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Belchertown, Granby & Amherst

SENTINEL

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Mason's fight



By Aimee M. Henderson
ahenderson@turley.com

Editor's note: This is the first in a series this month telling the stories about people living with heart disease in honor of February being National Heart Month. If you would like to share your story please contact Editor Aimee Henderson at ahenderson@turley.com.

Looking at him you'd never know. You'd never know that this four-year-old bundle of energy - jumping from stairs and climbing on furniture like his favorite superhero Spiderman - had half a heart. But he does, and for him, life has been a fight from the very beginning.

Mason Duchesne was born four years ago to Adreana and Jeremy Duchesne of Belchertown, rounding out their family which already included a son, Alex, and daughter, Sydney. Mason's life up until 20 weeks gestation was going according to plan, but it all



Turley Publications photos by Aimee M. Henderson

Four-year-old Mason Duchesne shows off his super hero heart cape and scar.

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Protest of proposed cable merger eyed

By Walter Hamilton
Correspondent

BELCHERTOWN - The town committee charged with monitoring cable TV, Internet and telephone services here has been asked by the selectmen to advise whether the town should support a state-backed protest of a proposed merger between Comcast and Time Warner Cable.

The board, at its Jan. 26 meeting, asked the telecommunications advisory committee to make a recommendation on a call by the national consumer advocacy group Consumers Union to petition state attorneys general to fight the proposed merger in the name of public interest. Selectmen asked, specifically, if the town should send a letter to state Attorney General Maura Healey expressing its

support for a lawsuit to block the merger if it violates state or federal antitrust laws.

Under the proposed merger, Charter, the provider of cable services in Belchertown, would swap its Northeast U.S. customers with Comcast. As part of the deal now before the Federal Communications Commission, Comcast would transfer its Time Warner subscribers in the mid-west to Charter.

"Multi-national companies are trading customers like trading sheep," said Selectman Ken Elstein.

In Western Massachusetts, Charter provides cable and other communications services, phones and Internet in Belchertown, Chicopee, East Longmeadow, Easthampton, Hadley, Hampden, Ludlow,

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Quaboag Valley Relay for Life sets stage for 2015 walk

By Gregory A. Scibelli
Correspondent

BELCHERTOWN - For the past several years, the Quaboag Valley Relay for Life has found a great home at the track on the lower field of Belchertown High School. The event has brought many teams, great support from the community, and raised lots of money for the fight against cancer. The Quaboag Valley Relay for Life is getting ready to kick things off for 2015 and will be holding an event on Feb. 8 at the Hope United Methodist Church from 1 to 3 p.m.

Rebecca Pease, the chair of the Relay for Life organization committee, is excited to march in her second survivor's lap this year, and is hoping to add more people to that first lap of the relay. The Feb. 8 kickoff event will give Pease and the rest of the event committee the opportunity to introduce this year's themes and help participants get organized. It is even easier to join the Relay for Life with

many of the rules relaxed.

"There used to be a \$10 charge to sign up a team and a requirement for number of people and amounts to raise for the relay," said Pease. "There is no longer a fee to sign up and there is no minimum amount of money to raise. We just want as many people as we can to try to raise money for the American Cancer Society."

This year is the 30th anniversary of the American Cancer Society. Pease says the Quaboag Relay will feature a birthday theme and kick-off event will also feature a birthday cake. She is encouraging the teams to embrace the birthday theme as they organize their tents and other team clothing and materials.

Pease says she wants to see an increase in teams for this year. Last year, there were 32 teams and hundreds of members for each team. She hopes to add at least 10 more teams for this

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Animal control gets a 'BARC'

New group forming to support pound

By Aimee M. Henderson
ahenderson@turley.com

BELCHERTOWN - A new group has formed in Belchertown with the intent to help some of the most vulnerable. Belchertown Animal Rescue Committee (BARC) will act like a "friends of" group to the Belchertown Animal Control, raising money for the pound. In its first effort BARC hopes

to raise enough money to help build a new building for animal control.

Kristin Wood, who has spearheaded the formation of BARC, was first introduced to Belchertown Animal Control after she rescued an American Bulldog from the streets of Holyoke five years ago. Wood found the bulldog, extremely sick, underweight and close to death. With the help of Belchertown Animal Control and Anna Fenton, animal con-

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Candidates already lining up for election

By Aimee M. Henderson
ahenderson@turley.com,

BELCHERTOWN - Nomination papers were made available recently and candidates for town offices have already begun to line up for the May 18 town election.

Donald L. Minney has pulled his papers, looking for another run on the board of assessors for a three-year turn. Town Clerk Colleen Toothill-Berte has also

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WALK | from Page 1

year and get even more participants and volunteers.

"We have had a lot of teams that have had a lot of success," said Pease. "We definitely would like to add more."

Pease, a survivor of colon cancer, had a team that raised more than \$10,000 last year. Another team raised about \$15,000, she said. The Relay teams are looking for anyone interested in learning more to come to Hope

Church next week to check out the kick-off event.

"Even if you're a person who is just considering and is not sure," said Pease. "We definitely want to meet you and encourage you to come check it out. If you have not been a part of a Relay for Life or have never attended, it is really a life-altering experience."

This year's relay will take place on June 12 beginning at 6 p.m. and continuing until noon on June 13.

Pease also complimented the number of new committee members get-

ting involved with the Relay. She hopes it will translate to more success this year.

"We're definitely looking to breathe new life into the relay," said Pease.

For more information about the Quaboag Valley Relay, go to http://main.acevents.org/site/TR/RelayForLife/RFLCY15NE?pg=entry&fr_id=65269.

ELECTION | from Page 1

pulled her papers, looking for a full three-year term.

It's early to say, but the board of selectmen may see a race, with challenger Nicholas Tirrell pulling papers. Incumbent Ronald Aponte has confirmed he will also seek another term.

"Yes, I plan on running for another three year term as a member of the Board of Selectmen," said Aponte on Friday.

Kenneth Elstein has not pulled papers and did not respond to a request whether he planned to run again or not for board of selectmen (as of press time).

On the school committee, which saw a crowded race last year, may see another. Open seats include Clare

Popowich's spot and Richard J. Fritsch, both three-year terms. Fritsch has pulled his papers for a return to the committee, however there is no word yet on Popowich's intentions. Challenger Thomas Laughner has thrown his name in the ring however.

On the planning board Michael Hofler has offered his name for the five-year seat. That seat is held by George R. Synan, who has not pulled papers as of yet. There is a vacant three-year seat.

Other seats up for grabs are a seat on the board of health held by Roger M. Bonsall (three years), a five-year and one-year seat on the housing authority. Nancy Delgado Bachmann is the current five-year member up for re-election. She has not pulled papers.

Also to be elected at town meeting on May 11 are Almoners – Whiting

Street and Susan M.D Bridgman Funds; Paul Anziano (one year) and Ellen Lachance (one year).

It is early in the nomination paper process, as candidates have until March 26 at 5 p.m. to obtain blank nomination papers. They have until Monday, March 30 at 5 p.m. to submit papers to the board of registrars for certification of signatures. Candidates need 50 signatures of registered voters to be placed on the ballot. Candidates can take out eight papers with room for 32 names on each, with an allowable 250 signatures.

The last day for the registrar to file certified nomination papers with the town clerk is Monday, April 13, and the final date to protest or withdraw a name from nomination is Wednesday, April 15.

BARC | from Page 1

control officer, Wood said "Lucky" was nursed back to health and now lives with her.

"They took great care of him," said Wood, adding that when Lucky was found he was only 70 pounds, but now is a whopping 153 pounds.

Wood said along the recovery she would visit Lucky at the pound and take him for walks and feed him. This allowed him to get used to Wood, as well as allowed Wood to get to know his temperament.

"I've worked in hospitals and I've seen nurses that aren't that nice," said Wood about how Fenton treats the animals at the pound and those interested in the animals.

Since then Wood has felt a want to get involved, but now she said there is a need. The group has met three times now and is currently trying to raise \$500 to submit a 501(c)(3) application, allowing them to become an official non-profit charity. After that first hurdle the group will begin serious

efforts to raise \$100,000 to build a new animal control building across the street from its current location.

According to Wood, the department of public works will eventually need the space where the current animal control space is for their equipment. Across the street there is a foundation to a building where Wood hopes a new building can be placed. She said the town has been willing to assist with the endeavor, however there are a lot of steps to make it come to fruition. The group will need to raise enough money to buy all the building supplies, as well as other costs associated with constructing the building.

"Our mission is to continue to fund the pound so we can help microchip and provide rabies vaccines to animals that need it," said Wood.

Wood said the costs to nurse Lucky back to health drained animal control funds that year and she wants to make sure there is always enough money to help animals in need, whether it be a dog, cat, bird, bunny or more.

"My hope is that (animal control) will always have enough funds available to save any animal that needs help," said Wood.

Wood through this new group wants to stress that building a new pound is no longer a want, but has become a need. She said the town needs more space at the DPW to store equipment and there needs to be a space for animals. Wood said animal control takes in approximately 2,000 animals each year.

BARC is considering hosting a bazaar in March to raise money, but other fundraisers are being planned. She said the group is meeting once a month right now, but will likely begin to meet more as there is more to plan. The next meeting is Thursday, Feb. 19 from 6 to 7 p.m. in the selectmen's meeting room in Lawrence Memorial Hall (town hall). The group will also begin selling T-shirts and formulating a packet about BARC, including its official goal and some photos.

PROTEST | from Page 1

Southampton, Wilbraham and a few other communities. All told, Charter represents 53 cities and towns in Massachusetts.

Consumers Union, the company that publishes Consumer Reports magazine, has asked the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to reject the merger application, saying it will "result in anticompetitive harms that no conditions can remedy" and that it "overstates the proposed benefits from the merger and fails to address the public interest harms that could result."

"The net effect will be higher prices for consumers, fewer choices and less incentive for the combined company to respond to consumers' needs," CU said.

CU argues that competition will be diminished, giving a single company

"unprecedented control over key video programming:" give Comcast control over half the high-speed broadband service in the country: "give big companies priority access to its broadband customers if they pay for it;" and reduce incentives to improve service and lower rates.

CU asked the FCC to reject the merger in December. It is asking anyone that supports its position to reply to CU at the email address actions@cu.consumer.org.

In other business, the board was informed by Town Administrator Gary Brougham that the language of an agreement regarding the historical preservation and future display of Belchertown State School history and artifacts has been approved by state and local historical commissions and the Belchertown Economic Development and Industrial Corporation. The agreement was the

final step before demolition of buildings could begin in the Phase I area. The work is expected anytime, since the contractor, Associated Building Wreckers of Springfield, has been awarded the \$904,939 contract to demolish six buildings on the former state school campus.

- The board also:
- Appointed Jeffrey Halper to an open firefighter/paramedic position on the Belchertown Fire Dept.
 - Appointed Jordyn Bradway, of 12 Sarah Lane, and Jeremy R. Burns, of 62 Sabin St., both of Belchertown, to the position of reserve police officers for the Belchertown Police Dept.
 - Appointed Irene Mariettos to the Belchertown Historic District Bylaw Commission and recommended to that board that it name Anna Szymd Marques an associate member.

Bette Lord-Hess

2014 National Circle of Achievement Award Recipient

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