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## Teachers tentatively reach agreement

By **Brendan Rooney**  
Correspondent

HOLYOKE – Educators and Parents alike can now exhale a sigh of relief knowing a tentative agreement between the HTA (Holyoke Teachers Administration) and the Holyoke Public School District was officially reached this past Wednesday night, ushering in a point of closure to nearly more than 300 days of ongoing mediation, according to HTA President Nick Cream.

Providing confirmation was Holyoke Mayor Joshua A. Garcia, who took to social media to reveal the announcement late Wednesday night, stating:

“Well done Holyoke Public Schools and Holyoke Teachers Association! #ItsTimeForHolyoke,” the mayor said. “I am pleased to announce that the Holyoke Teachers Association (HTA) bargaining team has reached a tentative agreement with the Holyoke School Committee’s bargaining team. I commend the HTA team for their determined advocacy throughout the process. While there were robust debates and differing views along the way, that is precisely how a healthy bargaining process works. Progress can be messy, but once aligned, stronger outcomes are achieved for everyone!”

In addition, Garcia revealed additional details, describing the latest proposal as “truly unprecedented.”

“It is not only the strongest agreement in Holyoke’s history, but also stands as one of the best teacher contracts in the region, surpassing those of many surrounding communities. You have a lot to be proud of HTA... good work,” Garcia said. “I am especially proud of the Holyoke School Committee and their bargaining team for their careful, collaborative, and strategic approach during

See **AGREE**, page 6

## girls inc. celebrates grand opening of new facility

HOLYOKE – Girls Inc. of the Valley celebrated the grand opening of its newly renovated headquarters in Holyoke on Thursday, April 30, marking a major milestone in expanding opportunities for girls across the region to grow up strong, smart, and bold.

The event welcomed the donors, partners, and community members whose support made the transformation possible, including the organization’s successful fundraising campaign, that secured \$7.25 million to complete the building’s renovation. The celebration also highlighted how the new space is already strengthening and expanding the organization’s impact.

Held from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the organization’s headquarters at 480 Hampden Street, the evening began with tours of the renovated facility, followed by a program featuring remarks and powerful firsthand stories from youth participants about the impact of Girls Inc. programming.

The newly renovat-

ed headquarters now serves as a permanent home for the Girls Inc. Experience: a safe, supportive environment where girls gain the skills, confidence, and connections they need to succeed. With expanded space and resources, Girls Inc. of the Valley has already begun increasing its reach across Holyoke and surrounding communities, expanding evidence-based programming, and deepening partnerships with local organizations.

“This building represented so much more than a renovation; it was a powerful investment in the future of the young people we serve,” said Suzanne Parker, Executive Director of Girls Inc. of the Valley. “Because of our community’s support, we are expanding access to life-changing programs that help girls grow up strong, smart, and bold.”

The Grand Opening Celebration also served as a springboard for Girls Inc.’s upcoming “Ready or Not, Here They Come” campaign.

See **GIRLS**, page 6



Submitted photo  
Cynthia Medina Carson (Girls Inc of the Valley Alumna, former Board Member, campaign co-chair), Bernadette Harrigan (former Board Member, campaign co-chair), Suzanne Parker (Executive Director), Debra Vega (current Board Chair), Sabria Brown (Girls Inc. of the Valley Alumna, graduate student at Bay Path University).



Turley photo by Gregory A. Scibelli  
Courtney Froebel decorates some real estate with chalk at the Holyoke Public Library’s mini golf and games day. See more photos on page 10.

## Opioid grants awarded to nonprofits

By **Gregory A. Scibelli**  
gscibelli@turley.com

HOLYOKE – Mayor Joshua Garcia announced Wednesday the city has committed about \$1 million in awards through the city’s Opioid Settlement Fund.

According to a press release from the mayor’s office, multiple nonprofits will benefit from the first awards made from the fund.

The press release states “the inaugural round of funding reflects the City’s commitment to investing opioid settlement resources directly into evidence-based programs that support prevention, treatment, recovery, harm reduction, and stabilization for residents and families affected by substance use disorder.”

Here are the groups that are receiving grant funding and what the funding will be used for:

- **MassHire Holyoke** — \$220,333.10 to establish an Ambassador Program focused on workforce development and employment opportunities for individuals impacted by substance use disorder, helping remove barriers to economic stability and long-term recovery.

- **Holyoke Medical Center** — \$231,539.17 to support a Recovery Coach in the Emergency Department, connecting individuals experiencing substance use crises with immediate recovery support and pathways to treatment.

- **Holyoke Board of Health** — \$99,244.00 to expand harm reduction activities, including outreach, education, and overdose preven-

See **GRANTS**, page 6

## Sheriff’s rolls back law enforcement in first phase of budget reduction

By **Brendan Rooney**  
Correspondent

LUDLOW – In response to the ongoing fiscal challenges facing sheriffs’ offices across Massachusetts, the Hampden County Sheriff’s Office today announced the first phase of a potentially multi-phase plan to reduce spending and align operations with the



Commonwealth’s current budget realities.

Sheriff Nick Cocchi said the initial phase will focus on scaling back and restructuring several external law enforcement and public safety programs which are not currently funded or reimbursed by another municipality or organization. In

total, this phase will redefine, limit or eliminate around 50 positions to the tune of \$3.6-\$4 million in savings. Staff were notified of the changes on Tuesday, March 24, with some changes being immediate and others taking place over the course of the next couple months to allow for smooth transitions for staff and operations.

The changes follow the removal of approximately \$26.5 million from the Hampden County Sheriff’s Office’s Fiscal Year 2026 allocation as the Commonwealth closed the books on Fiscal Year 2025, further compounding an already strained FY26 budget. As noted by the Office of the Inspector General, this situation stems from years of

the legislature’s deficit-driven funding practices dating back to the abolition of county government in 1999.

Sheriff Cocchi said the plan reflects a broader effort to respond responsibly to the fiscal environment while also acknowledging feedback from legislative leadership regarding spending by sheriffs’ offices on units and programs that focus entirely outside the walls of our facilities.

“This is not something we want to do,” Cocchi said. “These partnerships were built over decades and have made a real difference for public safety across Western Massachusetts. But given the current budget situation, we have to scale back in these areas. I don’t believe it’s the right move for public safety, but it’s the reality we’re being asked to respond to.”

The Office of the Inspector General’s preliminary review of sheriffs’ budgets identified several law enforcement activities

across the state as “discretionary expenditures,” rather than mandated responsibilities. While Sheriff Cocchi maintains that the public safety work and partnerships throughout Hampden County go hand-in-hand with good correctional practices, it is clear that his view is not shared by everyone on Beacon Hill.

“In light of that perspective, and in the absence of clear direction about how those activities should be funded going forward, we believe the responsible course is to begin scaling back those external operations,” Cocchi said. “If the financial situation in the Commonwealth improves, we will request prior approval of funding through the legislature to again support the public safety gaps and deficiencies in Hampden County. But as of now, this is the sad reality we are facing.”

**Phase One: Scaling Back External Public Safety Partnerships**

The first phase of the cost-reduction plan will involve eliminating, reducing or restructuring a number of specialized units and regional partnerships that support outside law enforcement agencies. In total, this phase will redefine, limit or eliminate around 50 positions to the tune of

\$3.6-\$4 million in savings. Several units will move to limited or part-time status, operating only when resources allow or when agencies request support through special details with municipal reimbursement.

**Among them:** Countywide Support—26 Post Certified deputies regularly staffed 28 shifts to reinforce agencies with insufficient personnel. These deputies provided coverage across multiple jurisdictions facing staffing gaps, but these positions will no longer be filled, unless paid/reimbursed by the agency/municipality.

See **SHERIFF**, page 6

# 'Broadway Brings Joy!' theater academy continues ballet legacy

HOLYOKE – In 2022, Debra Vega, the Artistic Director of BBJ "Broadway Brings Joy!" Musical Theater Academy of Holyoke, started her musical theater training program as a small 4-day camp to give her (then) 8-year old theatrical son and his pals a place to hone their singing, dancing and acting skills. With a focus on studying the JOY of musical theater, BBJ is now heading into their 5th season! The program has grown into several summer camp offerings, after-school programming for students ages 3 and up, and a robust adults program. Debra and the BBJ students and staff perform 4 musical theater showcases a year!

During these years of growth and expansion, BBJ has found a home sharing space with MAB Massachusetts Academy of Ballet, located in Open Square in the beautiful canal district of Holyoke. Rose & Charles Flachs, the Co-Directors of MAB, have been long time mentors for Debra. In fact, she started teaching Jazz for them in 2009 and they have been friends and creative partners ever since. Both Rose & Charles have been professional ballet dancers and Debra has been a professional Broadway dancer & Radio

City Rockette. Together they have offered professional level training through Mass Academy of Ballet's many class offerings over the years.

Starting this June, a new chapter is beginning. After 21 years in business, Rose & Charles are transitioning into retirement when they end their Spring Season this May 2026 and plan to close the doors on Mass Academy of Ballet. They have trained numerous professional dancers over the years. Many who have gone on to have great success in Ballet Companies, Contemporary Dance Companies and Musical Theater Productions all over the world. A true legacy of professional level teaching, and one of the longest tenants in the gorgeous studios of the repurposed mills of Open Square. Mass Academy of Ballet has always been a Holyoke gem.

With this transition coming, and BBJ continuing to grow, Debra saw an opportunity to both continue to expand her Musical Theater program into a more well-rounded dance/theater program, but also preserve the incredible legacy of Rose & Charles and MAB. "I see this as aligned timing," Debra says. "The timing of them being ready for retirement has totally aligned with the steady

growth of BBJ." She adds, "What an honor to continue to dance in the space where Rose and Charles have trained so many talented and successful dancers. It was important to me to have their legacy live on and I will do my best to continue to offer their level of professional training as we move into the future."

Debra has been working closely together with Rose & Charles to ensure a smooth transition for any MAB students who wish to continue their ballet training under the Broadway Brings Joy umbrella, therefore, BBJ plans to add a ballet curriculum to the current BBJ dance offerings starting this summer, as well as continue Holyoke's beloved Holyoke Historic Nutcracker that happens every December. Many students already take classes through both studios in the same location, but now all classes will come together under one comprehensive musical theater school.

To celebrate their 5th year in business, for the first time ever, BBJ will be offering 7 Summer Camps across Western Mass and CT (5 of



Debra Vega

them in Holyoke), that will give students a glimpse into the BBJ Fall offerings and an opportunity to work with their incredible growing staff across all curriculums! These include their signature Musical Theater Camps, 2 Levels of Ballet Camps, Hip-hop/Jazz Camp, and a Half-day Mini-camp focused on Pre-Ballet and Musical Theater Minis ages 3-5.

In addition to camps, they are also offering a One-Day Everything BBJ Dance/Theater Intensive for ages 6-18 on Saturday, Aug 1. This is a great way to try something new (like Acting or Tap or Vocal Training) and experience everything that BBJ will have to offer this Fall, all in one day!

All camps and summer offerings can be viewed at the BBJ parent registration portal: <https://dancestudio-pro.com/online/broadwaybringsjoy> or through their website: [www.broadwaybringsjoy.com](http://www.broadwaybringsjoy.com).

For anyone who wants to see what Broadway Brings Joy Musical Theater Academy is all about, you are invited to attend their end of season BBJ Spring Spectacular Showing happen-

ing on Friday, May 15 at 7 p.m. (doors open at 6 p.m.) at the Leslie Phillips Theater at Holyoke Community College with a FREE musical theater showcase entitled "Iconic Broadway!" This 75-minute family-friendly showcase will highlight some of the most iconic songs and dances Broadway has to offer, including favorites from these popular shows: The Lion King, Annie, On The Town, Les Miserables, 42nd Street, Singing In The Rain, Cats and a Chorus Line. A little something for everyone.

On the very next day, Massachusetts Academy of Ballet is producing their final Spring Ballet Concert on Saturday, May 16th at 1pm at the Pope Francis Preparatory School in Springfield, MA. The show will feature Classical Ballet and Contemporary Ballet works choreographed by Directors, Rose & Charles Flachs, Jazz choreography by Debra Vega and the return of many professional students who trained with MAB in the past, who will be taking a break from their ballet companies to come back to perform in the Spring Ballet Concert. Tickets are \$17 and can be purchased through this link: <https://massmutualcenter.eventue.net/event/REG25/MAB051626A>

As the Spring Season

comes to a close, Debra wishes to extend gratitude to Rose & Charles Flachs and Mass Academy of Ballet for sharing their space with Broadway Brings Joy and allowing BBJ the time to grow. Debra says, "It is because of them and their support that I was able to bring my vision of a Musical Theater Academy in Holyoke to life. I will always be so grateful for the opportunities they have given me!" And even though they will be retired from running their studio, Rose & Charles will continue to teach an ongoing Teen/Adult Intermediate Level Ballet Class on Tuesdays/Thursdays this summer and into the Fall, so they won't be going far. Their wonderful teacher, Audrey West, will continue to teach ballet with BBJ as well.

BBJ Broadway Brings Joy Musical Theater Academy of Holyoke is appreciative of the continued support of their growing BBJ community, as well as thankful for the support of the MAB ballet community. BBJ is very optimistic of the road ahead as they head into their very exciting 5th season this summer. Debra says, "Our motto is 'Bring YOUR Joy to Us' and JOY is exactly what we will continue to try to bring."

## Holyoke History Room hosting lectures

HOLYOKE – The Holyoke History Room will be hosting two public lectures in the Holyoke Library's Community Room in May. On Monday, May 18 at 5:30 p.m., Jeremy Smith will explore the contentious history of federally-funded housing and renewal in Holyoke with a talk entitled: Conflict & Conservatism: Holyoke's Struggle for Public Housing. Topics will include the construction of Lyman Terrace in the 1930s, Jackson Parkway in the 1940s, and the demolition of the old Ward 4 in the 1960s. A discussion will follow the talk. Smith is a long-time local resident with deep roots in Holyoke. His great-great grandfather was Frank Feather, one-time Alderman and a co-proprietor of Feather & France, sheet-metal manufacturers. Smith is also an archivist at UMass/Amherst Special Collections & Archives and a Holyoke Public Library Board member.

On Thursday, May 28 at 5:30 p.m., the History Room is pleased to be hosting Dr.

Marge Bruchac, who will present: Recovering Histories of Indigenous Presence in the Kwinitekw (Connecticut River Valley). For many millennia, Native people lived along the Connecticut River in western Massachusetts, sustained by local flora and fauna. During the 1600s, Native leaders in Agawam (now Springfield), Woronoco (now Westfield), Nonotuck (now Northampton and Hadley) and Pocumtuck (now Deerfield and Greenfield) invited English colonists to establish trading posts and small settlements. Sachems negotiated diplomatic and trade relations with colonial settlers and attempted to preserve, in written deeds, Indigenous rights to hunt, fish, gather, plant, and live here in perpetuity. During the late 1600s and into the 1700s, colonial conflict and warfare violated these agreements and fractured these relations. Countering the myth of an Indigenous population that vanished, Bruchac's talk will offer glimpses into colo-

nia relations, reflecting on the lives of Native families who remained highly visible – literally "hiding in plain sight"—utilizing long-standing Indigenous skills, kinship networks, and ecological knowledges to make a comfortable living, while supplying their white neighbors with medicinal, material, and practical assistance. Dr. Bruchac (Nulhegan Abenaki) is an historian, ethnographer, performer, and museum consultant well-known for her publications and other work on this topic. Her talk for the History Room is made possible by a grant from the Holyoke Local Cultural Council, a local agency funded by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.

Both talks are free and open to the public. The History Room is open for research Tuesdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 3 to 6 p.m. and Wednesdays and Thursdays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, contact Eileen Crosby at [historyroom@holyokelibrary.org](mailto:historyroom@holyokelibrary.org) or (413) 420-8107.

## Junior Achievement of Western Mass. to honor 18 Under 18 Class of 2026

Awards dinner set for May 18 at Storowton Carriage House

SPRINGFIELD – Junior Achievement of Western Massachusetts (JAWM) will honor its 18 Under 18 Class of 2026 at a special celebration presented by Teddy Bear Pools and Spas. The awards dinner will take place at 5 p.m. on Monday, May 18, 2026, at Storowton Carriage House, and will spotlight 18 outstanding young people from throughout Western Massachusetts who exemplify innovative spirit, leadership and community involvement.

"We are proud to celebrate this year's honorees and the example they set for their peers and their communities," said Amie Miarecki, president, JAWM. "Their accomplishments reflect talent, drive and a strong commitment to mak-

ing a difference."

The following students comprise JA's 18 Under 18 Class of 2026:

- Miracle Chambers, Roger L. Putnam Vocational-Technical Academy
- Kyleigh Dorman, Holyoke High School
- Brayden Federico, Agawam High School
- Alia Ghaoui, Williston Northampton School
- Graham Howard, Longmeadow High School
- Khloe Jacobs, Springfield International Charter School
- London Lester, Central High School
- Fynn Maldonado, Holyoke High School
- Xzavier Markham, Pittsfield High School
- Janiyah Mateo, Roger L. Putnam Vocational-Technical Academy
- Nilani Mathur, Longmeadow High School
- Mykella Meadows, Central High School
- Adrien Pazmandy, Frontier Regional High School
- Rachel Roblinski, Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School
- Addison Rodriguez, Holyoke High School
- Arianna Turner, Central High School
- Toni Vassallo, Agawam High School
- Miya Wranovix, Longmeadow High School

JAWM thanks Teddy Bear Pools and Spas, Holyoke Community College, the Men of Color Health Awareness (MOCHA), The UPS Store and The Realistic CEO Magazine for supporting JA's 18 Under 18 Class of 2026.

Tickets to the event are on the Junior Achievement of Western Massachusetts at [westernmass.ja.org](http://westernmass.ja.org).

Junior Achievement Worldwide (JA) is the world's largest organization dedicated to giving young people the knowledge and skills they need to own their economic success, plan for their future, and make smart academic and economic choices. JA learning experiences are delivered by educators and community volunteers and provide relevant, hands-on experiences that give students ages 5 through 25 knowledge and skills in financial literacy, work readiness, and entrepreneurship. JA was founded in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1919, making Junior Achievement of Western Massachusetts (JAWM) the organization's first chapter. Today, it serves thousands of young people in Western Massachusetts and parts of Worcester County and Vermont who participate in JAWM learning experiences annually. For more information, visit [jawm.org](http://jawm.org).

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# Win a trip to Italy while supporting hospice

CHICOPEE - Local nonprofit Harmony House of Western Massachusetts invites the community to take a chance on winning a trip to Italy for two while supporting its mission and residents.

The nonprofit is selling tickets for \$100 per chance to win a guided trip for two to Italy, with several destinations, including Rome, Capri, and the Amalfi Coast, from October 10-20, 2026.

Only 250 chances will be sold and the

prize package-valued at \$9,900-includes airfare, accommodations, transportation, meals, and a curated travel experience, making it a unique opportunity for community members to help care for their neighbors facing terminal illness. Profits from the raffle will directly support Harmony House's mission of providing a home with compassionate end-of-life care and companionship to hospice patients in need, regardless of their financial status or any other circum-

stances.

This is the second year Harmony House has hosted the fundraiser. Last year's winners, Jerry and Marilyn, reflected on their experience, sharing, "You buy something like this and assume that it would just be a donation, but this was the trip of a lifetime! Great trip, brand new buses, guides were very knowledgeable, and the information session at Figaro's Restaurant before the trip was very informative."

Tickets are available for purchase now through Thursday, June 4, and the drawing will take place via Facebook Live on Friday, June 5. Visit [HarmonyHouseWMA.org/ItalyRaffle](http://HarmonyHouseWMA.org/ItalyRaffle) for purchase options, trip itinerary, and terms and conditions. Tickets are also available for purchase at Figaro's Restaurant in Enfield, Pizza Lino in Chicopee, and the office of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Parish in Westfield.

# Volunteers needed at veterans grave restoration event

HOLYOKE - The Veterans Services is honored to host a graves restoration event on Saturday, May 16, at the Elmwood Cemetery located at 2190 Northampton Street. The event will begin at 10 a.m. Rain date will be May 30.

This event is to restore and preserve our deceased veterans' markers so that

they are kept in a presentable form for posterity.

Tools and supplies will be provided. There are no hazardous chemicals (to humans, animals or environment) used in the process of restoration. If you have any questions, please contact Wayne Klinge at [klingew@holyoke.org](mailto:klingew@holyoke.org) or 413-322-5630. All are welcome.

# Migrating fish get a lift over the Holyoke Dam

*HG&E Fishway opens for the season with free admission*

HOLYOKE - The first and most successful fish lift on the Atlantic Coast, Robert E. Barrett Fishway at the Holyoke Dam, opens for its annual viewing season on Wednesday, May 6, with special Mother's Day activities on Sunday, May 10. The Fishway is fun for all ages and admission is free.

The Barrett Fishway, owned and operated by Holyoke Gas & Electric (HG&E), consists of two elevators or "lifts" which carry migrating fish up and over the Holyoke Dam. Visitors can watch the lifts in action from an observation deck overlooking the Connecticut River.

The fishway is open for self-guided tours during regular business hours. In addition, HG&E will provide a guided tour each Saturday and Sunday throughout the season at 1:30 pm. This tour is free and open to the public. A knowledgeable and friendly guide will take guests on a 45-minute tour of the facility and share information about fish species of the Connecticut River. Additionally, The Barrett Fishway offers free educational programs for schools. Reservations for school groups are required, visit [www.hged.com/tour](http://www.hged.com/tour) for details.

Continuing a decade-old tradition, all mothers visiting the Fishway on Sunday, May 10 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., will receive a free carnation to com-

memorate Mother's Day and the spirit of re-birth on the Connecticut River.

In addition, the Annual HG&E Shad Derby will be held on May 9, 10, 16, and 17 with a grand prize of \$1,000 in cash for the first-place winner in the senior division ([www.hged.com/shadderby](http://www.hged.com/shadderby)).

Located off Bridge Street (Route 116) in Holyoke, just west of the South Hadley-Holyoke Bridge, the Holyoke Fishway's 2026 season runs from May 6 through June 21, hours of operation are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday. The facility is closed on Monday and Tuesday.

For further information on the Barrett Fishway, visit [www.hged.com/fishway](http://www.hged.com/fishway) or call (413) 536-9460.

# Holyoke Medical Center scores high in patient safety grade

HOLYOKE - Holyoke Medical Center is dedicated to being a high-reliability organization, providing the very best quality care to area residents, while empowering our employees through an environment valuing respect, leadership, belonging, and emphasis on exceptional care.

"An 'A' Grade is a strong sign that Holyoke Medical Center is deeply committed to protecting patients from harm," said Leah Binder, president and CEO of The Leapfrog Group. "We commend the leadership, Board, clinicians, staff and volunteers for the role each played in earning this distinction."

The Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade stands as the

only hospital ratings program focused solely on preventable medical errors, infections and injuries that kill more than 500 patients a day in the United States. This program is peer-reviewed, fully transparent and free to the public. Grades are updated twice annually, in the fall and spring.

To explore Holyoke Medical Center's full grade details and to find valuable tips for staying safe in the hospital, visit [HospitalSafetyGrade.org](http://HospitalSafetyGrade.org). Connect with The Leapfrog Group on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram and stay informed through The Leapfrog Group newsletter.

Medical Center is dedicated to being a high-reliability organization, providing the very best quality care to area residents, while empowering our employees through an environment valuing respect, leadership, belonging, and emphasis on exceptional care.

"We are very proud of our team for earning two consecutive 'A' grades from The Leapfrog Group," said Spiros Hatiras, President and Chief Executive Officer of Holyoke Medical Center and Valley Health Systems. "Holyoke

# City lists Memorial Day parade and program

HOLYOKE - The city's annual Memorial Day observance will be held on Monday, May 25, at 10 a.m. at the Veterans Memorial Park located at Hampden and Maple Streets.

Prior to the formal program, the War Memorial Building at 310 Appleton Street will be open from 8:30 to 9:15 a.m. for refreshments and setup for a procession that will start at 9:30 a.m. The procession will head to the Korean War Memorial and the Gold Star Memorial before arriving at Veterans Memorial Park for the ceremony.

Separately, American Legion Post 351 at 50 St. Kolbe Drive is hosting breakfast on Memorial Day from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. American Legion Post 325 at 22 Sycamore Street is hosting lunch from 12 noon to 2 p.m.

# HCC names Julissa Colón of South Hadley as first Dean of Student Experience

HOLYOKE - Holyoke Community College is pleased to announce that Julissa Colón of South Hadley has been selected as the college's first dean of student experience.

Colón, 44, is a 2013 graduate of HCC. She started working at the college in 2010 as a clerk for the Gateway to College program and earned her associate degree in liberal arts. With the help of HCC's Pathways Program, she transferred to Smith College, where she received a bachelor's degree in Latin American Studies and History and was subsequently hired as special programs coordinator for Gateway to College. While continuing to work full time, she earned a master's degree in public administration and a graduate certificate in gender leadership and public policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

In 2020, Colón was hired as the inaugural director of El Centro, HCC's bilingual sup-

port program.

Now, as the first dean of student experience, she oversees new student programs, including orientation; Student Engagement, which includes student clubs and activities; wellness programs, including the college's on-campus partnership with the Center for Human Development; and Commencement. She also serves as chair of the HCC Care Team and as the student conduct officer.

"Julissa brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to this position, including program development and implementation, assessment of program outcomes, budgetary oversight, and strengthening HCC's position as a Hispanic Serving Institution," said Renee Tastad, assistant vice president of student affairs and



Submitted photo  
Julissa Colón, of South Hadley, has recently been named the Dean of Student Experience at Holyoke Community College.

enrollment management. "What sets her apart, however, is her 15 years of experience working directly with HCC students."

Colón started her new

job in January. "I genuinely love HCC," she said. "I love our students. I love the staff and faculty that I work with. I love what HCC imagines itself to be, and I say 'imagines itself' because we are always striving to be better."

Colón grew up in Springfield and is the mother of two grown children, Christian Aponte, 20, and Luna Aponte, 25, a 2021 HCC graduate.

"HCC has been my home for so long, said Colón. "I've been here for 15 years and the amount of growth that I've experienced as a student, as the parent of a student here, as the aunt of a student here, is tremendous. My family has been here. My friends are here. My folks come here. My commitment to my community is here."

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USDA INSP. STOREMADE FROZEN HAMBURGER PATTIES 80% LEAN 3 OZ 20 CT BOX ..... <b>\$1.75</b> ea	USDA INSP. NATIONAL CASING HOT DOGS 2 1/2 LB BOX ..... <b>\$9.89</b> lb	USDA INSP. FROZEN CODINO'S STUFFED SHELLS WITH RICOTTA 48 OZ ..... <b>\$5.99</b> ea
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Guest Column

## SOCIAL SECURITY Matters

By Russell Gloor

### I want to do everything right when I claim Social Security

Dear Rusty:

I will be 62 in two years. I plan on signing up for SS at age 62, but I have heard there are details that are important when signing up. When it comes time, I want to make sure I do everything right. Can you help me understand?

Signed: Claiming Soon

Dear Claiming Soon:

Deciding when to claim your Social Security benefit is a decision you should make only after careful consideration of your personal circumstances. And details are, indeed, important. For example, if you claim at age 62 (when you first become eligible), your monthly SS benefit will be only 70% of the amount you would get by waiting until age 67 to claim. And there are other considerations as well, including:

If you are still working and claim at 62, you will be subject to Social Security's Annual Earnings Test (AET) which limits how much you can earn from working while collecting early SS benefits. The earnings limit changes each year, and for 2026 it is \$24,480. If the annual limit after you claim early is exceeded, SS will take back \$1 in benefits for every \$2 you are over the limit. And, if your work earnings substantially exceed the annual limit, you may even be temporarily ineligible for early SS benefits (until you either stop working full time or reach your SS full retirement age). FYI, the AET lasts until you reach your FRA (age 67).

The benefit reduction for claiming SS early is permanent. After you claim, you will only get increases for Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA) which occur annually according to inflation. FYI, the average annual COLA adjustment is about 2.5%.

If you are married, the reduced benefit you get by claiming early will potentially be the basis of your spouse's survivor benefit if you pass first. Surviving spouse benefits are based on the amount you are receiving at your death, thus waiting longer for a higher personal benefit may also provide your spouse with a larger survivor benefit as your widow.

If you wait longer than age 62, your monthly benefit will continue to increase (by approximately 6% per year) until you reach your FRA, when you get 100% of the amount you are entitled to from a lifetime of working. FYI, you can even wait longer - up to age 70 - to claim an even higher monthly amount (8% more for each year of delay after FRA). At age 70, your SS benefit would be about 75% more than your age 62 benefit amount.

If you haven't already done so, I suggest setting up your personal online "my Social Security" account at [www.ssa.gov/myaccount](http://www.ssa.gov/myaccount) to see what your SS benefits are estimated to be at various ages. Then, when you are closer to age 62, contact us again to talk about your specific personal circumstances at the time, and we can provide you with everything you need to know about applying for Social Security.

In the end, when claiming your Social Security benefits, you should consider your financial need, your health and life expectancy, your plans for working, and your marital status. We commend you for exploring this well in advance of becoming eligible and we will be here to assist when it is time for you to apply.

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



Guest Column

### The Garden Lady takes on spring bulb woes

Debi, who gardens in Hardwick, reached out to the Garden Lady with concerns over her daffodils.

They didn't bloom well this year, and she wonders if they need fertilizer.

"Dear Garden Lady, sorry to bother you in this busy season but our daffodils aren't doing well. I'm guessing they need food. What would you suggest?"

I am happy to answer your question! There are typically four reasons why daffodils don't bloom.

Probably the first mistake gardeners make is removing the foliage too soon after the flowers go by. Foliage needs about six-eight weeks of ripening before it can be removed.

While it is still green, it is photosynthesizing and making energy for next year's flowers.

It can get unsightly as

it starts to yellow and finally turn brown and dry up, but we must be patient. It is ready when it comes off with a gentle tug. Some gardeners get strategic with nearby plants so that the eye moves away from the foliage and to another plant taking the stage in full bloom. Another reason why daffodils may be stingy with their flowers is that the clumps are overgrown and need to be divided. Wait until the foliage has turned brown, then dig up the bulbs, pry them apart and replant them twice their width from one another and about two to three times their height deep.

I recommend using a pointed shovel, not a trowel. Sometimes they can be dug deep and you want to make sure you get the bulb out intact.

Do this while the brown foliage is there so that you can find them. While it may feel "off" to be replanting in early summer, it is a perfectly fine time to do it.

Debi's bulbs could also need fertilizer, like she suggested. A sprinkling of granular fertilizer with low nitrogen, but sufficient phosphorus and potassium for blooming and rooting, respectively, would be ideal. The two best times to feed are when the bulbs are up a few inches and now, just past bloom. Daffodils do require less fertilizer than tulips and hyacinths, and sometimes bloom for years without the addition of fertilizer.

See GARDEN, page 5



These yellow-rumped warblers, also known as Myrtle warblers, flitted around the edges of Lake Wallace in Belchertown, on April 22.

A Belchertown resident sent an email reporting he saw two yellow-rumped. He attached the above photos. The second photo a rear view of the warbler clearly shows the yellow rump of this aptly named warbler.

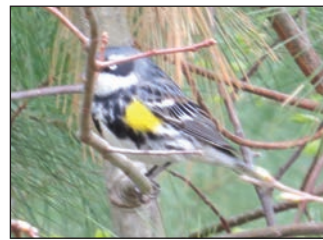
These warblers are about the size of black-capped chickadee and have a long bill and narrow tail.

They are gray with yellow on their sides, a small patch on the head and of course, the large patch on the rump. They have white on wings, throat and underneath. They have black and white streaking on the breast. Males have a large black patch around the eye. The female is duller.

In summer, yellow-rumped warblers inhabit open coniferous forests and edges and not as often deciduous forests. They primarily feed on insects in the summer. On migration and winter they eat fruit and berries particularly bayberry and wax myrtle. Their song is a series of high-pitched notes often described as "chewy" or "chip-chip."

When males court females, they fluff their feathers, raise their wings and the feathers of the crown and hop from perch to perch, chipping. They may also make display flights in which they glide back and forth or fly slowly with exaggerated wingbeats. The yellow-rumped Warbler's flight is agile and swift and the birds often call as they change direction.

The female builds the nest and sometimes uses



This photo shows a side view and back view of a yellow-rumped warbler recently seen in Belchertown. Photos by Doug Moore



material the male brings to her. The nest is a cup of twigs, pine needles, grasses and rootlets. The female also may use moose, horse and deer hair, moss and lichens. The nest takes about ten days to complete. She lays a clutch of one to six eggs speckled with brown or reddish gray.

**Bluebirds**

A Rutland couple say two bluebirds in their yard on April 25. They hope they will nest in the yard.

**Great blue heron**

I finally saw a great blue heron perched in a tree at the beaver pond, which abuts my hayfield. Every year, one or two are frequent visitors and even nested there.

**Purple martins**

A purple martin watcher spotted the first purple martins in Massachusetts for 2026 in Rehoboth on

April 4. The largest species of swallow in North America, they wintered in Brazil and flew 7,000 miles to the United States and Canada.

**Hummingbirds**

Soon the ruby-throated hummingbirds will be back. It is time to get out the nectar feeders. Instead of purchasing prepared nectar in powder or liquid form, avoid the harmful dyes and boil a one to four ration of sugar to water. I preferred to mix small batches, ¼ cup white sugar to 1 cup water on a more frequent basis to avoid spoilage. It can be stored in the refrigerator for about one week if making larger amounts.

**Tom turkeys**

In my travels, I spotted in three different locations Tom turkeys display-

See BIRDS, 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](mailto: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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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.

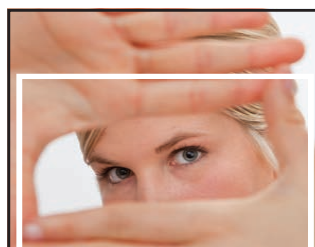
Please email (preferred) letters to [thesun@turley.com](mailto:thesun@turley.com). Mailed letters can be sent to *The Sun*, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069.

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your health

By Teri (Dreher) Frykenberg, RN  
Guest Column



# Getting hip to joint replacement surgery

A few weeks ago, I underwent my second total hip replacement. I had already replaced my left hip, and now it was time for the right one.

About 10 years ago, I also had both of my knees replaced. After nearly four decades as an ICU nurse, the physical toll of caring for patients, some weighing up to 300 or 400 pounds, had caught up with me. This is a common story among nurses: We prioritize others' needs and often ignore our own warning signs.

Obviously, I'm not alone. Around 7 million Americans are living with hip or knee replacements, allowing them to main-

tain mobility despite severe arthritis. Annually in the U.S., there are about 700,000 knee and 400,000 hip replacements, with studies showing many replacements lasting 25 years or more.

We're just not as healthy as we used to be. Arthritis inflammation in the joints can actually destroy the cartilage, and when you hit bone-on-bone, it causes not only significant pain but also disability. The increase in hip replacements is attributed to the aging baby boomer population, rising life expectancies and the obesity epidemic. Sports injuries and accidents are additional factors.

I've learned a lot about joint replacement, as a nurse,

a patient advocate and a patient. If you're facing a joint replacement, here are some considerations:

### Hospital or surgery center?

All four of my joint replacements took place at outpatient surgery centers, which I consider much cleaner environments than hospitals. After early morning surgery, I was home by noon and received home health care, so I never went to rehab.

A 2023 study by University of Pennsylvania researchers found that the rates of revisits and complications for surgery center patients were lower than for similar patients who had surgery in a hospital. However, that could have something to do with healthier patients choosing surgery centers and those with other health conditions, heart failure for example, going to hospitals.

That said, this is a topic for you and your doctor to discuss. In the end, you will decide where to have your joint replacement, so go where you are most comfortable.

### Choosing a doctor

Look for a surgeon who

is affiliated with professional organizations and has completed fellowships in the surgery you're having. You should also prioritize their experience, asking how many times they've performed this particular surgery.

Studies have found that surgeons who have performed more than 50 procedures have lower rates of complication and revision. You can ask the doctor directly how many times they've performed the surgery and what their complication rate is. Also ask whether you can speak with other patients the doctor has treated.

### Second opinions

Joint replacement is a major medical undertaking, so if you're feeling at all unsure about it - or the doctor isn't all you had hoped - Medicare covers second opinions subject to the 20% co-insurance. Medicare Advantage plans also generally cover second opinions, but check with your plan for details.

### Robots or no robots?

Robot-assisted joint replacement is becoming more common. A study

published in the Journal of Arthroplasty reported an increase in surgeons who have adopted robotics, from 10% in 2018 to 35% in 2023. Nearly half of partial knee replacements were robotically assisted. Fewer total knee and hip replacements were reported.

The study noted that further research is needed on outcomes, but surgeons who use robotic assisted systems say that the robot is simply the navigation system while the doctor is in the driver's seat.

### Rehab in a facility or at home?

With my surgeries, I wanted to avoid a rehab facility because that's another name for nursing home, where there are a lot of germs, more patients with compromised immune systems and generally higher infection rates.

Today, in fact, most joint replacement patients do recuperate at home. A project by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services found that patients who can safely recover at home heal faster, have fewer complications and have a greater sense

of ownership in their own recovery.

Not everyone can come home immediately, though, if they lack family support or access to home health care. Be sure to have this conversation with your doctor before your surgery.

Chances are your joint replacement will get you back to doing the things you enjoy, especially with a little bit of education and preparation.

*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

I am wondering if the trees or the ground cover adjacent to Debi's daffodils were fertilized with a high nitrogen blend and it affected the bulbs? I have a few daffodils near an apple tree that is close to my compost pile, where I mix chicken bedding with vegetable scraps, etc.

I think the high nitrogen run-off from the pile affected my blooming, just as an example. Of five possible clumps I had a measly two flowers. Bone meal, high in phosphorus, is in order to rebalance the soil.

Knowing Debi's sun exposure, I don't think this is an issue, but it is worth the mention for other readers who may struggle with sparse blooms. Daffodils won't bloom in deep shade. Dappled sunlight is fine.

Planting under deciduous trees is also fine. If you think shade is the culprit, wait until the foliage ripens and move them using the guidelines I provided for bulbs that are overcrowded.

I sure hope one of these suggestions will help your daffodils regain their former glory.

Rose, who reads the column in the Ware River News, was concerned that a number of her hyacinths were broken off at ground level when just buds, and she wondered what or who could be the culprit be.

"This is so disheartening, I don't want to even grow them any more."

I was astounded to hear this, because the same thing happened to me in one of my gardens at Old Sturbridge Village where I have a multi red, white and blue plant-

ing of hyacinths and tulips. Grooming last week yielded at least 10 hyacinth buds that looked as if they were but off at ground level.

Although the experts say rodents could be the cause, the cut was almost perfect, not gnawed in any way, plus hyacinths contain natural deterrents making them rodent proof, typically. I did cultivate the bed awhile back, my thought being that I may have cut a few of them off under ground.

As the stems elongated, they could have forced the bud above ground even though it was already dislodged, but the mystery remains. I'm sorry this happened, Rose, and I wish I had a definite answer for you, but at least know you are in good company with your hyacinth woes.

If anyone has any

answers I would love to hear them.

*Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 31 years she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to pouimette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.*

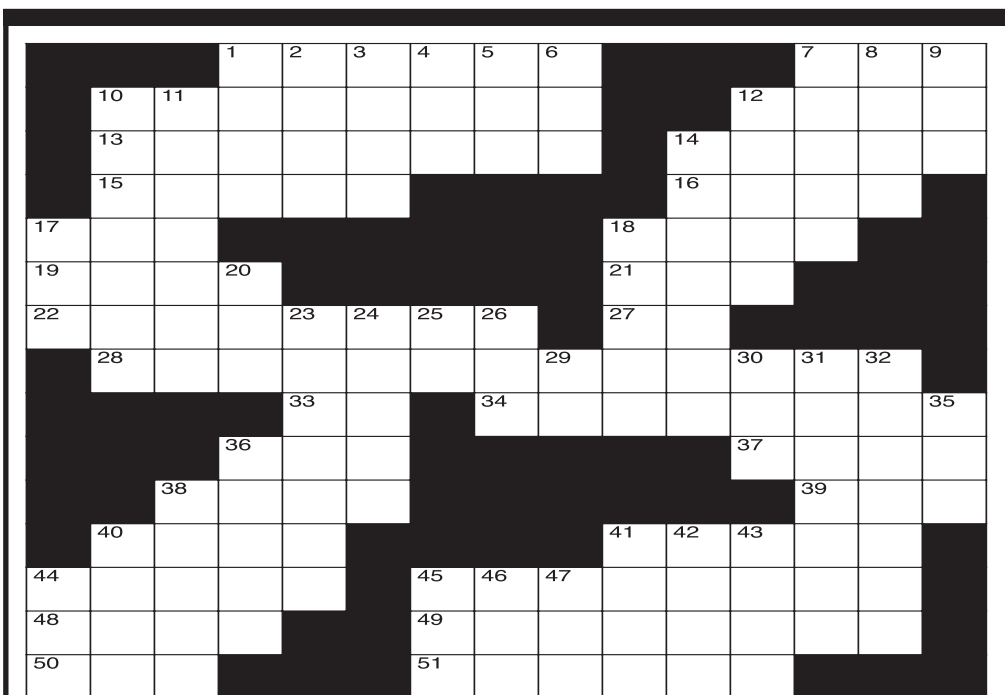
## BIRDS, from page 4

ing their tail feathers for one or more hen turkeys. I noticed one Tom with two hens strutting about as the females kept on eating near him.

### Bird fact

Annually, over 50 million Americans purchased more than one billion pounds of bird seed and suet.

*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

1. Large dung beetle
7. Gambling game \_\_\_-lo
10. Further along
12. Type of tobacco
13. Looked for
14. Silk fabric
15. Computer method to solve equations
16. As fast as can be done (abbr.)
17. Tear
18. Brews
19. "Famous" cookie baker
21. Women's Army Corps (abbr.)
22. Front parts of an animal
27. It's causing quite a stir
28. Beloved March holiday

33. 12th letter of the Greek alphabet
34. More impudent
36. Indicates center
37. Young woman (French)
38. A cause of distress
39. Santa's helper
40. Hillside
41. Many wombs
44. Is afraid of
45. Popular baked goods ingredient
48. Popular computers
49. Conceiving of
50. Google certification (abbr.)
51. Sturdy

### CLUES DOWN

1. Peruse quickly
2. Automobiles
3. Razorbill genus

4. Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!
5. Consumed
6. A place to sleep
7. Small seeds
8. Legendary law man Wyatt
9. Female sheep
10. Indigenous peoples of eastern Siberia
11. A place ships dock
12. Reciprocal of sine
14. Discomfort
17. British Air Aces
18. Exit sleep
20. Solar energetic particle
23. Plagues characterized by starvation
24. Short musical composition
25. Trauma center

26. Habitual twitching
29. A place where checks are exchanged (abbr.)
30. Decameter
31. Hinged surface in a wing
32. Shouting
35. Sports official
36. Volcanic craters
38. Supportive device
40. It's part of a rosary
41. Two-toed sloth
42. Body art
43. Let out
44. Foreign medical graduate
45. Nonprofit journalism organization (abbr.)
46. Couples say it
47. Bird's beak

CROSSWORD ANSWER on page 8

### 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: @bspholyokema

### 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  
Pastor: revdebma@gmail.com  
Website: www.stpetersholyokey.org  
Social media:  
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  
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.

## GIRLS ARE THE NEW GENERATION OF LEADERS

**GIRLS**, from page 1

a bold national movement centered on the power and potential of girls and the importance of investing in their futures.

Kicking off on May 7 as part of Girls Inc. Together Week and the organization's National Day of Giving, the campaign will mobilize the community through a strong emphasis on peer-to-peer fundraising. Supporters will be invited to become ambassadors for the mission by creating their own fundraising pages, sharing personal

connections to Girls Inc., and encouraging their networks to invest in the next generation of leaders.

This peer-driven approach will expand the reach of the campaign beyond traditional giving, empowering individuals to activate their own communities and play a direct role in fueling opportunities for girls. Rooted in the belief that when girls succeed, everyone benefits, the campaign will elevate stories of local participants while driving both awareness and critical funding for expanding programming.



The crowd watches on as speakers address the group at the Girls Inc Grand Opening of their newly renovated headquarters.

Submitted photo

## AGREE, from page 1

these negotiations."

Before concluding his statement, citing, "Their (HTA) steady leadership kept students' needs front and center while securing a deal that invests meaningfully in our educators. I also want to recognize our teachers for advocating for the support they deserve. Way to show the Commonwealth what we are able to achieve together under local control!"

The announcement of the agreement was made just prior to press time, and The Sun hopes to have more on this agreement, including full details on the compromises reached and if and when the contract is fully ratified by the union in next week's edition.

## JUMP, from page 1

tion efforts.

• **Tapestry Health** — \$328,883.73 to provide enhanced harm reduction services, strengthening access to lifesaving resources and support for individuals at risk.

• **Providence Ministries** — \$120,000.00 to provide emergency harm reduction services and critical supports for unsheltered individuals impacted by opioid use disorder.

"These first opioid settlement investments represent an important step in turning accountability into action," Garcia said in the press release. "The opioid crisis has touched every corner of our community. These funds allow us to invest in practical, community-driven solutions that meet people where they are—whether that means employment, emergency recovery support,

harm reduction, or services for our most vulnerable residents."

The city says the award process was guided by a "robust community review and public process."

The city had the applications reviewed by multiple stakeholders throughout the city. Among the participating groups were the: Board of Health Commissioners, the Citizens Opioid Advisory Committee, the Development and Government Subcommittee, the City Council, and staff from the City of Holyoke Office for Community Development.

The mayor will make the final decisions after hearing from the various committees. There was also a community needs assessment, used to find service gaps and identify the best ways to use the funding.

"The strength of this process was in its transpar-

ency and community participation," said Garcia. "These awards reflect what our residents, service providers, and public health partners told us is needed most."

The City anticipates there will be additional opioid settlement funding rounds in the future as settlement resources continue to be distributed, with ongoing emphasis on evidence-based interventions and measurable community impact. Awards and program operations must be consistent with the State Subdivision Agreement (SSA) and guidance from the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office and the Massachusetts Bureau of Substance Addiction Services. It is not known when the mayor's office will open up applications for a second round of funding. But more information on the grants and award can be found on the city's website.

## JUMP, from page 1

**Palmer Police Department Partnership** – HCSO currently provides full patrol coverage on two shifts, seven nights per week, with deputies handling calls for service, patrol duties, and community policing as the agency is facing significant staffing shortages. These positions will no longer be filled, unless paid/reimbursed by the agency/municipality.

**Springfield Police Department Partnership**–HCSO presently maintains a continuous presence at Union Station, Western Massachusetts' primary transportation hub that previously had a high call volume involving violent crime, disturbances, and drug activity. Deputies also provide year-round patrol coverage in Forest Park with two shifts daily, seven days a week, supported by the Mounted Patrol Unit. Additionally, deputies serve 209A restraining orders in the city. These positions will no longer be filled, unless paid/reimbursed by the agency/municipality.

**Chicopee Police Department / City Partnership** – The HCSO staffs three full-time analysts as part of the five-person team at the Real-Time Information Center in Chicopee. This state-of-the-art operation has the ability to use an extensive camera network paired with AI-powered software to enhance public and officer safety, but relies on the analysts to make the connections happen. The facility,

although based in Chicopee, has a regional impact, helping solve and prevent crimes across Hampden County. Additionally, POST-certified deputies serve 209A restraining orders in the city, and act as force multipliers when city patrol staffing is down. These positions will no longer be filled, unless paid/reimbursed by the agency/municipality.

**West Springfield Police Partnership**–The HCSO presently helps West Side police with targeted speeding details and traffic patrols. Additionally, we also have deputies on patrol in Bear Hole Reservoir and on the Connecticut River Walk and Bikeway. These positions will no longer be filled, unless paid/reimbursed by the agency/municipality.

**Marine Patrol Unit and Hampden County Regional Dive Team** – Last year, the regional water safety team conducted 119 patrols on the Connecticut River and Lake Congamond, supported 55 public events, and performed multiple search and recovery operations. The unit, along with the specialized underwater recovery team that assists local agencies during missing-person and recovery incidents, will transition to a part-time operation based primarily on paid/reimbursed assignments or emergency dispatches.

**Holyoke Police Partnership** – In partnership with Holyoke Police, the HCSO has sent deputies to assist HPD with large events like the St. Patrick's Road Race and Parade. Additionally, the Sheriff has two deputies who run programs to connect at-risk individuals with addiction recovery and treatment resources. In the last fiscal year, that unit provided 2,857 successful outreach contacts, 1,049 referrals, and trans-



Sheriff Nick Cocchi

ported 338 people to treatment and Medication Assisted Treatment programs, bridging the gap between law enforcement and recovery. These positions will no longer be staffed, unless paid/reimbursed by the city of Holyoke.

**HCSO Drone Unit**–Presently the HCSO Drone Unit provides support to law enforcement partners across the region in everything from investigations, violent stand-offs and missing person cases. This unit will remain available for emergency responses, but not for non-emergency situations without a funding mechanism to reimburse the department.

**Other specialized response teams** – including the Crisis Negotiation Team, Emergency Medical Response Team, and Search and Rescue Team — will continue to be evaluated as part of the broader restructuring effort. "These are highly skilled teams that provide important support during critical incidents," Cocchi said. "Our goal is to preserve as much of that capability as possible while adjusting to the fiscal constraints we're facing."

Sheriff Cocchi said he remains committed to working with the Legislature and state officials as discussions continue regarding the long-term funding structure for sheriffs' offices.

"The Inspector General's report made clear that the current budgeting process has become difficult to navigate for everyone involved," Cocchi said. "Our goal is to be transparent,

responsible, and collaborative as we work through these challenges with hopes of being funded fairly, with respect to the national reputation of our office based on our staff's dedication to changing lives."

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If you have been denied housing because of the presence of lead paint, you have options. Contact the Massachusetts Fair Housing Center (MFHC) or the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD).



MFHC: 413-539-9796  
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THURSDAY, MAY 14<sup>TH</sup> at 11:00 A.M.

MORTGAGEE'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE  
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5 ROOMS / 2 BEDROOMS  
SINGLE STORY  
**RANCH STYLE HOME**  
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154 Huron Avenue HOLYOKE, MASSACHUSETTS  
To be sold on the Premises

- Features:
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  - ±1,972 S/F of Finished Area • Electric Baseboard Heat •
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  - ★ TWO CAR ATTACHED GARAGE ★

Sale Per Order of Mortgagee  
Attorney Jonathan R. Goldsmith  
Of the Firm of Egan, Flanagan & Cohen, 67 Market Street, Springfield, MA  
Attorney for Mortgagee  
Terms Of Sale: \$10,000.00 Deposit Cash, Bank or Certified Funds.  
Deposit to be increased to 10% of Purchase Price within 5 Business Days.  
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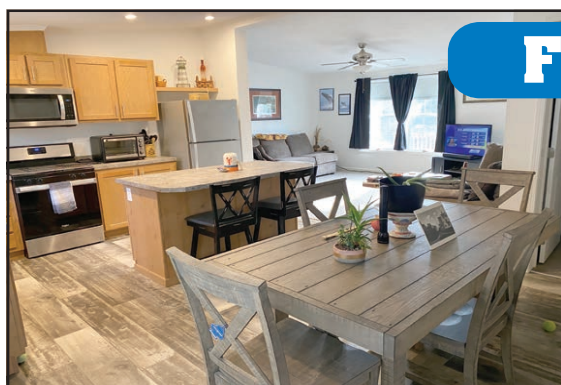
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to explore these topics and more.

This group will be held in zoom, is educational, confidential, and free.

Please contact Pat James 413-726-8661.



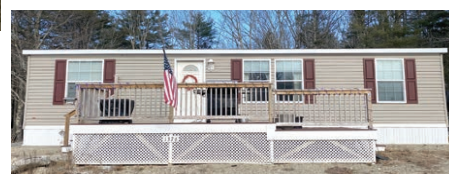
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# SPORTS

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OUR SUBMISSIONS

## Knights win completion of game

HOLYOKE – Last Monday afternoon, Holyoke High School came back from down 3-2 to win a suspended game with Ludlow 4-3. The Knights also defeated Amherst recently, but suffered a few losses against West Springfield,

East Longmeadow, and Easthampton. The Knights are 8-5 on the regular season and need just one more win to qualify for the state tournament this year. The Knights face Amherst on Friday, May 8 at 5:15 p.m. on the road.

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com  
Left, Daniel Blaha makes a catch on a fly ball. Below, Nolan Judd fires a throw back to the infield.



Joseph Rios sends a pitch home.



Jossue Adorno fires across the diamond.



Michael Medina fields a ground ball.



Ryan Greaney makes an easy throw to first.



First baseman Jeremy Francisco makes a clean play.

## Holyoke softball falls to Chicopee

HOLYOKE – Last Wednesday afternoon, Holyoke softball lost at home to Chicopee High School 11-0. The Knights had just one hit in the loss. The Knights also fell to Smith Voke in a wild match-up last Friday 18-17, but won earlier this week to improve to 7-7 for the season. Holyoke can qualify for the state tournament with two more wins in their final four games. Holyoke faces Putnam on Monday at 5 p.m.



Lily Tapion fires home.



Isabella Lachat watches her throw head for first.



Alilana DeJesus sends a pitch home for the Knights.



Alanna Bonilla cleanly fields a grounder to short.

Zomarís Robles fires across the diamond.

## HCC finishes season

HOLYOKE – Cougars baseball saw their season come to a close last Saturday, hosting a doubleheader against regional opponent Quinsigamond CC. Holyoke needed to win at least one of the two games to have a chance to qualify for postseason, but regrettably lost both.

The Cougars trailed 5-1 in the bottom of the seventh and final inning of Saturday's first game, where they'd drive in two runs to bring the score to 5-3. They had runners on second and third base with one out but unfortunately could not get them home, falling by the 5-3 final score. Holyoke learned before the start of their second game that they could no longer qualify for the postseason due to the outcome of another regional game played on Saturday. The Cougars did their best to just have a little fun in the finale, coming out on the bottom end of a 13-7 score.

Men's baseball closes the season with a 12-20 overall record and an 8-10 regional record. They finish just one game back of 4th place, and the final playoff spot, in the Region XXI (New England) standings. Holyoke won six straight games, their longest winning streak of the season, prior to Saturday's doubleheader. Fourteen freshmen from this year's team can return to play in 2027.

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

# Wenzel opens up season with win at Monadnock

WINCHESTER, N.H. – Open-wheel ace Nathan Wenzel strutted the stuff that made him both a speedway and New Hampshire state Modified champion Saturday at Monadnock Speedway, topping the season opening main event at the high-banked speedplant.

And even though Saturday marked the first event of the new season, reigning Limited Late Model track champion Dylan Zullo is already in the running for what may be the summer's most exciting victory at the historic quarter-mile oval.

With a huge crowd braving the chilly April temperatures, six drivers started their season with a flourish, each earning the first victory lap of the new season in their respective division. Along with Wenzel and Zullo, long-ago Mini Stock champ Kevin Clayton, Pure Stock

hot shoe Jimmy Zellman, Pro V8 Sportsman pilot Chris Kingsley and Young Gun speedster Sofia Rego each went home victorious.

Colton Martin and JT Cloutier led the All States Materials Group 604 Modifieds to the green Saturday, with Martin jumping all over the opening lead. Cloutier rode second in his shadow, with Kimmy Rivet a close third, and Wenzel, from row three, quickly on the charge.

Wenzel had third on lap three and took second from Rivet on the tenth go-round. He and Martin then raced under a blanket until light contact on lap 28 sent Martin tumbling off turn two, then moving Wenzel and Rivet to row one, with Tyler Leary now up to third.

Leary powered up to second on lap 36, quickly gluing his ride to Wenzel's

as the two former speedway champions squared off. They rubbed in the final turn, with Wenzel wobbling but still holding the point to score his first win of the season.

With Leary an airtight second, Martin charged back through the field to snatch third from Rivet, and Cloutier's strong night's work netted him fifth. Leary set fast time in qualifying, scorching his way around the high banks in 12.127 seconds.

Hillary Renaud led early in the Twin State Truck Services Limited Late Model feature. Dylan Zullo, though, was on a mission, blasting from row three as he began to pick up where he'd left off in his championship season a year ago. Taking the lead on lap two, he looked headed for an easy romp in Saturday's 30-lapper. A caution, though, on lap 24,

brought JD Stockwell to his door and the action was just getting started.

Over the last three laps, they rubbed, they pushed, and they traded places, with Zullo prevailing to win by just a foot. Robert Hagar had the best view of the top-two chaos, watching from close behind as he impressed in third. Renaud was fourth on the night, and Erik Smith rounded out the first five.

Kevin Clayton won the Monadnock Speedway Mini Stock championship more than a quarter century ago, taking top honors way back in 2000. In recent summers, victory lane had been like a foreign nation to him. But now, the popular wheelsman has a new streak started.

Starting up front, Clayton led all the way to win by three lengths over third row starter Craig Chaffee in the night's Keene

Towing and Recovery Mini Stock main event. Steady Tim Paquette came home third, Tim O'Shea was fourth, and Dick Lamotte fifth.

Jimmy Zellman won a thriller in the Brattleboro Towing and Recovery Pure Stocks, coming off a pair of runner-up finishes at Claremont, the Bay State blaster had his mind set on something a little bit better. Leading all the way, he achieved that goal Saturday.

Zellman's opening night victory didn't come easily though. He had Colton Hull and Carlos Grenier draped all over him every inch of the way. Grenier got up for second on lap 18 and the potent trio raced under a blanket the rest of the way. With Hull third, Josh Brigham impressed in fourth, and Kyle Begos was fifth.

Chris Kingsley won the

spirited Beck's Automotive Pro V8 Sportsman feature. Stephen LaPlante was second and Garden State ace Scott Riggelman came home third. It was Kingsley's first career win on the high banks.

Sofia Rego had a memorable night in the Doug's Auto Body Young Guns, winning with ease in both her heat and feature races. Eleven-year-old Dylan Stati - yes, just eleven - was second in the 15-lap feature, and Maeve Barry was third.

Monadnock Speedway roars back into action next Saturday, May 2, with a special Todd Martell Memorial 75-lap Modified main event atop a full night of NASCAR Local Racing Series events, and the first visit of the season of the exciting Pro 4 Modified series. Post time is 6 p.m. each Saturday.

# Thunderbirds defeated in series opener with Bruins

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – The Springfield Thunderbirds and Providence Bruins fought tooth and nail in another stingy contest, with the Bruins prevailing 2-1 in Game 2 of the Atlantic Division Semifinals on Sunday night inside Amica Mutual Pavilion. With that, the series shifts back to Springfield tied at one game apiece in the best-of-five set.

All of the scoring in the game came in a window of less than six minutes' time in the opening period. For a fifth straight game in these playoffs, Springfield

succumbed to a 1-0 deficit within the opening half of period one. Frederic Brunet geared a slapper toward Georgi Romanov, who made the initial save. However, the rebound bounced over to a waiting Matej Blumel on the right wing, and the 2024-25 AHL goal scoring leader rifled it into an empty cage to make it a 1-0 game at 8:34 of the opening period.

The T-Birds were granted a power play and an opportunity to tie the score quickly, and at 11:30, Dillon Dube did just that, parking himself along the left post



and guiding a Hugh McGing pass behind Michael DiPietro to even the slate, 1-1. Alek Kaskimaki picked up his second assist in as many games to round out the scoring play.

The Bruins showed they, too, could answer in a hurry, as Brunet gathered a rolling puck along the right wing and geared a backhand pass across the slot to Georgii Merkulov, who beat Romanov with a

quick release to put Providence ahead, 2-1, at 14:02.

Providence outshot the T-Birds 25 - 14 over the first 40 minutes of the game, but both DiPietro and Romanov were taxed with special teams work in a second period that featured 10 minor penalties and eight combined power plays of varying lengths.

The T-Birds finally were able to give DiPietro

a steady diet of scoring chances in the third, but the Springfield power play left two more opportunities on the table, going 0-for-6 in the final two frames after connecting on their first man advantage of the evening.

Springfield's netminding and penalty killing did everything in its power to buy the offense time for an equalizer. Romanov, for a fourth straight contest, kept his opposition to two goals or less. The T-Birds' backstop has now stopped 116 of 123 shots for a .943 save percentage in the Calder Cup Playoffs.

## ► Public Notices

**City of Holyoke Notice of Public Hearing**  
The DGR Committee of the Holyoke City Council will hold a public hearing to hear a special permit application of Wayne Versace for a nonconforming structure to construct an attached deck and install a rear entry door at 5 Brightwood Ave per 4.7.5. Hearing will take place on **Monday, May 18, 2026 at 6:30 pm**

at Holyoke City Hall 536 Dwight St and can be accessed remotely via [www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us) Meeting ID 824 0539 6605 Meeting Passcode 689658 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](mailto:Anderson-BurgosJ@holyoke.org) or by

phone 413-322-5525.  
DGR Chair, Richard Purcell  
05/01, 05/08/2026

**City of Holyoke Notice of Public Hearing**  
The DGR Committee of the Holyoke City Council will hold a public hearing to hear a Special permit application of Cypress Acquisitions, LLC c/o MacDermid Reynolds & Glissman P.C

for alteration of a nonconforming structure at 2201 Northampton Street per 4.7.3. Hearing will take place on **Monday, May 18, 2026 at 6:30 pm** at Holyoke City Hall 536 Dwight St and can be accessed remotely via [www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us) Meeting ID 824 0539 6605 Meeting Passcode 689658 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](mailto:Anderson-BurgosJ@holyoke.org) or by phone 413-322-5525.

DGR Chair, Richard Purcell  
05/01, 05/08/2026

**City of Holyoke Public Hearing Notice**

The Holyoke Planning Board will hold a Public Hearing on **Tuesday, May 26, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom.com** ID: 836 3939 8493; CALL IN \*67 646 558 8656 to hear, pursuant to the Holyoke Zoning Ordinance, Section 6.4.6.4, a Special Permit for an Increase in Sign Size for Florence Bank, at 1490-1504 Northampton Street, Holyoke MA 01040 (105-00-059).

The complete application may be viewed through the Holyoke Planning Dept M-F, 8:30-4 p.m.  
Applicant:  
Holyoke Retail, LLC  
Planning Board:  
Lauren Niles, Chairperson  
05/08, 05/15/2026

**Office of Purchasing 536 Dwight Street, Room 3 Holyoke, Ma 01040 Request for Quotes 2026-49 DPW Pouliot Pool Repairs**

The City of Holyoke, through its Procurement Office, is requesting quotes from qualified contractors for Pouliot Pool repairs. This procurement is conducted in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30B and Chapter 149. Documents are available electronically starting on 5/6/2026 @ 10AM by requesting electronically from [morrowj@holyoke.org](mailto:morrowj@holyoke.org)

The City seeks a contractor to complete repairs and maintenance necessary to prepare Pouliot Pool for the upcoming swim season. The contractor shall provide all labor, materials, tools, and supervision required. Scope of Work: Concrete Repair,- Repair damaged concrete, remove deteriorated material, structural patching, Surface Coating, apply commercial-grade pool coating, Pool Seam Resealing, remove and replace sealant, Pool Marking, Repaint depth line.

A non Mandatory but highly recommended site visit will be held on May 14th, 2026 @ 10AM Pouliot Pool 575 Maple Street, Holyoke Ma 01040.

Work must be completed prior to swim season. Include start date and duration.

**Submission Instructions Due May 5, 2026 at 2:00 PM.** Submit electronically to [morrowj@holyoke.org](mailto:morrowj@holyoke.org). Late submissions will be rejected.

Prevailing Wage Rates must be paid wage sheet for this job attached to specification documents.

The City reserves the right to reject any or all quotes, waive informalities, or cancel the RFQ.  
05/08/2026

**City of Holyoke Conservation Commission**

Pursuant to MGL Chap. 131 §40 and the Holyoke Wetlands Ordinance, the Holyoke Conservation Commission will hold a Public Meeting on **Thursday May 14th, 2026 at 6:15 p.m.** remotely via zoom at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83189025752?pwd=sCx3V77mzmdKzQoFJ7VNSmDVfWef0m.1> to review a Request for Determination of Applicability filed by Tec Associates on behalf of Pioneer Valley Railroad for the confirmation of wetland boundaries under the railroad's Vegetation Management Plan along the Pioneer Valley Railroad Right-of-Way in Holyoke, MA.

Signed,  
Jeffery Horan, Chairperson  
05/08/2026

# EARLY DEADLINES

In observance of Memorial Day,

## PUBLIC NOTICES

EARLY AD DEADLINE

Place your public notice

no later than NOON

# Thursday, May 21

– Thank you!

*The Holyoke Sun*

## OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.

One is a free, brief **Death Notice** listing the name of deceased, date of death and funeral date and place.

The other is a **Paid Obituary**, costing \$275, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice and may include a photograph. **Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: [obits@turley.com](mailto:obits@turley.com).

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

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- 2 Access archives and digital tear sheets by newspaper title.
- 3 Find a quick link to the state of Massachusetts' public notice web site to search all notices in Massachusetts newspapers.

*Public notice deadlines are Mondays at noon, Fridays noon for Monday holidays.*

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**HUGE ESTATE SALE DON'T MISS IT!**  
**2 Christopher Lane, Wilbraham**  
**Saturday, May 9 only, 9am-3pm**  
 Everything is priced to sell - and it all must go! Browse a wide variety of items including: extensive holiday decor, Beanie Babies, household items, furniture, Disney collectibles, New England sports memorabilia. Come early for the best selection!

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**SIT-IN KAYAK, Santee Hurricane 126**, \$300.00. Call 413-583-278.

**WHEEL HORSE COLLECTORS:** 4 old models, 312-8 (2), C-81 Elctro 12. Call Eleanor 413-283-3540.

## TAG SALE

**FRIDAY, MAY 8 AND SATURDAY, MAY 9, 8am-3pm.** Rain/shine.  
**63 Walker Rd., Wales.**  
 Antiques, furniture, plants, rare finds.

### HUGE ESTATE SALE

**DON'T MISS IT!**  
**2 Christopher Lane, Wilbraham**  
**Saturday, May 9 only, 9am-3pm**  
 Everything is priced to sell - and it all must go! Browse a wide variety of items including: extensive holiday decor, Beanie Babies, household items, furniture, Disney collectibles, New England sports memorabilia. Come early for the best selection!

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Donald Roy (860) 874-8396

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**In The News**

# Library hosts annual mini-golf day

**HOLYOKE** – Last Saturday morning, the Holyoke Public Library became the site of a miniature golf course for the public to enjoy.

A miniature golf course was installed throughout the three floors of the library and families had the opportunity to go through an entire

tour of the library building while mini-golfing 18 holes. Outside of the building, some large games and art through sidewalk chalk could also be enjoyed.

The library was full of activity during the three-hour free golfing opportunity. The event has become a yearly tradition.



Bridget Stark watches her daughter, Emilia, 7, start the 16th hole.



Mini-golfers navigate the course.



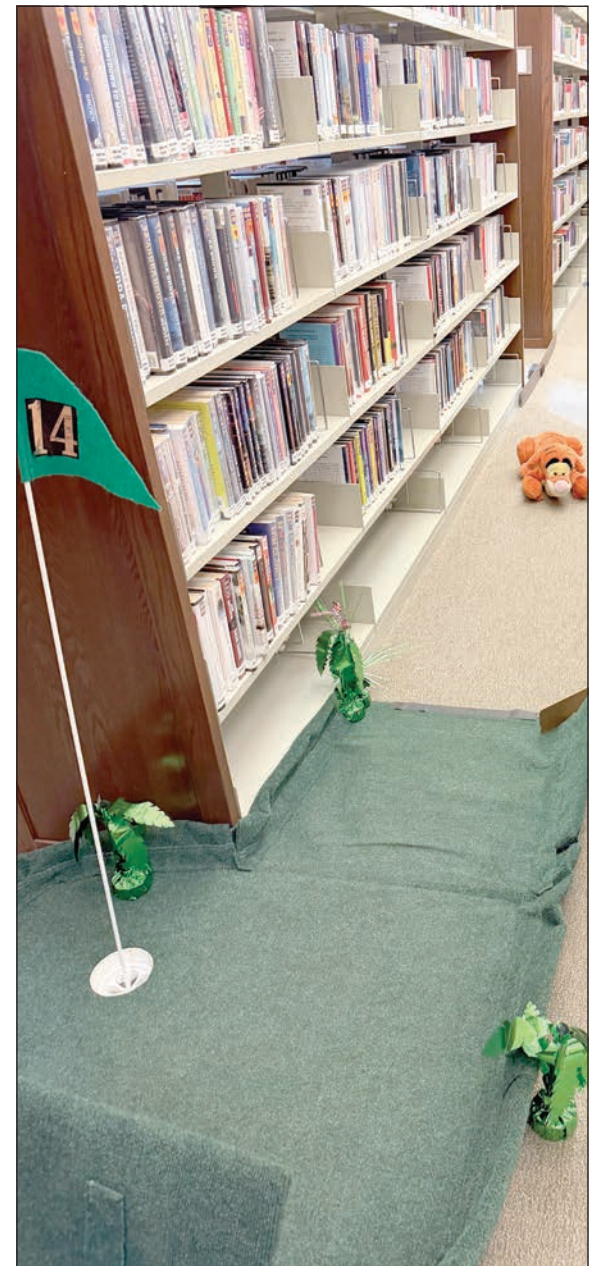
Dominic O'Connell, 8, swings at the 10th hole.



Roman, 3, and Gianna Hutchinson, 5, enjoy the oversized Connect Four game. *Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli*



Tatiana Matos and her daughter, Aliani, 7, enjoy the indoor course.

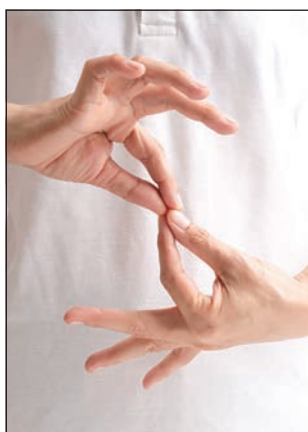


Holes could be found throughout the library.

## Basic Sign Language series offered

**CHICOPEE** – The Chicopee Council on Aging will offer a 4-part Basic American Sign Language Series at Chicopee Council on Aging's RiverMills Center, located at 5 W. Main Street. Join staff from the Willie Rose School for the Deaf for this 4-part series to learn basic American Sign Language. You will learn the alphabet, practice fingerspelling and will also build everyday vocabulary. Through

games, activities, and lots of practice, you will learn how to introduce yourself ask simple questions and respond in basic conversation. This is a class designed to be beginner friendly, so no experience is needed! The classes will take place May 11, May 18, June 1 and June 8 from 4 to 5 p.m. The cost of the series is \$5 and you must register in advance by stopping by RiverMills or calling 534-3698.



## State Ornithologist to discuss latest in bird conservation

**SPRINGFIELD** – On Monday, May 4, at 7 p.m. the Allen Bird Club of Springfield, MA invites the public to attend, From Wood Thrush to Goshawks: Using Traditional and Contemporary Approaches to Promote Bird Conservation. This program will be presented by State Ornithologist Andrew Vitz, who will

explain how a combination of traditional and advanced technologies are used in studying bird biology for improved conservation. Dr. Vitz will highlight species such as the American Goshawk, Eastern Whip-poor-will, American Bald Eagle, Wood Thrush, and American Kestrel. This presentation will be held, free

of charge, in the Tolman Auditorium of the Springfield Science Museum, 21 Edwards Street, Springfield, MA.

The Allen Bird Club is a nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing Greater Springfield area birders together since 1912. For more information, please visit [www.AllenBirdClub.org](http://www.AllenBirdClub.org).

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