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First female council president elected

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

HOLYOKE – Tessa Murphy-Romboletti was elected 7-6 to be the first ever female city council president of Holyoke.

Murphy-Romboletti was up against Long-time Councilor Kevin Jourdain for the position.

Councilors Juan Anderson Burgos, Patti Devine, Kocayne Givner, Meagan Magrath-Smith, Tessa Murphy-Romboletti, Israel Rivera and Jenny Rivera voted for Murphy-Romboletti.

See **PRESIDENT**, page 3



Tessa Murphy-Romboletti takes the podium to preside over a city council meeting as the new council president. Turley photo by Quinn Suomala

St. Patrick's Committee holds Grand Colleen pageant

HOLYOKE – The St. Patrick's Committee of Holyoke has selected five Colleen finalists after hosting their 68th annual Colleen Pageant on Saturday, Jan. 6. After receiving overwhelming interest from the community in this year's pageant, five finalists were chosen from a group of eighteen contestants who competed to be one of the Holyoke Colleens.

Each year the Committee chooses a Grand Colleen who reigns with her Colleen Court on a majestic float over the two-mile parade route. Not only does this honor represent women who are proud of their Irish heritage and community, but this journey helps them build connections, gain self-confidence, and develop skills that will help in their present and future career paths.

These are the five chosen finalists for the 2024 Holyoke Colleen: Amelia Frances George, age 22. George was also selected as Miss Congeniality, an honor that is selected by the contestants; Elizabeth Katherine Gourde, age 22, Hunter Rose Edwards, age 19; Natalie Belle Morris, age 19, and Taryn Shaylene Ryan, age 21.

"The Colleen Pageant Judges had the most difficult job on Saturday evening.



The 2024 Grand Colleen Court has been determined. The Grand Colleen will be chosen in February. More photos on page 16. The finalists for Grand Colleen are: Elizabeth Katherine Gourde, Natalie Belle Morris, Hunter Rose Edwards, Taryn Shaylene Ryan, and Amelia Frances George, who is also Miss Congeniality.

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

I know that the families and friends of all the contestants are proud of their accomplishments and for taking the chance to be Colleen" said Hayley Dunn, 2024 Parade President. "I'm

thankful to all of the contestants for helping to ensure the legacy of the Holyoke Colleen lives on. Congratulations to Amelia, Elizabeth, Hunter, Natalie and Taryn and I hope that they

enjoy every moment of the Green Season in Holyoke."

The 2024 Grand Colleen will be honored at the Grand Coronation Ball and Awards Reception on Feb. 17.

Clerk swears in new council, school committee at inauguration ceremony

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

HOLYOKE – The city started off the new year with the inauguration ceremony of

the city councilors, the school committee and the treasurer.

Mayor Joshua Garcia and City Clerk Brenna Murphy McGee were present at the ceremony, with McGee leading the

event and Garcia delivering a speech of his own.

Both of them left a message of unity for the incoming elected officials.

"We know that we and the

city of Holyoke are better than just squabbles and insults," McGee said. "In such political battles lies compassion, a powerful component in people. Harness such vigor and imagine what the results could be: unity."

Garcia asked all the officials to focus on coming together. He knows that they all want to improve the city of Holyoke but that they often have different ideas on how to get there.

He hopes that they can use their shared dedication to the city to get past any disagreements.

"Opposition for the sake of opposition is not going to help," Garcia said. "We need, all of us need, to restore the pride and security our residents deserve. We have the power to do that and it can only be done if we stay focused and keep working together."

Holyoke will be heading into this new term with five new city councilors: Patti Devine, Carmen Ocasio, Meagan Magrath-Smith, Howard Greaney, Carmen Ocasio and Michael Sullivan.

There are also two new school committee members: Gloria Caballero Roca and Luisette Arroyo Rosado.

Rory Casey will be officially taking over as treasurer.

All elected officials are ready to begin their terms and help the city to move forward. They took their oaths, led by McGee, to always protect and do their best for Holyoke.

During this ceremony the Holyoke Madrigal Choir performed a variety of songs including the National Anthem and "Amazing Grace".

Students from the E.N. White Dual-Language program also led the pledge of allegiance in both English and Spanish.



The new Holyoke City Council was introduced to the city during the inauguration ceremony. Please see more photos on page 9. Turley photos by Quinn Suomala

Tensions already present in new council term

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

HOLYOKE – Despite calls for civility from many residents, the Holyoke City Council started off their first regular meeting of the year last week by arguing something as simple as seating arrangements.

City Council President Tessa Murphy-Romboletti made the decision to move the seating assignments of the councilors in order to try to promote increased unity on the council.

“In the spirit of trying to make things a bit more efficient and collaborative, I decided to go with something different,” Murphy-Romboletti said.

Councilors David Bartley and Kevin Jourdain both questioned Murphy-Romboletti’s decision in doing this. They felt that she should have discussed the matter with the council before rearrang-

ing the seating.

“If we’re going to have these types of changes, they have to be discussed with people,” Jourdain said. “We should revisit this decision.”

Traditionally, councilors who have been reelected to the council have kept their seats, with the new councilors simply filling in the vacant seats.

Therefore, the veteran councilors have had the same seats their entire time on the council, and were perturbed by the sudden change.

“I was very happy where I was this morning, where I’ve been the last 12 years,” Bartley said.

Murphy-Romboletti felt it was time to change this tradition in order to try to promote new discussion between councilors.

“I feel like this is something people need to try to embrace,” she said. “We had everyone talk today about unity and

I feel like this is what we need to try to embrace. We need to not sit next to the same people that we always sit next to. I split up everyone in an attempt to get people to actually work together. So, I’m going to stand by this decision.”

Councilor Linda Vacon pointed out that the current rules state that a councilor can not move their seat unless they ask permission from the council president, which she feels implies that seats should not change unless requested.

Murphy-Romboletti said they could look at that rule and try to clarify it, if need be.

Other councilors felt that they should try to adapt to the change, given Murphy-Romboletti’s intentions.

“When I found out I was here I was very, very bothered, but then I said ‘there’s a reason for it, let’s just give the new president some time and let’s give each other some time to adjust to these

changes,’” Councilor Juan Anderson-Burgos said. “I really believe that this is for the greater good.”

“I didn’t want to move either, but I get the overall goal and the intention behind what we’re going,” Councilor Israel Rivera said.

Others may not have fully agreed with the decision, but they felt that Murphy-Romboletti had the right to make the choice, given her position as council president.

“This is your decision, I don’t think moving our seats will make us think any different, make any decisions different, make research different, but if this is what you want, this is what we have to accept because you were voted in as our president,” Councilor Jenny Rivera said.

No further decision was made on this matter at the meeting, the council plans to pick up the discussion at another time.

Emily Dickinson comes to visit

HOLYOKE – MIFA Victory Theatre in co-production with Ensemble for the Romantic Century of New York City and the Emily Dickinson Museum of Amherst present “Because I Could Not Stop: An Encounter with Emily Dickinson” by James Melo with the music of Amy Beach, performed by the MIFA Victory Players on Friday, Jan. 12, 7 p.m. at Holyoke Media, 1 Court Plaza.

General Admission is \$24 and you

may purchase tickets at www.mifafestival.org.

Starring actress Angelica Page and soprano Kristina Bachrach, “Because I Could Not Stop: An Encounter with Emily Dickinson” takes audiences on a journey through Dickinson’s elusive artistic world pairing chamber music of renowned 19th-century composer Amy Beach with Dickinson’s words, images, emotions, and imagination.

HCC gallery presents exhibit by artist Raishad J. Glover

Geo-Spec: Cultural Introspection Wealth’ opens

HOLYOKE – Cubes and hexagons abound in the work of conceptual artist Raishad J. Glover, the newest member of the Holyoke Community College visual art faculty.

“The cube acts as a form of building block,” said Glover. “Building blocks for family. Building blocks for community. Building blocks for ecosystems.”

A hexagon, he notes, traces the contour line of a cube, and is a form prevalent in nature, such as honeycomb found in beehives.

Cubes, hexagons, the environment, as well as other shapes and themes, come together in Glover’s latest exhibit, “Geo-Spec: Cultural Introspection Wealth,” which runs Jan. 16 through March 20 at HCC’s own Taber Art Gallery.

An opening reception will be held in the gallery Tuesday, Jan. 16, from 4:30-7:30 p.m., celebrating Glover’s work and his recent addition to the HCC faculty.

Glover studied studio art at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University in Boston and holds a master’s degree in fine art in painting and printmaking from the Yale School of Art in New Haven.

He joined HCC in the fall after nine years teaching art at Claflin

University and South Carolina State University in Orangeburg.

“I have a lot of history up here, a lot of family, and a lot of friends, and a gallery in Boston that is used to exhibiting my work,” said Glover, who lives in Northampton and maintains a studio there. “I wanted to get back to other areas that I’m familiar with and build connections.”

The “Geo-Spec” exhibit explores concepts such as culture, mind growth, wealth, and ecological design. “Geo” refers to geometry, “spec” to spectrum. Glover experiments with multiple mediums, such as lenticular printing, graphite powder, beeswax, dura-trans/backlit film, analog and digital photography, and LED Lights.

He is an advocate of sustainable design and chooses materials that are more environmentally friendly. Geo-Spec includes pieces constructed from granite, paper, glass, bamboo, and wool, among others.

One of the pieces is a refurbished portable television from the 1940s, retrofitted to play videos from an Amazon Fire TV Stick.

“We’re going to play a short video on there,” he said, “but it’s top secret until the show opens.”

The Taber Art Gallery, located off the lobby of the HCC Library on the second floor of the HCC Donahue Building, is free and open to the public Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. during regular school sessions.

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Brunelle elected as vice chair of the school committee

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

HOLYOKE – Erin Brunelle was elected as vice chair of the school committee, succeeding Mildred Lefebvre in the position.

Brunelle was elected 6-3 to the position, with Mayor Joshua Garcia and Committee Members Mildred Lefebvre, Brunelle, Gustavo Romero, John Whelihan and William Collamore voting for her on the third ballot.

Brunelle comes into this position at a crucial time for Holyoke Public Schools. The district is attempting to exit receivership, making them the first school district to do so.

Brunelle is prepared for the work that will come with this transition. She plans to help the committee begin the transition process.

“We need to reorganize ourselves to be prepared to get back to having the workload that we did,” Brunelle said. “For example, we’ve only been meeting

once a month, we’re definitely going to be going back to meeting twice a month.”

She also plans to look at the various subcommittees the committee currently has to see where they may have gaps when they do have full local control back.

“This year will be focusing on reestablishing all the roles as if we were already out of receivership so that way, even if it’s just in practice, when we do exit we as a body are ready to resume the role of the school committee as it’s meant to be,” Brunelle said.

Brunelle has been on the school committee for 10 years and is the vice chair of the school building committee. Both of these experiences she feels have prepared her for vice chair of the school committee.

As vice chair of the school building committee, Brunelle has had experience meeting with a diverse group of people and working toward the challenging goal of designing a school at an affordable expense.

“Personally I think what has pre-

pared me the most is I’m privileged enough to be vice chair of the school building committee,” Brunelle said. “The experience I was able to get has really prepared me for my new role.”

She also feels this experience has helped her to learn how to run a timely, effective meeting, which is a key role of the vice president of the school committee.

“I feel like I’m definitely ready for that challenge at this point,” Brunelle said.

Additionally, her years on the school committee have allowed her to see how the committee functions both under receivership and out of it. Brunelle believes this knowledge will aid her in easing any transition out of receivership.

“I was fortunate enough to be on the school committee for at least two years before we officially went into receivership,” Brunelle said. “I think it’s good that we have somebody in the vice chair position who has been in the committee for a long time and has the experience to

hopefully be able to guide us through that process.”

It was this experience that made Brunelle decide to run for the position. She knew this year would be important for the district and felt her knowledge could be crucial in guiding the committee.

“I look forward to helping to guide the committee in structuring the work that needs to be done to regain local control and make sure that we’re prepared for it,” Brunelle said.

Brunelle is grateful to the support her colleagues showed through electing her to this position. She understands the importance of the position and looks forward to working with them throughout her time as vice chair.

“I understand the leadership position of vice chair is not to benefit my own interests and opinions and I understand that we’re there to benefit and progress the goals of the district and I look forward to advancing those goals with each and every one of their help and assistance,” Brunelle said.

COLLEGE NOTES

HCC announces fall 2023 Dean’s List

HOLYOKE – Each semester Holyoke Community College recognizes superior scholarship through the Dean’s List. A student is placed on the Dean’s List if their G.P.A. is 3.2 or higher. The students listed are from the Holyoke area and have earned dean’s list honors for the Fall 2023 semester. Dayshel Erika Allen, Kelsie Anne Bacon, Roselyn Baez, Maya A. Baksh, Emily Bayliss, Fatima Bergman, Dustin Corey Bonnoyer, Kelsy Margaret Brainard, Dawne K. Brown, Maximilian Alexander Bruel, Nancy Virginia Capron, Gabriel Louis Cedeno, Ladeyshka Chavez, Veronica Luisa Colon, Jalen J. Cortes, Alexander Joseph Dumas, Brendan Michael Duval, Alina Rose Fairlie, Marcos Denzel Figueroa, Amanda Freeman, Karyna Gaston-Feliciano, Omarily Gomez, Kaylany Gracia, Brian David Hager, Nicole Louise Henchey, Elijah Jesus Jauridez, Alivia Regan Kaifer, Nuriye Kartal, Zachary Thomas Kent, Stephanie Lorraine Kuplast, Daneisha Luciano, Alezza

R. Maldonado, Amanda Maldonado, Oceana Maldonado, Yalexis Marie Martinez, Jose Antonio Mateo, Joseph Nathen Moquin, Taleishka Meiry Morales Babilonia, Yara C. Nevarez-Martinez, Erin Frances O’Donnell, Marianne O’Leary, Steven Joseph Pinkney, Charlotte Price, Cameron Christian Proulx, Mayumi Dalay Ramon, Edil R. Ramsahai, Moira Catherine Reardon, Tatiana Mabel Restrepo I, Crystal Eileen Reyes, Ellen E. Rice, Jessika Marilyn Richards, Camryn Rist, Nicole Rodriguez, Adelaida Rodriguez, Jose Emanuel Roman, Katherine Ryan Rousseau, Rebeca Marie Santiago, Jayshalee Santos, Alondra Marie Serrano, Aramis Jadiel Serrano, Olivia Margaret Shaughnessy, Collin Stasinov, Ian Micheal Streciwilk, Aidan Alejandro Sugrue, Patrick John Sweeney, Pablo Kai Tapion, Kara Elizabeth Torres, Yanitza Lee Torres, Marangelly Vargas-Gonzalez, Nilmarie Velazquez, Rachel Joy Westcott, Emily Anne Whitelock.

STCC announces fall 2023 Dean’s List

SPRINGFIELD – Springfield Technical Community College announces 784 students were named to the fall 2023 Dean’s List. To be considered, degree-seeking students must earn 12 or more college level credits in the current semester, or a total of 12 or more combined college-level credits earned during the fall and spring semesters, and achieve a 3.3 or above grade point average. These

students are from the Holyoke area, Alexis Jimenez, Alina Amaya Branche, Anthony Rosado-Burgos, Araceli Sumba, Bethany Anaya, Brennen Roberge, Brianna White, Cormac Norton, Einyer Castillo, Jasmin Marrero, Julie Guarente, Lissette Perez, Marissa Perez, Monique Edwards, Natasha Dube, Paola Rojas, Sean Sheedy, Tamara Smith, Tatiana Ramos and Valeria Perez.

SNHU announces fall 2023 Dean’s List

MANCHESTER, NH – Southern New Hampshire University announces the following students have been named to the fall 2023 Dean’s List. The fall terms run from September to December.

Full-time undergraduate students who have earned a minimum grade-point average of 3.500 to 3.699 for the reporting term are named to the dean’s list. These students are from the Holyoke area, Emmanuela Filev-Mihalak and Keiry Heath.

SNHU announces fall 2023 President’s List

MANCHESTER, NH – Southern New Hampshire University announces the following students have been named to the fall 2023 President’s List. The fall terms run from September to December.

Full-time undergraduate students who have earned a minimum grade-point average of 3.700 and above for the reporting term are named to the president’s list. These students are from the Holyoke area, Vanessa Plamondon and Crystal Hickey.

PRESIDENT, from page 1

Councilors David Bartley, Howard Greaney, Kevin Jourdain, Carmen Ocasio, Michael Sullivan and Linda Vacon voted for Jourdain.

Murphy promises to earn the trust of those who did not vote for her.

“I can really appreciate that not everyone voted for me,” Murphy-Romboletti said. “What I hope is that I’m able to show that I am willing to listen, but I’m also going to try to make decisions based on what I genuinely believe is best for creating an efficient and civilized government.”

She is aware that not everyone will be happy with all of the decisions she makes throughout her term, including those who voted for her as president, but she hopes that she is able to find compromises that work well for everyone.

“When you are trying to come to a consensus it often means that you are not going to get everything you want,” she said. “We have to remember that that is actually what the government is supposed to be like.”

Murphy-Romboletti knows that residents have been raising concerns over the civility of the city council, and she hopes to focus on improving the tone of the meetings throughout her term as council president.

She is aware this will not be an easy task and that it will likely take a variety of efforts, but she is prepared to do the work necessary.

“I think it’s about building trust and about open communication and dialogue,” she said.

On top of working to improve council decorum, Murphy-Romboletti also plans to try to take another look at the City Charter.

The last time anyone tried to make changes to the Charter was over 10 years ago, and it hasn’t been updated in decades, according to Murphy-Romboletti.

Included in the Charter is mention of who will take the position of council president should the president be absent from a meeting. The Charter states that the most senior member of the council should take the position.

Nowhere in the Charter does it specify the need for a vice president of the council, something Murphy-Romboletti would like to look into.

In her first term as a councilor, Murphy-Romboletti had filed an order to create a vice president position.

There she learned that the Charter already specified who would take the position of president, so should there be a vice president position created, they would need to specify how that position differed from what was already outlined

in the Charter.

“If we did have a vice president we’d have to define how that differs, or look at changing the Charter,” Murphy-Romboletti said.

On top of looking into the Charter, Murphy-Romboletti also expects the council will be working a lot with long-term planning and infrastructure for the city.

“Those are the kinds of conversations that are really difficult to have, but unfortunately they haven’t happened in the right way or in a productive way over the last few decades, so these are things that we have to address now,” Murphy-Romboletti said.

Specifically, Mayor Joshua Garcia is currently working on creating a master plan, something that has not been done for over 20 years. Murphy-Romboletti anticipates that being a major discussion topic for the council.

“We just celebrated 150 years, so we owe it to ourselves to look at the next 150,” she said.

Murphy-Romboletti also took the time to address the fact that she is the first female president of the city council in Holyoke’s history. Not only that, but for this term the city council has a majority of women, with seven female councilors and six male.

While she found it surprising that it took so long for a woman to be elected as

council president, she hopes that it will show the city that women are capable of filling any position.

“It’s an opportunity to show the community that women have a place in all spaces where decisions are being made,” Murphy-Romboletti said.

Also, she feels that the amount of women on the council is a positive shift in having the council represent the population of Holyoke.

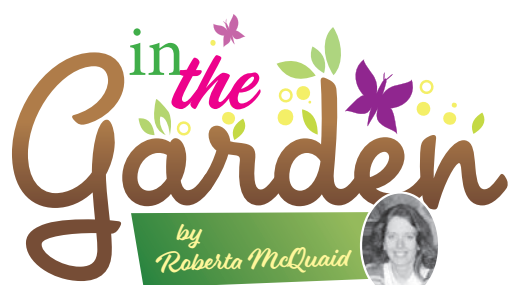
“I think it shows that Holyoke is heading in a direction where our elected officials are really starting to represent the community that we live in,” Murphy-Romboletti said.

Murphy-Romboletti is ready to begin her term and she looks forward to working with all of the people on the council.

She knows that she is new to this position, and newer to the council, but she is prepared for the work ahead and is ready to learn from and maybe help teach all her fellow councilors.

“I know that this is uncharted territory for me, but I do believe that one of my strengths as a person is being able to meet people where they are and try to get people to work together,” she said. “I’m hoping that those skills and the things that I’ve learned along the way, and being humble enough to admit when I’ve made a mistake will help me to gain trust.”

New questions for the New Year!



Jim, who gardens in Bridgewater, sent this question in to the Garden Lady. “I liked your article on experimenting with holly seeds. I do some of my own propagating with trees and perennials, so the holly seeds thing was good. My question concerns being dioecious and at what point can one determine male or female? Is there some way to determine sex at an early stage or must I grow a dozen plants for years before I can wean out the males and keep the females? I have read that a single male will successfully pollinate all the females within a half mile radius so finding the females is my goal at the earliest possible stage of growth.”

Sadly, the only way to figure out whether you have a male or female holly is by examining the flowers, so yes, that will require growing them on for some time; my research indicates about four to seven years.

The male flowers will have four petals and four stamens where you will see the pollen at the end. Female flowers look very similar except there is a green “bump” in the center of the petals – the ovary, where the berries will form from.

Garden centers usually propagate vegetatively from either male or female plants, so they are not playing the waiting game. Starting hollies from seed is still a fun experiment, time consuming nonetheless.

Dawn was worried that her amaryllis plant was dead. “My amaryllis was originally a Christmas gift. I’ve enjoyed it for a few years now, but its leaves yellowed, then they withered and died. I’m worried that I killed it!”

As soon as I heard from Dawn, my thoughts went to my own amaryllis, still in my bedroom window despite the fact that its leaves are brown and have fallen around the outside of its pot. I haven’t watered it since it started to “decline.”

It has sat there in this sorry state for a few weeks now. Never fear, it’s likely our bulbs have gone dormant.

This timing is a little off if you think about all of those boxed sets of amaryllis bulbs sitting on store shelves just in time for Christmas giving and planting. Bulb companies can “time” growth stages a little more

reliably that we can.

After a month or two of dormancy watering can resume and with good fortune, blooms should reappear in 6-8 weeks. Some experts recommend putting the dormant bulbs in a cool, dark room to rest.

I often move dormant pots of bulbs to my mudroom where temperatures are in the 50s this time of year and when I see green tips on the bulb I bring it back into the living area of my house. Usually regrowth comes, but a flower sometimes doesn’t.

In this case, the bulb is likely depleted of nutrients and without enough reserves left for re-bloom. I would recommend watering with an all-purpose plant fertilizer during active growth.

Seed production also diminishes the plant’s reserves, so be sure to deadhead the individual flowers as they go by, leaving the stem intact until it yellows. Hopefully these tips will give your amaryllis a few more good years of flowering.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 31 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.

Will my friend’s fiancée be entitled to a survivor benefit?



Dear Rusty

I have a very good friend who has cancer and will begin chemotherapy this week. He is 71 years old and is currently receiving Social Security benefits. He has been living with his fiancée for a little more than 2 years, but they have been a couple for about 15 years and will be married in the next few weeks. She is 60 years old.

I am naturally concerned about his and her future so my questions are:

What, if anything, should he and his wife do to ensure that she gets his Social Security benefits?

What benefits will she be entitled to and how soon will she be able to begin receiving them after his death?

Signed: A Friend with Questions

Dear Friend

You are kind to be concerned about your friend and his fiancée. Here’s what you need to know:

Social Security goes by state rules when it comes to what is often referred to as “common law marriage.” That means that whether

your friend’s fiancée will receive any benefits as a surviving spouse in a “common law” relationship depends on whether they live in a state, which recognizes common law marriage.

Most states do not, but state laws have changed over the years and many states which once recognized such unions as “marriage” no longer do. Although they may have “been a couple” for 15 years, if your friend and his fiancée have been living together for only two it is likely only the last two years will count for Social Security benefit purposes. So, whether your friend’s fiancée will get anything when your friend dies depends on where they live, unless they get married, in which case the rules are different.

In order for a married widow(er) to receive surviving spouse benefits, the couple must have been married for at least nine months. If they marry and your friend lives longer than nine months thereafter, then his wife will be entitled to a surviving spouse benefit from her husband. The amount of his wife’s benefit will be based upon the amount your friend is receiving at his death, adjusted for her age when she claims her surviving spouse benefit.

A surviving spouse can claim benefits from the deceased as early as age 60, but those benefits will be reduced for claiming before full retirement age (FRA). Taken at age 60, the wife’s benefit would be 71.5% of your friend’s SS benefit at his death. The wife need

not claim the survivor benefit immediately; she could opt to delay claiming in order to get a higher percentage of the husband’s amount. Survivor benefits reach maximum, 100% of the deceased’s benefit amount, at the recipient’s FRA.

So, if your friend and his fiancée now live in a state which currently recognizes common law marriage (Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Montana, New Hampshire, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Rhode Island or in the District of Columbia), then your friend’s partner will be considered his “wife” and entitled to survivor benefits as normal (the fiancée would need to prove they cohabitate in a marriage-like relationship to claim benefits).

If they do not live in one of those states, but they get married and the marriage lasts for at least 9 months, then the wife will be entitled to normal benefits as a surviving spouse as described above.

But if the couple do not live in one of the above states which recognize “common law” relationships or if their soon-to-occur marriage doesn’t last at least 9 months or if they do not get married, I’m afraid your friend’s partner will not be entitled to any survivor benefits from your friend.

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 informational 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.



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Deadline for submissions is Wednesday at noon.

Please email (preferred) letters to thesun@turley.com. Mailed letters can be sent to The Sun, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069.

Habitat breaks the mold: Offers affordable homeownership

By Brandice J. O'Brien

SPRINGFIELD – Yes, Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity builds houses. But, there's so much more to the nonprofit organization. Simply put, Greater Springfield Habitat offers the limited-income population of Hampden County an opportunity to create better lives and generational wealth for their families. GSHFH operates using a three-pronged approach as a construction company, social service agency, and mortgage provider. In fact, Greater Springfield Habitat's construction projects are built despite the rise of inflation, financial challenges, and changes in the local housing market.

GSHFH primarily constructs three- and four-bedroom single-family homes that measure approximately 1,500 square feet. GSHFH helps families purchase homes that they construct in partnership with the organization, by requiring sweat equity contribution in lieu of down payment from partner families and providing low-to-zero-interest mortgages and subsidies to purchase homes at below market rate. Greater Springfield Habitat mortgages are based on the family's income and set to not exceed 43% of their total household debt when combined with all financial obligations.

"GSHFH works with families that earn 45% to 60% of the area median income level. For a family of four, that's a household income of \$35,000 to \$59,000 per year," said Aimee Giroux, GSHFH executive director. "Traditional first-time home buyer programs require a minimum income of 80% or \$80,000 AMI and the family must have 3% to 10% down payment to qualify."

By comparison, Aimee said, imagine a family of four earning \$50,000 (50% AMI) is trying to secure a \$150,000 mortgage. They have a current debt of \$700 per month for a student loan, credit card and car loan. By partnering with GSHFH, they can afford up to a 2.5% interest loan. Their maximum payment with escrow would be \$993 per month with an overall debt to income of 40%. At the current 6.5% interest rate, their payment would be \$1,348 per month, and their debt to income would be 53%, which would make them ineligible for traditional funding.

Juan Gonzalez said just before he and his wife showed up to the January 2023 closing of his new home in Holyoke, he ran the numbers one last time to make sure the home was within their financial means. Looking over the math, he was worried. Unnecessarily so. Juan forgot the loan was interest-free. When he heard that he exhaled a big breath and said, "Disregard my math. Thank you, Lord. This home is more affordable."

"Habitat made the process easy and with a no-interest loan in this economy, we couldn't have asked for anything better," said Karina Dise, Habitat



Juan Gonzalez and Ireydiza Perez's finished house.



Juan, Ireydiza and their two children.

Photos submitted by Brandice J. O'Brien

homeowner in Monson, who with her husband, purchased their home in November 2007. "We are blessed to own a house and have land that goes with it. We can enjoy the outside when the weather is nice and we don't have to hear our noisy neighbors who used to live right next door to us. My husband likes to grill outside too, so that's definitely a plus."

Greater Springfield Habitat realizes everyone deserves simple, decent, affordable housing. Period. Habitat aims to close the racial wealth disparities by providing subsidies and affordable mortgages to help families break the cycle.

"We had debt, we cleaned it up and went to the bank to see if we qualified for a mortgage. We were told we didn't have enough money," said Lori Holt, who with her husband purchased a Springfield Habitat home in May 2014. "Our daughter told us about Habitat and encouraged us to apply. I didn't think we had a chance."

Eventually, Lori and her husband applied and were accepted. "It was such a blessing for us," Lori said. The couple has five children, four of whom are now adults. "We pay for mortgage what a lot of people pay for rent. Habitat helped our family a lot."

Kim Rivera, who experienced homelessness, on and off since her 18th birthday before owning a Habitat home, said she appreciates what Habitat has done for her. Kim purchased her home in December 2009.

"Habitat gave people like me the ability to get the American dream. I have stability. My children and grandchildren have a safe haven," Kim said. "I'm never selling this house. I'm going to keep it in the family. I want other generations to know they won't be homeless. I have three kids, and they've all seen the benefits of having a home."

Studies have shown children of lim-

ited-income homeowners are 11% more likely to graduate from high school and are 4.5% more likely to complete post-secondary education than children of low-income renters, Aimee said.

Since its inception in 1987, GSHFH has constructed 74 homes throughout Hampden County.

Habitat chooses partner families based on need, their willingness to partner with us, and their ability to repay a mortgage for the purchase of their home. In many instances, a family's current living situation is less than ideal with issues of rodents, limited electricity, no heat, and/or the apartment is in a dangerous location. For many families, gunfire, drugs and vandalism are fre-

quent. Families who face these realities often have challenges breaking the cycle for their children.

To ensure selected families understand the "hand up" versus a "hand out" ideology, prospective and have tools to manage the responsibility of homeownership, Habitat partner families must also attend first-time homebuyer education, financial literacy classes, good neighbor and home maintenance classes.

To keep the mission moving forward, GSHFH relies on donations. Most funding comes from individual donations, local businesses, and grants.

To learn more about Greater Springfield Habitat and its mission, visit habitatspringfield.org.



New homeowner Ireydiza accepts the keys to her new home.

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68						69							70	

CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Defensive nuclear weapon
- 4. Moved back and forth
- 9. One-time coach of the Cowboys
- 14. Last letter
- 15. Cause to become less intense
- 16. Genus of tree bugs
- 17. Body art
- 18. Romance novelist
- 20. Be filled with love for
- 22. City
- 23. Make vivid
- 24. Horses
- 28. Mauna __, Hawaiian volcano
- 29. Atomic #18
- 30. Shortly
- 31. A type of prejudice
- 33. Whirls
- 37. Six
- 38. Old world, new
- 39. __ Hess, oil company
- 41. Talk
- 42. Not off
- 43. Begets
- 44. Cars need them
- 46. Computing architecture (abbr.)
- 49. Of I
- 50. Journalist, activist Wells
- 51. Takes apart
- 55. Lists
- 58. Positively charged electrode
- 59. Hard, colorless compound
- 60. Inflammation of the peritoneum
- 64. Trent Reznor's band
- 65. Simply dry fruit
- 66. "Ivanhoe" author
- 67. Google certification
- 68. French commune
- 69. Medieval circuit courts
- 70. Soviet Socialist Republic

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Indigenous people of Mexico
- 2. Dietary supplement
- 3. Having a particular sheen or luster
- 4. Views
- 5. Academic Bill of Rights
- 6. Automobile
- 7. When you anticipate arriving
- 8. Beef or chicken intestine
- 9. Conspiracy
- 10. Blood disorder
- 11. Long-time NBAer Shawn
- 12. Time zone
- 13. US, Latin America, Canada belong to
- 19. Upton Sinclair novel
- 21. What a cow does
- 24. Cavalry-sword
- 25. Ancient Greek war galley
- 26. Stars
- 27. Rebukes
- 31. Billion year periods
- 32. Some are in a bottle
- 34. Tears down
- 35. Lethal dose
- 36. Humorists
- 40. Midwestern US state (abbr.)
- 41. Frameworks
- 45. Rocker Billy
- 47. More thin
- 48. Dog
- 52. Habitual repetitions
- 53. State of fuss
- 54. Uneasy
- 56. Chemical compounds
- 57. More cognizant of reality
- 59. A place to build
- 60. Exclamation that denotes disgust
- 61. Supplement with difficulty
- 62. Very slick
- 63. Hill or rocky peak

CROSSWORD ANSWER on page 6

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Putnam, Central hurt Holyoke's strong start

HOLYOKE – After jumping out to a great 6-1 record to start the season, Holyoke has now started its Valley League schedule, which includes tough opponents in Putnam and Central.

Holyoke lost to both teams in the past week, including Putnam 73-67 last Friday evening. Holyoke is now 6-3. The Knights hope to rebound against Northampton on Jan. 16 at 7:30 p.m.



Luis Figueroa lifts a shot over an opponent.



Davian Diaz looks to fight through a crowd of Putnam players.



Chauncey Ruiz goes for the free throw.



Jamil Rodriguez tries to get his shot off.



Shawn Rivera flies for a layup. Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com



Adaline Woods competes in the 200 freestyle. Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com



Scarlett LaRose makes her way across the pool in the 100 fly.

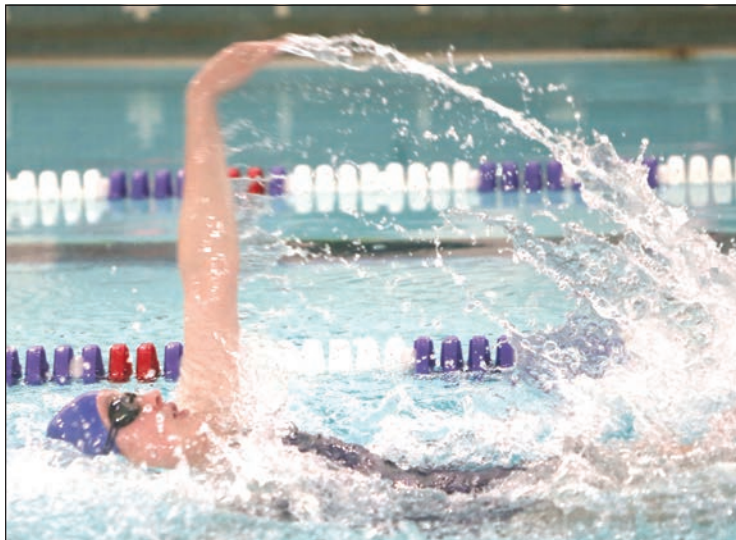


Madi Bomard goes for a win in the 100 freestyle.

Co-op swimming splits with Monson



Gracie Levrault works in the 200 individual medley.



Trinity Roy makes her way across the ball in the 200 medley relay.

HOLYOKE – Last Friday afternoon, Holyoke swimming, which co-ops with Granby and South Hadley, split its meet with visiting Monson. The girls scored a win, defeating the Mustangs 93-66 and improving to 3-1 on the season. The boys suffered a 34-20 loss against Monson and fell to 1-3 on the season. Adaline Woods captured a pair of wins in the 200 and 500 freestyle.

Wrestling edged by East Longmeadow

HOLYOKE – Last week, the Holyoke High School wrestling team opened the 2024 schedule with a meet against East Longmeadow. The Knights had a great effort but came up just short as a team losing 42-40. The Knights moved to 0-3 on the their weeknight schedule of meets. Last weekend, the Knights participated in a tournament in Tewksbury, and are not scheduled for a meet or tournament this weekend. The Knights next face Agawam on Jan. 17.

HoopHall Classic to be broadcast nationwide

SPRINGFIELD – The Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame announced today the broadcast schedule for the 2024 Spalding HoopHall Classic, an annual basketball showcase now in its 22nd year. Games will be played at Blake Arena from January 11-15 at Springfield College, the Birthplace of Basketball.

ESPN is returning as a broadcast partner, with 10 matchups broadcast nationally across Sunday and Monday's schedules. Coverage starts on Sunday with LaLumiere School, KY, vs. Prolific Prep, CA, at 1:30 p.m. Two matchups will be broadcast on ESPN2, five on ESPNU, and three on ESPN+.

Saturday's slate of eight games, which will tip off with Bishop Hendricken High School (RI) vs. Gulliver Prep (FL) at 9 a.m. and conclude with Grayson High School (GA) vs. Perry High School (AZ) at 9 p.m. will stream on the NBA App, with the first four games and last four games simulcast to NBA TV and NBA YouTube, respectively. Additionally, content and highlights from Saturday's games will be featured on NBA Future Starts Now. This marks the first time that HoopHall Classic games and content will be featured on NBA platforms.

BallerTV continues as a broadcast

partner for the event and will stream 14 games throughout the weekend.

18 of ESPN's Top 25 High School basketball programs will be participating in the event: Montverde Academy (#1), Long Island Lutheran High School (#2), Paul VI High School (#3), Link Academy (#4), Christopher Columbus High School (#5), Prolific Prep (#7), Arizona Compass Prep (#8), Don Bosco Prep (#9), La Lumiere School (#11), Harvard-Westlake High School (#12), Brewster Academy (#13), IMG Academy (#14), Bishop O'Connell High School (#15), Gonzaga College High School (#16), Oak Hill Academy (#17), Archbishop Stepinac

High School (#19), Grayson High School (#24), and McEachern High School (#25).

Ten of the last 12 No. 1 overall picks in the NBA Draft have played at the HoopHall Classic. This year, HoopHall Classic will feature 43 players in ESPN's Top 100 from the Class of 2024, 18 from the Class of 2025 Top 60, and five from the Class of 2026 Top 25.

The tournament will feature four women's games this year. Eight of the Class of 2024's HoopGurlz WESPN Top 100 recruits will be featured, five from the Class of 2025's Super 60, and two from the Class of 2026's Terrific 25.

Thunderbirds suffer loss against Providence Bruins

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – The Springfield Thunderbirds (16-12-3-2) could not overcome an early blitz by the Providence Bruins (19-12-3-0) in a 6-3 loss on Sunday afternoon at Amica Mutual Pavilion.

It did not take the Bruins long to flex their offensive muscles, as John Farinacci slipped into an open area in front of the net, received a pass from Brett Harrison, and one-touched it past Vadim Zherenko to make it a 1-0 Bruins lead just 2:40 into the game.

Just 1:04 later, Justin Brazeau added to the advantage, taking a Georgii Merkulov pass and deking to the backhand past Zherenko on a point-blank opportunity. Anthony Richard added a third at 6:05, and before the T-Birds knew it, the home side had a 3-0 lead.

After a pair of matching minors put the game at 4-on-4 for the first time, the Bruins found another seam in the defense, as Frederic Brunet made a perfect diagonal pass to the right post, where Ian Mitchell guided it into the twine, ending a potent first period for the Bruins with the 4-0 goal at 17:05.

Malcolm Subban entered in relief of Zherenko to start the second period, but the Bruins were not done on the

attack, as Jayson Megna beat Subban on an odd-man rush from the slot, and the lead ballooned to 5-0 at 6:27 of the frame.

Despite the mountain of a deficit, the T-Birds showed tremendous character as Zach Bolduc and Adam Gaudette each found the back of the net behind Michael DiPietro in just a 2:12 span to bring the margin down to 5-2 at the 13:52 mark of the period. Bolduc's fifth of the season broke a personal 11-game drought, and Gaudette scored for a third straight game, becoming the first AHL player to reach 20 goals this season.

The third period went 11 minutes with relatively minimal offensive chances for each team. Springfield would get another one as MacKenzie MacEachern roofed a shot from the right of the crease at 11:54 to cut the margin down to 5-3 off a slick set-up from Wyatt Kalynuk, but the comeback effort would not get any closer. Richard's second goal of the afternoon, a power play marker into an empty net, ended the scoring at the 17:54 mark of the third.

The T-Birds continued their four-game road swing on Wednesday night when they visited the Bridgeport Islanders.

Railers fall to Mariners

PORTLAND, ME – After spending a lot of the first part of this season crafting miraculous comebacks, Worcester did it happen in reverse, losing to the Maine Mariners, 4-2.

The Railers squandered a 2-1 lead as they allowed two goals by Alex Kile in the game's closing minutes, then an empty-netter by Curtis Hall at 19:59.

Kile's goals were his 19th and 20th of the season. The tying goal came with Maine on a power play at 17:09 of the third period. The winner was a 5 on 5 shot through a screen from about 55 feet at 19:33. It came after a Railers' mistake, an errant pass that led to an icing call and a faceoff in their own end.

Joey Cipollone and Anthony Callin scored the Worcester goals. Owen Pederson had the first Maine goal.

John Muse stopped 25 of 28 Maine shots. Brad Arvanitis was excellent for the Mariners with 34 saves.

Worcester had a chance to put things out of reach earlier in the third period but could not capitalize on more than three straight minutes of power play time, much of it skating 5 on 3.

Referee Michael Zyla did not call a penalty and missed a blatant trip that took down a Worcester player and it cost the Railers a goal. It happened at 11:12, or just before that, as Riley Piercey controlled the

puck along the right wing boards in the Worcester zone.

As Piercey began to move out he was tripped. The puck wound up on Pederson's stick. He carried it into the slot and popped a high backhand past Muse. Otherwise, Muse and Arvanitis were equal to the task to make 18 combined saves.

It took Worcester a while to tie the game but Cipollone finally did at 5:02 of the second period. He entered the Maine zone with Piercey on his right and one Maine defender between them. Cipollone took the puck in deep and his wrist shot broke through Arvanitis to make it 1-1.

Worcester made it 2-1 about seven minutes later on Callin's power play goal. He was set up by Blade Jenkins and zipped a 40-foot wrist shot just under the crossbar for the go ahead goal. The goal snapped an 11-game drought without one for Callin, although he had seven assists in that time.

Jenkins continued a very productive run of games with the assist. He is 2-9-11 in the last eight.

The Railers' next game is Friday night at the DCU Center, the first in a three-in-three versus the Norfolk Admirals. Worcester and Norfolk are likely to jockey for playoff position for the rest of the season and the Admirals have been leading the series to date, winning four of the five meetings.

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Thu., Jan. 25, 8 - 9 a.m.

RSVP: www.wma.us/TitanTalks

Penguin Plunge to be held this January

WESTFIELD – Amelia Park Children's Museum is announcing the 20th annual Penguin Plunge to be held at Hampton Ponds State Park, on Saturday, Jan. 27, 2024. Check-in begins at 11:30 a.m. and the plunging starts at 1 p.m. All proceeds from the Penguin Plunge will benefit Amelia Park Children's Museum.

New this year is the Petite Plunge for children ages 2 - 6. Little ones will have the opportunity to dip their toe or boot into a kiddie pool. Fun games like cornhole and a "snowball" toss will be added to the activities. S'mores and other refreshments will be available. Lively musical entertainment will be provided by Jay Pagluica of JP Lighting and Sounds.

Join as an individual or as a team. Each participant pledges to raise a minimum of \$75 from friends and family and is encouraged to collect as many sponsors as possible. Full time students will receive a registration discount of \$25 with valid school ID and pledge to raise at least \$50. The registration fee for the Petite Plunge participants is \$25.

A costume contest is part of the fun, and there are prizes for Best Individual Costume and Best Team Costume. Register in advance online or the day of the event from 11:30 am to noon. All participants will receive a free 2024 Penguin Plunge T-shirt.

Sponsorship opportunities, registration and pledge forms are available via the museum website <https://www.ameliaparkmuseum.org/penguin-plunge> or can be picked up at the museum. Penguins may also use the Fundly page to collect sponsors; <https://fundly.com/penguin-plunge-2024>.

Amelia Park Children's Museum is located at 29 South Broad St. Call (413) 572- 4014 or email questions to: fun@ameliaparkmuseum.org. Learn more about the museum at www.ameliaparkmuseum.org.



The Holyoke Madrigal Choir performed at the swearing-in ceremony of the city councilors, the school committee and the city treasurer.



The new Holyoke School Committee was sworn in by City Clerk Brena Murphy McGee. *Turley photos by Quinn Suomala*



Pastor Jose Rodriguez from Habitation Church led the invocation at the inauguration ceremony.



Mayor Joshua Garcia congratulated all the councilors and school committee members on being elected or re-elected to their positions.



Students from the dual language program at E. N. White school said the Pledge of Allegiance at the inauguration ceremony.



The new Holyoke city council was sworn in by City Clerk Brena Murphy McGee.



City Clerk Brena Murphy McGee swore in new Treasurer Rory Casey.



City Clerk Brena Murphy McGee gave the closing remarks at the inauguration ceremony.

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USDA INSP. STORE MADE BBQ MARINATED BEEF BLADE STEAKS	\$6.99 lb	90 Meat Outlet		90 Avocado St. Springfield 413-737-1288 www.90meat.com	
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Explore the difference at St. Joan of Arc School in Chicopee! Lively Letters and OSMO Tangible Play programs have been added to our PreK and Kindergarten programs. Lexia, a phonics instruction that gives students independent practice in basic reading skills, is now offered to Kindergarten through Grade 8 students. And a Robotics Curriculum is coming soon for our 8th graders.

The school will be holding an Open House on Saturday, Jan. 27 from 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. (no appointment needed). Appointment only tours for families will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 30 and Thursday, Feb. 1 from 3 p.m. – 7 p.m. Please call Chris or Janine in the Business Office at 536-6038 for registration information or to make

an appointment.

St. Joan of Arc is a welcoming, safe and secure school community providing social, physical, spiritual & intellectual wellness for students in Pre-K 3 to Grade 8. SJA has innovative offerings that include affordable tuition and extended care, free breakfast and lunch, extracurricular programs to include Chess, Book and Lego Clubs, as well as a Performing Arts Club. Computer fundamentals with intro to computer science, music, library, and Duolingo language classes are also offered. Located at 587 Grattan St., Chicopee offers easy access to I391 & I90. Financial aid and tuition assistance is available. To learn more visit www.sjachicopee.org.

We look forward to meeting you!

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OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, January 27th 9am-12 noon
No Appointment Needed

January 30th & February 1st 3pm-7pm
By Appointment Only



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CAREER Education

Come and see what great things are happening at St. Stanislaus

St. Stanislaus School in Chicopee is under the new leadership of Principal Katherine Rorrio, who fully appreciates the Franciscan values and long-standing traditions of the school. Mrs. Rorrio is a graduate of the school, was a teacher at the school for 20 years, and is now Principal.

This year the school's theme is "For it is in giving that we receive", an inspirational quote from St. Francis about the value of giving back. Students are focusing on a different Corporal Work of Mercy each month. Some of the Corporal Works of

Mercy that have been covered are - Feeding the Hungry and Working for Peace. The most recent Work of Mercy was Shelter the Homeless. Students and families collected 100 blankets, 50 hats, coats, and many undergarments that were donated to a local homeless shelter to help those in the community. Service projects are done throughout the year to help teach students the value of giving back.

The school will be holding an Open House on Sunday, Jan. 21 from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. (no appointment needed).

If you would like to schedule a private tour for another time, please call the school to schedule an appointment at (413) 592-5135.

St. Stanislaus School is a Roman Catholic, Franciscan, co-educational Pre-K through 8th grade school. Students are assisted in developing their potential spiritually, physically, and socially within a safe and diverse community. A foundation of academic excellence is created to prepare students to become contributing members of a global society. The school

has a welcoming Franciscan environment, modern air-conditioned facility, strong core curriculum, enrichment classes, certified faculty, full-day preschool (PreK3 and 4) and Kindergarten, free breakfast and hot lunch, before & after school program, and one to one use and integration of iPads and Chromebooks into curriculum. Financial Aid is available. Interested students are invited to "spend a day with us". To learn more please visit www.saintstansschool.org.

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- Certified faculty
- Full day Preschool & Kindergarten
- Free breakfast and hot lunch
- Before & After school program
- One to one use and integration of iPads & Chromebooks into curriculum

Call us for more information and to schedule a tour. We welcome the opportunity for you to experience St. Stanislaus School! Interested students are invited to "spend a day with us."

OPEN HOUSE
SUNDAY, JAN. 21, 2024
11AM-1PM



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TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITIES AT GÁNDARA, CONTACT THE RECRUITERS DIRECTLY!

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CAREER Education

St. Michael's Academy to hold Open House

Are you looking for a school that educates each of its students as an individual? Are you looking for dedicated teachers who want their students to succeed? Are you looking for a school that combines faith with education in order to teach strong moral values, respect and kindness? Are you looking for a school with a structured environment that promotes learning?

Then we have a school for you!

St. Michael's Academy, located at 153 Eddywood Street in the East Forest Park section of Springfield, invites you to an Open House and Curriculum Fair on Sunday, Jan. 28, 2024. There will be a special presentation for prospective students and their families that will begin at noon. The event will include an information session, followed by a panel of students, teachers

and parents for questions and finish with a full school tour. The full school will be open to visitors with teachers in each of the classrooms to accommodate questions.

Attend the Open House and learn what St. Michael's Academy can offer your child. St. Michael's Academy is not just books and papers. The educational process strives to form the entire child academically, spiritually, physically and emotionally. The dedicated teaching faculty truly care about their students and want them to learn, grow and succeed. The final result is a graduate who is well prepared for high school, college and beyond. Each student takes with them a solid foundation for continued growth and achievement, having learned the value of respect, kindness and community service.

Unable to attend the Open House on January 28th? Simply call the Admissions Office at (413) 782-5246, ext. 1208 and schedule an informational session and tour.

St. Michael's Academy is located off of Plumtree Road in Springfield, directly behind Holy Cross Church. The Academy educates students from preschool 3 years old, through grade 8. It is the largest Catholic elementary school in Western Mass and the only Catholic elementary school in Springfield.



Apex Homecare of Western MA expands programs and staffing to meet growing needs in the elder care arena

Direct Support Professionals at Apex Homecare of Springfield provides home care aides to increase independence for the people with disabilities and seniors, every day.

Caregivers and students pursuing a degree in the healthcare field are encouraged to contact the agency to take advantage of Apex's Direct Support Professional (DSP's) training program. To attract top quality Aides, the agency provides attractive benefits and a career path.

The direct care worker shortage is a global issue, stretching well beyond Massachusetts. In the U.S., 3 out of every 4 agency providers has a wait list for caregiving services. According to the Global Coalition on Aging Report, 70% of Americans who reach age 65 will need long-term services and support. If nothing changes, the report predicts there will be a national shortage of 151,000 care workers by 2030, and a 355,000-caregiver shortfall by 2040.

Pew Research states that one in four Americans live with a disability that interferes with activities of daily living and a recent national survey reports 90% of Americans age 50 and over want to 'age in place'.

To compound the situation, demand in the family caregiving market is increasing as well. Currently, 53 million Americans serve as family caregivers and the number is growing.

An Executive Order from the White House signed in April 2023 offers new



Direct care workers and students pursuing a degree in healthcare are encouraged to contact Apex.

resources to remedy the caregiver shortage crisis to meet increased need. It is the most sweeping set of executive actions to improve care in the nation's history and takes immediate action to enhance job quality for the direct care workforce. Like many of Apex's services, the Executive Order also provides resources for family caregivers that foster emotional well-being and stems the financial and health strain that caregiving has on a family.

About Apex Homecare

Apex provides a safe, compassionate and friendly atmosphere to enable the client to enjoy and maximize the excellence of life in the comfort of his or her home. If you or a loved one needs services, contact Cheryl Rumley RN at Apexhealth01@verizon.net. If you are seeking a career in the caregiving, disability or healthcare field, visit the Apex career page.



St. Michael's Academy

Attention Elementary School Teachers!

Looking for a rewarding teaching experience?

St. Michael's Academy will be hiring teachers for the 2024-2025 academic year.

Interested? Send your resume to a.dougal@smaspringfield.org.



Looking for a new school for your child?

Join us on Sunday, January 28th

at noon for an

Open House

Learn what St. Michael's Academy can offer YOUR child!

St. Michael's Academy, 153 Eddywood St., Springfield, MA
Check us out at smaspringfield.org



Apex Homecare

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Deliver Excellent Care in a Safe & Supportive Environment

Apex Homecare has immediate Openings

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CAREER Education

Hampden Charter School of Science marks 14 years of educational excellence

Hampden Charter School of Science (HCSS) is a top-ranking free college-preparatory public school founded in 2009 and serving families with students in grades 6th-12th at two campuses in Western Massachusetts: HCSS-East (Chicopee Campus) and HCSS-West (West Springfield Campus).

HCSS proudly provides seven years of unparalleled college preparatory education for grades 6-12 students, paving the way for college admissions and a wealth of scholarship opportunities. College and Career Readiness at HCSS is a tailored process forging the best possible alignment between each distinctively talented student and the most suitable college or university for them. Students collaborate closely with their counselors to delve into their manifold talents and interests, set aspirations based on these insights, and identify colleges that align with their ambitions.

- College Board AP Capstone Diploma Program: A prestigious program that enhances research, analysis, and presentation skills.
- Focused Attention in Small Classes: With an average class size of fewer than 20 students, each individual receives the attention they deserve.
- University Partnerships and Dual Enrollment: Engage in university outreach programs that offer dual enrollment opportunities, bridging the gap between high school and college.



- Enhanced College-Prep Curriculum: HCSS's amplified curriculum prepares students comprehensively for higher education.
- Early SAT and PSAT Preparation: To build a strong foundation, Rigorous SAT and PSAT training starting in 8th grade.
- Comprehensive College and Career Guidance: A thorough guidance program that starts as early as 6th grade, equipping students for future academic and career choices.
- Experiential College Campus Visits: Hands-on learning through college campus tours and informative sessions, providing real-world college experience.

- Community-Driven Guest Speakers and Career Workshops: Gain insights from guest speakers and partake in career workshops led by community professionals.
- Consistently High College Acceptance Rates: An impressive average college acceptance rate of 95% since 2014.
- Substantial Scholarship Achievements: More than \$51M in scholarships raised since 2014.

- HCSS Curriculum Highlights:**
- Project-Based Instruction and Con-

textual Learning: Engage in real-world problems and hands-on projects that bring learning to life.

- Developmentally Appropriate and Data-Driven Instruction: Personalized teaching strategies delivered by dedicated and highly qualified educators.
 - High-Level Academic Discussions: Opportunities to improve critical listening, thinking, and analysis skills across all subjects.
 - Advanced Placement (AP) Opportunities: Access 14 AP courses starting in 9th grade to challenge and elevate academic capabilities.
 - Early Honors Courses: Availability of honors courses beginning in 7th grade for an academically accelerated path.
 - Inquiry-Driven Curriculum: A focus on fostering inquiry, discovery, innovation, and collaboration in learning.
 - Comprehensive Support Services: SPED and ELL services ensure that 100% of at-risk students meet high school MCAS graduation requirements.
 - Extensive Tutoring Programs: Free in-school, after-school, and Saturday Academy tutoring, in addition to 24/7 online support in all subjects.
 - Project Lead The Way (PLTW): A new addition fostering STEM skills through hands-on projects and real-world challenges, preparing students for future innovation and leadership.
- Apply by March 3, 2024, for grades 6th-10th at www.hampdencharter.org.



HAMPDEN CHARTER SCHOOL OF SCIENCE

ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR GRADE 6-10



Why Hampden Charter School of Science?

- NO COST
- FREE TRANSPORTATION
- COLLEGE-PREP EDUCATION
- TECHNOLOGY IN CLASSROOM
- EXCELLENCE IN ACADEMICS
- ATHLETICS
- ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES and CLUBS
- 100% COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE

WELCOME SATURDAYS

11:00 AM - 1:00PM

January 20th
February 3rd
February 10th
March 2nd

VISIT:
WWW.HAMPDENCHARTER.ORG

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HELP WANTED

The Town of Huntington is seeking an **INTERIM TOWN CLERK**. This is a salaried position for approximately 18 hours per week. Application and complete job description are available online at www.huntingtonma.us or by emailing admin@huntingtonma.us. Applications are due by January 26, 2024. Town of Huntington is an Equal Opportunity Employer

TOWN OF WILBRAHAM

P/T ADMINISTRATIVE CLERK - ASSESSORS

Looking for a reliable P/T Administrative Clerk for our Assessor's Office. For application and more information please visit www.wilbraham-ma.gov. Open until filled. EOE

TOWN OF PALMER

INSPECTOR OF BUILDINGS/ BUILDING COMMISSIONER

The Town of Palmer is seeking qualified applicants for the full-time position of Inspector of Buildings/ Building Commissioner. Must have certification as a local inspector by the State Board of Building Regulations and Standards and obtain Certification as an Inspector of Buildings/ Building Commissioner within the time limit allotted in Massachusetts State Building Code 780 CMP Section 110.R7. For a full job description please visit www.townofpalmer.com/jobs. Qualified and interested applicants should submit their cover letter and resume to Robert Reed reed@townofpalmer.com.

TOWN OF WILBRAHAM

POLICE OFFICER

For application and more information please visit www.wilbraham-ma.gov. Review of applications begins immediately. Open until filled. EOE

HELP WANTED

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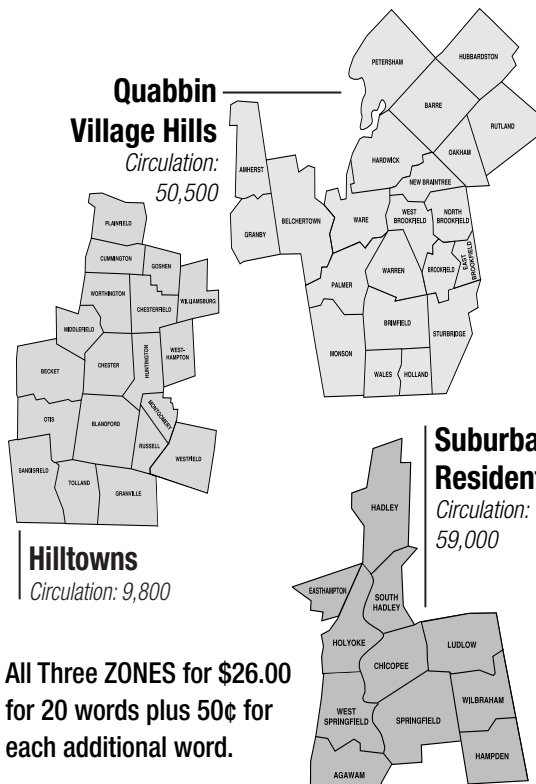
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All of the contestants who participated in last Saturday's Grand Colleen pageant pose on stage.

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com



The Cassin Academy of Dance performs at the pageant.



The Madrigal Choir performs a song.



The Holyoke Caledonian Pipe Band performs.



Last year's Grand Colleen, Abby Glasheen, speaks.



Last year's Grand Colleen and court pose together one last time.



HEALTHY HEARTS

Presentation & Cooking Demonstration

♥ Wednesday, January 24th • 9:30 – 11:30 AM ♥

"Healthy Meal Planning Tips for Older Adults"
With Helga LaCroix, MS, RD, LDN

Start the New Year off right and boost your nutritional knowledge with help from Day Brook Village Senior Living. Learn how to improve your health and wellness in 2024 from Registered and Licensed Dietitian Nutritionist Helga LaCroix, enjoy a cooking demo from Executive Chef Todd Graves, savor heart-healthy refreshments and take home a delicious, home-style lunch!

RSVP by January 17th. Call 413-420-5145, scan the QR code or visit RSVPDayBrookVillage.org.



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