OPINION

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Opinion Editor: Stanley Moulton
Contributing editors: Dan Crowley,
Chad Cain and Brooke Hauser

EDITORIAL

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Kudos to Northampton High School art teacher Lisa Leary for inspiring excellence in her students.

The students in Leary's honors art class have received numerous national and regional awards for their work this year, and are being rewarded with acceptance at prestigious art schools. Among them is senior Kailey Weaver, who earned a $50,000 scholarship to Cooper Union in New York City.

"I never thought in my wildest dreams that I'd be going to art school," says Weaver. "The reason I am is completely because of Ms. Leary … I always thought of art as a hobby, but being part of a program that is this difficult made me realize I could do more."

Leary says, "I like to be both difficult and encouraging. It's a delicate balance. I take it really seriously and try to motivate the kids to be more creative and expressive. It's so fantastic to watch them grow."

Judging from their success, Leary can be proud of a job well done.

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Dmitri Weise, of Belchertown, has learned at age 15 how he can help improve the lives of less fortunate people.

Weise, a student at North Star, the self-directed learning center in Sunderland, began handing out care packages in February to homeless people in downtown Northampton. They contain personal hygiene items, socks and pet food.

"At this point, I just want to make sure everyone who we come across has at least one package," says Weise, who hopes to make a year-round project of giving the packages to people individually.

That caring attitude will serve Weise well throughout his life.