account), or you can call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 to request an "Earnings Statement" be sent to you. That statement will show your lifetime earnings by year, the 35 highest of which were used to calculate your PIA (your Social Security benefit at your FRA). Generally, your Social Security FRA benefit will be about 40% or less of your average indexed monthly earnings.

So, to recap, your SS retirement benefit isn't based on your contributions to the program; it's based on your average monthly lifetime earnings. If you had less than 35 years contributing to the program, SS would still use 35 years in the benefit formula by using zero dollars in earnings for some number of years, which would result in a smaller AIME.

Thus, if you claimed before your full retirement age of 67, your SS benefit was reduced because you claimed early. And if you had less than 35 years of SS-covered employment, your AIME was less, resulting in a smaller PIA. And that is likely why your monthly Social Security retirement benefit is low.

One other thought to consider: if you are married and your spouse's monthly SS benefit is considerably more than yours (e.g., more than twice as much as yours), you may want to explore your options for spouse benefits.

I hope this explains how your SS benefit is calculated, but if you still question your monthly SS retirement amount, I suggest you first obtain your "Earnings Statement" to review the lifetime earnings SS has on file for you. If there are any discrepancies in your Social Security's earnings record, there are correction remedies available to you.

Please see **SOCIAL**, page 5

## Online seed houses offer endless choices

It's been a fun couple of weeks in the realm of gardening! While I haven't yet gotten my hands into the soil yet, I have been on the hunt for all kinds of seeds for the Old Sturbridge Village gardens: those for obscure medicinal plants, unique heirlooms, and rare native plants.

That process has led me to some interesting mail order companies that I'd like to share with you.

My mail order "go to" for herb seeds has always been Richter's ([www.richters.com](http://www.richters.com)) but when I couldn't locate a few of the items on my list there, a simple internet search led me to Thyme Garden ([www.thymegarden.com](http://www.thymegarden.com)).

Their catalog boasts over 400 varieties of herb seeds and more. The text doubles as an herbal encyclopedia of sorts, providing the reader with cultural information in addition to loads of herbal lore.

A paper copy will set you back \$2.50, but you can get a digital download for free. It's noteworthy to mention that many of the seeds are harvested on the farm in Oregon. The company has been in business since 1989, and clearly knows their stuff.

I purchased both Jimsonweed and Cotton for the Paul Roger's Herb Garden from this company.

Prairie Moon Nursery ([www.prairiemoon.com](http://www.prairiemoon.com)) is an excellent source for native plant material and seeds.

This statement from their website gave me something to think about: "Native plants co-evolved with native insects and wildlife; they are deeply dependent on one another. These plants provide food and shelter to in-

flowered Hollyhock known scientifically as *Alcea rosea nigra*, yet what I discover are cultivars called "Jet Black" or "Black Watchman." I want the original.

Here is where seed sales at Monticello ([www.monticelloshop.org](http://www.monticelloshop.org)) come in handy. Thomas Jefferson was an avid gardener, and the display gardens around his estate highlight many of his favorite plants.

I was also able to secure seeds for unimproved versions of Rusty Foxglove and Black Eyed Susan Vine. Because of this good fortune, you will see authentic 1830s gardens when you visit the Village.

There is no printed catalog to my knowledge, but the shop has its seed sales organized in a friendly manner online. Some seeds are even harvested on site.

Speaking of authenticity, it's also important that we utilize heirloom vegetable varieties within our gardens, so that you, the visitor, see the real deal, 1830s style. I've often ordered heirloom vegetable and flower seeds from Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Company ([www.rareseeds.com](http://www.rareseeds.com)) and this year is no exception.

Their big, beautiful Rare Seed and Whole Seed Catalogs are free for the asking and seed shipping is free, also. Search over 1,300 seeds.

If you can't find what you are looking for there, hop on over to Victory Seeds ([www.victoryseeds.com](http://www.victoryseeds.com)) and there will be more heirloom, open

Please see **GARDEN**, page 5



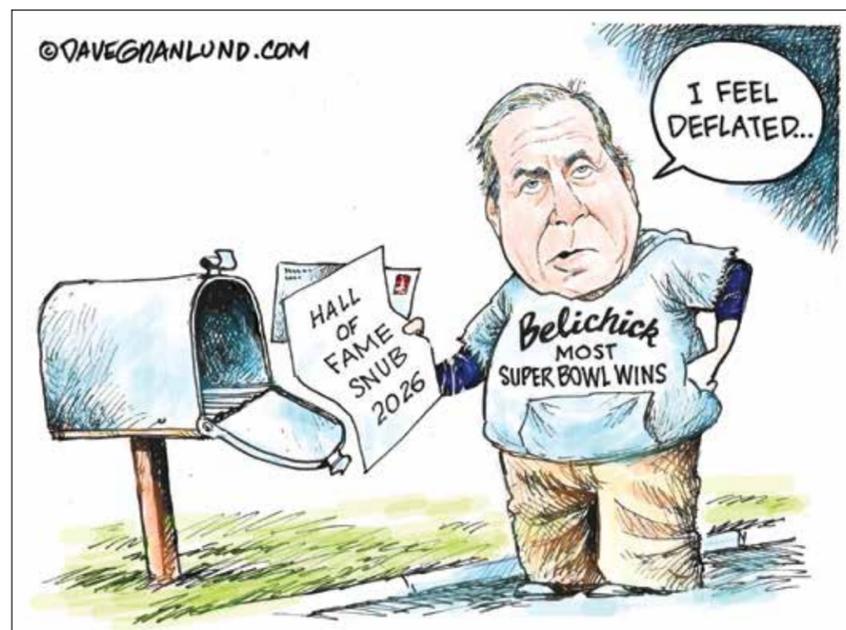
sects, birds, and other small animals, which in turn support larger predators. Native plants are the fundamental stepping stones of a healthy eco-system."

While many of us already enjoy growing native plants, the impact of doing so goes far beyond our ornamental gardens.

Prairie Moon offers seeds, blended seed mixes, plants and more, and their catalog is free for the asking. You can also download a catalog and cultural guide.

Growing native plants from seed often requires specialized treatments such as chilling or nicking and soaking, so I'd definitely recommend brushing up. I found Toothwort (at last!) and Late Horse Gentian, both for the herb garden.

Sometimes the tricky part about searching out heirloom seeds in the issue of cultivars. For example, I need a black



On Dec. 20, compilers at the Athol Christmas Bird Count recorded a total of 58 species including a Gadwall, a first time for this species during a Christmas count.

Male Gadwall have grayish-brown heads, sometimes showing cinnamon on the forehead and faint purplish iridescence on the crown. Females resemble female mallards, but they have a thinner, darker bill.

Gadwall nest in tall vegetation near water and show a preference for nesting on islands. Their choice of nesting location gives them some protection from predators. Female Gadwall produce an egg a day and lay a clutch of seven to 12 eggs. To meet their demand for protein during this stressful time, female Gadwall eat more invertebrates than males during this period in addition to using reserves of nutrients they've stored in their bodies during the winter.

Their winter habitat is fresh and brackish wetlands with abundant aquatic vegetation on which they primarily forage. Gadwall often snatch food from diving ducks as

they surface. Gadwall number have increased in North America since the 1980s. This is partly because of conservation of their habitat, wetlands and adjacent uplands.



By Ellenor Downer

The oldest known Gadwall was a male, and at least 19 years, 6 months old. He was banded in Saskatchewan in 1962 and shot during hunting season in Louisiana in 1981.

#### Christmas Bird Count

The National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Counts take place within a 22-day period, there are many state count circles and volunteers must be available. Despite snowy weather, compiler Jon Skinner said of the Groton-Ayer count on Dec. 14, "I was surprised that we were able to scratch our way to 81 species in such snowy conditions. It has to be a testament to the relentless nature of both

our team and the birds." Two new species were added 13 black vultures soaring over Lancaster and a killdeer at Devens. Some of the other highlights were evening grosbeak in both Harvard and Groton, red crossbills in Townsend, Lapland longspur at Fitchburg Airport and in Ayer, chestnut-collared longspur at Fitchburg Airport, American kestrel in Groton, two Baltimore orioles in Groton, eastern Phoebe in Shirley, redpoll in Lancaster and a long-eared owl in Devens. Species seen three days before or after the actual count date and noted as such were chipping sparrow, brown-headed cowbird, Peregrine falcon and sandhill crane.

#### Bluebird

I received an email on Jan. 26 from Jeffrey Landry. He had a visit from a bluebird on Friday, Jan. 23. He thought it was either the male parent or one of its offspring from a previous summer. He said, "For several years I have called him, 'Sunshine' and he arrived at my feeder on a bright beautiful winter's afternoon and this uncalled for visit was icing on my day's cake."



Male gadwall

He offered to share this bluebird story. He said, "I was sitting on my meditation cushion yesterday watching my breath emerge from a deep silence and then gently return back into it. There was no counting, no manipulation, only watching, only flow. After some time had passed, I opened my eyes because I felt I was being closely watched."

"I have a bird feeder right outside of my window and sure enough a male bluebird or one of his offspring from a previous summer, was perched and staring directly at me. Two summers ago I named the parent bluebird, 'Sunshine' and last May he returned to the same nesting box in my front yard.

Quizzically, Sunshine leaned slightly forward. He was amazingly close."

"It was beautiful, glorious to see his blue rust colored body outlined by a background of white snow

still clinging to frozen lilacs and tall trees. The sight of this sent ripples of love, that became currents of joy, to course through me."

"I felt a smile stretch a mile wide across my whole being. It was like being visited by a long absent friend. Within minutes this made me get up and fill another feeder with dried mealworms because bluebirds aren't seed eaters like many of the other birds that seek nourishment here. Like my breath, the mealworms disappeared into a well of silence. A contented peaceful silence that then took flight."

#### Evening grosbeaks

A Cummington resident sent a photo of evening grosbeaks at her feeder. She said they are part of a flock that come to visit the feeders often.

People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by emailing [mybackyard88@aol.com](mailto:mybackyard88@aol.com) or [edowner@turley.com](mailto:edowner@turley.com) or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005. The Palmer office has a new phone system and I will be getting an extension where messages may be left. I will publish the number as soon as it is set up.

## OPINION PAGE/ LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the Editor have a maximum of 350 words. We require writers to include their name, address and phone number in order for our office to authenticate authorship prior to publication. Addresses and phone numbers are not published.

Unsigned or anonymous letters will NOT be published.

We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions. Libelous, unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks or defamation of character are not allowed. Deadline for submissions is Wednesday at noon.

Please email (preferred) letters to [townreminder@turley.com](mailto:townreminder@turley.com). Mailed letters can be sent to Town Reminder, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069.

## 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.

## TOWN Reminder

### TEAM

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# Granby Jr. Sr. High School announces first quarter honor roll

GRANBY – The Granby Jr. Sr. High School would like to extend congratulations to those students who achieved Honor Roll for the first quarter of the 2025-2026 school year:

**7th Grade Maximum Honors** – Emilie Bond, Landon Brown, Jace Cruz, Gavin Guilbert, Avery Henderson, Kyla Houle, Jude Joslyn, Savannah Kraus, Leigh-ton Ladas, Alexa Nai, Lily Paquin, Abigail Schmieding, and Aubree Wonderlie.

**7th Grade High Honors** – Samuel Crawford, Emily Durham, Oliver Francis, Madelynn Heroux, Lillian Los, Julianna Roberts, Miley Son, Michael Sullivan, and Wallace Trafford.

**7th Grade Honors** - Justin Harvey, Oliver Helbok, Paris Hernandez, Olivia Heroux, Molly Murdza, Zoey O., Madison Parker, Cameron Shea, Emma Sicard, and Weston Tierney.

**8th Grade Maximum Honors** – Austin Alamed, Andrew Bond, Avery Gagnon, Lilyana Gagnon, Jeriel Gonzalez, Leely Kim, Caroline Koziol, Bri-Anne Kraus, Lucas Leverage, Ella Ludkiewicz, Sofia Marsh, Samantha Samonte, Ryan Smith, Avery Tetreault, and Sophia Wright.

**8th Grade High Honors** – Conor Anderson, Haylee-May Barnes, Kaylannie Colon, Allison Cross, Kingston Cruz, Tage Flowers, Peyton LaFlamme, Travis Lemoine, Shawn McDermott, William Pula, Michaela Slater, and Alexander Tetreault.

**8th Grade Honors** - Mat-

thew Barnes, Ava Belliveau, Kerry Bombardier, Camden Carillon, Abigail Carmody, Eloise Ciosek, Logan Dufresne, Levi Foster, Margaret Healey, Lucas Melendez, Milo Morton, Jovan Murphy Jr., Henry Stewart, Shi-Anne Thompson, and Bennett Weglarz.

**9th Grade Maximum Honors** - Rowan Cook, Allisandra Crowley, Honor DeCarlo, Arianna Mislak, Marley Skipton, Mia Smith, Avery Tipton-Wolmart, and Kaylee Vincelette.

**9th Grade High Honors** - Ella Clark, Jocelyn Curran, Addison Hill, Ruby Murdza, Raylin Paquette, Ciara Pytel, Sophia Silchuk, Stella Siudak, Marcela Tapia, and Kara White.

**9th Grade Honors** – Wyatt Ciejka, Piper Godbout, Nathaniel Gomez, and Ciara Lopuk.

**10th Grade Maximum Honors** – Gina Auselle Casadevall, Lauren Barlow, Gianna Capone, Emily Durham, Ralph El Aouji, Abigail Esquivel, Jacob Fuller, Vitaly Gavel, Sophia Labonte, Abigail LaDuke, Anthony Miasaszek, Emma Murphy, Kaelynn Slapski, Richard Sweet, Isabella Tetreault, and Carli Zobka.

**10th Grade High Honors** - Trevor Binley, Logan Carmody, Makayla Dennis, Amelia Gardner, Chase Hauschild, Gabriel Helbok, Grace Pula, Catelyn Rivera, and Sophia Rodrigues.

**10th Grade Honors** – Reynaldo Huertas Guzman, Sophia Press, Madison Scheinost, Colin Sicard, and

Jacob Weglarz.

**11th Grade Maximum** – Meredith Bartosz, Logan Campbell, Lucas Ciejka, Parker Dufresne, Christopher Gregorio, Morgan Justin, Madelyn LaPointe, Brenna Moreno, Audrey Pleisch, Jaidyn Roberge, Celine Samonte, Gilmarie Vega Febres, Nathan Walsh, and Mckenna Zumbuski.

**11th Grade High Honors** – Kayden Baldwin, Joseph Barrett-Lorenzi, Sydney Chateaufneuf, Summer Daudelin, Liam Everson, Kyrsten Gaj, Quinn Lavoie, Samuel Moure, and Kalli White.

**11th Grade Honors** – Brennan Anderson, Lyla Bergeron, Daniel Brown, Brandon Carillon, Tessa Healey, Ty Jones, Caleb Leverage, Lauren Piercey, Lydia Pike, and Eleanor Szlosek.

**12th Grade Maximum** - Emma Beaulieu, Ethan Bergeron, Lea Charest, Allison Charron, Kaitlyn Curran, Benjamin French, Quinn Fuller, Jake Gagnon, Braeden Gallagher, Durant Garden, Braydon LaDuke, Mylin Laliberte, Rosalba Manduca, Allison Maslak, Keith Patterson, Anthony Santiago, Addison Scott, and Isabella Woods.

**12th Grade High Honors** - Brandon Chatel, Edward Dziok, Addison Gardner, Ava-Elizabeth Loughman, Annalise Patterson, Daniel Santiago, and Stephen Szlosek.

**12th Grade Honors** - Raymond Colon, Leonardo Esquivel, Angelina Fuentes, Jared Lapite, Blake Lashway, Faith Ramos, Jadin Rowell, Mark Tavernier, and Nathaniel Valle.

## Library seeks food donations



Turley photo by Emily-Rose Pappas

The South Hadley Public Library has a food drive going, and is accepting food, diapers, hygiene items, and other items to be delivered to Neighbors Helping Neighbors.

## South Hadley Democrats to elect state convention delegates on March 7

SOUTH HADLEY — Democrats in South Hadley will convene in person on Saturday, March 7, 2026, to elect 11 delegates and 4 alternates to represent our town at the 2026 Massachusetts Democratic State Convention. The caucus, which is hosted by the South Hadley Democratic Town Committee, will take place in the Community Room of the South Hadley Public Library, 2 Canal Street in South Hadley. The library is handicapped accessible. Caucus sign-in opens at 9:30 a.m., and the caucus will start at 10 a.m. Those voting must be in attendance at the caucus. There will be no absentee

or proxy voting at any local caucus for any reason.

Registered and pre-registered Democrats in South Hadley who are 16 years old by February 19, 2026, may vote and be elected as delegates or alternates during the caucus.

Opportunities are available for youth (age 16 to 35), people with disabilities, people of color, and members of the LGBTQ+ community not elected as delegates or alternates to apply to the State Democratic Committee to be add-on delegates.

The 2026 Democratic State Convention will be held in person on Saturday, May 30, 2026, at the DCU Cen-

ter in Worcester. This year, delegates will gather to voice support for the Democratic nominee for the US Senate and for Democrats across the Commonwealth and the nation. Convention and delegate information is available at: <https://massdems.org/massdems-convention/>.

For more information or to get involved with the South Hadley Democratic Town Committee, visit [southhadleydems.com](http://southhadleydems.com) or email the Committee at [southhadleydemocrats@gmail.com](mailto:southhadleydemocrats@gmail.com). Massachusetts voters may register to vote or check registration online at: [www.RegisterToVoteMA.com](http://www.RegisterToVoteMA.com).

## Granby Lions Club 'Groundhog Fuel Assistance Fund' 2026

Through March 16, 2026

GRANBY – Once again this winter heating season, the Granby Lions Club has established an Emergency Fuel Assistance Fund for Granby residents. This fund, titled the "Groundhog Fund", will enable residents of Granby to obtain needed assistance for

fuel to help them through the next six weeks of winter.

The Lions Club Groundhog Fund will begin helping residents on February 2 and will continue until March 16.

Residents who would like to apply for needed assistance are asked to complete an application, and these applica-

tions are available in the Senior Center/Council of Aging Office at 10 West State St. in Granby from 9:00 am – 3:00 pm Monday through Friday.

The Granby Lions Club appreciates the continuing support that the community of Granby gives to our projects and activities.

### SOCIAL from page 4

If that is the case, please feel free to contact us again for more information.

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](http://amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory) or email us at [ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org](mailto:ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org). Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.

### GARDEN from page 4

pollinated, non GMO varieties to choose from. I love the concept of Victory Gardens, and the company does a great job of explaining and promoting it.

Victory Seeds offers free shipping on all orders over \$30 and their website provides "quick links" to each main category for easy online shopping. They also encourage seed saving practices, which is neat.

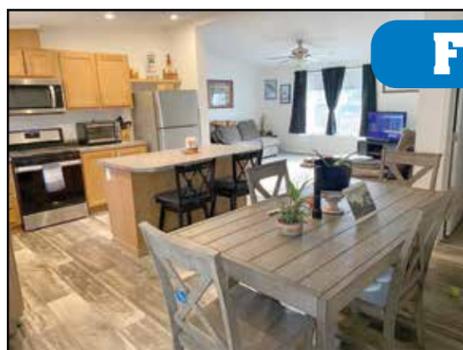
This summer, look for China Rose Radish, Tall Telephone Peas, Boston Marrow Squash and Long Green Cucumber growing in our gardens and used in our households. These were all purchased from Victory

Seeds.

If you are bored one afternoon, why not take a look at what these or any number of reputable seed houses have to offer. You will no doubt expand your plant knowledge while you expand your garden!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 34 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](mailto:pouimette@turley.com) with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.

Read the Town Reminder online at [www.townreminder.turley.com](http://www.townreminder.turley.com)



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### FEBRUARY EVENTS

#### WINTER ECOLOGY

On Thursday, February 19 at 6:30 p.m., you can join ecological horticulturist Erik N. Vegeto for **Winter Ecology: Life Beneath the Snow**. Learn about the ways that winter can be a time of quiet work in your garden and deepen your connection to the land throughout the year.

#### EXTRASOLAR PLANETS

On Thursday, February 26 we'll enjoy two astronomy programs for all ages. At 5 p.m., we'll have a talk about **Discovering Extrasolar Planets** by Mount Holyoke's Tom Burbine, followed by an **Observatory Night** hosted by our neighbors at **Mount Holyoke's Williston Observatory** from 6-8 p.m.

# SPORTS

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## Hambley's 22 points paces Tigers to win



Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

Noah Hambley tries to get around an opponent.



Noah Rivera is pressured under the hoop.



Chase Pecia tries to pass the ball away.

**BELCHERTOWN** – Last Tuesday night, South Hadley High School boys basketball defeated Belchertown 57-41. South Hadley played strong for three quarters and the scoring early held up for the Tigers. Belchertown had a tough time out of the gate and could not catch the Tigers. Both teams are 9-8 heading into the last week of the regular season. South Hadley got 22 points from Noah Hambley and 21 points from Tim Loughrey while Belchertown was led by 15 points from Brice Letendre and 14 points from Shea MacLean.



Tim Loughrey heads up for a shot.



Isiah James heads inside the arc.



Griffin Soderbaum sends a pass away.

## Rams take down Ware

**GRANBY** – In a battle of two very strong teams, Granby defeated Ware 36-30 last Monday night. The key to a victory for Granby was a strong defensive effort in the second half. After being held to two points in the second quarter, the Rams came back strong, but also held the Indians to just 10 points in the second half. Granby was led by Brenna Moreno with 12 points. Amelia Orszulak and Reese McKeever had 12 points each for the Indians. Ware is now 13-4 while Granby is 14-3.



Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

Kalli White brings in a rebound.



Rowan Cook fights for a rebound.



Eleanor Szlosek looks around for a good pass.



Kaitlyn Curran fakes a step and shoots instead.



Brenna Moreno heads into the arc.

## New look for sectional hockey tournament this year

By Tim Peterson  
Sports Correspondent

**WEST SPRINGFIELD**—The 2026 Western Massachusetts high school hockey tournament is scheduled to take place from Feb. 16-19.

Six of the seven Berry Division teams will qualify for the Class A tournament.

The Berry Division teams, who are looking to qualify for the Class A tournament, are Westfield, East Longmeadow, Greenfield, Minnechaug Regional, Longmeadow, Ludlow, and West Springfield.

The Westfield Bombers are the two-time defending Class A champions. They defeated the Greenfield Green Wave, 7-3, in last year's championship match.

All six of the teams in the Fay-Wright Division will be competing in this year's Class B tournament.

Those six teams are Easthampton, McCann Tech, Amherst, Taconic, Agawam, and Chicopee High School.

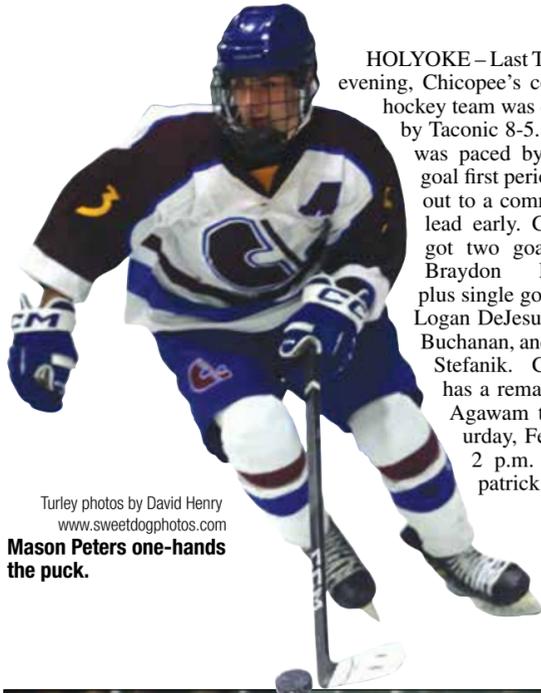
Agawam defeated Taconic, 6-1, in last year's Class B championship match.

The top two teams in Class A & B will automatically advance into the semi-finals.

Prior to playing the semi-final round, the top-seeded team in Class A will be facing the second-seeded team

Please see **HOCKEY**, page 7

# Beavers defeat Pacers ice hockey



Turley photos by David Henry  
www.sweetdogphotos.com  
**Mason Peters one-hands the puck.**

HOLYOKE – Last Thursday evening, Chicopee’s co-op ice hockey team was defeated by Taconic 8-5. Taconic was paced by a five-goal first period to get out to a commanding lead early. Chicopee got two goals from Braydon LaDuke, plus single goals from Logan DeJesus, Owen Buchanan, and Griffin Stefanik. Chicopee has a rematch with Agawam this Saturday, Feb. 14 at 2 p.m. at Fitzpatrick Rink.



**Landon Johnson angles toward the goal.**



**Logan DeJesus avoids a Taconic defender.**



**Aiden Nadeau tries to pass out of pressure.**



**Griffin Stefanik starts up the ice.**



**Julian Lee-Choi recovers the puck on defense.**

**HOCKEY** from page 6

in Class B. The top-seeded team in Class B will also play the second-seeded Class A team.

Those games will boost the team’s state power rankings.

The other four teams in each of the classes will be playing in the quarterfinals on February 16.

The higher-seeded teams will be hosting the quarterfinal matches.

Any of the quarterfinal games played at the Olympia Ice Center in West Springfield will be held during the daytime. The game times on rink 1 will be 11am and 1:30pm. The games on rink 2 will be at noontime and 2:30pm.

The losers of the quarterfinals will be playing

non-playoff games against each other.

The Class A semifinals are scheduled to be played at Olympia on Feb.17. The start times for those two games will be 11am and 1:30pm.

The Class B semifinals are scheduled for Olympia on Feb.18. The start times for those two games will also be 11am and 1:30pm.

Both Western Mass. finals will be played on rink 1 at Olympia on Feb.19.

The Class B finals will be held at 5:30 p.m. followed by the Class A final at 8 pm.

The tickets prices for the semifinals and finals are \$8. Tickets are available through GoFan Only.

There is not a different price for students or senior citizens.

## T-Birds suffer loss to Toronto Marlies

TORONTO, ON - The Springfield Thunderbirds (16-24-4-2) fell by a final score of 5-1 to the Toronto Marlies (23-15-4-3) on Saturday inside Coca-Cola Coliseum in what proved to be one of the nastiest games of the season.

Simmering tensions boiled over from the opening drop of the puck on this night, a result of an altercation in the clubs’ prior meeting on Jan. 23. In that contest, Marshall Rifai of the Marlies fought Springfield’s Simon Robertsson and threw multiple punches at a vulnerable Robertsson when he was lying prone on the ice. Robertsson has yet to play in a game since.

On this day, Steve Ott chose to start Kale Kessy for

the opening puck drop, and Kessy immediately dropped the mitts with Rifai, which lit the fuse for three separate fights between the foes in the opening 15 seconds, resulting in 37 combined penalty minutes, plus a game misconduct to Toronto defenseman Blake Smith.

Once the dust from the altercations subsided, the Marlies quickly threw their own punches on the scoresheet, beginning with Vinni Lettieri snapping a shot past Vadim Zherenko on the blocker side just 1:12 into the contest, giving Toronto the 1-0 advantage on a 4-on-4 goal.

Springfield’s power play had a tough go to begin the night, failing to connect on a

three-minute power play from the remnants of Smith’s penalty time. Despite outshooting Toronto 15-5 in the period, the T-Birds’ deficit grew as Logan Shaw and Michael Pezzetta each beat Zherenko just 1:22 apart, and with just over five minutes left in the first, it was 3-0, and Georgi Romanov was summoned to replace Zherenko in the net.

Romanov more than did his part as the game moved to the second, as Romanov denied 14 Toronto offerings in the period and helped Springfield kill off a Marlie power play in the process.

After nearly 120 minutes without a goal, former Marlie Calle Rosen finally got Springfield on the scoresheet

with just 10 seconds left in the period, as he sneaked down the left wing and slammed a shot through Artur Akhtyamov on Springfield’s 26th shot of the night to make it a 3-1 game into intermission.

However, the T-Birds did not have any offensive juice left in the tank in the third, and Romanov finally relented a power-play goal to Luke Haymes past the midpoint of the third, which restored Toronto’s three-goal advantage, 4-1. Romanov finished his terrific night in relief with 26 saves on 27 shots. Bo Groulx would add an empty-netter with the T-Birds skating 5-on-4 with the extra skater to round out the scoring.

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Location: Tantasqua Jr High School (320 Brookfield Rd., Fiskdale, MA)  
• Boys Grades 4th-6th 8:30 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.  
• Boys Grades 7th & 8th 9:45 a.m. - 11 a.m.  
• Boys Grades 9th-12th 11 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.  
• Varsity players sign up if still playing with school\*\*

**Tryout # 2: Sunday March 1, 2026**  
Location: Oxford High School (100 Carbundle Dr., Oxford, MA)  
• Boys Grades 4th-6th 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
• Girls Grades 4th-6th 4:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.  
• Boys & Girls Grades 7th & 8th 5:45 - 7 p.m.  
• Boys and Girls Grades 9th-12th 7:15 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.  
• Varsity players sign up if still playing with school\*\*

Pre Register/pay on website: [teammassbasketball.com](http://teammassbasketball.com)  
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## Important dates and announcements for the town

**SOUTH HADLEY** – Keep note of some important dates coming up for the town and budgets, budget votes, and town meetings and elections.

- February 17, 6 p.m.- Selectboard vote on Special Town Meeting
- February 25, 6 p.m.-

Tentative Special Town Meeting

- March 3, Selectboard Meeting- Budget Public Hearing
- March 11, School Committee Meeting- Budget Public Hearing
- March 17, Selectboard Meeting- Budget Vote

- March 25, School Committee Meeting- Budget Vote
- March 28, Annual Town Election and tentative Override Vote

You can find a tax impact calculator online now at <https://southhadley.org/1504/Budget-Task-Force>.

### VOTERS from page 1

Hadley, as many communities across Massachusetts are experiencing similar pressures.”

The upcoming effects on the town and schools will result in drastic cuts to the schools, DPW, Police and Fire Departments, Senior Center, both the South Hadley Public and Gaylord Memorial Libraries, the Town Hall, and many other areas of the town.

“For the schools, the most important message is that we have already made reductions over the past decade, and there aren’t any other places to cut without significantly impacting students. An operational override would allow the district to maintain core programming and service levels rather than continuing a cycle of reductions,” said Voyik.

The override being discussed at the Special Town Meeting is an operational override that will help to address the structural deficit that has been affecting the town and the school district.

Multiple options are being put forth at STM for town meeting members to vote on, and they include \$6 million over three years, \$9 million over four years, and \$11 million over five years.

“If an override question appears on the ballot, the election date would be Apr. 14. The key point is that the schools will not be ‘fine’ under a deficit budget. A deficit budget would require reductions that directly affect students and families,” said Voyik. “It’s important to have accurate information, ask questions, and en-

gage in the public process as the community considers the best path forward.” The town is encouraging the community to vote so that they can have a say in what is to come. While residents cannot control gas prices or bills, they can have a say in the next steps and what direction the override will go in, how much it will be, and how long it will last.

“The reason we have done so much in bringing volunteer residents together is that we can’t do it alone without their help. We know that the library, Senior Center, and the schools provide support and are a huge part of people’s quality of life, but we want to be transparent about what they cost,” said Wong.

“It’s important that we are straightforward about the district’s financial reality and the educational impacts of further reductions. I encourage community members to attend upcoming meetings to hear details, ask questions, and review the information being presented,” said Voyik.

The school district is facing significant personnel cuts, including 20 student-facing positions, as well as two administrative positions, which will result in larger class sizes and even fewer activities for students to take part in.

Other reductions in the schools include elimination of all sports and extracurricular activities, reductions to AP, Honors, and elective course offerings, and so much more.

“We are doing our best to support the schools, and whether we have kids in the school system or not, the

quality of education affects... [everything]. It’s incredibly important to the next set of leaders, and I want to emphasize that the schools are very much a top priority for town and school officials because we see their importance in the community,” said Wong.

Important dates and information

The community is strongly encouraged to educate themselves on the work that the Budget Task Force has done to analyze and come up with possible solutions ahead of the February 25 Special Town Meeting. You can find more on the town’s website at [www.southhadley.org/1504/Budget-Task-Force](http://www.southhadley.org/1504/Budget-Task-Force).

The School Committee will be hosting a community meeting on Monday, Feb. 23, about the school’s budget at Michael E. Smith Middle School at 6 p.m., and all are encouraged to attend with questions.

The Special Town Meeting will be held at the high school on Feb. 25 at 6 p.m. in the High School Auditorium. The STM is to vote whether or not an override will occur, with two action items on the Warrant. The Warrant is currently available to view on the town website. March 4 is the next School Committee meeting, and Mar. 11 will be the School’s Public Budget Hearing.

“The best way to prevent misinformation is for residents to engage directly in the process and rely on the official presentations and posted materials,” said Voyik.

### GAVEL from page 1

home. “We immediately got to work,” she said.

That meeting also proved pivotal in another way. There, Miles met then-Selectboard member Sarah Etelman, who encouraged her to learn more about town governance and eventually consider running for office. With Frank DeToma’s seat opening up and encouragement from Etelman to attend meetings and observe, Miles decided to take the leap. She ran a contested race and won, beginning what would become three terms on the board.

Her longevity, she said, came from both temperament and purpose. “Many projects take a long time, and I like to see things through,” Miles explained. From developing financial and Selectboard policies to setting long-range goals, she found satisfaction in shepherding initiatives from start to finish. She also grew into the role over time. New to elected office in 2017,

she said it took a while to find her footing and determine where she could make the greatest impact. Ultimately, the work aligned well with her strengths. “I simply enjoy leadership and community development. I’m skilled at it and enjoy it, making the Selectboard a good fit for the last many years.”

Asked to reflect on the most meaningful moments of her tenure, Miles does not hesitate. “The most meaningful decision by far has been hiring Lisa Wong as our Town Administrator,” she said, calling the appointment transformative for South Hadley. While acknowledging the legacy of former Town Administrator Mike Sullivan, Miles credits Wong’s experience, energy, and innovation with benefiting the town in lasting ways. “I could write an entire article on her contributions alone,” she said.

The most challenging chapter, however, is still unfolding. South Hadley, like many Massachusetts communities, is grappling with a se-

rious budget crisis. As both a Selectboard member and the board’s representative to the Budget Task Force, Miles has been deeply involved in navigating those challenges. “

The road ahead will continue to be challenging due to rising and uncertain health-care costs, a volatile federal government that has affected federal funds and grants, and a state government that desperately needs a comprehensive audit, a change to the Chapter 70 school funding formula, and leadership that needs to focus attention further to the West than they typically do,” said Miles.

In looking at how South Hadley has changed since she joined the board, Miles points to major improvements in municipal planning and transparency. She is particularly proud of the development of a facilities management plan to better steward town buildings, the construction and opening of the senior center, and a comprehensive overhaul of the budget process. “It’s now a far more open and

## Legal Notices

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
The Trial Court  
Probate and Family Court  
Hampshire Probate and Family Court  
15 Atwood Drive  
Northampton, MA 01060  
(413)586-8500  
Docket No. HS26P0028EA  
Estate of:  
Phillip A. Chesky  
Date of Death: 11/16/2025  
CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION**

To all interested persons:  
A Petition for Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative has been filed by Phillip B. Chesky of Wilbraham, MA requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.  
The Petitioner requests that

Phillip B. Chesky of Wilbraham, MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve Without Surety on the bond in unsupervised administration.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**  
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: **10:00 a.m. on the return day of 02/20/2026. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.**

**UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE**  
A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.  
WITNESS, Hon. Diana S. Velez Harris, First Justice of this Court.  
Date: February 04, 2026  
Mark S Ames, Register of Probate  
02/13/2026

## Czarniecka joins Greenfield/Northampton Cooperative Bank

**SOUTH HADLEY** – The Greenfield / Northampton Cooperative Bank is pleased to announce the hiring of Joanna Czarniecka as Assistant Vice President and Branch Manager of its South Hadley branch office located at 487 Newton Street, South Hadley, MA.

Czarniecka joins GCB with 9+ years of local banking experience. She holds a bachelor’s degree in architecture from UMass Amherst.

“We’re thrilled to welcome Joanna to the bank,” said Lisa Kmetz, Executive Vice President, Retail & Security Officer. “With her background and track record in banking, Joanna has a wealth of expertise and she will be a great resource to our team.”

In her new role, Czarniecka will oversee daily branch operations, develop and service relationships with existing customers, and assist new customers with loan and deposit products.



Submitted photo  
**New South Hadley Branch Manager for the Greenfield/Northampton Cooperative Bank, Joanna Czarniecka.**

## Making South Hadley greener with trees

**SOUTH HADLEY** – Make South Hadley even greener, and watch your child grow alongside a tree! Get a free tree for #EarthDay2026, thanks to the South Hadley Public Library’s partnership with Neighborhood Forest. Sign up before March 15 at [www.neighborhoodforest.org](http://www.neighborhoodforest.org).

Trees will arrive ahead of Earth Day, April 22, and you will be contacted regarding pickup details.



### Town Reminder 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 (with a word limit of up to 500 words) and may include a photograph.

**Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: [obits@turley.com](mailto:obits@turley.com).

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**Public notice deadlines are Friday at 3 p.m.**

visit [www.publicnotices.turley.com](http://www.publicnotices.turley.com)

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The students from MacDuffie are ready for a rematch.

Turley photos by Emily-Rose Pappas



Don't let the ball touch the floor.



The first-place trophy waiting to go to the new victors.

SENIORS from page 1

"I think it is the fact that our young people, especially the ones away from home, can come here and feel like they're part of a family. I think for the seniors, it brings a lot of life."

MacDuffie is a private international school with students from 19 different countries represented and is located in Granby.

"Our diversity is the biggest part of our school. We are all about community, all about family, and just about

everybody knows who everyone is, and they care about everyone and know everyone."

The game was a great success, and the seniors and MacDuffie students are already looking forward to another game.



The game was tight with the Seniors vs MacDuffie students fighting to take the lead.



"Good game!"

CHOCOLATE from page 1

The second part was learning the specific vocabulary to describe the tastes, smells, textures, and sensations that occur when you eat chocolate. The final part of the presentation was to taste the chocolate and guess which brand and type of chocolate it was.

"I love doing this because it really is this perfect balance and blend of education and fun. We get to taste and eat chocolate and learn about a food that we love, and it's really eye-opening because people learn how different chocolate can be, and why."

The chocolate selections were mostly dark chocolates, with a mix of some milk and white chocolate varieties, and the selections of chocolates that were put through contests with the International Chocolate Awards and the Academy of Chocolate.

The selections of chocolates were some of the ones that won last November, and were deemed the "best" chocolates in the world by an international panel of experts. They were also mixed with brands of chocolate that were local and found in the supermarket.

"I love the lightbulb mo-

ments that happen, sometimes more dramatically for some, and more subtly for others. When people finally understand what goes into making a chocolate bar, it's really interesting to take something that's supposedly a commonly understood food and see it in a whole new way. The fact that I can facilitate that really excites me," said Wilson.

The community room was packed, and all the people who attended enjoyed the experience, tasting a variety of twelve chocolates and cocoa nibs.

"I always make a point in the middle when I'm talking about the chocolate-tasting vocabulary, that there are ways to talk about and describe the chocolate, to say there is no right or wrong answer, and everyone's taste palate is different. What's interesting is that there usually is a consensus about the chocolates that are enjoyed, and it's interesting because people come with so many different preferences and likes. It's bringing people into one room and having people realize and see people articulate their experiences," said Wilson.



The samples of chocolate ready to be reviewed by participants.

Turley photos by Emily-Rose Pappas



The delicious varieties and brands of the chocolate offered for testing.

South Hadley band to host concert

SOUTH HADLEY/FLORENCE - 35-member semi-professional brass ensemble to perform a concert on Sunday, March 1, at the Bombyx Center for the Arts in Florence.

The Bombyx Brass Collective, a 35-piece semi-professional brass choir led by Music Director Juli Sansoucy,

will present their second program of the season, Musical Flurries, Sunday, March 1, 3 pm at the Bombyx Center for Arts & Equity, 130 Pine St in Florence.

A donation of \$25 is suggested for the concert.

The program will feature a variety of popular and classical music, including

"Symphony for Brass and Percussion," music by movie composer Hans Zimmer, and standards from the rock group "Chicago." The music is sure to delight everyone who attends.

To learn more about all the other programming at the Bombyx Center, visit www.bombyx.live.

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Large advertisement for The Village Commons featuring a 'WELCOME WE ARE OPEN' sign, a 'DON'T MISS OUT!' starburst, and details about a special advertising section in local newspapers for February 27, 2026. Includes contact info for Dan Flynn.