SEPTEMBER 2026 | Vol. 3, No. 7

# DEERFIELD CURRENTS

AWARD WINNING

The Engage: Deerfield SM Newsletter

ENGAGE: DEERFIELD

CHANNELING COMMUNITY INTERESTS INTO ACTION

## Quiet Volunteers 2

**They might be quiet, but we're shouting about them.**

This is our second issue featuring friends and neighbors who serve our community in ways that can go unnoticed (click here for Part 1). Read about their enthusiasm and the rewards that come from volunteering a small amount of time to benefit many people. You're sure to be inspired, so we show how to lend a hand if you can.

**Enjoy reading Quiet Volunteers, Part 2.**

## THE BRIDGE OF FLOWERS' VITAL VOLUNTEERS

*By Quiet Volunteer, Annette Szpila, Committee Chair*

The story begins in the 1920s, when the trolley bridge that took goods back and forth across the Deerfield River to the train station up the hill on the Buckland side was no longer needed, and the abandoned bridge became an eyesore. The newly established Shelburne Falls Area Women's Club took up the challenge – by Antoinette Burnham and her husband, Walter – to make it a bridge full of flowers. So in 1929, the Bridge of Flowers was born. From its inception, the bridge has been run and managed by volunteers. Along the way, a decision was made to pay for the expertise of professional gardeners, and thus began a little enterprise that required all the elements of a business, like salaries and insurance. It is remarkable that throughout these many years a small band of volunteers has managed the bridge and figured out how to pay for all that's needed to keep it going. The Bridge of Flowers is our "product," and its beauty is dependent on the two gardeners and the members of the Blossom Brigade. Their dedication helps to ensure that the plantings are always ready for visitors to stroll across the 400-foot path. We could not have this iconic tourist attraction if it were not for our mighty group of volunteers. *To volunteer: bridgeofflowersmass.org/support.

## THE BLOSSOM BRIGADE

*By Quiet Volunteer, Marcia Manley*

My husband, Dwight, and I volunteer with the Bridge of Flowers crew on Fridays in the summer from 8 to 10 a.m. The Friday morning Blossom Brigade walks through the garden, recognizes any plant that needs help and does weeding when needed. We are also very lucky to have our curators, Head Gardener **Carol DeLorenzo** and Assistant Gardener **Elliston Bingham**, who help and educate us.

Before I moved here, I took a Master Gardeners course in Maine, and later in Deerfield, I joined the Master Gardeners in western Massachusetts. The course teaches many things, and if you're interested in learning or expanding your gardening experience, this is for you: See wmmga.org.

The rewards of going to the bridge garden every week for just two hours includes seeing such a beautiful array of flowers, lots of visitors who love the garden and being with the women and men of the Blossom Brigade.

*Blossom Brigade volunteers Marcia & Dwight Manley*

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*Volunteers Lucinda Brown, Linda Singer and Anne Diemand Bucci*

## FOUNDATION FOR COMMUNITY JUSTICE

*By Quiet Volunteer, Lucinda Brown*

I serve on the board of a small, all-volunteer foundation whose mission is to promote justice, healing and recovery in Franklin County. **The Foundation for Community Justice** was created 25 years ago as a bridge between innovative programs in the local courts and community input. When I retired from the Trial Court in 2018, I began volunteering with the foundation, which is chaired by **Anne Diemand Bucci** and currently has several programs.

**The mini-grant program** fulfills requests from agency staff on behalf of clients where a small amount of money will make a big difference. This past year, the foundation received 142 requests and provided funding for things like birth certificates, state IDs, winter boots, space heaters, phones and an infant car seat.

**The Waiting Room Welcome** takes place every other month when children can have in-person visits with an incarcerated parent. Several of us representing the foundation have music, activities, fidget toys, snacks and books for the children while they wait in the lobby at the House of Correction. And we give them small gift bags as they leave. The purpose of our efforts is to minimize the trauma that children experience when a parent is incarcerated. In the past year, we have greeted more than 140 visiting children. We hope that we make a difference in their lives.

Through my work in the Trial Court, I saw how the lack of resources and opportunities held people back. Without a state ID, for instance, a person can't open a bank account, get a job or find housing. And someone may need a birth certificate to get an ID. A mini-grant of $35 literally opens doors. Once I retired and could volunteer for the foundation, we created the mini-grant program to fill that need, and the program has grown exponentially.

I devote a lot of time by choice to the foundation, probably 10 or so hours per week, but the rewards are huge. I am connected to a wonderful group of foundation board members and a large network of caring people in local schools and agencies.
I love knowing that our quiet efforts are helping several hundred people move forward with their lives. Through the efforts of the Foundation for Community Justice, people in Franklin County who receive mini-grants or attend the Waiting Room Welcome feel there is a caring community here offering good will, offering hope. That is the kind of community I believe we have here.

*Learn more about the Foundation for Community Justice here: healingfranklincounty.org.

## SOUTH COUNTY TRIAD

*By Quiet Volunteer, Sharyn Paciorek*

The South County TRIAD works to meet the needs of seniors in Deerfield, Sunderland and Whately. I became involved 26 years ago after I walked into a TRIAD meeting in the 1888 Building downtown and found out that the president, Betty Turner, was stepping down. She nominated me as the new TRIAD president, and Sheriff Frederick McDonald officially appointed me.

Over the last 26 years, I've found volunteers (10 or so, including my family members) to join at various times to help out, and our to-do list expands as needed. Here are just a few of the things that we do: We pick up medications at the pharmacies. We buy gift cards for food from Big Y, Stop & Shop and Walmart (many older folks like to multi-shop there). One of our members picks up a resident who doesn't drive and takes her to the nail salon, grocery store and doctor appointments. We have provided air conditioners in the summer and warm clothes in the winter. I have organized members of the Frontier Regional Honor Society to clear snow from walkways so people can get out of their homes safely.

People pitch in with donations, sometimes supplies and medical equipment. I enjoy working with everyone to help our senior community.

How can someone help TRIAD?
*The best way is to donate money or items, such as medical equipment, supermarket gift cards or personal care articles. You can drop them off at Sharyn's house at 50 Sugarloaf St., or call/text her at (413) 774-0613.

# 100+ WOMEN WHO CARE FRANKLIN COUNTY

At its last meeting, **Karen Hogness**, chair of 100+WWC, announced that it actually has 213 members who represent 25 towns, giving them the potential to donate over $10,000 to their selected nonprofits. Hearing about and helping new and diverse non-profits is one of their goals. At its 10th quarterly meeting on Aug. 3, three nonprofits were selected to make presentations.

**1. Seeds of Solidarity** was presented by **Deborah Habib**. The Women Healing Women Healing Earth program provides free workshops with culturally diverse local artists, chefs and healers, offered in a relaxing farm setting. See seedsofsolidarity.org/about.

**2. Engage: Deerfield** was presented by **Lili Dwight** (in photo, above right). This local group transforms resident interests into civic action through education, conversational events and a high-impact newsletter. With proven growth in participation, Engage now hopes to sustain and expand this successful engagement model to a wider community. See engagedeerfield.org.

**3. Friends of the Franklin County Regional Dog Shelter** was presented by **Leslee Colucci**. The shelter's mission is to protect and improve the lives of stray, lost and unwanted dogs by offering a safe, welcoming facility and finding a home best suited for each animal. See fcrdogkennel.org.

**Seeds of Solidarity** was chosen as this quarter's recipient of the 100+WWC gift. Next meeting is Nov. 2. *Please visit the website 100pluswwc-franklinctyma.com for FAQ's and ways to join or donate.

Engage:Deerfield appreciated the opportunity to share our work. It was a great honor to be nominated.

# READ. REGISTER. VOTE.

- Read our town website for accurate information from Town Clerk Cassie Sanderell: See the voting and election information section.
- Make a plan on how you'll vote: In person, Voting by Mail or Absentee Voting.
- Ask if you can help someone get to the polls.
- Mark your calendar:
  - **Oct. 6: Franklin County Technical School** Districtwide Election. Vote at Deerfield Town Hall, 8 Conway St. Hours: 12 p.m.-8 p.m.
  - **Oct. 17-30 (except Sundays): early in-person voting** at Town Hall for the midterm Election Day.
  - **Oct. 24, 5 p.m.: Last day to register to vote** for Election Day. Moved recently? Make sure you're registered correctly.
  - **Nov. 3: Election Day.** Vote at Deerfield Town Hall, 8 Conway St. Hours: 7 a.m.-8 p.m.
  - **Nov. 16: Deerfield Special Town Meeting.**

**Info video:** Listen to a discussion about the Franklin County Technical School project from the recent Engage:Deerfield Community Conversation: "Franklin Tech: To Build or Not to Build?"

engagedeerfield.org/conversation-videos--resources

## New Elementary School Playground

A crowd turned out on Aug. 25 for the Grand Opening of the Deerfield Community Playground at the Elementary School. The new playground includes a rubber surface and a wheelchair-accessible swing. Principal **Tina Gemme** and Superintendent **Darius Modestow** kicked off the celebration, and a student cut the opening ribbon. Shout out to the educators, members of the school committees and the **Community Preservation Committee** (CPA funds covered $200,000 of the ~$386,650 project). Thanks to the Conservation Commission and Planning and Zoning boards for all the time and energy they put into this project.

## Municipal Tribal & Technical Assistance Grant

The $30,000 grant – obtained by **Amy Hahn**, Land Use Coordinator – will help to update our Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan, which serves as a tool for grant eligibility, capital planning and emergency management for long-term resilience.

# Around Town

Congratulations to **Karen Menard** (in photo, at right), Deerfield's recently retired Assessors' Clerk, on being named the 2026 Lucille Bayes Clerk of the Year by the Massachusetts Association of Assessing Officers in recognition of her outstanding service and dedication to the assessing profession. Thank you from the Town of Deerfield for 28 years of dedicated service.

Deerfield resident **Jillian Morgan** is the Mass Humanities Council's new director of development. She previously worked as development director at the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts.

Recorder photo

Frontier Regional senior **Louise Flagollet** runs to the finish line in her opening cross-country meet on Sept. 8 and wins in a race against Easthampton at Nonotuck Park in Easthampton.

**Save the Date!** Enage will host ***"Decoding the Ballot"*** on Oct. 25 at the Meeting House. Arrive at 2:45 p.m. Always *Free!*

Calling Creators: The Deerfield Cultural Council is accepting proposals for projects that engage audiences of all ages, highlight our local community, elevate historically marginalized voices and are accessible to everyone. Apply here: Deerfield Cultural Council. **Deadline: Oct. 15.**

Franklin Conservation District Chair **Carolyn Shores Ness** and her granddaughter, **Cecy Yazwinski**, attended the convention of the National Association of Conservation Districts in Delaware on Aug. 24-27. Carolyn represents Massachusetts for the National Association of Conservation Districts and is a member of the executive board of the Northeast Region of Conservation Districts.

**Graveyards and Gravestones**
Learn about the legends of old graveyards with gravestone carving, epitaphs and tour the Old Burying Ground on Albany Road. Oct. 24, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., 80 Old Main St. Special All-Day Event: Graveyards and Gravestones - Historic Deerfield. All events included with $20 general admission; Deerfield Residents FREE.

Want to get "**Engaged**"? Click here to learn about volunteer opportunities.

*Engage: Deerfield℠ is a fiscally sponsored project of the Peace Development Fund. Make a tax-deductible donation by mail or online at: Engage:Deerfield Donate. By mail: The Peace Development Fund, PO Box 1280, Amherst, MA 01004-1280. Memo line: "Engage: Deerfield"*

*Currents* is edited by **Pat Ryan** and designed by **Emily Gaylord**. Our Town Crier is **Lili Dwight**. Email Lili with news items at ldwight@engagedeerfield.org. Learn more at: engagedeerfield.org/about.