



TODAY'S QUOTE

"There is a secret person undamaged in every individual." — Paul Shepard

TOMORROW'S WEATHER



Scattered T-Storms with heavy rain
High 83
Low 65

WINNING LOTTERY NUMBERS

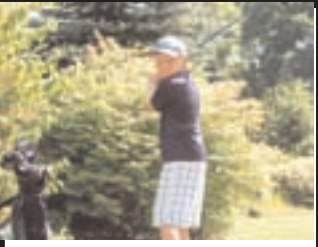
MASS. DAILY NUMBERS drawn Wednesday afternoon were **8-4-9-3**
MASS DAILY NUMBERS drawn Wednesday night were **2-9-2-2**
Megabucks Doubler: **3-7-11-12-22-38**
Powerball: **10-41-44-48-56**
Powerball: **4**

LOCAL



People, Places & Things
Page A3

SPORTS



The Hole in One Kid
Page A10

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

WHAT'S HAPPENING 'BEYOND OUR BORDERS'
PAGE A2

MEETINGS

WHERE TO GO TO KEEP TABS ON YOUR TOWN
PAGE A3

POLICE LOGS

AREA LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY
PAGE A5

Program throws book at 'elephant'

CRIMINAL JUSTICE EXPANDS OPPORTUNITIES AT CONFERENCE CENTER

BY WALTER BIRD JR.
NEWS STAFF WRITER

SOUTHBRIDGE — It has been called the town's white elephant, a colossal failure that never lived up to expectations.

To those who fought hard to bring the Southbridge Hotel and Conference Center to town, that perception belies reality. There is, in fact, a lot more going on there than meets the eye.

The problem, of course, is the public was promised so much more.

"Has it taken longer to get to the point where it's more of a public access project? Yes," said Charles "Chip" Norton, managing director of Franklin Realty Advisors Inc. "Is it a white elephant? No."

Norton was standing in the conference room lobby at the hotel yesterday morning, where more than three dozen local business and education leaders joined local and state officials gathered for news that a four-year criminal justice program is coming to the area by way of a \$600,000 federal grant.

U.S. Rep. Richard E. Neal, D-Springfield, delivered the news at a brief press conference and hinted at more good news to come concerning a business development at the former AO complex he hopes will be completed by this fall.

Yesterday, however, the main topic of discussion was a partnership between Quinsigamond Community College, the Worcester-based two-year college that already has a cam-



pus based at the complex, and Westfield State College, through whom the funding will be channeled. The school will build on its four-year criminal justice program, working with Quinsigamond, which currently has 573 students enrolled in criminal justice, to transfer them from two- to four-year graduates.

The program will serve as a training ground for law enforcement officials everywhere, Neal said.

"With this new central Massachusetts location," he said, "students, law enforcement and Homeland Security professionals can now receive their education and training at a state-of-the-art facility."

The congressman gave a verbal nod to the criticisms of a project in which he played a big part, along with the late Sen. Edward M.



Dean Coots photos

Quinsigamond Community College President Gail Carberry speaks at the Southbridge Conference Center on Wednesday, July 7 about a federal grant awarded to the Southbridge branch of Westfield College, above left. Also on the roster of speakers were U.S. Rep. Richard Neal, D-Mass., above, Westfield State College President Evan Dobbelle and Tom Foley, a former State Police colonel who is candidate for sheriff of Worcester County and a member of the governor's council, left. Above, Neal took the time to talk with area business leaders and educators about the increased use of the Conference Center after the program announcing the grant.



Please Read XXXX, page AXX

'Eye' on RMV impact

BUSINESS FORUM TO DISCUSS MOVE

BY CHRISTOPHER TANGUAY
NEWS STAFF WRITER

SOUTHBRIDGE — Cable access program "Eye on Southbridge" announced Wednesday it would host a forum with business advocates to consider the impact of the Registry of Motor Vehicles' abandonment of its former Southbridge office — and the potential impacts of the department's newest local branch.

At a press conference held in the Town Council chamber of Town Hall, hosts John Gatti Jr. and Larry Beinema, along with regular guest former state Rep. Mark Carron, said the televised discus-



Christopher Tanguay photo

Former state Rep. Mark Carron, right, makes a point during Wednesday's 'Eye on Southbridge' forum on the RMV move as hosts John Gatti Jr., left, and Larry Beinema listen.

sion would likely be held in the next two to three weeks.

The focus of the meeting will be what Carron said is a need for legislation that would protect a

private business from being financially harmed by the state.

Specifically, the panelists were talking about

Please Read FORUM, page A7

Four national firms eye area site for casino

BY RYAN GRANNAN-DOLL
NEWS STAFF WRITER

CHARLTON — Although they have not settled on whether to build on a local site, Penn National Gaming company is just one of four firms interested in building a casino in Charlton.

"It is one of many sites that we are exploring, but given how fluid the situation is on the legislative front ... we really haven't circled any given site on the map," said Penn National Gaming Senior Vice President for Public Affairs Eric Schippers. "We do have an interest in being in Massachusetts."

Springfield-based Attorney Paul Nicolai on Wednesday, July 7 revealed Penn and Hard Rock

International as two of the four firms exploring the idea of building a casino behind the 5-East service stop off the Massachusetts Turnpike.

He declined to reveal the names of the remaining two firms.

The Seminole Tribe of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., which owns the Hard Rock company's chain of hotels, casinos and restaurants, could not be reached for comment.

Nicolai has an arrangement possibly purchase a 114-acre parcel from owner Vincent Iuliano, of Charlton. That option expires next summer.

A study commissioned by Hard Rock determined

Please Read CASINO, page A11

Tantasqua talent showcased at Red Sox game



BY CHRISTOPHER TANGUAY
NEWS STAFF WRITER

STURBRIDGE — At 17, most young men on their way to Fenway Park would be excited just to sit in the grandstand and take in a game.

Few ever get to set foot on the grass. Even fewer become the center of attention.

On Saturday, July 3, the night before Independence Day, Tantasqua senior Joe Conceison sang the National Anthem at the start of the Red Sox game as part of the ball club's Central Massachusetts Day festivities.

"There was a lot of nerve build-up all week, but it was an amazing experience," Conceison said a few days after his major league performance.

The road to Yawkey Way was a serendipitous one for Conceison, who regularly sings the Star Spangled Banner at Tantasqua bas-



Courtesy photo, left/Christopher Tanguay photo, above

Tantasqua senior Joe Conceison, shown here playing the piano at home, performed the National Anthem at Fenway Park on Saturday, July 3.

Please Read FENWAY page A11



Grant boosts criminal justice program at AO

GRANT
continued from page A1

Kennedy, saying, "It is another example of our continuing efforts to utilize the Southbridge Conference Center to its full potential."

The announcement was greeted with enthusiasm, especially from those who helped bring it to fruition.

"This," said state Rep. Geraldo Alicea, D-Charlton, who was recognized as among those working behind the scenes to introduce the program to the community, "is a home run for Southbridge. The town has always been known as the Eye of the Commonwealth. Now, it's turning into ... the Eye of New England."

At least part of that eye's vision appears trained on education opportunities. The town is getting ready to build a new senior/junior high school and QCC, which had long held classes at the current high school on Cole Avenue, has been in town since last year.

"Southbridge," said WSC President Evan Dobelle, "is fundamental to our success in Western/Central Mass. This is about bringing back our tax dollars to help us sustain a safer community. Criminal Justice and Homeland Security are critical to our future."



Dean Coats photo

Members of the audience, which included many Westfield State College alumni, applaud during Wednesday's announcement of the criminal justice program in Southbridge through a partnership with WSC and Quinsigamond Community College.

Lest anyone think the focus on learning here is a fly-by-night operation, QCC President Gail Carberry said, "We're not here as carpetbaggers. We're here as partners. We are delighted that Westfield State is partnering with us in criminal justice."

"It's a starting point. QCC came in. Now WSC is

coming in. This town has so much to offer. The spices are going into the soup."

As it simmers, Norton believes the sour taste left by lofty expectations that never quite matched reality will dissipate.

"It'll happen by itself," he said. "The main thing is government utiliza-

bachelor's degree at Westfield State, see education as a part of the town's future as it continues to grapple with an identity crisis brought on by the gradual loss of the AO.

"We are set up for colleges, education and for seniors," said Charette. "We have every service imaginable and affordable cost of living. We're very close to the other pieces you want with it. College towns are exactly like us."

The town, added Alicea, "is ready for it. We've always been saying we see this as a college atmosphere."

As for the perception that the hotel and conference center has not been used, Charette referenced the new WSC program and noted groundwork had already been laid.

"You've had a homeland security training program that has been going on here for about a year now," he said. "It has been very well attended. The Mass. chiefs were thrilled with the area. It's already a tried program."

An educational component in Southbridge was a near no-brainer, according to Dr. William J. McCarthy, coordinator and assistant professor of

criminal justice at Quinsigamond.

"What we found was a dynamic problem with education in this geographic area," the one-time Worcester County sheriff candidate said. "We came up with a dynamic solution to meet the needs of students here. We're very excited about this."

"Partnering with somebody like WSC is an advantage to our students. They're going to need a bachelor's degree in this changing world."

The expansion of educational opportunities at the AO complex, added Norton, is a trend he hopes will continue. It is all part of an effort to adapt to a changing climate.

"The concept below the hotel and conference center," he said, "was to use this as a base to redirecting the past. The park historically has been AO. That specific use has changed dramatically. We're changing with the needs of the northeast."

"Education is a neat fit here and we certainly have lots of space readily available."

Walter Bird Jr. may be reached at 508-909-4107 or by e-mail at wbird@stonebridgepress.com.

'Eye on Southbridge' to host business forum

FORUM
continued from page A1

the burden that was left to be carried by Big Bunny supermarket — to the tune of \$300,000 — when the RMV, a former tenant of the grocer's plaza, vacated the recently renovated office it had occupied for years.

Big Bunny has been family owned for more than 60 years.

"Never again should this be able to happen to a citizen of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts," Carron said. "Legislation must be filed, and it will be sup-

ported by organizations like NFIB (National Federation of Independent Business) and the chambers of commerce."

Meeting for the upcoming "Eye on Southbridge" broadcast will be Bill Vernon, Massachusetts state director of the NFIB and Alexandra McNitt of the Central Mass. South Chamber of Commerce.

The NFIB is an advocacy organization for small and independently owned businesses nationwide.

Gatti also issued a public invitation for the Senate and House chairs of the Joint Committee on Transportation — state

Sen. Steven A. Baddour, D-Methuen, and state Rep. Joseph F. Wagner, D-Chicopee — to make a return visit to Southbridge to discuss RMV-related concerns.

Neither of the two lawmakers have returned to town since promising a public hearing would be held when town officials, residents, and local news outlets expressed concern over the RMV's handling of its initial moving process.

That process was also called into question Wednesday, with all three panelists stating their dismay over the lease for the Casaubon Senior Center/Armory.

Gatti said he has grave concerns over what relocating the RMV away from Big Bunny and into the Casaubon building will do to the western end of Main Street.

"What's this going to do to the Globe [Village] area?" he asked, mentioning the hardships many of the businesses in the Big Bunny plaza are experiencing, and the boon foot traffic in and out of the RMV used to pro-

vide for it.

"We need business," Gatti said. "We've got to help business."

News staff writer Christopher Tanguay may be reached at (508) 909-4132, or by e-mail at ctanguay@stonebridgepress.com.

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REWARD!

"Riley"

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on Monday night
June 21, 2010.

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coarse tan fur with gray,

black and white highlights.

Riley is very shy and needs to go home.

Please call 860-974-0324

860-420-8015 or 860-748-6302

