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City officials enacts water use restrictions

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

HOLYOKE – For the better part of 2026, despite the heavy snow storms that occurred late January and early February, most of Western and Central Massachusetts, including right here in Holyoke have been at some level of drought.

According to the city’s website, On May 8, the Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Rebecca Tepper declared that the Connecticut River Valley is currently in a Level 2 - Significant Drought because of below normal rainfall over the last three months.

The Holyoke Water Works surface water supply remains stable at 95% capacity and is not currently threatened by the drought situation. However, in accordance with the City’s Water Management Act Registration, the Holyoke

Water Works is implementing water use restrictions:

All nonessential outdoor water uses are banned with the exception of watering of ornamental and flower gardens with drip irrigation, handheld hose, or water cans.

Essential uses of water include: health and safety reasons, including public facilities used for cooling such as the splash pad and swimming pools, production of food, including privately-owned home vegetable gardens, maintenance of livestock, core function of a business, irrigation of public or interscholastic athletic fields and public parks, and watering of publicly funded shade trees.

The water works said nonessential uses of water are: irrigation of lawns via sprinklers or automatic irrigation systems, washing of vehicles, except in a commercial car wash or as nec-

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Songwriter/author delights students

Submitted photo
Last week, Author Sonia De Los Santos visiting a pair of Holyoke elementary schools to interact with children using musical performances.

Submitted by
Holyoke Public Schools

HOLYOKE – Sonia De Los Santos, a renowned songwriter and children’s author, received a warm welcome at Kelly Elementary and E.N. White Elementary during a recent visit. A Latin Grammy nominee, Ms. De Los Santos captivated stu-

dents with musical performances in English and Spanish and a reading of her newest children’s storybook, “La Golondrina.”

The author’s visit was made possible by Joan Grenier, owner of the Odyssey Bookshop in South Hadley, and her Rise Up Reading/Leyendo Pa’Lante initiative, which donated

417 signed copies of “La Golondrina.” Her donation meant that every student in grades PreK-1 at both elementary schools were able to take their own personal copy home to read again with their families.

“La Golondrina” tells the joyful story of a young girl’s fascination with a migratory swallow that

sings in the trees outside her grandmother’s home in Mexico. As the tale unfolds, the young girl speaks to the bird about its upcoming journey northward to find food and a new home—much like the one her own father is making, and the one she will someday make, too.

See AUTHOR, page 6



HCC recently honored English Professor Patricia Sullivan, shown here with her granddaughters, proudly displaying her faculty award.

Long-time HCC professor honored with faculty award

HOLYOKE – Longtime Holyoke Community College English Professor Patricia Sullivan, a Holyoke resident and HCC alum, is the recipient of the 2026 Elaine Marieb Faculty Chair for Teaching Excellence Award, the college’s highest faculty honor.

As this year’s awardee, she will lead the procession of graduates and give the keynote address at the college’s 79th Commencement ceremony on May 30 at the MassMutual Center in Springfield.

The award was one of six presented during HCC’s

annual, end-of-the-year staff and faculty awards ceremony on Wednesday, May 20.

Sullivan graduated from Holyoke High School in 1974 and HCC in 1976. She earned a bachelor’s degree from American International

See AWARD, page 6

Graduates make commitment to becoming future educators

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

HOLYOKE – Once again, Holyoke Public Schools are recognizing outgoing seniors who are planning to seek higher education to become a part of the next generation of educators.

Last Friday, May 15, Future Teachers Signing Day was held.

According to the Holyoke Public Schools, the event celebrates graduating seniors who are planning to pursue a career in some area of education following the completion of undergraduate programming.

The event was held this year at Summit View

Pavilion, brought together students, families, educators, and community members as they honored the next generation of educators—and encouraged them to return to Holyoke as teachers after earning their certifications. The tradition has entered its eighth year now. Since 2019, HPS has honored a combined 53 students over the years.

This year’s honorees as future educators include:

- **Jimary Fardonk**, a senior at Dean Tech who plans to attend Holyoke Community College
- **Samariliz Gaston**, a senior at Dean Tech who plans to attend Holyoke Community College
- **Isabella Laury**, a

senior at Dean Tech who plans to attend Elms College

- **Kaylie Lopez**, a senior at HHS North who plans to attend UMass Amherst

- **Fynn Maldonado**, a senior at HHS North who plans to attend Keene State College

- **Ashanty Provosot**, a senior at HHS North who plans to attend Assumption University

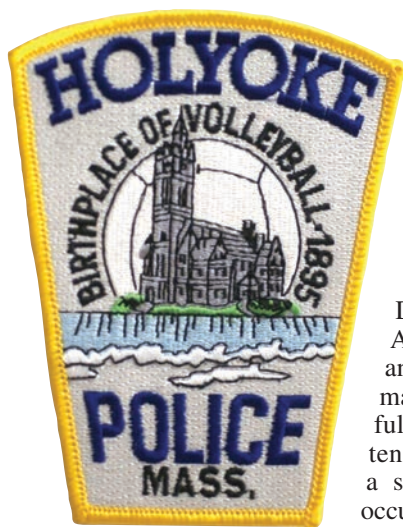
- **Dani Rodriguez**, a senior at HHS North who plans to attend Holyoke Community College

- **Bella Rosado**, a senior at HHS North who plans to attend Holyoke Community College

See FUTURE, page 6



Eight Holyoke graduating seniors are making a commitment to pursue careers in education. They were honored at a signing program held last Friday evening at Summit View Pavilion.



Last year’s Holyoke Mall shooting subject sentenced

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

HOLYOKE – On Monday, Hampden District Attorney Anthony D. Gulluni has announced that a juvenile male indicted as a youthful offender has been sentenced in connection with a shooting incident that occurred inside the Holyoke

Mall on July 25, 2025.

The incident was one of the most recent incidents that have drawn emergency personnel to the mall. There have been a couple of shootings that have taken place there, as well as a fire in the middle of the mall near the food court’s ventilation system that has also taken place.

The resolution for the juvenile that opened fire on police resolved last week.

Last Thursday, the defendant was sentenced to five years to five years and one day in state prison on two counts of assault with intent to kill.

Additionally, the defendant received concurrent state prison sentences of two and a half years to three years on charges of unlawful possession of a firearm and possession of a firearm without a serial number. The

defendant was also sentenced to probation through 2032, on two counts of attempted assault and battery with a firearm.

As conditions of probation, the defendant was ordered to stay away from the victims and the Holyoke Mall, possess no firearms or dangerous weapons, and attend school, work, or obtain a GED.

According to a press

release from the DA’s office, at approximately 4:30 p.m. on July 25, 2025, Holyoke Police Officers working a detail assignment inside the Holyoke Mall approached the defendant after a mall security officer observed an alleged shoplifting incident. During the encounter near the Round One entrance, the defendant produced a fire-

See SHOOTING, page 6

Community Preservation Act funds granted to projects

HOLYOKE – The city recently made Community Preservation Act grant awards for six different projects. They include funding for Holyoke City Hall’s steps, Scott Tower at Anniversary Park, horses on the Holyoke Merry-Go-Round, The Dwight St. Garden, windows at Holyoke Health Center, and improvements to Butler’s Pantry at Wistariahurst Museum.



There will be major improvements to Scott Tower, including capping the tower base with cement pavement, replacement of interior steps with an aluminum spiral staircase, graffiti removal and repointing and mortaring the fieldstone wall. A new cement concrete ramp with an aluminum railing to the Scott Tower platform, and the surrounding drive will be graded and resurfaced.



Funds were given for an engineering study to rehabilitate the City Hall granite stairs. This study will serve as the foundation for future permitting, bidding, and construction. These historic granite stairs serve as a primary entrance to Holyoke City Hall.



Another award is for the full restoration of four of the 98-year-old, handcrafted wooden horses. The work includes transportation to the restoration site, professional museum-quality restoration, and the installation of new brass sleeves.

UCCH to host choral competition

HOLYOKE – The United Congregational Church of Holyoke is pleased to welcome Music in the Parks, a regional choral competition featuring some of the most talented high school choirs in the area.

The final two events will be held on Friday, May 29 and Friday, June 5. Admission is free, and the

public is warmly encouraged to attend.

Music in the Parks draws competitors from across the region, making each event a wonderful opportunity to experience the energy, talent, and dedication of young performers at their best.

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.

HCC celebrates Commencement May 30

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Community College will celebrate its 79th Commencement on Saturday, May 30, at the MassMutual Center in Springfield. The ceremony begins at 10 a.m.

This year, HCC will confer associate degrees and certificates to about 700 graduates from the class of 2026. The procession of graduates into the arena and the keynote address will be delivered by the yet-to-be named recipient of the

Marieb Award of Teaching Excellence, HCC’s highest faculty award.

A handful of students from this year’s class will also be featured on the Commencement stage.

Foundation of Health major Yasmari Cardenas ’26 of Springfield will deliver the student address to her classmates. Music major Gaia Ciano ’26 of Springfield, the student performer, will sing “My Way,” by Jacques Revaux, lyrics by Paul Anka. Liberal arts

major Estefany Duron Mejia ’26 of Chicopee will present the class gift.

For those who cannot attend in person, HCC will stream the Commencement ceremony live over the Internet. The live stream will be available through a link on the main page of the college website, www.hcc.edu, where other details about this year’s Commencement can also be found.

The ceremony will be American Sign Language interpreted.

Holyoke Arts League to be featured at Wistariahurst Museum exhibition

HOLYOKE – During the month of June, the Wistariahurst Museum at 238 Cabot St. will host an exhibition of artwork by members of the Holyoke Arts League (HAL). The museum and gardens are the historic home of the Skinner Family that owned and operated the Skinner Silk Mill, the world’s premier silk fabric production facility in the city’s Canal District.

Meet the artists at an opening reception on Monday, June 1, from 5-7 p.m. This event is free

and open to the public. Throughout the month of June, the exhibition may be viewed free of charge during the museum’s open hours, Mondays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and Tuesdays from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

This juried show will include entries in oil and pastel, watercolor, acrylic, tempera, gouache and other non-oil wet media, graphite, charcoal, printmaking and other graphic media, sculpture and ceramics. Light refreshments will be served.

The arts league was

founded in 1923 and is now celebrating its 102nd year. The League holds artist demonstrations and weekly adult figure drawing sessions. For more information about HAL, visit <https://www.holyoke-arts-league.org> online. You may also address inquiries to holyokeartsleague@gmail.com.

For more information about Wistariahurst, call (413) 322-5660 or online at info@wistariahurst.org. You may direct inquiries about Wistariahurst by emailing munselle@holyoke.org.

Golf to support Wreaths Across America

AGAWAM – The Friends of the Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Agawam and the Friends of the Agawam Veterans Council proudly announce their Second Annual Golf Tournament in support of Wreaths Across America, a national effort to honor and remember our fallen veterans during the holiday season.

This exciting event promises a day of camaraderie, remembrance,

and community support. Golfers, sponsors, and community members are invited to participate and help lay wreaths at the graves of veterans resting at the Agawam Veterans Memorial Cemetery this December.

The Tournament will be held on June 28. Registration begins at 10:30 a.m. and golfing starts at 12 noon at Agawam Municipal Golf Course. The costs are \$135 for an individual golf-

er, \$540 for a team of four, \$30 for dinner only, and \$100 to sponsor a tee. Other sponsorships are also available.

To Register or Sponsor, contact Marline Claremont at 413-221-9548 or email wreathfriends@gmail.com. Registration forms are available upon request. Join us in honoring those who served with a round of golf, good food, and great company—all for a noble cause.

Cameron promoted to Holyoke Medical Center executive vice president

HOLYOKE – Spiros Hatiras, President and CEO of Holyoke Medical Center and Valley Health Systems has announced the promotion of Carl Cameron to Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer.

“Carl has been with Holyoke Medical Center for over 25 years and his dedication and commitment to the hospital and our community is unmatched. He has been

a driving force in expanding the footprint of Holyoke Medical Center as we continue to grow in services and locations,” said Hatiras. “Carl has also implemented innovative technologies that have brought Holyoke Medical Center to the forefront of medical effi-



Carl Cameron

ciency, while also helping to recruit and retain exceptional physicians and staff members.”

“I am proud to be a part of Holyoke Medical Center and Valley Health Systems and our ability to continuously adapt and thrive as an inde-

pendent community hospital. Together with the strong leadership of Spiros Hatiras and the hard work of our entire team of physicians, nurses, and staff, we are fulfilling our vision as the best place for care and the best place to work,” said Cameron.

Cameron joined Holyoke Medical Center in 2001. His roles have included Chief Operating Officer, Vice President of Operations,

Chief Information Officer, and Director of Information Systems. He earned his B.A. degree in Business Administration from Western New England University, and an M.S. degree in Information Systems from WNEU. Cameron has a certificate in Lean Healthcare from the University of Michigan and is a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

Youth sports fundraiser

HOLYOKE – On Wednesday, May 27, Nick’s Nest will be holding a fundraiser for the boys 5/6th grade Paper City Basketball team.

The team is raising funds for a tournament in Hampton Beach. 5% of all proceeds from day sales will be donated to their cause.

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Joslyn Fox to headline PrideFest 2026

More Pride Month events are scheduled

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Pride is proud to announce that Massachusetts drag performer Joslyn Fox will headline Holyoke PrideFest 2026, taking place on Saturday, June 27, 2026, at Veterans Park in downtown Holyoke.

Known for her humor, heart, and unforgettable personality from Season 6 of RuPaul's Drag Race, Joslyn Fox brings hometown New England energy to what organizers say will be the biggest Holyoke Pride celebration yet.

Holyoke Pride has grown from a grassroots community gathering into a month-long citywide celebration of LGBTQIA+ visibility, culture, and joy, drawing thousands of attendees from across Western Massachusetts and beyond. PrideFest itself has become

one of the region's fastest-growing Pride events, featuring live performances, local artists, food vendors, community organizations, family activities, and nightlife events throughout the city.

The 2026 celebration begins with the annual Pride Flag Raising Ceremony at Holyoke City Hall on Monday, June 1, followed by a full calendar of events throughout the month, including:

- **June 1** – Pride Flag Raising 5 p.m. at Holyoke City Hall

- **June 5** – House of Colors Youth Queer Prom

- **June 7** – Buen Provecho Drag Brunch

- **June 13** – Holyoke Pride Rainbow Run 5K & 1-Mile Walk at Ashley Reservoir

- **June 25** – Drag Story Hour at Holyoke Public Library

- **June 27** – Holyoke

PrideFest 12 to 6 p.m. at Veterans Park

- **June 27** – Holyoke Pride After Party 6 to 11 p.m. at The Wauregan

Organizers say the expanded lineup reflects Holyoke's continued commitment to building visible, welcoming, and inclusive spaces for LGBTQIA+ residents and visitors alike.

"Now more than at any point in recent memory, it is important that LGBTQIA+ people know they are not alone," said Holyoke City Councilor and longtime Holyoke Pride organizer Juan Anderson-Burgos. "Pride is more than a celebration — it is visibility, solidarity, and a public declaration that every person deserves the right to exist openly, safely, and without fear. When communities come together in support and love, especially during difficult moments in our country's history, that visibility becomes powerful.

Holyoke continues to show that our city stands proudly with the LGBTQIA+ community."

Holyoke Pride organizers are also inviting local businesses, organizations, and community members to become sponsors, volunteers, and partners for the 2026 season. According to organizers, sponsorship support helps keep many Pride events free and accessible to the public.

"What began as a one-day event has become a city-wide movement centered on community, creativity, and connection. Every sponsor, volunteer, performer, and attendee helps make Holyoke Pride possible," said Anderson-Burgos.

Additional announcements regarding performances, entertainment, vendors, and special guests will be released throughout the spring. Holyoke Pride organizers also wish to thank lead



sponsor Holyoke Community College and the Holyoke Local Cultural Council for their continued support over the years, helping expand LGBTQIA+ programming, visibility, and community

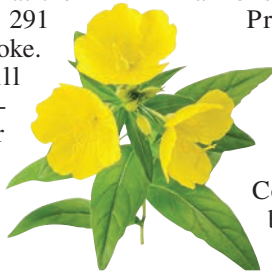
celebration throughout the City of Holyoke.

For event information, sponsorship opportunities, volunteer signups, and updates, visit www.holyokepride.org.

Plant Sale to be held at Senior Center

HOLYOKE – The Holyoke Senior Center Garden Club will hold its second annual plant sale on Saturday, June 6, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Senior Center, 291 Pine St., Holyoke. Shoppers will find a selection of sun or shade loving perennials, plus herbs and annu-

als that do well in our local gardens. Members will be available to answer questions about the plants they enjoy. The sale will be held rain or shine.



Proceeds from the sale are used for projects that beautify and support the Senior Center's gardens. Come and visit our beautiful life-enhancing gardens.

Celebrate Juneteenth at Wistariahurst

HOLYOKE – On June 19, Wistariahurst Museum and Genuine Culture welcome guests to the Wistariahurst gardens for our annual Juneteenth event, Celebrate Juneteenth! This event commemorates freedom and the country's second Independence Day through community and celebration. Wistariahurst and Genuine Culture are collaborating for the fourth year to bring back this celebration for the Holyoke community and beyond. Enjoy activities throughout Wistariahurst's

grounds. Play games in the gardens, get creative with hands-on art projects, and more! There's something for everyone, with activities for people of all ages.

This event will feature performances including Voices of Praise, storyteller Eshu Bumpus, and DJ Pzo Pete! Local food vendors will also be selling food and drinks for guests to enjoy, including Souper Sweet, White Lion Brewery, and Thai Chili Street Food. Other performers and food vendors are to be

announced.

Black-owned businesses, makers, and artists will be selling a variety of locally made items. Local organizations will also have tables at the event, sharing information on their initiatives and what work they're doing in the community.

Juneteenth serves as a poignant reminder of the remarkable resilience of Black lives, symbolizing the challenges and victories of formerly enslaved individuals striving for unity, education, and polit-

ical engagement during the Reconstruction period. So mark your calendars and bring your friends and family to Wistariahurst Museum on June 19 from 12 to 3 p.m. It's going to be a day of joy, making memories, honoring history, and uplifting the voices of the Black community in Holyoke. Best of all, admission to this celebration is completely free and open to the public. We can't wait to see you there.

This event is sponsored by the Adam's Foundation of South Hadley.

HCC Foundation awards \$405K in scholarships

HOLYOKE – The Holyoke Community College Foundation has awarded \$405,000 in scholarships to students for the 2026-2027 academic year.

The HCC Foundation awarded 438 scholarships to 422 incoming, current, and transferring HCC students. Some students received multiple scholarship awards. Individual awards range from \$500 to \$5,000.

HCC celebrated this year's recipients and donors at a scholarship reception on May 14.

The HCC Foundation is a nonprofit that works to advance the college's

mission, vision, and values. Founded in 1968 as the Friends of Holyoke Community College, in response to a devastating fire that forced the college to rebuild on a new campus, the Foundation now manages assets of more than \$20 million, the largest community college foundation endowment in Massachusetts.

Holyoke:

Lexi Amburgey, Cedric Ayvazian, Max Berrios Rivera, Zoe Bisbing, Liushka Borrero Ramos, Charlie Bridges, Odalíz Cancel Acevedo, Eurené Carabuena, Franchesca Carattini, Eduardo Cardenas,

Alanie Castellano, Nathalie Chavez, Shakira Colon, Shaina Colon, Carolyne Concepcion, Suleika Concepcion, Yarilis Conde Estremera, Joshua Correa, Chad Correia, Aneilys Cruz, Samantha Diaz, Dinmariel Ferrer, Tanayri Figueroa, Misterna Isaac, Deysie Isaac, Jemima Kitsa, Alicia Knapp, Cristal LaSanta, Athena Lebron, Rose Luciano, Tiff Mackey (two awards), Deshaun Malave, Arthur Mazzu, Luis Medina, Scarlett Mendes, Jamil Navarro, Eithan Ortiz Viera, Natalie Pelletier, Dorah Rains, Mariely Ramos, Kristen Renta-

Vazquez (two awards), Lionel Resto, Jennifer Reynolds, Rafael Rivera, Nicole Rivera, Raysha Rivera, Lexyanna Rivera, Erykka Rocha, Kevin Rodgers, Jeremy Rodriguez, Judeliz Rodriguez, Jacob Rodriguez, Vivian Rodriguez, Emmanuel Rojas, Mayrangelique Rojas De Leon, Karina Romero, Katelyn Roque, Sammy Rosa, Mya Sandoval, Jerika Santana, Heidey Santos Roman, Kayla Saunders, Melissa Sepulveda, Aidan Stark, Nick Sylvester, Sidney Valentin, Aleena Valentin, Caridad Vega-Ramos, Tawana Walter.

Library loaning out tablets

HOLYOKE – The library is offering tablets for loan to patrons with a Holyoke address and a valid CW MARS library card. The devices are provided through funding from the Massachusetts Broadband Institute.

The goal of the program is to expand access to education, workforce training, and telehealth by establishing public device lending programs.

Devices are fully loaded with software. Please call or stop by the library for more details.

Tablets should be used to support activity in one of

three categories:

- **Workforce Development:** Allow for job-seekers to build skills that support them in crafting résumés, complete online training, apply for jobs and pursue remote work.

- **Education:** Strengthen participation of individuals to complete virtual coursework, homework help, adult education and digital literacy training.

- **Health Monitoring & Access:** Provide devices for telehealth visits, patient portal navigation, accessing health information and supporting remote patient monitoring programs.

Are you having difficulty communicating with your partner, struggling with boundaries, and healthy relationships?

We invite you to join us Friday afternoons from 1-2:30 pm to explore these topics and more.

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Fri., May 22 Jim McArdle & Jerry Murphy 6-9pm	Sat., May 23 Blaney Brothers	Sat., May 30 Jack & His Guitar 6-9pm
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A PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Holy Spirit, You who made me see everything and showed me the way to reach my ideal. You, who gave me the divine gift to forgive and forget the wrong that is done to me and you, who are in all instances of my life with me. I, in this short dialogue want to thank you for everything and confirm once more that I never want to be separated from you no matter how great the material desire may be. I want to be with you and my loved ones in your perpetual glory. Amen. Thank you for your love towards me and my loved ones. Persons must pray the prayer three consecutive days without asking your wish. After third day wish will be granted no matter how difficult it may be. Then promise to publish this dialogue as soon as this favor is granted. I will never stop trusting God and His power.

R.E.J.

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Guest Column



Social Security's 'First Year Rule' and withdrawing

Dear Rusty:

I am 63 years old, and about to apply for my Social Security benefits.

I am self-employed but only working part time. I know about Social Security's annual earnings limit but recently I learned I must also be concerned about a monthly earnings limit of \$2,040. My questions are:

1) How do I find out if I will be subject to a monthly earning limit of \$2,040 per month? I thought it was only evaluated annually.

2) If I choose to cancel Social Security within the first year or after, what are the penalties? Would I have to pay them back for the whole amount for the whole time that they paid me? Which makes no sense, since I have been paid into SS since I was 13 years old.

Can you help me understand this?

Signed: Claiming Early and Still Working

Dear Claiming Early:

It can get tricky if you are still working after claiming your Social Security before your SS Full Retirement Age, especially during your first year collecting. I'm happy to answer your specific questions:

1. There is a special rule which applies during your first year collecting early Social Security benefits (e.g., before your Full Retirement Age or "FRA," which for you is age 67). What will happen is this: when the IRS provides SSA with your 2026 earnings (in 2027), SSA will review to see if your total 2026 net earnings from self-employment exceeded the 2026 annual limit of \$24,480.

If not, no further action is necessary. But if you did exceed the full year 2026 earnings limit, SSA will contact you and ask you to provide them with details about your monthly 2026 net earnings. If you have exceeded the monthly limit in any 2026 month after your SS benefit started, you will not be entitled to SS benefits for that month.

Essentially, if you have exceeded the annual limit, you cannot exceed the monthly earnings limit in any remaining month during your first year of collecting. If you exceeded the annual limit and also any monthly limit, SSA will send you an overpayment notice saying you must repay them for the benefits you were not entitled to receive because you exceeded the monthly earnings limit.

2. You can, within 12 months of applying for Social Security, ask SSA to withdraw your application for SS retirement benefits. They will do that for you, but you will also be

required to repay them all SS benefits that they have already paid to (or for) you.

This essentially would "wipe the slate clean" and enable your SS benefit to continue growing, allowing you to apply for a larger monthly benefit later. But if you wait longer than 12 months after you first apply for SS benefits, you can no longer withdraw your application for Social Security. Thereafter, you would be subject to the annual earnings limit (the monthly earnings limit would no longer apply).

FYI, after you reach your FRA, there is no limit on your earnings and you could choose to suspend your benefit payments and earn Delayed Retirement Credits (DRCs) to get a higher monthly benefit. Also at your FRA, if SSA withheld any of your benefits because you exceeded the earnings limit before reaching your FRA, you would get time credit for the number of months your benefits were withheld. Essentially, they would advance your benefit-start month by the number of months your benefits were withheld, yielding a slightly higher monthly amount after your FRA.

Finally, it's important to know that the contributions you made to Social Security from payroll taxes (FICA/SECA) over your lifetime are not what determines your monthly SS benefit amount. Your monthly SS benefit is based on two main factors: a) your average monthly earnings (indexed for inflation) for the highest earning 35 years over your lifetime as reported to the IRS, and b) the age at which you claim your SS benefits.

Your contributions to Social Security while working only provide you with eligibility to collect SS benefits; the contributions aren't put into a separate account for you and are not used to calculate your monthly SS 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

Why do we wait until Memorial Day to plant?

For as long as I can remember, the "safe date" for planting tender crops was always Memorial Day.

This year in particular the holiday is on the early side, the 25th of May, as opposed to the 30th or 31st. Here in New England, five or six days can make all the difference in the world.

Sure, as I write, the mercury is set to rise well into the high eighties for three or four days, then become more reasonable again. It's a wonder the plants know what to do.

Anyhow, read on to learn about some tender plants and how they respond better when soil or air temperatures have warmed.

Although cool loving peas and warmth loving beans are both legumes, bean seeds in particular crave seventy to eighty degree soil in which to germinate. This is particularly evident with white seeded

bean varieties, since the white seeds reflect the heat instead of holding on to it like dark seeds do. Oftentimes, white seeds will rot before they sprout if planted too soon. If you are in the mood to gamble and desire an early sowing of beans, use a dark seeded variety.

Untreated corn seeds will not germinate in soil below 60 degrees. We are advised to be patient and trust that seed planted in warm soil will make up for lost time, and they typically will, in no time flat.

Those of us who plant only a small plot have luck starting corn seeds indoors then transplanting the seed-

lings outside. I sowed my corn two seeds per six pack a few days back and have it on heat along with a sowing of winter squash and melons and all are popping up nicely.

I usually pick the best of the two in the cell of the pack and pinch away the slower one so there is no competition, giving the stronger seedling all of the room to grow nicely. Never pull out when thinning; roots may be disturbed.

Speaking of seedlings, it's also important not to shock our home grown pepper or tomato seedlings by transplanting them into cold soil or cold air. Night temperatures should be a consistent 50 degrees before planting out peppers.

I typically preheat the soil my peppers are to be planted in with black plastic, laying it right down in the garden bed for a week

See GARDEN, page 5



by Roberta McQuaid



By Ellenor Downer

A Western Massachusetts resident spotted this brown thrasher in the Berkshire foothills.

Sometimes they visit feeders like the one in the attached photo. Brown thrashers blend in with their surrounding and are tricky to spot.

They are fairly large, slender songbirds with long proportions: the legs are long and sturdy, the bill is long and slightly down curved and the tail is long.

They often cock the tail upward in the manner of wrens. A bright yellow eye, gray brown face and black and white wings bars are other identifying features.

Thrashers are reddish brown on the head, back, tail and wings. They have a white breast and belly with

darker speckling. They are 9.1 to 11.8 inches long or slightly smaller than a blue jay. The brown thrasher is the only thrasher species found east of Texas.

Thrashers have one of the largest repertoires of any North American songbird over 1,000 different songs. Since they rarely venture far from thick undergrowth, there singing give their location away especially when perched in a treetop or shrubs.

Their songs are a complex string of many musical phrases, many copied from other birds' songs with each phrase typically sung twice. They also make a distinctive, harsh "tsuck" note.

They imitate other birds including Chuck-will's-widows, wood thrushes and northern flickers.



Photo by Connie Schwaiger

Brown thrasher

Both males and females incubate the eggs and feed the young. Nestlings sometimes leave the nest fully feathered within nine days of hatching, earlier than either of their smaller relatives, the northern mockingbird and gray catbird.

An aggressive defender of its nest, the Brown Thrasher is known to strike people and dogs hard enough to draw blood.

Shrubby habitats are popular hideouts for nest predators, which may explain why the thrashers

See BIRDS, page 5

the HOLYOKE Sun

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EDITOR/SPORTS
Greg Scibelli
aan@turley.com
sports@turley.com

ADVERTISING SALES
Wendy Delcamp
wdelcamp@turley.com

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WEB
sun.turley.com

PHONE
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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.

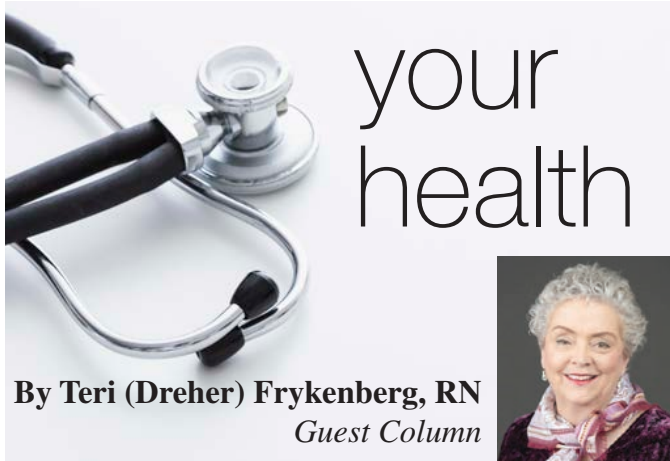
For more information, call 413-283-8393.

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.



your health

By Teri (Dreher) Frykenberg, RN
Guest Column

“But you look so good!” When someone with a disability hears those words, it’s not necessarily a compliment. In fact, it may make them feel unseen and unheard. That’s because many disabilities are not immediately apparent to others.

According to the World Health Organization, 1.3 billion people worldwide live with disabilities. In 2008, the number of Americans

with disabilities was about 39 million, but that number is probably much higher now because of the effects of the COVID pandemic. About 17 million adults report symptoms of “long COVID,” with most saying that the symptoms limit their daily activities to some degree.

Many symptoms of long COVID, such as fatigue and “brain fog,” are invisible. In fact, it’s estimated that more than 70% of disabilities are

Not every health challenge is a visible one

invisible, including autism, ADHD, dyslexia, chronic illnesses and mental health conditions. Many invisible disabilities go undiagnosed or misunderstood, leading to barriers in education, employment, travel and marketplaces.

“True inclusion begins when we start recognizing what we cannot see,” says Mary Anne Ehler, president of Protected Tomorrows in Lincolnshire, which helps special needs families prepare for the future. “Families in all walks of life experiencing all forms of disabilities, no matter if developmental, cognitive, physical or mental health disabilities, need specialized guidance and support.”

Autism is a prime example. It lies along a spectrum from mild to severe, meaning that many children and adults who appear “normal” may in fact be struggling with work, school and social interactions. Someone could

wonder why that person is behaving as they do without realizing that there is an underlying cause.

Another example in the news recently is dyslexia, which causes children and adults to have difficulty with reading and writing because of how their brains are wired. Cruelly, children with dyslexia have been labeled “stupid” or “slow,” when in fact, the only difference is that they approach learning differently. Many successful people, from Tom Cruise to Cher to California Gov. Gavin Newsom, have dyslexia.

If you’ve ever watched someone pull into a handicapped parking space and get out of the car without apparent difficulty, remember that three-fourths of those with disabilities don’t use assistive devices, such as wheelchairs, walkers or canes, according to the Invisible Disabilities Association (invisibledis-

abilities.org).

“Everyone deserves to live their best life,” Ehler said. “Whether or not a person utilizes an assistive device, if they are debilitated by symptoms such as fatigue, dizziness, mental health disorders or cognitive difficulties, they are living with invisible disabilities.”

People are quick to judge, writes Kathleen Bogart, a psychology professor at Oregon State University, Psychology Today. She cites a study that showed people are less willing to help individuals when the disability isn’t visually apparent. “Society relies on appearance when deciding who is legitimate, truthful or entitled to support,” she wrote.

Invisible disabilities may also cause doctors to overlook diagnoses or assume symptoms are exaggerated.

“If providers overlook symptoms, individuals may

choose not to disclose their disability at all or lose trust in the health-care system, leading to fewer supports, connections, and increased mental health strain,” Bogart wrote.

In 2016, Gatwick Airport and some partners created the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower as a way to for someone to voluntarily communicate their need for extra time or assistance without having to explain themselves over and over. The sunflower symbol is now recognized all over the U.K., and has been adopted at U.S. airports, too, including Boston Logan.

The Sunflower organization offers lanyards along with personalized ID cards that identify a person’s hidden disability and the types of assistance they may need. Businesses and nonprofits can join the Sunflower network as well. Visit hdsunflower.org.

See HEALTH, page 6

BIRDS, from page 4

fledge so quickly for birds of their size. Brown Thrashers are the largest common host of parasitic brown-headed cowbirds.

The oldest Brown Thrasher on record was at least 10 years, 11 months old. It was found in Florida in 1978 where it was banded in 1967.

Rose-breasted grosbeak

A Worthington resident saw a rose-breasted grosbeak showed up at his feeder earlier than usual on May 1. He said they always arrive the first week of May. Last year it was not until May 7.

Belchertown birds

A Belchertown resident sent an email reporting birds seen and heard on his property. They included Baltimore oriole, grey catbirds, a Blackburnian warbler in the maple tree, and he heard, but not seen, a northern parula. He also has a pair of eastern phoebes nesting under an eave of the house.

At nearby Lake Wallace, he took photos of yellow warblers and a green heron catching fish.

Red-shouldered hawk

A Montgomery resident saw a red-shouldered hawk recently.

Nesting sparrows

A Belchertown resident said she had sparrows using a nest box in her yard. She

found a few of their babies on the ground. At first, I thought something got into the nest, but today a found another one. I think the nestling had died and the parents got them out. She said she may remove the nest box and replace it with a new one in case the sparrows succumbed to disease.

Brimfield birds

A Brimfield resident said he put up the humming bird feeders in late April when he learned of a ruby-throated hummingbird in Ware. A couple days later he had an adult male ruby-throated hummingbird and a few days later she saw a female.

He said, “One each gray catbirds, male Baltimore oriole and males rose-breasted grosbeak showed up last week. This week a second male oriole and two more grosbeaks show up, another male and a female. He also has a male eastern towhee in his yard. He said, “A couple of years ago we had two male towhees in the yard and one spent the summer attacking its reflection in the many windows despite best efforts to dissuade it.”

He said elsewhere, in Warren on South Street there are three occupied great blue heron nest and two others he was not sure if they were being used. The osprey pair has been around for awhile. The nest has gotten deep-

er over the years and on a recent visit he could only see the tail or maybe wing feathers barely showing above the nest. I think incubation has started, but can’t be sure.

He also has a male common yellowthroat and house wren in his yard.

He said, “House wrens have nested in nesting boxes in the yard several times and I saw feathers near the entrance hole on a box they have used before. The wrens have a habit of building false nests in a couple of boxes that they never use.”

He also said, “A male yellow-bellied sapsucker spent some time on a native dogwood and today a sapsucker, probably the same one, spent several hours tapping away at the same tree.”

Geese in a pavilion

On May 12, I drove by Camp Putnam in New Braintree and saw four geese under their pavilion near the pond. I see many Canada geese in fields or ponds, but I have never seen them in a pavilion.

Other birds

On May 8 I received an email reporting a scarlet tanager, grosbeaks and hummingbirds.

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.

GARDEN, from page 4

prior to planting. I cut holes into it at transplanting time, amending each hole as I go.

For added warmth, some gardeners looking to get a head start often use a row cover to add a few degrees of warmth and protect plants from the wind.

Tomatoes are planted outside after all danger of frost has passed. Typically on Memorial Day! In fact, I think the whole “safe date” theory came to be because of tomatoes! When I was just getting started in horticulture I remember all sorts of contraptions people

used to use to try and get the first ripe tomato in the neighborhood.

By planting tomatoes transplants earlier you could get earlier fruiting. Cloches or wall-o-waters were popular before the floating row covers became the rage.

I typically wait to transplant my tomatoes. Mine are huge this year.

Remember, if your plants get big and your are still a few weeks away from getting them from the six pack into the ground, “pot them up.” It’s a term for going up a size, say from a cell to a four inch

pot, so roots don’t get bound before they get the chance to live happily ever after in the garden.

Soon enough, for sure.

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

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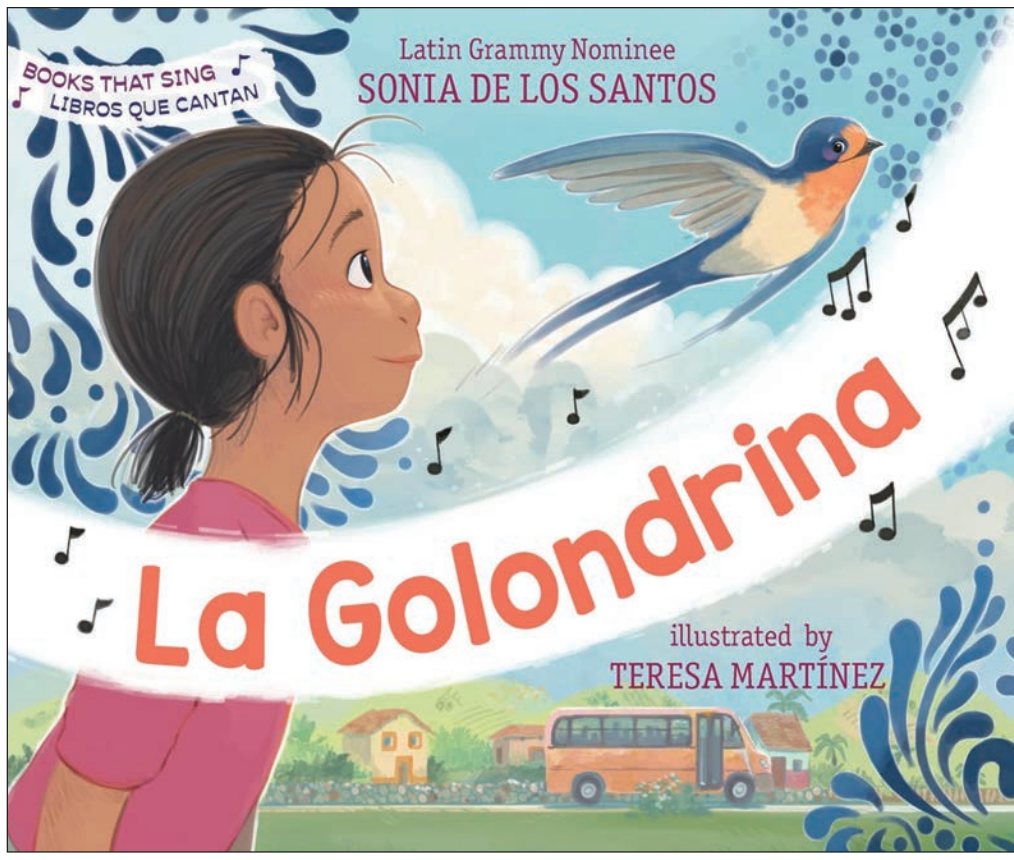
FUTURE, from page 1

According to a press release from HPS, Holyoke High School North Principal Lori McKenna offered welcoming and closing remarks for the evening program. Guest speakers included Rep. Patricia Duffy, School Committee Vice Chair Devin Sheenan.

One special guest of this year's even was Massachusetts Secretary of Education Dr. Stephen Zrike, a familiar face as he previously served as a superintendent/receiver for Holyoke Public Schools from 2015-2020. Guest attendees also included representatives from Holyoke Community College, Clark University, and College of

Our Lady of the Elms.

The Future Teachers program is a win-win for both graduating high school seniors of today and the future students of tomorrow, explained HPS Director of Recruitment Christie Elman. "Students who sign the Future Teachers pledge are setting a vision for the kind of careers they see for themselves after college, which in turn helps them stay focused and motivated. And for our schools to be able to hire former students as HPS educators in the future is another way we can continue to support the next generation of students through teachers who know first-hand about living and learning in Holyoke."



AUTHOR, from page 1

Born in Monterrey, Mexico, Ms. De Los Santos has been singing in Spanish and English for audiences of all ages since 2007, when she joined the Grammy Award® winning group Dan Zanes and Friends. As a solo artist, she has released three family music albums and one EP that all celebrate the subjects that mean the

most to her: migrating birds, friendship, chocolate, and anecdotes about growing up in Mexico and realizing her childhood dream of moving to New York.

Ms. De Los Santos has been nominated for a Latin Grammy® and hailed by Billboard as "one of the Latin Children's music artists you should know" and "Best Latin Children's Music." She has performed at renowned venues and

festivals such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Austin City Limits, Lollapalooza, The Getty Museum, The National Gallery of Art, The Smithsonian Folklife Festival, and many more. In 2020, Sonia launched En Casa con Sonia, an online musical series recorded from her home, and in 2021, she debuted ¿Qué Pasa, Sonia? a radio segment featuring some of her favorite songs at Sirius XM's Kids Place Live.

WATER, from page 1

essary for operator safety, washing of exterior building surfaces, parking lots, driveways or sidewalks, except as necessary to apply surface treatments such as paint, preservatives, stucco, pavement, or concrete.

The orders from the water works state residents are encouraged to practice water conservation methods, including minimizing overall water use, taking shorter showers, running dishwashers and washing machines only with full loads, and addressing leaks in a timely fashion.

According to the state drought condition index, Level 2 is described as a significant drought, with Level 3 being considered critical, and Level 4 being considered an emergency.

While some minor rain is in the forecast for the upcoming weekend, it is not yet predicted how long the drought conditions, and thus the water use restrictions, could be in place for.



SHOOTING, from page 1

arm and discharged a round in the direction of officers. One officer returned fire, striking the defendant in the leg.

"This defendant's reckless and violent actions endangered law enforcement officers, mall employees, and innocent shoppers," said Gulluni. "This sentence reflects the seriousness of bringing a loaded firearm into a crowded public place and opening fire. We are grateful no innocent individuals were injured and commend the responding officers for their professionalism and courage during an

extremely dangerous situation."

Holyoke Police Chief Brian Keenan was pleased with the outcome of the case and the sentencing of the juvenile involved in the incident.

"I would like to thank Hampden District Attorney Anthony Gulluni and ADA Curtis Frick who did a tremendous job prosecuting this case," Keenan said. "When a police officer is shot at, there must be severe consequences, so a situation like we witnessed in Cambridge doesn't repeat itself. I commend the Judge for his ruling. The mall should be safe haven for all

our visitors and its employees. This suspect's brazen actions put our officers and mall patrons in a potentially deadly situation. I would also like to applaud our officers involved for their professionalism and poise during this incident."

The case was investigated by the Holyoke Police Department and the Massachusetts State Police Detective Unit assigned to the Hampden District Attorney's Office.

The Commonwealth was represented by Assistant District Attorney Curtis Frick and Victim Witness Advocate Cassidy Dill.

AWARD, from page 1

College and a master's degree in English from Westfield State.

She began her professional career at HCC in 1981 as a member of the Business Department, teaching shorthand and business writing. In the early '90s, she joined the English faculty, where she has taught ever since.

"HCC has become my second home. Really. Truly," she said. "I could have retired many years ago, and I choose to stay. I don't want to leave. When I think about leaving, I just know that I can't - yet."

She is married to former Holyoke Mayor Michael Sullivan, with whom she has three children and six grandchildren.

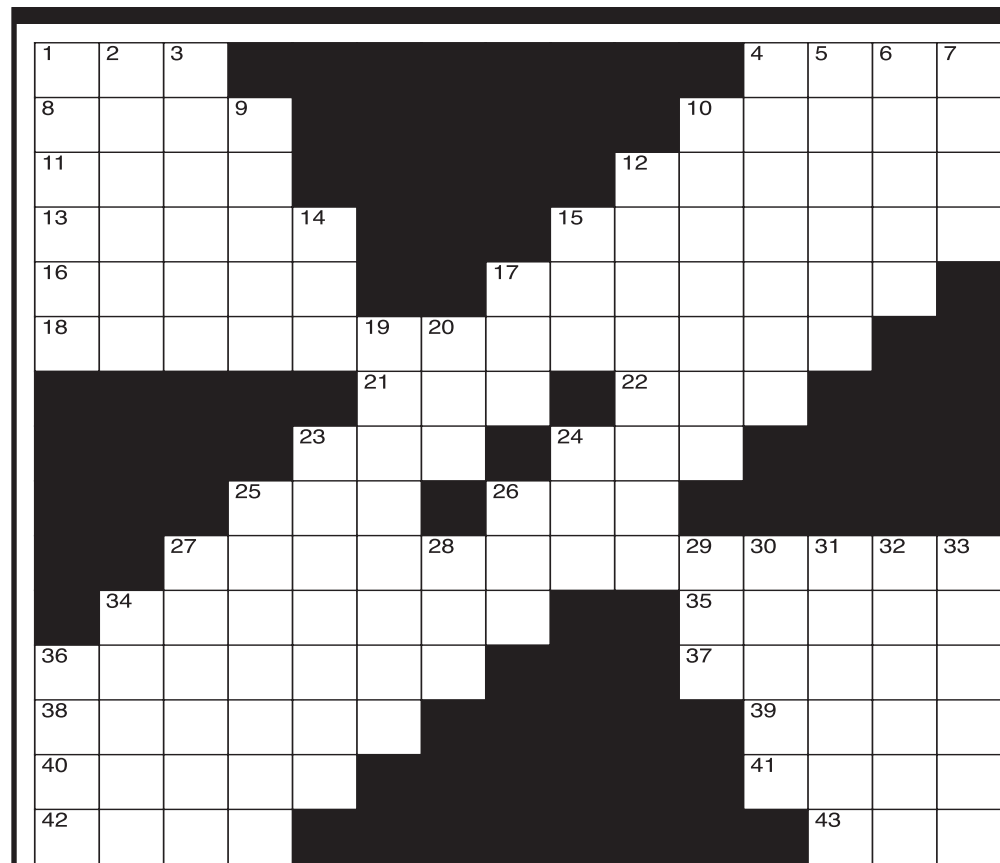
"I could have retired many years ago, and I choose to stay. I don't want to leave. When I think about leaving, I just know that I can't - yet."

- Patricia Sullivan
HCC faculty honoree,
English Professor

The Marieb Award, endowed by the late HCC professor emeritus Elaine Marieb '80, recognizes a full-time faculty member for outstanding classroom teaching. Award recipients serve for one year, receive a small stipend

for professional development, lead the procession at Commencement, and give the keynote graduation speech.

The college also presented the Christina Royal Equity in Action Award to Julissa Colón, dean of student experience; the Idelia Smith Adjunct Faculty Award to accounting instructor Lois Koltz; the Outstanding Professional Staff Award to Mari Cintron, staff assistant in the Division of Institutional Advancement; the Outstanding Classified Staff Award to Yarida Cruz, administrative assistant in the Center for Academic Program Support; and the Outstanding Part-Time Staff Award to Monica Archibald, clerical assistant in the Center for Academic Program Support.



HEALTH, from page 5

flower.com/us for details.

The symbol conveys a universal request: Approach with patience and understanding. It is also a way to increase disability representation and show connection with the disability community.

Recognition of invisible disabilities is likely becoming a larger challenge because "inclusion" has been tainted as the current political climate turns against diversity, equity and

inclusion (DEI). Research shows that few employees reveal invisible disabilities to their employers, and even fewer are comfortable asking for accommodation, which they are entitled to under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

We can all play a part in building awareness of invisible disabilities by not being afraid to reveal them and showing kindness and consideration to those who do.

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.

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CROSSWORD ANSWER on page 8

SPORTS

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Mustangs defeat Knights

MONSON – Last Monday afternoon, Monson High School defeated Holyoke 13-7 in baseball action.

The Mustangs were led by a first-inning home run by Benjamin Pignone. He finished with four hits and five RBI in the game. Among his

four hits, he socked two doubles. He was a triple short of the cycle. Jake Beaupre also had two hits.

Holyoke had two hits from Jeremy Francisco, while Aidan Robinson drove in two runs. Monson finished the regular season at 12-4.

Victor Flemin Sori delivers a pitch.



Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli
Justin Rivera hustles for second base.



Ryan Greaney sends a throw to first.



Nolan Judd hustles out a ground ball.



Aidan Robinson makes a throw across the diamond.



Victor Flemin Sori takes a swing.

Knights fall to Panthers

HOLYOKE – Last Friday afternoon, Holyoke High School softball lost to Palmer 19-7 to put themselves in a must-win situation for their final game of the season.

Holyoke did muster some early offense with runs in the second, third,

and fourth inning, but Palmer had a 10-run first to jump out to a big lead, and a five-run sixth got the Panthers up by 12 runs to invoke the mercy rule.

Holyoke got two hits each from Grace Bechard, Zomaris Robles, and Samantha Rodriguez.

Holyoke was scheduled for one final game against West Springfield, with a win getting the Knights to .500 and an automatic spot in the Division 2 state tournament. Holyoke could also rank in the top 32 of the division to qualify automatically.

Volleyball Hall of Fame announces Class of 2026 inductees

HOLYOKE – The International Volleyball Hall of Fame (IVHF) is proud to announce its 2026 induction class, with the official ceremony scheduled for October 17 in Holyoke, Mass., USA, the Birthplace of Volleyball. This prestigious group of nine legends, representing eight distinct disciplines within the sport, has been selected for their history-making contributions, standard-setting excellence as global icons on the field of play and significant impact off the court. In addition, four special award honorees will also be honored for their contributions to the sport.

The 40th IVHF induction class features transformational leader and former FIVB President Dr. Ary Graça (Brazil, leader); three-time Olympian and FIVB World Champion April Ross (United States, female beach player); two-time Olympic Gold Medalist and legendary libero Fabiana “Fabi” Alvim (Brazil, female indoor player); two-time Olympian and World Cup Gold medalist Yoel “Joël” Despaigne (Cuba, male indoor player); four-time Olympian and two-time

World Champion Ekaterina Gamova (Russia, female indoor player); three-time Olympian and two-time World Champion Alison Cerutti (Brazil, male beach player); legendary player who also coached his country’s first Olympic Gold Medal-winning team Laurent Tillie (France, coach); the architect of Paralympic inclusion Denis Le Breuille (England, ParaVolley) and three-time Olympic referee Takashi Shimoyama (Japan, referee).

Also announced are four special award winners, recognized for their contributions to the IVHF or the global sport of volleyball itself. They include the late Gabriel Cherebetiu (Mintonette Medallion of Merit, Romania/Mexico), John Cook (Mayoral Award of Excellence, United States), Starlings USA (Court of Honor, United States) and Alejandro Coccia (Award for Media Excellence, Argentina).

“The IVHF 2026 Induction Class brings together some of the most outstanding figures in our sport. Big congratula-

tions to the inductees and to the IVHF Leadership,” said Fabio Azevedo, President of the FIVB. “The entire Global Volleyball Movement thanks and fully supports the excellent work carried out by the IVHF in promoting the values, legacy and heritage of our sport by honouring the athletes, leaders and officials who have made an exceptional contribution to the development of volleyball and beach volleyball around the world. Celebrating these legends strongly aligns with the FIVB Strategic Vision 2032, and our continued partnership with the IVHF helps bring this vision to life. Together as One!”

All told, the IVHF has inducted 185 individuals from 27 countries into its historic Hall of Fame - those

totals will rise to 194 inductees from 28 countries after the 2026 event, as this will be England’s first inductee. Three of the inductees also earned one of their votes by winning the Fan Vote for their respective category. More detailed information on each inductee can be found below.

“The International Volleyball Hall of Fame continues to serve as a bridge between the sport’s remarkable history and its exciting future,” said Steve Bishop, President of the IVHF Board of Directors. “The Class of 2026 reflects the worldwide growth, diversity, excellence, and enduring legacy of volleyball across every level and discipline of the game. On behalf of the International Volleyball Hall of Fame Board of Directors, we are

proud to honor these extraordinary individuals whose achievements and lifelong contributions have helped inspire generations of athletes, coaches, officials, leaders, and fans while continuing to shape the future of our sport around the world.”

The 2026 International Volleyball Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony will take place in Holyoke, Massachusetts, USA on Saturday, October 17, 2026. The event is open to the public on a first-come, first-served basis, and ticket packages are available online now at VolleyHall.org/Induction-Celebration.

“This is one of the most historically significant classes ever assembled by the International Volleyball Hall of Fame,” said George Mulry, Executive Director of the IVHF. “Collectively, the Class of 2026 and this year’s special award recipients have helped shape, elevate and redefine the sport of volleyball across multiple eras, disciplines and continents. From Olympic champions and transformational global leaders to innovators in coaching, officiating, media and ParaVolley,

their influence can be seen in nearly every corner of the game today. Together, they represent the evolution of volleyball itself — honoring the sport’s rich history while inspiring its future generations.”

Volleyball enthusiasts are encouraged to sign up for the IVHF Insider e-newsletter for behind-the-scenes and exclusive content before, during and after Induction Weekend, including the new series “The Road To Holyoke.” To sign up for free, please visit ivhf.org/

The International Volleyball Hall of Fame is a 501c3 nonprofit based in Holyoke, Mass., and is dedicated to honoring the legends, recognizing the greats and preserving the history of volleyball at all levels - men and women, amateur and professional players, coaches and contributors, around the world. The IVHF was incorporated in 1978 and continues to create a diversely representative institution from a wide range of countries and disciplines. For more information on the induction events, please visit the Hall’s website at www.ivhf.org or email info@ivhf.org.

Pioneers get 2026 campaign underway with win

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

LUDLOW – Since joining USL League Two in 2019, the Western Mass. Pioneers have qualified for the league playoffs each season. A new group of Pioneers players are hoping to continue the post-season tradition this spring.

In front of a large crowd at historic Lusitano Stadium in Ludlow, the Pioneers began the 2026 campaign with a 4-2 victory over the Albany Rush, last Friday night.

“Most of the players on last year’s team graduated from college, so we do have a lot of first-year players this season,” said Pioneers head coach Federico Molinari. “I thought we played well in tonight’s game. We had a lot of opportunities, especially in the first half.”

The Pioneers posted a 10-1-3 regular season record a year ago. They lost to FC Motown STA, 2-1, in the Eastern Conference quarter-finals.

A couple of the Pioneers players from last year’s squad have signed with professional soccer teams.

“It’s really nice to see your players playing soccer at a high level,” said Molinari, who’s been leading the Pioneers since 2012. “That’s our main goal every year.”

One of the local players listed on the 2026 Pioneers roster is Thomas Wadas, who’s played soccer for the Ludlow Lions and is currently a member of the UMass-Amherst men’s soccer team.

Wadas has been listed on the Pioneers roster for the past several years. He made his first start for the Pioneers in the season opening match.

“I used to watch the Pioneers games from the stands, so I’ve been looking forward to this moment for a long time,” said Wadas, who’s a midfielder. “Being a starter in the season opener is a very special thing to me. We played hard for the whole 90 minutes of tonight’s game. When we come together as a cohesive team, we can look forward to another strong season. Anything less than making the playoffs seems like a failure.”



Sam Montalto looks to pass.



Fernando Delgado dribbles up the field.



Michael Gouvin, of Monson, sends a pass away.



Jaiden Williams, of Belchertown, competes with an opponent.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com
Thomas Wadas, of Ludlow, is new to the Pioneers this season.



Pearse O'Brien advances the ball.

Wadas was a starter in ten of the 15 games that he played in for the Minutemen as a freshman last fall. He finished the 2025 season with two goals and three assists.

“It was a big adjustment going from the high school level to the collegiate level,” Wadas said. “All of the players are bigger and stronger in college. The game is also a lot more physical. I’m just glad that I was able to contribute as a freshman. Playing for the Pioneers is only going to help me prepare for my sophomore season at UMass.”

A first-year player member of the Pioneers is Michael Gouvin, who’s from Monson. His older sister, Laura, played for the New England Mutiny several years ago.

Gouvin, who comes from a soccer family, attended Avon Old Farms before playing two seasons for the men’s soccer team at the University of New Hampshire. He decided to transfer to Bentley University before the start of last season.

“I used to play youth soccer games on this field. It feels awesome to be back here playing again,” said Gouvin, who’s a starting defender. “I’ve never

played a game in this type of environment before. Winning our first game of the season feels incredible.”

The Pioneers have won every match that they’ve played against the Rush since 2022. They outscored them, 11-0, in both matches last season.

Prior to the start of the match, third grader Brooke Lamothe did an outstanding job of performing the National Anthem.

The Rush ended their scoreless spell against the Pioneers when Lucas Horja

fired a shot into the back of the net past Western Mass. goalie Ben Alexander for an unassisted goal during the 11th minute of the opening half.

The Pioneers quickly took over the momentum.

The home side had five corner kicks before scoring the equalizer in the 37th minute.

An Albany player fouled Wadas, which gave the Pioneers a free kick. Pearse O’Brien booted the ball into the box and Matiwos Rumley managed to score the tying goal.

Two minutes later, an

Albany player fouled O’Brien inside the box resulting in a penalty kick.

O’Brien, who’s from West Hartford Conn., stepped up to the spot and lined a shot into the back of the net giving the Pioneers the lead for the first time.

Horja scored the tying goal nine minutes into the second half.

Five minutes later, Gouvin sent a pass into the box from the right wing where Felipe De Andrade, who had just entered the match as a sub, headed the ball into the net.

“I saw that Felipe was

open and I just sent him the ball,” Gouvin said. “It was a perfect play. My main goal in every game is to make an impact.”

The duo of Alfred Baafi and Martin Echarren, who also came off the bench, hooked up on the Pioneers final goal during the 82nd minute. Echarren flicked a shot into the net for his first goal as a Pioneers player.

The Pioneers are scheduled to play a road game against the Seacoast United Phantoms on Wednesday night before returning home to face NEFC at 7:30 p.m. Saturday.

► Public Notices

City of Holyoke Notice of Public Hearing

The Ordinance Committee of the Holyoke City Council and the Planning Board will hold separate public hearings to hear a zone change application from BG (business general) to DR (downtown residential) of Irfan Raheel at 172 Sargeant Street (060-06-001) to allow for second floor residential use. **Planning Board public hearing will be held on Tuesday, June 9th, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. remotely via zoom.us** with Meeting ID 836 3939 8493 or by call in at 1-646-558-8656 using same meeting ID. **Ordinance Committee public hearing will be held on Tuesday, June 30th, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.** at Holyoke City Hall 536 Dwight St and can be accessed remotely via zoom.us Meeting ID 886 8239 2822 Meeting Passcode 994415 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 to the

Planning Board, please contact Brianna Tejada at tejadab@holyoke.org. For the Ordinance Committee, please contact City Council Admin Asst Jeffery Anderson-Burgos at anderson-burgosj@holyoke.org or by phone 413-322-5525.

Planning Board Chair
Lauren Niles
Ordinance Chair
Meg Magrath-Smith
05/22, 05/29/2026

HOLYOKE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Holyoke Public Schools will be holding a public hearing on the Fiscal 2027 School Department Budget on **June 8, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. in the Field Room at Dean Technical School.** Public comment can be submitted via email to Irene Feliciano at ifeliciano@hps.holyoke.ma.us no later than 3:00 p.m. on Monday, June 8, 2026. A copy of the budget is available for inspection at the Holyoke Public

Schools Business Office beginning on Wednesday, June 3, 2026 at 8:00 a.m.

ESCUELAS PÚBLICAS DE HOLYOKE

Las Escuelas Públicas de Holyoke celebrarán una audiencia pública sobre el Presupuesto del Departamento Escolar para el Año Fiscal 2027 el 8 de junio del 2026 a las 5:00 p. m. en la Sala Fielde de la Escuela Superior Dean Tech. Los comentarios del público pueden enviarse por correo electrónico a Irene Feliciano, a la dirección ifeliciano@hps.holyoke.ma.us, a más tardar el lunes 8 de junio del 2026 a las 3:00 p. m. Habrá una copia del presupuesto disponible para su revisión en la Oficina de Administración Financiera de las Escuelas Públicas de Holyoke a partir del miércoles 3 de junio del 2026 a las 8:00 a. m. 05/22/2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court

Probate and Family Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
Docket No.
HD26P0960GD

In the interests of
Ja'zier Amiri Negron
of Holyoke, MA
Minor

NOTICE AND ORDER:
Petition for Appointment
of Guardian of a Minor
NOTICE TO ALL
INTERESTED PARTIES

1. **Hearing Date/Time:** A hearing on a Petition for Appointment of Guardian of a Minor filed on 05/05/2026 by **Natasha Escano of Holyoke, MA** will be held **06/05/2026 08:30 AM Guardianship of Minor Hearing.** Located: **Hampden Probate and Family Court, 50 State Street, Springfield, MA 01102-0559.**

2. **Response to Petition:** You may respond by filing a written response to the Petition or by appearing in person at the hearing. If you choose to file a written response, you need to:

File the original with the Court; and
Mail a copy to all interested parties at least five (5) business days before the hearing.

3. **Counsel for the Minor:** The minor (or an adult on behalf of the minor) has the right to request that counsel be appointed for the minor.

4. **Counsel for Parents:** If you are a parent of the minor child who is the subject of this proceeding you have a right to be represented by an attorney. If you want an attorney and cannot afford to pay for one and if you give proof that you are indigent, an attorney will be assigned to you. Your request for an attorney should be made immediately by filling out the Application of Appointment of Counsel form. Submit the application form in person or by mail at the court location where your case is going to be heard.

5. **Presence of the Minor at Hearing:** A minor over age 14 has the right to be present at any hearing, unless the Court finds that it is not in the minor’s best interests.
Date: May 5, 2026

Rosemary A. Saccomani
Register of Probate
05/22/2026

City of Holyoke Public Hearing Notice

The Holyoke Planning Board will hold a Public Hearing on **Tuesday, June 9, 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 Stack- Holyoke & Main, LLC at 679 Main Street and 689 Main & Beaulieu Street, Holyoke MA (055-00-009, -0091, -009.2).

For a complete copy of the application, contact the Planning Dept, M-F, 8:30-4:00p.m.

Applicant:
Stack- Holyoke & Main, LLC
Planning Board:
Lauren Niles, Chairperson
05/22, 05/29/2026

City of Holyoke Notice of Public Hearing

The Holyoke License Board will be holding a Public Hearing on **Wednesday, June 3, 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 **New Seasonal All Alcohol On-premises License for De Todo Un Poco Restaurant & Bakeshop LLC DBA De Todo n Poco 325 Main Street** pursuant to M.G.L. Ch.138.

Applicant:
Todo Un Poco Restaurant & Bakeshop
License Board:
Jose Correa, Chairman.
05/22, 5/29/2026

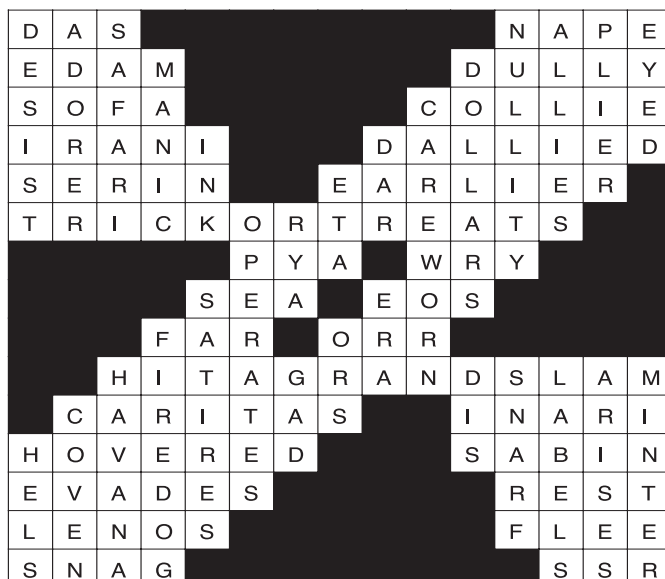
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Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.

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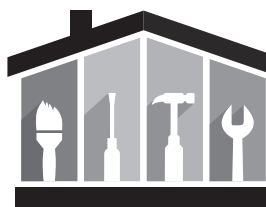


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By Tina Lesniak
Correspondent

SOUTH HADLEY – In neighborhoods across South Hadley, native flowers are beginning to bloom, pollinator gardens are expanding, and residents are learning that even small patches of land can make a meaningful environmental impact. At the center of that effort is Growing Wild South Hadley, a volunteer-driven group working to restore native habitats one yard, garden, and public space at a time.

Part of the statewide Growing Wild Massachusetts initiative through the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, the local chapter encourages residents to plant native species that support birds, butterflies, bees, and other wildlife.

“Growing Wild South

Hadley is composed of community volunteers and members of the conservation commission who want to grow native plants in our yards and around town,” volunteer Genevieve Van de Merghel said.

The group’s work stretches beyond simple beautification. Native plants are essential to the survival of many pollinators and birds whose life cycles depend on them. Van de Merghel pointed to monarch butterflies as one example.

“Without native milkweed, monarch butterflies cannot breed,” she said. “Their caterpillars can only eat milkweeds to survive.”

The same ecological relationship exists throughout nature. Many pollinators rely on specific native plants, and birds rely on those insects for food. According to Van



de Merghel, a single brood of chickadees requires between 6,000 and 9,000 caterpillars to mature.

“Plants that support pollinators feed our birds, too,” she said.

To help residents participate, the group hosts educational talks at the Gaylord Memorial Library and organizes seasonal native plant giveaways and bulk purchases. One of the group’s most popular partnerships is with New

England Wetland Plants, a wholesale native plant grower based in town. By purchasing in bulk, Growing Wild South Hadley is able to offer residents flats of native plants at wholesale prices.

The organization also maintains a growing list of native plant nurseries and gardening resources on the town website, helping homeowners navigate the often-overwhelming process of transitioning to native landscaping.

While many of the pollinator gardens are located on private residential properties, the group has also taken on public projects that serve as demonstrations for the broader community. Through a grant from the Hampden-Hampshire Conservation District, volunteers established a pollinator garden outside the Gaylord Library.

“This garden is maintained by volunteers and is meant to be a demonstration garden of how even a small space can be beautiful and make such a difference,” Van de Merghel said.

Another project, a native bioswale planted near the River to Range Trail, combines stormwater management with habitat restoration. The drainage channel now supports butterflies and beneficial pollinators while helping direct runoff away from the

trail and parking areas.

Community involvement remains central to the organization’s mission. Residents can participate through plant swaps, volunteer garden maintenance, or monthly Zoom meetings featuring guest speakers and updates on local projects.

Looking toward the future, the group hopes its efforts will create something even larger: a connected corridor of habitat running through South Hadley that can sustain migrating birds and pollinators for generations to come.

“We would love to establish a corridor for migrating birds and pollinators to travel through South Hadley,” Van de Merghel said, “with plenty of delicious food and resources to help them on their journey or to make South Hadley their summer home to raise their families.”

Amelia Park Children’s Museum announces plans for ‘Farm in the Woods’

WESTFIELD – Diane Chambers, executive director of Amelia Park Children’s Museum has announced plans for a unique outdoor playscape called Farm in the Woods, scheduled to open this summer.

In 2025, the museum was awarded a grant through the Beveridge Family Foundation for concept, construction and fabrication of the outdoor play space. The funding allowed the museum to hire Panoptic Design/Build, a museum exhibit designer and fabricator, based in West Springfield to create designs.

The project was also funded in part by the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism with state funding secured by Senator John Velis and Representative Kelly Pease.

“Panoptic is so excited to be working on the Farm in the Woods exhibit for the Amelia Park Children’s Museum, with a community that has earnestly and enthusiastically supported this project. The Farm in the Woods is intended to bring out the best parts of growing up on a farm in New England: Curious observation, secret hideaways, exciting adventures,

and always something new to discover. It examines the place of farms in the broader ecosystem, exploring themes of biodiversity and connectedness with playful interactives. We look forward to visitors coming here for the classic outdoor fun of sand, slides, and garden beds, and returning again and again with their friends and families to keep building curiosity and resilience,” said Panoptic designer Terra Fletcher.

Sponsorships for Farm in the Woods are still available. For more information, contact diane@ameliapark-museum.org, 413-572-4014.

Win a trip for two to Italy while supporting hospice patients in need

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 circumstances.

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!”

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](https://www.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.

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