



TWIN CITY TIMES

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FREE • Vol. XXVII, No. 42

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1999

Thursday, March 5, 2026 • FREE

Lady Gaga Tribute Concert Rescheduled

LEWISTON, ME - The Franco Center announces that the Lady Gaga: Just Dance tribute concert originally scheduled for Saturday, February 28 has been postponed to Saturday, April 4, 2026. The Franco Center will light up with pop spectacle and powerhouse vocals, as Amanda Tubbs & Band take the stage in Lady Gaga: Just Dance, a high-energy tribute concert celebrating one of music's most iconic artists.

Doors and cash bar open at 6:00 p.m., with the concert beginning at 7:00 p.m. Audiences can expect a thrilling night of chart-topping anthems, emotional ballads, and nonstop hits that capture the fearless style, heart, and electrifying presence of Lady Gaga.

Bringing the Gaga magic to life is Amanda Tubbs, backed by her full band and known for her commanding vocals and dynamic stage presence. From dance-floor favorites to soul-stirring performances, this tribute promises glitz, glam, and unforgettable moments.

Special guest Julia Haven will perform select Lady Gaga songs during the concert. Julia Haven is the stage name of Maine's own Julia Gagnon, whose powerful voice and rising-star presence make her the perfect addition to this celebration of bold artistry.

"We are deeply grateful to our event sponsors — Dirigo Federal Credit Union, Norway Savings Bank, and Central Distributors Inc. — whose generous support helps make nights like this possible," said Theresa Shanahan, Franco Center executive director.



Amanda Tubbs as Lady Gaga. Brit Martin Photo.



Julia Haven will join Amanda Tubbs in song during the Feb. 28 Lady Gaga tribute concert. Messier Management Photo.

"We also want to thank our season underwriter, Maple Way Dental, and our media sponsors Bennett Radio, Sun Journal, Turner Publishing, and Uncle Andy's Digest. Their continued partnership allows the Franco Center to bring exciting, high-quality performances to our community while keeping the arts accessible to all."

Box Office Manager Susan Spellman said, "Tribute concerts like Lady Gaga: Just Dance are a fun and affordable way for audiences to enjoy top-notch live music. By hosting popular tribute shows, we're able to keep ticket prices approachable while still delivering a full concert experience with incredible talent on stage."

Tickets are \$30 in advance and \$35 at the door and can be purchased in person when the box office is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays, online at www.franco-center.org, or by phone at 207-689-2000. The Franco Center is handicap accessible through its elevator entrance on the Lincoln St. Alley side of the building. Parking is in the mill lot on Oxford Street. The venue is at 46 Cedar Street in Lewiston.

Tickets <https://app.arts-people.com/index.php?show=306942>

Northeast Bank supports arts-integrated learning with \$5K gift

PORTLAND, ME - Northeast Bank ("the Bank") (NASDAQ: NBN) is proud to announce a donation of \$5,000 to Side x Side in support of arts-integrated programming for students in Portland and Lewiston public school systems. The contribution reflects the Bank's continued commitment to supporting education, youth development, and community well-being.

"We are deeply grateful for Northeast Bank's recent \$5,000 gift. This support helps Side x Side meet growing teacher demand for arts-integrated programming, reaching more than 1,000 students this year and ensuring that youth feel seen, supported, and empowered



Pictured left to right: Bethany Belanger, Beth Wilbur Van Mierlo, Aaron Hagan

to thrive. By weaving the arts into academics, students grow more connected to their learning and to one another—an impact that is especially important during times of isolation and uncertainty. Our partnership with Northeast Bank highlights the

power of coming together to inspire creativity, raise aspirations, promote well-being, and make a lasting difference in the lives of our youth and the communities they call home," said Beth Wilbur Van Mierlo, Executive Director of Side x Side.

New England Fiddle Ensemble presents 2026 concert season

MAINE - The New England Fiddle Ensemble, a local nonprofit, announces concerts in Maine for their 2026 season:

Saturday, May 9, 2026, 6:30pm

Star Theatre, 120 Rogers Road, Kittery, ME

Sunday, June 7, 2026, 2:00pm

Westbrook Performing Arts Center, 471 Stroudwater Street, Westbrook, ME

The New England Fiddle Ensemble is back for its 17th season, and the music—and the community behind it—has never been bigger. This year's Ensemble brings together more than 170 musicians, ages 5 to 87, united by a shared love of making music together.

A true community orchestra, the New England Fiddle Ensemble draws players from across the region and from every walk of life. While fiddles are at the heart of the sound, the Ensemble is anything but

one-note. The stage comes alive with a rich mix of guitars, banjos, mandolins, basses, harps, cellos, and more. Experience levels span the full spectrum—from a fearless 5-year-old bass player who threatens to steal the show on Walk Right In, to a retired string teacher with over 30 years in the classroom.

A nonprofit organization, the New England Fiddle Ensemble's mission is simple and powerful: to bring community together through music. Rehearsals take place in eight locations across New Hampshire and Maine from November through April, before all groups unite for two large ensemble rehearsals and six concerts. Music is taught entirely by ear, so you won't find music stands on stage—just performers smiling, connecting with the audience, and communicating with one another through the music.

Audiences can ex-

pect moments that are as moving as they are memorable: a talented family of eight singing and soloing on a bluegrass favorite; an 86-year-old fiddler tearing into a Canadian fiddle tune; a teenager belting out Side by Side; and the shimmering beauty of a harp on Hector the Hero. Community musicians are supported by professional players, coming together to deliver a performance that's heartwarming, high-energy, and full of joy—with just the right dose of humor.

This is more than a concert. It's a celebration of music, connection, and the magic that happens when a community plays together.

The New England Fiddle Ensemble is supported by the Eppes-Jefferson Foundation, The Warren Memorial Foundation and Riverwoods Exeter.

For tickets, go to: <https://www.nefiddleensemble.org/concerts/>

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Newsmakers, Names & Faces

MCCS president praises proposal to continue free college scholarship

AUGUSTA, ME - Maine Community College System President David Daigler said he was “thrilled” that Governor Janet Mills is proposing ongoing support for the Maine Free College Scholarship.

“I’m thrilled Governor Mills is fighting to keep the Maine Free College Scholarship going for the Class of 2026 and beyond,” Daigler said after the governor’s State of the State address Tuesday night.

“The scholarship is an incredible investment in Maine’s economy because today’s community college students are tomorrow’s skilled workers that we all rely on for a productive and growing state economy. Maine’s young high school graduates deserve the opportunity to put in the work, study hard, and get a strong start without struggling to pay tuition as they get the technical skills they need for good-paying jobs right here in Maine or to transfer to a four-year college,” Daigler said. “We thank the governor for leading this effort to offer the scholarship to this year’s graduating high school seniors and beyond. It will make a huge difference and bring

more skilled workers into Maine’s workforce faster.”

The scholarship allowed Tori Wile of Gray, who attended the Governor’s address, to pursue her dreams of learning a trade. “I didn’t want a sit-down job, and I knew the community colleges had all the trades,” said Wile, who earned an associate degree in building construction technology from Central Maine Community College (CMCC) last year and now works in the facilities department. “I don’t think I could have afforded college at all, or at least as easily.”

Wile, a lifelong Scout who earned the Bronze Star and is an Eagle Scout, is assistant scout master for a Lewiston troop and is currently pursuing a second CMCC degree in facilities management.

The Maine Free College Scholarship is a last-dollar scholarship that pays 100% of tuition and fees for recent high school graduates in qualifying years. Currently, graduates (or equivalent) from the high school classes of 2023, 2024, and 2025 qualify for the scholarship. Qualifying students must pursue a degree or certifi-

cate, fill out the FAFSA, and accept any state or federal aid before Maine Free College Scholarship funds are applied.

Since the scholarship began in fall 2022, 22,327 Free College Scholarship-eligible students have enrolled. Of those, more than a third are still enrolled, more than 3,600 have graduated, and almost 1,800 have transferred to a University of Maine System (UMS) university or another four-year college to continue their education.

A recent UMS transfer report said “MCCS transfers show the strongest outcomes: in Fall 2024 they passed 88.5% of attempted credits, the highest among transfer groups and higher than first-time students MCCS transfers also post the highest return rate (75.8%) than other transfer groups and first-time students”

Full-time tuition and fees for a Maine resident at the community colleges is \$4,156 a year, the lowest of any New England college. After FAFSA-related state and federal aid is applied, the average annual Maine Free College Scholarship amount is \$1,600 per student.

Guest conductor leads Midcoast Symphony Orchestra

TOPSHAM, ME - Audiences will have the rare opportunity to journey through the entire Romantic era of classical music in the Midcoast Symphony Orchestra’s (MSO) March concert, “Ambition and Destiny.” The three selections in the concert are presented in chronological order, with Carl Maria von Weber’s Oberon Overture representing the early period of romanticism, Ludwig van Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4 the classical middle period, and Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 4 the latter years of romanticism as it was giving way to modernism. The concert’s title reflects the ambition of the composers’ experimentation with new forms as well as the theme of fate embodied in Tchaikovsky’s passionate symphony. The concert showcases two Colby College faculty members, Guest Conductor Jinwook Park, returning to the MSO’s podium for the first time in two years, and pianist Morgan Lee, who relocated to Maine after earning her Master’s Degree in 2022.

The three pieces in the program are all penned by well-known composers. The Oberon Overture previews the plot and themes of von Weber’s final opera in which a brave hero travels from the faerie realm throughout the known world to rescue his love. Guest artist Morgan Lee joins the MSO in the technically challenging Piano Concerto No. 4, and the final portion of the concert is Tchaikovsky’s passionate Symphony No. 4, manifesting fate in the power of the horns consistently interrupting the dreamscape



Jinwook Park (photo credit Susan Wilson)



Morgan Lee (photo credit Angi Manter)



Concert graphic image (illustration by Donna Stackhouse)

of the strings throughout the first movement.

Born in South Korea, Jinwook Park received his Bachelor of Music from Busan National University and then moved to the United States to pursue his graduate studies at the Boston Conservatory. Currently Mr. Park is a member of the Colby College faculty and serves as the Music Director of the Colby Symphony Orchestra and the Augusta Symphony Orchestra. He last conducted the MSO in March of 2024. Morgan Lee has built a dynamic career as a soloist, collaborator, and

teacher. She frequently performs with some of the most prominent ensembles and performing arts organizations in the state of Maine, including the Portland Symphony Orchestra, Opera Maine, Classical Uprising, the Colby Symphony Orchestra, and the Amethyst Chamber Ensemble.

The concert takes place on Saturday, March 21, at 7pm at the Franco Center in Lewiston, and Sunday, March 22, 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. The MSO is pleased to be pioneering a new streaming option for this concert at the cost of \$15 per household. Both in-person and streaming tickets can be reserved at midcoast-symphony.org or by calling the box office at (207) 481-0790. As part of its ongoing educational and outreach series “More with Midcoast,” the MSO presents an interview with both guest artists, Mr. Park and Ms. Lee, who will discuss their careers as well as providing personal insights into the pieces included in the concert. Seating at this free event is first come, first serve, and no latecomers will be admitted.

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Newsmakers, Names & Faces

Auburn's Lin Dehetre receives NSB's President's Award

SOUTH PORTLAND, ME - Hundreds of Norway Savings Bank team members gathered together at the DoubleTree by Hilton in South Portland on February 10 for an afternoon of camaraderie and community at the 2026 Employee Appreciation Day Celebration, an annual tradition that recognizes individuals and teams from across NSB for their outstanding work and contributions.



Individual Awards
President's Award

This year's President's Award winner is Lin Dehetre, Market Manager VP based at NSB's Auburn branch (pictured attached), who consistently delivers at the highest level, displays exceptional leadership, and enthusiastically supports her fellow team members. She has coached and guided team members from across the bank and proudly promoted the NSB culture, coining the phrase "our culture is our compass." In addition, the New Gloucester resident performed over 150 volunteer hours last year for several organizations, including Safe Voices, Junior Achievement of Maine, and the Olympia Snowe Women's Leadership Institute. She earns the respect of those she encounters through her genuine service and presence.

"Lin is a true team player and leads with confidence and great humility. Her impact is beyond measure, and her passion shines through in everything she does, as a team member, community contributor, and person," said Dan Walsh, President and CEO of NSB.

Employee of the Year Award

The 2026 Employee of the Year Award was given to Amy Lehigh, Market Manager VP for NSB in Gorham and Standish. Lehigh, who is also a Gorham resident, was noted for her ability to build a team, bank partnerships, and strong connections with everyone she comes in contact with, as well as her selflessness, leadership, and commitment to providing ongoing support for her team members.

"Amy exemplifies NSB's 'One Team' philosophy and embeds it in her daily life," said Darci Hamm, NSB's Chief Operating Officer EVP. "Her work ethic is nothing short of remarkable, and she extends the same energy and effort to the work she does

in the community."

Culture Champion Award

The winner of this year's Culture Champion Award is Ashley Morrill, Market Supervisor for NSB in Brunswick and Topsham, who was lauded for her leadership, compassion, and work ethic and for facing challenges "head on" while continuing to guide and lift up the team.

"Ashley demonstrates true leadership in showing up for others, even in difficult times, and empowering them to succeed," said Randy Easler, Senior Retail Banking Officer SVP at NSB. "She has fostered a community of inclusivity within the Mid-coast market and never wavers in supporting her team and the customers. She truly leads by example, not by position."

Best Supporting Role Award

Dave Guthro, Marketing and Communications Officer AVP, was the recipient of the 2026 Best Supporting Role Award. The Kennebunk resident was honored for his commitment to utilizing his expertise in supporting the bank, its team members, and customers since his arrival at NSB in 2024.

"Dave is affable, articulate, action-oriented, and amazing. He is always ready to put his talents to best use for the betterment of the team and NSB through easy-to-understand communications, guidance, and solutions. Every corner of the bank has been positively impacted by Dave's efforts and support," said Melissa Rock, Marketing Director SVP at NSB.

Culture Awards

The NSB Culture Awards are presented to team members who exhibit elements of the Bank's culture through their daily responsibilities and high quality of work:

Communication Awards: Fred Barstow, Kelcey Kimball, Penny Anderson, Mike Grass.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Awards: Dodie

Haley, Mary Martell, Andrea Osgood, Keysha Wright.

Hunger for Excellence Awards: Sharon Breytenbach, Andy Esty, Erin Mowery, Emily Thibodeau.

Leadership Awards: Tess Barker, Beth Garza, Sarah Hawkes, Mike Scarpone.

Team Member Experience: Michele Close, Dustin LaPlante, Sedrina Rodrigues, Ross Whelchel.

Length of Service Awards

Employees celebrating a milestone anniversary at NSB were also recognized leading up to the event, with team members with milestone anniversaries of five years or more honored during the event:

25 Years of Service: Vicki Leighton and Dana Myles

20 Years of Service: Jen Cook, Heidi Edwards, Kelcey Kimball

15 Years of Service: Donna Gray, Tricia Lathrop, Lou Paquet

10 Years of Service: Tanya Damon, Katie Deshaies, Dana Fields, Beth Garza, Mike Grass, Megan Merrifield, Leigh Swett

5 Years of Service: Penny Anderson, Autumn Dennison, Nate Dubois, Jessica Harmon, Caitlyn Hildreth, Thomas Hodgkins, Heather Kroitzsh, Jennifer Steckino.

Best Source for Arts, Music and Theater! Your Hometown Paper.

Goodwill NNE AmeriCorps serves 103,842 hours, 49 organizations

GORHAM, ME - Goodwill Northern New England (Goodwill NNE) AmeriCorps members contributed 103,842 hours of service across 49 community organizations in 2025, strengthening communities throughout Maine and New Hampshire.

Goodwill NNE AmeriCorps programs place members in local nonprofits, municipalities, and schools, where they support youth development, public health, and organizational capacity-building efforts that help communities thrive long term.

"We're excited to be able to offer more local agencies the opportunity to host AmeriCorps members," said Goodwill NNE AmeriCorps Director, Steve Niles. "Our members are dedicated, hardworking individuals who genuinely want to make a difference in their communities."

There are many benefits to being a host site, said Niles, including utilizing members to expand programming, increased access to resources, and having an additional fully funded team member for a whole year.

Goodwill NNE has over 60 AmeriCorps member slots to grant out to partner agencies across Maine and New Hampshire due to successful funding requests. With programs focusing on youth development, public health, and organizational development (for efforts to reduce poverty), many organizations could benefit from an AmeriCorps member serving at their organization for 11-12 months. Examples of the work members are doing at existing organizational partners include:

Public Health AmeriCorps

Deb York, Executive Director of An Angel's Wing, Inc. in Maine, shared how Public Health AmeriCorps members have expanded the organization's ability to support individuals in recovery:

"Through efforts of

Public Health AmeriCorps, we have developed a systematic approach to tracking progress among our residents. In the last 2 years, around 70% of our residents have shown measurable progress in their recovery journey, evidenced by decreased substance use and increased engagement in therapeutic activities. This partnership has helped facilitate the establishment of our recovery homes. With PHA support, we have opened and now operate three homes, which has allowed us to accommodate 24 individuals in need at a time. Without Goodwill's partnership, An Angel's Wing Inc. would not be able to open our newest home, which will house another 18 women and children, providing a safe and supportive environment for those in recovery."

Public Health AmeriCorps, Youth Development

At South Portland Middle School in Maine, Public Health AmeriCorps members addressed behavioral health, school climate, and social-emotional well-being by delivering evidence-based restorative justice interventions with fidelity, contributing to an 89% reduction in behavior incidents that remained low throughout 2025.

By providing daily, research-based support to high-need students and facilitating over 400 personalized family communications, members expanded the school's capacity to prevent escalation, support student mental health, and reduce strain on educators.

Goodwill NNE VISTA Partnership

Since 2015, the Goodwill NNE VISTA Partnership has worked to alleviate poverty in communities across Maine and New Hampshire, from the most rural towns to the most populated cities. VISTA members strengthen organizational capacity through indirect services such as fundraising, volunteer recruitment and management,

and increasing community awareness of host site missions.

At Hospice Volunteers of Somerset County, Executive Director Linda described how essential this support has been. She credits VISTA member Julie Jencks with helping rebuild the organization's capacity to serve their community, saying, "VISTA helped us at a dire time when we almost folded."

GoodHealth Works AmeriCorps

Goodwill AmeriCorps operates GoodHealth Works AmeriCorps, a Maine-based public health program that places members in community organizations to improve health education, expand access to services and strengthen local public health systems. Members serve in roles such as community outreach, health navigation, volunteer coordination, and supporting programs that address social drivers of health.

The program was recently approved for expansion and is now seeking additional Maine host sites for members beginning in Fall 2026. Goodwill NNE AmeriCorps also plans to submit a new Public Health AmeriCorps proposal this winter, with the goal of expanding public health efforts in Maine and re-establishing programming in New Hampshire.

Become a Host Site

To begin the process of becoming a Goodwill NNE AmeriCorps host site, visit goodwillnne.org/programs/ameriCorps/ and fill out the interest form <https://forms.office.com/r/6Bf5gZ2scT>. Goodwill NNE staff will reach out to provide relevant information on specific funding opportunities/programs available including links to reserve a slot in an information session with staff and the application to receive a member(s).

Visit linktr.ee/goodwillameriCorps to learn more about Goodwill NNE AmeriCorps programs.

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Gorham Weekly • 28 State Street • Gorham, ME 04038

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Seniors Not Acting Their Age A Rare Opportunity to Ski Hidden Valley



Skiers enjoy an easy descent in Hidden Valley Nature Center



The groomed Bowl Loop Trail offered entertaining descents



Skiers push through ungroomed Dyer Pond Trail

Hidden Valley Nature Center is located on Egypt Road in Jefferson. Part of the Midcoast Conservancy, the preserve consists to 1,000 acres of permanently protected land with over a mile of frontage on Little Dyer Pond. Twenty-five miles of trails available for hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, biking, walking and running weave through the hilly, forested terrain. Opportunities to fish, camp, and canoe are also offered.

I thoroughly enjoy skiing at Hidden Valley Nature Center. However, several years have passed since they received sufficient snow for what I consider a pleasurable ski. That changed after a late-January coastal snow storm. When I checked their website for a trail report, they enthusiastically disclosed receiving 16 inches of snow and as a result 6 miles of trails had been groomed. I an-

nounced a Penobscot Paddle & Chowder Society ski trip for the following day.

I'm not the only Hidden Valley ski enthusiast in the club. Four members signed on with only 24-hour notice. The five of us met at noon on a cold, sunny day with modest winds.

An inspection of trail conditions was the first order of business. Although groomed, the access trail had received a lot of traffic and was well-packed. Two of us elected to use backcountry skis while the rest chose touring skis. As it turned out, varied conditions justified either selection at different times during our outing.

After a short downhill ski on the Service Road at the beginning, we stopped at the impressive Visitors Center where non-conservancy members can leave donations. We spent time studying a large map of the trail network and picked up a brochure that included a trail map to carry with us.

At the end of the Service Road, we joined Bowl Loop Trail and traveled north on rolling hills that offered moderately demanding climbs and entertaining descents. Several returning skiers were met in this area; all spoke enthusiastically about the remarkable skiing conditions and outstanding weather.

At a junction for Little Dyer Pond Trail on the right, we chose to leave the groomed conditions behind and explore the shoreline of the pond. We followed the tracks of at least one skier who had broken trail on the narrow path in deep powder. Light weight touring skis were ideal in the deep snow; heavier backcountry skis not so much.

We skied along the shore of the frozen pond past Pond Cabin, where visitors can arrange to stay overnight, and continued to South Campsite where picnic tables were buried in snow. Just beyond the campsite, we turned right onto Bambi's Trail and proceeded north along the shore to North Campsite.

Bambi's Trail angled westerly away from the pond as we advanced to the northern end of the preserve. The previous skier had lost the trail in this area and we couldn't find it either. Arduous bushwhacking nicknamed "jungle skiing" ensued as we struggled west and then south until locating the northern extension of Little Dyer Pond Trail, which soon led to Hermit Thrush Trail.

Our fortunes improved as we experienced easy skiing progressing southwest on Hermit Thrush to Bowl Loop Trail on the right. An immediate right turn off Bowl Loop led us over complex North Head. After climbing steeply up the head, we dropped precipitously down the other side before reconnecting with groomed Bowl Loop. Exciting predominantly downhill skiing followed along the west side of the preserve back to the Service Road.

After a group discussion, we collectively agreed to forego an immediate return to our vehicles and opted to continue south towards Sugar Hill, Couch Hill and Moose Alley Trails instead. Sugar Hill Trail was ungroomed and a steep climb. Recovering from knee surgery, I decided to give my tiring knee a rest and bypass the Sugar Hill ascent. Instead, I skied gradually downhill on Couch Hill and Moose Alley Trails and returned to the Visitors Center.

My companions completed the demanding Sugar Hill climb and descent. During the downhill plunge one skier suffered a spectacular tumble. Fortunately, the deep powder provided a soft landing. They soon joined me at the parking area where we reflected on our good fortune having spent a stimulating afternoon skiing Hidden Valley.

My book, *Maine Al Fresco: The Fifty Finest Outdoor Adventures in Maine* relates many more exceptional ski outings throughout the state. 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

Save the Date and please share this invitation! Thursday, April 23 | Morning Event: "The Scamdemic Up Close" Attend in person at USM in Portland OR via Zoom Join AARP Maine and our collaborating partners for this informative and engaging session. All are welcome, but registration is required. Light refreshments will be provided for in-person attendees. Registration and event details can be found at AARP Maine's website.

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Protect yourself from scams with national expert

MAINE - AARP Maine invites you to a free, eye-opening educational event with nationally recognized speaker Erin West—former prosecutor and founder of Operation Shamrock, a leading initiative combatting global scam networks.

Erin will share how international crime rings are targeting everyday people—especially older adults—why these scams are rapidly on the rise, and the practical, empowering steps you can take to keep yourself and loved ones safe.

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Farm visits, career exploration with 4-H Ag Ambassador program

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

The program consists of a series of online and in-person learning experiences. The Spring 2026 cohort will meet virtually on March 11 and 18 and April 1, 8 and 15 from 3:30-5 p.m. and in-person on March 21 and 25 (optional). There will be an overnight Ag Symposium for all participants on April 19-21 at UMaine in Orono. Participants will visit a local creamery, maple sugarbush operation, Johnny's Selected Seeds and more. Transportation assistance for field trips may be available upon request. For a full schedule, visit the program website.

With the shrinking number of formal agricultural programs offered to high school youth, students are lacking opportunities to learn about local food systems and discover careers in agriculture. The 4-H Ag Ambassador program aims to help teens from all walks of life discover a future in agriculture and connect with other young people with similar goals.

Youth involved in this program will have opportunities to pursue their interest in agriculture and explore career pathways. This includes mentoring in post-secondary opportunities, as well as investigating current issues related to food systems, livestock, crop sciences, aquaculture, climate issues and food equity. Program participants



Ag Ambassadors explore experimental seedlings destined for the Roger Clapp Greenhouses at the University of Maine. Photos courtesy University of Maine Cooperative Extension.



Ag Ambassadors at Pineland Farms learn about the dairy cattle herd and agritourism. Photos courtesy University of Maine Cooperative Extension.

will serve year-long terms as Agriculture Ambassadors for the Maine 4-H program under the guidance of 4-H staff.

This program is open to all Maine youth; previous 4-H membership is not required to enroll. Register on the program website. All participants will be enrolled as members of the Maine 4-H program. To request reasonable accommodation, please contact Alisha Targonski at alisha.targonski@maine.edu or call 207.622.7546.

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

ing community-driven, research-based programs in every Maine county. UMaine Extension seeks to build thriving communities and help grow the food-based economy. Extension also leads Maine's 4-H program, the most successful out-of-school youth educational program in the state. 4-H programs are grounded in the belief that kids learn best by doing and suit a variety of backgrounds, interests, budgets and schedules. Participants complete hands-on projects in areas like health, science, agriculture and civic engagement in a positive environment where they are encouraged to take on proactive leadership roles.

Health issues start earlier, here's how employers can respond

By Patty Starr, President & CEO, Health Action Council, and Craig Kurtzweil, Chief Data & Analytics Officer, UnitedHealthcare Employer & Individual

Employer health benefits costs are rising faster than inflation and wage growth, putting continued pressure on employer sponsored plans. According to KFF's 2025 Employer Health Benefits Survey, per-employee benefit costs increased 6% in 2025, with another 6.5% increase projected for 2026.¹

New research from the Health Action Council, a nonprofit employer coalition, and UnitedHealthcare show that serious health conditions are appearing earlier in life, particularly among younger employees. The analysis, which analyzed data from more than 225,000 HAC members with UnitedHealthcare plans, found the following:²

Health care claims for younger adults are increasing.

While Millennials and Gen Z still have lower overall health care spending than older generations, their claims are rising at a much faster pace. Between 2023 and 2025, their year-over-year growth rate was nearly double that of Baby Boomers. At the same time, younger adults are developing chronic conditions such as diabetes and obesity earlier in life, visiting emergency rooms more frequently, and engaging with primary care

providers less often than any other generation.

Major health events are becoming more common.

Major health events — defined as medical claims exceeding \$100,000 annually — are now about twice as common as they were five years ago. Average monthly claims for these events, including heart attacks, strokes, complex surgeries, and high-cost conditions such as cancer or genetic disorders, have increased nearly 40% since 2020.

Metabolic conditions are driving higher long-term risk and cost.

Metabolic conditions such as diabetes, obesity, and high blood pressure are closely linked to more serious health events over time. Men, in particular, often delay preventive care well into midlife, increasing the likelihood that these conditions go undetected or unmanaged. According to the report, men with metabolic conditions are seven times more likely to experience a heart attack, stroke, or other major health event than men without these conditions. When these events occur, health care spending rises sharply, with claims reaching up to 150% higher for men in their 40s and nearly 160% higher for those over age 65.

What this means for employers

Taken together, these trends show that health issues that once showed up

later in life are now affecting employees earlier in their careers, and the financial impact is already being felt in employer health plans.

Here are three steps employers can take:

Design benefits and communications that reflect how younger employees use care, including virtual and digital entry points.

Make primary care easier to access by lowering barriers such as cost, appointment availability, and time away from work.

Encourage preventive care and routine screenings, with a particular focus on men and employees at risk for metabolic conditions.

Data-driven strategies can help make a meaningful difference. Since 2021, employers participating in Health Action Council initiatives have outperformed the PwC industry trend³ by more than 12%, resulting in \$292 million in paid claims savings. These results underscore the value of identifying risks earlier and supporting employees before health issues become more serious.

To learn more, access the white paper for strategies to help improve workforce health engagement and affordability.

¹ 2025 Employer Health Benefits Survey | KFF

² UnitedHealth Group internal data based on a comparison of current medical and pharmacy plan data of Health Action Council plan sponsors from April 2024 through March 2025, paid through June 2025.

³ PwC Health Research Institute medical cost trends, 2009-2025.

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Youth Art Month highlights K-12 Waterville artists

WATERVILLE, ME - Ticonic Gallery, part of Waterville Creates, is once again partnering with Colby Arts to celebrate Youth Art Month (YAM) with a multi-site exhibition at the Paul J. Schupf Art Center (93 Main Street, Waterville) and Greene Block + Studios (18 Main Street, Waterville). The program exhibits artwork by more than 300 K-12 students from 33 area schools.



Image credit: John Meader

The 12th annual YAM exhibition opens on March 1 and will remain on view at the two venues until March 30. Ticonic Gallery and Greene Block + Studios will host an opening reception from 4-7pm on March 13 as part of downtown Waterville's Second Friday event (a departure from the usual First Friday this month). Last year's YAM opening reception welcomed nearly a thousand visitors to the gallery spaces in a few hours.

Waterville Creates' exhibitions coordinator. "We are deeply grateful for our partnership with Colby Arts and the opportunity to present this multi-site exhibition together. We look forward to welcoming student artists and their families as they fill downtown for the opening celebration on March 13."

Humanities.

Youth Art Month 2026 participating schools: Albert S. Hall School, Athens Community School, George J. Mitchell School, James H. Bean School, Kennebec Montessori School, Lincoln Elementary School, Madison Elementary School, Madison Junior Senior High School, Maine Arts Academy, Maranacook Middle School, Margaret Chase Smith Community School, Messalonskee High School, Messalonskee Middle School, Mid-Maine Technical Center, Mount Merici Academy, Mt. Vernon Elementary School, Readfield Elementary School, Reeds Brook Middle School, Samuel L. Wagner Middle School, Skowhegan Area High School, Skowhegan Area Middle School, St. Michael School, Sylvio J. Gilbert Elementary School, Temple Academy, Vassalboro Community School, Wagner Middle School, Waterville Alternative Program, Waterville Junior High School, Waterville Senior High School, Wayne Elementary School, Whitefield Elementary, Winslow High School, Winslow Jr. High.

The artwork of students K-5 will be on view in Ticonic Gallery in the Paul J. Schupf Art Center at 93 Main Street in Waterville. Students in grades 6-12 will have their work showcased at Greene Block + Studios, just down the street from Ticonic at 18 Main Street.

Ticonic Gallery is free and open to the public daily, 11am-6pm, except on Tuesdays and federal holidays. For the duration of Youth Art Month, Greene Block + Studios will also be open to the public Wednesdays-Mondays, 11am-6pm. For more information on YAM and future exhibitions, visit ticonic.org.

Youth Art Month is sponsored by the Harold Alfond Foundation, Kennebec Savings Bank, the City of Waterville, and the Colby Center for the Arts and



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"This year marks our 12th anniversary celebrating arts education and the creativity of K-12 students," said Marie Sugden,

Boost the blood supply, get free A1C testing with Red Cross

MAINE - New American Red Cross data reveals that 1 in 5 blood donors have elevated A1C levels — a sign that prediabetes and diabetes are prevalent among adults in generally good health.

Early detection isn't just good for long-term health — it's also a warning for people's wallets.

As the nation's largest blood supplier, the Red Cross is uniquely positioned to provide donors with health insights that can help bridge preventative care gaps, such as undiagnosed diabetes and hypertension.

Visit RedCrossBlood.org now to book a time to give blood or platelets. In March, the Red Cross will provide free A1C testing on successful blood, platelet and plasma donations. Those who come to give March 1-31 will also get a \$15 Amazon Gift Card by email. See RedCrossBlood.org/March.

The American Red Cross urges donors to help the national blood supply recover from a severe blood shortage and empower their health by making an appointment to give blood or platelets in March. As a thank-you for helping save lives, successful donations will receive free A1C testing, commonly used to screen for prediabetes and diabetes, in March (one result per calendar year).

New Red Cross data reveals 1 in 5 blood donors have elevated A1C levels — a sign that prediabetes and diabetes are prevalent among adults in generally good health. The findings are based on the first year of free A1C screening offered by the Red Cross, which provided results to more than 920,000 blood donors nationwide over three testing periods in 2025. Among donors with elevated A1C levels, 80% had readings indicating prediabetes — a condition that can often be reversed through lifestyle changes such as a balanced diet and regular exercise.

"Too many people still face gaps in access to preventive care, and the Red Cross is proud to help close them by giving our 2.5 million blood and platelet donors easy access to essential health information, like their blood sugar levels," said Dr. Courtney Lawrence, Red Cross medical director. "By giving blood and downloading our Blood Donor App, individuals can be informed and empowered to better manage and advocate for their health."

The A1C test does not require fasting and

provides an average blood sugar level over the past three months. Visit RedCrossBlood.org, use the Red Cross Blood Donor App or call 1-800-RED CROSS to schedule your March donation appointment. All who come to give blood, platelets or plasma March 1-31, 2026, will also receive a \$15 Amazon Gift Card by email. See RedCrossBlood.org/March for details.

Donating blood in March is part of Red Cross Month, a national campaign that encourages people to deliver support when help can't wait by also making a financial donation, volunteering or taking a lifesaving skills class.

Why You Should Know Your A1C

Millions of U.S. adults are living with undiagnosed prediabetes and Type 2 diabetes, which are often preventable and in many cases, reversible. These conditions often develop silently, though if untreated, they can lead to serious health complications such as stroke, heart disease and kidney failure.

Early detection isn't just good for long-term health — it's also a warning for people's wallets.

An American Diabetes Association study found that, while people with prediabetes typically incur a few hundred dollars in additional medical costs each year, those with blood sugar levels that have progressed to the diabetic range could face several thousand dollars more in annual expenses — as much as 25 times higher.

How to Find Out Your A1C from the Red Cross

After making a successful blood, platelet or plasma donation in March, donors can access their A1C result within one to two weeks through the Red Cross Blood Donor App or donor portal at RedCrossBlood.org. Anyone with an elevated A1C level is encouraged to consult their health care provider.

In addition, donors can access and track their blood pressure, hemoglobin, pulse and body temperature, which are taken during each donation's mini-physical to ensure they're healthy enough to give.

How Blood Donation Can Help Bridge Health Care Gaps

As the nation's largest blood supplier, the Red Cross is uniquely positioned to help bridge existing health care gaps by providing blood donors with critical health insights. Through the Red Cross Blood Donor App

and online donor portal, donors can track their results and share them with their health care provider.

These efforts are part of the broader Red Cross mission, which has supported the health of communities for 145 years. Today in Maine, this work includes installing free smoke alarms in neighborhoods at high risk for home fires, providing basic health and mental health services to disaster survivors, and supporting the well-being of military families, veterans and their caregivers.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why is the Red Cross testing blood, platelet and plasma donors' A1C levels?

A: The Red Cross values the health and well-being of blood donors. By providing this vital health insight, the Red Cross is helping to bridge existing care gaps and empower donors to take an important step toward preventative care and lifesaving intervention.

Q: Should I fast to receive the A1C test on my blood donation?

A: No, the A1C test does not require individuals to fast. This is noteworthy because eating a nutritious meal prior to blood donation is important.

Q: Can I donate blood if I have prediabetes or diabetes?

A: People with prediabetes or diabetes are generally eligible to donate blood, platelets and plasma if they are feeling well on the day of their donation. In most situations, the type of medication donors take to manage their diabetes does not disqualify them from donating blood.

Q: Can I donate blood while taking GLP-1 medication?

A: In most situations, the type of medication you take to manage your diabetes or insulin resistance won't disqualify you from donating blood. Whether you take insulin injections like Apidra or Humalog, an injected diabetes medication like Ozempic or Mounjaro, or oral medications like metformin, you are still eligible to donate if you are feeling well on the day of your donation.

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

Lights Out applications open for Norway Maine Arts Festival

NORWAY, ME - Lights Out is now accepting craft, fine art vendors, and nonprofit applications for the 2026 Norway Maine Arts Festival, taking place Saturday, September 12th, 2026, from 10am-4pm in historic downtown Norway, Maine. With the great success and growth of last year's festival, Lights Out is encouraging even more people and artists to congregate in Norway to explore and celebrate the diverse cultural tapestry of Maine's artists, craftspeople, and entertainers.

The Norway Maine Arts Festival is a free, day-long celebration of Maine's creative community, featuring visual art and fine craft vendors, live performances, food vendors, nonprofit organizations, and keynote programming, all set along Main Street in the heart of town. Through the confident networking, marketing, and vision of Lights Out, the Norway Maine Arts Festival saw massive growth in 2025, receiving over 4,000 attendees and presenting 125+ booths tended by a range of artists, craftspeople, and non-profit organizations, as well as 8 musical acts and 3 keynote talks across two stages.

In a post festival survey from last year's festival, one vendor stated, "I have been doing the Norway festival for 5 years and it has always been successful and one of the easiest shows logistically to have on the schedule. Great staff to deal with, great location. This year was all of that but more. I feel like Lights Out did an outstanding job with advertising, and really getting the word out. I also think in the past few years the street was not full of vendors and this year felt like there were twice as much."

Building on a strong first year under Lights Out's leadership, the 2026 festival will introduce several new and expanded elements, such as a refined street layout, additional food vendors, a dedicated keynote speaker area, and the return of art awards in partnership with the Maine Craft Association. As part of this year's partnership, application fees are waived for current Maine Craft Association members and Lights Out members.

Important dates:
Applications due: Friday, March 13, 2026

Notifications of decision sent by: Monday, March 30, 2026

Visit the Norway Maine Arts Festival online at maineartsfestival.org to learn more about



the festival and apply for a booth. Contact nmaf@lightsoutgallery.org for any questions you may have and ben@lightsoutgallery.org for inquiries about sponsorship opportunities. Lights Out looks forward to viewing your work and seeing you at the 2026 Norway Maine Arts Festival!

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Maine Discovery Museum receives National Medal, a first for Maine

BANGOR, ME - Maine Discovery Museum (MDM) has been named one of ten institutions nationwide to receive the 2025 National Medal for Museum and Library Service, the nation's highest honor for museums and libraries, awarded by the Institute for Museum and Library Service (IMLS). MDM is among just five museums recognized this year, and the only museum in the Northeast. It also marks the first time a Maine museum has received this distinction in the award's 30-year history.

The IMLS recognized MDM for its deep commitment to communities across the state:

"Maine Discovery Museum (Bangor, ME) has developed deep and vital partnerships with other nonprofits to provide educational programming throughout the state, often going to rural and underserved communities to bring their expertise to them. The museum also has relationships with a wide network of community anchors like libraries, parks and recreation departments, and schools to provide educational and enrichment programming."

For Executive Director, Kate Dickerson, the honor carries special weight as MDM celebrates its 25th anniversary. "We are unbelievably

honored to receive this Gold Medal, especially as we're celebrating our 25th year. Thanks to the founders who had a vision more than 25 years ago to serve our community, and to all those who have fostered and built MDM into who we are now: helping people of all ages to discover the world around them through creative exploration and science. We could not have reached this point without the support of our donors and the best team in the business. I'm especially proud that Maine Discovery Museum is the first museum in Maine to receive this award."

- Kate Dickerson, Executive Director, Maine Discovery Museum



A common thread over the IMLS award's 30-year history is that gold medal winners are community anchors defined by strong programs, inclusive practice, solid partnerships, and documented impact. MDM's recognition reflects 25 years of growth - from playing a vital role in downtown Bangor's revitalization to becoming Maine's statewide hub for informal public science education.

Each year, MDM serves approximately 60,000 people at our museum and another 15,000

through our off-site programs. Critically, 94% of MDM's mission-driven programming is provided at no charge - made possible by grants, donations, and sponsors - ensuring that cost is never a barrier to learning, and we reach people where they are.

Voices from the Community:

"Small rural communities from around the state do not have ready access to many STEAM related programs and MDM helps to fill that need in a stable and predictable way. Families and students cannot

easily travel to places like Boston but still deserve to have access to high quality educational STEAM programming for all ages. The importance of having organizations like MDM in the community and thriving cannot be overstated. MDM's educational work and programming fills a deep need for science instruction and understanding throughout the state."

- Alyson Saunders, Dexter Regional High School

"This kind of thing makes me realize how many different careers there are. And every time it makes me think of something else I can be when I get older."

- 4th grader, Fisher-Mitchel School, Bath. During a MDM Science Around ME program

"There are some world-changing projects being built in Maine and it's important that the state is aware of them. The MSF {Maine Science Festival, a program of MDM} is an important avenue for this advocacy and creates opportunities for researchers, educators, and entrepreneurs to meet each other which could foster impactful relationships for the future of our state and beyond."

- Brian Harris, Med-Rhythms, MSF Presenter

For a full list of MDM's programs and events, please visit <https://www.mainediscoverymuseum.org/programs>.



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In-house food service returns to St. John's Catholic School

BRUNSWICK, ME - St. John's Catholic School (SJCS) is thrilled to announce the launch of a new food service program that will center on fresh, scratch-made meals in the school's kitchen. This initiative represents both a step forward in student wellness and a return to the school's longstanding tradition of on-site meal preparation.

A Return to Our Roots Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, St. John's successfully operated its own food service program, with meals prepared in-house. During the pandemic and periodically throughout the school's history, SJCS partnered with MSAD 75 for meal service. This transition represents a thoughtful return to the school's pre-pandemic model, complete with a focus on locally sourced ingredients and student-centered menu planning.

Gradual Implementation for Long-Term Success

The new program started at the beginning of the school year, gradually to ensure sustainability. Each Wednesday fresh, from scratch-made meals are prepared in the St. John's kitchen. Every day, students have the option of adding a fresh salad bar with wholesome ingredients and salad topping favorites. In the new year, the made from scratch meals have expanded to two days a week.

This phased approach allows the school to balance consistency with in-

novation while maintaining a reliable partnership with MSAD 75 during the transition.

"We're not just serving meals—we're building healthier habits and stronger connections," said Pamela Sullivan, a St. John's teacher who is leading the nutritional team. "By bringing meal preparation back into our school kitchen and sourcing from local farms, we're teaching students the value of good nutrition and the importance of supporting our local community."

Fresh, Local, and Nutritious

St. John's is proud to partner with Native Maine, a statewide network of farmers dedicated to supplying schools with locally grown, high-quality produce. This partnership ensures that students benefit from nutritious meals while also supporting Maine's agricultural community. Daily menus will be planned collaboratively with MSAD 75 and tailored to student preferences based on real-time feedback.

The lunch program uses Bisson Farms as a local meat source. When things are in season, they glean from local farmer's markets and use Native Maine. "It truly has been a win-win," says Sullivan.

Community Involvement and Support

The program is powered by a combination of hired staff and parent volunteers, creating meaningful opportunities for families to engage in the school community. Feed-

back from a recent survey showed unanimous support from families, and the program has also earned strong backing from educational and nutrition leaders.

Special thanks are extended to the professionals who guided the program's development:

Amanda Johnson, Food Service Director, MSAD 75

Allison Leavitt, Nutrition Director, Lisbon School Nutrition Program

Martha Poliquin, Former Food Service Director for Falmouth Schools, Maine DOE Regional Local Foods Project Manager

The all-inclusive model simplifies budgeting, reduces decision fatigue, and gives students full access to all meal choices at a minimal cost increase.

The initiative also strives to reduce waste with less plastic packaging and transporting food in steel pans and trays.

A Commitment to Student Health

With more than 30 years of teaching experience and training as a licensed health coach, St. John's leadership understands the vital link between nutrition and academic success. "While change can feel challenging, we believe this program will enhance the health, focus, and performance of our students, while strengthening our community as a whole," said John P. Yorkey, school principal.

St. John's is excited to embark on this new chapter in student nutrition.

Alice James Books awarded grant from Maine Arts Commission

NEW GLOUCESTER, ME - Alice James Books (AJB), an independent poetry publisher based in Maine, has been awarded a General Operating Support grant from the Maine Arts Commission. This project is supported in part by the Maine Arts Commission, which receives support in part from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

The grant provides stabilizing support for Alice James Books as the organization continues its work publishing innova-



tive poetry and supporting literary artists across the country. Alice James Books publishes an average of eight to ten new titles each year and maintains a backlist of more than 250 books in print. Funding from the Maine Arts Commission and the National Endowment for

the Arts will support ongoing publishing operations and help sustain AJB's mission to champion contemporary poetry.

For more information, read the Maine Arts Commission's announcement, email Emily Marquis at PA@alicejamesbooks.org, or call 207-926-8283.

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CMH joins Prime Healthcare Foundation

ONTARIO, CA - Prime Healthcare Foundation (PHF), a public nonprofit 501(c)(3) charity, announced today that Central Maine Healthcare (CMH) has officially joined its national, award-winning health system, expanding the Foundation's footprint to

21 hospitals nationwide and its mission to the communities of Maine. With the closing of the transaction, PHF becomes the sole corporate member and parent organization of CMH.

The transaction includes Central Maine Medical Center, Bridgton

Hospital, Rumford Hospital, Rumford Community Home, Bolster Heights, Maine College of Health Professions, CMH Cancer Care Center, and more than 40 physician practices, representing one of the most significant healthcare investments in Maine's recent history.

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AARP News You Can Use – March 2026

By Joyce Bucciantini, AARP Maine Community Outreach Volunteer

Last year the New England Aquarium in Boston announced that over half of their African penguins have reached senior penguin status. Six of the penguins are over 29, very senior indeed! The aquarium has risen to the challenge of caring for their older penguins by making modifications to their habitat, allowing these senior penguins to “age in place” in their birdie community.

Aging in place refers to not only living but to thriving in our homes as we age. For some this could mean making adaptations in their homes to accommodate changing physical needs. For others it means moving to smaller homes or apartments within their familiar community. According to AARP research, more than 70% of older adults want to live in their homes or communities long-term. We all feel more secure, more independent and more connected when we are close to home. Aging in place promotes satisfaction, positive

quality of life and self-esteem, all important aspects of remaining healthy and happy as we age.

Everyone benefits when seniors are able to stay in their communities. Anyone who has been to a town meeting in Maine knows the value of the shared wisdom and experiences from longtime community members. Older adults tend to volunteer at higher rates providing help and support for others, making communities stronger and more livable for all ages.

In her book *The Second Fifty: Answers to the 7 Big Questions of Midlife and Beyond*, Debra Whitman, Ph.D. reminds us that it is important to plan for where we want to age sooner rather than later. Planning to age in place requires us to be honest about our health and the ability to access family support and community resources. AARP and other organizations have practical checklists to help older adults plan to age in place. The AARP HomeFit Guide (available for download at AARP.org/HomeFit) explains different types

of home modifications to meet our needs as we age. Maine’s local Area Agencies on Aging are a great resource to help families identify and access community services to enable older Mainers to stay in their homes.

Most of us don’t really think about how our age might impact where we live. Taking time to plan for where we want to age, having conversations with our families, and using resources from AARP and community organizations can help all of us be ready for whatever the future might hold.

As always, please check out the AARP Maine web page to find an AARP event near you.

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

aarp.org/me · me@aarp.org · [@aarpmaine](https://www.instagram.com/aarpmaine) · 866-554-5380

Lisbon Credit Union announces scholarship program

LISBON, ME - Lisbon Community Federal Credit Union is pleased to announce that applications are now being accepted for its 2026 Rochel “Russ” Livernois Memorial Scholarship Program, an annual scholarship initiative that has supported local students for more than two decades.

Through this long-standing program, Lisbon Community FCU will award four scholarships of up to \$2,500 each to graduating high school seniors who demonstrate strong academic achievement, community involvement, and a commitment to furthering their education.

“The Livernois

Scholarship is one of the most meaningful ways we give back to our communities each year,” said Sarah Perkins, President/CEO of Lisbon Community Federal Credit Union. “We are proud to continue this tradition and support students who are working hard to achieve their educational goals while making a positive impact around them.”

Established in 2000, the Rochel “Russ” Livernois Memorial Scholarship honors the legacy of Rochel ‘Russ’ Livernois, who served as Treasurer/Manager from the Credit Union’s founding in 1959 through 1985. His years of service, leadership, and dedication to the cred-

it union and its members continue to be reflected through this scholarship program.

Eligibility & Application Information:

Open to graduating high school seniors within Lisbon Community FCU’s field of membership

Applicants must plan to attend an accredited college, university, or technical school

Applications are reviewed based on academic performance, community involvement, and a written essay

The application deadline is May 1, 2026, and scholarship recipients will be announced on or before May 29, 2026.

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

Cancer prevention: What you can do today

By Ann Morrell RN
February was Cancer Prevention Month in the U.S. There is a confusing amount of information available on ways to improve your health and lower your risk of cancer. This month we are focusing on a few ways to boost prevention as part of our initiative to bring information to our western Maine readers.

Maine is a natural and beautiful place, and we are blessed with fresh air and high quality water sources. Other parts of the country must import water supply from other states or contend with highly treated water sources. We even have a spring water bottling company that ships Maine water around the world. Think about that for a moment. That said, many of us have private wells and it is especially important to know the quality of your water. As discussed in January’s article, our groundwater can be contaminated with Radon as well as heavy metals, toxins or bacteria. Testing yearly is recommended or at least an annual well treatment to kill any bacteria that may cause health issues. Visit www.Maine.gov for more information on testing in your area.

From the mountains to our seacoast, we are the first to see the sunrise and we have some of the most spectacular sunsets to be seen. Most days we can step outside and take a

deep breath of the freshest air on earth. Some areas of the US have so much pollution that the air is thick with odors, pollen or chemical contaminants. Though some of us struggle through the cold of winter, there is no denying the beauty and healthy cleansing of a deep freeze and thaw. With these blessings in place, we can focus more on our food and lifestyle.

There is a saying, “Eat your food as medicine or you will eat your medicine as food.” It may seem impossible to avoid toxins altogether but starting at home is the best way to stay healthy and lower your risk of developing cancer. A healthy diet, lifestyle including walking or some kind of movement, social time and outdoor time in nature can all contribute to our mental health and healthy nervous system function.

We have talked a lot about healthy diets, but what does that mean?

Less “ultra-processed food” and more whole, fresh foods. Anything with ingredients that you can’t pronounce, identify or make at home is on the avoid list. Convenience is a wonderful idea but just know that your health may suffer for that convenience and convenience should not be every day or every meal. Your health is worth a little work in the kitchen.

Eat the rainbow. Look for produce of every color.

Try something new, purple potatoes or red lettuce!

Try to incorporate more than 20 different fruits and vegetables each week.

Avoid any artificial dyes: Yellow #5 (in pickles and many foods), Red #3 and #40 (candy, ketchup, baked goods), Blue #1 (Gatorade, candy)

Buy organic and fresh when possible. Many more organic products are available these days from coffee to tomatoes. Your local farmers market is a good place to find fresh seasonal foods. I scored some fresh carrots that were dug the day before I bought them in January. Talk about fresh! When I cleaned and chopped them, I thought of the chat I had with the grower and that there was no middle man. Amen!

Read labels. Look for dyes and chemicals that you can’t identify and leave them on the shelf.

The cost of groceries has risen sharply recently but I have noticed that some organic products are now more in line with the cost of lesser quality items. For example, I found an organic coffee cheaper than several of the major brands!

Some produce varieties (apples and berries) are more prone to pests, so they are more likely to be sprayed with toxic pesticides and should be washed very well before eating. There are produce “clean-

ers” in spray bottles that contain safe surfactants that can be sprayed and rinsed off before eating. Lemon juice or vinegar are acidic and a natural way to break down chemical waxes, but these will not remove pesticides that have been absorbed into the fruit or vegetable. Buying organic when possible (local organic is even better) is good for you and good for our local economies. Luckily, in Western Maine we have several farmers’ markets and many more local farms to choose from. Better to support a local family than a huge corporation!

Pick one of the following areas to focus on each month this year:

Replace plastic food containers with glass. Buy condiments in glass jars, wash and reuse. Beware of acidic condiments like ketchup in plastic bottles, as the acid can leach toxins from that plastic and you do not want to eat that!

Shop for hygiene products that are phthalate (plastic) free like natural shampoo bars, loofah sponges, organic cotton shower exfoliators, (say “no” to those plastic shower poofs) and natural dental floss.

Look for fragrance free laundry sheets instead of toxic liquids (or make your own laundry soap powder with Borax, washing soda and soap flakes)

Ditch the highly fragrances products like air

fresheners, laundry boosters and dryer sheets. Most products with “fresh fragrances” contain phthalates. Phthalates are hormone disrupting chemicals that are tied to higher rates of asthma, cancer and reproductive problems. If you like a scented home, try essential oil diffusers, naturally scented soy or beeswax candles or try essential oils on wool dryer balls. (Farmers Markets again, hint-hint)

Whether you are just starting this process or a seasoned “detoxer” you can usually find a way to improve your diet or habits. With cancer rates on the rise, we need to collectively work harder to make our health a priority and do all we can to prevent cancer. Vote with your dollar, show your local markets which products you would like to have access to. We have seen an increase in organic options and toxin free products in local stores! Hooray!

Remember to see your provider for any screenings recommended for your age and gender. Early detection is key to treatment of cancer. Let’s make 2026 the year we lower our risk for cancer!

Reminder: We have many activities at the CRCWM that support our mission to embrace anyone affected by cancer in our hopeful and caring community of Western Maine. In person classes include

Stamping Up, Craft and Chat, Chair Yoga, Women’s Support Group and Coffee Hour, Men’s Rally Group and Bridgton Cancer Patient Support Group. We offer recorded classes, access to counseling, our Soup Program and public swim passes. Please see below for contact information.

About the Author

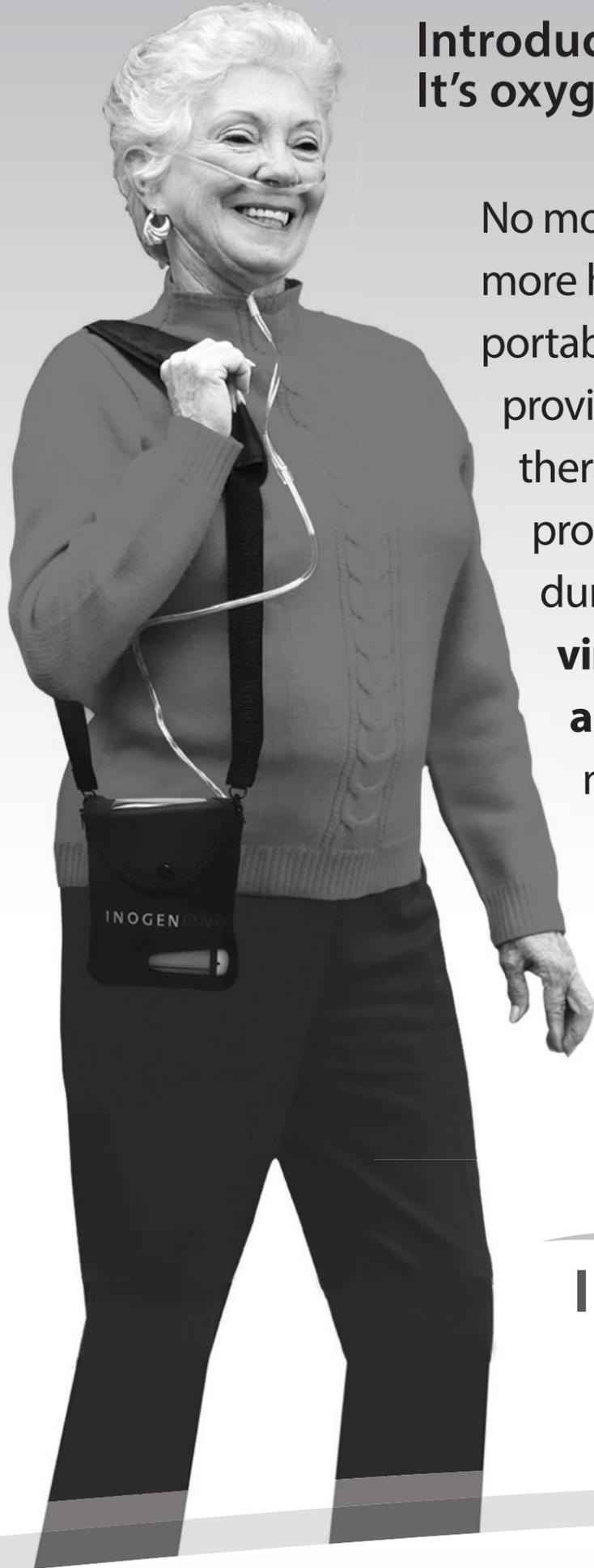
Ann Morrell is a practicing Registered Nurse and Health Content Writer. Her varied 12+ years of nursing experience ensure that her content provides technical information with practical insights.

I SCREEN, YOU SCREEN... WE ALL NEED TO SCREEN

Screening is a cornerstone of cancer control. Cancer screening tests increase the chance of finding cancer early when treatment is likely to work best. With some cancers such as colorectal and cervical, screening and early treatment can prevent the occurrence of cancer. I SCREEN, YOU SCREEN is a monthly initiative of the Cancer Resource Center of Western Maine to share information with the public about the importance of early detection and screening. Each month, there will be a focus on a different cancer and include some of the possible signs and symptoms that should prompt a conversation with your primary care provider.

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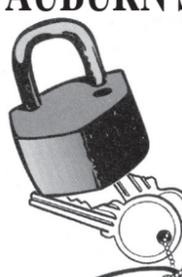
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Mar 7, 8
LEWISTON -- The Maine Music Society Choral, directed by Dr. Richard Nickerson, is thrilled to announce its upcoming March concert, Echoes of the Earth, to be held on Saturday, March 7, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. and Sunday, March 8, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. at the Franco Center in Lewiston.

Mar 7
BRUNSWICK -- UUCB Concerts for a Cause presents singer-songwriter Crys Matthews at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Brunswick on Saturday, March 7 at 7:30 p.m. to raise money for Oasis Free Clinics and Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project.

Mar 8
AUGUSTA -- Had enough of winter? Join the Augusta Symphony Orchestra for a Spring concert on Sunday, March 8, at 3:00 pm at Cony High School's Viles Auditorium.

Mar 11, 15
LEWISTON -- 2026 Maine Jewish Film Festival Preview this March at

Bates College in Lewiston, Pettengill Hall G52

Wednesday, March 11 7:00pm Mazel Tov
 Sunday, March 15 2:00pm Las dos Mariette

Mar 18
LISBON FALLS -- University of Maine Cooperative Extension will offer "Plant-Based on a Budget" from 5-7 p.m. at the Androscoggin-Sagadahoc County Extension office, 24 Main Street, Lisbon Falls.

The hands-on workshop is designed for adults interested in preparing affordable plant-based meals. Participants will learn practical strategies for shopping and meal planning, and will prepare two budget-friendly recipes using ingredients such as lentils, beans, grains and seasonal produce. The session will focus on building skills for preparing nutritious meals without relying on higher-cost meat substitutes.

The \$10 registration fee supports program costs. Registration is required and limited to six participants. Visit the program webpage to register by Wednesday, March 11.

Mar 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 Courture Room from 5:30 to 6:30pm.

The Romance Book Club will end with Romantasy. 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.

Mar 24
MAINE -- University of Maine Cooperative Extension will begin its Spring Gardening Webinar Series: Building Food Security in Maine with "Big Yields on Small Plots: Maximizing Your Garden's Footprint" from 6-7:15 p.m.

Led by Carrick Gambell, urban agriculture professional, this webinar will introduce participants to strategies to get the most out of their garden, no matter the size. Topics will include

succession and companion planting, trellising and season extension. Designed for gardeners of all levels, participants will leave with practical steps to grow food for themselves, their families and their communities.

Registration is required; sliding scale fee options are available. Register on the event webpage to attend live or receive the recording link.

Apr 9
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. Ben Potter: Pollen and Gatorade: Materials and

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Connotations in the Landscape, at 5:00 pm, 70 Farm View Dr, New Gloucester, ME 04260.

May 28
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. Edwige Charlot: Artist talk, at 5:00 pm, 70 Farm View Dr, New Gloucester, ME 04260.

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Fashion News

Tias Prom Project

Dedicated to providing dresses & confidence to young women

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.

How to Donate?

- DM for pickup
- Drop-Off Locations:
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 - 781 Edes Falls Rd, Harrison, ME
 - 780 Broadway St, South Portland, ME

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St. Mary's Health System launches weight management program

MAINE - St. Mary's Health System has launched a new bariatric care and weight management program offering both surgical and non-surgical treatment options for individuals seeking medically supervised weight loss.

Services include physician-guided medical weight management, nutrition counseling, long-term follow-up support, and advanced surgical care when appropriate. Non-surgical treatment options include GLP-1 medications.

Care is delivered through a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach, with personalized plans tailored to each patient's medical history, health goals, and lifestyle.

The program is led by Zara Wahla, MD, and Huy Trieu, MD, general surgeons at St. Mary's Surgical Associates, working alongside nurses, dietitians, and support staff to provide coordinated care.

The new program expands access to specialized weight management

services within the Lewiston-Auburn area, allowing patients to receive comprehensive care close to home.

Additional information and seminar registration are available at stmarysmaine.com/weight-management.

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

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