

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

Tribunus



Plebis

RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

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March 2025

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

MAJOR DECISION LOOMS

IT'S UP TO OTIS

By Bill Price, Editor

The school committee of the Farmington River Regional School District is now just one step from completing its 2½-year effort to revise the division of costs between Sandisfield and our neighboring town of Otis.

At a Special Town Meeting February 28, with a vote of 53-0 Sandisfield accepted the proposed revision of the Regional District Agreement (RDA).

The single remaining step in the process is a vote at a similar Special Town Meeting in Otis March 25. For the RDA revision to go into effect, both towns must cast a majority vote in favor.

This is perhaps the most important choice Otis and Sandisfield have faced in decades.

The RDA being revised is the original 1992 agreement that set up each town's financial responsibilities for the school.

The revision would make the contributions more sustainable for Sandisfield, which, for many years, according to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), has been paying significantly more than what it can afford.

THE GOOD NEWS ESTIMATE

Acceptance of the RDA would result in a property tax increase to Otis residents and a decrease for Sandisfield residents.

The good news is that the revised numbers released by the School Committee at their March 3 meeting were considerably lower than what the committee had previously indicated. This was because the earlier numbers had been based on this year's (FY25) budget.

Instead, applying next year's (FY26) budget numbers on the new RDA, according to the committee, the average Otis property tax bill was projected to increase by only \$36, which is just \$3 per month.

The main reason for this big change is that in the numbers DESE recently published regarding what each town could reasonably afford for education to be used in next year's budget process, Sandisfield's number went up while Otis' went down. The new apportionment method then did its job correctly and reduced the impact of the new RDA on Otis for next year.

Cont'd on p.4

Take the Master Plan Survey!



The Planning Board invites you to share your opinions and concerns about the town and its future.

Information from this survey will serve as the town's blueprint to achieving its desired future. The survey is open to all community members.



Paper copies are available at the Post Office, Library, Transfer Station, and Town Hall. Drop boxes to return completed paper surveys are located at the library and Town Hall

SANDISFIELD

www.surveymonkey.com/r/SandisfieldMP

What Would You Like for Sandisfield?

A NEW MASTER PLAN IN THE WORKS


By Jeff Bye

The Planning Board is developing a revised Master Plan for Sandisfield, to be published in 2026. We need your help.

See the survey plan and QR code to the left.

A new survey is being conducted by Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) on behalf of the Town's Planning Board. The survey will collect information from Sandisfield residents in order to assist the Planning Board with development of the Master Plan. The survey can be taken online or via printed copies that will be available for pick up and drop off.

If possible, please use the QR code and the URL (www.Surveymonkey.com/r/sandisfieldMP) to respond to the survey via the website BRPC has made available. This will make collection of the data much easier.

This same information will be posted on the Town's website. Paper copies of the survey will be available at Town buildings. 

Assessors' Inspector House Calls



From the Town Website


To all Sandisfield Town Residences:

Beginning February 26, the Sandisfield Assessors' Office will be conducting site (building and land) inspections.

Jim Harris, from our appointed service provider Catalis, will be visiting properties throughout the town through the spring of 2025. His vehicle is a black 2020 VW GTI with MA plates 1TZZ2G76. While most inspections will be conducted outside of the property, some building permit visits may necessitate access to the building.

We ask that you are courteous and understanding as Catalis conducts their required activities. The Board of Assessors appreciates your cooperation at this time as we execute our Massachusetts mandated building permit and cyclical inspections.

Please contact the Assessors Office at 413-258-4711 x6 , 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays with any questions.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation. 

TOWN OF SANDISFIELD NOTICE OF TOWN CAUCUS

All inhabitants of Sandisfield qualified to vote in town matters are called to a caucus at 6:00 P.M. at the Old Town Hall at 3 Silverbrook Rd., in Sandisfield, on Monday, March 3,

2025 for the purpose of nominating candidates for the following offices:

- Select Board Three-Year Term
- Board of Assessors Three-Year Term
- Moderator One-Year Term
- Board of Health Three-Year Term
- Board of Health Two-Year Term
- School Committee Three-Year Term
- Planning Board Five-Year Term

The Cost of Eggs Starts Here

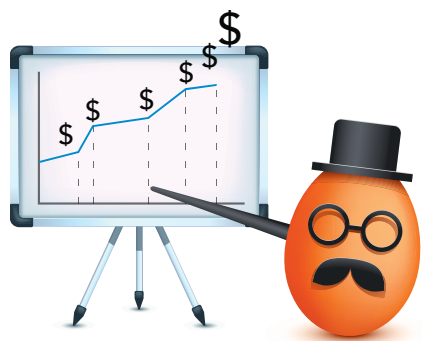
A DOZEN DOLLARS FOR A DOZEN EGGS?

By *Brigitte Ruthman*

You can still buy industrial eggs by the dozen at WalMart for about the cost of a large retail coffee. However, conventional wisdom – and maybe just wisdom itself – now tells us that commercially raised eggs from caged hens is a good idea for neither the hens that lay them nor the humans that consume eggs produced from chemically amended feed in a not-so-happy living place.

Massachusetts ratified that belief with the 2016 passage of an act to prevent cruelty to farm animals. The law bans the confinement of egg-laying hens, veal calves, and breeding pigs. Rather absurdly though, the law demands in vague language that animals must be able to lie down, stand up, fully extend their limbs, and turn around freely. I wonder who enforces that.

Each egg layer must be given at least 1.5 feet of usable floor space. Check, egg layers get that much out here at Joshua Farm on Dodd Road, and they have it at a few other outstanding Berkshire County farms.



EGG PRICES ARE GOING UP.

Eggs, once unfairly villainized as contributors to heart disease (not), are in demand. And now they're unfairly villainized as leaders of inflation. There are a variety of reasons for that.

Nationwide, commercial production isn't keeping up, in large part because of bird flu. Bird flu is headed our way. It is already wreaking havoc on chickens. These days, one sick chicken requires "depopulation" of an entire flock – which can mean up to thousands of slaughtered chickens. No Canada geese will be allowed to park here this summer.

But really there isn't much that can be done except keep your chickens indoors and behind fences, which is not the free range the advertisers – and egg buyers – want. One reason egg prices are going up is to cover biosecurity. Eggs are already \$11 at Stop and Shop. As of February 3, Waffle House added a 50-cent per egg surcharge because of rising costs due in part to bird flu.

Like cows, only a small percentage of hens ever get to see sunlight and grass. Eggs from these hens tend to be boring – with whites that won't whip into peaks and pale-yellow yolks that lack the rich orange orbs made of grasshoppers, short grasses, and worms.

There really aren't a lot of local egg producers, both because of the heavy losses from predators of all kinds, and the high cost of feed, a shortage of affordable farmland, and housing.

But there are some standouts. Off the Shelf Farm, for instance, a Great Barrington area enterprise made of inspiration and determination.

GETTING INTO THE BUSINESS

I got into the egg trade years ago when I erected a coop to accommodate a few hens given by a friend whose landlord had banned them. I was impressed how well they roosted in the porch rafters and foraged during the day. They knew where home was and always returned before dark, but the porch was beginning to look like a barn and coyotes, bobcats, bears, and foxes were at the gate. Eventually I relocated them into movable coops.

But the eggs started to pile up. On crutches from foot surgery, I went peddling to local restaurants and retail stores. My predicament reminded me of my mother's periodic encounters with Electrolux salesmen that she always felt sorry for and invited in for

conversation before buying some attachment she didn't need.

There weren't takers enough to support my initial stepped-up egg production but in a last-ditch effort I hobbled up to the Red Lion Inn on a suggestion to visit then chef Brian Alberg. I decided that if he said no I'd have to give the hens away and think of something else to do besides milking cows.

"Sure, I'll take them," he said matter of factly while whisking creamy sauce. He fished out the price of \$4/dz for 30 dz from the cash drawer in the front lobby.

It went on like that way for a while, until a new chef arrived and wasn't as interested.

The Berkshire Co-Op was next. Then I ventured down the road to the gold standard – Guido's, where you must apply to be counted as a coveted local food vendor.

I handed over a sample of a dozen rainbow eggs – so named because of the variety of colored eggs in the box. A lesson to me from the Amish in Pennsylvania. Guido's samplers, luckily, said yes. And they became exclusive, along with a later addition of duck eggs.

Still, there were days even a couple of years ago during slower winter months when the market wasn't there. So I brought the rest to local food pantries where my eyes were opened about hungry people. I committed to providing at least a few dozen to make sure those not so well off in Norfolk and Great Barrington could also have the benefit of healthy, local produce. An older Italian woman opened a box and rolled a blue egg around in her hand and smiled. I about cried.

Then Guido's expanded and Covid hit and everyone wanted those eggs as local farm products inched their way into popular culture.

Now, there are customers who plan their shopping around Saturday egg deliveries, but only every couple of weeks in the winter when the light is low and fewer eggs survive cracking in frigid temperatures.

Some of those determined folks have managed to track down the farm in search of those eggs, which now tend to sell out within hours.

Cont'd on p.6

MAJOR DECISION LOOMS

Cont'd from p.1

AGAINST THE GRAIN

Voting for a tax increase of any kind may well be against the grain for Otis taxpayers. But it may be in their benefit to do so.

If Otis rejects the revision, Sandisfield may follow through on its motion to withdraw from the district and send its elementary school children to other Berkshire schools.

As the Sandisfield Select Board wrote on January 31, the board “sincerely hopes the amended RDA passes in Otis. But if it doesn’t, Sandisfield has many excellent education alternatives it is prepared to pursue for which the economics to Sandisfield would be similar to those under the new RDA.”

Should that happen, the costs to Otis taxpayers to maintain its own school would be dramatically higher than any increase in costs that would result from the revised RDA.

ENDORSEMENTS, PRO AND CON

The revised RDA has been endorsed by the Farmington River Regional Educators Association (employee union), the FRRSD School Committee (7-0), and the Sandisfield Select Board. As previously reported, it was pre-approved by DESE before the Special Town Meetings were scheduled.

Two letters opposing the revision appeared in the most recent issue of the Otis Observer.

In the first, the Otis Select Board expressed concern about the town’s financial viability and whether the town could afford other public services if this revision passed.

The second letter, unsigned and under the heading of Special to the Otis Observer, included a comment that Sandisfield would have to provide a \$10 million bond in the event it withdraws from the district. School committee members, administrators, and others who have been working on this issue report that they know of no such bond and question its source. The Times, which has published at least ten articles on the RDA process over the past two years has not previously seen a reference to this requirement. An email sent February 27 to the Observer’s “Hello” address questioning the source of that statement has, as of March 4, gone unanswered.

Despite their disapproval of the proposed revision, both the Otis Select Board and the Observer seem to agree that the RDA should be updated after three decades. They simply believe that after 2½ years of effort the School Committee should begin its work all over again.

WE RECOMMEND “YES”

Meanwhile, school enrollment across the Berkshires is declining. Locally, there are only about 100 elementary students at Farmington River, about 60 from Otis and 40 from Sandisfield. The trend across the Berkshires seems to indicate even more consolidation of schools.

The Times recommends a “yes” vote at the Otis Special Town Meeting, to match the vote from Sandisfield.

This would ensure the continuation of the FRRSD as a vital part of our shared community.

As the Sandisfield Select Board summarized in its January 31 letter: “Sandisfield has waited patiently, and made an enormous effort, rooted in compromise, to achieve an outcome that is fair to all, as is reflected in the amended RDA. But it’s well past time for a decision.”

Sandisfield's Special Town Meeting

RDA REVISION PASSES 53-0

By Larry Dwyer

A packed house filled Old Town Hall February 28 for a particularly special Special Town Meeting.



Residents packed Old Town Hall for the Special Town Meeting, February 28.

Photo: Larry Dwyer

The main event, Article 1, was whether or not to approve amendments to the FRRSD Regional District Agreement (RDA) between the towns of Sandisfield and Otis. The chief reason for amending the RDA was to change the apportionment that each town pays toward the funding of the school.

The Town of Otis is scheduled to vote on the amendments at their own Special Town Meeting March 25. In order for the revision to be accepted, both towns must approve the amendments by majority vote. The rub is that the change may increase property taxes for Otis while lowering them for Sandisfield.

If the amendments are not approved by Otis, Sandisfield has said it may withdraw from the school district.

During discussion, Barbara Cormier indicated that she supported the RDA revision, and that if it was approved by Sandisfield but not by Otis that Sandisfield should vote to leave the district at its Annual Town Meeting in May.

In answer to a question of what would happen if Sandisfield did leave the school district, it was determined that the question be delayed until after the Otis vote and be raised again in advance of the Annual Town Meeting, if necessary.

When Moderator Dominic Konstam called for a vote, Article 1 passed unanimously, 53-0.

Article II included changes to the town's bylaws, including major additions for the Annual Budget, a Capital Improvement Plan, and Approval of Warrants.

One interesting note was that an amendment was made to change the wording in the bylaws to reflect gender neutrality. This amendment was passed by a three-quarter majority, which demonstrates that for those who attended the meeting DEI remains important despite Washington's recent policies to eliminate DEI legislation.

Article III included changes regarding town audits. During discussion, David Hubbard, a former Finance Committee member, said that passing this article would help correct Sandisfield's past fiscal problems caused by the town's failure to conduct audits in a timely manner.

Article IV was to pay utility bills that had missed the fiscal year deadline for a total of \$131.74.

With that, the evening's participants who had remained to the end wished each other good night and went along home. 🏠



Breaking News

The FRRSD School Committee, at its regular meeting March 3, accepted a revised RDA plan which including a lower estimate of the Otis property tax assessment. The lower estimate was made possible by basing the numbers on the budget for the coming fiscal year budget rather than those for FY25. This estimate reduced the increase in the average Otis property tax bill to \$36.

At the following information session FRRSD Superintendent Tim Lee refuted published comments by the Otis Select Board and the Otis Observer, both of which are opposed to the revised RDA.

The Cost of Eggs Starts Here

Cont'd from p.3

The experiences with customers has been exhilarating. One man complained to Melissa, Guido's buyer, that the box did not include ingredients. When she replied that the box only contains eggs, he insisted that the dye used to color them should have been noted. The eggs are laid by chickens of various heirloom breeds – adding blue, green, white, and brown to the mix.

The hens are given a secret ingredient which sets the bright orange yolks apart – fresh milk.

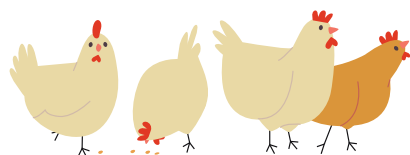
A woman who couldn't have known that came rushing into the back room after I handed her a box as I walked by her staring at the egg shelves – "These are just what Martha Stewart had!" she blurted, and asked for another box.

Expansion of my egg domain required that I protect my flock with a livestock guardian dog so I acquired Buck, a handsome, bold Maramee/Pyrennes mix. Buck now protects the flock – or at least, mostly.

And costs are rising. A \$4,000 feed bill in January and little profit in the cold.

Bird flu?

I'm more worried about red-tailed hawks, which confuse Buck into chasing airplanes. 🐦



BURN SEASON OPEN

Posted on Town website

Burn Season officially opened as of January 15 and will remain open until May 1. Please review the following regulations for burning and be sure to obtain your permit. If you have any questions or need any assistance, please feel free to contact Laurie McArthur at (413) 258-4711 ext 3. Applications for a burn permit are available at Town Hall between the hours of 8:30am and 1:00pm on the day you intend to burn, or online at sandisfieldma.gov.

BURN PERMIT REGULATIONS:

- Massachusetts allows residents to burn brush between January 15 and May 1 inclusive, depending on weather conditions. You must obtain permission from the town in which you plan to burn brush.
- You may only burn BRUSH! All other materials are illegal. No leaves, grass, hay, stumps, building debris or any other materials are allowed to be burned.
- All open burning must be a minimum of 75 feet from buildings or structures.
- Burning will be allowed to start at 10:00 a.m. and must be extinguished by 4:00 p.m.
- Any open fire must be attended at all times by the permit holder.
- No person shall set, maintain, or increase a fire in open air at any time except by permission.
- You must be 18 years or older to apply for a permit and/or set, maintain or increase a fire once permission has been granted by the Fire Department.
- You must have an appropriate means to extinguish an open-air fire completely at the end of the day or if requested by the Fire Department.
- The Fire Department can refuse or cancel a permit at any time. (Example: Violation of permit regulations, or change in weather conditions.)
- Open burning season is January 15-May 1.

Massachusetts Regulation 310 CMR: DEP 7.07 "Open Burning"

More information from the Massachusetts DEP. 🐦

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MAR 10TH MOVIE NIGHT-INSIDE OUT 4:30-8PM

MAR 15TH FULL BURN BAND 8PM

MAR 16TH HILLTOWN BLUES JAM 2PM

MAR 17TH ST. PATTY'S SPINDLE | MUSIC BINGO 6PM

MAR 21 BRETT POTTER DUO 6PM

MAR 22ND ROCK 201 8PM

MAR 29TH D-ROD & THE UPRISING BAND 8PM

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Pruning Workshop Draws a Crowd

“EVERYONE WANTS TO LEARN HOW TO PRUNE THEIR BACKYARD APPLE TREE.”

By Suzanne OConnell

Despite below-zero temperatures and a gray sky, nearly forty enthusiastic apple growers showed up at Riiska Brook Orchard on New Hartford Road on a Saturday morning in mid-February.

They gathered to learn about apple tree pruning from an expert. Joe Pappas, who manages Riiska Brook for owners Calvin Rodman and Emily Melchior, is a trained orchardist who has been in the fruit-growing business for more than ten years.



The initial gathering on the freezing, overcast day. Photo: Emily Melchior



Joe Pappas demonstrating the use of his favorite tool, a razor-sharp pruning saw, to remove a small, out-of-place branch. Photo: Tom Christopher



Joe Pappas twisting a young shoot to change its growth orientation.

Photo: John Alessi

Joe shared strategies to increase your tree’s fruit production through the quadrant method. Techniques vary for young trees beginning their growth and older trees needing revitalization.

Hardy souls who stayed well into the afternoon were rewarded with fresh-baked blueberry muffins and coffee, courtesy of the Riiska Brook Orchard.

Many potential apple growers who missed the event are hoping the pruning workshop will happen again this spring. 🍏



Cultural Council Awards, 2025

By Jennifer Hibbins

The Sandisfield Cultural Council is pleased to announce that \$7,005 in grants has been awarded to 16 organizations or individuals to provide cultural programming to the residents of Sandisfield and surrounding areas in fiscal year 2025.

- Berkshire South Community Center, Berkshire Ukulele Band and Berkshire Sings
- Berkshire Pulse, Theater Dance Residency at Farmington River Elementary
- Farmington River Elementary for a Force and Motion program, field trips to Hancock Shaker Village and the Mahaiwe, plus a Community Musical production
- Farmington River PTA, Inflatable Planetarium at the school
- Festival Latino of the Berkshires
- Greenagers, Education and Trail Stewardship at Yanner Park
- MUSIC Dance.edu, Hip Hop Chair Dance Exercise for Seniors
- Natalie Tyler, Contemporary Sculpture at Chesterwood
- New Marlborough Village Association, Meeting House Programs
- Sandisfield Arts Center, Joel Brown and Dave Maswick, Live

- Sandisfield Arts Center, Evening of Song 2025
- Sandisfield Cultural Council, Sandisfield Memorial Day Parade
- Sandisfield Recreation Committee, Sandisfield Family Fun Day
- WAM Theatre, 2025 Community Engagement

In keeping with our council priorities, grants were awarded to applicants that best met the following criteria: The venue should reach a large group in the community. Community-wide gatherings are desired. School children and activities related to learning are a high priority, as well as events for senior citizens in town. Local presenters dealing with the arts, humanities and sciences are encouraged.

The Sandisfield Cultural Council is supported by an annual grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, as well as funding of \$500 from the Town of Sandisfield.

The Council seeks additional members to carry out our mission to broaden and enhance the cultural life available to the town of Sandisfield and its residents. Members who join now will have time to get up to speed before the next grant cycle in the fall. Reach out to any current member for more information on joining: Alexcia Adams, Karema Almeida, Connie Canty, Ellen Croibier, Jennifer Hibbins, Jennifer Lenzi or Ashley Nikituk. Or contact us by email at culturalcouncil@sandisfieldma.gov.

Call for Art

ANNUAL DANIEL MANACHER PRIZE FOR YOUNG ARTISTS

By Times Reporters

The Sandisfield Arts Center has announced the 2025 Call for Art for the 4th Annual Daniel Manacher Prize for Young Artists. The prize is in support of young artists in Berkshire County. Esteemed artist Josephine Halvorsen will return as judge for this year's award.

Works will be accepted through April 7, 2025. Up to three artists will be selected as finalists, each receiving \$400 to support their art practice as well as participate in a group show of their work at the Sandisfield Arts Center during the 2026 Gallery season. Winners will be notified and announced the first week of June 2025.

Eligible artists are those aged 17-26 years of age, residing or attending school in Berkshire County, and working in painting, drawing, mixed media, and sculpture. There is no fee for the application. All entrants will be judged based solely on the merit of the work presented. Past winners are not eligible to apply. Complete eligibility requirements can be found on the Sandisfield Arts Center website.

The prize was created by Adam Manacher and Carol Birnbaum, parents of Daniel Manacher in memory of their son and his passion for art.

"Daniel worked on different surfaces, always hand-drawn," said his parents. "He loved interacting with people in their love for art. We hope, with the Daniel Manacher Prize for Young Artists, to inspire other young artists and to assist them as they reach for their dreams."

Halvorsen is Professor of Art and Chair of Graduate Studies in Painting at Boston University. She lives in western Massachusetts and is currently building a studio in Sandisfield.

To apply, visit Sandisfieldartscenter.org. For questions or more information, email Jessica Coffrin at gallery@sandisfieldartscenter.org.







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Sandisfield Arts Center

Arts Center Receives \$15,000 Grant From Feigenbaum Foundation

By Hilde Weisert

One of the largest and most generous foundations in Berkshire County may be one you've never heard of, the Feigenbaum Foundation. But it's a name you should remember, since they are a major benefactor of cultural and other organizations in our county, and they recently contributed \$15,000 to the renovations for our own Sandisfield Arts Center.

Their website describes the foundation's purpose this way:

The founders, brothers Armand and Donald Feigenbaum, had a deep respect and love for the Berkshires. In keeping with that idea, organizations located in or providing primary benefits to the Berkshires are the Foundation's preferred grant recipients. The purpose of the Feigenbaum Foundation is to focus its financial assistance primarily on pursuits related to, effecting or associated with education in technology, engineering and management; academic institutions and disciplines; medical institutions and disciplines; cultural programs and projects; community-based tax-exempt organizations in the Berkshire County area; established religious institutions, programs and project.

The non-profit Sandisfield Arts Center falls into the cultural programs and projects category. Although we are much smaller than many of their grantees, the directors of the Feigenbaum Foundation recognized the value of our renovation project, "Building Our Future Together," to our small and special community.

With this grant and the generous funding already received from individual donors, along with the Estate of Leslie and Johanna



HVAC units have been installed in the ceiling of the main room.

Photo: Arts Center

Garfield (administered by their family), the 1772 Foundation, the Homestead Foundation, and the Wyomissing Foundation, we are close to covering Phase 1 costs.

That means we'll have climate-friendly HVAC and a modernized Gallery for our grand opening weekend May 30-June 1.

"The Landscape We Live" is the opening Gallery show, celebrating the 30th anniversary and renovations of the Arts Center. The exhibition pays tribute to Sandisfield—the topography, trees, totems, rocks, rivers, animals, and artists who call it home. We'll share the full season lineup in a future article, but "The Landscape We Live" is very much a focus of this season.

UPDATE ON OUR RENOVATIONS

Work continues on the project despite the cold. Three of the four ceiling HVAC

units are in (see the photograph). As anyone will recognize who has done home renovations, unexpected needs and issues add to the costs. For example, work on the ceiling HVAC led to discovering an unrelated problem. Our electrical system requires a major upgrade to support the HVAC and future kitchen. Digging the foundation for the future shed cost more than the initial estimate because – it's Sandisfield – it hit ledge.

Such inevitable surprises along the way are why we continue to seek donations from foundations and from members of our community to complete our Phase I, 2025 plan. We also need funds for Phase II, 2026, for the kitchen and storage shed.

Look for our article in the April Times for a further update and a season preview. 📖

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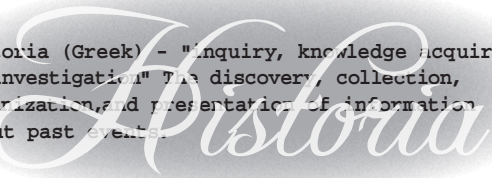
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steve@millriverfolkschool.org

Mass Cultural Council
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historia (Greek) - "inquiry, knowledge acquired by investigation" The discovery, collection, organization, and presentation of information about past events.



Reminiscences of a South Sandisfield Childhood

PART TWO: STORMS

By Ron Bernard

Last month we introduced the memoirs of Stella Hyde Morey who lived in South Sandisfield as a precocious young girl in the mid-1910s. Stella's transcribed 3,600-word memoirs, written in 1987, include remarkable, detailed impressions of everyday life and people.



Only known image of the Joseph French house. **Sandisfield Then & Now**, courtesy of Riiska family

*Vera E. Tibeau or Tibbo; b. July 1893, Newfoundland, Canada; m. Owen Hartshorn (1887-1940), Dec. 7, 1910, at Boston, Mass.; rem. before 1950 to Joseph A. Rowley of Tolland, Mass., and Colebrook River, Conn.; d. Jan. 30, 1972, Miami, Florida].

*See, "Newton Hartshorn of Sandisfield," Sandisfield Times January/February 2018, pp.10-11.

Part One, published last month, included recollections of farming traditions. Part Two here continues with excerpts about her daily life, with slight edits for clarity and conciseness. The South Sandisfield Congregational chapel was the social center of the community. The church and its ministers and parishioners are recurrent in her writing. Two of her anecdotes detail Sandisfield thunderstorms of the early part of the last century.

By a quirk of fate, my mother [Ethel] was 41 years old when I was born [New Rochelle, NY] and my father [Howard J. Hyde Sr.] was 52. My brothers were grown and away at school. So, I associated completely with older people. We had a huge 14-room house (built in 1770) about 10 minutes' walk from the church. I was in the middle of everything that was going on. Because I was my father's shadow, I went where he went, saw everything, and didn't miss a trick.

Vera Hartshorn was the daughter-in-law of a very well-known New England portrait painter. She was very (lively). Fire-red hair, curly; blue eyes. Creamy complexion sprinkled with freckles. She loved life.*

THUNDERSTORMS

We had a dreadful thunderstorm in the area and her husband [Owen] and hired men were rushing to get in the last bit of hay before the downpour. He asked her to take the team to a corner of the field. She hopped on the rake and was down in the field when a bolt of lightning hit the rake. It killed the team and threw her 10 or 15 feet. She was rushed to the hospital unconscious and remained so for some time. They believed the reason she lived was because she brought along a heavy raincoat and threw it on the iron seat to give a little "cushioning." In those days raincoats were made of rubber, not plastic!

We used to get very dreadful thunderstorms in that area, and I'll bet they still do. Behind the church there was a small pond – not natural but formed by a dam. There was a meadow between the church and pond. As you face the church you will see behind it, a little distance, a mountain



Too many cooks in the kitchen
 Adding lawyers to the mix might get salty

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Rare view of the church and horse barn, and benefactor Sarah Webster Smith's house, right, c.1910s. Author's collection.

(more like an overgrown hill). It was heavily timbered, and that mountain is loaded with iron ore. The Indians mined it for ore. It was also loaded with rattlesnakes.

But I can remember standing in the window counting the times the lightning struck the mountain. There always seemed to be a great disturbance around the mountain during storms. Mother was scared silly of thunderstorms. She would go into the family sitting room, pull down the shades, light the piano lamp and play and sing songs. I wasn't having any of that so I would crawl under the shade and watch God's fireworks. When a storm got going, she always sang 'Rock of Ages' – all the verses.



Example of a horse-drawn hay rake from the period

'REV. GOODIE' AND THE SNOWSTORM

Stella mentions Rev. Asa Stanley Goodrich, one of the Congregational ministers who impressed her.

He was called "Goodie" behind his back. He was a most delightful person, and the young people adored him. He was a

champion for the young. One year on a Friday or Saturday in January we had heavy snowfall. Sunday was bitterly cold. (Although) the roads were very bad, families were at the church waiting for the minister anyway. He didn't come. Father was about to send Ray (my brother) back to our place to (get) saddle horses so that he and another of the boys could ride up to New Marlboro [where Rev. Goodrich also preached] to meet him. Just then Will Sage, son of Mrs. C. H. Sage, came in on horseback to say Rev. Goodrich wouldn't be in. Goodie was safe at their house. The Sage place was about halfway between New Marlboro and the church in South Sandisfield.

His horse fell and hurt its leg and Goodie had to walk almost a mile (back) to the Sages, leading the horse. The way Mrs. Sage expressed it was that neither horse nor man was in any shape to travel further. Mr. Sage said, "Goodie was beat out" and he thought frost bitten as well. He also remarked that "Ma" had given him a glass of her dandelion wine because he was shuddering with the cold. That made him feel good so he asked for more saying, "he felt so much better that he might get to church to hold a short prayer meeting." The net result was that Goodie was out like a light and (Mr.) Sage remarked that he was gassed (and) "that would hold him for 24 hours." 🇺🇸

Part One appeared last month. Part Three, "The Quilt," will appear next month.



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WINTER 2024-2025



2024-2025 Snowfall
 to date as measured /
 estimated at a Beech Plain
 back-yard weather station.

November 2024	3.5 inches
December 2024	10.0
January 2025	
2	2.0
26	5.0
January total	7.0
February	
3	2.0
6	1.0
8/9	4.0
13	1.0
15	5.0
17	1.0 + ice
February to date	14.0
SEASON TO DATE . . .	34.5 inches
Extreme Temps	
December 24, 2024	minus 6.2°
January 21	minus 7.2°
January 22	minus 10.8°

**DID YOU
 KNOW?**



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 forward**

**DAYLIGHT SAVINGS
 TIME BEGINS
 Sunday, March 9, 2025,
 at 2:00 AM**

Thank you to our January/February Donors!

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Thomas Blinkhorn
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Joel & Kate Millonzi
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James Remis
James Stern & Jane Judge*



NEW BOSTON CHURCH SERVICES

Worship Service

Sunday, March 16

10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

**Followed by the
Annual meeting and election
of the Church Council at
11:30 a.m.**

**4 Sandisfield Road
Sandisfield, MA 01255**

newbostoncongregationalchurch.org

CRITTER CORNER



February Bluebirds!

Ron Bernard writes: Bluebirds in recent years have been a delight to see here. Most years a single pair arrives in Spring, too late to occupy our 'bluebird houses' which tree swallows claim by early March. But this year three pairs (!) bravely showed up in early February in the middle of a really harsh winter. Will they thwart the swallows? We'll see.

HELP FOR EXISTING HOUSING SUCCESSFUL REHAB PROGRAM RETURNS

By Times Reporters

Nearly two dozen Sandisfield homes were rehabilitated through three previous rehab programs between the 2018 and 2020 fiscal years, with another fifty or so similarly upgraded in other Berkshire County towns.

That same program is being reinstated for FY2025, and Sandisfield residents will have an equal opportunity to participate as the program operates on a first-come/first-served application basis.

So as the program begins to roll out, the backers strongly suggest that qualified Sandisfield residents fill out a pre-application form and get on the waiting list. The project manager anticipates receiving a total of slightly over \$1 million in funding to rehab a dozen units and local residents could benefit.

THE FUNDING SOURCE

There is no cost to Sandisfield for the program. The funding is provided by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, working with the local Board of Selectmen in conjunction with Berkshire Community Development and Baily Boyd Associates of Boston to provide the program benefits locally.

The program offers Deferred-Payment Loans (DPLs) at zero percent interest to finance the rehabilitation of eligible projects. The maximum DPL is \$60,000 per unit to address code violations, with an additional \$10,000 per unit when improvements include removal of lead paint or asbestos, making handicapped access, septic system replacement, or multiple energy-efficiency enhancements. The DPL is secured by a lien placed on the property for a period of 15 years, which will be forgiven at a rate of 1/15th per year provided the property owner(s) are not in any way in default. The DPLs do not require monthly loan payments. If a property is sold or transferred within the 15-year period after rehabilitation completion, the funds will be recaptured on a prorated basis. After the 15-year recapture period expires, the loan is forgiven.

ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants must meet the initial eligibility requirements, as laid out in the pre-application form, in order to qualify to begin the application process. Final eligibility is determined after the fully completed loan application and all supporting documentation is received, reviewed, and accepted by the BCD Housing Rehab Program Manager. See the adjoining Sandisfield Income Eligibility Chart for income limits based on household size.

The program is offered to owner-occupied single-family/multi-family and investor-owned units in the Town of Sandisfield. If the structure is a single-family owner-occupied unit, the owner must meet income guidelines of low to moderate income. If the structure contains year-round rental units, at least 51% of all the

households including rental units/renters must meet these income limits. The applicant must be the property owner of record for the proposed residential structure.

SCOPE OF REPAIRS

A wide range of repairs are covered, including but not limited to:

- Roof and Siding replacements and repairs
- Electrical, Heating and Plumbing upgrades
- Structural improvements
- Handicap Accessibility improvements
- Energy efficiency enhancements
- Insulation and Window repairs
- Lead Paint and Asbestos removal

TESTIMONIALS

Sandisfield Residents who have previously benefited from the program express their gratitude about the program:

“This program was the answer to my prayers. I was in need of a roof badly along with other repairs and without this program, my house would have been destroyed by major leaks in the roof. The team was amazing!”

-FY18 Sandisfield Recipient

“My insurance company stated that they would not renew my policy if I didn’t get a new roof. I was at wits end caring for my husband. The program came to my rescue and I couldn’t have been more pleased. The workers all worked together as a team and communication was excellent. A BIG thank you!”

-FY17 Sandisfield Recipient

For more information on the Housing Rehabilitation Program, visit the Sandisfield website or contact Dawn Odell Lemon, Project Manager at dawn@berkcd.com or 413-528-0104. 🏡



Commonwealth of Massachusetts Income Limits


Sandisfield Income Eligibility Chart 80% of Median Income

Household Size	Berkshire County
1	\$61,350
2	\$70,100
3	\$78,850
4	\$87,600
5	\$94,650
6	\$101,650
7	\$108,650
8	\$115,650

Kindling Still Available

By Times Reporters

A young Sandisfield entrepreneur, Liam Pennington, 8, who started a kindling operation last winter, has made such a success of it that his 5-year-old kid sister, Everleigh, 5, has become a partner in the business.

Their work will be for sale, \$5 a bundle, through early spring at their roadside stand at 220 Sandisfield Road. 



Liam, second grade, home-schooled.
Photo: Jane Kaufman, The Berkshire Eagle



Everleigh, kindergarten, home-schooled.
Photo: Lindsay Pennington



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EVENTS AT THE LIBRARY THIS MONTH.

Thursday, March 27, at 6:00 p.m., the **Sandisfield Women's Book Group** will meet to discuss "Last Train to Key West" by Chanel Cleeton. In 1935 three women are forever changed when one of the most powerful hurricanes in history barrels toward the Florida Keys. Over the course of the Labor Day weekend, the women's paths cross unexpectedly, and the danger swirling around them is matched only by the terrifying force of the deadly storm threatening the Keys. Join us for conversation, review of the book, and pleasant company!

Saturday, March 8 is **Pot Painting Time** for all ages. Turn a plain terra cotta pot into YOUR art design. We provide the paints, the pots, and even smocks for the little ones to wear while painting. The event is from 1:00-3:00 p.m. Cookies, juice, and hot beverages available as well.

All month long – It is never too late to participate in the **Massachusetts Center for the Book 2025 Reading Challenge**. March's book is one about someone with a marginalized Identity. Stop by the Library

for a postcard with each month's reading challenge.

Latest additions to the library shelves

Holding It Together

(nonfiction) changes the way you understand what you thought you knew.

Jessica Calarco weaves powerful narrative with compelling empirical data to give us a metaphor for understanding our economic lives: women as social safety net. . . . Once you see the economy the way Calarco describes it, you cannot unsee it." Review by Tressie McMillan Cottom, Professor at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and New York Times columnist.

There Are Rivers In The Sky (fiction) A brilliant, unforgettable novel, which raises big ideas of "who owns the past" with nuance and complexity. Elif Shafak ties together diverse time periods and places in a way that seems both natural and wonderfully unexpected." Review by Mary Beard, author of SPQR

The Last Tsar (nonfiction) by Tsuyoshi Hasegawa This masterful book is like a slow motion picture of Russia approaching the edge. Yet only the weakness, inaction, and stupidity of the last

Tsar as well as the stunning recklessness of the Russian elites pushed the empire into a breach. A chilling lesson on how the ineptness of one man, and the opportunism of many, can pull down not only an outdated regime, but the entire temple of state, law, and civil society. Review by Vladislav Zubok, author of *Collapse*.

Time of the Child by Niall Williams –From the author of *This is Happiness*, a compassionate, life-affirming novel about

one Christmas season that transforms a small Irish town. You don't need to wait for Christmas to read this great little novel nor do you need to be Irish. Sometimes you just need a novel that speaks to your heart in kind ways.

The Wide Wide Sea (nonfiction) by Hampton Sides – An epic account that in the words of Douglas Preston "portrays in a nuanced and respectful way those peoples impacted by his final voyage – including the Aboriginal Tasmanians, the Maori, the Tahitians, the Hawaiians, and the Native Alaskans."

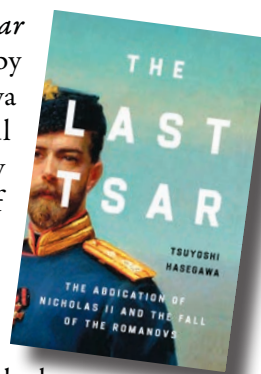
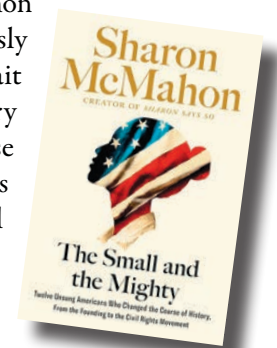
The Small and the Mighty (nonfiction) by Sharon McMahon – A meticulously researched portrait of twelve ordinary Americans whose little-known stories define our national character. They changed the course of history from the Founding to the Civil Rights Movement.

The Stolen Queen (fiction) by Fiona F. Davis – Do you enjoy historical fiction, mystery, and female antagonists? An engrossing story of two female characters who uncover a mystery that takes them back to the day of a female pharaoh but also delves deep into family ties and human identity.

MUSEUM PASSES: Don't forget the Library has passes to the following:

- The Clark
- The Springfield Museums (all Five!)
- Hancock Shaker Village
- Mass Moca
- Herman Melville Museum and Home
- Bidwell House
- Ventfort Hall

**First Day of
Spring:
March 20th**



SANDISFIELD RECREATION COMMITTEE PRESENTS:

Hop INTO SPRING

WITH BERKSHIRE BUNNIES

- LIVE BUNNIES
- TERRARIUM MAKING
- LIGHT REFRESHMENTS

SATURDAY, APRIL 5TH | 10AM-12PM

OLD TOWN HALL
 3 SILVERBROOK RD, SANDISFIELD, MA
 PLEASE RSVP BY 3/22/25 TO
SANDISFIELDEVENTS@RECREATIONCOMMITTEE.INFO

POT PAINTING TIME

AT THE SANDISFIELD LIBRARY!

SAT., MARCH 8TH | 1-3PM

Arts and Crafts for kids (of all ages 1-99)
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Letters to the Editor

Green Committee Deserves Credit

In the last Issue of the Sandisfield Times, in “Select Board Chairman’s Year-End Report,” it was unfortunate that no credit was given to the Green Committee for its work in acquiring the funding for the Town’s Solar arrays and heat pump.

The sentence read: “The Town Hall is now heated and cooled by a heat pump system with a backup generator, paid for through grant funding. Not only will the Town Hall enjoy something it’s never had – air conditioning during the hot, muggy days of summer – but the Town will save on oil expense in the winter because solar panels installed a year ago will fuel the heat pumps.”

The Green Committee began its work in 2018, by creating a Solar Photovoltaic Installation bylaw to become eligible for a Green Communities grant of \$128,805. The Green Committee was also awarded an additional META 7 grant of \$12,500 for an engineering design of a heat pump and solar array system needed to meet the building’s heating and cooling requirements. The savings in electricity with the installation of solar panels was estimated at \$231,000 over 25 years. In the Fall of 2022, a Green Communities Competitive Grant of \$67,504 was submitted to the MassDOER for the heat pump. The Heat Pump project was estimated to save in excess of 1,069 gallons of heating oil amounting to an annual savings of \$5,386. Over 20 years this would save an additional \$107,720 in heating bills. The total amount of grants and savings is \$547,529 courtesy of the Green Committee.

The Green Committee included members George Riley, Anina Carr, Jeff Bye and myself. We spent hundreds of hours in more than four years working toward acquiring the grants and finally overseeing the installations. Credit also goes to the Mass DOER Green Communities Regional Coordinator, Mark Rabinsky, and Grant Coordinator Jane Pfister who helped guide the Sandisfield Green Committee through the grant approval process.

Sandisfield has always relied on volunteers to provide community support. It seems to me that to not give even an ounce of credit to the volunteers of the Green Committee, and also to give the impression that the Select Board was responsible for work that was done by others, is a complete disregard of the services provided by the volunteers of the Green Committee.

Larry Dwyer
West Street

Oops - Photo Caption Error

I was reading through the new edition Jan/Feb Sandisfield Times.

I truly wait anxiously for every new edition !

However, there was a mistake captioning the photo COOKIE SWAP.

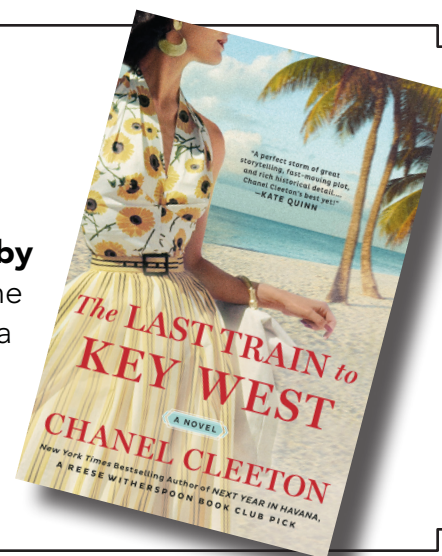
This was not a Recreation event. This is a yearly event (over 20 yrs now) at the New Boston Inn, sponsored entirely by Barbara Colorio (the Inn owner) . She provides delicious food, a fun atmosphere, while decorating every nook and cranny to transform the Inn into a Holiday wonderland. She provides Santa and a magical afternoon, free to all those who attend. All you need to do is bring your cookies to swap and a large container, of course.

Thanks.

Lynn Rubenstein
Recreation Committee

Sandisfield Ladies Book Club

Thursday, March 27, at 6:00 p.m., “Last Train to Key West” by Chanel Cleeton. In 1935 three women are forever changed when one of the most powerful hurricanes in history barrels toward the Florida Keys. Over the course of the Labor Day weekend, the women’s paths cross unexpectedly, and the danger swirling around them is matched only by the terrifying force of the deadly storm threatening the Keys. Join us for conversation, review of the book. and pleasant company!



NOW HEAR THIS!

Edited by Laura Rogers-Castro. Please send notices for Now Hear This! to editor@sandisfieldtimes.org

MARCH EVENTS

Sandisfield Select Board Meetings are currently through Zoom and in-person at 6:30 p.m. on Mondays unless otherwise posted. Please visit sandisfieldma.gov or call 258-4711 for information.

Playgroup on Tuesdays from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. at the Otis Town Hall. Sponsored by South Berkshire Kids. Pre-registration unnecessary. Led by Nina Carr. This fun program includes free play, crafts, stories, and songs! A great time to meet with friends and make new friends! For confirmation of dates, please call Nina Carr (258-3314). Free!

Coffee Hour on Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. at the Council on Aging, Town Hall Annex. Snacks and conversation! For more information, contact Nina Carr (258-3314). Free.

Chair Yoga with Wendy Larsen on Wednesdays at 2:00 p.m. at the Old Town Hall on 3 Silverbrook Road, sponsored by the Council on Aging. For more information, contact Nina Carr (258-3314). Free.

Town Caucus on Monday, March 3 at 6:00 p.m. at the Old Town Hall, 3 Silverbrook Road. For nominating candidates for seven electoral offices at upcoming Town Election in May.

Pot Painting Time at the Library on Saturday, March 8 from 1:00-3:00 p.m. Arts and crafts for kids of all ages (1-99). Clay pots and paints provided. Also cookies and juice.

New Boston Congregational Church service. Sunday, March 16 at 10:00 a.m. followed by **annual meeting and election of the Church Council** at 11:30 a.m.

Ladies Book Club at the Library, Thursday, March 27, at 6:00 p.m., "Last Train to Key West" by Chanel Cleeton.

SAVE THE DATE

Hop into Spring with Berkshire Bunnies on Saturday, April 5 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Old Town Hall. Live

bunnies, terrarium making, light refreshments. Sponsored by the Sandisfield Recreation Committee. Please RSVP (sandisfieldevents@recreationcommittee.info) before March 22. Free.

ONLINE EVENTS

A Farm and Garden Show with Sandisfield Residents Bill Taylor and Jaye Alison Moscarriello streamed every Monday from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. at berkshireradio.org.

Co-Existing with Coyotes, Online Program on Thursday, March 13 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. Join John Maguranis, a former Army veterinary technician and retired Animal Control Officer for an engaging webinar on living with coyotes. John is a dedicated educator and conservationist who is the Massachusetts Representative for Project Coyote. Learn how to foster understanding and respect for "America's Song Dog." Please register at bnrc.org. The Zoom link will be emailed to those registered.

EVENTS IN SURROUNDING TOWNS

Winter Bird Walk every Saturday in March at 10:00 a.m. along the Riverfront Trail in Great Barrington. The walks are led by Ben Nickley (ben@berkshirebirds.org) of the Berkshire Bird Observatory. Free and beginners are welcome! Meet at the Great Barrington Co-Op.

Bird Felting Ornament Workshop on Thursday, March 6 at 6:00 p.m. at the Public Safety Complex Community Room in Tolland. Join fiber artist Tracy Kochanski with a workshop on needle felting. You will learn how to choose wool, use proper needle technique, sculpt, and attach basic shapes to create the various elements of a bird. All materials and tools will be provided. Space is limited. Registration (413-258-4794) required.

The Road & The Bear: Film & Book Discussion on Sunday, March 9 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Becket Athenaeum.

Following a screening of John Hillcoat's "The Road," the 2009 film adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's Pulitzer Prize winning novel, Becket Athenaeum Director Nicole Schulze will lead a discussion that compares the film to the Becket Athenaeum Big Read title – "The Bear" by Andrew Krivak. Having knowledge of "The Bear" for this program is great, but not required. Refreshments, including popcorn, wine, beer, and non-alcoholic beverages will be served. Come early to get settled. RSVP appreciated: bit.ly?BA-road-bear. For additional information, please call 413-623-5483 or email at info@bwlibrary.org.

Kids in the Kitchen: Around the World at the Table on Thursday, March 13 from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. at Berkshire South Community Center in Great Barrington. This healthy cooking class for kids helps children connect with different cultures through food while learning to make delicious meals. Free, but registration (berkshiresouth.org/community-youth/) is required.

Rock & Mineral Show on Saturday, March 15 and Sunday, March 16 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Whiting Mills on 100 Whiting Street in Winsted. Over 25 vendors. Free admission. For more information, visit www.whitingmills.com.

Berkshire Grown Winter Farmers Market on Saturday, March 15 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Housy Dome on 1064 Main Street in Housatonic. Featuring locally grown and produced foods, including greens, winter squash, root crops, apples, cheese, meats, honey, maple syrup, baked goods, and more. Local musicians perform.

Steady Mood & Blood Sugar on Wednesday, March 19 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. at Berkshire South Regional community Center. This is a part lecture/part cooking class with Thais Harris. Free, but registration is required. Please visit berkshiresouth.org/community-adult/.

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

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Thank you to those who contributed to our 2024 Appeal. Those who donated in January and February are listed on page 13. Your donations are welcome and appreciated.



THE SANDISFIELD TIMES is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization staffed by volunteers from the Sandisfield community and funded by individual and business sponsors. Its mission is to connect the community through reliable, regular, and relevant information. The paper is published 11 times each year, with a joint January-February issue and monthly issues thereafter.

Donations of any amount are needed to ensure the continuation of this newspaper. Please send checks to: The Sandisfield Times, P.O. Box 584,

Sandisfield, MA 01255 or donate online at our website: www.sandisfieldtimes.org. Donations to The Sandisfield Times are deductible under section 170 of the Federal Income Tax Code. Donations do not include subscriptions. Subscriptions do not qualify as donations.

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the New Boston Inn. The Times is also available in West Otis at the laundromat, the library, and Paige's Place; in East Otis at Katie's, Pappas, and the Knox Trail Inn. Also at the Monterey Library (outside box) and the Roadside Cafe, in Colebrook at the post office, and at the Mill River General Store. Back copies are available for purchase.

The Times can be mailed to your home (non-Sandisfield addresses only) by paid subscription (see form at left) or you can read it (free) online as a PDF document at www.sandisfieldtimes.org. Classified ads, 30 words or less, are free.

We welcome submissions, comments and suggestions, including letters to the editor by the 15th of the month prior. Maximum 300 words. We may edit for space, style or clarity. We will try to publish Public Service Announcements when we have room, with priority given to Sandisfield organizations. No portion of the The Sandisfield Times may be reproduced without permission.

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If internet accessible, all letters, news events and tips, ideas, obituary and family announcements, photos (600 dpi if possible) and advertisement queries to editor@sandisfieldtimes.org