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March 13, 2026 ■ FREE

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Sign carriers needed

HOLYOKE – The St. Patrick's Committee of Holyoke is calling on enthusiastic individuals, school groups, clubs, and community organizations to join the excitement of the 73rd Holyoke St. Patrick's Parade on Sunday, Mar. 22, by serving as sign carriers. More than 100 volunteers are needed to help introduce each marching unit and proudly recognize the sponsors who make this beloved tradition possible.

Sign carriers lead the way for award winners, bands, floats, marching units, and divisions—bringing energy, visibility, and anticipation to the parade route. No experience is required; participants simply need to be 12 or older, upbeat, and ready to engage with the crowd.

As a thankyou for their time and spirit, each sign carrier will receive a 2026 Holyoke St. Patrick's Parade sweatshirt and a \$20 stipend upon completing the parade. It's a perfect opportunity for students, service groups, and community members to take part in a lively, meaningful local tradition while earning a little extra money.

"Being a sign carrier

See SIGN, page 6

City hosts Colleen Gathering

By Brendan Rooney
Correspondent

HOLYOKE – The city hosted this year's Colleen Gathering at the Wyckoff Country Club on Sunday, March 8.

The gathering featured the 2026 Colleens and their courts from Holyoke, Chicopee, Agawam, West Springfield, Springfield and Westfield, along with the 2026 award recipients from the surrounding communities. Festivities included a luncheon, raffles, and performances from the Black Rose Academy of Irish Dance, along with the Colleens and their courts, who also got to show off their Irish step dance moves.

Before the presentation kicked off, remarks were provided by Dave Haslam, a member of the Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Committee and chairman for this year's Colleen Gathering, along with 2026 Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee President Jim Wildman, who offered a bit of insight into the behind-the-scenes process of the event and revealed that every year, the parade president of the St. Patrick's Committee of Holyoke selects a city to host the Colleen Gathering in early March.

"Normally, we try to set this up throughout the regionals every year and have it be different,"



2026 Colleens assembled. Colleens and their courts from Holyoke, Agawam, Chicopee, Westfield, West Springfield and Springfield.

Turley photos by Brendan Rooney

Wildman said. "And it's always a great day. It brings all the Colleens and all the committees together, and it gets them all in one place, and lets them just have a day of fun and relaxation, before the next two weeks, which get really busy and hectic leading up to the parade weekend. I'm also looking forward to enjoying the Parade, and just getting ready for the lead up to things, it's great to see the weather getting better, and can't wait for the parade weekend."

Assemble the Colleens

Every Colleen and their

courts introduced themselves to the attendees, and first to kick off was the Holyoke contingent, which was led by the 2026 Grand Colleen Jadyne Lois Christie, who touched upon the importance of the gathering, while celebrating her Irish heritage, and previewed what she was looking forward to on Parade day.

Holyoke

"I felt today's event went so well, and bringing all the communities together, and getting to dance, and hang out with everyone was just incredible to be a part of and watch," Christie said. "As Grand Colleen, it's such

an incredible honor getting to represent my Irish ancestors, and to ensure their history is always remembered, is just a special moment to reflect on."

She also brought focus to the inclusion of the new Sensory Street addition to the parade.

"I'm really looking forward to seeing how the Sensory Street designated area is in action, because it's such a great concept, which will invite so many new faces and families who haven't had the opportunity to come to the parade due to other intellectual disabilities, and it's just great to

see a sense of inclusivity on the biggest stage possible, which brings the community together, regardless of ability," Christie said.

Rounding out her court were Paige Brady Leahy, Bridie Bowler, Anna Mary Evans and Olivia Rose Royland.

Agawam

Next up was Agawam, who was led by 2026 Colleen Ava Levesque, and her court Zoie Leopardi, Samantha Machos, Hannah Newsome, Summer Smith and Madelynne "Maddie" Szemela.

See COLLEEN, page 6



Tartan party draws big crowd

HOLYOKE – The St. Patrick's Committee, with the help of numerous volunteers, put on the Eighth Annual Tartan Party for Dobbin last Saturday afternoon at the Holyoke Merry-Go-Round. There will be rides for children, face painting, and Tartan merchandise available for sale.



Above, the Grand Colleen and Court made an appearance at the event. Right, The numerous volunteers who made the event possible. Below, The merry-go-round was full of activity last Saturday. Submitted photos



Sensory Street available this year

By Brendan Rooney
Correspondent

HOLYOKE – A new addition is coming to the 73rd Annual Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Parade, as the St. Patrick's Committee of Holyoke is partnering with the Miracle League of Western Mass (MLWM) and Magic for Maddie to introduce 'Sensory Street' along this year's parade route, which offers and provides a lower-stimulus viewing option for visitors with sensory sensitivities.

Providing insight into how this came together was Holyoke City Council President Tessa Murphy-Romboletti, who explained that the inspiration came from a trip to Ireland last year.

"Last year, a group of city officials and Parade Committee members took a trip to visit our sister

city of Tralee, Ireland. We marched in their parade and saw that their parade offered a 'sensory-friendly' area for spectators, and we thought it was such a great idea," Murphy-Romboletti said.

She explained that she pitched the idea to the Parade Committee, and they followed through.

"Our 2026 Parade President (Jim Wildman) and volunteers took the initiative and made it come to fruition, with the support of some amazing sponsors," Murphy-Romboletti said.

It was also revealed that Wildman then reached out to Kerry Parsons, a board member for the MLWM, who loved the idea.

"We're so excited, because this is such an incredible inclusion to the parade," Parsons said,

See SENSORY, page 6



Logo and graphic from the social media post. Art courtesy of the Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee

Six local educators receive Excellence in Teaching Awards

HOLYOKE – Six Holyoke Public Schools educators were surprised and honored on Friday, March 6 when Interim Superintendent Anthony Soto entered their classrooms bearing flowers, balloons, and a proclamation from Holyoke Mayor Joshua A. Garcia to let them know they were selected to receive Pioneer Valley Excellence in Teaching Awards this year.

Since 2003, the award has been distributed annually to honor Western Massachusetts educators for their dedication and excellence. More than 100 Western Massachusetts educators are honored each year. This year's Excellence in Teaching

Award winners from Holyoke include:

- **Bevan Brunelle**, teacher of theater, media, and senior seminar at Holyoke High School North
- **Rebecca Fuentes**, PreK teacher at Kelly Elementary
- **Jennifer Haugsjaahabink**, science teacher at Morgan Elementary
- **Matthew Lacasse**, physical education teacher at McMahon Elementary
- **Julie Ortiz**, school counselor at Sullivan Middle School
- **Laura Skwira**, Therapeutic Intervention Program teacher for grades K-2 at Lawrence Elementary

Carlos Vega grant applications open

HOLYOKE – This year marks the 15th year of The Carlos Vega Fund for Social Justice mini grants.

Local non-profits and individuals are invited to apply for funding between Mar. 9 and the Apr. 20 deadline, by completing the application form available at www.carlosvegafund.org. All applicants must have either 501(c)(3) status or be fiscally sponsored by a 501(c)(3) organization.

For more than 40 years, Carlos Vega fought for social justice in the Greater Holyoke area. In 2010, a small group of family and friends started the Fund to support the kind of social justice initiatives that were important to Carlos.

This year the Carlos Vega Fund for Social

Justice will provide grants amounting up to \$2,000 to be used for one-time programming or project that focuses on the fundamental primary causes of injustice, fosters change, and promotes self-help and empowerment.

The purpose of the grants is to support the efforts of those who are addressing issues of poverty and oppression, and involve people who are socially and economically marginalized in the Greater Holyoke area.

Previous mini grants have supported a variety of organizations including: Girls Inc. of the Valley, Granby Public Schools, The Gray House, Holyoke Public Schools, Holyoke Safe Neighborhood Initiative, Holyoke



Senior Center, Home City Development, OneHolyoke CDC, The Performance Project, Lorraine's Kitchen in Chicopee, Common Wealth Murals, Seeds of a Father, The Care Center, Eagle Eye Institute,

Wellspring Cooperative and Wistariahurst Museum.

The Carlos Vega Fund for Social Justice is administered through the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts and is overseen by an advisory committee. Since 2012, the Fund has awarded more than \$90,000 to more than 50 organizations in the greater Holyoke area.

Grant Awardees and the 2026 Social Justice Award recipient will be publicly announced at an event on May 28.

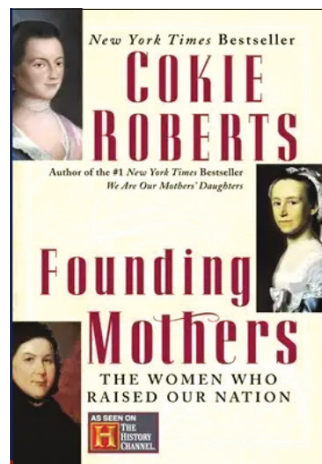
For further information and/or to obtain an application, please visit the Carlos Vega Fund for Social Justice website at <http://www.carlosvegafund.org/> or contact Aaron Vega at carlosvegafund.413@gmail.com.

Founding mothers book next discussion

HOLYOKE – Join fellow readers for the next book discussion group at Wistariahurst beginning March 24. This book club, coinciding with Women's History Month, will dive into "Founding Mothers: The Women Who Raised Our Nation" by Cokie Roberts.

"Founding Mothers" is the perfect read to celebrate both Women's History Month and the 250th anniversary of the United States.

This book tells the stories of the women who have shaped the history of this country and their part in the American Revolution. "Founding Mothers" discusses women such as Abigail Adams, Mercy Otis Warren, Deborah Read Franklin, Eliza Pinckney, Catherine Littlefield Green, Esther DeBerdt Reed, and Martha Washington. These women,



among others, were crucial in forming a new nation.

This book discussion group will meet over the course of four weeks on Mar. 24, Mar. 31, Apr. 7, and Apr. 14 from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at Wistariahurst Museum. The required readings for each meeting are as follows:

- Tuesday, March 24,

5:30 to 6:30 p.m. having read pages 14-95

- Tuesday, March 31, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. having read pages 96-159

- Tuesday, April 7, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. having read pages 160-241

- Tuesday, April 14, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. having read pages 242-292

Visit your local branch to get a copy of "Founding Mothers: The Women Who Raised Our Nation."

This book is also available for free as an eBook on Libby and Hoopla and as an audiobook on Hoopla. Participation in this book discussion group is free and open to the public.

Interested readers should register on Wistariahurst's Eventbrite page: <https://www.eventbrite.com/organization/wistariahurst-museum-64788818143>.

City now seeks administrator to carry out financial plans

HOLYOKE – In the wake of the Holyoke City Council's approval last week of Mayor Joshua A. Garcia's Financial Modernization Act, Garcia has launched the search for one of the key players in the City's redesigned financial landscape — the Chief Administrative and Financial Officer, or CAFO.

"We're looking for a dynamic, mission-driven leader," Garcia said. "This newly created role offers a rare opportunity to help shape the future of City government by strengthening day-to-day operations and modernizing how the City manages its finances. The CAFO will play a key leadership role in organizing separate financial offic-

es into a centralized finance department, implementing consistent systems and controls, and driving citywide coordination across departments."

At the Mayor's direction, the CAFO will exercise oversight of all City departments and coordination of special projects and interdepartmental initiatives. The management responsibilities include budgeting, collective bargaining, and purchasing, as well as implementation of the Mayor's policies and initiatives.

The CAFO will also serve as an advisor to the Mayor, City Council, and municipal departments and boards.

Candidates for the posi-

tion, which pays between \$115,000 and \$160,000, must meet a high standard of education and professional achievement.

"This is an ideal opportunity for a collaborative, solutions-oriented leader who thrives in complex environments and is excited to build new systems, improve processes, and deliver results that matter," Garcia said. "If you thrive in complex environments, love improving systems, and want to make a lasting impact, Holyoke wants you."

Those interested can apply on Indeed.com or send resume and cover letter to Personnel@holyokey.org. The application deadline is March 31.

Holyoke Community College hosting free health careers open house on March 26

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Community College will host an open house at its Center for Health Education & Simulation on Thursday, March 26, for anyone interested in exploring educational programs and careers in healthcare, human ser-

vices, and veterinary and animal science.

Visitors to the Health Careers Open House are welcome to tour HCC's state-of-the-art health education facility from 4 to 6 p.m. and talk to representatives from the college's pro-

grams in nursing (RN and LPN), radiologic technology, veterinary and animal science, medical assisting, Foundations of Health (public health), CNA (certified nursing assistant), medical billing and coding, and human services.

The event is free and open to the public.

The building, located at 404 Jarvis Ave., just off the main HCC campus, is home to the college's nursing and radiologic technology programs, and medical simulation labs.

There will also be representatives attending from the offices of financial aid, admissions, advising, and workforce development to talk to prospective students about their educational options and career pathways.

"This is a fantastic

chance to dive into all of our health majors in one exciting event," said nursing resource coordinator Dee Westcott. If you can't make it in person, please contact Dee Westcott at dwestcott@hcc.edu for more information.

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March 14th Corner Boys

March 15th Holyoke Caledonian Pipe Band • Dee Reilly

March 16th Blaney Brothers

March 17th J. McArdle & J. Murphy The Heals

PUBLIC NOTICE TO FORMER HOLYOKE PUBLIC SCHOOLS SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

Please be advised that student's Special Education (Chapter 766) records, with a withdrawal date within the year 2017/2018 will be destroyed on March 18, 2026. If you wish to obtain a copy of your records, please contact the:

Holyoke Public Schools, Special Education Department
57 Suffolk Street, Holyoke, MA 01040
Tel: 413-534-2000 Ext. 1209

This does not pertain to current Special Education Student's records.
This notice does not pertain to student's transcripts Which are dealt under 603 CMR 23.06

AVISO PUBLICO PARA LOS EX-ESTUDIANTES DE EDUCACION ESPECIAL DE LAS ESCUELAS PUBLICAS DE HOLYOKE

Favor informarse que los archivos de estudiantes de Educación Especial (Capítulo 766) con fecha de retiro dentro del año 2017/2018, serán destruidos el 18 de Marzo de 2026. Si desea obtener una copia de sus archivos, favor de comunicarse con las:

Escuelas Públicas de Holyoke,
Departamento de Educación Especial
Calle Suffolk # 57, Holyoke, MA 01040
Tel: 413-534-2000 ext. 1209

Este aviso no concierne los archivos actuales de Educación Especial. Este aviso no concierne las transcripciones del estudiante bajo 603 MCR 23.06

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Women needed for state commission

BOSTON – The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women is currently seeking candidates for the Hampden County Commission on the Status of Women, one of 11 Regional Commissions across the Commonwealth that strives to represent women and girls in the areas of equality and opportunity.

The mission of the Hampden County Commission on the Status of Women (HCCSW) is to provide a permanent, influential voice for women and girls across the county that facilitates and fosters community and inclusiveness. The Commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights, and the

full enjoyment of life for all women and girls throughout their lives.

HCCSW represents all cities and towns in Hampden County which include Agawam, Blandford, Brimfield, Chester, Chicopee, East Longmeadow, Granville, Hampden, Holland, Holyoke, Longmeadow, Ludlow, Monson, Montgomery, Palmer, Russell, Southwick, Springfield, Tolland, Wales, West Springfield, Westfield, and Wilbraham.

To apply for the Hampden County Commission on the Status of Women and to submit a resume, please visit: <https://masscsw.org/about/regional-commissions/hampden-county/>



An old photo taken during the Flood of 1936.

Submitted photo

Flood of 1936 to be remembered

HOLYOKE – Ninety years ago, in March of 1936, the Connecticut River overtopped the Holyoke Dam by seventeen feet, reaching a record discharge of 244,000 cfs. The B&M Railroad tracks became impassable, and the city—then home to about 55,000 residents—sustained serious damage. Author and emergency management professional Josh Shanley will speak about this disaster at

the Holyoke Public Library on Mar. 14 at 1 p.m. This historical lecture will describe the causes of, impact of, and recovery from the flood of '36, with particular focus on Holyoke and South Hadley. As floods know no boundaries, the talk will place the event in both historical and regional context.

Presenter Josh Shanley draws on decades of experience with emergency response and management.

As a firefighter-paramedic, he participated in the response to the World Trade Center attacks in 1993 and 2001. After earning a Master's degree in Emergency Management in 2005, he built a career as a municipal Emergency Management Director and served on several state boards and committees. He has since earned Master's degrees in both Entrepreneurial Thinking and Education, worked widely as

a consultant and educator in his field, and is the author of three books: The Connecticut River Valley Flood of 1936, Northampton Fires and Firefighting, and Cold War: Massachusetts.

While the talk is primarily historical, Shanley will also share his insights into the potential impact of future floods in the region. Sponsored by the Holyoke History Room (historyroom@holyokelibrary.org).

UCCH offering corned beef dinner

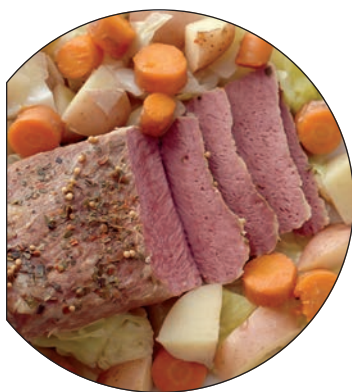
HOLYOKE – St. Patrick's Day is right around the corner, and what better way to celebrate than by indulging in some Corned Beef and Cabbage for a good cause? Well, now is your chance.

United Congregational Church of Holyoke is hosting a Corned Beef and Cabbage Dinner Fundraiser on Saturday, March 14 at 6

p.m. Dinners will include dessert and coffee or tea and can be dine-in or take-out. Tickets are \$17 each and can be reserved by calling the church office at 413-532-1483.

All Proceeds will go to the Outreach Community to continue their critical work in the community.

The United Congregational Church of Holyoke is an Open and Affirming congregation of the United Church of Christ. We welcome all individuals, regardless of where they are on their journey. If you'd like to learn more about UCCH, please visit our website at www.uccholyoke.org, find us on Facebook or Instagram, or call our office at 413-532-1483 Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.



Chamber hosting annual St. Patrick's breakfast

HOLYOKE – The Greater Holyoke Chamber invites the entire community to its highly anticipated annual St. Patrick's Breakfast, proudly presented by Witman Properties, PeoplesBank, HG&E, BankESB, and Greenfield Cooperative Bank. The event will take place on

Wednesday, March 18 at 7:30 a.m. at The Log Cabin. This traditional gathering offers an opportunity for residents, business leaders, community leaders, and community members to reconnect, celebrate local achievements, and honor this year's distinguished award recipients.

Harmony House holding book signing event

CHICOPEE – Local nonprofits Harmony House of Western Massachusetts and Holyoke VNA & Hospice Life Care will host a free community discussion and book signing on Thursday, March 26 from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Dumay Center at Elms College.

Community members are invited to join a thoughtful conversation about hospice, caregiving, and the connections made throughout the end-of-life journey. The discussion will be led by Maureen Groden, RN, a hospice nurse, educator, and local author of *When a Loved One Is Dying: Conversations About Care,*

Connection, and Coping. Groden will share selected readings from her new book which provides a compassionate guide exploring the emotional and practical realities of supporting a loved one at life's end. She will also be available for book signings following the discussion and reading.

As more families navigate serious illness and caregiving, the event aims to provide a welcoming space for open conversation, learning, and support. This event is free and open to the public, though advance online registration is requested. The event is sponsored through the generosity of Elms College.

Hampden DA holding annual St. Patrick's Day party

SPRINGFIELD – Hampden District Attorney Anthony D. Gulluni is kicking off his re-election campaign with his annual St. Patrick's Day Party on Friday, Mar. 20 from 5 to 8 p.m. at the John Boyle O'Reilly Club, 33 Progress Avenue in Springfield. Tickets are \$25 per person and will be available at the door.

Now a long-standing tradition in Western Massachusetts political circles, the annual St. Patrick's Day Party has become a major networking event for elected officials, candidates and civic leaders from across the region. This year, as DA Gulluni is up for re-election, the event provides a great way to kick off his campaign year while connecting with supporters and community leaders. The event serves as a fundraiser for Gulluni's campaign and consistently draws prominent local political figures for an evening that blends policy conversations with celebration.

The festive gathering will feature live Irish music, Irish step dancing and traditional food, creating a lively backdrop for informal conversations among leaders shaping the future of the region. "This event has always been about bringing people together," said DA Gulluni. "St. Patrick's Day is a

chance to celebrate heritage, strengthen relationships and connect with the community in a setting that is welcoming and fun. It has grown into a night that many people mark on their calendars every year."

The St. Patrick's Day Party is open to the public and has become a highlight for those looking to engage with local political and civic leadership in a relaxed, social setting.

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The St. Patrick's Day Party is open to the public and has become a highlight for those looking to engage with local political and civic leadership in a relaxed, social setting.

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2026 Cornelius J. Moriarty, Jr. Scholarship for Cadet Engineers

Pursuant to MGL Chapter 164, Sections 69B to 69F, applications for a cadet engineer scholarship will be received at the:

Office of the Manager
Holyoke Gas & Electric Department
99 Suffolk Street
Holyoke, MA 01040

Deadline: March 30, 2026

(Applications will only be considered if received on or before the deadline.)

Application forms may be obtained from our website: www.hged.com or from high school guidance counselors. For further information, please contact the Office of the Manager, at (413) 536-9313.

Applicants for the scholarship must be:

- 1) Residents of the City of Holyoke.
- 2) Graduates of a duly accredited senior secondary school (year 2026 or before).
- 3) Not less than seventeen (17) years old on their last birthday, nor more than twenty-five (25) years old.
- 4) Accepted for admission to, or already enrolled in, an accredited community college, college, or university having a course of study leading to a degree of Bachelor of Science in Engineering.



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Is there income tax on Social Security benefits?

Dear Rusty:

The Trump Administration is saying that now there will be no taxes on Social Security benefits. Since we're getting ready to start our 2025 income tax return, can you explain how this all works?

Signed:
Confused Taxpayer

Dear Confused Taxpayer:

You are obviously referring to the so-called "One Big, Beautiful Bill" and how that bill affects income tax on your Social Security benefits. And this is because of the publicity surrounding the so-called "one big, beautiful bill" enacted last year, which claims to "eliminate income tax on Social Security benefits." Well, that bill did, yet technically didn't, fully eliminate income tax on benefits." Allow me to explain.

The OBBB does eliminate income tax on most SS benefits, but it does so in a somewhat unique way – by providing an additional \$6,000 (per person) deduction to your federal taxable income as reported to the IRS. Thus, you will pay less total income tax when you file your taxes with the IRS because of that additional deduction to your taxable income.

The extra deduction is available to those over age 65 and is meant to offset the income tax which will still be levied by the IRS on the SS benefits you received in 2025. Essentially, the rules governing income tax on Social Security benefits have not changed.

The IRS will still levy income tax on your SS benefits if your combined income from all sources (known as your "provisional income") is over \$32,000 as a married couple filing jointly or more than \$25,000 if you file as an individual. If your provisional income is below the threshold for your IRS filing status, you will pay no income tax on your received 2025 SS benefits.

But if your provisional income exceeds the threshold for your IRS filing status, then somewhere between 50% and 85% of your received SS benefits will be taxed (how much SS income to be taxed depends on your combined income in 2025). By now, you should have received form 1099-SSA which advised of your 2025 Social Security income, including any income tax you had withheld from your SS benefits.

This income should

be reported when submitting your 2025 income tax return. If your "provisional income" is over \$32,000 as a married couple filing jointly (or over \$25,000 as an individual filer), then your 2025 SS benefits will still be taxed by the IRS. But when completing your 2025 Income Tax Return, you will also be able to claim an additional \$6,000 per person (\$12,000 if you file jointly), which will likely offset any income tax you must pay due to the SS benefits you received in 2025.

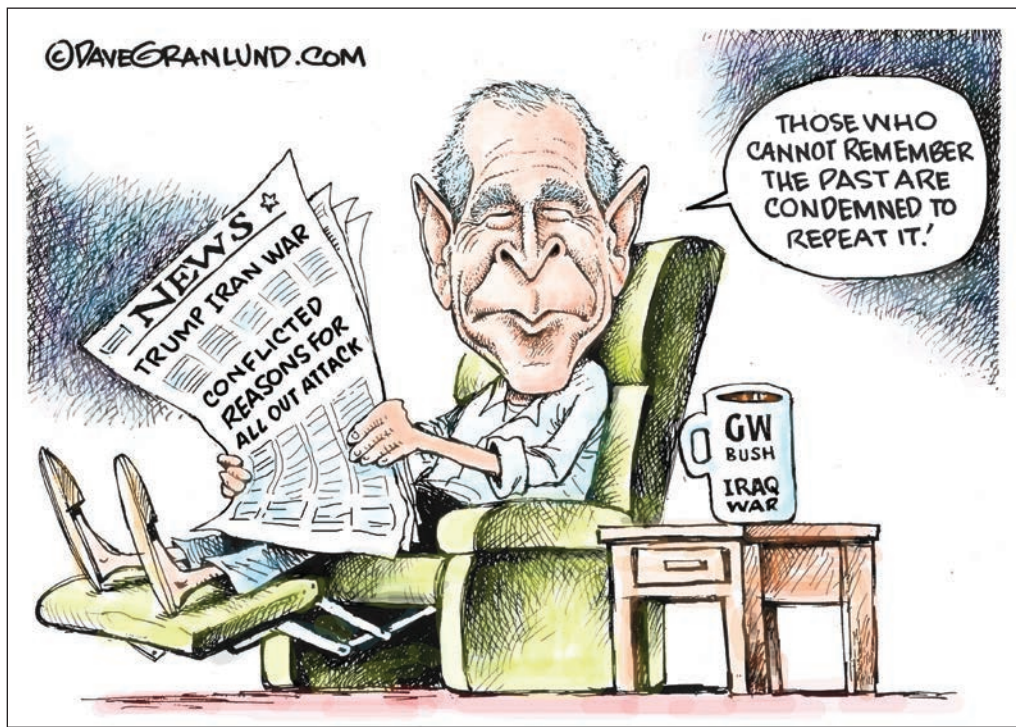
If you use a tax preparer or tax preparation software, they will guide you through this calculation. Note, too, that the \$6,000 per person deduction amount will be less if your combined taxable income is more than \$150,000 as a married couple (or more than \$75,000 as a single filer).

Be aware, though, that the OBBB is temporary tax accommodation which expires after tax year 2028. And that's because the process used to pass the bill in Congress (a "budget reconciliation" process) didn't actually change SS law; rather it provided a way around it to offset income tax paid on SS benefits.

So, to recap, the IRS can still levy income tax on your received Social Security benefits but, because of the OBBB, you will likely also (depending on your provisional income level) receive an extra deduction which offsets any taxes calculated on your Social Security benefits.

Finally, be aware that if your first husband also predeceases you, you will then become eligible for a surviving ex-spouse benefit from him, even if he has remarried.

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 ssadviser@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.



Guest Column



Male red-winged blackbird

On March 2, I received an email from a Worthington resident that he just saw a red-winged blackbird.

Male red-winged blackbirds arrive before the females. They are one of the first birds to return to northern breeding grounds, arriving in late February or early March.

Red-winged blackbirds are abundant songbirds, who inhabit marshes, wetlands and fields. The male is glossy black with bright red and yellow shoulder patches or epaulets. Females have streaked brown plumage.

The highly territorial males often sit on high perches, singing and displaying their epaulets. Their "conk-la-ree" is heard frequently. They are known for "dive bombing" crows, hawks and even humans to defend their territory. They primarily eat insects such as beetles, dragonflies and



By Ellenor Downer

moths during the breeding season and seeds and grains during fall and winter.

They nest in loosely associated colonies in shrubs or cattails and are found across most of Northern America. They are polygamous and a single male may mate with up to 15 different females in his territory. Red winged blackbirds can form huge roosts during the winter of up to a million birds.

Brimfield resident

A Brimfield resident sent an email recently. He said, "On Saturday I was driving to West Springfield to put up some picture at the library for an exhibit. Some members of the Allen Bird Club are displaying photographs there for the month of March. On the way I stopped by a nest in Ludlow that bald eagles have used for at least three years."

In Brimfield, he said, "Lately we have been seeing a Cooper's several times in

the yard and a broad-winged hawk was seen on Feb. 22. The broad-winged hawk sat in a tree in front of the house for over an hour. Last year a pair of broad-wings had a nest on the next door neighbor's property. They could see the nest from their deck, but I was never able to see the nest walking around near where they described its location."

Turkey vultures

On Feb. 11, the Brimfield resident saw a turkey vulture in the center of Palmer near the intersection of Routes 20 and 32. This week, his wife saw 25 turkey vultures flying above that area. They often see vultures soaring over that area and the first of the year shows up in mid-February. He said, "I believe the vultures nest in the area, possibly on or near Mount Dumplin that is just north of the turnpike ramps."

See BIRDS, page 5

An herb catalog and a favorite herb

One of my favorite seed and plant catalogs of all time is Richters Herbs (richters.com). I look forward to the paper copy arriving in the mail by early December.

The company is out of Ontario, Canada, and offers over 1,200 unique varieties, mostly herbs of all kinds with a few vegetables thrown in for good measure. I've ordered from them for well over two decades and think their products are just great, everything from common culinary herbs to unique medicinal plants and everything in between, even dye plants and ornaments.

I love how the seeds are packaged in foil lined envelopes and quantities are liberal, often giving you enough seed for two or three years of sowing, depending on the variety. On occasion I have had to order plants that I couldn't find locally and despite the distance, they

together make a round globe of a plant, and who could leave out lettuce leaf, with its crinkled pale green leaves.

Over the years I have found that there are just a few obstacles to growing great basil. Seeds should be planted indoors – rarely will they do well from an outdoor sowing.

Start basil about the same time that tomatoes are sown, in mid to late March. Make shallow furrows and space the seed one-eighth of an inch apart in rows within a small pot or seed pack. When true leaves form pluck out the tiny seedling and transplant it into a cell of a four or six pack, or an individual tiny pot.

Grow on indoors until the weather improves. Basil is particularly cold sensitive, so be sure that all danger of frost has passed before transplanting it into the garden.

But in addition to our old favorites, there is lemon, anise, cinnamon and spice, each with fragrant leaves. Looking for unique foliage? Try dark opal, whose leaves are tinted dark purple or bush basil, whose tiny leaves alto-

See HEALTH, page 5

The Holyoke Sun welcomes election letters to the editor

The Holyoke Sun welcomes readers to participate in this year's election campaigns by writing letters to the editor for publication on these pages. Letters of up to 250 words from local residents endorsing candidates on the ballot or discussing campaign issues should be sent to *The Holyoke Sun*, care of Turley Publications, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, faxed to 413-289-1977 or emailed to thesun@turley.com. Please include a daytime telephone number for verification purposes (it will not be printed). Letters must be received by noon Monday to be considered for that Friday's

newspaper. No attack letters will be printed. No letters written by candidates supporting their own candidacy will be printed. If the volume of letters received is larger than the space available in the newspaper, or if the letters become repetitive, the newspaper reserves the right to print a representative sample. No endorsement letters will be printed in the last edition before the election.

For more information, call 413-283-8393.

Campaign news

As part of its election coverage, the newspa-

per plans to print stories about contested races for Congress, state Senate, state House, district attorney and Governor's Council during the weeks leading up to the election, as well as a question-and-answer voters guide. In order to ensure fairness to all candidates, no political press releases will be printed, nor will reporters cover political rallies or fundraisers.

Candidates who wish to further publicize their candidacy, beliefs and events may contact advertising, 413-283-8393 about paid advertising in *The Holyoke Sun*.

the HOLYOKE Sun
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The Holyoke Sun is published every Friday by Turley Publications, Inc., 24 Water St., Palmer, Mass. 01069. Telephone (413) 283-8393, Fax (413) 289-1977.

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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 defamations 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.

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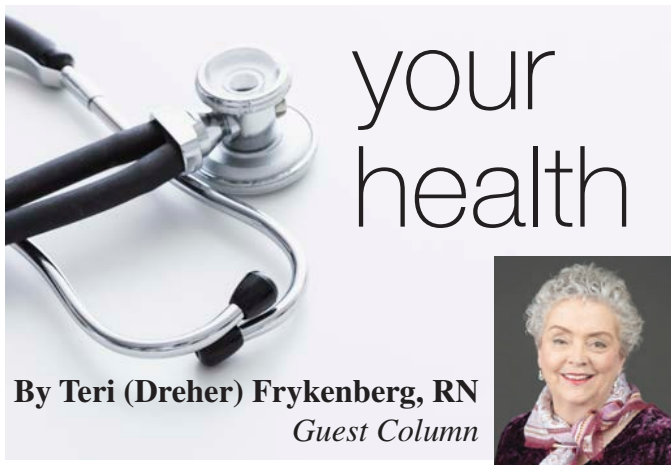
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Advice on care at home after the hospital



how long you've been hospitalized, you may need considerable help.

Will you need a walker or wheelchair? Shower chair? A first-floor sleeping arrangement? A bedside commode? These are all things that can be planned for if you know they're coming. Very often, hospitals have social workers who help patients navigate after-hospital care. Medicare has a thorough discharge planning guide on its website; search Medicare Publication No. 11376 in your browser.

Other things to think about are trip hazards like small pets and throw rugs and having some ready-made or frozen meals on hand.

Arrange for help in advance, too

A spouse may be standing by, but they may need help themselves. Adult children, friends or neighbors may be able to pitch in. If there's no one you can call on for help – and more than 50 million Americans over 50 are aging on their own – it's time to contact a home health agency. A patient advocate, who is likely familiar with the home

health landscape in your area, is a good resource and go-between.

The cardinal rule is: Ask for assistance when you need it to avoid further complications from falls, lack of nourishment or lapses in personal care.

Understand what Medicare covers

Home health care spending grew at an annual rate of more than 10% in 2024, and shows no signs of slowing down. A significant chunk of the spending in 2023 – \$148 billion – was by Medicare. But Medicare doesn't cover everything, so you may have out-of-pocket expenses.

Medicare-covered home health services include skilled nursing care, physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech-language pathology services when ordered by a doctor. Part-time or intermittent home health aide care is covered only if you're also getting those services at home.

Skilled nursing care can include wound care, injections, nutrition services and monitoring unstable health conditions. Medicare also covers durable medical

equipment when prescribed by a doctor, such as beds, walkers, wheelchairs, pumps and oxygen.

Medicare doesn't pay for 24-hour a day care, meal delivery, homemaker services or personal care services that help with bathing, dressing, grooming, etc.

Questions to ask a home health agency

There are a zillion questions you could ask, but I think these are among the most important:

- How long has this agency been in business and is it licensed to perform home health care?
- Can you provide references, or can I speak with previous clients?
- Do you accept long-term care insurance, Medicare or Medicaid? If so, do you bill insurance, or do clients pay you and then file for reimbursement?
- How do you recruit and select caregivers, and do you perform background checks?
- Are your caregivers employees or contractors? Are they bonded?
- Can I meet caregiver candidates and select the ones I want?

• What should I do if my caregiver doesn't show up as scheduled?

• How often is the care plan reviewed?

• How do I communicate concerns and questions to you?

Research has found that patients who recover at home have better outcomes, which is why the hospital-at-home movement is growing. So if you're going to be recuperating at your place, don't go it alone.

Teri (Dreher) Frykenberg, R.N., a registered nurse and board-certified patient advocate, is the founder of www.NurseAdvocateEntrepreneur.com, which trains medical professionals to become successful private patient advocates. A Monson, MA resident, she is the author of "How to Be a Healthcare Advocate for Yourself & Your Loved Ones" and her new book, "Advocating Well: Strategies for Finding Strength and Understanding in Health Care," available at Amazon.com. Contact her at Teri@NurseAdvocateEntrepreneur.com to set up a free phone consultation.

It's usually good news when the doctor says you or a loved one can come home from the hospital. Sometimes, though, it's a mixed blessing.

Hospital discharge sometimes means that further hospital care won't improve someone's health condition, and the hospital is eager to get someone else in that bed. People are discharged faster these days, often with significant lingering health issues that have to be seen to.

In the hospital, there's a staff of nurses, nurse aides, therapists and others to care for you or a loved one. When you get home, though, it's just you and maybe a spouse or other family member. That's why the home health industry is booming.

In 2020 (the most recent

data available), approximately 3 million patients received home health care services in the U.S., often following a hospitalization or skilled nursing facility stay. They are being cared for by some 12,000 home health agencies, more than 80 percent of which are for-profit companies.

Home health is something patient advocates know a lot about – and there's a lot to know. Here are some of the things I've learned over my years as an RN and nurse advocate.

Prepare in advance if you can

A best-case scenario is that you know you'll need some help when you get home. For every day you spend in a hospital, you lose a month of muscle tone and mobility, so depending on

ing brown, your plants may have a nitrogen deficiency.

I usually have had to "top dress" my basil twice after planting, each time with a sprinkling of balanced organic fertilizer and some aged compost. Usually they green up in a matter of days.

Basil has the insatiable desire to flower. We must "deadhead" or the plant will fulfill its earthly desire to reproduce by making and dropping seed, all at the expense of foliage production.

Since we grow this plant for its leaves and not its seed, or its flowers for that matter, clip away the buds at the first sign of them. Another challenge to basil growing has been the Japanese beetle.

Basil leaves riddled with chew marks should best be removed. Japanese beetles are relatively easy to hand pick in the morning

and at night.

A gentle tap on a leaf will easily knock beetles into a wide mouth jar of soapy water positioned underneath. Ideally, basil leaves should be harvested after the dew has dried in the morning but before the sun shines too brightly; at that particular time its oils are the most pungent.

Enjoy the new catalog recommendation and be sure to get those basil seeds started by the end of the month.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 34 years she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to pouimette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.

HEALTH, from page 4

Downy mildew disease was discovered to be prevalent some years back. While I don't take any particular precautions, and my basil shows little sign of the familiar leaf blotching, Richters does offer seeds of resistant varieties for you to try if this disease has been troublesome in your garden.

Basil foliage has also been known to burn if planted outdoors without a period of hardening off. For this reason, gradually get seedlings used to bright sun and wind over the course of a week before planting in the ground.

Provide your transplants with fertile, well-drained soil in a sunny spot. If, over the course of the summer you notice that the leaves are no longer grass-green, but instead are pale or even turn-

BIRDS, from page 4

Other birds and more

The Brimfield residents still has lots of junco about as well as a healthy the gray squirrel population. Recently they saw two and sometimes three red squirrels. He is enjoying the longer days and looking forward to warmer temperatures.

Red-tailed hawk

A Rutland couple saw

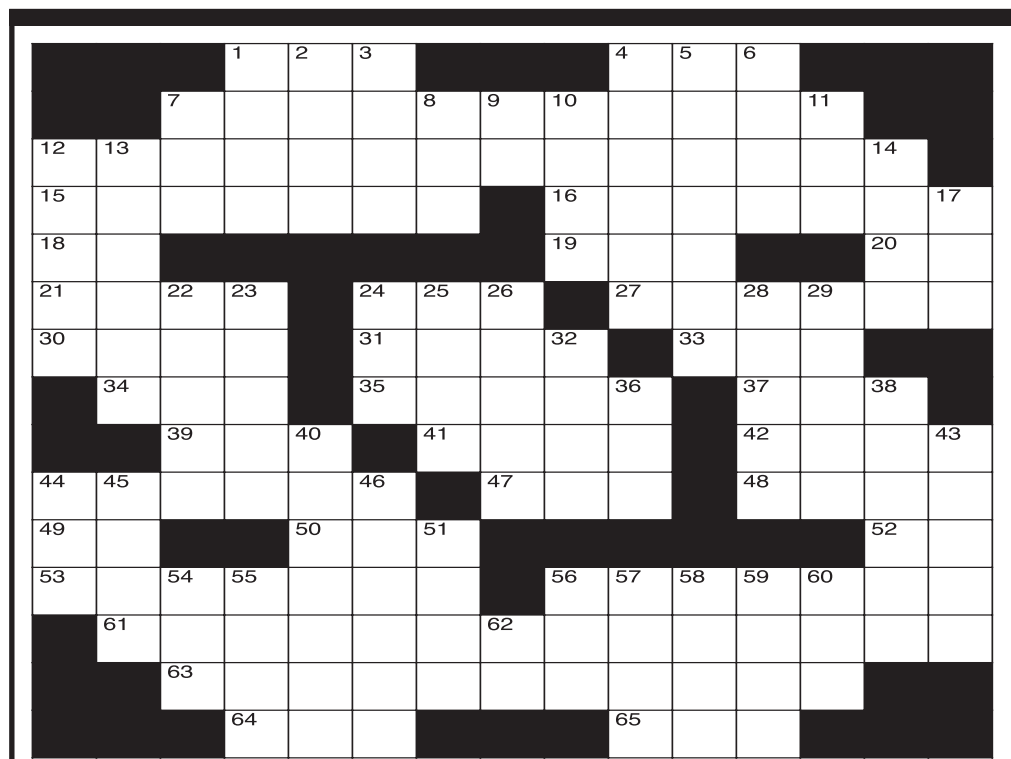
a red-tailed hawk quickly grab a gray squirrel her husband shot. They watched it hungrily consume a "warm meal" in the yard. They moved their feeder nearer to the house due to the deep snow. They have lots of black-capped chickadees and woodpeckers come to the new location

Bluebirds

An Oakham resident sees bluebirds on a daily basis. She enjoys watch-

ing them.

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



- CLUES ACROSS**
- Blockchain-based entity
 - A woolen cap of Scottish origin
 - Painted with glue
 - Legendary crooner
 - Structure made with strips of wood
 - Tropical fruits
 - Commercial
 - Comedienne Gasteyer
 - The Ocean State
 - Ancient Scot
 - Basics
 - Stated propositions
 - Scottish island group
 - Expression of annoyance
 - Large tree
 - Engine additive
 - Conspiracy
 - Drunkard
 - Someone who is morally reprehensible
 - Ancient Syrian city
 - Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls
 - Carry (slang)
 - Sweet potato
 - European river
 - The Golden State
 - Windy City ballplayer
 - New Testament
 - Possess spiritually
 - A treeless grassy plain
 - Popular historical novel
 - In a law-abiding way
 - A place to sleep
 - Criticize
 - Occupant
 - Member of Great Plains people
 - Social media firm
 - Digital audiotape
 - Midway between east and southeast
 - Chronic, progressive disease
 - Chinese lute
 - Not wet
 - Moves wings up and down
 - Communication devices
 - Swiss river
 - Female sibling
 - Receive
 - Relating to a type
 - General's assistant (abbr.)
 - Steep bank
 - Taxi driver
 - Moves into without difficulty
 - Bicycle manufacturer
 - Traditional rhythmic pattern
 - Fugitives are on it
 - Bitter-tasting organic substance
 - Die
 - Matched
 - Literary genre ___-fi
 - Cannot
 - Pounded
 - British rock group
 - Debt relief order
 - 2006 NL Cy Young winner
 - Green vegetable
 - Tough outer skin of fruit
 - ___ Spumante (Italian wine)
 - Ailments
 - Famed singer Charles
 - Camper

CROSSWORD ANSWER on page 8

CHURCH DIRECTORY



Your Community Church

Blessed Sacrament Parish

Rev. Duy Le
 frduyle@blessedsacramentholyoke.org
 1945 Northampton St., Holyoke
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 Sunday 8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
 DAILY MASS AND ROSARY
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 Monday - Friday: MASS 6:45 a.m.
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 Legal Holidays: MASS 8 a.m.
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 Facebook: @bspholyokema

First Baptist Church

Pastor Theresa Temple
 1976 Northampton St., Holyoke
 (413) 533-7728
 firstbaptistchurchholyoke@comcast.net
 Facebook: First Baptist Church of Holyoke, MA
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 Wednesday Bible Studies, one at 11 a.m. and one at 5:30 p.m.

Our Lady of the Cross Catholic Parish

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 Email: pastor@ourladyofthecross.com
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 Parish Offices are located at: 15 Maple Street, Holyoke (413) 532-5661
 parish@ourladyofthecross.com
 OFFICE HOURS:
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 Sunday 7:30 a.m., 9 a.m. (Polish), and 10:30 a.m.
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 Legal Holidays Mass 9 a.m.
 Reconciliation (Confession)
 Monday - Saturday 8 a.m.
 Saturday 3:15pm
 Anytime by Appointment
 DEVOTIONS
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 Divine Mercy Chaplet - 7:50 a.m.
 ROSARY 8:05 a.m.
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St. Peter's Lutheran Church

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 Pastor: revdebma@gmail.com
 Website: www.stpetersholyoke.org
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 facebook.com/stpetersholyoke
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 Friday, 12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
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 Other: Prayers with Pastor - Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m. - on Facebook Live.

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 Instagram:
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 Days and Hours of Services:
 Sunday: 8 a.m.
 Sunday: 10 a.m.
 Sunday: 5 p.m. (Spanish)

Spring Gardening Workshops available March 28

By Kristin Rivers
krivers@turley.com

WESTFIELD – The Western Massachusetts Master Gardener Association will be holding the 27th Annual “Let’s Get Growing!” Spring Gardening Workshops on March 28 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Westfield Middle School - South.

The festivities will include a marketplace fair, raffles, an Ask a Master Gardener table, refreshments, soil testing and 10 classes to help educate and empower them in gardening this spring.

This year’s topics are “Using Trees and Shrubs for Year-long Interest,” “Berry Delicious Gardens,” “Practical Tips: Growing for a Changing Climate,” “Gardening in Small Places,” “From One Comes Many: Propagation Workshop (Hands-on),” “Invasive Species 101: Identification & Management,” “Vegetables vs. Pests: How to Win!” “Design Your Own Water Feature,” “Let’s Go Native: A Sustainable, Attainable Approach,” and Get your Hands Dirty: Creating a Succulent Garden (Hands-on).”

The hands-on workshops, it should be noted, are already filled.

The speakers include Dan Ziomek, owner of Sugarloaf Gardens, Berry Specialist Laura Griffin McDermott, Plant Magic Garden Owner and Gardening for Hot People Podcast Co-Host Cheryl Rafuse, Master Gardener Chris Ferrero, Wistariahurst Gardens Master Gardener Toi Graham, Environmental Biologist at the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources Jennifer Forman, Master Gardener Ed Sourdiffie, Full Circle Garden Master Gardeners Margery Gerard and JoAnne Palmer and Kessa McEwen, horticulturist and landscape designer at Berkshire Botanical Garden.

Anyone interested is encouraged to register quickly, as classes fill up fast. Mail-in registrations have to be postmarked and sent in by March 16 at \$35, online registration is through March 26 for \$35 and walk-ins are the day of at \$40 cash only.

Rosy Bonner, a member of the WMMGA and part of the Planning Committee for the event, expressed excitement

for this year’s workshops and said attendees have an opportunity to take two of them during the day.

“The sessions are an hour and 15 minutes long. The speaker usually speaks for an hour and then gives them a good 15 minutes because they usually have lots of questions that may not have come up in what we were talking about,” Bonner said.

On the topics, Bonner explained, “our whole mission is sustainability and good practices” and community feedback also guides this, with evaluations at the end of the workshops. A couple of this year’s workshops, for example, came to be through those evaluations.

“We didn’t have anything on trees and shrubs last year, so a lot of people said, ‘Can you bring back something else in trees and shrubs?’ So, the person we have doing it this year is Dan Ziomek and he’s been in the industry for 20 plus years. He’s currently the manager of the Sugarloaf Gardens in Sunderland,” Bonner said. “He has a wealth of information. He will bring his truck loaded with shrubs and trees and his focus this year is make sure if you’re

going to use trees and shrubs, it’s just like flowers. You just don’t have them look good one season, you have them look good four seasons. So, he’s really going to talk about what trees or shrubs might be featured for your garden or landscape over the year long. So, it’s just good biodiversity, but it also makes pretty art too.”

Another topic Bonner highlighted was “Vegetables versus Pests: How to Win!” as attendees always seek a topic on vegetables.

“They talk about some common vegetables that you grow and pests or diseases that take them over. Number one, how to prevent it and number two, how to manage insects and diseases if you get them. It’s practical, useful ideas that really work,” Bonner said. “I say they really work because the two presenters, Margery Gerard and JoAnne Palmer, are both master gardeners, but more important than that, their expertise in this area comes from the fact that they are two of the people that oversee the South Hadley garden called Full Circle Garden. It’s a vegetable garden and they raise way over 2,000 pounds of

food in the summer for the food pantry there, so not only are they master gardeners, they have such practical, hands-on experience.”

Bonner said another concern gardeners have is invasive species in “how to identify it and what to do about it,” with the focus on spotted lanternflies, jumping worms, Japanese Knotweed and more.

“The person doing it is very careful to say manage, not completely eradicate, because sometimes, once you get these invasives in here, you can’t get rid of them, but you could at least manage them. Others you catch them early enough because you’ve identified them early enough you can really get rid of,” Bonner said. “She is the point person for Massachusetts that watches over what plants or insects that go on the invasive list, so she’s really got her hands into this part.”

After Bonner expressed gratitude to the Western Mass community for supporting the event year after year and, also, for this year’s raffle, as many community members donated items too, she added that she hopes attendees take away inspiration and ideas to help



better understand biodiversity.

“They’re an important part in saving our world and making a difference, and it’s not mammoth things they have to do. It’s small, little changes that they can do. Whether it’s adding a little water feature or adding a native or addressing that invasive or adding a bush with berries for the birds, there’s something that they’re going to walk away with that they truly will make a difference in helping to save our world,” Bonner said. “They’re taking care of our environment and that’s really what we need is everybody doing a little piece.”

“If you’re looking to get energized, inspired, get out of this humdrum of winter, come to our workshops. We guarantee you’ll walk away with a smile and feeling spring is here!” Bonner said.

To learn more and to register, visit wmmga.org.

SENSORY, from page 1

something that Murphy-Romboletti also bestowed praise towards.

“This addition is a great way to make sure everyone gets to enjoy the parade, including families with children and individuals who may not love the big noises that can happen during the parade,” Murphy-Romboletti said. “Simply, it’s just another way for our city to say, ‘you are welcome here.’”

Echoing similar thoughts was Wildman.

“This is a huge step for us, because I don’t believe there is another St. Patrick’s Day Parade that does this type of activity, and to have this area be inclusive for all these kids and adults who have issues with all the lights, sirens, and the noise, and for them to come in and join us is heartwarming,” Wildman said.

Wildman added that the social media response and reaction to the announcement has been beneficial and surprising.

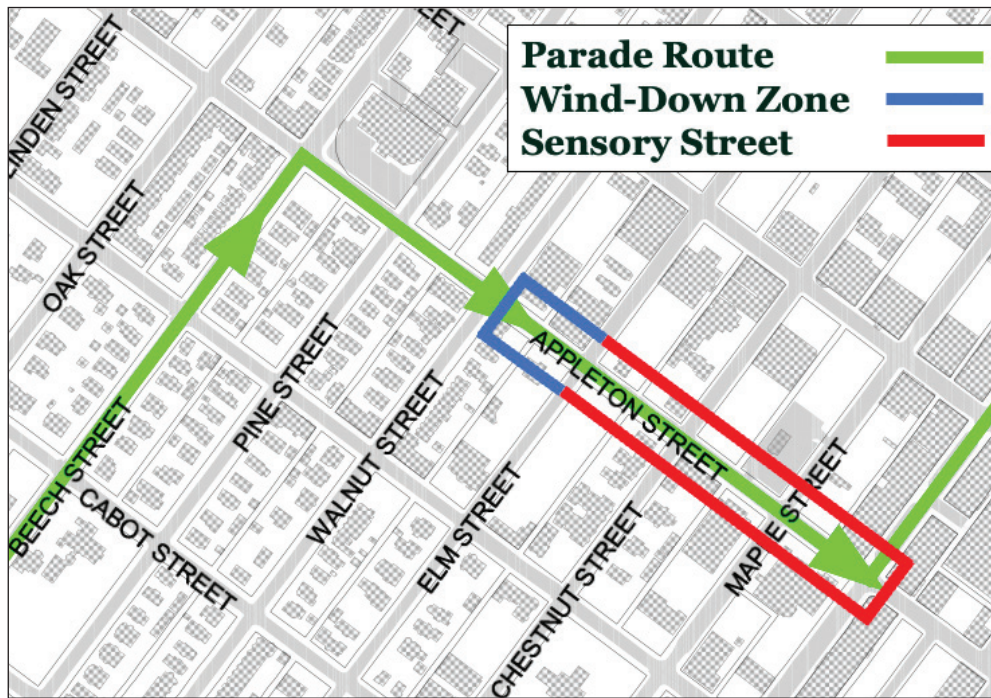
“For example, this past

week, we had our social media go out, and we had almost 500 likes and close to 1K comments within 24 hours,” Wildman said. “We gained interest and traction from groups we’ve never heard of, who have shared the announcement, that are all talking about coming, and so we’re hoping for a very, very good first year, and for people to show up and enjoy this with their families.”

According to details, the full Sensory Street zone runs from Appleton Street, Elm, Maple Street, and the wind-down begins to take shape at Walnut Street before the traditional parade experience returns on High Street. Both zones will be marked with signs along the route and highlighted on the official parade map.

No reservations are required to access Sensory Street, and the zone will be open to all spectators. Offering an in-depth analysis of what families can expect was Murphy-Romboletti.

“During the couple of



Map of the Sensory Street Designated Zone .

Art courtesy of the Holyoke St. Patrick’s Day Parade Committee

blocks of ‘Sensory Street,’ folks can anticipate no emergency or flashing lights, no sirens or amplified alarms, bands will feature strings only (no percussion or brass), as well as reduced loud or sudden vehicle noises,” Murphy-Romboletti

said. “I think it’s great that we can join others in these efforts because true inclusivity isn’t about taking away an experience from anyone else; it’s about creating new opportunities that encourage bringing more people into the fold.”

The new initiative is believed to be the first of its kind for any major event held in Western Massachusetts.

The Holyoke St. Patrick’s Day Parade kicks off later this month on March 22.

SIGN, from page 1

is one of the most fun and accessible ways to be part of Parade Day,” said Jim Wildman, 2026 Parade President. “These volunteers help set the tone for every unit that follows, and their enthusiasm truly fuels the crowd. We’re thrilled to welcome new and returning participants who want to experience the parade from the inside out.”

Past sign-carrying groups have included scouting troops, sports teams, Key Clubs, National Honor Society chapters, school clubs, small businesses, and faith-based organizations. Spots fill quickly, and early signups are encouraged.

Those interested can learn more and register at www.holyokestpatricksparade.com/sign-carriers or email holyokeparadesign-carriers@gmail.com.

The 73rd Holyoke St. Patrick’s Parade steps off on Sunday, March 22, 2026, following the 49th Holyoke St. Patrick’s Road Race on Saturday, March 21, 2026.

COLLEEN, from page 1

Levesque shared this was a moment she had waited all her life for.

“To, actually, be the Colleen is insane; it’s been extremely competitive, all the girls are talented, and it’s such an honor to represent my Irish heritage. And this event has been a great way to network, and everything has been amazing, and I can’t wait till Parade Day,” Levesque said.

Chicopee

Following afterwards was Chicopee, who was introduced by 2026 Colleen Charlotte Rae Fields and her court: Mila Dillard, Gracelyn

Jarry and Shannon Caloon. Fields said that her highlight of the gathering was getting to know all of the other Colleen and she’s excited for Parade Day, discussing

what it means to be an ambassador for the Chicopee community.

“Everyone is really nice and sweet, and it’s great to see everyone share the same

morals that we do,” Fields said. “I can’t wait to see everyone in the crowd, and to take in the moment with my court, in front of everyone, is going to be really excit-

ing. Also, being an ambassador means a lot to me, and I’m really excited to hopefully help bring this community together and just better Chicopee as a whole.”

West Springfield

Representing West Springfield were 2026 Colleen Siobhan Erris Ginty and court: Grace Kennedy Atwater, Saoirse Bacon, Ava Dominguez, Kenzie Candon, and Kellen Ross, who were also in attendance and partook in the festivities.

Westfield

In attendance for Westfield was 2026 Colleen Reese O’Connell, who led her court into the spotlight as Giara Curran, Maggie Leen, Savanna Mazeika and Angelica Madison Racette followed behind.

Springfield

Finally, the last ensemble was Springfield, represented by 2026 Colleen Anna O’Toole, who is from Wilbraham, and a Minnechaug Regional High School senior, and her court Anna Flanagan, Siobhan MacDonnell, Emma Westbrooks, and Sophia Dow.

O’Toole expressed what this honor truly means to her and revealed a deeper meaning.

“I’m very excited to be this year’s Springfield Colleen, and it honestly means more than just a title to me, because I get to rep-

resent my grandparents and their heritage, and I wouldn’t be here today if it weren’t for them,” O’Toole said. “Also, I want to add that representing Springfield is so great because all of the little kids get to look up to me, and say she’s unafraid to represent her heritage, so why can’t I do the same thing, and that means the world to me because I want to be a good role model, and ambassador for the community.”

She also provided insight into what this title means to her hometown of Wilbraham.

“So, as you know, under the umbrella of Springfield Colleen and my court, we also get to represent the other contingences such as East Longmeadow, Longmeadow and Wilbraham, and being from Wilbraham, it’s great because I get to be a liaison of my school, being Minnechaug, and to be able to represent my school pride and heritage within Springfield is pretty cool,” O’Toole said.

Parade Day is almost here

Officially now only under two weeks away, and fast approaching is the 49th Holyoke St. Patrick’s Road Race, which kicks off on Saturday, March 21 and closing out the holiday weekend is the 73rd Holyoke St. Patrick’s Parade on Sunday, March 22.



Colleens dancing with the Black Rose Academy of Irish Dance.

Turley photos by Brendan Rooney



2026 Holyoke St. Patrick’s Day Parade Committee and the 2026 Holyoke Grand Colleen and her court.

SPORTS



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Holyoke beats Chicopee in Suburban semifinals

HOLYOKE – At Peck Middle School last Wednesday evening, Holyoke 5/6 Suburban boys basketball defeated Chicopee 51-37 in the Red Division playoffs semifinals. Holyoke was scheduled to face East Longmeadow in the finals.



Jayceon Gonzalez sends a long shot away.
Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com



Jayzavian Santiago shoots ahead of pressure.



Jaydrian Santiago eyes the hoop.



Jenzell Santiago gets low as he heads into the paint.



Noah Cabrera gets a shot off.

St. Patrick's Day Road Race set to kick off big weekend

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

HOLYOKE – Last March, for the first time in several years, it was gorgeous weather for the Holyoke St. Patrick's Road Race.

More than 6,000 people participated in this year's event, with nearly 5,000 participants finishing the 10K, or 6.2-mile course.

It was Samuel Whittaker of Salem, CT, who finished the race in 31:24. Alex Corbett, who placed second in last year's race, came in 23 seconds later at 31:47.

The top female finisher was Angelia Rafter at 34:13 and she placed 12th overall. Rafter is from Glastonbury, CT.

Among local finishers,

Matt Provost of Monson was 19th overall at 35:09. Ryan Davis of South Hadley was a close 20th at 35:10. Lindsay Smith of South Hadley finished 22nd at 35:12.

While the race course, commonly known as a "hilly" course throughout downtown Holyoke ending with a turn off Beech St. and up the hill on Hampden St. toward the finish line remained largely the same, there was one noticeable change in this year's event.

Presidential Timing took over the official timing duties after 4RUN3 went out of business last year. Those looking for more results from the events can go to www.presidential-timing.com to look at more specific results from the race. Like previous timers,

you can look up people by name and bib number to get more specific results.

This year, the road race is set to take place on Saturday, Mar. 21 with the main race beginning at 1 p.m.

This year's race would feature runners from all over the region, the state, and surrounding states as many are preparing for the Boston Marathon, set to take place in just under a month. Many runners over the years have enjoyed using the St. Patrick's Day Road Race as practice for the marathon because of the challenging hills throughout the streets of Holyoke that runners must navigate through.

While there has been a considerable amount of snowfall this past winter, the

Holyoke DPW will have the streets utilized in the race ready to go for both runners and spectators. Helping matters has been the recent warmer weather that has helped accelerate the melting a lot of the snow.

For participants in this year's race, Runner numbers and bib-tags can be picked up on Friday, Mar. 20 from 3 to 6 p.m. They can also be picked up on Saturday morning between 9 a.m. and 12 noon.

There will be free shuttle service going from Holyoke Community College to the race area. The shuttle will drop runners off at the Mater Dolorosa School parking lot outside of the clothing drop. Race officials advise using a shuttle by 12 noon in order to make the start of the race.

Local high school seniors headed to All-Star Games

SPRINGFIELD – The Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame announced the team rosters for the 2026 Western Massachusetts Senior High School All-Star Games. On Friday, Mar. 20, the Hall of Fame will host the 2026 All-Star event on the Jerry Colangelo Court of Dreams at the Hall of Fame. Sixty of the region's top seniors were selected from different divisions to participate in the final high school contests of their prep career.

"We are honored to welcome Western Massachusetts' top high school basketball players to the 15th annual All-Star celebration at the Basketball Hall of Fame," said John L. Doleva, President and CEO of the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame. "This event is a special opportunity to recognize the hard work and achievements of these outstanding seniors, and we invite the community to join us as they take the court one final time in their high school careers."

A committee of local coaches and media members, representing each division on both the boys' and girls' sides, selected the teams. Using the designated classes for the PVIAC Tournament, the players will be divided into six teams: two girls' teams, two boys' teams of Class A and B players, and two boys' teams of Class C

and D players. Only graduating seniors are eligible for the All-Star Games. Rosters are on the next page.

For the 15th year, the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame will recognize one boy and one girl as the Western Massachusetts Players of the Year. A special presentation will be made for the recipients during halftime of one of the participating games. A panel of local media members selects the award winners, who are recognized for their achievements on the court as well as their sportsmanship and character off the court.

Participants in the Boys Class C and D game include: Ware's Jack Gaudreau and Brady Guimond, Palmer's Dylan Doherty, Gavin Smola, and Stephen Fredette, Mahar's Jayden Delgado, Granby's Zavien Fernandez, and Monson's Austin Meacham.

In the girls game, participants include: Minnechaug's Cailin O'Brien, Kelly Cronin, and Elizabeth Woytowicz, Mahar's Hayden Comeau, and Agawam's Isabella Laprise.

And in the Boys A and B game, participants include: Holyoke's Jordan King-Perilli, Chicopee's Dominic Garcia, Belchertown's Jake Pacunas, Minnechaug's Miles Fergus, Chicopee Comprehensive's Brody Fay, and South Hadley's Isiah James.



The participants are off in the 48th running of the Holyoke St. Patrick's Road Race last March.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

Public Notices

CITY OF HOLYOKE RFP 2026 - 34 Brown Ave REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR PROPERTY SALE

The City of Holyoke is accepting offers to purchase and develop the land at 37 Brown Avenue, Holyoke, MA 01040. The land is approximately .14 Acres in size and further identified in the Holyoke Assessors records as Map 081, Block 00, Parcel 042 and in Hampden County Registry of Deeds Book 24819, Page 196.

Assessed Value: \$268,500
Suggested Minimum Bid \$10,000.00

Zoning: Two Family Residence (R-2)

https://holyokema.mapgeo.io
Offers for the purchase of the land should be submitted to:

City of Holyoke
Purchasing Department, Room 3
536 Dwight Street
Holyoke, MA 01040
Attention: BID NUMBER RFP 2026-34

Sale of 37 Brown Avenue
Deadline to submit an offer is: 3/31/2026 @ 2PM

If City Hall is closed due to an unforeseen event such as inclement weather or other unexpected closure, offers will be accepted until 2:00 PM on the next normal business day. The City of Holyoke reserves the right to reject any and all offers. Offers should include the following information:

- Proponent Background: Name, contact information and a demonstration that the proponent has the capacity and experience to make any proposed improvements.

- Description of intended use of the property: Description of any proposed improvements, timeline of work and estimated budget, including purchase, design, permitting and construction.

- Explanation of Need: Describe how acquiring the lot would benefit the purchaser and how it would be a benefit to the surrounding area.

- A monetary offer: Specify the purchase price for the property.

Important Notes:
All City Property Dispositions are governed under MGL Ch.30B

To request RFP packet please send an email request to morrowj@holyoke.org 03/13, 03/20, 03/27/2026

CITY OF HOLYOKE RFP 2026 - 33 HILLSIDE AVE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR PROPERTY SALE

The City of Holyoke is accepting offers to purchase and develop the land at 432 Hillside Avenue, Holyoke, MA 01040. The land is approximately .173 Acres in size and further identified in the Holyoke Assessors records as Map 123, Block 00, Parcel 021 and in Hampden County Registry of Deeds Book 26065, Page 525.

Assessed Value: \$218,500
SUGGESTED MINIMUM BID \$10,000.00

Zoning: Single Family Residence (R-1A)

https://holyokema.mapgeo.io
Offers for the purchase of the land should be submitted to:

City of Holyoke
Purchasing Department, Room 3
536 Dwight Street
Holyoke, MA 01040
Attention: BID NUMBER RFP 2026-33

Sale of 432 Hillside Avenue
Deadline to submit an offer is: 3/31/2026 2:30 PM

If City Hall is closed due to an unforeseen event such as inclement weather or other unexpected closure, offers will be accepted until 2:30 PM on the next normal business day. The City of Holyoke reserves the right to reject any and or all offers. Offers should include the following information:

- Proponent Background: Name, contact information and a demonstration that the proponent has the capacity and experience to make any proposed improvements.

- Description of intended use of the property: Description of any proposed improvements, timeline of work and estimated budget, including purchase, design, permitting and construction.

- Explanation of Need: Describe how acquiring the lot would benefit the purchaser and how it would be a benefit to the surrounding area.

- A monetary offer: Specify the purchase price for the property.

Important Notes:
All City Property Dispositions are governed under MGL Ch.30B

To request RFP packet please send an email request to morrowj@holyoke.org 03/13, 03/20, 03/27/2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Probate and Family Court 50 State Street Springfield, MA 01103 (413)748-7758 Docket No. HD26P0493EA Estate of: Constance F Gamache Date of Death: 02/04/2026 CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION

To all interested persons:
A Petition for Public Administration has been filed by **ohn J Ferriter of Holyoke, 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 **J Ferriter of Holyoke, MA** be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **With Corporate 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 04/06/2026**. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE

A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.

WITNESS, Hon. Claudine T. Stoudemire, First Justice of this Court.

Date: March 09, 2026
Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate
03/13/2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Probate and Family Court 50 State Street Springfield, MA 01103 Docket No. HD26P0386GD In the matter of: Andrew Houle Of: Holyoke, MA Respondent

Alleged Incapacitated Person CITATION GIVING NOTICE OF PETITION FOR APPOINTMENT OF GUARDIAN FOR INCAPACITATED PERSON PURSUANT TO G.L. c. 190B, §5-304

To the named Respondent and all other interested persons, a petition has been filed by Department of Developmental Serv of Springfield, MA in the above captioned matter alleging that **Andrew Houle** is in need of a Guardian and requesting that **Cheryl Van Gerven of Oxford, MA** (or some other suitable person) be appointed as Guardian to serve Without Surety on the bond.

The petition asks the court to determine that the Respondent is incapacitated, that the appointment of a Guardian is necessary, and that the proposed Guardian

is appropriate. The petition is on file with this court and may contain a request for certain specific authority.

You have the right to object to this proceeding. If you wish to do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance at this court on or before 10:00 a.m. on the return date of **03/25/2026**. This day is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline date by which you have to file the written appearance if you object to the petition. If you fail to file the written appearance by the return date, action may be taken in this matter without further notice to you. In addition to filing the written appearance, you or your attorney must file a written affidavit stating the specific facts and grounds of your objection within 30 days after the return date.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The outcome of this proceeding may limit or completely take away the above-named person's right to make decisions about personal affairs or financial affairs or both. The above-named person has the right to ask for a lawyer. Anyone may make this request on behalf of the above-named person. If the above-named person cannot afford a lawyer, one may be appointed at State expense.

WITNESS, Hon. Claudine T. Stoudemire, First Justice of this Court.

Date: February 25, 2026
Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate
03/13/2026

City of Holyoke Notice of Public Hearing

The DGR Committee of the Holyoke City Council as well as the Holyoke Planning Board will hold separate public hearings to hear a zoning ordinance text change proposal to require a certain percentage of native plantings in new construction or major rehabilitation projects and to bring the city into alignment with Massachusetts' Prohibited Plant List in banning their use. **Planning Board public hearing will be held on Tuesday, March 24th, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. via www.zoom.us Meeting ID: 821 5782 8682 or by call in at 1-646-558-8656 with same meeting ID. Ordinance Committee public hearing will be held on Tuesday, March 24th, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. at Holyoke City Hall 536 Dwight St and can be accessed remotely via www.zoom.us Meeting ID 836 8603 7067 Meeting Passcode 652755 or by call in at 1-646-558-8656 with same Meeting ID and Passcode.** For a copy of the application or to provide comments, please contact City Council Admin Asst Jeffery Anderson-Burgos at Anderson-BurgosJ@holyoke.org or by phone 413-322-5525.

DGR Chair
Richard Purcell
03/06, 03/13/2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Division Docket No. HD26P0450EA Estate of: Kenneth H. Lubold Date of Death: November 25, 2025 INFORMAL PROBATE

PUBLICATION NOTICE

To all persons interested in the above captioned estate, by Petition of Petitioner **Paula Lubold of Holyoke, MA** and Petitioner **Richard Lubold of Holyoke, MA**

a Will has been admitted to informal probate.

Paula Lubold of Holyoke, MA and **Richard Lubold of Holyoke, MA** have been informally appointed as the Personal Representatives of the estate to serve **without surety** on the bond.

The estate is being administered under informal procedure by the Personal Representatives under the Massachusetts Uniform Probate Code without supervision by the Court. Inventory and accounts are not required to be filed with the Court, but interested parties are entitled to notice regarding the administration from the Personal Representatives and can petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including distribution of assets and expenses of administration. Interested parties are entitled to petition the Court to institute formal proceedings and to obtain orders terminating or restricting the powers of Personal Representatives appointed under informal procedure. A copy of the Petition and Will, if any, can be obtained from the Petitioners.
03/13/2026

City of Holyoke Notice of Public Hearing

The Ordinance Committee of the Holyoke City Council as well as the Holyoke Planning Board will hold separate public hearings to hear a zoning ordinance text change proposal to require a certain percentage of native plantings in new construction or major rehabilitation projects and to bring the city into alignment with Massachusetts' Prohibited Plant List in banning their use. **Planning Board public hearing will be held on Tuesday, March 24th, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. via www.zoom.us Meeting ID: 821 5782 8682 or by call in at 1-646-558-8656 with same meeting ID. Ordinance Committee public hearing will be held on Tuesday, March 24th, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. at Holyoke City Hall 536 Dwight St and can be accessed remotely via www.zoom.us Meeting ID 847 9735 1126 Meeting Passcode 243017 or by call in at 1-646-558-8656 with same Meeting ID and Passcode.** To provide comments to the Planning Board, please contact Brianna Tejada at tejadab@holyoke.org. To provide comments to the Ordinance Committee, please contact City Council Admin Asst Jeffery Anderson-Burgos at Anderson-BurgosJ@holyoke.org or by phone 413-322-5525.

Planning Board Chair,
Lauren Niles
Ordinance Chair,
Meg Magrath-Smith
03/06, 03/13/2026

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03/13, 03/20/2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Probate and Family Court 50 State Street Springfield, MA 01103 Docket No. D17P0179GD In the interests of Andrew E Houle Of: Holyoke, MA RESPONDENT

Incapacitated Person/Protected Person CITATION GIVING NOTICE OF PETITION FOR TERMINATION OF A GUARDIAN OF AN INCAPACITATED PERSON

To the named Respondent and all other interested persons, a petition has been filed by Department of Developmental Svcs of Springfield, MA in the above captioned matter requesting that the court:

Terminate the Guardianship of the Respondent.

The petition asks the court to make a determination that the Guardian and/or Conservator should be allowed to resign; or should be removed for good cause; or that the Guardianship and/or Conservatorship is no longer necessary and therefore should be terminated. The original petition is on file with the court.

You have the right to object to this proceeding. If you wish to do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance at this court on or before 10:00 A.M. on the return date of **03/25/2026**. This day is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline date by which you have to file the written appearance if you object to the petition. If you fail to file the written appearance by the return date, action may be taken in this matter without further notice to you. In addition to filing the written appearance, you or your attorney must file a written affidavit stating the specific facts and grounds of your objection within 30 days after the return date.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The outcome of this proceeding may limit or completely take away the above-named person's right to make decisions about personal affairs or financial affairs or both. The above-named person has the right to ask for a lawyer. Anyone may make this request on behalf of the above-named person. If the above-named person cannot afford a lawyer, one may be appointed at State expense.

WITNESS, Hon. Claudine T. Stoudemire, First Justice of this Court

Date: February 25, 2026
Rosemary A. Saccomani, Register of Probate
03/13/2026

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The Town of Oakham is seeking an experienced working **HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT.** The Highway Superintendent serves as the working department head responsible for the planning, administration, and day-to-day operations of the Town's Highway department. Pay rate is \$31.82 - \$40.30/hr depending on experience. Email admin@oakham-ma.gov for a full job description and town employment application.

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TAX-TIME SURVIVAL GUIDE

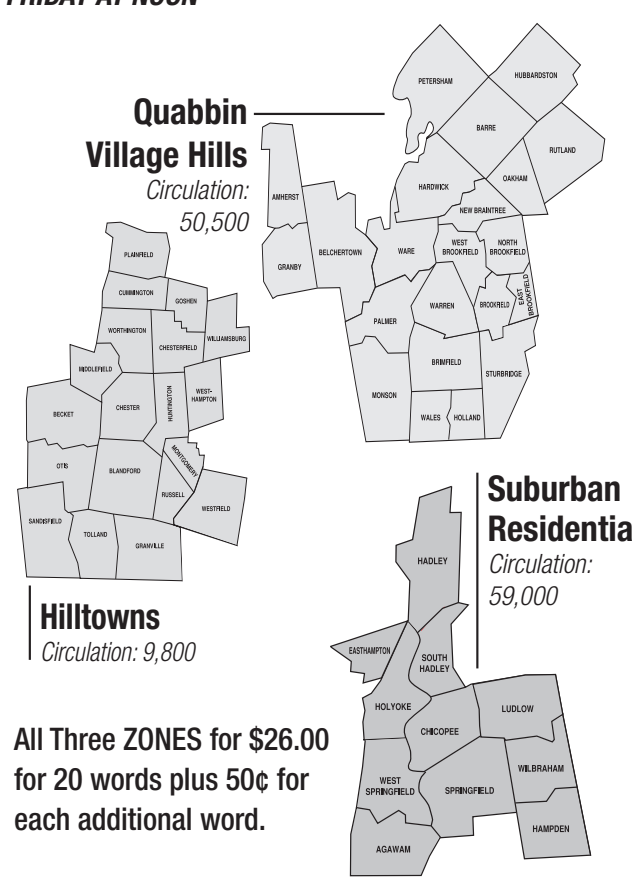
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SUMMER CAMP



Check Out These Great Camps!

The benefits of attending summer camp

Summer camp is something akin to a rite of passage for millions of youngsters each year. Many adults look back fondly on their experiences at summer camp, often crediting such times as formative periods in their lives.

Summer camp benefits children in myriad ways. Recognition of the many advantages of attending summer camp can serve as a great reminder of just how fun it can be for children to spend their time away from school at a camp of their choosing.

• Campers continue to socialize throughout summer.

Socializing isn't just for the school year. While children in high school might be independent enough to come and go with their friends during summer break, kids who are still in elementary school or middle school might not be old enough to handle such freedom. That can make it hard to stay in touch with friends, which in turn can contribute to feelings of boredom and loneliness. Camp provides ample opportunities for young children to socialize during a time of year when they might not see their school friends as often as they're used to.

• Campers can expand their horizons. Though some summer camps are exclusive to residents of certain communities, many tend to feature children from numerous towns or municipalities. Such camps provide an opportunity for campers to expand their horizons by engaging with youngsters who come from different backgrounds. Indeed, the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University notes that summer camp may be the first time children spend substantial amounts of time with people whose backgrounds differ from their own.

• Camp can get kids off their devices. Modern children are growing up in a digital world, and parents know how hard it can be to get kids to put down their devices and get outdoors. But the key to making that pivot could be access to outdoor play spaces. A 2025 study from researchers at the University of Michigan published in the journal Health and Place found that efforts to reduce kids' screen time are more successful when children are given a chance to play outside. Many summer camps are structured around outdoor play, making them a

potentially invaluable ally as parents seek to help children cut back on the time they spend using their devices. Children who do not attend camp and live in households where both parents work or in single-parent households where Mom or Dad works may be forced to spend much of summer indoors, which could increase the frequency with which they turn to devices to occupy their time.

• Camp adds structure to summer days. Once a school year ends, the structure a school day provides vanishes into thin air. Couple that with extracurricular

activities that go on hiatus during summer vacation, and kids accustomed to structure are left with little to do and no need to schedule their time. That can add an aimlessness to summer days. Camp can provide the structure kids are accustomed to but still offer a break from responsibilities like homework or the commitments required of extracurricular activities.

There's no shortage of benefits to enrolling youngsters in summer camp, where kids can socialize, grow and get off their devices while engaged in structured but stress-free activities.

summer@HCC

Holyoke Community College Summer Youth Programs for Ages 8-16

Save your spot and register today for summer fun!



- July 27-31, Minecraft Designers (ages 8-10, 11-14)
- August 3-7, Python Programmers (ages 8-10, 11-14)
- July 20-24, Make Your First Video Game (ages 8-10, 11-14)
- July 13-17, ROBLOX Coders (ages 8-10, 11-14)
- July 6-10 and 13-17, Fun Bites with Chef Swanigan (ages 9-16)
- July 20-24 and 27-31, Around the world with Chef Swanigan (ages 9-16)
- July 6-10 and 13-17, Cooking without Borders with Chez Vargas-Gonzalez (ages 9-16)
- July 20-24 and 27-31, Passport to Flavors with Chef Vargas-Gonzalez (ages 9-16)

Check out our adult enrichment courses, too! hcc.edu/bcs

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REGISTRATION OPENS 8AM APRIL 1ST



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WEEK #2: July 13 - 17
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August 10 - August 14 • August 24-28

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WEEK 1: JUNE 15-19	Studio Arts & Crafts	Cross Country Camp		Gamer's Guild
WEEK 2: JUNE 22-26	Speech & Debate	Taylor Swift Camp		STEM Challenges!
WEEK 3: JULY 6-10	Broadway at Bement	Soccer Club		Mission Monadnock
WEEK 4: JULY 13-17	Magic Behind the Music	D&D Camp		History Hunters
WEEK 5: JULY 20-24	Graphic Novel Camp	Counselor in Training		Flag Football & More
WEEK 6: JULY 27-31	Little Explorers Camp	Soccer Camp		PE Games & Sports
WEEK 7: AUGUST 3-7	Movie Magic Camp	Spanish Explorers		



The Bement School
94 Old Main Street
Deerfield, MA 01342

Registration Link
bement.org/summer

