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CMMC maternity nationally recognized as “High Performing”

LEWISTON, ME -- Central Maine Medical Center (CMMC) has once again been recognized as “High Performing in Maternity Care” by U.S. News & World Report.

U.S. News began evaluating maternity care hospitals in 2021, rating hospitals that provide labor and delivery services and submit detailed data to the publication for analysis. For the 2025 edition, 817 hospitals, an all-time high, submitted maternity data for evaluation. These public ratings assist expectant parents, in consultation with their doctors, in making informed decisions about where to receive maternity care for uncomplicated births.

According to the publication, just half of the hospitals evaluated for the 2025 ratings edition have been named Best Hospitals for Maternity Care.

Hospitals rated “Best” for Maternity Care by U.S. News:

Are high performing in breastfeeding metrics.

Have C-section rates 22% lower compared with maternity care hospitals not recognized by U.S. News.

Have severe unexpected newborn complication rates 44% lower compared with maternity care hospitals not recognized by U.S. News.

Have episiotomy rates 33% lower com-



Elaine Law, RNC, 30-year NICU nurse at the CMMC Maternity Department and dedicated nurse leader emeritus

pared with maternity care hospitals not recognized by U.S. News.

Have breast milk feeding rates 12% higher compared with maternity care hospitals not recognized by U.S. News.

Are 13% more like-

ly to report race/ethnicity data for both C-section and severe unexpected newborn complications compared with maternity care hospitals not recognized by U.S. News.

“What an honor it is for our Maternity De-



partment to once again receive this recognition,” said Rebecca Brakeley, MD, chief of Women’s and Children’s Health at Central Maine Healthcare. “Few life events are as significant as childbirth, and the people of central Maine are very fortunate to have such dedicated and skilled healthcare professionals available to them when the time comes. U.S. News & World Report is acknowledging what the people of Maine already know: CMMC is a great place to have a baby!”

When a baby is born at CMMC, a chime that is heard around the hospital is played to share the good news.

Earlier this year, Newsweek also named CMMC one of the best hospitals in the nation for maternity.

Additionally, CMMC received a near-perfect 97 (out of 100) score on the Centers for Disease Control’s (CDC) Maternity Practices in Infant Nutrition & Care (mPINC) survey which evaluates categories such as immediate postpartum care, breastfeeding education and support after patient discharge. The national average score was 82.

Franco Center’s spectacular Sights and Sounds of Christmas

LEWISTON, ME — “Make it a holiday tradition to visit the Franco Center each year for our spectacular Christmas show,” said Theresa Shanahan, the Center’s executive director. “Our show brings together all the best sights and sounds of the season, rolled into one magical live production.”

The Franco Center’s annual Christmas show—Sights and Sounds of Christmas—is a cherished event for families, featuring an unforgettable celebration of the holiday season with a variety of performances, music, and a dazzling light show. This year’s event promises to be just as spectacular, with evening shows at 7 p.m. on Friday, December 20, and Saturday, December 21, and a special late afternoon performance at 4 p.m. on Sunday, December 22.

The beautiful Performance Hall stage will come alive with holiday-themed acts, from ballet dancers to singers, duets, quartets, dramatic readings, and poetry — all evoking the warmth and

joy of Christmas. Several performances will be enhanced by a synchronized Christmas light show that adds an extra layer of sparkle to the festivities.

Curated by the Franco Center’s Production Director, Jake Hodgkin, the show features a diverse lineup of performers, including ballet dancers from the Grace Center. Hodgkin has designed the show to evoke a nostalgic, old-fashioned homestyle Christmas, where attendees can immerse themselves in the holiday spirit.

“If you’re looking to get into the holiday spirit, don’t miss this show,” said Hodgkin. “The Franco Center will be decked out with festive decorations, including over a dozen beautifully lit Christmas trees, twinkling holiday lights, and seasonal music playing throughout the building.”

Hodgkin is a dynamic figure in the world of entertainment, with a career spanning theater, live events, and entrepreneurial ventures. His passion for lighting and special effects started at age 12



Jake Hodgkin is directing the Franco Center’s annual Christmas show—Sights and Sounds of Christmas—on Friday, December 20, Saturday, December 21, and Sunday, December 22. Photo Credit: Melissa Hodgkin

when he first discovered a system that synchronized lights to music — a technology he now uses in the Sights and Sounds of Christmas production. Over the years, his experience has included lighting design, directing, and producing, making him a ver-

satile force in the world of live performances.

This year’s immersive lights and special effects will feature computerized Christmas lights, haze, low-flying fog, sparklers, and even fake snow, enhancing the magical atmosphere of the show.

Hodgkin’s expertise in storytelling and stagecraft has been shaped by his work with local theaters such as Community Little Theatre, The Public Theater, Lyric Theater, and Portland Players. He is also the owner of a DJ business and runs an annual spooky walk called “Chaos on Cobb Road,” which attracts up to 800 visitors every year.

In addition to his work in entertainment, Hodgkin serves as a high school basketball and boys’ lacrosse referee, demonstrating his commitment to teamwork and youth development.

“This show is a testament to Jake’s creativity, hard work, and love for all things theatrical,” said Shanahan. “We hope that people will join us for this spectacular Christmas show and experience the spirit of the season.”

A new addition to this year’s show will be the presence of a group of Victorian Christmas carolers. This group of carolers will be performing prior to the show and during the show’s intermission. The carolers include Sharon Patrick, Cassie Gendron, Karen McArthur, Don Dostie, and John Howard.

Tickets for the Sights and Sounds of Christmas show range from \$10 to \$30. They can be purchased online at www.francocenter.org/shows, by phone at 207-689-2000, or in person at the Franco Center box office, open between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.

on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

The cast for Sights and Sounds of Christmas include: Jake Hodgkin, Bette Sanborn Fecteau, Elise Pierson, Wesley Pierson, Maggie Bristol, Jackie Preston, Jim Hodgkin, Bella Hartman, Lucy Reynolds, Michelle Breton, Larry Hodgkin, Preston Marston, Isabelle McCormick, Ashleigh St. Pierre, Karen Flynn, Adrian Morneau, Delaney Giroux, Theresa Cormier, Rapture Waters, Jim McKinley, Eden Bauer, Jennifer LeBlanc, Emma Carmichael, Kathy Amsden, Edith Bambakakis, Shaun Arndt, Lauren Hodgkins, and John Pulsifer.

The tech team, stage crew, and dance instructor include: Joseph Strout, Sarah Greaton, Brandon Chaloux, Theresa Shanahan, Jake Hodgkin, Michael Breton, Denise Scammon, Melissa Hodgkin, Allison Marston, Rick Osgood, Larry Hodgkin, and Jennifer Bement.

Support for this beloved Christmas event comes from Skelton Taintor & Abbott, The Dance Center, Berman & Simmons, Dirigo Federal Credit Union, Maple Way Dental Care, Bennett Radio Group, Sun Journal, and Uncle Andy’s Digest.

The Franco Center is located at 46 Cedar St., Lewiston, with parking available in the mill lot. The building is fully handicap accessible via the Lincoln St. Alley side.



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Newsmakers, Names & Faces

Bicycle Coalition of Maine hires new Executive Director

PORTLAND, ME - On January 2, 2025, the Bicycle Coalition of Maine will welcome Andrew Zarro as its new Executive Director. Andrew's primary responsibility will be to foster fiscal and organizational support locally, regionally, and nationally for the Coalition's vital programs and services. With over a decade of leadership experience across the non-profit, governmental, and private sectors, Andrew is well-positioned to guide the BCM in its mission to make Maine a safer and more accessible place for all cyclists and pedestrians.

Selected from a diverse pool of highly qualified candidates, Andrew brings a wealth of knowledge in policy, advocacy, donor relations, and strategic planning, that will advance the Coalition's



organizational goals. Andrew also brings to the organization a successful track record of partnership

building, increasing foundation and grant support, and growing membership engagement.

The Coalition's Board President Kierie Piccininni shares, "We are delighted to bring Andrew aboard. He has a contagious authenticity and an innate ability to connect with people. With his planning and operational acumen and passionate focus, Andrew is a great fit for the Bicycle Coalition of Maine." Piccininni adds, "Throughout his career, Andrew has been drawn to service-oriented work. He is the perfect addition to an organization whose very purpose is to build community, and create safer streets and more accessible trails for the state of Maine."

In Andrew's previous roles at the Greater Portland Council of Gov-

ernments and GrowSmart Maine, to name a few, he led initiatives to bridge the gap between municipal governments and their communities, addressing regional housing, transportation, and sustainability challenges. This background will serve as an asset to his role leading the Bicycle Coalition of Maine as the organization works to connect with communities throughout the state and work alongside local and state governments to create better and safer infrastructure for active transportation.

"I am honored and excited to join the Bicycle Coalition of Maine as Executive Director," said Andrew. "Active transportation is not just about getting from one place to another—it's about connecting people, fostering healthier communities,

and investing in Maine's future. By prioritizing infrastructure improvements and safety, we can ensure cycling and walking are accessible to everyone. My vision is to put the 'coalition' back in BCM, uniting voices and efforts from MDI to Bethel, Kittery to Fort Kent, and everywhere in between. Together, we'll create a more connected, sustainable, and vibrant Maine for all."

Andrew's community-minded focus was exemplified in his three years as a Portland city councilor, and as a small business owner in his hometown. He notes, "I have always been inspired by the work the BCM has done and see tremendous potential for expansion of the Coalition's impact. I look forward to joining the BCM at the beginning of the new year."

Registration now open for the 2025 WinterKids Downhill 24

CARRABASSETT VALLEY, ME — The countdown is on! Registration is officially open for the 2025 WinterKids Downhill 24, Maine's only 24-hour ski and snowboard challenge. Mark your calendars for February 27-28, 2025, as Sugarloaf transforms into a high-energy, illuminated playground for skiers and snowboarders from across New England.

This year, WinterKids is excited to spotlight a growing movement in our community: philanthropy powered by kids, for kids. From the youngest skiers to seasoned snowboarders, more young people are stepping up, fundraising, and advo-

cating for their peers. The Downhill 24 embodies this spirit of "kids helping kids," ensuring all children can access outdoor winter fun and activities that keep them healthy and thriving.

Here's what you need to know:

What's New in 2025: Special prizes and challenges just for younger participants to inspire and reward their fundraising efforts, expanded course options, and eco-friendly event tees.

Returning: The iconic, lit-up Narrow Gauge trail (thanks to Herc Rentals and Pike Industries!), non-stop skiing and snowboarding, and the chance to ski Sugarloaf at



night—the only time you can all year.

Why You Should Join: Whether you're a seasoned athlete, a weekend warrior, or just looking for a fun way to give back, this event is for you. WinterKids is calling on families, friends, coworkers, and thrill-seekers to lace up their boots, hit the slopes, and make a difference. Proceeds from the event support WinterKids' programs, helping over 50,000 participants

each year stay active and healthy outdoors during the winter.

This year's Downhill 24 is a unique opportunity to celebrate kids taking the lead in giving back to their communities. It's more than just an event; it's a chance to empower the next generation of changemakers to make a meaningful impact.

How to Register
Visit D24.org to sign up. Spots are limited and filling fast, so don't wait!



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Newsmakers, Names & Faces

Olivia Pol joins Fontaine Family Team

MAINE -- Fontaine Family - The Real Estate Leader is proud to announce Olivia Pol as the newest addition to their growing Scarborough team.

Olivia is originally from Chittenden, Vermont and now resides in Alfred, Maine. She graduated from Rutland High School in Vermont and continued her education in Maine at the University of New England, where she earned a B.A. in Psychology.

Before embarking on

her real estate career, Olivia gained valuable experience working in dental offices, honing her attention to detail and commitment to excellent client care. She will now bring her passion for connecting with people and her diverse background to help clients reach their real estate goals.

Olivia's rich multicultural heritage reflects her diverse perspective—her mother hails from Buffalo, NY, and her father from Aix-en-Provence, France, making her a dual citizen.



She is also part of a large and close-knit family, with three full siblings and three step-siblings.

When she's not helping clients find their dream homes, Olivia is a self-proclaimed hobbyist who enjoys painting, beekeeping, and walking, among other creative and outdoor pursuits.

Olivia looks forward to helping her clients find their dream homes!

For real estate opportunities with Olivia Pol, she can be contacted by phone at (802) 342-8981 or email at Olivia@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.

Auburn appoints Director of Public Services

AUBURN, ME – The City of Auburn is delighted to announce that Eric Cousens has been appointed as the city's executive director of public services.

Cousens is a Maine native and graduate of the University of Maine, with more than 20 years of experience in municipal government.

"Eric's dedication to our city is inspiring, not to mention his depth of knowledge and vision," said City Manager Phil Crowell. "He is a talented and thoughtful planner, economic development professional, and leader. He cares deeply about Auburn, its future,



and its people."

Cousens, who has been serving as Auburn's director of planning, permitting & code, brings

valuable professional experience to the Public Services position. He first joined the city in June of 2006 and has served in

multiple roles within the Planning Department, including city planner, deputy director, and most recently, director. His promotion was effective Tuesday, November 12.

"I'm proud to serve this city. This was the first community in Maine to have a comprehensive plan (1919), and I think Auburn has led the way in planning and strategic growth ever since," said Cousens.

"My interests are broad, my skillset is adaptable, and I like to get stuff done," Cousens added. "Auburn's public services model allows us to better coordinate our planning,

transportation, economic development, engineering, and capital investment efforts. We For immediate release, continued Page 2 of 2 work hard to get the most benefit from limited resources. I'm fortunate to work with such a talented team of professionals and I'm excited about this new role."

Cousens' promotion is part of additional restructuring within the city. Deputy Director of Planning, John Blais will be joining Cousens on the Public Services team, as well as Economic Development Director Jay Brenchick. Blais and Brenchick join

Director of Engineering Dan Goyette, Transportation Systems Director Jonathan LaBonté, and the new director of planning.

"The timing of these changes is pivotal for Auburn as we experience growth and amazing initiatives," said Crowell. "Soon we will begin our search for a new planning director as well as a long-range city planner."

Cousens replaces Denis D'Auteuil, who was appointed as Auburn's assistant city manager in July. Eric lives in the greater Auburn-Lewiston area, has two children, and is an avid outdoorsman.

L/A Senior College offers new classes for 2025

LEWISTON, AUBURN, ME -- Looking for something to keep you busy during the cold dark days of Winter? Lewiston Auburn Senior College is pleased to announce that our Catalog of courses/classes is now available for review. Click of this link <https://lewiston-auburn-senior-college.coursetorm.com/browse> to see what we will be offering. We have a variety of courses/classes, In Person, on ZOOM or a combination of both.

Want to learn more about the new Americans

in Androscoggin County? What about the East Coast Greenway linking L-A and beyond? Do you like to eat? I know I do, and we have several programs on food available. Looking to discuss a book, check out Laura Sturgis' course? Do you love to travel vicariously, there are several travel classes which will take you to a variety of interesting places? Come play games or learn about kilts, no, not quilts, kilts.

Registration begins January 1, 2025. If you have any questions, you can send an email to laseniorcollege@gmail.com or call 207-713-7266."

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Seniors Not Acting Their Age

Blustery Number 5 Mountain



Hikers celebrate reaching the top of Number 5 Mountain

Number 5 Mountain is a 3,186-foot peak located in the mountains southwest of Jackman and northwest of The Forks. It's part of a range of peaks that separate Attean Pond and the Moose River in the north from Spencer Lake and Stream in the south. Access to the trailhead is via Spencer Road (AKA Hardscrabble Road), a dirt road in fair condition.

I can't find any definitive information on how Number 5 Mountain got its unusual name. A few mountains in northwestern Maine have been assigned numbers for names. It seems likely that early lumbermen gave them numbers to differentiate the many outwardly similar spruce

fir covered peaks in that mountainous area.

An ailing left knee restricts my mountaineering options. Unwilling to give up mountain hiking completely, I've been choosing treks easy to moderate in difficulty. My son, Adam, hiked Number 5 earlier in the fall and suggested that the 5.2 mile outing with fabulous views from the summit area and only 1,250 feet of elevation gain met my criteria. In fact, Adam was so impressed with the high elevation vistas, he was anxious to go back a second time before winter made access problematic.

My wife, Nancy, and I met Adam and his friend, Liz, in The Forks on a cold blustery but sunny morn-



A massive boulder marks the true summit of Number 5 Mountain

ing. We drove north on Route 201 and turned left onto Spencer Road opposite Parlin Pond. Although the conditions were fairly good during most of the 16.6-mile drive to the trailhead access road, we encountered a few rough muddy sections.

Early on, we passed through an area where Central Maine Power Company is constructing a transmission line. Farther along, the road crosses over a small stream that feeds Fish Pond. The pond leads to Spencer Lake and Stream and ultimately the Dead River, a canoe trip Adam highly recommends. Hopefully, that will be on the agenda next spring when water levels

are high.

When we arrived at the access road, a trail sign had been blown over by the wind. Adam rectified the problem and we drove up the steep rutted road to an open area where there is plenty of parking space – our high clearance vehicles were invaluable.

Number 5 Mountain and Trail are maintained by Leuthold Forest Preserve. According to their website, The Nature Conservancy donated two conservation easements to the preserve resulting in a total of 16,934 protected acres.

The trail begins on an old logging road next to a kiosk. After hiking gradually uphill for about a half-mile, we turned right onto a marked trail and entered a predominantly conifer forest on a partially snow-covered surface.

The gradient steepened as we progressed steadily upward on rough rocky terrain until reaching a wooded plateau. In a couple of areas, the path connects with and follows the former Fire Warden's Trail before again leaving it behind.

After crossing a lengthy log bridge over a boggy area, we began climbing precipitously on a circuitous boulder-strewn path that required periodic



Number 5 Mountain offers glorious views of the Attean Pond region

scrambling. Scaling a massive boulder, we emerged onto open ledges with fabulous views of the surrounding mountains. We quickly sought refuge from blustery winds in mountain scrub and donned parkas, stocking caps, and mittens.

Once adequately attired for the severe wind chills, we ascended steep sloping ledges to a closed firetower. No longer safe to climb, the 47-foot steel structure was erected in the spring of 1933.

Just beyond, we encountered glorious views of the Attean Pond region. From that exceptional vantage point, we were able to look down on the entire famed Moose River canoe trip and nearby Sally and Attean Mountains. An area we have thoroughly explored in the past, the overlook offered a remarkably unique perspective.

We lingered to embrace the extraordinary vista. However, powerful winds and brutal cold finally forced us to begin our descent.

Once out of the wind, we enjoyed an uneventful return. With the exception of the high elevation ledge scrambling, the relatively gentle path was easy on my fragile knee. I see additional easy mountain hikes in my future.

My book, *Maine Al Fresco: The Fifty Finest Outdoor Adventures in Maine* describes the nine best mountain hikes in Maine and narrates an exciting humorous paddling escapade on the Moose River Bow Trip.

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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MCPM accepting applications for 2025 Fellowship program

LEWISTON, ME – The Maine Center for Palliative Medicine (MCPM) at Andwell Health Partners is pleased to announce that applications are now being accepted for the MCPM Fellowship. This prestigious program offers nurse practitioners an unparalleled opportunity to advance their careers through a combination of didactic and clinical learning, under the supervision of experienced faculty. The fellow will have the opportunity to practice in multiple pal-

liative and hospice settings including inpatient, community and clinical.

The NP fellow will benefit from both supervision and conditional independence, enabling them to achieve successful board certification in Advanced Hospice and Palliative Nursing. By the end of the fellowship year, the trained nurse will have acquired the following competencies:

Provide patient-centered care that is compassionate, culturally sen-



Formerly known as Androscoggin Home Healthcare + Hospice

sitive, appropriate, and effective for the treatment of serious illness

Demonstrate the ability to evaluate one's own practice and improve outcomes with patients through constant self-evaluation and lifelong learning

Facilitate effective communication between patients, their families, and the inter-professional healthcare team

Demonstrate commitment to carrying out professional roles and responsibilities while adhering to ethical principles

Demonstrate awareness of healthcare systems, fiscal responsibility, and the ability to effectively interface with other resources to optimize care

Actively participate in providing leadership in healthcare now and in the future

Applications for the MCPM Fellowship are open to dedicated nurse practitioners seeking to enhance their skills and make a significant impact in the field of palliative care.

Application process

and timeline

Application period for the fellowship is now open. Applications will be accepted until January 31, 2025, and applicants will be contacted for interviews by February 3, 2025. The Fellowship begins July 1, 2025, and finishes June 30, 2026.

For more information and to apply, please visit <https://andwell.org/health-services/nurse-practitioner-fellowship/> or email lynzie.pinard@andwell.org.

WinterKids invites families to celebrate winter at Lost Valley

AUBURN, ME – WinterKids is thrilled to host its annual Welcome to Winter event on Thursday, December 19, 2024, from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM at Lost Valley in Auburn, Maine. This free, family-friendly event is open to all and offers a unique opportunity for children and families to try new winter activities, connect with their community, and enjoy the health benefits of outdoor fun.

WinterKids Welcome to Winter 2024 features:

Snowshoeing, Nordic and downhill skiing, snowboarding, and snow sculpting.

Free equipment for kids to try out winter sports for the first time.

Warm treats like hot chocolate and s'mores.

Fun "out-DOOR" prizes for attendees.

"Winter can be a tough season for families, especially if you're new to Maine or unfamiliar with snow activities," said Tom Long, Program & Environmental Sustainability Manager at WinterKids.



"Welcome to Winter is designed to make winter fun, accessible, and welcoming for everyone—whether it's your first time on snow

or your hundredth." Why Attend WinterKids Welcome to Winter? It's FREE: Enjoy all activities at no cost.



No Gear? No Problem: WinterKids provides equipment so kids can experience winter sports without financial barriers.

Build Community: Meet neighbors, make memories, and enjoy the season together.

Families are encouraged to dress warmly, bring their winter spirit,

and prepare for an evening of fun and connection. Lost Valley's welcoming and cozy atmosphere, along with Lost Valley's supportive staff make it the perfect place to introduce children to winter sports in a stress-free environment. For more information, visit <https://winterkids.org/welcome-to-winter/>.

USDA invests \$14.6M to strengthen rural infrastructure

BANGOR, ME – U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Maine State Director Rhiannon Hampson announced a \$14.5M loan to the Eastern Maine Electric Cooperative Inc (EMEC). The funding comes through the agency's Rural Utility Service, which makes insured loans and loan guarantees to nonprofit and cooperative associations, public bodies, and other utilities. This week USDA released a total of more than 200 awards across 44 states to expand access to a clean and reliable electric grid, provide safe drinking water and

create good-paying jobs.

"Maine's electric grid is at the foundation of our communities - our transportation network, businesses, schools, and families," said Director Hampson. "Rural Development invests in modern infrastructure to support these vital components of rural life. Local funding alone often is not sufficient to modernize infrastructure. We're glad to bring tax dollars back to Maine to help local entities like EMEC address rural needs, making small towns more sustainable and building lasting economic growth."

Calais-based EMEC

will receive the funds through Rural Development's Electric Infrastructure Loan and Loan Guarantee Program. The program supports construction and improvement of electric distribution, transmission, and generation facilities in rural communities. EMEC serves an average of 13,072 consumers through 1,740 miles of distribution line and 51 miles of transmission line in Aroostook, Penobscot, and Washington counties. It will use the funding to connect 600 consumers and build and improve 73 miles of line.

"The loan will pro-

vide funding for the EMEC's four-year construction work plan which will continue to enhance the co-op's electric system and continue to improve the reliability of the system," said CEO Scott Hallowell. "The Rural Utilities Service plays a vital role in helping the co-op provide and improve service to its consumers." Information about the electric cooperative and more information about the planned upgrades are available on the EMEC website (www.emec.com).

Rural Development announced two other infrastructure awards in Maine this week, both through its

Water and Environmental Programs. The Kennebec Valley Council of Governments will receive a grant of \$85K to help 62 communities across Kennebec, Somerset, and western Waldo counties increase their recycling rates. The Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments will receive a grant of \$67K to help communities in western Maine manage challenges such as landfill closures, household hazardous waste disposal, pharmaceutical and textile collections, and PFAS mitigation. Both projects will assist local governments and help reduce waste disposal expenses.

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities, create jobs and improve the quality of life for millions of Americans in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community facilities such as schools, public safety and healthcare; and high-speed internet access in rural, Tribal and high-poverty areas. Visit the Rural Data Gateway to learn how and where these investments are impacting rural America. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov/me.

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Arts & Entertainment

Monmouth Community Players to present Shorts Play Festival

MONMOUTH, ME -- The Monmouth Community Players (MCP) are excited to present our 4th Annual MCP Shorts Play Festival, happening at the start of the new year, January 3-5, at Cumston Hall in Monmouth, ME. This short play festival had its origins during 2020, where MCP solicited scripts from local playwrights and presented staged readings via zoom recordings. Since then the festival has evolved to include live performances of the shows. The past 2 years have been performed in found spaces. This year the festival grows as we bring it to the stage for the first time, where shows will



Birdie Gay, Ben Simpson and Brittany Bazinet in "Dancing into the Unknown", shorts 2023

get full production value. The best part of this festival is that we get to honor the creativity of many of Maine's hard working playwrights. We pride ourselves on seeking out new

work from our talented Maine playwrights.

The festival this year will include 11 scripts, to be rehearsed in December and performed in January. The festival features six

local directors, and will be performed by local actors. This event is a celebration of all the local talent that we have in our area and around our state. The 11 plays that have been selected to be produced include *Just Ice* by Jon Bolduc and *People Watching* by Josie French, both of Lewiston, *Here We Grow Again* by Greg Simpson of Minot, *Scrabble* by Jeff Stewart of Southport, *Making an Impression* by Roger Powers of West Bath, *Nine Miles to Maryville* by Joe Swenson of Portland, *Down With It* by Melanie Wolfe of Blue Hill, *Change of Date* by Jonathan Hamann and *My 2 Cents* by Danny Gay, both of Monmouth,



Emily Carlton & Jane Mitchell in "Curiosity Kills", shorts 2023

Pinkie and Sheila by Randy Hunt of Westbrook, and *The Proposal* by Greg Tullonen of Auburn.

The 4th Annual MCP Shorts Play Festival will

occur at Cumston Hall, 796 Main St, Monmouth, ME 04259 on January 3rd at 7pm, January 4th at 7pm, and January 5 at 2pm. Tickets will be \$10 general admission and are available online or at the door. Advance tickets can be purchased by visiting our website's home page, www.monmouthcommunityplayers.org or contacting our box office at mcp-boxoffice@gmail.com or calling at 207-370-9566. Any questions about the play festival can be directed to our Artistic Director at adatmcp@gmail.com. We hope to see you come out and support local artists and locally created art this season!

Volunteers needed to lead the Food for Thought Challenge



Photo courtesy University of Maine Cooperative Extension.

LISBON FALLS, ME – University of Maine Cooperative Extension will hold a Food for Thought 4-H STEM Challenge

workshop for volunteers from 3-5 p.m. on January 16 and 30, 2025 at the Androscoggin/Sagadahoc office, 24 Main Street, Lisbon

Falls.

This workshop is geared toward adults who want to learn more about how to help youth address food security issues at the community level. The first workshop will introduce the innovative 4-H STEM Challenge which features engaging activities designed for youth in grades 3 and above. In the second session, participants will receive a free kit, valuable positive youth development training, and support to set up their own program. Through this 4-H opportunity, volunteers can inspire the next generation of problem-solvers while tackling real-world challenges.

Registration is free, but required. Open to adults in Androscoggin or Sagadahoc counties. For more information or to register, visit the event webpage. To request a reasonable accommodation, contact 207.581.8206 or sarah.sparks@maine.edu.

Poetry Foundation publishes Alice James Books profile

NEW GLOUCESTER, ME - The Poetry Foundation has recently published a Grantee-Partner profile featuring Alice James Books (AJB), a leading independent poetry publisher. This Grantee-Partner profile comes on the heels of AJB's receipt of a Poetry Programs, Partnerships, and Innovation grant from the

Poetry Foundation, which enabled AJB to grow its team and expand the services it can provide to poets.

Franny Choi, author of *Soft Science* and *The World Keeps Ending*, and the *World Goes On*, shares their enthusiasm for publishing with Alice James Books in the following quote: "I was so excited

to get to publish with Alice James because of their reputation for putting out beautiful, game-changing poetry. But what's even more meaningful to me is the care that they took with my book. It's no small thing to get to work with a team of people who are so obviously invested not just in the work, but also in their authors."

Skelton Taintor & Abbott attorney selected for fellowship

LEWISTON, ME -- Skelton Taintor & Abbott Attorney Christian A. Jones has been selected as a fellow for the 2025 Justice Andrew M. Mead Fellowship for Pro Bono Service. This honor provides Christian with the opportunity to help address the access to justice gap while developing legal and professional skills and gaining exposure in the legal community. It also underscores Christian's commitment to providing legal services to underserved communities and his dedication to advancing justice through pro bono work.

"I am truly humbled

and honored to be accepted to participate in this wonderful program," said Jones. "It is a privilege to be able to contribute to the cause of justice and provide legal services to those in need. I hope this recognition will inspire other new lawyers to engage in pro bono work and make a difference in the lives of those who are often overlooked by our legal system."

Christian is a dedicated attorney practicing in the field of Family Law at Skelton Taintor & Abbott. Christian graduated from Franklin and Marshall College and earned a Juris Doctor

degree from the University of Maine School of Law. Christian's background includes work as a student attorney at the Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic's General Practice Clinic and Rural Practice Clinic, and at the Office of the Maine Attorney General.

For more information on Skelton Taintor & Abbott or Attorney Jones, please visit www.sta-law.com or call 207-784-3200.

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

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Letter to the Editor:

The true meaning of Christmas

It seems every year about this time before Christmas I start to think back to times long ago when our lack of technology and the slower pace of life seemed to draw us closer to the true Christmas spirit. Take for example the era that was illustrated in the paintings of Norman Rockwell, a time before television, and rotary telephones and radios were all they had then and many children were probably waiting for a new Radio Flyer sled for Christmas. The evenings for many in the community young and old often were taken up in the winter with ice skating on the local rink.

Norman Rockwell had a unique gift in cap-

turing the humanity of all of his pictured subjects and the soul of America became the heart-warming covers of the Saturday Evening Post. My favorite of his paintings is titled Saying Grace, which is on my kitchen wall. In this he shows a young boy and his grandmother saying grace in a crowded restaurant with all the patrons looking on with curiosity and respect at what prayer before meals is all about. Rockwell knew that people were very proud of their faith and there was no hesitation in putting it on a national magazine. Does our advanced technology and lifestyles along with today's political correctness make the true meaning of

Christmas seem more distant?

Then at this time of year I always enjoy the Christmas movies of the past. I have a special liking of all of Frank Capra's movies, and his best perennial Christmas movie, It's A Wonderful Life and who hasn't seen this at least a dozen times. We recall in the movie how George Bailey's guardian angel allows him to see his town as though George had never been born. What kind of a contrast would we see in our world if Christ had never been born?

Does the secular world need their guardian angels to show them what life on earth would be like without Christ's in-

fluence? All that embodies the Christmas spirit, love, caring, unselfish giving and peace and goodwill to mankind would be missing.

The other great Christmas movie I'm sure we all have seen that tells us we are never too late to find the Christmas spirit, is the story of Ebenezer Scrooge in the Dicken's A Christmas Carol. The latest version I like best with George C Scott playing Scrooge. Scott does an extremely good job of showing the drastic contrast that takes place in Scrooge before and after the three ghosts of Christmas visit him. He is truly a different person after his visits are complete, he now sees

for the first time in his life the people around him who are struggling, the people he avoided so he wouldn't have to respond to their pain and suffering. He now becomes a very

likeable person and wants to be liked by these people who have entered his newfound life. I don't need three ghosts to show me I need more of the reformed Scrooge in my life.

This may cause us to drop back in time about two thousand years ago to that first Silent Night. This was the night that the world was totally changed by one solitary vulnerable child, the greatest child ever born yet with the greatest humility of only having a stable for His birth. Who came to

us at this time transformed the world but also how He came to us tells the message that His kingdom is not of this world. His coming tells us that, faith in God, trust and love of mankind will be forever what we all should strive for. This is the true meaning of Christmas. It was Christ coming to us in our great need that brought us Christmas, and today we have no greater need than to keep Christ in Christmas.

We are all invited to hold onto the true meaning of Christmas and share our joy in the Christmas spirit with just two cherished words.....MERRY CHRISTMAS.

Peter Pinette
Woodland, Maine

Skowhegan Savings donates \$20K to 20 local nonprofits

SKOWHEGAN, ME -- Skowhegan Savings Bank employees donate \$20,000 to 20 local nonprofits during the bank's fourth annual Season of Giving. Started in 2021, the bank's employees annually select 20 nonprofits in their communities to give \$1,000 grants to as part of the program.

"Our annual Season of Giving reflects the bank's commitment to giving back and showing our appreciation of these nonprofit organizations, who work to strengthen our communities' throughout the year," said David Cyr, president and CEO of the bank. "Our employees take great pride in being a part of our communities."

This year's Season of Giving recipients included local food pantries, humane societies and other community initiatives, including the John Domareki Kindness Award Scholarship Program.

"John was known by many in the community as a volunteer coach for Skowhegan High School football, baseball and basketball teams. He was a friend to all and received a kindness award himself," said Molly Chapman, retail operations manager. "This scholarship award was set up to recognize students who exhibit the same kindness, respect at



Nicole Rutherford, director of development of Make-A-Wish Maine, joined the bank's call center team to accept their Season of Giving Grant.

school and within the community that he did."

The employees of the Rangeley branch selected the Sargent Family Community Fund as their 2024 grant recipient. The fund was created by Craig Sargent, who saw a need to support those in need in the greater Rangeley region.

"The Sargent Family Community Fund was founded to benefit the people in the area who do not have the means they need to live at an optimal level. Since our creation, our goal has been to help people in need through financial assistance, volunteer labor, food donations and

much more," explained Sargent.

The bank's call center team surprised Make-A-Wish Maine with their \$1,000 grant. The organization raises funds to help grant wishes for children with illnesses in Maine.

"We wanted to impact a life of a child and Make-A-Wish was the perfect place to do so," stated Debbie Kramer, assistant vice president and call center manager. "It brings joy to our hearts that we can make a wish come true in putting a smile on a child's face, as these children inspire us with their strength and determination."

Skowhegan Sav-



Skowhegan Savings Bank's Skowhegan Branch choose to spread the kindness by recognizing the John Domareki Kindness Award Scholarship Program with their Season of Giving grant.



Skowhegan Savings branch in Rangely awarded the Sargent Family Community Fund with their Season of Giving grant.

ings has been a longtime supporter of the Make-A-Wish Maine organization and has been the lead sponsor of their annual Trailblaze Challenge, a 23.4 mile fundraising hike along Maine Huts & Trails in Carrabassett Valley.

Other nonprofits that received Season of Giving grants this year, included:

- Baker Mountain Ski Tow Club
- Fairfield Food Pantry Families Matter, Inc.
- Goodwill Hinckley Food Cupboard
- Heart of Maine Resource Center
- Hospice Volunteers of Somerset County
- Kennebec Valley Humane Society

Lights Up Productions

Madison Main Street Middle School Food Pantry

Maine Mountain Children's Home
Moonshiner's Snowmobile Club

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Somerset Humane Society

The Sweet Dreams Project

Town of Jackman Food Cupboard

Cyr expressed great pride in being part of an organization whose employees are so passionate about giving back to their communities, "Our employees really enjoy having the opportunity to select the nonprofits. It's always fun to see the diversity of organizations that they select and to witness the nonprofit's appreciation when they surprise them with these grants."

In 2024, the bank donated over \$400,000 to local nonprofits and community initiatives. For more information about the Skowhegan Savings' Charitable Foundation or the Season of Giving program, please visit <https://www.skowhegan.com/about-us/charitable-giving>.

Practicing solidarity with the Jewish community

BRUNSWICK, ME -- This holiday season, The Brunswick Area Interfaith Council, (BAIC) is promoting PROJECT MENORAH 2024, a grassroots movement encouraging non-Jews to place a symbolic

Hanukkah Menorah in their window.

Paper menorah designs can be found and printed free of charge on the website, <https://www.projectmenorah.com>. Alternatively, an actual menorah can be purchased

and included with other holiday decorations.

This small act lets your Jewish neighbors know that you stand for their safety and religious liberty and that your home is a safe space. Jewish communities around

the world, in the US, and in Maine are currently experiencing unprecedented levels of antisemitism in the form of graffiti, hate speech, bodily harm, and shootings. Antisemitism underlies white nationalism and neo-nazi groups

that have a presence in Maine.

This year, Hanukkah is December 25th to January 2nd, but you can participate starting today and throughout the holiday season with tens of thousands of people from

all 7 continents (who participated last year) by putting a Menorah in your window to fight hate, and tell the world that Only Love Lives Here. Your Jewish neighbors will be grateful for these acts of solidarity.

Lewiston Middle School's bountiful harvest event

LEWISTON, ME -- In early December on a snowy day, students and teachers from Lewiston Middle School's 21st Century Program in Lewiston, ME hosted a multi-faceted and interactive harvest event to celebrate the fresh foods they have been growing at school in their Flex Farms.

Students were very busy after school harvesting the Flex Farms that had been growing basil, edible flowers, green beans, and mint. They then used their harvest to cook up a pesto sauce, a green bean dish, and even a mint dessert. The students also made homemade soaps that included edible flowers grown in their Flex Farms. In addition, students and teachers executed a lesson on PH levels to show their expertise in monitoring and tracking levels in their hydroponic systems and they discussed the many new things they have recently learned about STEM, hydroponics and nutrition.

On a very cold and snowy day when they didn't even know if school would be in session, Lewiston Middle School students were in the midst of growing, harvesting and cooking fresh foods! The school district has nine



Gretchen Pleasant, 21st Century Program Director. "To reach all of the components, we use Fork Farms for a gardening club. We also have a cooking club, sewing club, quilting club, woodworking club, painting, basket weaving and much more. We do our best to teach a lot of different hands-on skills that they may not have an opportunity to do at home or during the regular school day."

At Fork Farms, we are so very thankful and proud of our partners and the creative ways they use our Flex Farms to learn, grow, find new recipes and continue to explore and support their communities.

Flex Farms across six local schools where they grow a variety of fresh foods including a variety of lettuces, fresh herbs, peas, and even edible flowers. These harvested foods are not only sent home with students and teachers but are also used in various program activities. They are served at school events, where parents and students can enjoy the fresh produce, further integrating the harvest into the program's broader educational and community activities.

Students in Lewiston Middle School's 21st Century Program are embracing innovative, sustainable approaches to enhance access to fresh food and hands-on learning tools within their school district.

In a region where food insecurity impacts many, the program's use of Flex Farms teaches students to grow fresh produce indoors year-round. The goal is to empower students with valuable skills they can share with their families and communities. Additionally, students have created mini hydroponic systems using recycled bottles, which now thrive on home windowsills, further extending the impact of their learning.

The Flex Farms are just one part of the 21st Century program. "The goal is to have students participate in a literacy component, STEM component, health and wellness, youth leadership, and an art component," said

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Marketfest Cookie Challenge brings out bakers' best

WISCASSET, ME – Cranberry Lime Snowballs, Gingerbread, Hot Cocoa Cookies, Molasses & Ginger. Just the names of the cookies are swoon worthy and lucky the judges who got to taste ever single flavor!

At the end of the judging during Marketfest's Christmas Cookie Challenge on December 7, the winning cookie was the Double Chocolate Peppermint Bark Cookie baked by Becca Thayer of Wiscasset. This year's judges were Lily Burt from Jodie's Café and Bakery; Daphne Cromwell, owner of D-Zerts by Daphne; and Shane McCarthy, manager, Water Street Kitchen & Bar. According to Ann Clifford, coordinator with Monique McRae of the Cookie Challenge, the judges took their roles very seriously and spent time viewing, tasting, and conferring with each other.

Eleven local bakers took part in the Challenge with an age range from 8 years old to 84. Clifford said the 8-year-old was disappointed about not winning but declared her intention to return and try again in 2025.

The location for the 2nd annual CCC was the first floor of AEkeir Brewing at 111 Main St. in Wiscasset Village. Owner Jeremy Meyers was pleased to



Becca Thayer's cookie, Double Chocolate Peppermint Bark, was deemed the best by judges during Wiscasset Holiday Marketfest's Christmas Cookie Challenge. Becca (l) was awarded a gift card to Now You're Cooking in Bath by CCC coordinator Monique McRae. (Ann Clifford photo)

host the event and opened early so volunteers could move tables, add holiday decorations, and welcome the bakers.

After the judging, the public was invited to purchase the individually-wrapped cookies for a donation. Clifford said the winning Double Chocolate Peppermint Bark Cookie, which she described as "amazing," sold out within minutes. And all the cook-

ies were gone in about an hour. The purchase donations are given to Wiscasset's Feed Our Scholars.

The local businesses underwriting Marketfest's community activities are Lead Sponsor, Ames True Value; Major Sponsors are Carriage House Gardens, First Federal Savings, First National Bank, J. Edward Knight & Co., Jodie's Café & Bakery, Midcoast Federal Credit Union,



Christmas Cookie Challenge judges (l to r) Lily Burt from Jodie's Café, Daphne Cromwell of D-Zerts by Daphne, and Shane McCarthy from Water Street Kitchen & Bar, had the awesome task of choosing among 11 superb cookie entries to award the competition's BEST during Wiscasset Holiday Marketfest, Dec. 6-8, 2024. (Bob Bond photo).

Red's Eats, Rock Paper Scissors, Sherri Dunbar/Tim Dunham Realty, and Water St. Kitchen & Bar. Additional support is from

AEkeir Brewing, Bradbury Art & Antiques, M.W. Sewall, Red Bull Antiques, Sprague's Lobster, and Water Lily Flowers & Gifts.

Wiscasset Holiday Marketfest is a program of Wiscasset Creative Alliance. www.WiscassetHolidayMarketfest.com

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Seniors impacted by Alzheimer's invited to apply for scholarship

NEW YORK — The Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA) is offering scholarships of up to \$5,000 to college-bound high school seniors affected by Alzheimer's disease or other dementia-related illnesses as part of its annual Teen Alzheimer's Awareness Scholarship. Entries can be submitted at www.alzfdn.org/scholarship and must be received by

Saturday, March 1 at 5 pm ET. Eligible teens are invited to apply for the scholarship by submitting an essay (1,500 words maximum) or submitting a video (no more than four minutes long) describing how Alzheimer's disease has impacted their lives, what they have learned about themselves, their family and/or their community through their experience with Alzheimer's, and how they plan to advocate or raise awareness in the future. Examples of ways that Alzheimer's impacted a student's life can include: Having a loved one with Alzheimer's disease



or another dementia-related illness

Helping care for someone with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia-related illness
Volunteering or working in a care setting that serves individuals with dementia
Raising Alzheimer's awareness in their school or community
Conducting Alzheimer's research

The program is open to current high school seniors living in the United States who will be attending a U.S. college or university this Fall. Students already attending college are not eligible to participate. The top prize awarded is a \$5,000 scholarship. Additional prizes are awarded for runners up and honorable mentions. More than \$481,000 in

college scholarships have been awarded since the program's inception. AFA provides these scholarship funds through the generous support of charitable donors. Individuals wishing to support this and other programs and services for families affected by Alzheimer's disease can do so by visiting www.alzfdn.org/donate or calling AFA at 866-232-8484.

National Guard holds Change of Command ceremony

AUGUSTA, ME -- Brig. Gen. Dean Preston formally handed over duties of the Maine Army National Guard "Land Component Commander" to Brig. Gen. William Dionne during a change of command ceremony on Saturday, Dec. 7, 2024. The Land Component Commander oversees the Maine Army National Guard and is responsible for the training, operations, and welfare of all its soldiers. This weekend's ceremony marked the conclusion of Preston's 34-year military career and celebrated his retirement

after a lifetime of service to the nation and the state of Maine. Brig. Gen. Dianne Dunn – the Adjutant General of the Maine National Guard and Commissioner of the Department of Defense, Veterans, and Emergency Management – served as the presiding official and spoke glowingly of both the incoming and outgoing officers. Dunn oversees the Maine National Guard in its entirety – to include both the Army and Air components. "Brig. Gens. Preston and Dionne have navigated long and distinguished



Brig. Gen. Dean Preston passes a ceremonial Army flag to Brig. Gen. Diane Dunn, signifying that he has relinquished duties as the Land Component Commander of the Maine Army National Guard in a ceremony at Camp Chamberlain, Augusta on Dec. 7, 2024. Photos by Maj. Nick Erickson, Maine National Guard.



The Maine Army National Guard's Honor Guard presents the colors during the Land Component Commander Change of Command Ceremony at Camp Chamberlain, Augusta on Dec. 7, 2024.

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careers," said Dunn. "Their leadership has been instrumental in ensuring the readiness and resilience of the Maine Army National Guard. We're so grateful for everything Dean (Preston) and his family have done for us over the years, but we're also excited to welcome Will (Dionne) and his family to the position." Preston now moves on to focus on his duties as the principal of Calais Middle / High School after an illustrious career as a true "civilian soldier." Commissioned in 1990, Preston served in numerous leader-

ship roles in the MEARNG, to include command of Alpha Company, 133rd Engineer Battalion during Operation Iraqi Freedom. He eventually took command of the 133rd in its entirety, leading the unit through a tour to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. As final honors, Preston was awarded the Legion of Merit, received several tokens of appreciation from former teammates, and was presented with an American flag that flew over Camp Chamberlain. In his "spare time," Preston has dedicated

over 20 years to coaching basketball in Washington County and was named Penobscot Valley Conference Class C Boy's Coach of the Year in February. Preston and his wife, Avery, live in Perry and are proud parents to one daughter, Holly, and one son, Cody. Dionne, the incoming Land Component Commander, brings 32 years of National Guard experience and leadership to the role. Dionne has held a multitude of key positions, to include multiple combat deployments in support of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Dionne, who resides in Bangor with his wife Annmarie, will now command the Maine Army National Guard and assume responsibility for the readiness of the Maine Army National Guard's units. His highest honors include the Bronze Star Medal and the Order of Saint Maurice Medal. With the change of command complete, Dionne pledged to uphold the standards set by his predecessor. "It is a privilege to lead this exceptional organization," Dionne said. "I look forward to continuing our mission of service and excellence."



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MAINE HOSTING SOLUTIONS

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Wednesdays

GORHAM – Story Hour every Wednesday from 10:30 to 11:30 at North Gorham Public Library.

Thursdays

LEWISTON -- Baby Sensory Playtime in the Lewiston Public Library's Children's Department every Thursday morning from 10am to 12pm.

Drop-in and join us for Baby Sensory Playtime! Babies and their caregivers will have the opportunity to interact with a variety of sensory toys and socialize with other families with young children. Playtime with sensory toys contributes to a baby's cognitive development, fine motor skills, social and emotional development, creativity, and language development.

Recommended for babies ages birth-18 months and their caregivers. Siblings are always welcome. This program is free, open to the public and no registration is required.

Dec 19

AUBURN -- WinterKids is hosting its annual Welcome to Winter event on Thursday, December 19, 2024, from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM at Lost Valley in Auburn. This free, family-friendly event is open to everyone and offers fun ways for kids to try winter activities like snowshoeing, skiing, and snow sculpting—no

Calendar

Send your submissions to the Editor. More online.

gear required!

Dec 20-22

LEWISTON -- The Franco Center's annual Christmas show—Sights and Sounds of Christmas—is a cherished event for families, featuring an unforgettable celebration of the holiday season with a variety of performances, music, and a dazzling light show. This year's event promises to be just as spectacular, with evening shows at 7 p.m. on Friday, December 20, and Saturday, December 21, and a special late afternoon performance at 4 p.m. on Sunday, December 22.

Dec 23

LEWISTON -- Join us at the Lewiston Public Library at noon to celebrate the holiday season! Come and make your own snowflake for decoration or as an ornament. Create a unique snowflake for yourself or as a gift. All materials are provided. Free. In person. Recommended for children ages 5 – 13 years old and siblings welcome.

Dec 24

BUXTON -- All are welcome to come and enjoy our FREE delicious Turkey dinner with all the

fixings - Tuesday, December 24, 2024 (Christmas Eve) - 5:00 pm at Living Waters Church, Parker Farm Road, Buxton.

Dinner will be followed by a short Christmas Eve Service at 6:00 pm.

We will offer the option of takeout containers for those who do not want to sit inside.

Dec 24, 31

LEWISTON -- From 11:15am to 12:00pm at the Lewiston Public Library, enjoy an interactive storytime for some fun with books, songs, and body movement while building early literacy skills.

Recommended for children ages 3 – 5 years old and their caregivers. Siblings are always welcome. Please stay home if you or your child are sick and not feeling well. This program is free, open to the public, and no registration is required.

Dec 31

BANGOR -- The Maine Discovery Museum is thrilled to invite families to ring in the New Year early at Midnight at the Museum! This fun-filled, family-friendly New Year's Eve event takes place on

December 31, from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM, offering kids and parents the perfect way to celebrate the holiday without staying up until midnight.

Jan 3-5

MONMOUTH -- The Monmouth Community Players (MCP) are excited to present our 4th Annual MCP Shorts Play Festival, happening at the start of the new year at Cumston Hall, 796 Main St, Monmouth, ME 04259. January 3rd at 7pm, January 4th at 7pm, and January 5 at 2pm. Tickets will be \$10 general admission and are available online or at the door. Advance tickets can be purchased by visiting our website's home page, www.monmouthcommunityplayers.org or contacting our box office at mcpboxoffice@gmail.com or calling at 207-370-9566.

Jan 10

LEWISTON -- On Friday, January 10th at 10am the Lewiston Public Library Children's Department will be offering the program My Little Snowflake Handprint Keepsake. Caregivers and their young children will be able to make a wintery snowflake themed handprint keepsake. This activity is recommended for caregivers with children between the ages of 0-6 years old. Siblings are also welcome to attend and participate. This program will take place in the Children's Department on the third floor of the library. The activity is free and there is no registration required.

Jan 11

BRUNSWICK -- The 2024-25 UUCB Concerts for a Cause Series season will include folk, jazz, blues, celtic, and choral singing for justice. This season's charities receiving 100% of the profits from the concert are Brunswick Area Teen Center and Maine Family Planning. For further details about the concerts, go to <https://www.uubrunswick.org/events/>.

David Mallett - Sat, January 11, 2025 at 7:30 pm. Doors open 7:00 pm.

Maine's own singer-songwriter David Mallett is one of America's true troubadours. In a career that spans four decades, David Mallett has recorded 17 albums and has performed in clubs, concert halls and festivals across the US, Canada and Europe. He has appeared on numerous broadcasts, including National Public Radio's A Prairie Home Companion. Known for his carefully written, poetic offerings, his body of work has provided material for more than 150 artists, including Alison Krauss, Pete Seeger, Hal Ketchum, Emmylou Harris, John Denver and even

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the Muppets, and his "Garden Song" has become an American folk classic.

Tickets: \$25 in advance, \$30 at the door, \$10 Students/Children. Available at the church office, Gulf of Maine Books, or online at <https://ticketstripe.com/pousette>.

Mar 15

BRUNSWICK -- The 2024-25 UUCB Concerts for a Cause Series season will include folk, jazz, blues, celtic, and choral singing for justice. This season's charities receiving 100% of the profits from the concert are Brunswick Area Teen Center and Maine Family Planning. For further details about the concerts, go to <https://www.uubrunswick.org/events/>.

Women in Harmony - Sat, Mar 15, 2025 at 7:30 pm. Doors open 7:00 pm. Tickets: \$25 in advance, \$30 at the door, \$10 Students/Children

Women in Harmony is a Portland-based chorus of 60 women's voices, which has been singing for social justice for over 20 years. It is a diverse group of gay and straight, musically sophisticated and musically untrained women who unite in song and a spirit of fairness. Women in Harmony is dedicated both to musical excellence and social justice.

Tickets: \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door, \$10 Students/Children. Available at the church office, Gulf of Maine Books, or online at <https://ticketstripe.com/womenharmony>

Apr 12

BRUNSWICK -- The 2024-25 UUCB Concerts for a Cause Series season will include folk, jazz, blues, celtic, and choral singing for justice. This season's charities receiving 100% of the profits from the concert are Brunswick Area Teen Center and Maine Family Planning. For further details about the concerts, go to <https://www.uubrunswick.org/events/>.

Guy Davis - Sat, April 12, 2025 at 7:30 pm. Doors open 7:00 pm.

Guy Davis is a two-time, back-to-back Grammy nominee for Best Traditional Blues, a musician, actor, author, and song-

writer. Guy uses a blend of Roots, Blues, Folk, Rock, Rap, Spoken Word, and World Music to comment on, and address, the frustrations of social injustice, touching on historical events, and common life struggles.

Tickets are \$25 in advance, \$30 at the door, and \$10 for students/children. Available at the church office, Gulf of Maine Books, or at ticketstripe.com/guydavis.

May 17

BRUNSWICK -- The 2024-25 UUCB Concerts for a Cause Series season will include folk, jazz, blues, celtic, and choral singing for justice. This season's charities receiving 100% of the profits from the concert are Brunswick Area Teen Center and Maine Family Planning. For further details about the concerts, go to <https://www.uubrunswick.org/events/>.

House of Hamill - Sat, May 17, 2025 at 7:30 pm. Doors open 7:00 pm.

The upcycled Celtic folk trio, House of Hamill, features Brian Buchanan and Rose Baldino of the Celtic folk-rock band Enter the Haggis. They are both accomplished traditional fiddle players and classical violinists, with over 25 years of writing and performance experience between them. They write unusual new fiddle tunes and exciting, unpredictable original songs while breathing new life into traditional and contemporary songs. A third full-time member, Caroline Browning, recently joined the duo, playing bass, mandolin, and vocals. Their music occupies a space between traditional Irish and sophisticated indie folk.

Tickets are \$25 in advance, \$30 at the door, and \$10 for students/children. Available at the church office, Gulf of Maine Books, or online at ticketstripe.com/house.



The rewards of being there for Mainers in crisis

As a mobile crisis worker, Marissa Exchange's role is all about giving back. She provides confidential support, and connects individuals in crisis to resources they need, collaborating with families, mental health providers, and other community partners to ensure that the person has a holistic network of support. Most importantly, she provides a safe, kind space for individuals in crisis to share what they're going through, and ask for help.

And yet when Marissa talks about her work, she gushes about how much she gets from it.

"It's super rewarding," said Marissa. "It feels really good to be able to make a difference, to know that people feel comfortable with me, and trust me to be a safe - or even just a neutral - place where they can say anything without fear of being judged or getting a negative response."

She also loves that she can make her own schedule, work remotely if she needs to, and manage her shifts while pursuing her master's degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, and training to become a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor.

Marissa is part of a growing legion of Crisis Responders who are discovering the rewards of working with Mainers experiencing a mental health crisis to assess their needs, and guide them to an appropriate level of care.

There are a wide variety of open positions statewide that offer full-time, part-time and per-diem opportunities. The work is done in the community, outside a hospital or nursing home. Training opportunities are widely available and easy to complete.

Like Marissa, others who are working in this field are finding that it gives back much more than it takes.

"It's just been this incredible journey," said Melanie Grant, a crisis residential services worker, who provides intervention and support to ensure the safety and well-being of patients in a residential treatment facility.

"A lot of it is just working with people who are going through a hard time, whether it has to do with substances, or past trauma or loss of a loved one. It's people needing people. And we've all needed people."

To learn more about full-time, part-time and per-diem opportunities in your community, go to Mainecareerswithpurpose.org. Follow @MaineCareerswithPurpose on Facebook and Instagram.



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"It feels really good to be able to make a difference."



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

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SENIOR TRIPS

If interested in any of the following trips or upcoming trips, please contact Claire Bilodeau at 784-0302 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.

MAY 29 - JUNE 4, 2025 - WASHINGTON, D.C.

- NATION'S CAPITAL – Trip includes 7 days and 6 nights lodging, 6 breakfasts and 4 dinners. A guided tour of Washington, D.C. which includes the US Capitol, the White House, the National Archives, Embassy Row and Georgetown. We will also visit the Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial. We will also have a

guided evening tour of all the Memorials. We will have a Guided Tram Tour of inspirational sights such as Arlington National Cemetery, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Kennedy Graves and the Iwo Jima Memorial.

We will visit the Smithsonian Museum and the Museum of the Bible which contains some of the oldest and most important biblical artifacts in human history. On our way home we will stop and enjoy the National Harbor which is a unique waterfront wonderland of shopping, dining and more. **A \$75.00 deposit is due when signing up for this trip. The price is \$985.00 per person double occupancy. Add \$305.00 for single occupancy. Final payment is due 3/22/25.**

SEPTEMBER 11-19, 2025 – BLUEGRASS COUNTRY & THE SMOKY MOUNTAINS

- Price includes round trip air from Logan International Airport, hotel transfers, and all transportation while on tour, 9 days, and 13 meals.

Highlights of this tour are Louisville and Lexington, Kentucky – Churchill Downs, Kentucky Derby Museum, Louisville

Slugger Museum, Buffalo Trace Bourbon Distillery, Lexington Horse Farm.

Gatlinburg, Tennessee – Dolly Parton's Smoky Mountain Theme Park, Guided tour of the Great Smokey Mountain National Park (UNESCO), Cherokee, Old Smoky Moonshine Distillery.

Asheville, North Carolina – Blue Ridge Mountains, tour of the Biltmore Estates Mansion and manicured grounds.

Deposit for this trip is \$698.00 per person and due by March 11, 2025. Early bookings save \$100.00 per person. For more information on pricing call Claire.

OCTOBER 6 – 10, 2025 – ATLANTIC CITY, CAPE MAY, & PHILADELPHIA

- Trip includes 5 days and 4 nights lodging, 4 breakfasts and 4 dinners and a free casino bonus for those who want to gamble.

Guided tour of Philadelphia including Liberty Bell, Independence Hall, Betsy Ross House, the Federal Reserve and Mint. Then off to Cape May with a Trolley Tour of the Victorian Mansions of Cape May and a walking tour of a historic Victorian Home. We travel to Cape May Point and the

famous Cape May Lighthouse. Our next day is a free day in Atlantic City to do as you please. Take in a show, do some gaming or just stroll down Atlantic City's Famous Boardwalk. **A \$75.00 deposit per person is due upon signing up. The price for this trip is \$849.00 per person double occupancy. Add \$210.00 for single occupancy. Final Payment is due 7/30/25.**

NOVEMBER 16-26, 2025 – CLASSICAL GREECE

- Price includes round trip air from Logan International Airport, hotel transfers and all transportation while on tour. Trip also includes 16 meals (9 breakfasts, 1 luncheon, and 6 dinners).

Highlights of this tour are Athens, the Acropolis and Parthenon, Delphi, Olympia and Ancient Mycenae. You will visit a Greek Farm, have a Cooking Class, Greek Dance Class, and visit two remote monasteries. We will also have a tasting of local wines, olive oil and sweets.

If you are interested in any of these trips or for more information, please contact Claire at 784-0302 or Cindy at 345-9569.

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New Chief Advancement Officer at Good Shepherd Food Bank

AUBURN, ME – After a nationwide search, Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine is pleased to announce the promotion of Robin McCarthy to Chief Advancement Officer.

This key leadership position will guide the Development, Communications, and Government Affairs teams in advancing Good Shepherd Food Bank’s strategic initiatives to ensure that everyone in Maine is food secure. McCarthy, who joined the Food Bank’s development and communications division in 2019, will focus on building sustainable fundraising success and driving awareness of the Food Bank’s mission to end hunger in Maine with collaboration and inclusivity.



Robin McCarthy promoted to Chief Advancement Officer for Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine.

“It’s a complete honor to step into the role of Chief Advancement Officer for my next chapter at Good Shepherd Food Bank. I’ve had a front-row seat to the surge in hunger that began with the pandemic and continues to grow, the dedication of

our talented team in meeting these challenges with agility and professionalism, and the generosity of Mainers who tirelessly contribute their time, resources, and voices to help one another,” said McCarthy. “I’m excited to partner with my colleagues and



stakeholders across the state to harness this spirit of community support and ensure everyone in Maine has access to the food they need to thrive.”

McCarthy’s experience engaging audiences and inspiring action in advocacy, development, and communications for organizations working at state and national levels, combined with her strategic leadership, made her a standout candidate in the selection process. Her promotion comes at a pivotal time for the Food Bank, as it embarks on the next

phase of its mission to ensure food security for all Mainers.

“At the close of this extensive selection process with over 100 candidates, I am overjoyed that Robin is our choice for this important role at the food bank,” stated Heather Paquette, president of Good Shepherd Food Bank. “Her deep understanding of our food security work, care for her team and our partners, and unshakable leadership traits make her a perfect fit for the role. Robin is a creative thinker and demonstrates re-

siliency and adaptability through all challenges she faces. She is ready to lead the next chapter of our work towards achieving food security for everyone in Maine.”

Robin McCarthy’s appointment to Chief Advancement Officer highlights a new and exciting chapter for Maine’s only Feeding America member food bank. For more information on how you can help, please visit www.FeedingMaine.org. Together, we can achieve food security for everyone in Maine.

Electricity Maine customers should watch for refunds

HALLOWELL, ME – Approximately 20,000 former and current Electricity Maine customers will soon receive refunds, the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) announced.

The refunds are part of a settlement among the OPA, the Staff of the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), and Electricity Maine. The refunds will cover up to three months of unlawful charges.

“Electricity Maine customers were overcharged by millions of dollars compared with what they would have paid had they simply paid the Standard Offer price for electricity,” said Public Advocate William Harwood. “Customers should keep an eye out for mail from Electricity Maine containing refunds for those charges.”

Customers will receive refunds via debit

cards, which will need to be activated upon receipt. Depending on how many months’ worth of refunds a customer is entitled to, they may receive a second refund, which will be mailed approximately 190 days after the first refund. The amount of the refund is based on the amount of time customers were charged a variable rate without their consent, and the amount the customer

paid above the Standard Offer at the time.

In 2000, the Maine Legislature restructured the state’s electric industry by taking power companies out of the generating business, allowing them only to deliver electricity. For the supply of electricity, consumers can choose either the Standard Offer rate, which is set annually by the PUC, or consumers may choose a Competitive

Electricity Provider (CEP) such as Electricity Maine, whose rates are not subject to PUC review or approval.

Maine ratepayers can choose to switch back from a CEP to the Standard Offer Provider at any time without a penalty by contacting their utility.

The OPA released a Frequently Asked Questions guide at www.maine.gov/MEOPA regarding the refund process, and cus-

tomers can call 207-624-3687 with any questions or concerns.

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



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