

Garcia, Monahan respond to budget comments

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

HOLYOKE – Mayor Joshua Garcia and Chair of the Board of Public Works Mary Monahan responded to statements made by the city council at their meeting on Dec. 19 in regards to the sewer fund.

The city has been in a contract with Veolia, a wastewater treatment company, for 18 years. Recently, many city councilors have pointed out issues they see with this contract.

They have brought up issues with the fact that certain items, such as street sweeping, are funded through the sewer fund, and thus are handled by Veolia.

Garcia and Monahan specifically pointed to some comments made by Councilor Kevin Jourdain during the last meeting.

“Councilor Jourdain kept referring to ‘they’ as some entity that’s putting these costs that aren’t specific to the operations and management of the wastewater treatment plant into the enterprise fund,” Monahan said. “Well, ‘they’ is the city council.”

The city council is the body who funds the budget and, had they had any questions on this matter, could have been asking for the last 18 years of the contract.

Monahan and Garcia agree this is something they want to fix, and they have taken steps to do so, but this isn’t an issue that has recently appeared.

“One would guess the inclusion of the non-wastewater collection and treatment costs goes back to the beginning of this contract with Veolia, which we’re now in the 18 year of,” Monahan said. “These costs have been paid through the enterprise fund through the beginning of the contract term. Council always had the opportunity to file an order to request a financial study be done.”

Monahan wanted to make it clear that this was not a recent issue, but something that has been ongoing for many years.

However, she and other members of the Board of Public Works and the Department of Public Works have been working to fix it.

Earlier this year, the city

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Donahue School hosts ‘Cocoa and Clauses’ event

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

HOLYOKE – Maurice A. Donahue School hosted their annual Cocoa and Clauses event on Dec. 21, much to the delight of the community.

At this event children and their families were invited to come in and receive gifts from Santa Claus himself, as well as Mrs. Claus. These gifts were donated to the event by Toys for Tots, something Event Organizer Iwana Langlois is more than grateful for.

“We were blessed this year and the last couple years to get Toys for Tots donations,” Langlois said. “We have beautiful gifts for kids and many of the kids won’t get a gift for Christmas, or if they do it might just be one small thing, which is wonderful, but this is just another opportunity for them to get something.”

Following the gift giving, children were welcome to indulge in hot chocolate, cookies and some crafts while also getting visits from Frosty the Snowman, Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer, Mrs. Frosty and a friendly penguin.

Over 500 people signed up to attend, all looking for-



Staff from Maurice A. Donahue School all dressed in festive sweaters to enjoy celebrating the holidays at the Cocoa and Clauses event.
Turley photo by Quinn Suomala

ward to this wonderful holiday-cheer-filled event.

“We have over 500 people coming, which is the biggest we’ve ever done,” Langlois said. “Everyone’s just feeling really good and they’re excited.”

Langlois has been running this event since it started over

10 years ago. She had the initial idea to create the event in order to try to spread some holiday cheer to the community.

“I was just trying to bring the families together for something special,” she said. “I think what I wanted was something very simple, kind of old-fashioned, just some cook-

ies and cocoa because that’s what you do with Santa...the simplicity of the holidays is often forgotten and that’s what I wanted, to bring that back and have everybody together.”

It really did bring everyone together. The instant tick-

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City Councilor proposes meeting time cap

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

HOLYOKE – The Holyoke Charter and Rules Committee discussed a potential order to put a cap on the length of city council meetings.

Councilor Kocayne Givner was the one who filed the order. She believed that putting a cap on the city council meeting length would allow the meetings to be more concise and the government to be more efficient.

Her proposed order would regulate the meetings to two and a half hours, with the council able to vote to extend the meeting by 15 minutes twice, capping overall at 180 minutes.

“I filed this order in an

effort to bring new attention to what I see as an ongoing, I wouldn’t say problem, but it just doesn’t make government accessible to the public,” Givner said. “I filed this order in hopes that we can become more efficient as a city council.”

Givner felt that the length of the current meetings made it difficult for community members who wanted to participate in certain issues to do so.

“Our meetings are regularly three plus hours long and I think that’s a little obnoxious,”

- Kocayne Givner

“Our meetings are regularly three plus hours long and I think that’s a little obnoxious,” Givner said.

She felt that existing subcommittees were a better place to have more robust discussion of matters and that the entirety of the discussion in those committees did not need to be recounted

during city council meetings.

Councilor Kevin Jourdain believed that this would limit the ability of the councilors to fully express their thoughts on different matters.

“I’m afraid that when you start limiting what councilors can say, what councilors can speak beyond what rules we already have, it really starts to border on censorship,” Jourdain said.

Givner pointed out that making discussion time more limited in the city council would not prevent councilors from being able to speak on their ideas, but instead push them to be more concise.

“As far as censorship, how many times do we really need to say the same thing?” she said. “I don’t need to make the same statements in the city council that I made in the subcommittee.”

Additionally, she felt that if citizens were passionate about an issue, they may prefer going to or listening to a specific subcommittee meeting in which

they knew the topic would be discussed in-depth rather than waiting through a three or four or more hour-long council meeting.

“I’d like to add that we do have subcommittees and if there’s a topic that anyone is specifically interested in; all the conversation and debate is really intended to happen in subcommittees,” Givner said. “If we would stick to that format, it would be really helpful for the public.”

Vacon also saw a potential issue in that the orders are typically dealt with at the end of the city council meetings. She worried that this cap would cause orders to be continuously put off.

Givner proposed that, to avoid that issue, they move the orders to the beginning of the meeting. Councilor Tessa Murphy-Romboletti suggested that they try to mirror their rule after Springfield’s. Springfield is a larger city, but they on

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Zonta Club to host foster care informational meeting

LUDLOW – Children who are removed from their birth family due to neglect or abuse can be in multiple foster situations for a long time before being reunited or adopted by another family. Due to a severe shortage of foster homes and volunteer advocates, many of these youth are placed in any home with the space, whether or not it is the best match.

While the experiences of foster children vary widely, some common themes emerge during this critical, formative stage of their lives: trauma, instability and uncertainty, emotional and psychological challenges, and educational disruptions.

We can't protect foster children, or any child, from challenges in life, but we can equip them with resilience and prepare them for those hardships. Children need structure, responsibility, and opportunities to see that they can do and learn new things. There is something every one of us can do to help. Details and Resources: zontaqv.org/foster



The Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley will hold a panel discussion and dinner on Monday, Feb. 12 at the Ludlow Country Club for anyone interested in learning more about the realities and opportunities in the Foster Care system in Western MA.

The program will be facilitated by Andrea Bordenca, founder of Lead Yourself Youth and will include representatives from Family Justice Advocates, Department of Children and Family Volunteer Case Review Program and Family Resources, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) and other organizations that provide services to foster children and families.

Ludlow Country Club on Monday, Feb. 12. At 5:30 p.m. Socialize, 6 p.m. Buffet Dinner, followed by the Program. Dinner \$28 is payable by cash, check, or credit card the night of the event, but RSVP to info@zontaqv.org by 2/7 for the caterers. Contact info@zontaqv.org for information on sliding scale fee.

Holyoke looking for local artists for public art project

HOLYOKE – The city of Holyoke invites artists from all backgrounds and experiences to submit proposals for the Making it Public: temporary public art project. This initiative aims to celebrate the rich cultural heritage and diversity of Holyoke.

The selected artist will have the opportunity to create a vibrant and iconic piece of art that reflects the city's history, culture, and community. This project will not only enhance the visual landscape of Holyoke but also foster a sense of pride and empowerment among its residents.

The city of Holyoke is committing \$12000 to support the selected artist.

The artist will be paid in 4 increments of \$3000 for the artist, supplies, and art piece. The city and the El Corazon Project will support site selection, installation, and support throughout the project. The city will provide a location/studio for the artist to work on the project if needed. Holyoke encourages artists to embrace artistic freedom while capturing essential elements of Holyoke's rich history, including Puerto Rican, Irish, volleyball, and being the "paper city".

The artwork should become an iconic symbol that supports our tourism efforts in the city. The city envisions a temporary sculpture that can create

a strong visible presence in the area. Selection Criteria will be as follows; 1) Originality (5 points) a) How original is this concept? 2) Creativity (15 points) a) Does the concept show out of the box creative ideas? 3) Relevance to theme of purpose (20 points) a) To what extent does the project align with the intended theme or purpose of the temporary art project? Skill 4) Technical Proficiency (15 Points) a) How does the artist demonstrate technical skill in their work? (Bringing their ideas to life) 5) Attention to detail (15 points) a) Does their portfolio and proposal pay attention to detail? Feasibility 1) Practicality (20 points) a) Is the proposed project

feasible within the given time frame and resource constraints? 2) Logistical Consideration (10 points) a) Has the artist taken into consideration the nature of the project-temporary status? Project Location: The sculpture will be located within the heart of Holyoke, from the lit electrical tower off the highway on Main Street to the lit electrical towers on the corner of Main and Lyman. The exact location will be coordinated with awardee by MIM/OPED.

Deadline for submissions is Jan. 31, 2024 and the awardee will be announced on Feb. 14, 2024. For more information please email at StephanieColon@mimcoordinator@Holyoke.org.

First Night Junior returns

HOLYOKE – The Children's Museum at Holyoke, in collaboration with the Holyoke Merry-Go-Round, MA State Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the International Volleyball Hall of Fame, is excited to announce the 26th annual First Night Junior celebration.

On Sunday, Dec. 31, the Holyoke Heritage State Park will once again be hosting their annual kid-friendly New Year's Eve celebration. The event runs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and admission includes entrance to the Children's Museum, Volleyball Hall of Fame, unlimited Merry-Go-Round rides, and entertainment.

There will be a kids DJ at the Merry-Go-Round, and Cinderella, Belle, and Spiderman will be costumed characters. The State Park Visitors Center will host a reptile show, plus have a craft and a community New Year's Resolution board. The Children Museum will host face painting, slime

making, and a special craft project. The Volleyball Hall of Fame will have BTC Entertainment doing balloon twisting and magic. Holyoke Hummus food truck will be onsite serving food during the event. Holyoke Mayor Josh Garcia will hold the honor of dropping our very own New Year's Eve ball in front of the Visitors Center at 1 p.m.

Tickets are available online at www.holyokemerrygoround.org/tickets and will be available the day of the event at the Merry-Go-Round and at the Children's Museum. Tickets are \$10 each, and a family four-pack is \$35 for everyone over the age of one. For those who order tickets online, please bring your Order Confirmation Email (printed or phone) with you to the Holyoke Merry-Go-Round or Holyoke Children's Museum on the day of the event to receive a wristband. Wristbands will grant entrance to each building and to the available entertainment.

City to hold Inauguration ceremony

HOLYOKE – City Clerk Brenna McGee will administer the oaths of office to newly elected and re-elected



City Councilors and School Committee members at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 2. Holyoke's Treasurer, Rory Casey, will also be sworn in.

The inauguration ceremony, which will be held in the upstairs auditorium, is open to the public.

Doors will open at 9:30 a.m. McGee will emcee the proceedings. Holyoke Mayor Joshua A. Garcia will make brief remarks.

Immediately after the ceremony, the City Council will convene in their chambers to elect a Council President to succeed outgoing Council President Todd McGee.

Applications open for 2024 Young Women in Public Affairs Award

Applications for the 2024 Young Women in Public Affairs Award are available from the Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley. Applications can be obtained from the high school guidance counselors in local towns and on its website: ZontaQV.org/scholarships/.

A local recipient will receive a \$1000 award, funded by the Zonta Club of the Quaboag Valley and will be entered for the District YWPA award. The District recipient will be eligible for a \$5,000 award from Zonta International.

According to Zonta Club President Dana Burton, the goal of the award is to encourage young women to participate in public and political life by recognizing a

young woman's involvement in government, policy-making, and volunteerism. "The YWPA program looks to the young women of today for leaders of tomorrow and advocates the Zonta International's mission of advancing the status of women worldwide," noted Burton.

To be eligible for this award, applicants must be between the ages of 16 and 19, have an active commitment to volunteerism, leadership achievements, and experience in local or student government. Applicants must be pre-university or pre-college students.

Completed application and supporting documentation are due to the Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley by March 8.

Families get assistance this season

HOLYOKE – Employees across 46 teams of Valley Health Systems, which includes Holyoke Medical Center, Holyoke Medical Group, Holyoke Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice Life Care, and River Valley Counseling Center, joined together to help support 48 families in need of assistance this holiday season. The families consist of 123 children and their parents/guardians affiliated with the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Holyoke.

"The Boys & Girls Club of Greater Holyoke is very grateful to have the support of community partners like the Holyoke Medical Center. For several years now, the 'Adopt a Family Program' has made it possible for children who need us most to receive new toys during the holiday season. Words cannot describe the joy this program has brought to hundreds of local children during this

holiday season," said Ann Mann, director of operations for the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Holyoke.

In addition to the employee donations, Holyoke Medical Center made a direct contribution of over 100 new toys to the Holyoke Police Department for distribution to children experiencing homelessness on Christmas morning. The donation provided by Holyoke Medical Center was valued at more than \$2,500.

"Holyoke Medical Center and Valley Health Systems are committed to giving back to our community. We are incredibly appreciative and proud of our team joining us each year with their generosity. Since 2016 our staff have supported over 800 children and their families at the Holyoke Boys & Girls Club," said Lisa Wray Schechterle, director of community benefits at Holyoke Medical Center.

Winter pickleball classes available at HCC

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Community College is running a series of pickleball classes in January and February for beginners, intermediates, and tournament-level players in the warmth and comfort of the college’s indoor athletics facility.

The group classes will be led by pickleball coach and racquet sports instructor Kelly Canniff, who has 25 years’ experience educating children, adolescents, and adults.

Sessions run on both Tuesday and Thursday mornings on the pickleball courts inside the David M. Bartley Center for Athletics & Recreation on the main HCC campus, 303 Homestead Ave.

Each class runs 90 minutes. The cost for each three-week, three-session series is \$90.

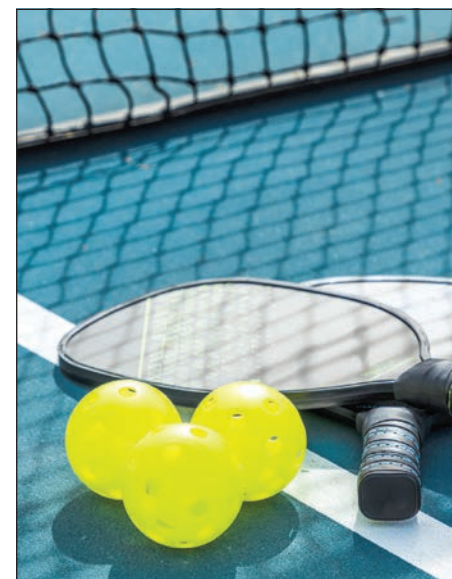
Pickleball 101: Tuesdays, Jan. 16-30, or Thursdays, Jan. 18-Feb. 1. Classes start at 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Pickleball 101 is geared toward beginners or those who have played a few times and covers topics such as serving, developing a forehand, scoring, basic rules, positioning, and strategy.

Pickleball Intermediate Level: Tuesdays, Feb. 6-20, or Thursdays, Feb. 8-22. Classes start at 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. This series is designed for players who have taken beginner classes or already have some familiarity and

experience with the game and want to advance their play by improving their groundstrokes, overhead shots, volleys and serves, and adding direction, control, and accuracy.

Pickleball Tournament Ready Prep: Tuesdays, Feb. 27- March 12, or Thursdays, Feb. 29-March 14. Classes start at 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. These classes are designed for players who want to prepare for tournament-level play, with practice that will help them improve shot variety and accuracy and develop better strategies for playing doubles.

To register, please go to: hcc.edu/health-and-fitness.



Nugget, once known as Natty, came to Second Chance with a severe leg injury and is now the Timberyard Brewery dog.

Submitted Photo

Nugget get a second chance at a happy life

EAST BROOKFIELD – Nugget, formerly known as Natty, faced unimaginable pain and adversity when he arrived at Second Chance Animal Services with a severe leg injury. The dedicated team at Second Chance worked tirelessly to save his leg, but ultimately, the decision to amputate was made to ensure Nugget’s comfort and quality of life.

In a heartwarming twist of fate, Nugget caught the attention of Matt and Nellie Zarif, the generous owners of Timberyard Brewing Company and longtime supporters of Second Chance. The brewery, known for its commitment to the community, had not only donated to Second Chance but also hosted events and provided storage for a large donation.

Nugget’s story resonated with the Timberyard team, who had just started hosting popular puppy yoga classes to benefit Second Chance, led by the talented yoga instructor Audrey Martinez. The classes, held monthly, include a visit

from friendly adoptable dogs available at Second Chance, who romp around the taproom while attendees work on their yoga moves.

Nugget, now thriving after his surgery, found his forever home with the Zarifs, joining a loving pack that includes three young boys and another three-legged dog, Lucy. Nugget’s dog-sister wears a prosthetic leg and goes to work with her dog mom, Nellie Zarif, a prosthetist at Hanger Clinic in Worcester, where she helps to inspire people with limb loss.

Nellie considered making a prosthesis for Nugget but quickly realized that he did not need one due to the nature of his amputation and his young age. “He is so fast on three legs that four legged dogs have a hard time keeping up with him,” said Lindsay Doray, chief development officer at Second Chance, who expressed admiration for Nugget’s resilience. “We were in awe of his determination.”

As a proud member of the Timberyard family, Nugget comes to

work with Matt Zarif every day and has become a local sensation. The staff from Second Chance, including the veterinarian that performed his surgery, stop by the brewery from time to time to visit him. “Nugget is the smartest dog that I have ever met,” said Matt Zarif. “Like-Lassie level smart; when you talk to this dog, he understands you. He’s the perfect brewery dog, so well behaved, sweet, and friendly. He loves being a part of the action.”

Nugget has embraced his role as a dogfluencer, delighting visitors at Timberyard and stealing the spotlight in social media posts. His favorite gig? Greeting attendees on puppy yoga mornings. He’s even been spotted auditioning with Santa for a chance to be a reindeer, sitting patiently next to Santa for hours during his visits to the brewery, posing for photos with happy families, and helping to fundraise for a local charity. Nugget’s journey from pain to fame is a testament to the power of love, resilience, and a community that cares.

Veterans Memorial Cemetery hosts ‘Wreaths Across America’

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

AGAWAM – The Agawam Veterans Memorial Cemetery hosted a ceremony for Wreaths Across America on Dec. 16.

The day started at 10 a.m. with a ceremony held to honor the veterans who had passed. In this ceremony they laid ceremonial wreaths for each branch of service.

“One of the key points there is that we’ll have a 100-year-old army veteran Harvey LaFleur of Chicopee that will represent the army in the laying of that wreath,” Agawam Location Coordinator Paul Barabani said.

On top of this, they had new recruits from each of the branches of service, in order to have the oldest and youngest of each branch present to lay a wreath.

The Gold Star mothers and family members were also present at the ceremony, to remember their own contributions to protecting the country.

After this ceremony, 9,528 remembrance wreaths were placed in front of the graves of veterans to honor their memories.

Over 1,300 volunteers participated in this ceremony.

Many of the Friends of the Agawam Cemetery also contributed support to the organization of the ceremony.

“They provide assistance in boarding and departing of the buses and also have a display here for anyone who wants to help with sponsorship of the wreaths in the future,” Barabani said.

Volunteers from various military branches in the areas helped to get the wreaths to the cemetery.

This included the 104 Fighter Wing at Westfield-Barnes Regional Airport, the 439 Airlift Wing from Westover and the

Veterans Association.

Barabani was grateful to all who contributed their efforts to help this ceremony come together. He wanted to ensure that the cemetery workers also got recognition for their help in preparing the cemetery for the ceremony.

“The real individuals behind the scenes are the grounds crew from the Agawam Veterans Cemetery,” he said. “Each year, rain or shine, they are here to offload the wreaths and put them in position so when Saturday comes it is organized and runs efficiently.”

Without the grounds crew and all the volunteers this key ceremony would not be possible.

He also was grateful to all of the sponsors who put forward their funds to make the 9,528 wreaths possible. Wreaths Across America surpassed their goal of 9,528 wreaths by 2,329 thanks to

these sponsors.

The extra wreaths sponsored for this year will be rolled over to next year’s ceremony.

Barabani also wanted to emphasize the importance of ceremonies like these. Not only do they honor past veterans, but they also help to inspire future generations to protect and serve.

Wreaths Across America focuses on its three pillars: remember, honor and teach. The remembrance wreaths and the ceremony help with remembering and honoring those who are gone and those who still serve today.

Ceremonies like these also help teach future generations about the importance of veterans, Barabani says, so that they can take up the position themselves in the future.

“Wreaths Across America is the greatest patriotic event in Western MA of

the year,” he said.

Wreaths Across America is still looking to collect wreaths and raise money for the next year’s ceremony.

“Right now Wreaths Across America is offering a two-for-one special that started on Dec. 16 and runs until Jan. 16,” Barabani said. “For each sponsorship of a wreath for \$17 they will actually provide two wreaths to the cemetery for next year’s ceremony.”

Additionally, they will provide \$5 from that \$17 to the Friends of the Cemetery so they can use that revenue for enhancements at the cemetery.

“It’s a great opportunity for anybody that wants to sponsor for next year,” Barabani said. “Their \$17 becomes \$39.”

If interested in donating to this cause, go to <https://www.wreathsaacrossamerica.org/pages/16181/overview/?relatedId=0>.



A total of 9,528 wreaths were placed on veterans’ graves by volunteers after a short ceremony held on Dec. 16 at the Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemetery National Wreaths Across America Day event.

Turley photo by Kara Walsh-Vey

Are spousal benefits always a factor?



Dear Rusty

Both my wife and I have worked our entire lives.

When we retire, will we both be entitled to full benefit amount each or will there always be a spousal factor in there? Also, how are those benefits calculated – based on your highest salaries throughout your career, or your ending salaries when you retire?

Signed: Looking Ahead

Dear Looking

Prior to retiring from work is a smart time to investigate how Social Security will fit into your golden years. To answer your second question first, each person's personal SS retirement benefit is based on the highest earning 35 years over their entire lifetime, with earlier years adjusted for inflation.

The person's Average Indexed Monthly Earnings, essentially the person's lifetime average inflation-adjusted monthly earnings amount, is first determined.

Using AIME, the person's Primary

Insurance Amount is calculated using a special benefit formula which will yield a PIA of about 40% or less of the person's AIME. The PIA is the amount received if benefits start in the month full retirement age or "FRA" is attained, as you can see, Social Security likes acronyms.

Since you and your wife were both born after 1959, FRA for both of you is 67. The age when you claim benefits, relative to your FRA, determines how much you'll get. Claim before FRA and your benefit is reduced; claim after your FRA and your SS retirement benefit will be more (up to age 70 when maximum is reached); claim at your FRA and your benefit will equal your PIA – the full (100%) amount you've earned from a lifetime of working.

Spouse benefits only come into play if the PIA for one of you is less than 50% of the other's PIA. In that case, the spouse with the lower PIA gets a "spousal boost" to their own SS retirement benefit when claimed.

The amount of the "spousal boost" will be the difference between the lower PIA and half of the higher PIA, but the amount of the "spousal boost" (as well as the person's own SS retirement amount) will be reduced if benefits are claimed before full retirement age. Any time SS benefits are claimed before full retirement age, those benefits are permanently reduced.

If one spouse is entitled to a "spousal boost" from the other, the spousal amount will

reach maximum at the recipient's full retirement age. Thus, if the lower earning partner's highest benefit will be as a spouse, then that spouse should not wait beyond their FRA to claim. If, instead, the lower earning partner's own SS benefit at age 70 is more than their spousal amount, waiting longer than FRA to claim could be prudent, depending on life expectancy.

So, as you can see, deciding when to claim Social Security benefits should consider many things, including financial need, work status if claiming before FRA, marital status and life expectancy. But it is your lifetime earnings which determines your SS retirement benefit amount, and it is how your FRA entitlements compare to each other that determines whether spousal benefits will be paid.

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

Pre-planning this year's vegetable garden



It's so exciting to think about planning my vegetable garden; all kinds of possibilities await.

Right after Christmas is usually when I get started. There are less paper catalogs arriving in the mail lately, but it is still my preferred method of shopping.

I like to peruse the pages, "starring" items and bending the corners of the pages so that I know to come back and consider whatever vegetable variety I think I must have. It's here in the early stages that I dream big.

I save the tailoring to later, once I've inventoried my seed stash and know exactly what I need.

But before I even get out the blue container that contains all of my seeds, I have some thinking to do. What did I have too much of last year? Too little? What consistently performs well in my garden? What doesn't do well? Am I ready to simplify by paring back or do I like the challenge of a big garden?

So many things to consider.

What did I have too much of? Roasting

peppers come to mind.

I roasted and roasted and roasted some more. In between roasting I was giving them away.

"Carmen" is grown specifically for that purpose, and last year I grew eight plants more than normal. Maybe I'll cut back this year.

My "Picnic" peppers did well, too. They were great to eat right from your hand, and in yellow, orange and red, they certainly made my husband's salads colorful.

I was pretty well spot on with 12 total plants.

Sadly, I struggled with tomatoes last year. I didn't have anywhere near enough!

This was the year that the girls grew to love my roasted tomato sauce, too. I couldn't make very much of it because the tomatoes petered out early.

Oddly enough, I enjoyed tomatoes that self-sowed in different spots of my yard much later into the season. It gave me an idea that I ought to make a couple of indoor sowings. One the third week of March as always, and maybe another two weeks later.

Regardless, now that the sauce is a hit, I'm going to increase the number of transplants I grow, and definitely improve the soil where the tomatoes are planted. Something that probably went unthought of is that the buckets of rain we had last summer likely leached nitrogen from the soil.

I had best remember to fertilize at planting then supplement after the first

month or so.

Another area where low nitrogen may have been a factor is with my winter squash. My harvest wasn't just disappointing, it was embarrassing!

The Garden Lady better figure this one out, especially with the squash habit she has. Soups, breads, lasagna, and more all require that amazing orange flesh; and if you don't grow your own it can certainly get expensive.

I definitely want to grow butternuts in abundance again.

On the flip side, I didn't need as many cabbage or broccoli plants. The sauerkraut is taking up lots of space in the fridge, but hasn't made its way into our bellies for some reason, and as far as broccoli goes, I just can't seem to freeze it in a way that is palatable.

Someone told me to give up blanching it. Just cut it up and throw it in bags in the freezer. After all, it worked well for kale, and they are cousins, right?

I tried a stalk that way, then thawed it out and ate it the next day. I thought it worked great, so I froze the rest of my harvest that way.

A month or so later I steamed some up and it was the most inedible thing that ever popped out of my freezer. Silly me, if this was the preferred preservation method it would have been touted as such long before I hit the gardening scene.

Maybe I should grow three or four different varieties of broccoli with different days to harvest, so that the majority of the harvest can be enjoyed fresh over a longer period.

I always analyze if my vegetable garden is too big for my lifestyle these days. I really don't want to pare back because it is important that I grow a good amount of our family's food.

What I have to accept is that it may become a jungle. I will keep up until I can't anymore. Someday there will be time for more order, but these are not the days, at least for me, and that's okay.

As you begin planning this year's garden there are a lot of things to consider. But maybe for now, make a lot of "stars" and bend those corners.

Enjoy dreaming! Reality doesn't really have to play a part until the order is placed.

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.



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A Quote

OF NOTE

"Let's celebrate the inception of improved us, not the new year."

Mohith Agadi

Letters to the Editor 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 thesun@turley.com. Mailed letters can be sent to *The Sun*, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069.

STCC student and graduate start internships at MassMutual

SPRINGFIELD - A Springfield Technical Community College student and an STCC graduate joined financial services company MassMutual in Springfield as interns this fall.

MassMutual hired cybersecurity student Michael Lavallee and recent graduate Michael Buckley to work as information technology interns. Lavallee and Buckley started last month as cybersecurity analysts. They are working in a new one-year internship program for eligible STCC students.

"The paid internships give the students real world experience and could lead to permanent positions," said Scott Duquette, their supervisor and director of the U.S. Security Operations Center at MassMutual.

The partnership with MassMutual comes at a time when cybersecurity jobs are in demand and STCC's cybersecurity degree program is growing. The college received local, state and federal funding for a cyber range facility at Springfield Union Station. Scheduled to open in 2024, the Cybersecurity Center of Excellence will serve as a regional cybersecurity center for Western Massachusetts and beyond.



From left, Scott Duquette, director of the U.S. Security Operations Center at MassMutual, stands with interns Michael Lavallee and Michael Buckley at MassMutual in Springfield.

Submitted Photo

Buckley, a Springfield resident and a May 2023 graduate of STCC, said he "absolutely loved" the school's cybersecurity program and the tools it gave him to begin his internship, where he could advance his knowledge.

"I didn't realize how much I didn't know about IT until I started going through the education programs," said Buckley.

Lavallee, the other MassMutual intern from STCC, said he was thrilled

to receive the opportunity.

"I am very grateful for this opportunity. The fact that it was even presented to me is a blessing in itself," Lavallee said. "I couldn't have gotten here without STCC's program."

Lara Sharp, dean of the School of STEM at STCC, said its cybersecurity program aligns with the needs in the industry. STCC gives students the option to pursue a two-year degree or one-year certificate. Classes are taught online.

Earning a degree from STCC is more attainable now than ever thanks to MassReconnect, a program for Massachusetts residents 25 years of age or older who meet eligibility requirements to earn an associate degree or certificate for free.

What's more, the STCC students interning at MassMutual will rapidly gain experience in the ever-changing world of cybersecurity. For example, they will take part in security investigations where they look for and respond to threats.

"Having that background from STCC will definitely help in running those investigations," Duquette said.

Singers welcome to join chorale

SOUTH HADLEY - The South Hadley Chorale will resume rehearsals for its annual March concert on Wednesday, Jan. 3, 2024, from 7 to 9 p.m. at All Saints' Church, 7 Woodbridge St. The program features the John Rutter edition of Gabriel Faure's Requiem, Paul Basler's Missa Kenya, plus works by Chorale conductor Anita Anderson Cooper.

Rehearsals will continue Wednesday evenings until the concert on Sunday, March 24, 2024.

New singers are welcome to join. There are no auditions, although most

singers have had some choral experience.

Interim Conductor, Anita Anderson Cooper, is a well-known area musician, conductor, teacher, and composer. She received degrees from Westminster College, Boston University, and Delta State University. Cooper also directs the chorus of the Paul R. Baird Middle School in Ludlow and conducts the Smith College Handbell Choir.

The South Hadley Chorale is made up of 50 singers from 16 communities. For more information, please visit www.southhadleychorale.org or call 413-533-3833.

Send Us Your Photos!

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<p>CLUES ACROSS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A way to injure 5. Mutual savings bank 8. Rock TV channel 11. Large number of fish swimming together 13. Military mailbox 14. Female of a horse 15. Category 16. City 17. Breezed through 18. Officer who bears a mace 20. Tax collector 21. "Cheers" actress Perlman 22. Pauses before acting 25. Extracted information from a wave 30. Tendency to revert to something ancestral 31. No seats available 32. Nocturnal rodents 33. Moves gently to 	<p>and fro</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 38. Not good 41. A way to ready 43. One who makes something better 45. Things associated with American history 48. Ancient Phoenician fertility god 49. A continuous portion of a circle 50. Volcanic craters 55. Units of electrical resistance 56. Gamble on 57. Ethiopian town 59. One point east of northeast 60. Polynesian garland of flowers 61. Spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation 62. State of fuss 63. Keyboard key 64. Partner to relaxation
<p>CLUES DOWN</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "The world's most famous arena" 2. Polite interruption sound 3. Private school in New York 4. Refuse of grapes 5. Tomei, actress 6. Adult beverages 7. Supporter 8. Papier-___, art material 9. Forests have them 10. Most ancient Hindu scriptures 12. Downwind 14. Marketplace 19. Flowering plant genus 23. Street where nightmares happen 24. Admirer 25. Dip lightly into water 26. When you hope to get there 27. Partner to cheese 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 28. Egg 29. A way to disqualify 34. South American plant 35. Fold-away bed 36. Debbie Harry album "___ Koo" 37. Swedish krona 39. Displaying warmth and friendliness 40. Official orders 41. Bowling alley necessity 42. Stray 44. About milk 45. Expressed pleasure 46. Caribbean dance 47. If not 48. ___ fide (Latin) 51. Swiss river 52. Hebrew calendar month 53. One easily swindled 54. Point that is one point south of southwest 58. Small island (British)

CROSSWORD ANSWER on page 9

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Tips for keeping pets safe during severe flooding

If you're a pet owner, that means you'll also need to keep your pets out of harm's way. Best Friends Animal Society, a leading animal welfare organization working to end the killing of cats and dogs by 2025, offers the following tips to keep your pet as safe as possible:

- Outside animals should be brought indoors unless evacuation is required.
- Do not wait to evacuate. The longer you wait, the more difficult it will be to get out with your pets.
- If evacuating, please bring your pets with you. If that is not possible, do not keep animals enclosed in a pen or crate and make sure to keep pets on the highest floor or point of your home.

- Make a plan of where to go with your pet(s). Identify pet-friendly emergency shelters that may be open in your area for temporary respite. There are also pet-friendly hotels that you may be able to locate online.

- Put together an emergency go-bag of all your pets' essential items, such as medications, food, bowls, leash, crate, toys, blankets, and identification tags. It's also pertinent to have your animal's vaccination and medical records handy, including their microchip number, together inside a waterproof, sealed bag. Keep the bag as close to the door so that if you need to evacuate immediately, you can grab your pet and the bag and leave.

- Identify a neighbor who has access to your home and can grab your pets and their go bag if you are not home during a flooding event.

- Close all windows and doors.
- Do not attempt to walk through floodwater. As little as six inches of moving water can knock you and your pet down.

- Do not allow your pet to drink any floodwater. Floodwater is polluted with chemicals, sewage and other harmful debris and foreign materials that are harmful to your pet.

- Do not assume your pet can swim. Animals can panic if put in a situation that they are too stressed to handle.

- Do not drive through water or even over bridges that sit above fast-moving water, as they can collapse at a moment's notice.

- Do dry off a pet as quickly as possible. Wetness can cause bacterial growth and inflammation on their skin.

Don't have a pet? Now is the perfect time to adopt or foster a pet in need. Shelters across the country are at capacity due to less people choosing the adoption option. Every time you adopt, you are saving two lives: the life of the pet you are bringing home, as well as opening space for another homeless dog or cat to be taken in by shelters and rescue groups. To learn more, visit bestfriends.org.

MEMA receives \$1.5M in funding

FRAMINGHAM – The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency has been awarded \$1.5 million in federal grant funding to facilitate collaboration among and provide training to emergency management professionals through the Northeast Emergency Management Training and Education Center.

The funding comes from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program.

NEMTEC was launched in April 2023, offering accessible, no-cost, comprehensive training and education in emergency management across the six New England states to strengthen the regional response to natural and manmade disasters.

Grant funding will enable NEMTEC to expand its reach and capabilities by developing a specific curriculum to address identified capability gaps and emerging topics. The funding will support the expansion of the number and variety of classes offered and help provide training in multiple modalities and on various platforms to meet the diverse needs of New England emergency management professionals.

"We are fortunate to have a strong New England coalition of emergency

management partners to address the increasing complexity and frequency of crisis events caused by climate change," said Gov. Maura Healey. "I want to thank the Biden-Harris Administration and FEMA for this funding that will allow MEMA and our neighboring states to deliver relevant and specific training to make our most vulnerable communities more resilient."

During 2023, MEMA and NEMTEC provided more than 75 emergency management classes, serving over 1,100 participants. NEMTEC prioritizes innovation in eLearning and proactively seeks emerging technologies and tools that will expand virtual programs to enhance the accessibility of training courses.

"Through collaboration, training, and planning, emergency management professionals will have the tools to expand their core capabilities within their jurisdictions, increasing community-level resilience and reducing long-term vulnerability, especially within disadvantaged communities," said MEMA Director Dawn Brantley.

For more information about NEMTEC and to register for courses and workshops, please visit the MEMA website at www.mass.gov/mema/nemtec.

Zonta Service Grants available

In keeping with Zonta's more-than-100-year tradition of improving the lives of women and girls, the Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley is currently soliciting proposals from local non-profit organizations for projects that benefit women and/or youth. Since its inception in 1991, the Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley has contributed over \$150 thousand in cash and in-kind donations to local non-profits.

The Zonta Service Grant Form application can be downloaded at www.zontaqv.org/service-grant/ or requested by contacting info@zontaqv.org. 2024 Grants ranging from \$100 to \$2000 will be awarded biannually, in May with a April 1 deadline and November with a Oct. 1 deadline. Proposals must include specific details of the project including the need that will be addressed with the funds. In reviewing completed applications the committee will give preference for a hands-on component that can involve Zontians and supporters, if appropriate.

The club's efforts to raise funds for these grants included a Calendar Raffle, Golf Tournament and Poinsettia sales. Two-thirds of all profits are used to fund local initiatives; one-third goes to the Zonta Foundation for Women to fund global projects with partners including UNFPA, UNICEF USA, Girls Not Brides, Coalition to End Violence Against Women and Girls

Globally and Women's Empowerment Principles.

2022-23 grant recipients included: Girl's Inc of the Valley received a grant to help build new programs at their new Holyoke location.

YWCA of Western MA received a grant to purchase gift cards for individuals in their network to purchase essentials.


Safe Passage of Northampton to offset printing of a program booklet for Say Something - 8-hour skills-focused training program grounded in effective strategies of bystander intervention and empowerment self-defense.

Food Share in Palmer in support of stocking personal hygiene products and other items in short supply for women and girls.

Second Time's a Charm in Palmer received a grant toward the purchase of different-sized gowns in short supply for teens in need.

Alianza DV Services, Inc. (formerly Womanshelter/Companieros) in support of a fall showing of the Clothesline Project, a visual display of violence statistics that often go ignored. Each shirt is made by a survivor of violence or by someone who has lost a loved one to violence.

Inquiries can be directed to the Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley, Mary Knight the Communications Chair at info@zontaqv.org or 413-219-8260.



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Scholarship applications being accepted

HOLYOKE – The Polish Junior League of Massachusetts welcomes area college students of Polish heritage to apply for one of the annual academic scholarships.

Students must have a permanent address in one of the four Western

Massachusetts counties: Hampshire, Hampden, Franklin or Berkshire. Application forms with related information are available at www.polishjuniorleaguema.org/applications.

The deadline for all applications and related materials is May 1, 2024.

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Knights in action before holiday

HOLYOKE – Prior to the holiday week, Holyoke wrestling was in action at West Springfield High School at a multi-team event that was held prior to the Christmas holiday. The Knights competed in

multiple meets, including one with host West Springfield to kick off the event.

The Knights competed in a meet early this week and will be in action following the new year.



Rivera Soler starts a matchup for the Knights.

Dereck Concepcion locks up in a match.

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com



Manny Rivera starts a match.



Izabella Guzman grapples with an opponent.



Jossue Adorno looks for an opening.



Jonathan Rivera holds the leverage in his match.

Rohan, Rodriguez lead Knights past SICS

HOLYOKE – Last Wednesday night, Holyoke boys basketball got a huge offensive effort with a 93-46 win over SICS. Dylan Rohan and Jamil Rodriguez had 22 points each to lead the team. Shawn Rivera added 13 points and Chauncey Ruiz added 10 points in the win.

Holyoke is out to a 4-1 start and had a matchup with Chicopee earlier this week.

The Knights have one final game before 2024 as they face Longmeadow at home on Friday, Dec. 29 at 7 p.m. They face Putnam next Friday evening at home to start the 2024 part of their schedule.

Holyoke girls seek first win of the basketball season



Amilyan Treadwell-Mercedes charges toward the hoop.



Kylie Blaha shoots while being fouled.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

HOLYOKE – After a tough first stretch of games, Holyoke girls basketball is seeking its first win of the season heading into 2024.

The Knights fell to Minnechaug and Pittsfield in their final two games prior to the Christmas holiday.

The Knights also faced Granby, Conn. and fell as well.

The Knights open the 2024 part of its schedule on Jan. 9 against West Springfield.



Xenedy Jacobs works around the perimeter.



With pressure, Kiara Perez looks for a path to the hoop.



Multiple Knights fight to steal the ball away.

Read or Subscribe The Holyoke Sun online at www.sun.turley.com

Olympic team among eligible Hall candidates

SPRINGFIELD – The Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame announced the list of eligible candidates for the Class of 2024, including several high-profile, first-time nominees, including the 2008 U.S. Olympic Men’s Basketball Team (“Redeem Team”), Vince Carter, Seimone Augustus, Bill Laimbeer, Rick Barnes, Mike Fratello and Penny Taylor.

A first look at the list of eligible nominees will be provided by “NBA Today” on ESPN, hosted by Malika Andrews, with Class of 2023 Hall of Famer Becky Hammon, Kendrick Perkins, Chiney Ogwumike, and Brian Windhorst. A complete list of eligible candidates can be found below.

Finalists from the Honor’s Committee for the Class of 2024 will be announced on Friday, February 16, in Indianapolis, Indiana, during NBA All-Star Weekend.

The entire Class of 2024 will be unveiled during the NCAA Final Four in Phoenix, Arizona, on Saturday, April 6, in a nationally televised broadcast.

The announcement time and broadcast network for both the Finalist and the Class Announcement will be announced in the near future.

Enshrinement weekend will begin at the Mohegan Sun on Friday, August 16, with the Tip-Off Celebration and Awards Gala, followed by the Enshrinement

ceremony on Saturday, August 17, at Springfield’s historic Symphony Hall.

VIP Packages for the Hall of Fame Enshrinement Weekend will go on sale on Friday, February 16. All single-event tickets to the Ceremony, Tip Off Celebration, and Awards Gala, as well as other ancillary events, will go on sale on Saturday, April 6, at 12:00 p.m. EST. All packages and tickets will be available for purchase at hoopball.com.

The complete listing of events and pricing will be released by Feb. 1.

The Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame also announced changes to its election process that will more carefully examine candidates from the

International, Men’s Veteran’s, Women’s Veteran’s, and Contributor Committees. Since 2011, the Hall of Fame has allowed these categories to be stand-alone ‘direct-elect’ committees with the objective of ensuring candidates who may have ‘fallen through the cracks’ received focused and specialized consideration in these various categories. The Election Process Committee has determined that this objective of more acute consideration has been met during this 12-year period, and now candidates put forth from these categories will revert back to the previous and traditional process of being presented for final consideration to the Honors Committee for election.

T-Birds coach gets call to NHL

Daniel Tkaczuk will take over as interim head coach

SPRINGFIELD – On Dec. 13, St. Louis Blues President of Hockey Operations and General Manager Doug Armstrong announced the team has relieved Craig Berube of his coaching duties and named Springfield Thunderbirds head coach Drew Bannister interim head coach. Bannister will travel to St. Louis on Wednesday and serve his first game behind the bench on Thursday when the Blues host the Ottawa Senators.

Bannister, 49, has spent the past three seasons with the Blues’ AHL affiliate in Springfield, leading the team to a 93-58-19 regular-season record. The Belleville, Ontario, native has also guided the Thunderbirds to consecutive playoff appearances, including 2021-22, when they won the Eastern Conference and reached the Calder Cup Final.

Bannister began his coaching career in the Ontario Hockey League (OHL), where he spent three seasons as an assistant with Owen Sound and three as head coach with the Soo Greyhounds. He also served as head coach of the AHL’s San Antonio Rampage and as an associate coach with the Utica Comets. As a player, Bannister’s career spanned over 20 years and included 164 NHL regular-season games between the Tampa Bay Lightning, Edmonton Oilers, Anaheim Mighty Ducks, and New York Rangers.

In addition, Thunderbirds general manager Kevin Maxwell has announced that Daniel Tkaczuk will take over the

head coaching duties in Springfield on an interim basis.

Tkaczuk, 44, joined the St. Louis Blues organization in 2016 as an assistant coach with the club’s AHL affiliate, the Chicago Wolves. After spending the 2017-18 season as a Skills Coach with the Blues, he rejoined the AHL affiliate as an assistant coach under Bannister in 2018, a role he has held ever since, including a promotion to Associate Head Coach in 2022.

The Toronto, Ontario native began his coaching career in the OHL as an assistant coach with the Owen Sound Attack from 2011-15 before spending the 2015-16 season with the Kitchener Rangers. Tkaczuk and Bannister were co-assistant coaches with Owen Sound from 2012-15.

Tkaczuk was the sixth overall draft pick in the 1997 NHL Draft by the Calgary Flames and played 12 professional seasons in both North America and Europe. As a member of the Saint John Flames, Tkaczuk captured a Calder Cup championship in 2000-01. He was tied for second among Flames skaters with 10 goals in the Calder Cup Playoffs that season.

In 286 AHL games with Saint John, the Worcester IceCats, Bridgeport Sound Tigers, Charlotte, Syracuse, Rochester, and Hartford, Tkaczuk posted 59 goals and 109 assists for 168 points. He was a career point-per-game performer in the playoffs, scoring 14 goals and adding 17 assists in 29 career Calder Cup playoff contests. Tkaczuk also skated in 19 NHL games with Calgary, putting up 11 points (four goals, seven assists) in the 2000-01 season.

Granite State announces Pro Stock Series 2024 schedule

WALPOLE, N.H. – Granite State Pro Stock Series officials announced Friday the schedule of events for the 2024 racing season. The series slate includes a nine-race championship battle spread from May to October, with the championship event taking place at Lee USA Speedway’s Octoberfest weekend.

The Granite State Pro Stock Series will visit five different tracks in 2024: Lee, Star Speedway, Claremont Motorsports Park, Riverside Speedway and Speedway 95. The schedule begins with the annual 100-lap spring event at Star Speedway in Epping, New Hampshire, this year on Saturday, May 4 with a Friday night practice on May 3. From there, teams will roll to Claremont Motorsports Park for the Memorial Day weekend, with a main event set for Sunday, May 26.

On Saturday, June 8, the series will make the first of two visits to Lee USA Speedway. That will be followed by the first of two races at Hermon, Maine’s Speedway 95 on Saturday, June 16. After a few weeks off, the schedule continues with a return to Claremont for Independence Day weekend on Friday, July 5 with a special event.

The high-banks of Hudson International Speedway will host the series again on Sunday, July 14, while Riverside Speedway returns to the schedule with an event on Saturday, August 10. The final two events of the year will take place at Speedway 95 on Sunday, September 15 and Lee’s Octoberfest weekend, where the champion will

be decided, on Saturday and Sunday, October 5-6.

“Our 2024 schedule is shaping up to be one of the best in our history,” Mike Parks, President of the Granite State Pro Stock Series, said. “Return trips to places like Star, Speedway 95, Lee USA and Riverside, mixed with us getting back on the high-banks of Hudson, will produce an exciting championship battle for fans to follow during the summer of 2024.”

Additional information regarding the 2024 Granite State Pro Stock Series schedule including event registrations, rules and more will be available soon. For the latest news, fans and teams are encouraged to visit [gspss.net](https://www.gspss.net) and follow the series on social media.

2024 Granite State Pro Stock Series Schedule

- Saturday, May 4 - Star Speedway - Epping, N.H.
- Sunday, May 26 - Claremont Motorsports Park - Claremont, N.H.
- Saturday, June 8 - Lee USA Speedway - Lee, N.H.
- Sunday, June 16 - Speedway 95 - Hermon, Maine
- Friday, July 5 - Claremont Motorsports Park - Claremont, N.H.
- Sunday, July 14 - Hudson International Speedway - Hudson, N.H.
- Saturday, August 10 - Riverside Speedway - Groveton, N.H.
- Sunday, September 15 - Speedway 95 - Hermon, Maine
- Saturday/Sunday October 5-6 - Lee USA Speedway, Lee, N.H.

20th annual 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.

Amelia Park Children’s Museum and the Penguin Plunge have been a longstanding institution and tradition respectively in Westfield. Through the years participants and sponsors of the Plunge have helped to raise over \$350,000 to support Amelia Park Children’s Museum.

“We are striving to attract more plungers to this event,” says Diane Chambers, executive director. “It’s a fun outing for the whole family or a group of friends whether they are plunging or watching. We’re adding new activities and entertainment, plus incentives to entice more plunge participants in 2024.”

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.

The following prizes will awarded dependent on amount of money raised per individual:



Penguin Plunge 2024 T-shirt to those adults that raise \$75 - \$149 (* \$25 for those 2 - 6, \$50 for those 7 - 18); Penguin Plunge 2024 hat and T-shirt for those that raise \$150 - \$299; Penguin Plunge 2024 drinkware, hat and T-shirt for those that raise \$300 - \$499; Penguin Plunge 2024 jacket, drinkware, hat and T-shirt for those that raise \$500 or more; Monetary prizes of cash for the top 3 individuals or teams that raise the most money; 1st Place - \$300, 2nd Place - \$200, 3rd Place - \$100.

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>.

The money raised by the Plunge goes to providing playful learning for area children and their families. This event is crucial in supporting the work of Amelia Park Children’s Museum

Amelia Park Children’s Museum is located at 29 South Broad St. and is open 9 a.m to 4 p.m. Thursday-Tuesday. The museum offers hands-on learning for children ages 1-7 in a safe and welcoming environment. Cost of admission is \$8 per person; grandparents have a reduced rate of \$4. Admission is \$2 per person on Thursday afternoons from noon 4 p.m. Call us with questions at (413) 572- 4014 or email questions to: fun@ameliaparkmuseum.org. Learn more about the museum at www.ameliaparkmuseum.org.

Applications for Dean campus now being accepted

HOLYOKE - Students who wish to apply for admission to Holyoke High School Dean campus can begin the application process now. All students interested in Dean are encouraged to apply.

Applications will be accepted through Feb. 9. Rolling interviews will take place throughout February. Students will be notified on Feb. 27 if they have been accepted or waitlisted. More information is available online.

For assistance, please call (413) 534-2071.

Holyoke High School's Dean Campus will use a recently updated admission policy to determine which students will be accepted for enrollment in fall 2024.

(Note: The admission policy will be available in Spanish within the next two weeks. HPS apologizes for the delay. Please call (413) 534-2071 if you need assistance.)

Rosazza named new associate director of early literacy

HOLYOKE – Caitlin Rosazza is the new associate director of early literacy for Holyoke Public Schools. She is assuming the role previously held by Chankyna Aribó, who recently moved due to her husband's job relocation.

As associate director of early literacy, Ms. Rosazza leads and supports the implementation of the Early Literacy strategic priority, including providing professional learning and support to expert teachers/coaches, K-2 classroom

teachers, and reading interventionists.

She began her teaching career as an English Language Arts (ELA) teacher at the former Peck School. She also taught ELA and coached early literacy at a Springfield charter school. She received her bachelor's degree from Smith College and master's degree in curriculum and instruction from Boston University. In her free time, she enjoys reading, listening to podcasts, and baking.

Public Notices

City of Holyoke Notice of Public Hearing

The Holyoke License Board will be holding a Public Hearing on **Wednesday, January 3, 2024, at 5:15 pm.** You can join via Zoom.com; ID **81480186788**; CALL IN: *67 646 558 8656 or in person at City Hall Annex 20 Korean Veterans Plaza Room 403, regarding the application for a **Transfer of License of a All Alcohol Liquor License (Off- Premises) from LPS Inc. DBA Dillion's Package Store 344 High Street transferring to Gleam Global Holdings LLC DBA Dillion's Package Store 344 High Street,** pursuant to M.G.L. Ch.138.

Applicant:
Gleam Global Holdings, LLC

License Board:
Anthony Luciano,
Chairman
12/22, 12/29/2023

City of Holyoke Notice of Public Hearing

The Holyoke License Board will be holding a Public Hearing on **Wednesday, January 3, 2024, at 5:15 pm.** You can join via Zoom.com; ID **81480186788**; CALL IN: *67 646 558 8656 or in person at City Hall Annex 20 Korean Veterans Plaza Room 403, regarding the application for a **Application for multiple Amendments of a All Annual All Alcohol Liquor License (On- Premises) from 241 Whiting Farms LLC DBA Paper City Bar & Grill transferring to Fairfield Inn & Suites 229 Whiting Farms Road,** pursuant to M.G.L. Ch.138.

Applicant:
241 Whiting Farms LLC
License Board:
Anthony Luciano,
Chairman
12/22, 12/29/2023

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Hampden Probate and Family Court 50 State Street Springfield, MA 01103 (413)748-7758

Docket No. HD23P2637EA
Estate of:
James W. McAvoy
Also known as:
James Warren McAvoy
Date of Death: 09/15/2023
CITATION ON
PETITION FOR
FORMAL
ADJUDICATION

To all interested persons:
A Petition for **Formal Adjudication of Intestacy and Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Delia McAvoy of Westfield, 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: **Delia McAvoy of Westfield, 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 01/25/2024.**

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 CODE (MUPC)

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. **Barbara M Hyland**, First Justice of this Court.

Date: December 27, 2023
Rosemary A. Saccomani
Register of Probate
12/29/2023

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN ON THE APPLICATION OF Race Street Properties, LLC of 40 Main Street TO BE A PUBLIC WAREHOUSE WITHIN AND FOR THE County of Hampden in the City of Holyoke. FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONDUCTING A GENERAL WAREHOUSE BUSINESS AS PROVIDED IN CHAPTER 105 OF THE MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAWS
12/29/2023, 01/05/2023

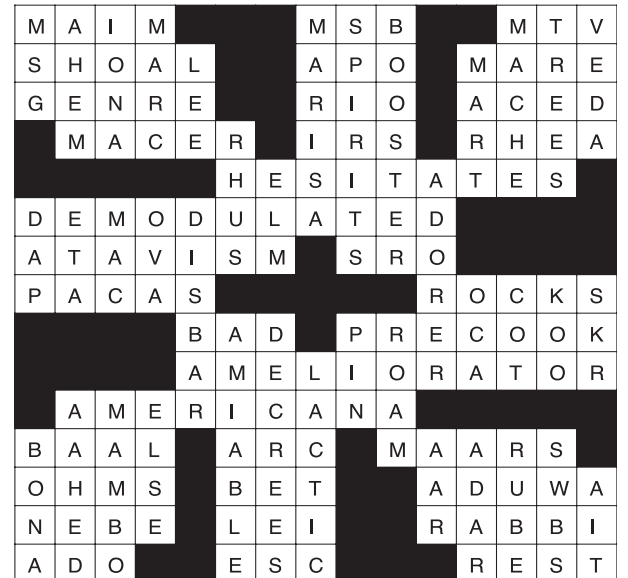
The Holyoke Sun OBITUARY POLICY

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 \$225, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice and may include a photograph. **Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com.

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



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1/2 page (horizontal- 9 3/4" across x 8" down) or (vertical- 4 3/4" across x 16" down)	\$975 total
Full page (9 3/4" across x 16" down)	\$1,800 total

This special section is circulated into all 12 of our papers, those papers include. **The Sentinel, The Chicopee Register, The Sun, The Register, The Wilbraham-Hampden Times, Agawam Advertiser, Country Journal, Town Reminder, Quaboag Current, Journal Register, Ware River News and Barre Gazette.**

The 2024 Career & Education edition publishes **the week of January 10th-12th**
Space reservation deadline is January 3rd.

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Tips offered to keep up good school attendance

HOLYOKE – Snow, slush, freezing rain, ice, and colder temperatures can make it challenging for students to get to school on time every day. Likewise, families can also experience colds, flu, and other health challenges during the winter months.

Whenever possible, however, students should attend school each day to ensure they are staying on track with their learning. Too many absences can make it hard for students to stay engaged, connected, and learning at every grade level, from kindergarten through high school.

While attendance can be affected by weather or illnesses, there are some prac-

tical steps families can take to minimize the amount of time students need to miss school.

Make a plan for getting children to school when they can't get there their usual way.

- Coordinate with family, friends, and neighbors to make alternate driving plans.

- Check with your school to see if your children can join a walking school bus so they can be escorted to school by a volunteer or school staff member.

- If your children are having trouble getting to school, we want to help. Please call the school office.

Do what you can to help keep your

children healthy.

- Dress them warmly for cold weather.
- Maintain regular bedtime and morning routines.

- Provide healthy meals at home, and encourage your children to eat breakfast and lunch provided for free at school.

- Check with your family's medical providers to make sure your children are up to date on vaccines and routine health screenings.

- Encourage your children to be physically active, get enough sleep, and wash their hands regularly. Also encourage them not to share food, cups, or eating utensils.

- If your children seem anxious or unhappy about going to school, consider seeking guidance from their teachers, school counselors, or your family's medical providers to help your children feel more comfortable about learning.

- Keep your children engaged in learning if they cannot attend school in person.

- Ask your children's teachers or school for resources you can use at home to keep your children learning.

- Make plans in advance to identify trusted adults who can support your children's learning at home if you can't be there to assist.

Student, teacher receive awards

HOLYOKE – Sullivan seventh-grader Xavier Rodrigue and Morgan fifth-grade English teacher Cecily Selden were recently surprised in their classrooms when Superintendent Anthony Soto arrived to present them with Superintendent's Excellence Awards.

Xavier was nominated by Sullivan Dean of Students Cynthia Marquez. "Xavier represents the REACH values every day at Sullivan School," she said in her nomination. "He advocates for himself and others by asking probing questions about our systems and how they affect change. He is constantly looking for ways to improve our school culture and is a role model for his peers.

He also has a great sense of humor."

Ms. Selden was nominated by Grade 3 teacher Nana Boadu Ansah for her exceptional work ethic and dedication to her students.

"Cecily is the hardest working teacher I have ever worked with," Ms. Ansah said when nominating Ms. Selden for this recognition. "When I first started at Morgan, right out of college, Cecily was my go to support person. She helped me persist. She saw potential in me, just like she does every single student she comes across. She is a staunch advocate for Holyoke families and carries on every day with such love in her heart. I admire her greatly and she is the type of teacher Holyoke needs more of."

Search underway for principal

HOLYOKE – Opportunity Academy Principal Geoffrey Schmidt will be leaving Holyoke in January to take on the role of principal for Louis E. Dieruff High School in the Allentown School District in Pennsylvania, his home state.

"While I am sad to say goodbye to my students and staff, I appreciate this opportunity to return to the Lehigh Valley and rejoin my family there," Principal Schmidt said. He joined Holyoke Public Schools in 2018 as Opportunity Academy's engagement director and school design lead. He was promoted to principal in 2021, and in that role he has provided leadership and oversight for Opportunity Academy's three programs:

A small personalized progressive

education center for high school students of any age;

A dual-enrollment program at Holyoke Community College for students age 16+ who seek an early college experience; and

A project-based and competency-based high school program for students who are more than one year off-track.

Transition planning is underway while HPS continues its recruitment efforts to hire a new principal for Opportunity Academy. Applications for the position will be accepted through December 21. HPS anticipates hiring a new principal prior to Mr. Schmidt's last day on January 29, 2024.

Photography submissions needed for virtual show

AGAWAM – The Friends of the Agawam Public Library is looking for entries to their 4th Open Judged Virtual Photography Show, to be on display after March 15, 2024. The show provides a platform to recognize and encourage photographers and benefits the Agawam Public Library. Twenty-one awards totaling \$1,540 will be determined by judging done on March 1, 2024. Dave Roback and Tim Donelan,

both well recognized photographers, will be the judges.

The show is divided into four categories of photography: creative, nature, photojournalism and pictorial. The entry fee is \$25 per entry. Deadline for submissions is Feb. 15, 2024. If we have not received sufficient entries, the show will be cancelled and all fees returned.

All images must be original, made by the photographer, captured by film or

digitally, and cannot be previous entries in our show.

The Prospectus and Entry Form can be accessed by going to www.agawam-library.org, and scrolling down to the Friends of the Library widget. From there you will be able to click on a link to the show's information.

For further information please contact Bob Kadis at r.kadis@comcast.net or at 413-789-4814.

MEETING, from page 1

average have shorter meetings than the Holyoke City Council. Murphy-Romboletti felt they could draw from that.

"I think we should do something similar, I think that the public deserves it and I think that we deserve it and I think that's just good governance," she said.

Murphy-Romboletti read aloud the rule Springfield currently has in place for the length of their city council meetings.

"Their rule says 'no meeting of the city council shall go beyond 10 p.m. EST unless, upon a motion of any city councilor, the meeting is extended for a period of time stated in the motion,'" she read.

This rule also states that the motion needs a unanimous vote by the council and, if not approved, all remaining items on the meeting agenda would continue into the next standard meeting's agenda.

Givner and Councilor Jose Maldonado-Velez both agreed that this rule was worth looking into. Jourdain was not enthused about the idea, but also was not entirely opposed to it.

"Maybe just having a maximum cap of 10 or 10:30 and then you need permission of the body to continue on, I'm open to that," Jourdain said. "I try to keep an open mind on that. I think we should use language more like what Springfield wrote."

In the end, they put this order as complied with in order to look at different wording in the future. The city council continued this decision at their most recent meeting on Dec. 19, so the order will be discussed further in the future, once the wording of it is further developed.

BUDGET, from page 1

council approved funding for a comprehensive study of the enterprise funds. The study will be completed by May of 2024.

This study will identify the true costs associated with wastewater collection and treatment, identify other costs currently funded by the sewer enterprise fund, establish a five-year Capital Improvements Program and recommend a funding program and strategies.

Once the study is complete, the information gathered will be shared with both the government and the citizens of Holyoke.

"This data will be reviewed with the public so that the public has an understanding of what needs to be paid for and, with public input, the city council—again they are the financial authority of the city—they can make a decision with accurate data as to how these costs would be allocated," Monahan said.

This study will be beneficial for the city. Monahan believes it will help the city decide how to appropriately allocate the extra costs in the enterprise fund for FY25.

"My thing is trying to get to the root cause of what we see is going on and then bring forward action steps that allow us to untangle that," Garcia said. "So the action step moving forward is we're evaluating it and we're looking forward to seeing what the recommendations are."

Monahan and Garcia also wanted to address Jourdain's statement saying that only 90% of ratepayers paid their sewer bill.

"It is totally inaccurate," Monahan said.

According to Monahan, Jourdain only had access to raw data with respect to the total dollars in arrears. Someone who was even a day late in payment would appear in arrears, so this data is not accurate for how many people pay their bills.

Holyoke has a very active shut off program, so if they do not pay their bill and get to be two bills behind, they are shut off.

"You are not allowed to accrue a bill that doesn't get paid without getting shut off," Monahan said.

Additionally, the total dollars in arrears over 12 months is almost

\$18,000, that is out of \$8 million in billings.

"So take this data that he was given and construe it as 10% of the ratepayers aren't paying their bill is totally inaccurate," Monahan said.

Garcia also mentioned that the deficit in the fund was an issue, as this year they had to put the strain on the taxpayers of Holyoke.

"The impact currently is that the deficit got absorbed in the normal taxation, so one way or another it's got to be paid, it's not an invisible number," Garcia said.

Monahan overall wanted to reassure citizens that the DPW and the Board of Public Works is working on the issue, and that they hope for support from the community and the council in the future.

"The DPW and the Board of Public Works take their positions responsibly and we're excited about the movement forward with respect to DPW operations and the contract operations at the treatment plant," Monahan said. "We want to be totally transparent with the public with respect to how the process is done and what the status is of the enterprise fund."



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HELP WANTED

GATEWAY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Gateway Regional is seeking a 6-hour custodian for the Littleville Elementary School/Main Complex. Hours will be 11 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

Work days Monday-Friday. Looking for a highly motivated individual who is able to:

- Read and follow instructions
- Have knowledge of cleaning procedures
- Experience in cleaning and maintenance a plus
- Lift 50 lbs or more
- Be self-motivated
- Work alone or with a group
- Good communication skills with staff and the public
- Knowledge of operation of equipment such as a floor scrubber, snow blower, etc.
- Work in the extreme cold and heat
- Have a valid driver's license
- High school degree or GED

Send letter of interest and resume to: William Sullivan, Interim Principal; Gateway High/Middle School, 12 Littleville Road, Huntington, MA 01050
Deadline: January 5, 2024
GRSD is an EOE

TOWN OF PALMER: CLERK BOARD OF HEATH

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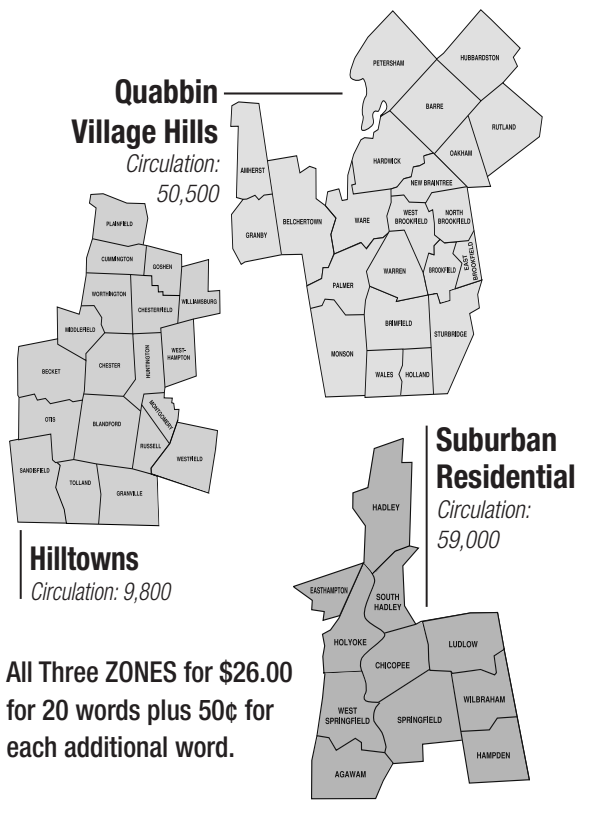
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Frosty the Snowman and Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer were present at Cocoa and Clauses at Donahue School.



The halls and cafeteria of Maurice A. Donahue School were packed with children and families enjoying hot cocoa, cookies and crafts while waiting for Santa.



The outside of Maurice A. Donahue School was decorated for the Cocoa and Clauses event.



Santa and Mrs. Claus were present to pass out presents to all the children at the Cocoa and Clauses event.



Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer and a friendly penguin greeted children at Cocoa and Clauses.



The staff at Maurice A. Donahue set up a Polar Express themed photo booth.



Mrs. Frosty said hello to the children in attendance of Cocoa and Clauses.

Turley photos by Quinn Suomala



Chloe Blauner, Abraham Albelo and Brianne Ackley from Donahue all posed for a photo with Frosty the Snowman.



Maria Lopez, Liana Ramirez and William Ramirez all enjoyed the food and activities at the Cocoa and Clauses event.



Teairra Zayas and Dan Cavanaugh helped to serve the hot chocolate and cookies to all in attendance.

DONAHUE, from page 1

ets went up for people to reserve a spot at the event, many were excited to sign up. The community loves the chance to get together and celebrate the holidays.

“We love to be involved,” Amarilys Cartagena said. “The kids get to enjoy the night and see all the characters, it’s great.”

It is due to the joy from the community that Langlois has loved doing this event each year.

“I love looking at the children, whether with Santa or Frosty or whatever

they’re doing, they are so happy and that’s what makes this the right thing,” she said.

She loves how much this event brings the community together around the holidays. Christine Burns from the rotary club donated the costumes for the event from Clowntique, something Langlois was more than grateful for.

This event also brings in different departments in the city, such as Stop n Shop and the Sheriff’s Department. Langlois was particularly grateful for all the Sheriff’s Department had done for the event.

“The Sheriff’s Department does a lot

of the baking,” she said. “They donate a lot, we’re blessed to have them.”

The staff at Donahue also make the event according to Langlois. So much of the staff donate large portions of their time to helping the event, helping everything to come together and to this event a special night for all.

“I love the way the staff comes together,” Langlois said. “People will come to me and ask ‘what do you need? What do you want me to do?’ And whether it’s somebody that just started here or somebody that’s done it in the past, it just brings everybody together for something very special.”

This year’s event in particular was special to Langlois as it was her last time organizing it before she retired. She had her last day at Donahue School the day after the event, Dec. 22.

“This year is special for me because I’m retiring tomorrow,” Langlois said. “Thirty years in Holyoke, so it’s a big ‘whoop-de-doo’ for me. I’ll help them next year but I won’t be coordinating it. So it’s special.”

This could not have been a better one to end it on, with the biggest turnout in the history of the event and everyone enjoying their night, it was a great way to close off Langlois’ final days at Holyoke.