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Celtics posthumously honor Lewiston's Joe Walker

LEWISTON, ME -- Joe Walker, the manager of Schemengees Bar & Grille in Lewiston, ME, was well-known for ensuring the safety and satisfaction of his patrons. When a gunman began firing inside the restaurant on October 25, Walker swiftly took action to protect everyone present. Rather than using the bar's exit, Walker hurried to the kitchen to procure a weapon. Tragically, in his attempt to halt the assailant, he was fatally shot. His legacy lives on in the hearts of his family and the community, revered for his altruism and the ultimate sacrifice he made.

For putting others' lives before his own and making the ultimate sacrifice, Joe Walker was posthumously honored as a Hero Among Us during the Boston

Celtics home game against the Cleveland Cavaliers on Tuesday, December 12th. His family was in attendance for the game and the Heroes Among Us ceremony.

Lewiston, ME resident Joe Walker was posthumously honored as a Hero Among Us during halftime of the Boston Celtics home game against the Cleveland Cavaliers on Tuesday, December 12th, 2023.

Since its establishment in 1997 by the Boston Celtics, the Heroes Among Us program has recognized outstanding individuals who have made exceptional and lasting contributions to their communities. The award is presented at every Celtics home game and pays tribute to the heroic achievements of these outstanding citizens.



Lewiston, ME resident Joe Walker was posthumously honored as a Hero Among Us during halftime of the Boston Celtics home game against the Cleveland Cavaliers on Tuesday, December 12th, 2023. His family joined the Celtics in celebration of Joe for putting others' lives before his own and making the ultimate sacrifice during the recent, devastating mass shooting in Lewiston.

Turning spare space into a thriving community gallery

Guest column by Briana Hilton

LEWISTON, AUBURN, ME --

Lewiston-Auburn has a relatively mature population in terms of age. As the Sun Journal highlights, planning for later life has become a key step for many residents, and the community as a whole has a responsibility to provide support and steps to care for this invaluable section of society. The city and its community have already taken significant strides towards this with the decision of the referendum at Lewiston High School creating specific room for adult and senior learning, and there are now spaces being outlined for the use of the entire community in the future. With that in mind, it's worth considering what can make a community space a worthwhile area, starting with considering creativity.

Introducing creativity

A shared communal space needs to have a purpose - especially one that places a focus on that community and its adult citizens. That purpose can be communicated through its creative design, and this nod is especially important if the area is designed for creative uses. Consider, for instance, the use of sculptures, both metal and otherwise.

As ArchDaily notes, sculptures shape urban areas. As well as acting as a focal point, they can reflect and present the values of the town and its people. Some of the most famous sculptures do exactly this. Take, for instance, Barbara Hepworth's Summer Dance, which reflects the cultural and historical ties of its host towns of Cornwall to the ancient links of the region. Artwork should mean something. As it happens, the industrial and farming history of Lewiston-Auburn is a great basis for the use



of metal sculptures. Twisted and sculpted metals can easily provide a fantastic icon which harks back to the golden era of the twin cities, and will be a focal artistic point for an area with real purpose.

Making it utilitarian

It's important that any plans have an edge to them that will lend itself to the educational and vocational development of adults. Given, a public gallery and community space will already provide the community with some big benefits, ranging from the active space to be used through to the creativity such a space fosters. However, it must also be there for active use and cannot simply be something to look at.

A simple way to manage this is through providing ample sitting space - both conventional (in the forms of benches and such) and improved (such as stone steps, plinths and fountains). This is another great area to get creative with. Dezeen highlights

one sunken garden design used in Los Angeles, where shade can be taken from the sun and a distinctly green aspect given to any learning or other engagement. This is a great way to provide inspiration and make an area feel fully sheltered.

Ensuring inclusivity

Lewiston-Auburn is one of the most creatively dense places anywhere in the country, defined by the amount of public viewable artwork and creations in and around the city. You might not know this,

however, if you have any form of motor disability; according to Bates University, the accessibility that enables everyone to view these works of art is simply not there. It is imperative that any new developments put accessibility first.

There are simple principles to adhere to in ensuring that public spaces are accessible. These are providing wheelchair ramps; ensuring pathways are wide enough for the use of mobility aids; and making sure that pathways are level. Despite this, it can be quite easy to get this wrong. Using US federal and UN guidelines is important, as these will provide the proper widths and requirements for mobility aids and safety measures. This won't just aid people with mobility impairments, either, as those hard of hearing or sight will stand to benefit from inclusive spaces.

Pulling all of this together will ensure that any new public space is fit for the needs of older generations. They have a right to access education and learning, too, but these spaces are not always constructed in a way that's perfect for them. The design of these spaces needs to be carefully managed, of course, but that's entirely achievable while still creating a relaxing and creative area.



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Newsmakers, Names & Faces

Red Cross responds to growing climate-driven humanitarian needs

PORTLAND, ME— In 2023, the intensifying climate crisis took a devastating toll on people in the U.S. who turned to the American Red Cross for help coping with a record number of billion-dollar disasters.

So far this year, an all-time high of 25 billion-dollar disasters ravaged communities across the country. In our region, we saw historic flooding devastate much of Vermont this summer. Additionally, families sweltered in the nation's hottest summer on record, including places which rarely experience such extreme temperatures. Back-to-back disasters led to a series of blood drive cancellations, which further strained the national Red Cross blood supply that was already dwindling from summer travel and back-to-school activities.

"Intensifying extreme disasters are causing more humanitarian needs for families in Maine and across the country," said Stephanie Couturier, regional chief executive officer, Red Cross Northern New England. "This holiday season, please remember those who need support in the face of emergencies — and join us to provide care and comfort by making a financial donation, becoming a volunteer or by giving blood or platelets."

Help during the holidays by visiting redcross.org to make a financial donation or visit RedCrossBlood.org to make an appointment to give blood or platelets. Individuals can also learn more about joining our team through our upcoming virtual volunteer fairs on December 14, 2023, or February 22, 2024. Register here.

INCREASING SUPPORT AMID THE CLIMATE CRISIS

With the growing frequency and intensity of disasters driven by the climate crisis, the Red Cross is racing to adapt its services and grow its disaster response capacity across the country. As part of this national work in 2023, the Red Cross distributed \$108 million in financial assistance directly to people after disasters of all sizes, including July's catastrophic flooding across Vermont — and for other major disasters such as Hurricane Idalia, the Hawaii wildfires and a spate of tornadoes across multiple southern states.

Across the country, the Red Cross is delivering this vital financial assistance on top of its immediate relief efforts — including safe shelter, nutritious meals and emotional support — which have been provided on a near-constant basis for this



year's relentless extreme disasters. In fact, 2023's onslaught of large disasters drove an increase in emergency lodging provided by the Red Cross with partners — with overnight stays up more than 50% compared to the annual average for the previous five years.

Locally, Red Cross disaster volunteers continued working 24/7 to help Mainers affected by local home fires, the nation's most frequent disaster. In 2023, our Disaster Action Teams assisted 802 people after 222 home fires in Maine. These same teams doubled down on home fire prevention efforts by installing at least 944 free smoke alarms in homes across the state this year.

RESPONDING TO ADDITIONAL EMERGING NEEDS

Beyond extreme disasters, people stepped up through the Red Cross to address other emerging

needs for communities, including:

BLOOD DONATIONS: As the nation's largest blood supplier, the Red Cross is grateful for the millions of donors who rolled up a sleeve throughout the year for patients in need. To further improve people's health outcomes, the Red Cross has been working with community partners to introduce blood donation to a new and more diverse generation of blood donors — which is critical to ensuring that a reliable blood supply is available to the 1 in 7 hospital patients who need a lifesaving blood transfusion.

LIFESAVING TRAINING: This year, the Red Cross expanded its training to empower people to act during current-day crises — which is vital considering that nearly half of U.S. adults report being unprepared to respond to a medical emergency. This

included launching the new "Until Help Arrives" online training course last spring for opioid overdoses, severe bleeding, cardiac arrest and choking emergencies, and partnering with professional sports leagues through the Smart Heart Sports Coalition to help prevent tragedies among student athletes by offering CPR training and increasing access to AEDs.

MILITARY FAMILIES: Red Cross workers helped service members on U.S. military installations and deployment sites worldwide — including in Europe, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. As part of our support this year, Red Cross volunteers delivered emergency communications messages connecting more than 87,000 service members with their loved ones during times of family need, while also engaging members in morale and wellness activities during deployments.

INTERNATIONAL: As part of the world's largest humanitarian network, the American Red Cross supported international response efforts to disasters such as this year's massive earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria, the drought and hunger crisis in Africa, and flooding in Pakistan and Bangladesh. This has included providing millions in cash assis-

tance, food, shelter, basic supplies, medical care and mental health services. As devastating conflicts persist in other areas of the world, the global Red Cross Movement continues to provide aid for people suffering, including those in Ukraine and in Israel and Gaza, as part of its neutral, humanitarian mission.

Visit redcross.org/NEHoliday for more information about how the Red Cross of Northern New England helped people across our region in 2023.

The Red Cross is grateful for community partners and corporate supporters who contribute to our mission. Thanks to their generosity, the Red Cross is able to bring help and hope to people in need.

Send all items for Newsmakers, Names & Faces to the Editor. Deadline is Friday by five.

SNAP deadline to apply for help replacing food extended

AUGUSTA, ME— The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) announced today that Maine people who lost food purchased through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) as a result of Monday's storm now have until January 18, 2024, to apply for benefits to replace that food.

SNAP recipients originally had 10 days from

when the food was lost or from when power is restored to apply. Maine DHHS requested and received approval within 24 hours for the extension from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which oversees the SNAP program, to give Maine people who are still recovering from the impacts of the storm more time to apply.

How to apply for

SNAP benefits to replace lost food:

SNAP recipients who lost food purchased with SNAP benefits due to a power outage, flooding, or other misfortune related to the storm may be able to receive benefits to replace that food.

Losses must be reported to DHHS by January 18, 2024.

SNAP recipients

should fill out a simple form (PDF) available on the DHHS website at maine.gov/dhhs/ofi/applications-forms and email it to farmington.dhhs@maine.gov. Paper forms are also available at local DHHS offices.

The replacement benefit amount is the lesser of the total value of the food purchased with SNAP that was lost, or one month's

benefit.

General Assistance (GA) is another resource that Maine people can access to address immediate needs related to the storm. In an emergency, GA administrators in municipalities may presume individuals are eligible prior to full verification if the applicant reports an emergency that requires immediate assistance, and the administrator can rea-

sonably presume, after an initial interview, that the applicant will be eligible for assistance upon full verification. Loss of food or other impacts related to Monday's storm may be considered as a qualifying emergency. People can apply for GA in their city or town offices. If anyone is unable to reach their local GA administrator or has questions, they can call 1-800-442-6003.



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Newsmakers, Names & Faces

LA Metro Chamber launches small business supports

LEWISTON AUBURN, ME – The Lewiston Auburn Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce proudly announces the launch of two vital initiatives aimed at bolstering small businesses in Androscoggin County. In the wake of the October 25th Tragedy, the Chamber recognizes the challenges faced by local businesses. The LA Metro Chamber, a trusted resource for information, support, and response efforts, has been instrumental in addressing the needs of businesses affected by the tragedy, and is launching a two-pronged approach to support local businesses.

Small Business Relief Fund (SBRF) Grants: Immediate Relief for Androscoggin County Businesses

The Small Business Relief Fund (SBRF) is a crucial endeavor designed to offer short-term relief to businesses in Androscoggin County. These funds aim to stabilize the local economy and position the region for economic resilience following the unprecedented challenges of the October 25th tragedy.

History and Context: During the October 25-27th lockdown, businesses in the area faced

unexpected closures and incurred unforeseen expenses related to evacuations and disposal of perishable goods. The economic impact extended beyond the closures, with a slow rebound in customer return and revenue generation. Responding to the community's needs, the SBRF was initiated by the LA Metro Chamber prior to November 1, 2023, and has received overwhelming support with approximately \$575,000 raised by December 15, 2023.

Use of Funds:

As of December 15, 2023, the funds raised will be utilized in two phases:

Phase 1 Grants (Immediate Relief):

\$150,000 available on a first-come, first-served basis.

The first 150 eligible and complete applications received by January 19, 2024 will be awarded \$1,000, or until funds are fully granted.

If funds remain after January 19, 2024, they will be awarded through Phase 2 Grants.

Phase 2 Grants (Short Term Relief):

\$350,000 allocated for grants for businesses, and requires additional documentation.

Eligible Phase 1 ap-

plicants will be encouraged to submit Phase 2 Grant applications.

Regional Marketing and Contingency:

Collaborative marketing campaigns, led by the Chamber in partnership with media and municipalities, will encourage residents and visitors to support local businesses. The #LocalLAFlavor contest, starting immediately, invites participants to share pictures of their favorite local spots using #LocalLAFlavor for a chance to win.

\$75,000 is earmarked for initial marketing and emergent needs. If additional marketing funds are identified, SBRF funds will be used as a last resort, ensuring a portion of funds remains reserved for 2024 emergent needs.

Important Dates:

The Small Business Relief Grant Application launches on December 20, 2024.

Live support line available from Thursday, December 21, 2024, running 7 AM - 8 PM Monday-Friday (except holidays).

Deadlines for Phase 1 and Phase 2 Grants: January 19, 2023, 11:59 PM

FMI about the Small Business Relief



Grants: <https://lametrochamber.com/relief/>

#LocalLAFlavor Contest: Celebrating Local Cuisine and Community Support

To encourage area residents to get back out to their local favorite spots, a collaborative contest has been launched. Many bars, breweries, family entertainment, and restaurant businesses across Androscoggin County continue to see year-over-year losses since October 25th. "Many owners and operators are just starting to see a portion of their customer

base return, and their first question is "Where are the exits?." said Shanna Cox, President + CEO of the LA Metro Chamber of Commerce. "While the likelihood of another mass shooting is infinitesimally small, lingering fear is to be expected. This contest encourages people to check on their favorite bartender or server, order takeout, or sit down inside again."

The contest is easy - simply share a picture of a purchase from your favorite local spot with #LocalLAFlavor on Facebook or Instagram for a chance to

win. Three lucky winners will be selected - one \$100 winner and two \$50 winners. Let's celebrate our local flavors and demonstrate community support. The contest ends on January 8, 2024.

Businesses and individuals are both encouraged to get involved and enter to win. FMI, visit <https://lametrochamber.com/localaflavor-contest/>

For further information, contact Shanna Cox, President + CEO, by calling 207-783-2249 or emailing Shanna@LAMetroChamber.com

TRICARE authorizes temporary prescription refill waivers

FALLS CHURCH, VA – The Defense Health Agency (DHA) announced that TRICARE beneficiaries in 14 Maine counties may receive emergency prescription refills now through Dec. 29, 2023, due to severe weather.

The counties impacted are Androscoggin, Aroostook, Franklin, Hancock, Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Oxford, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Sagadahoc, Somerset, Waldo, and Washington.

To receive an emergency refill of prescription medications, TRICARE beneficiaries should take their prescription bottle to any TRICARE retail network pharmacy. If the bottle

is unavailable or the label is damaged or missing, beneficiaries should contact Express Scripts, Inc., or their retail network pharmacy for assistance.

To find a network pharmacy, beneficiaries may call Express Scripts at 1-877-363-1303, or use the Find a Pharmacy tool.

If possible, visit the pharmacy where the prescription was filled. Prescriptions filled by a retail chain may be filled at another store in that chain. If the clinician who prescribed the medication is available, beneficiaries can ask them to call in a new prescription to any network pharmacy.

As a reminder, TRICARE beneficiaries, other

than active duty service members, may receive urgent care from any TRICARE-authorized urgent care center or provider and do not need a referral. This allows beneficiaries to seek nonemergency care for illnesses or injuries if their primary care provider is unavailable because of emergencies. Any TRICARE beneficiary who reasonably believes they have an emergency should always call 911 or, go to the nearest emergency room.

Beneficiaries are advised to visit Express Scripts' weather alert page for updates.

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Aquarium welcomes guests with extended hours, new animals

BOSTON, MA – The New England Aquarium is excited to welcome guests this holiday season to see two newly arrived California sea lions, a new film in the Simons Theatre, and a free outdoor photo exhibition called “Voices of the Waterfront.”

The Aquarium will extend its hours from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily from December 26 to January 2. Guests are strongly encouraged to purchase tickets online in advance at neaq.org, as timed ticket slots may sell out. Highlights for the week include:

Meet Gio and Farley
The Aquarium recently welcomed two California sea lions, Gio and Farley. The 15-year-old sea lions are now permanent residents in the Aquarium’s New Balance

Foundation Marine Mammal Center, and join three other California sea lions: Zoe, Sierra, and Tipper. Daily presentations have returned to the Marine Mammal Center at 12 p.m. and 2 p.m. and are a great way for visitors to see the sea lions interacting with their trainers.

Nurse shark feedings
Continuing its decades-long commitment of caring for and protecting sharks, the Aquarium is welcoming a new nurse shark, named Cirri, to its Caribbean coral reef exhibit. Guests can view daily feedings at the top of the Giant Ocean Tank with Cirri and other animals at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Simons Theatre films

The Aquarium’s Simons Theatre is now showing ARCTIC: Our Frozen Planet, a 45-min-



Protecting the blue planet

ute documentary filmed on a scale never attempted before. The film captures a year-long adventure across the seasons in the Arctic—and the subsequent impact our changing climate has had on it. Tickets and show times are available at all Aquarium ticketing locations by calling 617-973-5206 or by visiting neaq.org. Also showing are Blue Whales: Return of the Giants 3D, Great White Shark, Incredible Predators 3D, and Secrets of the Sea 3D.

Voices of the Waterfront

In partnership with the Coalition for a Resilient and Inclusive Wa-

terfront, the Aquarium created “Voices of the Waterfront,” a free exhibition of 27 large-scale photos wrapping around the Aquarium’s exterior along Central Wharf. The exhibition celebrates the creative ways that people and organizations are accessing Boston’s waterfront and encourages more involvement to bring about more change to it as a public good amid environmental challenges.

The Aquarium gift shop will have extended hours of 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. during the week of December 26, and the Harbor View Café will be open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., with the exception of December 31, when it will close at 3 p.m. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit neaq.org or call 617-973-5200.



Female sea lion Gio sticks out her tongue during a recent training session. CREDIT: Vanessa Kahn/New England Aquarium



\$8M for Maine preschools serving low-income families

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Susan Collins and Angus King announced that the Maine Department of Health and Human Services received \$8,000,000 through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Early Childhood Development’s

Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) program. This funding will allow the State of Maine to expand access to high-quality preschool for children from low-income families.

“Early childhood education is an investment in the future of our chil-

dren,” Senators Collins and King said. “This funding will expand access to pre-K and help build an educational foundation for Maine children that will benefit them for the rest of their lives.”

“The first five years of a child’s life lay a foundation for future develop-

ment and learning. Federal funding to advance a coordinated system in Maine will help young children and families get the critical services need, including developmental screenings and high quality early care and education,” said Stephanie Eglington, Maine Children’s

Alliance.

The PDG B-5 program supports state efforts to create or enhance preschool programs in high-need communities, while developing infrastructure to better deliver preschool services.

Senators Collins and King have always support-

ed Maine’s early childhood education programs. Earlier this month, they cosponsored a resolution recognizing October 20th as National Early Childhood Literacy Awareness Day. They also recently announced more than \$5 million for early learning programs in Maine.

Maine housing remains in high demand

AUGUSTA, ME -- Most counties in Maine are seeing plenty of qualified buyers for available single-family existing homes. According to Maine Listings, 1,218 homes changed hands in November 2023, a decrease of 5.51 percent from November 2022. The median sales price for homes sold in November reached \$355,000—an increase of 9.23 percent compared to No-

vember 2022. The MSP indicates that half of the homes were sold for more and half sold for less.

“Winter is a great time for sellers to list their property,” says Carmen McPhail, 2023 President of the Maine Association of REALTORS® and Associate Broker at family-owned United Country Lifestyle Properties of Maine with offices in Lincoln, Bangor and Lubec. “Life circum-

stances often prompt the need to buy or sell homes, regardless of the season.

“Typically, fewer homes come on the market during the holidays, which impacts the already tight for-sale inventory” added McPhail. “Qualified buyers remain active, and sellers of well-maintained, properly priced homes can expect multiple offers in many markets.”

Nationally, November 2023 sales eased 7.3 percent from November 2022. According to the National Association of Realtors, the national MSP for existing single-family homes increased 3.5 percent to \$392,100 last month. Sales in the regional Northeast declined 13 percent and the regional MSP rose 4.8 percent to \$428,600 comparing November 2023 to a year ago.

“We know that Maine’s real estate market continues to be challenging,” says McPhail. Working with a Realtor will allow you to be the best-prepared buyer or seller in your market. Realtors are able to evaluate offers for sellers and quickly act for their buyers when the opportunity arises.”

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Seniors Not Acting Their Age

Quest for North Peak



A sloping escarpment turned out to be a false summit

North Peak of Moxie Bald Mountain was a setback for my son, Adam, and me. We had hiked Moxie Bald in early November but failed in an attempt to ascend the elusive North Peak, a summit too far given the limited fall daylight.

We were also unsuccessful climbing both peaks last winter due to difficulty of trailhead access. That problem was not going to change this coming winter, so we decided to return to North Peak this fall before snow and ice-covered roads became an impediment.

Moxie Bald Mountain and North Peak are located in remote Bald Mountain Township on the east side of Moxie Pond approximately twelve miles east of Caratunk. The Appalachian Trail (AT) is the only means of hiker access. As the name

implies, North Peak is situated north of Moxie Bald. Supposedly, a spur trail leaves the AT somewhere north of Moxie Bald and leads to the North Peak summit. We were unable to find it during our previous expedition but were determined to accomplish our goal this time.

There are no good roads to AT trailheads for the Moxie Bald Peaks. In my opinion, the best of the bad choices is to follow Lake Moxie Road from The Forks to Moxie Pond. From there, driving south on Troutdale Road along the western shore of the pond brings one to an AT crossing a little south of the pond. The water level in that area was too high for safe hiking during our earlier visit, so we continued on rutted rocky dirt roads to a higher elevation AT crossing. That was again our plan.



Cairns and blue blazes marked the North Peak Trail

Arriving at Moxie Pond, we were surprised to find the water level substantially lower than on our previous visit because the dam operator had drawn down the pond. The AT near the southern end of the pond was now passable. However, because the hiking distance to our goal was uncertain, we decided to continue to the loftier AT crossing closer to the peaks.

The mountains had also changed since our prior hike. Snow could be seen on the peaks as we drove south on Troutdale Road. I decided to carry micro spikes.

The trail was free of snow and ice when we began the trek in a hardwood forest. The terrain transitions to a conifer forest when one gains elevation. A light layer of snow and patchy ice covered the path as we progressed to a junction

on the right where the AT continues over Moxie Bald Mountain.

Turning left, we proceeded on the Moxie Bald bypass, a snow-covered rolling passageway. Sporadic views of barren North Peak could be seen shortly before reconnecting with the AT.

Leaving the junction, the trail dropped abruptly into a wet, irregular sector inundated with ice. Skirting hazardous areas, we began climbing gradually on partially exposed ledges. Soon after, we arrived at North Peak Trail on the left.

Marked with cairns and blue blazes, the spur trail rises gradually on a succession of exposed granite ledges in a sparse conifer forest. The rocky surface was partially covered with ice and snow. We persisted steadily upwards while avoiding ob-



The summit of North Peak provided 360 degree views

vious slippery areas.

Emerging above tree line, we encountered a spectacular continuum of enormous granite ledges. We scrambled up a massive steep sloping escarpment expecting to find the summit. Instead, it was the first of several additional imposing inclines.

During the Moxie Bald expedition, we had sighted a Canadian lynx while driving to the trailhead. No lynx this time. However, in a snowy section a little below North Peak summit, we found fresh Fisher cat tracks. According to knowledgeable friends, the secretive predators frequent the area.

A climb over a series of precipitous ledges in icy winds brought us to the true summit. We donned parkas, stocking caps, and mittens to protect from severe wind chills while enjoying fabulous 360 degree views. We had anticipated an exceptional mountaineering experience but the expansive exposed summit exceeded even our high expectations.

The harsh wind chills forced us to retreat below tree line sooner than we preferred. It was difficult to leave such a remarkable alpine setting.

The temperature decreased and parkas were needed for the remainder of the hike. We completed our return without complications. My micro spikes were along for the ride, I never used them.

My book, *Maine Al Fresco: The Fifty Finest Outdoor Adventures in Maine* narrates nine more exceptional mountaineering expeditions.

Ron Chase resides in Topsham. His latest book, *"Maine Al Fresco: The Fifty Finest Outdoor Adventures in Maine"* is available at www.northcountrypress.com/maine-al-fresco or in bookstores and through online retailers. His previous books are *"The Great Mars Hill Bank Robbery"* and *"Mountains for Mortals – New England."* Visit his website at www.ronchaseoutdoors.com or he can be reached at ronchaseoutdoors@comcast.net

Annual ag-focused calendar celebrates farming, land & sea

ORONO, ME — The Maine Agricultural Mediation Program (MAMP), which is part of University of Maine Cooperative Extension, has released its 2024 wall calendar.

The theme of this year's calendar is "Farming and Tending to the Land and Sea Throughout the Seasons." It features

twelve charming images from Maine-based artists that capture the essence of agricultural work and life. From vibrant fields of crops to somber coastal scenes, each image tells a unique story of Maine's agricultural journey throughout the seasons.

Measuring 8.5 by 11 inches, the calendar is de-

signed with wire binding for easy hanging. Copies are now available for purchase for \$6.50, which includes shipping. Order a copy by visiting UMaine Extension's website.

MAMP is one of 43 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Mediation Programs. It supports the agricultural

community in Maine by providing conflict resolution, contract and lease consultation and financial coaching.

MAMP provides services in three major areas: mediation/ conflict resolution; contract/ lease consultation and co-drafting; and financial coaching. The MAMP staff,

mediators, and financial coaches are person-focused and aim to provide compassionate assistance, support and resources to agricultural producers, their lenders, USDA agencies, and others involved in various conflicts. All MAMP services are voluntary and confidential and are no-cost/ low-cost to

participants. Visit the program website to learn more about agricultural mediation at UMaine Extension. All MAMP services are voluntary and confidential and are no-cost/ low-cost to participants. Visit the program website to learn more about agricultural mediation at UMaine Extension.



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Arts & Entertainment

Camden National Bank donates \$50K to L/A Community

CAMDEN, ME – Camden National Bank has announced it will donate more than \$50,000 to provide both immediate aid and long-term support to the Lewiston-Auburn community in response to the recent tragic event.

“There are no words to adequately describe the sadness and devastation that we are feeling for our family and community members,” said Greg Dufour, president and chief executive officer. “We are grateful to call Maine our home. We remain focused on providing our employees and community with the support and assistance

they need as we collectively work together toward healing and recovery during these challenging times.”

The total of \$50,000 in funding from Camden National Bank is being distributed as follows:

\$15,000 to the LA Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce Foundation to support immediate needs such as rent, heating oil, etc. for the victims’ households. The Chamber’s Foundation identified a process to swiftly distribute funds to the more than 155 victims identified by the Office of the Maine Attorney General and the



Department of Justice. Community Foundation’s \$15,000 to the Maine Lewiston-Auburn Area

Response Fund, which provides immediate and long-term aid to the victims, families, and communities impacted by the tragedy.

\$10,000 to support the Lewiston Police Relief Association to support our heroic first responders and their families as they experience mental health issues and work diligently to provide additional community support.

\$10,000 in funding will be distributed to address future needs of the community.

Camden National Bank is deeply rooted in the Lewiston-Auburn community. In 2000, the bank

acquired a banking center in Lewiston through the acquisition of Kingfield Savings Bank. The bank then expanded its presence in 2012 when it acquired 15 banking centers from Bank of America, of which two of those locations were located in Lewiston and Auburn. Today, in addition to the two banking centers and strong commercial lending, Lewiston-Auburn serves as a significant hub for several support service employees, including Ryan Smith, Executive Vice President of Commercial Banking, who is tied intimately with the community.

Big impacts from nonprofit arts, culture sector in Waterville

WATERVILLE, ME—Waterville Creates today announced that the City of Waterville’s nonprofit arts and culture industry generated \$13.5 million in economic activity in 2022, according to the newly released Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 (AEP6), an economic and social impact study conducted by Americans for the Arts. That economic activity—\$9.7 million in spending by nonprofit arts and culture organizations and \$3.9 million in event-related spending by their audiences—supported 174 jobs and generated \$2.4 million in local, state, and federal government revenue. Spending by arts and culture audiences gen-

erates valuable commerce to local merchants, a value-add that few other industries can claim.

Building on its 30-year legacy as the largest and most inclusive study of its kind, AEP6 uses a rigorous methodology to document the economic and social contributions of the nation’s nonprofit arts and culture industry. The study demonstrates arts and culture are a critical economic driver of vibrant communities, both locally and nationally.

“We have always known that arts and cultural activities not only enrich and enliven our community but also generate significant economic activity. When the film

festival is happening or there is a sold-out show at the Opera House, the restaurants are packed, hotel rooms are filled, and Main Street is alive,” said Shannon Haines, president + CEO of Waterville Creates. “This study quantifies that activity in a way that demonstrates the undeniable impact of the arts as an economic driver in downtown Waterville’s revitalization efforts.”

Nationally, the Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 (AEP6) study reveals the American nonprofit arts and culture sector is a \$151.7 billion industry—one that supports 2.6 million jobs and generates \$29.1 billion in government revenue.

“Arts and culture organizations have a powerful ability to attract and hold dollars in the community longer. They employ people locally, purchase goods and services from nearby businesses, and produce the authentic cultural experiences that are magnets for visitors, tourists, and new residents,” said Nolen V. Bivens, president and CEO of Americans for the Arts. “When we invest in nonprofit arts and culture, we strengthen our economy and build more livable communities.”

Key figures from Waterville’s AEP6 study include:

The typical attendee spends \$37.62 per person

per event, not including the cost of admission.

42.7% of arts and culture attendees in Waterville were from outside Kennebec County. They spent an average of \$53.60.

88% of respondents agreed that the activity or venue they were attending was “a source of neighborhood pride for the community.”

87% said they would “feel a sense of loss if that activity or venue was no longer available.”

As Americans for the Arts’ research partner for the City of Waterville, Waterville Creates was responsible for local implementation and data collection. Waterville Creates’

local partners in AEP6 data collection included the Colby College Museum of Art, Colby Arts Office, Children’s Discovery Museum, and the Waterville Public Library.

“As Waterville continues to make significant investments in arts and culture, this data is crucial to us in demonstrating to our community and our funders the remarkable return on those investments,” said Haines. “Since opening the doors of our home at the Paul J. Schupf Art Center in December 2022, we have welcomed more than 80,000 visitors, which—based on this data—represents over \$3 million in related spending by our patrons.”

City of Lewiston announces Jan. 2 Inauguration

LEWISTON, ME - The City of Lewiston announced today the 2024 Lewiston City Inaugural Ceremony. The event is free and open to the public.

Details: City of Lewiston Inaugural Ceremony for Incoming Mayor, City Council members, and Lewiston School Committee members on Tue., Jan. 2, 2024, from 6:30 PM to 8 PM at Franco Center, 46 Cedar St., Lewiston. Free Parking Available at Continental Mill, 66 Oxford St.

The event will include the Oath of Office for incoming Mayor Carl L. Sheline, the incoming Lewiston City Council, and the incoming Lewiston School Committee:

- Lewiston City Council
- Ward 1 – Joshua L. Nagine
- Ward 2 – Susan G. Longchamps
- Ward 3 – Scott A. Harriman
- Ward 4 – Michael R. Roy

- Ward 5 – Ryn Soule
- Ward 6 – David B. Chittim
- Ward 7 – Timothy J. Gallant
- Lewiston School Committee
- At-Large – Megan D. Parks
- Ward 1 – Jean Phoenix Irons McLaughlin
- Ward 2 – Janet I. Beaudoin
- Ward 3 – Elizabeth A. Eames
- Ward 4 – Craig G. Charpentier

- Ward 5 – Ashley R. Medina
- Ward 6 – Meghan P. Hird
- Ward 7 – Donna M. Gallant
- The City Council President and the School

Committee Chairperson will be elected as part of the Inaugural exercises, and during the ceremony, speeches will be presented by Mayor Sheline, the City Council President, and School Committee Chair-

person. The Blue Notes, a Lewiston High School musical group, will provide the entertainment, and a dessert reception will occur immediately following the ceremony.

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Sen. Collins sits down with Maine astronaut Dr. Jessica Meir



WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Susan Collins met with NASA astronaut Jessica Meir, a native of Caribou, Maine, in her D.C. office. Dr. Meir conducted the first three all-woman spacewalks with fellow astronaut, Christina Koch, which totaled 21 hours and 44 minutes. Yesterday’s visit is Dr. Meir’s first time on Capitol Hill since returning from space in April 2020.

“Dr. Meir’s journey from the halls of Caribou High School to the vastness

of space serves as inspiration for children throughout Maine and across the country that they, too, can achieve their dreams,” said Senator Collins. “Mainers are incredibly proud of the work that Dr. Meir has done to advance humanity, from her scientific experiments, to her historic all-woman spacewalks, and it was a pleasure to meet with her and congratulate her on all of her accomplishments.”

On September 25, 2019, Dr. Meir became the first Maine woman to

travel to space. During her first spaceflight in 2019, Senator Collins spoke with Dr. Meir while she was working onboard the International Space Station. To congratulate Dr. Meir and the first all-woman spacewalk, Senator Collins led a bipartisan resolution to fully integrate women into the astronaut corps and ensure that one of the next humans to walk on the moon will be a woman.

Most recently, Dr. Meir served as a flight engineer on the International Space Station for Expedition 61 and 62, from September 2019 to April 2020. Throughout her time in space, Dr. Meir contributed to hundreds of experiments in biology, Earth science, human research, physical sciences, and technology development. In total, she has spent 205 days in space, that included 3,280 orbits of Earth and a total travel distance of nearly 87 million miles.

In 2016, Senator Collins and Dr. Meir were two of the six inaugural inductees of the Caribou High School Alumni Hall of Fame.

DEA provides updates on efforts to combat opioids, meth in Maine

WASHINGTON, D.C. –U.S. Senator Susan Collins received a briefing from Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Administrator Anne Milgram on efforts to address illegal Chinese marijuana operations, combat the opioid epidemic, and fight the rise of crystal meth use in Maine.

“No community is immune from the opioid epidemic, and I commend the men and women of the DEA for their work to combat illicit opioid trafficking and distribution. While we continue to target deadly opioids, we must not lose sight of the need to protect our communities from other emerging threats. The significant increase of crystal meth seizures in Maine – from 3 kilograms in 2021 to 72 kilograms in 2022 – is incredibly shocking,” said Senator Collins. “Administrator Milgram



and I also discussed the recent reporting on the illegal Chinese marijuana growing operations in Maine and the potential harm they pose to our public health and national security. We must put an end to these criminal enterprises that are flooding our State and infiltrating our rural communities. I will continue to push the Department of Justice, including the DEA, to work with state and local law enforcement and shut down these illegal opera-

tions.” In August, Senator Collins and the Maine Delegation wrote to Attorney General Merrick Garland requesting information on what the Department of Justice is doing to shut down these illegal Chinese marijuana growing operations. Following an investigation by Maine Wire that uncovered more than 100 foreign-owned drug houses throughout rural Maine, Senator Collins renewed her call for federal action.

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Getting in costume for CLT's *And Then There Were None*



Getting the cast properly in costume is a big job for costumer Jane Mitchell (at right), pictured here showing a maid's outfit to cast member Elise Christie, who plays the role of Mrs. Rogers in the upcoming Community Little Theatre (CLT) production of the murder mystery *And Then There Were None*.

In this classic Ag-

atha Christie whodunit, ten strangers are summoned to a remote island. All that the guests have in common is a wicked past they're unwilling to reveal and a secret that will seal their fate. For each has been marked for murder. Christie herself described this play as her best piece of craftsmanship.

Performances will be

held at 7:30 p.m. on January 19, 20, 25, and 26, and at 2:00 p.m. on January 21, 27, and 28. Tickets and subscriptions are available online at www.lact.com/box-office or by calling 783-0958. Ticket prices (including all fees) are \$25.00 for adults, \$22.00 for seniors and students, and \$17.00 for children ages 13 and under.

Test your Disney knowledge, win prizes at Trivia Night

Preregistration is encouraged but not required

TRIVIA NIGHT

PRIZES FOR THE TOP 3 TEAMS

TUESDAY, JAN. 9TH

Starts at 4:30 pm

Lewiston PUBLIC LIBRARY

LEWISTON -- The Lewiston Public Library will host a Disney-themed trivia night on Tuesday, January 9, 2024, from 4:30 to 5:30pm in Callahan Hall. Teams can consist of one to five people. This program is free and open to the public.

Do you find yourself singing Disney songs or

quoting movie lines to friends? Then this program is for you! Come with a few friends to test your Disney knowledge. The top three teams will earn prizes. Preregistration is encouraged but not required. To preregister your team please visit The Lewiston Public Library's website's event

page. The Lewiston Public Library is located downtown at 200 Lisbon Street at the corner of Pine Street and Lisbon Street. More information on Tuesday's program is available by contacting the Lewiston Public Library at 513-3135 or LPLReference@lewistonmaine.gov.

Send all items for Names & Faces to the editor. Deadline is Friday by five pm.



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L/A Veterans Park seeking donations

LEWISTON/AUBURN, ME – With the recent flooding, Veterans Park has taken a direct hit. Some things are under water and some we can't see until the water recedes. At that time, we will begin to rebuild the Lewiston/Auburn Veterans Memorial Park.

Please consider donating to rebuild this important monument in our community. Send donations to:
L/A Veterans Council,
PO 2316,
Lewiston, ME 04241
Point of contact and

chairman is Jerry Dewitt, 576-0376
At this point, we are not accepting any more names for the next stone until further notice. Chairman Dewitt says, "Come hell or high water we will have a ceremony at veterans memorial park on Memorial Day 2024".

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Throwback Thursday movie matinee at LPL



JANUARY 25, 2024
FROM 4-6PM



THROWBACK THURSDAY MOVIE

Contact the reference desk at lpreference@lewistonmaine.gov to find out this month's movie

LEWISTON, ME -- Throwback Thursday returns to Lewiston Public Library this January with a follow-up winter-themed movie classic to our featured film from December. These events showcase movies from previous decades to introduce new generations to some movie classics. These events are free and open to the pub-

lic. Our fifth event is Thursday, January 25, 2024, from 4 to 6 p.m. in Callahan Hall and will feature a movie open to all age groups. Come enjoy the sequel to the 90s classic that got us all quacking on ice and rooting for Team USA. Some snacks will be provided but patrons are welcome to bring

their favorite movie treats along with them. The Lewiston Public Library is located downtown at 200 Lisbon Street at the corner of Pine Street and Lisbon Street. More information on Thursday's movie is available by contacting the Lewiston Public Library at 513-3135 or LPLReference@lewistonmaine.gov.

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

The Bangor Savings Bank grants empower local nonprofits

BANGOR, ME-- The Bangor Savings Bank Foundation continues its commitment to supporting Northern New England communities with \$195,000 in grants awarded to 22 nonprofit organizations. These grants aim to positively impact Maine and New Hampshire organizations dedicated to uplifting communities in areas such as housing, healthcare, education, and community recreation.

"As a steward of our communities, we share in the inspiring vision of these organizations and work together to strengthen our communities," said Bob Montgomery-Rice, President and CEO of Bangor Savings Bank. "These recipients dedicate their time to serving diverse needs through their programming and services, which further the well-being of the region."

One recipient is MaineGeneral Medical Center in Augusta, Maine, for which the Foundation awarded a \$75,000 multi-year grant (\$25,000 over three years). MaineGeneral, Central Maine's largest and sole community hospital, offers comprehensive healthcare services for all ages. As the third largest healthcare system in the State, MaineGeneral includes the 198-bed Alford Center for Health



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in Augusta, the state's largest outpatient center (Thayer Center for Health in Waterville), a regional cancer center, primary and specialty care practices, long-term care facilities, rehabilitation services, home health care, hospice, specialized memory care, and community outreach programs.


The grant will support the expansion of the Harold Alford Center for Cancer Care with increased exam rooms, improved patient flow, dedicated space for education and support programs, and additional services for patients battling cancer.

Local grant recipients include:
 \$25,000 (\$12,500 over 2 years)
 Trinity Jubilee Center
 Lewiston, Androscoggin County, Maine
 Trinity Jubilee Center addresses the unmet needs of under-served people in Maine's Lewiston-Auburn community through collaboration


with local, state, and federal organizations and other agencies. It meets these needs through services that include a community integration program for job hunting and immigration support, a resource center that includes a free medical clinic, hygiene and clothing supplies, phone services, a mailing address, mental health referral services, and a holiday wish list program, as well as a soup kitchen, food pantry, and a day shelter.

The grant supports the construction of Trinity Jubilee Center's new facility, specifically funding their Client Services Office. This central hub will connect thousands of Mainers with employment, housing, essential supplies, and more. Alzheimer's Association Maine Chapter | \$7,500 Scarborough, Maine (Statewide)
 Androscoggin Home Healthcare + Hospice | \$8,000 Lewiston, Androscoggin County, Maine

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\$65K grant to establish a halal-certified cooperative

BANGOR, ME – U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Maine State Director Rhiannon Hampson today announced that USDA is awarding Cooperative Development Institute (CDI) a Rural Business Development Grant. The nonprofit will use the \$65K grant to help develop a halal meat cooperative in Maine. The new cooperative will serve the growing demand for halal meat from residents across Maine and the region. It will also help make more local meat available in the state, shortening the supply chain for residents.

“This Rural Business Development Grant award is a prime example of the

way we’re using federal dollars to create a multiplier effect,” said Director Hampson. “CDI’s work with Maine food producers will foster sustainable economic development while creating more culturally diverse food options. The Biden-Harris Administration made a promise to hold equitable access to programming at the center of our work. With investments such as this RBDG for CDI, they are delivering on that right here in Maine.”

The new cooperative includes livestock growers and processors who intend to develop a halal meat brand and a halal-certified, USDA-regulated slaughter and processing facility.

Based in Northampton, MA, CDI will use the grant funds to advise and train the members of the cooperative in its early stages. Some of the key assistance CDI will provide to them includes:

- conducting market and feasibility studies.

- performing outreach to confirm state and federal food safety requirements and inspector capacity.

- coaching farmers as they learn to meet processing schedules.

- advising on pricing and capital management.

- helping cooperative members market their products.

- Local Maine livestock producers and Five

Pillars Butchery, an immigrant-owned business based in Unity, Maine, will comprise the new cooperative. According to CDI’s field technician, there are up to 15 farmers who are interested in working as part of this cooperative effort. Six of these farmers are Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, several are beginning farmers, and one farm is operated by a cooperative of Somali women.

Five Pillars Butchery expects to reach full capacity by 2028. Once at capacity, the business estimates that over \$2 million in sales may flow back to farmers in the cooperative. This income will increase the farmers’ ability to rein-

vest in farm infrastructure, hire more employees, and contribute to the sustainability of Maine’s agricultural sector. As State Director Hampson noted, “Through this project, Maine benefits from the inclusion of new farmers, new ideas, and, most importantly, the partnerships that are central to supporting each of these.”

USDA RBDG Program is now open:

Towns, nonprofits, business cooperatives, federally recognized tribes, and other entities may submit RBDG applications. To be eligible for the program, a project must benefit small or emerging businesses. Rural Development announced several

awards recently, including a grant for Island Institute to provide loans to small coastal businesses, one for the Sunrise County Economic Council to offer technical assistance to Washington County businesses, and one for the Poodunk Snowmobile Club to purchase new trail grooming equipment.

USDA accepts applications for the Rural Business Development Grant program for a limited period each year. The program is currently open and accepting applications through February 28, 2024. Visit the Maine RBDG webpage (<https://tinyurl.com/yhufpnam>) or call (207) 990-9127 to learn more.

Brick & Beam invests \$125K in local afterschool programs

PORTLAND, ME -- United Way of Southern Maine’s (UWSM) Brick & Beam Society has invested \$125,400 in four afterschool programs to increase access and help build systemic equity. Brick & Beam Society (B&B) is a giving circle of UWSM that focuses on early childhood learning and STEAM programming for historically underserved communities from birth through 8th grade.

The investments include:

- \$47,400 to Our Place Portland for Youth Mentorship Groups + Family Advocacy Services. The program will engage middle school students as Mentors-in-Training for younger youth with a small stipend and provide afterschool programming that

includes STEAM activities, field trips, meals and snacks. Our Place Portland will also provide advocacy services for caregivers and host events to engage the broader community.

- \$28,000 to Gateway Community Services, Maine for Project STRIVE (Support Toward Refugee and Immigrant Voices and Education), which provides accessible, free, and well-rounded academic support for high-need students in grades 5-8 in Westbrook.

- \$25,000 to Portland Community Squash (PCS)’s Rally Portland. Rally Portland is an afterschool program for students in 6-12th grade that provides squash lessons, food, enrichment, academics, and wellness.

- \$25,000 to Boys &



Girls Clubs of Southern Maine’s South Portland programs to enrich afterschool programming.

“Our continued partnership with United Way’s Brick & Beam Society helps us overcome the big-

gest barriers to afterschool access, including affordability and transportation,” said Barrett Takesin, executive director at PCS. “Thanks to their sustained support, Rally Portland can continue to be one of

the most accessible afterschool programs in the state.”

Out-of-school programs are uniquely positioned to provide impactful learning experiences for youth that blend fun, learning, and social-emotional growth. This is especially important for students who may be struggling with anxiety, depression, trauma, food insecurity, and homelessness. In a recent survey of parents and caregivers conducted by United Way of Southern Maine in partnership with the Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce, 44% of respondents expressed a need for increased access to afterschool programming for their children.

Partnerships with out-of-school time organizations are part of a larger

effort by Brick & Beam Society to elevate its focus on literacy and STEAM to build systemic equity that result in positive academic, development, and social outcomes.

Brick & Beam Society investments are funded through member contributions and decided on by member volunteers. Investments support early childhood education with a specific interest in STEAM and literacy programming for kids from historically underserved communities in Southern Maine and are aligned with UWSM’s goal to provide every child in Southern Maine with quality early learning experiences.

To learn more about United Way of Southern Maine and Brick & Beam Society, visit uwsme.org.

Sen. Collins urges action to address border security crisis

WASHINGTON, D.C. – On December 18, there were a record 12,381 encounters with foreign nationals entering the U.S. along the southwest border without authorization.

In response to this ongoing—and worsening crisis—U.S. Senator Susan Collins, Vice Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, delivered remarks on the Senate floor today to call for bipartisan solutions that address the border security crisis

the United States is facing at both the southern and northern borders.

In her remarks, she noted that “so far this fiscal year, we are averaging nearly 8,500 encounters per day, and this month, the average is nearly 10,000 per day. At the current rate, we are on pace for more than three million encounters in fiscal year 2024, which would shatter the previous high set last fiscal year. To put this in perspective, that is more than twice as many

encounters at the southwest border as there are people in the entire State of Maine.”

IMPACT ON MAINE

“In the State of Maine, encounters have increased over 450 percent since fiscal year 2021,” said Senator Collins. “Just recently, the U.S. Border Patrol encountered a group of 20 Romanians illegally crossing into the United States near Houlton, Maine. Two of these

individuals were flagged as Transnational Criminal Organized Crime matches and detained for expedited removal proceedings. The remaining 18 were released into the local community.”

“Communities in Maine and throughout our country are struggling to absorb this influx of people who are being released into the interior. The majority of migrants are released pending an adjudication of their claims, but that is a process that can take

years,” Senator Collins continued. “In Portland, Maine, a city of 68,000 residents, more than 1,600 asylum seekers have arrived since January. Sanford, Maine, which has a population of only 22,000, has had approximately 400 migrants arrive since May. Over the past six months, the City of Sanford has spent 1.3 million to provide food, housing, and other required assistance to asylum seekers and their families.”

FENTANYL CRISIS

“Mexican drug cartels are using the chaos at the southern border to facilitate their trafficking operations. They are sending record amounts of fentanyl into this country – enough to kill every American many times over,” said Senator Collins. “Maine, like so many states, has seen record increases in recent years in the number

of overdose deaths, nearly 80 percent of which were fentanyl related. We lost 513 Mainers in the first 10 months of 2023 to fatal overdoses – 373 of these deaths were fentanyl-related.”

Earlier this year, Senators Collins and Kyrsten Sinema (I-AZ) introduced the Asylum Seeker Work Authorization Act of 2023, which would shorten the waiting period for asylum seekers who come through legal ports of entry to apply for work authorizations.

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Grants awarded to Maine groups working for racial justice, equity

AUGUSTA, ME – The Maine Justice Foundation has awarded grants from its Racial Justice Fund to six Maine groups for 2023. The goal of the Fund is to support Black, Indigenous, and People of Color statewide to forge social, systemic, and economic solutions that will address racism and inequities in our culture, organizations, and systems.

“We are delighted to announce these Racial Justice Fund grants to six inspiring organizations. The grants result from thoughtful consideration and hard work by the Fund’s volunteer Advisory Committee, the Foundation’s Board and staff, and generous donations by many corporate and individual leaders,” said Michelle Draeger, Executive Director of the Foundation. “We believe these projects will meaningfully advance racial justice and equity for BIPOC Mainers.”

The Foundation is issuing six grants between \$5,000 and \$10,000 during this third year of grants, an increase in both organiza-

tions supported and funds distributed from the inaugural year. The grantees and the projects supported are:

\$10,000 Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project: Racial Justice Fellowship Program | A grant to provide a paid fellowship opportunity for law school students who identify as immigrants or have lived immigrant experience.

\$10,000 Ladder to the Moon Network: Expanding Reach through Digital Media | A Grant to expand the reach of Am-jambo Africa, a publication that provides vital information directed toward immigrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking community members, through digital channels including radio, podcast, and videos.

\$10,000 Maine Inside Out: Mountain View Correctional Facility Theatre Production | A grant to engage BIPOC young men incarcerated at Mountain View Correctional Facility in weekly workshops with Maine Inside Out theatre facilitators to create and share two original plays.



\$10,000 Maine Commission on Indigent Legal Services (MCILS): Fighting Racial Justice in the Courtroom | A grant to host a series of DEI trainings for attorneys who provide criminal indigent legal services in Maine.

\$5,000 In Her Presence: Frances Warde Home | A grant to ensure the availability of culturally appropriate and nutritious food at the Frances Warde Home for sheltered asylum seekers in Portland, ME.

\$5,000 Alpha Legal Foundation – Maine Justice Corps: Maine Justice Corps | A grant to support a Maine JusticeCorps pilot program in Androscoggin and Cumberland Counties that will place a minimum of (7) full-time BIPOC AmeriCorps members as legal navigators in court-

houses.

“This is the third cycle of grant awards that the Racial Justice Advisory Committee has reviewed” says Evelyn Silver, Racial Justice Fund Advisory Committee Co-Chair. “Each year, we are gratified to receive many excellent proposals to further the work of racial equity across Maine. The grants announced today reflect the values and goals of the Maine Justice Foundation and the generous donors who have allowed us to further this important work.”

“I am honored to be part of history once again with respect to funding six outstanding local organizations committed to racial justice and equity in Maine,” says Reginald Parson, member of the Ra-

cial Justice Fund Advisory Committee. “I was impressed with the creative projects that were presented and I look forward to seeing how each project develops in the coming year. I have also been blessed to work with a group of dedicated professionals on the Racial Justice Fund Advisory Committee. Everyone is committed to making a difference and this gives me the inspiration to keep moving forward in a time of turmoil and uncertainty in America and the world.”

Since the inaugural grant round, corporations, philanthropic leaders, and individual donors across Maine have given an additional \$290,000 raising the fund to \$815,000 to combat racial injustice and inequity through the Foundation’s Racial Justice Fund. This growth has allowed the Foundation to issue an additional \$50,000 in grants in 2023. The founders of the Fund are:

AARP Maine, Androscoggin Bank, AT&T, Baker Newman Noyes, Bangor Savings Bank, Bernstein

Shur, Central Maine Power, Cross Insurance, Birch-Brook, Drummond Woodsum, Eaton Peabody, F.L. Putnam Investment Management Company, Gorham Savings Bank, HM Payson, Hancock Lumber, Hannaford Supermarkets, Harvard Pilgrim, Northern Light Health, Pierce Atwood, Preti Flaherty, RM Davis, Verrill, and the Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation.

The Fund’s Advisory Committee issued a request for proposals and reviewed applications. The current members are co-chairs Dr. Evelyn Silver and Prof. Marcelle Medford, Mary Herman, Reginald Parson, Francys Perkins, Shelly Okere, Bill Harwood, and Janis Cohen.

The Maine Justice Foundation, founded in 1983 as the Maine Bar Foundation, is the state’s leading funder of civil legal aid and is committed to ensuring access to justice for all Mainers. Find us online and support the Racial Justice Fund at www.justicemaine.org.

Maine DHHS: Take advantage of mental health help

AUGUSTA, ME - The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) encourages Maine people to take advantage of the many resources available to support mental health during this holiday season and at the end of a challenging year for many.

While the holiday season can be a cheerful time, it can also lead to an increase in stress, depression, and other behavioral health challenges including substance misuse. This may be compounded by recent challenges such as the October tragedy in Lewiston and the December 18 storm that directly affected one in four residents and continues to leave some without power,

homes, and jobs.

“The holidays can be a joyful time spent with friends and family as we travel, gather, and reflect on the year behind us. That said, 2023 has been a trying year as people across the state coped with trauma and natural disasters,” said DHHS Commissioner Jeanne Lambrew and Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention Director Dr. Puthiery Va. “We want Maine people to know that a range of supports are available, from crisis intervention to resiliency support, to help all have a safe, healthy, and happy end of the year.”

It is common to feel added stress during the holiday season. There are ways to help address stress

other conditions and improve your mental health, including:

- Paying attention to your feelings
- Practicing self-care
- Connecting with your community and loved ones, and supporting others
- Knowing when to seek help.

Some of the signs that children or adults may be experiencing stress and that mental health may need attention include irritability, nervousness, changes in appetite, fatigue, and difficulty sleeping or concentrating. More serious warning signs may include a sense of hopelessness, withdrawing from loved ones, substance misuse, self-harm,

and feelings, thoughts, or actions of suicide.

Seek help immediately if you or someone you know is talking about self-harm or suicide, feelings of hopelessness or unbearable pain, or about being a burden to others. Know that you are not alone, and here’s how to seek help.

Mental Health and Substance Use Resources:

988: If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, call or text 988 to reach the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. The 988 Lifeline responds 24 hours a day, seven days a week to calls, chats or texts from anyone who needs support for suicidal, mental health, and/or substance use crisis, and connects those in need with trained crisis counselors. Individuals can also dial 988 if they are worried about a loved one who may need crisis

support.

StrengthenME: StrengthenME is an initiative to help Mainers who are not experiencing a mental health crisis but may need stress management and resiliency resources to promote health and well-being. Services are completely anonymous, free, easy to access, and community focused.

OPTIONS: Maine residents facing opioid use challenges can connect with a local liaison through OPTIONS (Overdose Prevention Through Intensive Outreach, Naloxone and Safety), which sends mobile response teams to connect people directly to recovery services and treatment and distribute naloxone, the lifesaving overdose medication.

The Maine Resiliency Center: The Maine Resiliency Center was established in the wake of

the mass violence event in Lewiston on October 25, 2023. Located at 184 Main Street, it provides free community connection, support, and resources to those impacted by this tragedy.

NAMI Maine’s Teen Text Support Line: This free, confidential resource for youth aged 13-23 is available daily from 2 p.m.-10 p.m. The line is staffed by trained support specialists- aged 18-24. Text (207) 515-8398.

211 Maine: If you or someone you know needs other support and you don’t know who to call, reach out to 211. 211 Maine is a free, confidential information and referral service that connects people of all ages across Maine to local services, including StrengthenME and OPTIONS. 211 Maine is based in Maine and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



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Calendar

Send your submissions to the Editor. More online.

Jan 3, 24, 31
AUBURN -- Anime & Manga Club from 4 PM - 5 PM - Teen Space, Auburn Public Library

Join us in the Teen Space to watch anime, read manga and share your fanart with fellow fans. While we have plenty of manga in the stacks, feel free to bring some of your own to share with the group!

Jan 6, Feb 3, Mar 2, Apr 6, May 4
WESTBROOK -- Prides Corner Community Church, 235 Pride St. Bean Supper \$10 per person: Two kinds of baked beans, mac and cheese, ham, coleslaw, bread and brownie. Eat in at 5:00PM or Take Out from 4:30-5:30PM. Call 207-415-9260 to reserve your individual meal today.

Jan 6
GORHAM -- Public Bean Supper at White Rock Community Clubhouse, 34 Wilson Road, Gorham Saturday, January 6, 4:00-5:30pm

Eat in or take out! Homemade baked kidney & navy beans, coleslaw, potato salad, macaroni & cheese, biscuits, hot dogs and dessert. \$10 adults, \$5 under 12 Follow us on Facebook for updates: facebook.com/whiterockcommunityclub

Jan 9
LEWISTON -- LPL TO HOST A TRIVIA

NIGHT

The Lewiston Public Library will host a Disney-themed trivia night on Tuesday, January 9, 2024, from 4:30 to 5:30pm in Callahan Hall. Teams can consist of one to five people. This program is free and open to the public. Pre-registration is encouraged but not required. To pre-register your team please visit The Lewiston Public Library's website's event page. 513-3135; www.LPLonline.org

Jan 9, 16, 23
AUBURN -- from 4 PM - 5 PM - Teen Space, Auburn Public Library

Whether it be crocheting, drawing, origami or something else entirely, The Teen Space Craft Club serves as a time to work on any arts and crafts related projects, share advice and learn something new. Crafters of any experience are welcome!

Jan 17
AUBURN -- Dungeons & Dragons from 3 PM - 5 PM - Teen Space, Auburn Public Library

Come to the Teen Space for a D&D adventure in a fantasy world! Open to beginners and experienced players alike. Come with a character sheet (level 1-3)

or use one that we provide.

Jan 20, 21

LEWISTON, TOPSHAM -- "Song & Dance Music from Around the World" Saturday, Jan. 20, 2024, 7:00 p.m. - Franco Center, Lewiston; Sunday, Jan. 21, 2024, 2:30 p.m. - Orion Performing Arts Center, Topsham

Libertango - Astor Piazzolla

Huapango - José Pablo Moncayo

Old American Songs - Aaron Copland (with Philip Lima, Baritone)

Thunder and Lightning Polka - Johann Strauss, Jr.

Three Songs from Des Knaben Wunderhorn (The Boy's Magic Horn) - Gustav Mahler (with Philip Lima, Baritone)

Symphonic Dances from West Side Story - Leonard Bernstein

Tickets are \$25 in advance for adults; \$30 at the door. All concerts are free for students 18 and under or college students with identification.

A limited number of free tickets for parents accompanying children under 18 are available - call 481-0970 for more details

For more information visit MidcoastSymphony.org, call 207-315-1712, or e-mail info@midcoast-symphony.org

Jan 25
LEWISTON -- THROWBACK THURSDAY MOVIE MATINEE

Our fifth event is Thursday, January 25, 2024, from 4 to 6 p.m. in Callahan Hall and will feature a movie open to all age groups. Come enjoy the sequel to the 90s classic that got us all quacking on ice and rooting for Team USA. Some snacks will be provided but patrons are welcome to bring their favorite movie treats along with them. 513-3135; www.LPLonline.org

Jan 26
AUBURN -- Thinking in the Box: Let's Make Comics! from 3 PM - 4 PM - Teen Space, Auburn Public Library

Have you ever wanted to make your own comic? If you're unsure what to write, not sure how to produce your comic or if you're interested in how comics are made, stop by the Teen Space and get some ideas!

Jan 27
GRAY -- First Congregational Church of Gray Saturday Night Church Supper on Saturday January 27, 2024 @ 5:00 at the Parish House, 5 Brown Street, Gray. Handicapped Accessible

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gled-sized and are \$10.00 each. Please pay at the door. The Menu includes: Variety of Casseroles, & Salads, Baked Pea Beans, Red Hot Dogs, Breads, Assortment of Desserts & Beverages

Feb 5
LEWISTON -- TAROT 101 WORKSHOP AT LPL

The Lewiston Public Library will host a Tarot 101 Workshop on Tuesday, February 6, 2024, from 5 to 6:30 pm in The Jeanne Couture Room. The Tarot 101 Workshop will feature the return of Kate Sheridan, a.k.a The Laundress. This workshop is free and open to both teens and adults. Registration is required and the link to sign up can be found on the Lewiston Public Library's website under events.

Please bring your own 78-card deck and something to take notes with you to the program. 513-3135; www.LPLonline.org

line.org

Mar 23, 24
LEWISTON, TOPSHAM -- "A New Artistic Mélange" - Emily Isaacson, Guest Conductor Saturday, Mar. 23, 2024, 7:00 p.m. - Franco Center, Lewiston; Sunday, Mar. 24, 2024, 2:30 p.m. - Orion Performing Arts Center, Topsham

May 18, 19
LEWISTON, TOPSHAM -- "Cityscape, Seascape, Soundscape" Saturday, May 18, 2024, 7:00 p.m. - Franco Center, Lewiston ; Sunday, May 19, 2024, 2:30 p.m. - Orion Performing Arts Center, Topsham

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



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SENIOR TRIPS

APRIL 11 – 19, 2024 – THE FRENCH RIVIERA – Trip includes 9 days, 7 Breakfasts, 2 Lunches and 3 dinners. Lodging for 7 nights in the same hotel. Highlights are Nice, Food Tour & Tasting, Nice Flower Market, Monaco, Monte Carlo, Grasse, Cannes, Saint-Honorat Island & Wine Tasting, Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild, St. Paul de Vence and much more.

MAY 11 – 19, 2024 – BILTMORE ESTATE & ASHEVILLE, NC - Trip includes 8 nights lodging including 4 nights in the Asheville area, 8 breakfasts and 6 dinners and a guided tour of the Asheville, North Carolina area. We will have a full day visit to the spectacular Biltmore Estate, America's largest privately owned home. We will visit the Biltmore Village that connects the estates present and past and provides a place for dining, shopping and historical exhibits. We will also visit the Antler Village and winery. We will tour the Blue Ridge Parkway with a guide and stops along the way. A \$75.00 deposit per person is due

when signing up. Price is \$1,245.00 pp double occupancy which includes all entrance fees, meal tips and bus driver tip.

JUNE 15 – 23, 2024 - WESTERN CANADA'S ROCKIES, LAKES & WINE COUNTRY - This trip includes 9 days and 8 breakfasts, 2 lunches and 3 dinners. Highlights of this trip are Calgary, Albertan BBQ, Banff, Bow Falls, Lake Louise, Rev-elstoke Railway Museum, Okanagan Valley, Vineyard Dinner and Wine Tasting, Stanley Park, Granville Island and much more. Call Claire or Cindy for more information.

OCTOBER 6 – 14, 2024 - NOVA SCOTIA, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND & NEW BRUNSWICK – Trip includes 8 nights lodging, 8 breakfasts, 1 lunch, and 6 dinners. You will have a guided tour of Acadia National Park, Halifax, Peggy's Cove & Lunenburg. We will visit King's Landing Historical Settlement and have a guided tour of Prince Edward Island including Anne of Green Gable's Home. We will have admission to the Hopewell Rocks and you will visit the Waterside Town of Saint John, New Brunswick and much

more. A \$75.00 deposit is due when signing up. Price is \$1,639.00 per person double occupancy and this includes all entrance fees, meal tips and bus driver tip.

If interested in any of these trips or upcoming trips, please contact Claire Bilodeau at 784-0302 or 576-8604 or Cindy Boyd at 345-9569. If we are not available, please leave a message and we will call you as soon as we can.

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Humane Society announces “Cold Paws, Warm Heart” winners

LEWISTON, ME – The Greater Androscoggin Humane Society announces the winners of their “Cold Paws, Warm Heart” Annual Raffle. With over \$12,000 in ticket sales the winners

were: Erica Brown of Rumford winning \$500 of home heating assistance and a handmade quilt, James and Mary Ingalls of Greene with \$300 of home heating assistance, Dee Kelley of Lewiston

with \$200 of home heating assistance and Mike Twitchell of Turner with \$100 of home heating assistance. All proceeds from the raffle directly benefit the Humane Society.

The Greater Androscoggin Humane Society provides a safe haven for over 3,000 sick, homeless and abused animals in the greater Androscoggin area per year. The primary support for the shelter comes

from fundraising events and donations of concerned citizens.

The Greater Androscoggin Humane Society is located at 55 Strawberry Avenue in Lewiston. If you are interested

in learning more about volunteering at the Shelter or adopting an animal call 783-2311 or visit the website at www.SavingPetsInMaine.org. You can also join them on www.facebook.com/GAHumane.

Bedard Medical named to Inc. list of fastest-growing companies

AUBURN, ME – Inc. revealed that Bedard Medical is ranked No. 4283, in its annual Inc. 5000 list, the most prestigious ranking of the fastest-growing private companies in America. The prestigious ranking provides a data-driven look at the most successful companies within the economy’s most dynamic segment — its independent, entrepreneurial businesses. Facebook, Chobani, Under Armour, Microsoft, Patagonia, and many other household name brands gained their first national exposure as honorees on the Inc. 5000.

“Being on the Inc. 5000 list two years in a row underscores the dedication of our team. In the dynamic world of healthcare, their passion and commitment have been unwavering. Their efforts not only drive our growth but, more importantly, impact countless lives every day. We

move forward, inspired by their dedication and driven by our shared mission to care for the communities we serve.” – Ben Nadeau, CEO of Bedard Medical.

The Inc. 5000 class of 2023 represents companies that have driven rapid revenue growth while navigating inflationary pressure, the rising costs of capital, and seemingly intractable hiring challenges. Among this year’s top 500 companies, the average median three-year revenue growth rate ticked up to an astonishing 2,238 percent. In all, this year’s Inc. 5000 companies have added 1,187,266 jobs to the economy over the past three years.

For complete results of the Inc. 5000, including company profiles and an interactive database that can be sorted by industry, location, and other criteria, go to www.inc.com/inc5000. The top 500 com-

panies were featured in the September issue of Inc. magazine.

“Running a business has only gotten harder since the end of the pandemic,” says Inc. editor-in-chief Scott Omelianuk. “To make the Inc. 5000—with the fast growth that requires—is truly an accomplishment. Inc. is thrilled to honor the companies that are building our future.”

“Being included on the Inc. 5000 2 years in a row is a great achievement for the team here at Bedard. It shows how their hard work and dedication to helping those who come to us on their healthcare journey affects the company as a whole. I look forward to seeing what we can do together and how we can continue to innovate and improve within the healthcare industry,” said Anthony Burden, Director of Medical Supplies.

Concord Group announces Bailey Lallier as Underwriting Director



The Concord Group Insurance Companies hired Bailey Lallier to serve as Underwriting Director. Bailey will oversee the company’s Personal and Commercial lines Underwriting.

BEDFORD, NH — The Concord Group Insurance Companies is pleased to announce Bailey Lallier has joined the company as Underwriting Director, overseeing Personal Lines and Commercial Lines Underwriting.

Bailey began her career at Auto-Owners Insurance as an Associate Underwriter, advancing to a number of roles with increasing responsibility.

Most recently, she served as Regional Director of Auto-Owners’ Little Rock Region. Bailey holds a Bachelor of Science degree and a Master of Business Administration degree from Appalachian State University in North Carolina, and has also earned the Associate in Underwriting and Associate in Insurance designations.

“Having Bailey lead The Concord Group’s Un-

derwriting operations will provide dedicated leadership support while advancing our integration with Auto-Owners’ practices and operational efficiencies,” said Mike Nolin, Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for The Concord Group. “We are excited to have Bailey join our team and look forward to our continued underwriting success under her leadership.”

Aegean Development announces opening of the Peck Center

LEWISTON, ME -- The new PECK Center will now be Maine’s hub for Space as a Service (SaaS) offerings at its 64,000 sq/ft property located at 184 Main St, in Lewiston ME.

Since Covid-19 the country and state have seen a radical shift in office space needs, with more remote employees being asked to return to an office atmosphere the standard ‘shared desk’ model is quickly not meeting the needs of many companies, nor is the traditional commercial leasing space attractive to companies as they deal with changing commercial environments.

The PECK Center bridges that divide by providing dedicated private office space, and shared resources and amenities all with a

simplistic billing model and customizable membership lengths from monthly to annually. And unlike traditional leases, there is no ambiguity or long-term commitments.

By focusing on Professional and Enterprise needs, single operators to growing enterprises that need open space for future growth in a landmark building with secure facilities and free connected garage parking for themselves and their clients. An example of the fields that will be represented as members are, Financial, Legal, Marketing, Health and Wellness, Engineering, Insurance, Physical and Occupational Therapy, Massage Therapy, and Home Health management.

Prices will start at \$375

for a dedicated workstation, and go up based on office and space needs. The Peck Center will customize space for clients to include interior design and furniture procurement at additional costs.

All prices will include unlimited access to amenities for themselves and clients during normal business hours.

Amenities include a fitness room with locker and shower facilities, café, conference rooms, parking, High-Speed Internet, and business support. We will be interviewing prospective members effective immediately, with the target occupation beginning in late November.

For more information, including pictures please visit www.peckcenter.com

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For more details and to submit your qualifications or resume, contact CEO@egcu.org by December 15th.

***No fundraising involved. Must live in one of the the six counties listed above.**