



'Cookie' etches name into Milford basketball history

SPORTS, 1D

DAILY NEWS

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From left, Christina Gonzalez, co-owner of Brody's Diner, and Nina Yagual, longtime waitress.

CRAIG SEMON/TELEGRAM & GAZETTE

'He's in here. We feel him'

Brody's Diner co-owner reflects on late owner

Craig S. Semon
Worcester Telegram & Gazette
USA TODAY NETWORK

SHREWSBURY – During the holidays, amid a winning Patriots season, in a year when Mark Wahlberg filmed a movie scene at her beloved greasy spoon, Christina Gonzalez can't help reflecting on her time at Brody's Diner, her time with original owner and operator Robert "Bob" V. Ricker, and

what ventures lie ahead. "Bob was an amazing guy. We love Bob. We constantly keep talking about Bob," Gonzalez said. "He's in here. We feel him. He's on our mind all the time." Ricker was the owner and operator of the Shrewsbury landmark on Route 20 for 14 years. He retired in 2022 due to illness and died on Sept. 10, 2024, at 73. Gonzalez, who lives in Millbury, worked with Ricker for 15-plus years at Brody's Diner, and she's still there today. It all started when a friend told her they were hiring at the soon-to-be-opening

See **BRODY'S DINER**, Page 4A

State nursing vacancies see decline

Crystal Yormick
Boston University Statehouse Program

While nurses and hospital leaders say it's a positive that there's been a recent decline in nursing vacancies, they also say there's still work to do. New data from the Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association (MHA) show that one in every 10 nursing positions is vacant, compared to other post-pandemic years when one in six roles was unfilled. While that's an improvement, it only gets the vacancy rate down to where it was before COVID-19, according to Aaron Winston, a registered nurse and committee co-chair for the Massachusetts Nursing Association. "Before we start celebrating, we need to really take a hard look at what constitutes business as usual," Winston said. "If you look at this data, there has been such a rush in the health care professions to kind of put the pandemic behind us and go back to 'normal.' But

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Ginnie Ford, a special care nursery nurse at Framingham Union Hospital, has worked as a nurse since 1978.
DAILY NEWS AND WICKED LOCAL STAFF
PHOTO/ART ILLMAN

MSBA approves Natick school for eligibility period

Caroline Bunnell
The MetroWest Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK

A year after being accepted into the Massachusetts School Building Authority's (MSBA) grant program, Natick

is moving into the next phase of a process that would lead to the renovation or replacement of the Memorial Elementary School. Following acceptance into the program, schools must complete a 270-day eligibility period during which the

MSBA evaluates the district's understanding of the process and the school's initial building needs. Once this phase is complete, and a project team is formed, the feasibility study can begin. The feasibility study takes an in-

depth look at the school's existing conditions and educational programming and establishes a cost-effective plan for improving the building. Memorial Elementary School was

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