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Bartley investigated for ethics violations

By Gregory A. Scibelli
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HOLYOKE – Last year, in a surprise, long-time Ward 3 City Councilor David Bartley was ousted after being defeated by Anne Thalheimer.

Now, allegations are coming forward that Bartley was engaging in unethical activity while he was serving as a member of the city council, which he did from 2012 through last year.

Bartley is currently being investigated for participating in votes that favored clients of his that he was serving as an attorney for.

The State Ethics Commission's Enforcement Division issued an Order to Show Cause that Bartley violated the conflict of interest law.

The order states that Bartley was the attorney for several parties that were involved in real estate matters. These matters were related to city business and

See ETHICS, page 8

Educators honored for civic learning

HOLYOKE – Two Holyoke educators were honored March 9 by the city and state for their work engaging students in civic learning.

During a Civics Learning Week ceremony at Wistariahurst Museum, Vanessa Martinez, Holyoke Community College professor of anthropology, and Nicholas Cream, an ethnic studies and history teacher at Dean Technical High School, received proclamations recognizing their work from the mayor, the state House of Representatives, and the state Senate.

"We're here today to honor two civic leaders who have gone far and beyond to inspire their students to think critically, engage respectfully with different perspectives, and understand their roles as active citizens," said Wistariahurst Director Morgan Seiler. "Civic education is about empowering students to participate, lead, and contribute to the communities they call home. Teachers like Vanessa and Nick make that possible by bringing these lessons to life and showing their students their voices truly matter."

Martinez, Ph.D.,



Submitted photo

Holyoke Mayor Joshua Garcia, left, and state Rep. Patricia Duffy, right, honor Holyoke educators Nicholas Cream and Vanessa Martinez during a March 9 ceremony at Wistariahurst Museum.

a health anthropologist, is co-founder of the Springfield-based Women of Color Health Equity Collective and coordinator of community-based learning at HCC. In 2023, Martinez's students began collecting stories from Holyoke residents for two oral history projects, one on the COVID-19 pandemic

and another that examines living conditions in the city and their impact on public health. Those interviews have become part of the Wistariahurst Museum's permanent archives, and those projects continue.

"That was the beginning," said Martinez, who lives in Holyoke. "Even my 100 level classes are now

involved. They do interviews, they learn about oral history, they develop research skills. I feel so blessed to be able to continue this project and show students the importance of working in their communities and feeling their work will live beyond them."

Cream, who lives in Westfield, is president

of the Holyoke Teachers Association and an advocate for civic participation and for teachers striving to improve education in Holyoke.

"Our nation's long-standing audacious experiment in self-governance requires a popu-

See CIVIC, page 10



Submitted photo

Counter clockwise from top left, Unforgettable Fire performs. The concert brought out a large crowd. The Grand Colleen and Court had their dancing shoes on.

Schools boast increase in graduation

By Gregory A. Scibelli
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HOLYOKE – While Holyoke Public Schools are just in their first year of returning to local control. But a recent press release from HPS boasts the successes that the district's turnaround plan has accomplished.

According to the press release, the 2025 graduation-rate data released recently by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) documents significant improvements in Holyoke Public Schools' graduation rates.

"DESE's data highlights meaningful gains in graduation rates in general, and especially for two key groups of students, including English learners, and students who are Hispanic or Latino," said Interim Superintendent Anthony Soto. "While there is much to celebrate in the data across the board, we are especially happy to report this growth for two sub-groups of Holyoke learners."

DESE's data documents two positive trends:

- Holyoke Public Schools' 2025 graduation rate for students who are English learners was 75.3 percent, exceeding the state average of 71.1 percent by 4.2 percentage points.

- The district's 2025 graduation rate for students who are Hispanic or Latino is nearly on par with the state average, with Holyoke's graduation rate of 80.8 percent, compared

See SCHOOLS, page 10



Marshal Mania lights up the city

HOLYOKE – On Saturday, March 8, Marshal Mania took over the Log Cabin as Unforgettable Fire performed, with food, fun, raffles and more to help get the party going for Irish season. The big events are set for this weekend with the road race on Saturday and parade on Sunday.

Council President Tessa Murphy-Romboletti gives civic lesson at Wistariahurst

By Brendan Rooney
Correspondent

HOLYOKE – Last Thursday, March 12, the Wistariahurst Museum hosted a town forum that was open to the public called the 'If Not You, Who? Getting Involved in Local Government,' in honor of 'Civic Learning' week, which is an annual, nonpar-

tisan awareness week that brings together students, educators, policymakers, and leaders in the public and private sectors to highlight and further energize the movement for civic education in states and communities across the nation.

The guest of honor was current Holyoke City Council President/At Large City Councilor Tessa

Murphy-Romboletti, who is entering her third term as an At-Large Holyoke City Councilor and is currently serving her second term as Council President and is the first woman in the city's history to hold the title. Also in attendance were State Rep. Pat Duffy (D-5th Hampden) and Ward 4 Councilor Rick Purcell.

The event was built

upon the foundation of being a no-stress and non-partisan seminar that provided a way to allow Holyoke residents to understand what goes into city government, and essentially figure out what's going on in the Paper City, and how they can make a difference.

Romboletti kicked off the presentation by offering insight into her humble

beginnings as a born-and-bred Holyoker and how she rose through the ranks, along with a deep dive into the various functions and roles the city government entails. "I have lived in Holyoke all my life, and I have always felt a connection to our community, and I was the type of girl

See LESSON, page 10



More shenanigans from the 2026 Colleen Gathering

HOLYOKE – The very popular Colleen Gathering, bringing together the colleens and their courts from the area together in one setting, was hosted by Holyoke on Sunday, March 8. The tradition included meet and greets, games and Irish dancing.



There is always lots of dancing at the gathering.

Many future court members were in attendance.



Members of the Agawam and Holyoke courts lead the dancing.

Submitted photos

Holy Week services for UCCH announced

HOLYOKE – Spring is here again, and just like springtime, Holy Week is a time of rebirth and renewal. The United Congregational Church of Holyoke is marking this special week by announcing a week of services and events.

Palm Sunday service will be held on Sunday, Mar.

29 at 10 a.m. in the Church's historic Skinner Chapel.

Maundy Thursday worship will be held on Thursday, April 2 at 6 p.m. in the church's Parlors. Soup and bread will follow the Maundy Thursday service, and those seeking to attend are asked to reach out to the church office to

sign up.

Easter Sunday worship service will be held on Sunday, Apr. 5 at 10 a.m., also in Skinner Chapel. All Are Welcome to attend any of these events.

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.

Free concert to be held at Day Brook

HOLYOKE – Day Brook Village Senior Living, a locally owned, not-for-profit Continuing Care Retirement Community located in Holyoke, MA will be hosting a concert fea-

turing Dave Colucci on Wednesday, April 1 at 2 p.m. in the Sheldon Dining Room.

This performance is free and open to the public. An RSVP is required; kindly call 413-561-7958.

Providence Places holding next concert in series

HOLYOKE – Our second concert of the Spring series is on Sunday, April 12 at 2 p.m. in our Mother of Sorrows Chapel at Providence Place. Providence Place is located at 5 Gamelin Street in Holyoke, right behind the Holyoke Mall. The April 12 concert will include a piano solo performance by Tamila Azadaliyeva featuring a pro-

gram that brings together works by Glinka-Balakirev, Rachmaninov, Tchaikovsky, Debussy, and Mompou, celebrating the universal language of emotion and storytelling. This event is free and open to the public with ample parking available. For more information please contact Katelyn Bacon at 413-534-9700 or email kbacon@providenceplace.org.

Legacies of Freedom: Civil Rights Advocacy in action

HOLYOKE – Wistariahurst Museum is excited to welcome law students from Western New England University School of Law's Center for Social Justice for Legacies of Freedom: Civil Rights Advocacy in Action. This community event, featuring presentations about various topics by three law students at Western New England University School of Law, is organized by the school's

Center for Social Justice and Outreach and Diversity Committee's Justice Riders program.

These presentations discuss civil rights, constitutional law, and civic engagement. Guests will have the chance to engage in each presentation through Q&As with the presenting students. Legacies of Freedom is brought to Wistariahurst as part of the Museum's civic learning initiative, in collaboration with

Liberty and Learning and Massachusetts 250.

Civic education is essential to ensuring each and every person across this country is equipped with the necessary tools to engage as members of our self-governing society. As we look ahead to the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 2026, we have an unparalleled opportunity to shine a light on the importance of civic education and the way in which it can

sustain and strengthen our "many voices, one nation" for the next 250 years and beyond.

Learn about topics from voting rights to due process and local advocacy. Join presenters Daniel Nieves III, Monnea Slade, and Zeno Temple for Legacies of Freedom: Civil Rights Advocacy in Action on April 16 at 6 p.m. This event is free to attend and open to the public.

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HCC athletic director inducted into national hall of fame

HOLYOKE – Thomas “Tommy” Stewart, Holyoke Community College director of athletics, has been inducted into the National Junior College Athletic Association Track and Field Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

He was enshrined as a member of Hall of Fame’s class of 2026 during a March 5 ceremony at Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas, site of the NJCAA Track and Field Championship, where he served as meet director.

Stewart, a resident of Westfield and a graduate of Westfield State University, has served on the NJCAA Track and Field Committee for 20 years, but he has been involved with the NJCAA in various roles for 25 years.

“To be recognized nationally is a significant thing,” Stewart said. “I think, over the years, Holyoke Community College has become known nationally because of all we’ve done with the NJCAA.”

Stewart has worked in college athletics for more than 37 years, the past 30 at HCC. During that time, HCC has hosted nine NJCAA national cross-country championships and one national track and field championship.

“His long-standing dedication, administrative excellence and commitment to student-athletes is evident throughout his career,” the NJCAA said in Stewart’s induction announcement.

Representing 550

schools, the NJCAA is the largest athletic association for two-year colleges in the United States. HCC belongs to Region 21 and its athletic teams play in Division III.

At HCC, Stewart oversees nine intercollegiate sports programs and manages the David Bartley Center for Athletics and Recreation. He also serves on the NJCAA Board of Regents as the representative for Region 21. He chairs the NJCAA Division III Men’s Golf Committee and the NJCAA Division III Women’s Golf Committee



Thomas Stewart

while also serving on the NJCAA Track and Field Committee. In 2016, he was elected second vice president for the NJCAA’s men’s division. In that role, he oversaw the complete budgetary activity of the association.

He has also previously served as co-chair of the NJCAA finance and budget committee.

“This is my 25th anniversary with the NJCAA. I’ve had a good run and a wonderful career,” said Stewart, who is planning to retire from HCC in 2027. “I’ve interacted with a lot of different people

across the country at different institutions. Our HCC teams have won titles. We’ve had great athletes. Great kids. All-American players. I’m very lucky to do what I do, and it’s good to be winding down. At some point, you’ve got to pass the baton to somebody else.”

In May 2024, Stewart received the NJCAA’s George E. Killian Award of Excellence, the highest award bestowed each year by the association, the first recipient from any college in New England.

Stewart started his career in higher education at Westfield State University, where he worked for seven years as student activities administrator and director of

intramurals and coached cross country. He was hired at HCC in 1996 as student activities director and became assistant athletic director in 1999 and athletic director in 2007.

In October 2023, he was inducted into the Westfield State University Athletics Hall of Fame. As an undergraduate there, Stewart was a four-year member of the WSU Owls cross country and track and field teams. An all-conference runner in 1985 and 1987 in cross country, he won the Westfield State Invitational and was an all-New England runner in steeplechase his sophomore year. The WSU cross country and track teams won conference titles all four years he was on the team.

Bird feeders attract bears

AGAWAM – The Allen Bird Club of Springfield, MA reminds area residents that early spring means hungry bears. If you enjoy feeding birds during the winter, it’s now time to bring feeders in at night or to put them away entirely until next December. Black bears have an excellent memory and will return to feeders where they find easy meals. When that happens, bears can become a nuisance. In the worst case scenario, they may have to be euthanized.

An excellent way to

feed birds year-round is by planting native fruit and seed bearing plants that provide food for wildlife. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s new citizen science initiative, Garden for Birds, offers regionally-tailored tips on the best plants to choose to help struggling wildlife to thrive. This program is free and participation can be cancelled at any time. Information on how to turn your yard into a bird-supporting habitat can be found at gardenforbirds.org.

Sensory Friendly Egg Hunt to be held April 4

HOLYOKE – Wistariahurst Museum is egg-static to bring back our Sensory-Friendly Egg Hunt for a third year. Designed for families with sensory sensitivities, this festive egg hunt focuses on gentle exploration and enjoyment so every bunny feels comfortable and welcome. This year’s egg hunt will take place indoors throughout the halls of Wistariahurst. Weather permitting, outdoor games and activities will add some egg-stra fun to the event. Each child can gather

eggs and exchange them for prizes ranging from candy to fidget toys. Hop to it and register for one of the available time slots. Registration is available for free on Wistariahurst’s Eventbrite page.

When interviewed at last year’s egg hunt, Museum Director Megan Seiler noted “The city of Holyoke does an amazing job putting on a big egg hunt downtown, but not every kid thrives in that environment... So we wanted to be able to offer a more quiet, more calm space for

kids who might have sensory sensitivities.” Wistariahurst is egg-cited to bring this event back for after families in Holyoke and beyond enjoyed this event the past two years.

Families can sign up for timed entry to ensure smooth check-in between 2 and 4 p.m. on Saturday, April 4. Families are welcome to enjoy the egg hunt any time during their timeslots, and each time slot will be limited to 10 families. If you are late for your time slot, don’t worry. We still encourage all registrants to attend

even if they are running late. Families are also welcome to explore the gardens and enjoy outdoor games, weather permitting, during the event.

Outside of this event, we have open hours on Mondays from 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. and Tuesdays from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m., and our gardens are open every day from dawn until dusk. We also host Sensory Friendly Sunday Funday events monthly. Hop to it and get your tickets for this year’s Sensory Friendly Egg Hunt.

Seats open for cooking, wine-tasting classes

HOLYOKE – Seats remain open for noncredit cooking and wine-tasting classes this spring at Holyoke Community College.

Monthly sessions of cooking and wine-tasting classes run from 6-8 p.m. on Thursday, March 26, Thursday, April 23, and Thursday, May 14, at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute, 164 Race St., Holyoke, with an additional cooking class recently added to the spring schedule on Thursday, April 2.

Valley wine writer Ken

Ross leads the wine-tasting classes. The stand-alone sessions each focus on a different theme: New Zealand wines (March 26), rosé wines (April 23), and summer white wines (May 14).

Wine-tasting classes are \$79 per session, which includes wine and light snacks.

The cooking classes are taught by HCC culinary arts alumni and local chefs

and Marangelly Vargas-Gonzalez: March 26 and

April 2: Puerto Rican cuisine (Swanigan); April 23: Southern cuisine (Swanigan); May 14: charcuterie (Vargas-Gonzalez).

Each cooking session costs \$99, including food and drinks.

To register or read a more detailed description of each class, please go to: hcc.edu/food



Ceremony honors veterans, Gold Star families

SOUTH HADLEY – Please join the South Hadley American Legion Post 260, South Hadley Sons of the American Legion, Yankee Division Veterans Association - YDVA Holyoke & South Hadley VFW Post 3104 on Thursday, March 26 at 6 p.m. at the South Hadley Public Library, 2 Canal Street, as we honor the service and sacrifice of our Vietnam Veterans. We pay special tribute to the service members of South Hadley, Holyoke, and Granby who made the supreme sacrifice defending

our Nation’s freedom. This ceremony honors ALL who served anywhere in the world between 1955 - 1975. Thank you for your service and WELCOME HOME!

Please join us for light refreshments followed by Veteran speakers, community leaders, and special recognition to the honored guests, our Vietnam veterans. We will conduct a wreath-laying ceremony and the sounding of Taps for those who made the supreme sacrifice during the Vietnam War. A special tribute will also be paid to our

Gold Star Families.

A special flag presentation will be made to the Gold Star Family of U.S. Army Corporal Vincent Owen McCann Jr., of Holyoke who made the supreme sacrifice in Vietnam on December 26, 1969.

This event is family friendly and appropriate for people of all ages. We hope to see you for this moving tribute to our hometown heroes who answered the Nation’s call and served with great honor during trying time for our Nation.

Holyoke Community College announces annual Jazz Festival

HOLYOKE – The annual Holyoke Community College Jazz Festival returns for its 27th year on Friday, March 27, with vocalist and composer Dominique Eade joining the Amherst Jazz Orchestra and members of the HCC jazz faculty for a big band concert.

The Friday show begins at 8 p.m. in HCC’s Leslie Phillips Theater in the Fine & Performing Arts building on the main HCC campus, 303 Homestead Ave.

The concert is \$10 for the general public and free for HCC students, faculty and staff.

“I met Eade at the Jazz in July program at UMass that I teach at every summer and enjoyed her singing and

educational approach very much,” said HCC music professor Bob Ferrier, the HCC Jazz Festival organizer. “She’s great and highly regarded for her vocal styling and improvisation.”

Led by trombonist David Sporny, the Amherst Jazz Orchestra has been a mainstay of the HCC Jazz Festival since the first one in 1998.

On Saturday, March 28, starting at 10 a.m., Eade, Ferrier (guitar) and HCC music professor Ellen Cogen (vocals, piano) will lead workshops, demonstrations, and jam sessions for area musicians. Participation is free and open to the public.

A critically acclaimed vocalist, composer, and long-

time music educator, Eade has recorded and co-produced seven albums under her name, landing her on top 10 lists at Billboard, National Public Radio, Entertainment Weekly, DownBeat Magazine, and the Jazz Journalist Association.

After being signed to RCA Victor in 1998, she was nominated for Best Debut Artist for the First Annual Jazz Awards in New York City. She received the 2006 Outstanding Alumni Award from the New England Conservatory, where, as a teacher for more than three decades, she mentored an array of talented musicians, including Roberta Gambarini, Michael Mayo, Rachel Price, Sofia Rei, and Jorge Roeder.

She has performed in clubs and at festivals all over the world, from New York’s The Blue Note and Los Angeles’s The Jazz Bakery to the Panama Jazz Festival and Buenos Aires Jazz Festival.

The New York Times called Eade “an exceptional singer ... who weighs a chanteuse’s coolness against a jazz musician’s exploratory instincts.”

For more information, please contact Bob Ferrier at 413-552-2480 or rferrier@hcc.edu or Mary Starzyk at 413-552-2485 or mstarzyk@hcc.edu.

To learn more about guest artist Dominique Eade, please go to: dominiqueeade.com.

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Guest Column



When will I get full credit for delaying my Social Security retirement?

Dear Rusty:

The time is nearing that I want to move from my current Social Security survivor benefit to my own SS retirement benefit at 70 years of age.

I have been looking more deeply into the application of Delayed Retirement Credits and I have read that DRCs accumulated in the year that I turn 70, September 2026, will not be effective when I actually turn 70. Rather, those DRCs won't be paid until the following year. Can you verify that this is correct? I presume that if the DRC's are not applied at age 70, that they will be applied sometime after the first of the year and any increase will be paid retroactively.

Signed: Retiring Soon

Dear Retiring Soon:

The Delayed Retirement Credits you speak of have accumulated at the rate of 8% per year (.667% per month) since you reached your SS Full Retirement Age, which means that at age 70 your monthly SS benefit will be about 129% of the amount you were entitled to at your FRA of 66 years plus 4 months.

However, your understanding of how DRCs will work for you at age 70 is not correct. If you claim for your Social Security retirement benefits to begin in September 2026 (the month you turn 70) you will receive all DRCs, you have accumulated up to that point in time. In other words, you will get your full age 70 benefit amount immediately, including all DRCs earned until then, effective with your first SS retirement payment, which you will get in October 2026. What you have likely read about is that DRCs work a bit differently for those who claim SS after their full retirement age, but before their 70th birthday month.

For those who claim mid-year but before age 70, only DRCs earned through the end of the preceding year are initially applied and DRCs earned during the current year are not paid until the following January. This results in a loss of some SS benefit between the time bene-

fits start and the following January, because only the amount earned as of the end of the previous year are first paid, and the full number of DRCs earned during the current year are applied in January.

But, as is the case for you, when benefits are claimed to start in the month you reach 70 years of age, all DRCs earned up to the month of your 70th birthday are immediately applied. Congratulations on selecting a strategy which will maximize your monthly Social Security benefit.

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



Guest Column

On the look out for a nice lawn

I'll be the first to admit that I don't have an especially nice lawn. Looking out the window further proves it.

It is early in the year and all, so the shades of brown I see are pretty common, but there are some lawns that are greening up nicely while mine is definitely not.

My mind always goes to thoughts of green as we approach St. Patrick's Day. I wonder if that's why my Irish dad enjoyed caring for his lawn so much?

One of his spring rituals was to rake it. I remember him out there working his way across the yard a little at a time, making pile after pile of dead grass, leaves and small sticks.

This was the just the first job in a season's worth of work aimed at growing



by Roberta McQuaid

(the more surface area of the weed that is removed, the more weakened it becomes.)

High mowing also fosters deep root growth. Deep roots sustain the lawn during periods of drought.

Keep mower blades sharpened for the cleanest possible cut.

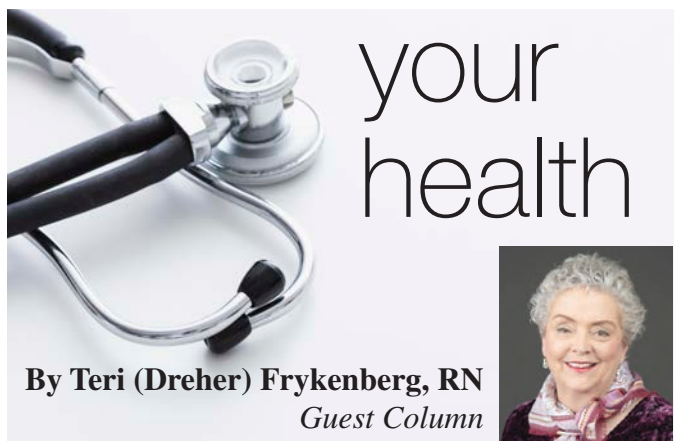
Water efficiently and effectively. If you set up sprinklers each season to water the lawn for you, take some time early in the season to position them so that water isn't wasted on sidewalks or driveways.

Mark the location and set up will be a no-brainer each time.

To grow best, grass requires an inch of moisture each week, more if your soil is sandy. Do the tea cup test to determine how much

See XXXXXX, page 7

Smoking cessation is beneficial at any age



By Teri (Dreher) Frykenberg, RN
Guest Column

If there's one habit every doctor wishes you would break, it's smoking. Quitting significantly improves health and reduces the risk of diseases.

And this is true no matter what age you are, from your 20s right into your 70s. While some older adults may believe it's "too late" to change, evidence shows that about one-third of older adults who attend specialized clinics successfully quit and stay off cigarettes for at least a year.

Research has also found that even 75-year-olds who are able to stop cigarettes gain an average of one year of life expectancy. That's one

more year to do some of the things you enjoy, like visiting with grandchildren (and not being relegated to the patio to light up).

Besides life expectancy, other benefits for older quitters are

- A lower risk of disease: Older adults who quit have lower rates of death from heart attacks, strokes and cancer compared to those who continue to smoke.
- Reduced frailty: Stopping smoking is associated with a lower degree of "frailty" (a measure of increased vulnerability and weakness) over time, promoting healthier aging

and better physical function.

- Cognitive and sexual health: Quitting smoking can lead to improved brain function and has been shown to improve long-term sexual function recovery following procedures like prostate surgery.

- Surgical success: For older adults facing surgery, quitting at least eight weeks prior can significantly decrease the risk of lung-related complications. If you can go eight weeks, you can keep going.

Quitting cigarettes is really, really hard because of the addictive properties of nicotine, which has been shown to boost dopamine in the reward circuits of the brain, but causes cravings and withdrawal symptoms when it's stopped. This is true whether your source of nicotine is a cigarette or a vape.

Most adults who smoke say they want to quit. A 2022 survey found that more than half of adult smokers tried to quit in the previous year. If you fall into that group, don't go it alone, especially if smoking is a decades-long ingrained habit. Chances of success improve with support from doctors and family.

Support for smoking cessation is everywhere you look. The National Cancer Institute hosts a website, smokefree.gov, which is chock full of tips and techniques to help you on your journey to becoming a former smoker.

For example, there's guidance on nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), which has been shown to increase the success rate, especially when several forms are used, such as a nicotine patch supplemented by lozenges or gum. Some studies suggest that older adults may actually have higher success rates using NRT compared to younger smokers.

You can also find apps, texting and social media sites that offer support, along with how to build a quit plan.

Medicare wants you to quit smoking, too. After all, it will save them money. Medicare covers counseling sessions to help you stop smoking under Part B, allowing up to eight sessions every 12 months at no cost if your provider accepts Medicare. Additionally, Medicare Part D covers certain prescription medications to assist with

See HEALTH, page 5

Our advertisers make this publication possible. Let them know you saw their ad in the Holyoke Sun

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

TEAM



EDITOR/SPORTS
Greg Scibelli
thesun@turley.com



ADVERTISING SALES
Wendy Delcamp
wdelcamp@turley.com

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.



@ The Holyoke Sun

WEB

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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.



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@ The Holyoke Sun

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Free line-cook training classes begin March 30

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Community College will be running a new edition of its free, line-cook training program at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute beginning March 30.

The six-week daytime program runs until May 8. Classes meet Mondays and Wednesdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., and Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. There are no classes on April 6, April 27, and May 4.

Additional spring semester line-cook training programs will start on April 27 (evening) and May 11 (daytime).

“HCC tries to meet the needs of its students by

offering multiple options for start days and times,” said Paul Sheehan, assistant project coordinator for culinary arts programs. “Over the last few years, we have offered our free line cook training as separate day and evening programs to help students find the schedule that works best for them.”

The program is designed for those already in the restaurant industry who want to upgrade their skills as well as unemployed or underemployed individuals interested in starting new careers.

“We usually have a mix of young people entering the job market for the first time and people who

are re-entering the job market, looking for a second career,” Sheehan said. “The course is perfect for anybody who’s looking for a job and has a passion for food and the dining industry.”

All classes meet in person at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute at 164 Race St.

Participants will learn all the essential competencies they need to become successful line cooks: knife skills; how to prepare stocks, soups, sauces, desserts,

poultry, fish and meat; culinary math and measurements; moist and dry heat cooking methods; as well as workplace soft skills, such as building a resume and searching for jobs.

Offered as part of HCC’s Business & Workforce Development division, the line cook course is free to qualifying applicants.

For more information, or to fill out an inquiry form, please go to hcc.edu/line-cook.



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.

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



HEALTH, from page 4

smoking cessation. Medicare Advantage Plans are required to cover counseling and some medications as well, though benefits vary by plan.

Here in Massachusetts, 1-800-QUIT-NOW is Massachusetts’ tobacco and nicotine Quitline, where you can connect to a free trained quit coach by phone or line. They share

strategies to curb cravings, handle life’s big and small stresses and tackle. You can track your progress and learn how to access free NRT

supplies.

Talking to your healthcare provider is also important, both as a source of support and advice on using certain prescription medications to curb smoking such as varenicline (Chantix). This medication can be used by older adults, but caution is advised because of a higher likelihood of age-related kidney issues. Your doctor may also recommend cognitive behavior therapy (CBT).

What does a quit plan look like? Pick a date you’re going to quit and rid the house of cigarettes, ashtrays and other smoking parapher-

nal. You might need to take some things to the dry cleaner to get the cigarette smell out. Tell everyone that you’ve made a quit plan and you need their help.

Be proud of what you’re accomplishing! Let people know when you’ve been smoke-free for a week, a month, a year. If you do happen to light up, don’t give up. Tomorrow is another day.

And you may have more tomorrows when you’ve become an ex-smoker. Good luck!

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.

GARDEN, from page 4

water your sprinklers emit and at what rate. Simply place a tea cup or other container on the lawn and turn on the sprinkler, check every five minutes or so until water reaches the inch mark.

Now you can set a timer, or turn off the sprinklers manually knowing your lawn has gotten its weekly drink. Most people know that early morning is the best time to water the lawn. By watering early in the day less moisture is lost to evaporation.

Grass is also less prone

to fungal diseases because it has a chance to dry before nightfall.

Know your soil. A friend of mine who knew a lot about turf once told me that if I were to apply one thing to my lawn each season it should be lime. Grass can’t grow well, or fight off diseases or bugs for that matter, if it isn’t getting the nutrients it needs.

Many nutrients are bound up until the pH is corrected. Get a soil test and specify on the order form that you wish to grow grass, as results for flower or vegetable gardening may differ.

Based on the results of your test, recommendations will be made as to the type of lime to use and at what application rate. For more information contact the UMass Extension or www.umass.edu/plsoils/soiltest. Here are some interesting grass facts: Did you know that according to a poll (sponsored by Briggs and Stratton) 64% of homeowners wish they had a better lawn? Or that 63 million households own at least one lawn mower?

The Professional Lawn Care Association estimates that a well-maintained lawn can increase the value of a

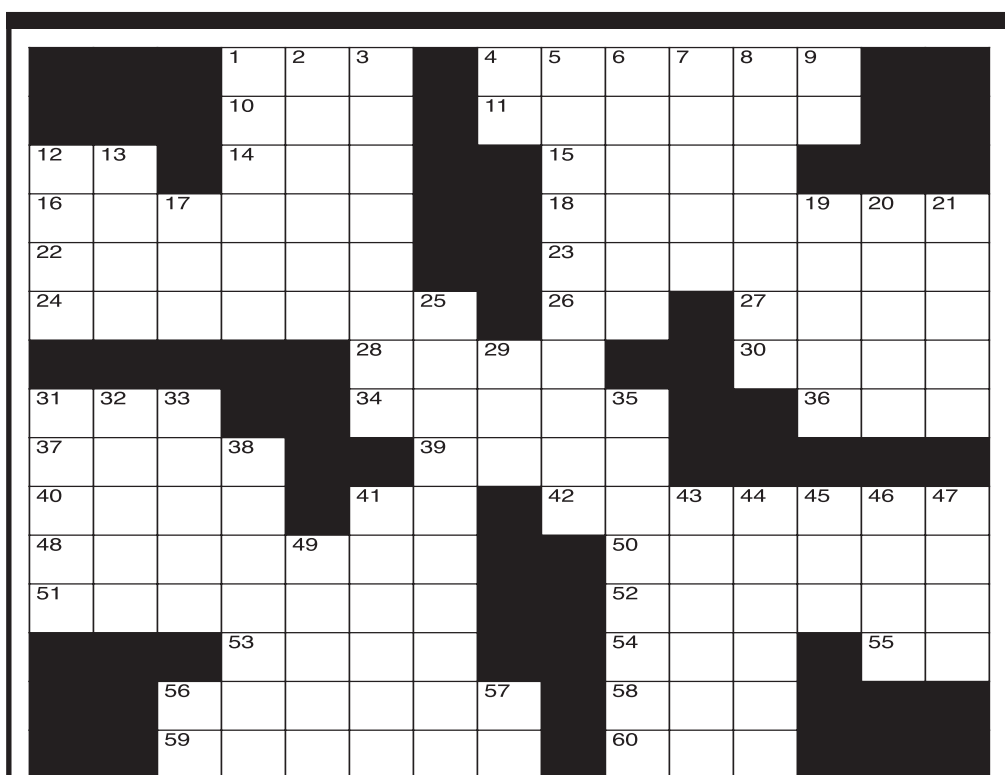
home by up to 20%.

This was probably of little concern to Presidents Washington and Jefferson... they were the first to have lawns as we know them today but they were main-

tained by sheep!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 34 years she has held the position of staff horticultur-

ist 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.



CLUES ACROSS

1. Inclined to do
4. Sketches
10. Book of Chronicles (abbr.)
11. Atomic #58
12. Dorm official
14. Small Eurasian deer
15. Southern constellation
16. Workers’ groups
18. Former
22. Excellent
23. Romance language related to Spanish
24. Reference
26. Equally
27. Dirty towels
28. A cargo (abbr.)
30. Ammunition
31. You get one in summer

34. Slang for trucks with trailers
36. Swiss river
37. Exchange rate
39. British School
40. College teacher
41. Foreign Service
42. Horse gear
48. Cost to fly
50. A salt or ester of boric acid
51. Mocking
52. One who bird-watches
53. Concluding passage
54. A major division of geological time
55. Sodium
56. A way to produce
58. Soak
59. Laughed loudly and harshly
60. Affirmative

CLUES DOWN

1. Moth species
2. Quantum of energy
3. Break the law
4. Location of White House
5. Official cancellation of a decision
6. Where rockers work
7. Cut of beef: ___ mignon
8. Nocturnal burrowing reptile
9. Atomic #62
12. Genus of evergreen shrubs
13. Flowering plant of the legume family
17. Inches per minute (abbr.)

19. Tropical fruit
20. Hot fluid beneath the earth’s crust
21. James ___, painter
25. Popular dessert
29. Payment (abbr.)
31. Cuisine style
32. Genus of true flies
33. City in western France
35. Arrogance
38. One holding a position of command
41. Weekday
43. An evening party
44. Print errors
45. Not good
46. Egyptian Sun god
47. East German town
49. Olfactory property
56. Atomic #37
57. “Pollock” actor Harris

Blessed Sacrament Parish

Rev. Duy Le
frduyle@blessedsacramentholyoke.org
 1945 Northampton St., Holyoke
 PARISH RECTORY: 413-532-0713
 OFFICE HOURS:
 Monday - Thursday 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
 Friday 8:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
 WEEKEND MASSES:
 Saturday 4 p.m.
 Sunday 8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
 DAILY MASS AND ROSARY
 Monday - Friday: ROSARY 6:15 a.m.
 Monday - Friday: MASS 6:45 a.m.
 Legal Holidays: ROSARY 7:30 a.m.
 Legal Holidays: MASS 8 a.m.
 ROSARY AND MEDITATION
 Monday Evening: 6 p.m.
www.blessedsacramentholyoke.org
 Facebook: @bspolyokema

First Baptist Church

Pastor Theresa Temple
 1976 Northampton St., Holyoke
 (413) 533-7728
firstbaptistchurchholyokey@comcast.net
 Facebook: First Baptist Church of Holyoke, MA
 HOURS: Sunday worship service (winter hours) at 10:30 a.m. (summer hours) at 10 a.m.
 Wednesday Bible Studies, one at 11 a.m. and one at 5:30 p.m.

Our Lady of the Cross Catholic Parish

Pastor: Fr. Albert Scherer, OFM Conv.
 Email: pastor@ourladyofthecross.com
 Holy Cross Ave., Holyoke
 Parish Offices are located at:
 15 Maple Street, Holyoke
 (413) 532-5661
parish@ourladyofthecross.com
 OFFICE HOURS:
 Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
 WEEKEND MASSES:
 Saturday 4 p.m.
 Sunday 7:30 a.m., 9 a.m. (Polish), and 10:30 a.m.
 DAILY MASS:
 Monday - Saturday 8:30 a.m.
 Legal Holidays Mass 9 a.m.
 Reconciliation (Confession)
 Monday - Saturday 8 a.m.
 Saturday 3:15pm
 Anytime by Appointment
 DEVOTIONS
 Monday - Saturday
 Divine Mercy Chaplet - 7:50 a.m.
 ROSARY 8:05 a.m.
www.ourladyofthecross.com

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Your Community Church

St. Peter's Lutheran Church

Rev. Debora Stein
 34 Jarvis Ave., Holyoke
 Office: (413) 536-3369
[Office: stpetersholyokey@gmail.com](mailto:stpetersholyokey@gmail.com)
[Pastor: revdebma@gmail.com](mailto:revdebma@gmail.com)
 Website: www.stpetersholyokey.org
 Social media:
[facebook.com/stpetersholyokey](https://www.facebook.com/stpetersholyokey)
 OFFICE HOURS:
 Monday and Thursday, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
 Wednesday, 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
 Friday, 12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
 WORSHIP:
 Sundays at 9:30 a.m. (also on Facebook Live) & Thursdays at 6:30 p.m.
 Other: Prayers with Pastor - Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m. - on Facebook Live.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church

The Rev. Canon Joel Martinez
 485 Appleton St., Holyoke
 413-532-5060
Office@StPaulsholyoke.org
StPaulsholyoke.org
 Instagram:
[stpaulsepiscopalchurch_holyoke](https://www.instagram.com/stpaulsepiscopalchurch_holyoke)
 OFFICE HOURS:
 Tuesday - Friday 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.
 Days and Hours of Services:
 Sunday: 8 a.m.
 Sunday: 10 a.m.
 Sunday: 5 p.m. (Spanish)

First Lutheran Church

1810 Northampton St.
 Holyoke, MA 01040
 Every Sunday at 9 a.m.
 Holy Week Maundy Thursday at 6 p.m.
 Good Friday at 6 p.m.
 And Easter Sunday special time at 10 a.m.

Public Notices

City of Holyoke Notice of Public Hearing

The Holyoke License Board will be holding a Public Hearing on **Wednesday, April 1, 2026, at 5:15 pm.** You can join via Zoom.com; ID **83974921923**; CALL IN: ***67 646 558 8656** or in person at **City Hall, 536 Dwight St. in the Old Tax Collector Office Room 6**, regarding the application for a **Amendment-Change of License Classification for SJS Colon Enterprises LLC DBA Waterfront Event Venue at 920 Main Street.** pursuant to M.G.L. Ch.138.

Applicant:
SJS Colon Enterprises LLC
License Board:
Jose Correa, Chairman
03/20, 03/27/2026

City of Holyoke Notice of Public Hearing

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Applicant:
Fernandez Wine & Spirit Inc.
License Board:
Jose Correa, Chairman
03/20, 03/27

City of Holyoke Notice of Public Hearing

The Holyoke License Board will be holding a Public Hearing on **Wednesday, April 1, 2026, at 5:15 pm.** You can join via Zoom.com; ID **83974921923**; CALL IN: ***67 646 558 8656** or in person at **City Hall, 536 Dwight St. in the Old Tax Collector Office Room 6**, regarding the application for a **Transfer of an An-**

nual All Alcohol Off-premises License from Trak II Convenience LLC DBA Racing Mart Fuels, 330 Main Street to OM Main St Racing Mart Inc. DBA Racing Mart Fuels 330 Main Street. pursuant to M.G.L. Ch.138.

Applicant:
OM Main St Racing Mart Inc
License Board:
Jose Correa, Chairman
03/20, 03/27

**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.
HD26P0171EA
Estate of:
Henry K Zephir
Date of Death: 04/22/2025
CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION**

To all interested persons:
A Petition for **Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Mark T Zephir of Bethel, NC** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that **Mark T Zephir of Bethel, NC** 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 04/21/2026. 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 16, 2026**

Rosemary A Saccomani,
Register of Probate
03/20/2026

**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

**Public Auction Sale
March 28, 2026 at 8:30am
42 Main Street, Holyoke MA
All Sales Cash**

Immediate removal day of sale
Furniture, Appliances, TVs and other items

Nice Yamaha Piano
Lot 16638 (S. Ferrigan) (65pe)
Great Deals ~ Bring a Truck
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
(413)748-7758
Docket No.
HD26P0543EA
Estate of:**

**Robert Matthew Rose
Date of Death: 02/22/2026
CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION**

To all interested persons:
A Petition for **Formal Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Barbara J. Rose of Hampden, MA and Mark D. Rose of Hampden, MA** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioners request that **Barbara J. Rose of Hampden, MA and Mark D. Rose of Hampden, 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 04/10/2026. 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 13, 2026**

Rosemary A Saccomani,
Register of Probate
03/20/2026

**City of Holyoke
Invitation For Bid
2026-39SD**

**Theater Sound Upgrades:
Holyoke High School
Auditorium**

The Holyoke School Department invites qualified contractors to submit bid proposals for the sound upgrades for the Holyoke High School for the auditorium, located at 500 Beech Street, Holyoke, MA 01040. The awarded contractor will work directly with the lead music teacher to ensure that the finished project is satisfactory and meets the standard required to support the school's music program. The City and the Schools expect that the workmanship must work with the auditorium's layout and functionality. Documents are available electronically on 03/18/26 at 10:00 am by requesting from morrowj@holyoke.org

A Non-Mandatory but highly recommended pre-bid walk-through on 03/27/26 at 10:00 am at Holyoke High School, 500 Beech Street, Holyoke, MA 01040. All questions are due by 04/03/26 at 4:00 pm. Answers via Addendum to all plan holders will be issued by 04/08/26 at 4:00 pm. Please submit questions via email to morrowj@holyoke.org

Sealed bids are due on **04/14/26 at 2:00 pm in person** at 536 Dwight Street in the Procurement Office Room 3, Holyoke, MA 01040 where they will be opened and read publicly. We will not accept electronic submissions.

The city reserves the right to reject any and all bids if in the city's best interest. The city follows Ch.30B, Ch.149, and all other Federal, State and Local Purchasing laws.
03/20/2026

**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.
HD24P1572EA
Estate of:**

**Joanne L Tobiasz
Date of Death: 01/16/2024
CITATION ON PETITION FOR ORDER OF COMPLETE SETTLEMENT**

A Petition for **Order of Complete Settlement** has been filed by **Daniel J Tobiasz of Holyoke, MA and Robert N Tobiasz of Southamton, MA** requesting that the court enter a formal Decree of Complete Settlement including the allowance of a final account, a determination of testacy and heirs at law and other such relief as may be requested in the Petition.

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 04/13/2026.

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.

WITNESS, Hon. **Claudine T. Stoudemire**, First Justice of this Court.
Date: **March 09, 2026**

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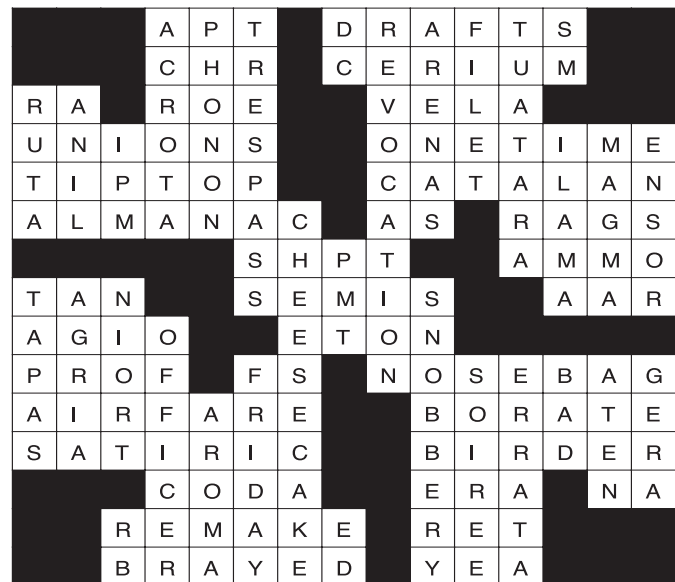
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7/8 squad wins title

HOLYOKE – On March 4 and 7, Holyoke boys basketball won the Red Division playoffs, defeating Northampton 78-26 in the semifinals and then the Falcons in the finals on Saturday, Mar. 7 66-52. The finals were held at Belchertown High School.



Adrian Lopez reaches out for a layup.



Demarlon Torres extends for a shot.

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com



Devin Cabrera flies for a layup.



Ray Phillips passes ahead of pressure.



Irvin Sanchez fights for a shot on the hoop.

Women's basketball season comes to a close

HOLYOKE – Earlier this month, Holyoke Community College Women's basketball saw their stellar season come to a close on Sunday afternoon, March 1, falling to top seed CC of Rhode Island in the New England (Region XXI) championship game. The #2 seed Lady Cougars played well in their attempt to win a regional title but were

on the wrong end of the 86-51 final score.

Holyoke had a tremendous season overall, finishing in second place in the regular season New England standings before their runner-up finish in the regional championship tournament. Their postseason and title game appearances were the

program's firsts since the 2010-11 campaign. Women's basketball finishes the year with an 11-4 regional record and a 15-8 overall record. They were 13-4 against fellow NJCAA teams. Eight players from this year's squad can return to play next season.



The Cougars face off with Bristol Community College early in the playoffs.



Annastacia Dixon sends a pass away.



Tatiyana Zuniga heads across the court.



Mileidy Rosado heads into the paint.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli



Johnays Andrades gets the open layup.

Wrestling season nets many championships in region

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

The high school wrestling season has come to an end, with many individuals and teams in Western and Central Massachusetts bringing home titles.

At the All-State Tournament held on March 1 and 2 right in Springfield at the MassMutual Center, Agawam High School girls wrestling captured the All-State title with 86 points.

Ludlow was 11th overall at 46 points. Stella Christopher captured the All-State title at 165 pounds, defeating Jordyn Reynolds of Greater Lawrence. Gabriella Ramos was a runner-up at 145 pounds. For Ludlow, Ella Libiszewski was the runner-up at 114 pounds.

In the mixed-gender all-state event, Agawam would place 16th with 33.5 points. Minnechaug scored 26 points and both teams crowned an all-state champion. Jordan

Agosto was Agawam's all-state champion with a top finish at 144 pounds. Minnechaug's Kai Ly also took an all-state title at 138 pounds.

Ludlow High School captured the Division 3 state girls wrestling championship with 97.5 points, crowning four state champions. Quabbin Regional High School was ninth overall with 36 points. South Hadley finished with 18 points and Holyoke with 16 points in

the meet.

Ludlow's champions were Libiszewski at 114 pounds, Samantha Bertini at 120 pounds, Ellianna Williams at 145 pounds, and Riley Morais at 152 pounds. Quabbin had one champion with Kailynn Schuster scoring the win at 138 pounds.

Agawam took second place in the Division 2 state girls tournament, scoring 94.5 points. Christopher had the big performance by placing first in the 165-

pound bracket. Ramos placed second at 145 pounds and Madison Minalga also had a runner-up finish at 185 pounds.

In the Division 2 state championship, Agawam was the second-best finisher from Western Mass., finishing fourth overall with 96 points, and crowning one runner-up in the field. Minnechaug was a distant 14th with 52 points. The Falcons' Ly won the state championship at 138 pounds, while Agawam's

Ryan Sexton placed second.

In the Division 3 state championship, Holyoke placed ninth overall with 69 points, Ludlow was 25th with 28 points, Quabbin 26th with 27 points, and South Hadley and Belchertown also registered points in the competition. Holyoke would place two wrestlers as runners up. Steven Santiago was the second-place finisher at 120 pounds and Parker Brunelle was the runner-up at 285 pounds.

Registration now underway for QVBL

SOUTH HADLEY – Registration has opened for the Quabbin Valley Baseball League, an over-28 recreational league, held its first meeting of 2026 to prepare for the upcoming season.

For the 2026 season, the cost will be \$215 and will include a 16th game added to the regular season schedule.

During the 2025 season, the league experimented with playing on Mother's Day Saturday as well as a weeknight game to allow players an opportunity to

play under the lights. While the night games were very successful, the Mother's Day Saturday games were rained out.

Those elements will return along with a 16th game with an opponent to be determined as the league's board explores possibilities for interleague matchups with another league in the region.

For returning players to the league, the deadline is Mar. 22 at 12 noon to be registered for the 2026 season in order to be guaranteed a roster spot. There

will be open practices for all players but specifically targeted at new players scheduled for March 29 and April 4 at times and locations to be announced. The draft is currently scheduled to take place on April 4 following that practice.

The season is currently slated to start on Sunday, April 19 and following the success of the six-team fall league last year, the league will also have a fall league in September and October this season.

The registration is live at www.quabbinvalleybaseball.org. Players must register and then pay the league dues via Venmo or contact the league leadership if an alternate form of payment is needed.

Aside from the weeknight and Mother's Day games, other games take place Sundays at 10 a.m. outside of Mother's Day, Memorial Day and July 4 weekends. Playoffs will be in August.

This is the 30th season for the league and league officials are looking to celebrate the anniversary with a couple of events.

Thunderbirds inch closer to .500 with big comeback

SPRINGFIELD – The Springfield Thunderbirds (24-27-6-2) rode their veteran forwards to a thrilling, come-from-behind 4-3 win over the Providence Bruins (45-12-1-0) on Sunday afternoon inside Amica Mutual Pavilion.

After potting seven in a win over Hartford a night ago, the Bruins wasted little time adding to their potent offensive weekend as Matthew Poitras cleaned up a rebound in the blue paint after Georgi Romanov made an initial save off of Ty Gallagher. Poitras' 12th goal of the year made it 1-0 Providence just 2:10 into the contest.

The Springfield power play provided a good response for the visitors at 9:34 when Juraj Pekarcik shuffled a rebound past Simon Zajicek following a Marc-Andre Gaudet slapper, tying the score, 1-1.

Unfortunately, the Bruins would restore their lead in short order when Matej Blumel surprised Romanov with a long slap shot just 1:18 later to make it a 2-1 game.

Springfield's special teams continued a strong first period, as the man-down unit successfully fended off two Providence advantages to keep the deficit at just one goal heading into the second.

With a carryover power play to begin the second, Dillon Dube nearly got Springfield even with a one-time slapper that beat Zajicek but caught the iron. Romanov, meanwhile, had a strong showing in the period, especially early in the period, keeping his team within a goal by making nine stops in the period.

Zajicek and the

Providence penalty kill stiffened on a third man-down scenario near the midpoint of regulation, and the 2-1 score remained intact heading to the third.

The third period began with Springfield penalty kill once again answering the bell on back-to-back Providence power plays to keep the score at a manageable 2-1.

As the third passed its midpoint, the T-Birds' most experienced leaders took over, beginning at the 10:36 mark when Chris Wagner's torrid weekend continued as he threw a shot off a defender and past Zajicek to tie the game, 2-2.

Just 1:50 later, the T-Birds flipped the game upside-down when Wagner won an offensive zone draw directly back to Dillon Dube, who snapped a perfect shot under the crossbar to give Springfield its first lead, 3-2.

Romanov and the T-Birds' defense locked things down in the defensive zone, and Alek Kaskimaki hit an empty net after a clutch shot block from Wagner at 18:53 of the third. Blumel would get his second of the night for Providence, but only three seconds remained at the time of the goal, making it too little, too late for the Bruins.

The T-Birds' comeback marked the first time all season that the Bruins failed to win when leading after two periods. With their victory, the T-Birds now sit in the sixth and final playoff spot in the Atlantic Division with 13 games remaining in the regular season.

The T-Birds take a trip north of the border for their next two contests on Friday and Saturday in Laval and Belleville, respectively.

More players wanted for Pioneer Valley Baseball

SOUTH HADLEY – The Pioneer Valley Baseball League, an adult baseball league for players who are age 18 and over, is now fully open for registration for the 2026 season.

The adult league will be administered by the Quabbin Valley Baseball League, and a registration link is on the home page of the league's website www.quabbinvalleybaseball.org. Thought it will be under the Quabbin umbrella, there will be no major changes in how the league is operated.

This year, the PVBL will have a 22-game regular season schedule followed by a double-elimination playoffs. The league, which had five teams last year and had to utilize multiple byes throughout the season, will be fielding a sixth team this season.

There are several spots open for that sixth team, so players interested in joining the league should get signed up as soon as possible to claim a spot.

The league is a wood-bat only league utilizing playing under regular baseball rules though all players do bat. The league operates on a Saturday-Tuesday schedule. Games are played on Saturday mornings with start times in the 5:30 to 6 p.m. range. The league will start play in late April and run through the end of August. There are slots open for both full-time

players and part-time players. The fee for full-time players will be \$260 with part-time players getting up to 11 games for \$130. Fees paid go toward the operation of the league, paying for insurance, umpires, fields, and baseballs. No one profits in any way.

In addition to the new sixth team, there are limited open roster spots on the other teams in the league, so get your registration in as soon as possible to participate in this season.

Games are played at ballfields throughout the region from as far south as Southwick's Whalley Field, through South Hadley's Beachgrounds and up north at Frontier Regional High School in South Deerfield.

For any questions, please go to the league website for more information. The league hopes interested players will come out and join the fun this spring and summer.



Worcester Railers grab split last weekend in Reading against Royals

READING, PA – The Worcester Railers HC (26-24-5-2, 59 pts) split the weekend against the Reading Royals (30-20-6-1, 67 pts) by a 4-2 final on Sunday, March 15th, in front of a crowd of 3,066 at Santander Arena. The Railers are back in action this Friday at the DCU Center in Worcester, MA against the Maine Mariners for a 7:05 p.m. puck drop.

Reading came out firing in the first with three unanswered goals. Connor Kurth (1-0-1) kicked things off for the Royals at 2:09 with a slapshot into the top corner of the net (0-1). Connor McMenamin (1-0-1) scored

a rebound chip over Thomas Gale as the puck came loose in the crease at 8:29 (0-2). A third goal from Reading at 14:39 closed the period with the Royals up three-nil. Brandon Saigeon (1-1-2) finished off an initial drive from Vincent Sevigny at the outer edge of the zone. Ross Mitton (1-0-1) broke the scoreless drought for the Railers with an early third-period goal off a faceoff (1-3). Michael Suda (1-0-1) narrowed the Royals' lead down to a single goal with 61 seconds left on the clock with a shot that sent the puck past Keith Petruzzelli (2-3). A final empty net goal from Ben Meehan (1-0-1) at 19:35 in the third extended the

Royals' lead back to two goals and cemented the 2-4 final.

The Royals openend a three-goal lead in the first frame. Connor Kurth (11th) drove the puck home with a slapshot to the top corner of the net at 2:09 on Reading's first shot of the afternoon. Connor McMenamin (10th) made the game 2-0 for the Royals as he finished off a rebound along the far side of the crease and chipped the puck high as Gale dove to cover. Brandon Saigeon (12th) closed out the period with a third goal on the power play, another rebound play set up by Vincent Sevigny on the outer edge of the zone. Worcester trailed in shots on goal with

six to Reading's 10. Each team picked up one penalty in the first twenty minutes.

It was a scoreless second period for both sides as neither team was able to break past their respective goaltenders. Despite not finding the back of the net, both teams kept the energy going with continuous conversations and physical blows. Cam McDonald collected a roughing call just as the period turned to its second half. MacAuley Carson dropped the gloves against former-Railer Artyom Kulakov. Both men earned themselves a double minor in the final five minutes of the frame. Reading outshot Worcester by one, nine to eight. Worcester led in pen-

alties with three to Reading's two.

The Railers managed to narrow the gap created by Reading in the first, as Ross Mitton (5th) scored the first goal of the game for Worcester at 4:22 in the final frame. Mitton's shot came from a faceoff win by Ryan Miotto, who maneuvered the puck behind him at the near faceoff dot in the Royals' zone. Mitton quickly steadied the puck and skimmed the crossbar as he fired high on Keith Petruzzelli (3-1). Worcester continued to chip away in the offensive zone as Gale was called to the bench for the extra attacker. Michael Suda (3rd) nabbed a second

goal for the Railers from the left point, his shot sent past Petruzzelli for a narrow 2-3 game. An unexpected turnover in Reading's zone, as Declan McDonnell's stick snapped while he tried to maintain puck possession, led Ben Meehan (9th) to a fourth and final goal for the Royals. Meehan sent the puck sailing from along the near boards into the unattended Railers' net as the final seconds of regulation ticked away. Final shots were 29-27 in favor of Reading. Worcester led in shots for the period with 13 to 10. MacAuley Carson and Jacob Frasca earned the sole penalties awarded to each team in the period.

ETHICS, from page 1

therefore, he should have abstained from voting in any of the matters due to that conflict of interest.

Bartley is also being accused of not complying with mandatory training education requirements. It is required that city councilors refresh their conflict of interest and other training every other year. Bartley apparently only did training 2025.

The ethics commission's order, which was released earlier this week, alleges the following:

- In 2023, while the Housing Court was considering the city's petition to enforce the State Sanitary Code at a Holyoke property, Bartley, as attorney for the late owner's heirs, communicated with the city's attorney regarding a continuance of the petition and was paid by the heirs upon the sale of the

property;

- After the city referred a Holyoke property to the Attorney General's Office regarding State Sanitary Code violations, Bartley responded to a January 2024 demand letter from the Attorney General's Office on behalf of the property owner;

- In February 2024, Bartley represented a client who had purchased a property from the city in 2019 which included a reverter

clause allowing the city to take the property back if it was not developed within five years. As attorney for the property owner, Bartley communicated with a prospective buyer's counsel in connection with a request for a waiver of the reverter clause; and

- From September 2024



David Bartley

State Sanitary Code violations.

Mayor Joshua Garcia condemned the alleged actions of Bartley, saying it is "not acceptable."

"This type of conduct, using one's position in government to advance personal or private business gain, is simply not acceptable in our government," Garcia said.

With the four accusations, Bartley faces up to \$40,000 in fines, \$10,000 maximum for each violation.

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In The News

LESSON, from page 1

in high school who volunteered for everything, but I always maintained and held that connection and purpose of care for our community," Murphy-Romboletti said. She then told the crowd that she learned early on that the "city council can't solve all problems", due to a quick interaction with a Mark Lubold, who is the current chair of the Holyoke Board of Public Works, knocked on her door when he was running for city council back in the day, and she confessed she answered and Lubold asked if he could talk to her parents, and she told Lubold 'you can talk to me first', and that interaction started to set the gears in motion to her building the foundation for what would be her political career.

Upon post-graduation from Holyoke Public Schools, Murphy-Romboletti then went on to earn her Bachelor of Arts in History and Sociology from the University of Delaware.

"I moved home to work for Alex (Morse), who was the mayor at the time, and at that time, I felt I didn't have my own identity at the time, so I then decided to join boards, and just got into volunteering, and didn't look back," she said. "I got involved with a ton of different things, such as CelebrateHolyoke, Friends

of Holyoke Public Schools, and I also joined the Parade Committee, and that was what really started my involvement in public service." Murphy-Romboletti then explained to the crowd that she was an intern under former Mayor Mike Sullivan, which allowed her to build an interest in attending city council meetings, which she frequented and presented at quite often.

"I always thought someone on the city council should actually have the experience of working at city hall, and eventually I got to this point, where I got into the loop with this program called Emerge, and it turned out to be a game-changer," she admitted. "For a bit of context, Emerge is a group that helps Democratic women run for office. I then joined this program, and was surrounded by these awesome women, and I finally made the decision to run for city council.

Murphy-Romboletti unveiled a deep dive and confession that she didn't feel ready to take on the role of city council president when she was elected by her constituents for the first time.

"I will fully admit on day one, I didn't feel I was ready to be president, but my colleagues felt I was ready, and here we are in my second term as president," she said.

The conversation then

shifted into how residents can apply and run for the city council or any position of office. Murphy-Romboletti explained that the 1st step is to pull nomination papers from the city clerk's office, then you need to get signatures, file paperwork, set up a campaign account, and lastly, she stressed, talk to the voters.

"The first time I ran, I set a goal to knock on at least 50 doors a day, and on the weekend, it was more than that quota," she noted. Before adding the concept of knocking on a potential voter's door can be a bit scary, but she reassured the crowd, just be yourself, and put in the work.

Murphy-Romboletti then revealed and debunked the five myths of running for office, which consisted of topics such as you have to be a politician, you need to have a lot of money, you need to know everything, you need to love public speaking, and one person can't make a difference. She then explained to the crowd how she has evolved over the course of her political career, citing that she has found a balance of time management, and stressed the importance of boundaries.

"I feel being on the city council has taught me to be comfortable with the idea of letting people down, no



Submitted photo

Holyoke City Council President Tessa Murphy-Romboletti kicks off her presentation and gets the crowd energized and engaged.

matter what, and if you are making everyone happy with your decision, you are not doing everything right," she said. "I understand that at the end of the day, I need to look at a topic in terms of all sides of the issue, do my homework, and come to terms with a decision I can sleep with."

The final portion of the forum featured Murphy-Romboletti delivering her conclusion that left the crowd with a sense of drive and direction.

"There is so much happening in Holyoke, and the

first step to making a difference is understanding it's my responsibility to try and pass along and make notice of all the opportunities of how one can get involved without running for public office, and the fact that you are all here indicates that you care," Murphy-Romboletti said. "So the first step towards making a difference is to attend meetings of all kinds, contacting elected officials, joining subcommittees, partaking in community events, and don't be afraid to volunteer and join non-profits, because the truth is, through

small acts of change, you are now essentially making the change to create a more unified vision of the city, we all envision and strive towards."

Murphy-Romboletti will be honored and recognized in this year's 73rd annual Holyoke St. Patrick's Day parade as the 2026 Rohan Award Winner. The award is one of the parade's highest honors, as this achievement recognizes a long-standing member of the Committee who has made significant contributions to the overall success of the Parade and the Committee.

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 offices 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 position, 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.

Those interested can apply on Indeed.com or send resume and cover letter to Personnel@holyoke.org.

The application deadline is March 31.

Carlos Vega Fund grant applications available

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. 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 includ-

ing: 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 carlosvega-fund.413@gmail.com.

Harmony House holding discussion, book signing event March 26

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 navi-

gate 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.

SCHOOLS, from page 1

to the statewide average of 80.5 percent. This data highlights a narrowing of the gap compared to 2024, when our graduation rate for students who are Hispanic or Latino was 2.7 percent less than the state average.

Other highlights from DESE's data include the following:

- In 2025, Holyoke's graduation rate was 80.8%—the highest on record since the state began reporting cohort-based graduation

rates in 2006. The 2025 graduation rate is up 3.7 percentage points compared to 2024, and up 18.7 percentage points compared to 2016.

- The sub-groups with significant cohort representation that increased the most from 2025 compared to 2024 included males with an increase of 7.5 percentage points, English learners with an increase of 7.4 percentage points, and students with disabilities with an increase of 5.8 percentage points.
- Since 2016, the sub-groups with the most signif-

icant increases in graduation rates include English learners with an increase of 32.3 percentage points to reach 75.3%, and students with disabilities with an increase of 32.1 percentage points to reach 68.8%.

- The dropout rate for HPS also decreased to 4.6 percent in 2025, compared to 4.9 percent in 2024. This is still higher than the statewide average of 1.8 percent, and reducing the dropout rate remains a high priority for Holyoke going forward.

"Our investments in instructional leadership,

standards-aligned curriculum, effective teaching practices, and social-emotional support are contributing to our higher graduation rate and are helping drive improved outcomes for students," Soto, who will depart the position at the end of the school year.

"We are overall pleased with the results. Holyoke's graduation is nearly 20 points higher than it was 10 years ago. There is much to celebrate. But at the same time we are keeping our focus on continued improvement efforts," said incom-

ing Superintendent Jackie Glasheen, who will become the HPS superintendent in July. She currently serves as the assistant superintendent. "There are still gaps between Holyoke's student achievement data and statewide averages, and closing that gap remains a top priority throughout the rest of this school year and beyond."

Even with the gains noted in 2025 compared to 2024, Holyoke's four-year average graduation rate for the Class of 2025 was 80.8 percent, still less than the statewide average of 89.3

percent. This most recent graduation rate set a record high in Massachusetts, up from 88.4 percent in 2024.

"The launch of high school redesign nearly 10 years ago has transformed the high school experience for our students," said Chief of Strategy Erin Linville. "The opportunities that are a part of the redesign plan, including theme-based academies, early college learning, hands-on learning, career technical education, and alternative pathways, empower students to experience success in many ways."

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CIVIC, from page 1

lace with an understanding of the nation's laws and government, the skills for discussion and working together across differences, and a commitment to civic strength," said Mayor Joshua Garcia. "Educators play a central role in the essential daily work to support young people in the development of an informed and empowered civic identity."

State Rep. Patricia Duffy of Holyoke presented Martinez and Cream with proclamations from the

House and Senate.

"Being in public office, I know how important it is that we start early to get our kids engaged and really know what's going on in this way too complicated world," said Duffy. "That's why it's so important that we're honoring Nick Cream and Vanessa Martinez, because of both how you teach and how you model for your students that civic life is not just what you learn in the classroom but how you engage in the greater community, and Holyoke is all the better for it."