

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

Tribunus



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April 2026

Budget Agonisties

TOWN SEEKING TO EASE THE PAIN

By Bill Price

Last summer, in response to a Sandisfield Planning Board survey, a majority of respondents said “yes” to the idea of full-time emergency services for the Town even if it meant raising their property taxes.

“Sixty-five percent of the respondents said ‘yes,’” reported the Planning Board chairman at an information meeting in September. The 126 respondents consisted of about 100 two-person households and 26 or so singles, representing possibly 225 voters.

That support for expanded services will be put to the test at the Annual Town Meeting coming next month when voters will be asked to pass the FY2027 budget, which includes significant increases driven in large part by the Town’s expanded Fire and EMT services.

Select Board Chairman Steve Seddon points out that last year’s property tax bill for most homeowners was about what it was in 2019, thanks to several years of conservative budgeting. This year he acknowledges will be a little different.

If the answers to the budget proposals are “yes,” homeowners could see an increase in property taxes of not quite eight percent, driven primarily by the cost of the EMS

Cont'd on p.5

New Nonprofit to Support Sandisfield Fire Department

By Bill Price

A new nonprofit was established in March to raise funds to support the Sandisfield Fire Department.

It will replace a former nonprofit, SFDI (Sandisfield Fire Department, Inc.), that for many years had a similar mission but a series of disputes with a succession of Select Boards culminated with the current board formally severing the Town’s relationship with SFDI. The organization still exists, but has no connection with Sandisfield or with the Sandisfield Fire Department (SFD).

The new organization, Friends of Sandisfield Fire Department (FOSFD), will fund raise the way most nonprofits do – through individual solicitation, annual appeal mailing, special events, and grants if available. The group is actively seeking volunteers to assist with these efforts and to expand its membership.

Officers of the nonprofit include three active Sandisfield residents: Patricia Hubbard (President), Jeff Bye (Treasurer) and Liana Toscanini (Secretary).

Friends of SFD filed Articles of Organization with the Commonwealth on February 3 and was granted charitable 501(c)3 nonprofit status by the IRS on March 5. Contributions received are now tax-deductible.

The Agreement of Association with the Town of Sandisfield, signed March 24, can be seen at the Town’s website, sandisfieldma.gov.

Treasurer Jeff Bye said, “The creation of a new nonprofit to support the Sandisfield Fire Department was necessary to help defray the costs to the taxpayer of running an excellent emergency service operation that benefits all residents. Our website is now live and our PayPal is ready to accept donations.”

President Hubbard told The Times, “I think we have accomplished a great deal within a short period of time. We went from an idea to a reality in a two-month period. Now, we are ready to provide support to our town.”

To volunteer, donate, or obtain more information, call Jeff Bye at 413-429-7985 or visit <https://friendsofsfd.org/>.



Cont'd on p.2

New Nonprofit to Support Sandisfield Fire Department

Cont'd from p.1



Friends of SFD officers from left to right: Patricia Hubbard (President), Jeff Bye (Treasurer), and Liana Toscanini (Secretary)

Photo: Richard Migot

BACKGROUND OF THE OFFICERS

Patricia Hubbard: Since moving to Sandisfield in 2007, Hubbard has been an Events Planner primarily for nonprofit organizations and was an Events Coordinator at the Norman Rockwell Museum. Currently on the board of Volunteers in Medicine Berkshires (VIM), she has been responsible for many of their fundraising events and serves as co-chair of their Development Committee. Prior to moving to the Berkshires, Patricia had a career in new product development for a variety of Fortune 500 companies.

Jeff Bye: Raised in Texas, Bye is a retired NASA electrical engineer who throughout a 35-year career at the Johnson Space Center in Houston held multiple technical management and leadership roles. In 2015, he and his wife Melissa moved to Sandisfield where he used that experience to chair the Broadband Committee, the Planning Board, and serve on the Board of Assessors and the Green Committee.

Liana Toscanini: After moving to Sandisfield in 1996, Toscanini was actively involved in the restoration of the Sandisfield Arts Center, the Sandisfield Historical Society, The Sandisfield Newsletter, the Sandisfield Times, Sandisfield Cultural Council, Sandisfield's 250th Anniversary, and Friends of Yanner Park. She has served on many nonprofit boards including Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce and the MA Nonprofit Network. She founded the Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires in 2016.

Mission Over Money TOP TEN THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT NONPROFITS

By Liana Toscanini

Friends of Sandisfield Fire Department is a new nonprofit with a mission to raise funds for the town's Fire & EMS departments. For those unfamiliar with nonprofit structure and how nonprofits are governed, here are some handy facts:

- Nonprofits exist to serve a cause. Any money earned above expenses must be put back into the organization to further its charitable mission.
- A nonprofit is tax-exempt according to IRS tax code 501c3 because it provides a public benefit. Donations to the nonprofit are tax-deductible.
- Nonprofits are overseen by the state (via the Attorney General's Office) and the Federal Government (via the IRS).
- Nonprofits are governed by a board of directors that provides oversight, stewardship and guidance. Nonprofit board members are volunteers. They are not paid.
- To maintain tax-exempt status, nonprofits must be transparent about their finances so members of the public can see how their donations are spent.
- Nonprofits file IRS Form 900 annually, which is a public document that anyone can access to review an organization's income and expense.
- Nonprofits rely on both earned revenue (from ticket sales, fees for service, advertising sales) and contributed revenue (donations, gifts in kind, gifts from foundations and grants).
- There are over 1,000 nonprofits in Berkshire County, employing one in four people,
- Nonprofits are the third largest sector after retail and manufacturing. They fuel the economy and improve the quality of life.
- Nonprofits are pervasive but often overlooked. They include museums, theaters, schools, universities, hospitals, churches, animal welfare and environmental organizations, youth, education, housing, human rights, human services, libraries, food pantries, and more.



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Questions & Answers With FOSFD

By Times Reporters

The Times asked the three officers of Friends of SFD a few questions.

What is your working relationship with the Sandisfield Fire Department?

Friends of SFD is an independent 501c3 organization that will function independently from the Sandisfield Fire Department. Our mission is to raise funds to fill any gaps that exist following the approval of the Town budget. Primarily we will help purchase equipment, pay for training, hold safety educational programs, and provide general support and related charitable activities.

Do you plan to expand your now-three-member board of directors?

Yes. Three members is a minimum number. Ideally our board should be five-to-seven members. Anyone interested can volunteer to serve on either our fundraising committee or our finance committee, as a first step in participation. We can be reached at info@friendsofsfd.org.

Will a fire department member serve on your board?

No. Our policy is not to include anyone from the fire department as we are a separate entity.

Do you plan scheduled meetings? Will they be open to the public?

We plan on conducting regularly scheduled board meetings. They will not

be open to the public. Board meetings of nonprofits are not generally open to the public. However, we will keep the community updated via regularly published monthly reports and quarterly financial reports.

How will the SFD be supported other than through fundraising?

There is no other connection to the Fire Department.

How will you raise funds?

Funds will be raised through standard nonprofit fundraising vehicles such as events, annual appeal, individual solicitations, and grants (when available).

Do you have a bank account yet?

Yes. We've opened an account at Lee Bank.

Will you have any interaction with SFDI?

There will be no interaction with SFDI.

How does FOSFD differ from SFDI?

Friends of SFD is run by experienced nonprofit leaders, including Liana Toscanini, founder of the Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires, and Patricia Hubbard, who has served on multiple boards and is currently on the board of Volunteers in Medicine and heads their development committee. Jeff Bye has experience in the development and management of multi-million dollar budgets and serves on multiple municipal boards.

Our Board's combined years of public service, business, and financial management, nonprofit experience, and upstanding reputation assures the public that Friends of SFD will be run in a legal and ethical way.

In addition, the organization:

- Owns no property
- Does not take or receive money from the Town of Sandisfield
- Offers full transparency
- Is not connected in any way to the Fire Department.

Jeff Bye is a candidate in the coming election for the Town's Select Board. If elected, would that create a conflict of interest or does his chairmanship of the Planning Board?

We asked the Massachusetts Ethics Commission that question. We were informed that elected officials are "special employees" and as such are allowed to serve on nonprofit boards while simultaneously serving on the Select Board. Should Jeff be elected, there were two conditions:

- His name can not appear on any personalized solicitation letters from Friends of SFD.
- He cannot sign Friends of SFDI checks for purchases to support the Fire Department. 



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BOB'S FAREWELL TO SANDISFIELD

Robert Fedell of Town Hill Road was first elected to the Select Board in 2023 to fill a one-year vacancy. He won a full three-year term the following year. As a long-tenured EMT volunteer in New Marlborough, his knowledge of emergency services was important to many of the Board's recent decisions. Because of his scheduled move to another town this summer, he was unable to continue his Board membership and resigned with one year remaining in his term.

Dear friends, neighbors, and fellow citizens of Sandisfield,

I was asked to write a brief goodbye and reflect on my time on the Select Board. It has truly been an eye-opening experience. When I first joined, I assumed the role would involve fairly routine decisions to help oversee the town ... but I quickly realized it was much more than that.

From the start, I made it a point to show up early to every meeting, carefully review each weekly warrant, and question anything that didn't make sense. It began with smaller questions – like why we were renting water coolers when purchasing them would pay for itself within a year.

Before long, however, much larger issues came our way: the unexpected departure of the Town administrator, the tanker accident, multiple leadership changes in the fire department, transitions within the police department, and the eminent domain taking of the firehouse.

There are a few issues I wish I could have seen through to completion. One that stands out is Dodd Road. At my very first Select Board meeting, I asked then-Highway Superintendent Brad about its status and was told plans were in motion. Fast forward three years, and those plans proved to be subpar – but I do believe we now have real forward momentum toward a proper long-term solution.

I approached each decision with the understanding that I was there to represent the voters – not a personal agenda. There were certainly times when voices were raised and tempers flared, but I came to believe that nothing good comes from those moments. Staying calm, cool, and collected was always the better path.

We accomplished a great deal as a Board, and I'm grateful to have worked alongside such dedicated people. Steve, your efforts behind the scenes did not go unnoticed. John, your straightforward approach was always appreciated. And Janey, you've taken on so much in such a short time – I hope things settle down for you soon.

I wish all of you well. Perhaps someday I'll return to Sandisfield and once again enjoy the quiet beauty of this remarkable town.

*Best wishes,
Bob Fedell*

Meet the Candidates

**HOLD THIS DATE:
MAY 1, 7 P.M.**

The Town's Council on Aging will hold a forum for the candidates to introduce themselves and take questions from voters at the Town Hall meeting room, **Friday, May 1, at 7:00 p.m.**



The deadline for candidates who still wish to take out nomination papers with the Town Clerk is April 13 at 5:00 p.m. As of this writing, eleven residents have either taken out papers or been nominated at the Town Caucus to run for elected office at the May municipal election. All of them deserve the Town's gratitude for their willingness to serve.

THE CANDIDATES SO FAR:

- **Moderator** Dominic Konstam (incumbent)
- **Selectman** Alex Russo (3 yr)
Steve Seddon (incumbent)
- **Selectman** Jeff Bye (1 yr)
- **Assessor** Vacancy (3 yr)
- **Board of Health** John Boulais (3 yr)
Brigitte Ruthman (incumbent)
- **Planning Board** Carol Garcia (5 yr)
- **Town Clerk** Amanda Leavenworth (3 yr)
Douglas Miner (incumbent)
- **Library Trustee** Kathy Burrows (5 yr)



Budget Agonistics

Cont'd from p.1

per-diem full-time staffing program.

The Select Board and Town Manager have worked overtime to keep the increase out of what they refer to as “no-man’s land” – which is a tax levy increase of 10 percent or more. An increase of that magnitude might see a tax revolt with residents voting down the entire budget, sending the Town leaders back to the drawing board.

A few nervous moments during the long budget planning process revealed the stunning possibility of a tax levy increase of between 10 and 20 percent. Those numbers caused many expensive “asks” by department heads to receive answers of “no” or “next year, maybe.”

Number-wise, the draft budget for FY27 is \$3,503,095, about a quarter of a million dollars over what it was for FY26.

The Select Board was scheduled to review the budget draft with the / Finance Committee at a meeting March 30. The outcome of that meeting will have occurred too late to be included in this month’s Times.

LAST YEAR/THIS YEAR

Last year, the Town had about a million dollars in free cash. That money could have been used to defray the bump in this year’s tax levy. However, most of that cash has been or will be spent on the eminent domain purchase of Firehouse #2 and its much-needed renovation.

The Sandisfield Fire Department, Inc. (SFDI) had claimed ownership of the Town’s fire stations despite SFDI having been set up as a nonprofit to support the department. Contributing to that belief was a series of acquiescent, although often resistant, select boards which voted that the Town needed to pay a yearly rent for the use of the buildings.

The end result was that the Town faced serious expenses when it acquired the firehouse, including: the purchase price of \$299,000; replacement of the septic system; furnace repair; new equipment to replace out-of-date uniforms; deferred maintenance; per diem costs for firemen and EMTs to replace the volunteers who resigned rather than serve under yet another new fire chief. Other expenses will include improvements to meet OSHA requirements.

One bright spot in the budget is that the Town no longer faces the \$11,000 yearly rental to FSDI for the two firehouses. While that may seem a drop in the bucket, drops add up.

The latest draft of the Town’s FY2027 tax budget was scheduled to be reviewed at a March 30 combined Select Board/Finance Committee meeting. The meeting’s results were too late to be included in this month’s Times.

The Town’s Draft FY27 budget can be reviewed online at www.FY27DRAFTBudget/sandisfieldma.gov. 

Hard to Say “No” to a Good Idea

Here is an example of a request by a department head which may or may not be filled in the FY27 budget. The request is from Brian Fahey, Sandisfield’s interim police chief who also serves as chief of police of Monterey.

“I am requesting that we add a full-time officer for the evening shifts. We have a full-time day shift officer that responds to any and all calls from 8-4 Monday through Friday. I would like to see someone on shift from 4 to 12.

“I have been able to trim our budget so it will only increase about 30 percent. By losing Chief [Mike] Morrison who responded to most evening calls from his home, the majority of the calls were covered. With his dismissal and or his eventual retirement next year we would have faced this crisis eventually. There is certainly a need for another officer.

“The Sandisfield Police Department last year responded to more than 1,200 calls for service which fully justifies the need for another officer. Relying on the state police to respond to Sandisfield for an emergency is just not practical. When an officer is needed for an emergent situation when time is critical, I would feel much more comfortable knowing a Sandisfield officer is close by. Even responding to a burglar alarm when your home is being broken into, having the state police respond from, for example Alford is just not practical.

“We all know that speeding in town is also at times problematic. Having that extra officer doing routine patrols would substantially reduce the speeding, especially on Rt. 8. Since my arrival in town there have been several serious and major accidents on Rt. 8. There have also been domestic-related calls where response time is critical to ensure a positive outcome.”

OUT ON A LIMB



For the Rawley Family

Richard Ellis Hand, Sanford, Maine

Your article last month about the Rowley family home and barn reminded me that important pieces of our American heritage have often been saved only by the actions of “stubborn” individuals.

More often than not, this is a single individual driven to find a path to success despite all the schedules, estimates, and gaslighting of civil authorities whose handouts more often than not lead to legal entrapments that end options and the building is lost.

Recently I viewed a bonus feature included with the 2019 film version of “Little Women.”

The then current head of the Orchard House Society, which owns the Concord home of Louisa May Alcott and her family, described how their building had been saved three times from destruction.

The first time was in 1857, when Ralph Waldo Emerson helped Bronson Alcott purchase the 17th century building which everyone else described at the time as “firewood.” Alcott not only made it livable again, but added on to the building. The second save – after Louisa May had written “Little Women” in that house and the family had moved to Boston – “Orchard House” was once again described as a “tear-down” that occupied a location fit for a new mansion. However, a neighbor who had watched a steady stream of Alcott fans peering into the dark windows, decided it had to be saved. She bought it and formed the “Orchard Society” to help maintain and save the building for the future.

The third save was more recent, around 2000, when it was determined that a new foundation was needed to save the building from collapse. The 17th century house indeed might very well not have even had a foundation – and Bronson, in his poverty, very likely put nothing under his addition. However, by now the building was seen as too famous to lose. Of course, part of this parable is that care and upkeep are a continuing need to all our creations.

I find this a stirring example of how one person in each generation can be so right – and the majority, so wrong.

As a child, I discovered the Parmenter Court Cupboard in the halls of the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford. It was from my hometown (Sudbury, MA) and had been seen as a wreck that was saved by an elderly family member who had forbidden others from destroying it. It was “found” by Wallace Nutting who restored the feet (etc.) in the early 1900s. When I saw it a brass plaque retold this story and claimed it to be the oldest known American-made example of “Pilgrim” furniture.

It has always been a fight to save our heritage, constant and continuous! Be strong!!

Opinions in Out on a Limb articles are those of the authors and do not represent The Sandisfield Times.

Subjects should be of interest to most of us and have a strong link to Sandisfield, written by and for Town residents.

Address either PO Box 584, Sandisfield, or email.




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berkshireagventures.org



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CHURCH AWARDED PRESERVATION GRANT

By Ron Bernard

Attendees at the regular service of the New Boston Congregational Church on Sunday March 15 cheered upon learning that the church had been awarded a substantial grant from the “Hurting Churches” fund of the Northeast Fellowship of Congregational Christian Churches.

The grant of \$20,000 in two payments in 2026 and 2027 will be applied to addressing the most urgent and critical needs – repair or replacement of the roof, steeple, and belfry. The award will cover a significant but partial amount of the total cost of the project which is expected to be upwards of \$50,000. The award is contingent on meeting certain policies including securing the balance required from internal or external sources and updates on the project’s progress.

Pastor Eric Kriebel thanked the committee which prepared the application. He said that the Fellowship cited two important reasons for the (unanimous) approval by the Fellowships’ directors: robust and sustained attendance over the past eight years and that the church has demonstrated vitality and sustainability. In other words, the Fellowship is confident in the management and direction of the NBCC. The approval letter said that the NBCC application was thorough and well done and could serve as a model for others.

Since the arrival of Pastor Eric in 2017, average attendance at Sunday services has increased five-fold from only about ten to the mid-fifties by 2025, a remarkable statistic that probably few if any other congregations in this area have enjoyed.

While the Church will apply for other grants as possible, the balance required to complete the project is considerable and will need donations from individuals and patrons together with proceeds from community events such as the very successful yard sale held last year which will be organized again this September.

The NBCC, also affectionally known as “The Little Brown Church,” was constructed in 1879, entirely of American chestnut wood. One of the most architecturally important historic structures in Sandisfield, the building is a “significant contributing element” in the New Boston Village National Register Historic District (2022). The Little Brown Church is the only survivor among six Christian denomination churches that existed in Sandisfield since the mid-1750s. The Society has operated continuously since it was formed in 1874. Pastor Eric is the forty-third minister at this church. For more information about services or to donate, please visit newbostoncongregationalchurch.org.

HELP WANTED

Personal Care Assistant needed for two special children in Sandisfield. Pay is through the Mass health program with a starting rate of \$20.00 and a \$3.25 differential for complex care. Flexible hours before and after school with occasional weekend hours. All training provided and Personal Care Assistant will not be left alone with individuals. Must pass a CORI check. Please call Terry Gray at 413-841-1508 if interested.



Anni Crofut's Family Cabaret!

Sat, May 2, 7pm

\$20 (children 12 & under - \$5)

A hilarious, romping evening of madcap mischief, song, dance, comedy, fiddle, yo yo, ukes, jazz, and more.

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250TH COMMEMORATIVE BOOK PUBLISHED

By Ron Bernard

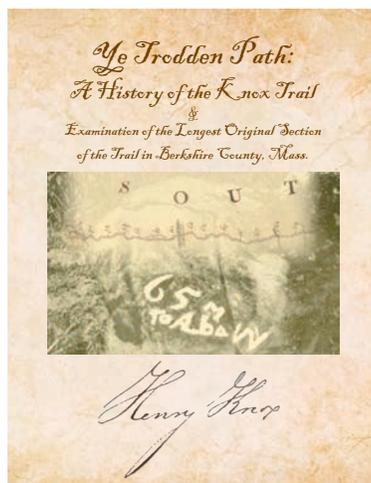
A new book about the role of the Knox Trail and its Berkshire towns at the outset of the Revolutionary War has been published by the Berkshire County Historical Society in conjunction with the commemoration, "Knox Trail 250."

Ye Trodden Path: the History of the Knox Trail is the product of a unique collaboration of five local historians and Knox aficionados including Bernard Drew of Great Barrington, Rob Hoogs of Monterey, Gary Leveille of Great Barrington, Tom Ragusa of Otis and Ron Bernard from Sandisfield.

It was Henry Knox whom Gen. Washington picked to organize a 'mission impossible' in the winter of 1775-76 to transport sixty tons of captured British cannonry 300 miles from Fort Ticonderoga, NY, to Boston. George Washington and his ragtag Patriots were faced off against the professional British army sent by King George to forestall a colonist uprising. Shocked by the sight of big guns aimed down from Dorchester Heights, the British armada evacuated Boston on March 17, 1776.

This was an event that changed the course of the American Revolution. But for brilliant planning, a super human feat of execution, and the bravery of the Patriots, we probably would not be celebrating the "Fourth of July."

Ye Trodden Path includes an overview foreword and separate sections dealing with distinct aspects of this ancient roadway through Berkshires best known in colonial times as "The Great Road."



Local residents, students, and history buffs will derive much from the book's Foreword, a comprehensive summary of the Knox episode and the road taken, until now not widely known or enough appreciated.

Part I is Bernard Drew's back story of a "military road" from early colonial days through Shays' Rebellion in 1787, and the route's contemporary manifestation.

Part II takes readers from Columbia County, NY, into Alford, Egremont and Great Barrington, Mass., and the efforts of Knox researchers over many years to unravel vexing mysteries and sometimes unreliable tradition about the true path that Col. Knox followed from Columbia County into Massachusetts.

Part III, "Before Knox," is based on original and unpublished research on relevant topics including, the numerous colloquial names of this road, e.g., *Ye Trodden Path*; why countless ancient native trails like this one evolved into

a modern system of roads and Interstates that have connected and shaped our country; the relevance of "ceremonial stone landscapes," pre-Columbian indigenous stone arrangements that lie undisturbed along the surviving section of the Great Road and are witnesses to history; and the untold story of the five Sandisfield taverns that welcomed settlers and military contingents in the 1750s-80s.

The initial impetus for this book is Part IV about the longest surviving original section of the Great Road, six miles through Sandisfield and Otis, most of it under protection of the Otis State Forest.

This section is the story of a decades-long quest of one man – Tom Ragusa of Otis – to create an accurate map of the trail as it was when the colonists arrived. Using long forgotten maps and reports from the 1760s found in state archives, together with modern surveying techniques, co-author Ragusa produced a marvel, mapping what may one day gain this section appropriate national recognition as pristine North American heritage site. His 15-foot-long map, now on display at the Massachusetts State Archives in Boston, was reconfigured to five feet in length and is enclosed as a fold-out in color in *Ye Trodden Path*.

In 2076, when people celebrate the 300th anniversary of this country including the legendary tale of the Knox expedition, the authors hope that their book will have aided those future historians and preservationists. They also hope that one day the original trail section in Otis State Forest will be properly marked and maintained so that visitors can experience walking in the footsteps of heroes and greatness and appreciate the sacrifices that were made in the cause of liberty and freedom.

Copies of the book are available through Ron Bernard (see order form), at the Farmington River Store in New Boston, or from the Berkshire County Historical Society in Pittsfield (melville@berkshirehistory.org).

NEW!!

250th Commemorative Book

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Proceeds benefit the Berkshire County Historical Society

For more information contact Ronbernard@aol.com



SANDISFIELD ARTS CENTER

While We Were Shoveling Snow

A LOT OF WORK GOING ON AT THE ARTS CENTER

By Times Reporters

While most of us were shoveling snow last winter, a number of construction crews were hard at work at the Arts Center under the watchful eyes of Jerry Herman and Jean Atwater-Williams, project coordinators.



Funded primarily by a generous \$116,000 grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council/Facilities and by donations by individuals, the Arts Center was able to construct a storage shed behind and adjoining the building, install a fully-equipped support galley with a range, fridge, sink, dishwasher, microwave, and cabinetry. This will make it possible to provide more extensive beverages and snacks for galley openings and center celebrations.

An opening reception is planned for May and a full report with pictures will be in next month's Times.



SPECIAL EVENT: Rebel Masquerade Dance Party Friday, April 24 7:00-11:00 p.m. Sandisfield Arts Center

The masks are on!! The rebellion begins!!

Start the evening with a candlelit **Rebel Soiree** from 7-8, live music, tarot readings, local artisans set the stage for a night of intrigue.

Then, as the clock strikes eight, our amazing disc jockey, **DJ BFG**, ignites the dance floor. From there... anything can happen.

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NEW 2026 DISCOUNTS AND SAVINGS!

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

Historia

What's in a Name?

SANDYS VS. SANDY EXPLAINED (SORT OF)

By Ron Bernard

One may ask, "What is Sandisfield's claim to fame?" A quirky yet plausible answer might be, "No one has ever heard of the place." Not long ago an effort by the Sandisfield Historical Society to raise awareness about this town created a mischievous bumper sticker which read, "Where the h--- is Sandisfield?"

In a previous column I suggested it may be time to reprise that brilliant slogan.

One may also ask, "Why is this town named Sandisfield?" Another good question. Among the names of 19,495 incorporated villages, towns, and cities in this country, we are the only Sandisfield which further supports that our "claim to fame" is obscurity.

And what about "Sandy" as in the name of the tributary, Sandy Brook, which runs through South Sandisfield? Is there a connection or some historical relationship between the names Sand(isfield) and Sandy?

HOW AND WHY SANDISFIELD?

If ever there was a town that deserved to be named in honor of its founders (the Browns), this place is it. Instead, Sandisfield was named for Lord Samuel Sandys (pronounced as Sands), a British nobleman and politician who lived from 1695 to 1770, but probably never set foot in the New World. Sandys held numerous high level offices including Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons. In March 1761, he was appointed as First Lord of Trade and Plantations, at that time one of the most important offices in the British government.

There is nothing written to explain the circumstances of this curious naming, but I have a theory.

Sir Francis Bernard (no relation to me) was Governor of Massachusetts Bay colony, 1760-69. On March 6, 1762, both Township No. 1 (Tyringham) and Township No. 3 (Sandisfield) were incorporated and given proper names. According to historical accounts about Tyringham, Gov. Bernard named No. 1 in honor of a relative, possibly his cousin Jane Tyringham, back in England. The humble Governor had already named several places after himself including Bernards Township (today, Bernardsville) in New Jersey (1758), and Bernardston in Franklin Co., Mass., (1762).

My theory is that to curry favor with Lord Sandys, his influential superior, either Gov. Bernard or his aides proposed the name Sandisfield for Township No. 3. Apparently, the Berkshires land grant proprietors and their chosen principal, Daniel Brown, who worked for decades to establish this frontier town, had no say in the matter.



Lord Samuel Sandys

WHAT ABOUT SANDY BROOK?

Sandisfield historian George Shepard (1820-93) in his 1885 treatise noted a curious coincidental name association with Sandy Brook and wrote, "Some of the older people claim that it [the Sandy Brook in South Sandisfield] takes its name from one Sandys, an early settler (they

say), and they even claim that Sandisfield derived its name from the same source. This, however, lacks confirmation. The records make no mention that can be found of any such person. If named from Sandys he must have been a noted man living elsewhere." Apparently unaware of Lord Sandys from 125 years before, a skeptical Shepard refrained from opining that the roots, Sands, Sandys and/or Sandy in our case were related, leaving the question to history which was wise of him.

Since the earliest days of this settlement people have wondered why the little tributary which arises at York Lake and flows thirteen miles southeastward through Colebrook, Conn., is called "Sandy Brook."

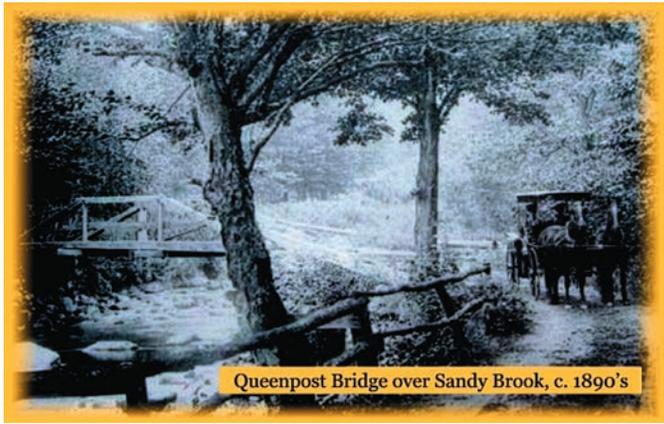
Many continue to assume a connection with the name Sandisfield. I have read every scrap of written history about Sandisfield I could find. There is no evidence or even a hint of commonality of the name of this stream with the name Sandisfield.

FOR NOW, LET'S GO WITH THIS ANECDOTE

Robert Grigg (1930-2016) was the beloved, long-time historian (one of the best) for neighboring Colebrook. Bob was most helpful to me in 2011 while researching material for our 250th anniversary commemorative book, Sandisfield Then and Now. South Sandisfield and Colebrook were socially connected, and Bob knew a lot about the intermarried families on either side of the imaginary state line.

For many years he wrote an informative and often amusing column for the Winsted Journal called, "Bytes of History." In January 2011, certainly with a wink and chuckle, he wrote this explanation about the naming of Sandy Brook:

"Historically, man's association with Sandy Brook can be traced to early Colonial times. A Boston merchant by the name of Sandie, or Sandy, had a contract with the British army to supply hay to their cavalry. He decided to utilize a large open area within the virgin forest in what is now western Massachusetts. This so-called interval land had been created by the Native Americans as an area that would encourage



Queenpost Bridge over Sandy Brook, c. 1890's

Photo: Colebrook Historical Society



Top: Sandisfield delegation and members of the Village Council at Ombersley Court, July 21, 2014.

The first known direct contact between Sandisfield and Ombersley, Worcestershire, England, the ancestral home of the Sandys family, was in 1990 when Norton Fletcher, then president of the Sandisfield Historical Society, paid an informal visit. In 2014, the Ombersley Village Council welcomed Susie Crofut, Ben Luxon, Jean Atwater-Williams and Ron Bernard to explore the possibility of a sister-cities relationship.

The house is for sale. With no Sandys heirs available or willing to assume residence and all the responsibilities entailed, Ombersley Court, built in 1730 for the first Lord Sandys, could be yours for \$18 million.

animals and birds in their food chain, thus making hunting a much more manageable task. This particular land had been created around a series of quite powerful and un-fluctuating springs, thus Sandie, the first European to utilize the hay produced by the native grasses, had his name applied to the map in the form of 'Sandie's Field' and 'Sandie's Brook' which have since acquired modern spellings."

Bob forgot to include sources or explain how a farmer back then could get hay to the British cavalry.

Nevertheless, until something better comes along this fanciful anecdote will have to do. And to my idol, George Shepard: Mr. Shepard, if you are reading this, please know that we are working on it.

MORE FORGOTTEN OR UNEXPLAINED PLACE NAMES IN SANDISFIELD

Besides the naming of Sandy Brook, other vexing mysteries remain in Sandisfield. For example, who named Roosterville, the New Boston section near Hanging Mountain? Why is the extreme southeast section of Sandisfield called the Free Quarter? Why was the section of town renamed as Montville in about 1850? I have a theory about the latter which I hope to prove or at least elevate to plausibility. Watch for a future Historia. 



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Cock-a-Doodle-Do

By Bill Price

Roosterville Road has a new, locally-made signpost, pictured above. It stands where the short, dead-end road begins on the west side of Rt. 8 in lower New Boston.

This photo of the sign was posted by Bob Platt on Connect Sandisfield/Facebook early last month. Bob, did you make it? Did you install it?

Roosterville is an often-overlooked section of Town. Great people live on Roosterville Road, their homes strung along the narrow pavement like pearls on a string.

A one-lane bridge leads off to the right, at the site of the Old Red Shop, a manufacturing building once the largest structure in Sandisfield, long since disappeared. The bridge crosses the Farmington and leads past the Platt family's original home and up Clark Road that used to wind its way to the top of Hanging Mountain. The road, legally closed for over fifty years and totally obscured with trees and brush, is hardly walkable now and absolutely undrivable. But on MapQuest, the road still exists. Don't believe MapQuest and don't go there.

The name Roosterville is something of a mystery. It might have been misnamed for the many chicken farms that used to populate Town Hill Road and Montville in the 1920s to the '50s and supplied surrounding towns with thousands of chicken dinners, including even Boston and New York City. But the level ground around Roosterville was part of Solomon Deming's farm from the 1750s, the first farm in New Boston (and possibly all



Roosterville sign posted on Facebook

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of Township 3). It was Deming land for 150 years, down through Francis Deming who many of us knew well. It's been since farmed by the Tuffy Campetti family and in a sense still is. Dawn Campetti, Tuffy's daughter, now farms that land with her husband, XXXXX Pachulski.

In any event, please no one tell the Rand-McNally people that Roosterville is still on their Massachusetts road maps. Not as a road, but as a little town. I have their 2025 United States Road Atlas and there it is, a town called Roosterville, just north of the Connecticut border.

I, for one, would hate for the map people to decide Roosterville doesn't exactly exist. To us in Sandisfield, it does and always will. And now we have a rooster on the road sign to prove it. 🐓

A Prize for Young Artists

THE 5TH ANNUAL DANIEL MANACHER PRIZE

An opportunity is presented again for young artists aged 17 to 26 who live in or attend school in Berkshire County. The prize recognizes and encourages emerging talent across the county. Submissions can be from a range of visual arts, including painting, drawing, mixed media, and sculpture. The Sandisfield Arts Center of Sandisfield announced the call for art

Up to three artists will be selected as finalists and each will receive \$400 in support of their art practice, as well as participation in a group show of their work at the Sandisfield Arts Center in the 2026 Gallery season. Opening for the group show will be on August 16.

The award was established by Adam Manacher and Carol Birnbaum in memory of their son, Daniel Manacher. "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."

The deadline for artists to complete and submit applications is April 17. There is no application fee. Details of eligibility and application requirements can be found at sandisfieldartscenter.org. Please read the eligibility and application requirements carefully before submitting for the prize. Direct any questions to gallery@sandisfieldartscenter.org

The Sandisfield Arts Center is committed to inclusivity. Artists needing technical assistance due to a lack of access to a computer, camera, or internet at home to complete their application are encouraged to contact gallery@sandisfieldartscenter.org. There is no fee associated with the application and all entrants will be judged based solely on the merit of the work presented. 🏆

Sandisfield's Liana Toscanini received the Judge John A. Barry Community Service Award at Hillcrest Educational Center's St. Patrick's Day Celebration on March 12. The award recognizes outstanding service to the nonprofit community and the citizens of Berkshire County. The late Judge Barry presided over the District Court of Northern Berkshire and was actively engaged in civic and nonprofit leadership, including serving as Board President of Hillcrest. Hillcrest Educational Center provides a range of care for children with complex psychiatric, behavioral, and developmental disorders. Liana is flanked by Hillcrest COO Chris Smith on her right and CEO Shaun Cusson.

Photo: Betsy Andrus



Liana receives her Judge John A. Barry Community Service Award

OPEN SPACE/ RECREATION PLAN START UP FROM THE TOWN WEBSITE

The Town announced a new committee to renew the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP).

The committee will guide the development of a long-term plan to protect important open space and recreational facilities. Committee members will work with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission to identify priorities for conservation land, working farms, forests, wildlife habitats, park and recreation areas, trails, and greenways.

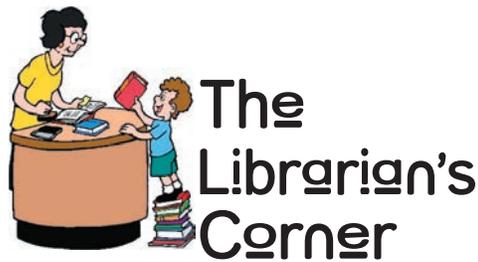
The Town hopes for five to nine volunteers to serve on



this Committee, which will meet monthly for approximately one year.

Members will provide insight and feedback to ensure the OSRP accurately reflects the needs and interests of the Town. Residents and Board and Committee members interested in land preservation, natural resource conservation, playgrounds, recreation, trail use and development, and endangered species are encouraged to volunteer.

If you're interested, contact Laurie McArthur, Administrative Assistant, 258-4711, ext. 3. 🏆



Monday, 9:00 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
Wednesday, 1:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.
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FOOD PANTRY

Low on budget? Need a little helping hand Please stop by any time the library is open and browse our nonperishable shelves in the lower level.

Donations of NON-perishable food items can be dropped at the Sandisfield Library during regular library hours as well.

We want to thank EVERYONE who has graciously donated to our little food pantry. We greatly appreciate all your help and kindness.

BERKSHIRE BUNNIES

We will be celebrating the leap into spring weather (hopefully) with a visit with bunnies and a little egg hunt at the library on Monday, April 20. Come over, grab a basket, and join the fun. Time is yet to be determined.

ADULT FICTION

This is Not About Us by Allegra Goodman. A story of growing up and growing old, the weight of parental expectations, and the complex connection between sisters—a big-hearted book about the love that binds a family across generations.

Agnes Aubert's Mystical Cat Shelter by Heather Fawcett. A woman who runs a cat rescue in 1920's Montreal turns to a grouchy but charming wizard to help save the shelter in this cozy fantasy from the New York Times bestselling author of the Emily Wilde series.

The Devil's Bible by Steve Berry. A Cotton Malone adventure with mystery and intrigue stretching back centuries into the Czech Republic and Sweden.

The Devil's Daughter by Danielle Steel. Two diametrically different sisters – one calculating and egotistical, the other honorable, kind, and compassionate – clash in this compelling novel.

Kin by Tayari Jones. A 2026 Oprah's Book Club choice. The novel sparkles with wit, intelligence, and feeling about two lifelong friends whose worlds collide in the face of devastating tragedy. An emotional story about loss, hope, grief, and forgiveness by best-selling author Colleen Hoover.

NEED A NOTARY?

The Library can do that to! Give us a call for an appointment or stop by during regular hours.

MUSEUM PASSES

Don't forget the Library has passes to several local museums!!

- Springfield Museums – all five!
- Clark Museum
- Hancock Shaker Village
- Norman Rockwell Museum
- Mass Moca
- Ventfort Hall
- The Zoo at Forest Park



Mill River Folk School

www.millriverfolkschool.org
 a Massachusetts 501(c)(3) not-for-profit

Registration for the 2026 workshop season is now open, and the first one is on us! (February)
 Space is limited, so register soon.



Blacksmithing, Woodcarving, Beeswax Candle Making, Basket Making, and much more!



WINTER 2025-2026 SNOWFALL



2025-2026 Snowfall to date as measured / estimated at a Beech Plain back-yard weather station.

November 2025 1 inch
 December 2025 19.5
 January 2026. 30.5
 February 2026. 20.0

March 3 2026 1.5
SEASON TO DATE 72.5

EXTREME TEMPERATURES:

Dec 5, 2025 -3.1
 Jan 24 -6.7
 Feb 8 -10.1



NEW BOSTON CHURCH SERVICES

Easter Worship Service
Sunday, April 5
 from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m
 Easter egg hunt for the kids
 and a time for fellowship
 following the service.

Music Sunday Worship Service
Sunday, April 26
 from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m
 A special worship service to
 focus on the music of faith

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Comings and Goings



LOUIS LIBERATO LODOVICO
1953-2026

Written by his family and his friends at The Sandisfield Times:

Louis L. Lodovico of Tolland died peacefully on March 16, bringing a quiet close to a long and courageous journey with heart failure. He faced numerous health challenges along the way, overcoming many hurdles and showing incredible resilience until the very end.

There will be no services, as Louie preferred to keep things simple.

For over 35 years, he worked as a dedicated plumber in nearby towns, with many loyal customers in Sandisfield for whom he did many favors over the years. He built a reputation not just for his hard work, but for his vibrant personality. Louie had a sharp sense of humor and a special gift for making people laugh, always bringing a bright smile to any room he entered or to anyone with whom he stopped to talk.

Louie was a simple man with an eye for creativity – always tinkering or collecting all sorts of things. He loved to cook, and he couldn't stop at a gas station without picking up a lottery ticket.

He lived his entire life exactly on his own terms. Fiercely independent and always true to himself, Louie carried this exact same spirited philosophy through his final years.

Louis leaves behind a family who will miss him deeply and many others not mentioned. He is survived by his daughter Amy Babikyan and her husband Haig, his cherished granddaughter Alina Babikyan, and his son Louis P. Lodovico, who became his father's dedicated caretaker in his later years. Louis spent every weekend by his father's side, together with Deanna Coggin whose steady presence and constant support never wavered.

His remarkable strength, endless jokes, and the genuine love he shared with those closest to him will remain in our hearts forever.

We will all miss you, Big Lou.

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APRIL 4TH DAVE O DUO 7PM

APRIL 5TH **HAPPY EASTER!**

APRIL 10TH TREVOR DAVIS 6PM

APRIL 11TH SCOTT SILVIA 6:30PM

APRIL 18TH ADAMS BROTHERS 7PM

APRIL 19TH HILLTOWN BLUES JAM 2PM

APRIL 24TH NEW FALLEN DAY 6:30PM

APRIL 25TH TBD

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Mary's Heron

Officer Mary Bredenfoerder caught this picture of a great blue heron flying across Twining Pond near East Otis Road in Tolland about two years ago. She often posts her excellent wildlife photos on Connect Sandisfield/Facebook. Sandisfield's and Tolland's herons are among the treasures of our towns, often seen cruising across Twining Pond or up or down the Clam and Buck Rivers.



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Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day

The Annual Household Hazardous Waste collection will be held on Saturday, May 16 at the Great Barrington Transfer Station. More information and details will be posted later.

To keep up to date with Town News, visit <https://www.sandisfieldma.gov> where you see all announcements on the front page of the Town website. Individuals can also sign up on that page under (subscribe to E-alerts) and receive a notification when information is posted to the website).

NOW HIRING: VOCATIONAL STUDENT DRIVER

From the Town Website, sandisfieldma.gov

The Town of Sandisfield is seeking a responsible and courteous driver to transport vocational students safely either using the Town-owned shuttle van or using their personal vehicle (must meet 7D requirements),

Schedule Options:

- Transfer Location Route: Pickup in Sandisfield to Lee Big Y (arrive by 7AM), pickup in Lee to return home by 3:15PM
- Direct School Route: Pickup in Sandisfield to Taconic High School, arrive at Taconic before 7:30AM, pickup at Taconic at 2:30pm to return home

Requirements:

- Must have a valid Massachusetts 7D Certificate (driver and vehicle must meet 7D standards)
- Minimum 5 years driving experience; Class D license in good standing
- Clean driving record
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NOW HEAR THIS!

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

APRIL

Sandisfield Select Board Meetings are currently through Zoom and in-person at 6:00 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. No pre-registration necessary. Led by Nina Carr. This fun program includes free play, crafts, stories, and songs! A great time to meet with friends and meet 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 Town Hall Annex, sponsored by the Council on Aging. For more information, contact Nina Carr (258-3314). Free.

Food Pantry on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Library, lower level.

Easter Worship Service on Sunday, April 5 from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. at the New Boston Congregational Church located on Route 57. All are welcome. Easter egg hunt for the kids and a time for fellowship following the service. For more information and to view the calendar, visit newbostoncongregationalchurch.org.

The Rebel Masquerade Dance Party, Special Event on Friday, April 24, 7:00-11:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center at 3 Hammertown Road. Masks are on, the rebellion begins! Rebel Soiree from 7-8, live music, tarot readings, local artisans, and at 8 p.m. disc jockey DJ BFG ignites the dance floor. Costumes highly encouraged – prize for best dressed! See ad on page 9.

Music Sunday Worship Service on Sunday, April 26 from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. at the New Boston Congregational Church located on Route 57. A special worship service to focus

on the music of faith. Stay for fellowship after the service. All are welcome. For more information and to view the calendar, visit newbostoncongregationalchurch.org.

HOLD THE DATE

Meet the Candidates on Friday, May 1, 7:00 p.m., sponsored by Council on Aging and The Sandisfield Times, meet Town leaders, ask questions.

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.

Habitat Chat on first Wednesday of the month from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. sponsored by the Massachusetts Pollinator Network. An informal conversation to learn about wildlife habitat, pollinators, and more! Register at thebeatnews.org.

EVENTS IN SURROUNDING TOWNS

COA Coffee Social every Monday at 9:00 a.m. at the Tolland Public Safety Complex. Open to all Tolland residents and those of neighboring towns. Coffee, pastries, and good company! Free.

Chair Yoga on Tuesdays from 10:30 to 11:45 a.m. at the Tolland Public Safety Complex. To reserve a spot, please email MaryAnn (mademing67@gmail.com) or Bonnie (bonniescrivener@msn.com). Free.

Spring Book Sale Saturday April 18, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and Sunday April 19 9:00 a.m. to Noon. Otis Ridge Ski Lodge. Used books, puzzles. To benefit Friends of the Otis Library.

Crafting Conversations with Susie Kandt on Wednesdays through April 29 from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. at the Berkshire South Community Center in Great Barrington. Bring your current project and work alongside others in a casual and friendly atmosphere focused on creative play and light conversations. Free.

Coffee House: Frankie Ciccarelli & Eric Reinhardt on Friday, April 3 from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. at the Monterey Community Center. An intimate evening of live music. Coffee and Dessert will be served. Please register in advance (ccmonterey.org).

A Walk on the Old Knox Trail on Saturday, April 11 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Bidwell House Museum at 100 Art School Road in Monterey. Learn about Henry Knox and see where his artillery train travelled through Monterey in 1776. The program begins around a bonfire as Ron Hoogs introduces the story of the Knox Trail and Henry Knox's journey. Free.

Tolland COA Art Day on Monday, April 13 at 10:00 a.m. Come and make decorated frames and greeting cards. All supplies provided, just bring your creativity. Free.

Massachusetts: A Song of Itself featuring State Poet Laureate Regie Gibson on Saturday, April 18 at 3:00 p.m. at the First Congregational Church in Stockbridge. Telling the History of the Commonwealth through storytelling, music, poetry, and song. Regie, backed by a group of outstanding musicians, gives voice to a wide range of historical characters and their aspirations, hopes, and struggles. For tickets, visit west-stockbridgehistory.org.

Spring Wildflower Ramble on Saturday, April 25 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on the Henry Buck Trail in American Legion State Forest on 344-360 West River Road in Barkhamsted, CT. Join Friends of American Legion and Peoples State Forest's President Erik Landgraf and his wife Helen for a fascinating glimpse of spring wildflowers along the trail. Please dress appropriately for the weather and bring water.

11th Annual Barkhamsted Earth Day Festival on Sunday, April 26 from 12:30 to 5:00 p.m. at Matthies Grove Pavilion, Peoples State Forest, 106 East River Road in Barkhamsted. Free food and fun! Christine's Critters will present a live birds of prey show.

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

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