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Elderly housing answers to be studied

Possible future regional elderly housing

By Emma Monahan
Staff writer

BROOKFIELD – The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission held an open forum about senior housing, during which residents heard about smaller developments from planning officials. Residents and officials from Brookfield, East Brookfield, North Brookfield, West Brookfield, Barre, Hardwick and Warren met on Oct. 17 at the First Congregational Church to get a sense of the needs of area senior centers and to discuss the possibility of a regional senior housing facility.

Brookfield Selectman Clarence Snyder invited CMRPC officials to discuss the topic and to hear about what members of the community believe they need in order to make this happen.

“We’ve seen people from our church having to leave town and leave their homes,” said Snyder. “We want them to be able to stay in their communities.”

Ron Barren and Emily Glauert, of CMRPC, presented to

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Young and old walk and run together



Members of Sturbridge Girl Scout Troop 05092 walk together at Walk, Run and Roll and Go4Life.

TURLEY PUBLICATIONS STAFF PHOTOS BY EMMA MONAHAN

By Emma Monahan
Staff writer

NORTH BROOKFIELD – Two forces joined together last Friday evening for the second annual Walk, Run, and Roll and first Go4Life Walk at North Brookfield Public Schools. After weather forced the Go4Life to cancel the week before, Senior Center Director Diane Nicholas was happy that the school was willing to combine their events.

“Our hope is to get families walking together,” said Nichols.

The intergenerational walk is to help not only motivate families, but senior citizens as well. With a positive turnout at last year’s Walk, Run, and Roll, and combining the two set a perfect example of North Brookfield community coming together.

Monique Dubuc, a special education teacher at the elementary school, was very ex-

cited to be bringing back the Walk, Run, and Roll for a second time.

“Bullying is a sticking point,” said Dubuc. “Last year I really wanted to do something that’s bigger than our bullying policy, some sort of movement.”

Dubuc discovered the walk through a friend, and was instantly inspired to host her own. After receiving positive feedback last year, she was more encouraged to bring it

back.

Mark Minnucci, director of Student Services, was ready to bring back the walk for the school community.

“We really wanted to have an event that brought the community together,” said Minnucci. “This is an active attempt towards bullying and bringing awareness to it. Having Go4Life here has also helped bridge these two com-

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The cast of “You Can’t Take It With You” will perform Friday, Nov. 1, at 7 p.m., and Saturday, Nov. 2, at 2 p.m., and again at 7 p.m., at Tantasqua Regional High School.

Tantasqua theatre students take on comedy

Staging “You Can’t Take it With You”

By Emma Monahan
Staff writer

STURBRIDGE – Tantasqua Regional High School’s theater department has been preparing for their fall production of “You Can’t Take It With You” by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart. Director Sam Briggs had so much student interest she decided to open the matinee to the understudy cast.

“There are such a variety of characters,” said Briggs. “We haven’t done a slapstick com-

edy in a while, and I try to be diverse with the plays and musicals I pick for the students.”

The play tells the story of Alice and her wacky family as she introduces them to her sophisticated boyfriend, Tony. The couple, who hope to get their families blessings, are soon wrapped up in Alice’s family’s shenanigans, including fireworks. The comedy was that perfect fit for her students in Briggs’ eyes.

“I have a good group of seniors this year who are very funny,” said Briggs. “I thought this play would be a good fit.”

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- opinion -

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the small group the research they have done in the area, looking at population growth, towns' median age and salary, and types of housing in the area. The forum, which was held at the request of Snyder and the church, was to see if there's a need for senior housing, what the current challenges are for seniors in the area and any possible solutions or opportunities.

Many of the problems seniors face are housing costs. Barren stated the price of houses are far above the average household income, and it's the case all over the region. CMRPC predicts a flat or level growth in population within the next 20 years. Regionalizing the project would have to happen because no one town has the money to build such a facility.

While discussing challenges, CMRPC focused on housing, transportation and mobility, and local services. Many attendees stated that seniors want to downsize their homes, but new homes being built are too large, and would have to be affordable. It causes an overlap between the needs of the young and old, according to CMRPC officials.

The upkeep of their homes also poses an issue. Some seniors may not be able to keep up with maintenance because of the size of their home, or the type of job that needs to be done. Nonprofits can help with these issues, such as bringing in a plumber or electrician, but they are difficult to fund when contractors are looking to make more money.

Another issue discussed was zoning, and the possibility of creating smaller lots and use. One resident saying in order to solve the housing issue, the zoning issue would need to be solved creatively beforehand.

Barren discussed the idea of cottage developments, which would be like small cul-de-sacs but with small commons throughout and the homes away from larger lots. Mobile home parks are also another option, with Brookfield having two that are for 55 years or older.

Residents also talked about how community care is just as important as senior care. Having neighbors and family continue to check up on senior residents is very important, they said. This led to a conversation about transportation, how being able to leave the home and participating in activities is just as important.

CMRPC was briefed on the Quaboag Connector program that currently transports residents from multiple towns in the region, and its current plans to expand. North Brookfield Senior Center Director Diane Nichols said seniors in her town are not very interested in the program, and a bus share already runs on Tuesdays to the local supermarket. Nichols stated that she believes seniors also need assistance not only medically, but mentally as well. Sitting home alone by themselves and not interacting socially takes a toll on their mental health.

Residents suggested that organizations such as CMRPC need to find large plots of land on a bus route to purchase. The evening's forum will help Barren and his team develop a site plan. Afterwards, the organization could possibly look at land, and are currently pushing the state to provide funding for projects such as this in rural communities.

It is unknown when CMRPC will return with updates, but the few local residents that did attend seemed to be satisfied with what the organization is doing for their communities.



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Over the years, Briggs has seen interest in theater at the high school increase, with many of her students joining the program since they entered middle school.

“I've always liked entertaining,” said ninth-grade student Lantana Meisl. “I'm always shy in front of people I don't know though. When I joined this group, I was so happy, it helped a lot.”

Meisl started theater this school year, playing Grand Duchess Olga Katrina in the main production.

Tenth-grade student Giana Uwazany decided to try something new and auditioned after giving up dance, and she fell in love with theater.

“After this year, I plan on coming back,” said Uwazany, who plays Essie in the matinee. “This is all a little challenging since we don't have enough stage time being the matinee production.”

The matinee is giving the many students who audition the opportunity to perform in front of their friends and family. It was a way for Briggs to avoid cutting any students and an opportunity to give all actors a shot.

While many of the students in the matinee show are having difficult time rehearsing on stage, they are still excited to be learning from their fellow classmates.

“This play deals with a lot of physical comedy and comedic timing,” said Briggs. “They also use a lot of body language as well. They're trying to figure out how this character stands, how this one walks.”

The students have also been enjoying the characters they're playing. Lizzy Portwood, a senior, plays Penny in the main production.

“Comedy has always been my favorite,” said Portwood. “And this character is so quirky and weird, just like me, it's hard not to say yes to a role like this.”

Ninth-grade student Cierra

Rossi is excited to be on stage and learn from her fellow cast members.

“I feel so prepared as I make my way up in high school,” said Rossi. “I'm in the matinee, so being able to learn from them is an amazing opportunity.”

Briggs believes that this is a show for everyone, something audience members will be able to relate to.

“You can laugh along with this show,” said Briggs. “It's a show about family, love and connection, how your family can be extremely supportive. People will see a little bit of their own family in it, cause they're quirky like everyone else.”

“You Can't Take It with You” performances are on Friday, Nov. 1, at 7 p.m. and on Saturday, Nov. 2, at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. at Tantasqua Regional High School. Tickets are \$10 for adults, and \$8 for seniors and students.

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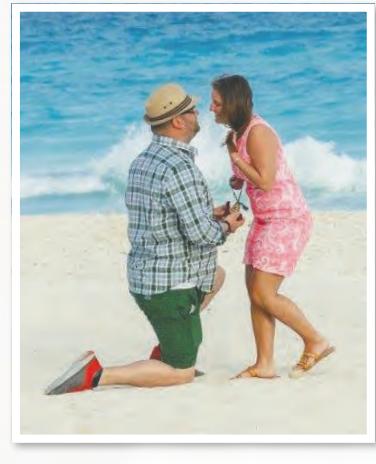
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