

St. Mary’s Health System expands mental health services

LEWISTON, ME — St. Mary’s Health System has officially opened its new Day Hospital Program, offering intensive outpatient mental health treatment for adults in need of short-term, structured support. Located on the St. Mary’s campus in Lewiston, the program is already serving patients and helping fill a critical gap in Maine’s behavioral health system.

The Day Hospital Program delivers a high level of care while allowing patients to remain at home and stay connected to family, friends and community supports. It is especially well-suited for adults transitioning from inpatient psychiatric care or those who need more support than traditional outpatient services provide.

“This level of care is essential for helping people find stability without requiring hospitalization,” said Aaron Landry, LCSW, director of social work. “It’s about meeting people where they are and giving them the tools and structure to heal while staying connected to their lives.”

Patients attend five days a week, Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and receive five hours of therapeutic programming each day. The care team includes a psychiatrist, nurse and licensed social workers who provide group therapy, medication management, clinical check-ins and discharge planning. Snacks and transportation support are also available.

The program currently serves up to 10 patients, with plans to grow to 30.

To learn more, visit stmarysmaine.com.

‘The Little Prince’ opens Friday at CLT



From left are cast members Evelyn Lenhart, Nicole Emery, Elliot J. Manfrim, and Hazel Flynn in a scene from CLT’s “The Little Prince.” The show opens Friday, May 9.

AUBURN, ME — The L/A Community Little Theatre in Auburn will present “The Little Prince,” opening this Friday, May 9.

Based on the timeless fable first published in 1943, “The Little Prince” tells the story of a young

man and an aviator who visit various planets, learning about loneliness, friendship, love, and loss.

See Prince, page 6

Lewiston Farmers’ Market opens May 11

LEWISTON, ME — The Lewiston Farmers’ Market will open for the 2025 summer season on Sunday, May 11th, (Mother’s Day!) from 9:30 am - 1:00 pm with an exciting new set up on the green at 75 Lincoln Street. This new orientation will make for greater visibility and allow visitors sidewalk access and entrance to the market directly from Lincoln Street. At the height of the season the market will extend onto the Oxford Street lot which, with support from Lewiston Public Works, will be partially transformed from gravel to grass, creating a more scenic, enjoyable and accessible space for all. Customers will continue to have parking access at the 2 Oxford Street lot along with on street parking right on Lincoln Street.

The Lewiston Farmers’ Market is also excited to announce the introduction of “Third Thursday” markets, which will take place every third Thursday of the month, June through September from 4:00-7:00 pm on the green space at 75 Lincoln St. Enjoy the summer evenings with live music, food trucks, and free kids activities! Customers can expect a variety of vendors, offering fresh produce, spices, soaps, sourdough bread, and more!

For both the Sunday and Thursday markets visitors can expect to shop with returning vendors selling farm fresh vegetables, seasonal fruit, grass fed beef, chicken, eggs, homemade baked goods, maple products, small batch cheese and milk, sourdough bagels, fresh cut flowers, perennial plants, handcrafted soap, crafts and more! This season the LFM is bringing on a number of new, rotating guest vendors selling an array of products including small batch sourdough bread, pastries, fresh pasta, gluten free baked goods, and handmade jewelry. Visit the calendar page at lewistonfarmersmarket.com or sign up for the e-newsletter to stay in the know about rotating vendors.

As in seasons past,
See Farmers’, page 14



AUBURN, ME — The Lewiston-Auburn Kiwanis Club is pleased to announce its \$100,000 Hole In One Contest. It will be hosted by Taber’s Restaurant, Miniature Golf and Driving Range at 473 Lake Shore Drive, Auburn. The qualifying dates are June 14 & 15 from Noon to 5 pm and Jun 18, 19, 20 and 21 from 4 to 7 pm. Those who are the ten closest to the pin will shoot it out for the top prize on June 22 at 3 pm!

Everyone is welcome to try to qualify, just use your favorite club and our golf balls. Try as many times as you like! It only costs \$1 for one ball, six balls for \$5 and 13 balls for

\$10.

This is a fundraiser for the Lewiston-Auburn Kiwanis Club. We have been serving our communities since 1922 with many charitable activities, such as scholarships, supporting Key Clubs in five area high schools and donations to community groups.

For more information, send an e-mail to abchoate@aol.com.

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Newsmakers, Names & Faces

Cornhole, river paddles return to support Pine Tree Camp



Pine Tree Camp counselor, Skylar Wansky, of Rome, Maine, tossed it for a good cause at the 2024 cornhole tournament to benefit Pine Tree Camp. All proceeds support summer camp tuition for Maine children and adults with disabilities. This year’s tournament will take place Thursday, May 29 at The Woodshed in Manchester. More information at www.pinetreesociety.org. Photo courtesy of Pine Tree Camp.

BRUNSWICK, MANCHESTER AND SOLON, ME — The Hammond Lumber Cornhole for a Cause tournament and Bath Savings Paddle for Pine Tree Camp return this spring with one goal in mind: to raise funds for Maine kids and adults with disabilities to experience freedom and independence at Pine Tree Camp. Since 1945, Pine Tree Camp has welcomed all who could benefit, regardless of their ability to pay. Over 90% of campers need full or partial tuition assistance.

On Thursday, May 29, the 3rd Annual Hammond Lumber Company Cornhole for a Cause will take place at The Woodshed in Manchester. This cash prize tournament is professionally managed by Real Wicked Events.

The 29th Annual Bath Savings Paddle for Pine Tree Camp weekend brings paddlers together on the Kennebec River in Solon on Saturday, June 7 and the Androscoggin River in Brunswick on Sunday, June 8. Both paddles are family-friendly and perfect for all ages, skill levels and abilities.

3rd Annual Hammond Lumber Company Cornhole for a Cause
Thursday, May 29
4:45pm Check In | 5:30pm Tournament
The Woodshed, 915 Western Ave., Manchester
Cost: \$60 per team
Register: <https://pinetreesociety.org/pts-events/hammond-lumber-cornhole-for-a-cause/>

29th Annual Bath

Savings Paddle for Pine Tree Camp
Saturday, June 7
9:30am
Solon: Traditional route down the Kennebec River
Paddle begins at The Evergreens Campground in Solon (202 Ferry Street, off Route 201A) and ends in North Anson on the Patterson Bridge Road. This is a three mile, two-hour paddle.
Register: <https://pinetreesociety.org/bath-savings-paddle-for-pine-tree-camp/>

Sunday, June 8
9:30am
Brunswick: Loop on the Androscoggin River
Paddle begins and ends at the Water Street Boat Landing (located at the end of Water Street) in Brunswick. This is a two mile, two-hour loop.
Register: <https://pinetreesociety.org/bath-savings-paddle-for-pine-tree-camp/>

UMaine Extension announces online community garden map

ORONO, ME — University of Maine Cooperative Extension has launched an updated community garden map to help connect Mainers looking for an opportunity to plant, tend and harvest vegetables and flowers in a communal space.

The Community Garden Map includes information about local community gardens that provide opportunities for individuals to have their own garden plots or volunteer in collective growing spaces. Research shows that participation in community gardens can promote a sense of belonging, expand social networks, and improve physical and mental



Community gardens are important resources for towns and neighborhoods that provide individual and communal gardening space for local residents. Photo courtesy University of Maine Cooperative Extension/Edwin Remsburg.

health, among other benefits. To learn more about the Community Garden Map, or add a garden to the map, visit the program webpage or contact us at 207.356.1348 or extension.gardening@maine.edu.

Maine Nonprofits earn cash prizes at Roux Institute Showcase

PORTLAND, ME — Maine Audubon, Main Street Skowhegan, and Tree Street Youth earned top spots in the culminating showcase of the Roux Institute’s “Intrapreneurship for Nonprofits” program.

The 14-week program — funded by the Onion Foundation — offered environment organizations an opportunity to develop an entrepreneurial mindset and conceptualize projects that could generate revenue and help support their programmatic activities. Twelve of the foundation’s Environment Program grantees participated in the training program, now in its second year. Nonprofit leaders worked with professors and mentors from Northeastern’s Roux Institute Entrepreneurship team to spawn income-stream ideas grounded in assessments of their areas of expertise, underutilized resources, and their cus-

tomers’ needs. After exploring the market for their ideas, the participants developed detailed plans for launching their proposed income-generating initiatives.

“Staff at nonprofit organizations devote inordinate time to fundraising, taking them away from important programmatic activities. Yet, some of these organizations have the potential to generate earned income because of their special knowledge, networks, or facilities,” says Diana Morris, Executive Director at the Onion Foundation. “The Onion Foundation launched the intrapreneurship program to provide training and assistance to those nonprofit leaders with a serious interest in learning how to conceptualize and implement an income-generating project.”

At the final showcase on April 4, staff and board members from eight non-

profit programs presented their ideas to an audience of organizational leaders and entrepreneurs as well as to a judging panel comprising Fritz Onion, co-founder of the Onion Foundation; Sarah Guerette, Senior Program Director, Business Development Services at Coastal Enterprises, Inc.; and Rich Cantz, the President and CEO of Goodwill Northern New England.

Participating organizations included Hearty Roots, IFKA Community Services, Tree Street Youth, Pine Tree Camp, Maine Audubon, Main Street Skowhegan, Hurricane Island Outward Bound, and The Ecology School. While each nonprofit presented innovative, mission-driven ideas for generating earned income, three organizations came out on top: Maine Audubon earned first place and a \$10,000 prize for its proposal to create a robust ecommerce site and educational marketplace for native plant sales.

Main Street Skowhegan secured second place and \$5,000 for its idea to develop a business-to-business (B2B) outdoor gear-lending subscription model for hotels and lodges in the region. Finally, Tree Street Youth got third place and \$2,500 for its Samara Strategies pitch, which outlined a plan to offer fee-for-service design support to help organizations solve problems.

“The participating nonprofits brought great enthusiasm to this program, and it’s been exciting to see how their entrepreneurial

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News

makers, Names & Faces

Signature Soup Challenge raises over \$2K to help end hunger

CMH welcomes new physical therapy provider

LEWISTON, ME — Community Credit Union is thrilled to share the success of its community-driven Signature Soup Challenge fundraiser. Throughout this month-long event, several local Signature Businesses joined forces to fight hunger, donating a portion of their proceeds to support the cause.

Running from February 15 to March 15, the Signature Soup Challenge brought together local businesses and generous community members, raising \$2,230 to combat food insecurity. Every dollar raised will go directly to the Maine Credit Union's Campaign for Ending Hunger, benefitting local food pantries and hunger relief partners.

"With two USDA programs (the Local Food for Schools and Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program) facing serious funding shortfalls, essential resources like the Good Shepherd Food Bank are under increased pressure," said Betsy Sibley, Co-Chair of Community Credit Union's Ending Hunger Committee.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to the incredible



local businesses who made this event a flavorful success:

- Bakery Barn, Lewiston
- Bear Pond Variety, Turner
- Daddy O's Diner, Mechanic Falls
- Governor's Restaurant & Bakery, Lewiston
- The Highland Grille, Turner
- Jimmy's General Store, Turner
- KP's Place, Auburn
- Simones' Hot Dog Stand, Lewiston
- Thatcher's Restaurant & Pub, Auburn
- Webb's Market, Lewiston

"One in eight Mainers face food insecurity. This fundraiser is our way of stepping up to help our neighbors. We're deeply grateful for the generosity of our Signature Business partners and the community members who came out to support them," said Erin Dunn-Kimball, Co-Chair of the Ending

Hunger Committee. "Every bowl served contributed to a greater cause — and the impact of these funds will be felt directly

in the meals provided to those in need."

Whether you came for the soup or stayed for the cause, your support has made a real difference. For all who was able to support these Signature Businesses while they support Ending Hunger pantries and partners — thank you for serving hope at a time of need.

Community Credit Union is a member-owned, full service financial institution that has been serving its members since 1945. The Credit Union now serves those that live, work, worship or go to school in Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec and Oxford counties or have a family member that qualifies. The Credit Union has a low-income designation from NCUA as well as certified as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). Community Credit Union has branches located at 144 Pine Street, Lewiston, 40 Stanley Street, Auburn and 1025 Auburn Road in Turner serving more than 12,000 members. For more information, log onto www.communitycreditunion.com.

LEWISTON, ME — Central Maine Medical Center (CMMC), which is part of Central Maine Healthcare (CMH), is pleased to introduce a new provider. Gregory Violette, DPT (Doctor of Physical Therapy), works with orthopedic patients at Central Maine Therapy Services.

Gregory earned his Doctor of Physical Therapy degree from the University of New England. He says he believes in using active listening, effective communication and empathy with his patients.

"I believe patient-centered care is the key to achieving therapeutic goals and establishing meaningful relationships," Violette said. "I aspire to empower my patients to become the best versions of themselves."

Central Maine Therapy Services offers comprehensive services including physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, pelvic floor rehabilitation and Lymphedema care.

They offer private treatment rooms, extensive rehabilitation equipment and a gym, as well as activities of daily living training facilities to support func-



tional gains and recovery for patients of all ages. Call (207) 795-2122 for an appointment.



Local

Auburn launches Comprehensive Plan survey

AUBURN, ME — The City of Auburn and its Comprehensive Plan Committee are excited to announce the launch of a comprehensive plan survey. All community members are invited and encouraged to take the survey, which is a crucial step in developing a long-term vision that reflects the needs of the community.

The comprehensive plan survey aims to gather input on various topic areas, including housing, transportation, parks and recreation, economic development, city services, and natural resources. The



feedback and insight collected will guide the creation of a plan that reflects the goals and vision of Auburn's community.

Community members can access the survey online at tinyurl.com/plan-auburn or visit the Planning Department at Auburn Hall (60 Court Street) for paper copies. The survey will be open from May 1 to May 31, and everyone is encouraged to take a few minutes to share

their thoughts and ideas.

For more information about the comprehensive plan process, survey, or other opportunities to get involved, please contact Director of Planning, David Hediger at dhediger@auburnmaine.gov.

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 Rare Descent of Upper St. George River



Canoeist Eggman DeCoster catches an eddy below Searsmont Falls

For many years, I've organized a Penobscot Paddle & Chowder Society spring whitewater trip on the St. George River that flows through Waldo and Knox Counties. The section chosen has been from Searsmont to North Appleton, the same route as the traditional downriver race held each March.

Rarely paddled is a sector of the St. George above Searsmont which boaters call the Upper St. George. The primary reason is it has a small watershed so there is seldom sufficient volume for a fluid enjoyable outing. Conversely, the lower section is fed by Quantabcook Lake. Another factor

is the whitewater is more challenging on the upper; hence many paddlers prefer the lower with rapids limited to Class II in difficulty.

When I announced a St. George trip this spring, some interested Chowderheads expressed a desire to paddle the upper if it was an option. Coincidentally, it rained the day of my scheduled trip so I postponed until the following day when water levels increased. Being a Monday, only three retired club members were available to join me. My late friend, Skip Pendleton, a lover of the St. George, coined the term "Aarpies" when referring to retired paddlers.



A paddler descends one of many rapids on the Upper St. George.

The water volume was above normal when four Aarpies met at the takeout in North Appleton on a cool, sunny day. Whether or not there was sufficient flow to navigate the upper was unknown. We left shuttle vehicles behind and transported two canoes and two kayaks north to a rapid easily scouted from a bridge a short distance upriver from Searsmont on Route 173.

The falls I call Bridge Rapid had adequate water for a paddle on the upper. A careful assessment of the complex rapid indicated our descent would be a challenging endeavor.

We traveled a few miles north on Route 173 to the traditional upper put-in in the tiny village of Woodmans Mills. A local landowner generously allowed us to launch from his backyard. One canoeist in the group departed next to a nearby upstream bridge to take advantage of a short feisty rapid just below.

After some easy whitewater, calm water ensued in a winding stretch of river for perhaps two miles. Boulders on the shore indicated a change in the character of the river. Around the bend, rapids led us to a three-stage pitch that required negotiating down narrow chutes in each ledge.

Flatwater followed for about a mile. Again, the appearance of boulders suggested rapids below. Shortly after, a series of Class II rips ended in a pool above Bridge Rapid. From that vantage point, there didn't appear to be any clear route. Scouting from the bridge in advance had been an advantageous decision.

Canoeist Eggman DeCoster probed far right and dropped out of sight. I followed. A steep pitch that ended in a sticky hole



Topsham resident Paul Plumer navigates his canoe through a rapid on the Upper St. George River

was manageable. However, I was too far right at the bottom and caromed off a protruding boulder that pushed me away from my intended eddy. The remainder of my descent was a haphazard succession of rock dodging in narrow channels. Our companions experienced similar bumpy escapades.

After completing a sector of technical rapids below the bridge, we paddled flatwater to a precipitous two-stage cataract I call Searsmont Falls that begins under the Route 131 Bridge in Searsmont. Club members sometimes run this falls at lower levels, but we concluded it was too high for a safe plunge on this day so we carried. A long stimulating Class II runout followed to the lower St. George.

More flatwater ensued to a long falls above Ghent Road Bridge. We found paddling the sizeable waves through a winding route most entertaining. Over a mile of additional exhilarating whitewater followed after passing under the bridge.

Quick water in a circuitous stretch led to Magog Chute, a Class II pitch. Everyone enjoyed plummeting down the steep wave-filled falls. Rocks hidden in the waves were unpleasant intrusions for some of us.

A combination of calm water interspersed with easy rapids brought us to the takeout immediately below the Route 105

Bridge in North Appleton. Once we carried our boats up a steep bank to the parking area, four Aarpies celebrated an exceptional day of paddling on Skip Pendleton's favorite river.

My book, *Maine Al Fresco: The Fifty Finest Outdoor Adventures in Maine* narrates nine exciting excursions on the best whitewater rivers and streams 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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May is AANHPI Heritage Month

MAINE — May is Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month, and Khmer Maine is excited to move forward with our Capital Campaign to establish Maine’s first Asian American Community Center. This ambitious project aims to create a welcoming space for all of Maine’s Asian American communities – a place to gather, share resources, celebrate culture, and strengthen our voice. We embark on this journey with deep gratitude for the generations who paved the way and optimism for what this center will mean for future generations.

We’re excited to officially kick off our May celebrations with a Donor Matching Challenge. Starting May 1st, a generous supporter will match donations toward the community center, doubling the impact of every gift. This is a fantastic opportunity to accelerate our progress toward the \$10 million goal.

Another special initiative kicking off this month is a delicious partnership with Coffee By Design. Together, we’ve created the AANHPI Blend, a medium roast coffee that not only celebrates our heritage but also supports our campaign. For each 16oz bag sold, \$2.00 will be donated toward our capital campaign. The coffee blend incorporates beans from Sumatra, Papua New Guinea, and India, with notes of grapefruit and molasses – a unique mix reflecting the diversity of AANHPI cultures. It’s a flavorful way for coffee lovers to contribute to a historic cause. Keep an eye out at Coffee By Design cafes and our events for this special AANHPI Heritage Month coffee!

We hope you’ll join us in spreading the word, enjoying a cup of AANHPI Blend coffee, and contributing during this



Khmer Maine’s Executive Director provides testimony at a Maine legislative hearing in support of LD 957, LD 1202, and LD 1474. By speaking up for inclusive curricula, Khmer Maine is ensuring that AANHPI, African American, and Wabanaki histories are represented in Maine’s schools.

match campaign. Together, we can make history with Maine’s first Asian American Community Center!

Civic and Community Engagement

Advocacy has been front and center for Khmer Maine this past month. In April, we made our voices heard at the Maine State Legislature by testifying in support of three important education bills: LD 957 (to integrate AANHPI studies), LD 1202 (to integrate African American studies), and LD 1474 (to strengthen Wabanaki studies) into the statewide school curriculum. Standing before lawmakers in Augusta, we stressed that these initiatives are about inclusion — ensuring all Maine students learn a fuller, more accurate history that reflects the contributions and experiences of communities of color. Our Executive Director spoke on behalf of Khmer Maine, sharing why it’s vital for Asian American and Pacific Islander stories to be taught alongside those of other underrepresented groups. It was a powerful moment of civic engagement, as we joined educators and allies in advocating for an education system that honors everyone’s heritage. We are hopeful that with our community’s support, these bills will move forward, helping to create a more informed and inclusive generation of Mainers.

Civic engagement

isn’t only about policy—it’s also about empowering our own community members. Our citizenship classes have been in full swing this spring, with a dedicated cohort of students meeting weekly to prepare for their naturalization process. It’s inspiring to see immigrants and refugees in our community studying U.S. history and civics, practicing English, and gaining confidence to take the citizenship exam. Each class, we celebrate small victories: one participant recently passed a practice civics test with flying colors, and another is now scheduled for their official interview. These successes remind us how important access to information and support is on the journey to citizenship. We’re proud to report steady progress – more attendees are joining, questions are being answered, and the dream of becoming U.S. citizens is getting closer for our students.

Building community power also means working together with our peers. This month, Khmer Maine helped convene the third gathering of the Southeast Asian (SEA) Collaborative, a new network of Southeast Asian organizers and leaders in Maine. Over ten organizers from Cambodian, Vietnamese, Lao, Thai, and other Southeast Asian American communities came together in

See *Heritage*, page 10

AARP Maine seeks community service award nominees

PORTLAND, ME —

AARP Maine is seeking nominations for its 2025 AARP Andrus Award for Community Service, which honors individuals 50 and over who share their experience, talent, and skills to enrich the lives of others in their community. The annual award is named after AARP’s founder, Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus, who founded AARP in 1958 at the age of 73. The nomination deadline is July 15, 2025.

“AARP Maine is excited to shine a light on Mainers 50-plus who are using what they’ve learned to make a difference in the lives of those around them,” says Noël Bonam, AARP Maine State Director. “AARP has long valued the spirit of volunteerism, and the important contributions AARP volunteers make to their communities and neighbors.”

The screening of nominees will be performed by a panel of AARP staff and volunteers. The panel will review a range of criteria including each nominee’s positive impact on their community and the lives of individuals aged 50



and over.

André Chassé, current AARP Maine Volunteer State President, says: “The AARP Maine Andrus Award acts as a symbol to our members and to the public that we can all work together for positive social change.”

AARP Andrus Award for Community Service nominees must meet eligibility requirements including:

Nominees must be 50 or older, but do not need to be an AARP member or a volunteer with AARP;

The achievements, accomplishments or service on which nominations are based must have been performed on a volunteer basis, without pay;

The achievements, accomplishments or service on which the nominations are based must reflect AARP’s vision and mission;

Couples or partners

who perform service together are eligible; however, teams are not;

The recipient must live in the awarding state; and

This is not a posthumous award.

The application deadline is July 15, 2025. Click here for complete eligibility requirements and to complete our online nomination form.

The AARP Maine Andrus Award for Community Service is an annual awards program developed to honor individuals whose service is a unique and valuable contribution to society. Last year’s winner was Pamela Partridge, a retired educator from North Anson.

For more information about AARP and our work in Maine, please visit our website at www.aarp.org/me and follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @aarpmaine.



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Arts & Entertainment

Prince
Continued from page 1

The two have a whirlwind adventure together, and by the end, both the “little man” and the aviator must go home—each with a new understanding of how to laugh, cry, and love again.

Performance dates for “The Little Prince” are May 9,10,15,16, and 17 at 7:30 pm, and May 11 and 18 at 2:00 p.m. Tickets are available online at lactl.com.

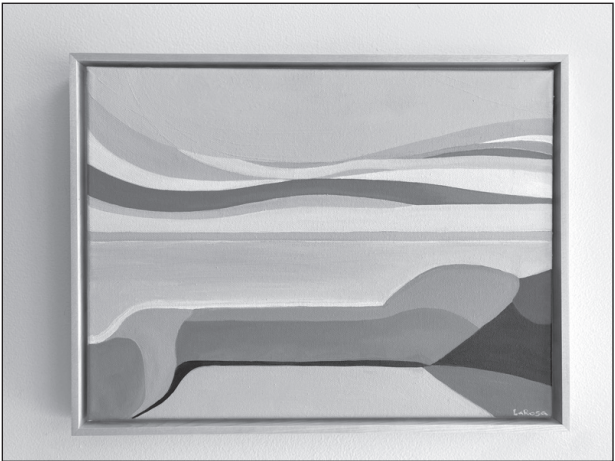


com or by calling 783-0958. Ticket prices (including all fees) are \$25.00 for adults, \$22.00 for seniors and students, and \$17.00 for children ages 13 and under. Tickets will also be available at the door.

May exhibit at the WHA art gallery at CMMC

LEWISTON, ME — The Woman’s Hospital Association (WHA) Rotating Art Gallery at Central Maine Medical Center in Lewiston is displaying the paintings of Mike LaRosa during the month of May.

LaRosa is a self-taught artist who has been painting on a semi-regular basis for the past 13 years in between a full-time career, travel, and home life. His work was selected for exhibit at the 2021 Brunswick Art Festival. He has also shown his art at the Main Street Gallery in Norway as well as Vessel and Vine in Brunswick. A pharmacist by professional training he is also a designer, marathoner, and world traveler. He spent 5 years living in Philadelphia before moving to Maine in 2013 and holds degrees in Doctor of Pharmacy from Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia and a Bachelor’s in Engineering from Clarkson University in Potsdam, New York.



‘Ocean Breeze’ by Mike LaRosa

Using both oil and acrylics his emphasis is on geometric abstracts, conceptual work and abstract landscapes. The work draws influences from music, cinema, architecture, conceptual abstractions, popular culture, Maine landscapes and world travel. The intent is a search for balance, narrative structure and harmony within a composition.

The works on display may be purchased through

the WHA Gift Shop located adjacent to the main lobby at Central Maine Medical Center. A percentage of sale proceeds benefits patients of CMMC.

Send all items for Arts & Entertainment to the editor.
Deadline is Friday by five pm.

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

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NOW and THEN

by Sean Grennan

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Study highlights paths forward for seaweed growers, processors

GARDINER, ME — The Maine Aquaculture Association (MAA) has released its first national report analyzing U.S. consumer preferences for edible seaweed products, offering new insights to help America’s growing seaweed sector strengthen its foothold in the domestic market.

The survey report responds to a central question raised across the U.S. seaweed sector: who wants to eat seaweed, how do they want to eat it, and why? Seaweed farming in Maine has expanded rapidly over the past decade, but barriers remain in introducing this sea vegetable to the average American plate. This report provides guidance for seaweed growers and processors aiming to connect with consumers and bring compelling new products to market.

“This research helps answer the questions we hear from seaweed producers every day,” said Christian Brayden, Project Manager at the Maine Aquaculture Association and lead author of the study. “There’s growing excitement around seaweed as a sustainable, tasty, and nutritious ingredient.”

As the seaweed sector continues to scale, consumer acceptance will be key to realizing many other benefits—including the revitalization of Maine’s working waterfronts where seaweed is grown, harvested, and landed, often by fishermen using seaweed production to diversify their income. This also rings true for the continued growth of innovative, mission-driven food companies. Without



Maine farmed kelp, credit Joseph Conroy III

a deeper understanding of U.S. consumer interest, these benefits risk being left on the table.

Given that the average American palate has historically been slow to embrace seaweed, the study explores which products may resonate most with domestic buyers—and which consumers are most likely to purchase them.

To answer these questions, Brayden conducted a nationally representative survey of 2,035 respondents, gauging their willingness to buy 10 different seaweed-infused products. Participants were also asked why they would or wouldn’t purchase each product, along with questions about their seafood preferences, demographics, and more.

The survey found that products where seaweed is added to a food that the consumer already likes—for example, seaweed teriyaki sauce or potato chips dusted with seaweed—draw the strongest willingness to purchase. This is

especially true for products that are also ready-to-eat and in snack form. While health benefits play a supporting role in consumer decisions, they aren’t the driving factor. Consumers under the age of 45 also show the strongest willingness to buy seaweed products.

These results offer actionable insights for companies seeking to scale the domestic seaweed market. By identifying the most promising product formats and audiences, the report helps chart a path for future innovation, marketing, and consumer education efforts.

“Expanding demand for seaweed strengthens the entire value chain—from ocean farmers to processors to the vibrant coastal communities they support,” said Brayden. “With the right strategies, seaweed can go from niche to mainstream.”

This study was supported by funding from the National Sea Grant Program through the Maine Aquaculture Hub (project number #NA18OAR4170103).

\$69.5K raised by MCHPP, Jersey Mike’s

BRUNSWICK, ME — Mid Coast Hunger Prevention Program (MCHPP) announced the results of the organization’s partnership with Jersey Mike’s Subs for the company’s 15th Annual Month of Giving.

Throughout the month of March, Jersey Mike’s locations in Maine accepted donations for MCHPP. These fundraising efforts culminated in the Day of Giving on March 26, when 100% of sales were donated to the Brunswick-based nonprofit. The total amount of money raised for MCHPP during the month was \$69,427, which will have a substantial impact on the organization’s services—including its Food Pantry, Soup Kitchen, and neighborhood

grocery distribution efforts.

“This is a game-changing gift for our organization, and it couldn’t come at a more critical time,” said Hannah Chatalbash, MCHPP’s Executive Director. “The first quarter of 2025 marked the busiest three month period for our pantry in the 40+ year history of the organization. At the same time, we’re experiencing major cutbacks to federal food programs, resulting in the loss of thousands of pounds of free food each month. Jersey Mike’s support through this fundraiser will make a tremendous difference in our work this year.”

“Mid Coast Hunger Prevention Program is making a real difference for our neighbors experienc-

ing food insecurity, and we know the funds raised will help meet critical needs,” said Chris Brown, Jersey Mike’s franchise owner. “A big thanks to our customers, team members and partners who came in and helped us make such an important impact during this year’s Month of Giving.”

Across the U.S. and Canada, more than \$30 million was raised this year by Jersey Mike’s locations and their customers to benefit over 200 local charities during the Month of Giving. This fundraising total exceeds the \$25 million raised during last year’s campaign. With this year’s donation, Jersey Mike’s has raised \$143 million since the Month of Giving began in 2011.

Sen. Collins speaks at UMaine award presentation



ORONO, ME —

U.S. Senator Susan Collins delivered remarks at the inaugural Patricia M. and Donald F. Collins Leadership Award ceremony at the University of Maine (UMaine). This endowed scholarship award was established in memory of Patricia and Donald Collins, both Class of 1949 graduates of UMaine, former mayors of the City of Caribou, and the parents of six children, including Senator Collins. Patricia Collins also served as the first female chair of the UMaine System Board of Trustees, the Catholic Charities of Maine Board of Directors, and the Catholic Foundation of Maine Board of

Trustees. Donald Collins was a Bronze Star and two-time Purple Heart recipient as an infantry sergeant during the Battle of the Bulge in World War II, and later served as a member of the Maine State House of Representatives and the Maine State Senate.

The inaugural recipient of the award is Keegan Tripp of Winn, a member of the University of Maine Class of 2026. Keegan is the President of the University of Maine Student Government, a board member of the University of Maine Alumni Association, and a recipient of the John M. Nickerson Scholarship for political science students

who have demonstrated exceptional academic achievement. Keegan also interned at Senator Collins’ state office in Bangor.

“My parents believed deeply in the value of education, civic responsibility, and giving back to their community, and they exemplified those principles throughout their lives,” said Senator Collins. “It is incredibly meaningful to honor their legacy through this endowed scholarship. I know that they too would be proud of Keegan, whose leadership, character, and outstanding academic achievements made him an excellent candidate to be the first-ever recipient of this award.”

MERIT helps Mainers save for their futures

Contributed by AARP

PORTLAND, ME —

More than one million private sector workers nationwide have enrolled in state retirement savings programs, a major milestone in the effort to address the nation’s retirement savings challenges. These options allow employees whose workplaces do not offer retirement plans to automatically contribute a portion of their paycheck to a retirement savings account.

In Maine, the Maine Retirement Investment Trust (MERIT) has enabled thousands of workers to save for their futures.

“These options work because they make saving easy,” said Noël Bonam, AARP Maine State Director. “MERIT has empowered more than 13,000 workers to start building their retirement security—many for the very first time. We’re proud Maine is leading the way.”

Auto-IRA and other state-facilitated retirement options now operate in 20 states, with additional states at various stages of implementation. These

programs are free to employers and designed to be easy for businesses and workers alike.

“These programs show that when saving for retirement is easy and automatic, people do it,” said Nancy LeMond, AARP Executive Vice President and Chief Advocacy & Engagement Officer. “Thanks to state action, over a million Americans who were previously unable to save for retirement through their job are now doing that, though too many hard-working people are still left behind. Now state leaders and Congress must work to ensure every American worker has access to a retirement savings option at work where they can easily save for their future.”

According to AARP research, nearly half of American workers in the private sector — 56 million people — still lack access to a retirement plan through their employer. Small businesses are especially likely to not have an employer-based retirement option in place. Auto-IRA programs can help close this retirement savings gap; they don’t

charge fees to employers and are designed to be simple for both employers and employees to use.

AARP has been a leading advocate for these options, working at both the state and federal levels to expand access to retirement savings. AARP has endorsed proposed federal legislation, including the bipartisan Retirement Savings for Americans Act and the Automatic IRA Act, both of which would help improve retirement security for American workers.

AARP Maine advocacy led to the establishment of MERIT in 2021. Legislators in Maine are currently considering legislation (LD 355, An Act to Advance the Maine Retirement Savings Program) that would further expand and strengthen the program in order to ensure that even more Mainers have easy access to a retirement savings plan for years to come.

For more on AARP’s advocacy on retirement security and broader efforts to strengthen financial security, view AARP’s Financial Security Fact Sheet.



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Country Jamboree at the LHE/PAC



FRYEBURG, ME— The Leura Hill Eastman Performing Arts Center presents the Country Jamboree on Saturday, May 10th at 7:30 pm. If you've ever wanted to take a trip back in time and spend a magical evening revisiting the glory days of country music, the Country Jamboree will take you there! Featuring an incredibly talented cast that has performed with some of country music's most popular

artists, this outstanding performance features the music of Hank Williams, Patsy Cline, Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Loretta Lynn, and so many more. Like spending an evening at The Grand Ole Opry, the Country Jamboree takes you from an all out hoe down to a poignant love song – and everything in between.

Tickets are \$35 for adults, \$30 for seniors, and \$5 for students. Pre-or-

der tickets online at www.fryeburgacademy.org/pac, or call the box office at 207-544-9066. Tickets will also be available at the door on the night of the show. The lobby will be open at 6:30 and seating will begin at 7:00. The LHE/PAC is located at 18 Bradley Street in Fryeburg, Maine.

www.fryeburgacademy.org/pac
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Meet & Greet

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Court is in session as MCPKids! present “Fairy Tale Courtroom”

MONMOUTH, ME — MCPKids!, alongside MCPKids! Sponsors Textech Industries, MTAB Painting, Mills Family Monmouth Lights, and Community Credit Union and MCP Marquis Season Sponsor Great Falls Federal Credit Union and Season Sponsors Winthrop Area Federal Credit Union and Readfield Insurance Agency, wish to announce the cast of their upcoming production of Dana Proulx’s “Fairy Tale Courtroom”. The play, under the direction of Danny Gay, will run May 9-11, 2025 at historic Cumston Hall in Monmouth. Other production staff include Katie Coan as Assistant Director, Josie French as Producer, Amy Hamlin as Stage Manager, Patrice Foley-Olsen as Props Mistress and Keith Mercik as Sound Operator.

This extremely adaptable comedy shows the other side of several familiar fairy tales, when two of their biggest villains, the Big Bad Wolf and the Wicked Witch, are brought to trial. Both the Wolf and the Witch have been frolicking from fairy tale to fairy tale, wreaking havoc as they try to prevent the general public from living happily ever after. Hear the personal accounts of what happened, told in testimonies and flashback sequences, from characters such as Snow White, Dorothy, Sleeping Beauty, the Three Pigs, Little Red Riding Hood, and many others, including the Witch



Witch trial cast: front row: Elizabella, Harrison, Arya, Brenda, Kai, Sophia, Emily; middle row: Luke, Madison, Lydia, Lucy, Josh, Makenzie, Silas; back row: Beckett, Alicia, Elena, Ashlynn, Drea, Dorothy, Avery



Wolf trial cast: front row: Henry, Lorelei, Iris, Marley, Breanna, Chris; back row: Connor, Noah, Ender, Oliver, Iana, Allie, Josie

and the Wolf themselves, as each trial unfolds. The audience is the jury, so each trial has two endings, depending on the verdict.

The cast consists of 34 talented students across central Maine, including: Emily Hamlin, Oliver Hamlin, Allie Mercik, Josie Sylvester-Howard and Avery Hamlin of Wales; Luke Gaspary, Kai Helczyk-Postole, Iana Helczyk-Postole, Ender Gaspary, Dorothy Gaspary, Lucy MacLeod, Joshua Citrano and Makenzie Allen of Auburn; Arya Iannotti and Drea Libby of Leeds; Elena Michaud and Alicia

Michaud of Topsham; Sophia Pinard, Brenda Butler, Marley Card and Ashlynn Goyette of Monmouth; Breanna Bramlett, Lorelei Lowell, and Madison Sullivan of Sabattus; Noah Bushway and Elizabella Poussard of Lewiston; Iris Rutherford of Jay; Chris Condon and Connor Coan of Gardiner; Henry Rousculp, Beckett Carlson and Silas Carlson of Readfield; Harrison Ellis of Augusta; and Lydia Griswold of Winthrop.

Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students. Showtimes are 7:00 pm on

See MCPKids!, page 14

Don’t miss Maine’s most inclusive race

BRUNSWICK, ME — Each year, Independence Association and Spindleworks support over 350 adults and children by breaking down barriers and building a world where everyone - regardless of ability - has the opportunity to live with dignity, independence, and joy.

This isn’t just a race. It’s a celebration of strength, community, and resilience.

Every stride that you take helps provide life-changing programs, support services, and opportunities for individuals with disabilities and their families.

Run with purpose. Run with heart. Run with us.

Join us on Saturday, May 10th for the 13th annual Run for Independence. Brunswick Rec Center | 220 Neptune Drive. 5K, 1 Mile, and Kids’ Fun Run. First race begins at 10am

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This race is for everyone. Whether you are a marathon pro or just here for the snacks and good vibes, your presence makes

a difference in supporting adults and children with disabilities in our communities.

You don’t have to be fast. You just have to care. Because it’s not about how you move. It’s about why.

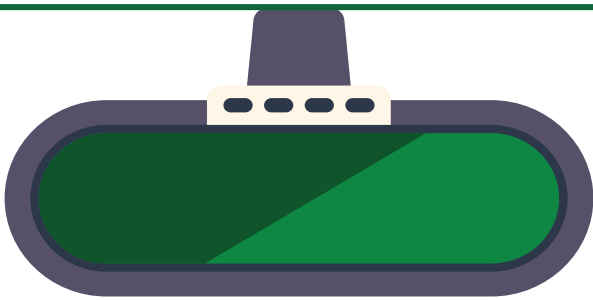
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Bissell Brothers hits million mark for annual Maine grain usage

PORTLAND, ME — Maine’s acclaimed craft brewery, Bissell Brothers, has achieved a significant milestone by utilizing over 1 million pounds of Maine-grown grain in a single year. Maine Malt House has confirmed that BB purchased 1,007,630 pounds from family-owned Buck Farms in Aroostook County throughout 2024, amounting to 25% of all Maine-grown ingredients used in brewing that year, according to the Brewers Association.

This accomplishment has been a decade in the making, sparked by the recent transition of two of their most iconic offerings—The Substance IPA and Swish Double IPA—to recipes that now incorporate 100% Maine-grown grain. And they’re far from the only ones—many of Bissell Brothers’ beers now feature 100% or more than 50% Maine-grown grain, further reinforcing their commitment to local agriculture. Swish, the 6th highest-rated New England-Style Double IPA in the world according to Untappd, will move to full year-round production beginning this summer. This expansion will allow Bissell Brothers to continue increasing their use of

Maine-grown grain in 2025 and beyond, further solidifying their role as a leader in sustainably-intentioned brewing.

The Million Mark firmly establishes Bissell Brothers’ commitment to Maine agriculture and their dedication to supporting the long-term financial stability of local farming communities. Their decision to prioritize quality over convenience boosts the state’s economy and demonstrates that world-class beer can be made from premium ingredients grown at home. This achievement results from years of strategic investment in partnerships with neighboring farmers and maltsters, and a relentless drive to redefine craft beer from the soil up.

“As modern brewers, we have the blessing of being able to source ingredients from around the globe. However, it’s always been an aspiration of our brewery to incorporate as much of Maine in our beers as possible. Our relationship with Maine Malt House has allowed us to do just that. Over the last ten years, our businesses have grown in tandem, enabling us to steadily replace European base malts with those produced entirely in Aroostook county. We are endlessly

grateful to the Buck family for the decade of friendship and collaboration that has helped us achieve this massive accomplishment.” - Noah Bissell, Co-Founder of Bissell Brothers

Join Bissell Brothers on their journey ahead:

Support Local – Enjoy beer brewed with 100% Maine-grown grain, crafted in partnership with Maine Malt House.

Taste the Difference—Every pint of Substance IPA and Swish Double IPA directly supports Maine’s farmers.

Be Part of the Future – Swish is now brewed year-round, and Bissell Brothers’ commitment to using local ingredients continues to grow.

Find Bissell Brothers beer in popular retail outlets throughout New England and beyond, or purchase directly from their brewery and restaurant on Thompson’s Point in Portland, Maine.

QUICK FACTS:
1,007,630 pounds of Maine-grown grain was used by Bissell Brothers in 2024

In 2024, that number made up approximately 25% of all Maine-grown ingredients used in brewing, according to the Brewers Association.

Red Cross installs 119 free smoke alarms

BIDDEFORD, ME — This month, 48 American Red Cross of Northern New England volunteers and staff teamed up with the Biddeford and Saco Fire Departments to install 119 free smoke alarms for local families during a Sound the Alarm home fire safety event throughout York County.

“We are grateful to everyone who supported today’s Sound the Alarm event to help keep our neighbors safe from home fires,” said Steve Thomas, Red Cross Southern Maine Chapter executive director. “Home fires are a constant threat in our community, accounting for most of our disaster responses. Today’s efforts will make a lasting difference to help save lives and protect those who are most vulnerable.”

During each 30-minute home visit, the teams evaluated residents’ current smoke alarms, installed new ones (as needed) and shared information on the causes of home fires, how to prevent them, what to do if a fire starts and how to create an escape plan for the entire family. Most people don’t realize they have just two minutes to escape a home fire before it’s too late. Working smoke alarms provide critical early warning to help save lives.

“One of the areas I am particularly passionate about is housing - making sure that Mainers can find

safe, affordable places to live. Safety includes measures like smoke alarms,” said House Speaker Ryan Fecteau, a Biddeford native who spoke at Saturday’s event. “For cost, accessibility, or other reasons, folks may not take the important step of installing smoke alarms in their homes and making sure they are working well. That’s why events like this are so important, and why I’m so grateful that the Red Cross is committed to installing more smoke detectors in homes everywhere.”

MAKING LOCAL HOMES SAFER Wendy Berry, of Saco, is among the local residents who received free smoke alarms through Saturday’s Sound the Alarm event. Berry signed up after hearing about the Red Cross Home Fire Campaign from a friend. She had smoke alarms in her home, but they were 26 years old. Like so many, Berry did not realize smoke alarms expire after 10 years, making the devices less effective.

“I feel like I can sleep a little better at night knowing that I now have that added protection of new alarms,” Berry said, adding that talking with the Red Cross about fire escape planning and the home fire safety tips was reassuring too.

“I feel re-inspired to be a little bit safer. The experience was wonderful and seamless,” she said.

“The team was very kind and respectful. They went over everything and explained exactly where they were going in my home and how they were going to install the alarms.”

SAVING LIVES FROM NATION’S MOST FREQUENT DISASTER Home fires are the nation’s most frequent disaster, claiming seven lives (mostly children and the elderly) every day across the country – and injuring more than 30. But working smoke alarms can cut that risk of dying in a home fire by half. Here in Maine, the Red Cross responded to 251 home fires in 2024, assisting 907 Mainers. So far this year, the Red Cross has provided critical support to at least 277 Mainers following 98 home fires – 11 of which were in York County.

This Sound the Alarm event is a critical part of the national Red Cross Home Fire Campaign, which has helped save at least 2,284 lives — since launching in October 2014. Locally, the Red Cross and its partners have installed more than 20,000 free smoke alarms in homes across Maine since the program’s inception.

If residents missed us on April 12, or for Mainers who live outside York County, anyone can request free smoke alarms year-round by visiting redcross.org/EndHomeFiresNNE or calling 1-800-464-6692 (option 4).

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Heritage

Continued from page 5

Brunswick to connect and share ideas. The room was filled with laughter, solidarity, and fruitful discussion about how our communities can support one

another. From joint cultural events to mutual aid and advocacy, there was a strong sense that we can accomplish more united than alone. The SEA Collaborative is still growing, but these initial meetings

are a promising start to a coalition that can amplify Southeast Asian voices across Maine. We left the meeting energized by the possibilities of working in partnership with our fellow SEA community members.

Roux

Continued from page 2

spirit has materialized into real business plans that have the potential to generate income,” says Fritz

Onion. “Entrepreneurship requires passion, diligence, creativity, and know-how. We believe that this partnership with the Roux Institute has increased the participating nonprofits’

chances for success.”

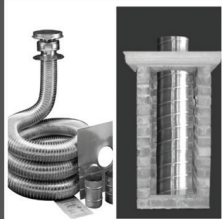
Through the “Intra-preneurship for Nonprofits” program, participating organizations built collaborative relationships with other nonprofits, connected directly with change-makers throughout Maine, and applied their lessons to real-world scenarios to ensure business success. Now, the three winners will use their award funds to jumpstart their revenue-generating efforts, enabling them to sustain — and potentially expand — their nonprofit work.

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Moving past fear—to healing presentation in Auburn

AUBURN, ME — Lisa Troseth, practitioner of Christian Science healing and international speaker, will present her talk, “Moving past fear—to healing”, on Thursday, May 15, 2025 at 7:00 pm at First Church of Christ, Scientist, 79 Lake Street, Auburn.

The talk will focus on universal healing precepts found in the Holy Bible, especially in Christ Jesus’ life and teachings, showing how they are available for anyone to understand and experience through the lens of Christian Science. The talk is free, open to the public, and sponsored by First Church of Christ, Scientist, Auburn-Lewiston.

“Fear can be overcome and even healed in our lives by discovering the strong connection and relationship we have to something bigger than ourselves—God”, says Troseth. “By learning to lean and rely on this greater, higher good, we can feel moved to love beyond ourselves—and this frees us from fear and so much more.”

Sharing examples of healing from her own life and professional practice of Christian Science, Troseth will explain why Christian Science is both Christian and scientific, meaning that people can prove its effectiveness for themselves, as fully described in the book Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures, written by the founder of the Christian Science movement, Mary Baker Eddy.

Troseth will also touch on the life of Mary Baker Eddy, who came to understand, confirm, and teach what she felt was original Christian healing.

Eddy herself said she was especially inspired by Jesus’ demand, “He that believes on me, the works that I do will he do also; and greater works than these will he do, because I go unto my Father” (found in the Gospel of John 14:12 in the Bible). For over 150 years, people around the world have worked to follow Christ Jesus in this practice of Christianity and continue to do so today, experiencing healings of physical ills and personal difficulties.

Lisa Troseth has been a Christian Science practitioner for many years, helping people on a daily basis through this scientific approach to prayer. She travels from her home base in Rogers, Arkansas, to speak to audiences around the world as a member of the Christian Science Board of Lectureship.

For more information or child care, please call: 207-782-0012.

Maine Music Society Chorale presents Showcase of Americana



The Maine Music Society Chorale; Photo by Jared Morneau

LEWISTON, ME — The Maine Music Society Chorale is pleased to announce its upcoming concert, A Showcase of Americana, on Saturday, May 10, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. and Sunday, May 11, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. at the Franco Center in Lewiston.

Our final Chorale concert of the season will explore the Americana genre of music which reflects the stories, landscapes, and spirit of American culture, evolving over time. The 80+ member Chorale has been rehearsing for weeks on a diverse repertoire that includes a variety of styles such as folk, spirituals, gospel and bluegrass.

“This piece . . . has traveled the world and back again, with stops in churches, colleges, Carnegie Hall, The Ryman Auditorium (where Bill Monroe introduced bluegrass music to the world), and even the Guinness Brewery in Dublin.” This extraordinary work will be accompanied by a blue grass ensemble.

“I’m really looking forward to this concert as we step away from the traditional choral concert and show the diversity in sound of our Chorale!” said MMS Artistic Director, Richard Nickerson.

Consider this a perfect Mother’s Day gift!

For more information, or to purchase tickets, visit us online at mainemusicsociety.org or call the MMS business office at 207-333-3386. Please note that there are limited number of free tickets available for this concert; contact our business office.

Tickets:
Adult - \$27*
Senior - \$25*
Student - \$6*(age 13+)
Children 12 and under: 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 the MMS business office: 207-333-3386.

The Maine Music Society thanks its Season Underwriters Hardy, Wolf & Downing and the Sun Journal, event co-sponsor Anonymous Donor in Memory of the Yodeling Sisters, Judy & Sally, and event supporter Ouellette & Associates, P.A.

Based in Lewiston/Auburn, the Maine Music Society (MMS) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit 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 What’s Going On to the Editor.
Deadline is Friday by five.

Augusta Symphony Orchestra announces May Pops Concert

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Ryu Mitsuhashi



Maine Composer
Nathan Saunders

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This performance of the Katahdin Suite was funded in part by a grant from the Maine Arts Commission, an independent state agency supported by the National Endowment for the Arts



AUGUSTA, ME — The Augusta Symphony Orchestra invites the community to an enchanting afternoon of live music at its May Pops Concert! Join us on Sunday, May 11, at 3:00 PM at Cony High School (60 Pierce Dr, Augusta, ME) for a performance that promises to delight music lovers of all ages.

This exciting program features a stunning solo performance by ASO’s concertmaster, violinist Ryu Mitsuhashi, who will captivate audiences with Pablo de Sarasate’s Zigeunerweisen (Gypsy Airs). The orchestra will also perform the Katahdin Suite, a work by Maine composer and ASO musician Nathan Saunders. To round out the concert, the ASO will bring to life a vibrant selection of Eastern European dances, rhapsodies, and more!

Admission is free, but donations are gratefully accepted to support the orchestra’s mission of making music accessible to all. Mark your calendar and join us for an unforgettable afternoon of music.

For more information about the Augusta Symphony Orchestra and upcoming events, visit www.augustasyphonymaine.org.

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Maine Track celebration honors Class of 2025



PORTLAND, ME — During its annual Celebration in Portland Saturday, MaineHealth recognized the 41 students who will be graduating from the MaineHealth Maine Medical Center – Tufts University School of Medicine (MHMMC-TUSM) Maine Track program next month. Celebration is the Maine-based culminating event for fourth-year medical students who have completed their classroom instruction in Boston along with community-based practice in Maine. Students will begin their residencies this summer, 11 of them at MHMMC Portland.

Dr. Jeffrey Florman, who has been a neurosurgeon with MaineHealth for more than two decades and associate professor with Tufts, gave the keynote speech. Dr. Florman is an expert in brain injury, brain tumors and complex cervical spinal disease, but used his remarks to talk about the human, rather than the scientific side of medicine. He encouraged students to approach doctoring with

intention, remembering every patient is an individual deserving of personalized care.

“Particularly in light of the respect I have for the Maine Track students, it is with great humility that I find myself recognized by the students and an honor to speak at this celebration,” Dr. Florman said.

The Maine Track program is a partnership between MHMMC and Tufts formed 17 years ago to help address the shortage of doctors in Maine, provide financial assistance to aspiring medical students with a connection to Maine and develop an innovative curriculum focused on community-based education. MHMMC’s annual Maine Track celebration marks the local recognition of the medical school students, who also will take part in a graduation ceremony at Tufts on May 18.

Student speaker Austin Steward, M25, is among the 19 students who grew up in Maine to graduate from Maine Track this

year. He will be continuing his education as a resident at MHMMC Portland.

“The Maine Track gave us more than a medical education; it gave us the space to grow into the physicians we want to be without shedding the identities that brought us here,” Steward said. “Whether artists or athletes, caregivers or advocates, we were welcomed as whole people. We were guided by mentors who modeled that same approach, reminding us to see both ourselves and our patients in their full humanity. That sense of belonging and purpose is what I’ll remember most, and what I hope we, the Class of 2025, carry into our next chapters.”

When this year’s Maine Track class graduates, 480 students will have completed the program since it began. As of 2024, 85 Maine Track graduates who have completed their residency and fellowship training are practicing medicine in Maine.

“These students attended medical school and are entering their residencies at a time of rapid change for the health care industry,” said MaineHealth Vice President of Medical Education Dr. Linda Chaudron. “I look forward to seeing how this next generation of providers innovates and adapts to meet the needs of patients, particularly in rural communities.”

Maine increases pre-K funding, per pupil expenditures

MAINE — A new national report finds that in 2023-2024, Maine served 47% of its four-year-olds in state-funded pre-K. Through 2023-24, Maine did not serve any three-year-olds in state-funded preschool, but that has changed this school year, as the responsibility for preschool for 3-5-year-olds with identified special needs has begun to shift to school administrative units. Maine also made increases in state spending per child.

The National Institute for Early Education Research’s 2024 State of Preschool Yearbook presents a critical snapshot of preschool education in America. The 2023-2024 school year set national records for state-funded preschool enrollment and spending. While the increases in funding and enrollment are skewed by a small number of states making progress, quality of preschool programming remains highly uneven from state to state.

In Maine the report found that, in the 2023-2024 school year: Maine preschool enrolled 6,361 children, an increase of 124 from the prior year.

State spending totaled \$34,079,285, with an additional \$6,234,595 in federal recovery funds to support the program, up \$8,456,798 (27%), adjusted for inflation, since last year.

State spending per child (including federal recovery funds) equaled \$6,338 in 2023-2024, up \$1,230 from 2022-2023, adjusted for inflation.

Maine met 9 of 10 quality standards bench-

marks recommended by NIEER.

Currently, 44 states and DC fund preschool programs. Most state pre-K programs continue to serve only four-year-olds; few state pre-K programs serve three-year-olds. Nationally, enrollment reached 37% of four-year-olds but only 8% of three-year-olds.

“When states put money into quality preschool programs, they are investing in children’s futures and can expect to see strong returns on their investments,” said W. Steven Barnett Ph.D., NIEER’s senior director and founder. “Despite the state’s goal of universal pre-K, Maine’s progress is slower than other states in the Northeast, like New York and Vermont, that serve a majority of their four-year-olds in state-funded pre-K.”

States spent more than \$13.6 billion on preschool in 2023-2024, including \$257 million in federal COVID-19 relief dollars. This represents an increase of nearly \$2 billion (17%) over the previous year. However, just four states—California, New Jersey, New York, and Texas—accounted for half (51%) of total national preschool spending.

Preschool investments increased in all but five states with existing programs. Six states—California, Colorado, Maryland, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Texas—each boosted preschool spending by more than \$100 million.

Enrollment grew to 1,751,109 children nationwide, an increase of more than 111,000 from the pre-

vious year. Ten states saw enrollment growth exceeding 20%: Alaska, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, and Ohio. California and Colorado alone added more than 30,000 children each, together accounting for over 60% of the national enrollment increase.

Alabama, Hawaii, Michigan, Mississippi, and Rhode Island remain the only states nationwide to meet all 10 of NIEER’s recommended benchmarks for preschool quality. NIEER’s benchmarks measure essential preschool quality indicators, including teacher qualifications, class sizes, early learning standards, and program assessments.

A key question across the country is how proposed cuts to the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and other federal agencies will affect Head Start and other programs for children. If Head Start funding for children in low-income families is eliminated, access to public preschool will decline in several states by more than 10 percentage points, and in some, by 20 percentage points.

Nearly 2,000 three- and four-year-olds in Maine could lose access to Head Start if federal funding for the program is eliminated,” said Allison Friedman-Krauss, Ph.D., lead author of the report. “Increased uncertainty about federal funding underscores the urgency for states to prioritize and expand early childhood investments.”

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SEPTEMBER 15 - 18, 2025 - THE GRAND CANYON OF PENNSYLVANIA - Trip includes 3 nights lodging, 3 breakfasts and 3 dinners including the historic Peter Herdic House and The Carriage House. Highlights of this tour are Susquehanna River Cruise, Pennsylvania Grand Canyon Wagon Tour, Millionaires Row Tour, Thomas Taber Mu-

seum, Historic Rowley House and much more. A \$75.00 deposit is due upon signing up. Price of this trip is \$769.00 pp double occupancy and \$918.00 for a single. Final payment is due July 17, 2025.

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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– CLASSICAL GREECE
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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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