Calendar of Events
A complete listing of department, committee, commission, and board meetings is posted: www.royalston-ma.gov

December 1 Friday
Winter Parking Ban in effect December 1st through April 30th
7 p.m.  Open mic at Town Hall, sponsored by the Royalston Cultural Council. Free. Arrive early to sign up to play music. The Williams Brothers will be the house band for the evening. Free. Light supper, baked goods and tea and coffee for sale. First Friday open mics continue throughout the winter.

December 2 Saturday
6:00 p.m.  Tree Lighting Ceremony at the Gazebo in South Royalston Village. Jolly Old Elf, music, neighbors, and fun.

December 3 Sunday
2:00 p.m.  Make a Holiday Garland from cinnamon sticks and cookies, citrus, beads and other festive items at Town Hall. Only a few spots are left, so call or email the Library quickly to register. Free. Sponsored by the Friends.

December 7 Thursday
Hanukkah begins
Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
6:30 p.m.  Ladies’ B. Holiday Basket Packing  Town Hall. All welcome to get involved.

December 8 Friday
Royalston’s Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony on The Common. A performance by the Athol Congregational Church Handbell Choir begins at 5:30 pm. Santa arrives at 6:00. Come join your neighbors singing Christmas carols, enjoying homemade snacks, chowder, cookies, hot chocolate, and s’mores. Sponsored by the Royalston Cultural Council and 1st Congregational Church.

December 9 Saturday
5:30 p.m.  Royalston Fish &Game Roast Beef Dinner

December 12 Tuesday
6:32 p.m.  New Beaver Moon

December 13 Wednesday
All dark hours today and tomorrow - Geminid Meteor Shower
75 shooting stars / hour. Since it’s just past the new moon, skies will be dark, and the “shooting stars,” at rates of several per minute, should be especially visible. To sleep under the shooting stars use a tarp and insulate the ground by nesting pillows and blankets on the tarp. Dress warmly.

December 16 Saturday
10 a.m.  Friends of the Library meeting. All welcome.

December 21 Thursday
10:27 p.m.  Winter Solstice – the least daylight of the year, but we begin gaining light each day headed to summer.

December 25 Monday
Christmas Day

December 26 Tuesday
7:33 p.m.  Full Beaver Moon

January 1 Monday
New Year’s Day- Library, Post Office and Town offices closed

January 11 Thursday
6:57 a.m.  New Wolf Moon

January 15 Monday
Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday – Town offices, schools, post office, Library closed

January 18 Thursday
3:30 p.m.  Library Book Group meets to discuss Irish historical fiction, The Last Storyteller by Frank Delaney. All welcome. Copies of the book are available to be checked out at the Library.

January 19 Friday
7 p.m.  Historical Society quarterly meeting to discuss plans for 2024 exhibits, projects and programs. All welcome.

January 25 Thursday
12:54 p.m.  Full Wolf Moon
7pm  Meeting upstairs in the Town Hall to discuss possible regionalization of the Royalston Transfer Station to Winchendon. All encouraged to attend and share ideas.

Save the Date
February 21 Wednesday
2:00 p.m.  ZooMobile from Southwick Zoo Introduction to Animal Ecology. Town Hall. Funded by the Royalston Academy and sponsored by the Friends of the Library.

February 25 Sunday
2:00 p.m.  Author Visit: Jack Kittredge and Julie Rawson will discuss their book, Many Hands Make a Farm: 47 years of Questioning Authority, Feeding a Community, and Building an Organic Movement. Town Hall

March 10 Sunday
Willow Basket Making Workshop– Two sessions of 3 hours each. Limited to 12 people each session.
Select Board Notes  
Shelby Bronnes, Clerk

Meeting with State Officials
On October 23rd a meeting was held with the Select Board, Building Committee, Energy Committee, Senator Joanne Commerford, Director of Rural Affairs Anne Gobi, and Representative Susan Whipp. Various topics were discussed at length, including the lack of progress on the solar array slated for the old landfill site on town land. As readers will recall, Verogy won the contract for this project three years ago. However, progress has stalled for several years waiting for National Grid to open slots on the grid. A solar array for the South Royalston Waste Water Treatment Plant was also discussed. The legislators present asked for details of both projects so they can work from their end to move things along. The group was brought up to speed on the status of Raymond Building and the King St. Bridge and the future wants/needs of these landmarks. It concluded with the Board and others feeling well heard, and with strong support from the legislators present for Royalston to engage in a Master Planning process.

Transfer Station
There has been a lot of discussion about the offer we received from the Town of Winchendon to regionalize with their Transfer Station. No decisions will be made without discussion with you folks. There will be an informative meeting Thursday, January 25th at 7pm upstairs in the Town Hall. We would love for you to come share your thoughts, ideas and hopefully we can come to a unified decision. Tell your neighbors and your friends!

IT Services for Town Departments
Suzor IT, an Information Technology firm based in Orange MA, provides Royalston with IT service and support. This month they completed a comprehensive network assessment of all town buildings and taken an inventory of town hardware and software. Within a couple of weeks, we will receive a report on the status of hardware and software systems for potential upgrades and additions they may suggest. This will be important information to have as we begin to build the FY25 budget this winter.

Have a safe and happy holiday season!

Town Clerk News
Town Clerk Barbara Richardson 978-249-0493
Hours: Wednesdays 10 a.m.-2 p.m.; by appt.

I am requesting people take the Annual Street List seriously and return it ASAP with your updated information. It will be coming out as close to the first of the year as possible. This will be very important as the Presidential Primary will be held March 5th, 2024. If this office can’t verify your residence, you may be put on the inactive voters list and will need to fill out a form at the polls to be able to vote. Returning your street list in the envelope provided will eliminate this hassle.

Dog license renewal forms will be included with the street list form again this year.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Board of Health News
Phil Leger, chair

There will be an informational hearing to discuss the future of the transfer station on January 25, 2024 at 7 pm at the town hall. We will have the various proposals and options for keeping the facility open or regionalizing with Winchendon. Also, the cost of running 3-phase power to the facility will be discussed. No decisions have been made at this time.

A reminder that all vehicles entering the facility need to have a current windshield sticker in view on driver’s side. Demo is not free. Trash bags need to have a bag sticker visible. Please remove from packaging prior to dumping, ribbons, plastic, twist ties, styrofoam etc.

Covid test kits are available at the Post Office, Town Hall, and Library. Be safe, get vaxed! Flu, covid, and RSV vaccines available at most pharmacies.

Royalston Emergency Management Agency
Director Jim Barclay ema@royalston-ma.gov or phone 978-249-2904
Deputy Director Tom Musco tgmusco@gmail.com or 978-249-9633

There will be a re-test of the CodeRED emergency alert system in the next couple of months. Please watch the Town website and social media for details on the exact date and time.

As we approach the holidays, difficult driving season, and typical winter illnesses, I encourage you all to submit to the vaccinations appropriate for your age and condition, among them: COVID-19, flu, pneumonia, and/or RSV; make sure your vehicle is properly serviced (lighter weight oil, fully-functioning battery, full windshield washer fluid reservoir) and outfitted (survival supplies in case of stranding; sand and shovel for getting “unstuck”) for the winter months; and that you’re being an alert friend and neighbor and report anything that seems not quite right – maybe a neighbor you haven’t seen for a few day, a summer home that may have had uninvited guests, potential “porch pirates” pilfering packages – and report it. Your attention and action make a difference!

Be informed ~ Make a Plan!

Marion’s Food Pantry
Appointments Only
Starting Dec. 2023
Call:

Deb Conrad (978)895-3505, Jeff & Sue Smith (978) 895-7887.
Royalston Department of Public Works
DPW Superintendent Jaret R. Thiem 978-249-4223 or dpwadmin@royalston-ma.gov

DPW Superintendent Jaret R. Thiem reports the Brown Road culvert is currently in production. He and his crew are finishing late fall grading, and continuing the roadside mowing. In the great news department, Royalston received a Small Bridge Grant to complete the design work on Falls Road. Thiem adds the DPW will be applying for another of these grants next spring, for the construction phase of the project.

The annual Winter Parking Ban is in effect NOW – Apr. 30th. Please do not park anywhere you may obstruct winter sanding, salting, and snow removal operations. If a vehicle is impeding these operations, it may be towed, at the owner’s expense.

As always, Superintendent Thiem invites questions and concerns (an occasional compliment is greatly appreciated!) but requests that all input is e-mailed to dpw@royalston-ma.gov so he can properly track them. Of course, you may call the DPW during business hours for any urgent needs, and for any EMERGENCY: DIAL 9-1-1.

South Royalston Revitalization Committee

December features two fun family events. RSVR is sponsoring the South Village Tree Lighting at the Gazebo on Saturday, Dec 2 at 6:00. And the Royalston Arts Council is sponsoring the Tree Lighting Ceremony on the Common on Friday, Dec 8 at 5:30 as well as the Open Mic on Friday, Dec 1st. Please come and enjoy! On Dec. 2, the Ladies Benevolent Society will be at the Gazebo to sell ornaments in memory of loved ones. Santa will visit on a fire truck at 6:15 p.m.

Thank you to the folks who are working on the South Village Tree Lighting: Rose Lawrence, Linda Alger, Lynne Kellner, Janice Trask, Rene’Lake-Gagliardi, Nancy Monette, Kelly Dolan, Ruth Suyenaga, Hattie Bernstein and Maureen Blasco. Refreshments were donated by Nancy Monette. Thank you to Cathy Offutt and Teddy Laakkonen who donated the beautiful tree and to Erin Girouard who will be singing and providing the sound system.

Much appreciation to Kevin and Brady Killay and Scott Monette for helping to cut down the tree and set it up in the gazebo.
Phinehas S. Newton Library News
Kathy Morris, Library Director
Trustees: Jeffrey Mangum, Jennifer Basso, Theresa Quinn
Mondays 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Thursdays 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. and 6:30 - 8 p.m.;
Saturdays: 9:00 am-12 noon
978-249-3572 www.royalstonlibrary.org

Donations to the Friends
Stephanie McClure
Dan and Cheryl Mahoney
Kellie Peterson
Robert and Judith Dempsey
Rev. Phillip Jacobs
Amy and Stephen Newland
Mary Carnie
Stephen Demboske

Art Exhibit
During December and January, John Burk will have a selection of
his photographs at the Library. John is a nature photographer, au-
thor, and freelance writer. Several of his books are at the Library
including seven of the Appalachian Mountain Club’s hiking trail
books and others about central Massachusetts.

In February and March, the Library will be highlighting ‘Art by
Royalston’s Young People.’ If you are between the ages of 5
through 18, and have a piece of artwork you would like displayed,
contact the Library. It’s best if it’s framed but we can make a mat
to hold it if it’s not matted and framed. We look forward to seeing
what is submitted as I’m sure others in town will be as well.

Preschool Story Time
Brooke Coleman leads an inviting easy play time for preschool chil-
dren with simple crafts, stories, and snacks on non-holiday Mondays
at 2:00 p.m. No registration is necessary. The relaxed atmosphere
fosters sharing and friendship.

Holiday Cheer on Saturdays in December
Once again the Friends of the Library are supplying goodies to warm
up your Saturday mornings at the Library. Stop by for some coffee,
te, hot cocoa, or cider to accompany holiday treats.

Holiday Garland Workshop
Join Barbara Richardson on Sunday, December 3 at 2:00 p.m. at the
Town Hall to create a holiday garland. There will be an assortment
of beads, cinnamon cookies, cinnamon sticks, star anise, and dried
citrus fruit as well as ribbons and fabric to create a festive garland that
can last for years. This free program is sponsored and funded by the
Friends of the Library.

Want to Learn Another Language?
Transparent Language Online provides you with the opportunity to
learn a language online for free through the Library. Over 110 lan-
guages are offered and you can increase your vocabulary, reading,
speaking and writing skills and track your progress any time, any
place, anywhere. To sign up go to: https://libraries.state.ma.us/?d
b=transparent&locid=mlin_c_phineas. You can use the program as a
guest or create an account that will allow you to track your progress
and where you left off each time you log-in. This program is provided
by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

Library Spice Club- Travel the World with Spices
New spices monthly until March
December’s spice is cardamom. It is native to India but today Gua-
temala is the largest producer. The plant is related to ginger and its
warm, complex flavor blends both with sweet and savory dishes.
It is an ingredient in Indian curry blends and Scandinavian baked
goods. Used for thousands of years for both its culinary and me-
dicinal purposes, it is noted for its antioxidant and antimicrobial
properties to mention only a couple. Stop by the Library to pick up
your kit which contains information about cardamom, some reci-
pes, and a container of the herb with sufficient spice to season the
included recipes. Kits are available until they are gone. Funded by
the Friends of the Library and put together by Gina Verrelli.

Library Book Group
The Library book group will not meet in December but will recon-
vene on Thursday, January 18 at 3:30 p.m. to discuss the book, The
Last Storyteller by Frank Delaney. Delaney was a master storyteller
of historical fiction and this book vividly describes the political and
personal relationships in Ireland in the 1950’s. Copies of the book
will be available to borrow by December 16 at the Library. Everyone
is invited to attend. The group meets on the third Thursday of most
months for lively discussion and delicious refreshments. Sponsored
by the Friends of the Phinehas S. Newton Library.
Some of the new materials at your library

**Adult Fiction**

- Albom, Mitch: *The Little Liar*
- Alderman, Naomi: *The Future*
- Baldacci, David: *The Edge*
- Baldree, Travis: *Bookshops & Bonedust*
- Child, Lee: *The Secret*
- Connelly, Michael: *Resurrection Walk*
- Cussler, Dirk: *The Corsican Shadow*
- Evavovich, Janet: *Dirty Thirty*
- Evison, Jonathan: *Again and Again*
- Flower, Amanda: *I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died*
- Freethy, Sarah: *The Porcelain Maker*
- Gerritsen, Tess: *The Spy Coast*
- Hannah, Sophie: *Hercule Poirot’s Silent Night*
- Hennigan, Rosemary: *The Favorites*
- Jewell, Lisa: *The Girls in the Garden*
- Kahn, Ausma: *Blood Betrayal*
- Keegan, Claire: *So Late in the Day*
- McCullum-Smith, Alex: *From a Far and Lovely Country*
- McDermid, Val: *Past Lying*
- McDermott, Alice: *Absolution*
- Mitchard, Jacquelyn: *A Very Inconvenient Scandal*
- Nunez, Sigrid: *The Vulnerables*
- O’Brien, Tim: *America Fantastica*
- Unger, Lisa: *Christmas Presents*
- Ward, Jesmyn: *Let Us Descend*

**Adult Non-fiction**

- Brooks, David: *How to Know a Person*
- Chast, Roz: *I Must be Dreaming*
- Conover, Ted: *Cheap Land Colorado*
- Cristofono, Peter: *Rockhounding New England*
- Drummond, Ree: *The Pioneer Woman Cooks: Dinner’s Ready! Start Here*
- French, Erin: *Big Heart Little Stove*
- Henderson, Caspar: *A Book of Noises*
- Kilmeade, Brian: *Teddy and Booker T. Class*
- Land, Stephanie: *Prequel*
- Maddow, Rachel: *The Woman in Me*
- Spears, Britney: *My Name is Barbra*
- Stone, Sly: *Thank You*
- Willis, Jim: *Cosmo and Me*
- Woo, Ilyon: *Master Slave Husband Wife*
- Zachos, Ellen: *How to Forage for Wild Foods without Dying*

**Children’s Fiction**

- Bailey, Linda: *The Three Little Mittens*
- Beaty, Andrea: *Lila Greer, Teacher of the Year*
- Blabey, Aaron: *The Bad Guys in Look Who’s Talking*
- Brunetti, Ivan: *Shapes and Shapes*
- Cronin, Doreen: *Lawrence & Sophia*
- Gaiman, Neil: *What You Need to Be Warm*
- Giddens, Rhiannon: *We Could Fly*
- Graham, Bob: *The Concrete Garden*
- Hillenbrand, Will: *Little Red*
- Hopkinson, Deborah: *Trim Helps Out*
- Hopkinson, Deborah: *Trim Sets Sail*
- John, Jory: *The Big Cheese*
- Kinney, Jeff: *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: No Brainer*
- Madison, Megan: *Goodbye*
- Moore, David: *Boyogi*
- Reich, Susanna: *Pass the Baby*
- Smith, Sydney: *Do You Remember?*
- Stansbie, Stephanie: *The Owl Who Dared*
- Tarshis, Lauren: *I Survived the Great Alaska Earthquake, 1964*
- Wild, A.M.: *Not He or She, I’m Me*

**Children’s Non-Fiction**

- Berne, Emma: *Jan Kendeigh*
- Bithell, Rachel: *The Black Hills*
- Breach, Jen: *Daring Women of D-Day*
- Ho, Joanna: *On the Tip of a Wave*
- Langston-George, R.: *Virginia Hall*
- Phillips, Sarah: *A Whole World of Art*
- Rajan Gopal, Jyoti: *Desert Queen*
- Rogers, Lisa: *Beautiful Noise*
- Wood, Alix: *Welcome to the Tree Stump*

**Audiobooks**

- Child, Lee: *The Secret*
- Ward, Jesmyn: *Let Us Descend*

**DVDs:**

- Golda, Jules: *Mission Impossible, Dead Reckoning, The Quiet Girl, and Scooby-Doo! And Krypto, Too!*

**Yoga with Jess**

As fall settles in and the temperatures drop, warm up, stretch, and breath with Jess Schanz on Tuesdays at 6:00 p.m. upstairs in the Town Hall. Improve your core strength, balance, and flexibility in these one hour sessions sponsored by the Friends of the Library. Bring your own mat. Free, with free-will donations going directly to the instructor.

**Borrow a Digital Projector, Sound System, and Screen from your library—** You can have a home movie night or practice your power point presentation with this equipment. It is compatible with a DVD player (which may also be borrowed) or a computer.
Historical Society News
Is someone on your gift list interested in Town History?

The Royalston Historical Society has printed copies of the Town map of 1831 showing all of the roads, homeowner names and place names. Available for purchase at the Post Office and suitable for framing. $10.

Thank you to Michael Adams for once again spearheading the recent wreath creation and sale. It is a lot of work and a big fundraiser for our group.

Quarterly meeting will be on January 19 at the Chase Gospodarek household/13 NE Fitzwilliam Rd. All are welcome to attend and discuss 2024 exhibits, projects and programs. It is a good place to connect with nice people and eat desserts too.

This heavy ice saw is part of the downstairs collection in our museum. Before the 1930s electrification of Town, ice was cut on Little Pond and dragged by horses to wagons, which transported to the blocks to ice houses, small barns with walls packed tightly and thickly with straw and/or saw dust. These insulated ice houses could store ice for refrigeration well into summer. There is still one ice house in Town near the Eagle Reserve. Delivery men would make the rounds filling household ice boxes with fresh blocks. There is a good kids’ book at the Library called Cocoa Ice by Diana Applebaum that explains ice cutting well.

Shop Local! Shop Small! Shop Smart!
As you shop for the holidays, please consider supporting your hard-working, talented friends and neighbors with a purchase of goods or services offered right here in Royalston or surrounds. In addition to giving unique gifts, when you spend $100 locally, about $71 of it stays right here! According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, spend that “...same $100 at a big-box store or national retailer, and only $14 stays.”

In need of medical equipment for temporary use? The First Congregational Church of Royalston has a supply of such items as walkers, shower sheets, and commodes for loan. They are also looking for donations of such items. Please contact Deb Conrad 978-895-3505 or Jeff Smith 978-895-7887 to arrange pick up.

Babysitter needed
In search of caring individual to provide childcare for 8 month old, M-F, 8:30-noon, school days only. Contact kayla@villageschoolma.org’

Royalston Fish and Game Club

Clubhouse phone: 978-249-3004.
Time for your 2024 membership! Stop by or call the Clubhouse 978-249-3004

The final 2023 Roast Beef Dinner is scheduled for Dec. 9th. The all-you-can-eat, family-style meal includes tossed salad, bread with real butter, perfectly cooked roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, and a strawberry or chocolate Hoodsie cup for dessert. Take-out dinners are available. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and supper is served about 6 p.m. Call or stop by the Clubhouse at 978-249-3004. Tickets are $15/person; NO tickets will be available at the door!

The Royalston F&G will serve as an official Deer Check Station this season and is expected to be open from 3 p.m. - 6 p.m. Please follow the Royalston Fish & Game Facebook page, or call the Clubhouse for any changes. The Club may also offer coffee and breakfast for Hunters throughout the season.
CONGRATULATIONS AND GOOD NEWS

Got something to crow about? Let us know at the RCN. Drop at the Library or email chasegos2@gmail.com.

Congratulations to Kelly Chen, whose sculpture is featured at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston until March 24 as part of the exhibit, “Digital Iridescence: Jell-O in New Media.” Kelly has co-directed the Royalston Shakespeare Co for the last 2 years, been part of the accompaniment for the recent silent films shown by the Library, (including Metropolis last month), and acted in the Historical Society’s living history cemetery tours.

Congratulations to Joshua Morris Siegel who has recently been named to the Society of Master Saddlers’ Executive Committee. “Informed by research, this British Society encourages the manufacture, maintenance, and expert fitting of saddlery of the highest quality and standard... by striving to be the world-wide authority in the empathetic and correct use and fitting of saddlery.” Josh is the first executive member from the USA.

From Warren Preville:
I would like to thank all my friends/customers for the most generous gift of my new mower. Thank you.

Thanks to the Lajoie family for decades of light in a dark time of year shining tall above Doanes Falls.

Puzzle Up
Carl Schmidt, puzzlemaster

ACROSS
5. NASA Spacecraft currently exploring Jupiter
6. Forecast for a blend of seasonal weather
8. Waterfall with a steep climb
10. News about the neighbors
12. "Grilled" sandwich filling
13. Waterfall with a picturesque stone bridge
15. Winter pond activity
16. A riverside factory

DOWN
1. A ballet dancers outfit
2. Sunrise
3. Even colder country to the north
4. The "P" in P.S. Newton
7. Arrows of Sunlight
9. First M in the M&M trail
10. Meteor shower Dec 13 & 14
11. Machinists tool brand
13. Like one lunar side
14. Indigineous

answers to last month’s puzzle available at the library
ARRSD Updates
submitted by Superintendent Ehrenworth
A lot has been going on in the Athol-Royalston Regional Family & Community Center. On October 26, we took a team of parents to the Better Together 2023 Summit, put on by MA DESE (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) Family Engagement Support, in Marlborough, MA. Parents and staff learned strategies on connecting, and the importance of being willing to try new ways of engagement. Thank you to the engaging speakers: MA Secretary of Education Patrick Tutwiler, presenters from the Salem Public Schools, and most of all, thank you to the parents who showed up at 7:00 AM to go with us.

We had an amazing time Nov. 7th at the “Cruising into Literacy” event. Thank you to everyone who contributed, and a special thank you to our partners, Valuing Our Children, who supported the craft and story walk, and Liz Perez from Heywood for the dancing.

Support for the Community Food Pantry at AHS has been amazing. Fundraisers by Ragnarok Tattoo, to the school-wide food drive competitions by the ARRSD Schools, to local partners sponsoring food collection – Eagles, Tully CC, community members donations, Dean’s Beans – and The Farm School for your continued support, delicious coffee, and fresh produce. We could not continue the good work without your support. Thank you all!

The ARRSD is excited to officially announce its partnership with the A-O Driving School and approval by the Department of Transportation for AHS to become a branch office for A-O Driving School’s Driver Education Program. AHS is in the process of finalizing plans for FREE Driver Education, to be offered as a part of its program of studies. A minimum 30-hour Driver Education course will be taught by a professional driving school instructor, and take place during the regular school day. It is important to note this course will be free to all Athol High School students, but seats will be limited. Beyond the classroom education, students successfully completing the course will be provided with free on the road driving training, including six hours of observation, and 12 hours of actual driving. With a successful launch, the hope is to offer one Driver Education course in each of the remaining three terms, with a beginning date of the 2023 winter term. In the next few weeks, Athol High School will release additional information to all students and families about the Driver Education course, including the enrollment process and how we will identify which students will gain access to our term two course (late November to January 2024).

Many more details about the happenings in all of Athol and Royalston’s schools are available on the recently redone website, www.arrsd.org.

ARRSD Calendar:
December 6 Wednesday
Early Dismissal ARRSD – Half-day professional development

December 22 Friday
Winter Break begins at close of school – Classes resume January 2

Royalston Community School
Royalston Community School’s (RCS) annual Harvest Evening, hosted by the Royalston Parent-Teacher Group, took place on the last Friday of October. Students enjoyed dancing, games, and making crafts. They also decorated pumpkins, and were entered into drawings for door prizes.

RCS appreciates Officer Josh! The Royalston Police Sergeant, also serving as Royalston’s D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) instructor, addressed the topic of trick-or-treating safety with the students during library time. Students learned the importance of reflective clothing, trick-or-treating in familiar neighborhoods, and having treats inspected before eating them.

RCS staff dressed as food mascots during Spirit Week. Each staff member purchased the actual food item or brand they wore, and those purchases were donated to the Athol-Royalston Regional School District’s food pantry, located at Athol High.

The Royalston Academy sponsored a visit from Theatre at the Mount. Students enjoyed, “Tilly the Trickster,” a dynamic and fantastic show. RCS is grateful for the Royalston Academy’s sponsorship of such programs, which provide educational enhancement that might not otherwise be affordable.

During October, National Fire Prevention Month, Royalston Fire Chief Eric Jack, and Department members Brenda L. Putney, Jayne Porter, and Andrew Bond spoke with RCS classes about fire safety. They learned about safe cooking practices, and about the different types of fire extinguishers used for specific types of fires. They reviewed what to do in the event of a bedroom fire, and hot touch vs. cold touch. They also learned about E.D.I.T.H. (Exit Drills In The Home); how to get out of the house, and the importance of having a safe meeting spot. The Department provided each student with a Fire Prevention goody bag.

Royalston Community School PTG
PTGroyalstoncommunityschool@gmail.com
RCS added 2,957 units of food to the AHS Food Pantry during the Athol-Royalston Regional School District’s third annual Hunger Bowl! Royalston Community School yielded the top spot in the competition this year to Athol Community Elementary School, which took in just 15 more than RCS! Contributions of foods and sanitary items are welcomed throughout the year.

The Royalston Parent-Teacher Group is soliciting donations for a Tin Can Raffle December 11-15. Specific asks are for toys, books, gift cards, outdoor/sporting equipment, stuffed animals, arts & crafts supplies. Also needed are large, clean cans (like #10 food tins) to be used for ticket holders for each item. Parents are invited to contact ptgroyalstoncommunityschool@gmail.com if interested in volunteering for the event. This is one of the PTG’s most successful fundraisers each year. All proceeds are used to enhance classroom learning with subscriptions, equipment, and cultural events and presentations.
**Monty Tech**

Sara Dilg at 978-248-9828, Royalston Rep. s-dilg@montytech.net ~ 978-248-9828

**Accountability System.** As part of Massachusetts’ Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) state plan, which emphasizes improving the performance of historically underserved students, Monty Tech has been working to meet the targets set by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Historically underserved students include students with disabilities, English learners (ELs) and former ELs, and students from low-income families. (A student who falls into more than one of these categories is considered a “high needs” student.) It’s important to note that the number of English Learners at Monty Tech is lower than the state’s minimum threshold for inclusion in the “English Language Learners” accountability reporting category (that threshold is 20 students).

Accountability indicators used to measure the progress of a school against similar schools are as follows:

- MCAS score achievement
- ELA/Math MCAS growth percentiles (“Student Growth”)
- High School Completion-Graduation, extended engagement rate, and dropout rates.
- To take into account those who do not graduate in a four-year time frame, the “Extended engagement rate” is a longer-term measure of students’ engagement with, or enrollment in, the school.
- Progress Towards English Proficiency (as explained above, this is not public for Monty Tech)
- Chronic Absenteeism
- Advanced Coursework Completion -Advanced Placement classes, the Project Lead the Way (PLTW) STEM curriculum, and Dual enrollment (high school and college) course completion

As you would expect, state-defined goals are high target percentages for indicators like student growth, advanced coursework completion, graduation rate percentages, and levels of engagement. Conversely, target percentages for chronic absenteeism and dropout rates are low.

Monty Tech met all its MCAS targets for achievement and growth. Beyond MCAS scores, the school’s strengths included its low chronic absenteeism and high advanced coursework completion. For the overall student population, the 4-year cohort graduation rate was higher than the target of 95%, and the overall dropout rate was very low (less than 1%). However, the numbers for specific populations were not as promising. For example, the 2022 4-year cohort graduation rates for students with disabilities (88.1%), low-income students (93.5%), and “high needs” students (94%) show that more work needs to be done. And the 2022 dropout rate for students with disabilities, at 1.4%, remains higher than the target rate of 1%.

Overall, for 2021-2022 data, Monty Tech landed in the 70th percentile relative to similar schools by making 67% substantial progress toward DESE-set targets.

Fortunately for all its students, Monty Tech recently accepted a FY24 Strengthening Career and Technical Education Secondary Perkins grant in the amount of $298,198 (“Perkins V”). Perkins V, provides federal funding “to ensure students enrolled in career and technical education programs are able to fully develop the academic knowledge, technical skills, and employability skills needed to enter the workforce and pursue continued education in their chosen field.”

In other financial news, the first-ever Comedy Night held on October 27th raised $7,500 toward the Foundation Scholarship Fund. The fund, led by a board of area business, finance, healthcare and education leaders, provides scholarships to students pursuing post-secondary training at accredited 2- and 4- year colleges, trade schools, and/or apprenticeship programs. Additionally, fifteen new businesses became members of the Program Advisory Committee, which met in October.

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**Kid Craft Idea**

**Ground Spice Ornament**

Mary Barclay cleans out ground spices each fall, replacing them with fresh for holiday baking, saving the “retired” warm “cookies and cakes” spices (cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, allspice, ginger, etc.) to make ornaments that give off the aroma of baked goods. The proportions of spices aren’t of concern, as long as the ratios of other ingredients to ground spice are appropriate.

**Ingredients:**
- 1 cup ground warm spices
- Additional spices for dusting board/pin
- ¾ cup applesauce (not chunky)
- 2 tbsp. white glue (like Elmer’s)

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl, kneading well until the applesauce is all absorbed. Make the dough into a ball, then flatten into a disk. Using a rolling pin dusted with ground spices, on a board that’s been dusted with ground spices roll to about ¼” thick, continuing to dust and turn the dough, so it doesn’t stick. Cut out shapes; metal cookie cutters work best. Use a drinking straw to make a hole for a ribbon "hanger."

Place cut outs on waxed paper, on a flat surface, and allow them to dry at room temperature for 24-48 hours, flipping them over several times so they dry evenly. Run ribbon or twine through the hole and tie.

Each batch makes about a dozen ornaments. Doubling the dough makes it difficult to handle. High humidity will make the ornaments soft. Although the aroma dissipates over time, the dried ornaments can be kept in airtight containers from season to season.

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**What is Happening at the Village School?**

December 15  Friday

Early Dismissal Village School – Winter Celebration; winter break begins

Dean’s Beans Coffee  You can get yours delivered, fresh, once a month to the Village School, whole beans or ground. Find the order due dates and the order form at https://www.villageschoolma.org/shop/ and order online- it’s easy! Coffee is ready to pick up, just inside the school entrance.
**Garden Notes**

There are election deniers; I am a weather denier. I had this notion that if I didn’t appropriately dress for cold weather, we would not experience cold weather. In the universe of notions, this was a pretty lame one. While we’ve been spared any bone-chilling moments, there have been mornings decidedly cooler than brisk. First frost was October 31 (we almost made it to November) and since then, there have been any number of below-freezing readings. I remain coatless.

Today is the National Day of Overeating. Back when we hosted the affair, the table was filled with homegrown. Now, as a guest, I have been assigned Brussels sprouts. I will pick them moments before their preparation. There was no question as to the availability of Brussels sprouts. The challenge will be to have them for Christmas.

Garden work continues apace. (Admittedly, the pace is that of a snail.) Clean-up (pulling old plants) is a simple enough affair and turning the ground with my trusty hoe manageable enough, but enriching the soil is a more formidable task. I have made it less. In the early years I dropped eight five-gallon pails of compost on each one hundred square feet of garden bed. The soil was less-than-poor, requiring mountains of amendments. At a certain point, the number was reduced to six pails. Now? I have no compelling need to maximize production. More importantly is the realization that as soon as I hang up my hoe the beds will revert to grass, grass that will grow just fine without any encouragement from me. This year four pails will be added to each bed.

It is time for the annual day of reckoning in respect to garden performance. I rate it a solid B. Successes far outnumbered failures. Corn, beans, and tomato puree were so successful I froze a two year supply of each. Some roots have been dug and some have not but I anticipate no shortage in the root cellar. A variety of factors contributed. Weed pressure and insect pressure were low. There were some, but not many rabbits. There were some, but not many, porcupines. The rest of the country endured heat after heat; not so Royalston. There was a hot stretch in July, but not unbearably so. August was downright moderate, with many more readings below 80º than above. And, of course, the rain. Twenty-four inches from June thru September with nary a dry morning. The year of the rubber boot.

Another season.

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**Grape Jam**

I wish I could tell you that the smell of grapes growing wild along country lanes is a childhood memory, but I can’t. I have no memory of wild grapes - Concord grapes - growing along the back roads in the Mount Washington Valley, where I grew up. My affinity for the smell of Concord grapes comes, instead, from childhood breakfasts and Welch’s Grape Jelly smeared generously on buttered toast. Even so, when a walk toward the Common one September day brought the unmistakable scent of grapes warming in the sun, I was transfixed.

The Concord grape that grows along our roads is the result of careful breeding over many years. It is derived from the wild Vitis labrusca, a hearty native vine with the fortitude to withstand harsh New England weather. Horticulturist Ephraim Wales Bull, spent much of his life in mid-19th century Concord Massachusetts propagating hundreds of seedlings until he produced a grape suitable for market. In fact, the Concord grape is one of just a handful of edible fruits that are native to North America.

I had noticed grape vines along our road all during the summer, but none of them had the slightest sign that they would produce fruit. So, the discovery of these vines with ripening fruit was like a small miracle. I picked one and popped it in my mouth. Sour! These will need more time, I reasoned, and I made note of their location. Two weeks later, they had turned a deeper purple and fell easily off their stems. I filled a large colander and prepared to make grape jam.

I have never made grape jam. What possessed me I cannot say. I had a rudimentary understanding of how to use a hot water bath to seal glass jars, so I felt confident I could employ the process for jam. I just needed a grape jam recipe. With the internet as my guide, I thought, how hard can this be?

Not hard, but humbling. The internet notwithstanding, making grape jam is a tricky business - at least it was for me. I offer, for your amusement, what I have learned.

1. Never prepare dinner while making grape jam.
   The chili turned out great, but the jam suffered from my neglect. It grew thick in the cooling pan, making it hard to pour into the jars.

2. Do not practice your chorus part while making grape jam.
   All that stirring - I was certain I could do something else at the same time. With my music folder open beside me, I turned my attention to the alto section of Purcell’s Te Deum. It was not until the next rehearsal, when I found the pages stuck together with jam spatter, that I realized the error of my ways.

3. No matter how lovely it looks in the jar, do a taste test before making a gift of your grape jam.
   I produced five pint jars filled with beautiful purple jam, and a little left over, which I put in the fridge. This was fortunate. A taste test of the left overs revealed a jam so solid it was more like grape gumdrops. Imagine giving that away as a gift!

I plan to rescue the grape gumdrop jam. A friend advises that I open the jars, add some organic grape juice, and reheat the jam (“don’t cook it any longer!”), and reseal the jars. I am humbled, but undaunted. Meanwhile, Welch’s anyone?

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**Deb D’Amico**

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**Larry Siegel**
Rambling

I don’t hike, and I don’t really walk. The truth is I wander or ramble. However, at my age I hesitate to admit that. It makes me sound doddery.

But that is exactly how I ended up in a watery ditch, then a thicket of birch saplings, and finally a prickly mass of thigh high Blackberry and scratchy Hay-scented fern. I was in the barn’s south woodlot, and I could see the roof of the barn through the trees-tops - so unreachable it seemed, for I was leg weary and sweaty on an unseasonably hot fall afternoon. Why did I always do this – step off the trail and into the woods, then start looking at things - until I got so turned around, I didn’t know where I was.

The first thing I had looked at when I stepped off the barn’s Stacked Stone Trail (Athol, MA) was what I call the Boneyard, for it contained the weathered stumps and roots of the large trees that were excavated in 2018 to create the trail. They reminded me of elephant skulls piled in a heap, all tusks, and skulls with blank eye sockets. They had baked and bleached in the sun for five years now, changing little. Their bone whiteness and hardness stood out to me in a visceral way. In the era before excavators to push them out of the way, such stumps were maneuvered with giant tripods rigged with a screw, and powered by 4 men and as many mules, to lay them closely along property lines. The twined roots served as livestock pen, property boundary and windbreak. They were ghastly things and originated the old saying “homely as a stump fence”.

From the Boneyard I had headed south, ostensibly to look at the stone walls marking the barn’s woodlot boundaries. Forty-five minutes later, hot, and tired, I splashed a foot into the water of that ditch and realized with a sinking feeling I hadrambled again. When I told my husband of my latest wander in the woods, he said in an obvious way, “You need to walk straight in, then straight out.” But I never do, I whined.

I returned to the Boneyard several days later, for a personal test of sorts. I walked straight to the pile of stumps and gingerly climbed on top, as if to physically plant myself. This seemed a good time to look at the whorls and striations of the exposed wood, and the beetle galleries and exit holes. Climbing down just as gingerly, I walked in as straight a line as I could to the stone wall marking the barn woodlot’s southern boundary. It was of single wall construction, about as tall as my waist, and the stacked rocks were all large, needing two hands or more to lift and maneuver. “Rocks rounded by glacial action and erosion are used in many miles of stone walls throughout New England, but they are harder to handle and more difficult to level and keep in place (than flat angular stones)”, wrote Curtis P. Fields ((1971) . Such walls of glacial till seem a lot of work for boundaries that were never meant to keep in sheep (this one was not tall enough) or cows (there was no evidence of wood posts or barbed wire). But back at a time when labor was cheap and widely available, men would move rocks on sledges in the frozen forest and construct boundary walls for their room and board.

From the wall I reversed direction and tried to walk north back towards the stump dump. Don’t look down. Don’t look down. Aw, you looked down. The woodlot is marked with many stumps in various stages of decay. One must count growth rings when one comes upon stumps, and that is what I did. Many of the trees were approximately 75 years old when they were cut, and interestingly, many of the logs were left to rot. Why was that? I am not sure how long ago these trees were cut, but there is a mathematical model formulated by researchers from the U.S. Forest Service and the University of Minnesota showing how long different tree species take to break down. The model calculates that it takes from 46 to 71 years for certain conifer species to decompose. White Pine, which comprised most of the decomposing stumps and logs in the woodlot, loses half of its initial biomass in 19 years, and encompasses a full 59 years in which its woody debris resides in the forest.

I suspect someone like Tom Wessels would understand my interest in stump piles, stone walls, and decaying trees. And I imagine he would kindly call this passion “forest forensics”. He likened walking into a forest to approaching a crime scene: what happened here, and who done it? I like to think I am a bit of a sleuth. But I am probably also like the elderly governess Miss Veneker in Barbara Pym’s novel A Few Green Leaves. Found exhausted and asleep atop a rock after getting turned around in her shortcut through the forest, she admitted “I guess I WAS wandering.”

Linda LeBlanc

Spice of the Month Recipe

Cardamom is the spice of the month at our Library. Stop by and pick up a sample and some accompanying recipes (curated by amazing cook Gina Verrelli) each month this winter.

Orange Cardamom Cookies

Makes 2 dozen

Ingredients

¾ cup (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, softened
1 cup brown sugar
2 tablespoons orange zest (from about 2 oranges)
1 large egg
¼ cup molasses (do not use blackstrap)
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 ¼ cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking soda
¼ teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons ground cardamom
1/2 cup granulated sugar, for rolling

Instructions

1. In a large mixing bowl, using an electric mixer on medium speed, beat the butter until smooth and creamy.
2. Beat in the brown sugar and orange zest, just to combined.
4. Carefully, sprinkle the flour, baking soda, kosher salt, and cardamom evenly over the surface of the dough, and then beat just to combine.
5. Refrigerate the dough for at least 2 hours to firm it up.
6. Then, preheat the oven to 350-degrees Fahrenheit. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Scoop out large (about 2 tablespoon-size chunks) of dough, and roll lightly in your hand to form a ball.
7. Roll each cookie in the granulated sugar, and then place evenly spaced apart on the prepared baking sheet. You will only be able to fit 12 cookies on a sheet, just refrigerate the remaining dough and repeat the process until all of the dough is used up. Bake for 11-13 minutes, or just until the edges set.

Makes a good gift...

For just $25, you can give a year of the Royalston Community Newsletter to a former resident, a family member, or a friend who would like to see what’s going on in this busy little community! One size fits all, it lasts the entire year, and it doesn’t need to be wrapped! Contact the Library with subscription requests at royalstonlibrary@gmail.com or 978-249-3572.
Got Snow?

Not a sugar coating,  
A cold blanket covers  
verdant lawns and fields,  
Harbinger of times to come.

Blossoms turned brown,  
Gardens fallow.  
Gravity defying leaves,  
Almost weightless,  
Dance a lazy pirouette  
toward the lawn.

A single wild geranium graces  
the field’s entryway.  
Above, a cardinal signals  
his presence,  
A jaunty note of hope.

*Michael Young, Royalston Poet Laureate*

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**Out of Town Subscriptions**
are available for $25/calendar year (10 issues)  
by mailing a check to: Friends of the Phinehas S. Newton  
Library, PO Box 133, Royalston MA 01368

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**Preschool Storytime**  
2 p.m. each Monday  
Stories, socializing, songs, snacks and crafts  
Free  
Call the Library for more information

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