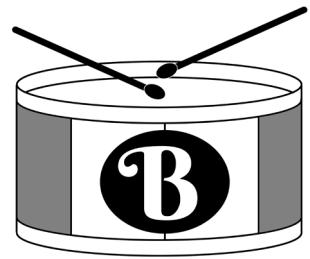


Becket Beat

Keeping neighbors connected Vol. 4, No. 7, August 2025



On the Job with Becket's Finest

by Amy Alpert



Sgt. Michael Hunt & K-9 Rex, photo by Art Alpert

mandatory certification process for all Massachusetts police officers.

Kristopher McDonough has served as Becket's Police Chief since 2012, when he took over from Bill Elovirta. He joined the department as an officer in 2008. As Chief he splits his time between the towns of Becket and Otis, with both towns sharing the cost of his salary and benefits – a collaborative arrangement that helps save tax payer dollars. As Becket is larger geographically, Chief McDonough indicated that it is twice as busy for the police force compared to Otis.

Under the Berkshire County Mutual Aid Agreement, the town of Becket's K-9 Unit has responded to 11 other Berkshire County towns. K-9 Officer Michael Hunt and K-9 Rex have participated in search and rescue missions, particularly for missing children and older adults. While Rex is currently in training to search for drug detection, his main job remains human search and rescue. Having a K-9 unit is a rare asset for a small town like Becket.

This canine initiative comes at a minimal cost to the town of Becket thanks to a Stanton Foundation Grant that was awarded to the town and approved by the Select Board in 2018. The grant, totaling approximately \$36,000 paid for Officer Hunt's certification as a Canine Officer, and the equipment

The small entrance in the rear of Town Hall leads to the offices of the Becket Police Department. Today, I met with Kristopher McDonough, Chief of Police and Michael Hunt, K-9 Officer, to get a sense of what it is like to serve on the police force in a rural town like Becket.

The department consists of five full-time officers and one part-time officer. Previously, there were several part-time officers but the state has since discontinued adding part-time positions, favoring the standardized training approach offered to full-time officers. Kris and Mike completed the full-time, 800-hour, police academy. The other officers completed the Bridge Academy, 200-hour training. This academy was designed to provide officers who did not previously attend a full-time police academy with the necessary training to meet the new certification standards set by the Massachusetts Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Commission, an independent state agency tasked with implementing a



Becket Police Chief Kristopher McDonough, photo by Art Alpert

Continued on page 4

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McNerney Road: A Family History

by Mark Hanford

A new plaque has been placed in the North Becket Memorial Park across from the library. It lists veterans from Becket who served in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. One hundred and seventy-five men from Becket served in the Union army during the Civil war. Some did not return home. One of those young men was John McNerney, the eldest of Michael and Nora McNerney's 11 children.

The McNerneys were a rugged and persevering family, who left Ireland for America at the height of the Potato Famine for a six-week voyage on the sailing vessel *The President*, arriving on March 7, 1849. In tow were 4-year-old John, his two-year-old sister, and infant Bridget.

Years later, at age 18 on December 23, 1863, son John McNerney enlisted in Company B of the 37th Massachusetts Infantry. The 37th was organized in Pittsfield under the command of Col. Oliver Edward. It consisted mostly of residents from the western part of the state. During their time in service, the 37th lost four officers and 165 enlisted men in battle and 92 to disease. John McNerney died on May 12, 1864, at the battle of Spotsylvania, Virginia. The 37th also had 593 soldiers at the battle of Gettysburg.

A poem, likely written by one of John's sisters or possibly his father, was included in John's mother Nora's obituary published in the *Pittsfield Sun*. It describes a mother's pain and anguish at the loss of her eldest son. Here is an excerpt from that poem:

One by One they have been gathered here to the place
beyond the dome
To the place where trouble ceases
Which we call eternal home

And there waiting are the loved ones, dear ones
Who have gone before Sons and Daughters
Radiant beaming
at the open portals door

And we Fain would see the meeting
with the first-born hero boy
He whose life was to his mother
More than Gold without alloy

Yet she gave it to his Country
Gave it freely though with pain
Now her soul will gladly greet him
For no parting comes again

The foundation of the McNerney farm still stands nestled in the remains of Michael McNerney's apple orchard where one can imagine young John and his siblings playing and climbing on their father's apple trees all those years ago.

Mark your Calendar for a Special Town Meeting

**Saturday, September 20th at 2pm
at the Becket Washington School**

Voter approval sought for:

- Paved Road Bond Financing for up to \$5 million.
- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) By-Law. Article addresses local stipulations for the state's Affordable Homes Act. ADU article was tabled at the May 10th Annual Town Meeting (ATM).
- Conservation Commission By-Law. Addition of two alternate members with staggered three-year terms to address coverage and improve efficiency.

Learn more in advance. Attend a public hearing to explain details and answer questions about these topics on **Wednesday, August 13th at 6pm** in the Town Hall Community Room.

Important Notice:

Becket Town Hall will be closed to the public August 25th through September 1st for parking lot repaving. Town officials ask that you please plan any Town Hall related errands accordingly.



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needed for our first K-9, Kain. Sadly, Kain passed away last fall. After the passing of K-9 Kain, K-9 Rex was generously donated to the department.

Unfortunately, our interview was cut short because Mike and Kris got a call to an accident on Route 20 – just another day on duty at the Becket Police Department.



Becket Police Department

Phone: (413) 623-6010

Emergency: 911

Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/becketpolice#](https://www.facebook.com/becketpolice/)

Online:

www.townofbecket.org/police-department

Dog Owners and Forest Animals: Beware the Quill

by Susan Neul

Which of the many mammals that live in the Becket woods should a dog walker be most afraid his dog will tangle with? Black bears? The largest of the Becket wild animals, black bears are frequently sighted but unless they are new moms with cubs in tow, they will skedaddle when they hear you coming. Bear-inflicted injuries to dogs do indeed happen and often will be the subject of sensational news articles, but veterinarians in the Berkshires say it's been years or maybe decades since they've treated any dogs who have tangled with a bear.

The same goes for coyotes. Perhaps because owners of small dogs know better than to take their little guys into the woods during coyote mating season when these hungry predators are most aggressive. Suburban coyotes are notorious for snatching pocket dogs and cats out of yards but this doesn't happen much in the Berkshires. Owners are either more cautious here or the coyotes have an abundance of easier food available.

What about the fierce, aggressive and very carnivorous fisher and bobcats? Fishers have indeed been known to snatch cats, but keep in mind that they typically weigh less than 10 pounds and will tree themselves rather than attempt to take on a dog. Bobcats are much bigger and theoretically able to best a 20-pound dog but they tend to hunt at night and are much more interested in an easy meal than a fight.

So, what wild animal in Becket is responsible for the most visits to the veterinarian? The porcupine! And it isn't even carnivorous or aggressive. It's just a simple wood-gnawing rodent, with teeth perfectly situated to peel bark but not exactly great at inflicting harm to other animals. Surprisingly, it's the cheesy, rank odor of porcupines that entices dogs to follow their nose to find out what or who produces such a yummy odor, only to get a painful surprise upon discovery.

Contrary to common thought, the porcupine does not shoot its quills. When threatened, it hides its head in a nook of tree roots or similar spot and leaves its butt and tail facing the aggressor. It can swing its tail into a dog's nose and hopefully send the



Porcupine, photo by Susan Neul

Community Calendar August 2025

Full listing & details: www.BecketBeat.org/Community-Calendar

see page 6
for more >>



BECKET ARTS CENTER

Wednesdays: Drop-In Workshop "The Art of Voice" / Weekly Summer Sing-Along / 4-6pm / Free

Thursdays: Yoga with Rima Sala / 9:30-10:30am / \$15 per class (discount for members)

Fridays: Creative Modern Dance w/ Louise / 10-11am / \$15 per class (discount for members) / ages 18+

Saturday, August 2: Midsummer Celebration of the Arts / 4-6pm / \$120

Friday, August 8: 'Bits and Places' Opening Reception / 5-7pm / Free

Saturday, August 9: Music Brings Communities Together: The Jackets / 5-7pm / Free

Thursday, August 14: Speaker Series: Natalie Tyler / 5-7pm / \$5 (free for members)

Friday, August 22: 'MOTIF' Opening Reception / 5-7pm / Free

Saturday, August 23: Music Brings Communities Together: Hot Sauce / 5-7pm / Free

Wednesday, August 27: Plein Air / 10am-1pm / \$10 (free for members)

Thursday, August 28 & Friday, August 29: Mosaic Workshop w/ Denise White / 1-3pm (Thursday) & 1-2pm (Friday) / \$60 (discount for members)

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Friday, August 1: Family Movie: *The Wild Robot* / 4-6:30pm, movie starts at 4:30pm / Free

Saturdays except 8/16: Storytime with Stay & Play / 10:30am-12:30pm / Free / Stay after Storytime for snacks and a chance for kids to play and caregivers to connect with each other!

Tuesdays: Baby & Toddler Playgroup / 10-11am / Free

Tuesday, August 5: Book Club: *The Women* by Kristin Hannah / 1:30pm / Free

Tuesday, August 5: Level Up Your News Media Literacy with Phil Eil / 6-7pm / Free

Monday, August 11: Cookbook Club: *The Complete Summer Cookbook* by America's Test Kitchen / 6-7:30pm / Free

Thursday, August 14 & 28: Mindful Making for Teens / 5:30-7pm / Free

Saturday, August 16: Super You! Hero Training Academy Magic Show with Mike Bent / 2-2:45pm / Free

Thursday, August 21: Game Night / 6-8pm / Free

Tuesday, August 26: Movie Night for Adults / 6:30-9:30pm, movie starts at 7pm / Free

Wednesday, August 27: Close at 6pm

Saturday, August 30 & Sunday, August 31: Book & Bake Sale Fundraiser & Library Open / 10am-4pm / By donation (cash or check)

Tuesday, September 2: Book Club / 1:30pm / Free

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Community Calendar August 2025

Full listing & details: www.BecketBeat.org/Community-Calendar

see page 5
<< for more



TOWN GOVERNMENT

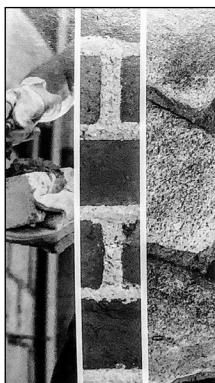
Tuesday, August 5: Board of Assessors / 11am
Wednesday, August 6: Board of Health / 5pm
Wednesday August 6: Select Board/Finance Working Meeting / 6pm
Tuesday, August 12: Historical Commission / 3pm
Wednesday, August 13: Planning Board Public Hearing (to discuss special town meeting topics) / 6pm
Wednesday, August 20: Bylaw Review Comm. / 10am
Wednesday, August 20: Select Board / 6:30pm

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Mondays in August: Chair Yoga for Seniors / Washington Town Hall / 11am / Free
Tuesdays in August: Yoga for Seniors w/ Rima Sala / Washington Town Hall / 9am / Free
Tuesdays in August: Berkshire Mobile Farmers Market / 3:30-5:30pm / Becket Town Hall Pavilion
Tuesdays in August: Bean Bag Baseball / 6-8pm / Becket Town Park Pavilion
Tuesdays & Thursdays in August: Becket Senior Group / Becket Town Hall / 10am-2pm / free Chair Yoga 10:30-11:00am followed by Lunch and Bingo / Becket Town Hall / Lunch \$3
Wednesdays in August: Yoga / Becket Town Hall / 9am / \$3
Fridays in August: Pickleball / 5-7pm / North Becket Tennis Court
Fridays in August: Farmer's Market @ Becket Country Store / 4-7pm / Live music, local vendors, and more
Saturdays, August 2, 16: Food Pantry / Becket Federated Church / 9-11am
Saturday, August 23: End of Summer/Back to School Celebration / 9am-3pm / Becket Federated Church / Free
Saturday, August 30: All You Can Eat Breakfast / Becket Federated Church / 8-10am / \$10

Route 8 Pub Sunday Music Series 5-8pm

8/3: Tom Filiault and the Saddle Up All-Stars
8/10: Fannie Pack
8/17: Ed Rejuni
8/24: The Ladies Diane and The Dukes
8/31: Labor Day Show with Jack Waldheim



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Summer Photos from Around Town by Art Alpert



**Pickleball, every Friday
(May 2-September 26)
from 5-7pm at the North
Becket Tennis Court**

So much to do
around town! Visit:
[becketbeat.org/
community-calendar](http://becketbeat.org/community-calendar)



State Rep Leigh Davis in a “Constituent Conversation” at the Becket Arts Center (BAC)

by Marcia Parnell

Fresh off the Mass Pike from Boston, State Representative Leigh Davis held a “Constituent Conversation” at the BAC on Friday, June 20th. Attended by nearly 40 constituents from several Berkshire County towns, Davis kicked off the session by explaining a bit about her background, status of the state budget, and experience thus far as a state legislator. She then queried every attendee about their top issue or concern.

Anticipating anxiety about the impact of federal funding cuts, Davis said she and her colleagues are keeping a close watch on what's happening in the U.S. Congress and Senate. In FY 2025 Federal funding accounted for 33% of the State's \$69.2 billion budget. Despite the uncertainty, Davis explained there is good news in that the state has \$1.3 billion in its 4% surtax fund (aka millionaire's tax), which can only be spent on transportation and education, and a healthy rainy-day fund. But she also cautioned that the rainy-day fund would not be used to replace federal funding. Instead, state legislators will be looking for alternatives and Davis believes a lot was learned from the Covid experience that can be drawn upon.

Davis said that her time as a Great Barrington Select Board and Finance Committee member serves her well in her new job. (Davis was elected to fill the seat vacated by long-time rep Smitty Pignatelli and took office on January 1, 2025.) Still, it was a bit of baptism by fire, she explained. The legislative session opened on January 1 and bills were due by January 15th. The process involved long hours and fast-paced, detailed work with colleagues and staff. She also noted that she has found her fellow legislators – 132 Democrats and 25 Republicans – collegial and helpful, much more so than she anticipated.

Top issues cited by attendees and recorded by Davis on her tablet ran the gamut: education; health care; meeting basic needs; housing; infrastructure including transportation, roads, schools, internet and cellular access; voting rights; youth engagement, protection and safety of the immigrant population; poverty; energy policy; streamlining regulations; and small-business needs.

At the end of the conversation Davis presented BAC board chair Ken Cheeseman with a donation check of \$500 from the Leigh Davis Committee. As she later explained, “As someone who comes from an arts background, I believe deeply in the power of the arts to bring people together, spark creativity and strengthen rural communities. The Becket Arts Center’s mission reflects my own values – equity, access and community investment.”

To learn more about the bills Davis is sponsoring visit www.leighdavis.org/general-5. Davis also cited malegislature.gov as a great way to learn about bills in play that you may want to add your voice to in support or opposition.

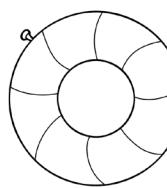


(L to R) Team Leigh Volunteer Tommie Hutto-Blake, State Rep Leigh Davis and BAC Board members Paula Langton and Ken Cheeseman, photo by Asa Stone

Kids’ Corner

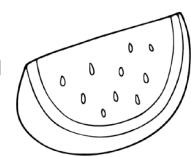
SUMMER WORDSEARCH

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CAMP
HIKING
HOT
HUMID
KITE
OCEAN
POOL
SAND
WARM



Homemade
GIFTS MADE EASY

Answer key on page 10

Cormier Family Business Expands in Becket

by Cathy Terwedow

What do you do when you run successful tree, trucking, landscaping, and excavation businesses, and it rains for days on end? Or two feet of snow drops in 24 hours, followed by a mud season that never seems to end? Easy! If you're Gerry and Tyler Cormier, you start yet another business: Cormier Country Storage.

Gerry was born and bred in Becket. He attended all the local schools: Becket Washington Elementary (BWS), Nessacus Middle, and Wahconah High. Growing up on his father's property, he learned to cut trees, operate heavy equipment, landscape and create fishponds from a very young age.

As a young adult, Gerry bought a truck and started Cormier Trucking, growing the business from one truck to seven and taking on drivers to deliver precast Unistress concrete (and other items) throughout New England.

In 2001, Gerry's entrepreneurial spirit kicked in when he realized he could earn money doing what he loved: landscaping. Thus were Cormier Tree Service and Cormier Landscaping born. Brother Randy, who tended the books for 20 years, left a year ago. Word of mouth spread, and Gerry's businesses grew. Now 13 trucks strong and operating out of a renovated sawmill near BWS, Cormier businesses are growing again.



Gerry and Tyler Cormier, photo by Cathy Terwedow

Gerry's son, 22-year-old Tyler, has joined his father as a partner. Having majored in forestry at Smith Vocational, Tyler says he was born for this work, and dad agrees. "Tyler is more than ready to step in. I trust him to handle anything in the field. He's bright and ambitious, my right-hand man," said Gerry.

As for the new business, Gerry likes the stable income of storage. "So much of our business is driven by weather. Too much snow, not enough sleep. Too little snow, not enough income. Ditto for rain. We lease to the state, plowing Routes 20, 112, and 23 from Worthington to Westfield and Russell to Blandford. We excavate, mow, grade roads, build retaining walls, design patios and decks, you name it. But we're always praying for good weather."

The ability to sell, rent, and store a wide range of containers and dumpsters should smooth the Cormier income curve, enabling Gerry to dream of beach vacations funded by steady, non-weather-dependent rentals. The new business is pending Planning Board approval.

Beware the Quill, continued from page 4



Porcupine, photo by Susan Neul

canine running back to its owner. The quills inflicted in a tail swat can usually be removed with pliers at home. Pulling them out definitely hurts and some dogs will protest greatly. It's the quills in the mouth that need professional removal under sedation. One attempt by a dog to grab the critter in its mouth can result in hundreds of quills in the tongue, gums and upper palate. Quills are known for their ability to migrate, so immediate removal is necessary before a quill travels to the eye or brain. Local veterinarians say they remove quills at least once a week and, when the porcupines are particularly active, they need to send clients to the emergency vets in the area to meet the demand.

Will a dog once quilled learn its lesson? Vets say no. The prey instinct is too strong. One Becket resident reports that his dog tangled with a porcupine, and perhaps the same porcupine, three weeks in a row, and the dog was on a leash! But another resident insists her dog remembers the pain from the first encounter and now just dances around porcupines but doesn't approach. She attributes this to the superior intelligence of German Shepherds, which makes veterinarians laugh. The bottom line: keep your canine friends as far away from porcupines as you possibly can.

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Word search answers

SUMMER WORDSEARCH



BECKET WASHINGTON COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP (BWCP) NEWS

End of Summer/Back to School Celebration

WHEN: Saturday, August 23, 9am-3pm

WHERE: Becket Federated Church (3391 Main St., Becket)

WHAT: Bounce House w/ Water Slide – Balloon Animals – Crafts & Games for Kids – Vendors –
Bake Sale – Raffle Baskets – DJ – and more!

Becket Arts Center - Sing, Dance, and Play in August

Art is alive in August at the Becket Arts Center. The solo exhibit of our 2025 Becket Arts Center poster winner, Kristi W. Colbert, opens Friday, August 8 at 5pm, and the exhibit 'MOTIF' opens Friday, August 22.

Ongoing weekly offerings include: Paula Langton's "The Art of Voice" a community summer sing-along on Wednesdays from 4-6; Yoga with Rima Sala on Thursdays at 9:30; and Creative Modern Dance on Fridays from 10-11.

Music Brings Communities Together continues August 9 and 23 with the Jackets and then Hot Sauce. Our speaker series moves to Chesterwood on August 14 at 6pm with Natalie Tyler; Plein Air returns on August 27; and we host a mosaic workshop on August 28 & 29. You can always find the latest events online at BecketArtsCenter.org/events

BECKET ARTS CENTER

Movie, Magic, and Media Literacy at the Becket Athenaeum

As August unfolds, let's start with a shout-out to our Summer Reading program participants for getting us more than three quarters of the way through our community goal of 100 hours of combined reading. If you haven't signed up, it is not too late! Visit our website for more info about Beanstack, our new online reading tracker or come into the library for a paper tracker and start logging your or your child's reading to earn prizes.

On August 1, we'll have a Family Movie showing of The Wild Robot at 4:30pm. Pizza and light snacks provided, or byo dinner. Come early to get settled. On August 5 at 6pm, adults are invited to join us for a conversation with acclaimed journalist Philip Eil about the current state of news media, how we got to this complex and chaotic moment, and what media consumers can do to maintain a healthy information diet. At 2pm on August 16, Mike Bent presents Super You! Hero Training Academy Magic Show. Using hilarious comedy, amazing magic, crazy puppets, music, sound effects and riveting storytelling, the show will help kids discover their inner "super powers!"



Becket Beat

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Find the Becket Beat at:
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