

## Nature story time, winter wildlife walk in Gorham area

**WESTBROOK, ME** -- Join Presumpscot Regional Land Trust and the Walker Memorial Library for a winter story time at the Land Trust's Pride Preserve in Westbrook. We'll read a book and then walk along the brook to a rock outcropping where fairy houses dwell and play or make our own. Feel free to dress up in your most sparkly fairy costume!

This event is for families with kids ages 2-5, siblings are welcome. Children must attend with a parent or guardian. The walking portion will be around a half mile total, on a wooded path with a modest hill.

Nature Story Time



at Pride Preserve at Pride Preserve, Westbrook on February 12, 2025 | 10-11am \* Partner program with Walker Memorial Library

Join Presumpscot Regional Land Trust with Maine Naturalist Joan Lundin for a Winter Wildlife Walk at Pride Preserve in Westbrook. Joan will lead participants on an

exploration of Pride Preserve, searching for signs of animals during the winter months. Look for tracks of animals hopping, walking or bounding, tell-tale signs of meals taken, and communications dribbled into the snow or scratched on a tree trunk. Pride Preserve features a 3.5-mile trail network through forests and wet-



lands. These trails offer a very remote, quiet, wilderness-like experience. This event is geared towards

adults and kids ages 12 and older.

Winter Wildlife Walk at Pride Preserve, West-

brook on February 12, 2025 | 10-11am

Sign up at PRLT's website

## Gorham dance team debuting 2025 routines at Showcase

**GORHAM, ME** -- Come support our Performance Team at Gorham High School as they debut their routines for the 2025 season!

Tickets are \$10 and can be purchased at the front desk. Proceeds go directly to our dancers! We will also have concessions, a 50/50 raffle, and a table of amazing raffle prizes!

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**FEB 15 5PM**  
**GORHAM HIGH SCHOOL**  
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## Cressey Road Christian Church in Gorham hosts Super Bowl Party

**GORHAM, ME** -- Route #25 and Cressey Road. Bring a snack to share and we'll have a microwave available to warm food. Hope to see you there!

## Donate Ramen noodles this week to Gorham Food Pantry

**GORHAM, ME** -- Greetings, pantry friends! Gorham Food Pantry is in need of Ramen noodles this week! If you happen to be shopping this week and wondering what you might pick up for the pantry, some Ramen would be great! Thank you so much for your support of your Gorham neighbors.

## Kids Valentine's cookie decorating with Uno Pizzeria & Grill

**SOUTH PORTLAND, ME** -- There's nothing sweeter than Uno's Kids Valentine's Cookie Decorating Event! Bring the kiddos to UNO to decorated Valentine's Day Cookies, and enjoy a delicious meal at the same time!

This event is Free, and Kids Eat Free (with purchase of adult entrée). Reservations strongly encouraged, so call today.

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We strongly encourage Letters to the Editor, Op/Eds, columns or any other submissions from our readers.

Agree with us or another columnist? Disagree? Write to us and let us know!

Email all submissions, including name, address and phone number, to the editor.

# Newsmakers, Names & Faces

## AARP News You Can Use – February 2025

By Joyce Bucciantini, AARP Maine Community Outreach Volunteer

February is one of the most beautiful times in Maine. Gone are the super short days of early winter, leaving us with more daylight to enjoy the great outdoors in Maine. Many cities and towns have winter-themed celebrations which might include snow sports, ice fishing, or maybe an opportunity for hot cocoa. These are great ways to fight off cabin fever and reconnect with our neighbors and friends. For those who enjoy warmer activities, there is always excitement to be found at

the state high school basketball tournaments during the February school vacation week.

In between enjoying the bright winter weather and fresh air, we must also keep in mind a yearly task that we all must do, but few enjoy: get our taxes done! Yes, as surely as the new year moves forward, it is important to start making a plan for gathering our financial information and completing our tax forms. However, there is good news! The AARP Foundation Tax-Aide program offers free tax preparation services in 47 locations in Maine. Last year, 240



Tax-Aide volunteers filed 13,671 Federal returns helping Maine taxpayers receive \$10.4 million in Federal refunds. They also filed thousands of state tax returns, all at no cost!

This remarkable program offers free tax prepa-



ration services, focusing on taxpayers who are over 50 years old and have low to moderate incomes. AARP Foundation Tax-Aide is offered by AARP Foundation in partnership with the Internal Revenue Service. All Tax-Aide volunteer counselors are IRS-trained and certified to prepare and file most types of federal and

state tax returns for Maine taxpayers.

The online Tax-Aide Site Locator tool will help you find the Tax-Aide location nearest to you. This website provides the locations, the operating schedules and who to contact for making tax preparation appointments. Visit

[https://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp\\_taxaide/locations/](https://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp_taxaide/locations/) or call 1-888-227-7669 for more information.

AARP Foundation Tax-Aide appointments fill up fast. It is a good idea to make your appointment early in the tax season. Then you can rest

easy and enjoy all that the great Maine outdoors has to offer, or for indoors fun, check out an AARP Maine coffee social near you. Perhaps I'll see you there!

Joyce Bucciantini is a retired middle school educator. She currently coordinates Delta Kappa Gamma's Read to Me program, is a tutor with Literacy Volunteers-Androscoggin, and is an active AARP Maine volunteer. In her spare time, she enjoys her gardens, being outdoors and traveling.

Please use the following QR Code or web address to find more information about AARP Maine and events near you:

## OUT Maine accepting college scholarship applications

**ROCKLAND, ME**— As of January 10th, OUT Maine is now accepting applications for its annual college scholarship fund for Maine students.

Thanks to a generous anonymous donor to the organization, OUT Maine is able to offer substantial renewable scholarships to help Maine LGBTQIA2S+

and allied students bridge the gap between financial aid and need at a college, university, or vocational school of their choice. The scholarships available can be worth up to \$25,000 every year for four years of schooling.

The goal of this scholarship fund is to uplift queer and allied youth seeking a



LIFTING UP  
MAINE'S  
QUEER YOUTH

post-secondary education, especially those who originate from underserved re-

gions of Maine or demonstrate financial need. First generation college students

are also highly encouraged to apply.

In order to apply, students must be Maine residents at the time of application, and send in materials such as a short essay, two letters of recommendation, and financial aid award information from the student's school and/or Free Application for Federal Student Aid

(FAFSA). There is no fee to apply for this scholarship. Submissions will be reviewed by volunteers from OUT Maine's Board of Directors and several internal staff members.

Applications are due by April 1st, 2025. Students can visit OUT Maine's website for further eligibility details and requirements.

## Give the gift of time as a Red Cross volunteer

**PORTLAND, ME** — The American Red Cross asks you to consider giving the gift of your time in 2025, resolving to help people in need as a volunteer in Maine – and throughout the Northern New England Region.

"Our volunteers make up 90% of our work force and are the beating heart and soul of the Red Cross," said Stephanie Couturier, regional CEO, Red Cross

of Northern New England. "Their support is immeasurable. Their precious gift of time builds our capacity to help people in what can be their darkest days."

Depending on your interests, the Red Cross offers a variety of volunteer opportunities — from supporting a family after a home fire, helping a military member during an emergency, or helping us ensure blood is available



for patients in need.

Disaster Action Team (DAT): Help families in your community after a home fire or other disaster. DAT team members provide emotional support, emergency financial assistance and information to help families begin to recover.

Hero Care Caseworker: Support members of the military, their families and our veterans. Become a casework volunteer and

help provide emergency communications and critical services to military families all over the world.

Blood donor ambassadors: Engage with blood donors by greeting them at blood drives, helping them register, answering questions, providing information and assisting them at the refreshments table.

Blood transportation specialists: Volunteer transportation specialists support hospital patients by delivering blood from our facilities to local hospitals. If you have a little free time, love driving and

enjoy meeting new people, the Red Cross has a great volunteer spot waiting for you.

In 2024, 600 Red Cross volunteers in Maine logged nearly 42,000 hours supporting the region's humanitarian needs.

"Red Crossers aren't volunteering for a paycheck. We give our time because we are passionate about the mission," said Maryellen Tarling, a Red Cross volunteer from Cape Elizabeth, Maine.

Tarling joined the Red Cross more than three years ago after searching

for a way to make a positive impact in her community. She currently serves on the Southern Maine Disaster Action Team, responding to and helping Mainers recover from home fires and other disasters. She also leads the region's preparedness team.

"You often see people at their worst, but as a Red Cross volunteer you can take comfort knowing, that through your role, you will be providing hope when people need it most. It's a rewarding experience and I highly recommend it."

The need to help has never been greater. Join us to provide relief and hope when it matters most. Visit [redcross.org/Volunteer-NNE](http://redcross.org/Volunteer-NNE) and get started today.

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# Newsmakers, Names & Faces

## Maine Hospice Council hosting conference

**AUGUSTA, ME** - The Maine Hospice Council and Center for End-of-Life Care will host a "Community-Based Palliative Care for ME: State-wide Educational Conference" at Thomas College in Waterville, ME, March 27-28, 2025.

Maine palliative care enhances quality of life through physical, emotional, spiritual and psycho-social interdisciplinary team management of pain and other symptoms. Pal-

liative care services are a high quality, cost-effective approach to helping individuals deal with serious illness.

Market research data, compiled by Hospice Analytics in 2015, reveals only 10 of 34 Maine hospitals report having a palliative care program. In addition, those programs may have varying structures, staffing, and services.

The March 27-28 Educational Conference at Thomas College, will bring

together a number of palliative care experts to share current data analytics, messaging, education and other relevant information to providers and consumers in Maine. They will underscore the value of offering palliative care statewide, as well as developing palliative care programs in all Maine hospitals.

The Conference Keynote Speakers and their topics are:

Marian Grant, DNP, ACNP-BC, ACHPN,

FPCN, FAAN, RN "Using Evidence-based Principles to Strengthen Public/Provider Engagement with Palliative Care"

Constance Dahlin, MSN, ANP-BC, ACHPN, FPCN, FAAN "National Consensus Guidelines: Framing Quality Palliative Care"

Torrie Fields, Founder/CEO TFA Analytics; Strategic Advisor to the Coalition to Transform Care "Developing a State-wide Medicaid Palliative

Care Benefit for Maine: Focusing on Value-based Analytics"

"When individuals are living with serious illnesses and their pain and symptoms are not managed effectively, quality of life is often compromised, resulting in poor healthcare outcomes. Palliative care is a team approach to effectively managing pain and symptoms for a patient at any age and any stage of a serious illness. The goal is to enhance the individual's

quality of life, help them remain at home for as long as possible and generate higher quality healthcare outcomes for all Maine people." says Kandyce Powell, Maine Hospice Council Executive Director.

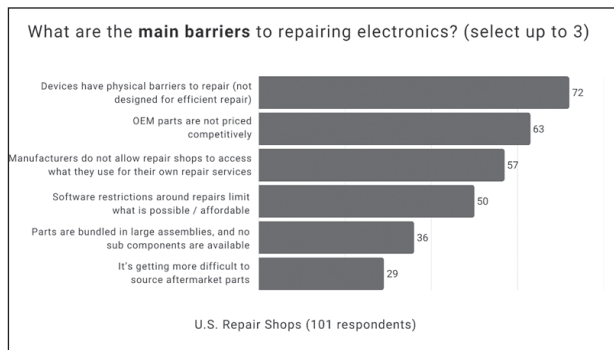
Complete information, including details on the Conference speakers and presenters, and Conference Registration, is available on the Maine Hospice Council website: <https://mainehospicecouncil.org/>

## New report: 'The State of Right to Repair'

**BOSTON, MA** -- As our newly seated state legislature and others across the United States consider Right to Repair legislation, U.S. PIRG Education Fund released a new analysis of this crucial consumer and environmental issue. The report, "The State of Right to Repair," reviews Right to Repair advances to date and underscores the need for continued progress to ensure that people can access what they need to repair modern gadgets. The analysis includes information from a U.S. PIRG Education Fund-iFixit survey of 207 repairers, 101 of whom are American shop owners or professional technicians.

"It's clear that Right to Repair is gaining ground, but we aren't done yet," Meghan Smith, Right to Repair Campaign Associate for U.S. PIRG Education Fund. "More Americans can fix more stuff now versus when our campaign started, but there are more issues to address. Our work is as critical as ever: When people can't fix stuff, it ends up on the junk pile. It's annoying, expensive and wasteful."

In 2024, 30 states considered some form of Right to Repair legislation and new laws passed in Oregon, California and Colorado. Over the last three years, six states have passed a total of eight right to repair laws. In addition to the ballot measure



passed for the Right to Repair for cars, Maine's Senate also passed a Right to Repair bill for consumer electronics last year.

"Right to Repair is already a hot topic in state houses across the country in 2025," added Gay Gordon-Byrne, the executive director of Repair.org. "We know the public is with us, and that what we're asking for is common sense. We won't stop until your ability to repair your stuff is fully protected."

The majority of professional repair technicians indicate that access to parts and repair instructions has improved -- 68% say that parts access has improved, while 64% say that repair information access has improved. However, significant gaps remain, including access to schematics, repair materials for enterprise equipment and appliances, and access to software tools. As the Right to Repair Coalition relaunches its efforts in 2025, advocates point to these as key foci moving forward.

"State of Right to Repair" identifies these prior-

ities for the coalition's state campaign work this year:

Expanding the number of states with active Right to Repair laws;

Closing loopholes or gaps in existing laws to ensure that the Right to Repair effectively covers the greatest number of repairs;

Working with companies and regulators to ensure effective compliance.

"We need to listen to the people out there actually repairing devices if we want to live in a more fixable world," added Elizabeth Chamberlain, sustainability director at iFixit. "Our goal has always been to make sure people can fix their stuff, and while we are excited about our progress, it's clear we need to keep up the pressure."

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

## Albin, Randall & Bennett welcomes Bethany Laverriere

**PORTLAND, ME** - Albin, Randall & Bennett (ARB) is excited to announce that Bethany Laverriere has joined the firm as Talent Acquisition Manager, where she will lead ARB's efforts to recruit and retain top talent.

Prior to joining ARB, Bethany played a pivotal role in building dynamic teams, identifying talent, and managing programs at a regional public accounting and consulting firm in Maine. With over a decade of experience in talent acquisition and recruitment, Bethany's



Bethany Laverriere

mission is to develop and align strategies and talent to organizational goals.

Bethany is a graduate of the University of Maine where she earned her bachelor's degree in business management and education. She lives in Southern Maine with her family, where they enjoy all that Maine has to offer.

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#### Deadline

Deadline for ads and press releases is 5 p.m. on Friday preceding publication. Published every Thursday's publication.

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*Seniors Not Acting Their Age*

# Icy Canyon Hiking in Quebec



Canyon hikers arrive at Jean Larose Falls



A hiker descends ice-encrusted stairs while holding a fixed line



Hikers cross an icy bridge over a deep chasm

Over the recent New Year's week, seven Mainers traveled to the Mont Sainte Anne area of Quebec for several days of Nordic skiing. We rented a beautiful condo at the foot of the mountain in the village of Beaufre.

Primed for an awesome week of skiing, we were confronted with adversity. Heavy rains the day we arrived forced the Mont Sainte Anne Cross Country Ski Center to close on New Year's Eve for trail maintenance. Seven eager skiers were left staring out Condo windows with no obvious place to go.

Consideration was given to a climb of Mont Sainte Anne, an alterna-

tive several of us had exercised during a prior visit. Enthusiasm for a mountain hike was tepid, so we explored the possibility of a trek through a nearby bird sanctuary called Cap Torment. Alas, the trail system was closed.

Upon further investigation, we determined there is an extensive trail network in the area called Sentier Mestachibo. The western end begins in Beaufre and continues east along the Sainte Anne du Nord River for several miles to Sainte-Ferreolles-Neiges. Particularly appealing was a canyon trek to Jean Larose Falls in the Beaufre sector.

After a short drive, we arrived at the trailhead

on Route 360 opposite the Mont Sainte Anne alpine ski area on a cloudy, breezy day. Several vehicles were parked in the icy lot and numerous hikers were coming and going. The apparent popularity of the outing was reassuring.

Icy trail conditions were a concern from the outset. Since skiing was the primary focus of the trip, some members of the group lacked micro spikes or had inferior traction devices.

A study of the map at the trailhead kiosk indicated the western end of the Mestachibo Trail led down to the waterfall in about a mile. However, a side trail that traveled in

the opposite direction provided a 3.2 mile loop. We separated into two groups. Four of us wearing quality micro spikes decided to complete the longer clockwise route while the other three chose the shorter option.

Extensive ice was encountered on the loop. We carefully negotiated steeply downhill on a twisting passage while selecting the most secure footing possible. Even with micro spikes, this was a challenging endeavor.

Dropping deeper into the canyon, we came upon a precipitous ice-encrusted wooden stairway which was immediately followed by a narrow bridge over a deep chasm. A safety line had been affixed to trees next to the stairs and we cautiously descended gripping the line for security.

We crossed more ice-covered bridges as the attenuated path wrapped precariously around the side of a cavernous ravine. In order to safely proceed while avoiding a hazardous fall required inserting our spikes firmly into the frozen surface on every step.

Persisting over more icy terrain, we finally connected with the main Mestachibo Trail and

turned right. Soon after, an obvious but unmarked path on the right declined abruptly on a forested slope. Exploring part way down, we could see the turbulent Jean Larose River flowing below. We met a group of Quebec hikers who advised us that we had rejoined Mestachibo Trail and continuing our descent would lead us to the falls.

Persevering to the bottom of the canyon, we converged with the fast-moving Jean Larose River and hiked upstream along the shore. Rounding a bend, we were astounded with our first view of the magnificent waterfall. Our friends arrived from the other direction almost simultaneously.

Jean Larose Falls plummets for almost 200 feet. We lingered to savor the impressive spectacle. A 400-step wooden stairway that leads to the top of the cliff next to the falls is a manmade marvel. After a strenuous ascent, we completed our trek back to the trailhead on a wide, snow and ice covered path.

Four of us drove north on Route 360 to a colorful church in Sainte-Ferreolles-Neiges that marks the start of the eastern end of the Mestachibo Trail. Dropping down precipitously on slippery

snow and ice, we completed another canyon descent to the Sainte Anne du Nord River, a section of whitewater some of us paddled more than two decades ago. Two excellent canyon hikes behind us, we were ready for skiing.

My book, *The Fifty Finest Outdoor Adventures in Maine* narrates numerous exciting hikes around the State of Maine and an exhilarating kayak trip plunging over the waterfalls of Gulf Hags, known as the Grand Canyon of Maine.

*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.ronchaseoutdoors.com](http://www.ronchaseoutdoors.com) or he can be reached at [ronchaseoutdoors@comcast.net](mailto:ronchaseoutdoors@comcast.net)*

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Deadline is  
Friday by five.**

# Upcoming DaPonte String Quartet concerts

**MAINE** -- DaPonte String Quartet Concerts upcoming program begins with Haydn's Quartet in D, Op. 20, no 4, written in 1772, and concludes with Erich Korngold's String Quartet in Eb Major, Op. 26 no 2, composed in 1932.



February 14 @ 7:00 pm - 8:45 pm. Union Hall, 24 Central St., Rockport, ME

February 15 @ 3:00 pm - 4:45 pm Lemont Hall 2 Pleasant St., Brunswick, ME

February 16 @ 3:00 pm - 4:45 pm. St. Colum-

ba's Episcopal Church 32 Emery Lane, Boothbay Harbor, ME

February 20 @ 7:00 pm - 8:45 pm. Maine Jewish Museum 267 Congress Street, Portland, ME

February 22 @ 3:00 pm - 4:45 pm. Sanford

Springvale Historical Society 505 Main Street, Springvale, ME

February 27 @ 7:00 pm - 8:45 pm. First Church in Belfast, UCC 8 Court St., Belfast, ME

February 28 @ 4:00 pm - 5:45 pm. Eagle Hill

Institute 59 Eagle Hill Rd, Steuben, ME

March 1 @ 3:30 pm - 5:15 pm. The Barn at Woodlawn 19 Black House Drive, Ellsworth, ME

Tickets and additional information available from [dapontequartet.org](http://dapontequartet.org)

## 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 com-

plete 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)

## AARP Maine releases 2025 legislative priorities

**PORTLAND, ME** -- With the First Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature now underway, AARP Maine announces its 2025 legislative agenda which includes strengthening caregiver support resources in Maine, as well as a focus on fair and affordable utility rates.

"On behalf of our more than 200,000 members statewide, AARP Maine looks forward to working with Governor Mills and our legislative leaders in Augusta from both sides of the aisle," said Noël Bonam, AARP Maine State Director. "We know that Mainers 50-plus continue to experience the strain of providing care for loved ones, the state's affordable housing crisis, and unaffordable electricity rates. It is critical that both elected and appointed leaders work to address these important issues that affect Mainers 50-plus and their families."

AARP's overarching vision is a society that allows all people to live with dignity and purpose as they age and to fulfill their goals, ambitions and dreams.

AARP Maine proudly puts forward the following legislative priorities and calls upon Maine's lawmakers to work in support of Mainers 50-plus and their loved ones.

**Financial Support for Family Caregivers:** AARP Maine urges Maine legislators to take action this session to lessen the financial burden on Maine's 166,000 family caregivers. Unpaid family caregivers are the backbone of Maine's long-term care system. A recent AARP Maine survey found that nearly 85 percent of caregivers have spent their own money to help care for a loved one. A national AARP report found that caregivers assume out-of-pocket care costs that average \$7,200 a year. These costs can lead to financial repercussions for family caregivers' economic security.

Maine lawmakers have an opportunity to create a lasting, positive impact for Maine's family caregivers by codifying Maine's Respite for ME program. Launched in the fall of 2022 and funded by the Maine Jobs and Recov-

ery Act, the Respite for ME pilot program provided eligible family caregivers with grants that enabled caregivers to access services such as respite care, assistive technology and other resources.

The program provides important support to Maine's caregivers whose collective financial contributions reach a value of \$2.9 billion annually in the Pine Tree State. AARP Maine calls on our lawmakers to work together to reinstate the Respite for ME program since the pilot program ended in the fall of 2024.

**Fair Utility Costs:** Another issue that affects many Maine families is volatile utility costs. AARP Maine continues to fight to keep utility rates fair and reasonable in the state with the country's oldest population. High utility rates, coupled with rising housing, food, and medicine expenses, force many vulnerable, older adults to make tough choices. Mainers need more consumer protections, and AARP Maine is committed to ensuring that all Mainers

have access to fair and reasonable electric rates. Any discussion of rate changes must be transparent and allow for public engagement. AARP Maine will continue working to address current laws that cause undue burdens to electricity customers. Any costs, particularly those covering government subsidies, etc., which are transferred to ratepayers, should be re-evaluated and re-structured in a fair and reasonable manner.

**Affordable Housing:** People of all ages and ability levels need safe, decent, and affordable housing that will enable them to continue living safely in their homes and communities as they age. Policy solutions to create affordable housing in Maine must also prioritize opportunities that will ensure long-term equity, safety, choice, stability and accessibility. AARP Maine encourages solutions that offer a sustainable range of housing sizes and types suitable for all forms of neighborhoods, and age-friendly housing designed for people of all ages and ability levels, including those with disabil-

ities.

**Home and Community-Based Services:** AARP Maine's 2024 Vital Voices survey found that 87 percent of Mainers 45-plus say that it is extremely or very important to be able to stay in their own home as they get older. Many older Mainers will need support through either a family caregiver or home and community-based services to facilitate aging in place. AARP Maine calls on lawmakers to fund the services needed to meet individuals' long-term services and support needs that will enable them to remain, in a meaningful manner, in their own communities which is preferred both socially and financially.

**High-Speed Internet Service and Digital Equity:** AARP is fighting for Mainers to have affordable, reliable high-speed internet access in their communities and to have the skills, technology and capacity needed to succeed in today's digital economy. While federal investments will bring much-needed Internet service to many parts of Maine over the

next several years, there is still work to be done to ensure older adults and other vulnerable populations are able to make the most of the service once it is available to them. AARP Maine will engage with lawmakers, municipal officials, and local advocacy groups to work towards digital equity so that all Mainers are able to use the internet to learn, connect, and succeed in today's digital world.

"AARP Maine and all of our member advocates look forward to productively engaging with the 132nd legislative session to ensure that Maine continues to be a place where people 50-plus want to live, work, retire and thrive," Bonam said. "In 2025, we will be in Augusta on a regular basis with our AARP Maine Tuesdays at the State House program. We invite more volunteer advocates to join our efforts as we speak up for Mainers 50-plus and their families on these critical issues."

For more information about AARP Maine, visit [www.aarp.org/me](http://www.aarp.org/me) and follow us on social media @ [aarpmaine](https://www.instagram.com/aarpmaine).

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# Arts & Entertainment

## Vivid Motion Dance invites all to show auditions

**DANCE AUDITIONS**

**Grania**  
Pirate Queen

**Saturday February 8**  
9:30am - 11:00am

Deering Grange Hall  
FMI [vividmotiondance.org](http://vividmotiondance.org)



**PORTLAND, ME** -- Long-time Portland staple Vivid Motion Dance brings dancers and choreographers together for their spring show, the return of their Grania: Pirate Queen! With a focus on entertainment and supporting the

love of dance for all ages, all humans, and all levels, the all-volunteer community has become an outlet for dancers and choreographers, and a place where both long-time and new dancers are able to perform on the stage together.

Co-directed by Scott Potter and Ali Odlin, Vivid Motion Dance's spring show again tells the tale of Grania "Grace" O' Malley (Gráinne Ní Mháille), a woman born from a seafaring western Irish clan who becomes the most feared chieftain and pirate captain of the Irish seas. Grania and her people fight the lengthening shadow of the English Empire, eventually coming face to face

with the formidable Queen Elizabeth. Is she Grania's greatest rival or greatest friend? Find out this spring!

**HOST:** Vivid Motion Dance, Portland's innovative and kinda quirky dance company

**WHO:** YOU! Ages 9+ of all dance experience levels (experienced to novice) are invited

**WHAT:** Auditions  
**WHEN:** Saturday February 8 2025

**WHERE:** Deering Grange 1408 Washington Ave Portland

Auditions are held in a class format and include a warm up followed by several combinations at center. Pre-registration

is required and open at [vividmotiondance.org/auditions](http://vividmotiondance.org/auditions).

**Rehearsals:** Saturdays 9:30a-2:30p and Sundays 12:30p-5:30p beginning Saturday February 15 at Deering Grange in Portland ME. \*may not be required for all; exact schedule dependent on casting

**Tech:** May 5-8 at The Hill Arts

**Shows:** May 9-11; Fri 7:30p; Sat 2:30p & 7:30p; Sun 2:30p; all shows are at The Hill Arts

More information, including a complete list of roles (description of pieces, dance levels, gender) and registration is available at [vividmotiondance.org](http://vividmotiondance.org)

## Zac is Back with Gorham Arts Alliance

**ZAC STEARN LIVE**

**FEBRUARY 7**  
GORHAM ARTS ALLIANCE

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SHOW & BOOK SIGNING

**GORHAM, ME** -- Zachariah Stearn returns to Maine for ONE NIGHT ONLY at Gorham Arts Alliance in support of his book "5 to Places: Memoirs of a Theatre Kid". This evening promises to be everything audiences expect from Zac - comedy, music, and heartfelt stories. This performance will feature some of the "untold" stories in "5 to Places" and this specialty performance will include a Q & A Session with the au-

dience and a book signing! Don't miss this extremely limited seated event for ONE NIGHT ONLY, February 7 at 7PM

Gorham Arts Alliance  
34 School St, Gorham, ME, United States, Maine 04038

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**SEE PAGE 14**

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**Feb 8**  
6:30 - 8:30 pm

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 | 782-3200**


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

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**February Greetings from Baxter Memorial Library!**



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Monday February 10th at 10am. Registration is required. Please call the Youth Services department at 222-1190.

**February Break at Baxter** ALL AGES WELCOME

**Tuesday 2/18** 10am-11:30am  
Join us and create your own puzzle to share with your family and friends this winter season. While supplies last.

**Wednesday 2/19** 1pm-3pm  
Come make a shrinky dink necklace!

**Thursday 2/20** 10am-2pm  
Join us for an entire day of LEGO fun! We will have LEGO challenges on our tables and our program room will be filled with LEGOS!

**Book Club!**  
Thursday, February 6th  
*The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek* by Kim Richardson

**Thursday, February 20th**  
*That Librarian* by Amanda Jones

Meets at 10:15am in the Schneider Great Room. No registration necessary. All are welcome!

**Evening Book Club!**  
Tuesday, February 25th  
*Piranesi* by Susanna Clarke

Meets at 6pm in the Main Library. No registration necessary. All are welcome!

**Baxter Adult Art Night**

**zentangle**

All materials provided!

**Thursday, February 27** 6-7 pm

# Applications open for UMaine Fellows Program

**ORONO, ME** — The University of Maine’s Foster Center for Innovation has opened applications for the 2025 Innovate for Maine Fellows Program. This premier internship initiative will connect up to 60 Maine college students with the state’s most innovative companies, offering paid, hands-on internships that drive growth and impact.

Innovate for Maine is looking for students who are passionate about innovation and entrepreneurship. Those who are eligible for the program

include undergraduate and graduate students at Maine colleges and universities, Maine residents attending out-of-state schools and individuals with strong ties to the state. Selected students tackle exciting projects such as product development, market research, computer programming, prototyping, videography and social media marketing, all while building professional networks and preparing for future success. Since its inception in 2012, Innovate for Maine has helped 360 students gain invaluable experience

with more than 280 Maine businesses.

Participating businesses — from startups to larger companies — gain access to motivated, top tier interns ready to bring fresh ideas and energy. For-profit Maine businesses of any size developing innovative products, services or processes can participate

Full Funding for Eligible Companies

Through funding from the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan (MJRP), which were provided to the University of Maine

System for workforce development, eligible Maine businesses with fewer than 250 employees that delayed business formation or were negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic can host an intern at no cost. The funds will help support Maine startups and small businesses as they recover and grow post pandemic.

MJRP was proposed by Gov. Janet Mills and approved by the Legislature to invest the state’s share of federal American Rescue Plan relief funds.

“Our two Innovate

for Maine interns helped fast track one part of our product that now reaches over 15,000 Maine students,” said Helen Cohen, chief operating officer of Reach My Teach. “Watching them gain real world experience — using Figma, building websites and conducting user interviews — was incredibly rewarding. Their work is making a real difference for schools,

The program handles recruiting the students, and fellows are carefully selected and matched with projects to ensure that company needs are met.

Interns participate in a four-day boot camp that trains them to be ready to contribute to their host company on day one. The Innovate for Maine team then continues to supervise and mentor them throughout the summer. Fellows can work full time or part time during the summer with opportunities to continue part time during the academic year.

Applications for both students and companies close on Feb. 16. To apply or learn more, visit the Innovate for Maine Fellows Program website.

# USM, DEA partner on decal to warn against fentanyl

**PORTLAND, ME** -- The Department of Public Safety at the University of Southern Maine (USM) has transformed one of its cruisers into a rolling billboard to educate the community about a dangerous drug and prevent overdoses.

A decal with the slogan One Pill Can Kill now graces the rear third of the SUV used by the department’s three campus safety officers. The United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) coined the slogan. One Pill Can Kill is a warning about the potential of fentanyl contamination in

bootleg medication. Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that can kill in even small doses. As part of a multi-pronged strategy to raise awareness using digital and traditional communications outlets, the DEA covered all costs associated with the decal.

“The partnership with the University of Southern Maine and their willingness to apply decals on a campus cruiser in support of the campaign shows their continued commitment to the community and solidifies a partnership between the DEA and the University,” said Acting Special Agent



in Charge Stephen Belleau, DEA New England Field Division.

The project’s point person for USM Public Safety was Lt. Paul Cox. He worked with the staff at M & H Signs in West-

brook to design the decal using a list of DEA-approved graphics and fonts. M & H Signs then printed the decal and completed the application within two hours. The invoice of \$1,400 went directly to the

DEA for payment. With the return of students from winter break last week, the cruiser’s new look is poised to get more attention on USM’s campuses in Gorham, Portland, and Lewiston, along with all the roads in between.

“The general public thinks fentanyl is something you inject with a needle. They don’t realize that these pills are out there, and one of the leading causes of overdoses is counterfeit prescription pills,” Cox said. “We want people to realize, you don’t know what’s in that pill unless you get your pills from a pharmacy.”

USM Public Safety is the first law enforcement agency in Maine to feature the DEA campaign on a cruiser. That partnership is poised to grow. Grainne Perkins, USM’s chief of police and vice president of public safety, is developing a community policing initiative to reinforce the One Pill Can Kill message. In collaboration with the DEA, she plans to set up tables on all three campuses where an attendant can provide visitors with more detailed information and resources. The dates and locations of the tabling events are still being finalized.

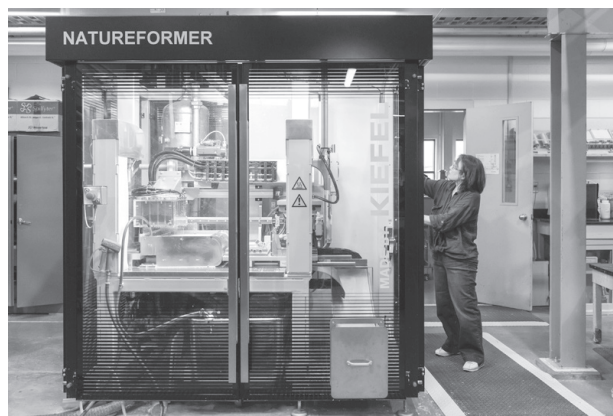
# UMaine advances new forest bioproducts program

**ORONO, ME** — Following the recent announcement by Gov. Janet Mills and Maine’s Congressional delegation that Maine’s Forest Bioproducts Advanced Manufacturing Tech Hub will receive an additional \$22 million to position Maine as a global leader in forest-based biomaterial production and manufacturing, the University of Maine is advancing plans to launch its Forest Bioproducts Technology Maturation Program, a critical component of the Tech Hub.

The Forest Bioproducts Tech Hub’s goal is to accelerate research and development of natural polymers and other wood fiber bioproducts that can sequester carbon and replace plastics and toxic chemicals, while bolstering “Made in America” supply chain goals. Launched in 2023, the Tech Hub is led by the Maine Technology Institute and the Mills Administration, and supported by more than 70 partners, including Sappi, IDEXX, Thornton Tomasetti, FOR/ Maine, the Maine Forest Products Council, the Manufacturers Association of Maine and the Maine Venture Fund.

As a primary Tech Hub partner, UMaine will provide world-class innovation expertise, cutting-edge bioproducts equipment and infrastructure, and intellectual property to build talent pipelines and help private sector companies rapidly accelerate product commercialization and operational growth.

“Maine’s Forest Bioproducts Advanced Manufacturing Tech Hub represents the future of sustainable innovation, building on two centuries of forest industry leadership and 160 years of University of Maine excellence in research, development and education along with world-class facilities,” said Joan Ferrini-Mundy, president of the University of Maine and its regional campus, the University of Maine at Machias, as well as vice chancellor for research and innovation for the University of Maine System. “This investment will transform cutting-edge ideas into real-world solutions, powered by the expertise of our talented faculty, staff and students. Together with our partners, we are charting a bold course to position Maine as a global leader in sustain-



Process Development Center senior scientist Seongkyung Park showcases a fiber thermofforming machine, and how it can be used to make sustainable dinnerware, at the Process Development Center in July. Photo courtesy of the University of Maine.

able materials, economic growth and innovation.”

UMaine’s Forest Bioproducts Technology Maturation Program, funded at \$10.5 million in the award announced this week, will support startups and established companies in the forest bioproducts space.

“The technology maturation program will provide companies with the talent, expertise and access to equipment to demonstrate new technologies and manufacturing processes at commercial scale, unlocking the potential for forest biomaterials to reach new high-value markets such as plastics and fuels replacements, textiles,

building materials, biomedical applications and packaging, and create new economic development opportunities in Maine and beyond,” said Renee Kelly, associate vice president for Strategic Partnerships, Innovation, Resources, and Engagement.

From tailored work plans that include specific technical and business development milestones to access to a robust network of companies and research institutions and facilities, companies who participate in the Technology Maturation Program will receive wraparound support from UMaine. In addition to facilitating technology de-

velopment for individual companies, UMaine will work with companies with similar technical barriers to help reach new markets. The opportunity to work directly with experts at UMaine facilities, including the Advanced Manufacturing Center (AMC), Advanced Structures and Composites Center (ASCC) and Process Development Center (PDC), will allow companies to test and validate new bioproducts and processes, focusing on scaling production and meeting safety standards. Finally, students, including undergraduate-, graduate- and doctoral-level innovation fellows, will be embedded with participating companies to support their growth.

“UMaine’s near-commercial scale Process Development Center has a decades-long history of advancing biobased technologies,” said Colleen Walker, director of the PDC. “Our team is very excited to expand our work with emerging companies and offer access to our expertise and facilities to propel the development of forest-based bioproducts through the Forest Bioproducts Technology Maturation Program.”

“Tanbark is excited to be part of the Tech Hub network,” said Melissa LaCasse, co-founder and CEO of Tanbark Molded Fiber Products. “We see many opportunities to accelerate new forest biomaterials applications in collaboration with UMaine, and to work with talented students who are the future of our skilled workforce.”

Maine is one of just six Tech Hubs selected to receive an award under new funding for the Tech Hubs Program included in the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

More about Maine’s Tech Hub can be found at [www.mainetechhub.us](http://www.mainetechhub.us).

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# St. John's Catholic School awarded Overall Best-In-Show

**BRUNSWICK, ME** - St. John's Catholic School is proud to announce their 7/8th grade Plant the Moon Challenge project was awarded Overall Best-in-Show. Their project studied the effects of purple light on plants in regular soil and moon soil stimulants. While this was a project implemented by our 7/8th grades, more than 60 of SJCS students helped to support this project.

Participating in the Plant the Moon Challenge Jr. (PTMC) has been an extraordinary opportunity for our students to engage in real-world, hands-on experimentation while mastering the scientific method. The challenge required them to form hypotheses, design experiments, collect and analyze data, and present their findings—a process that deeply reinforced their understanding of the scientific method. For example, students hypothesized about which soil amendments would optimize plant growth in lunar regolith simulant and then rigorously tested their ideas. Through this, they learned the importance of controlling variables, replicating trials, and drawing evidence-based conclusions.

Through PTMC, students grew not only as scientists but also as collaborative problem-solvers. They were inspired by their potential to contribute to the future of space exploration and sustainable agriculture, fostering both a sense of curiosity and a belief in their ability to

make a meaningful impact in STEM fields.

"Students developed research skills by investigating existing studies on soil science and space agriculture," said Middle School Teacher and PTMC coach Karin Paquin. "I emphasized the importance of using peer-reviewed articles to ensure their sources were credible. This required teaching them how to access academic databases and critically evaluate research, a skill they can carry into future academic and professional endeavors."

The PTMC also broadened their perspectives on STEM, space exploration, and agricultural science. By working with lunar simulants, students developed an appreciation for the challenges and innovations involved in sustaining life beyond Earth. They discovered connections between STEM disciplines—such as physics, biology, and engineering—and realized how these fields work in tandem to solve real-world problems.

Dr. Tim Durham, Associate Professor of Crop Science at Ferrum College in Virginia and Science Advisory Board Member, added, "congratulations on your completion of the Plant the Moon Challenge. You showed perseverance and innovation in critical thinking when your hypothesis was rejected. The team demonstrated curiosity and a desire to apply their learning to real world science problems revolving around living off world."

In the eight weeks of their PTMC participation, the team encountered multiple challenges that tested their adaptability and problem-solving skills. One significant challenge was determining the optimal amount of water for plant growth. Initially, they started with 5 milliliters of water per plant, but after observing limited progress, they adjusted to 20 milliliters, which significantly improved growth outcomes.

"This changed my perspective of biology, and it helped me see how hard it would be for astronauts to grow food in space," said 6th grade student participant, Max. Classmate Graham adds, "it changed my view on science for me because now I think we could actually grow plants on the moon."

"It changed science for me by showing me that science isn't all just vocabulary and a paper and pen. It showed me that science can be more hands on," added 6th grade student participant, Gracelynn. Students also collaborated with ELA teacher Katie Loubier to revise their reports and provide feedback on grammar, spelling and punctuation. In art class with Jennifer Weiss, they were able to draw models of their experiments before building and change designs based on research.

Reflecting on the process, the team identified areas for improvement. Paquin adds, "if we were to repeat the experiment, we would begin with high-



er water volumes, ensuring the plants receive adequate hydration and nutrients from the start. This adjustment could have potentially influenced our results even further."

These findings also sparked new questions, particularly about the limitations of replicating Earth-like conditions in space. For example, how can astronauts provide consistent natural light for

plants in a space environment where sunlight is intermittent? This question opens the door to exploring innovative solutions, such as advanced lighting systems or reflective technologies, for sustaining plant growth in space. Our PTMC experience not only strengthened our understanding of the scientific method but also deepened our curiosity about the intersection of space explo-

ration and agricultural science, inspiring us to seek answers to real-world challenges in STEM fields.

How did the students react to learning they won? 7th Grade student Mary Kathleen said she and her classmates were surprised and excited. "It was kind of amazing. I saw our name at the awards ceremony, and I was like... what?! I couldn't believe that we did it."

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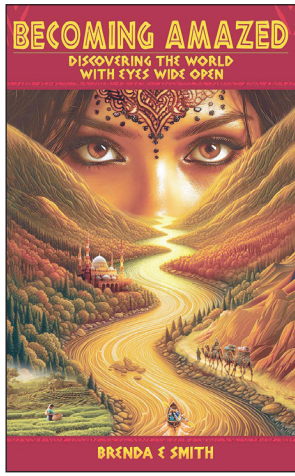
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# Maine author publishes insightful adventure memoir

**BELFAST, ME--** Brenda Smith's *Becoming Amazed* plunges you into a world where the thrill of the unknown reigns supreme. Her journey began with a heart-pounding initiation—rafting and mountain climbing through the untamed Tanzanian wilderness chronicled in her book *Becoming Fearless: Finding Courage in the African Wilderness*. What started as a step outside her comfort zone soon became a quest for the extraordinary, pushing her to explore some of the most re-

mote corners of the globe. From Bolivia's rugged landscapes to Ethiopia's hidden tribal territories, from the enigmatic villages of Pakistan to the leech-infested forests of Sri Lanka, Brenda confronts everything from a revered idol exacting mysterious revenge to navigating eerie two-dimension spaces. The stakes reach their zenith in the brutal murder of a friend by terrorists—a moment that forces Brenda to reckon with the harshest realities of the world she craves to



explore. Through every trial, Brenda gains profound

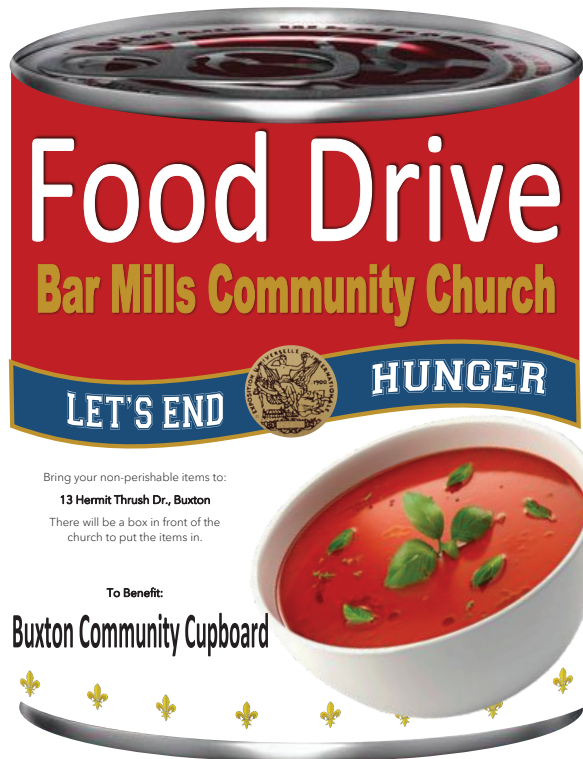
insights, emerging stronger, braver, and more enlightened. Her stories are a blend of daring exploits and deep reflections, perfect for fans of *Eat Pray Love*, *Wild*, and *Tracks*. The Extraordinary Travelers Club (ETC) chose Brenda as their featured Extraordinary Traveler for their January 2025 edition of *Dispatch*. In her role as a Sobek Expeditions guide in Tanzania, Ethiopia, Alaska, and Pakistan, in her 20s, the allure of exotic locales captivated Brenda, igniting a

lifelong passion for adventure. Fueled by wanderlust, she has lived, worked, or traveled in over forty countries. While earning her master's degree in philanthropy and media at Suffolk University, she co-produced, co-directed and co-edited an episode for the PBS series *The Visionaries* shot in Kenya and Tanzania. The funding for most of Brenda's travels came from her employment as a licensed CPA working for multi-national corporations, the US Department

of State and international nonprofit organizations. Now retired, she lives in Belfast, Maine, documenting cherished memories of her global exploits, often pounding the keyboard into the wee hours of the morning. Her first book *Becoming Fearless: Finding Courage in the African Wilderness* has won awards for best travel memoir from Reader Views, Story Trade Awards, Readers' Favorites and The Book Fest. She promises more adventure stories to come.

## Bar Mills Community Church seeking donations for food drive

**BAR MILLS, ME --** Thank you to everyone who helped with Bar Mills Community Church's January mission of collecting T-shirts, socks, and briefs. It was a great help. Our February mission is a food drive to benefit the Buxton Community Cupboard. We are collecting non-perishable food items. The items can be dropped off at the Bar Mills Community Church on 13 Hermit Thrush Dr. in Buxton across from the town hall. There will be a box in front of the church to put the items in. We thank you for your generosity.



## Lakes Region Senior Center invites Gorham seniors to activities

**GORHAM, ME --** If you are looking for a fun senior center with lots of activities daily, come join us at Little Falls Activity

Center, 40 Acorn Street, Gorham, Maine. We are open from 8:30 to 2 or 3 pm depending on the activity. Our calendar is online.

Call Gerry Day, President, at 839-3859 for more information. Membership fee is \$20 a year with many perks.

## Clothes galore at Gorham's Mission of Hope Clothes Closet

**GORHAM, ME --** The FREE Clothes Closet at Cressey Road Church (Mission of Hope Clothes Closet) is open to all who need Fellowship, Friendship and Clothes. We are located at 81 Cressey Road, Gorham, and we are open on the FIRST and

THIRD Saturday of each month from 9 o'clock AM to 12 Noon. We focus on clothes and accessories (gloves, scarves, hats, etc.) and welcome your donations during our operating hours. Clean clothes in good shape help the most, as

they go right out to help people locally or in nearby communities. An attempt is made to have season appropriate clothes available to you. After we have displayed them for a time, they are donated to our local second-hand shops. See *Clothes*, page 14

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## AARP Community Challenge grant now accepting applications

AARP Maine is thrilled to announce that the 2025 AARP Community Challenge grant program is now accepting applications. We hope that all eligible nonprofits and government organizations will apply for this once-a-year opportunity!

The AARP Community Challenge grant program is part of the nationwide AARP Livable Communities initiative, which supports the efforts of communities to become great places for people of all ages,

especially people 50-plus. The grants fund quick-action, innovative projects related to public places, transportation, housing, digital connections, community resilience, and more. Here in Maine, we've seen tangible, long-term results from

previous grantees. Recent local projects have included disaster preparedness initiatives, transportation improvements, community park and open space enhancements, and much more.

We encourage eligible

organizations to apply by the March 5, 2025 application deadline. For more information, to submit an application or view past grantees, visit [www.AARP.org/CommunityChallenge](http://www.AARP.org/CommunityChallenge). Since 2017, AARP has invested \$20.1 million toward

1,700 projects – including 70 projects in Maine. Apply now and make sure your local project is considered for a grant this year!

Jane Margesson  
AARP Maine Communications Director  
Portland

## UMA professor demystifies American yoga in new book

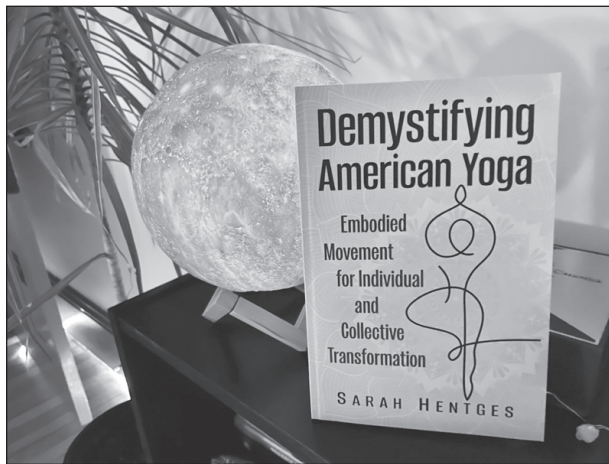
AUGUSTA, ME – Sarah Hentges, professor of transdisciplinary cultural studies at the University of Maine at Augusta (UMA), has released her fourth book, “Demystifying American Yoga: Embodied Movement for Individual and Collective Transformation.”

Part storytelling, part cultural critique, part innovation and part practical application, “Demystifying American Yoga” is about more than yoga — it's about American culture and our past, present and collective future. It is about how we care for ourselves and others amidst a toxic culture of individualism, perfectionism, consumption, exploitation, compe-

tion and other destructive ideas and behaviors.

Despite its popularity in the U.S., we are mostly unaware of yoga's ancient roots as well as its contemporary applications. Numerous misunderstandings surround American yoga. It is often seen as simple stretching, or a religious practice. Others feel it is an example of cultural appropriation, and that it is elitist and exclusive — a fitness trend for flexible, aesthetically ideal bodies.

Focusing solely on the physical aspects of yoga overshadows its core elements: conscious breathing, mindful meditation, deep philosophy, and transformative healing. However, for Hentges,



American yoga “is about the power of embodiment to connect us with ourselves and others,” she says. “It is about hope and joy and the ways in which yoga has evolved in the U.S. — how American yoga is full of promise and

potential despite the ways it has been used to sell myths and bypass spirituality.”

Drawing from her experience as a professor and yoga teacher, Hentges explores the marginalized, feminist, queer, grassroots,

underground, interconnected, creative, innovative and somatic elements of yoga. In “Demystifying American Yoga,” she offers exploratory embodied practices, mines diverse sources, and asks critical questions about identity, culture and power.

Hentges has over 25 years of experience teaching college courses and fitness classes, including 20 years of teaching yoga.

Previous books by Hentges include “Women and Fitness in American Culture” and “Girls on Fire: Transformative Heroines in Young Adult Dystopian Literature.” Her work spans a variety of fields and themes, most recently centered around embodied

social justice and transformation.

A popular professor at UMA, Hentges teaches several courses including American studies, women and gender studies, and interdisciplinary studies as well as the courses Girls on Fire, Hip Hop America, American Fitness, and Cultural Criticism and Theory. She is also UMA's program coordinator for interdisciplinary studies.

In addition to her academic credentials, Hentges holds certifications in trauma-informed yoga and JourneyDance facilitation. She is also the founder and lead curator of The Spiral Goddess Collective, a Center for Mind/Body Movement in Bangor, Maine.

## BBB: Scammers posing as loan processors

Scammers are at it again, posing as representatives from loan processing companies to trick consumers into sharing personal information. This advanced fee loan phishing scam often comes in the form of harassing phone calls and voicemails. The caller insists they need to verify minor details, such as your income, to finalize your loan application. While the message may sound convincing, it's a ruse to steal your private information.

How the scam works  
You receive a call

or voicemail from someone claiming to be from a loan processing team, often using a common name, like “Jessica.” The caller says they've been trying to contact you about your loan application and need to verify some final details to complete your approval, although more than likely, you never applied for a loan. They provide a callback number and application ID to make the message seem legitimate. The voicemail emphasizes urgency, requesting you call back before a specific deadline to finalize the

loan.

Better Business Bureau (BBB) has received over 500 Scam Tracker reports of this scheme from across the United States in between November 2024 and January 2025, indicating that scammers are aggressively targeting consumers. People report receiving multiple calls per day, often from different phone numbers but with nearly identical voicemail scripts. Realistically, there is no loan, and returning the call could lead to scammers collecting sensitive information, such as your

Social Security number, bank account details, or other personal data.

Tips to avoid the scam

Verify the company's legitimacy: If you're contacted about a loan application you don't recall submitting, hang up and do your research. Look up the company name online and contact them directly using verified contact information.

Never share personal information with unsolicited callers: Scammers often ask for details like your Social Security number or

bank account information. Avoid sharing sensitive information over the phone unless you initiated the call.

Watch for red flags in voicemails: Be wary of messages with vague details, generic names, or urgent demands for a callback. Scammers often use scripted messages to target as many people as possible.

Avoid calling unknown numbers back: Resist the urge to call the number back. Returning calls to unknown or suspicious numbers could con-

nect you to scammers or result in unexpected fees.

Check for scam reports: Look up the phone number or details of the voicemail online. Many victims post about similar scams to warn others.

Report suspicious activity: If you believe you've been contacted by a scammer, report the incident to BBB Scam Tracker at [BBB.org/ScamTracker](http://BBB.org/ScamTracker).

Stay vigilant and cautious to protect yourself from falling victim to phishing scams like this one. If an offer seems too good to be true, it likely is!

## Grant to fund recycled forest product manufacturing

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Senators Susan Collins and Angus King, and U.S. Representatives Chellie Pingree and Jared Golden, are announcing the Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration's (EDA) decision to award \$22 million in funding for Maine's Forest Bioproducts Advanced Manufacturing Tech Hub, led by the Maine Technol-

ogy Institute. The grant will support the advancement of two projects that aim to further position Maine as a global leader in forest-based biomaterial production and manufacturing.

“Maine is a leader in the forest products industry — both here at home and around the globe,” said the Delegation. “An investment in our forestry sector is a direct investment into

Maine's economy and future. This \$22 million award for the Forest Bioproducts Advanced Manufacturing Tech Hub will be critical in ensuring we have the tools to strengthen the workforce, spur innovation and further build upon the industry's success.”

The grant will support implementation of two projects that include:

Connecting forest bioproducts technological innovations with the commercialization resources and partnerships necessary to successfully bring that intellectual property to market at a globally competitive scale and serving as the backbone organization for the consortium, coordinating governance, strategy, evaluation, and community engagement; and

Strengthening a pipe-

line of innovations (functionalized feedstocks, applications, and manufacturing technologies), de-risking these innovations with technical assistance, and leveraging new commercialization, advanced manufacturing, and workforce resources of the Tech Hub to accelerate the most promising innovations.

Last March, the Delegation wrote a letter to the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development expressing their support for Maine's application for a Tech Hubs Implementation grant. In addition to the Delegation letter, Senator Collins sent a follow-up letter advocating for this program to receive Tech Hubs grant funding. Previously, the Forest Bioproducts Advanced Manufacturing Tech Hub received

a \$500,000 Consortium Accelerator Award to continue implementing their strategies, including the pursuit of additional capital, and was among six Tech Hubs across the country to receive awards from additional funding through the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

The Forest Bioproducts Advanced Manufacturing Tech Hub is among 31 Tech Hubs designated in October 2023 designated by the Department of Commerce to scale up the production of critical technologies, create jobs in innovative industries, strengthen U.S. economic competitiveness and national security, and accelerate the growth of industries of the future in regions across the United States.

In 2016, Senators

Collins and King called on the U.S. Department of Commerce to establish the Economic Development Assessment Team (EDAT), that would work across agencies and sectors to create strategies for job growth and economic development in Maine's rural communities. The creation of the EDAT and its subsequent studies and research led to the EDA and the U.S. Forest Service providing funding for the Forest Opportunity Roadmap Maine (FOR/ME) Initiative. The FOR/ME Initiative is a participant-led initiative that is helping to diversify the state's wood products businesses, attract investments, support research and development, and develop greater economic prosperity for rural communities impacted by mill closures.

Jason Hodsdon Masonry

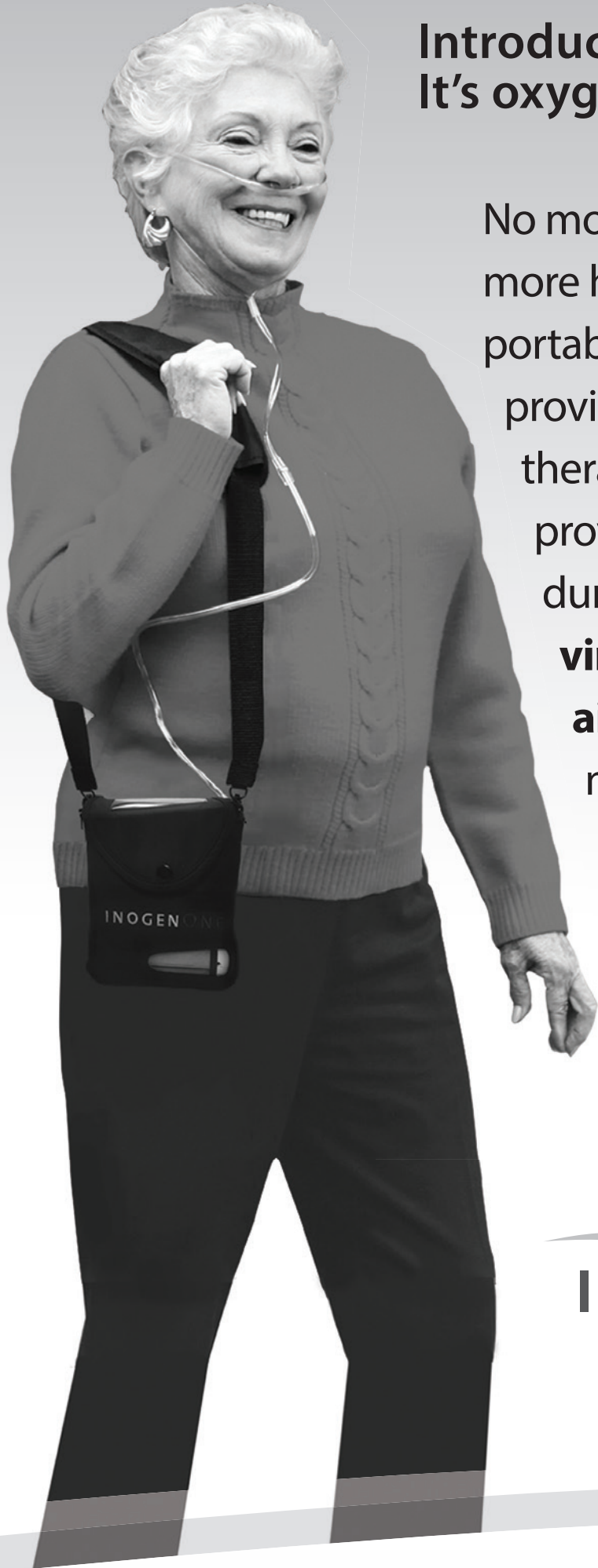
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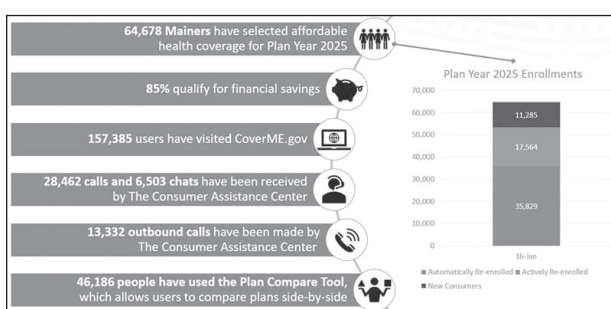
# Record number sign up for affordable coverage

**AUGUSTA, ME** — The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Office of the Health Insurance Marketplace (OHIM) announced that nearly 65,000 Maine people signed up for affordable health coverage in 2025 through CoverME.gov, Maine's health insurance marketplace, during the fourth annual open enrollment period that concluded last week. Maine's marketplace contributed to the more than 24.2 million people who signed up through Affordable Care Act marketplaces nationwide. Maine is one of 19 states plus Washington, D.C. that fully run their own Health Insurance Marketplaces, with the Federal government running the rest through HealthCare.gov.

Of the 64,678 Maine consumers who selected a health plan, 11,285 were new consumers who didn't previously have insurance

through the marketplace. This breaks Maine's prior record for new consumers turning to CoverME.gov for insurance since it transitioned to a state-based marketplace in 2021. The remainder were returning consumers who actively re-enrolled or were automatically re-enrolled in a plan. Another 8,423 consumers selected standalone dental plans, an increase of nearly 6% year-over-year.

"Having health insurance saves lives," said Governor Janet Mills. "There isn't anyone who doesn't get sick, and there isn't anyone who doesn't need to see a doctor at some point. From day one, my administration has worked to make health insurance available for more Maine people can see a doctor, can get preventative care, and can afford critical prescription medications. That way, people can be healthy, join or rejoin the workforce, and care for



their families." "This year's record-breaking enrollment reflects our ongoing commitment to ensuring Maine people have access to affordable, high-quality health coverage," said Sara Gagné-Holmes, Commissioner of the Department of Health and Human Services. "CoverME.gov continues to provide vital support for individuals and families across our state, helping more Mainers access the care they need to live healthier lives."

Open enrollment through CoverME.gov — the only place where Maine

residents can shop for plans that meet Affordable Care Act quality coverage standards and find financial savings to help pay monthly premiums — ran from November 1, 2024, to January 15, 2025. For plan year 2025, 85% of Mainers who selected a plan during open enrollment qualified for financial savings. While average premiums set by insurance companies rose in Maine and many other states in 2025, premiums paid by consumers qualifying for financial savings increased by less than \$15 per month, thanks to extra financial assistance from

the federal government. However, the expanded financial savings, approved by the U.S. Congress, are currently set to expire at the end of 2025.

"The enhanced health care tax credits have been critical in keeping coverage affordable, especially for Mainers who are older and live in more rural locations, said Hilary Schneider, Director of the DHHS Office of the Health Insurance Marketplace, which runs CoverME.gov. "Without these tax credits, many Mainers will likely make the tough decision to go without health coverage or will have to cut other necessary expenditures in order to afford health coverage. This will not only have a detrimental impact the health and wellbeing of our citizens but also on our economy."

The next CoverME.gov open enrollment will start on November 1, 2025.

In the meantime, Maine residents who experience a life event such as getting married or divorced, having or adopting a baby, or losing employer-sponsored coverage or MaineCare, can enroll in coverage using a Special Enrollment Period. Additionally, Maine residents can check a box on Maine State tax return Form 1040ME to opt into the Easy Enrollment Tax Referral Program, which is a new Special Enrollment Period. Visit CoverME.gov for more details.

CoverME.gov is at the heart of Maine's effort to ensure that people can see their doctor, afford their medications, and stay healthy. CoverME.gov is a one-stop shop for health care coverage and the only place Mainers can get financial assistance to reduce out-of-pocket costs for coverage. Eligible Maine people can enroll in MaineCare at any time of year.

## 2025 Common Ground Country Fair artwork unveiled

**MAINE** -- The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) unveiled the 2025 Common Ground Country Fair artwork at the Maine Agricultural Trades Show in Augusta. The artwork for the fair's promotional materials and iconic T-shirts is selected from contest submissions each year and the winning design is highly anticipated. This year's artwork by Katherine Noble Churchill, features two draft

horses, livestock important to sustainable farming methods. From moving heavy equipment to plowing fields for planting, draft horses offer farmers an alternative to fossil-fueled machinery.

"It is an honor to have my artwork represent MOFGA's 2025 Common Ground Fair promoting organic agriculture in Maine," says Noble Churchill. "Each year, I look forward to attending the Common



Ground Fair, enjoying the animals, crafts, music, and delicious organic food. My favorite part has always been watching Chris Lombard's demonstrations of human/horse communication and connection. Now and in the

future, I hope to see people enjoying the continual process of learning to develop communication and athleticism in the horse for both riding and working on the farm."

The "Belgian Draft Horses" posters will be available for sale in MOFGA's online store (at store.mofga.org) starting January 17, 2025.

Planning is underway for the 2025 Common Ground Country

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Illustration by Katherine Noble Churchill - Printed by Lucie County Publishing Company

2025 Common Ground Country Fair design by Katherine Noble Churchill, titled "Belgian Draft Horses."

Fair, which will take place on September 19, 20, and 21 in Unity, Maine. Vendor applications are now being accepted for many areas of the fair. Vendors

and exhibitors interested in learning more about how they can participate in the event this year can learn more at: mofga.org/the-fair.

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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.

## 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

## Feb 14

**LEWISTON** -- At 10am the Lewiston Public Library Children's Department will be offering a Valentine's Day Keepsake

program. Caregivers and their young children will be able to make a collaborative family handprint keepsake on canvas for Valentine's Day. All family members can participate in this program.

Free. No registration required. Recommended families and their young children ages birth-6 years old. Older siblings are also welcome to attend and participate.

## Feb 15

**WESTBROOK** -- The Chinese and American Friendship Association of Maine (CAFAM) will ring in the Year of the Snake, Saturday, February 15, 2025, at the Westbrook Performing Arts Center, 471 Stroudwater Road, Westbrook, ME

## Feb 18, Mar 18, Apr 15

**TURNER** -- Music for Mavis" hosts 2025 Cabin Fever Concerts at 98 MATHEWS WAY, OFF RT. 117 TURNER CENTER. 6:00-7:30 PM. Leave the winter blues behind and enjoy music with your fellow music lovers, right beside the gazebo, downstairs in the TPLibrary Building. The music is as follows:

February 18: Stan Keech & friends, Bluegrass/folk

March 18: Robbie Coffin, Maggie, & Dave Rockin' Rock & Roll

April 15: Jim Galant and Billy Belskis, Instrumentals/blues/Celtic/a mix

## Feb 19

**LEWISTON** -- Let's Grow Crystals at 11am, Lewiston Public Library Children's Department. Children will be provided with materials to grow tetragonal crystals by creating a solution with water and a package of monoammonium phosphate and powdered pigments.

Because the crystals take many days to grow, the crystal solutions will be kept in the display case so patrons can see their growth. After 2 weeks or so the finished crystals will be removed from their solution. The crystals will be kept in the display case on a lighted stand. Participants may also take the crystals home at that time.

Free. No registration required but supplies are limited. Recommended kids 8-12 years old. The Lewiston Public Library is located downtown at 200 Lisbon Street at the corner of Pine Street.

## Mar 15

**BRUNSWICK** -- The 2024-25 UUCB Concerts for a Cause Series sea-

son 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

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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/guydavis](https://ticketstripe.com/guydavis).

## Apr 26

**TOPSHAM** -- "All Aboard for the 2025 Great Falls Model Railroad Club Train Show! 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM, Mt. Ara-

rat 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.

## Clothes

*Continued from page 9*

In addition to helping folks find clothes, we want to spend time with you! There are tables to sit, talk and to share a cup of coffee and usually a goodie with volunteers or others. Come see us! You might make a new friend. All are welcome!

# GORHAM LITTLE LEAGUE

## Field Funding Campaign

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

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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.

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

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**NUMBER OF WEEKS TO RUN:** \_\_\_\_\_

# Connections & Confections

 **GORHAM HOUSE**  
a Senior Lifestyle community



**Confectionary Connections:  
A Progressive Tour**  
February 13 or 20 | 2 p.m.

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