



THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

Fireworks at the Firehouse, Again

CHIEF GRILLO OUT; ACTING CHIEF COLONAIR IN

By Bill Price

At the beginning of August, rumors that something had gone haywire at the Fire Station spread through Town faster than a speeding fire truck.

The following day the Town website announced a special executive session of the Select Board to meet August 5, a Wednesday, “to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against, a public officer.”

At the meeting, the Board voted to terminate Mike Grillo from his position as Fire Chief as of August 7. The Board’s reasoning is outlined on page 3 and on the Town’s website.

Former Assistant Chief Chris Colonair agreed to stay on as Acting Chief while the Board determined the way forward. At a



Sandisfield firemen on duty Aug. 24, from left, Acting Chief Chris Colonair, Sgt. Tom Zeimet, Lt. Josh Ramirez, and Capt. Collin Wolfe.

Photo: Bill Price

Select Board Working Session following Grillo’s dismissal, the consensus among the Board and the Acting Chief was that the department maintain the level of service that has been developed over the past year.

Town Clerk and Fireman Douglas Miner said at the working session that “Mike and Chris have left the firehouse ten times better off than a year ago. The blueprint Grillo brought is a good one and should continue.” He added that Chris’ appointment as Acting Chief is the first time a career medic is in charge of the Sandisfield Fire Department.

Later, Chris told The Times that his goal was to maintain the current programs “and not give people whiplash. We’ve had no fallout from the firefighters for the change in leadership. We retained 100 percent of the firefighters, and they all stand by to support the town and each other. The department consists of a

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Sandisfield Gets a New Road

Photos by Larry Dwyer.

Almost anyone who has driven recently along South or North Main Street (Route 8 in Sandisfield) has been delayed a few minutes while Palmer Paving Corporation resurfaced a section of the highway.

No more. The road is done. Running from Connecticut all the way to Otis, parallel to the Farmington River the entire eastern height of Town, the road has been completely resurfaced as well as widened about five feet on each shoulder. Palmer has finished the yellow line down the middle and white stripes along both edges. Route 8, which last received a major resurfacing in 2012, will now be a lot safer to drive at night with new reflective paint to show drivers where the ditch is.

The new surface may in fact encourage some drivers to imagine they're on a speedway, but Police Officer Mary Bredenfoerder said, "Be sure to slow down. You never know where I'll find you."

So take a gentle drive on the new Rt. 8. You're going to like it.



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Fireworks at the Firehouse, Again *Cont'd from p.1*

serious cadre of very experienced people.”

He added that he had known Mike for ten years, for a time as his boss and more recently as his assistant at the fire station. He said, “Mike is doing well and looking for other opportunities.”

Asked by The Times for a statement, Grillo responded with an email that he asked be shared with the Town. His statement is on page 4.

Search for New Chief

The Select Board is considering a future town information meeting to determine what the Town desires in a chief. For instance, does the Town like the model of full-time chief? Should the chief’s responsibilities be divided between an anchor position and an administrator to handle paperwork? Should a chief be on duty 24/7? It might be that two positions would have to be posted, that of Fire Chief at \$75,000 and Firefighter/EMT at \$51,000. A lot of budget decisions need to be made.

Select Board Chair Steve Seddon said, “It’s great to promote from within, but we do need to open the position to the outside. We’ll see who applies and their qualifications.”

Acting Chief Colonair said that he would be an applicant. He told The Times later that even if he was not selected as Chief, “I’d stay on the job. The department is in a significantly better place than over

the last few years. I don’t take lightly that the former group that led the department simply walked out the door. We didn’t know where to look for stuff, paperwork. There was no continuity. So if not the chief, I’ll at least stay to help.”

Grillo in Connecticut

In a report published August 7, The Berkshire Eagle summed up Mike Grillo’s time prior to his hiring in Sandisfield. It is reprinted here with permission of The Eagle.

“At the time of his hiring, Grillo had mounting debt from his landscaping business and several civil lawsuits against him. Select Board members previously told The Eagle they were aware of both the civil litigation and his financial troubles.

“Last fall, he was arrested in his home state of Connecticut on 34 tax-related charges, including felony larceny. He’s accused of failing to pay wages and bills for the landscaping and facilities management companies he operated before coming to Sandisfield ...

“Grillo is the third fire chief to leave the department since 2023, when Ralph Morrison departed after 40 years following nine formal town charges alleging misconduct, negligence and self-dealing that stemmed from a fire truck rollover accident.

“[Morrison] was replaced by Henry Fristik, who served for less than a year, citing a hostile work environment as his reason for leaving.” ^{\$1}

The Firing of Chief Grillo

By Bill Price

On August 5, the Town announced in a press release and on the Town’s website the abrupt firing of Fire Chief Michael Grillo, a little over a year after he was hired. The announcement followed a closed Execution Session meeting at which all three members of the Select Board voted to accept the Town Manager’s finding that Mike Grillo be released from his position as Sandisfield Fire Chief.

The announcement of the firing left the town wondering why. The answer has finally arrived.

At its regularly scheduled meeting on August 31, the Select Board approved the minutes of the earlier closed meeting, which are now posted on the Town’s website.

The Town has also released an accompanying Administrative Fact-Finding document and a response from Chief Grillo

As outlined in a report from Town Manager Janey Snyder, Grillo was accused of engaging “in a romantic and/or intimate relationship with a subordinate while serving as Fire Chief, in violation of the Sandisfield Fire Department’s Anti-Fraternization General Order.”

The investigation further stated that “Chief Grillo did not appropriately disclose and mitigate the conflict created by the relationship.”

Grillo, who was represented by an attorney at the Executive Session, disputed most of the claims. (Grillo’s attorney was not allowed to speak.) Grillo explained, said the report, that he had “satisfied the disclosure requirement by effectively disclosing the relationship to himself.”

In a summary, Town Manager Janey Snyder wrote that Grillo’s “sustained violations, including the violation of the Anti-Fraternization General Order, failure to maintain appropriate professional and supervisory boundaries, failure to appropriately disclose and mitigate the resulting conflict of interest, lack of candor during the investigation, and conduct that compromised the integrity of the investigative process, demonstrate a fundamental failure of judgment and professional boundaries incompatible with the responsibilities and public trust inherent in the position of Fire Chief.” ^{\$1}

Statement from the Former Chief

ASKED FOR COMMENT, GRILLO PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING

As I say goodbye to Sandisfield and my time as your Fire Chief comes to an end, I leave incredibly proud of what we accomplished together.

A year ago, we set out with a simple mission: strengthen the emergency response system, raise the standard, and make sure that when someone called for help, someone answered.

Together, we did that.

We achieved a 100% response rate without missing calls for service. We strengthened staffing and training, improved our capabilities, and placed a second ambulance into service.

We also proved that being a small rural town doesn't mean you have to think small. Through expanded EMS operations, the IFT program, and a willingness to think outside the box, we generated more than \$230,000 in just five months—putting the department on a path where that revenue could cover most, if not all, of its operating budget. *[Editor's note: This process and the amount are in dispute.]*

But our greatest accomplishment wasn't a number.

It was the community that rallied behind us.

Firefighters and EMTs stepped up. Residents showed up. Town officials supported investments. People embraced change and believed Sandisfield deserved an emergency response system it could depend on.

Public safety doesn't begin when the tones drop. It begins long before—with training, equipment, staffing, preparation, and a community willing to stand behind the people who answer.

When someone calls 911 on the worst day of their life, they have one question:

Is someone coming?

Our responsibility was to make sure the answer was yes.

Coming to Sandisfield as an outsider also gave me a perspective on this town that I hope is worth leaving behind. Sandisfield is an incredible small town filled with people who care deeply about their community. With that passion come strong opinions and disagreements—and that's okay.

The person sitting next to you at Town Meeting who sees

something differently is not your enemy.

They are your neighbor.

Don't allow old politics, history, or yesterday's disagreements to determine tomorrow. We showed that change can be good when people are willing to embrace it, and that this small town is capable of accomplishing big things when people come together.

The Sandisfield patch represents more than a Fire Department.

It represents the trust of an entire community.

Continue expecting excellence from those who wear it, continue giving them the support necessary to achieve it, and never allow "good enough" to become the standard.

If there is anything I hope remains from my time here, it is that:

Never settle. Never stop improving. Never stop showing up for one another.

Keep supporting your emergency services.

Keep taking care of your neighbors—even the ones you disagree with.

Keep demanding excellence.

And keep moving Sandisfield forward.

For a chapter of my life, I had the privilege of being your Fire Chief.

I will always be proud of that.

Thank you, Sandisfield.

It was an honor to serve you.

Michael Grillo

Former Fire Chief 



Former Fire Chief Mike Grillo

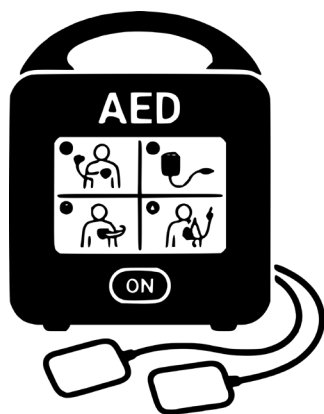


Heart & Soul Reached its Goal

UP TO FIFTEEN AEDs COMING TO TOWN; ONE OF THEM COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE

By Friends of Sandisfield Fire Department (FoSFD)

Our event committee has recovered from the hugely successful Heart & Soul Summer Social we held at Sandisfield Orchard in September and is already thinking about our next fundraiser.



In keeping with our commitment to financial transparency, we're happy to report Heart & Soul event expenses of approximately \$6,000 (against ticket, sponsorship and donation revenue of just under \$24,000) netting Friends of SFD \$18,000.

Thanks to all of our supporters and a special bulk purchasing agreement that happily includes a Cardiac monitor, we have enough

to purchase up to fifteen Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs). On July 27, the Select Board agreed to accept the gift of the portable defibrillators from Friends of Sandisfield Fire Department (including maintenance costs of about \$1,000 annually).

A special shout out to our hardworking and resourceful committee members Melissa and Jeff Bye, Barbara Cormier, Patricia Hubbard, Zoe Nelson, Cailin Rocco, Laurie Seddon, and Susan Van Sickle. Additional thanks to all those who jumped in to help, including Calvin and Joe from the Orchard, Jim Ruocco on raffle tickets and breakdown, and Fire Department volunteers Cam Nearey, Tommy Curwen (with Bagpipes!), Brian Reynolds, John Boulais and his son Jack who so ably directed the parking for the 230 attendees.

Since inception earlier this year, Friends of SFD has spent a total of \$7,571 (including start up and insurance costs) against \$25,962 raised through donations and sponsorships. More information about the organization is available online at FriendsOfSFD.org 



Letter to the Editor

Editor's note: This letter thanking the Sandisfield Fire Department for its response to the Blachere barn fire in November 2025 was intended for the January/February 2026 issue of The Times. Because of a series of glitches, we missed it. The letter is published here with our apologies to our friends, the Blacheres.

December 2025

To the Sandisfield Fire Department;
Having somewhat recovered from the shock and tragedy of losing our 1770 barn to fire on Thanksgiving Day, we want to express our sincere thanks to the Sandisfield Fire Department (especially Chief Mike Grillo who arrived on the premises in less than 10 minutes). We would also like to thank all the surrounding fire departments (ten in all) from Massachusetts as well as neighboring Connecticut for their assistance in saving our house and cabin. We also appreciate the outreach from so many friends and neighbors offering assistance during these difficult times.

We have owned our place in Sandisfield for 53 years and recently decided to move back here full time. We're looking forward to spending most of our time in this still very unspoiled place, hopefully with a new (old) barn erected in the near future.

Again, many thanks to everyone including The Sandisfield Times for the excellent reporting that we receive each month.

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Fireworks at the Swap Shop

By Bill Price

Editor's note: The Swap Shop reopened after a couple days with a new look and a set of rules. This article was assembled while the shop was still closed.



Imagine Carl Nett's surprise when he stopped at the Transfer Station August 27 to find a sign on the Swap Shop door – "Closed Until Further Notice." He soon typed out an alarm on ConnectSandisfield/Facebook. "Just got back from the transfer station. Swap shop was 'ordered' closed this morning and all content removed. WTH?"

He took offense at the *way* it was done. "Seemed fine to me. And in any case, wouldn't one request a clean up, etc before slamming the doors shut? ... Makes no sense to me at all. Someone has a lot of explaining to do."

Then stuff hit the fan

Right away Barbara Cormier owned up to taking part in the Swap Shop raid, with help from Jeff Bye and Linda Riiska. DPW Supervisor Derek Boomsma innocently unlocked the place for them.

In answer to Carl's post, Barbara asked if he thought cracked, rotten eggs in cartons was OK, moldy books with pages stuck, broken glass on the floor, children's games with pieces stuck together, plus other collections of people's cast-offs. She added that these complaints "in no way reflected on Tim [the custodian], this is not his job," and that the shop would stay closed until it was cleaned up.

Almost instantly, some 35 residents responded with a variety of invective, outrage, or gratitude for getting the place cleaned up.

One reader defended the custodian: "Tim, thank you for all of your hard work and dedication to the transfer station and the swap shop that I

absolutely love. . . . I hope today's events do not prevent you from keeping this position, you truly are appreciated." and gave him a "thumbs up" emoji.

Cudgels came out

One blamed the closing on the Usual Suspects, New Yorkers: "Just more wealthy people in this town taking it over slowly piece by piece, that's all."

Another: "Seems reactionary; if there is chaos people can still find something useful."

Another: "I was there last weekend. Looked fine to me. Very sad!"

Our Treasure Island

One mentioned that New Marlborough regularly cleans out its swap shop "so they can start fresh." Another said: "Egremont will often clean it out then start all over."

Someone wrote: "It needed to be cleaned out and it was, it is being reorganized. Not a bad thing. Maybe rules have to be set."

And one calming voice summed things up, "Every town has a treasure island at the dump. Thank you [to those cleaning and organizing the shop] . . ." ST

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Local Artist Among Manacher Prize Winners *CASH AWARDS FOR 2025 AND 2026*

By Suzanne OConnell

At least sixty joyous family members as well as other artists and friends of the prize winners gathered at the newly renovated Garfield Family Gallery at the Sandisfield Arts Center on Sunday, August 16 to celebrate eight young Berkshire County artists who were awarded the Daniel Manacher Prize for Young Artists.

Each year local artists between the ages of 17 to 27 are invited to submit their portfolios for the prize. Winners receive a \$400 cash prize and the opportunity to display their work at the Sandisfield Arts Center.

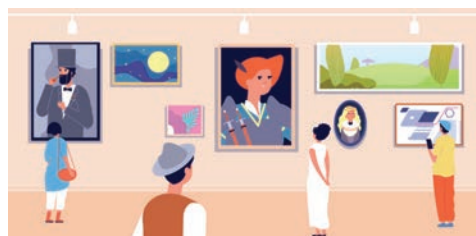
Winners for 2025 were **Elizabeth Cheng, Enaya A. Ogletree, Annie Scott and Evelyn Vollmer (a graduate of Mt. Everett Regional High School)**. The judge was Josephine Halverson, a New Marlborough resident artist with a studio in Sandisfield and Boston University professor.

Winners for 2026 included a **Sandisfield resident Mari Maeve Brennan (a graduate of Monument Mountain Regional High School)** and **Tamar Byl, Moira Ford, and Katie Maier**. The judge was Virginia Overton of Sandisfield, a nationally and

internationally renowned sculptor artist.

The prize, in its fifth year, was created by Adam Manacher and Carol Birnbaum in memory of their son, Daniel Manacher, and his passion for art. Adam said, "With this prize, we hope to carry forward values that were important to Daniel. We are happy that the judges have found young artists who tenaciously pursue their vision, seek to make ordinary objects extraordinary, and bring community into the conversation."

Additional information about the artists and their work is on the Sandisfield Art Center website: <https://sandisfieldartscenter.org>. Soon there will be information on the website about the opening for submissions for the 2027 prize. ^(S1)



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Workshop space limited, please preregister.

SAT. SEPTEMBER 12 10 AM FREE
PAPIER-MÂCHÉ WORKSHOP

Session 2 of 2

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(See June 19 listing for description.)



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SUN. SEPTEMBER 20 2 PM FREE
THE POETRY OF TOUCH

An afternoon of verse inspired by the "Touch Me, Gently" show. Poets include **Phillip Benevento, Linda Storms, and Jaye Alison**.

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HUGE YARD SALE

BENEFIT FOR THE NEW BOSTON CHURCH

By Ron Bernad

The New Boston Congregational Church will hold a multi-family yard sale on Friday and Saturday, September 18 and 19.

Last year's event was described as "not an ordinary yard sale." Some two hundred bargain seekers were not disappointed. Those who attended know what to expect this year; newcomers will be pleasantly surprised.

Proceeds will go towards a new roof and restoration of the church belfry.

A church committee has been busy all summer planning an even bigger and better collection of antiques, and new (or nearly new) and good-condition merchandise popular with collectors and rummage sale enthusiasts. Many beautiful plants will be available for new homes.

The event is geared for family fun. For a small donation you can ring the 1879 church bell. Be sure to request a free tour of the beautiful and historic interior. Not to be missed is a free thrilling show on Saturday afternoon by Boston fire performer, Ali, the "Dame of Flames." Hotdogs, popcorn, and beverages will be available.

New Boston Church, 4 Sandisfield Road; Friday and Saturday 9 a.m. to late afternoon. Payment by cash, personal checks, Venmo, and PayPal. For more information see the ad on this page. To learn more about the "Little Brown Church," visit NewBostonCongregationalChurch.org. To donate items or to arrange pick up for your bigger things, contact Ron at Ronbernard@aol.com or call 413 269-0012. 



Recently the church received a special donation from noted artist Will Noad of Winsted. The historian for Burrville, a section of Torrington, Mr. Noad is the creator of unique folk art-style signs and has generously donated his 12 by 48-inch "Sandisfield." The sign will be auctioned as part of the church's 2026 fund-raising campaign for a new roof and restored belfry. His award-winning wood framed signs are in New England museums and private collections.

The "Sandisfield" sign is available for online auction bidding effective September 1, 2026. The auction closes at 12 p.m. (noon), October 15, 2026. The minimum bid is \$250. To make a bid, please go to the church's website, www.newbostoncongregationalchurch.org and click "Fundraising" then "Online Auction." Or go directly to this address: newbostoncongregationalchurch.org/fundraising/online-auction.

The sign will be on display during the church yard sale, September 18-20 and can be seen at other times at the church on request. Contact Ron at ronbernard@aol.com. 

Residents Respond to “Open Spaces” Survey

By Ron Bernard

The Open Spaces and Recreation Plan Committee was encouraged by the high rate of responses from Sandisfield residents to the online survey of community opinions and suggestions about opportunities for public use of open spaces.

Andrew McKeever, consultant for the Berkshire Regional Planning Council, said on August 25, “Ninety responses have been received which is an excellent result and ahead of expectations to this point. It is encouraging to know that there is significant interest in the community concerning the future of land use in Sandisfield. We appreciate everybody’s contribution.”

The number of surveys returned to date translates to about ten percent of Sandisfield’s population and perhaps one-quarter of households.

McKeever said that the committee is hoping to gather more by the end of September for optimal statistical reliability.

The online survey takes only about ten minutes to complete. To access it, scan this QR code, or go to www.surveymonkey.com/r/SNDOSRP.

Also, paper copies are available at the library, transfer station, and town hall where there is a computer and assistance on request.

Last month, the committee reviewed the Town’s historic population and demographic data as well as future projections from the UMass Donahue Institute as a start to an analysis of needs for different age brackets. The committee also reviewed maps depicting land suitable for development and historic patterns of construction in Sandisfield. These latter surveys will help identify areas that may need environmental protection or greater access to outdoor recreational opportunities.



The next meeting, (open to the public) will be Wednesday, September 16, at 6:00 p.m. at Town Hall. The committee will continue to review these topics and begin the process of inventorying important environmental components such as watersheds, wetlands, flood hazard areas, prime farmland, rare species, and wildlife corridors in Sandisfield.

Later this fall and winter, the committee will explore conservation and outdoor recreational needs. The resulting action plan will be heavily informed by broad community input gathered from the survey, two public listening sessions, and a period of time for community members to review and comment on a complete draft plan before the committee adopts it.

The committee last month welcomed Terry Spohnholz, Anne Mihalick, and Carol Ivers, who joined committee members Adam Brown, Kathleen Segrin, Calvin Rodman, Ron Bernard, and Ralph Levenworth. 



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The players are Terry Keevil, oboe and duduk (Armenian oboe), Lesley Rosenthal electric violin, two Sandisfield residents Jaye Alison Moscariello, vocals, and Bill Taylor, piano. Clarinetist Gerold Mohn joins the group for this concert.

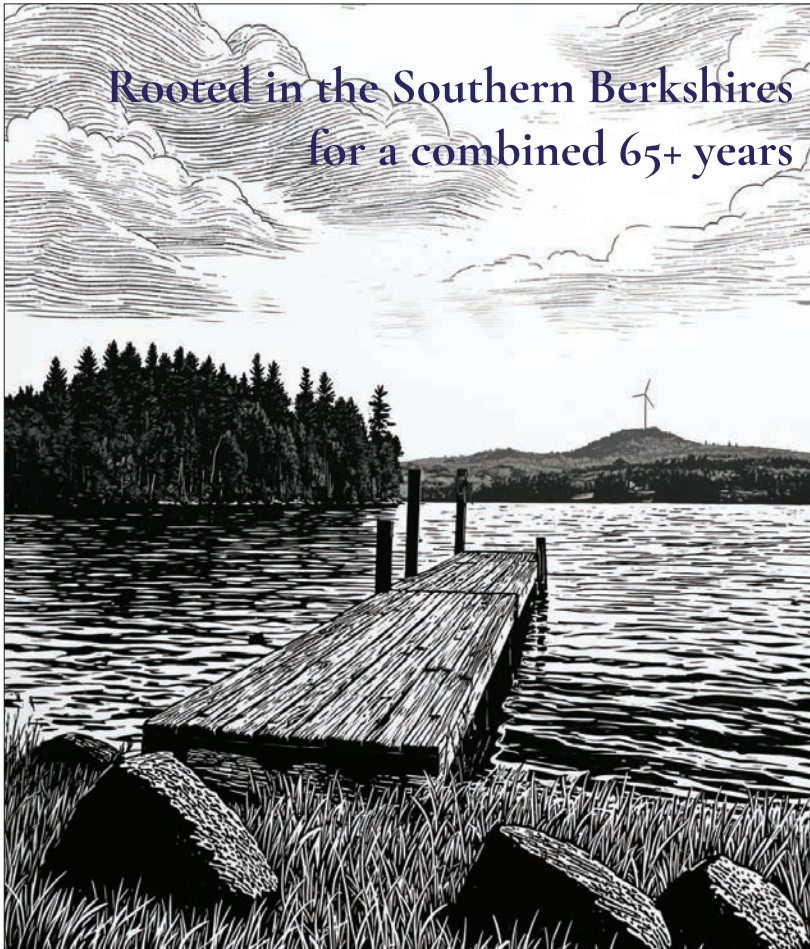
There will be a 15-minute intermission and brief reception after the performance.

Tickets at www.sandisfieldartscenter.org.

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From the Conservation Commission

The Sandisfield Conservation Commission is a local municipal agency consisting of five interested community volunteers, appointed by the Select Board to enforce the state Wetlands Protection Act, to manage town conservation land, and to protect its natural resources. The Commission serves as a liaison to the Department of Environmental Protection of Massachusetts.



The commissioners are unpaid municipal employees. They must take Conflict of Interest Training and are sworn into office by the Town Manager. Meetings are open to the public and are usually held on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at Old Town Hall, 3 Silverbrook Rd, 7:00 pm.

Current members are Mary Turek, Chair, Eric Hartshorn, Anne Mihalick, Deidre Pytrl, and Theresa Spohnholz. 



Too many cooks in the kitchen

Adding lawyers to the mix
might get salty

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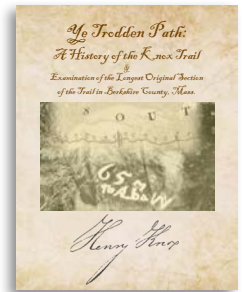
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*Proceeds benefit the Berkshire County Historical Society
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Walks Turn Paths into Portals

FREE BERKSHIRE WALKS A LOCAL TREAT

Story/photo by Wayne Keller

Every weekend through September and into early October, the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area offers "Heritage Walks," right here in the Berkshires and Litchfield, Connecticut.

These are free, guided walks led by historians, naturalists, and environmentalists, each one opening a door into the layered stories of our region: its land, its people, its quiet revolutions.

On a crisp, colorful-Autumn Saturday last year, my granddaughter and I joined the truly fascinating Keystone Arches Bridges Walk in Chester, Massachusetts. Our guide, Dave Pierce, brought the past to life with



Keystone Arches Bridge, Chester, MA.

such depth and clarity that even the old stagecoach road beside the railway seemed to speak, with each step more compelling than the last.

This season, on September 5 we'll join the first of several scheduled walks through the history of Indian Town, Stockbridge and, later, on September 12, the newly-added walk around York Lake and Sandisfield State Forest. I'm curious what

the land will share with us next.

Brochures are available at the Farmington River General Store and the Sandisfield Library. Pick one up. Choose a walk. These walks are free; the stories are priceless.

The full (69 walks in total) 2026 schedule is posted at www.housatonicheritage.org/heritagewalks. 



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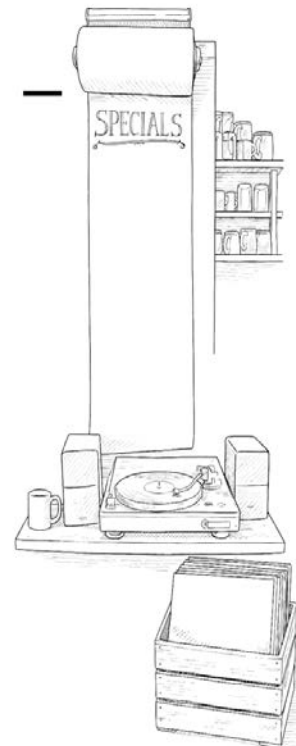
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Our Firemen Take 2nd Place!

Sandisfield came in second in the first Berkshire-wide "The Toss: Cornhole Classic" held in late August in Great Barrington.

Organized by State Rep. Leigh Davis to help "build community and express gratitude to our first responders," police, fire, and EMS personnel from Berkshire County were invited to compete in a cornhole-tossing contest. Nine towns turned out.

From Sandisfield, our contestants were Firemen John Boulais and Douglas Miner. Only Great Barrington beat them, with Becket third and Alford fourth.

Good job, boys! 

Bar Mitzvah at the Arts Center

By Hilde Weisert

When Tomer Ben-Gal and Dana Vorisek, who spend their summers in Monterey, were looking for a place to hold their son Lucien's bar mitzvah service, friends recommended the Arts Center.

Tomer and Dana were moved by the historic building, which had morphed from church to synagogue to arts center. The family agreed that the Center would be the right place for the coming-of-age ceremony when a boy or girl turns 13 and becomes a Jewish adult, assuming responsibility for their own actions.

And so the afternoon of August 22 was set as the first bar mitzvah to be held there since the building's many decades as a synagogue which ended 30 years ago.

The space was transformed with the room rearranged with seats for family and friends facing the Torah Ark at the top of the balcony. The Ark is where the sacred Torah scrolls were kept.

From that balcony, Lucien read from a Torah at the service conducted by Cantorial Soloists Robert Fire and his wife, Pat Fire, from Sheffield. A reception was held afterwards in the downstairs Gallery.

"We are honored to have made use of the Sandisfield Arts Center for a purpose embedded in the building's history – marking an important milestone in a young person's life," said Tomer and Dana. Lucien was struck by the historic significance of the event. "I feel very privileged to have read from a Holocaust Torah," he said. 





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BACK TO SCHOOL

ITEMS FROM THE FARMINGTON RIVER MIDSUMMER NEWSLETTER

See the Monthly Newsletter for information important for your kids' success at school this year.

Breakfast & Lunch

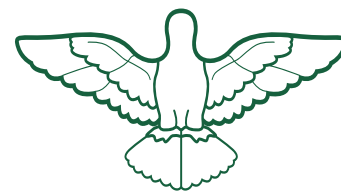
Every kid can get two free meals every school day. The Farmington River Elementary School participates in the state-sponsored program providing universal free meals to all students, ensuring every kid has the nutrition they need for a productive learning day! Students in K-6 have access to a free, nutritious breakfast (8:00-8:45) and lunch daily, often including scratch-made favorites like muffins, meatballs, and soups. Students in our PK/EK class receive lunch, provided they are in school at that time. Breakfast and lunch menus are always available at frisd.org/ourschool/lunch-menus.

Check the School Calendar

The 2026-2027 School Calendar was attached to the Midsummer Newsletter. You can also find copies at school offices. The school encourages families to review this calendar carefully when planning vacations and other appointments. Consistent attendance is vital for student success. To put it into perspective, if a student misses just two days of school a month, by the end of the year, that adds up to 20 days missed. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education considers missing 18 days or more in a school year as chronically absent, which can significantly impact a child's learning and progress. The school staff asks for your cooperation in minimizing absences during instructional days.

September Schedule

September 7:	No School. Labor Day
September 24:	Back-to-School Night, 6:00 p.m. at the school
September 30:	School Picture Day. Wear your favorite shirt. 



NEW BOSTON CHURCH SERVICES

ALL WELCOME

**Worship Service on:
Sunday, September 13
10:00 to 11:00 a.m.**

**This is a special anniversary
service to celebrate
152 years of ministry.**

**All welcome to stay for
fellowship after the service.**

**New Boston
Congregational Church
4 Sandisfield Road
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newbostoncongregationalchurch.org

Manon Hutton-DeWys Trio

Pianist Manon Hutton-DeWys, violinist Joana Genova, and cellist Elisa Kohanski play three powerful piano trios from Mel Bonis, Beethoven, and Shostakovich.

Saturday SEPTEMBER 19 4:30 pm



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Sharing With Bears

LIVE TOGETHER, WITH CAUTION

By Tom Christopher

I've put away my .22 rifle – the cry in gardening circles these days is for “coexistence” with wildlife.

That is an unquestionable benefit when coexistence consists of putting up bluebird boxes at the edge of your pasture or installing a fence around the vegetable garden so you don't have to channel Mr. McGregor when Peter Rabbit hops into your yard.

It's more complicated when a black bear starts stopping by.

That wasn't an issue before 1952 when the laws permitted shooting bears on sight in Massachusetts, and the total population consisted of few animals surviving in the remoter areas of the northwest corner. Then new laws were passed that restricted shooting bears to licensed hunters during a regulated hunting season. With that minimal help, this smart, adaptable species quickly rebounded so that today there are an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 black bears in Massachusetts, and their population is growing at 8 percent annually.

Sandisfield is in the center of this revival, and it's not uncommon to see a black bear crossing one of our roads. It thrills me when I do because they are magnificent animals, and their renewed presence is evidence of how rapidly nature can recover from the damage we do to it.

I experience mixed feelings, however, when I see them not infrequently crossing my lawn to check out the vegetable and fruit garden. Black bears are omnivores who rely on plants and fruits for 85 percent or more of their diet.

They especially relish cherries; you'll notice that their scat consists mostly of pits when the fruits of our native black cherries ripen during late August to mid-September. Black bears are equally fond of domesticated cherries as I learned when my dwarf cherry tree fruited for the first time a couple of years ago. I thought the cherries would be ripe by the weekend, but a bear anticipated me by stripping the tree just a day or two before. I know it was a bear who did this because it

left a pile of the pit-filled scat very close nearby.

The cherry thief returned every 2-3 weeks for almost a year afterward to check if there was anything else ripening in my garden that suited its tastes.



This illustrates a problem in bear/human coexistence: bears quickly learn where the calories are abundant, and once a bear identifies your yard, it will be back.

Bird feeders are a notorious bear attracter, and to maintain one these days is, in my opinion, irresponsible. Once you teach a bear that human habitations are a good food source, that animal is headed for trouble, possibly even euthanization.

I've enclosed my vegetable garden and orchard with a high-voltage electric fence whose design I took from a bee-keepers website. An easier solution for bird watchers is to replace the feeders with native berry and seed-bearing or caterpillar-hosting shrubs and trees. Massachusetts Audubon offers lists of regionally appropriate plants that feed birds on its website (www.massaudubon.org/nature-wildlife/birds).

The National Wildlife Federation maintains a search engine (www.nativeplantfinder.nwf.org/plants). If you type in your Zip Code it will

generate a list of plant species that host the most caterpillars in your area. Caterpillars are the key food most songbirds use to raise their chicks and an abundance in your yard will attract a wide variety of winging, feathered visitos.

Poorly secured garbage is irresistible to bears. Like bird feeders garbage teaches them a reliance on human habitations as a food source. The state website, Mass.gov, offers advice on bear-proofing your garbage (www.mass.gov/info-details/prevent-conflicts-with-black-bears).

To put the danger posed by black bears into perspective, it's important to note that black bear attacks on people are exceedingly rare in the United States. On average, there are less than a dozen black bear attacks annually in the 40 states that these creatures share with people, with less than one resulting in a fatality. Compare that with the record of whitetail deer, which cause 1.5 to 2.1 million vehicular accidents annually in the United States, resulting in 26,000 to 59,000 injuries to people and 150 to 440 deaths.

Do your part for coexistence with bears by keeping them wild. 

Historical Society Begins New Chapter

By Joanne Olson, President

Every town has a story worth preserving. In Sandisfield, that story lives in our historic Meeting House, old photographs and documents, treasured family memories, and in the people who have called this community home for generations.

As the newly elected President of the Sandisfield Historical Society, I am excited to share that we are beginning a new chapter. Together with a dedicated Board of Directors, we are working to reinvigorate the Society and make it a more active, welcoming, and meaningful part of our community. Our vision is to preserve Sandisfield's rich history while creating opportunities for residents and visitors to connect with it through restoration efforts, educational programs and community events.

To make that vision a reality, we need your support. Your membership helps preserve our town's history, care for the Meeting House, and strengthen the Historical Society for future generations. Members also enjoy voting privileges, invitations to annual and special meetings, and discounts at Society events.

We also welcome your ideas, your stories, and your involvement. Whether you choose to volunteer, share historical materials, attend events, or simply become a member, your participation helps ensure that Sandisfield's unique history continues to be celebrated and preserved.

Together, we can honor our past while building a vibrant future for the Sandisfield Historical Society. Applications for membership are available at the Sandisfield Free Library, by emailing us at Sandisfieldhistory@gmail.com, or on the website of this newspaper. 



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Events at the Library this month.

Food Pantry at the Library is open whenever the library is open.

Donations of food items can be dropped at the Sandisfield Library during regular library hours. We want to thank EVERYONE who has graciously donated to our little food pantry. We greatly appreciate all your help and kindness.

At the Library this month.

Thursday, September 24 at 6:00 p.m., the Sandisfield Women's Book Group will meet to discuss *Good Dirt* by Charmaine Wilkerson. *Good Dirt* is an exploration of family bonds, grief, heartbreak, and the deep scars of slavery and racism.

Latest additions to the library shelves

ADULT FICTION

Under the Falls by Richard Russo, The Pulitzer Prize-winning author returns with a spell-binding tale of a crime in a small town that exposes long-held secrets and betrayals among a group of friends.

A River Red with Blood by John Connolly, Another Charlie Parker novel from the esteemed Irish writer. Our protagonist will be

forced to confront a band of killers without morality and loyalty, not even to one another, in a place where the very darkness is alive and it wants revenge.

Sunrise by Tea Obreht. Three lives, one hundred years, one ghost town: an explosive novel about a mysterious place called Sunrise, where the secrets of the past refuse to stay buried, from the New York Times bestselling author.

God's Country by William Kent Krueger. After a family trip into the Minnesota wilderness takes a dangerous turn, Cork O'Connor embarks on a solitary mission to save a missing friend. In his latest novel, the author delivers a thrill ride while exposing the reader to the magnificence of the natural world.

John of John by Douglas Stuart is a fierce novel. The Western Isles of Scotland are isolated and this is a tale that is soulful, tragic, comic, uplifting and ultimately so very satisfying. An exploration of the chains of love, both invisible and visible, forged between a parent and child.

The Fourth Option by Jack Carr. When law enforcement, the courts, and the prison system fail, there is a fourth and final option. Disillusioned by the government and institutions he dedicated his life to serving, former Navy Seal and CIA operative Chris Walker is about to end his life when he receives a call that saves it.

The Unlikely Tale of Chase & Finnegan by Jasmine Warga, a story that is all heart, and masterfully imagines the internal lives of two unlikely animal friends: Finnegan, a rescue dog with a broken heart and Chase, a newly orphaned cheetah cub. For young readers of all ages.

Need a Notary?

The Library can do that too! 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 Museums!
- Clark Museum
- Hancock Shaker Village
- Norman Rockwell Museum
- Mass Moca
- Venthall
- Forest Park in Springfield
- Magic Wings in Deerfield

We recently added the Trustees – passes to wonderful places to explore. Check it out at the library. \$1



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Now Hear This!

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

September

Sandisfield State Primary Election on Monday, September 1 from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Town Hall on 66 Sandisfield Road. NOTE: In-person voting is at TOWN HALL, NOT OLD TOWN HALL.

Paper-Mache Workshop-Session 1 of 2 on Saturday, September 5 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center. Create vibrant, tactile sculptures in a fun and fast-paced workshop led by Christine Novak and Jaye Moscardiello. Open to ages 12 and up, this hands-on session invites you to craft colorful 3D pieces for the "Touch Me, Gently" exhibition opening on Saturday, September 19. Wear an old T-shirt as it could get messy! This workshop is supported in part by the Daniel Manacher Prize for Young Artists. For reservations to the limited-capacity workshop, visit sandisfieldartscenter.org. Free.

Housatonic Heritage Hike on Saturday, September 12, from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. at the Sandisfield State Forest, York Lake turnoff on Rt. 57. The 1.75-mile hike will focus on wildlife habitat, forestry,

and landscape-scale restoration. Learn how local forests are being restored for wildlife, healthy ecosystems, and future generations with Doug Brown (Berkshire Natural Resource Council) and Tom Ryan (Massachusetts Department of Conservation and recreation). Registration (tom.ryan@mass.gov) is requested but not required. Meet at access road off Rt. 57 marked by sign, "York Lake, Sandisfield State Forest, DCR." Park along access road to state forest.

Paper-Mache Workshop-Session 2 of 2 on Saturday, September 12 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center. See description for Session 1 above. Wear an old T-shirt as it could get messy! For reservations to the limited-capacity workshop, visit sandisfieldartscenter.org. Free.

Worship Service on Sunday, September 13 from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. at the New Boston Congregational Church located on Route 57. This is a special anniversary service to celebrate 152 years of ministry. Stay for fellowship after the service. All are welcome. For more information and to view the calendar, visit newbostoncongregationalchurch.org.

"Not Your Ordinary Tag Sale" on Friday, September 18 (9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) and Saturday, September 19 (9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.) at the New Boston Congregational Church located on 4 Sandisfield Road (Route 57). Proceeds go toward a new roof and repairs to the belfry. Food stand with baked goods, burgers and hot dogs, popcorn, and soft drinks. "Ring the Church Bell" for a \$5 donation. Antiques, jewelry, quality housewares, furniture, artwork, plants, and more.

Fabulous Fridays: Open Mic Series on Friday, September 18 at 7:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center. Seasoned performer or just starting out, share your talent! Music, poetry, comedy or whatever. Or just come and enjoy some live entertainment. Performers should arrive 15 minutes early to sign up. Donation.

Touch Me, Gently, Group Show Opening Reception on Saturday, September 19 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center. Dolls by Susan Flex Gilbert, Touch Me, Gently invites you to experience three-dimensional art through touch. Through October 11 (open most weekends 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. or by appointment, contact

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SEPT 11TH NEW FALLEN DAY 6:30PM
SEPT 12TH BAND TBD 8PM
SEPT 18TH JON BERMAN 6PM
SEPT 19TH ONE ARM BANDIT 8PM
SEPT 20TH HILLTOWN BLUES JAM 2PM
SEPT 25TH TREVOR DAVIS 6PM
SEPT 26TH SIX PACK OF BLUES 8PM
SEPT 27TH BOONDOCKS & BLOSSOMS
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gallery@sandsifieldartscenter.org). Artists include Susan Flex Gilbert, Christine Novak, Jaye Alison and others. Free.

Annual Pig Roast on Saturday, September 19 at 5:00 p.m. at the American Legion Post 456 in New Boston on Route 8. Live music, food. This event is free, sponsored by the Town of Sandisfield Recreational Committee. RSVP (sandisfieldevents@recreation-committee.info) is required so organizers can prepare for the roast.

The Poetry of Touch on Sunday, September 20 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center. Join local poets for an afternoon of original verse inspired by the "Touch Me, Gently" group art show. The readings will explore the themes of tactile connection, comfort, and experience. Discover how words can evoke touch, texture, and tenderness during challenging times. Poets include Phillip Benevento, Linda Storms, Hilde Weisert, Jaye Alison, Ed Lent, and Bonnie Arkin Cordova. Visit sandisfieldartscenter.org for tickets. Free.

A Hike Amongst Fall Colors at Bob's Way on Sunday, September 27 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Join Tom and Nancy Condon from the Naturalists Club in Springfield for this 2.5-mile hike. Gentle climbs over two ridges, through hardwood forests and wetlands. Wear hiking footwear and use a walking stick if needed. Register (tomnancycondon@gmail.com) for this free Housatonic Heritage hike. Meet in the Bob's Way parking lot on Route 23. Free.

SAVE THE DATE

Oktoberfest on Saturday, October 3 from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m. at Looking Glass Gardens on Dodd Road. Free admission. Music, Food, Beer, pony and hayrides.

RECURRING EVENTS

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

Sandisfield Select Board Meetings are currently through Zoom and in-person at 6:00 p.m. on Mondays (every other during summer) 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 is necessary. Led by Nina Carr. Free play, crafts, stories, and songs! A great time to meet up 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. 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 during open hours at the Sandisfield Library, lower level. Donations of non-perishable food items are gratefully accepted.

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.

New Marlborough Farmers Market on Sundays from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on the Village Green. Farm bounty, baked goods, handmade items.

Native Tree and Shrub Identification and Ecological Forestry Concepts Walk on Sunday, September 13 from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. at the Bidwell House Museum on Art School Road in Monterey. Space is limited and pre-registration (bidwellhouse@gmail.com) is required.

Indoor Tag Sale on Saturday, September 19 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on 204 West Granville Road in Tolland. 30-plus tables, food truck, and musical entertainment sponsored by the Tolland Cultural Council. For questions, call 413-258-4794, ext. 129.

Trodding on the Knox Trail in Celebration of MA 250 Anniversary on Saturday, September 26 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Explore a preserved section of one of the Berkshires' oldest roads and hear its stories. Meet on Brett Road in Monterey at the Swann Lodge. This is a moderately difficult, 2.5-mile hike and hiking poles are recommended. Free.

— Join the Sandisfield Recreation Committee —



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Anonymous

Larry Marion

Suzanne OConnell

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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.

The Times is distributed free of charge to all Sandisfield postal address and boxes. Free copies are available at the following town locations: The transfer station (Wed/Sat/Sun), the Library, and in New Boston at A&M Auto, the Farmington River General Store,

Sandisfield Orchard, and 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 in New Marlborough at the Southfield 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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