

Mission Working Dogs visit the Colisee

By Nathan Tsukroff

LEWISTON — Mission Working Dogs was on a fundraising mission last Friday night at the Androscoggin Bank Colisee, with more than eight dogs and handlers greeting hockey fans at the entrance.

About a year ago, just as the COVID-19 pandemic began, Christy Gardner of Lewiston founded Mission Working Dogs to train therapy and service dogs to help people in the community with disabilities.

A therapy dog provides psychological or physiological therapy to individuals other than their handler, while “a service dog is trained to help mitigate the individual disabilities of one person. So, if you were missing a leg, or you were blind, or you were diabetic, that dog is trained specifically for you,” she said. “And they can all be trained differently, because everybody’s disability may be different.”

Gardner was serving as a sergeant in

the United States Army Military Police in Asia in 2006 when she was severely injured. She survived with a double-leg amputation, a spinal cord injury, and a traumatic brain injury, which eventually led her to accept her golden retriever service dog named Moxie in 2010.

Now retired at age 13, Moxie “gave me my life back, my independence,” Gardner said. Having a service dog “gave my family peace of mind to know that if I have a seizure anywhere, she’s trained to call 911. She’s also trained to go out and get specific neighbors if I need help.” Moxie was, “basically, another person that can take care of me!”

Gardner is training a new service dog, Independence, whom she calls “Indie”.

Service dog training ranges between one and two years, with dogs learning a variety of commands. Moxie, knew 160 different commands when she completed her training.

See Dogs, page 3

Walk-in vaccination begins at Auburn Mall

From CMH

AUBURN - Central Maine Health-care’s high-volume vaccination site at the Auburn Mall began taking walk-ins last Friday.

“This week, our site reached a milestone as we administered the 25,000th dose of vaccine. And another milestone is right around the corner: We are opening up to walk ins beginning Friday to get vaccine into the arms of more people,” said Amy Lee, MBA, MBHA, MJ, FACMPE, vice president and chief operating officer of the Central Maine Medical Group. “We

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Roslyn Keith of Lewiston takes a few minutes to visit with Grace, a therapy dog being trained by Lewiston chiropractor Dr. Phil McLean and his wife, Amy, before the hockey game at the Androscoggin Bank Colisee on Friday night. (Tsukroff photo)

First trade show in Maine Under the pandemic

By Nathan Tsukroff

AUBURN —Welcome to the Maine Home Show . . . the first trade show in Maine since the COVID-19 pandemic began more than a year ago.

With just four weeks to bring the show together after the State of Maine gave permission for expanded indoor gatherings in March, Travis Dow booked space in the Norway Savings Bank arena to create a pandemic version of the home show that Mainers have enjoyed for so many years.

The Maine Home Show finally opened its doors the second weekend of April, with around 50 exhibitors.

The show took place on one of the two ice rinks at the arena. This rink had been shut down at the end of the hockey season, while the other rink hosted play

throughout the weekend. Exhibitors were able to set up on the concrete base of the arena, rather than on a covering over the ice.

This was the ninth annual Maine Home Show, after being forced to skip last year due to the pandemic.

The show was hosted at the Androscoggin Bank Colisee in Lewiston the first eight years, shifting to the Norway Savings Bank Arena this spring after the Colisee told Dow it was extending hockey play and wouldn’t be able to host the show.

Dow has already booked the Norway Savings Bank Arena for next year’s show on March 19 and 20, 2022, and said it provides room for him to expand the show as needed.

He worked with the staff at the Arena for this year to be sure pandemic guidelines were followed. “We developed a plan

on how to lay the event out and structure it in such a way that it kept people safe,” he said.

“Once we did that” and he knew he could present the show, “then I started generating all the support from the exhibitors and planning all the advertising, and bringing on these new ways of bringing people in as far as electronic tickets and contactless payments,” Dow said.

In the past, visitors simply paid admission at the door. But this year, visitors printed out their online tickets and scanned the ticket QR code at the entrance for admission. Dow said another advantage to this new system was that visitors planned to attend, rather than making a last-minute decision on the day of the show.

With only a month to pull the show together for this year, Dow said the number of exhibitors was down from past

See Trade show, page 8



Travis Dow of Dow Media LLC in Lewiston, gives a thumbs up while chatting with Twin City Times Publisher Laurie Steele about the success of the Maine Home Show. Dow has produced the show since its inception 10 years ago, and said this year’s show - the first trade show in Maine since the pandemic began a year ago - was well received by both vendors and visitors. (Lillian Baker photo)

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Newsmakers, Names & Faces

Letter to the Editor

Saving for retirement

It is a distressing fact that on average, working households in Maine have just \$2,500 in retirement savings. This is due in part because many Maine workers have no way to save for retirement through their employer.

This legislative session, a simple solution is being proposed and AARP Maine strongly supports it. LD 1622, sponsored by Senator Eloise Vitelli (D-Arrowsic), would offer thousands of Maine workers an easy way to save for retirement through their workplace.

Under this proposal, employees could save for retirement through a

payroll deduction in the amount they choose. Employees would be automatically enrolled in the program but could choose to opt out if they wanted to. The money they save would be theirs to take with them from job to job, to rely on in later years for a more secure retirement. All the employer would have to do is set up the deduction.

This program could be a game changer for many Maine workers. An AARP Maine survey that was just released found that when it comes to planning and saving for retirement, 40 percent of Mainers 45 and older say

they are behind schedule. Further studies show that Mainers are 15 times more likely to save when they can do so through their job. Over time, even a small contribution can make a big difference.

If you are one of the thousands of Mainers concerned about saving for retirement, please urge your legislators to support LD 1622. Maine lawmakers have the opportunity to give Maine workers an easy way to increase their savings and take control of their own future.

Pat Pinto
AARP Maine Volunteer State President
Portland

Helping towns support veterans

From Maine Senate

AUGUSTA — Last week, the Maine Senate voted in favor of a bill from Sen. Donna Bailey (D-Saco) to allow municipalities to opt-in to a program that benefits veterans by keeping their property tax rate credits at a steady rate, unaffected by the change in a town or city's valuation.

LD 191, "An Act To Permit Municipalities To Provide Assistance to Veterans in Paying Property Taxes," received unanimous support in the Senate.

"We want to give veterans the maximum tax credit, regardless of any changes in the market value of the municipality in which they reside,"

said Sen. Bailey. "LD 191 grants us another opportunity to support veterans in our state and to encourage their home ownership. I'm grateful to receive the support of the Senate."

In LD 191, each municipality that chooses to adopt this voluntary program would determine what the appropriate length of time of homeownership is before veterans can receive this benefit. The State's share of taxes would not change. Veterans who are renters would receive a \$100 annual benefit.

Senate President Troy Jackson (D-Allagash) a co-sponsor of this bill, said: "Over the past several years, we have heard from

Mainers all over the state who have been struggling with high property taxes. This burden has made it more difficult for seniors and working-class Mainers to stay in their homes and live with some sense of comfort and peace of mind. That's why easing the property tax burden has been a top priority for me and many of my colleagues. I'm proud of the progress we have made, but it's clear that there is always more work to do. This bill gives an additional option for municipalities to provide property tax relief to veterans in Maine who have served our country."

LD 191 faces further votes in the Legislature.

Maine home sales up in March

From Maine Realtors

AUGUSTA - Strong home buyer demand continued across Maine last month, with Realtors reporting 1,313 single-family existing home sales—a sales jump of 16.81 percent over March 2020.

According to statistics released today by Maine Listings, the statewide median sales price (MSP) reached \$268,500, an increase of 17.79 percent compared to March 2020.

The MSP indicates that half of the homes were sold for more and half sold for less.

"Maine residential real estate sales volume and median sold values showed continued strength during March 2021," said Aaron Bolster, Broker/Owner of Allied Realty in Skowhegan and President of the Maine Association of REALTORS®. "The pace in the residential real estate market continues to be rapid. For March 2021, the statewide days on market statistic was 11 days, compared to 48 days for March 2020."

The National Association of Realtors reported a 10.4 percent nationwide increase compared to the March 2020 statistics. Prices also rose 18.4 percent to reach a national MSP of \$334,500. Regionally, sales in the Northeast jumped 16.9 percent and the regional MSP increased 21.4 percent to \$364,800 comparing March 2021 to March 2020.

"In this fast-moving market, homes become available for sale and are immediately met with pent-up buyer demand," added Bolster. "Whether you're a seller or a buyer, start working with a REALTOR® when you first think about transacting real estate so that you're fully prepared and ready to take action."

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Dogs

Continued from page 1

Gardner said she started her non-profit group because she has “been a dog trainer for nine years now, and I could not keep up with the demand of people asking for service dogs and therapy dogs.”

“We just had our first graduating class in April,” she said. Two of the four dogs that graduated were at the Colisee on Friday. “The arena here is a great training environment for the dogs” and their handlers, because the crowds, the food, and the different game noises “are just a great way to spice up their training.” Dogs are trained to remain calm under various conditions to properly meet the needs of their handlers.

There were also four therapy dogs at the game, including two – Bentley and Grace - who spend every day in the office of Lewiston chiropractor Dr. Phil McLean and his wife, Amy.

The McLeans are raising Grace to be a therapy dog. When she is old enough, she will be bred, and her puppies will be put into the Mission Working Dogs program, McLean said. Bentley is seven years old and is also being trained as a service

dog to help someone with handicaps. He’ll be able to follow directions, such as “turn left” or “turn right”, or push a button on demand. “He’s got the perfect temperament for it,” McLean said.

Rebecca Mann is the vice-president and veteran’s advocate for Mission Working Dogs. She loves animals and has three dogs, including her service dog, Sully. She served in the army for 11 years, including two deployments to Afghanistan. She was medically retired in 2016 after suffering an injury that led to a double-leg amputation. She and Gardner both have prosthetic legs.

Lauren King is the secretary for the non-profit group, working as a school teacher in central Maine.

Claire Parker is the treasurer and youth advisor for the group. She is the owner and handler for Lucky Tim, the facility dog for Leeds Central School in Leeds.

As the secretary for Leeds Central, Parker brings Lucky to school every day. He plays with the pre-K through grade 6 children at recess, running around on just three legs after a front-leg amputation several years ago.



Handlers and trainers with Mission Working Dogs of Lewiston greeted visitors to a hockey game at the Androscoggin Bank Colisee last Friday night as part of a fund-raising event for the non-profit group. Dogs are trained as either therapy dogs, to help people with emotional needs, or service dogs, to help people who are disabled. (Tsukroff photo)



Carlie Thwaits snuggles with “Indie”, an eight-week-old puppy, at a fund-raising event for Mission Working Dogs before a hockey game last Friday at the Androscoggin Bank Colisee. (Tsukroff photo)



Lewiston chiropractor Dr. Phil McLean and his wife, Amy, prepare their dogs Bentley and Grace to greet visitors. (Tsukroff photo)



Therapy dog Lucky Tim takes a break with owner/handler Claire Parker of Leeds. Parker is a secretary at Leeds Central School, where Lucky is the facility dog. He plays with the pre-K through grade 6 students, running around on just three legs. (Tsukroff photo)

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Keep wildlife out of your backyard



Spring can be an exciting time to see wildlife, and homeowners can take steps to keep wildlife out of backyards. (Photo courtesy of Maine DFIW)

From Maine DIFW

AUGUSTA - Some wildlife species are drawn to residential areas because they offer food, shelter, and safety from natural predators. This can be an exciting time to see wildlife!

Seeing wildlife

during daylight is typically not a cause for concern. In the spring and summer, mothers are busy raising their young and may need to look for food during the day.

The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife says that to prevent wildlife from coming to your yard, you just need to understand why animals might be attracted to your property, and then take some preventative steps.

KEEP WILDLIFE WILD

- Watch wildlife from a distance.
- Never approach, handle, feed, or attempt to

move a wild animal.

FEED BIRDS THE NATURAL WAY

- Plant native plants in your yard that provide food and shelter for birds and other species, without attracting rodents and other animals.

ELIMINATE ACCESS TO SHELTER

- Seal potential entry points in attics or chimneys and under buildings, decks, and crawl spaces with 1/4-inch mesh hardware cloth, boards, or metal flashing.
- Trim tree limbs near rooftops and attach sheets of metal flashing around building corners.

PROTECT POULTRY AND LIVESTOCK

- Secure your poultry and livestock in a predator-proof pen, protected by electric fencing or guard animals.
- Store food indoors or in an animal-proof container.

BE SMART ABOUT THE GARBAGE

- Store garbage in a building.
- Use garbage cans with latching lids that do not open if pushed over.
- If you have curbside pickup, wait until that morning to take out the trash.
- Keep dumpster lids closed and latched.

COMPOST RESPONSIBLY

- Secure your compost to keep wildlife out.
- Never compost animal matter, which can become smelly and attract wildlife.

BE A RESPONSIBLE PET OWNER

- Keep your pet's vaccinations up to date.
- Keep your pet on a leash and under control at all times.
- Don't feed pets outside unless you must; and if that's the case, clean up after.
- Don't feed feral cats.
- At night (dusk until dawn), brings your pets inside and lock pet doors to keep other animals out.

Bill supports affordable housing in Maine

From Maine Senate

AUGUSTA — The Maine Senate voted last week in favor of a bill from Sen. Nate Libby (D-Lewiston) to support affordable housing and preserve historic buildings in Maine through the extension of a tax credit program.

LD 201, "An Act To Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Promote Weatherization in the Buildings Sector by Extending the Sunset Date for

the Historic Property Rehabilitation Tax Credit," received unanimous support in the Senate.

"There is a well-documented shortage of affordable housing here in Maine. Newspapers are full of headlines about how hard it is for Maine families to find a place to live. This bill would extend a successful tax credit that will not only increase safe, affordable housing stock, but also help preserve the character of our downtowns," said Sen. Libby. "I'm grateful to my colleagues for their support of this bill."

As amended, LD 201 would extend the sunset date for the Maine Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (MHRTC) from 2025 to 2030. The MHRTC incentivizes business and real estate owners as well as property developers to rehabilitate and reuse income-producing historic buildings in Maine. The credit encourages investment in downtown areas

to spur revitalization, and to create affordable housing. The MHRTC helps encourage redevelopment of housing located within walking distance of downtown stores and services, which reduces the need for new construction and the dependence on motorized transportation.

"The historic rehabilitation tax credit demonstrates that historic preservation is a critical strategy for community revitalization," said Greg Paxton, executive director of Maine Preservation. "Among many other projects, these credits have been used to rehab 15 vacant or underused mill buildings and 23 abandoned schools across the state, and strengthened instead of dragging down the intown areas around them. And these projects are loved by citizens of our communities, who feel pride in the repurposing for current uses of the historic buildings constructed so well by our predecessors."

Since the program was adopted in 2008, almost 1,300 affordable homes have been created or preserved, and almost 700 new full-time, year-round jobs have been generated by businesses occupying commercial spaces and in building maintenance. To date, the program has generated \$3 million more in state and local tax revenues than it has cost in tax credits.

LD 201 faces further votes in the Legislature.

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First tick findings reported for 2020

From UMaine

ORONO - The Maine Forest Tick Survey at the University of Maine has issued its 2020 Citizen Science Results Report for nine southern and coastal counties in the state, and is seeking forest landowners to be part of its citizen science research program this summer.

To understand the growing risks of tick-borne diseases in Maine and investigate potential risk mitigation strategies, UMaine researchers developed the state's first active tick surveillance program in partnership with volunteer landowners with up to 1,000 wooded acres in Androscoggin, Cumberland, Hancock, Knox, Kennebec, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Waldo and York counties.

Land managers and citizen science landowners collect ticks on their wooded properties, which are then identified and tested for pathogens.

The researchers leading the multiyear, multi-disciplinary project — research associate Elissa Ballman and faculty members Allison Gardner, Jessica Leahy and Carly Spornarski — also are studying the relationship between land management practices and tick-borne disease exposure risk to help better protect landowners, recreationists and forest workers in Maine.

According to the recently released 2020 Citizen Science Results Report, adult tick populations last year were robust in the early summer, but the nymph populations were greatly reduced compared to recent years. This was likely a result of the unusually hot, dry weather in mid-summer.

In 2020, the first year of the project, 116 volunteer citizen scientists in nine southern and coastal Maine counties collected more than 2,000 specimens, 1,643 of which were ticks. Researchers tested 445 of those ticks — blacklegged tick nymphs — for pathogens. The largest number of blacklegged tick nymphs were collected in Knox County, followed by Kennebec County.

Of those blacklegged tick nymphs, more than 25% were carrying *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the bacterium responsible for Lyme disease. All nine counties in the study had ticks positive for the pathogen, with the highest rates in Hancock and Cumberland counties.

Over 7% of the blacklegged tick nymphs were carrying *Anaplasma phagocytophilum*, the bacterium responsible for anaplasmosis. It was detected in ticks in six of the counties, with the highest prevalence in Knox County.

More than 5% of the blacklegged tick nymphs were carrying *Babesia microti*, the organism responsible for babesiosis. It was found in six counties, with the highest prevalence rates in Knox and Cumberland counties.

The 2020 Citizen Science Results Report also found that properties with timber harvests in the past 20 years had significantly fewer blacklegged ticks. In addition, properties with invasive plants had significantly more blacklegged ticks; that was especially true of land with Japanese barberry and bush honeysuckle, corroborating previous research findings.

This year's Maine Forest Tick Survey in the nine counties hopes to expand with the recruitment of 150 new volunteer forest landowners in the nine southern and coastal Maine counties. The citizen scientists will collect ticks for identification and testing for associated pathogens, and send them to the university for analysis. Online training and collection materials, including drag cloths and vials, will be provided for volunteers in June.

Sampling will begin in July, the month when blacklegged tick nymphs (the life stage responsible for most human infections) are active. Participating citizen scientists will be asked to sample for ticks on three days throughout the month for an hour each day, and will receive the identification and pathogen test results of their tick samples, as well as reports about the findings of the entire project, during the winter.

More information about the Maine Forest Tick Survey, including how to volunteer, is available online or by contacting Elissa Ballman, the citizen science coordinator, elissa.ballman@maine.edu. Follow project updates on Facebook and Twitter.

The University of Maine, founded in Orono in 1865, is the state's land grant, sea grant and space grant university.

Guest Essay

Flavors Hook Kids supports cigarette ban

From Flavors Hook Kids

AUGUSTA - We strongly support the FDA's decision to prohibit the sale of menthol cigarettes and all flavored cigars. We urge them to move swiftly in doing so. But let's put our expectations in perspective. FDA action will take years, and flavored tobacco products are hooking our kids right now.

Maine lawmakers can and must take immediate action on menthol cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products by passing LD 1550, An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products.

Congress gave the FDA authority over tobacco products in 2009, including the authority to require large warning labels. The FDA announced their intention to require such labels in 2011. Ten years later, we are still waiting. An FDA decision is not the

same as FDA action.

Maine kids can't wait 10 years for these deadly products to be removed from store shelves. States must act now and Maine is poised to do so with LD 1550. We cannot put another generation of Maine kids in harm's way by leaving menthol, mint, and candy flavored tobacco on the store shelves.

There are now over 15,000 flavored tobacco products on the market and menthol cigarettes are by far the most dangerous. Menthol numbs the throat and masks the harsh taste of tobacco, making it easier to inhale, and inhale more deeply. People who smoke menthol also show greater signs of nicotine addiction and are less likely to successfully quit smoking than other smokers.

The harm from menthol flavored tobacco is all around us, spanning generations. For decades the tobacco industry has targeted people with lower incomes, African Americans, Native Americans, and LGBTQ youth and young adults with cheaper pricing and predatory advertising of flavored products, particularly menthol.

Today, half of all current high school smokers use menthol cigarettes, while more than 8 out of 10 African American adults who smoke use menthol cigarettes. It's no accident that Black Americans die at higher rates than any other racial or ethnic group in the U.S. from tobacco-related diseases such as cancer, heart disease, and stroke.

Many of us have mothers or grandmothers who started smoking because menthol was advertised as "light", "mild", and "smooth". Believing menthol was a safer tobacco product, many have


now paid the price with a lifetime of nicotine addiction, poor health, and too often, premature death.

This is about justice and equity, and taking long overdue action on the health disparities created and perpetuated by the tobacco industry.

The FDA's decision is long overdue. But let's not get lulled into a false sense of security that the problem of menthol cigarettes and other flavored tobacco is now solved. Action is needed now to protect kids and save lives. We call on the Maine Legislature and Governor Mills to end the sale of all flavored tobacco products and give this generation of Maine kids a fair shot at a healthy, productive future, free from tobacco addiction.


More information about the Flavors Hook Kids campaign can be found at www.flavorshookkidsmaine.org.

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Arts & Entertainment

Theatre silent auction starts May 16



From CLT

LEWISTON - The L-A Community Little Theatre (CLT) is preparing to launch its third annual “Not So Little” Online Auction starting May 16. Funds raised from this year’s auction will be directed to the theatre’s building fund. Local businesses have again showed tremendous support for CLT through sponsorship and

the donation of items. The focus of CLT’s last auction, which earned \$6,700, was to cover costs incurred after the theatre had to shut down due to the pandemic. While the theatre has yet to launch its first post-COVID production, volunteers have been busy with behind-the-scenes activity and making improvements to the facility. The CLT community hopes to bring back live theatre to the Lewis-

ton-Auburn community in the very near future. This year’s auction is sponsored by Modern Woodmen, Skelton Taintor and Abbott, and L’Hommedieu Law. Donations have been made by Shaw’s, Day’s Jewelers, Lamey Wellehan, Broadstreet Music, Martindale Country Club, and the Inn at Poland Spring, just to name a few. The auction boasts more than 50 items including private sailing cruises,

signed theater memorabilia, designer purses, art work, cookware, golf outings, and dance and piano lessons. All auction information is on the CLT website at www.laclt.com. Bidding will go live at noon on Sunday, May 16 and will continue through 8 p.m. Sunday, May 30. Additional items are likely to be added to the auction after bidding begins.

Summer Programs at the Knight House

From AHS

AUBURN - The Androscoggin Historical Society has developed an informative and fun series of experiences scheduled throughout the summer at the Knight House. Constructed in 1796, this is the oldest house in downtown Auburn. It is located on the Auburn Riverwalk near West Pitch Park. Programs are free, although donations are gratefully accepted. Masking is required

to enter the house. For more information, please contact the Society at 784-0586. **Tours:** **Saturday, May 29, from 1:00-4:00** The outside theme will honor “Memorial Day,” with an emphasis on The Civil War. **Wednesday, June 9, from 1:00-4:00** The outside activities will involve “Methods of Communication,” from slates and quills, to telephones and typewriters.

Saturday, June 26, from 1:00-4:00 Outside activities will involve “Cleaning Chores” using old artifacts. **Wednesday, July 14, from 1:00-4:00** The outside theme will feature textiles and “Needle Tatting” demonstrations. **Saturday, July 31, from 1:00-4:00** The outside activities will feature “Old Fashioned Games.” **Wednesday, August 11, from 1:00-4:00**

The outside theme will be “Preserving Foods” and will feature a corn sheller, apple peeler, and butter maker. **Saturday, August 28, from 1:00-4:00** The theme will be “The Herb Garden” and will include samples from The Knight House culinary and medicinal herb garden. **Monday, October 11, from 1:00-4:00** Celebrate Indigenous People’s Day by viewing the Ne-Do-Ba collection of artifacts donated to AHS.

Introduction to Meditation

from Auburn Library

AUBURN - Interested in how meditation works to bring personal balance, but not sure where to start? In honor of Mental Health Awareness Month, Mellow Mainer Meditation joins Auburn Public Library again to lead this Introduction to Meditation course, perfect for beginners. The course will be virtual via Zoom, from 4:30-5:30 on Wednesday, May 19. Call Donna Wallace at Auburn Public Library, 333-6640, ext. 4, to register. Incorporating meditation as part of your daily self-care routine is like medicine for the mind and spirit. This session includes a short,

guided meditation plus a resource list. For more information on Mellow Mainer Meditation, visit mellowmainer-meditation.com. This program is for adults, and will be presented via Zoom. To register, please call the Reference Department at 207-333-6640, ext. 4, or email dwallace@auburnpubliclibrary.org. The Zoom link will be sent to you on the day of the program. For more information on this or other upcoming, virtual programs offered by the Auburn Public Library, visit our website (auburnpubliclibrary.org), our Facebook page (Auburn Public Library Advocates), or call or email.

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Maine Senate Dems reject ‘junk insurance’ plans

From Maine Legislature

AUGUSTA — Senate President Troy Jackson (D-Allagash) and members of the Senate Democratic Caucus soundly rejected legislation to bring back junk insurance health plans in a vote of 22-13 on Thursday.

The vote comes after the Maine Legislature passed a law putting strict limitations on junk insurance plans in 2019.

“Mainers expect their health insurance plans to cover their basic needs and be there when they are sick or injured. It’s why my colleagues and I championed legislation to put strict limits on short-term health insurance plans, otherwise known as junk insurance plans, last session,” said President Jackson. “Health insurance companies shouldn’t be able to trick Mainers into purchasing these cheap, faulty plans. They shouldn’t be able to

sell Mainers a bill of goods only to pull the rug out from underneath them in a health crisis. Today, we once again made it clear that Senate Democrats will always choose Maine people over large insurance companies.”

These junk insurance plans are typically offered as a substitute for comprehensive health care coverage but fail to cover the basics. The plans aren’t subject to the same standards ushered into statute through the Affordable Care Act or Maine’s Act To Protect Health Care Coverage for Maine Families. This means plans can discriminate based on health status, age and gender, exclude coverage of preexisting conditions, impose annual or lifetime limits, opt not to cover entire categories of benefits (such as prescription drugs), rescind coverage, and require higher out-of-pocket cost-sharing than otherwise allowed.

“Federal changes to the Affordable Care Act have made it possible for all Mainers, regardless of their income level, to qualify for subsidies to purchase quality, affordable health care plans. Instead of pushing for short-term plans that are nothing but junk, Maine lawmakers should get getting the word out to constituents that they are eligible for affordable coverage and should sign-up now,” said Sen. Heather Sanborn (D-Portland), Chair of the Legislature’s Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee. “Mainers can go to [CoverME.gov](#) to learn more.”

Short-term health plans often don’t cover the cost of prescription drugs or maternity care. Many states have joined Maine in taking action to protect residents from short-term health plans, including Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Guest Column Drug Addiction in Rural America

By M.K. Leach

Roughly 46 million or 14% of the population are currently classified as living in rural areas, and around 15 out of 100 people live in rural areas.

However, drug addiction and drug overdose have surpassed rates in urban areas and have become a major public health concern. Overdose rates have skyrocketed amid the COVID-19 pandemic, drastically affecting rural America. According to the Centers for Disease Control, drug overdose deaths have surpassed other leading causes of death like AIDS or motor vehicle crashes. Opioids contribute to most of these deaths, which has been an ongoing trend for over 20 years.

In 1999, increases in deaths involving opioids began, and by 2010, heroin-involved deaths began to increase, and since 2013, more deaths involved synthetic opioids. Rural communities are at significant risk, and per the CDC, residents tend to be older, poorer, and sicker than those living in urban centers. Moreover, differences in socioeconomic factors, health behaviors, and access to drug rehab and health care contribute to the problem.

Drug addiction can be especially hard to combat in rural areas

due to limited resources for prevention, treatment, and recovery. Some states have taken steps to increase access to rural drug rehab centers and programs and have seen success. However, drug addiction and overdose in rural areas continue to be problematic. According to a 2014 Update of the Rural-Urban Chartbook, drug rehab admission rates for nonmetropolitan counties were highest for alcohol as the primary substance, followed by marijuana, stimulants, and opioids. Factors contributing to drug addiction in rural America include low educational attainment, poverty, unemployment, lack of access to healthcare, and isolation.

Additionally, more opioids are being prescribed in rural America. The CDC analyzed prescribing data and found the number of patients being prescribed opioids was higher in rural areas than in urban settings. Higher rates of opioid-related deaths have been recorded in rural areas than in urban areas. In 2017, 14 rural counties were among 15 counties with the highest opioid prescribing rates. The CDC also found that patients in rural counties had an 87% chance of receiving prescribed pain medication.

To place the information in context, in 1999, drug overdose death rates for urban areas


were higher than in rural areas. In 2004 the rates converged, and in 2006 overdose rates were higher in rural areas. In 2015, approximately six times as many drug overdose deaths occurred in urban areas than in rural areas. Overall, there are significant regional differences rurally—in 2016, opioid-related deaths were higher in urban than in rural counties, particularly in the Midwest. However, over the past two decades, rates have increased more in rural areas than in urban areas nationally.

The most dramatic increase in opioid-related deaths occurred in the rural Midwest, which was 16 times higher in 2016. Moreover, prescription opioids are involved in a larger share of rural than urban drug overdose deaths. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant issues for many rural communities, especially those struggling with an increased number of overdose deaths. It is clear that drug addiction is just as much a problem in rural America as it is in urban centers.

Michael Leach has spent most of his career as a health care professional specializing in Substance Use Disorder and addiction recovery. He is a regular contributor to the healthcare website Addicted.org and a Certified Clinical Medical Assistant.


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COVID-19 IN OUR COMMUNITY

UPDATED FACTS & DATA FOR AUBURN, MAINE





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AVERAGE CASE COUNT FOR ANDROSCOGGIN COUNTY

LAST 7 DAYS: 61.71
PREVIOUS 7 DAYS: 86.28

AVERAGE CASE COUNT FOR AUBURN & LEWISTON

LAST 7 DAYS
AUBURN: 14.2
LEWISTON: 24.42

PREVIOUS 7 DAYS
AUBURN: 18.28
LEWISTON: 33.28

The City of Auburn has worked to educate residents and local businesses, across many platforms and through all populations. We have received some complaints regarding compliance issues, but we have worked with those involved and overall, have had a high level of compliance.

The City has closely monitored all communications from the Governor's office and from Maine CDC and we have developed safety plans for most any activity in Auburn. Our community has done well with following protocol and the advice of experts throughout this pandemic.

Androscoggin County has a positivity rate of 3.5% over the last 14 days, which is down from 3.7% over the last 28 days. In comparison, three other counties in Maine have higher positivity rates over the last 14 days. Androscoggin County has also seen the case rate per 10,000 people drop from the previous 14-day period and the number of outbreaks drop from 16 to 9.

City staff have also had an integral part in the operations of the mass vaccine site at the Auburn Mall and the Auburn Fire Department has been working with Maine CDC to vaccinate those who may otherwise have difficulties in getting to a traditional vaccination site.

DATA FROM MAINE CDC

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Trade show

Continued from page 1

years. Visitors have enjoyed around 75-80 exhibits in previous shows.

As far as exhibits, “We had a little bit of everything,” Dow said. Exhibits included furniture, yard services, household goods and knickknacks, building services, windows and doors, and generators.

With fewer exhibitors this year, the show featured wider aisles and larger booths than in past years. Dow said there is lots of room available to add exhibitors in future shows. For this year, he took advantage of the extra space to “to just make it open, and allow for as much social-distancing as possible.”

The advantage to an in-person show is that visitors can speak directly with a vendor, Dow said. “A key component to it is actually talking to somebody that knows what they’re doing” with the services offered.

For the vendors,

the show is important to generating leads for their businesses, Dow said, so the exhibitors “were really thankful” to be at the show.

This first trade show of the pandemic in Maine “broke the ice for the events industry to show people that we can do it, and that it can happen,” Dow said. He expects other trade shows to be presented in Maine, now that he was able to demonstrate they can take place safely.

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Mike Chizman of New Auburn discusses the benefits of solar power with Matt Brown and Shiyoko Mosher of The Solar Community at the Maine Home Show in April at the Norway Savings Bank Arena in Auburn. The home show was cancelled last year, due to the pandemic, and was the first trade show in Maine this year. (Tsukroff photo)



Brandy Leclair (right), of Hill and Shores Woodworks, demonstrates a wooden bottle cap opener to Jannine Hemond (center) and her daughter, Jennifer, along with their dog, Lucy, at the Maine Home Show in April at the Norway Savings Bank Arena in Auburn. (Tsukroff photo)



About 50 exhibitors filled one of the ice rinks at the Norway Savings Bank Arena in Auburn for the Maine Home Show in early April, the first trade show in Maine since the pandemic began more than a year ago. (Tsukroff photo)

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Shawn Cantwell and Don Billings of DMR Sealcoating at their booth at the Maine Home Show in April at the Norway Savings Bank Arena in Auburn. (Laurie Steele photo)



Michelle Di Emedio, Tim Berube, Jim Hebert and Tony Fontaine of Aireserv at the Maine Home Show in April at the Norway Savings Bank Arena in Auburn. (Laurie Steele photo)



Bob Carey of Aerus at the Maine Home Show in April at the Norway Savings Bank Arena in Auburn. (Laurie Steele photo)

See Page 10-11 for more Home Show photos

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Jaime Johnson, a Scentsy independent consultant, at the Maine Home Show in April at the Norway Savings Bank Arena in Auburn. (Laurie Steele photo)



Riley, Nathan, and Dylan with Collegiate Entrepreneurs at the Maine Home Show in April at the Norway Savings Bank Arena in Auburn. (Laurie Steele photo)





Ryan Pleau and Thomas Favreau at their AAA Insurance booth at the Maine Home Show in April at the Norway Savings Bank Arena in Auburn. (Laurie Steele photo)



Timothy Evrard with Apex Exteriors & Finish at the Maine Home Show in April at the Norway Savings Bank Arena in Auburn. (Laurie Steele photo)



Kim Richards Jones at her Tupperware booth at the Maine Home Show in April at the Norway Savings Bank Arena in Auburn. (Laurie Steele photo)



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Bob Waterman of Waterman Farm Machinery shows off a riding mower at the Maine Home Show in April at the Norway Savings Bank Arena in Auburn. (Laurie Steele photo)



Dave Roy and Nick Roy of A-1 Seamless gutters at the Maine Home Show in April at the Norway Savings Bank Arena in Auburn. (Laurie Steele photo)



Don Asselin of Prestige Pools waits for visitors in his booth at the Maine Home Show in April at the Norway Savings Bank Arena in Auburn. (Laurie Steele photo)



Heidi and Justin Bernier of Meservier & Associates at the Maine Home Show in April at the Norway Savings Bank Arena in Auburn. (Laurie Steele photo)



Holly Morris of Hardt's Kitchen & Bath Center at the Maine Home Show in April at the Norway Savings Bank Arena in Auburn. (Laurie Steele photo)



Jack Rhodes with NUIMAGE of Maine at the Maine Home Show in April at the Norway Savings Bank Arena in Auburn. (Laurie Steele photo)



Michelle Rossignol shows the available colors at her Color Street Nails display at the Maine Home Show in April at the Norway Savings Bank Arena in Auburn. (Laurie Steele photo)

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Avoid Fraudulent Tax Preparers

From US DOJ

WASHINGTON, D.C. – With just a couple of weeks left in this year’s tax season, the Department of Justice urges taxpayers to choose their return preparers wisely.

Return preparer fraud is one of the IRS’ Dirty Dozen Tax Scams. Unscrupulous preparers who include errors or false information on a customer’s return could leave a taxpayer open to liability for unpaid taxes, penalties, and interest.

Over the last year, the Justice Department’s Tax Division has worked with U.S. Attorney’s Offices around the country to bring both civil and criminal action against dishonest tax preparers, seeking as ap-

propriate civil injunctions to stop ongoing fraud, civil penalties or disgorgement of ill-gotten proceeds, and criminal sanctions. The department intends to send a strong message that those who prepare fraudulent returns will face serious and lasting consequences.

Examples of civil injunctions obtained by the Tax Division over the last year include:

On Feb. 25, 2021, a federal court in Delaware enjoined return preparers Jorge Bravo, Michael Eller Income Tax Service, Nelson Graciano and Pedro Toala from preparing, filing or assisting in the preparation or filing of any federal tax returns which claim ineligible persons as dependents, claim improper business expenses or losses, or

improperly claiming the Child Tax Credit and other credits. The injunction runs through Dec. 31, 2026, and requires the defendants to hire an independent monitor to examine selected returns.

On Nov. 17, 2020, a federal court in the Northern District of New York entered a stipulated permanent injunction against Demetric Williams, individually and doing business as Poor No More LLP, that bars him from preparing returns for others, and from owning or operating a tax return preparation business, and from representing customers in connection with any matter before the IRS. Williams was required to notify his customers of the order.

On Aug. 27, 2020, a

federal court in the Western District of Tennessee permanently enjoined Rickey Greer and Stacie Smith (formerly Greer) from acting as federal tax return preparers, assisting in any way in the preparation of federal income tax returns, and representing any person before the IRS. Under the terms of the injunction, the Greers agreed to give up their IRS-assigned preparer identification numbers.

The Tax Division has also sought to strip fraudulent preparers of ill-gotten gains and to hold in contempt those who attempt to flout court-ordered restraints on further fraudulent activity.

The Tax Division reminds taxpayers that the IRS has information on


its website for choosing a tax preparer, has launched a free directory of federal tax preparers, and offers information on how to avoid “ghost” tax preparers, whose refusal to sign a return should be a red flag to taxpayers. (More information can also be found here.) The IRS also has a list of important reminders for taxpayers who are about to file their 2020 tax returns, including how to prepare for a smooth filing process.

In addition, IRS Free File, a public-private partnership, offers free online tax preparation and filing options on IRS partner websites for individuals whose adjusted gross income is under \$72,000. For individuals whose income is over that threshold, IRS

Free File offers electronic federal tax forms that can be filled out and filed online for free.

Acting Assistant Attorney General David A. Hubbert of the Tax Division made the announcement.


In the past decade, the Tax Division has obtained injunctions against hundreds of unscrupulous tax preparers. Information about these cases is available on the Justice Department’s website. An alphabetical listing of persons enjoined from preparing returns and promoting tax schemes can be found this page. If you believe that one of the enjoined persons or businesses may be violating an injunction, please contact the Tax Division with details.




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‘Light, Line, Form’ at CCAC



“Nautilus Shell” by Maryjane Johnston (Photo courtesy of CCAC)

From CCAC

BATH - The Chocolate Church Arts Center gallery will feature Maine artists Maryjane Johnston and Tanja Kunz in a show titled “Light, Line, Form”, with an opening event at CCAC on Friday, May 28.

“Light, Line, Form” will feature recent works from the two artists, and will juxtapose minimalism and fullness through photography and painting.

Maryjane Johnston, who was born in Bermuda and grew up in Cape Elizabeth, is best known for her photographs of the female form. She presents the female form as simplified, with ambiguous shapes that can be revealing, mystifying, and personal. The intimate nature of the subjects immerses the viewer in a universe of sensations sometimes blurring the line between illusion and reality.

Tanja Kunz received her M.F.A from the University of Victoria, in British Columbia, and her B.F.A. from the University of New

Mexico, in Albuquerque. Her paintings and drawings reference the natural world, but are abstract and mysterious. The artist says, “With a background in natural healing and traditional medicine, this work reflects my fascination with the energy, beauty, and power of nature.”

The Chocolate Church Arts Center, at 804 Washington Street in Bath, will host a gallery opening event with the artists from 5-7:30 p.m. on May 28. The event will take place mostly outdoors, with light refreshments served. Four people will be allowed to enter the gallery at a time, and face coverings must be worn by all attendees. The event is free to attend, but guests must register in advance. Tickets and more information can be found at chocolatechurcharts.org.

“Light, Line, Form” will be on display until June 26, with the gallery open Tuesday-Saturday 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Visit the CCAC website and Facebook page for more information, or call 207-442-8455.

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LEWISTON – Lewiston Public Library - Virtual Preschool Babytime & Storytime. Children 0-5 are welcome to join the fun on Zoom as Ms. Jackie uses interactive songs and stories to introduce children to the world of books, learning, and the library. Call 207-513-3133 for details and registration.

1ST AND 3RD TUESDAYS
11:30 a.m.
LEWISTON – Lewiston Public Library - Virtual Book Chat. Join LPL staff via Facebook Live for a conversation about what we're reading. Make suggestions, share your thoughts, find resources, and get personalized recommendations from our librarians!

THURSDAY
May 13
9:30 a.m.
GORHAM – Baxter Memorial Library. Toddler Discovery Time - Join Ms. Dani for a Virtual Discovery Time on Facebook as she reads a picture book to our youngest listeners. (18 months-3 yrs).
6-7 p.m.
GORHAM - Friends of Baxter Memorial Library Annual Meeting. The Friends of Baxter Memorial Library invite all members to their Annual Meeting on the lawn next to the

Calendar

Send your submissions to the Editor. More online.

library. Social distancing and masks are requested.

MONDAY
May 17
5:30 p.m.
AUBURN – City Council workshop and meeting.

TUESDAY
May 18
7:30 a.m.
AUBURN – Auburn Public Library Board of Trustees meeting.
8 a.m.
GORHAM – Ordinance Committee meeting, via Zoom.
9:30 a.m.
GORHAM – Baxter Memorial Library. Preschool Discovery Time – If you love picture books, watch Ms Heidi on Facebook as she reads a new book each week. (ages 3-5).

4 p.m.
AUBURN – Auburn Sewer District Trustees meeting.
6 p.m.
LEWISTON – City Council meeting. CAN BE VIEWED REMOTELY VIA ZOOM: Due to necessary COVID19 precautions, the May 18 City Council meeting will be broadcast via ZOOM -

<http://www.lewistonmaine.gov/2021cc> Also, public comment will be possible at publiccomment@lewistonmaine.gov The meeting will be archived on the City's YouTube channel <http://www.lewistonmaine.gov/YouTube> by the next day.

6 p.m.
AUBURN – Conservation Commission meeting.
6:30 p.m.
GORHAM – Tentative recurring Town Council Workshop, via Zoom.

WEDNESDAY
May 19
8 a.m.
GORHAM – Gorham Economic Development Corporation meeting, via Zoom.
10 a.m.
GORHAM – Baxter Memorial Library - join Ms. Deb on Facebook at <http://bitly.ws/d2uS> for a virtual STEAM activity – Homemade Granola. Activities are geared toward K-5 learners and require minimal supplies that you'll likely have right on-hand at home.

4 p.m.
AUBURN – Auburn Farmers' Market
4 p.m.

AUBURN – Auburn Water District Trustees meeting.

THURSDAY
May 20
8 a.m.
AUBURN – 9-1-1 Committee meeting.

9:30 a.m.
GORHAM – Baxter Memorial Library. Toddler Discovery Time - Join Ms. Dani for a Virtual Discovery Time on Facebook as she reads a picture book to our youngest listeners. (18 months-3 yrs).
4-5 p.m.
GORHAM – Eco-maine Executive Committee meeting, via online video conference.
6:30 p.m.
GORHAM – Tentative Capital Improvement Projects/Economic Development Committee meeting, via Zoom.

6:30 p.m.
GORHAM – Board of Appeals meeting, via Zoom.
7 p.m.
AUBURN – Community Forest Subcommittee meeting.

MONDAY
May 24
5:30-6:30 p.m.
LEWISTON – Finance Committee meeting at City Hall Administrator's Conference Room.
5:30 p.m.
LEWISTON – Planning Board meeting via Zoom. The Planning Board Agenda and information for this meeting will be available on the website on the Friday before the meeting date.

TUESDAY
May 25
9:30 a.m.
GORHAM – Baxter Memorial Library. Preschool Discovery Time – If you love picture books, watch Ms Heidi on Facebook as she reads a new book each week. (ages 3-5).
5:30 p.m.
AUBURN – Agriculture Committee meeting.

WEDNESDAY
May 26
7:30 a.m.
AUBURN – Auburn

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Housing Authority Board of Commissioners meeting.

10 a.m.
GORHAM – Baxter Memorial Library - join Ms. Deb on Facebook at <http://bitly.ws/d2uS> for a virtual STEAM activity - Building a Simple Shelter. Activities are geared toward K-5 learners and require minimal supplies that you'll likely have right on-hand at home.

4 p.m.
AUBURN – Auburn Farmers' Market.
6 p.m.
AUBURN – Complete Streets Committee meeting.

THURSDAY
May 27
9:30 a.m.
GORHAM – Baxter Memorial Library. Toddler Discovery Time - Join Ms. Dani for a Virtual Discovery Time on Facebook as she reads a picture book to our youngest listeners. (18 months-3 yrs).

4-5 p.m.
GORHAM – Eco-maine Outreach & Recycling Committee meeting, via online video conference.

6 p.m.
AUBURN – Comp. Plan Update Committee, via Zoom.

MONDAY
May 31
Municipal centers, administrative offices, and libraries closed in observance of Memorial Day
11 a.m.
GORHAM – Memorial Day Parade, starting at Village School.

if they have one. Minors must have parental consent and be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

Vaccination by appointment remains available.

To make an appointment or for more information about Central Maine Healthcare vaccination sites, visit cmhc.org or call Central Maine Healthcare's COVID vaccine call center at 207-520-2917.

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Walk-in
Continued from page 1

are delighted to offer this additional convenience to individuals 16 and older and to Maine residents and non-residents alike."

Walk-in vaccination will be available from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

Vaccination is available to individuals 16 and older. Individuals should bring their identification and their insurance card,

Send all items for What's Going On to the Editor. Deadline is Friday by five.

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AVSWCD seeks new board members

From AVSWCD

LEWISTON - Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District is currently seeking farmers, foresters, wildlife specialists, ecologists, conservation enthusiasts, and community members of both Androscoggin and Sagadahoc county to attend board meetings and join our board of supervisors.

Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District (AVSWCD), founded in 1947, is a non-profit organization co-operating with landowners and operators to help them manage and protect land and water resources on private and public lands. Conservation Districts are local units of government established under state law to carry out natural resource management programs at the local level. The Conservation District's main aim is to teach the proper methods of land use and how to obtain the utmost from its natural resources while maintaining its fertility, preventing flooding, erosion, drought, maintaining, and restoring wildlife habitats, and protecting our water supply.

By joining the board, you become directly involved in AVSWCD by attending monthly meetings, participating in planning events, future goals, and new ideas.

Board meetings are held monthly via Zoom every third Thursday of the month at 7-9 pm. These dates and times are subject to change to accommodate board members. Please email our district manager Mackenzie Richard at districtmanager@androscogginswcd.org for more information.

Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service are equal opportunity employers and program providers.

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