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Friday, March 15, 2013

THIS WEEK'S QUOTE

"Happiness depends upon ourselves."

Aristotle

INSIDE

- Almanac .....2
Obituaries .....13
Police Logs .....9
Opinion .....10
Learning .....8
Calendar .....13
Real Estate .....B Sect.
Sports.....14

LOCAL



Charlton welcomes new fire inspector Page A4

LEARNING



Charlton PTO receives \$3.5K grant from Staples Page A2

SPORTS



Naps remain thorn in Rams' side during district semifinal Page A14

OPINION

GET YOUR POINT ACROSS PAGE A10

POLICE LOGS

PAGE A10



Food Share Radiothon coming at the end of March

FOURNIER POSES CHALLENGE TO LOCAL HIGH SCHOOLS

BY GUS STEEVES VILLAGER STAFF WRITER

SOUTHBRIDGE — One thing Ray Fournier would love to be able not to do is the annual Food Share Radiothon, which happens this year on March 28.

But the chances of that happening anytime soon are very slim, since it'd require everyone being able to afford decent food.

"You can't argue the numbers, and our numbers go up every year," he said Thursday. "... Every year we set records, and every year I

say we can't go higher. And every year, we do."

Food Share, as most people know, is the food pantry located in the basement of the Catholic Charities building on Elm Street. Every year on the Thursday before Easter, its staff and various guests take over the airwaves of WESO-AM for the day to raise the funds necessary to feed the needy in our area for most of the year.

That need, Fournier said, is growing fast.

In 2006, before the bottom fell out of the economy Food

Share fed 3,570 individuals from 1,071 families. Last year, the agency served 7,271 people from 2,372 families, he said.

Despite the stock market's recent record highs, that's just one piece of evidence the recession is still smothering too many people. Unemployment is stubbornly refusing to fall — it was still 7.9 percent in January, although many sources argue the real rate, including those who have simply given up job-seeking, is 15-20 percent. Oil prices keep hover-

ing in the \$100 a barrel range, hiking prices for almost everything from food to travel. Homes for sale stay on the market for months, and foreclosed ones sit vacant longer. And the average working person's paycheck gets thinner due to the recent jump in withheld taxes, longer trends in deteriorating buying power, and growing debt.

All of those issues have played some role in a noticeable drop in individual donors, Fournier said. In previous years, he filled five



Ray Fournier

pages with the names of people who would visit WESO

Turn To FOOD page A12



File photo

Erin Lowkes, now 15, of East Brookfield, along with her self-appointed team captain Jen Foley, stand in front of their team of friends and family, all wearing shamrocked signs for "Team Erin," during the 2011 walk. This year's event is slated for Saturday, March 16.

The luck (and walk) of the Irish

LOCAL STUDENTS RAISING MONEY FOR LOCAL DIABETES CAMP

BY JOY RICHARD STONEBRIDGE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Runners, take your marks — and walkers, ready your stride.

The Barton/Joslin diabetes camps will hold their annual St. Patrick's Day walk to benefit campers on Saturday, March 16. All of the money raised will go towards camper tuition for the upcoming summer session.

Two of the people looking to bring in money for their Barton/Joslin friends are current campers, and Webster residents Jordan, 13, and Jonathan Beals, 15.

The siblings have both managed type 1 diabetes for a large portion of their lives, and said they finally feel "normal" when they spend their summers at the local camps.

Located in Oxford and Charlton, the

Beals siblings said being around a group of peers and leaders who all know how tricky their particular illness can be is comforting.

Jordan said that is why she is working hard to raise money this month. She said she has already brought in \$200 for the cause, and said she is hoping to meet the \$2,000 goal she and her mom set.

To donate or sign up for the walk residents can visit www.firstgiving.com/11030/annual-st-patricks-road-race-racewalk, and enter either Jordan or Jonathan names to access their accounts.

"I started going when I was 10 and was diagnosed with type 1 [diabetes]," said Jordan during an interview last week. "I like the camp. Everyone there has the

Turn To WALK page A12

Charlton man charged with indecent assault

BY GUS STEEVES VILLAGER STAFF WRITER

CHARLTON — A Charlton man is facing charges he allegedly inappropriately touched his daughter's teenage friend when she spent a night at their home.

Fadi Merdaa, of 187 Stafford St., faces two counts of indecent assault on a person 14 and over. He was arraigned Feb. 26 and pleaded not guilty before being released on \$200 bail with an order to have no contact with the alleged victim.

According to the police report by Sgt. Daniel Dowd, his daughter invited the friend, who had recently turned 18 but is still in high school, to spend a weekend night visiting with her mother's knowledge.

The girl reported that she fell asleep on the couch about 3 a.m. "after watching movies," noting that before this incident she'd "consider[ed] this home to be like family, and has always felt safe there."

Shortly after 6 a.m., she told Dowd, Merdaa's wife left for work and he sat on the couch talking to her. She alleged that he made "several" references to her age, and "began rubbing her calf and leg," the report states. "He commented on how he liked his women not too thin and liked her muscle tone." "I tried kissing her "several times," and touched her in several places, including under her pants and sports bra, Dowd wrote.

Turn To ASSAULT page A12

Church to host Ghana bike collection



Photo courtesy www.villagebicycleproject.org

A woman and child ride into their village in Ghana.

ORGANIZER: 'THEY JUST NEED TRANSPORTATION'

BY GUS STEEVES VILLAGER STAFF WRITER

CHARLTON — In the U.S., we tend to think of bicycles as something teenagers use until they can buy a car (although that's likely to change before too long).

In other parts of the world, though, they're the common

person's basic form of transportation if they don't want to walk.

"When we say we walk '10 miles to school,' it's a joke. These people actually do," said James Wood, who's organizing a bike and elec-

Turn To BIKES page A12



Mark Ashton photo

And the award goes to Passionella (Beth Baker, center), surrounded by Rom Portwood and Lynn Boucher, during rehearsal for "The Apple Tree" Wednesday, March 6. For related photos, turn to page A8!

Don't sit under 'The Apple Tree'

UNLESS YOU'RE LOOKING FOR MUSICAL MIRTH FROM GATEWAY PLAYERS

BY MARK ASHTON VILLAGER STAFF WRITER

SOUTHBRIDGE — For its 38th season of community theater in Southbridge, Gateway Players Theatre has gone to back to its roots — music and comedy — by branching off into historical sources of humor.

Here's the plan: Plant a sprig of Mark Twain's wit, humor, and insight into the origins of the human condition; feed and water with liberal sprinklings of

Broadway musicals, timeless love stories, and some Jules Feiffer comedy; prune everything into three distinct acts, and sit back to harvest a cornucopia of unique entertainment. Ta da — the next, and imminent, Gateway Players Theatre production!

Show dates for "The Apple Tree" are Fridays and Saturdays, March 15-16 and March 22-23 at 7:30 p.m., and

Turn To PLAY page A15