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SPORTS, 1B

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Fundraiser kicks off with 2,400 pumpkins



As part of their annual charity drive, the HOPE Lodge will once again be selling pumpkins in front of the former Helen Mae Sauter building on Elm St. throughout the month of October. STEPHEN LANDRY/THE GARDNER NEWS

HOPE Lodge selling gourds as part of annual charity drive

Stephen Landry
The Gardner News
USA TODAY NETWORK

The pumpkins are back on Elm Street. As part of their annual charity drive, the HOPE Lodge in Gardner will once again be selling pumpkins throughout the month of October. This season marks the second year the fundraising event has been located

next to the Big Chair in front of the former Helen Mae Sauter building, and over 2,400 pumpkins, including “spookies,” swan gourds, snowballs, minis, and “perfects,” are on display for sale. This season marks the event’s fourth year, according to organizer Chris Tourtellot, who said the fundraiser – which was located in front of the First Congregational Church for its first two years – had become a popular annual event in the community.

“I know many people enjoy this, and a lot of people bring their kids and their grandkids down to see the pumpkins,” he said. The event’s new location provides customers with easier access and more parking than was available at the Uptown Rotary, according to Tourtellot. “Also, the lawn here is little flatter

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Jaci LeMay pins a badge on her husband, Matthew LeMay, after he was sworn in as Westminster’s next police chief during a ceremony Sept. 30. STEPHEN LANDRY/THE GARDNER NEWS

‘To serve with integrity’

New Westminster police chief is ready to start

Stephen Landry
The Gardner News
USA TODAY NETWORK

Westminster officially has a new chief of police. Matthew LeMay, a former captain with the Fitchburg Police Department, was sworn in during a ceremony at the Westminster Senior/Community Center on Tuesday, Sept. 30. “I’d like to thank the town leaders, the selectboard, for placing their trust in me,” LeMay said. “To the men and women of the police department, my commitment is simple - to serve with integrity, to lead with fairness, and to build strong partnerships. To the community, I’m humbled at this responsibility and grateful for your trust, and I’m eager to get to work.” LeMay is no stranger to the community, having lived in Westminster with his wife Jaci for nearly eight years. He said the fact that he already knew the community and its residents would be an advantage as he began his new job.

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Open conversations about mental health to combat suicide

Beth McDermott
Reporter assisted by AI
The Gardner News
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Suicide Noted National Tour is coming to Gardner to spark conversations about suicide. The event is set for 1 p.m. Oct. 5 at Alyssa’s Place, 297 Central St., according to a community announcement. Andy Grant, a suicide attempt survivor and host of the “Real Men Feel” podcast, and Sean Wellington, creator of “Suicide Noted,” will lead the discussion. They will be joined by suicide attempt survivors and ideators to offer hope and connection. “Silence kills men. The best way to prevent suicide is to talk about suicide,” Grant said. “Events like this remind people that they are not alone, and that there is power in sharing our stories.” The tour will visit 20 cities, bringing unfiltered conversations to the fore-

front. Wellington, who lost his best friend to suicide and has lived with suicidal thoughts, created the podcast to share real stories. “We’ve reached tens of thousands through the podcast, but nothing compares to sitting in a room with people, face to face, creating something together,” Wellington said. “There’s nowhere else to go where we can be completely honest.” The event will include a Q&A session, allowing audience members to ask questions and receive heartfelt answers. Each stop on the tour will be documented for a short film and will help launch a survivor-powered Speakers Bureau to continue the work after the tour ends. Massachusetts has seen a steady rise in suicide rates over the past decade, highlighting the need for open conversations about mental health and

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Alyssa’s Place Peer Recovery and Resource Center at 297 Central St. in Gardner. STEPHEN LANDRY/THE GARDNER NEWS

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