



TODAY'S QUOTE

"If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail."
— Abraham Maslow

LOCAL



Local happenings
Page A3

SPORTS



Boxing for a cause
Page A12

WINNING LOTTERY NUMBERS

MASS DAILY NUMBERS drawn Saturday night were:
3-3-1-3

MASS. DAILY NUMBERS drawn Sunday afternoon were:
3-6-3-9

MASS DAILY NUMBERS drawn Sunday night were:
2-0-4-8

IN FOCUS



Images of autumn
Page A16

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

WHAT'S HAPPENING 'BEYOND OUR BORDERS'
PAGE A2

OPINION

GET YOUR POINT ACROSS
PAGE A4

WHAT TO DO

A CALENDAR OF AREA EVENTS
PAGE A11

A Common spectacle

SCULPTURE UNVEILED TO SALUTE AO HISTORY

BY RYAN GRANNAN-DOLL
NEWS STAFF WRITER

SOUTHBRIDGE — The new pair of eyeglasses, so to speak, on the Town Common is reminding people of the town's the treasured history.

The "Spectacular A.O." sculpture, a model of eyeglasses, was dedicated to the town Thursday, Oct. 21, wraps up a four-year effort to educate residents on the town's heritage as the birthplace of the optical industry, specifically the former American Optical company.

"It is really a tremendous statement about Southbridge and the people that live here," said the project's sculptor Michael Saari, of Woodstock, Conn.

The one-ton sculpture resembles a pair of eyeglasses — reminiscent of the specs A.O. used to manufacture at its Southbridge plant — now the Southbridge Hotel and Conference Center. The sculpture stands 19 feet high and 7 feet wide. It rests on footings. Saari used laser cutting methods and ancient techniques to build his art work.

"Let pride rise to the top of this sculpture," said one of the projects chief organizers, Janina Swiacki, with her sister Nancy, both



Ryan Grannan-Doll photos

The new "Spectacular A.O." sculpture now adorns the Town Common. Raymond Petrelli attended the sculpture dedication in character as former A.O. owner George Wells.

Please Read AO, page A7

Food pantry sounds alarm

FIRE AID, INCREASED NEED IN AREA TAX SUPPLY AS HOLIDAYS APPROACH

BY RYAN GRANNAN-DOLL
NEWS STAFF WRITER

SOUTHBRIDGE — The approaching holiday season can be especially troublesome for those already struggling to survive.

That's where the Southbridge FoodShare Incorporated steps in by asking the community for help, so it can continue its assistance mission of providing people with food. Raymond Fournier, the FoodShare's president, said the pantry needs food and money donations from the community to fill the area's growing hunger needs. Specifically, he is asking canned meats and vegetables as well as turkeys for the FoodShare's annual Thanksgiving turkey giveaway, scheduled for Nov. 20.

He said he needs 350 birds. While the FoodShare still receives monthly contributions from several organizations, the shelves at its 79 Elm St. facility are still rather bare, according to Fournier.

"We have not received anything of consequence since the mailmen did their collection in May. That's the problem," Fournier said.

Overall, donations are down compared to last year, but the pantry still has to feed more than 500 customers, from Southbridge, Sturbridge, Charlton, Dudley and surrounding towns, Fournier said. Stocks are down from the summer when the shelves were

Please Read PANTRY, page A7



Ryan Grannan-Doll photo

FoodShare volunteer Collin Mocklow helps FoodShare President Raymond Fournier stock food at the agency's 79 Elm St. facility.

Area towns plan Halloween fun

BY RICH HOSFORD
NEWS STAFF WRITER

The changing of the leaves, the colder weather and the sudden presence of pumpkins, scarecrows and ghoulish decorations can only mean one thing, Halloween approaches. This year, there is plenty to do in the area to get one's fill of candy and scary in a safe and fun way.

Trick or treating this year will be held on Sunday, Oct. 31, Halloween night, for most area towns.

Southbridge plans a Parade of the Horribles from 5-5:30 p.m. from Wells Middle School to the Town Common, followed by trick or treating from 5:30-7 p.m.

In Sturbridge, trick or treating will run from 5 to 7 p.m., in Brimfield it will run from 5 to 8 p.m., in Wales it will be from 4 to 5 p.m. and in Holland it will run from 4 to 7 p.m.

Police will be out to help ensure safety, but they would like to pass on a few

Please Read HALLOWEEN, page A8



Courtesy photo

Ghouls and chills await brave OSV patrons to the Trail of Terror during the annual 'Things that Go Bump in the Night' event Oct. 30.



UPS AND DOWNS

Shawn Kelley photo

STURBRIDGE — Melory Ferreira, 2, and Xavier Torres, 8, both of Southbridge try out a toy see-saw for sale at the Sturbridge Federated Church rummage sale on Saturday Oct. 23. Everything from furniture to shoes to children's toys were sold in the bottom of the church.

Exploring universal themes

LOCAL AUTHOR PUBLISHES HIS SECOND NOVEL

BY RICH HOSFORD
NEWS STAFF WRITER

STURBRIDGE — A local author's newest work is hot of the presses and he hopes it finds its way into your home. Alberto Mercado, of Sturbridge, announced the release of his second self-published book, "Annabel; Finding Her Way Home," which went on sale Monday, Oct. 25.

The book is a follow-up to Mercado's first book, published in 2009, "From Ashes to Dreams: My Life, My Story," a fictional story based on real events in the

author's life growing up in Puerto Rico and moving to the United States. The new book focuses on a fictional character, Fernando, who, along with his wife, tries to find his biological mother, Annabel, after 30 years of separation. Annabel had left her son on the steps of a church after fleeing an abusive husband who she feared would hurt her child. The story relates how the pair reunites and has to deal with new complications in the family

Please Read AUTHOR, page A15



Food pantry finds demands outpacing the gifts



PANTRY

continued from page A1

packed. "Food going out far exceeds food going in," he said. "Right now our stock is as low as I have seen in eight years. Four months ago, we had such a surplus of vegetables," he said.

The need for food pantry donations is likely growing in Southbridge, if data is any indication.

Ryan Grannan-Doll photo

Southbridge FoodShare Incorporated President Raymond Fournier displays the bare shelves of his agency's 79 Elm St. facility.

According to the 2010 Hunger in America study, 37 million people annually seek food assistance, up 46 percent from 2005.

The hunger issue knows no bounds. Of the 42,441 clients surveyed for the study that pickup food at a pantry, 42.7 percent of them are ages 30-49. Two other figures are indicative of how bad the hunger problem might be in Southbridge — 15.7 percent of those surveyed are 65 or older and 21.8 percent are of Hispanic descent.

Despite its troubles, Fournier said he would never allow the FoodShare to close. It would leave people like the victims of last

week's fire at an apartment building on Pearl Street without a place to get food. Fournier said several of the fire victims, who became homeless as a result of the blaze, have received food from the FoodShare. To Fournier, closing is not option, but reducing hours is.

"No. It can't happen. We can't let it happen. If worse come to worse, we may cut down [by] one day. I don't see how that is going to solve anything."

The latest developments at the FoodShare are another chapter in its recent struggles. A lack of money and volunteers, and an increase in customers, has plagued the agency in

prior years. In 2004, Fournier said, the FoodShare served 3,104 people, but that number jumped to 4,120 in 2007. Attracting volunteers to work there is often a problem, he said.

Donations can be sent to 79 Elm St., Southbridge, MA, 01550. Food can be dropped at that location. The pantry hours 10 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. Monday, Wednesday and Fridays.

Ryan Grannan-Doll can be reached by phone at (508) 909-4050, or by e-mail at rgrand@stonebridgepress.com.

AO sculpture puts focus on Common, town history

AO

continued from page A1

retired teachers.

While motorists ogled at the sculpture during the dedication ceremony, one of the project's chief organizers, Nancy Swiacki said the new structure will help people realize the town's interesting nickname, among other things.

"Our goal ... was to galvanize why Southbridge is called the Eye of the Commonwealth," Swiacki said.

That nickname is commonly used in the community and appears on a Route 131 sign welcoming people to town.

The optical roots the sculpture evokes run deep. American Optical was founded in 1833 and by 1946, the firm's manufacturing plant was the largest lens factory in the world. Prior to that, William Beecher founded a local jewelry store that eventually

became A.O. when George Wells and his brother, Hiram, bought it, according dickwhitney.net, a local history Web site operated by historian Dick Whitney. Inside the plant, workers created eyeglasses, sunglasses and even combat goggles. Over the years, the company expanded and built campuses in Putnam, Conn., Vermont and even Mexico, according to Whitney. The company went out of business in the 1980s. Prior to that, divisions of it were sold off into companies that still exist today, such as Schott North America Lighting and Imaging on Charlton Street.

The sculpture also recalls an era past when A.O.'s operation played a big role in daily lives of residents, according to Janina Swiacki. The sculpture is located directly across from the company's executive entrance, where drivers would idle in their vehicles waiting to pick up employees after a work shift, she said.

"The Common used to be known as A.O.



common," Janina Swiacki said.

The dedication's timing was also significant. Held on a Thursday, A.O.'s payday, at 4 p.m. when workers would depart for the day, Janina Swiacki said they would head to the downtown area to shop before heading home.

Even the sculpture's final color is significant. While it has not yet been painted, Janina Swiacki said it will eventually be black, because that color was popular in the 1950s.

"President Kennedy wore black frames," she said.

Standing near his work, Saari said he was glad to be contributing a piece of art the public can enjoy for free.

"There are not a lot of public art [pieces]," he said. "I'm basically thrilled."

The dedicated was four years in the making. The Swiacki sisters brainstormed the idea in 2006 out of a desire to pay tribute to 175th anniversary of the first pair of eyeglasses made in town and the 140th anniversary of the founding of A.O., which happened two years ago. A 12-person committee was established to oversee it, which the Swiacki sisters chair and from there, the committee raised \$85,500 for the sculpture's



Ryan Grannan-Doll photos, left and center; Joy Richard photo, above

From far left, Janina Swiacki, at left, dedicates the new A.O. sculpture last week on the Town Common. Robert Saari, left, and his son, sculptor Michael Saari, of Woodstock, Conn., who created the sculpture. Above, a worker adjusts a part of the Spectacular A.O. sculpture recently dedicated on the Town Common on Thursday, Oct. 21.

total cost.

People got a lot for their money. "Here we have a piece of art ... that will put us on the map," said Town Manager Christopher Clark.

Ryan Grannan-Doll can be reached by phone at (508) 909-4050, or by e-mail at rgrand@stonebridgepress.com.



Crafters wanted for St. Christopher's annual fair

BRIMFIELD — St. Christopher's Parish is seeking crafters, artisans and vendors for its annual Christmas Craft Fair to be held from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 20 f and from 10 a.m. - 1 m.m. Sunday, Nov. 21. Tables are \$35 each and covers both days. The kitchen will be serving throughout the day and there will also be a cookie walk and several great raffles. To reserve a table call the parish at 413-245-7274 days; or Cindy at 413-283-6709 evenings or email stchrisbrimfield@gmail.com.

www.theheartofmassachusetts.com

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