

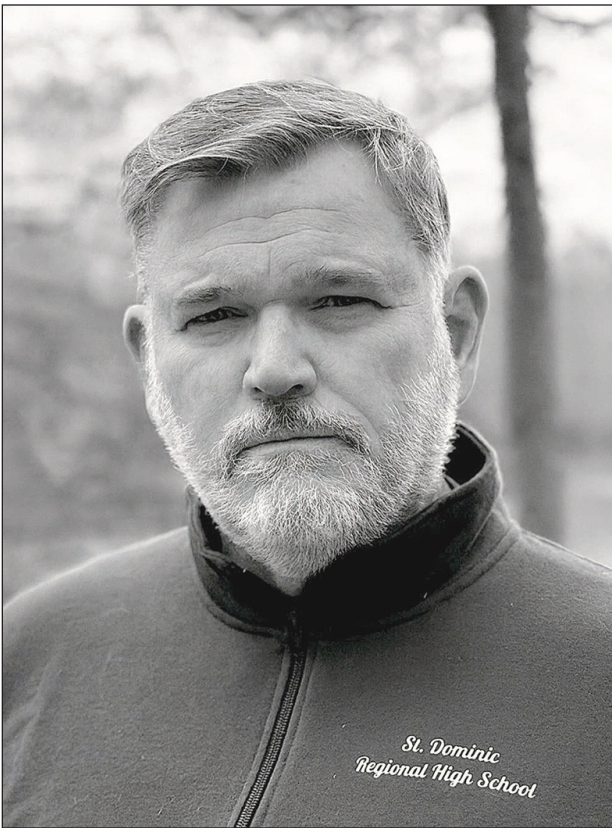
Saint Dominic announces Head of School, Dr. Claude Berube

LEWISTON, ME

– The Board of Directors of the independent Saint Dominic Regional High School (SDRHS) are pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Claude Berube as Head of School, effective January 1, 2026. Dr. Berube, a respected educator, author, and naval historian, will lead SDRHS through its next phase of revitalization for education in the catholic tradition.

Dr. Berube retired last year from the U.S. Naval Academy with twenty years of teaching experience and has served as an adjunct graduate-level professor with the Naval War College and the Institute of World Politics. A retired Commander in the U.S. Navy Reserve and former intelligence officer, his military honors include the Meritorious Service Medal, the Joint Service Commendation Medal, and three Navy Commendation Medals, among others. During his tenure as Director of the U.S. Naval Academy Museum, he received the Navy's Meritorious Civilian Service Award. Dr. Berube also completed three tours on Capitol Hill, serving in both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. He currently serves on the board of the Senator Margaret Chase Smith Foundation and is a member of the Knights of Columbus.

A Lewiston-Auburn native, Dr. Berube graduated from St. Dom's in 1984. He earned his bachelor's degree from Saint Anselm College, master's degrees from Northeastern University and the Naval War College, and his doctorate in history from the University of Leeds in England. He has long ties to the community. The grandson of French-Canadian immi-



grants to Lewiston-Auburn, Dr. Berube's father was in the first class of St. Dom's in 1941 and his mother represented Lewiston in the Maine State House and Senate from 1970 to 2000 and served for several years on the Finance Council of the Diocese of Portland, Maine.

"We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Berube as our Head of School," said Sean Andrews, Chair of the SDRHS Board of Directors. "His unique combination of academic excellence, leadership experience, and commitment to the catholic intellectual tradition makes him the right person to guide us at this pivotal moment. His passion for forming young people in both character and scholarship for two decades at the U.S. Naval Academy aligns perfectly with our mission."

As Head of School, Dr. Berube will oversee the strategic plan to strengthen enrollment, expand academic

offerings, restore a robust curriculum, while building a supportive community culture. The initiative includes new partnerships to provide students with faith formation, advanced learning opportunities, and mentorship.

Dr. Berube added, "It is an honor to serve the faculty, staff, alumni, parents, and students at a moment when families are seeking schools that deliver academic rigor, character growth, and a commitment to excellence. We may be opening the next chapter in a new building and as a new independent organization, but the spirit and soul of Saint Dominic continues. We are re-lighting a beacon of catholic education."

SDRHS, located at 184 Main Street in Lewiston, Maine, will host an Open House on January 15, 5:30P-7:30P, welcoming prospective students, parents, and alumni to tour the building and meet Dr. Berube.

January Special Section National Human Trafficking Awareness Month page 9

Mad Science Dinosaur Workshop

LEWISTON, ME

– Join us for a Dinosaur Workshop hosted by Mad Science at the Lewiston Public Library on Saturday, January 17th at 11AM in Callahan Hall.

In this Dinosaur Workshop kids will examine fossil casts and explore the differences in the teeth of herbivorous and carnivorous dinosaurs. Every paleontologist-in-training will then get to dig in and experience a mini dinosaur excavation and make a cast of a dinosaur tooth to take home. This workshop has 20 spots available for kids and registration is required. To register, call the Children's Department at 513-3133 or email LPLKids@lewistonmaine.gov.

Mad Science of Maine is a leading sci-



ence enrichment provider. They deliver unique, hands-on science experiences for children through after-school programs, birthday parties, workshops, special events, and summer camps. Their innovative programs are as entertaining as they are educational!

This workshop is free

and open to the public.

The Lewiston Public Library is located downtown at 200 Lisbon Street at the corner of Pine Street. More information about the performance by Mad Science is available by contacting the Lewiston Public Library at 513-3133 or LPLKids@lewistonmaine.gov.

Boy Scouts prepare for Christmas tree recycling

AUBURN, ME

– Scouts from Troop 121 in Auburn prepare this year's mailing of tag for their annual Christmas tree recycling program. Pictured from left to right are: Alex Burnham, Jacob Parcell, Cayden Moody, Anthony Seddon, Logan Dumont, Darius Reaves and Jackson Roux.

For the 14th year, the Boy Scout Troop 121 will again pick up Christmas trees in Lewiston and Auburn. While the cities provide locations for free tree disposal, they no longer collect the trees at curbside. For a minimum donation of \$5, the Scouts

will pick up Christmas trees on Saturday, January 10, 2026, and Sunday, January 11, 2026. For safety reasons the trees should not be placed curbside until the morning of January 10th.

Money raised by the program goes directly to troop scouting activities. Troop 121 was created to help give youth with special physical, mental and emotional challenges the opportunity for success in a safe scouting environment that builds character, encourages citizenship, teaches life skills and develops personal fitness.

To make a pick-up

request, send a donation by Jan. 8th to Troop 121, United Methodist Church, 439 Park Ave., Auburn, ME 04210. The troop, in turn, will send a tag to place on the tree when it is put curbside. For more information please call 783-0790.

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What's Going On
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Newsmakers, Names & Faces

Maine’s minimum wage \$15.10 per hour effective now

MAINE – Effective January 1, 2026, the state minimum wage increased from \$14.65 to \$15.10 per hour. The state minimum wage will now also pertain to agricultural workers in Maine, after the Legislature enacted and Governor Mills signed ‘An Act to Establish a State Minimum Hourly Wage for Agricultural Workers’ in June.

Note: Local municipalities, such as Portland and Rockland, may have higher minimum wage standards. Employers should contact their local municipality for guidance. Workers in those communities who are not receiving the locally required minimum wage should contact the appropriate municipal office.

MDOL is required under Maine law (Maine statute Title 26, chapter 7, section 664), to make annual adjustments to the minimum wage based on the cost-of-living index (CPI-W) for the Northeast Region, after Maine voters amended the law by referendum in 2016. Between August 2024 and August 2025, there was a 3.1 percent increase in the CPI-W.

According to Current Population Survey

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

estimates, 35,000 workers were paid hourly and earned an hourly wage of less than \$15 per hour in 2024. These workers represent about five percent of all wages and salary workers (both paid at hourly rates and not paid at hourly rates) and about nine percent of wage and salary employees that are paid at hourly rates.

In addition to the minimum wage, the new “tip wage,” or service employee minimum wage, in 2026 will be \$7.55 per hour. This means that service employees must receive at least a direct cash wage of \$7.55 per hour from the employer. The employer must be able to show that the employee receives at least the min-

imum wage of \$15.10 per hour when the direct wage and tips are combined at the end of the week. The amount of tips necessary to qualify as a service employee will increase from \$185 per month to \$191 per month.

The minimum salary threshold for exempting a worker from overtime pay must exceed 3,000 times the State’s minimum wage or the annualized rate established by the US Department of Labor, whichever is higher. Starting January 1, 2026, the new minimum salary threshold for salaried workers exempt from overtime will be \$871.16 per week, or \$45,300.32 per year. This is only one of the factors used in determining whether a worker is exempt from overtime pay under federal or state law. An individual can earn more than the minimum



Minimum Wage

Labor Laws of the State of Maine provide protection for people who work in Maine. The Maine Department of Labor administers the laws, which all employers must follow. Department representatives inspect workplaces to ensure compliance. Citations and penalties may be issued to employers who do not comply.

Maine Law (Title 26 M.R.S.A. § 42-B) requires every employer to place this poster in the workplace where workers can easily see it.

This poster is available online at no charge and may be copied: <https://www.maine.gov/labor/posters/>

Agriculture and Non-Agriculture Minimum Wage is \$15.10 per hour effective January 1, 2026

Minimum Wage

Under Maine labor laws, all agriculture and nonagriculture businesses operating in the state with one employee is automatically covered by state law. This includes all public and private employers regardless of profit or size. Effective January 1, 2026, the minimum wage in Maine is \$15.10 per hour.

Municipal Minimum Wage Ordinances

Employers with employees who work in Bangor and/or Portland or any other municipality that passes a local minimum wage ordinance, may be subject to additional regulations and should check with municipal officials.

Service Employee

A service employee is someone who regularly receives more than \$191 a month in tips. As of January 1, 2026, employers must pay a direct service wage of at least \$7.55 per hour. If the employee's direct wage combined with earned tips do not average, on a weekly basis, the state required minimum wage, the employer must pay the difference.

Overtime

Unless specifically exempted, employees must receive overtime pay for hours worked in excess of 40 in a workweek at a rate not less than time and one-half their regular rate of pay. Employers have the right to allow or deny overtime, but if overtime is worked, it must be paid in accordance with state requirements. Compensatory or "comp" time cannot be used by private-sector employers, although private-sector employers can allow employees to flex their time within the workweek (but not the pay period if the pay period is longer than a seven day cycle in the workweek).

Exemptions from Overtime

Maine statutes incorporate by reference the salary requirements under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). As of January 1, 2026 the minimum salary requirement will be \$871.16 per week. Salary is only one factor in determining whether a worker is exempt from overtime under federal or state law. The duties of each worker must be considered as part of this analysis. Failure to adhere to both requirements—meeting the duties test and the weekly salary threshold— are violations of state law and potentially federal law depending on the discrepancies in the laws.

Statements to Employees

Every employer shall give to each employee with the payment of wages a statement clearly showing the date of the pay period, hours worked, total earnings and itemized deductions.

Recordkeeping

Employers shall keep, for three years, accurate records of hours worked and wages paid to all employees.

The Department of Labor enforces state wage and hour laws. Employers with questions about the law may call 207-623-7900 or may visit the department's webpage.

Minimum Wage Guidance

www.maine.gov/labor/labor_laws/minimum_wage_faqs.html

legislature.maine.gov/statutes/26/title26sec664.html

Overtime Guidance

www.maine.gov/labor/labor_laws/overtime.html

legislature.maine.gov/statutes/26/title26sec664.html

***Note:** Maine employers may also be covered under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act. For more information, contact the U.S. Department of Labor Wage and Hour Office at 603-666-7716.

For more information, contact:

Maine Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Standards
45 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0045
Telephone: 207-623-7900
TTY users call Maine Relay 711.
Web site: www.maine.gov/labor/bls
Email: bls.mdol@maine.gov

The Maine Department of Labor provides equal opportunity in employment and programs. Auxiliary aids and services are available to people with disabilities upon request. rev. 10/25

salary threshold and still be eligible for overtime. The duties of each worker must be considered as part of this analysis.

Employers can download the required minimum wage poster at no cost on the Department’s website: <https://www.maine.gov/labor/posters/>

The minimum wage and overtime law can be found here: <http://legislature.maine.gov/legis/statutes/26/title26sec664.html>

More information about minimum wage and other labor standards is available at <https://www.maine.gov/labor/bls/>

The Department will be presenting about the new agricultural minimum wage law at the Maine Agricultural Trades Show in January: <https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/events/agtradesshow/2026-ag-tradesshow.shtml>

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MaineHealth welcomes its first babies of the new year

PORTLAND, ME – MaineHealth welcomed its first babies of the new year when twins Ruby and Rhett Dudley were born at 2:49 a.m. and 2:50 a.m. at MaineHealth Franklin Hospital. Ruby weighed 5 pounds and

5 ounces and was 17 inches long. Rhett weighed 4 pounds and 15 ounces and was 17 inches long.

Jade Grant and Logan Dudley said they were excited for Ruby and Rhett to come into the world.

“This is the perfect way to ring in the new year,” said Jade Grant.

MaineHealth hospitals with birthing centers include MaineHealth Franklin Hospital in Farmington, MaineHealth Lincoln Hospital in

Damariscotta, MaineHealth Maine Medical Center in Portland and Biddeford, MaineHealth Mid Coast Hospital in Brunswick, MaineHealth Stephens Hospital in Norway, MaineHealth Pen Bay Hospital in Rockport and MaineHealth Memorial Hospital in North Conway, New Hampshire.



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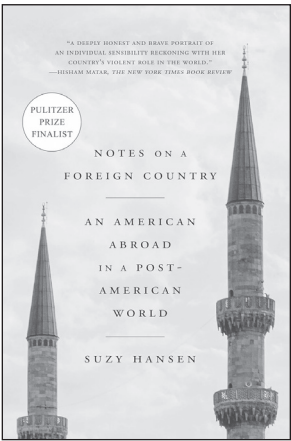
Your Hometown Paper.

News-makers, Names & Faces

APL offers programs leading up to 2026 Camden Conference

AUBURN, ME – The Camden Conference was founded in 1987 as a non-profit, non-partisan, educational organization whose mission is to foster informed discourse on world issues. Each year, they host a conference, with participating libraries offering community events related to their theme. The 39th annual Camden Conference, scheduled for February 20-22, 2026, is entitled “Today’s Middle East: Power, Politics, & Players.” It will be both a live and virtual event. In person, it will be hosted in Maine at the Camden Opera House with two additional satellite venues at the Strand Theatre in Rockland and the Lunt Auditorium in Falmouth. It will also be available to livestream worldwide.

The Middle East region remains one of the world’s most intractable trouble spots. It is a volatile arena where regional powers, global interests, and local aspirations intersect in ever-evolving and often violent ways. This year’s Camden Conference will explore how traditional and emerging powers are reshaping relationships and testing alliances across this globally vital region. The Auburn Public Library is pleased to participate as one of the hosting libraries. Leading up to this



year’s Conference, APL has three events planned. **HOW POPULISM WORKS IN ERDOGAN’S TURKEY** Dr. Senem Aslan, Professor of Politics, Bates College
Tuesday, January 13th, 2026 – 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. Androscoggin Community Room

On Tuesday, January 13, 2026, the Auburn Public Library will welcome Dr. Senem Aslan, Professor of Politics at Bates College. Dr. Aslan will be at the Library to talk about How Populism Works in Erdogan’s Turkey.

This talk explores how Erdogan’s increasing reliance on populist discourse and style throughout his tenure contributed to the rise of an authoritarian regime sustained by popular support. It highlights how the performative and emotional dimensions of these strategies can help autocratic leaders garner



support and reinforce their perceived authenticity, particularly when their legitimacy is under threat.

Senem Aslan is professor of Politics at Bates College. She is the author of Nation-Building in Turkey and Morocco: Governing Kurdish and Berber Dissent published by Cambridge University Press in 2015. She recently completed a book manuscript on populism and the politics of emotions in Turkey.

This program will take place in the Androscoggin Community Room beginning at 4:30 p.m.

FILM SCREENING & DISCUSSION – “ERDOGAN: THE MAKING OF A SULTAN” Tuesday, January 27th, 2026 – 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. Androscoggin Community Room

On Tuesday, January 27, the Auburn Public Library invites you to a screening and discussion of the documentary Erdogan: The Making of a Sultan.

“In this acclaimed new documentary, Emmy and BAFTA award-winning



director, Gilles Cayatte, and expert on Turkish affairs Guillaume Perrier, profile President Erdogan.”

“He rose to power as the anti-corruption candidate, challenging the old order and advocating closer ties with the EU. But now, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan seems to epitomise the concept of Turkish Authoritarianism. The attempted coup d’état of July 2016 has enabled him to consolidate his power and silence all opposition.” (from Kanopy.com)

Following the screening, attendees are invited to remain for a brief discussion of the film.

This program will take place in the Androscoggin Community Room starting at 4:00 p.m.

BOOK DISCUSSION –

NOTES ON A FOREIGN COUNTRY: AN AMERICAN ABROAD IN A POST-AMERICAN WORLD

by Suzy Hansen
Thursday, February 5th, 2026 – 4:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Conference Room
The final event leading up to the 39th Annual Camden Conference will be a discussion of the book Notes on a Foreign Country: An American Abroad in a Post-American World by Suzy Hansen.

In the wake of the September 11 attacks and the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, Suzy Hansen moved to Istanbul, seeking to understand the Middle East that had been reduced to scaremongering headlines. She arrived with romantic ideas about a mythical city perched between East and West, and with a naive sense of the Islamic world beyond. Over the course of her many years of living in Turkey and traveling throughout Greece, Egypt, Afghanistan, and Iran, she learned a great deal about these countries and their cultures, histories, and politics. But the greatest, most unsettling surprise was when Hansen learned about her own country—and herself, an American abroad in the era of America’s de-

cline. It took leaving her home to discover what she came to think of as the two Americas: the country and its people, and the international experience of American power.

Blending memoir, journalism, and history, and deeply attuned to the voices of those Hansen met on her travels, Notes on a Foreign Country is a moving reflection of America’s place in the world. It is a powerful journey of self-discovery and revelation—a profound reckoning with what it means to be an American in a time of grave national and global turmoil. (from book jacket)

This discussion will take place in person in the Conference Room on Thursday, February 5, 2026, from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. Thanks to funding provided by the Camden Conference, free copies of the book are available to those who register, and books will be available for pickup after January 5.

To register for any of these events, please visit the Library website -- www.auburnpubliclibrary.org -- or call the Reference Desk at 207-333-6640, ext. 4.

For more details on the 2026 Camden Conference, including participating speakers, membership, or other pre-conference events, visit their website at camdenconference.org.

Credit Union celebrates employees earning CCUFC designation

LEWISTON, ME – Community Credit Union is proud to announce that three dedicated team members have earned the Certified Credit Union Financial Counselor (CCUFC) designation in 2025, an achievement that further strengthens the organization’s commitment to financial stability and lifelong support for its members.

The CCUFC designation is earned through America’s Credit Unions’ Financial Counseling Certification Program (FiCEP), which equips credit union employees with the skills and knowledge required to guide members toward sound financial decisions. The program emphasizes practical, compassionate financial counseling designed to meet people where they are in every stage of life.

The employees earning the CCUFC designation this year are:

Mary Randall, Loan Specialist
Erin Dunn-Kimball,

Marketing Specialist

Ginger Leigh Smith, Financial & Life Navigator

Many Americans often learn about personal finances from family and friends—or are left to navigate complex financial decisions on their own. With economic uncertainty impacting many households, the need for expert, trusted financial guidance has never been greater. CCUFC-certified professionals are uniquely trained to provide that support, helping members build confidence, resilience, and long-term financial well-being.

With these new designations, the Credit Union now has nine CCUFCs among its staff of 42 employees, underscoring the organization’s deep investment in professional development and member-focused service.

“As a credit union that strives to provide financial services ensuring stability for all members, employees, and communities at every stage of life, this achievement rep-

resents another meaningful step toward fulfilling our mission,” stated Betsy Sibley, Chief Marketing Officer for Community Credit Union. “We are incredibly proud of Mary, Erin, and Ginger for their commitment to lifelong learning and for the positive impact they make every day.” Community Credit Union congratulates all CCUFC-certified professionals on this outstanding accomplishment; thank you for your dedication to strengthening financial confidence and resilience

across the communities you all serve.

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 13,000 members. For more information, log onto www.communitycreditunion.com.

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Seniors Not Acting Their Age A Glorious Day on Mosquito Mountain

Located a few miles east of The Forks and situated along the western shore of picturesque Moxie Pond, remote Mosquito Mountain is a unique peak. Although a relatively small mountain at 2,223-feet, the prominence offers a fairly challenging ascent with phenomenal views from the rugged higher elevations – especially in winter. Although not officially winter, my son, Adam, and I experienced winter conditions during a recent mid-December climb.

Access to Mosquito Mountain is via Troutdale Road, a dirt road that parallels the west side of Moxie Pond. Whether or not the road is plowed is a concern in winter.

From The Forks, Adam and I drove north on Moxie Pond Road to the junction with Troutdale Road on the right next to Moxie Pond. The road was plowed; however, a slippery hard-packed snow surface required careful negotiation for about 2 miles to the tiny unplowed parking area at the trailhead. Despite a moderate incline and about 5 inches of fresh snow, we were able to park our 4-wheel drive vehicle with minimal difficulty.

The temperature was in the low teens when we arrived and never climbed above 20 degrees during the entire hike. Cloudy skies and moderate winds were forecast but glimpses of sunshine left us hopeful that we'd have sunny skies for the views at the top.

Our first decision was whether or not to take or wear snowshoes given the limited amount of fresh snow. We decided snowshoes would be more of an impediment than an advantage so left them behind.

We began ascending gradually in a modest depth of snow through a relatively new, predominantly hardwood forest. No signs of prior hikers were observed but the trail was quite easy to follow despite the blanket of powder.

Early on, scrambling over or around a few downed trees was necessary. We then crossed a powerline and remnants of what is probably a former logging road before angling right and climbing steadily.

Later, the path turned abruptly left, the gradient steepened, and the forest transitioned to primarily spruce growth. We began slipping on ice hidden beneath the snow so donned micro spikes and wore them for the remainder of the trek.

Shortly after, we persisted up three substantial ridges in a dense snow-covered forest and passed a massive boulder on the left. Just beyond, a spur trail turned left. We followed the narrow path to a spectacular east facing overlook where an American Flag is erected on the edge of a vertical cliff. Our wish for sunny skies was fulfilled as we spent a prolonged period embracing the glorious views of elongated Moxie Pond and mountain ranges

in the north and east.

Returning to the main trail, we cautiously completed a precipitous rocky climb to the shoulder of the summit ridge. Following the path in this area was confusing because it weaves through a sparse stunted conifer forest with numerous blowdowns. The snow pack added to the difficulty.

After careful inspection, we located a narrow route on the south side of the ridge and followed the rolling path until emerging onto extensive open ledges that rise to the top. The mostly barren summit area is magnificent and we wandered to various locations in search of different views. The finest vistas were found on cliffs facing the mountains of western Maine.

Frigid gusts forced us to find shelter in a low area north of the summit where we relaxed for lunch, free from the biting wind. Before departing, we added parkas in anticipation of a less strenuous descent.

Meticulous maneuvering was necessary when descending the rocky pitch on the east side of the summit ridge. The danger of injury from a fall in that remote area was not lost on us.

During the return, our micro spikes were particularly beneficial negotiating down steep sections where ice was lurking under the snow. Digging our heels in with each step prevented any falls.

After returning to the trailhead, we celebrated our first wintry hike of the season. We're hoping for many more. Given the unusually cold weather so far, there is reason for optimism.

My book, *Maine Al Fresco: The Fifty Finest Outdoor Adventures in Maine* narrates numerous winter mountain ascents of Maine peaks including Mount Katahdin and the Traveler Range in Baxter State Park.

The author of "The Great Mars Hill Bank Robbery" and "Mountains for Mortals – New England," Ron Chase resides in Topsham. His latest book, "Maine Al Fresco: The Fifty Finest Outdoor Adventures in Maine" is available at North Country Press and through online retailers. Visit his website at www.ronchaseoutdoors.com or he can be reached at ronchaseoutdoors@comcast.net



An overlook on Mosquito Mountain provides a spectacular view of Moxie Pond



A hiker nears the summit of Mosquito Mountain



The Mosquito Mountain summit ridge provides outstanding views of western Maine mountains

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Maine community colleges 2025 year in review

AUGUSTA, ME – In 2025, Maine’s community colleges continued their mission of providing an affordable, relevant, high-quality education – delivered by outstanding instructors and with the support and community that students need to thrive. Among the year’s highlights were new student housing and athletics options, expanded academic programming in key economic sectors, new leadership, spectacular athletic and academic achievements, and record high enrollments for both degree-seeking students and Early College students who are still in high school.

RECORD OVER-ALL ENROLLMENT: A third straight year of record fall enrollment, with 15,833 students enrolled in fall 2025. Key factors include the colleges’ robust high-quality programming, high demand for skilled workers, new guaranteed transfer agreements with the University of Maine System and six private colleges in Maine, and the Maine Free College Scholarship.

RECORD HEALTH CARE ENROLLMENT: Responsive to Maine’s ongoing shortage of health care workers, Maine’s community col-

leges continued to focus on expanding nursing and health care training programs, enrolling a record high 3,570 health care students in Fall 2025 (up from about 2,000 students pre-pandemic) in more than 60 health care-related degree and certificate programs across the state. In addition, the colleges offered scores of health care-related short-term workforce training programs that take less than a year to complete and offer both immediate job skills and prepare graduates to pursue certificates and degrees.

CONSTRUCTION TRADES TAKE CENTER STAGE: As the state of Maine takes multiple steps to alleviate Maine’s housing crunch, the need for skilled construction workers of all stripes has never been greater. Maine’s community colleges focused on meeting that need in 2025, developing new industry based collaborations through the system’s Harold Alfond Center for the Advancement of Maine’s Workforce and with expanded degree, certificate, and short-term training opportunities.

INNOVATION RECOGNIZED: Three of Maine’s community colleges (Kennebec

Valley Community College (KVCC), Southern Maine Community College (SMCC), and York County Community College (YCCC)), were recognized for high quality non-credit offerings, a noteworthy development as colleges nationwide adopt new non-credit short-term workforce training programs alongside accredited degree and certificate programs. The colleges are in the first cohort recognized by the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE).

STRATEGIC PLAN UNVEILED: In March, the system Strategic Plan was released, outlining the short- and long-term goals and strategies for serving our students, supporting our employees, and building lasting partnerships with business and industry groups.

GROUNDBREAKING PRISON EDUCATION: Washington County Community College (WCCC) received funding to expand the college’s innovative prison education program, allowing the college to launch an innovative suite of online, stackable certification courses in computer technology. WCCC, which has offered a range of classes at multiple corrections facilities

in Maine since 2018, was one of five New England colleges to receive the funding.

LEADERSHIP: Among the leadership changes in 2025 was the hire of Doug Binsfeld as president of Northern Maine Community College (NMCC), and Betsy Libby, formerly the president of CMCC, as the new MCCS vice president and chief academic affairs and enrollment management officer. MCCS also welcomed construction executive Stacey Harris and KVCC nursing student Jasmine Sanders as new trustees for the system’s Board of Trustees. Sadly, MCCS mourned the passing of Eastern Maine Community College (EMCC) President Liz Russell and honored her with the naming of the campus Learning Commons. MCCS President David Daigler joined the College Presidents for Civic Preparedness, working with higher education leaders in Maine and across the country and the Institute for Citizens & Scholars to promote students becoming engaged citizens.

EMPLOYEE HON-

ORS: SMCC Don Sheets was named the 2025 recipient of the Maine EMS Governor’s Award, the highest individual honor in the state’s emergency medical services system. NMCC faculty member Patrick Wiley was recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s New England office as the 2024 EPA Regional Wastewater Trainer of the Year.

STUDENT HON-ORS: For the second time in three years, KVCC had welding students compete in the National Welding League Championship. EMCC had automotive students compete in the National Championship round of the Mopar Career Automotive Program Bracket Challenge.

NEW FACILITIES, ASSOCIATIONS: Among the new and updated facilities around the system in 2025: KVCC added a new student housing option, which means all seven colleges now offer housing options. KVCC also opened a new early childhood education classroom on the Fairfield campus, providing full-day care for children ages six weeks to three

years, with priority for students and employees. SMCC opened a new Advanced Manufacturing lab at the Brunswick campus. YCCC added a new student shower facility. CMCC opened a new Construction Electricity Lab. NMCC finalized preparations of its new child care center.

2025 Sports highlights include:

SMCC’s golf program won two national championships when the men’s team won the USCAA National Championship team title, and first-year standout Grace Thompson won Individual National Champion honors in the women’s field.

CMCC’s men’s soccer team won their second straight USCAA DII National Championship after an undefeated season.

SMCC’s softball team won its first-ever United States Collegiate Athletic Association (USCAA) National Championship in the 2025 USCAA Small College World Series.

WCCC joined the Yankee Small College Conference, a key milestone in its expanded athletics program.

AARP Fraud Watch: Credit repair scams

With rising costs and economic uncertainty, many of us are looking to start the new year by taking more control of our finances and tackling lingering debt. But paying down what you owe takes time, discipline, and a clear plan—not quick fixes. Be cautious of offers that promise guaranteed results or fast debt elimination.

Scammers often target consumers with sig-

nificant credit card debt, claiming they can negotiate with creditors to reduce what you owe. These operations typically charge hefty fees and deliver little—or no—help. Some even advise you to stop communicating with your creditors, which can make your situation worse.

If you or a loved one need help getting out of debt, turn to reputable organizations like the non-

profit National Foundation for Credit Counseling (www.nfcc.org). They can offer real guidance without hidden fees or false guarantees.

Learn how to spot and avoid scams with AARP Fraud Watch Network™. Suspect a scam? Call our free helpline at 877-908-3360 and talk to one of our fraud specialists about what to do next.

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Arts & Entertainment

Midcoast Symphony Orchestra brings “Myths and Magic” to life

TOPSHAM, ME – “Hear, hear, hear!” proclaim the three dramatic chords at the opening of Mozart’s overture to the “Magic Flute,” a fitting beginning to the Midcoast Symphony Orchestra’s January concert called “Myths and Magic.” Each work on the program casts a spell. The Finnish composer Jean Sibelius conjures an ancient tale in the “Swan of Tuonela,” a piece that will showcase the English horn mastery of the MSO’s Billie Jo Brito. In “Passacaglia: Secret of Wind and Birds,” Chinese composer Tan Dun includes passages where orchestra members sing and the audience calls up bird songs on their cell phones. The nineteenth-century composer Engelbert Humperdinck suggests the shadowy woodlands of Grimm’s fairy-tales in his noble overture to “Hansel and Gretel.” With “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice” by Paul Dukas, we

are reminded of Mickey Mouse’s overwhelming escapades with brooms and buckets in Disney’s “Fantasia.” The concert concludes in Middle Earth with a selection from Howard Shore’s soundtrack for “The Lord of the Rings.” “Myths and Magic” continues the MSO’s tradition of programming January’s concerts with shorter and more accessible pieces to encourage audiences of all ages to attend as a family. The concert takes place on Saturday, January 17, at 7pm at the Franco Center in Lewiston, and Sunday, January 18, at 2:30pm in the Orion Performing Arts Center in Topsham. Tickets are \$27 in advance and \$30 at the door, with free admission to anyone 25 and under. Tickets can be reserved at midcoastsymphony.org or by calling the box office at (207) 481-0790. Short season tickets, which include admission to all three remaining concerts



Music Director Rohan Smith (photo credit Charlie Buchsbaum Levine)

in the 2025/26 season plus one guest ticket, are also on sale for \$65. As part of its ongoing educational and outreach series “More with Midcoast,” the MSO will host an open rehearsal on Sunday at 1:15pm before the Orion Arts Center performance. In this event,

audience members are invited to sit on stage with members of the orchestra as Music Director Rohan Smith leads them in a rehearsal of a short section of one of the pieces in the concert. Seating at this free event is first come, first serve, and no latecomers will be admitted.



Illustration by Donna Stackhouse

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STB auditions for *Over The River and Through The Woods*

BATH, ME – Studio Theatre of Bath is excited to announce auditions for *Over The River and Through The Woods* by Joe DiPietro, directed by Kirstin Hayward.

This touching and funny play follows Nick Cristano, a thirty-something Italian American bachelor from New Jersey who is very close to his four grandparents. When

Nick is offered a job in Seattle, his grandparents, Frank, Aida, Nunzio, and Emma, are devastated by the thought of him moving away. In their efforts to keep him close, they come up with one heartfelt (and often hilarious) idea after another, including inviting a charming nurse to dinner in hopes of sparking a romance. The play beautifully captures the humor, love, and generational differences that make family so special.

Auditions will be held on Saturday, February 21, 2026, 10:00am - 2:00pm and Sunday, February 22, 2026, 1:00pm - 5:00pm at Sagadahoc Preservation, Inc., 880 Washington St, Bath, ME 04530. Auditions will consist of reading sides (small scenes from the show). Preparing a monologue is optional, and should be limited to no longer than

See Auditions, page 14

Myths and Magic

Family-friendly selections to warm up your winter

Saturday
January 17, 2026
7:00PM • Franco Center, Lewiston

Mozart.....	<i>The Magic Flute</i> Overture
Sibelius.....	<i>The Swan of Tuonela</i>
Dun.....	<i>Passacaglia: Secret of Wind and Birds</i>
Humperdinck.....	<i>Hansel and Gretel</i> Overture
Dukas.....	<i>The Sorcerer's Apprentice</i>
Shore....	Selections from <i>The Lord of the Rings</i>

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High levels of cancer-causing gas found in 37% of Maine homes

AUGUSTA, ME – January is National Radon Action Month, and the American Lung Association is raising awareness of the potential health risks of radon and the importance of home testing. Exposure to radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer, and the number one cause of lung cancer in people who have never smoked. Radon is responsible for an estimated 21,000 deaths annually in the U.S.

According to the Lung Association’s recently released “State of Lung Cancer” report, about 37% of homes tested for radon in Maine had results that were at or above the action level recommended by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which is 4 pCi/L. The Lung Association in Maine strongly urges all residents to test their home for radon and take immediate steps to mitigate the threat if elevated levels are found.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas emitted from the soil that can accumulate indoors. It is colorless, odorless and tasteless. Radon can enter a home through cracks and openings in walls, basements, floors and foundations. It does not matter if the building is new or old, well-insulated or drafty, or has a basement or not. Once indoors, radon can build up to dangerous levels and release radioactive particles that attack your lungs with dangerous, cancer-causing radiation. There is no known safe exposure level.

Radon exposure has no immediate symptoms, irritating effects or warning signs. The only way to detect radon in your home is to test for it.

“Radon is an invisible danger, appearing at high levels in far too many homes across Maine. Unfortunately, too

few people are aware of the potentially devastating effects of radon exposure. We’re committed to educating and empowering residents to protect their homes and families,” said Lance Boucher, Eastern AVP for the Lung Association. “Any home can have a radon problem, and testing is the only way to know if your home is safe. Thankfully, testing is easy, affordable and readily available at local hardware stores and through trusted online retailers.”

For National Radon Action Month, the Lung Association has the following guidance to protect Maine residents from radon exposure at home:

Every home should be regularly tested for radon. High amounts of radon have been found in every state with an estimated one in 15 homes nationwide reporting radon levels above the EPA action level of 4.0 pCi/L. In some states, as many as one in three homes have high radon levels. Elevated radon levels can be found in single and multi-family homes, apartments, schools and other buildings. Radon levels can greatly vary from house to house. Even if your neighbors have low radon levels, yours could be high. Do-it-yourself test kits are simple to use, inexpensive and can save lives. If you are buying a home, consider hiring a certified radon professional who can conduct testing during the inspection period. Radon testing is recommended every five years and every two years if you have a mitigation system.

Rental property owners have a duty to protect tenants from health and safety hazards in most states and should disclose known radon levels to tenants and reduce high radon levels through radon mitigation. Some

states have tenant rights laws regarding radon testing and mitigation. Tenants should talk to their landlord or property manager about radon testing.

If radon test results are high, hire a professional to lower your radon levels and reduce radon exposure in the home. EPA recommends installing a mitigation system if radon levels are above 4 pCi/L and considering similar actions if radon levels are above 2 pCi/L. Radon mitigation should always be completed by a professional. A typical radon mitigation system consists of a vent pipe and properly sealing cracks and other openings. This system collects radon gas from underneath the home’s foundation and vents it to the outside. Contact your state radon program for a list of certified professionals. Some state health departments offer financial assistance or low interest loans for radon mitigation.

If you smoke, reduce your risk of lung cancer by quitting. Smoking and radon are the number one and number two leading causes of lung cancer in the U.S. If you smoke and are exposed to high radon levels in your home or workplace, your risk of developing lung cancer is especially high. If you are ready to start your journey to quit for good, the Lung Association offers resources at Lung.org/quit-smoking.

To learn more about the potential health risks of radon, testing and mitigation, visit at Lung.org/radon and take the Lung Association’s free Radon Basics course at Lung.org/radon-basics.

Get involved and help the mission of the American Lung Association. The Trek Across Maine in Pineland Farms is coming up June 19 -21. Learn more at TrekAcrossMaine.org.

Make healthy aging a New Year’s resolution in 2026

MAINE – With the new year on the horizon, the Alzheimer’s Foundation of America (AFA) is encouraging people of all ages to make healthy aging a priority in 2026.

“Healthy aging is a resolution everyone should make and keep, because the benefits last far beyond the new year,” said Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr., AFA’s president & CEO. “Lifestyle choices can influence a person’s chances of developing Alzheimer’s disease or another dementia-related illness, as well as other health conditions. Incorporating these small steps into your life will go a long way to promoting good brain health and healthy aging.”

AFA encourages individuals to take the following ten steps:

Eat Well - Adopt a low-fat diet high on fruits and veggies, like strawberries, blueberries and broccoli. Take daily vitamins. Limit intake of red meats, fried and processed foods, salt and sugar. Generally, foods that are “heart healthy” are also “brain healthy.” Make sure to consult with your doctor about what is an appropriate diet based on your medical needs.

Stay Active – Physical activity increases blood flow to the brain and can also help improve mood and overall wellbeing. Brisk walking benefits brain health, while aerobics can boost your heart rate, and weight training builds strength and flexi-

bility. Try out different activities until you find one that works for you.

Learn New Things – Challenge your brain by starting a new hobby like playing tennis, learning to speak a foreign language, trying a cooking class, or something you haven’t done before. Even something as simple as brushing your teeth with your non-dominant hand stimulates the brain by forcing it to think outside of its normal routine.

Get Enough Sleep – Getting a consistent, quality sleep every night is key; at least seven to nine hours is ideal. Having a good sleep environment is also helpful. Insomnia or sleep apnea can have serious physical effects and negatively affect memory and thinking. If you are having difficulty with your sleep, be sure to speak with your doctor about it.

Mind Your Meds -- Medication can affect everyone differently, especially as you age. Keep your doctor or local pharmacist updated on any changes with medications and have them review your drug list as medications can interact with each other.

Stop Smoking and Limit Alcohol - Smoking can increase the risk of serious illnesses, while too much alcohol can affect memory, impair judgment and present safety issues.

Stay Connected – Social interaction and maintaining an active social life are very important

for brain health, cognitive stimulation and mood. Invite friends and family over for a meal, board games, or just to hang out. Engaging in your community and participating in group activities is also beneficial.

Know Your Blood Pressure – Blood pressure can impact your cognitive functioning. Visit your physician regularly to check your blood pressure and make sure it is in normal range.

See Your Doctor - Maintain checkups. Health screenings are key to managing chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and obesity, all of which can impact brain health. Speak with your physician about any concerns or questions you have about your health.

Get a Memory Screening - Our brains need regular checkups, just as other parts of our bodies do. Memory screenings are quick, easy, non-invasive exams for our brains. Talk to your doctor about getting a screening as part of your annual wellness exam or call AFA at 866-232-8484 (AFA offers screenings for free, with no minimum age or insurance prerequisites).

Additional information about healthy aging, brain health and wellness and memory screenings can be found on AFA’s website, www.alzfdn.org or by calling AFA’s Helpline at 866-232-8484. The helpline is open seven days a week.

\$190M for Maine rural hospitals, providers

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Susan Collins, Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, announced that Maine will receive \$190 million in first-year funding through the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP), a \$50 billion initiative that will be awarded over five years that she proposed to support rural health care systems across the country. Maine’s population is the oldest of any state in the nation and is among the most rural, placing unique strains on its rural health care system.

“I proposed \$50 billion in funding for the Rural Health Transformation Program to help give rural states like Maine the resources they need to keep health care available close to home,” said Senator Collins. “This funding will help strengthen our rural hospitals and

support innovative approaches that can lower costs and improve health outcomes for Mainers no matter where they live. And while this investment will not solve every challenge facing our state’s rural health care system, it represents an important step toward improving access to care for individuals across rural Maine and comes at a time when many rural health care providers are facing significant financial hardship.”

The Rural Health Transformation Program represents the largest single federal investment in rural health care in more than two decades. Senator Collins proposed the funding during negotiations over amendments to the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. She successfully pushed to expand the RHTP to \$50 billion and ensure that a broad-

er range of rural providers would be eligible for support, despite voting against the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is expected to distribute the \$50 billion initiative in tranches of \$10 billion over each of the next five years.

The State of Maine’s application for RHTP funding, submitted by the State with the support of the entire congressional delegation, focuses on five core priorities: empowering rural Mainers to achieve their own healthy living goals; strengthening the rural health workforce; adopting health-enabling technologies such as telehealth and electronic medical records; reducing financial and transportation-related barriers to care; and sustaining the long-term viability of Maine’s rural health care ecosystem.

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

CMMC welcomes its first baby of 2026

LEWISTON, ME – Central Maine Medical Center (CMMC) welcomed its first baby of 2026 into the world on New Year’s Day.

The baby boy is named Amir Barow and was born at 3:35 a.m. on Jan. 1, 2026, weighing eight pounds and one ounce and measuring 20 ½ inches.

The child’s parents are Aliza Padilla and Wirow Barow of Lewiston.

“The CMMC labor and delivery team was overjoyed to welcome baby Amir with punctual timing on his due date, early this morning,” said Rebecca Brakeley, MD, chief of Pediatrics at CMMC. “Only a small percentage of babies are born on their due date, making Amir’s arrival even more special.”

The family was excited to be gifted a tote bag of newborn essentials and diapers from the maternity team. The parents and baby are recovering peacefully.

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

Last month, U.S. News & World Report once again recognized CMMC as “High Performing in Maternity Care.” Newsweek also named CMMC one of the best hospitals in the nation for maternity.



A thank you to Skowhegan Savings Bank’s Dave Cyr

SKOWHEGAN, ME – On January 2nd, Dave Cyr retired as the 13th president of CEO of Skowhegan Savings Bank. Under Cyr’s leadership, Skowhegan Savings grew from \$600 million to more than \$850 million in assets with a capital base exceeding \$100 million. His vision and leadership have positioned the bank for continued success, including the development of incoming CEO Dan Tilton and COO Vicki Alward.

Cyr balanced growth with putting customers and the Bank’s community first. He led the opening of the Portland, Maine branch, established a \$1 million Workforce Development Fund through the Skowhegan Savings Charitable Foundation, and guided the bank to earn Best Places to Work in Maine recognition 13 times.

Throughout his twenty years at Skowhegan Savings, Cyr ensured the Bank remained deeply involved in its communities with the bank participating in



more than 150 community events annually while fostering a culture of respect, integrity, and teamwork.

In his retirement Cyr looks forward to harvesting timber on his property and spending time with

his family and four legged friends.

Please join us in thanking Dave for his outstanding contributions to Skowhegan Savings Bank and our communities throughout Maine!

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Special section: National Human Trafficking Awareness Month

How to identify and report human trafficking

Human trafficking myths and misconceptions

Contributed by the Department of Homeland Security

Everyone has a role to play in combating human trafficking and the first step one can take is to learn the key indicators. Remember that not all indicators listed below are present in every human trafficking situation, and the presence or absence of any of the indicators is not necessarily proof of human trafficking. It is up to law enforcement to investigate suspected cases of human trafficking. Keep yourself and your community safe by learning to recognize common indicators of human trafficking and how to report it.

Identifying Human Trafficking - Ask Yourself:

- Does the person appear disconnected from family, friends, community organizations, or houses of worship?
- Has a child stopped attending school?
- Has the person had a sudden or dramatic change in behavior?
- Is a juvenile engaged in commercial sex acts?
- Is the person disoriented or confused, or showing signs of mental or physical abuse?
- Does the person have bruises in various stages of healing?
- Is the person fearful, timid, or submissive?
- Does the person show signs of having been denied food, water, sleep, or medical care?
- Is the person often in the company of someone to whom he or she defers? Or someone who seems to be in control of the situation, e.g., where they go or who they talk to?
- Does the person appear to be coached on what to say?
- Is the person living in unsuitable conditions?
- Does the person lack personal possessions and

IDENTIFYING HUMAN TRAFFICKING – ASK YOURSELF:

☐ Is the victim in possession of their own identification and travel documents?

☐ Is the victim coached on what to say to community members, workers, law enforcement or immigration officials? Does someone else communicate for the victim?

☐ Is the victim recruited for one purpose but forced to engage in other work?

☐ Are the victim's wages being unlawfully garnished to pay off a debt or fee? (Paying off a smuggling fee alone is not considered trafficking.)

☐ Is the victim forced to perform commercial sex acts?

☐ Has the victim or their family been threatened with harm if they attempt to leave?

☐ Has the victim been threatened with deportation or criminal charges?

☐ Has the victim been harmed, deprived of food, water, sleep, medical care, or other life necessities?

☐ Is the victim free to contact friends or family without being coached or monitored?

☐ Is the victim under the age of 18 and engaged in commercial sex?

☐ Is the victim living in substandard housing?

BCIC-ENG 9/25

TRAFFICKING VS. SMUGGLING

Human Trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act, or in which the person performing the commercial sex act is under 18 years of age.

Human Smuggling is defined as the importation of people into the United States involving deliberate evasion of immigration laws. This offense includes bringing illegal aliens into the United States as well as the unlawful transportation and harboring of aliens already in the United States.

These are *not* interchangeable terms

Smuggling is transportation-based and is a crime against a border

Trafficking is exploitation-based and is a crime against a person

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www.dhs.gov/bluecampaign

appear not to have a stable living situation?

Does the person have freedom of movement? Can the person freely leave where they live? Are there unreasonable security measures?

Reporting Human Trafficking:

Do not at any time attempt to confront a suspected trafficker directly or alert a victim to your suspicions. Your safety as well as the victim's safety is paramount. Instead, please contact local law enforcement directly or call the tip lines indicated on this page:

Report Suspicious Criminal Activity

Call 1-866-347-2423 to report suspicious criminal activity to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Tip Line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. Highly trained specialists take reports from both the public and law enforcement agencies on more than 400 laws enforced by ICE HSI, including those related to human trafficking.

The Tip Line is ac-

cessible outside the United States by calling 802-872-6199.

Get Help from the National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH)

Call 1-888-373-7888 or text HELP or INFO to BeFree (233733). The NHTH can help connect victims with service providers in the area and provides training, technical assistance, and other resources. The NHTH is a national, toll-free hotline available to answer calls from anywhere in the country, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. The NHTH is not a law enforcement or immigration authority and is operated by a nongovernmental organization funded by the Federal government.

You Can Help
By identifying victims and reporting tips, you are doing your part to help law enforcement rescue people, and you might save a life. Law enforcement can connect survivors to services such as medical and mental health care, shelter, job training, and legal assistance that restore their freedom and dignity.

Contributed by the Department of Homeland Security

Here are some common myths and misconceptions about human trafficking:

Myth: Human trafficking does not occur in the United States. It only happens in other countries.

Fact: Human trafficking exists in every country, including the United States. It exists nationwide—in cities, suburbs, and rural towns—and possibly in your own community.

Myth: Human trafficking victims are only foreign born individuals and those who are poor.

Fact: Human trafficking victims can be any age, race, gender, or nationality. They may come from any socioeconomic group. A socioeconomic group is the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation.

Myth: Human trafficking is only sex trafficking.

Fact: Sex trafficking exists, but it is not the only type of human trafficking.

Forced labor is another type of human trafficking; both involve exploitation of people. Victims are found in legitimate and illegitimate labor industries, including sweatshops, massage parlors, agriculture, restaurants, hotels, and domestic service.

Myth: Individuals must be forced or coerced into commercial sex acts to be victims of human trafficking.

Fact: Under U.S. federal law, any minor under the age of 18 who is induced to perform commercial sex acts is a victim of human trafficking, regardless of whether he or she is forced or coerced.

Myth: Human trafficking and human smuggling are the same.

Fact: Human trafficking is not the same as smuggling. "Trafficking" is based on exploitation and does not require movement across borders. "Smuggling" is based on movement and involves moving a person across a country's border with that person's consent in violation of immigration laws. Although human smuggling is very

different from human trafficking, human smuggling can turn into trafficking if the smuggler uses force, fraud, or coercion to hold people against their will for the purposes of labor or sexual exploitation. Under federal law, every minor induced to engage in commercial sex is a victim of human trafficking.

Myth: Human trafficking victims will attempt to seek help when in public.

Fact: Human trafficking is often a hidden crime. Victims may be afraid to come forward and get help; they may be forced or coerced through threats or violence; they may fear retribution from traffickers, including danger to their families; and they may not be in possession of or have control of their identification documents.

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

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Local skater qualifies for National Team, named STAR Student

SCARBOROUGH, ME – Benjamin Schmidt, age 14, of Scarborough, Maine, has been named the STAR Student of December at Maine Connections Academy, a tuition-free online public school serving students in grades 7-12 statewide. Benjamin is receiving this honor for both his academic excellence and incredible career as a young athlete, qualifying for the U.S. High Performance National Development Team.

The life of a young figure skater is a challenging one, but Benjamin’s passion is advancing him to perform at the highest level. Since he was 10 years old, Benjamin and his mother, Dawn Schmidt, have been getting up at 3:15 a.m. to commute to Massachusetts six days a week for his training. This dedication and discipline have yielded tremendous success as he placed sixth at sectionals in the Eastern Series this year, along with being a pewter regional medalist, and qualifying for the U.S. High Performance National Development Team. He will be going to the United States Figure Skating High Performance Camp next year to continue his training.

Benjamin fell in love with the sport when he saw it on TV at three years old. Encouraged by his family, he started skating at age four and continued to build his skill and compete locally until he was 10, then started competing out of state. His rigorous training includes the commute to Massachusetts, strength training at NX-Gen’s Athlete Training Program in the afternoon, and off-ice training at home.

Now in his freshman year, Maine Connections Academy has allowed Benjamin to balance both academics and sports. He utilizes the school’s flexibility for his studies on his long commutes to and from training. Benjamin is studying hard with aspirations of becoming a doctor one day, and he finds his science and geometry classes helpful and engaging. His mother, Dawn, is happy that Maine Connections Academy has been such a great place for her son since he started there in seventh grade. “The teachers are amazing. They are always there, always supportive, and always want to help Ben succeed,” she said.

Though Benjamin is highly successful at his age, he keeps his head level when it comes to figure skating. He has recently achieved a triple toe, and is aiming at nailing down his triple lutz-triple toe combination. He hopes to compete at the United States Figure Skating Nationals at the junior level and make the National team. Teachers, friends, family, and the three cats, Mina, Miles, and Dobby, are all excited to see Benjamin continue to level up his game on the ice and study medicine in the future.



Kick the Nic in 2026: ALA offers support to help people quit

BANGOR, ME – Currently, 14% of adults in Maine use at least one tobacco or nicotine product such as cigarettes, e-cigarettes or nicotine pouches. Nicotine is extremely addictive, so the American Lung Association is offering free resources and support to help people quit tobacco and nicotine products for good.

Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Maine, killing 2,390 people each year. While it’s best to quit as early as possible, quitting tobacco and nicotine products at any age will enhance the length and quality of your life.

“In our state, 14% adults smoke and 16.8% of high school students use a tobacco product. We know that breaking the addiction to nicotine is extremely difficult. For most people, it takes multiple attempts to quit tobacco for good. Each quit attempt brings a person closer to reaching their goal,” said Lance Boucher, AVP, Advocacy and Public Policy with the American Lung Association. “It is critical that people who are ready speak with their healthcare provider about Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved tobacco treatment medications, coupling them with proven effective cessation programs to quit.”

The American Lung Association offers a free Lung Helpline to help people get started on their journey to quit. People can call 1-800-LUNGUSA to connect with a licensed registered nurse, respiratory therapist or certified tobacco treatment specialist. Services to help people quit nicotine and tobacco are available for adults and also teens ages 13 and up. The Lung Helpline also offers programs to employees to help their employees quit.

In addition, the Lung Helpline can help assist with information about lung cancer screening if they are eligible, help navigate insurance challenges, and connect people with Lung Health Navigators who specialize in lung cancer, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and pulmonary fibrosis.

For more information about quitting tobacco, visit the American Lung Association website at Lung.org or call the Lung Helpline at 1-800-LUNGUSA (1-800-586-4872) and press 2. Most health insurance covers medications and counseling to help you quit. If you don’t have insurance, check out your coverage options through Healthcare.gov– open enrollment runs through January 15. For more information, visit Lung.org/openenrollment.

Create a Valentine's Day Card!

February 2nd - February 14th

Kids & Families on the 3rd Floor

Adults on the 2nd Floor

Lewiston PUBLIC LIBRARY

Send all items for Names & Faces to the editor.

Deadline is Friday by five pm.

Painting Class:

Let It Snow!

Saturday, January 24th

11:00AM

located in the **Idea Lab**

Second Floor

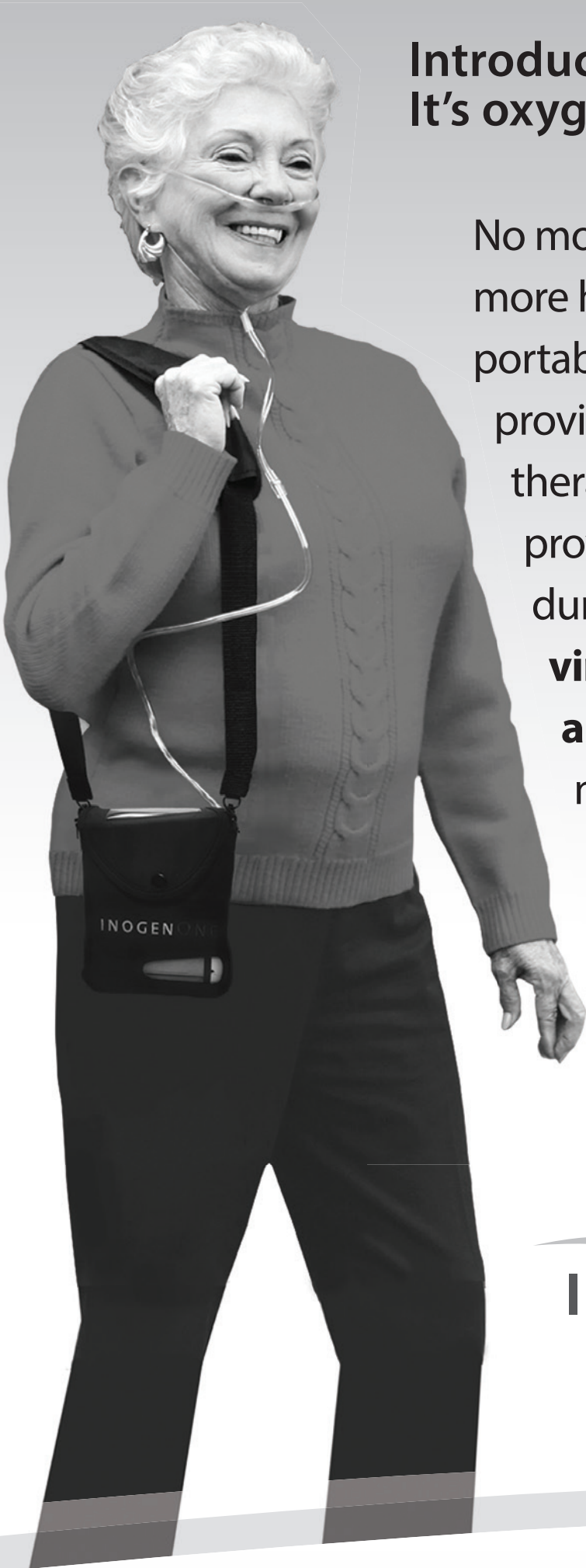
taught by local artist, *Nicole Ann*

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Jan 10
LEWISTON – From 11am-12pm the Lewiston Public Library Children’s Department will be offering New Year’s Wish Trees, a family keepsake program. Families will be able to decorate a tree of wishes for the new year. Extra paper for wishes will be packaged into envelopes for families so they can continue to add to their trees after the program. Families with children ages 14 and under are welcome to attend. This program will take place in the IDEA LAB on the second floor of the library.

Jan 10
SCARBOROUGH – 1pm Middle Eastern Cooking (and lunch!) with author Sandra Garson at Scarborough Public Library
In partnership with the Camden Conference, join cookbook author and chef Sandra Garson for a talk about the food of the Middle East followed by a catered lunch. Space is limited, registration required. scarboroughlibrary.libcal.com/event/15665982 or call 883-4723 option 4.

Jan 13, Jan 27, Feb 5
AUBURN – The Auburn Public Library is offering three events in partnership with the 2026 Camden Conference:
“How Populism Works in Erdogan’s Turkey” a talk with Dr. Senem Aslan from Bates College, Tuesday, January 13th, 4:30-5:30 PM (Registration requested)
Film screening & discussion: “Erdogan: The Making of a Sultan”, Tuesday, January 27th, 4-5:30 PM (Registration requested)
Book discussion: “Notes on a Foreign Country: An American Abroad in a Post-American World” by Suzy Hansen, Thursday, February 5th, 4-5 PM (Registration required - books provided)

Jan 13-15
AUGUSTA – The Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) has announced the full slate of educational sessions and meetings for the 85th Maine Agricultural Trades Show, taking place January 13–15, 2026, at the Augusta Civic Center.

Jan 15
LEWISTON – Lewiston Public Library’s Genre Roulette Book Club samples genres by focusing on one genre for three months at a time: join for one season

Calendar

Send your submissions to the Editor. More online.

or come to them all! This winter, the book club will be focusing on Romance across three sub-genres. We will meet monthly in the Couture Room from 5:30 to 6:30pm on the following Thursdays: January 15th, February 19th, and March 19th.

The first selection is a historical romance. On January 15th, we’ll meet to discuss The Queer Principles of Kit Webb by Cat Sebastian. Lord Holland begins taking lessons in thievery from Kit Webb in order to reclaim a family heirloom and falls in love along the way.

This book club is recommended for ages 18+. If you need help locating a copy of any of these titles, please contact our Lending Services Department at 513-3134 or visit the lending desk on the library’s first floor.

Jan 16 & 17
SOUTH PORTLAND – Women In Harmony at South Portland High School, 637 Highland Avenue, South Portland on Friday, January 16, 2026 at 7:30pm and Saturday, January 17, 2026 at 3:00pm. This winter, we present a formidable choral program entitled “I Have a Voice.”

Jan 17, 18, 26
LEWISTON, TOPSHAM – “Myths and Magic,” Rohan Smith, Conductor, Saturday, January 17, 2026 - 7:00 p.m. - Franco Center in Lewiston and Sunday, January 18, 2026 - 2:30 p.m. - Orion Performing Arts Center in Topsham. Tickets: \$27 in advance; \$30 at the door. www.midcoastsymphony.org or 481-0790

More with Midcoast Sunday, January 26, 2025 - 1:15 p.m. Open Rehearsal with Music Director Rohan Smith -- Orion Performing Arts Center in Topsham - sit on stage

Jan 17
LEWISTON – Join us for a Dinosaur Workshop hosted by Mad Science at the Lewiston Public Library on Saturday, January 17th at 11AM in Callahan Hall. In this Dinosaur Workshop kids will examine fossil casts and explore the differences in the teeth of herbivorous and carnivorous dinosaurs. Every paleontologist-in-training will then get to dig in and experience a mini dinosaur excavation and make a cast of a dinosaur tooth to take home. This workshop has 20 spots available for kids and registration is required. To register, call the Children’s Department at 513-3133 or email LPLKids@lewiston-maine.gov. This workshop is free and open to the public.

Jan 22
NEW GLOUCESTER – Free artist event at Unity Environmental University. Each event highlights a Maine-based artist with a pop-up exhibition, lecture, and catered reception. Matt Russ: Moments of Clarity at 5:00 pm, 70 Farm View Dr, New Gloucester, ME 04260.

Jan 22
VIRTUAL – University of Maine Cooperative Extension 4-H will offer an online club for youth ages 9–18 about the basics of farm animal care on Thursdays, 4–5:15 p.m., January 22–February 12, 2026.

Jan 24
LEWISTON – Join us at the Lewiston Public Library for Painting Class: Let It Snow! in the 2nd floor Idea Lab on Saturday, January 24 at 11am. Recommended for children ages 7 – 14 years old. Come learn how to paint a snowy scene with step-by-step instruction by local artist, Nicole Ann. Get creative by painting a winter sunset using acrylic paints on canvas panels. All materials are provided. This program is free, open to the public, and no registration is required.

Jan 26
LEWISTON – Join the Androscoggin Historical Society, Auburn Public Library, and Lewiston Public Library as we partner to explore fiction with a historical twist. We will be meeting on the last Monday of each month from 5:30 – 6:30pm to discuss a historical fiction novel. Our next meeting will take place on January 26th @ 5:30pm, at the Lewiston Public Library, located at 200 Lisbon St., Lewiston, ME 04240. We will be reading Stories from the Old Squire’s Farm (chapters 1-17) by C.A. Stephens.

Feb 2
LEWISTON – The Lewiston Public Library’s monthly crafters’ meet up will continue into the winter. Maker Monday meets every first Monday of the month from 4-6:30pm in the Couture Room.

Feb 2-14
LEWISTON – From February 2nd to February 14th, create a Valentine’s Day card at the Lewiston Public Library! Free supplies and crafting space will be available for adults on the 2nd floor and for children on the 3rd floor.

Feb 19
LEWISTON – Lewiston Public Library’s Genre Roulette Book Club samples genres by focusing on one genre for three months at a time: join for one season or come to them all! This winter, the book club will

be focusing on Romance across three sub-genres. We will meet monthly in the Couture Room from 5:30 to 6:30pm on the following Thursdays: February 19th, and March 19th.

February will focus on contemporary romance. The group will meet on February 19th to discuss Better Than Fiction by Alexa Martin. Book-hater turned book-seller Drew Young meets author Jasper Williams at an event at her store, and they soon find themselves living a romance that is better than fiction.

This book club is recommended for ages 18+. If you need help locating a copy of any of these titles, please contact our Lending Services Department at 513-3134 or visit the lending desk on the library’s first floor.

Feb 21
PORTLAND – GABBY’S DOLLHOUSE LIVE! Merrill Auditorium, Portland.

Feb 26
NEW GLOUCESTER – Free artist event at Unity Environmental University. Each event highlights a Maine-based artist with a pop-up exhibition, lecture, and catered reception. Ian Trask: Art from the Waste Stream at 5:00 pm, 70 Farm View Dr, New Gloucester, ME 04260.

Mar 19
LEWISTON – Lewiston Public Library’s Genre Roulette Book Club samples genres by focusing on one genre for three months

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at a time: join for one season or come to them all! This winter, the book club will be focusing on Romance across three sub-genres. We will meet monthly in the Couture Room from 5:30 to 6:30pm.

The Romance Book Club will end with Roman-tasy. On March 19th, we’ll meet to discuss Swordheart by T. Kingfisher. Halla accidentally summons Sarkis, an immortal warrior trapped in a steel sword who is now sworn to protect her.

This book club is recommended for ages 18+. If you need help locating a copy of any of these titles, please contact our Lending Services Department at 513-3134 or visit the lending desk on the library’s first floor.

Auditions
Continued from page 6

2 minutes. You will not be required to stay for the entire duration of the au-

dition, unless you want to, then we welcome you.

Roles available: We are seeking a diverse cast of six (6) performers who present ages 28-80. No prior theater experience is required—just enthusiasm, commitment, and a love for storytelling.

The show will run May 15-24, 2026. More information, including character descriptions, can be found: <https://www.studiotheatreofbath.com/over-the-river-through-the-woods>

Studio Theatre of Bath, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Founded in part in 1979 by Priscilla & J. Pat Montgomery, Studio Theatre of Bath is one of midcoast Maine’s oldest active community theater groups. Since 1980 “STB” has produced upwards of 140 major theatrical productions of all ranges & styles and has been a constant for community enrichment in Bath, Maine for nearly 50 years.

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Fashion News

Tias Prom Project

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The Tatiana Morrell Foundation was created to honor the incredible spirit of Tatiana Morrell — a young woman whose light, kindness, and heart continue to inspire us every day. One of the ways we carry her legacy forward is through something truly special: collecting prom dresses for students who may not have the means to purchase one. Tatiana believed deeply in making others feel seen, valued, and beautiful — and this mission reflects that love.

Through every dress given, every smile shared, and every moment of confidence created — Tatiana’s spirit lives on. Thank you for being part of this journey with us. 🌟



The Story Behind Our Mission:
To better understand our mission, you must understand our reasoning:
Tia lived with a heart led by kindness and intuition. When she noticed a new student struggling, she stepped in to make a difference—providing her with a beautiful dress and arranging for her mother to do her hair and makeup. That simple act of love gave the girl, who never imagined attending such an event, the night of her life.

Tia believed every young woman should feel confident, radiant, and celebrated during life’s special moments. In her honor, we are dedicated to continuing that mission—ensuring that no girl misses out on the magic of prom, homecoming, or a school dance because of financial hardship.

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SENIOR TRIPS

If interested in any of the following trips or upcom-ing 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.

SEPTEMBER 20 - 28, 2026 - DISCOVER PAINTED CANYONS OF THE WEST - Trip includes 9 days and 11 meals. Highlights are Colorado National Park, Wine tasting in the midst of Colorado Wine Coun-try. Moab, Arches Nation-al Park, Canyonlands Na-tional Park, Dead Horse Point State Park, Capitol Reef State Park, Bryce Canyon National Park and Zion National Park all in Utah, last day in Ve-gas. Included in price is round trip air from Logan International Airport and all Hotel Transfers. De-posit is \$698.00 pp plus \$429.00 if you want travel protection.

May 23-31, 2026 – BILT-MORE ESTATE & ASHE-VILLE, N.C. - This trip includes 9 days and 8 nights lodging, 8 break-fasts and 6 dinners. You

will have a full day at the Biltmore Estate and expe-rience the Biltmore House and Gardens. You will also visit the Antler Village and Winery. You will have a guided tour of Asheville and the magnificent St. Lawrence Basilica. We will experience a drive on the Blue Ridge Parkway (America's Most visited park unit). We also visit the Thomas Wolfe Me-morial State Historic Site. These are the highlights of the trip and there is so much more that we will see. On our way home we stop at the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. Price for this trip is \$1,245.00 per per-son double occupancy. A \$75.00 deposit per person is due upon signing up. The trip includes the bus driver tip and all tour gra-tuities. Add \$349.00 for single occupancy. Final payment is due 3/16/26.

OCTOBER 18-23, 2026 – SHIPSEWANA, INDI-ANA - This trip includes 6 days and 5 nights lodg-ing, 3 breakfasts and 3 dinners. You will have a full day guided tour of Indiana's Amish Country with a tour of an Amish Homestead and an Au-thentic Amish Dinner. We will experience Cook's Bi-

son Ranch with a scenic Wagon Tour of their ma-jestic ranch while seeing the bison up-close and even feeding them. We will spend time shop-ping and having lunch at Shipshewana Trading Place which is constant-ly ranked one of the top five Flea Markets in the Country. We will see the show "Loves Comes Soft-ly" at the Blue Gate The-ater. Price for this trip is \$865.00 per person dou-ble occupancy. A \$75.00 deposit is due upon sign-ing up. Trip includes bus driver tip and all tour gra-tuities. Add \$305.00 for single occupancy. Final payment is due 8/11/26.

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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