



TWIN CITY TIMES

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Registration is open for Hike for Hospice

LEWISTON, ME—Androscoggin Home Healthcare + Hospice invites all Mainers to Hike for Hospice on Saturday, May 18th at Pineland Farms to raise awareness for the importance of end-of-life care, emphasizing the support, kindness, and compassion that hospice services offer to patients and their families throughout Maine. Hike for Hospice aims to help ensure that high-quality hospice services are available to all individuals and their fam-

ilies throughout the state regardless of their ability to pay.

The event will include a traditional or ADA compliant trail, face painting, and family fun. Although the event is scheduled from 9am-1pm, there is no designated start time – participants are encouraged to come to hike and enjoy all that Pineland Farms has to offer at their own leisure.

Can't attend in person? No problem! Join us virtually where you can walk at your own pace in

the location of your choice as an individual or a team! Virtual participants can submit photos, videos, and/or stories of their participation via email to leslie.ogilvie@androscoggin.org, on the Androscoggin Facebook page, or through the hashtag #HikeForHospice2024.

“We invite everyone to join us for this meaningful event, either in-person at beautiful Pineland Farms or virtually at a location of your choice” said Androscoggin’s Community Re-



lations and Development Manager Leslie Ogilvie. “Hike for Hospice is more than just a walk. It’s an opportunity for people to celebrate the lives of loved ones who have passed away, whether in Androscoggin’s care or elsewhere.” To register or learn more, please visit <https://androscoggin.org/get-involved/hike/>.

For more information about the Hike for Hospice, please contact Leslie Ogilvie at leslie.ogilvie@androscoggin.org.

City of Lewiston launches revaluation website Revaluation extends through Jan. 2025

LEWISTON, ME—The City of Lewiston announced today that it has launched a new website, www.lewistonmaine.gov/reval, that details user-friendly information about the citywide residential and commercial property revaluation.

The City of Lewiston has not conducted a revaluation since the 1980s.

This revaluation extends through Fri., Jan. 31, 2025. The revaluation, the first in Lewiston since 1988, will equalize the value of all properties for the purpose of a fair distribution of property taxes.

The website answers questions, such as the following:

Why is the revaluation being done?

What is the timeframe for the revaluation?

Who is doing the revaluation?

What is a data collector?

Who are the data collectors and how can they be identified?

Can we know where the data collectors will be each day?

What can be expect-

ed during an interior and exterior assessment of my property?

What is done with the data collected?

How will the revaluation impact my property taxes?

“We recognize that folks may be hesitant to let the data collectors into their homes,”

said City of Lewis-

ton Chief Assessor Bill Healey. “It is important to do so because if we can’t get inside, we have to make assessment estimates, and we prefer not to make estimations. The new website enables individuals to view who the data collectors are and know how to identify them.”

In addition, the website has a Frequently Asked

Questions section and informational videos providing insight into the purpose and process of a revaluation. The web site also provides a link to Lewiston property records.

Questions about the website or the revaluation process may be directed to the City of Lewiston Assessor’s Office at (207) 513-3122.

Wild two nights of comedy at Great Falls

AUBURN, ME – Make laughter a priority this week at Great Falls Comedy Club with two shows, March 8 and 9, at 7:30 pm.

The club is excited to present a wild two nights of The Bob Lauver Comedy Hypnosis Show. Don’t miss out as Bob invites volunteers from the audience to

get hypnotized on stage right before your eyes.



This show promises to be a non-stop, entertaining, roller coaster ride event, and you have two chances this weekend to catch it.

Tickets for both shows can be found at <https://www.greatfallscomedyclub.com> or purchased at the door. Great Falls Comedy Club is located inside Craft Brew Underground at 34 Court Street, Auburn, under the red awning.

For more information contact the club at info@greatfallscomedyclub.com or by phone at 207-200-5366.

Evergreen CU raises the anchor on Sail Student Checking

PORTLAND, ME – Evergreen Credit Union is proud to launch their newest rewards checking account, Sail Student Checking, designed for individuals ages 13-24.

Sail Student Checking was created for young adults ready to navigate the world of finance. “We understand that teens and young adults have financial needs,” said Tim Verreault, Evergreen’s COO. “It begins by helping them through various money matters, starting with savings and a free, rewards-based checking account.”

With the abundance of current news about an emerging economy and stu-



Evergreen Credit Union launches Sail Student Checking, the ideal account for ages 13-24.

dent loans, Evergreen is eager to show Maine’s young adults the ropes when it comes to healthy money management. “Sail is not just a free checking account option for teens and young adults,” said Verreault. “We care about their success. Good money management starts with education, and we pledge to be there by

their side throughout their journey.”

Evergreen CU is Maine’s 5th largest credit union with over \$535 million in assets serving 6 counties in southern Maine. Their upcoming Scarborough branch opens on Rt. 1 in spring 2024. To learn more about Sail Student Checking, visit egcu.org/sail.

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

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Garages in February!

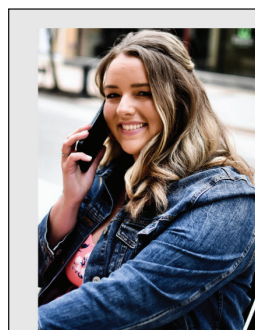


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Newsmakers, Names & Faces

Red Cross Month kicks off to honor community heroes

PORTLAND, ME — The American Red Cross of Northern New England is kicking off its annual Red Cross Month celebration in March to honor local community heroes who help ensure their neighbors never face crises alone.

Red Cross Month is a national tradition that began in March 1943 when President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued the first Red Cross Month proclamation — and each U.S. president has followed ever since.

“During Red Cross Month, we are proud to honor the people in our community who step up to support one another when help can’t wait during emergencies,” said Stephanie Couturier, Red Cross chief executive officer, Northern New England Region. “This relief and hope wouldn’t be possible without these local heroes. Please consider joining in their commitment by donating, volunteering, giving blood or platelets or taking a lifesaving skills course.”

Join the Red Cross Month celebration by visiting redcross.org to make a financial donation, give blood or platelets, become a volunteer or take a life-

saving skills course. Those who donate at redcross.org/givingday on March 27 will be part of the 10th annual Red Cross Giving Day, which aims to rally 30,000 supporters nationwide to help provide shelter, food, relief items, emotional support and other assistance for people affected by disasters big and small.

HELP CAN’T WAIT WHEN EMERGENCIES STRIKE Volunteers comprise 90% of the national Red Cross workforce to power its lifesaving mission, along with generous blood, platelet and financial donors; people trained in skills like first aid and CPR; and other supporters. Below are some of the ways that Maine’s nearly 600 volunteers have delivered relief with the Red Cross in times of crisis:

When catastrophic flooding devastated Maine in December, 82 trained Red Cross disaster workers raised their hands to help support the disaster relief operation. The Red Cross provided 154 overnight stays for 101 residents in 4 emergency shelters. With the help of partners, 612 meals and snacks were provided to those impacted by the storm. Our volun-



teers provided 847 relief items, including comfort kits and clean-up supplies to those in need. Red Cross caseworkers also opened 114 cases, serving 317 people with recovery support, including financial assistance and help with medical needs.

In October, unimaginable tragedy struck the Lewiston community. The Red Cross helped support individuals affected by the mass casualty event. 109 Red Cross workers, including 36 specifically trained in disaster-related health and mental health services, supported this response. With the help of partners, a total of 4,204 meals and snacks were provided. Our volunteers distributed 8,076 relief items including comfort kits, teddy bears and other supplies. Additionally, Red Cross caseworkers helped more than 100 people with recovery support.

The Red Cross responds to more than 60,000 disasters every year. Locally, the Red Cross responded to

282 disasters in Maine in 2023, assisting 1,267 individuals.

Home fires claim more lives in a typical year than all natural disasters combined, but working smoke alarms can cut the risk of dying in a home fire by half. In 2023, trained Red Cross volunteers installed 1,167 free smoke alarms in homes across Maine. Every two seconds, someone in the U.S. needs a blood transfusion. In January, the Red Cross declared an emergency blood shortage. While thousands of donors have answered the call to donate in recent weeks to combat the significant drop in the blood supply, more donors are needed to ensure the blood supply remains steady for those in need of lifesaving medical procedures. In 2023, the Red Cross collected more than 42,000 units of blood and held more than 1,800 blood drives throughout Maine.

As we approach the

final weeks of winter, the public is urged to book a time to donate blood or platelets now as we continue to strengthen the blood supply heading into spring. Much like pets provide comfort and support, so does the Red Cross in local communities. As a thank-you for providing comfort during Red Cross Month, all come to give blood or platelets March 1-24 will get a \$10 e-gift card to a pet supply merchant of choice, plus automatically be entered for a chance to win a \$3,000 gift card. There will be five winners. See rcblood.org/Pets for details.

Upcoming blood donation opportunities March 1-25:

Androscoggin
Lisbon Falls
3/14/2024: 12 p.m. - 4:30 p.m., Lisbon United Methodist Church, 14 School St.

Poland
3/9/2024: 9 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., Poland Town Hall, 1223 Maine Street, Rt. 26

Cumberland
Brunswick
3/14/2024: 12 p.m. - 4:30 p.m., L.L.Bean Training Center, 29 Sewall St, LL Bean training center

3/15/2024: 12 p.m. -

5 p.m., American Legion Post 20, 1 Columbus Drive
3/18/2024: 12 p.m. - 5 p.m., Thornton Oaks Retirement Community, 25 Thornton Way

3/23/2024: 9 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., Saint Pauls Church, 27 Pleasant Street
Cape Elizabeth

3/12/2024: 12 p.m. - 5 p.m., Saint Bartholomew Church, 8 Two Lights Rd

F a l m o u t h
3/20/2024: 9 a.m. - 2 p.m., The Episcopal Church of St. Mary, 43 Foreside Rd

G o r h a m
3/14/2024: 1 p.m. - 6 p.m., Cressey Road Christian Church, 81 Cressey Road

G r a y
3/19/2024: 8 a.m. - 1 p.m., Gray New Gloucester High School, 10 Libby Hill Road

S c a r b o r o u g h
3/21/2024: 12 p.m. - 5 p.m., Saint Maximilian Church, 150 Black Point Rd

South Portland
3/18/2024: 9 a.m. - 2 p.m., South Portland Community Center, 21 Nelson Road

W i n d h a m
3/20/2024: 12 p.m. - 5 p.m., North Windham Veterans Center, 35 Veterans Memorial Drive

Y a r m o u t h
3/13/2024: 2:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m., Harrison Middle School, 220 McCartney St

Online session for aspiring 4-H volunteers in March

MAINE -- University of Maine Cooperative Extension will host a two-part online informational session for adults interested in becoming Maine 4-H volunteers from 6-7 p.m. on March 19 and 26.

“Start Your 4-H Volunteer Journey” will provide participants with information about the UMaine Extension 4-H youth development program through four short e-Learning modules. Attendees will also participate in an experiential

educational activity, learn about the key aspects of positive youth development and be introduced to the ages and stages of youth. The two one-hour virtual sessions will wrap up with an outline of next steps and an introduction to a county staff contact to help with the application process if desired.

A 4-H volunteer is many things: mentor, advisor, friend, teacher, referee, role model, pacesetter and much more. 4-H volunteers have the opportunity

to make a positive difference in the lives of children, teach them valuable skills, help them achieve a positive self-image, accomplish personal goals and earn a sense of accomplishment.

The informational sessions are free, registration is required. To sign up, visit the program webpage.

For more information or to request a reasonable accommodation, contact Jennifer Lobley, jennifer.lobley@maine.edu; 207.255.3345.



Youth engage in aquaculture activities at Waldo County Extension's STEAM Team Ocean Xplorer meeting at the Belfast Free Library. Photo courtesy University of Maine Cooperative Extension.

Call for volunteers looking to improve the IRS

MAINE -- Civic-minded citizens in your area have a unique opportunity to make a difference in your community by applying to become a member of the Taxpayer Advocacy Panel (TAP). As a member they have a unique opportunity to protect taxpayer rights and improve IRS service, policies, products, and procedures — no tax experience needed!

TAP members serve as a conduit for bringing grassroots concerns to the attention of the IRS, and work on a variety of issues to improve IRS services

and taxpayer satisfaction. Applications for the 2025 TAP year are open until March 15.

Applications must be submitted by March 15, to be considered. Visit USA-Jobs for more details and to submit an application. Newly selected TAP members will volunteer to serve a three-year term starting in December 2024.

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



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Newsmakers, Names & Faces

David Byrne leads two sold-out programs at Waterville Creates

WATERVILLE, ME—Waterville Creates is pleased to welcome musician and artist David Byrne for two sold-out programs on Saturday, March 30, at the Waterville Opera House and Paul J. Schupf Art Center in downtown Waterville.

At 7:30pm March 30, Byrne will bring his inspirational speaking series Reasons to Be Cheerful to the Waterville Opera House. The live event series is organized by Byrne's online magazine Reasons to Be Cheerful, a publication he launched to document successful solutions to the world's most pressing problems. In Waterville, Byrne will share the incredible story of Maine's Penobscot River, which has undergone a stunning revival through a landmark dam-removal project that became a model for similar efforts around the world.

Byrne will be joined by Chief Kirk Francis of the Penobscot Nation and Laura Rose Day of the 7 Lakes Alliance in an hour-long program designed to uplift and encourage anyone who believes in conservation and collective action. His appearance at the Opera House is presented with major support from the Harold Alfond Foundation.

"David Byrne is truly a dream guest for Waterville Creates," said Shannon Haines, president +



CEO of Waterville Creates. "In addition to being a creative genius who has made incomparable contributions to the disciplines of music, theatre, and film, he has also demonstrated through the work of his foundation a commitment to making the world a better place by highlighting positive stories and creative solutions to today's global challenges. He embodies the creativity and positivity that we work so hard to cultivate here every day."

At 2pm March 30,

prior to Reasons to Be Cheerful, the Maine Film Center will screen an original 35mm print of Byrne's 1986 feature directorial debut True Stories, which the Los Angeles Times called, "a movie of effortless cool, the perfect entry for a late-'80s time capsule." Byrne will be in attendance for a Q&A session following the film.

"What better way to welcome such an influential and beloved guest as David Byrne—whom we've seen on the big screen in a big suit more

times than we can count, and who excites us every time—than with a special 35mm screening of his directorial debut, truly an indie classic, at one of the few places you can enjoy such an experience anywhere in Maine?" said Mike Perreault, executive director of the Maine Film Center.

Tens of Thousands Raised for Youth Arts Access

reasons to be cheerful

Providing youth with year-round access to transformative arts experiences is a key tenet of Waterville Creates' mission. In keeping with this message—and corresponding perfectly with Youth Art Month in March—Byrne has generously agreed for all ticket proceeds from both Reasons to Be Cheerful and True Stories to be donated to the Youth Arts Access Fund (YAAF). A unique program to Waterville Creates, YAAF guarantees that all youth, regardless of income, ability, or background, have access to outstanding arts programming and arts education opportunities. Established in March 2022, the fund provides youth aged 18 and under with free access to Waterville Creates' events and programs, including movies at the Maine Film Center, theatre camp, plays, concerts, and performances at the Waterville Opera House, and art and clay classes and camps at Ticonic Gallery + Studios. Since its launch, YAAF has been accessed over 2,700 times, provid-

ing around \$95,000 in free arts experiences.

Together, ticket pre-sales from Reasons to Be Cheerful and True Stories have raised over \$20,000 for the Youth Arts Access Fund.

"YAAF is a unique program in terms of both its scope and the ease with which it can be accessed," Haines said. "We aren't aware of any other arts organization that provides unlimited access for youth to any and all paid arts programs without requiring any demonstration of need. Removing cost as a barrier for youth participation in the arts is core to our mission of providing arts experiences for all. The funds raised from Reasons to Be Cheerful and True Stories will make an immediate, lasting impact."

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

Lunchtime social features French foods, local trivia

LEWISTON, ME—The Franco Center has announced a new lunchtime social: Poutine, Pea Soup & Trivia. The first social will take place from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday, March 18, at the Franco Center, 46 Cedar Street, Lewiston.

"This event is a time for all Franco-Americans and others in the community to come together and socialize," said Jake Hodgkin, production manager at the Franco Center. "This social will be less structured than our La Rencontre luncheons that typically

feature some form of entertainment."

This trivial social will feature Franco foods such as poutine and pea soup at 11:30 a.m. The menu will vary at times, but will be light.

The trivia will feature questions about the Lewiston and Auburn community. "The main purpose of this event is for socializing," said Hodgkin.

The cost is \$12 per person and includes the poutine and pea soup. Other foods may be available for purchase.

Call the box office at 207-689-2000 or stop in from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Tuesdays and Wednesdays to buy tickets in advance. Tickets can be purchased through the Franco Center online at www.franco-center.org/shows.

The Franco Center is at 46 Cedar Street, Lewiston. Parking is in the mill lot on Oxford Street. Handicap access is on the Lincoln St. Alley side of the building via an elevator.

WHY PEOPLE CHOOSE CHAMPOUX INSURANCE



Jonathan Knowlton
Licensed Agent

Jonathan Knowlton joined Champoux Insurance Group in February as an Account Executive, with 20 years of experience in the insurance and investment field. After graduating from Thomas College with honors, he went to work for MetLife as a personal financial representative. From there he worked for Allstate insurance and within 3 years, had opened his own agency on Sabattus Street in Lewiston. Jonathan closed the agency after 13 successful years. Making sure clients are educated about the risks they face and protecting them with auto, home, and life insurance products has always been important to him; local families truly are in good hands with him. Jonathan lives in Auburn with his wife and son and enjoys ice fishing, ATVing, hiking, growing hot peppers and volunteering with the Boy Scouts. Champoux Insurance Group welcomes Jonathan to our Team.



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Seniors Not Acting Their Age Skiing the Maine Huts Trails

My friend, Brent Elwell, is a frequent skier in the Carrabassett Valley region and more familiar with the trails in that area than anyone I know. While we were skiing together at Rangeley Lakes Trails Center recently, a discussion about Maine Huts and Trails ensued. The conversation evolved into a decision to ski to Poplar Hut, one of four lodges in the 80 mile trail system. Our companion, Eggman DeCoster, made it a three-

some. The Maine Huts and Trails network begins at Stratton Brook Trailhead in Stratton and weaves through the mountains and along rivers, lakes, and streams in a remote wilderness area to West Forks. The trails between Stratton Brook Trailhead and Flagstaff Hut are usually groomed but the status of grooming should be confirmed prior to planning a trip.

The closest access point to Poplar Hut is Airport Trailhead on Route 27 in Carrabassett Valley. According to the Maine Huts and Trails Map, the distance is 3.3 miles and the elevation gain 431 feet. This is also the trailhead for the Narrow Gauge Pathway and other destina-

tions in the trail system.

The three of us met at the trailhead on a gray, seasonably cool, breezy day. At Brent's recommendation, we left our touring skis behind and brought backcountry Nordic skis with edges instead. All of us carried small packs with additional layers of clothing, water, snacks, and a lightweight parka. Brent had the foresight to include a first aid kit, glide wax, and climbing skins.

We began our trek crossing an open field north of the airfield with a partial view of cloud enshrouded Little Bigelow Mountain in the distance. After traversing a bridge over the Carrabassett River, the short connector route joins Narrow Gauge Pathway and Maine Hut Trail.

At the junction, we met two skiers who had spent the night at Poplar Hut. A cheerful discussion about trail conditions, the benefits and deficiencies of different types of skis, and previous ski trips followed. They had welcome news to report; the trail to Poplar Hut was groomed and in good condition.

Initially, the narrow path travels through gentle rolling hills in a predominantly conifer forest. As we progressed, more ski-

ers and snowshoers were met returning from the hut. Nearing Poplar Stream, we plunged down a precipitous hill. Eggman was unable hold a snowplow when negotiating an abrupt right turn at the bottom and crashed into a snowbank. That was our only mishap of the day but not the first at that location as there were several telltale siltmarks nearby. Nothing hurt but his pride, we skied on.

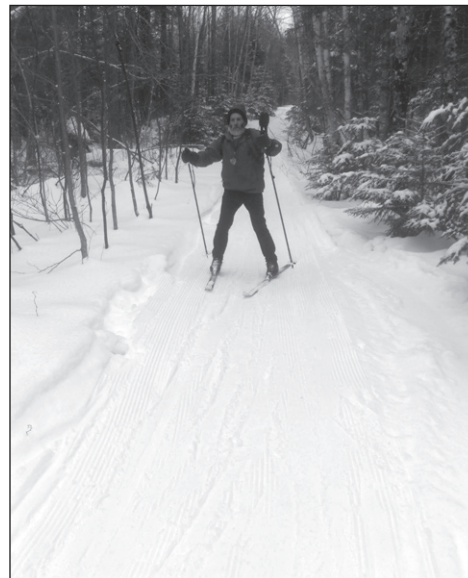
After crossing the bridge over Poplar Stream, we began climbing more steadily along the south side of the stream. When the gradient steepened, we stopped to add climbing skins to our skis. The skins eliminated the need to use the tiring herringbone technique and facilitated a much easier ascent.

Following the long climb, the trail levels off before it arrives at Poplar Hut. The impressive structure is nestled in a conifer forest and cloaked in snow this time of year.

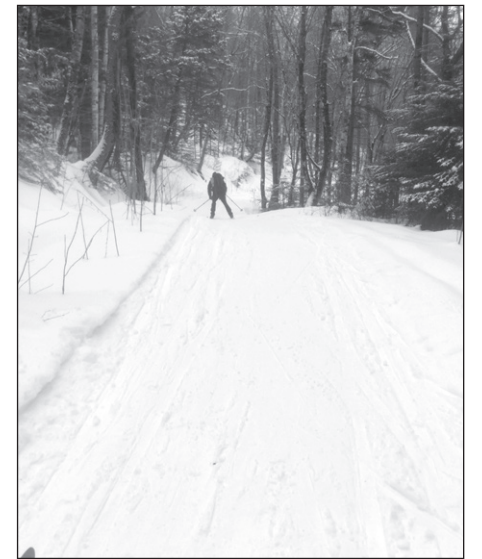
Although the hut's primary focus is to provide overnight lodging for guests, day visitors are welcome. We stacked our skis and poles, removed our boots in the entry way, and entered the warm spacious communal area.



A skier sets a snowplow before descending a hill on Maine Huts Trail



Skiers return from Poplar Hut



Long steep hills are common on Maine Hut Trail

The staff was very welcoming and we enjoyed hot drinks and snacks while relaxing next to a toasty woodstove. Spirited conversations with lodging guests were part of the entertaining experience. I decided to suggest an overnight hut excursion to my wife, Nancy.

After a pleasurable visit, we added glide wax to our skis and began our return. Soon after departing, we met a group of about twenty skiers on their way to the hut.

The choice to use backcountry skis was a good one as they were invaluable during our steep serpentine descent.

The edges assisted with maintaining ski control throughout our rollicking ride down to Poplar Stream Bridge.

While completing the remainder of our most excellent trek, we met more skiers and snowshoers advancing to the hut. I see a visit to Stratton Brook Hut in my future.

My book, *Maine Al Fresco: The Fifty Finest Outdoor Adventures in Maine* narrates three more ski excursions around the state and several winter expeditions into the huts in Baxter State Park.

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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UMaine Extension offers Vegetable and Fruit School

AUGUSTA, ME - The University of Maine Cooperative Extension and the Maine Vegetable and Small Fruit Growers Association are hosting the Maine Vegetable and Fruit School from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. on March 26 at the Elks Lodge 964, 397 Civic Center Drive.

Geared toward individuals involved in vegetable and fruit pro-

duction, participants will learn from experts in the field and gain practical skills that can be applied to their own operations. Topics include pest management in various crops such as sweet corn, pumpkins and squash, onions and garlic, tomatoes and strawberries. Attendees can also attend a session on common plant diseases in high tunnels to learn how to identify and man-



Photo of Highmoor Farm courtesy University of Maine Cooperative Extension.

age diseases in controlled environments.

Additionally, the event will feature a virtual visit to Pleasant Valley Farm in Argyle, NY, where owners Paul and Sandy Arnold will share experiences and insights on diversifying growing practices.

The cost is \$45 per person and includes access to all sessions, lunch and the opportu-

nity to network with fellow growers and industry professionals. Pesticide applicator training credits are also available upon request. Registration is required.

For the full agenda and to register, visit the program webpage. To request a reasonable accommodation, or contact Stephanie Wright, stephanie.wright@maine.edu, 207.933.2100.

Initiative helps farmers, rural businesses access wind energy

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today are launching a new initiative to help farmers cut costs and increase income using underutilized renewable technologies including smaller-scale wind projects. Through the Rural and Agricultural Income & Savings from Renewable Energy (RAISE) initiative, USDA is setting an initial goal of helping 400 individual farmers nationwide deploy smaller-scale wind projects using USDA's Rural Energy for America Program (REAP).

Today's announcement has the potential to make wind energy more accessible in Maine, according to USDA Rural Development Maine State Director Rhiannon Hampson. "This partnership between USDA and DOE creates new funding, technical assistance, and research and development opportunities," said Director Hampson. "In Maine, we already offer free technical assistance to farmers and small businesses pursuing distributed wind energy through our REAP TAG program. Thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act, and the new RAISE

initiative, USDA will ensure that more farmers and other rural businesses can save money and earn income from distributed renewable energy technologies. These infrastructure improvements help protect the environment and combat climate change, providing tangible benefits to all Mainers."

In 2023 USDA Rural Development in Maine awarded a REAP Technical Assistance Grant (REAP TAG) of \$152K to Pecos Wind Power Inc. The company designs, builds, and sells wind turbines for distributed generation. Increasing the use of

wind-generated power was one priority for the 2023 REAP TAG program, and the company was a successful applicant. Thanks to its USDA REAP TAG funding, Pecos Wind Power now offers free technical assistance to Maine farms and small businesses to help them plan wind generation projects and complete REAP proposals to help fund those projects.

Josh Groleau, co-founder and CEO of Pecos Wind Inc., attended the Distributed Wind Energy Association conference in Arlington, VA today where the new RAISE initiative between USDA

and DOE was announced. "This is a very logical collaboration," he said. "The DOE brings technical expertise and knowledge of wind turbine technology, while the USDA brings the needs and requirements of farmers. Together, the two agencies can bring serious economic benefit to farmers through the deployment of distributed wind power." Pecos Wind Inc. offers support to farms and rural small businesses throughout Maine.

USDA's REAP TAG program is now in its second year. Maine Rural Development is accepting REAP TAG applications

from technical assistance providers through March 15th, 2024. Contact Katrina Shaw, USDA RD Maine State Energy Coordinator (katrina.shaw@usda.gov or 207-990-9129) with questions about the REAP program or REAP TAG.

Send all items for Names and Faces to the Editor. Deadline is Friday by five.

Ocean State Job Lot fundraises to help children in need

NORTH KINGSTOWN, RI - Ocean State Job Lot (OSJL), the region's premier discount retail chain with 153 stores across the Northeast, is pleased to announce its third annual "Building Brighter Futures" fundraising campaign to help children in need throughout the region.

During the ongoing campaign, OSJL will collect customer donations at each of its stores' checkout registers and on its website, to directly

support local organizations in the Northeast that help children struggling with food insecurity, barriers to resources like clothing, and a range of mental health and developmental challenges. One hundred percent of every dollar collected during the campaign will go towards these efforts. Since the campaign's inception in 2022, the Ocean State Job Lot Charitable Foundation has raised over \$1 million to help underserved chil-



dren. "Children in our country shouldn't be facing food insecurity, inaccessibility to healthcare, and other basic necessities, but that is the reality today," said David Sar-

lito, Executive Director, Ocean State Job Lot Charitable Foundation. "Through this campaign, we hope to again make a meaningful difference in the communities we serve with the help of our customers, partners, and associates to improve the lives of children facing hardships."

The Ocean State Job Lot Charitable Foundation partners with a network of community organizations to support as many children as possible.

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Arts & Entertainment

Trio to perform at Franco Center in afternoon concert



LEWISTON, ME—The trio BMW: Breau Miller West will perform from 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday, March 10, at the Franco Center. The trio consists of well-known local musicians Denny Breau, Mark Miller, and Arlo West. Doors and cash bar will open at 1 p.m.

with a meet-and-greet.

Tickets are \$30 in advance and \$35 at the door and can be purchased in advance online at francocenter.org or by calling 207-689-2000. The box office is open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Tuesdays and Wednesdays for those who want to

buy tickets in person.

The Franco Center is at 46 Cedar St., Lewiston. Parking is available in the mill lot across the street on the Oxford Street side of the building. The Franco Center is handicap accessible on the Lincoln St. Alley side of the building.

Jonathan Knowlton joins Champoux Insurance Group



from Thomas College with honors, he went to work for MetLife as a personal financial representative. From there, he worked for Allstate Insurance, and within 3 years, had opened his own agency on Sabattus Street in Lewiston. Jonathan closed the agency after 13 successful years.

Making sure clients are educated about the risks they face and protecting them with auto, home, and life insurance products has always been important to Jonathan; local families truly are in good hands with him.

Jonathan lives in Auburn with his wife and son, and enjoys ice fishing, ATVing, hiking, growing hot peppers and volunteering with the Boy Scouts.

Champoux Insurance Group welcomes Jonathan to our Team.

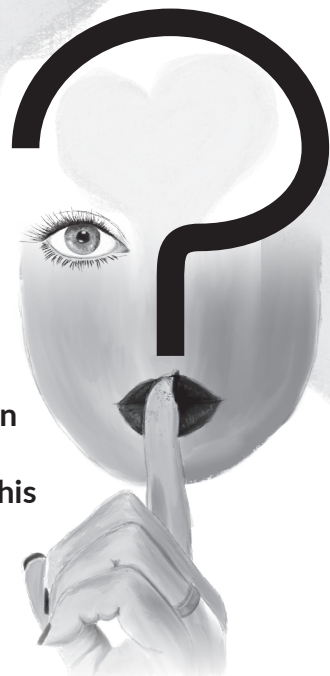
AUBURN, ME -- Champoux Insurance Group is pleased to announce that Jonathan Knowlton has joined their team in February as an

Account Executive. Jonathan brings 20 years of experience in the insurance and investment field with him to this new position.

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Children's Department



MaineCare responds to pharmacy vendor network disruption

AUGUSTA, ME — MaineCare, Maine’s Medicaid program, is continuing to respond to a disruption caused by a cyber security issue affecting Change Healthcare, an out-of-state vendor that operates MaineCare’s pharmacy claims system. This is a national issue affecting health care systems and Medicaid members in many states.

Because Change Healthcare shut down its systems on February 21, 2024 to limit the impact of the cyber security issue,

MaineCare has been temporarily unable to pay pharmacies for filling prescriptions for MaineCare members through the typical system. This has created questions and challenges for MaineCare members and pharmacies alike.

In response, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Office of MaineCare Services announced today that it has authorized pharmacies to provide prescriptions for up to 30 days to help MaineCare members

access needed medications. This is an extension of the 3-day supply authorization that MaineCare provided to pharmacies last Friday. Pharmacies should continue to fill members’ prescriptions as written by providers and process claims as they normally would. The Department will pay all eligible claims submitted once the system is operational again.

While DHHS works on temporary and permanent payment systems for pharmacies,

should neither turn away nor ask MaineCare members to pay out of pocket for any prescription that is covered by MaineCare. Such prescriptions may be needed for urgent illness as well as chronic conditions.

“It’s critically important that MaineCare members have and maintain access to their prescriptions,” said DHHS Commissioner Jeanne Lambrew. “We recognize the challenges MaineCare members are facing and will continue to do all we can to limit the impact

of this disruption. We thank pharmacies for their help in ensuring access to needed medications under these extraordinary circumstances.”

DHHS is in close communication with Change Healthcare about its timeline for resolving these issues and returning to business as usual.

MaineCare members experiencing trouble getting their prescriptions filled may call the MaineCare Pharmacy Help Desk at 1-866-796-2463. They may experience delays due

to call volume. Pharmacies may refer to the pharmacy provider guidance released earlier today for additional information.

MaineCare takes the security of members’ personal information seriously. Change Healthcare has not indicated that any personal data of MaineCare members was improperly accessed as part of the network disruption.

The Department will share further updates as information becomes available.

MSO journeys through three centuries of classical music

TOPSHAM, ME — The Midcoast Symphony Orchestra (MSO), conducted by Rohan Smith, continues its 34th concert season with a concert entitled “A New Artistic Mélange” that will be performed at the Franco Center in Lewiston on Saturday, March 23rd at 7pm, and at the Orion Performing Arts Center in Topsham on Sunday, March 24th at 2:30pm. The program at both concerts consists of three pieces from different centuries showcasing the evolution of classical music through the years. Beginning with Jessie Montgomery’s “Hymn for Everyone,” the concerts continue with Mozart’s “Prague” Symphony No. 38, and conclude with “Enigma Variations,” by Edward Elgar. Both concerts will be conducted by guest Artist Jinwook Park, a member of the Colby Col-

lege faculty and the Music Director of the Colby Symphony Orchestra and the Augusta Symphony Orchestra. Complete concert and ticket information is available at midcoastsymphony.org. Individual tickets are \$25 in advance and \$30 at the door. All concert tickets are free for students ages 18 and under, or for college students with ID. Audiences are encouraged to purchase tickets in advance online or by calling the box office at (207) 481-0790.

Guest Conductor Jinwook Park is a conductor and violinist who enjoys a versatile career as a music director, performer, and educator. He is the founder and the music director of Haffner Sinfonietta, and the former music director of Philharmonia Boston. Born in South Korea, Mr. Park received his Bache-

lor of Music from Busan National University and then moved to the United States where he received a Master of Music degree in violin performance at the Boston Conservatory. He further continued his Doctor of Musical Arts studies at Boston University. Currently Mr. Park is a member of the Colby College faculty and serves as the Music Director of the Colby Symphony Orchestra, as well as the Augusta Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Park is thrilled to be conducting with the MSO as his engagement as guest conductor in March 2020 ended prematurely due to the pandemic. When asked about this concert’s program, he stated “Elgar’s Enigma variation and Mozart’s Symphony No.38 are my favorite pieces, and I always want to conduct them. This is my first time conducting “Hymn for Every-

one” by Jessie Montgomery. She is an acclaimed American composer, violinist, and educator, so studying her musical works will be a good opportunity.” He further went on to say that he would “like the audience to enjoy the style, harmony, and melody of the pieces by different composers from different eras.”

“A New Artistic Mélange” continues a year-long celebration of the 20th season of long-time MSO Music Director Rohan Smith. The concert begins with “A Hymn for Everyone,” a poignant reflection on the effects of the COVID pandemic by Jessie Montgomery, a recent winner of the 2024 Grammy for best contemporary classical composition for another work of hers. The MSO is looking forward to sharing another piece by this well-

known American violinist, composer and educator after having previously played “Banner” in 2021. The second work in the program is Mozart’s Symphony No. 38, often called the “Prague” symphony after the city in which it was first performed in 1787. Many audience members will recognize this strikingly innovative piece by one of music’s most revered composers. The finale of the concert is “Enigma Variations,” 14 musical sketches by Edward Elgar reflecting a myriad of personalities in the composer’s life at the end of the nineteenth century. The stellar reputation of this inventive piece of music is well earned based on the depth and breadth of the human experiences it conjures to mind.

The Midcoast Symphony Orchestra is a com-

munity orchestra founded in 1990. Started as a chamber orchestra, there are now more than 80 members. The MSO performs a full range of orchestral literature from the classical to modern periods with four regular concerts each season at the Franco Center in Lewiston and the Orion Performing Arts Center in Topsham. A community-based organization, the orchestra draws players and audiences from south of Portland to Rockland along the coast, and inland from Augusta to the Lewiston-Auburn area. Its members all volunteer their time to practice and perform with the Midcoast Symphony. Under the baton of Rohan Smith, the orchestra continues to attract ever more professional-caliber musicians and award-winning guest artists.



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Founding BookReach volunteer retiring after 25 years

LEWISTON, ME -- 25 years ago, a group of local community members imagined a way to bring storytimes to the youngest populations in home-day-cares across Lewiston, Auburn, and Minot. The initiative was named BookReach and it has been a beloved community and library partnership since 1998, currently sponsored through the Lewiston and Auburn Public Libraries. Mac McPeake, or Mr. Mac as he is affectionately known, is one of the founding BookReach volunteers. With his 2024 retirement announcement he reflects on his time volunteering for BookReach and how the beloved program began:

"In 1997, I was a member of the Lewiston Twin City Aspiration

Partnership, a group of local businesspeople, educators, and other citizens who were seeking ways to improve our community. I volunteered to chair one of the Aspiration committees, and we chose as our goal childhood literacy. A member of our committee pointed out that teachers said they could tell within the first weeks of entering school whether a child had been read to. Also, those children who had been exposed to reading had a much easier time learning and were more successful in school." – Mac McPeake

The BookReach goals would be:

Bring a regular reading program and the best in children's literature to toddlers and preschoolers in family child-care

homes.

To foster children's enthusiasm for books so they will be ready to learn when they reach school.

To increase familiarity of area families and child-care providers with a great variety of quality children's resources.

Mr. Mac and the committee worked with the Lewiston and Auburn Public Libraries to arrange access to children's books, local child-care providers to agree to have readers come into their locations, LL Bean to provide tote bags, and solicited volunteers willing to read. In 1998 BookReach became a reality.

"I am extremely proud of the committee's work, and I have been a volunteer reader for BookReach since its in-



ception. BookReach has given me a great deal of joy in the past 25 years. I have met and worked with some wonderful child-care providers, hundreds and hundreds of children, gracious library staff, and BookReach staff.

It's important to read to the children in our community because it opens a big, new world for them. A child who is read to is more likely to be successful in school causing them

to like school, therefore improving their chances of becoming responsible citizens who pass on their love of reading to their children and further improving our communities.

I can't express the pleasure I experience when I'm out and a parent asks, "Are you Mr. Mac?", and then goes on to say how much their son or daughter enjoyed my reading to them. It doesn't get any better than that!

Sadly, due to health problems, I feel I am no longer able to give 100% to the program and it deserves 100%." - Mac McPeake

The Auburn and Lewiston public libraries will forever be grateful for the impact Mac McPeake has had on our community through his dedicated

early-literacy work. The BookReach program still reaches small, in-home childcare locations along with larger preschool facilities like Promise Early Education. Roughly 300 children under the age of five are read to through BookReach each month. Both libraries are actively recruiting new child-care providers, preschools, and local volunteers to get involved so that BookReach can continue in the years to come.

The Lewiston Public Library is located downtown at 200 Lisbon Street at the corner of Pine Street. More information on BookReach is available by contacting BookReach Coordinator, Sadie Bonang, at 513-3004 ext. 3515 or sbonang@lewistonmaine.gov.

L-A swim team shows potential at New England championships

AUBURN, ME--The YMCA of Auburn-Lewiston is excited to announce the results from our Twin Cities Swim Team's (TCST) performance last weekend at the New England Age Group Championships. Held at the Boston Sports Institute in Wellesley, MA (Feb 24-25), this is the highest level of competition in New England for swimmers aged 11 to 14. This was the first year TCST

has competed at this meet, with nine swimmers attending.

Results
12 top 20 finishes for individual events.

7 top 20 finishes for relay events.

7 team records were broken in total.

TCST finished 20th of 64 teams in attendance.

8 swimmers continue to nationals.

Top Performers
Alex Kozckodan, Ian Lane, Eli Vandeventer, and Caden Laplante: Placed 3rd in New England in the 11-12 Boys Freestyle Relay.

Caden LaPlante: Finished 1st place in 4 individual events. His time of 24.70 seconds in the 50-yard butterfly ranks #1 not only in New England, but #1 in the USA! Caden finished 2nd overall at the meet.



Caden Laplante from Fairfield sets the #1 time in the country of 24.70 seconds in the 50-yard butterfly.

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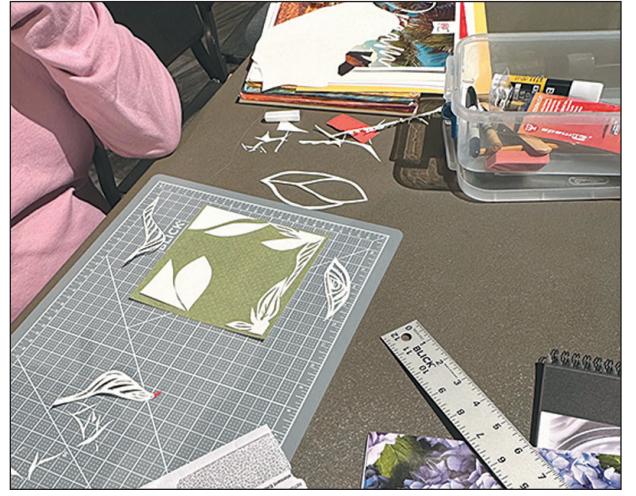
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Paper Arts exhibit, reception, tour at Franco Center March 9



These photos show several paper art work projects in various stages of completion which were created by the students of the Onion Foundation-funded nine-week Paper Arts Workshop at the Franco Center. Franco Center photos.

LEWISTON, ME— The Franco Center will host an hour-long art exhibit, reception and tour from 11 a.m. to noon Saturday, March 9, to celebrate the art works of 10 students completing its 9-week Onion Foundation-funded paper arts workshop led by local artist Karen Brooks. The public is welcome to attend this free event.

“This arts education program at the Franco Center featured multi-session, hands-on, skill-based art

lessons culminating in an exhibit and celebration,” said Denise Scammon, marketing and development director at the Franco Center. “I’ve worked with Karen Brooks in a similar program a few years ago and she is a phenomenal teacher.”

The Franco Center recognizes the role it plays in providing free arts education opportunities such as this program that is designed to meet the expressed needs and inter-

ests of older adults. “The students created art; they didn’t only learn about it. Each class built on skills learned in a previous lesson,” said Scammon. “The students took inspiration for their art from the Franco Center’s beautiful stained-glass windows and architecture.”

At the exhibit and reception on Saturday, March 9, students and teacher will share their creations and accomplishments in an event that is open to the public.

Light refreshments will be served. “We will open the doors at 11 a.m. followed by brief remarks at 11:15 a.m. During the next 45 minutes, students will be available to answer questions about their art works on display,” said Scammon. Visitors can take student-led tours after viewing the art.

The paper arts workshop was funded in part by the Onion Foundation.

The Franco Center is at 46 Cedar St., Lewiston, in the former St. Mary’s

Church on the corner of Cedar and Oxford streets. Parking is in the mill lot on Oxford St. Handicap access to the building is via an elevator on the Lincoln

St. Alley side of the building. Visitors do not have to register, speak French, or belong to a club or membership in order to attend this event.

Phase 1 of Redundant Waterline Project starts

LEWISTON, ME – Lewiston Public Works began project preparation work on March 3 for Phase One of the Redundant Waterline Project (RWP) at the Longley Bridge, Main St. and Lincoln St. in Lewiston. The project will disrupt traffic on the bridge beginning on Mon., March 4 until the end of July.

The Redundant Waterline Project is the installation of a water pipeline that travels through Auburn to the City of

Lewiston. This is the first phase of construction and includes laying a pipeline from the Main Street pump station, down Main Street in Lewiston, under the Longley Bridge into Auburn, and along Court and Turner Streets to the intersection with Great Falls Plaza in Auburn.

Currently, the City of Lewiston relies on pipeline infrastructure, the majority of which is over 130 years old, to convey drinking water from the Lake Auburn Water Treatment

Plant (LAWTP) through the City of Auburn and under the Androscoggin River to Lewiston. For several years, Lewiston has been exploring alternatives to provide an additional pipeline to reliably convey water to the City of Lewiston.

For Phase One, traffic going into Auburn on Longley Bridge will be down to one lane while traffic going into Lewiston will be two lanes. Major work on Main in Lewiston and Court St. in Auburn

will be conducted at night by 7 PM to 6 AM in April. Work will then continue on Turner St. in Auburn during the day in May and June with a detour in place for northbound traffic.

Construction is scheduled to conclude on or around July 24, 2024.

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Sherman, Vari join Fontaine Family Team

Linda Sherman Joins Fontaine Family Team

Fontaine Family - The Real Estate Leader is proud to announce Linda Sherman as the newest addition to their growing Auburn team. Linda is from West Bend, Iowa and currently resides in Moultonborough, New Hampshire. Linda holds her Associate Broker's license and is ready to leverage her extensive knowledge and passion for real estate to serve both buyers and sellers.

Linda holds a BA in History from Illinois Wesleyan University and has spent much of her professional career as a copy editor for a prominent national auto finance company based in Dallas, Texas. Transitioning to real estate after moving to New Hampshire in 2016, Linda obtained her NH real estate license and has since been actively involved in the real estate market, initially part-time while continuing her role in auto finance. Despite the dual responsibilities, Linda successfully managed a busy schedule,

primarily focusing on assisting buyers in the picturesque Lakes Region area.

Aside from her professional accomplishments, Linda's life is enriched by her family and hobbies. She is married to Jim Sherman, a Cornwell Tools franchisee whose territory spans northern New Hampshire and Fryeburg, Maine. Together, they have a daughter, Maja, a high school senior who is eagerly anticipating the next chapter of her life. Linda describes watching Maja grow into a thoughtful, intelligent, and humorous young adult as both a joy and a privilege.

The Sherman family is completed by two lively dogs and a cat, ensuring there's never a dull moment at home. In her leisure time, Linda has a passion for refurbishing old furniture, always on the lookout for her next project to bring new life to vintage pieces.

Linda is eager to apply her skills and experience to the real estate industry, committed to providing exceptional ser-



vice to her clients. For real estate opportunities with Linda Sherman, she can be contacted by phone at (603) 273-1683 or email LSUESTEIL42@gmail.com.

Joseph Vari Joins Fontaine Family Team

Fontaine Family - The Real Estate Leader is proud to announce Joseph Vari as the newest addition to their growing Auburn office. Joseph, originally from Youngstown, Ohio, and a current resident of Lewiston, Maine, brings a unique blend of experience and passion for community and real estate to the Fontaine Family team.

Joseph Vari is no stranger to building teams and investing in people. He



has spent over two decades in college coaching. Most notably, he has served as the Head Women's Soccer Coach at Bates College since 2019, where his commitment to developing students both on and off the field has been evident. Joseph also holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Hiram College and a Master of Education in School Counseling from Lynchburg College.

His journey in coaching across four different states—from Washington to Maine, with stops in Tennessee and Virginia—has not only honed his leadership and team-building skills but also sparked a deep interest in real estate and home renovations.

This interest is a family affair, as Joseph grew up in a family deeply involved in real estate, with his mother still actively selling homes and managing rentals in Ft. Myers, Florida.

Joseph and his wife Beverly have embraced the local L/A area, immersing themselves in the community by exploring new restaurants and shops. An outdoor enthusiast, Joseph enjoys spending quality time with Beverly and their dog, Gus, whether it's cooking at home, dining out, or enjoying local eats.

Joseph is eager to leverage his skills in team building and community engagement to help clients navigate the complexities of buying and selling homes. With a strong belief in the power of investing in people and a team mentality, he is ready to make a significant impact in the real estate industry and the communities Fontaine Family serves. For real estate opportunities with Joseph Vari, he can be contacted by phone at (207) 240-4737 or email joe@fontaineteam.com.

Fontaine Family - The Real Estate Leader is a highly skilled real estate team of licensed professionals dedicated to focusing on the client. Fontaine was awarded 2019 Maine Family-Owned Business of the Year, voted Best Real Estate Company in the Greater Lewiston/Auburn Area and Greater Portland Area year after year, recognized by Real Trends as America's Top 250 Real Estate Team and published in the Wall Street Journal in the Top 250 Real Estate Professionals ranking in the top 1/2 of 1% of Realtors outperforming 99.9% of the nation's Realtors.

The Fontaine Family Team serves 8 counties - Androscoggin, Cumberland, York, Sagadahoc, Oxford, Kennebec, Franklin and Somerset - in two locations, 336 Center Street in Auburn and 432 US Route One in Scarborough. For more information visit FontaineTeam.com, download their free home search mobile app "Fontaine Family Real Estate" or call (207)784-3800 or (207)289-3830.

Maine Defense Industry Alliance announced

SANFORD, ME - U.S. Senators Susan Collins and Angus King, U.S. Representative Chellie Pingree, and Governor Janet Mills announced the Maine Defense Industry Alliance (MDIA), a newly established non-profit coalition of Maine defense companies, state agencies, community colleges and universities, and other vocational training organizations. Based at the York County Community College (YCCC) Instructional Site in Sanford, this partnership was created to attract and train thousands of new employees to perform critical jobs in Maine's defense industrial base.

Today's rollout event was attended by Senator King, Rep. Pingree, Governor Mills, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, and Acquisition and representatives of several of Maine's defense employers, including: General Dynamics Bath Iron Works, General Dynamics Ordnance and Tactical

Systems, Pratt & Whitney, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, and Compotech. Educational partners in attendance included representatives from the Maine Community College System (MCCS), the University of Maine System, and Maine Maritime Academy.

"This new partnership between the institutions that train and educate Mainers and the state's defense employers that rely upon a highly-skilled workforce is exciting and vital to both the state's economy and our national defense," said Senator Collins. "Providing Mainers with paths to meaningful, well-paying jobs through investments in skills training will keep more young people in the state and provide valuable resources throughout their careers. This alliance is truly a win-win for Mainers and their families, our educational institutions, our businesses, our state, and our nation."

"The Maine Defense Industry Alliance is an innovative new coalition that

will connect the educational institutions that train thousands of hard-working Maine people with our state's cutting-edge defense industry," said Senator King. "By aligning skills training with the needs of Maine's defense sector, we are opening the doors to good-paying, impactful jobs while also solidifying our state's role as a cornerstone of our nation's defense strategy. This alliance is an investment in bridging the gap between public and private sectors that can impact businesses and colleges from Aroostook to York counties and will boost our state's economy and defense workforce, as well as our national security."

"With Maine's workforce aging faster than nearly any other state, it's critical that we continue to meet economic needs and offer opportunities to earn a good living right here in Maine," said Rep. Pingree. "Our state's robust and cutting-edge defense industry has immense potential to help address challenges

like Maine's historically low unemployment rate, our aging workforce, and the decline in the number of students graduating high school. This new partnership taps into our potential—creating more opportunities for Mainers to learn skilled trades in service of our state and our nation."

"Maine has a long, storied, and proud history of supporting our national defense. From BIW built Navy ships in Bath, to Portsmouth Naval Shipyard submarine refurbishments in Kittery, to aircraft engine design and service at Pratt & Whitney in Berwick, and others elsewhere, men and women in Maine have been contributing to the defense of our nation through their craftsmanship and highly skilled work for generations," said Governor Janet Mills. "Today, we advance that legacy by establishing the Maine Defense Industry Alliance. By marshalling the resources of state government, higher education institutions, and leading defense compa-

nies, this public and private partnership will build a pipeline of skilled workers to fill good-paying jobs in Maine's defense sector and fulfil our mission of supporting the defense of our nation. My Administration is proud to be a founding member of the Maine Defense Industry Alliance and to stand shoulder to shoulder with our partners."

"We now have a powerful public-private partnership that is Maine's coordinating body for workforce development for Maine's defense manufacturers. The Maine Defense Industry Alliance will put training opportunities on the fast track, helping the state's defense employers and Maine's workforce," said MCCS President David Daigler, who is serving as the inaugural co-chair of the MDIA board of directors.

General Dynamics Bath Iron Works President Charles Krugh said, "Defense-sector manufacturing requires a vast array of skills from design and engineering to precision machining and sophisticated construction techniques. Employers like BIW need to have a seat at the table with our educational partners to ensure the training provided to Mainers prepares them for the jobs of today and tomorrow. Working collaboratively through MDIA to develop a strong pipeline of skilled people will help meet the

industry's workforce needs in the years to come and support our nation's defense."

The defense sector in Maine employs 19,000 people across more than 150 companies, totaling \$3.2 billion in defense spending in 2021. Over the next five years, the aforementioned three Maine defense employers anticipate there will be more than 7,500 skilled positions to fill, with hundreds more expected across the sector.

In July 2023, Senator Collins, Vice Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee and Subcommittee on Defense, and Senator King advanced \$986,000 in Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) for YCCC through the Senate's Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill to upgrade lab equipment and expand workforce training technology. The bill, which was officially approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee, awaits consideration by the full Senate and House. This request is part of more than \$13 million Senator Collins advanced for Maine's community colleges in FY 2024 appropriations bills. In 2022, Senators Collins and King secured \$1.5 million in CDS for the expansion of the Welding Training Facility at the YCCC Sanford Instructional Center.

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Letter to the editor: Protect programs for Maine seniors

In 2023, the Maine legislature took historic action by expanding eligibility for Medicare Savings Programs (MSPs) for thousands of Mainers. MSPs are for people on Medicare who have limited income and resources so they may afford healthcare expenses such as copayments, deductibles, and Medicare Parts A and B. The expanded eligibility for these programs was significant. Under the law passed in 2023, people 65 and older with incomes up to \$27,681 would save \$7,300, and people with incomes between \$27,682 and \$36,450 would save \$2,000 on Medicare costs.

Unfortunately, the progress made last year is at risk because, in her supplemental budget, the Governor has proposed rolling back the MSP expansion. Under the current budget proposal, nearly 30,000 older Mainers will lose access to this critical new benefit.

Approximately 345,000 Mainers are enrolled in Medicare for their healthcare coverage. As a share of household expenses, Medicare households spend more than double that of non-Medicare households on their healthcare needs. Despite growing over time, enrollment in MSPs remains persistently low. Maine should be

expanding the availability of this program, not scaling it back. By advancing enrollment in the program, vulnerable Mainers will be more motivated to be proactive with their healthcare.

We must protect these essential programs that provide support to thousands of Mainers who need help covering their healthcare costs. I urge readers to contact their legislators and tell them that Maine should not consider a budget that cuts critical support to those who need it most.

André Chassé
AARP Maine Volunteer State President
Bangor

Camden advisor earns prestigious CEPA credential

CAMDEN, ME – With a strong commitment to supporting businesses, Camden National Bank continues to help business owners navigate complex financial and business succession decisions and is proud to announce that Camden National Wealth Management's advisor Marsha Osgood Connors has earned the Certified Exit Planning Advisor (CEPA) certification.

The CEPA certification is obtained by completing a rigorous 5-day MBA-style program designed specifically for advisors who work closely with owners of private-

ly held companies. The program's goal is to help protect, build, and manage wealth for business owners and their families going through an ownership transition.

"We recognize how important early planning is for business owners who want to sell their businesses and are prepared to provide guidance to those looking to exit," said Jennifer L. Mirabile, Executive Vice President, Managing Director of Camden National Wealth Management. "Marsha has been a Wealth Advisor with Camden National Wealth Management for

nearly 20 years, and this CEPA credential signifies her deep understanding of the intricacies of exit and estate planning strategies."

The wealth management professionals at Camden National Bank are dedicated to providing outstanding financial and investment advice to families, business owners, and investors. With the CEPA accreditation, our wealth management team provides additional expertise and depth of knowledge to help our clients make sound financial decisions that align with their goals and objectives.

FAME financing to assist Tanbark Molded Fiber Products

AUGUSTA, ME — At its monthly meeting held on February 15, 2024, the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME) approved financing for Tanbark Molded Fiber Products (Tanbark), a Saco-based manufacturer of molded fiber packaging products. The financing is expected to help create nine Maine jobs and retain an additional twenty-three Maine jobs.

FAME approved \$1,594,000 in total financing for Tanbark, which is comprised of a \$1 million FAME Direct Loan and a \$594,000 loan through the Grow Maine program. Grow Maine is administered by FAME and funded through federal State Small Business

Credit Initiative (SSBCI) funds. The funds will assist the company in purchasing and installing equipment for its micro-fiber manufacturing operation. The Maine Technology Institute also has approved financing for the project totaling \$500,000.

"We are pleased to provide support for Tanbark's operations in York County," stated FAME CEO Carlos Mello. "Utilizing Maine wood fiber for eco-friendly packaging is innovative and will help to support the forest products industry in Maine."

Tanbark is a producer of high-end sustainable packaging made from Maine's heritage wood products industry. The com-



Tanbark molded fiber food containers

pany manufactures molded fiber packaging using wood pulp largely sourced from the Maine woods. The wood-based products have a smooth finish and complex architecture with minimal draft angles. The wood products industry is a targeted sector in the state's ten-year economic development

strategy. Additionally, Tanbark's products are free of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), which are a group of chemicals used to make fluoropolymer coatings and products that resist heat, oil, stains, grease, and water. Tanbark's products can be used as a substitute for single-use plastic materials, which can damage oceans and landfills, among other things.

"We are grateful for FAME's support, which will help us to finalize our equipment purchases and installation and enable us to begin operations," stated Melissa LaCasse, CEO and co-founder of Tanbark. "We are also appreciative of the support of MTI. The breadth and depth

of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Maine is impressive, and it is a great place to start and grow a business."

Steve Femino, Tanbark Board Chair and CFO, added: "The support of FAME to complete this facility allows for future catalytic growth opportunities in Maine."

FAME's Direct Loan provides access to operating capital for startups and existing businesses for most business purposes. Loans up to \$1 million may be available if substantial public benefit is demonstrated and sufficient funds are available.

FAME's Grow Maine Program, administered by FAME in conjunction with various statewide lending partners, provides SSBCI

funding to eligible Maine businesses. Funding is available through FAME and its intermediary partners across the state via loan guarantees, direct loans, and equity capital.

The Finance Authority of Maine (FAME) is a quasi-independent state agency celebrating its fortieth anniversary that provides innovative financial solutions to help Maine citizens pursue business and educational opportunities. FAME helps to lead the creation of good paying jobs for Maine citizens by working at the nexus between economic and workforce development. To learn more about FAME, please visit www.fame-maine.com

Bill to allow reusable containers approved by Maine legislature

AUGUSTA, ME – When Castine business owner Kate Pilotte wanted to offer her meal kit customers reusable packaging, she was told Maine food regulations would not allow it. Kate then asked her State Senator to file a bill that would amend state law so local entrepreneurs have the option to safely offer reusable

containers as a way to reduce plastic pollution and waste.

This week, the Maine House and Senate approved that bill, LD 2091, setting the stage for an update to state law that will allow businesses to provide food in reusable containers and receive them back for sanitizing. The bill now heads to

Governor Janet Mills' desk for consideration.

"LD 2091 will open the door for companies around Maine to make decisions that are right for their business, safely meet customer demands, relieve burdens on local municipalities tasked with waste disposal, and explore new business models," said Kate

Pilotte, owner of Farm and Fish, a locally sourced meal kit service, in testimony delivered before the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee. "Customers want this, but I can't respond because the law obstructs my ability to do so."

Reusable food and beverage packaging options for event venues, in-house dining, retail, and take-out services are popping up throughout the country. Many businesses provide reusable, returnable container programs because it

saves them money and provides a better experience for their customers. Innovative third-party businesses are also being created to support the logistics and sanitation for businesses that provide reusable and returnable containers.

"Local Maine businesses that want to offer reusable options should be able to without our laws blocking them," said Vanessa Berry, Sustainable Maine Program Manager at the Natural Resources Council of Maine. "This bill will

allow for a safe transition to reusable packaging for a broad range of businesses, which will save money for those businesses, reduce taxpayer burdens, and reduce waste."

The disposal and management of packaging waste in Maine is estimated to cost property taxpayers at least \$16 million a year. LD 2091 will help reduce taxpayer costs for municipal waste disposal by reducing the amount of single-use packaging that ends up in recycling or trash streams.



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Mar 9

MINOT -- Church bean supper on Saturday, March 9th from 5 to 6 pm at the Minot United Methodist Church at 142 Minot Avenue, Minot, Maine. Buffet service, sit in bean supper, brown bread, casseroles, desserts. \$8 or a donation. Kids under 12 are free.

Mar 11

AUGUSTA -- Monday March 11 at 6:30 PM Denis Ledoux will present a program based on his new memoir French Boy / A 1950s Franco-American Childhood at the Augusta Public Library.

Mar 14

LISBON FALLS -- There will be a blood drive at the Lisbon United Methodist Church, 14 School Street, Lisbon Falls, Maine on Thursday, March 14th from noon to 4:30pm. To schedule an appointment call 1-800-RED-CROS and use sponsor code LISBON UMC

Mar 22

LEWISTON -- Fill the Plate Breakfast to benefit Meals on Wheels of SeniorsPlus 7 am – 9 am at Hilton Garden Inn Riverwatch, Auburn. Tickets: \$30 per person (\$35 at the

door); available at www.seniorsplus.org or by calling 207 795-4010. Seats are limited. Advance registration encouraged.

A breakfast to benefit the Meals on Wheels program of SeniorsPlus, the Western Maine Agency on Aging, will feature a keynote by Maine humorist Gary Crocker and will honor Lewiston resident Lucy Bisson with the Ikaria Award for outstanding contributions toward improving the lives of older adults

Mar 23

LISBON FALLS -- Dine In/Take Out Bean Supper Saturday, March 23rd from 4:30pm until SOLD OUT; Lisbon United Methodist Church, 14 School Street, Lisbon Falls, ME. Sponsored by the Methodist Women. Adults \$9.00.

Menu: Pea Beans, Hot Dogs, Potato Salad, Cole Slaw, dinner roll and a slice of pie!

Mar 23

GRAY -- The

First Congregational Church of Gray Saturday Night Church Supper, Saturday, March 23, 2024 @ 5:00 at the Parish House, 5 Brown Street, Gray

Handicapped Accessible. Meals are Single-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

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

Mar 26

LISBON FALLS -- Tuesday March 26 at 4 PM Denis Ledoux will present a program based on his new memoir French Boy / A 1950s Franco-American Childhood at

the Lisbon Falls Public Library.

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.

Apr 27

AUBURN -- Saturday April 27 at 11 AM Denis Ledoux will present a program based on his new memoir French Boy / A 1950s Franco-American Childhood for the Maine Franco-American Genealogy Society at the community room of the Auburn Public Library. Public invited.

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

June 15

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Saturday, June 15th, the Maine Iris Society will hold its 59th Annual Flower Show from 1:30 - 4:00 pm at the Auburn Middle School, 38 Falcon Drive in Auburn. Admission is free. There will be a plant sale of potted perennials. Bare-root iris rhizomes will also be available this year for \$1.00 each. Come and vote for your favorite Iris Bloom, Iris Stalk, Peony and Hosta Leaf.

Every 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Monday

LEWISTON -- PROGRAMS FOR HOMESCHOOL FAMILIES, held the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Monday 11:15am-12:30pm at the Lewiston Public Library Children’s Department Homeschool families,

are you looking for opportunities to have fun and socialize with other homeschool families? LPL will be offering activities for homeschool families in the Children’s Department the first three Mondays of each month from 11:15am-12:30pm. The activities will be a Homeschool Video Game Social on March 6th, a Homeschool Lego Club and Curriculum Swap on March 13th, and a Homeschool Storytime and Craft on March 20th.

This program is free and recommended for homeschool families with children of all ages. No registration is required. Contact info. 513-3133, LPLKids@lewistonmaine.gov

Oratorical Contest winners awarded



Back Row (L to R): Mr. Bronson Stinnett, Junia Trussoni, Calliope Valliere, Max Kanamugire, Emma Starbird, Henry Noonan, Ava Carrier, Brenna Bergman, Mallory White, Avaya Smith, Mrs. Ell Fanus Front Row (L to R): Evan Cote, Nolan Davis, Marley Simpson, Mac Hill, Ellie Arsenault, Elyse Haslip, Kristyn Purdy, Brycen Woodbury

The Tri-Town Optimist Club, which serves the towns of Poland, Minot and Mechanic Falls, held their annual Oratorical Contest on February 13. The topic was “How to Change the World with Optimism”.

Teachers Bronson Stinnett and Ell Fanus helped students prepare a 4 to 5 minute speech that was presented to a packed audience of family, friends and teachers.

First place was Elyse Haslip, second place was

Ava Carrier and third place was Henry Noonan. The contest is designed for youth to gain experience in public speaking, perfect self-expression, gain self-assurance and improve communication skills.

Lewiston HS students serve as Honorary Pages in the Senate



Arieth Mpaka, Pascoal Mpaka, Basilio Mpaka, Valente Mpaka, Sen. Peggy Rotundo, Victoria Mpaka and Mpaka Lumbizimbizi in the Senate Chamber.

AUGUSTA, ME — On Wednesday, February 21, Sen. Peggy Rotundo, D-Lewiston, and other members of the Legislature welcomed Victoria and Basilio Mpaka from Lewiston High School to serve as an Honorary Pages during the Senate session. Both Victoria (Grade 11) and Basilio (Grade 9) earned First Honors on Lewiston High School’s first quarter

honor roll.

“I am so pleased to see Victoria, Basilio and their wonderful family back in the State House,” said Sen. Rotundo. “I applaud them both for their consistently strong academic performance.”

On session days, the Senate Secretary’s Office manages the Honorary Page Program in the Maine State Senate. Pages perform

various duties such as delivering messages; distributing documents within the Senate Chamber; interacting with State Senators; and – most importantly – taking part in a real world, legislative learning experience.

To sign up to serve as an Honorary Page, please contact Alex Ferguson at (207) 287-1540 or Alex.Ferguson@legislature.maine.gov.

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

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