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CMMC first hospital in Maine to implant pioneering pacemaker

LEWISTON, ME - Central Maine Medical Center (CMMC) this month became the first hospital in Maine to complete a dual chamber leadless (wireless) pacemaker implant.

The electrophysiology team at Central Maine Heart and Vascular Institute (CMHVI) successfully performed several implants, using the AVEIR™ dual chamber pacemaker, an implantable device that stimulates the heart's two main chambers.

While traditional dual chamber pacemakers include wires that risk break-

ing and may cause infection, the Aveir pacemaker is wireless and therefore has a lower risk of infection.

The new pacemaker was approved by the FDA in 2023 and is ideal for patients who have abnormally slow heart rhythms and require pacing in both chambers of the heart.

"We have had single chamber leadless pacemakers for many years," said Joseph Dell'Orfano, MD, electrophysiologist at CMMC. "However, when patients experience slow heart rates, they often re-



CMHVI's electrophysiology team poses with Aveir equipment

quire pacing in both the top and bottom chambers of their heart. Now we can do this without the need for

surgically implanted wires or battery packs. This represents the future of pacemakers. I'm proud that we



WHERE YOU ARE THE CENTER

could bring this technology to our patients in Maine."

This isn't the first time in recent history CMHVI has led the way in Maine. Last spring, CMMC became the first hospital to successfully treat atrial fibrillation using Pulsed Field Ablation, a non-thermal device designed to minimize potential damage to the heart.

CMHVI offers advanced treatments for all

arrhythmias including atrial fibrillation and ventricular tachycardia. Last year, its vascular lab earned a three-year accreditation in peripheral arterial, peripheral venous and extracranial cerebrovascular testing from the Intersocietal Accreditation Commission. CMHVI has also started a dedicated hypertension and lipid clinic and a new preventive cardiology program. Additionally, the vascular surgery team recently performed its 50th TCAR, the latest in minimally invasive procedures to treat carotid disease.

New Community Tree Steward to join L-A's ReTreeUS

LEWISTON, ME - A new advocate for community fruit orchards is taking root in Lewiston-Auburn. Sean O'Connell, a Brooklyn, NY native, will join the L-A area as its new Community Tree Steward. His service term, which runs from January to November, will be focused on providing support for and expanding local school and community fruit tree orchards throughout the area.

This will include leading free fruit tree care workshops, orchard maintenance days and even establishing an arboretum in at least one of the L-A orchards.

O'Connell is hosted by ReTreeUS, which focuses on planting educational orchards and food forests throughout New England, and the Nutrition

Center, which has provided food access, community gardening and youth leadership opportunities in the L-A community since 1999. This Community Tree Steward site builds upon many years of partnership between the two organizations. Community Tree Stewards are placed throughout the state by the Maine Conservation Corps, an Americorps program devoted to accomplishing outdoor conservation projects, promoting environmental education and engaging community volunteers.

"[O'Connell] has hit the ground running. Our urban orchards in the Lewiston/Auburn area will all benefit from having a dedicated agroforestry volunteer to serve them," said Rachel Lyn Rumson, ReTreeUS program

manager. "He is planning engagement and learning opportunities for the community, including spring maintenance events and modeling fruit tree stewardship for our entire organization. We are so glad to have Sean joining us from the Maine Conservation Corps."

ReTreeUS has planted 11 school and community orchards in Androscoggin County, with nine in the L-A area. Each orchard is currently staffed with a caretaker, often a faculty member or a community member passionate about plant care.

"Fruit trees in urban Maine have a host of unique issues, like vandalism, soil pollution and the ubiquitous browntail moth," O'Connell said. "Our role as caretakers means we're the first and

last line of defense for our orchards, and I'm thankful that community members have already stepped up to make sure our fruit trees stay healthy."

O'Connell will be providing logistical and educational support for the L-A caretaker cohort, acting as the point person for orchard maintenance in the region.

In addition to working with existing orchard caretakers, O'Connell will be improving the orchards as part of his duties. This would include expanding existing orchards through new fruit tree plantings with community members and groups, teaching students from local schools how to maintain the orchards through free workshops and running tree inventories and health assessments. As much as

the position focuses on the physical orchards, it's also centered on educating L-A residents about growing and harvesting their own food, with the goal of creating a more just and equitable food system.

"We see the orchards and gardens as spaces that can bring people together and connect them with the land even in a more urban environment," said Bridgette Bartlett, Garden Programs Manager at the Nutrition Center. "We are so excited to have Sean's additional capacity to facilitate these connections, provide educational opportunities and ensure the care of community fruit trees which will help advance nutrition equity and food access in the Lewiston-Auburn area."

Integral to this goal is connecting with com-

munity members and organizations interested in environmental education and food access, with an added benefit of teaching tangible plant care skills. In the past, L-A's orchards have counted on students from Next STEP, the 21st Century afterschool program at Lewiston High School and the Margaret Murphy Center for Children for help planting and maintaining its fruit tree orchards. O'Connell will continue to strengthen the relationship between ReTreeUS, the Nutrition Center and their community partners throughout his term as a CTS.

For more information about plantings, workshops and community events in the L-A area, subscribe to ReTreeUS' seasonal newsletter, or email sean@retreeus.org.

Free pancake breakfast in Gray

GRAY, ME -- The First Congregational Church of Gray, UCC celebrates Shrovetide, the time of preparation for Lent that was a brief period of celebrations and feasting on foods that would be forbidden during the Lenten period. In early times, pancakes became a popular feast item, in part to use the eggs and dairy products that were

not allowed during Lent. Today's rules have changed and for most, eggs and dairy are permitted, but the pancake tradition survives!

The Youth Group of the Gray Church happily continues the Shrovetide celebration with a free pancake and sausage breakfast on Saturday, March 2, starting at 9:30 a.m. Blueberry, chocolate chips, gluten-free,

and "just plain pancakes" will be on the grills. Regular and vegetarian breakfast sausage will also be served. Completing the festive meal will be juice, coffee, tea, hot chocolate, and fresh fruit.

Following breakfast, join the youth as they hold their annual Pancake Flipping Challenge and a variety of other entertaining Mardi Gras games. The

games will begin at 10. If you haven't embraced the joys of Mardi Gras with your family, this is the time to experience the fun! Join us for Shrovetide at the Parish House of the First Congregational Church of Gray, UCC, on 5 Brown St (right behind MacDonald's). Donations will be gladly accepted at the door to benefit the Youth Group.

Tonight: Identifying healthy relationships for teens at APL

AUBURN, ME -- February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month. To raise awareness and to promote healthy relationships, the Auburn Public Library is partnering with Safe Voices to present "Identifying Healthy Relationships," a group activity where participants will learn about the dynamics of dating abuse and healthy relationships. For those interested, stop into the Teen Space on the second floor on February 20th from 2 PM to 3 PM. This program is open to teens ages 12-18 and does not require registration.

For teens looking for one-on-one support, drop-ins with a Safe Voices representative are available on the second floor of the library every second Wednesday of the month from 4 PM to 5 PM.

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

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Newsmakers, Names & Faces

It's not too late: Stay healthy during flu season

By Dr. Ana Stankovic, Chief Medical Officer, UnitedHealthcare of New England

Amid some of the coldest months of the year, many of us will layer up with our heaviest coats, gloves and blankets. The winter season also calls for us to layer up our immune systems by getting current on various vaccines, including for flu, COVID-19, RSV, shingles and more.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the flu shot as your best protection against influenza, the prevalence of which is currently very high in Maine, according to UnitedHealthcare data. Not only that, but the spread of other infectious diseases tends to increase during the winter months, putting you and your loved ones at greater risk of experiencing illness, pain or even hospitalization.

To help prevent that

and to stay as healthy as possible during the winter months, here are three strategies to consider:

Get this year's flu shot. While flu is most serious for older Americans and individuals with certain chronic conditions², it can affect people of all ages. Younger children, especially those younger than age 2, are at higher risk of developing serious flu-related complications, according to the CDC. Flu vaccination is recommended for everyone ages 6 months and up, other than a few exceptions such as people with severe allergies or individuals who are immunocompromised. Data shows the flu vaccine reduces the risk of the illness by up to 60%³. Additionally, flu vaccinations can help protect people around you, especially when the vaccine is well matched to viruses circulating each year.

Get this year's COVID-19 shot. Like the

flu, the coronavirus changes from year to year, which means the vaccine is reformulated annually to better target current strains. While almost 50% of the U.S. population received the flu vaccine in 2023, fewer (29%) got the COVID-19 shot⁴. A near-record low number of Americans report being concerned about getting COVID-19, despite the fact the coronavirus is deadlier than the flu and carries the added risk of long-term symptoms⁵. If you want protection from both, you can get the flu and COVID-19 shots at the same time, along with additional vaccinations⁶.

Get vaccinated against RSV and shingles. Besides the flu and COVID-19, RSV, or respiratory syncytial virus, is another infectious disease that spreads this time of year. While symptoms are often like a common cold, the virus can develop into something more severe,

especially for older adults and young children⁷. The CDC recommends an RSV vaccine for people 60 and older⁸, as well as another option, a monoclonal antibody injection, to help protect babies and toddlers up to 2 years old⁹. For people 50 and older, it's important to get the shingles vaccine, something that only 18% of Americans in that age group have done¹⁰. Shingles, which is caused by the same virus as chickenpox, can result in large, red clusters of fluid-filled shingles blisters that are often as painful as they look. Plus, more serious side effects are possible, including long-term pain or even hearing or vision loss¹¹.

If you didn't get vaccinated during the fall, now is the time to get current during the peak of this year's flu season. In most cases, vaccines are covered through employer-sponsored, individual, Medicare and Medicaid

health plans, and shots are typically available through primary care physicians, convenience care clinics and most local pharmacies.

To find a flu shot location near you, visit UH-CFluLocator.com.

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevention>

2 National Foundation for Infectious Diseases, 2024, <https://www.nfid.org/infectious-diseases/flu-and-older-adults>

3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/flu-vaccines-work/benefits>

4 Gallup, 2023, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/547625/new-covid-shot-uptake-lagging-behind-annual-flu-shot-rates.aspx>

5 Medpage Today, 2024, <https://www.medpagetoday.com/infectious-disease/generalinfectious-disease/110126>

6 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/vaccines/coadministration.html>

7 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/causes>

8 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023, <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2023/s0629-rsv.html>

9 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023, <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2023/p-0803-new-tool-prevent-infant-hospitalization.html>

10 The Washington Post, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wellness/2024/09/24/shingles-nerve-pain-shingrix-vaccine>

11 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/shingles/signs-symptoms/index.html>

Collins receives Army's highest public service honor

SUSAN COLLINS

U.S. SENATOR FOR MAINE

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Susan Collins was awarded the Army Distinguished Public Service Medal, the highest public service recognition awarded by the U.S. Army. Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth conferred the honor in recognition of Senator Collins' support for the Army through her leadership on the Senate Appropriations Committee and the Defense Appropriations

Subcommittee. Lieutenant General Paul Chamberlain, Military Deputy to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Financial Management and Comptroller, presented Senator Collins with the award on Capitol Hill.

"Receiving this award from the U.S. Army is a tremendous honor, and I am grateful to Secretary Wormuth and the leadership of the Army for this recognition," said Sena-



tor Collins. "Throughout my Senate service, maintaining a strong national defense has been one of my highest priorities. This commitment not only enhances our national security at a time when we face the most dangerous global security environment in 50 years, but it also supports good-paying jobs at Bath Iron Works, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Pratt & Whitney, and elsewhere across the State of Maine."

The Distinguished Public Service Medal is awarded by the Secretary of the Army to individuals whose distinguished service makes a substantial contribution to the Army's mission.

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Newsmakers, Names & Faces

Connected Office Technology's Mack Whittier to serve L-A

LEWISTON – AUBURN, ME -- Connected Office Technologies (COT), an all-in-one business technology firm in Portland, Maine, is proud to announce that Senior Sales Executive Mack Whittier is expanding its client base within the Lewiston-Auburn area.

Whittier resides in Lewiston and looks for-

ward to helping local businesses and non-profits save money on their printer and document management needs within his hometown.

"When you are depending on business technology to get what you need done, you shouldn't have to worry about overage fees, copy restrictions, supply depletion, or re-



ceiving a bill that's far more than anticipated. We make sure we understand each client's personalized needs and deliver in a cost-effective manner," said Whittier.

Connected Office Technologies offers printer programs for a flat monthly fee, including equipment, onsite assistance, remote monitoring,

and printer maintenance services providing a full array of production printers, desktop printers, interactive displays, and toner/supplies. Electronic document management systems are also offered by Connected Office Technologies. Co-owners/founders Tom Mitchell and Kyle Romick lead the team at COT, and its

clients currently include those from finance, government, healthcare, non-profit, and education.

Whittier is a 2020 Southern Maine Community College graduate and enjoys providing one-on-one service to clients. He can be reached at (207) 740-8540 (direct line) and at mwhittier@connecttheoffice.com

Ticonic Gallery issues Call for Makers for market

call for makers
SUBMIT BY MAY 31, 2025

made

MAINE MAKERS MARKET AT TICONIC GALLERY

NOV 15, 2025 - JAN 26, 2026

WATERVILLE, ME - Ticonic Gallery, a division of Waterville Creates, is calling for Maine-based makers, artists, and crafters to submit their work to Made: Maine Makers Market, a seasonal popup marketplace set to open November 15, 2025.

Made, which in previous years appeared under the name Holiday Bazaar, will be Waterville Creates' 10th annual artist shop. The 2024 Holiday Bazaar featured the works of more than 100 Maine-based artists, providing a space for creative minds to sell their wares and showcase their diverse talents.

"Made is a tribute to makers—a celebration of the creativity and craftsmanship

that thrive here in Maine," said Marie Sugden, Ticonic Gallery's exhibitions coordinator. "I am continually inspired by the artists who participate and deeply grateful for the opportunity to support their small businesses while sharing their incredible work with our community."

Celebrating the artistry and craftsmanship of Maine's talented makers, this seasonal marketplace features a curated selection of locally handmade wares, offering visitors the chance to discover unique treasures and one-of-a-kind gifts created by Maine artisans.

Artists can learn more and submit the application form at watervillecreates.org/shows/call-for-makers-made.

[org/shows/call-for-makers-made](http://watervillecreates.org/shows/call-for-makers-made).

Important Dates:
Submission Dates: February 17–May 31, 2025
Late Submission Dates: June 1–15, 2025
Selected Makers Will Be Notified: June 20, 2025
Inventory Drop-Off: Early October 2025
Exhibition Dates: November 15, 2025–January 26, 2026

Opening Reception: December 5, 2025, 5–7pm
Ticonic Gallery is open 11am–7pm daily, except Tuesdays and federal holidays. Learn more about the gallery at ticonic.org.

Bickford appointed lead Republican on Taxation committee

AUGUSTA, ME – Senator Bruce Bickford (R – Androscoggin) has been appointed to serve as the Senate Republican lead on the Legislature's Taxation Committee. Bickford previously served as a Representative for 12 years. He served five terms on the Taxation Committee.

A lifelong Auburn resident, Senator Bickford returned to the Maine Legislature represent Senate District 20 after a two-year break. He is serving his first term in the Maine Senate and his seventh legislative term overall.

Senator Bickford has spent his career managing small businesses throughout central and southern Maine. He also worked as a pharmacy technician in Auburn prior to his current



State Senate term. Bickford maintains his local business connections as a board member of the Auburn Business Association.

During his past legislative service, then Representative Bickford was instrumental in ushering in two of the largest income tax cuts in Maine's history.

"I'm excited to continue working on the Taxation Committee. Mainers currently experience the

highest property tax burden and the fourth highest overall tax burden in the United States. I look forward to pursuing policies that help Mainer's keep their hard-earned dollars."

Senator Bruce Bickford represents Auburn, Durham and Poland in Androscoggin County and New Gloucester in Cumberland County. He served in the Maine House of Representatives during the 124th – 125th Legislatures and the 127th - 130th Legislatures.

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

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Seniors Not Acting Their Age

A Glorious Day on Mount Kearsarge North



A 115-year old fire tower stands atop Mount Kearsarge North



Rugged terrain is encountered on the Mount Kearsarge Trail



A hiker emerges onto the Mount Kearsarge summit ledges

Located on the outskirts of North Conway, New Hampshire, Mount Kearsarge North, elevation 3,268 feet, is an excellent intermediate mountain hike. Ledges on the upper western slope offer wonderful views of surrounding mountains and the distinctive fire tower at the top provides phenomenal panoramic vistas.

Originally called Mount Pequawket, Mount Kearsarge has an interesting history. Like several New Hampshire peaks, the summit was the site of a small hotel in the 19th century. A bridle path was constructed in 1845 to transport guests by horse. The hotel reputedly “blew off the mountain” and was

rebuilt, only to blow away a second time. In 1909, it was replaced by one of the earliest fire towers in New Hampshire. The Mount Pequawket Fire Tower was operated by the Forest Service until 1960. The sturdy structure has withstood over a century of adverse weather conditions and is open to the public.

My friend, Kenny DeCoster, and I are both coping with knee problems and have been considering a moderate mountain hike to test our limitations. After reviewing the various options, we decided on Mount Kearsarge, a six-mile roundtrip trek. Much of the trail is on the former bridle path so there is minimal steep rock scrambling, an activity that is particularly challenging for our ailing knees. We chose a mid-January day for the outing.

We met at a rest area on Route 16 in North Conway on a clear, sunny day with seasonably moderate temperatures. Since parking is limited at the trailhead, we left Kenny’s truck in the rest area parking lot and drove a short distance to the trailhead on Hurricane Road in North Conway. Only two parking spaces remained when we arrived.

Gusty winds were forecasted for the summit, so we packed plenty of protective clothing. However, if confronted with unusually destructive winds, retreat was

our plan. The surface at the trailhead was a combination of hard-packed snow and ice so we started out with micro spikes and wore them throughout the trek.

Some buildings were visible on the right as we hiked easily on a wide trail in a predominantly hardwood forest. After perhaps a half-mile, the path narrowed and steepened. The trail in this area has been severely damaged by erosion and sections were free of snow and ice. Since the bare ground was frozen, we decided to continue wearing micro spikes.

The surrounding forest gradually transitioned from hardwood to mixed conifer and the gradient intensified as we persisted upward. And, the snow depth began to increase.

Soon after, we arrived at a lengthy stretch of icy open ledges. The ledges provided an opportunity to enjoy partial views of the Saco River Valley and the barren summits of the Moat Range in the west.

At the top of the ledges, we entered a dense spruce growth on a narrow twisting path. This section of the trail rises steadily as it wraps around the steep northwest side of the upper reaches of the

mountain. We encountered pockets of hard ice in this area that required careful maneuvering.

Angling northeasterly, we slowly progressed over rough terrain in stunted mountain growth and emerged onto exposed summit ledges with marvelous views facing south. Contrary to the ominous forecast, the winds were almost nonexistent. We were amazed at our good fortune as conditions were nothing short of glorious.

We proceeded towards the prominent fire tower that could be seen above mountain scrub. Two hikers were leaving the impressive structure when we arrived. After removing our micro spikes, we climbed the stairway to the glass-encased enclosure. The 360-degree views from the tower and the exterior deck were phenomenal. We settled in for a leisurely lunch break surrounded by wondrous vistas.

Caution was the watchword for our return. The icy areas on the ledges were particularly hazardous and, since descending causes greater stress on knees and hips, we slowed to a deliberate pace in steep sections.

Mount Kearsarge is a popular trek and we met about a dozen hikers

during our descent. Most importantly, we experienced minimal knee discomfort during the outing. More winter hikes appear to be in our futures.

My mountain guidebook, *Mountains for Mortals – New England* provides detailed directions, a map, and precise orienteering data for this hike. And, my latest book, *Maine Al Fresco: The Fifty Finest Outdoor Adventures in Maine* narrates exciting climbs on the nine best mountain hikes in 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 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 or he can be reached at ronchaseoutdoors@comcast.net

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Ambassador program features farm visits, career exploration

MAINE -- University of Maine Cooperative Extension 4-H is offering its Ag Ambassador program in March and April. The program, open to all Maine teens ages 14-18, focuses on career exploration in the local food system through farm and production visits around the state and provides opportunities to build relationships with industry professionals.

The Spring 2025 cohort will meet virtually on March 4, 11, 25, April 2 and 15 from 3:30-5 p.m. with in-person farm visits on March 22 at Mook Sea Farm and March 29 at Agri Cycle at Stoneyvale Farm. There will be an overnight Ag Symposium for all participants on April 21-22 at UMaine in Orono. For a full schedule, visit the program website.

With the shrinking number of formal agricultural programs offered to high school youth, students are lacking opportunities to

learn about local food systems and discover careers in agriculture. The 4-H Ag Ambassador program aims to help teens from all walks of life discover a future in agriculture and connect with other young people with similar goals.

Youth involved in this program will have opportunities to pursue their interest in agriculture and explore career pathways. This includes mentoring in post-secondary opportunities, as well as investigating current issues related to food systems, livestock, crop sciences, aquaculture and climate issues impacting food systems and equity. Program participants will serve year-long terms as Agriculture Ambassadors for the Maine 4-H program under the guidance of 4-H staff.

This program is open to all Maine youth; previous 4-H membership is not required to enroll. Register on the program website.



Ag Ambassadors at Pineland Farms learn about the dairy cattle herd and agritourism.

All participants will be enrolled as members of the Maine 4-H program. To request reasonable accommodation, please contact Alisha Targonski at alisha.targonski@maine.edu or call 207.622.7546.

University of Maine Cooperative Extension: As a trusted resource for over 100 years, Extension has supported UMaine's land and sea grant public education role by conducting community-driven,

research-based programs in every Maine county. UMaine Extension seeks to build thriving communities and help grow the food-based economy. Extension also leads Maine's 4-H program, the most suc-



Ag Ambassadors exploring experimental seedlings going into the Roger Clapp Greenhouses on the University of Maine Orono campus.

cessful out-of-school youth educational program in the state. 4-H programs are grounded in the belief that kids learn best by doing and suit a variety of backgrounds, interests, budgets and schedules. Participants complete hands-on projects in areas like health, science, agriculture and civic engagement in a positive environment where they are encouraged to take on proactive leadership roles.

Plan released for Maine child safety, family well-being

AUGUSTA, ME — The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Maine Child Welfare Action Network (MCWAN) announced the release of Maine's Child Safety and Family Well-Being Plan (2025-2030), a comprehensive five-year plan aimed at promoting the safety and well-being of children in Maine by strengthening support for families.

Recognizing that children, youth, and families too often end up interacting with Maine's child welfare agency long after needed supports could or should have been accessed, Governor Mills in early 2023 announced that DHHS and MCWAN would partner to develop a plan to ensure families in Maine have the support they need, when they need it. In May 2023,

DHHS and MCWAN released an initial plan, providing a framework for state agencies and communities to enhance available support for children and families.

The new five-year plan released today builds on this 2023 framework, by further aligning state agencies, community partners, and individuals around the guiding principle that keeping children safe starts with keeping families strong. The plan, which was developed in collaboration with parents, caregivers, youth, community leaders, and state and local partners, acknowledges that creating a state where children, parents, and caregivers have the support they need to thrive requires collaboration across communities and sectors.

"The new five-year

plan released today is a step forward in our efforts to safeguard the well-being of children in Maine," said Department of Health and Human Services Commissioner Sara Gagné-Holmes. "This framework will guide collective efforts to prioritize and strengthen prevention measures, which are key to laying a strong foundation of safety and stability that benefits every child and family in Maine."

"This plan establishes a shared commitment to ensuring children and their families can get the help they need, when they need it. It's important that this plan is not just about policies – it is about people," said MCWAN Coordinator, Melissa Hackett. "It was shaped by the voices of families and communities, and we invite all Mainers to play a role in making it

a success."

About the Plan

The Maine Child Safety and Family Well-Being Plan (2025-2030) builds on the initial plan, which was released in May 2023 and provided the foundation for a coordinated child safety and family well-being system. Since then, Maine has made notable progress, including:

Increased legislative investments in family support services.

Strengthened community collaboration to expand local support networks.

Launched the "Be There for ME" campaign to raise awareness of support for parents and caregivers.

The new plan includes updated goals and strategies to advance family well-being and underscores that state and community partners share responsibili-

ty for realizing this plan.

The plan includes two core goals and aligned strategies to proactively support families and strengthen the network of resources available statewide.

Goal 1: Parents and caregivers provide safety, health, and nurturing care for their children.

Goal 2: Families experience a supportive and coordinated child safety and family well-being system.

The 2025-2030 plan is intended to be a living roadmap that can adapt to evolving needs of families and communities, while reinforcing that improving child safety in Maine depends on collaboration at every level – from state agencies and local organizations to neighbors, educators, and health professionals.

For more information about Maine's Child Safety and Family Well-Being Plan, visit <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/programs-services/human-services/child-safety-and-wellbeing-plan>.

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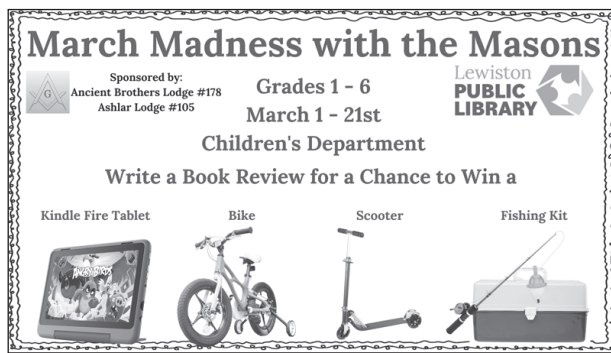
March Madness with the Masons

LEWISTON, ME -- From March 1st to the 21st, the Lewiston Public Library is partnering with the Ancient Brothers Lodge #178 and Ashlar Lodge #105 to host the 3rd annual March Madness with the Masons. This Masonic Lodge literacy program is for children in Lewiston and Auburn and to give away brand new bikes, Kindle Fire tablets, scooters and fishing kits.

To participate, kids in grades 1 through 6 will fill out a book review at the library. For every book review completed, a raffle

ticket with their name will be entered into the drawing to win a prize. Kids may submit more than one book review. Once the winners are chosen, a reception will be held on April 5th at 11am for kids to receive one of the prizes in Callahan Hall at the Lewiston Public Library.

The brothers of Ancient Brothers Lodge #178 are excited to partner with the Lewiston Public Library to expand our lodge's Bikes for Books program. To continue to work at improving the community at large, as



well as to aid in the success of our children and the future to come, it's essential to establish a love for reading early in life. Towards that end, the Maine Masonic Charity Foundation and Masons in

Maine are happy to bring the Masonic Bikes for Books program to children throughout Maine. The objectives of the program are fourfold:

To increase children's reading and com-

prehension skills.

To recognize positive child achievements.

To provide an attainable goal, with life enhancing results.

To get children to be active outside.

The Ashlar Lodge literacy program is designed to help schools promote reading for Kindergarten through sixth grade students. The libraries provide a reading program to encourage kids to read and they provide Kindles as an incentive. They feel that Kindles will help students gain access to reading

through the public library system and learn to enjoy reading. As one of the seven liberal arts and sciences, they believe reading will help children grow and prosper into young adults and accomplish their goals in life.

The Lewiston Public Library is located downtown at 200 Lisbon Street at the corner of Pine Street and Lisbon Street. More information on this program is available by contacting the Lewiston Public Library at 513-3133 or LPLKids@lewiston-maine.gov.

Maine Music Society Chorale presents *Out of the Ashes*

LEWISTON, ME — The Maine Music Society Chorale announces its upcoming concert, *Out of the Ashes: Music Born of Tragedy*, on Saturday, March 8, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. and Sunday, March 9, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. at the Franco Center in Lewiston. Based in Lewiston-Auburn, The Maine Music Society Chorale recently celebrated 50 years of singing. Led by Artistic Director Richard Nickerson, the upcoming concert will be an emotional musical journey through some of the bleakest times in human history. According to Nickerson, "This concert will show the incredible power of music to express any human emotion as well as the healing power of music. Throughout history, music has been used as a response to tragedy."

Among the works performed will be the world premiere of a new

piece by Michael John Trotta, *These Things Shall Never Die*, commissioned by the Maine Music Society and dedicated to all victims of the October 25, 2023, Lewiston tragedy. "This piece is our gift to, not only our local community, but the greater choral community as well. It symbolizes that we must continue to look for good, even in the face of evil," said Nickerson.

In the first half of the program, the Chorale will perform Donald McCullough's *Holocaust Cantata (Songs from the Camps)*. The work consists of songs written by concentration camp prisoners as well as readings based on interview transcripts, historical data, and prisoner stories. The second half will consist of several works, each one representing a different event. The concert will conclude with the uplift-



The Maine Music Society Chorale. Photo by Jared Morneau

ing Leon Dubinsky's *We Rise Again*, which has become an anthem of resilience in the face of adversity.

"We know this will be a powerful concert that deals with a very difficult

subject, but it is our hope that audiences will be inspired by the power of the human spirit," concluded Nickerson.

Both performances will include sign language interpretation. A limited number of reserved seats close to the sign language interpreters are available. Please call the MMS box office at 207-333-3386 by February 28 for tickets to that section.

A limited number of vouchers for free tickets for either performance can be obtained at both the Lewiston and the Auburn Public Libraries' reference desks and at the Maine Resiliency Center upon in-person request.

These vouchers must be redeemed for the actual tickets following the instructions on the vouchers.

For more information, or to purchase tickets, visit us online at mainemusicsociety.org or call the MMS office at 207-333-3386.

Tickets:
Adult - \$27*
Senior - \$25*
Student - \$6*(age 13+)

Children under 12: free (when accompanied by an adult)

*Price includes all handling fees

Group rates available for 10 or more tickets to the same performance

purchased at the same time. Call our business office: 207-333-3386.

The Maine Music Society thanks its Season Underwriters Hardy, Wolf & Downing and the Sun Journal, its Event Sponsor Maple Way Dental, and its Event Supporter Andwell Health Partners. MMS is also grateful to the Davis Family Foundation for a grant helping to make this concert accessible to all.

The Maine Music Society (MMS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to enriching the cultural life of the Lewiston-Auburn area through performances of choral music in a broad range of musical genres.

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

Initiative connects Maine youth to climate careers

AUGUSTA, ME – The Maine Department of Labor announced that Maine has been selected by the National Governors Association (NGA) to participate in a new initiative that will help connect youth volunteers to rewarding, in-demand climate careers.

The Service-to-Career Pathways Policy Academy, an initiative of the NGA Center for Best Practices, provides states with funding and technical assistance to enhance pathways from volunteer service to employment opportunities. Maine will leverage \$50,000 in grant funding to establish new certified pre-apprentice-

ship pathways for the Maine Climate Corps and other youth corps programs, through a partnership among the Maine Department of Labor, the Governor’s Energy Office, and Volunteer Maine.

Created in 2023, the Maine Climate Corps Network empowers volunteers to help the state address effects of climate change, in areas such as community and coastal resilience, clean energy, transportation, and housing. This initiative will provide a pathway for volunteers from corps programs into registered apprenticeships for key climate occupations.

“This initiative will

empower Maine Climate Corps volunteers to transition their skills, experience, and enthusiasm into meaningful, well-paying careers,” said Governor Janet Mills. “These efforts will strengthen Maine’s workforce, help to meet demand in fast-growing sectors such as clean energy, and bolster our fight against climate change on Maine.”

“Through NGA’s Service-to-Career Pathways Policy Academy, Maine will strengthen the connection between essential Maine Climate Corps programs and high-quality climate career opportunities by certifying these

programs as pre-apprenticeships,” said Labor Commissioner Laura Fortman. “This coordinated effort will create a seamless entry point for Maine’s young adults to connect with registered apprenticeships, build the climate workforce pipeline, and provide participants the opportunity for continued growth through upskilling and advancement.”

“The National Governor’s Association’s Service-to-Career Pathways funding expands opportunities for Service Corps Members in Maine to engage in meaningful career development while they serve,” said Maryalice



Crofton, Executive Director of Volunteer Maine. “While Member development has always been a feature of AmeriCorps and similar state programs, this grant provides resources to identify specific pathways

and add certification and credentialing to the Member experience.”

Learn more about Maine’s climate goals in the state’s updated four-year climate action plan, *Maine Won’t Wait*.

AARP survey highlights needs, concerns of older Maine residents

PORTLAND, ME -- In an ongoing effort to better understand the needs and attitudes of older residents in the state, in 2024 AARP Maine conducted a Vital Voices survey with 708 Maine residents aged 45 and older. Conducted tri-annually, the survey data highlights older Mainers’ interests and concerns, assesses awareness on select topics, and signals advocacy and outreach priorities for the state office. The 2024 Vital Voices survey included issues such as health care, financial security, energy costs, caregiving, livable communities and housing.

“AARP Maine is dedicated to improving the lives of Mainers aged 50 and older, as well as their families,” said Noël Bonam, AARP Maine State Director. “Through state-specific surveys such as Vital Voices, we gain valuable insights into the needs and desires of older adults in Maine. Our re-

search bolsters our efforts to advocate for fair utility rates, seek support for Maine’s family caregivers and provide resources on health and retirement security.”

Results from the AARP Maine Vital Voices survey include the following:

Caregiving is a pressing issue for Maine adults 45-plus according to the survey:

70% are currently providing care to a loved one or have done so in the past.

87% say it is extremely or very important to be able to stay in their own home as they get older.

27% say that it is extremely or very likely that they will provide care on an unpaid basis to an adult loved one in the future.

85% of current or past caregivers said that they spend their own money on transportation, medical devices, direct care

or home modifications, to help care for a loved one.

“Maine is home to 166,000 family caregivers, which is 12 percent of the state’s total population,” explains Bonam. “With the average caregiver spending over \$7,000 out-of-pocket each year to care for a loved one, we know that this issue is of paramount importance in the state with the oldest population.”

Earlier this month, AARP Maine announced its 2025 Legislative Priorities, noting that 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 Recovery 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. 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.

Utility costs are a concern for older Mainers: 81% say that an increase in electricity bills would be a problem.

Only 20% (one in five) Maine residents say their elected officials are doing enough to keep electricity affordable.

67% have seen their electricity bill go up in the past 12 months.

“High utility rates, coupled with rising housing, food, and medicine expenses, force many vulnerable, older adults to make tough choices,” said Bonam. “Mainers need more consumer protections, and AARP Maine is committed to ensuring that all Mainers have access to fair and reasonable electric rates. Any discus-

sion 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 which are transferred to ratepayers, should be re-evaluated and restructured in a fair and reasonable manner.

Financial security in retirement is on the minds of survey respondents:

88% believe having enough income or savings to retire is extremely or very important.

89% say having adequate Social Security benefits is extremely or very important.

91% feel that having financial security throughout their lives is extremely or very important.

“We know that Mainers 50-plus continue to experience financial strain whether they are working

or already retired,” said Bonam. “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 research highlights older Mainers’ voices at a moment when they need to be heard,” said Bonam. “AARP is listening, and we’ll use these findings to inform our work and help older Mainers and their families access important tools, resources and engagement opportunities as they age.”

Methodology
The Vital Voices survey of 708 Maine residents age 45 and older was conducted between July 17, 2024 and July 28, 2024. All data have been weighted by age, gender, and race/ethnicity according to 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates. Survey results have a 3.7% margin of error.

Collins championed 5 of 15 health care bills signed into law

WASHINGTON, D.C. – In the 118th Congress, there were 1,868 standalone health care bills introduced in both the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives. Of those bills, 600 received Committee consideration, 53 passed at least one chamber of Congress, and 15 passed both chambers and were signed into law. U.S. Senator Susan Collins led or co-led 5 of those 15 bills to passage with strong bipartisan support. They are as follows:

The National Alzheimer’s Project Act (NAPA) Reauthorization – A bill to reauthorize NAPA until 2035 and update language in recognition of the need to include underserved populations, including individuals with Down syn-



drome. The Alzheimer’s Accountability and Investment Act (AAIA) – A bill to require the Director of the National Institutes of Health to submit an annual budget to Congress estimating the necessary funding to fully implement NAPA.

The Building Our Largest Dementia (BOLD) Infrastructure for Alzheimer’s Reauthorization Act – A bill to authorize \$33 million per year over the next five years to support Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias Public Health Centers of Excel-

lence dedicated to promoting effective Alzheimer’s disease and caregiving interventions, as well as State Health Department cooperative agreements with the CDC to meet local needs in promoting brain health.

Supporting and Improving Rural EMS Needs (SIREN) Reauthorization Act – A bill to extend funding for five additional years for SIREN Act grants to rural fire and EMS agencies nationwide. These grants support rural EMS agencies in training and recruiting staff, conducting certification courses, and purchasing equipment,

including naloxone to address the opioid overdose epidemic.

The Autism CARES Act of 2024 – A bill to authorize over \$2 billion over the next five years for autism research and training programs, as well as required studies on how to increase the number of developmental behavioral pediatricians and on the aging process as a focus area of autism research activities. The bill will also create a new Autism Intervention Research Network for Communication Needs that will benefit autistic individuals who may be unable or

limited in using speech or language to communicate.

“These five bills will combat some of the largest public health challenges of our time by enhancing care for individuals with Alzheimer’s, autism, and substance abuse issues through improved research funding, strengthened public health programs, and workforce development,” said Senator Collins. “They also provide critical support for rural EMS agencies in Maine, equipping them to better serve their communities and address the opioid epidemic. Together, these laws represent meaningful steps to improve health care access, services, and outcomes. Throughout my Senate service, health care, biomedical research, and rural workforce develop-

ment have been among my greatest priorities and I am proud to have led to passage these bills that will benefit Maine families and communities across the state.”

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Lewiston residents invited to share ideas for Sunnyside Park



LEWISTON, ME – According to a recent study, urban greenspaces are critical components of healthy and sustainable cities. On Tue., Feb. 25, the City of Lewiston invites all to participate in the Sunnyside Park Spark Session to exchange ideas and improvements to the decades’ old park.

“A true gem in Back Bay Lewiston, Sunnyside Park is a precious and valued resource for our entire community, and especially for the Sunnyside neighborhood,” said Lewiston

City Councilor Josh Nagine, Ward 1. “I’m looking forward to friends and neighbors engaging to inform a citizen-driven action plan for improvements and updates at Sunnyside Park and strongly encourage residents with any interest to participate in the process.”

Nestled in a wooded area along the Androscoggin River, Sunnyside Park lies at the end of Whipple Street, off Main Street. The park currently features two basketball courts, a swing set and multipurpose field.

All are invited to

share their ideas, from bringing back an ice rink, or improving the Riverwalk along the Androscoggin, at the Sunnyside Spark Session. Those unable to attend may email their comments to hello@lewistonmaine.gov.

Sunnyside Park Spark Session

6 PM – 7:30 PM on Tue., Feb. 25, 2025

Lewiston Public Works, 103 Adams St.

Anyone with ideas to bring the park back to life - bring a friend and let’s get brainstorming.

Opportunity to learn more about volunteering with 4-H

MAINE -- University of Maine Cooperative Extension is hosting online informational sessions for adults interested in becoming Maine 4-H volunteers. Participants can choose from two options: noon–1 p.m. on February 21 and 28 or 6–7 p.m. on March 3 and 10.

“Start Your 4-H Volunteer Journey” will provide participants with information about the UMaine Extension 4-H youth development program through four short e-Learning modules. Attendees will also participate in an experiential educational activity, learn about the key aspects of positive youth development and be introduced to the ages and stages of youth. The two one-hour virtual sessions will wrap up with an outline of next steps and an introduction to a county staff contact to



Photo courtesy University of Maine Cooperative Extension / Edwin Remsburg.

help with the application process if desired.

4-H is a positive youth development program that helps youth “find their spark” and thrive. Volunteers play key roles in these experiences, making a difference by helping youth explore and discover the skills they need to lead successful and fulfilling lives. Adults interested in starting a 4-H club, sharing expertise and passion

through shorter programs that last a few hours or a few weeks, or assisting with local county 4-H events are encouraged to attend.

The informational sessions are free; registration is required on the program webpage. For more information or to request a reasonable accommodation, contact Jennifer Lobley, jennifer.lobley@maine.edu, 207.255.3345.

EPA to review cleanups at Maine Superfund sites

BOSTON, MA – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will conduct comprehensive reviews of completed cleanup work at five National Priorities List (NPL) Superfund sites in Maine this year.

Each individual site will undergo a legally required Five-Year Review to ensure that previous remediation efforts continue to protect public health and the environment. Upon completion of the Five-Year Review, the report will be available on each

site’s individual EPA site profile.

This year, EPA will conduct Five-Year Reviews for the sites listed below. The web links provided include detailed information on the status of each site, previous assessments and cleanup activities.

Five-Year Reviews of Superfund sites in Maine to be completed in 2025:

- Eastland Woolen Mill (Corinna)
- Pinette’s Salvage Yard (Washburn)
- Saco Municipal Landfill (Saco)

Brunswick Naval Air Station (Brunswick)

Loring Air Force Base (Limestone)

More information:

The Superfund program, a federal program established by Congress in 1980, investigates and cleans up the most complex, uncontrolled, or abandoned hazardous waste sites in the country and EPA endeavors to facilitate activities to return them to productive use. In total, there are 123 Superfund sites across New England.

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

CAREERCENTER RESUME WORKSHOP

Tuesday, March 11th
11:00am
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WinterKids announces Ski Free Days

MAINE – WinterKids, a nonprofit dedicated exclusively to inspiring and increasing outdoor physical activity for children and families in Maine, is thrilled to announce three upcoming “Ski Free” days. These special events will provide unforgettable winter sports experiences for over 200 youth, thanks to partnerships with Teens to Trails, Black Mountain of Maine, Downeast Family YMCA, Camden Snow Bowl, Central Aroostook Association, and Big Rock Mountain.

Ski Free Days are fully sponsored by WinterKids and all participants will be provided with lift tickets, rentals, and instruction at no cost to them. These outings aim to make skiing accessible

to all kids, regardless of where they live or their financial situation.

WinterKids Ski Free Days Schedule:

Sunday, March 2, 2025 – Black Mountain of Maine In partnership with Teens to Trails, over 100 students from 10 different middle and high schools will head to Black Mountain for a group ski trip.

Saturday, March 8, 2025 – Big Rock Mountain In partnership with Central Aroostook Association and instructional assistance from the Adaptive Outdoor Education Center, up to 40 participants will enjoy winter recreation at Big Rock Mountain.

Supporting WinterKids’ Mission

Ski Free Days put our mission into action by



helping children develop healthy lifelong habits through education and fun, outdoor winter activity. WinterKids supports all winter enthusiasts, from first-time skiers to experienced riders, and is especially passionate about introducing new participants to winter sports and recreation in Maine.

Approximately 50% of attendees at these events will be experiencing skiing or snowboarding for the first time. By eliminating financial and geographic barriers, WinterKids aims to give all children the opportunity to participate in, and enjoy, winter sports.

WinterKids would also like to recognize and extend a special thank you to Black Mountain of Maine, Big Rock Mountain, and Camden Snow Bowl for their partnership and support in making these ski trips a reality. For more information about WinterKids, please visit <https://winterkids.org>.



EMAIL BASICS

Two-Part Class

Part 1

Wednesday, February 19th @2pm-3pm
2nd Floor Idea Lab

Part 2

Thursday, February 20th @2pm-3pm
2nd Floor Idea Lab

Free. Registration Required.



Lewiston PUBLIC LIBRARY




Wednesday, March 19th
2pm-4pm
First Floor Couture Room

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Report: Climate programs spur \$2.2B investments in Maine

AUGUSTA, ME – The past few years have seen Maine families, local businesses, and Wabanaki Nations benefit from at least \$2.2 billion in direct and induced investments in clean technology thanks to federal funding provided by Congress, according to a new analysis issued today.

For the first time, the report quantifies the total investment in Maine made possible from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and comes at a time when the Trump Administration is considering cutting this lifeline for local communities.

“Federal climate investments are making a real difference for Maine families and businesses by helping us become more energy independent, creating good-paying jobs, and developing new sources

of homegrown clean energy,” said Jack Shapiro, Climate & Clean Energy Director at the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) who authored the report. “Programs like this, many of which serve Maine’s low-income and rural communities, are at risk if Congress and the Trump Administration take the drastic step of repealing these important funding sources.”

NRCM conducted a new analysis of data from the MIT/Rhodium Group Clean Investment Monitor, identifying \$2.2 billion in direct and induced public and private investments that have benefited Maine since the passage of the IRA. The total includes \$494.1 million in direct federal investment. When private investments are included, Maine has seen \$842.1 million in large-scale solar, wind,

and energy storage investments, and \$1.37 billion invested in clean energy technologies for families and businesses like rooftop solar, heat pumps, and zero-emission cars spurred on by federal programs.

“This report details the indisputable connection between clean energy and a competitive economy,” said Lindsay Bourgoine, Director of Policy and Government Affairs at ReVision Energy. “As a Maine-based and founded company, we are reinvesting these federal funds to build EV chargers, install heat pumps, and bring solar to schools, municipalities, and homeowners across the state, which creates a positive feedback loop for our local partners and communities. It is clear the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act and the Inflation Reduction Act strengthen our workforce,

drive economic growth, and offer Mainers relief on their energy bills.”

The report highlighted just a few of the local projects being supported in Maine that are benefiting Wabanaki Nations, low-income families, and local businesses:

\$206 million in energy grants and loans to rural small businesses and farms to help them reduce energy costs.

\$134 million for energy efficiency upgrades and increased access to solar energy for low-income families, and \$10 million for heat pumps in rural manufactured and mobile homes.

\$6.6 million to improve reliability of the electric grid for Wabanaki Nations and local Maine communities, and \$7.4 million to the Passamaquoddy Tribe for installation of solar and battery storage on

homes and offices.

\$23.5 million for Acadia National Park to transition to all-electric buses.

\$45 million in tax credits for energy efficiency upgrades that will benefit more than 21,000 Maine households.

\$65 million to improve the reliability of the electric grid in rural areas.

NRCM’s analysis also summarizes other findings showing clear economic benefits for Maine that result from investments in homegrown clean energy solutions:

Maine’s clean energy industry contributed \$2.31 billion to the state’s economy in 2022 alone and includes more than 2,500 clean energy businesses.

Maine’s existing renewable portfolio standard, which encourages clean energy development, already saves electricity

customers \$21.5 million per year.

Achieving the state’s goal of reaching 100% clean electricity by 2040 could reduce average household energy costs by approximately \$1,300 per year.

The programs in Efficiency Maine Trust’s latest triennial plan will push down electric rates for Maine families and businesses by more than \$490 million.

The report concludes, “Continuing federal clean energy investments and programs, and ensuring committed funding is deployed, is necessary to continue reducing energy costs for all residents, growing new jobs that keep people here, increasing energy independence, and reducing pollution, public health impacts, and climate risks in communities across the state.”

Red Cross: Donors needed to build up blood supply

PORTLAND, ME — The American Red Cross urges donors to give blood or platelets in February to help build up the blood supply after thousands of donations went uncollected last month. People of all blood types — especially those with type O negative blood — are encouraged to make and keep their donation appointments so hospitals can continue to ensure critical care for patients this winter.

Since the beginning of the year, hundreds of blood drives have been

canceled and more than 15,000 blood and platelet donations have gone uncollected due to severe winter weather and wildfires. As February continues, so does the potential for additional weather systems to disrupt blood drives. Flu and other seasonal illnesses are spreading, which could also force more people to cancel scheduled donation appointments, compounding the impact to collecting lifesaving blood products.

Give with your whole heart this month. To book a time to give blood or plate-

lets, use the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visit RedCrossBlood.org or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

As a thank-you, all who come to give through Feb. 28, 2025 will get a \$15 e-gift card to a merchant of choice. See RedCrossBlood.org/Flurry for details.

Upcoming blood donation opportunities Feb. 20-28:

- Androscoggin
Auburn
2/27/2025: 9 a.m. - 2 p.m., Edward Little High School, 77 Harris St

- Greene
2/22/2025: 8 a.m. - 1 p.m., Greene Fire Department, 106 Patten Road

- Cumberland
Brunswick
2/20/2025: 12 p.m. - 5 p.m., Bowdoin College, 8 Polar Loop, Morrell Lounge BLDG.

- 2/26/2025: 12 p.m. - 5 p.m., Elks Lodge, 179 Park Row

- Falmouth
2/26/2025: 9 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., The Episcopal Church of St. Mary, 43 Foreside Rd
Freeport

- 2/24/2025: 9 a.m. - 2 p.m., Hilton Garden Inn Freeport - Old Town Hall Building, 5 Park Street

- Gorham
2/20/2025: 1 p.m. - 6 p.m., Cressey Road Christian Church, 81 Cressey Road

- North Yarmouth
2/28/2025: 10 a.m. - 2:30 p.m., Wescustogo Hall and Community Center, 120 Memorial Hwy

- Portland
2/25/2025: 9 a.m. - 2 p.m., Cambria Hotel, 25 Hancock St

- 2/27/2025: 11 a.m. - 4 p.m., Jewish Commu-

- nity Alliance of Southern Maine, 1342 Congress St
South Portland

- 2/25/2025: 9 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., Eastpoint Christian Church, 345 Clarks Pond Pkwy

- 2/25/2025: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Southern Maine Community College Campus Center, 2 Fort Road
Westbrook

- 2/28/2025: 12 p.m. - 5 p.m., Westbrook Community Center, 426 Bridge Street

- Yarmouth
2/21/2025: 11 a.m. - 4 p.m., American Legion Post 91, 196 Main St

EPA recognizes Maine wastewater treatment entities for excellence

B O S T O N , ME – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) New England Office recently awarded 2024 Regional Wastewater Treatment Awards to one Maine wastewater facility and one individual to recognize them for their commitment to improving water quality.

For the past 40 years, the EPA Regional Wastewater Awards Program

EPA Regional Wastewater Awards Program has recognized personnel in the wastewater field who have provided invaluable public service managing and operating wastewater treatment facilities throughout New England.

2024 Regional Industrial Pretreatment Program Excellence Award

York Sewer District
The York Sewer District was honored for

exceptional work inspecting, permitting, and sampling industrial users that discharge industrial waste into the collection system. The District was one of only two in New England to receive this award.

The EPA Regional Industrial Pretreatment Program Excellence Award was established to recognize and honor employees of publicly owned wastewater treatment

plants for their commitment to improving water quality through outstanding oversight of its industrial users discharging to the municipal sewer system.

2024 EPA Regional Wastewater Trainer of the Year

Dr. Patrick Wiley of Southern Maine Community College

Dr. Wiley, who is the Water Treatment Tech-

nology Instructor of the Southern Maine Community College, was recognized for his outstanding work providing training to wastewater operators across Maine. Dr. Wiley was one of only two individuals across New England to receive this award.

The EPA Regional Wastewater Trainer of the Year was established to recognize and honor

the trainers who provide exemplary education to operators in the wastewater sector. Wastewater is a constantly evolving field, and operators are required to take many hours of training prior to becoming licensed, along with annual continuing education to keep them up to date on the newest technologies, contaminants, regulations, and other industry-specific topics.

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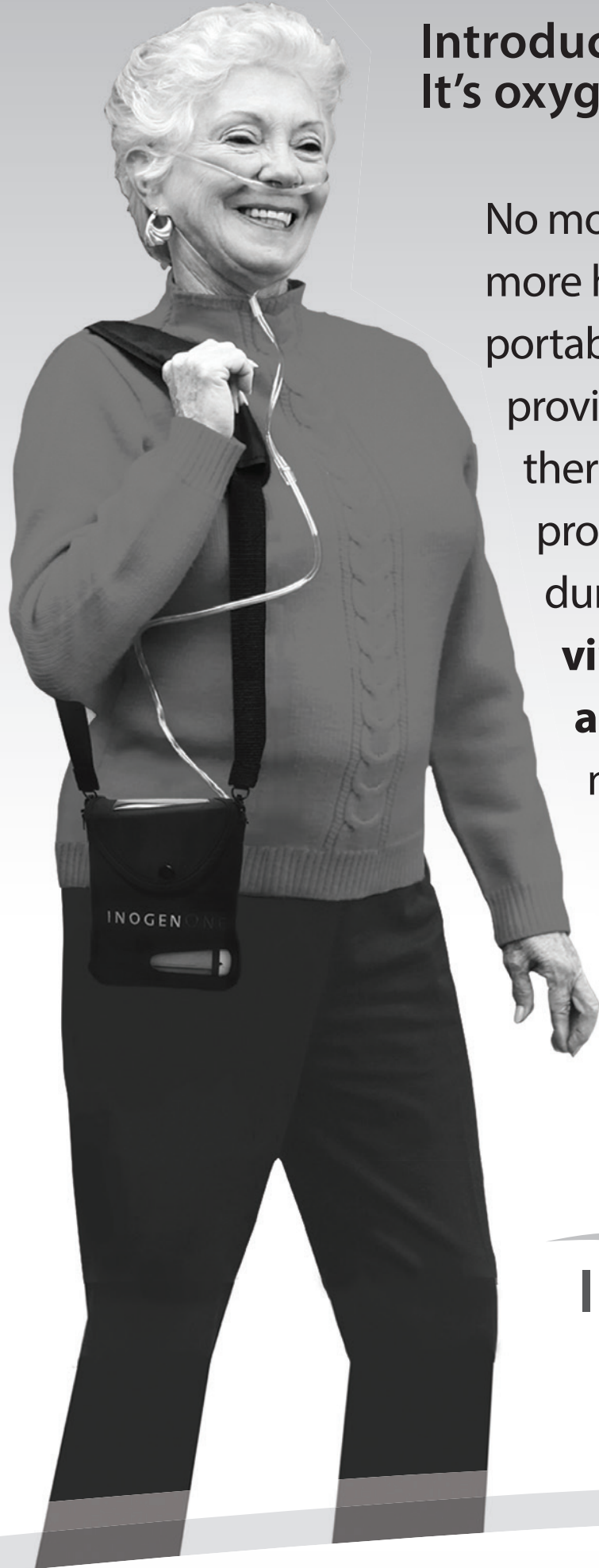
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Top schools shine in 8th annual WinterKids Winter Games



Rangeley Lakes Regional School-Gold Medal Winners

MAINE – WinterKids, an industry leader dedicated exclusively to inspiring and increasing outdoor physical activity for children and families in Maine, is thrilled to announce the winners of the 8th Annual WinterKids Winter Games, a four-week outdoor learning competition that engaged over 10,000 students and teachers across Maine.

This year's Winter Games, themed around Weather, encouraged students to become young scientists by observing and recording temperature, precipitation, wind, and clouds while participating in outdoor physical activities that promoted learning, teamwork, and fun.

The 2025 Gold Medal winner is Rangeley

Lakes Regional School (Rangeley, Franklin County), earning a \$5,000 cash prize for its outstanding participation and commitment to outdoor learning.

The Silver Medal was awarded to Lamoine Consolidated School (Lamoine, Hancock County), winning \$3,000, while Community Regional Charter School (Skowhegan, Somerset County) took home the Bronze Medal and \$1,500.

While these schools earned top honors, all participating schools received cash prizes and experienced positive outcomes—making every student, teacher, and community a winner in the spirit of the Winter Games.

In total, WinterKids has awarded \$18,250 to participating schools!

“This year’s Winter Games were a celebration of Maine’s winter season, science, and the power of outdoor learning,” said Courtney Holub, Executive Director of WinterKids. “We are so proud of all the schools that embraced the challenge, engaged their students, and brought their communities together in the spirit of movement, learning, and exploration.”

WinterKids Winter Games 2025 Highlights:

□ Cross-curricular teaching: Schools integrated math, science, language arts, social studies, physical education, and health into outdoor activities.

□ Outdoor exploration: Many students gained a newfound appreciation for the natural world through hands-on weather observations and activities like snowshoeing, skiing, tubing, and dog sledding.

□ Community building: The Winter Games fostered teamwork, school spirit, and family engagement, with school-wide events such as Opening and Closing Ceremonies, Outdoor Family Nights, and Community Lunches.



Lamoine Consolidated School-Silver Medal Winners



Community Regional Charter School-Bronze Medal Winners

Positive Health & Well-being Outcomes:

□ Encouraging active lifestyles: The Winter Games kept students moving outdoors, promoting physical fitness and healthy habits.

□ Boosting student confidence: Students gained confidence through

teamwork, leadership opportunities, and the challenge of trying new activities.

□ Strengthening social connections: Schools reported increased school spirit and collaboration among students, teachers, and families.

Since its inception,

the WinterKids Winter Games has grown into a highly anticipated annual event, inspiring children to be active and engaged with the outdoors. For more information about WinterKids and the Winter Games, visit www.winterkids.org/winter-games.

THE L-A VETERANS COUNCIL WANTS YOU TO KNOW THAT IT IS NOT TOO LATE TO HAVE YOUR LOVED ONES NAME ON THE NEXT STONE IN THE VETERANS PARK. NOVEMBER 2024 CALL JERRY DEWITT (207)-576-0376 TODAY, DON'T MISS IT, CALL TODAY. COST IS \$40.00. HONOR THOSE THAT HAVE SERVED.

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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.

Saturdays

AUBURN -- Books! Books! Books! The Auburn Public Library Bookstore is now open on Saturday mornings, from 9:30-1:00. Choose from hundreds of gently used books, with most prices under \$3. We have books for children, teens, and adults, fiction and non-fiction. We often have puzzles, CDs, and DVDs, too. Stop in and

browse our ever changing selection! Auburn Public Library, 49 Spring Street.

Feb 20

AUBURN -- Auburn Public Library will be hosting a session for Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month: Identifying Healthy Relationships, on Thursday, February 20th from 2 PM to 3 PM.

Feb 21 and 28 or Mar 3 and 10

MAINE -- University of Maine Cooperative Extension is hosting online informational sessions for adults interested in becoming Maine 4-H volunteers.

Participants can choose from two options: noon-1 p.m. on February 21 and 28 or 6-7 p.m. on March 3 and 10. The informational sessions are free; registration is required on the program webpage. For more information or to request a reasonable accommodation, contact Jennifer Lobley, jennifer.lobley@maine.edu, 207.255.3345.

Feb 21

LEWISTON -- Join us at the Lewiston Public Library for Family Movie Morning in the 3rd floor Callahan Hall on Friday, February 21st from 10:30am – 12:30pm. Chil-

dren and siblings of all ages welcome. Children under 8 must be accompanied by a caregiver.

Feb 22

LISBON FALLS – Dine in / Take out dinner on Saturday, February 22nd 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!

Feb 22

BUXTON -- Try our delicious Haddock Supper Buffet - Saturday, February 22, 2025 - 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.

Feb 22

GRAY -- First Congregational Church of Gray Saturday Night Church Supper, Saturday, February 22, 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.

Feb 25

LEWISTON -- According to a recent study, urban greenspaces are critical components of healthy and sustainable cities. On Tue., Feb. 25, the City of Lewiston invites all to participate in the Sunnyside Park Spark Session to exchange ideas and improvements to the decades' old park.

Mar 2

GRAY -- The Youth Group of the Gray Church invites you to a free pancake and sausage breakfast on Saturday, March 2, starting at 9:30 a.m. Blueberry, chocolate chip, gluten-free, and "just plain pancakes" will be on the grills. Regular and vegetarian breakfast sausage, fresh fruit, juice, and hot beverages will also be served. At 10 a.m., the annual Pancake Flipping Challenge and a variety Mardi Gras games begin. Experience the fun! Donations to benefit the Youth Group will be accepted at the door.

Mar 2, Mar 8

MAINE -- For the second year in a row, WinterKids, a nonprofit dedicated to keeping kids active in winter, is hosting three Ski Free Days in February and March in partnership with local organizations. These events will provide lift tickets, rentals, and instruction at no cost to participants, making skiing accessible regardless of where kids live or their financial position.

□ March 2 – Black Mountain (Teens to Trails, 100+ students)

□ March 8 – Big Rock Mountain (Central Aroostook Association, 40+ participants)

Mar 8, 9

LEWISTON -- The Maine Music Society Chorale announces its upcoming concert, Out of the Ashes: Music Born of Tragedy, on Saturday, March 8, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. and Sunday, March 9, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. at the Franco Center in Lewiston.

Mar 14

LEWISTON – At 10:00am the Lewiston Public Library Children's Department will be offering the program Little Masterpieces – Mess-Free Painting. During this program, caregivers will be able to help their babies create a work of art using a technique to limit the mess of traditional finger-painting while still providing

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babies the tactile experience and visual stimulation from manipulating paint on paper. This program is recommended for parents and their babies between the ages of 3 months – 18 months. This program will take place in the program room in the Children's Department on the third floor of the library. The activity is free and there is no registration required.

Mar 15

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

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

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

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

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

Mar 21

LEWISTON -- SeniorsPlus, the designated Agency on Aging for Western Maine, will hold a breakfast to benefit its Meals on Wheels nutrition program. The 2025 Fill the Plate Breakfast will be held from 7 to 9 a.m. on Friday, March 21, at the Hilton Garden Inn Riverwatch in Auburn. The breakfast will honor Lewiston resident Margaret Craven with the 2025 Ikaria Award and feature a talk by singer Julia Gagnon. Tickets are \$30 per person (\$35 at the door) and are available at www.seniorsplus.org/march-for-meals or by calling 207-795-4010. Seats are limited and advance registration is recommended.

Mar 31

LEWISTON -- Join us at the Lewiston Public Library for Read and Create Silly Storybooks in the Children's Department on Monday, March 31st at 11am. Recommended for children ages 6 – 13 years old and siblings are welcome. Come listen in on a silly story read-aloud and create your very own silly storybook using pictures and ad libs in a paper booklet. Get creative by filling in the blanks with silly words and illustrate your very own silly story. All materials are provided. This program is free, open to the public, and no registration is required.

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Direct Support workers help Mainers stay connected to their communities

From her earliest memories, Kathleen's mother, Alice, has been independent. Having raised four children largely on her own, Alice worked until she was 85 and is a fixture in their island community.

But as Alice aged, her vision began to deteriorate. She wanted to continue living independently in the home and community she loved, but she and her kids knew that she needed a helping hand to remain safe and happy.

For the family, that helping hand came from Jim, a Direct Support worker, who lives nearby, and now visits Alice for a few hours, several days a week. He supports her with a variety of household tasks, including shopping and preparing meals. Often, the most valuable support is the conversation and camaraderie he provides.

"Jim is my godsend," Alice said. "I look forward to him every single week."

Jim is part of the growing field of Direct Support, ensuring that Mainers with age-related, physical, behavioral, intellectual and cognitive health needs have the support they need to stay safe, independent and empowered to achieve their personal goals.

For Jim, this is the ideal encore career. At 65, he retired from his full-time job; but after two years, he began to feel restless.

"If you have too much time you can overthink things and feel like you're missing out on something," he said. "But when you're helping somebody, it feels like you're in exactly the right spot. And that's such a good feeling."

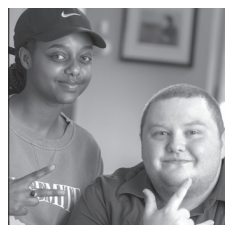
For Dakota, 24, the steady presence of a Personal Support Specialist, Sonya, has made all the difference in the world. Dakota, who lives with intellectual and developmental disabilities, says that Sonya's support has allowed him to gain the independence and a sense of connection to the community that he didn't have before. In addition to assisting with activities of daily living, her support allows him to go to the movies, go to bookstores and do many other activities he loves.

"It makes me feel so happy to be a part of society," he said. "With her support, I really feel like I've been able to flourish."

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



"It makes me feel so happy to be a part of society,"



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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.

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

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

NOVEMBER 16-26, 2025

- CLASSICAL GREECE

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

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

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

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