

80 years after Auschwitz

A view of the former Nazi German concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau as photographed Jan. 24.

ODED BALILTY PHOTO



‘Today, we remember and we don’t forget’

Personal, family stories convey horrors of the Holocaust, Pages S4-S9



REAL NEWS IN SCHOOLS

How the program works

Your school can have access to local, trusted journalism from The Eagle-Tribune on a daily basis. We report on news throughout the Merrimack Valley and Southern New Hampshire, covering all things local – from schools, to sports, to government, people profiles, business, entertainment and more. You get the facts – the real news – from experienced reporters, photographers and editors you can count on at no cost to your school.

Here are the basics of the program:

What is it? The Eagle-Tribune partners with local businesses to provide free digital access to our newspaper to anyone within the school at no cost to the school. This access encourages students to value the vital news coverage being produced by The Eagle-Tribune. They will build awareness and gain critical thinking skills in the process.

Who can participate? This program will benefit teachers, students, and the broader school community.

Where does it take place? You can access our newspaper online. Teachers can incorporate the program into their curriculums, even having reporters, photographers and editors visit your class.

When can we start benefiting? As soon as we have your commitment to participate in Real News in Schools we will go to work to

find a local business who wants to sponsor you. Once we have one, we will work with your IT Department to get the program up and running.

Why is this valuable? There's a lot of fake news out there on social media and elsewhere. The Eagle-Tribune, founded in 1868 as the Lawrence Daily Eagle and a twice Pulitzer Prize winning publication, has a long track record of fair and accurate reporting that cuts through the misinformation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
EAGLETRIBUNE.COM/REALNEWS

Photos from high school sports winter competition



Methuen's Cali Lucas fights to make the layup surrounded by Whittier defenders, from left, Yami Ortiz, Yaki Ortiz and captain, Nevaeha Wilkins during a non-league game.



Windham's Declan Fleming and Salem's Max Sylvester battle for the puck. Salem defeated Windham 3-2 in boys hockey action.



PLUMBING & HEATING INC.

(978) 689-8336
office@giard.plumbing

Services to Meet All Your Needs
Residential & Commercial Emergency Services
Owned and Operated by Tim & Jeremy Giard



MA License# 10301

NH License# 4444

Remembering history

80 years after Auschwitz, lessons of late Peabody Holocaust survivor live on



MARK LORENZ/Staff file photo

The late Sonia Weitz is seen in this 2007 photo at the Holocaust Center when it was located at the Peabody Institute Library.



KRISTEN OLSON

The late Sonia Weitz, holds hands and talks in Polish with Stanley Stec alongside Frank Jazab, both of Chicopee, during a Holocaust liberators and survivors reunion in 2006.

By Caroline Enos

» Staff Writer

PEABODY — Holocaust survivor Sonia Schreiber Weitz carried with her a horrific story when she moved to Peabody in the late 1940s.

Just three years earlier, at 16 years old, Weitz had been liberated from the Mauthausen death camp in Austria after surviving four others, including Auschwitz.

She weighed 60 pounds and was weak with typhus when American troops found her. Except for her sister, Blanca, and brother-in-law Norbert, all 84 members of her family had been murdered by the Nazis — all for the sole reason of being

Jewish.

It's a story of hate Weitz herself called indescribable. Yet, she dedicated her life to finding the words to tell it through her poetry and many discussions with students.

With Jan. 27 marking the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, her friends and family insisted that it must not be a story lost to time.

"If we forget the Holocaust, we will dishonor the memory of the victims who number in the millions, including more than 6 million Jewish souls," Lapin Foundation Executive Director Debbie Coltin said at a Zoom event honoring Weitz's memory in January.

"Today, we remember and we don't forget."

Weitz died from cancer at age 81 in 2010. She spoke to thousands of schoolchildren and college students during her life and was a member of the council advising the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C.

In 1982, she created the Holocaust Center Boston North in Peabody with her friend Harriet Wacks. The center merged with Salem State University following her death and is now known as the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies.

Weitz's story started in Krakow, Poland. Her happy

See **WEITZ**, Page S5

» Weitz

Continued from Page S4

childhood morphed into one strained by the persecution of Jewish people once the Nazis invaded the country in 1939.

It was in the Krakow Ghetto, where Jews were forced to live in overcrowded apartments with little food, that Weitz began seeing her family disappear and, eventually, learned of their murder.

Weitz described the time and the rest of her experiences during the Holocaust in the recording of a speech she made before her death that was played during the January event.

"The very first victim in my family was an uncle of mine who was arrested together with the leadership of his city, my uncle Henrik, and he was taken to Auschwitz before it became a real death factory," she said.

"He was killed, and his ashes were sent to my aunt. This is the first time I saw my father cry, and of course, would not be the last."

Weitz survived for a time using false papers that said she was 14, older than her real age, as the Nazis were rounding up all children under 14 at the time, and also papers that claimed she was Aryan, not Jewish, so she could sneak out of the ghetto. Her mother also dyed her hair blonde to make the lie more convincing.

The changes protected her for only so long.

Her mother was soon put on a transport of Jews heading to concentration camps, never to be seen again.

With the Nazis banning Jews from having pencils and paper, Weitz turned to writing poetry in her head to document what was happening and, in her own way, try to make sense of the devastation.

One of her most poignant poems details one of her last memories of her father.

Weitz, her father and her sister were taken to their



FILE PHOTO

The late Sonia Weitz of the Holocaust Center listens to the children's choir from the Cohen Hillel School sing during an interfaith commemoration of the Holocaust. The event was held at Peabody High School in April of 2003.



KEN YUSZKUS/File photo

Holocaust survivor the late Sonia Weitz speaks to the eighth-grade students at Higgins Middle School in Peabody in 2010.

first camp together. Separated by sections for men and women, Weitz snuck into her father's bunkhouse and shared a dance with him to the song of another prisoner's hidden

harmonica.
*"I danced with you that one time only.
 'How sad you were, how tired, lonely ...
 'You knew that they would 'take' you soon ...*

*"So when your bunk-mate played a tune
 'You whispered: 'Little one, let us dance,
 'We may not have another chance.'"
 Weitz's poem was true.*

Her father was taken away shortly after and was killed just two weeks before the end of World War II.

She and her sister would be moved between death camps throughout Nazi-occupied Europe and endured the Nazi's most heinous treatment.

They shivered with fever in bunkhouses with little food and no heat, worked as slave laborers in Nazi war factories, struggled to breathe in stifling cattle cars, and stepped over bodies during excruciatingly long death marches.

She called the Black American soldier who found her upon the liberation of Mauthausen a "Black Messiah."

"The horror on his face is something that even in my state, I cannot ever forget," she said.

It took four decades for Weitz to open up about her survival of the Holocaust. During the January event, Mayor Ted Bettencourt and District Attorney Paul Tucker recalled attending Weitz's speeches over the years. For Bettencourt, it was as a student at Peabody Veterans Memorial High School.

"I always remember her speaking about being an upstander, being somebody who sticks up for people and is there for people in difficult moments and won't stand by and allow something terrible to happen," he said.

"To be somebody that is on the good side, helping one another, really, that's what life is all about."

Contact Caroline Enos at CEnos@northofboston.com.



Get Your Faves Faster



YOUR LOCAL McDONALD'S:

660 Chickering Rd., North Andover, MA

155 Newburyport Turnpike, Rowley, MA

150 Canal St., Salem, MA • 210 Andover Street,

North Shore Mall, Peabody, MA • 40 Enon St., Beverly, MA

77 Hight St., Danvers, MA • 50 Maplewood Ave., Gloucester, MA

567 Lynnway, Lynn, MA • 781 Lynnway - Walmart, Lynn, MA

'He doesn't know how he survived'

Salem woman recounts parents' escape

By Jamie L. Costa

» jcosta@eagletribune.com

SALEM, N.H. — Marguerite Holender was only 6 years old when her parents begged the woman who was hiding her in a barn in France not to send her home.

Around the same time, Leon Holender left his mother and brothers behind at their home in Poland to walk to Russia with his older brother and sister-in-law in pursuit of safety. Those who stayed died in concentration camps.

"If you didn't understand the gravity of your situation and do something drastic to help yourself, you did not survive," said Michelle McLaughlin, 68, while reflecting on her parents' escape from Europe during the Holocaust.

Marguerite's story

Marguerite, now 91, stayed in that barn with the old woman, Angel, for two years, thinking her parents didn't want her anymore. Then one day when she was 8 they showed up.

"They left (Paris) when they knew they'd never survive and they walked hundreds of miles to this town (Saint-Saturnin) to hope for the best and find safety there," McLaughlin said. "And they did until the Nazis came one night and took her father."

On the way out the door he said to his family, "I'll see you after the war," but they believed in their hearts they'd never see him again.

They think he was taken to a concentration camp for a year where he got sick and was released after he told a Nazi that he was Lithuanian.

"We believe they didn't



Michelle McLaughlin, center, with her mother, Marguerite Holender, and her father, Leon Holender, in the 1970s. The Holenders survived the Holocaust on their own respective journeys fleeing France and Poland before meeting in Boston.

think he was Jewish and they released him," McLaughlin said. "He went back home and it was like a ghost showing up."

Back in town, the mayor helped the family survive by giving Marguerite's father

odd jobs around town to make money and feed the family until they could escape to the United States.

Ten years ago, Marguerite returned to Saint-Saturnin with her family to put a cross on Angel's grave to

thank her for saving her life and those of her family.

"When (Marguerite) was a little girl and they had nothing, she thought if one day she could live in a house and have indoor plumbing, she'd be so happy," McLaughlin

said. "Often when we talk, she cannot believe that her life turned out this good."

Leon's story

When Leon made it to Russia, he requested to go to the United States which McLaughlin said was a

mistake. Instead, he was charged with treason and sent to a gulag — a labor camp — in Siberia where he lived as a political prisoner until his release five years later.

"He said it was so cold that before his spit hit the ground, it was an icicle," McLaughlin said. "He should have been dead many times over from the harsh conditions of what they did to him and yet, he survived his prison sentence."

She added, "He doesn't know how he survived."

On the day of Leon's release, he saw a man carrying a blanket and together they walked to Asia before parting ways. Leon then made his way to France, where he again tried to immigrate to the United States.

Leon and Marguerite ultimately met in Boston in the late 1940s or early 1950s.

Though Leon never shared specific details of what his treatment was like while living in the gulag, McLaughlin said he was always strange in the way people are after something terrible happens to them.

"We didn't really understand him," she said. "We thought he was a little mentally disturbed sometimes which is a terrible thing to say but he had such an incredibly hard life."

Leon died in 1986.

Growing up as a child of survivors, McLaughlin always wished she had a normal, All-American family, she said. Instead she had to hide her Jewish heritage to avoid antisemitism and discrimination because of her culture, history and religion, and waded through her parents' trauma.

"My parents started sharing stories when we were very little," McLaughlin said. "They were so completely affected for the rest of their lives by their childhoods that were stolen from them."

From Warsaw to Lawrence

A woman's journey through war to freedom

By Jill Harmacinski

» jharmacinski@eagletribune.com

LAWRENCE — Edna Chabuz was 14 and had just finished seventh grade when the Nazis invaded Poland.

Her father and older brother were taken to stalags — war prisons — in Germany, and her younger brother was murdered by the Nazis after they caught him with a Jewish girl he was friends with.

Others Edna knew were also “taken away and never seen or heard from again,” she said.

Jews were bullied and brutalized, even shot and left to bleed to death in the streets. And she knew never to look a Nazi soldier in the eyes for fear of retribution, she said.

At age 17, she was torn away from her family and her home in Poland and sent to work on a farm in Germany. There she met a Polish soldier, a young man held at a nearby stalag as a prisoner of war, who translated German for her and helped her learn how to perform different farm duties.

That soldier, Walter Chabuz, would become her husband. And once World War II ended, the couple would bring their young family to Lawrence, where Walter would work in a textile mill and Edna in a shoe repair factory.

Today, Edna still lives in Lawrence. She will be 100 years old next month.

“A couple of years ago, she just turned to me and said, ‘I’ve been very lucky,’” said Maurice Chabuz, 75, one of Edna’s three sons. His mom remarked she survived bombings in World War II by both the Germans and the Allies.



TIM JEAN/Staff photo

Edna Chabuz, 99, sits with her granddaughter Christina Chabuz while visiting her at Mary Immaculate Memory Care in Lawrence. Edna grew up in Warsaw, Poland and escaped the Nazi-occupied country during World War II. She was ordered to work on a German farm, where she met her husband, Walter, who was Polish prisoner of war held by the Germans in a nearby camp. They came to Lawrence after WWII and raised their family.

Over the years, as his mother spoke of her youth in Poland and surviving World War II, her son took notes, piecing together her history little by little.

“I would write things down,” he said, noting his mother often spoke of the past while his father never “spoke a word” about the war.

She now lives in a memory care unit at Mary Immaculate Nursing and Restorative Center on Lawrence

Street. She’s still in good health which her son said he believes is because she never had a driver’s license and regularly walked wherever she needed to go in the city, including her former church, Holy Trinity, once known as Lawrence’s Polish parish.

A scared, skinny, hungry, young girl

She has recalled living in

Warsaw during the German occupation when food was rationed and extremely scarce and no work was available. At times all the family had to eat was a single potato, which they would grate into water for potato broth that would need to last several days. If they ventured out to find food it was “sometimes upon fear of death,” she told her son.

One night, a Jewish man was walking home and

because it was after curfew he was shot and left in the street to die. She remembers two German soldiers approaching an old man with a cane. The soldiers harassed the old man, calling him names and then kicking out his cane. As the man dropped to the ground, Edna was walking nearby with a girlfriend.

They “were scared and turned and walked away” fearing they would be killed,

she said.

The Nazis sent young Polish citizens to Germany to work on farms and in factories, she said.

If a Pole did not comply and go to Germany, their entire family could be murdered.

“So my mom had to go to Germany,” her son wrote in one of his accounts of his mother’s journey.

See **CHABUZ**, Page S9



Edna Chabuz with her cousin and her friend in Warsaw, Poland.



Edna Chabuz and her husband, Walter Chabuz, who was a soldier in the Polish Army during World War II.



Edna Chabuz walking with a friend in Poland before World War II.

» Chabuz

Continued from Page S8

When she arrived at the German farm she did not speak the language. So they called a Polish worker to translate.

“That just happened to be Dad,” he wrote in his account.

She said the farmer and his wife, who did not have children, were good to their workers. She thought maybe they pitied her because she was “a skinny, scared, hungry, young girl.”

She was also a “city girl,” who initially didn’t know the difference between a sugar beet or a weed. She learned how to work outside at the farm but also had household chores inside and a small room upstairs in the house. She was eating better than she ever did in Warsaw. Sometimes, the farmer would let her walk to the bakery and “the bakers would slip her a cookie or a small bun.”

She recalled Americans bombing the area through Christmas 1944. In April 1945, as she and other farm workers were in the fields planting potatoes, the Americans returned again. “This was Mom’s second time being bombed; First in 1939 by the Germans, then by the allies in 1945,” Maurice wrote.



Maurice Chabuz and his mother, Edna, who left Poland during World War II and raised her family in Lawrence, Mass.

A sponsor in Lawrence

On April 15, 1945, she said the farm owner told them “the Americans are coming!” They all stood along the main road as the Americans gave them candy and sweets. After stopping for a couple of hours, the Americans then continued north to Berlin, she said.

After the liberation, the couple stayed in Germany for a short time before leaving for the U.S. She wanted to go back to Poland but relatives said the country was under Russian control and not to return. At one point, they went to the train station but they did not get on board. They later learned the trains did not go to Poland but

Siberia in far eastern Russia.

A Polish officer who her husband knew immigrated to the U.S. With the friend’s help, the family found a sponsor in Lawrence.

Walter, Edna and now their two sons sailed on the U.S.S. Blanchford to New York City. The family arrived on a hot August day and then boarded a bus and a train to Lawrence. They arrived at 1 a.m. and met the sponsor who brought them home where they ate kielbasa, she said.

Their first apartment was at 17 Allen St.

Walter Chabuz would survive a serious accident that occurred while he was working as a laborer at the mill on Union Street. He fell five floors, hitting every floor along the way. Maurice said the Polish community and the Allen Street neighborhood supported his family while his father was recovering. “When Dad did get home, he could not work for a while,” he wrote.

“As children we would play with the scars all over his body. I recall being excited because I had my favorite cereal for dinner (Jets Cereal),” Maurice Chabuz recalled.

Years later, while talking with his father, he realized his family did not have much during that time. As a child, he was unaware.

“It was a struggle but I never knew. I knew I was loved,” he said.



Edna Chabuz when she made her First Communion as a girl living in Poland.

Follow staff reporter Jill Harmacinski on Twitter/X @EagleTribJill and on Threads at jillyharma.

Cellphone ban gaining steam in NH school districts

By Ethan DeWitt

» New Hampshire Bulletin

CONCORD, N.H. — Months after his school banned cellphone use during class time, Cameron Marvin is breathing a little easier.

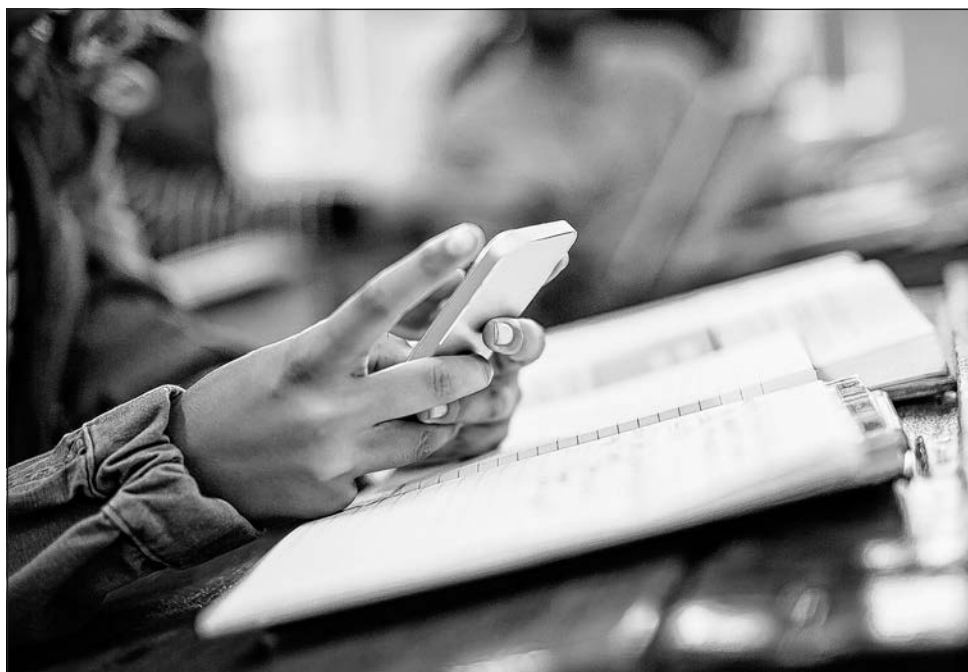
Before the ban, the eighth grader at Pelham Memorial School saw the phones do more harm than good. Kids would show off memes in the classroom, creating distractions. Teachers would interrupt a lesson to tell those students to put the phones away — another distraction. And breaks to the bathroom were fraught with the prospect of pranks, vandalism, and disruptive behavior, all filmed on students' phones to be posted for later online glory.

"Some kids think it's funny to record while doing something wrong," Marvin testified to lawmakers last week.

But in August, the Pelham School Board passed a policy banning the phones from use in middle school classrooms. Students must use magnetic, locked pouches to deposit their phones during instruction time. They can open the pouches only in designated areas in the school.

"The good thing is that you don't see just one person standing out and being punished with their phone taken away," Marvin said. "Everyone is equal, and everyone has to do the same thing with their phone. No one has that extra pressure."

This year, some lawmakers are hoping to pass a law restricting cellphones across the state. Amid bitter fights over the future of education, the idea has become an unlikely source of bipartisanship. Gov. Kelly Ayotte called for a ban in her inaugural address. Republican and Democratic lawmakers have pitched legislation to do so. And conservative



advocates, teachers unions, school boards, and even some students appear to be on board.

"Used to be it was a great social experience," said Rep. Rick Ladd, a Haverhill Republican, during a hearing. "Kids were yanking around with each other, having fun, talking to each other, looking at the whites of the eyes. Now what are they looking at? The white of the cellphone."

Ladd is the author of one of those bills, House Bill 131. The bill states that "school boards shall develop and adopt a policy governing student cellphone use in schools. Such policy shall restrict the use of student personal cellphones during class instruction without educator approval."

The bill allows individual teachers to make exceptions in cases where they would like to use phones as part of their instruction, and it requires that school boards build in other exceptions for students with disabilities who need devices to support their learning.

Ladd said the bill is to strike a balance between respecting the autonomy of

school boards and addressing what he sees as an entrenched problem: the decline in students' attention spans and the devices causing it. School boards can finesse the policies and school staff can figure out the best ways to apply them, but a change is necessary, he argued.

The bill comes as educators and states are racing toward more restrictive policies in schools. A 2024 survey of National Education Association members — the country's largest teachers union — found 90% of respondents supported a ban on cellphones during class instruction, and 83% supported banning phones for the entirety of the school day.

And 19 states, both Republican and Democratic-led, have passed legislation that either encourages, incentivizes, or requires a cellphone ban, according to Education Week.

Leah Wolczko, a former high school teacher in Manchester, quickly noticed the perils of cellphones at her school. Years ago, lacking a district-wide policy, Wolczko began calling parents of her students on her

February break to check in on their child's cellphone use, she told lawmakers.

She began with the students earning the lowest grades, and moved up the list to the highest performing students. Each time, she gave them a pitch: If she had permission to remove their child's phone, they could be performing at a higher level. Many parents agreed to the restriction, Wolczko said, and she would ask those students to deposit their phones at the front.

"We were going into the lower end of the year, like summer is around the bend, kids start to fall off, but my scores went up," she said. "They went up across the board."

Wolczko says no teacher wants cellphones in class and they know they can tell students to put them away. But without a bigger, school-wide ban, it is hard for one teacher to enforce the rules. And without adults stopping the phone use, kids can't do it on their own, she argued.

"It's our fault," she said. "It's the adults' fault that this is happening. You can not expect an addicted,

13-year-old child to be able to leave (the phone) alone. They can't. And so we need to be the adults in the room."

In August, Manchester's school board passed a policy banning cellphone use throughout the school day from preschool to eighth grade, according to the Union Leader.

The National Education Association of New Hampshire agrees; teachers do not want to be the "phone police," testified Brian Hawkins, director of government relations. The NEA supports Ladd's bill, but wants the language to be less directed at individual teachers, Hawkins said. The policy restricts cellphone use "without educator approval"; Hawkins said the NEA is worried that could make teachers into adjudicators.

Some have raised cost concerns. Pelham Memorial School initiated its cellphone ban with the help of a company, Yondr, that makes the soft pouches that lock away a cell phone with the use of a magnet. But at \$30 per student, the pouches are not cheap. And a cellphone ban is easiest to pull off for school districts that provide Chromebooks to students. Not all can afford to do so.

Barrett Christina, executive director of the New Hampshire School Boards Association, which has not taken a position on HB 131, noted that another bill proposed by Republican Rep. Melissa Litchfield, of Brentwood, House Bill 781, would require a cell phone ban but set aside \$250,000 in state funding to allow needy districts to apply for assistance to buy the technology.

For Pelham Superintendent Chip McGee, it is too early to know definitively whether the ban this school year has improved academics; the annual statewide assessments will not happen until

the spring. And he conceded that the policy has not been universally popular. Some parents have raised safety concerns, arguing they need to be able to contact their children during emergencies, he said. The students themselves have put together multiple petitions seeking to overturn the ban. And the policy has not been extended to the high school so far, after the high school student government made a plea for the district to allow students to police themselves and follow a "phones away" policy that doesn't rely on the pouches.

Still, McGee said at the middle school, there have been noted improvements. There are fewer acts of vandalism and bullying in the bathroom. Teachers are satisfied. And the amount of "time on task" that students have exhibited appears to have increased.

"Many fewer interruptions," he said.

Addressing McGee, Rep. Lisa Freeman, a Tilton Republican, made a stark comparison. "Would you believe there was a time when I was in high school that you could smoke cigarettes in the courtyard, and we rallied against that when they outlawed it? and guess what, they were right."

"I think that analogy to cigarettes is apt," McGee said.

Despite grumbling — and some student organizing — Marvin says life is better this year.

"The main description I can give is that it's more peaceful," he said. "There's a huge weight lifted off our shoulders. The phones are out of sight, and everyone knows it. So in a way, it makes the day much calmer."

New Hampshire Bulletin is part of States Newsroom, a nonprofit news network supported by grants and a coalition of donors as a 501(c)(3) public charity.

Photos from high school sports winter competition



CARL RUSSO/Staff photo
Whittier's Kelly Vigneaux drives to the basket as Methuen's Ava Chirwa defends.



CARL RUSSO/Staff photo
Whittier's Kelly Vigneaux stays close to Methuen's Ainsley Low as she races up the court during a non-league contest.



CARL RUSSO/Staff photo
North Andover's Patrick Nugent scores the Knights first goal on a breakaway against Masco's freshman goalie, Jacob Sofronas. Nugent also scored the Knights second goal a short time later in the second period.



CARL RUSSO/Staff photo
North Andover senior goalie Ryan Kmiec makes one of his 35 saves against Masconomet at the Haverhill Valley Forum.

The Eagle-Tribune

Upcoming Special Sections!

Subscribing has its benefits. Be the first to see these upcoming special sections!

My Town

**February
23**



***Business
Spotlight***

**February
26**



***Metro
Section***

**March
2**

