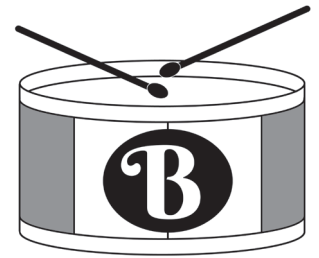


Becket Beat

Keeping neighbors connected Vol. 5, No. 9, October 2026



September 19th Special Town Meeting (STM) Results

By Kathy Dickinson

The September 19th STM convened at Becket Washington School was attended by over 100 registered voters and 17 other participants, including second homeowners.

Of eight Articles on the STM agenda, proposals to regulate short-term rentals and solar array developments were the most debated among a number of timely and consequential bylaws carefully considered over three hours.

The first four Articles all passed unanimously: Article 1 provided \$1,189.93 for unpaid invoices; Article 2 allowed for the transfer of \$165,500 from OPEB (Other Post Employee Benefits) Account to the OPEB Trust Account; Article 3 amended the vote at the 2026 Annual Town Meeting to allow transfer of \$320,000 from the Ambulance Stabilization Fund to offset the amount to be borrowed for ambulance funding; and Article 4 revised wording in Article 20 of the Bylaw Review Committee to state that the Committee “shall hold one or more public hearings which shall be publicly posted,” eliminating the requirement to publish the information in a newspaper of general circulation for two weeks.

Article 5 addressed language adopted during the Annual Town Meeting in May, 2025, by modifying the Becket Outdoor Lighting Bylaw (also known as “Becket Dark Skies”) to comply with language required by the State Attorney General. As noted by Chuck Garman, Chair of the Bylaw Review Committee, the change from “if any neighbors are inconvenienced,” to “if any person is inconvenienced,” is consistent with the wording in other town bylaws, and was supported by 84% of voters.

Garman introduced Article 6, a bylaw seeking to regulate Short-Term Rentals (STRs). While many other Berkshire towns have already regulated STRs, there is no local law protecting the Town of Becket from commercial investors who may buy up housing stock to convert to short-term rentals, ultimately limiting housing for local residents. The proposal included registration, licensing, and operating requirements – as well as limits on occupancy and the total number of STRs allowable per property owner. While some in attendance objected to new regulation, several residents voiced support for the proposal, sharing stories of negative experiences with neighboring STRs – referencing problems with noise, parking and safety risks. Some discussion revolved around the fees to be levied, which will be determined by the Select Board. Ultimately, the proposal passed by a majority.

With regard to Article 7: Solar Bylaw, and Article 8: the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Bylaw, since 2020, the state of Massachusetts has encouraged development of solar energy paired with energy storage to balance the ever-expanding need for clean energy. No municipalities can prohibit solar or battery storage development, so these bylaws were drafted to protect Becket properties and natural resources, and to propose reasonable safeguards going forward. According to Al Blake, Vice Chair of the Planning Board (PB), Articles 7 and 8 “were developed and finalized after many months of meetings by members of an ad hoc committee together with members of the PB, with input from consultants, engineers, and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission.” After months of exhaustive committee work, these two Articles garnered the most discussion over two hours.

Blake, Chair of the PB during an earlier period in which several applications were submitted seeking to develop solar installations on



Voters at Special Town Meeting; photo by Laurie Friedman

continued on page 2

parcels of land in Becket, introduced Article 7, which sought to replace outdated Solar Bylaws previously adopted in 2019. Blake explained that since then “the State Department of Energy Resources (DOER) has mandated that new or revised versions be completed by October 1, 2026.” He stressed that the goal was to “adhere to the State guidelines, while covering all aspects of protecting the interests of our town within that timeframe.” Garth Klimchuk, Chair of the Energy Committee and a renewable energy professional, had been consulted in the drafting of the bylaws, but during the STM expressed concern that the bylaws as proposed were too restrictive and reflected a virtual moratorium on solar development. Planning Board members Natasha Loeffler, Art Feltman, and current PB Chair John Verity countered that our rural town needed protections from aggressive development such as seen in the more urban region around Boston. Extensive discussion resulted in amended specifications. The Article passed by a two-thirds majority.



Voters at Special Town Meeting; photo by Laurie Friedman

Article 8 focused on the BESS portion of these projects. It was discovered that symbols in one of the tables needed to be corrected, and discrepancies in the numbering system remedied. After a motion carried to allow the corrections to be made by the Town Clerk, the BESS Bylaw passed, also by a two-thirds majority.

SHINE Medicare Information Session Wednesday, Oct. 28th, 10:30am – 11:30am

Community Room, Becket Town Hall, 557 Main Street

Those who are new to Medicare or already enrolled are invited to join Steven Rosenthal, Becket resident and SHINE program representative, to learn more about the Medicare enrollment process as well as details about the many changes to the Medicare system this year. There will be time for individual questions.

The SHINE program (Serving the Health Information Needs of Everyone) is administered by local Elder Services organizations throughout the state and provides free health insurance information, counseling, and assistance to people who are Medicare-eligible. The annual Medicare enrollment period runs from Oct 15 to Dec 7.

Becket Cultural Council FY27 Grant Cycle Closing Soon – Applications due October 15

By Joe Bazydlo, Becket Cultural Council member

The Becket Cultural Council’s FY27 grant cycle closes on Thursday, October 15, 2026. These state-funded grants, supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC), provide vital funding for local projects in the arts, humanities, and sciences that enrich our community. This year, in addition to explaining how their project will benefit the Becket community, we ask applicants to please clearly state the intent and/or anticipated outcomes of their work.

**The deadline to submit applications is
Thursday, October 15, 2026.**

To submit your application or review local guidelines, visit our page on the Mass Cultural Council website: <https://massculturalcouncil.org/local-council/becket/>

We look forward to seeing your applications and continuing to make Becket a vibrant, creative community.

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A Becket Boy's Career Path

By Keith Robinson

While I can't recall the year of my first "real" job, I clearly remember that the first legitimate paycheck I ever cashed was from Burger King in Lee. Yes, I did fail early in life in making sure my community was benefiting from home-grown labor, but one must stretch one's legs, no?

Prior to my first, aforementioned legitimate paycheck, my main source of income was a combination of my parents' generosity and an allowance. Said allowance would increase as I became more useful with tasks, such as mowing lawns with my parents. While the pay was modest, the meals were good and the rent was more than affordable.

Burger King was, and will always be, my first job. I met so many cool and different people through working there. The managers put me through my paces. Sandy Reynolds stands out in my mind. Every job station was a new challenge and the best was the register. The general public was now my playground. I could joke with people I would see often and also remind people of their regular orders when they forgot. But my favorite memory is instructing my dad to order a Whopper with heavy lettuce. Nobody orders heavy lettuce and that was our secret code to make a fresh (off the grill) Double Whopper with bacon, cheese, lettuce and tomato with light mayo and ketchup with no pickles. I heard one manager say, "I can't even close the box on this." It still makes me smile.

My next job would turn out to be the one to launch my career. My "application process" with Sid Van Orman consisted of my dad bringing me to the Sherwood Shoppe on a Saturday morning at 6:00 am. Sid brought me outside and the conversation went something like this:

"Are you willing to work?"

"Yes sir."

"Okay, be here next Saturday at 6:00."

The winter of 1988 was when I realized working with my parents and working for Burger King did not completely prepare me for the next step. There were lifts of lumber to sort and carry, snow to shovel and job sites to clean. But I loved it! My childhood friend, Juston, and I had music playing and we had competitions on who could stack the most lumber or who could complete their task faster. In hind sight, this is what made the job the most fun. We were enjoying ourselves in something that was not only helping us, but it helped our boss and the people who would, inevitably, live in the house.

In the summer of 1989 I was 17, with a license, and a pretty sweet 1978 Chevy Impala. That summer was all work. The construction with the Van Orman's was teaching me how to be humble (not easy for me) while encouraging me to build things properly. My ass was kicked and then I kicked ass back. At that point, preparing for college was the goal. Making and saving money were a necessity. Enter Don O'Brien and Watch It Grow landscaping. My dad, once again acting as my personal headhunter, was repairing Don's pickup truck. I was not privy to the initial conversation, but once again my application process went something like this:

"Are you willing to work?"

"Yes sir."

"Okay, be at my house on Monday at 3pm, and don't disappoint me."

Lawns were mowed, lumber was stacked, construction was happening, and now I was learning how to sustain and cultivate the vegetation that surrounds all of us while listening and learning from everyone I came in contact with. As the times would demand, Don would change our work day so that we could watch General Hospital. His wife, Mickie, would make us an early dinner and we would go off into the sunset to breathe in dried leaves and powdered lime. It is disturbing how much General Hospital holds a prominence in my life. I saw Luke and Laura get married at a Cub Scout meeting in 1981. I digress.

In 1990, college happened. I saved a lot so I didn't have to do much work. And as it happened, I didn't do much work in college either, but I'll save those tales for another story.

Circa 1993, I actually answered my phone one day and was asked if I wanted to work. I, of course, said "Duh" and that's when my tenure with Preston Webb started. What we had worked and worked well. From small additions to garages to houses. This relationship not only helped me learn more about building, but more about the people we worked for. And like Burger King, a good manager put me in the game. Of course, construction work does not come without a cost. Many splinters were removed, some blood was shed and my favorite injury was from Preston's point of view, "You had a piece of plywood in your hands and were walking over the deck and I looked back and you were gone." There was a slight bit of moisture on the floor joists at the Mahoney's soon-to-be-constructed house and I stepped inappropriately. Back in those days my body fit neatly between those joists and I landed in the basement with construction adhesive all the way up the inside of my arms. A sticky situation, indeed. Luckily, I did not ruin the fingers I type with to this day.

Community Calendar October 2026

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

see page 6
for more >>



BECKET ARTS CENTER

Up-to-date info at: becketartscenter.org/calendar

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

Friday, October 2, 9: Basic Watercolor Painting with Suzanne Gammon / 1-3pm / \$40 (disc. for members)

Saturday, October 11: A Reading of: THE YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING by Joan Didion / 3-4:30pm / \$10-20 suggested donation / The Back Shed @ the Dreamaway Lodge

Thursday, October 15: Evening Book Club with Lara Tupper, discussing Dar Williams' *What I Found in a Thousand Towns* / 7:30-8:30pm / Free

Wednesday, October 21, 28: Tai-Chi Chih with Sara Rotenberg / 9:30am / \$15 per class (disc. for members)

Wednesday, October 21, 28: Beginner Yoga with Maggie Murphy / 5:30pm / \$15 per class (disc. for members)

Thursday, October 22: Mexican Day of the Dead Workshop / 4:30-6:30pm / adults: \$10; youth: free



Saturday, October 24, 5-6:30pm @ the Becket Arts Center: an evening of music and conversation with singer-songwriter Dar Williams, author of *What I Found In A Thousand Towns*. The evening will feature a 25-30 minute song-and-story presentation

by Dar Williams based on her book about building social capital in communities, followed by local community leaders who describe their experience with community building. The evening will wrap up with 20-30 minutes of thoughts and questions from audience members.

Tickets: \$50 (discount for members)

BECKET ATHENAEUM

More info & to register: bwlibrary.org/events

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

Wednesdays: Mah Jongg Meetup / 2-4pm / Registration required

Wednesdays: One-on-One Tech Support / 2:30-4:30pm / By appt: bwlibrary.org/techhelp / Free

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

1st & 3rd Saturdays: One-on-One Tech Support / 10-12pm / By appointment: bwlibrary.org/techhelp / Free

Saturday, October 3: MANHATTAN SHORT Film Festival / 7-9:30pm / Free

Tuesday, October 6: Book Club: *When the Cranes Fly South* by Lisa Ridzén / 1:30pm / Free

Monday, October 12: Cookbook Club: *Essentials of Classic Italian Cooking* by Marcella Hazan / 6-7:30pm / Free / Registration required

Thursday, October 15: Game Night + Mah Jongg / 6-8pm / Free / Registration required for Mah Jongg

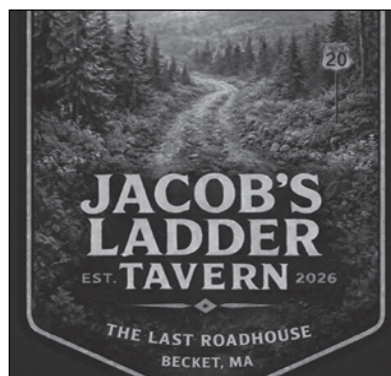
Friday, October 16: Secrets of Romani Fortune Telling with Jezmina Von Thiele / The Dream Away Lodge / 5:30-6:30pm / Free

Tuesday, October 20: Movie Night for Adults: The Devil Wears Prada 2 / 6:30-9:30pm, movie starts at 7pm / Free

Wednesday, October 21: AI Q&A with Russ Jarowski / 5-6pm / Free

Tuesday, October 27: SHINE Medicare Seminar with Steve Rosenthal / 3-4pm / Free

Tuesday, November 3: Book Club / 1:30pm / Free



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Community Calendar October 2026

see page 5
<< for more



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

TOWN GOVERNMENT

Tuesday, October 6, 27: Planning Board / 5:30pm
Wednesday, October 7, 14: Select Board / 6pm
Thursday, October 8: Joint Board of Health, Planning Board & Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting / 1pm
Tuesday, October 13: Historical Commission / 3pm
Wednesday, October 14: Board of Health / 5pm
Tuesday, October 20: Municipal Buildings Advisory Committee / 9am
Tuesday, October 20: Energy Committee / 5pm
Wednesday, October 21: Bylaw Review Comm / 3pm
Friday, October 23: Last day to register to vote
Thursday, October 27: Conservation Comm. / 6pm

Up-to-date info: www.townofbecket.org/calendar

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Tuesdays: Yoga for Seniors w/ Rima Sala / Washington Town Hall / 9am / Free
Tuesdays: Osteo/Chair Yoga for Seniors / Becket Town Hall / 10:30am / Free
Tuesdays & Thursdays: Becket Senior Group / Becket Town Hall / 11am-2pm / Lunch and Bingo / \$3
Wednesdays: Yoga / Becket Town Hall / 9am / \$3
Thursdays: Osteo/Chair Yoga for Seniors / Becket Town Hall / 10:45am / Free
Fridays: Fitness Class / Becket Town Hall / 9am / \$3
Friday, October 2: Whiskey Treaty Road Show Fundraiser Concert for Becket Washington School / 7-9pm / Jacob's Ladder Tavern / \$35 (in advance); \$40 (at door); kids free
Saturdays, October 3, 17: Food Pantry / Becket Federated Church / 9-11am
Saturday, October 24: Hazardous Waste Day / Lee Water Treatment Plant (379 Pleasant Street, Lee)

Live and local music events:

www.route8pub.com
www.thedreamawaylodge.com/events
www.facebook.com/PapaBobsentertainmenthall

**If you're not already registered,
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Nowadays I work independently as a carpenter and still enjoy the challenges, occasional injuries, getting to know my customers and helping to make their home dreams come alive. I credit all the experiences outlined above for allowing me to make a solid and satisfying career here in Becket.

Thank you for putting up with another long-winded soliloquy about my experiences in this town I, lovingly, call home. I am not a world-hopping global traveler, but this place is the best. As my former boss Don O'Brien would say "Once you drink the water, you can't leave." Probably because the well is too close to the septic.



Early Voting In-Person Hours for State Election on November 3

*Town Hall, 557 Main Street, Becket, MA
Town Clerk's Office*

Sat, 10/17 - 12-4pm
Tues, 10/20 - 10am-6pm
Wed, 10/21 - 12-8pm
Thurs, 10/22 - 10am-6pm
Fri, 10/23 - 12-4pm
Sat, 10/24 - 12-4pm
Tues, 10/27 - 10am-6pm
Wed, 10/28 - 12-8pm
Thurs, 10/29 - 10am-6pm
Fri, 10/30 - 12-4pm

Deadline to register to vote is October 23

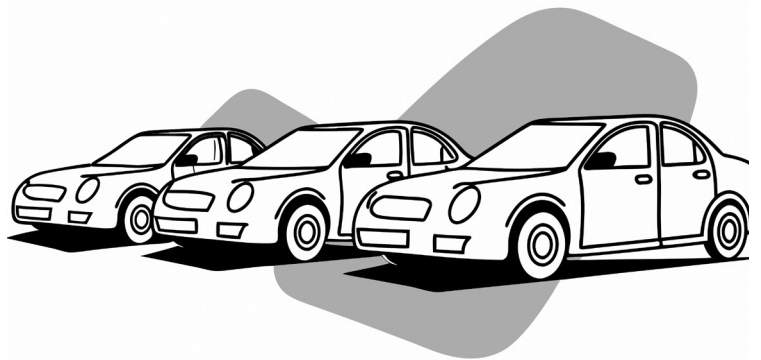
**Are you registered to vote?
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**In-Person Voting is
Tuesday, November 3
from 7am-8pm
at Becket Town Hall**

Free Rides Available for Early and Day-of Voting

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townclerk@townofbecket.org.



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Sweater Weather

By Kathy Baugh

It's sweater weather again—or, as the SNL skit famously put it, “Sweata Weatha.”

For many of us, those first cool nights of September bring mixed emotions. There is the excitement of pulling sweaters from the closet and watching the landscape slowly transform into a spectacular palette of yellow, orange, red and purple. But there is also the knowledge that winter is waiting in the wings, bringing snow, ice and those long days when we spend more time indoors.

Before we get too far ahead of ourselves, though, let's pause to appreciate one of New England's greatest seasonal spectacles: fall foliage. Each year, visitors from near and far come to the Berkshires to witness the landscape's remarkable transformation. But what, exactly, causes the leaves to put on such a dazzling show?

The answer lies in the chemistry of the leaf.

In autumn, the normally green leaves of many deciduous trees and shrubs turn various shades of yellow, orange, red, purple and brown.

Two processes are largely responsible: the breakdown of chlorophyll, the pigment that gives leaves their green color, and, in some species, the production of anthocyanins, which produce shades of red and purple.

The yellow and orange colors are not necessarily new. They come from pigments called carotenoids, which are present in leaves throughout the growing season but are masked by chlorophyll's dominant green. As long as chlorophyll is abundant, the green color prevails. When chlorophyll breaks down in the fall, the underlying yellow and orange pigments are revealed.

The reds, purples, pinks and the many shades in between are produced by anthocyanins. Unlike carotenoids, anthocyanins are not generally present in leaves throughout the growing season. Instead, they are produced in many species as summer gives way to autumn.

The timing of these changes is influenced by several environmental factors. As the days grow shorter and temperatures cool, trees begin preparing for winter. Chlorophyll production declines and the existing chlorophyll breaks down. Eventually, a process known as abscission separates the leaf from the tree, allowing it to fall.

Different species – and even individual trees among the same species — time these processes differently. That variation helps explain why the autumn display unfolds gradually rather than all at once, giving us the roughly two-month light show we have come to cherish here in Becket.

Weather also plays an important role in determining just how brilliant that show will be. Bright, sunny days and cool nights can encourage the production of anthocyanins and lead to particularly vivid reds and purples. In general, the most spectacular displays occur when autumn days are bright and cool and nights are chilly but remain above freezing.

So, as we pull on our sweaters and watch the first hints of color appear, there is more going on than meets the eye. Every brilliant red maple, golden birch and orange oak is part of a carefully timed biological process — a seasonal transition that has made New England a destination for leaf peepers from around the world.

Bottom line: our fall foliage is second to none, and it is an event well worth slowing down to relish.



Falling Leaves; photo by Art Alpert

One River, Four States: The Connecticut River Watershed

By Kathy Baugh

Did you know that Becket is part of the Connecticut River Watershed? Water from Becket drains into the Westfield River, which flows into the Connecticut River. This places the town within a hydrologic system that spans four New England states and is the focus of wide-ranging conservation and management efforts.

From September 18th through 27th, the Connecticut River Watershed Partnership (CRWP) promoted a host of events celebrating their 2nd Annual Watershed Week. The observance began with the Connecticut River Conservancy's Source to Sea Cleanup on Friday, September 18th, and concluded on World Rivers Day, Sunday, September 27th. Throughout the week, organizations and communities across all four watershed states held an array of events that invited people to celebrate and explore the Connecticut River Watershed. The celebration was funded in part by our own Wild and Scenic Westfield River Committee.

As New England's largest river and watershed, the Connecticut River is a defining feature of New England. It supports healthy communities, sustainable local and regional economies, clean water, and diverse wildlife habitat. Watershed Week gave residents and visitors an opportunity to connect with their local waterways while learning about the organizations and volunteers working to protect, restore, and enhance this remarkable watershed.

One featured event took place at the Chester Railroad Museum, formerly the Chester Railroad Station. Throughout the week, museum director David Pierce hosted a special program, "Rivers and Railroads: An Enduring Partnership."



Photo courtesy of Chester Railroad Museum

loop filmed from the Connecticut River to Muddy Pond."

A visit to the Chester Railroad Museum is a trip through local railroad history. The restored 1862 depot and museum house an early steam engine, two boxcars, including one designed for children's play, a Baker's Chocolate tanker, a wooden campout caboose available to rent and Bernie's Restaurant dining car, the museum's newest addition.

If you have not visited, the museum is well worth the trip. Pierce, a font of knowledge, will regale you with captivating stories on the development of the Hilltowns we call home.

To learn more about the Chester Railroad Museum visit <https://www.chestertrainwaysstation.net>

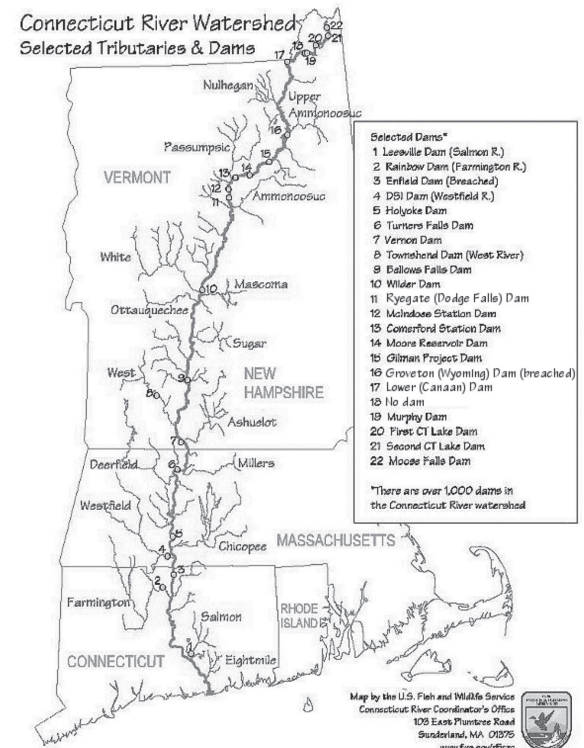
To visit the museum, call to schedule an appointment with David Pierce: 413-961-9166

To learn more about the Connecticut River Watershed Partnership visit: <https://ctriverwatershed.org>



Photo courtesy of Chester Railroad Museum

Pierce explained: "The Connecticut, Westfield, and Housatonic rivers guided the route of the Western Railroad, which in 1841 became the world's first mountain railroad and the first railroad built through wilderness, as those who have walked the Arches are familiar with. The Western Railroad's timber-frame truss bridge across the Connecticut River at Springfield was the world's longest when it opened on July 4, 1841, stretching nearly a quarter mile. The Westfield River hosted America's first cluster of stone-arch railroad bridges, while the headwaters of the Housatonic swallowed the railroad in deep mud three times before 1850. Museum tours feature all of this history, along with a helicopter video



Dalton Youth Center Drop-In Program for Grades 3–8

The DYC Drop-In Program provides a safe and welcoming place for young people in grades 3–8 to spend time after school, connect with trusted adults, receive mentorship and academic support, and explore new interests.

**Drop-In Hours: Monday–Friday
2:30–8:00pm**

This fall, young people can expect:

STEM and maker activities • Arts and crafts •
Gaming, air hockey, and spaces to hang out •
Basketball and recreation • Tutoring and academic
support • Refreshed kitchen with free healthy snacks

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- Going South for the Winter?
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- Is your Home Vacant Waiting to Sell?

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Jeremy Dunn
Dave Labrecque

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BECKET WASHINGTON COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP (BWCP) NEWS

October at the Becket Arts Center: Creativity, Conversation, and Community

October brings a lively mix of creativity, conversation, and community to the Becket Arts Center. The month begins with ongoing yoga classes with Rima Sala and watercolor workshops with Suzanne Gammon, offering opportunities to recharge and create. On October 11, the Arts Center presents a reading of Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking* at the Dream Away Lodge, featuring Paula Langton and followed by a conversation.

Later in the month, families can explore the traditions of Día de los Muertos during an October 22 hands-on workshop featuring sugar skulls, paper flowers, and a community ofrenda. On October 24, acclaimed singer-songwriter and author Dar Williams joins the Arts Center for an evening of songs, stories, and conversation about what helps communities thrive. From visual art and wellness to theater, cultural traditions, and big ideas, October offers plenty of reasons to gather in Becket. Visit BecketArtsCenter.org for the latest information.

**BECKET
ARTS
CENTER**

Films, Fortunes & Two Q&As at the Athenaeum in Oct.

The Athenaeum kicks off the month with a screening of MANHATTAN SHORT Film Festival on 10/3 at 7pm. Along with 5 other Berkshires libraries presenting screenings this year, we are excited to give our patrons the opportunity to join film lovers across the world in viewing and voting on the ten finalists' films. On 10/16 at 5:30pm, we welcome author, podcaster, tarot, palm, and tea leaf reader Jezmina Von Thiele for a pop-up program at The Dream Away Lodge on the history of Tarot and Jezmina's book *Secrets of Romani Fortune Telling*. The second half of the month gets more practical with an AI Q&A on 10/21 at 5pm facilitated by Russ Jarowski, our local tech specialist (who's still offering one-on-one tech support at the library on Wednesdays and select Saturdays). On 10/27 at 3pm, we welcome back Becket local and SHINE representative, Steve Rosenthal, for another info session on all things Medicare. Steve will present info useful to those newly eligible for Medicare or enrolling for the first time, as well as returning customers looking to maximize benefits this coming year.

