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Christopher Heights celebrates its fifth anniversary

Assisted-living community thriving

BY CHRISTAL WHELAN
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BELCHERTOWN — "I'm not the oldest. We have one lady who is 102, and another 101," said 97-year-old Ann Genero at the fifth anniversary celebration for the opening of Christopher Heights in Belchertown.

When she arrived five years ago from Palmer, there was just one other person, Betty Lannon, who has since passed away. Lannon and Genero were the first two residents to come live at Christopher Heights following its opening on June 21, 2018.

Christopher Heights assisted living facility formed part of a larger project for rejuvenating the former state school property. The town was awarded a \$3 million state grant through MassWorks Infrastructure to develop a mixture of residential, commercial and recreational properties. Walter Ohanian, CEO of the Grantham Group, LLC, expressed his indebtedness to Gary Brougham, town administrator at the time, and Claire O'Neill, project coordinator of MassDevelopment, for being advocates in his development of Christopher Heights.

Addressing guests and residents on this joyous occasion,



I'm not the oldest. We have one lady who is 102, and another 101."

ANN GENERO,
97-year-old Christopher
Heights resident

Ohanian said, "It's wonderful to see another beautiful June day here. When I first visited, it was just a piece of land with a hope. This facility stands exactly where the old hospital used to be."

Ohanian's group has developed a total of six Christopher Heights senior living communities all located

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Irene Skarzynski with her companion Corinne Hulse ready for some ice cream.

Selectboard revisits TA goals, objectives

BY MELINA BOURDEAU
Correspondent

BELCHERTOWN — Picking up a conversation started at its last meeting, the Selectboard discussed Town Administrator Steve Williams' goals and objectives in the coming year with a heavy focus on personnel and communication.

Williams prioritized communications, personnel and budgets, stating that some of the work is already ongoing.

Selectboard member Lesa Lessard Pearson said she wanted to discuss the organizational structure review within the town.

This would include changes in job description and their relation to the Personnel Board, although the Selectboard haven't determined what changes should happen with the board moving forward with the Town Manager switch.

She said she wanted to make

sure there were updates to municipal employees' job descriptions that reflected the work they're currently doing and focus on customer service.

"For people who have a number of responsibilities that are obsolete, that frees them up," she said. "Does it meet the needs of the customer base? It's totally customer orientated. The other part of the equation is — are we meeting the needs of the residents of Belchertown?"

Williams said he's begun having conversations with the HR Department about the matter.

He said he would present a plan once an outside consultant was chosen. Currently there are over 100 job descriptions that will need to be reviewed.

"The first step is going to make sure we have people for those jobs because there may be some that have already been deactivated that we still have on the books," Williams said. "We're not going

to spend that money and evaluate them if we're not going to fill those positions."

Lessard Pearson added that it would also be a good time to see what positions could be added to meet the needs of residents that aren't currently being met.

Selectboard Chair Ed Boscher suggested that because of her background and interest in the goal, that Lessard Pearson serve as a point person throughout the process of the structural review.

On the topic of communication, Boscher said while Williams referenced the town's social media policy, the most important aspect of the goal is to get information to residents.

"It's more about someone taking ownership and getting the news out there," he said. "Where's our digital presence? Where are we going to get a one-stop place to go?"

Lessard Pearson mentioned that

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Tick and tired of pesky bloodsuckers

BY MATTY ANDERSON
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BELCHERTOWN — OUCH! Look out for pesky ticks and mosquitoes this summer as they pack quite the punch for their size.

Kristen Krieger, a Public Health Nurse in the Quabbin Health District, warns residents about a potential risk to their health and safety. More specifically, she is educating the public of the potential risks of tick and mosquito bites.

Krieger has been spreading the word by giving a presentation featuring a "Bite Lab" at libraries, senior centers and more, throughout Belchertown, Ware and Pelham. She explains



TURLEY PHOTO BY MATTY ANDERSON
A sign posted at the Quabbin Reservoir across from Hanks Meadow.

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