

Bee-ginner's beekeeping: The basics of apiculture



ONLINE -- Learn how to become a beekeeper in this apiculture course, which covers the basics of beekeeping, bee biology, bee hive management, purchasing queen bees, honey extraction, and more. Online class opens January 15th & closes February 19th, 2024

Participants can complete the course content (which will take approximately 14 hours) at their own pace anytime during the period the course is open. There is an optional live Q & A session with the instructors during which you can ask questions about the course content.

Course Overview

This online class is designed to pro-

vide information that new beekeepers need to start and care for a honey bee colony. Learn everything you need to know to further your hobby or get your business off the ground!

Participants will be introduced to bee biology and management. Participants will also learn how to assemble hives, open and examine colonies, and see how honey and beeswax are harvested.

Featured Topics

Bee Biology

Disease and Mite Prevention

Hive Assembly and Management

Honey Extraction

Queen Bee Purchasing

And Much More!

Who Should Attend?

Whether you are brand new to beekeeping or already have a few years as an apiarist under your belt, you will gain valuable insights from our seasoned instructor and his experience.

Our students come from all walks of life – attorneys, teachers, retirees, farmers, artists – but they leave with one thing in common: a newfound confidence to start their own hives and pursue their passion for beekeeping.

See <https://cpe.rutgers.edu/beekeeping/beginners-beekeeping> for more information.

Local schools expand educator apprenticeship opportunities

AUGUSTA, ME - Governor Janet Mills announced today that her Administration has awarded six schools a total of \$985,000 to recruit, train, and retain educators through pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship pilot programs. Associate Commissioner of Labor Samantha Dina and Associate Commissioner of Education Megan Welter announced the awards during a Zoom press conference today.

The initiative, funded in part by Governor Mills Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan and unveiled earlier this year is part of a larger effort by the Mills Administration to connect employers with a skilled workforce and workers with career opportunities.

The awards will be used to train nearly 200 new and existing educators in 12 counties across the state with a focus on building pathways for multilingual individuals, people with disabilities, and people of color and rural communities to increase representation among Maines educator workforce. The six institutions of education receiving awards are:

Brunswick School Department - \$105,000

MSAD 1 / RSU #79 - \$75,000

RSU #34 - \$249,000

Portland Public Schools - \$250,000

University of Maine Farmington - \$144,000

University of Southern Maine - \$162,000

The six schools awarded funds will partner with the Maine Department of Education and the Maine Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship Program to pilot new educator apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs.

"As the daughter of a longtime public school teacher, I understand the deep and lasting impact that teachers have on their students, schools, and communities," said Governor Janet Mills. "Helping Maine educators advance and grow in their careers is not only good for them, but it is also good for our students and can lead to better outcomes for everyone in

See [Apprenticeship](#), page 16

Help save a life in Gorham today!

PORTLAND, ME — When blood products are fully stocked on hospital shelves, patients don't have to wait for critical care. Giving blood or platelets with the American Red Cross in December can help those in need make more holiday memories with loved ones.

This is a busy time for many. Holiday gatherings, travel and seasonal illnesses can all impact donor availability, making it hard to collect enough blood and platelets. Unfortunately, trauma patients in the emergency room, those undergoing cancer treatment and new parents in need of lifesaving transfusions can't take a holiday break. Donors are needed every single day.

Those who come to give blood,



platelets or AB Elite plasma Dec. 18, 2023-Jan. 5, 2024, will receive an exclusive Red Cross long-sleeved T-shirt, while supplies last. To extend a special thank-you to donors for helping address the need for blood, platelets and plasma during the critical post-holiday time, those who come to give Jan. 1-31, 2024, National Blood Donor Month, will be automatically entered for a chance to win a trip for two to Super Bowl LVIII in Las Vegas. Details

are available at RedCrossBlood.org/SuperBowl.

Upcoming blood donation opportunities for Dec. 20 - Jan. 5:

Cumberland

Brunswick

1/4/2024: 11 a.m. - 4 p.m., Martins Point Healthcare, 114 Bath Road Gorham

1/4/2024: 1 p.m. - 6 p.m., Cressey Road Christian Church, 81 Cressey Road

Making and keeping appointments throughout the month can help safeguard the national blood supply into the new year. Schedule an appointment by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting RedCrossBlood.org or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

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Newsmakers, Names & Faces

DHHS issues \$19M to Maine nursing facilities

AUGUSTA, ME — The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) announced that it has issued \$19 million in one-time Medicaid (MaineCare) payments to Maine nursing facilities to support their continued recovery from the pandemic, particularly for direct care staff who tend to the health and wellbeing of residents.

The Department issued the payments, consistent with language in the biennial budget the Governor signed into law in July, to approximately 80 nursing facilities.

“This investment will help to keep vital staff employed at nursing facilities all across Maine—safeguarding the high-quality and consistent care that Maine people rely on,” said Governor Janet Mills. “My Administration will continue to work to strengthen Maine’s health care workforce and improve the availability of affordable long-term care for Maine people.”

“A clear body of research links the availability of consistent, well trained, hands-on staff to quality of life and care in nursing facilities,” said DHHS Commissioner Jeanne Lambrew. “These payments are designed to support those dedicated staff and reflect Governor Mills’ commitment to ensuring

that high-quality long-term care is affordable and accessible for Maine people.”

“We appreciate these targeted, temporary funds that will help address the extraordinarily high costs of labor that have caused unprecedented challenges for nursing homes,” said Angela Westhoff, President and CEO of the Maine Health Care Association. “These payments are an essential step in safeguarding the well-being of residents and ensuring more stability of Maine’s vital nursing homes. Looking toward our state’s future, we are optimistic about continuing our collaborative efforts with the Mills Administration and the Legislature to sustain access to care for Maine’s residents.”

A growing body of evidence links the delivery of high-quality care in nursing homes to adequate and consistent staffing. An article published in *The JAMA Network Open* in January 2023 showed that maintaining constant staffing day-to-day, especially with licensed practical nurses (LPNs) and certified nursing assistance (CNAs), is a marker of better quality in nursing homes.

Each qualifying nursing facility was eligible for a payment amount that was informed by their direct care costs in 2022.

This week’s pay-

ments follow \$50 million DHHS issued to long-term care facilities for pandemic recovery in two rounds of payments in April 2023 and August 2022. Those payments and the funding issued this week will facilitate pandemic recovery as the Department continues to work with stakeholders to reform how nursing homes are paid to reward quality and streamline payment administration.

These investments build on the Mills Administration’s historic financial and operational support for nursing facilities, which includes:

In June 2019, Governor Mills signed into law a biennial budget that dedicated \$25 million to provide a cost-of-living adjustment to nursing facilities. As a result, nursing facility rates increased, on average, by five percent for Fiscal Year 2020;

In March 2020, at the onset of the pandemic, the Mills Administration began \$9 million in temporary payment rate increases to nursing facilities for extra costs associated with COVID-19, including staffing above and beyond customary levels to maintain proper ratios and to monitor residents and screen visitors, supplies and PPE, such as face masks and gowns, beyond

the amounts typically purchased;

In November 2020, the Mills Administration announced that it would reimburse nursing facilities for their costs to conduct Federally-required surveillance testing using commercial laboratories;

In December 2020, the Mills Administration awarded \$5.1 million to health care facilities, most of which were nursing facilities, to cover expenses resulting from the pandemic;

In July 2021, Governor Mills signed the FY22-23 biennial budget that dedicated \$36.4 million in cost-of-living adjustments and rebasing funding for nursing facilities;

In August 2021, the Mills Administration awarded \$12.5 million to nursing and residential care facilities to help them cover expenses resulting from the pandemic;

In September 2021, the Mills Administration delivered \$123 million in one-time funding, including \$30 million in General Fund dollars authorized through the biennial budget signed into law by the Governor, for nursing facilities, residential care facilities, and adult family care homes to help address workforce issues by retaining current staff or hiring new staff;

In December 2021, the Mills Administration announced its plan to increase rates for long-term care facilities by \$4.5 million from January to June 2022, and add another \$7.6 million through the budget for supplemental wage adjustments for fiscal year 2022;

Effective July 1, 2022, payment rates increased to support paying direct care workers at least 125 percent of minimum wage, on top of rebasing rates which resulted in rates increasing, on average, by 20 percent over the prior year; and on January 1, 2023, rates increased further to support 125 percent of minimum wage;

In August 2022, the Mills Administration issued \$25 million in one-time funding for nursing facilities, residential care facilities, and adult family care homes to help address ongoing workforce issues and relatively low occupancy;

In April 2023, the Mills Administration issued \$25 million in one-time funding for nursing facilities, residential care facilities, and adult family care homes to help address ongoing workforce issues and relatively low occupancy;

In July 2023, payment rates were increased by a cost of living adjust-

ment of approximately 4.5 percent

Since January 2021, the Department has used over \$2 million in Federal funds to support emergency nurse and related staffing to nearly one-third of Maine long-term care facilities to support care for residents during the pandemic.

This is in addition to at least \$50 million in financial relief distributed directly by the Federal government to nursing facilities across Maine.

Recognizing the need to address the workforce challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Mills included \$20 million in the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan to support health care workforce training. The Jobs Plan additionally supports marketing campaigns aimed at promoting health care careers in Maine and Healthcare Training for ME, a program to expand the availability of free and low-cost career training to help health care workers advance their careers, support workforce training needs of health care employers, and attract new workers to fast-growing fields. The Jobs Plan is also supporting the Caring for ME campaign to educate and encourage residents to become direct care providers.

Over \$3.5M for Maine environmental justice projects

BOSTON, MA — Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced over \$3.5 million to fund six projects across Maine that advance environmental justice as part of President Biden’s Investing in America agenda. The organizations, which EPA has selected through its Environmental

Justice Collaborative Problem Solving Cooperative Agreement and Environmental Justice Government-to-Government programs, will use the funds to ensure disadvantaged communities that have historically suffered from underinvestment have access to clean air and water and climate resilience solu-

tions in alignment with the Biden-Harris administration’s Justice40 Initiative.

Thanks to President Biden’s Inflation Reduction Act—the largest climate investment in U.S. history—this funding is a part of the largest investment ever announced under these two longstanding EPA programs. This is the

first in a series of environmental justice grant announcements the agency will announce before the end of the year.

“No President has invested more in environmental justice than President Biden, and under his leadership we’re removing longstanding barriers and meaningfully collab-

orating with communities to build a healthier future for all,” said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan. “Together, these community-driven projects will improve the health, equity, and resilience of communities while setting a blueprint for local solutions that can be applied across the nation.”

“EPA strongly believes that historically disadvantaged and overburdened communities must have a place at the table as we work toward climate and environmental justice. Successful environmental justice programs are built with community collaboration, common goals,

See *Projects*, page 10



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Newsmakers, Names & Faces

\$27M for Downeaster Corridor track improvements

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Susan Collins, Vice Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, announced that the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) will receive \$27,490,000 through the Federal Railroad Administration’s (FRA) Federal-State Partnership (FSP) for Intercity Passenger Rail-National Grant Program. Senator Collins previously sent a letter to the U.S. Department of Transportation

in support of NNEPRA’s grant application.

“This investment will help address critical infrastructure needs on the Downeaster Corridor, improving safety, efficiency, and reliability of Maine’s passenger rail while strengthening the connection between communities from Brunswick to Massachusetts and their local economies,” said Senator Collins. “As Vice Chairman of the Senate Appropriations

Committee, I will continue to advocate for investments into our state’s rail system.”

Specifically, this funding will be used for track-related improvements on CSX Transportation’s (CSX) mainline from Brunswick to the Massachusetts state line, in addition to helping support planned future service expansions of the rail line. The improvements will help to reduce the need to impose slow orders on the Amtrak Downeaster



service, which often results in delays and longer transit times.

Since 2009, when Senator Collins became a member of the Appropriations Committee, she has helped to secure more than \$1 billion in competitive



transportation grants for the State of Maine. This funding was made possible by

the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law that Senator Collins co-authored.

Campaign for Justice announces 2023 award recipient

AUGUSTA, ME – The Campaign for Justice is pleased to announce the 7th Annual Peter J. DeTroy III Award recipient is Toby Hollander, Esq., of Portland, Maine.

Toby served in the U.S. Navy and is a Vietnam veteran. Early in his career, he saw an unmet need for military veterans and together with a group of lawyers, began a legal collective to assist them with matters pertaining to military discharge. After moving to Maine, he began his legal aid career at Pine

Tree Legal Assistance, a position he held until going into private practice. Toby is known throughout Maine for his decades of work as an advocate for children and other disadvantaged individuals. His exemplary guardian ad litem work, in particular, has been cited numerous times in his nominations for the DeTroy award. Toby’s countless hours of pro bono work and dedication to public service as a tireless champion for those in need exemplify all the qualities that the Peter J.



DeTroy III Award upholds.

The Peter J. DeTroy III Award was established by the Campaign for Justice when Peter, a dedicated Campaign volunteer and one of Maine’s most esteemed lawyers, died suddenly on May 28, 2016, while riding his bike near his home in Portland. He was 68. A practicing lawyer in Maine since 1972

and a founding partner of the law firm Norman, Hanson & DeTroy, he became one of the state’s most accomplished lawyers over the decades. Peter served on a number of committees devoted to ensuring that the practice of law was inclusive, without discrimination, and without unnecessary barriers to young lawyers eager to learn. He

was a problem-solver, a counselor, and a zealous protector and defender of rights. He was a lawyer who harmonized empathy, passion, trust, integrity, and thoughtfulness in every case he handled in his long and impressive career.

The Campaign for Justice, the annual fundraising campaign to the Maine Bar, aims to ease the gap between existing need for civil legal aid and current funding. Since 2004, the Campaign for Justice has worked collaboratively with Cumberland

Legal Aid Clinic, Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project, Legal Services for the Elderly, Maine Equal Justice, Pine Tree Legal Assistance, and Volunteer Lawyers Project to raise money from local attorneys and judges.

The Campaign for Justice is administered by the Maine Justice Foundation. Founded in 1983, MJF is a non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring justice for low-income and vulnerable Mainers.

FMI: www.campaignforjustice.org

Kate Hannan, ME & NH realtor, joins Fontaine Family Team



MAINE -- Fontaine Family - The Real Estate Leader is thrilled to announce Kate Hannan as the newest addition to their growing Scarborough team. With over four years of dedicated experience in the real estate industry, Kate brings a wealth of knowledge, a deep commitment to her clients and a strong reputation for customer satisfaction. She is based in Stratham, New Hampshire, and serves the Seacoast Region of New Hampshire along with Southern Maine.

Kate’s journey in real

estate began after several years of being a stay-at-home mom, a role she cherished while raising her three children. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a focus on International Affairs from the University of New Hampshire, a testament to her commitment to excellence in her field. Prior to her career in real estate, Kate owned and operated a successful gift and candy store in the picturesque town of Bar Harbor, Maine. She later marketed and successfully sold the business, marking a transition to Seacoast, New Hampshire, where she decided to pursue her passion for real estate.

Kate currently resides in Seacoast, New Hampshire, with her loving husband and three children, including two girls and a boy. Their four-legged family member, a German

Shepherd, completes their happy household. In their leisure time, they enjoy boating in the scenic Great Bay and frequently escape to Cape Cod for some quality family time. Kate’s interests extend beyond her professional career, with personal real estate investments and property improvements serving as her hobbies. She is also an avid supporter of her son’s hockey pursuits and spends a significant amount of time at the rink cheering him on.

Fontaine Family Team is proud to have Kate Hannan on their team, and her dedication to her clients and passion for real estate will undoubtedly make her a valuable asset to the firm. As she embarks on this exciting new chap-

ter with Fontaine Family Team, she is eager to assist clients in achieving their

real estate dreams in the NH/ME region with the support of the Fontaine

Team. Contact Kate today at kate@fontaineteam.com or 207-944-1412.

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Seniors Not Acting Their Age

A Camden Hills Traverse

One of the finest hikes in the Camden Hills is a traverse of Maiden Cliff and Mount Megunticook. The expedition encompasses three of the most scenic locations in Maine: Maiden Cliff, a towering escarpment on Scenic Trail, and Ocean Overlook.

I try to arrange a Camden Hills adventure each fall. When I suggested a Maiden Cliff/Mount Megunticook traverse to my longtime hiking friend, John Stokinger, he enthusiastically agreed. This particular hike evokes nostalgic memories for both of us as we completed the trek with our young families about forty years ago. At the time, our four kids were in the five to ten years age bracket. Now, they're middle-aged and we're old. Time marches on.

The excursion presented medical implications for me. I've recently experienced some left knee discomfit and have an upcoming appointment with a knee specialist. Since hiking, particularly winter-mountain hiking, is an important part of my life, I want to provide the doctor with detailed information on how the knee reacts to a challenging mountain hike.

John and I met in the parking lot at Camden Hills State Park headquarters off Route One in Camden on a cold windy but sunny late fall day. Although there was no snow accumulation and only occasional ice, we otherwise experienced winter-like weather throughout the outing. Stocking caps, mitts, and layers of clothing were essential.

We left a vehicle in the parking lot and drove about six miles to Maiden Cliff Trailhead on Route 52. A Maiden Cliff loop hike is one of the most popular in the Camden Hills. Surprisingly, no other vehicles were in the parking area.

We began our trek on the predominantly dry Maiden Cliff Trail in a mixed hardwood and conifer forest. The streams and brooks were unusually high throughout the hike and caution was required during crossings to avoid wet footwear. Shortly before reaching Scenic Trail, we noted the path had been rerouted. This was the first of several trail improvements encountered during the expedition.

After a half-mile, we turned left at the Scenic Trail junction and climbed

steeply onto the shoulder of a high prominence on the western end of the Mount Megunticook massif. From there, it was easy hiking with sporadic views of Megunticook Lake to Maiden Cliff where an immense white cross identifies the location where twelve-year old Lenora French fell to her death in 1864. Despite the tragic event, this is a magical place that provides a fabulous view of Megunticook Lake and the Camden Hills beyond.

Progressing northeasterly on Scenic Trail, we found another rerouted section. The new route is a marked improvement over the former one which was badly eroded. Scrambling steeply up a series of ledges and boulders, we arrived at an overlook with more spectacular views of Megunticook Lake.

Persisting up a sloping ledge, we reached the summit of the western high point where a cairn is located. I call this site Maiden Cliff Mountain as it is separated from Mount Megunticook by a fairly deep saddle. Just beyond, while skirting the rim of an elongated cliff, we experienced remarkable expansive vistas of the surrounding area.

After dropping down steeply, we left Scenic Trail and proceeded on rugged rolling terrain on Ridge Trail towards the top of Mount Megunticook. The serpentine passage descends to a stream crossing and passes Jack Williams and Zeke's Trails before arriving at the forested summit marked by a gigantic cairn.

From the top, Ridge Trail begins a gradual decline. In another rerouted section, we met the only other hiker encountered during our trek. Angling west, we emerged onto the majestic cliffs of Ocean Overlook. Despite harsh wind chills, we lingered on the vertical escarpment to enjoy outstanding views of Camden Harbor and western Penobscot Bay.

We continued steeply



An immense white cross marks the top of Maiden Cliff



An elongated cliff on Scenic Trail provides expansive vistas of the surrounding area



Outstanding views of Camden Harbor and western Penobscot Bay can be seen from Ocean Overlook

down precipitous ledges to Adam's Lookout Trail on the left. This short path provides occasional glimpses of Penobscot Bay before joining Mount Megunticook Trail. After descending Adam's Lookout Trail, we followed Mount

Megunticook Trail steadily downhill and through the park campground to our shuttle vehicle completing one of Maine's finest most scenic treks.

The verdict on my knee is less than ideal. More senior medical care

seems likely.

My book *Maine Al Fresco: The Fifty Finest Outdoor Adventures in Maine* narrates eight more mountain hikes around the state.

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

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Helping children with special needs enjoy the holidays

Submitted by the Episcopal Center for Children

CHEVY CHASE, DC - The holidays are upon us, and while there's loads of merry-making and fun to be had – the changes and sensations of the season can add stress to the lives of children with special needs and their families. The Episcopal Center for Children (ECC), a non-profit organization serving children with special needs ages 5-14 in the greater Washington, DC area, offers the following tips to help.

“Children with special needs enjoy the holidays but they are especially sensitive to the changes in routines that the holidays bring,” said Stephanie Nash, LICSW, president and CEO of ECC. “Making a plan, thinking about your child’s needs, and adjusting your expectations can help you create a positive holiday experience for the entire family.”

Tip #1 – Make a plan for the holidays and share it with your family. Create a schedule for your family’s holiday activities and post it for your child to see. You may find it helpful to use pictures to help a young child. Talk about the schedule with your child, so he or she can anticipate



what will happen.

Tip #2 – Remind your family about holiday plans. Review the schedule. Discuss the schedule with others in your home, so they understand what is going on and how they can best support your child with special needs (and everyone else in the family), so everyone can have a fun holiday.

Tip #3 – For holiday gatherings, give your child a job and a plan. Ask your child to help collect coats, give out treats, or greet arrivals. Rehearse the plan. Give your child a schedule or plan for a festive occasion so he or she knows what to anticipate and

when things will happen.

Tip #4 – Maintain routines as much as possible. There may be special activities for the holidays, but try to keep your child’s schedule as close to “normal” as possible. Routines are key for helping children coping with special needs, and it’s especially important for children to stick to regular medication and sleep schedules as much as possible.

Tip #5 - If your child is sensitive to unfamiliar smells, help manage them. Cinnamon is a common holiday fragrance. One way to help a child experience this smell minimally (and gauge reaction

to it), is to add cinnamon to play compound before an event. Ask guests visiting your home to not wear heavy perfumes if your child is sensitive to them and think about other smells like evergreens.

Tip #6 – Eat healthy foods and consider how new or special foods impact your child. During the holidays there are all sorts of fun foods and treats to enjoy. Some children are more affected than others by dietary changes. Pay attention to your child’s moods and how diet and situational changes may be impacting him or her. If you are at an event, bring along food that is familiar

to your child if you think it may be needed.

Tip #7 – Take breaks when needed. Sometimes children need a break from the hubbub of holiday activities and busyness. Fill a bag or backpack with a few favorite toys, games or activities. If you see your child is getting stressed, get out the bag and find a quiet spot to play.

Tip #8 – Do not allow presents to be a hindrance to enjoyment. Toy packaging today can frustrate children and parents alike. Children who have trouble with fine motor skills may find unwrapping some gifts frustrating. You can adjust packages to their comfort level by loosening ribbons and paper, or pre-cutting fasteners. Ask others who give your child gifts to be aware of his or her needs when it comes to wrapping presents. Some children find it disorienting to unwrap things that are new and unfamiliar to them. If that is the case for your child, wrap a few favorite toys for your child to unwrap.

Tip #9 – Get your child into the spirit of the season through gift giving. Gift giving provides an opportunity to practice social skills. Help your child make a gift for someone else, and practice how

to give the gift to that person. Let your child experience the joy of giving.

Tip #10 – Give your child the gift of your attention. Holidays can be busy for grown-ups and children. Make sure you spend a few minutes of quality time with your child every day. Give your full attention. Practice active listening, where you listen to what your child is saying and then repeat it back to them to demonstrate that you are listening. Focus on offering connection and support.

About the Episcopal Center for Children

The Episcopal Center for Children (ECC) is a nondenominational, non-profit organization that has been dedicated to serving the needs of children and their families for the past 125 years. In June 2019, the ECC suspended operation for its K-8 therapeutic school for children with emotional challenges from the greater Washington, D.C. Metropolitan area. The Board of Directors continues to be committed to its longstanding mission of serving children in determining plans for the ECC’s future. ECC currently offers an After School Enrichment Program and is working toward reopening its therapeutic school.

SIREN Act to support rural EMS throughout Maine

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Susan Collins (R-ME) and Dick Durbin (D-IL) applauded Senate’s unanimous passage of their bipartisan SIREN Reauthorization Act. The legislation would extend funding for five additional years for Supporting and Improving Rural EMS Needs (SIREN) grants to rural fire and EMS agencies nationwide. Administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA),

this funding supports EMS agencies in training and recruiting staff, conducting certification courses, and purchasing equipment, including naloxone to address the opioid epidemic.

“It is vital that Americans who live in rural parts of Maine and across the country have access to lifesaving emergency medical services, which is why I have long advocated for funding to support access to quality rural health care,” said Senator Collins. “With the Senate passage

of this legislation, we are supporting rural EMS agencies, this bipartisan legislation would help to alleviate staffing shortages, upgrade training and equipment, and ultimately boost response times when seconds count. This program has made a real difference for recruiting and retaining EMS personnel in Maine’s rural communities.”

“In Illinois, rural EMS agencies are a lifeline for their communities. These first responders

are on the front lines, and we must ensure that they have the proper staffing, training, and equipment to address the emergency in front of them,” said Senator Durbin. “I worked in 2018 to pass the bipartisan SIREN Act to meet the needs of rural EMS agencies as they care for their communities. And today, I’m pleased that the United States Senate has recognized the importance of this successful program by advancing the *SIREN Reauthorization Act*. I’m

grateful for Senator Collins’ partnership in making certain that rural EMS agencies continue to have access to the funding they depend on. I urge the House of Representatives to quickly take up and pass this legislation so it can be signed into law.”

The SIREN Act was initially signed into law in 2018 as part of the Farm Bill. Since then, Senators Collins and Durbin have led the appropriations effort to grow the program from \$5 million annually

to \$10.5 million this year, resulting in a total of nearly \$30 million in grants nationwide. Funding through this program has supported several EMS agencies across the State of Maine, including those serving Aroostook, Franklin, and Waldo counties.

A decline in primary care and hospital service availability, workforce shortages exacerbated by the pandemic, great distances between health care facilities, and low insurance rates are some of the challenges facing rural communities. *See SIREN, page 12*

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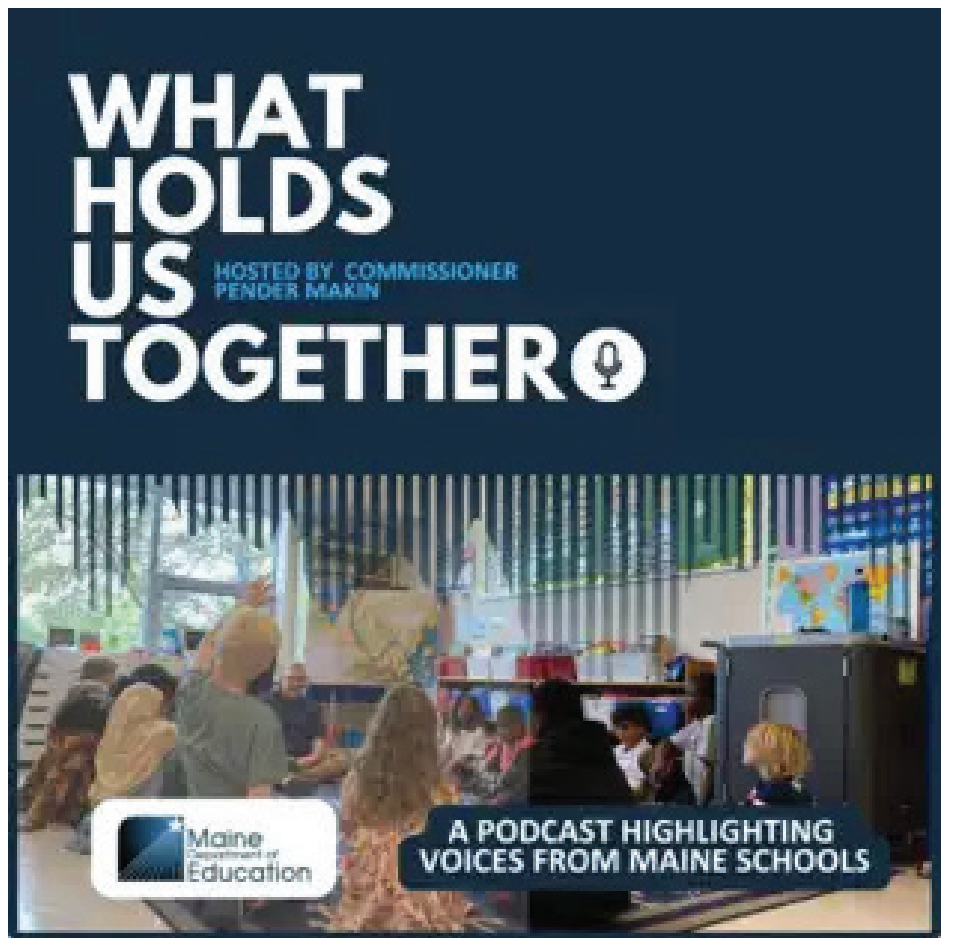
Gorham Educator Apprentice Program starting up in January

GORHAM, ME -- Interested in Working in public schools but don't know how to transfer careers or get started....HERE IS HOW! The Gorham Schools and its partner dis-

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Maine podcast supports staff, student wellbeing



AUGUSTA, ME— On the latest episode of her What Holds Us Together podcast, Maine Education Commissioner Pender Makin talked with three educators about the strategies they learned through the Maine DOE's partnership with The Regulated Classroom to improve staff and student wellbeing, increase student engagement, and help with regulation.

Special education teacher Jenn Whitney, second grade teacher Cecilia Dube, and first grade teacher Sierra Blake were among the 600 Maine teachers trained as trainers in the Regulated Classroom approach, and they shared how they are using the research-based tools and techniques in their classrooms and training other educators on wellbeing and regulation strategies.

"We continue to hear that student behavior, mental health, and dysregulation create some of the biggest barriers to success in the classroom. The Maine DOE offers

several programs for student and staff wellbeing, and I loved talking to three educators who were part of a cohort for one of those programs called The Regulated Classroom. This program leverages what we know about neuroscience and the parasympathetic nervous system, offering practical strategies to help students engage in the learning process," said Makin during her introduction to the podcast episode.

On the podcast, the educators discussed the techniques and strategies they are using and the results they are already seeing for themselves, other staff, and students. The educators report increased wellbeing, attendance, and engagement at their schools.

The COVID-19 pandemic took a tremendous toll on educator and student wellbeing, with educators reporting increased numbers of dysregulated students, stress, and classroom disruptions. Many educators feel over-

whelmed by these pandemic-induced behavioral issues. The Regulated Classroom utilizes a neuroscience-based approach to help educators create calm, engaged, and supportive learning environments by cultivating conditions for felt safety. Felt safety references a regulated state in the body's stress response system.

The program helps educators recognize and manage their own stress levels. It also helps educators manage increased levels of stress in students, which can be displayed as aggression, poor impulse control, limited attention span, and lack of motivation. Educators received access to a collection of practices and sensory tools to embed into daily routines and activities to promote a more regulated and stable environment for learning. This program supports student achievement and increased job satisfaction for educators.

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- Culturally Responsive Teaching (EDUC 115)
- Foundations of Literacy (EDUC 220)
- Teaching Exceptional Learners (EDUC 230)
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Send all items for Names & Faces to the editor. Deadline is Friday by five pm.

King: VA must protect veterans from prescription opioid abuse

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Senator Angus King, a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, is calling on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to step up its efforts to protect veterans from prescription opioid abuse. In a letter from King and his committee colleagues to VA Secretary Denis McDonough, the Senators are urging the department to take swift action following reports that found a majority of non-VA health care providers are not meeting the VA prescription opioid safety standards.

A recent report from the VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) found third-party administrators have failed to provide adequate oversight of whether Veterans Community Care Network health care providers were completing and certifying VA's Opioid Safety Initiative (OSI) training.

The OIG also found approximately 14,700 of 18,200 non-VA providers in the Community Care Network who prescribed opioids to veterans in fiscal year 2021 had not completed VA's OSI training and did not certify their mandated review of VA's guidelines. Lapses

in oversight have resulted in the over prescription of opioids from both the VA and Community Care Network providers — increasing veterans' risk of sedation and overdose.

"We write today to discuss our concerns with the Department of Veterans Affairs' oversight of non-VA providers who prescribe opioids to veterans," the Senators wrote in a letter to VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "In Fiscal Year 2022, the Department spent more than \$27 billion in the community for health care services for veterans. VA must ensure the

dollars it spends result in high-quality, safe care for veterans."

"It is clear VA and its contracted third-party administrators failed to do their due diligence in ensuring the health and safety of the veterans in their care...As stated many times before, we feel if there is an issue at one location, it will likely occur elsewhere. The Department must work not only to address the shortcomings outlined in these OIG reports but also to ensure lessons learned are implemented system-wide," the Senators continued.

"It is the responsi-

bility of VA to ensure the veterans in its care, or that of its community partners, are being provided high-quality care. We urge VA to act to ensure our nation's veterans are not put at risk when seeking care in the community...VA can outsource the work — but it cannot outsource the responsibility for taking care of our veterans," the Senators concluded.

Representing a state with one of the highest rates of veterans per capita, Senator King is a staunch advocate for America's servicemembers and veterans. A mem-

ber of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, he works to ensure American veterans receive their earned benefits and that the VA is properly implementing various programs such as the PACT Act, the State Veterans Homes Domiciliary Care Flexibility Act, and the John Scott Hannon Act. Earlier this year, King introduced bipartisan legislation to support veterans with mental traumas, as well as celebrated President Biden signing his legislation into law, which increases benefits for veterans and military families.

Maine ranked 10th nationally in United Health Foundation report

MAINE -- In December, the United Health Foundation released their America's Health Rankings 2023 Annual Report, which highlights improvements, challenges, and disparities in the health and well-being of Americans across all 50 states.

Nationally, this year's report shows that eight chronic conditions

have reached the highest prevalence in the report's history. These include arthritis, asthma, cancer, cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), chronic kidney disease (CKD), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), depression and diabetes.

Maine was ranked No. 10 and experiences the following strengths and challenges, according to

this report:

A 10% increase in dental care providers from 57.6 to 63.1 per 100,000 population between September 2022 and September 2023.

A high prevalence of high school completion with 94.6% of adults ages 25 and older with at least a high school diploma or equivalent; the state ranked 2nd in the nation in

this measure.

A 30% increase in chronic kidney disease from 3.3% to 4.3% of adults between 2020 and 2022.

A 20% increase in drug deaths from 37.6 to 45.2 deaths per 100,000 population between 2020 and 2021.

You can access

the state summary here: <https://www.americashealthrankings.org/learn/reports/2023-annual-report/state-summaries-maine>

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For more information, refer to the Owner's Manual and www.epa.gov/burnwise. Efficiency and emissions are provided by an EPA-approved third party lab. Heating area is estimated by the manufacturer.

EPA

carbon, and air toxics, such as benzene. If you smell smoke in your home or consistently see smoke coming out of your chimney, that's an indication that the heater is emitting harmful air pollutants. Exposure to fine particle pollution has been linked to asthma attacks, acute bronchitis, irregular heartbeat, heart attacks, and premature death. Indoor fine-particle pollution levels can affect both your lungs and heart. This may cause breathing problems and exacerbate pre-existing lung conditions. Communities already vulnerable and overburdened are particularly susceptible to indoor wood smoke pollution.

Nationwide, there are about 14 million fireplaces, 12.5 million wood stoves, and 814,000 hydronic heaters (outdoor wood boilers) in use as primary or secondary heat sources. Many of these are older wood-fueled appliances that pollute more than newer units. Use of electric heat pumps is a more energy-efficient method to both heat and cool your home. Heat pump technology has improved in recent years and can perform well even in cold climates such as New England.

The federal Clean Energy Tax Credits for Consumers covers 30 percent of the cost of heat pumps, capped at \$2,000 each year, but resets annually so it can be used for other projects. In addition

to new federal tax credits, the Inflation Reduction Act includes nearly \$9 billion for states and tribes for consumer home energy rebate programs, including point of sale rebates focused on low and middle income consumers. Finally, check to see if your state offers rebates as there may be additional State incentives for switching to heat pumps. Through these programs, communities will be able to electrify home appliances and perform energy efficient retrofits, such as installation of heat pumps.

EPA encourages the use of a heat pump as the primary source of heat. If there is a need for back up heating and you use a wood stove, EPA recommends using an EPA-certified woodstove. To upgrade an old wood stove, see the EPA-certified wood heaters list at EPA's Burn Wise website. This database also contains information on pellet stoves that are typically the cleanest burning EPA-certified wood heaters and on hydronic heaters, which are generally much less efficient than EPA-certified wood stoves and may produce excessive amounts of smoke that can negatively impact local air quality in your community.

Here are some tips from EPA for a healthier heating season:

Reduce your heating needs and bills by insulating your home; caulking around windows, doors, and pipes; and adding weather-stripping to doors and windows.

When considering the cost of a heater, consider pollution levels and health effects.

Upgrade to a cleaner technology, such as heat pumps as your primary source of heat and use your existing EPA-certified wood stove as a backup or supplemental source.

Store and season your firewood properly. Wood burns hotter and cleaner when dry and seasoned. Consider acquiring a woodshed to protect wood from the elements while allowing air to circulate and moisture to escape. Some simple and inexpensive ideas for building a woodshed are on EPA's Burn Wise website.

Use a moisture meter to check wood-moisture content, which is best at about 20 percent. For the proper use a wood moisture meter, go to EPA's Test Your Wood Moisture Meter webpage.

Check air quality in your area at the AirNow

website and, if possible, avoid burning wood during air quality alert days.

Have your heating system inspected by a certified professional annually with particular attention to vents and chimneys.

Outdoor fire pits and fireplaces are also popular during the fall and winter. While these fires are a source for cooking, warmth, and recreation, be aware that these are sources of air pollution that can affect the health of your family, neighbors, and community. Please check your local air quality at airnow.gov for steps to take to protect your health during air quality alert days.

In addition to replacing older wood stoves with EPA-certified models or alternative heat sources such as heat pumps, EPA encourages the use of energy-efficiency incentives whenever possible. Funding assistance or rebates that support renewable energy and energy efficiency in New England, and across the country, can be found in the Database of State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency website.

For more information visit EPA's Burn Wise website.

BOSTON, MA – During the winter, many people seek to avoid high heating costs by turning to wood as a fuel. Unfortunately, many wood heaters are inefficient and emit more pollutants into the air than heating with oil, natural gas or electricity. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) New England regional office is sharing tips to help people enjoy a healthier heating season.

"Now that winter is upon us, if your family is purchasing a new wood-burning heater, be sure to choose an efficient

EPA-certified unit," said EPA New England Regional Administrator David W. Cash. "Modern EPA-certified wood-burning appliances burn cleaner and produce less smoke inside and outside your home, meaning your family and neighbors have cleaner air to breathe. Further, efficient wood-burning appliances burn less wood, saving you both time and money."

Older or inefficient wood heaters emit greater amounts of fine particles and other pollutants, including carbon monoxide (CO), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), black



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Local students learn skills, teamwork, and independence

PORTLAND, ME - 'Tis the season to join the crowds and hit the stores trying to find the perfect Christmas gifts. This time of year can be challenging for everyone - but imagine navigating the holiday hustle and bustle as a person with visual impairment.

On Tuesday, December 12, a group of more than a dozen students with visual impairment did just that at the Maine Mall in South Portland. For decades, Catholic Charities Maine's Education Services for Blind and Visually Impaired Children (ESBVIC) has provided this annual learning experience for sixth to twelfth grade students with vision impairment. The day started with a scavenger hunt that challenged the young shoppers to find common items, budget their time and money, and purchase items around the mall. The goal was to provide students with a better understanding of the different stores and variety of items available in a mall, but the day was about a lot more.



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"I learned a lot about where to find things in the mall, and the people working in the stores were really helpful," said Tyler, a high school student from Winthrop, Maine. "But it was also great to be around other students with visual impairment. I'm the only ESBVIC student at my school - probably ever - and working with others on the scavenger hunt taught me to keep my mind open to how other people do things. I'm surprised how much I learned just by being here with this group."

The hunt was followed by lunch at the food court and time for the students to shop independently. "It was a challenging day that also celebrated the fun and excitement of the holiday season," Moulton said.



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"It's a fun time to be at the mall, and the students look forward to it. The crowds can be challenging but also make for a realistic shopping experience for the kids," said Nancy Moulton, ESBVIC Program Director. "Our program is about more than academic success; our Teachers for the Visually

Impaired (TVIs) also teach self-determination and important life skills." Moulton noted that students worked with their peers and independently. The time at the mall helped students flex their skills for social interaction, independent living, recreation and leisure interests, and sensory efficiency.




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New videos help Mainers assess, manage electricity consumption

AUGUSTA, ME—Efficiency Maine today announced it has added two instructional videos to the resources that support its initiative to loan out electricity monitors through participating libraries. The aim of the videos is to help consumers learn how to monitor and measure their electricity usage with the goal of reducing their electricity bill. Maine residents can now access the updated electricity monitor webpage, which features these new items, as well as includes updated monitor instruction sheets.

The initiative is a part of the quasi-state agency's growing collection of Do-It-Yourself (DIY) tips, tools, rebates, and weatherization resources. The mon-

itor campaign is designed to encourage consumers to understand and manage their electricity consumption by giving residents tools that can show them how much electricity they consume on a monthly and yearly basis.

"There are plenty of smaller, low-cost steps Mainers can take to reduce their energy use, increase their comfort, and lower their energy bills," said Michael Stoddard, executive director of Efficiency Maine. "The monitors can help identify which appliances are using the most electricity. Armed with that information, some consumers may make decisions about how and when they use them."

Starting in 2008, Efficiency Maine has supplied



electricity monitor kits to most of Maine's libraries interested in loaning them to their patrons. New monitors and an education campaign were relaunched in August 2021. Each kit includes an electricity monitor, a 25-page home energy efficiency tips booklet, paper instructions on how to use the electricity monitor, and educational activity worksheets for families and children. A new blog on the Efficiency Maine website contains a more detailed

description of the electricity monitors instructions and how they can help residents.

"We're pleased to partner with Efficiency Maine to help Mainers make informed decisions about how to cut energy costs," said Lori Fisher, Maine State Librarian. "Providing the monitor along with information on how to use it and other resources about energy efficiency is one way local libraries contribute to their

communities. I hope everyone takes advantage of this program."

"Library guests have appreciated the opportunity to take home the electricity monitors provided by Efficiency Maine," said Andrea DeBiase, library director at Carrabassett Valley Public Library. "They are always surprised by the results and sometimes come back to borrow the monitor kit a second time!"

Patrons can borrow a monitor free of charge from participating Maine libraries. If there is no library in town, consumers can visit the Maine State Library's website to request materials via postal mail.

More information about the electricity monitor loaner initiative can be

found at <https://www.energymaine.com/at-home/electricity-monitor-loaners/>.

Using an electricity monitor is only one way homeowners and tenants can evaluate their energy use and identify possible ways to help manage their bills. Efficiency Maine offers residents incentives of up to \$9,200 for insulation upgrades to increase their home's energy efficiency. It also has produced a downloadable Winter Energy-Saving Tips flier that describes useful do-it-yourself heating and weatherization steps and best practices on how to help homeowners seal their homes against drafts and use existing heating systems more efficiently.

DAR Scholarship accepting applications

WASHINGTON – Undergraduate and graduate students studying music with ambitions for future careers can take time over the holiday break to apply for the DAR Marian Anderson Legacy Scholarship. Sponsored by the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), the scholarship provides a one-time \$5,000 award to one student annually who is pursuing undergraduate or

graduate study in music.

Marian Anderson (1897-1993) was a groundbreaking African American contralto and an inspiration for civil rights. "This scholarship pays tribute to Marian Anderson's life, and the Daughters of the American Revolution seeks to honor her legacy through today's aspiring musicians. Her legacy lives on in others who aim for excellence in musical studies, are commit-

ted to their communities, and willing to stand up for what is right," said Pamela Wright, DAR President General.

Applicants should be accepted or currently enrolled in an accredited university or college in the United States and have a concentration in music in their course of study. Music performance, composition, theory, or education are all areas that students may be

specialized in to qualify for the scholarship. They should have a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale or the equivalent GPA on the scale used by the institution is required.

In honor of Ms. Anderson's commitment to the community throughout her life and her willingness to share her incredible talent with the world, applicants are asked to write a person-

al statement describing their humanitarian or volunteer contributions on behalf of their community and/or country.

To recognize the city Marian Anderson called home, preference will be given to students from the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania metropolitan area, even if they are not pursuing music studies in the Philadelphia area. This scholarship is not automatically renewed.

However, recipients may re-apply for consideration each year for up to four consecutive years.

The scholarship is supported by the Daughters of the American Revolution's Marian Anderson Legacy Fund. Learn more about the relationship between Marian Anderson and the DAR, and the organization's on-going efforts to honor her memory at www.dar.org/MarianAnderson.

Projects

Continued from page 2

and community empowerment," said EPA New England Regional Administrator David Cash. "Across New England, these selectees are poised to catalyze lasting change and make a profound difference, bringing cleaner air and water to their communities, combatting climate change, creating green jobs, and improving environmental health. We eagerly anticipate the enduring impact the grants in Maine will have in our region, advancing our common goal of environmental justice."

"Mainers from the coast to the mountains are already experiencing the impacts of climate change. As the Gulf of Maine warms and more frequent extreme weather events affect our fisheries, farmers, and businesses,

federal investments are critical to not only mitigating the climate crisis but making our communities more resilient to its impacts," said Congresswoman Chellie Pingree (D-Maine). "From strengthening working waterfronts and developing a clean energy workforce to improving environmental public health and advancing environmental justice, these significant investments made possible by the historic Inflation Reduction Act will go a long way in helping our overburdened communities and will also help Maine achieve our climate goals."

"Keeping Maine's environment healthy not only benefits our great outdoors, but also strengthens our local communities and businesses," said Congress-

man Golden (ME-02). "This set of EPA grants will boost severe weather resilience, reduce pollution, and improve food security for families all across the Second District."

The grants announced today deliver on President Biden's commitment to advance equity and justice throughout the United States. The two grant programs directly advance the President's transformational Justice40 initiative to deliver 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain federal investments to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized by underinvestment and overburdened by pollution.

The Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem Solving (EJCPS) Program

EPA's EJCPS pro-

gram provides financial assistance to eligible organizations working to address local environmental or public health issues in their communities. The program builds upon President Biden's Executive Orders 13985 and 14008, creating a designation of funds exclusively for small nonprofit organizations, which are defined as having 5 or fewer full-time employees, thus ensuring that grant resources reach organizations of lower capacity that historically struggle to receive federal funding. Eleven of the organizations selected for EJCPS this year are small nonprofit organizations, receiving over \$1.6 million in total.

EPA EJCPS grant selections in Maine:

Gulf of Maine Research Institute in Portland, Maine has

been selected to receive \$500,000 for building capacity for disadvantaged working waterfront communities to engage constructively in offshore wind development in the Gulf of Maine.

United Charitable has been selected to receive \$500,000 for supporting the ReTreeUS project in Auburn, Maine to work with 11 partner organizations to develop 8 food forests, providing benefits such as improvement of public and environmental health, while serving communities with high rates of food insecurity.

Maine People's Resource Center in Bangor, Maine has been selected to receive \$500,000 for a community-led program to invest in the workforce development necessary to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants through clean energy projects.

Center for an Ecology-Based Economy in the Western Maine Foothills Region has been selected to receive \$150,000 for increasing community resilience across municipalities, schools, and public land through education, planning and technical assistance.

Environmental Justice Government-to-Government (EJG2G)

EPA's EJG2G provides funding at the state, local, territorial, and Tribal level to support government activities in partnership with community-based organizations that lead to measurable environmental or public health impacts in communities disproportionately burdened by environmental harms.

EPA EJG2G grant selections within Maine's boundaries:

The Penobscot Indian Nation has been selected to receive \$1,000,000 for installing a minimum of 150 heat pumps in Tribal housing units and private housing units occupied by Tribal citizens with the greatest need – elderly, veterans, and families with young children.

Greater Portland Council of Governments has been selected to receive \$886,014 for assisting communities in creating and implementing action steps to respond to climate change with a special focus on addressing energy insecurity and climate adaptation for underserved, disadvantaged, and rural populations in Cumberland and York Counties in Maine.

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Prepare for the winter season with these tips

PORTLAND, ME – Consolidated Communications, Inc. (NASDAQ: CNSL), a leading broadband and business communications provider, is ready for the upcoming winter season, taking steps to prepare response plans and other protocols in the event of severe weather in its service areas.

“Winter storms are a yearly occurrence in our community, and when severe weather impacts our customers, ensuring the reliability of services for our customers is our top priority”, said Ryan Whitlock, senior vice president, operations at

Consolidated. “We continually monitor weather patterns and have rigorous emergency response protocols for a variety of potential challenges. Our teams stand ready to respond when needed. Connectivity is vital for our customers and our communities, and we’re ready for winter weather.”

Consolidated encourages customers and local residents to prepare as well, including:

Plan to stay warm, by winterizing your home making sure you can heat your home safely before winter; stay indoors if temperatures could cause

frostbite and hypothermia.

Pay attention to weather reports and storm updates; research and sign up for local emergency warning systems.

Stock up on emergency supplies including bottled water, non-perishable food, a battery-powered radio, flashlight, batteries and a first aid kit.

Review information from local resources, including Maine Emergency Management Agency.

Early season storms, when wet and heavy snowfall can cause damage to trees, typically have the potential to cause the most disruption to service. In

the event of severe impacts from winter storms, Consolidated is prepared to address customer needs while ensuring their safety and the safety of its employees. Consolidated teams prepare for the potential storms and severe weather that can impact service reliability and dependability, including by:

Ensuring all back-up power supplies and generators are fully operational;

Ensuring availability of fuel for both fleet and emergency generators during and after a storm;

Taking inventory of supplies, including copper and fiber cables, needed

for plant and network restoration and supplementing where necessary;

Increasing staffing in areas projected to be impacted;

Placing emergency network supplies throughout company facilities; and

Double-checking all safety equipment and supplies that are in place.

During a storm or severe weather event, commercial power outages may interrupt Internet and network services, which are dependent on electricity. As electric service providers begin restoring power, they typically prioritize emergency

responders and hospitals ahead of other customers. The company encourages customers to be prepared for interruptions in Internet service that may be related to commercial power availability.

Recent upgrades to fiber-optic infrastructure in some areas will also be of great benefit amid cold and wet conditions. Fiber-optic cables are more resilient to rain and snow than copper cables since they transmit light signals instead of electrical signals. This resiliency is just one of the benefits that fiber optic infrastructure can provide to a community.

SIREN

Continued from page 5
ance reimbursement for transport and emergency treatment have all strained rural EMS agencies. At

the same time, EMS agencies today are tasked with ever-greater responsibilities—preparing for natural and manmade disasters and bioterror threats, support-

ing the chronic and emergency care needs of an aging population, and responding on the front lines of the opioid epidemic. These first responders are

often the only health care providers in their area and face difficulty in personnel recruitment and retention, and securing expensive equipment.

The *SIREN Reauthorization Act* is endorsed by the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians, International Association of Fire Fighters,

International Association of Fire Chiefs, National Rural Health Association, National Volunteer Fire Council, and National Fire Protection Association.

Hannah Clark joins Fontaine Family team

Fontaine Family - The Real Estate Leader is thrilled to announce Hannah Clark as the newest addition to their growing Auburn team. As a seasoned associate broker in the real estate industry, Hannah is making waves in the Maine real estate market with her passion for helping clients find their dream homes. Born and raised in the picturesque town of New Gloucester, ME, Hannah’s journey is characterized by hard work, dedication, and a commitment to community.

Hannah’s roots in Southern Maine run deep, having graduated from Grey-New Gloucester High School before furthering her education at Central Maine Community College (CMCC), where she earned her Associate’s Degree. Her diverse professional background includes valuable experience at a marina in Freeport and a real estate investment firm, shaping her into the well-rounded and knowledgeable real estate professional she is today.

Beyond the world of



real estate, Hannah finds joy in various hobbies and activities. An avid gardener, she cultivates her passion for plants and nature, creating vibrant and welcoming spaces. At home, Hannah is a loving owner to three dogs and two horses, adding a touch of animal companionship to her life.

In her spare time, Hannah dedicates herself to the family farm, Royal River Orchard, in New Gloucester. Her hands-on involvement showcases her commitment to pre-

serving local agriculture and maintaining a strong connection to her community.

What sets Hannah apart is not only her professional expertise but also her compassionate heart. In honor of her son, Jackson, Hannah is an active member of the MPS Society and the Cure Sanfilippo Foundation. By participating in these organizations, she advocates for awareness, research, and support for those affected by Sanfilippo Syndrome, demonstrating her

dedication to making a positive impact beyond the realm of real estate.

Hannah’s multifaceted background and community engagement make her a standout professional in the Maine real estate landscape. Whether you’re buying or selling, Hannah Clark is the trusted partner you need for a seamless and fulfilling real estate experience, with the support of the Fontaine Team. Contact Hannah today at hannahclark@fontaine-team.com or (207) 713-4496.

Holly A. Lupu joins Skelton Taintor & Abbott

LEWISTON, ME – The law firm of Skelton Taintor & Abbott, of Lewiston announces that Holly A. Lupu has joined the firm as an Associate Attorney. Ms. Lupu graduated from the University

of Maine School of Law (J.D., 2023) and the University of Maine, Orono (B.A., Psychology, 2018). She was admitted to practice in all Maine state courts October 18, 2023. Ms. Lupu intends to focus

on real estate law, business and corporate law, and estate planning.

“We are honored to have Holly join our firm. Her wealth of knowledge and energetic personality will benefit all our

clients,” said Daniel A. D’Auteuil, Jr. Shareholder at Skelton Taintor & Abbott.

Ms. Lupu was a Legal Intern for the Volunteer Lawyers Project (2019) and Penobscot Community Health Care (2021). Most recently, she was also a Legal Intern with MaineHealth (2022). Additionally, Ms. Lupu served as President of the University of Maine

School of Law’s Business Law Association, is a CALI Award Recipient for Small Business & Entrepreneurship and is the 2023 Corporate/Business Law Award Recipient from the University of Maine School of Law. Skelton Taintor & Abbott is a full-service trial and general practice law firm representing clients throughout Maine.

With the addition of

Attorney Lupu, the firm consists of 13 attorneys practicing in virtually all fields of law and in both federal and state courts.

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



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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
Meals are Sin-

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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.

GORHAM LITTLE LEAGUE
Field Funding Campaign



The Gorham Youth Baseball & Softball Association is making a large capital investment to provide updates and add fields to accommodate practice and game schedules:

- Develop 2 fields at White Rock
- Purchase seasonal fence for Shaw Park
- Repair dugouts and fencing, build storage centers
- Add infield mix and relevel current fields
- Acquire tarps and field maintenance equipment
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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, Revelstoke 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 Water-side 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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Apprenticeship
Continued from page 1

the long-term. I am pleased we are putting funds from my Jobs Plan to use to help Maine schools find the teachers they need and support educators on the path to fulfilling careers as they make a difference in the lives of our children.”

Registered apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships are highly effective tools for workers to build their skill set and connect to high-wage careers and for employers to recruit and retain workers.

The Maine Apprenticeship Program currently has 1,382 apprentices and 411 participating businesses, with the program continuing to grow, including more than 30 educator apprentices through two distinct programs funded by the Governors Jobs Plan Gorham School District in partnership with Southern Maine Community College and University of Southern Maine, and Washington County Community College in partnership with MSAD 37.

The initiative expands a program launched

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

last year at Washington County Community College and the Gorham School District. The program was created after the Maine Department of Education last year released its Teach Maine plan in partnership with educators and stakeholders, to bolster the teacher workforce through innovative recruitment and retention strategies, including programs like apprenticeships. With encouragement from the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor Maine joined several other states in launching apprenticeships in educator occupations with new programs at Washington County Community College and the Gorham School District.

This expansion of

teacher apprenticeship programs is supported by Federal funding, including \$375,000 through the Governors Jobs Plan.

“The Maine Department of Labor works with employers to fulfill their workforce needs and works to connect Maine’s people to high quality jobs. One way that we do this is through mutually beneficial registered apprenticeships,” said Laura Fortman, Commissioner of the Maine Department of Labor. “Registered Apprenticeship is an excellent training model for schools to use, as it supports those already working in Maines schools to advance down the path of becoming a certified teacher, while continuing to earn an income.”

“The Maine Department of Education is committed to ensuring that everyone who wants to become a teacher in Maine has a pathway into the profession and is supported in the classroom. Teacher apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships offer a meaningful pathway to recruit, prepare, and support aspiring educators and we are excited to see these programs expanded across our state,” said Pender Makin, Commissioner of the Maine Department of Education.

The Maine Departments of Labor and Education accepted applications from organizations through September 25, 2023. Fifteen applications were received, and funding was awarded with a focus on increasing representation in the education sector among rural communities, people of color, and multi-lingual learners.

This investment is the latest by the Mills Administration to strengthen Maines workforce and create good-paying jobs in rewarding careers. It builds on the Mills Administrations commitment

to addressing systemic challenges that have constrained Maines ability to grow and thrive, with priority focus on investments to grow and develop Maines workforce.

This grant funding also builds on the investment of \$12.3 million awarded to expand apprenticeship strengthen through the Governors Jobs Plan and other Federal funds.

Apprentices in Maine who completed their program in the last two years increased their wages, on average, by nearly 40 percent. Nationally, 91 percent of apprentices continue their employment with their apprenticeship sponsoring business once their training is complete.

Maine people or businesses interested in registered apprenticeships can check out videos of apprentices and employers in action, easily find information about how the program works, and use the map to find an apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship near you on the overhauled website: https://www.maine.gov/labor/jobs_training/apprenticeship/.

The Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan - <https://www.maine.gov/jobsplan/> is the Governor’s plan, approved by the Legislature, to invest nearly \$1 billion in Federal American Rescue Plan funds to improve the lives of Maine people and families, help businesses, create good-paying jobs, and build an economy poised for future prosperity.

Since the Jobs Plan took effect in October 2021, the Mills Administration has delivered direct economic relief to nearly 1,000 Maine small businesses, supported more than 100 infrastructure projects around the state to create jobs and revitalize communities, and invested in workforce programs estimated to offer apprenticeship, career and education advancement, and job training opportunities to 22,000 Maine people.

For more about Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan, visit <https://www.maine.gov/jobsplan/>. For more about Maines apprenticeship program, please visit https://www.maine.gov/labor/jobs_training/apprenticeship/.

Town of Gorham announces 2023 holiday trash collection schedule

GORHAM, ME – The Town of Gorham is announcing the following New Years week collection schedule:

Thursday 1/4-Wednesday collection

Friday 1/5-Thursday collection

Please have tagged trash & recycling curbside by 7AM on your collection day.

If you have any questions regarding proper recycling or trash tag usage please call the office at 222-4950 or email us @ dpw@gorham.me

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Legislators attend White House event on gun violence prevention

AUGUSTA, ME — On Wednesday, December 13, Sen. Peggy Rotundo, D-Lewiston, joined Rep. Kristen Cloutier, D-Lewiston, Rep. Margaret Craven, D-Lewiston, other members of the Maine Legislature and other legislators from around the country for an event hosted by the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention designed to help states enact policies to prevent gun violence.

“I was grateful for the opportunity to join Vice

President Kamala Harris and legislators from around the country who have been involved in successfully passing gun safety legislation in their states” said Sen. Rotundo. “The information they shared is very helpful as we craft language for the Maine bill that we will bring forward in the upcoming legislative session. I was also grateful for the opportunity to meet privately with members of President Biden’s Office of Gun Violence Prevention to

discuss the particular needs of the families of the victims of the Lewiston shootings and to advocate for the resources needed to meet these needs and the needs of the community at large.”

The other members of the Legislature in attendance were House Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross, D-Portland; Sen. Anne Carney, D-Cape Elizabeth; Sen. Joe Rafferty, D-Kennebunk; Rep. Mo Terry, D-Gorham; and Rep. Vicki Doudera.



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