



# TWIN CITY TIMES

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## CLT presenting *Heart and Music Valentine's* weekend



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From Left to Right: Gregory Judd, Justin Morin, Sara Chaloux (stage manager), Samantha Harriott, Adrian Morneau (music director), Ashleigh St. Pierre (Director), Eileen Messina, and Jacob Sutherland. Not pictured Anthony M. Delorme. Photo credit to Sophie Wood, prior editing done by Benjamin Simpson

**AUBURN, ME** -- Introducing Ashleigh St. Pierre's directorial debut at Community Little Theater (CLT)! Heart and Music is sharing the love between each other, albeit complicated, romantic, or

platonic. Shows are February 14th & 15th.

L/A Community Little Theatre, located at 30 Academy Street in Auburn, has been producing live theatre since 1940. A volunteer, non-profit

organization, our goal is to provide affordable and quality entertainment in the performing arts as well as education, training, and experience in theatre for area youth. [www.laclt.com](http://www.laclt.com).

## Red Cross: Help prevent blood shortages in 2025

**PORTLAND, ME** — The American Red Cross urges donors to make an appointment to give lifesaving blood or platelets in the new year to help keep the blood supply strong this winter. Type O negative blood donors and those giving platelets are especially urged to give now to keep critical blood products on the shelves for patients in need.



celebrates those who generously roll up a sleeve to help save lives and urges those who are feeling well to make and keep donation appointments to help the blood supply stay on track throughout the winter.

The start of the new year is one of the most challenging times to collect blood products as the threat of severe winter weather builds and can often lead to widespread blood drive cancellations. Additionally, an active cold and flu season may prevent people from keeping donation appointments as they rest and recover from illness. During National Blood Donor Month, the Red Cross

Don't sit on the sidelines – kick off 2025 with a blood or platelet donation. To book a time to give, visit [RedCrossBlood.org](http://RedCrossBlood.org), download the Red Cross Blood Donor App, or call 1-800-RED CROSS.

For the sixth year, the Red Cross and the National Football League (NFL) are partnering in January for National Blood Donor Month to invite football fans and blood donors to join our lifesaving team and score

big for patients in need. As a special thank-you to donors for helping address the need for blood during the critical post-holiday time, those who come to give Jan. 1-26, 2025, will be automatically entered for a chance to win an exciting Super Bowl LIX giveaway. The trip includes access to day-of in-stadium pre-game activities, tickets to the official Super Bowl Experience, round-trip airfare, three-night hotel accommodations (Feb. 7-10, 2025), plus a \$1,000 gift card for expenses. For full details, visit [RedCrossBlood.org/SuperBowl](http://RedCrossBlood.org/SuperBowl).

Upcoming blood donation opportunities Jan. 16-26:

Androscoggin  
Lewiston  
1/20/2025: 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., CMMC, 12 High Street, Lower Level

## CMH expands mission with Prime Healthcare Foundation

**LEWISTON, ME** - The Central Maine Healthcare (CMH) Board of Directors and Prime Healthcare Foundation (PHF) announced that they have reached an agreement for PHF to become the sole corporate member and parent company of Central Maine Healthcare, pending regulatory approvals.

Under the agreement, Prime Healthcare Foundation, headquartered in Ontario, California, a 501(c)(3) public charity founded in 2006, affiliated with Prime Healthcare and operating 14 not-for-profit hospitals in six states, would become the owner of all CMH services and facilities, which will retain their current names and local leadership. PHF will offer substantially all CMH team members positions at comparable wages and

benefits, and they will honor provider and physician contracts.

CMH Chairman of the Board Devore Culver said PHF was chosen after a thorough evaluation of the system's mission, vision, and values, and a review of their track record of investing in hospitals to improve healthcare, especially in vulnerable communities throughout the country. "I was convinced Prime Healthcare Foundation would be the right partner for Central Maine Healthcare after meeting with their senior leaders and visiting its hospital in Woonsocket, RI," he said. "We saw first-hand how Prime cares about people, invests in technology, and values community partnerships to secure the vibrant future of critical healthcare resources."



WHERE YOU ARE THE CENTER

"Prime Healthcare Foundation has made a tremendous commitment to investing in our people, our facilities and equipment, and to improving access to quality healthcare throughout central Maine," said CMH Chief Executive Officer Steve Littleton. "As part of Prime Healthcare Foundation, we will now have the capability and the resources to attract and retain top talent, improve quality and access to care, and address unmet healthcare needs across Central Maine."

Prime Healthcare

Foundation has provided more than \$3.4 billion in charity care and sponsored local and global initiatives to promote health, support medical education, provide humanitarian aid, expand access to quality compassionate care and address healthcare disparities nationally and globally.

"Prime Healthcare Foundation is a steward of a mission to improve lives and uplift communities by ensuring access to the highest quality, compassionate care when people need it the most," said Kavitha Bhatia, MD, President and

Chair of the Prime Healthcare Foundation. "We look forward to welcoming the CMH staff, physicians, patients, and communities to the Prime family.

Through our dedication to health equity, clinical quality and patient-centered, physician-led care, we are deeply committed to ensuring the CMH legacy continues for generations to come."

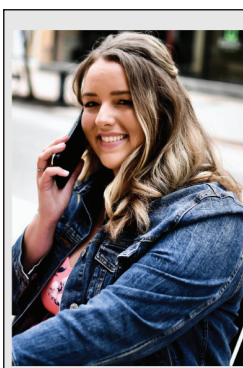
The CMH facilities will have access to Prime Healthcare's resources and nationally recognized leadership team that currently operates and manages 44 tax-paying and not-for-profit hospitals, more than 300 outpatient locations, and nearly 45,000 employees and affiliated physicians dedicated to providing the highest quality healthcare.

Rebecca Brakeley, MD, CMH's interim chief medical officer, said, "Prime Healthcare Foundation's nationally recognized commitment to quality and patient safety, as well as expanding access to medical education, is shared by our 600 medical staff providers who are and will remain dedicated to caring for people in our communities."

Terms of the agreement include a commitment by Prime Healthcare Foundation to invest \$150 million in facility improvements including investments in technology and infrastructure across the system. Charity care and community benefit programs will continue, preserving CMH's role as a valued community partner.

"We know our team members, patients, and community supporters will have a lot of questions," said Littleton. "Over the next several months, as we pursue regulatory approvals, we commit to communicating as much as we can, as soon as we can. Until we receive final approvals, our team members will remain focused on taking care of our patients and each other. We appreciate the support of our team members, our patients, and our community as we make this exciting partnership a reality."

"The people we serve, and our team members who care for them, can look forward to a bright future, full of optimism about what we will do together to provide state-of-the-art care in state-of-the-art facilities across central Maine."



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# Newsmakers, Names & Faces

## Auburn Public Library Chess Club Tournament

**AUBURN, ME** – The Auburn Public Library Chess Club is hosting a chess tournament on Saturday, January 25th starting at 10 AM in the Conference Room.

This will be the club's first tournament which is meant to be both a friendly and social competition. Players will be paired at random. Ratings are not required and will not apply. There will be



approximately 4 rounds in single-elimination style. Prizes will be awarded to both the 1st and 2nd place winners at the end of the tournament. First place will win a brand new chess set along with a \$20 Hannaford gift card. Second place will win a \$10 Hannaford gift card.

This program will take place in the Conference Room at the Auburn Public Library. Registra-

tion is required to guarantee your spot in the tournament, walk-ins welcome only as space allows.

The Auburn Public Library Chess Club, a new program that started in October of 2024, meets every Wednesday on the second floor of the library from 4 to 5:30 PM each week. The club is open to all and is a space for friends and neighbors to gather and play chess to-

gether, learning from one another and practicing strategy.

For more information about this and other programs offered at the Auburn Public Library, visit their website at [www.auburnpubliclibrary.org](http://www.auburnpubliclibrary.org) or call the Reference Desk at 207-333-6640, ext. 4.

Saturday, January 25, 2025 – 10 AM to 3 PM  
Auburn Public Library: Conference Room

## Machias Savings Bank awards Workforce Development grants

**MACHIAS, ME** – Machias Savings Bank is proud to announce the recipients of its 2024 Workforce Development Grant program, which funds projects to enhance and expand Maine's workforce. A total of \$50,000 in grants was

awarded to three organizations:

Jobs for Maine's Graduates (\$25,000) – Supporting their microcredential programming.

Junior Achievement (\$15,000) – Funding to expand to 7 more schools in

Maine.

Camp Susan Curtis (\$10,000) – Supporting their youth leadership programming.

The grants support initiatives focused on upskilling, reskilling, and career readiness to strengthen

Maine's workforce. Eligible applicants included 501(c)(3) organizations, educational institutions, and municipalities committed to building career pathways, vocational training opportunities, and accessible jobs for Maine residents.

"Each year, we are inspired by the incredible work of nonprofit organizations dedicated to strengthening Maine's workforce," said Melissa Denbow, SVP of Community Impact at Machias Savings Bank. "We are proud to support these

efforts and partner with organizations helping to create thriving communities in Maine."

For more information about the grant recipients and additional giving opportunities, visit [machiasavings.bank/grants-donations](http://machiasavings.bank/grants-donations).

## DAR Scholarship accepting applications by Jan. 31

**WASHINGTON D.C.** – Undergraduate and graduate students studying music can apply for the DAR Marian Anderson Legacy Scholarship through January 31, 2025. Sponsored by the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), the scholarship provides a one-time \$5,000 award to one student annually who is pursuing undergraduate or graduate study in music.

Marian Anderson (1897-1993) was a groundbreaking African American contralto and an inspiration for civil rights. "This scholarship pays tribute to Marian Anderson's life, and the Daughters of the American Revolution seeks to honor her

legacy through today's aspiring musicians. Her legacy lives on in others who aim for excellence in musical studies, are committed to their communities, and willing to stand up for what is right," said Pamela Wright, DAR President General.

Applicants should be accepted or currently enrolled in an accredited university or college in the United States and have a concentration in music in their course of study. Music performance, composition, theory, or education are all areas that students may be specialized in to qualify for the scholarship. They should have a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale or the equivalent GPA on



tarian or volunteer contributions on behalf of their community and/or country.

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

This scholarship is not automatically renewed. However, recipients may reapply for consideration each year for up to four consecutive years.

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

the scale used by the institution.

Applications require references sent through the application system, so students need to request

their references ahead of the Jan. 31st application deadline.

In honor of Ms. Anderson's commitment to the community throughout

her life and her willingness to share her incredible talent with the world, applicants are asked to write a personal statement describing their humani-

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# Newsmakers, Names & Faces

## Alward promoted at Skowhegan Savings Bank

**SKOWHEGAN, ME** – Skowhegan Savings Bank is pleased to announce the promotion of Vicki Alward to Executive Vice President (EVP), Chief Operating Officer (COO). With 17 years at the bank, Alward has played a key role in its growth and community commitment.

As COO, Alward will oversee day-to-day operations, including operational risk, compliance, process efficiency, and technology. Her expertise will enhance performance, drive innovation, and maintain the high customer service standards

Skowhegan Savings is known for.

Alward began her career at the bank in 2006, serving as Vice President, Risk Management Officer.

She was promoted to Senior Vice President, Chief Risk Officer in 2015 and advanced to Executive Vice President, Chief Risk Officer in 2023. Her leadership has been instrumental in establishing Skowhegan Savings as a trusted community partner.

“Vicki’s promotion reflects her leadership and commitment to excellence,” said CEO David



Cyr. “Her experience and strategic vision will be crucial to advancing our operations.”

“I’m honored to continue serving the bank and



**Skowhegan SAVINGS**

community,” said Alward. “I look forward to working with our team to further build on the bank’s commitment to exceptional service and innovation.”

This promotion coincides with the leadership transition at Skowhegan Savings. David Cyr, President and CEO, will retire at the end of 2025, and Dan Tilton, currently EVP of

Sales and Customer Relations, will assume the roles of President and CEO on January 1, 2026.

“Vicki’s promotion reflects a strategic approach to the bank’s future,” said Tilton. “Her deep knowledge and leadership will be key as we focus on innovation and operational efficiency.”

Before joining Skow-

hegan Savings, Alward was a CPA at Berry Dunn McNeil and Parker and served as a loan review officer at another bank. Her background in finance and operations will be an asset in her new role.

A Thomas College graduate, Alward is active in her community, serving on the boards of the Somerset Economic Development Corporation, Redington-Fairview General Hospital, and the Skowhegan Savings Charitable Foundation. A native of Madison, Maine, she now resides in Cornville.

## Lisbon Community FCU announces key promotions

**LISBON, ME** — Lisbon Community Federal Credit Union is excited to announce the promotion of two exemplary team members whose dedication and leadership have been instrumental in fostering the credit union’s continued growth and success. These promotions highlight our commitment to recognizing talent from within and ensuring our members receive the highest level of service and expertise.

Kristi Foss has been promoted to Lisbon

Branch Manager. Kristi has recently served as Teller Supervisor in our Lisbon office. Over her 18 years with the organization, Kristi has demonstrated exceptional leadership, a deep understanding of our members’ needs, and a passion for strengthening the community. In her new role, Kristi will manage branch operations, mentor her team, and uphold the exceptional member service that defines our Lisbon office.

Tracy Collins has been promoted to Risk

Mitigation Manager. Tracy has been a valued team member since 2004, serving most recently as Financial Resolutions Officer. Her extensive experience and commitment to safeguarding the credit union’s integrity have been vital to our success. As Risk Mitigation Manager, Tracy will oversee collections, while also managing fraud mitigation and compliance management. She will develop strategies to protect our members’ assets while supporting the credit union’s mission of

financial wellness.

“We are proud to recognize Kristi and Tracy for their hard work, dedication, and exceptional contributions to Lisbon Community FCU,” said Sarah Perkins, President/CEO. “Their promotions are a testament to their commitment to excellence and our institution’s positive growth. With leaders like Kristi and Tracy, we are well-positioned to continue serving our members and our community at the highest level.”

These promotions



**Kristi Foss**

come during an exciting period of growth for Lisbon Community FCU, as we remain dedicated to



**Tracy Collins**

advancing our mission of empowering members and supporting our local communities.

## Dept. of Labor holding free compliance trainings

**MAINE** -- Workplace labor law requirements can seem complex - join the Maine Department of Labor for no-cost upcoming trainings!

Upcoming Wage & Hour Compliance classes:

This course is designed for human resource or benefits professionals, accountants, business owners, managers, or payroll supervisors. Labor laws can be complex. This seminar covers wage and hour laws, including minimum wage, overtime, youth employment, severance pay, equal pay, rest breaks, leave requirements

(earned paid leave, family medical leave, family sick leave and leave for victims of violence). This class addresses commonly asked labor-related questions.

January 22, 2025: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Joseph L. Ferris Community Center, 318 Wilson Street, Brewer

February 5, 2025: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Rockland Career Center, 91 Camden Street, Suite 201, Rockland

February 12, 2025: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Freeport Community Library, 10 Library Drive, Freeport

February 19, 2025: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Lewiston Career Center, 5 Mollison Way, Lewiston

Register and browse more SafetyWorks! classes: [www.safetyworks-maine.gov/training/scheduled\\_classes/register.shtml](http://www.safetyworks-maine.gov/training/scheduled_classes/register.shtml)

If you have questions about Wage and Hour compliance, please reach out to the Wage and Hour Division at 207-623-7900 or [bls.mdol@maine.gov](mailto:bls.mdol@maine.gov), or visit [www.maine.gov/labor/bls/](http://www.maine.gov/labor/bls/)

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# Seniors Not Acting Their Age

## Fabulous Views from Bald Rock Mountain



Hikers enjoy a leisurely lunch at the summit of Bald Rock Mountain



The top of Bald Rock Mountains offers stunning views of Penobscot Bay



A trio relaxes on a Bald Rock precipice

The Camden Hills provide some of the finest mountain views in Maine. Selecting my favorite is no easy task. Ocean Lookout on Mount Megunticook is probably the most well-known and remarkably spectacular. The Scenic Trail above Maiden Cliff provides wondrous views of Megunticook Lake. The panoramic vista of western Penobscot Bay seen from the Georges Highland Path on Ragged Mountain is exceptional. And, the fabulous seascape from the summit of Bald Rock Mountain is stunning. Unable to choose, I keep returning to all of them.

The name of my outdoor club, Penobscot Paddle & Chowder Society, implies that we're primarily

a paddle club. Although paddling is our focus during spring and summer, we actually enjoy a variety of year-round activities including biking, skiing, and hiking.

Hiking is a popular club activity in fall and winter. When I recently announced a trek on Bald Rock Mountain in Camden Hills State Park, four Chowderheads quickly committed on short notice. No doubt the wonderful views and an excellent forecast were incentives.

Bald Rock Mountain is the fifth highest summit on the eastern seaboard of the United States. The fabulous views from the top of the 1,280 foot peak make it a popular hiking destination. The trail system that

provides access to Bald Rock Mountain has been used for decades and part of it was constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the 1930s.

The sizeable parking area was almost full when five of us met at the trailhead on a gorgeous warm, sunny late November morning. The trailhead is located near the junction of Route 173 and Youngtown Road in Lincolnville.

We began hiking easily uphill on the Multi-Use Trail. Limited to non-motorized traffic, the gravel path travels through the interior of the park and connects with park headquarters on Route One on the eastern end. About midway, the five-mile trail

passes Megunticook Cabin where overnight reservations can be arranged.

Progressing steadily upward in a mixed hardwood and conifer forest, we encountered several hikers and mountain bikers. After about a half-mile, we passed a junction with Frohock Trail on the left which leads to Frohock Mountain and provides an alternative route to the Bald Rock summit.

The gradient increased as we continued on Multi-Use Trail to a junction with Bald Rock Trail on the left. Evidence of a former shelter built by the CCC can be seen at the junction. I spent a stormy night there with friends in December 1980 when it was still intact. Coincidentally, another member of the group, Brent Elwell, also camped there at about the same time.

The character of the trek changed on Bald Rock Trail. Typical of a New England mountain trail, we ascended on a more challenging rocky, root-infested path. After weaving steeply upward on a circuitous route, we climbed an extended stone staircase likely erected by young members of the CCC nine decades ago.

The gradient moderated and the trail angled northeasterly at a location where we enjoyed encour-

aging glimpses of Penobscot Bay. After following a relatively level surface for a short distance, we scaled precipitous ledges and emerged onto the glorious summit area where all of eastern Penobscot Bay was seemingly at our feet.

Three members of another party were sitting on the edge of a precipice embracing the wonderful views. We located a nearby overlook and settled in for lunch and an extended visit.

From that vantage point, we were looking down on the 18-mile long island of Islesboro. Southeast, the ragged sister islands of North Haven and Vinalhaven appeared to blend together as one. Farther east, the high peak of Mount Champlain on Isle au Haut could be seen in the distance. A multitude of islands populate the bay northeast of Islesboro. Beyond them, on this clear day, we could see Blue Hill on Deer Isle and the peaks of Acadia National Park on Mount Desert Island.

Benefiting from warm temperatures, light winds, and clear skies, this was a truly magical experience. We lingered to fully appreciate the wonderful panoramic vista. After a leisurely lunch, we reluctantly relinquished our prized location to more arriving spectators. During our return, numerous enthusiastic

hikers were encountered also in pursuit of fabulous views.

My book, *Maine Al Fresco: The Fifty Finest Outdoor Adventures in Maine* relates exciting treks on nine more Maine mountains including peaks in the Camden Hills and Acadia National 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](http://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.ronchase-outdoors.com](http://www.ronchase-outdoors.com) or he can be reached at [ronchaseoutdoors@comcast.net](mailto:ronchaseoutdoors@comcast.net)*

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# 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 advocating 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.

**What's Returning:**



The iconic, lit-up Narrows 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](http://D24.org) to sign up. Spots are limited and filling fast, so don't wait!

## Sen. Collins named Chair of Appropriations Committee

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — U.S. Senator Susan Collins officially became Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee. The Committee holds jurisdiction over all discretionary spending for the entire federal government.

First elected in 1996, Susan Collins ranks seventh in Senate seniority and is the most senior Republican woman. She is the first Republican woman to be elected to a fifth term, the first Republican

woman to Chair the Senate Appropriations Committee, and the first Mainer to Chair the Committee in 92 years.

"I am honored to be the first Maine Senator in nearly a century to lead the Committee, and I remain committed to working to ensure that federal spending produces real results for the American people and that our state's needs are met," said Senator Collins. "As Chair of the Senate Appropriations

Committee, my priorities will remain helping Maine's communities, funding lifesaving biomedical research, investing in rural communities by supporting education, workforce, and child care programs, strengthening our national security, and improving our infrastructure."

Senator Collins joined the Appropriations Committee in 2009. Last Congress, she served as Vice Chair of the Appropria-

tions Committee and Ranking Member of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee. In previous years, she has also served as Chair and Ranking Member of the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Subcommittee and Ranking Member of the Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Subcommittee.

In 2021, Congress reinstated Congressio-

nally Directed Spending for non-profits and state and local governments. Following this decision, Senator Collins has secured more than \$1 billion for hundreds of Maine projects in FY 2022, FY 2023, and FY 2024 legislation. This federal funding promotes job creation, workforce training, and economic development; expands access to health care; supports law enforcement; improves public safety, education,

infrastructure, and community resources; and protects our environment. As Chair of the Appropriations Committee, Senator Collins will continue to work to secure such targeted investments that benefit Maine communities.

The last Mainer to lead the Senate Appropriations Committee, Senator Frederick Hale, served as Chair from December 1932 to March 1933, and as Vice Chair from March 1933 to January 1941.

## Prevent lung cancer by testing your home for radon

**BOSTON, MA** — In January, the EPA recognizes National Radon Action Month and encourages Americans to test their homes for radon. Radon is an odorless, colorless, naturally occurring radioactive gas that, when left unaddressed, can build up inside a home. Over time, exposure to radon can cause lung cancer. The only way to know if your home has high levels of ra-

don is to test for it.

"Radon is a serious public health risk that can be reduced using simple, proven techniques," said Acting Director of EPA's Indoor Environments Division, Sharon White. "During this year's National Radon Action Month, we urge everyone to take the first but vital step of testing their home. This year's theme of 'Test Your Nest: Test, Fix, Save a Life,' em-

phasizes that identifying and reducing radon exposure can decrease lung cancer risk and save lives. Together we can protect our families and communities from this invisible threat."

Testing for radon is easy and inexpensive. Affordable do-it-yourself radon test kits are available for purchase online and at most home improvement and hardware stores. Some states and municipalities

even provide at-home radon test kits for free. You can also hire a qualified radon professional to test your home. Contact your state or Tribal radon program to learn more about radon services in your area.

Millions of homes in the United States have elevated levels of radon. Radon is the number one cause of lung cancer among non-smokers and is responsible for about

21,000 lung cancer deaths every year, but many people don't know about radon or the risks it can pose to their health.

If you haven't tested your home for radon, National Radon Action Month is the perfect time to take this step to protect yourself and your loved ones. Tens of millions of homes have already been tested, and millions of homes with high radon levels have

been fixed.

The EPA recommends taking action to fix your home if you discover radon levels above 4 picocuries per liter. If your home does have elevated levels of radon, a qualified professional can install a system to lower your indoor radon levels. For more guidance on how to address radon risks, see EPA's radon website.

Test. Fix. Save a life.

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# Arts & Entertainment

## A unique and unforgettable play at The Public Theatre!

The Public Theatre starts the New Year with one of the most powerful and unique experiences you will ever have in a theatre with the critically acclaimed Off-Broadway hit *Every Brilliant Thing* playing Jan 24 – Feb 2.

*Every Brilliant Thing* is a funny, moving and unforgettable story told with the help of the audience.

If you have ever written a “gratitude list” or lost sight of the things that make life worth living, this humorous and heartbreaking interactive play is for you.

When a woman goes into the hospital because she finds it “hard to be happy”, her 7-year-old daughter starts writing her a list of all the brilliant things in life worth living for. No. 1: “Ice cream”, No. 25: “Wearing a cape”, No. 317: “The even numbered Star Trek films”. As the girl grows older, her list grows longer, ultimate-

ly reminding her of all the large and small miracles in her own life.

“The Public Theatre has never done a play like this before” says Artistic Director Janet Mitchko. “We are altering the theatre to create a greater sense of intimacy with the performer, including seating 24 people on the stage. People in the audience both on the stage and in the auditorium will help the actress to tell the story. This play is the most unique, delightful and non-intimidating interactive play I have ever experienced and the powerful impact it makes on everyone who sees it comes from the sense of community that is created by the spontaneous way the audience works together. In fact, this play’s unique structure is a part of its charm and central message reminding us that we are never alone, and can help each other get through life’s toughest moments.



Tarah Flanagan, Photo by Roger Mastroianni

Before the show begins, the actress will mingle with people throughout the entire audience

giving out slips of paper numbered with “brilliant things” to be read aloud when she calls out their corresponding number. Other audience members may also be asked to interact within the context of the story with strong guidance from the actress.

Starring in this show will be Tarah Flanagan. Tarah has previously appeared at The Public Theatre in *Private Lives*, *The Nerd*, *Almost Maine*, *The 13th of Paris*, *The Language Archive*, and *The Ladies Foursome*. A professional actress based in New York, Tarah has performed at some of the finest regional theatres the country as well as on film and tv. The production will be directed by Laura Kempley, an award-winning artistic leader, director, producer, and educator. Laura was the Artistic Director of Cleveland Play House for nine years during which time her theatre was

awarded the 2015 Regional Theatre Tony Award.

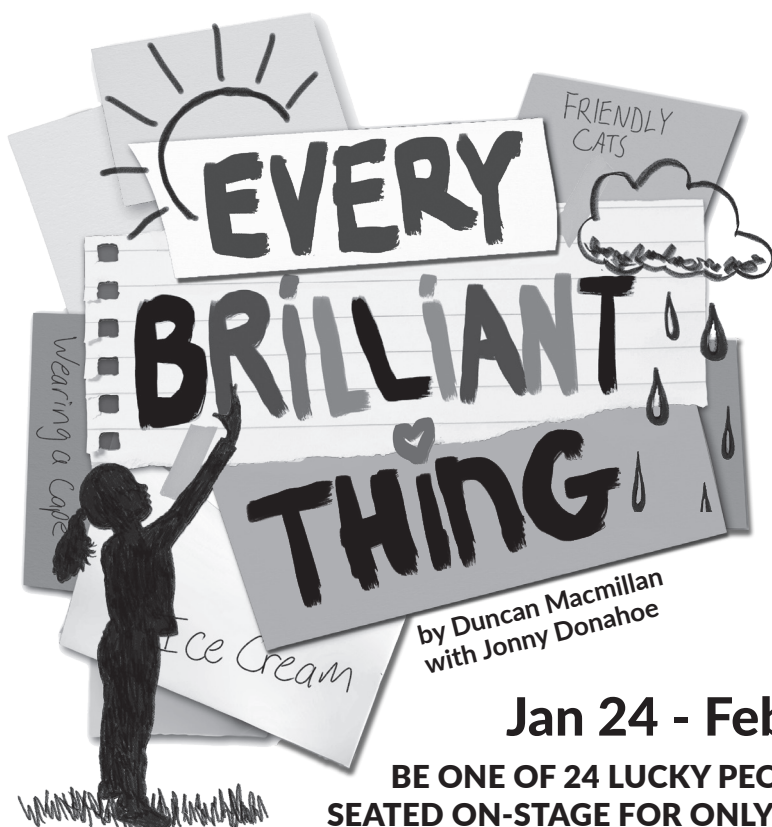
THIS PRODUCTION WILL BE SEATING 24 LUCKY PEOPLE ON THE STAGE for only \$20!

Special post-show events will include a free talkback on Sun, Jan 25 and Sat, Feb 1 following the matinee performances. Free Pre-show events included with your ticket will be a wine-tasting on Thurs, Jan 30 and a beer tasting on Sat, Feb 1 before the evening performances. Visit [ThePublicTheatre.org](http://ThePublicTheatre.org) for more details.

*Every Brilliant Thing* runs Jan 24 – Feb 2 at The Public Theatre, Lewiston/Auburn’s Professional Theatre located at 31 Maple St. Thurs-Friday at 7:00pm, Sat at 3pm, Sun at 2pm with a Sat evening show on Feb 1 at 7:30pm. Tickets \$35 - \$15. Tickets and information at [www.ThePublicTheatre.org](http://www.ThePublicTheatre.org) or 207-782-3200.

**FUNNY, MOVING and UNFORGETTABLE**

If you have ever written a “gratitude list”, this play is for you.



**Jan 24 - Feb 2**

**BE ONE OF 24 LUCKY PEOPLE SEATED ON-STAGE FOR ONLY \$20**

[ThePublicTheatre.org](http://ThePublicTheatre.org) | 782-3200

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Space is limited. Get your tickets today!

Children ages 4-12 are sure to treasure an evening of dressing up and dancing with their loved ones. All parents/guardians are welcome.

[ThePublicTheatre.org](http://ThePublicTheatre.org) | 782-3200

The Ball will be held at the Kora Shrine Temple, Lewiston

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# Remote education & healthcare in rural communities grant opens

**WASHINGTON** – U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Under Secretary Dr. Basil Gooden invited grant applications to improve access to remote education and health care in rural and Tribal communities.

USDA is making approximately \$40 million in funding available under the Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Grant Program.

This program funds distance learning and telemedicine equipment, like audio and video equipment. These funds will

help digitally connect people to education, training and health care resources that are otherwise unavailable or limited in remote parts of the country.

For example, DLT funding expands opportunities for:

Students to participate in classes that may be in locations too far to access in person.

Teachers to provide their expertise, trainings and educational services to students across the country.

Patients to seek specialized care and treatment from medical profes-



The Alford Youth and Community Center used a DLT grant to acquire devices to assist in physical therapy for seniors and youth.

professionals without needing to leave their homes or communities. Eligible applicants



include state and local governmental entities, federally recognized Tribes, nonprofits and for-profit businesses. Past grant recipients in Maine include RSU 10 (Rumford), the Alford Youth and Community Center in Waterville (via the University of New Hampshire

Center for Digital Health Innovation), and VNA Home Health and Hospice (dba Northern Light Homecare and Hospice, South Portland).

Applications must be submitted electronically through grants.gov no later than March 6, 2025. Additional program information is available online and via page 589 of the Jan. 6, 2025, Federal Register. Interested Maine applicants may contact Robert Fry, Telecom General Field Representative (robert.fry@usda.gov or 202-768-0589) with questions.

# New Paid Family and Medical Leave employer portal launches

**AUGUSTA, ME** – The Maine Department of Labor announced that the new Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) Portal, the online system for employers to register, designate a payroll processor, file quarterly wage reports, and remit quarterly premium contributions, has launched.

“The Department is excited to be moving into the next phase of the new Paid Family and Medical Leave Program, with the launch of its portal today,” said Luke Monahan, Director of Paid Family and Medical Leave. “We encourage employers to register and explore the new

portal as soon as possible in order to be prepared to begin wage reporting in April, and encourage people to stay up to date by visiting our website.”

In the hour since the portal launched this morning, over 100 employers have already successfully registered on the portal. Designed to be a straightforward process, the average time spent registering from a desktop has been nine minutes, and the average time spent registering from a mobile device has been five minutes.

Starting January 1st, 2025, any employer with at least one Maine-based employee must have begun

# MAINE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

payroll withholdings for their employees. Employers with 15 or more employees will contribute 1 percent of wages and may deduct up to half of the contribution from the employees’ wages. Employers with less than 15 employees will contribute 0.5

percent of wages and may deduct the entire amount from the employees’ wages.

All employers must register on the portal in order to begin wage reporting in April 2025. The portal will also allow self-employed individuals

and tribal governments to elect coverage.

Employers will begin their first quarterly wage reporting and premium payments starting April 1, 2025, and they are due by April 30, 2025.

The portal can be accessed here: <https://pfml.maine.gov/contributions/>

In December, the Department launched a PFML-specific call center, which can be reached at (207) 621-5024 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday. The number can also be found under the “contact us” tab on the PFML webpage.

Stay up to date by signing up for the PFML

Get Notified List and learn more in our FAQ, employer resources, recorded demonstrations, and step by step guides on our website: <https://www.maine.gov/paidleave/>

The Department partnered with FAST Enterprises to build the Maine Paid Family and Medical Leave Program’s online contributions portal. FAST Enterprises has previously worked with Maine Revenue Services to create the Maine Tax Portal, as well as the contribution collections system for the Massachusetts Department of Family and Medical Leave.

Benefits are scheduled to begin May 1, 2026.

# BBB: Top resolutions for a fraud-free new year

The loss of money, personal information, and perseverance of scammers continue with online purchase scams as the third riskiest of scams.

BBB recommends adding a few precautionary steps to the New Year’s resolution list and the weight loss and financial goals to help make the upcoming days and months fraud-free.

I resolve to be cautious with email. Be wary of unsolicited emails from a person or a company. Remember, scammers can make emails look like they are from a legitimate business, government agency, or reputable organiza-

tion (even BBB!). Never click on links or open attachments in unsolicited emails.

I resolve never to send money to strangers. If you haven’t met a person face-to-face, don’t send them money. This is especially true if the person asks you to transfer funds using a pre-paid debit card or CashApp. Money sent to strangers in this way is untraceable, and once it is sent, there’s no getting it back. Scammers will try to trick you into panicking – so before making a move, think the situation through. Don’t fall for it!

I resolve to do research before making

online payments and purchases. Research the retailer before entering payment information when shopping online, or if asked to pay online, research the retailer before entering payment information. Ask: Is this a person or business I know and trust? Do they have a working customer service number? Where is the company physically located? Would I be making payments through a secure server (<https://....com>)? Have I checked to see if others have complained?

I resolve to use my best judgment when sharing my personal information. Sharing sensitive personal information with

scammers opens the door to identity theft. Never share financial information, birthdate, address, Social Security/Social Insurance number, or Medicare number with an unsolicited caller.

I resolve to create strong, unique passwords for each account. Using strong, varied passwords across accounts makes it harder for fraudsters to access multiple accounts if one is compromised.

I resolve to enable two-factor authentication. Adding this layer of security to accounts, especially those involving finances or personal data, greatly reduces the risk of unautho-

rized access.

I resolve to be social media smart. Use privacy settings on social media and only connect with people you know. Be careful about including personal information in your profile, and never reveal your address and other sensitive information – even in a “fun” quiz. Scammers may use this information to make themselves pass as friends or relatives and earn your trust. Also, be careful when buying products you see on social media. BBB Scam Tracker has received thousands of complaints about misleading Facebook and Instagram ads.

I resolve to regularly

check my financial statements. Committing to review bank and credit card statements can help catch unauthorized transactions early.

I resolve to educate myself about the latest scams. Staying informed on emerging scams helps you recognize and avoid new fraud tactics.

For more information To learn more about scams, go to [BBB.org/ScamTips](http://BBB.org/ScamTips). For more about avoiding scams, check out [BBB.org/AvoidScams](http://BBB.org/AvoidScams). If this scam has targeted you, help others avoid the same problem by reporting your experience at [BBB.org/ScamTracker](http://BBB.org/ScamTracker).

# MECA&D to launch fully online Master of Arts in Education

**PORTLAND, ME** — Maine College of Art & Design has announced plans to offer a fully online Master of Arts in Education program beginning in Fall 2025 to meet growing workforce demands for art educators, leaders, and administrators across the region and country. The initiative is a strategic priority as outlined in Maine College of Art & Design’s Strategic Plan: Envision-

ing Our Future 2027.

“These online programs will build upon and leverage our unique strengths and characteristics to expand our audience and community while providing for the future adaptability of the College,” said President Laura Freid. “We ask our students to make art, make an impact, and inspire change, and these programs are a perfect fit for our portfolio and match

workforce demands.”

The new online Master of Arts in Education was designed in partnership with Dr. Rachel Somerville, Chair of Art Education at Maine College of Art & Design. The program prepares students for employment and career advancement in both traditional and contemporary work settings, including community, museum and curatorial, and educational settings.

Students can build a custom program of study that aligns with their area of expertise and focus by choosing from a robust selection of electives, or students can choose either an Arts Leadership and Administration focus or an Expressive Arts Therapy focus—both resulting in a Graduate Certificate upon completion.

Associate Dean of Online Learning, Heather Holland, shared, “Maine

College of Art & Design is a leader in art education. It is a natural next step to build these programs online enabling us to share our expertise with an even greater pool of students.”

The program can be completed in 12-18 months and is designed for working professionals who need the flexibility to balance work, life, and classes. Online classes will be small in size, a hallmark of a Maine Col-

lege of Art & Design education, making it possible for students to connect with faculty and classmates.

Online courses are offered asynchronously, allowing students to complete readings and assignments on their own schedule. Online programs are scheduled to begin in August 2025, and program leaders are now accepting applications. Learn more at [online.meca.edu](http://online.meca.edu).

# RSU 16 partners with BIMS for critical boiler repairs

**POLAND, ME** – RSU 16 School Board has approved an agreement with BIMS (Building Infrastructure Management Solutions) to complete critical repairs to stabilize the boiler system at Mi-

not Consolidated School. These upgrades will enhance efficiency, safety, and reliability, ensuring continued warmth and comfort for students and staff.

The scope of the

work includes:

**Boiler Stabilization:** Mechanical Services will disassemble, clean, inspect, and install new fireside rope and water port seals on the school's boiler. While no active

leaks have been detected, mineral buildup near the lower waterside port connectors requires attention.

**Low Water Cut-Off Piping Correction:** The existing installation of the low water cut-off devices

is improper, with a steam trap preventing necessary blow-downs to flush sediment. Mechanical Services will remove the steam trap, reposition the control, and restore proper functionality.

**Condensate Tank Connection:** A previously installed condensate tank lacked a power source, causing water discharge issues. A permanent electrical feed has been

See **Boiler**, next page

# January marks Human Trafficking Awareness Month

**LEWISTON, ME** – In observance of Human Trafficking Awareness Month this January, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Services (SAPARS) is dedicated to raising awareness about the issue of human trafficking, specifically sex trafficking, which impacts individuals and communities in Maine, across the country, and around the world.

Human trafficking can affect people of all genders, ages, races, and backgrounds, and often goes unnoticed. Victims are manipulated, coerced, or forced into sexual exploitation, which can leave them trapped in a complicated

cycle of confusion, fear, and violence. SAPARS stands firm in its commitment to addressing this complex issue by amplifying the voices of survivors, increasing public awareness, and along with the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault, urging Maine policymakers to develop tools to address and prevent trafficking.

“Our mission at SAPARS is to prevent all forms of sexual violence and to empower all people affected by sexual violence to find a path to healing,” said Meg Hatch, Executive Director of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Services.

“Human trafficking is

a violent crime that strips away the rights and dignity of those affected. By observing Human Trafficking Awareness Month, we hope to shine a light on this hidden epidemic, educate the public, and bring about meaningful change that will ultimately protect vulnerable individuals and support survivors on their journey to healing,” added Jaime Ricker, Sex Trafficking and Exploitation Advocate at SAPARS.

**Key Initiatives for Human Trafficking Awareness Month**

**Educational Campaigns:** Throughout January, SAPARS will launch a public awareness campaign

featuring key statistics, warning signs, and resources available for those at risk of or affected by sex trafficking. The campaign will be shared via social media, newsletter updates, and local news editorials.

**Support for Survivors:** SAPARS will continue its commitment to providing survivors with access to essential services, including crisis intervention, access to healthcare, and legal advocacy. During January, the organization will amplify its efforts to connect survivors with resources that can aid in their recovery.

**How the Public Can Take Action**

SAPARS encourages individuals and communities to get involved in the fight against human trafficking by:

**Recognizing the Signs:** Learn to identify red flags of vulnerability to human trafficking. We know that vulnerabilities increase the risks for trafficking and

exploitation. Take notice when someone seems controlled or isolated, those with unstable living situations, individuals who have experienced abuse, sexual violence, or substance use disorder.

**Reporting Suspicious Activity:** If you suspect that someone may be a victim of human trafficking, contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 or text 233733. Law enforcement and support services can take immediate action.

**Supporting Organizations:** Donate to or volunteer with organizations, like SAPARS, that provide direct services to survivors of trafficking and sexual violence.

**Advocating for Change:** Engage in conversations with local lawmakers and policymakers to push for comprehensive legislation that addresses human trafficking and supports survivor recovery.

*About Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Services (SAPARS)*

*Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Services (SAPARS) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting survivors of sexual violence, including sex trafficking. Through a range of prevention programs, crisis intervention services, and community education. SAPARS works to reduce the incidence of sexual violence and provide healing resources for victims. For more information, please visit [sapars.org](http://sapars.org)*

Call or text the Maine Sexual Assault Helpline 24/7 at 1-800-871-7741.

\*Please do not use email for urgent matters. If you are experiencing a mental health emergency or if the situation is potentially life-threatening, call 911 to receive immediate emergency assistance or contact the Maine Crisis Hotline at 1-888-568-1112.

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# NSB promotes Auburn's Loring-Lessard to AVP, Market Manager

NORWAY, ME--Norway Savings Bank has long believed that its team members are its greatest source of strength and that supporting individual growth, offering opportunities, and celebrating advancement are all pillars of a successful organization and a fulfilled team.

In this spirit, NSB is pleased to announce the promotion of Carter Loring-Lessard to Assistant Vice President, Market Manager for Windham

and Gray. The Auburn resident arrived at NSB in 2018 as a Personal Banker and was promoted to Branch Supervisor of NSB's Bridgton branch in 2021. In 2022, he was appointed Branch Manager in Windham. Loring-Lessard has been involved in many important bank initiatives since his arrival and served as a GROW mentor, helping other team members gain valuable experience. He is an active member of the Lakes Region Cham-



ber of Commerce, a board member for the Riding To The Top Therapeutic Riding Center in Windham, and a recent graduate of the Northern New England School of Banking.

"Carter has proven his abilities and skills as a leader of a team in a large market. He works closely with branch partners, fellow team members, and bank leadership to share and gain knowledge and insight," said Dan Walsh, President and CEO of Norway Savings

Bank. "Those efforts have helped ensure his team delivers the highest level of customer service."

Looking to make a great career move as 2025 begins? Join a positive, team-based culture that will utilize your unique gifts to help you achieve great things! NSB is currently seeking motivated individuals for a number of exciting and dynamic roles! Come take a look: [www.norwaysavings.com/get-to-know-us/careers](http://www.norwaysavings.com/get-to-know-us/careers).

## Painting class: Paint a winter scene

**Painting Class:**  
**Paint a Winter Scene**

Monday,  
January 27th  
4:00PM  
located in the  
Idea Lab  
Second Floor

Lewiston PUBLIC LIBRARY

Recommended for children ages 10-14

taught by local artist,  
Nicole Ann

LEWISTON, ME -- Join us at the Lewiston Public Library for Painting Class: Paint a Winter Scene in the 2nd floor Idea Lab on Monday, January 27th at 4pm. Recommend-

ed for children ages 10 - 14 years old. Come learn how to paint a winter scene with step-by-step instruction by local artist, Nicole Ann. Get creative by

painting a snowy landscape scene using acrylic paints on canvas panels. All materials are provided. This program is free, open to the public, and no

registration is required. The Lewiston Public Library is located downtown at 200 Lisbon Street at the corner of Pine Street. More information on this program is available by contacting the Lewiston Public Library at 513-3133 or [LPLKids@lewis-tonmaine.gov](mailto:LPLKids@lewis-tonmaine.gov).

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

**Boiler**  
*Continued from previous page*  
installed, allowing the pump to function correctly.

Steam Pipe Insulation: Repairs and new fiberglass insulation with an all-service jacket and PVC fitting covers will reduce heat loss and improve energy efficiency.

Safety Circuit Updates: The safety circuit for the boiler room will be updated to comply with Maine Fuel Board regulations, replacing two entrance door switches with a single, code-compliant switch.

The total cost of

these essential improvements is \$43,003. Mechanical Services has agreed to defer payment until July 1, at which time funding will be included in the proposed Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the 2026 fiscal year budget.

The boiler repairs are only a small portion of the overall HVAC assessment. This fall, when the application process for the School Revolving Renovation Fund (SRRF) opens, we will also address improvements to the heat distribution system and the inadequate ventilation at Minot.

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## Guest Column:

# Cabinet members must be experienced, capable leaders

By Sen. Angus King  
When the season for Cabinet nominations arrives, it always reminds me of what former Patriots Coach Bill Parcells said about his team and roster: "If they want you to cook the dinner, at least they ought to let you shop for some of the groceries."

Coaches – and Presidents-elect – should have the ability to pick their team. And over the decades, Congress has given Presidents significant deference. Despite all the partisan uproar you read about in the media, there have only been nine times in American history that the United States Senate has rejected a President's cabinet nomination. Yes, you read that right.

As a former Governor, I feel strongly about

giving the Chief Executive the chance to pick his or her Cabinet. In fact, having intelligent, respectable, and competent advisors around me during my terms helped me govern and make decisions for Maine that were in the best interests of our community. President Trump should be no different – that's why I supported 75 percent of his first-term nominees – but his advisors, and especially Cabinet Members, must be qualified for the sake of the people they represent.

My position on Cabinet nominees has always boiled down to two priorities: the candidate needs to be experienced and capable, and not have a stance that is hostile to the department or bureau they would be leading.

Consider this: a person is selected to manage a busy Maine restaurant in the middle of our summer season. Yet, this person has never been a line cook, nor a hostess. And he has certainly never been a waitstaff or a food runner. How can you expect this person to understand the roles within the restaurant if he has never held any of the positions he intends to lead? The functionality of the restaurant would certainly diminish and likely result in delayed and incorrect orders, inefficiency and loss of revenue.

Cabinet nominations are no different. Betsy DeVos, President Trump's pick during his first administration to lead the Department of Education is a great example of someone lacking both suitable

experience and interest in the mission of the department she was nominated to help. With no prior experience in public education, and closely held personal beliefs that ran contradictory to the organization she was tasked to lead, DeVos was hostile to the operation and success of the public education system. In this scenario, we are not talking about an undercooked hamburger, but rather a massive failure in our ability to provide a quality public education to students across the country. So Ms. DeVos ended up being one of the 25 percent of Trump nominees I could not vote to confirm.

The framers of our Constitution set up a Senate confirmation process as a check on the executive branch to make sure that

all parts of government are working by the people and for the people. And as one of Maine's senators, I take that job seriously. Since I've been in federal office, I have met with and interviewed each cabinet nominee and questioned them on their priorities and qualifications. And throughout this time, I have only voted against six cabinet nominees that I thought were grossly unqualified. In other words, I have voted in favor of 80% of cabinet nominees across three presidents from different parties.

The nominees from this new administration will be no different. As I have consistently done, I will give all nominees the opportunity to make their case in private meetings and when they come be-

fore the committees of jurisdiction. Only then will I decide on each nominee as they come to the Senate floor.

President Trump has a herculean task ahead of him the next four years: lower the cost of consumer goods, resolve various armed conflicts across the Middle East, and reform border security to name a few. As an American, I wish him the best of luck and hope he has all the necessary tools to achieve success. And as a United States Senator, you better believe I will do my due diligence to ensure that everyone on the taxpayer payroll is working towards those goals.

Donald Trump is headed to the kitchen; let's see how he is at picking his groceries.

## Nominations now open for state, county teachers of the year

**STATEWIDE, Maine** - The Maine Department of Education (DOE) and Educate Maine are excited to announce that nominations are officially open for the 2025 County Teachers of the Year and the 2026 State Teacher of the Year. Maine's State and County Teachers of the Year serve as advocates for teachers, students, and public education in Maine.

"The Maine Teacher of the Year program is an excellent opportunity to recognize the extraordinary educators across our state who are dedicated to their schools and communities – and who are engaging, inspiring, and motivating their students every day," Maine DOE Commissioner Pender Makin said. "These nominations will give 16 Maine teachers a prominent platform to share the wonderful, innovative happenings in Maine's classrooms and

advocate for public education."

Nominations can be made now through 5 p.m. on Friday, January 31, 2025 through a form on the Maine Teacher of the Year website. Nominations will be accepted from students, parents, caregivers, community members, school administrators, colleagues, college faculty members, and associations/organizations. Self-nominations and nominations from family members are not accepted.

Teachers who are nominated must:

Hold the appropriate professional certification for their teaching position;

Be a certified, in-good-standing, pre-K-12 teacher in a state-accredited public school – including career and technical education and adult education centers, public charter schools, or publicly-supported secondary schools (i.e. private schools that

enroll 60 percent or more publicly-funded students, sometimes referred to as "town academies");

Be actively teaching students at least 50% of the workday at the time of nomination and during their year of recognition;

Maintain their teaching position and remain in the county for which they are selected throughout the year of recognition;

Have a minimum of five years of teaching, three of which are in Maine.

Beyond serving as advocates for education, Maine's State and County Teachers of the Year serve as advisors to the Maine DOE and state-level education stakeholders across Maine. State and County Teachers of the Year also join a cohort of teacher leaders who actively work together for the betterment of education in Maine. They receive ongoing professional learning and

participate in many county and state leadership opportunities.

The 2025 County Teachers of the Year will be announced in May, and the 2026 Maine Teacher of the Year will be selected from the 16 county honorees. Through a selection process designed by educators, the field will be narrowed to semi-finalists and then state finalists before the Maine Teacher of the Year is announced by the Commissioner of the Maine DOE at a school assembly in the fall. Each year, State and County Teachers of the Year are honored at the annual Teacher of the Year Gala.

On behalf of, and in partnership with, the Maine DOE, the Maine Teacher of the Year program is administered by Educate Maine, a business-led organization with a mission of championing college, career readiness, and increased educational

attainment. Funding is provided by Bangor Savings Bank, Dead River Company, Geiger, Hannaford, the Maine State Lottery, the Silvernail family, and Unum, with support from the State Board of Education and the Maine County and State Teachers of the Year Association.

"Educate Maine is honored to continue our partnership with the Maine Department of Education to administer the Maine Teacher of the Year program," Educate Maine Executive Director Dr. Jason Judd said. "Our State and County Teachers of the Year exemplify the incredible dedication, innovation, and impact of educators across Maine. This program celebrates the vital role teachers play in shaping our future, elevates their voices, and strengthens the profession through leadership and advocacy."

The Maine Teach-

er of the Year program is committed to a nomination and selection process that ensures people of all backgrounds are represented. Educate Maine and the Maine DOE champion that commitment by encouraging the nomination of educators from all culturally-diverse experiences and backgrounds. Our goal is to expand and diversify our nomination pool.

Through the generous support of Maine businesses, there is no cost to the local district when the Maine Teacher of the Year is out of the classroom on their official duties, which include representing educators statewide and nationally and highlighting the important work of Maine schools, communities, and educators.

For more information about the Maine Teacher of the Year program, please visit the Maine Teacher of the Year website.

## Agriculture education scholarship available

**PORTLAND & ELLSWORTH** — Graduating seniors from Maine high schools who are National FFA Organization

(Future Farmers of America) members and interested in pursuing a career in farming, agriculture or natural resources are in-

cluded to apply for a Ronald P. Guerrette FFA Scholarship through the Maine Community Foundation (MaineCF).

The Guerrette FFA Scholarship Fund provides one, \$1,000 scholarship per year. The application deadline is March 1. To learn more and to apply, visit [www.mainecef.org/scholarships](http://www.mainecef.org/scholarships).

The fund was created in 1998 by friends and family of Ronald P. Guerrette of Caribou to honor his life and work.

## Maine CASA to hold training March 10-14

**MAINE** -- Interested in advocating for the best interests of a child? The Maine Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)

program is holding its next training for volunteer advocates from March 10th through March 14th, 2025.

This free, five-day training is designed to prepare attendees for certification as volunteer guardians ad litem (GALs) in Maine child protection cases. Trainees may participate virtually or in person. For those who wish to partici-

pate in person, the training will be held in Augusta. Accommodations may be available.

The foundation of a CASA's work is learning about the case and then advising the court what the CASA believes is in the child's best interest. CASAs come from a wide variety of professional and personal backgrounds and are guided throughout the process by CASA program staff. CASAs bring their own unique perspectives to their work as volunteers.

If you are willing to advocate for a child's best interests, we encourage you to apply to become a CASA volunteer. Those interested in the training must complete an application and, if invited to participate, must also complete criminal and child protection services background checks.

For more information about becoming a volunteer, please contact Maine CASA at 213-2865 or by e-mail at [casa@courts.maine.gov](mailto:casa@courts.maine.gov)

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# Signed into law: Social Security Fairness authored by Sen. Collins

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The President signed into law the Social Security Fairness Act (SSFA), bipartisan legislation authored by U.S. Senators Susan Collins and Sherrod Brown (D-OH). Senator Collins attended the bill signing ceremony at the invitation of the White House. The SSFA will restore Social Security benefits for millions of teachers, school cafeteria workers, custodians and other school employees, law enforcement officers, fire fighters, and other public servants by repealing two provisions of current law – the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) – that unfairly reduce the Social Security benefits that public employees or their spouses have earned. The bipartisan bill overwhelmingly passed the both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate by votes of 327-75 and 76-20, respectively.

With the signing of the SSFA today, both the WEP and GPO have been repealed, and those previously impacted by these provisions will see their earned benefit levels restored. Following the passage of the SSFA in both chambers of Congress, Senators Collins and Brown sent a letter to

the Acting Commissioner of the Social Security Administration (SSA) Carolyn Colvin requesting that the SSA swiftly implement the Social Security Fairness Act following the President's signing of the bill. Updates on the SSA's implementation of the SSFA will continue to be released here.

Senator Collins held the first Senate hearing on this policy in 2003 as Chair of the Senate Government Affairs Committee. She, along with the late Senator Dianne Feinstein, first introduced the Social Security Fairness Act in 2005. Earlier this year, Senators Collins and Brown called on Senate leadership to immediately bring their legislation, which had 62 Senate cosponsors—above the margin needed for passage—to the Senate floor for a vote.

“In 2003, I held the first-ever Senate hearing on the WEP and the GPO, and I am pleased that with today's signing of the Social Security Fairness Act, these unfair provisions in our Social Security system have finally been repealed,” said Senator Collins. “This is a victory for thousands of teachers, first responders, public servants, and the countless advocates who fought for years to correct this unfairness. For too

## SUSAN COLLINS

U.S. SENATOR FOR MAINE

long, the WEP and GPO have denied retirees and their spouses the Social Security benefits they earned through years of work and contributions to the system. This law ensures that public service will no longer come at the expense of one's earned retirement benefits.”

“The repeal of GPO and WEP is a historic win for public employees, including thousands of retired educators in Maine. We know that these unfair provisions make it more difficult to recruit and retain educators. This is a historic victory for educators, public employees, and their families. We are thankful for the bipartisan effort of our Senator from Maine, Susan Collins (R-Maine), who coauthored this bill with Senator Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and has been working on bringing justice to retired public service workers for over two decades,” said Jesse Hargrove, President of the Maine Education Association

“Repealing these two unfair provisions will restore Social Security benefits for teachers and educational leaders throughout our state, while also help-

ing to make it easier to recruit and retain educators for Maine's schools. The Maine Principals' Association thanks Senator Collins for championing this important bipartisan bill and her steadfast commitment to fixing this issue for public servants in Maine and across the country,” said Dr. Holly Blair, Executive Director of the Maine Principals' Association.

“The recent passage of the Social Security Fairness Act marks a significant victory for Maine Career & Technical Educators and other public sector workers across the state. This landmark legislation, authored by Maine's own Senator Susan Collins, repeals two long-standing provisions that have unfairly reduced Social Security benefits for many dedicated public servants. Career & Technical Educators, who are often recruited after working years in the private sector, will no longer be penalized by these provisions. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to Senator Collins for her unwavering commitment to this cause,” said Dave Keaton, Executive Director, Maine Administrators of Career & Technical Education.

“The Maine Chiefs of Police Association thanks Senator Collins for her leadership on the Social Security Fairness Act. This critical legislation will allow police officers and their families to receive the Social Security benefits they've earned through years of public service. Our organization appreciates the Senator's continued commitment to those who have dedicated their lives to protecting and serving Maine communities,” said Jason D. Moen, Chief of the Auburn Police Department and President of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association.

“The Social Security Fairness Act will provide our members and their families the full benefit of Social Security, helping to make a major difference in their quality of life. We want to thank Senator Collins for her dedication in getting this across the finish line. She has always been a leader and great advocate for those of us in public safety,” said Mike Scott, President of the Professional Firefighters of Maine.

“Maine Fire Chiefs Association would like to thank Senator Collins and all those involved in moving the Social Security Fairness Act forward. This bill will remove the pension offset that Social Security

currently has in place. Frequently, this offset is not discovered or readily disclosed until retirement planning is initiated, in some cases even delaying retirement. The Social Security Fairness Act will rectify this unjustified penalty and allow public employees to receive the Social Security Pension from the system they have paid into and earned. On behalf of The Maine Fire Chiefs Association's members and all those impacted, we applaud and thank Senator Collins for her efforts,” said William St. Michel, Executive Director of the Maine Fire Chiefs' Association.

More than 25,000 Mainers, who dedicated their lives to public service, are prevented from receiving the full Social Security benefits they earn due to two laws from the 1970s and 1980s. The Windfall Elimination Provision, enacted in 1983, reduces the Social Security benefits of workers who receive pensions from a federal, state, or local government for employment not covered by Social Security. The Government Pension Offset, enacted in 1977, reduces Social Security spousal benefits for spouses, widows, and widowers whose spouses receive pensions from a federal, state, or local government.

# Maine author publishes novel of dementia on the Maine coast

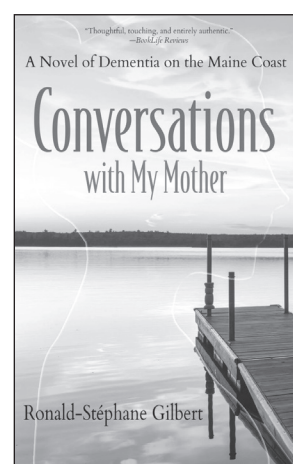
PORTLAND, ME --In *Conversations with My Mother: a Novel of Dementia on the Maine Coast*,

an elderly, good-hearted Francophone struggles with dementia as her small town succumbs to real-

estate development. Focused on her relationship with her acerbic caregiver daughter and peripatetic businessman son, the novel examines the siblings' attempts to cope with their mother's deepening decline and the impending sale of the family property to underwrite her care. With a strong sense of place that draws parallels between the beleaguered heroine's persistent kindness and the

embattled Maine coast's enduring beauty, this book is as much about gain as it is about loss, and, ultimately, is more about hope than regret.

Ronald-Stéphane Gilbert is a native French-speaker who was born and raised in Maine and frequently returns to visit friends and family. He is a participant in the Cleveland Clinic's landmark Brain and MIND



studies, as well as a member of various domestic and international Alzheimer's and dementia associations. *Conversations with My Mother*, A Novel of Dementia on the Maine Coast, an excerpt of which was recognized in the Lorian Hemmingway Short Story Competition, was inspired by his family's experience with his own mother. It is his first published novel.

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# Calendar

Send your submissions to the Editor. More online.

## 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.

### Jan 16

**AUBURN** -- FILM SCREENING & DISCUSSION --BEYOND ELECTIONS: REDEFINING DEMOCRACY IN THE AMERICAS. Thursday, January 16, 2025 -- 3:00-5:00 p.m., Androscoggin Community Room, Auburn Public Library.

### Jan 18

**LEWISTON** -- The Midcoast Symphony Or-

chestra under the direction of Rohan Smith presents "Invigorating Water Music." The performance is on January 18 at 7:00 p.m. at the Franco Center, 46 Cedar St., Lewiston. For info and tickets visit <https://www.midcoastsymphony.org/tickets> or call 207-481-0790. Tickets \$25 in advance or \$30 at the door. Age 25 and under are free. The Audience is also invited to our free "More with Midcoast" "Meet the Instruments" event that begins at 6:00pm.

### Jan 19

**TOPSHAM** -- The Midcoast Symphony Orchestra (MSO) will be continuing their 35th season with a family-friendly program that celebrates and encourages youth involvement in the arts, held at the Orion Performing Arts Center in Topsham on Sunday, January 19 at 2:30pm.

### Jan 25

**GRAY** -- The First Congregational Church of Gray Saturday Night Church Supper on Saturday, January 25, 2025 at 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 Kidney, Red Hot Dogs, Breads, Assortment of Desserts & Beverages

### Jan 25

**LISBON FALLS** -- Dine In/Take Out Bean Supper, Saturday, January 25th from 4:30pm - 5:30pm or 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!

### Jan 25

**BUXTON** -- Try our delicious Haddock Supper Buffet - Saturday, November 30, 2024 - 5:00 pm at Living Waters Church, Parker Farm Road, Buxton. Suggested donation: \$10 Adult, \$5 Child, \$20 Family.

Please note: We will offer the option of takeout containers for those who do not want to come inside for seating.

### Jan 27

**LEWISTON** -- Lewiston Public Library for

Painting Class: Paint a Winter Scene in the 2nd floor Idea Lab on Monday, January 27th at 4pm. Recommended for children ages 10 - 14 years old.

Come learn how to paint a winter scene with step-by-step instruction by local artist, Nicole Ann. Get creative by painting a snowy landscape scene using acrylic paints on canvas panels. All materials are provided. This program is free, open to the public, and no registration is required.

The Lewiston Public Library is located downtown at 200 Lisbon Street at the corner of Pine Street.

### Jan 27

**AUBURN** -- FILM SCREENING & DISCUSSION -- ELECTIONS, POPULISM, AND DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING IN THE AMERICAS with Dr. Clarisa Pérez-Armendáriz, Associate Professor of Politics and Chair of the Latin American and Latinx Studies Program, Bates College, Monday, January 27, 2025 -- 4:30-5:30 p.m., Androscoggin Community Room, Auburn Public Library

### Jan 30-Feb 2

**HERMON** -- Celebrity Egg Riders are revved up for the 52nd annual Dysart's Snowmobile Ride-in Weekend to benefit Pine Tree Camp.

Thursday, January 30: Live WABI-TV5 Telethon and Dysart's Spaghetti Dinner, 4:00pm at Dysart's Restaurant & Truck Stop, 530 Coldbrook Road, Hermon

Friday, January 31: Live and Silent Auction - Hosted by Maine Cabin Masters Jedi and Dixie, 6:00pm at Morgan Hill Event Center, 82 Morgan Hill Lane, Hermon

Saturday, February 1: Celebrity Egg Ride and Poker Run, 9:30am at Dysart's Restaurant & Truck Stop, 530 Coldbrook Road, Hermon

Sunday, February 2: Penobscot Snowmobile Club Radar Run, Noon at the Penobscot Snowmobile Club, 795 Bog Road, Hermon

### Feb 13

**AUBURN** -- BOOK DISCUSSION --DEMOCRACY AWAKENING: NOTES ON THE STATE OF AMERICA by Heather Cox Richardson. Thursday, February 13, 2025 - 4:00-5:00 p.m., Auburn Public Library

### 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

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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 songwriter. 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/guy-davis](https://ticketstripe.com/guy-davis).

### Apr 26

**TOPSHAM** -- "All Aboard for the 2025 Great Falls Model Railroad Club Train Show! 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM, Mt. Ararat High School, 68 Eagles Way, Topsham, ME 04086

(Handicapped Accessible). Admission: Just \$5 per person (kids under 12 free with an adult).

Get ready to immerse yourself in the world of model railroads at the Great Falls Model Railroad Club Train Show in Topsham, ME! With over 100 tables featuring new and used trains, tracks, buildings, books, and more, you'll find something for every enthusiast. From N to HO, S, O, and G scales, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

### 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](https://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](http://Mainecareerswithpurpose.org). Follow @MaineCareerswithPurpose on Facebook and Instagram.



**"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.**

# Classified Ads UP TO 40 WORDS!

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**HEADLINE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**AD INFO:** \_\_\_\_\_

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