

Winisquam Echo

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2026

FREE

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Tilton warrant includes zoning changes, operating budget and capital projects

TILTON — Tilton voters will be asked to consider a mix of zoning changes, spending proposals and capital reserve funding at the annual Town Meeting scheduled for Saturday, March 14 at 8 a.m. at Winisquam Regional High School.

The warrant opens with the election of town officers, which will take place Tuesday, March 10 at the high school (polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.), along with three proposed zoning amendments recommended by the Planning Board.

One amendment would permit Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in all zoning districts that allow single-family homes, provided specific conditions

are met. Those conditions include size limits between 750 and 950 square feet, no more than two bedrooms, owner occupancy of one of the units, and a prohibition on selling the ADU separately from the principal dwelling.

A second amendment would add a formal definition of back land or back lots, describing parcels without frontage on a public road and typically accessed by easement. A third amendment would define potable water in line with New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services standards.

The proposed operating budget totals \$7,481,179, as recommended by the Budget Committee, will be the first article up for dis-

cussion at the formal town meeting on March 14. The Board of Selectmen supports a slightly higher figure of \$7,569,091. The operating budget does not include funding for special warrant articles, which are voted on separately.

Several articles focus on roads and infrastructure. Voters will be asked to add \$120,000 to the Roads, Bridges and Sidewalks Capital Reserve Fund. Another article seeks approval to purchase a highway diesel dump and plow truck at a cost of up to \$267,588, with 80 percent of the expense expected to be offset by a New Hampshire DES grant. The remaining \$53,518 would be raised through taxation.

SEE TILTON, PAGE A8

Filteau wins Division II indoor shot put championship

BY JOSHUA SPAULDING
SPORTS EDITOR

PLYMOUTH — The Belmont indoor track team picked up one individual championship and some other strong results at the Division II indoor track championships at Plymouth State University on Sunday.

Brady Filteau won the shot put with a toss of 49 feet, 7.25 inches to claim the Division II title while teammate Ethan Rivera was ninth overall at 39 feet, 10.75 inches.

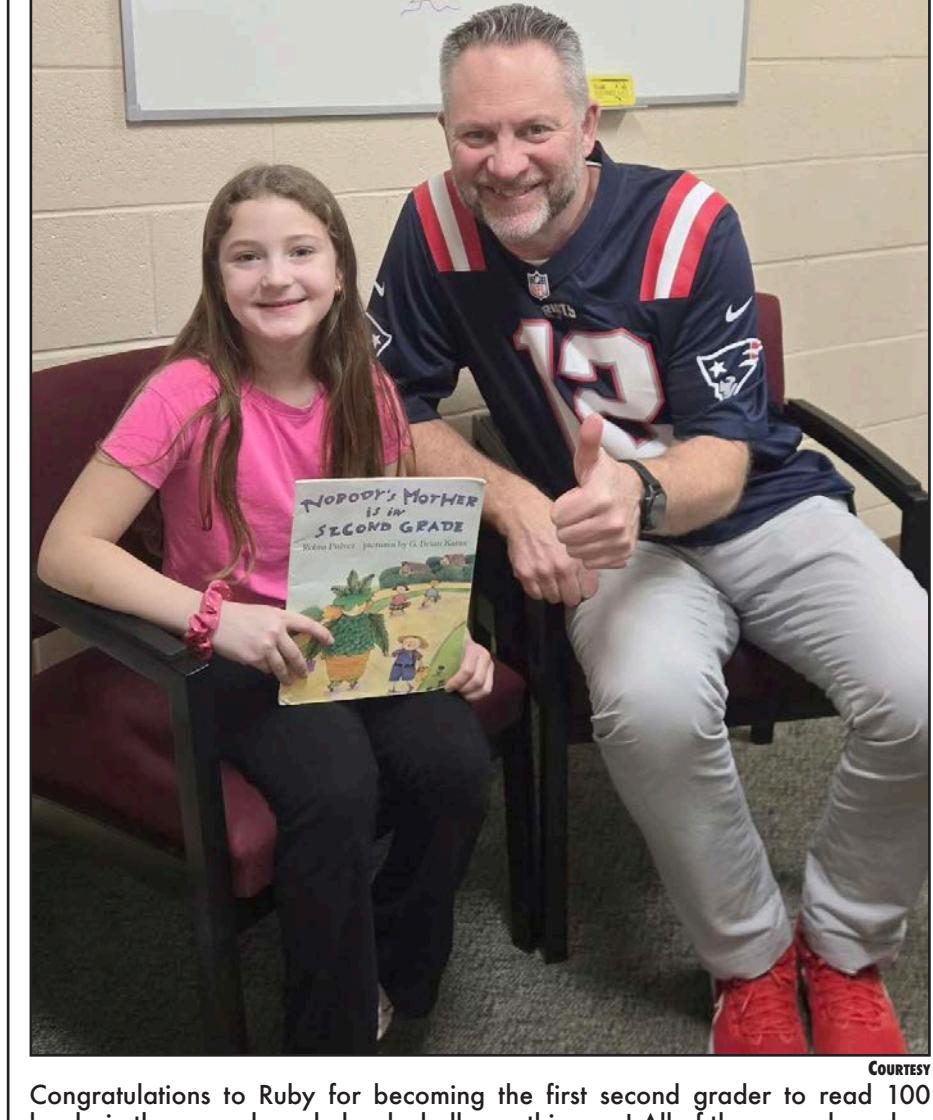
Brock Smith jumped to fourth place in the long jump with a distance of

20 feet, 6.75 inches and teamed with Nick Wright, Sacha Artis and Trey Schnelle to finish in ninth place in the 4X200-meter relay in 1:44. Artis was also 14th in the 55-meter hurdles in 9.67 seconds and Smith was also 14th in the 55 meters in 6.97 seconds.

For the Belmont girls, Ava Lacasse ran to second in the preliminaries for the 55 meters, finishing in 7.43 seconds and was second in the finals in a time of 7.38 seconds. Mia Ellis was ninth in 7.77 seconds and Hannah Young was 10th in 7.84 seconds.

Young, Ellis, Sadie Sturgeon and Lacasse finished in fifth in the 4X200-meter relay in 1:53.62 while Young was also ninth in the long jump at 14 feet, 11.25 inches.

Sports Editor Joshua Spaulding can be reached at 279-4516, ext. 155 or josh@salmonpress.news.



COURTESY

Congratulations to Ruby for becoming the first second grader to read 100 books in the second grade book challenge this year! All of the second graders at Belmont Elementary School participate in this challenge annually. Learning to read is such an important part of elementary school, so we are proud of all of our students who are working hard to become proficient readers! Photo courtesy of the Shaker Regional School District's Facebook page.

Sanbornton voters to choose local officials in town election

SANBORNTON — Sanbornton voters will head to the polls for the town election with a slate of local offices on the ballot, including Budget Committee seats, town clerk, moderator and several trustee positions.

Several races feature declared candidates, while others will be decided by write-in votes.

For the Budget Committee, voters will select two candidates for three-year terms, with Paul Stevens and Mark Brown, Jr. listed on the ballot. A separate race will fill one two-year term, the remainder of an unexpired three-year term, with Denise Backman running. All

Budget Committee positions also allow write-in candidates.

The Library Trustee race includes three candidates vying for two three-year terms: Stephanie Corrente, Sarah Fox and Barbara Whetstone, both of which list no declared candidates and will be filled by write-in vote.

Several offices are uncontested, with a single candidate listed. Tim Lang is on the ballot for a two-year term as Moderator, while Douglas A. Sarette is running for a three-year term as Supervisor of the Checklist. Juliana Loneragan is listed for the combined position of Town Clerk and Tax Collector for a three-year term. Susan

I. Stevens is running for a three-year term as Trustee of Trust Funds.

Other positions on the ballot include Selectman for a three-year term and Cemetery Trustee for a three-year term, both of which list no declared candidates and will be filled by write-in vote.

Town officials encourage voters to review the ballot in advance and to participate in the election, particularly in races that will be decided entirely by write-ins.

Election details, including polling hours and location, are available through the town clerk's office and on the town's official Web site.

Escape winter's chill with new exhibit at Lakes Region Art Association Gallery

TILTON — Tired of the endless gray skies, snow, and sub-freezing temps that define February in the Lakes Region? The Lakes Region Art Association (LRRA) has the perfect antidote: "Art in the Garden — Carved & Cultivated," a vibrant group exhibition bursting with the colors, textures, and life of gardens and nature's beauty. Featuring original works from talented local artists, the show runs Feb. 19 through March 15 at the Lakes Region Art Gallery in Tanger Outlets, 120 Laconia Rd., Suite 300, Tilton.

This uplifting collection transports visitors from winter's grip straight into lush, sculpted gardens—think carved elegance, blooming abundance, textured landscapes, and serene organic forms brought to life through pastels, watercolors, mixed media, and more. It's an early glimpse of spring's promise, right when New Hampshire needs it most, celebrating the creative spirit of our community and the enduring allure of cultivated beauty.

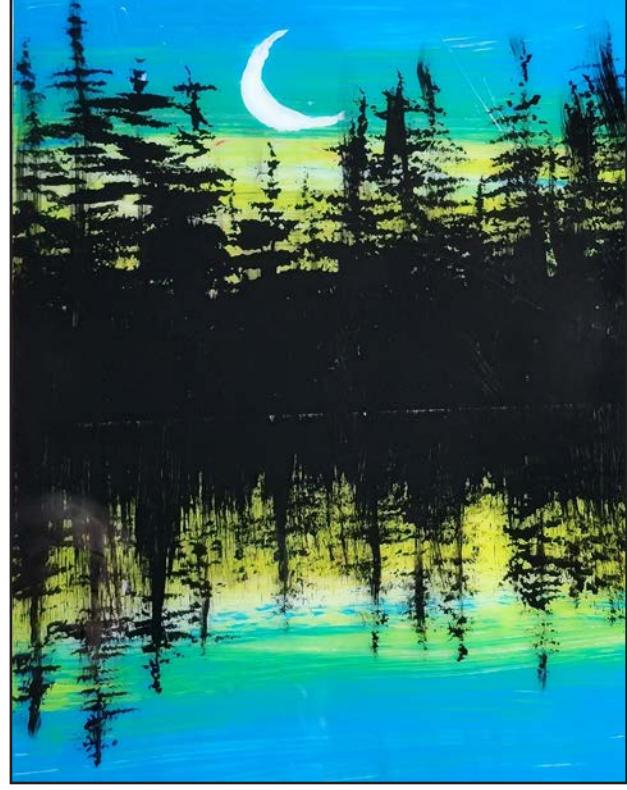
A lively Opening Reception welcomes every-

one on Friday, Feb. 20, from 4 to 6 p.m. Meet the artists, sip and mingle, enjoy light refreshments, and soak in the garden-fresh inspiration in a warm, friendly setting.

Adding extra fun to the evening, a Reverse Paint and Sip — "Forest Stillness" runs concurrently from 5 to 7 p.m. in the gallery. No experience required—guided instruction helps you create your own tranquil forest scene while you unwind (supplies included; \$40 per person; register ahead via the gallery Web site).

The Lakes Region Art Gallery continues its long tradition (rooted in the 1940s as the Laconia Art Association) as a welcoming hub for local creativity, with rotating shows of original art in diverse media. Open Thursdays through Sundays—check lakesregionartgallery.org for current hours and details.

For more info on the paint-and-sip registration, contact the Lakes Region Art Association Gallery at (603) 998-0029 or visit www.lakesregionartgallery.org.



Belmont voters face wide-ranging warrant with labor contracts, capital reserves, tax changes

BELMONT — Voters taking part in Belmont's annual town election will be asked to consider a lengthy and wide-ranging warrant this year, with 41 articles covering municipal elections, labor contracts, operating budgets, capital reserves, infrastructure spending and several tax-related changes.

The warrant opens with Article 1, the election of necessary town officers, including two Selectmen, members of the Budget Committee, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Adjustment, and other town positions.

Two zoning amendments appear early on the warrant. One would expand where manufactured housing is allowed by permitting it on individual lots outside of parks and subdivisions in several zoning districts. A second amendment would overhaul solar definitions and impose new limits on residential ground-mounted solar systems, including height restrictions, glare prevention and compliance with the town's noise ordinance.

The town's proposed operating budget is \$12,071,283, compared with a default budget of \$11,263,508 if the article

fails. The Budget Committee recommends the higher amount, and the Board of Selectmen supports that recommendation.

A significant portion of the warrant focuses on collective bargaining agreements for public safety and public works employees. Separate articles address new three-year contracts for the Fire Department, Police Department and Department of Public Works. Each article includes a first-year appropriation for 2026 and projected increases in later years. Companion articles authorize the Selectmen to call special town meetings if any of those labor articles are defeated, allowing voters to reconsider the cost items only.

Several articles address utility operations, including sewer and water system operating budgets fully offset by user fees, along with multiple capital reserve deposits for sewer and water system repairs and maintenance.

Capital spending and long-term planning feature

prominently throughout the warrant. Voters will consider lease-purchase payments for a new fire truck, an ambulance and a tanker, all funded through the Fire and Ambulance Equipment and Apparatus Special Revenue Fund without new taxation. Another article would amend how ambulance billing revenue is temporarily allocated in 2026, directing a portion to the General Fund to offset operating costs.

Highway-related articles include a proposed \$750,000 addition to the Highway Reconstruction and Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund and a separate article authorizing spending of anticipated state Highway Block Grant funds for road reconstruction.

Several articles propose establishing or adding to capital reserve and expendable trust funds, including funds for mill renovations tied to relocating Town Hall offices, municipal facilities, SCBA equipment for firefighters

ers, property revaluation, heavy highway equipment, bridge maintenance, cemetery maintenance, information technology, election equipment and library building improvements.

Financial housekeeping items include a proposed contingency fund for unanticipated expenses, funded by taxation, and a transfer from unassigned fund balance to help address accrued employee benefit liabilities.

Voters will also be asked to authorize distribution of income from the John M. Sargent Trust Fund to a wide range of local organizations, schools and nonprofits, including youth programs, social service agencies, and community groups.

Public safety operations appear again in an article to establish a police special detail revolving fund, allowing detail revenue to be retained and used for wages, equipment and cruisers without annual town meeting approval.

Two articles propose changes to veterans' tax

credits, including increasing the service-connected total and permanent disability credit and raising the general veterans' credit.

Toward the end of the warrant are two notable items. One petitioned article asks voters whether the town should sell the Mill Building. Another authorizes certain library income-generating activities and equipment purchases, as recommended by the Board of Selectmen.

With dozens of articles spanning labor costs, infrastructure, capital planning and tax policy, town officials have emphasized the importance of reviewing the warrant closely ahead of the election, which will take place on Tuesday, March 10. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at Belmont High School, 255 Seavey Rd.

A complete copy of the warrant can be found on the town Web site, along with the draft operating budget, 2026 Voters Guide, and other key documents.

Multiple candidates seek select board seats in Tilton

TILTON — Tilton voters will face several contested races in the upcoming town election, including a four-candidate field for the Select Board, along with ballots for Budget Committee and other key municipal positions.

The most competitive race is for the Select Board, where two seats are open. Four candidates are listed on the ballot: Robert Yanity, Katherine Dawson, Jeffrey Hinds, and Jeffrey Fontaine. Voters will choose two candidates to serve on the board, which oversees town operations, budget preparation and long-term planning.

The Budget Committee race also features competition, with two openings and two candidates listed: Deborah Hamilton and Suzanne McDonald.

Several other offices are uncontested, with a single candidate listed for each position. Jane Alden is running for Trustee of the Trust Funds, while Kim Sowles is on the ballot for the combined office of Town Clerk and Tax Collector. Judy Tilton is listed for Supervisor of the Checklist, and Eric Pyra is running for Moderator.

The ballot also includes one opening for Sewer Commissioner, with Peter Fogg listed as the candidate.

Town elections play a key role in setting policy and managing municipal services, particularly in a year when voters will also be asked to weigh in on budget and warrant articles at Town Meeting.

Voters are encouraged to review the ballot in advance and participate in the election to ensure local offices are filled with representatives chosen by the community.

Election details are available through the town clerk's office and the town's official Web site. Polls will be open Tuesday, March 10 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at Winnisquam Regional High School.

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Students named to President's List at Plymouth State University

PLYMOUTH — Students have been named to the Plymouth State University President's List for the Fall 2025 semester. To be named to the President's List, a student must achieve a grade point average of 3.70 or better for the Fall 2025 semester and must have completed at least 12 credit hours during the semester, at least nine of which must confer grade points, at the time the lists are finalized.

The following local students have been named to the President's List:

Vincenzo Cacciato of Belmont, majoring in Nursing.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR February 12-19

Thursday, Feb. 12

Sanbornton Conservation Commission Meeting 7 p.m., Old Town Hall, 19 Meeting House Hill Rd., Sanbornton. Regular monthly meeting of the town's conservation board.

Zoning Board Application Deadline (Northfield) 4 p.m., Northfield Town Office. Last day to submit applications for the Feb. 23 meeting.

Northfield Budget Committee Meeting (Public Hearing) 5 p.m., Northfield Town Office. Public hearing on budget proposals.

Tuesday, Feb. 13

Northfield Selectboard Meeting 5 p.m., Northfield Town Office. Regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen.

Thursday, Feb. 15

Northfield Planning Board Application Deadline 4 p.m., Northfield Town Office. Deadline to submit materials for review.

Abigail Clark of Belmont, majoring in Public Health. Ryder Dutton of Belmont, majoring in Social Work. Emma Haddock of Belmont, majoring in Marketing. Tatum Hartford of Belmont, majoring in English. Siera Kender of Belmont, majoring in Criminology. Gracey LeBlanc of Belmont, majoring in Elementary Ed & Youth Develop..

Brooke Nelson of Belmont, majoring in Allied Health Sciences.

Zakk Ober of Belmont, majoring in Marketing.

Riley Pinard of Belmont, majoring in English.

Jocelyn Roache of Belmont, majoring in Art and Design.

Ava Smith of Belmont, majoring in Forensic Science.

Bracie Thomas of Belmont, majoring in Criminal Justice.

Charlie Caron of Northfield, majoring in Elementary Ed & Youth Develop..

Noelle Drouin of Northfield, majoring in Elementary Ed & Youth Develop..

Holly Soucy of Northfield, majoring in Interdisciplinary Studies.

Ema Atherton of Sanbornton, majoring in Psychology.

Madison Heitz of Sanbornton, majoring in Criminal Justice.

Hannah Laughey of Sanbornton, majoring in Business Administration.

Lucas Robdau of Sanbornton, majoring in Environmental Science & Policy.

Carter Fredette of Tilton, majoring in Interdisciplinary Studies.

Callissa Harbour of Tilton, majoring in Art and Design.

About Plymouth State University

Established in 1871, Plymouth State University serves the state of New Hampshire and the world beyond by transforming our students through advanced practices where engaged learning produces well-educated undergraduates, and by providing graduate education that deepens and advances knowledge and enhances professional development. The Plymouth State Cluster Learning Model emphasizes open, integrative, and project-based experiences. With distinction, we connect with community and business partners for economic development, technological advances, healthier living, and cultural enrichment with a special commitment of service to the North Country and Lakes Region of New Hampshire. To learn more about Plymouth State University, visit www.plymouth.edu.



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Children's Auction unveils new brand identity

Going forward, the organization will be known as the Greater Lakes Region Children's Fund



Courtesy

The Communications Committee of the Greater Lakes Region Children's Fund are pictured here with the executive director. Left to right, members are Jennifer Prince, Janice Beetle, Executive Director Jennifer Kelley and Beth Osgood Dodge.

LACONIA—Leaders of the Greater Lakes Region Children's Auction today unveiled a new brand identity for the 44-year-old organization that supports children in need in the area. Going forward, the nonprofit will be known as the Greater Lakes Region Children's Fund.

The Children's Fund will represent the organization's philanthropic umbrella, which distributes hundreds of thousands of

dollars each year to over 60 nonprofits, and since its founding, has donated over \$9.2 million. The organization's new URL is ChildrensFundNH.org.

"We are so excited to be launching this new branding," Children's Fund Executive Director Jennifer Kelley said. "It's familiar yet fresh, and it ties together all that we do."

A logo system for the new brand identity was created by Kate Lilly of Lilly Designs, the organization's longtime designer

and a staunch advocate. Lilly donated her services and spent a year working with the Children's Fund's Communications Committee.

The Children's Auction was founded 44 years ago by the late Warren Bailey as a one-day collection to support local children; it raised \$2,100 that first year and eventually grew into a week-long event. Over the past several decades, the organization has increased fundraising—and its capacity to make grants to nonprofits—by growing the number of events that raise funds.

The former logo for the auction was created at least 15 years ago.

The rebranding process with Lilly began a year ago as auction leaders surveyed over 5,000 area residents to gather feedback on whether the organization's existing branding, was still resonating, given the tremendous growth.

"We were grateful to receive feedback from so many people," Kelley said. "It helped us to see that it was time to refresh our brand, ensuring it would stay true to Warren and the vision of the auction while also being mindful that we are more than the Children's Auction. We do four events throughout the year, and our branding should reflect that."

The new primary logo features two children at play, and Lilly said it reinforces the mission with

a youthful feel and familiar elements—such as the font, color palette and gold oval—while secondary logos for the four events offer a simpler option for specific marketing needs.

"During this rebrand, we were mindful of how important and beloved the organization is," Lilly said. "We didn't want to introduce too many changes, but wanted updates that felt fresh, yet still honored the core identity."

She added, "The elements are highly recognizable, and keeping them was essential for a smooth transition."

Logos for the events that support the Children's Fund have evolved over time, with the exception of the Christmas in July logo, which was created simultaneously with the rebrand. In the past, event logos were used on their own.

"With this rebrand and the development of the Children's Fund logo, the Children's Auction can now be positioned as a supporting event for the fund, similar to Pub Mania, The Sweepstakes Social, and Christmas in July—with the potential for many more in the future," Lilly said.

She also created what she calls a brand badge, a simple icon that can create a visual tie to the Children's Fund when space is tight.

Students named to Dean's List at Plymouth State University

PLYMOUTH — Students have been named to the Plymouth State University Dean's List for the Fall 2025 semester. To be named to the Dean's List, a student must achieve a grade point average between 3.5 and 3.69 for the Fall 2025 term, be a matriculated student with at least 12 credits, at least nine of which must confer grade points at the time the list is finalized.

The following local students were named to the Dean's List:

Tyler Carroll of Belmont, majoring in Business Administration.

Aaron Sanborn of Belmont, majoring in English.

Olivia Fahnstock of Northfield, majoring in Criminal Justice.

Nate Lavoie of Sanbornton, majoring in Computer Science.

About Plymouth State University

Established in 1871, Plymouth State University serves the state of New Hampshire and the world beyond by transforming our students through advanced practices where engaged learning produces well-educated undergraduates, and by providing graduate education that deepens and advances knowledge and enhances professional development. The Plymouth State Cluster Learning Model emphasizes open, integrative, and project-based experiences. With distinction, we connect with community and business partners for economic development, technological advances, healthier living, and cultural enrichment with a special commitment of service to the North Country and Lakes Region of New Hampshire. To learn more about Plymouth State University, visit www.plymouth.edu.

Students named to Dean's List at Plymouth State University

LACONIA — Lakes Region Community Developers (LRCD) is pleased to announce the addition of Shannon Casey, Leslie McEvoy, and Tate Miller, all residents of Laconia, to LRCD's Board of Directors. The Board provides leadership for carrying out the organization's mission to create affordable housing and empower LRCD's tenants to achieve economic security.

Shannon Casey is an Associate Broker Realtor with Keller Williams Coastal and Lakes & Mountains Realty. She was born and raised in the Lakes Region and earned her Bachelor's degree in finance from Franklin Pierce University. Before starting her real estate career in 2018, she was the CFO of Bigcat-coffees.com. Shannon is a Director for the Lakes Region Board of Realtors, a member of the Commercial Board of Realtors, and served for many years on the board of the Franklin Business & Industrial Development Corporation. She is passionate about all things planning and zoning and enjoys mentoring other realtors. In her spare time, she studies saxophone at the Music Clinic in Belmont.

Leslie McEvoy has lived at LRCD's Millview Apartments for seven years, bringing her important perspective as one of LRCD's tenants to the LRCD Board. Leslie is a trumpet player and for

mer music educator for 25 years. She has performed in concert bands, big bands, churches, brass ensembles, pit orchestras for high school musicals, and parades all around New England. She had a unique opportunity to perform at the Vienna International School in Austria with the Plymouth State Wind Ensemble in 2002. Leslie is a former member of the Lakes Region Symphony Orchestra and Carter Mountain Brass Band. She currently performs with the NH Philharmonic and Belknap Brass.

Tate Miller is a Commercial Loan Officer with Meredith Village Savings Bank, based out of MVSB's Laconia branch. He began his career with MVSB in 2022 as a Commercial Loan Apprentice,

working alongside several members of the Bank's commercial lending team to learn key aspects of

lending, credit analysis and business networking. Prior to joining MVSB, Tate gained experience in marketing and customer service roles. He earned his Bachelor's Degree in business and marketing from Plymouth State University. In addition to serving on LRCD's Board, Tate volunteers with the Lakes Region Chamber of Commerce, Hands Across the Table, Greater Lakes Region Children's Auction and New Hampshire Pumpkin Festival.

"We are very pleased to welcome Shannon, Leslie, and Tate to the LRCD Board," said Lisa Mure of Holderness, who serves as the Chair of LRCD's Board. "Their unique backgrounds and perspectives will enhance LRCD's efforts to create more affordable housing in the Lakes Region."

In 2025, LRCD finished construction of 15

units of supportive housing in Laconia, invested over \$750,000 in strengthening its Laconia portfolio, started construction of a new apartment complex in Wolfeboro that will add 30 affordable apartments to the market, and started construction on the Gale School redevelopment project in Belmont.

To learn more about Lakes Region Community Developers and/or its leadership team, visit LRCommunityDevelopers.org.

About Lakes Region Community Developers:

Lakes Region Community Developers' mission is to create opportunities for the people of the Lakes Region to thrive by developing healthy homes, creating vibrant community assets, and empowering residents.

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Opinion

When local decisions ripple outward

It is easy to think of town decisions as small, self-contained things.

A capital reserve here. A zoning change there. A budget line that looks minor compared to the scope of state or federal spending. But anyone who has lived in a small town long enough knows that local decisions rarely stay small for very long.

What is decided at Town Meeting often shapes daily life in ways that are felt quietly and steadily over time.

Roads are a good example. A vote to add money to a capital reserve may not produce immediate results, but it determines whether future repairs are planned or reactive. The same is true of equipment purchases, building maintenance and long-term infrastructure. These are not glamorous topics, but they influence safety, reliability and cost in very real ways.

Zoning decisions carry similar weight. A change in definitions or permitted uses may seem technical, but it can affect housing options, neighborhood character and property values years down the road. Once adopted, these changes tend to shape development patterns long after the meeting hall has emptied.

Even smaller articles matter. Trust funds, exemptions and modest appropriations often reflect community priorities. They signal what a town values, whether that is caring for seniors, maintaining shared spaces, supporting veterans or planning responsibly for future obligations.

None of this means every article deserves automatic approval. Town Meeting exists precisely because voters are expected to weigh proposals carefully. Some articles will prompt debate. Others will pass quietly. Both outcomes are part of a healthy process.

What matters most is recognizing that these votes are not abstract. They influence how well services function, how flexible future budgets will be and how prepared a town is to handle change.

Local government works best when decisions are made with an eye not only on the coming year, but on the years that follow. That kind of thinking does not require grand vision. It requires attention, patience and a willingness to consider consequences beyond the immediate moment.

Town Meeting may last only a day, but its effects tend to linger.

Letter submission policy

Letters to the Editor must include the author's name, address, and a daytime phone number for purposes of verification in order to be considered for publication. Only the author's name and the town in which they reside will be published. Letters submitted without all of the required information will not be accepted.

It is the sole prerogative of the Editor to determine whether a submission satisfies our requirements and decency standards, and any submission may be rejected at any time for any reason he or she might deem appropriate.

COURTESY

Sgt. Gray and Officer Heger from the Belmont Police Department attended the Health and Human Services Career Exposition at Lakes Region Community College last week, talking with students and community members about careers in law enforcement and other public service fields. Photo courtesy of the department's Facebook page.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Announcing write-in candidacy for Tilton Town Moderator

To the Editor:

Our town elections and town meetings are the bedrock of our community. The Town Moderator serves as the town's chief election official and the presiding officer over our annual business meeting. On Tuesday, March 10, Tilton will elect a new Moderator; I am writing to formally announce my candidacy as a write-in for this position.

The Moderator is responsible for ensuring that town meetings and elections are handled with transparency, legal precision, and absolute neutrality. Having been a resident of Tilton since 2020 and a recent attendee of our annual meetings, I deeply appreciate this responsibility.

As Town Moderator, I would commit to two primary objectives:

1. Election integrity: The Moderator oversees the conduct of the polls. I will ensure that Tilton's elections are secure, that state laws are strictly enforced, and that every legal ballot is counted with total accuracy.

2. Orderly town meetings: I view the Moderator as a neutral referee. I will ensure the "Rules of the Hall" are followed, that debate remains focused on the warrant arti-

cles, and that the meeting moves forward with efficiency and civility.

My professional background in engineering, cancer research, and project management has provided me with the skills necessary to manage complex discussions and resolve conflicts fairly. I am committed to a strict adherence to New Hampshire's RSAs to ensure that the "will of the voters" remains the final word.

Because I am a write-in candidate, your vote requires an extra step. To cast your vote for me at the polls:

Find the section for Town Moderator on your ballot.

On the blank line, clearly write: Chet Birger.

Crucially, you must fill in the oval or square next to the name you wrote. If the oval is not filled, the tabulating machine will not register the vote.

I invite anyone with questions to contact me at chet.birger@gmail.com. I respectfully ask for your write-in vote on March 10.

Sincerely,

Chet Birger
Tilton

Economic development, mental health services continue to take center stage in District I

To the Editor:

In the Year of 2025, the hot topics continued to be housing, workforce, and childcare. The First Phase of the Veterans Campus was completed in Franklin, the Laconia State Property is going through its purchase and sale final review process, the fish hatchery project in New Hampton is ongoing, the Raymond S. Burton Training Facility expansion project in Bethlehem is nearly completed, the new District Court House in Rochester broke ground and the new 911 Facility in Laconia also broke ground. The General Sullivan Bridge demolition project in Dover and Newington was approved to knock down the bridge.

This Councilor has been an advocate for Rural Health Funding coming from Washington, D.C. and conducted five round-table discussions about rural health topics within his District. The state was awarded \$204 million for Rural Health Funding in its first year and a GO-NORTH Committee has been formed to oversee and implement it.

Between January and December 2025, the Executive Council confirmed one Supreme Court Justice, one Commissioner of Education, and one Commissioner of Corrections.

The total contract items reviewed by the Executive Council were approximately 2,473 to include 16 late items over the course of 24 meetings. Of the 168 confirmations of board and commission positions, 28 were from District 1. On July 30, District 1 hosted an on-the-road meeting at the Ridge Runners Club House in Pittsburg. The Governor and Council toured Murphy's Dam, conducted an OHV tour, and travelled to the US Customs Station in

Pittsburg.

This Councilor's priorities will continue to be economic development, rural and mental health services, childcare and housing. Transportation is an important topic for my District, and the state overall has been confronted with financial constraints with our infrastructure and road projects. The Tram at Franconia State Park has been shut down for the next two years, a new Tram will be built. Mustard and Ketchup cars have been retired.

The Governor and Council are always looking for volunteers to serve on the dozens of state boards and commissions. If you are interested, please send your resume to Gov. Kelly Ayotte, State House, 107 North Main St., Concord, NH 03301; attention to Director of Appointments/Liaison or call at (603) 271-2121. A complete list of all state boards and commissions are available at the NH Secretary of State Web site: <https://media.sos.nh.gov/govcouncil/WORKING%20REDBOOK.pdf>.

My office is open to requests for state constitutions, tourist maps, consumer handbooks, etc. I periodically email my weekly schedule and Wrap Up Newsletter. If you would like to be included on this list, contact me at joseph.d.kenney@nh.gov. I also have an internship program for college students. My office number is (603) 271-3632. I am always available to old and new friends. Please stay in touch.

Serving you,

Joe Kenney
Executive Councilor, District I
Wakefield

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Living at the pace of the place

I've noticed that clocks seem louder than they used to be.

**KIND FOLKS,
COLD WINTERS**

By CHIPPY

Supper happened when the light shifted and the work was done. Meetings started when everyone arrived. If you were early, you waited. If you were late, you apologized and sat down. The clock mattered, but it didn't run the show.

Here in New Hampshire, I still see glimpses of that older rhythm, and I'm grateful for it.

There's a particular pause that happens in small towns that you don't find everywhere. Someone stops to talk in the post office. A line forms, but no one sighs too loudly. A conversation finishes at its

own pace. The clock keeps ticking, but it isn't offended.

I was reminded of this recently while waiting for a repair at a local shop. The estimate was vague — "a little while" — which used to drive me crazy when I was younger. Now it feels oddly comforting. A little while means the job will take the time it takes, not the time someone promised on a screen.

I sat there, reading a newspaper I'd already read, watching people come and go. Nobody looked rushed. Nobody checked their phone every ten seconds. The work got done. I got home. The world didn't end.

That wouldn't make for

a very efficient system in every place, but it works here. And maybe that's the point.

Efficiency has its place. So does patience. We've gotten very good at shaving seconds off everything, but I'm not convinced those seconds have made us feel richer in time. If anything, they've made us more aware of every minute we think we're losing.

I catch myself doing it too. Looking at the clock while someone is mid-sentence. Thinking about the next thing before finishing the one in front of me. It's not intentional. It's learned behavior.

What I admire about many folks around here is their quiet resistance to that

pressure. Not stubbornness — just a refusal to be hurried unnecessarily. You still see people who finish their stories, who take their coats off properly, who don't treat every moment like a race.

There's a wisdom in that, whether we name it or not.

As I get older, I'm more aware of time than I used to be, but I'm also less interested in fighting it. I don't need to outrun the day. I just need to keep pace with it. Some days that means moving quickly. Other days it means letting things unfold.

Winter, especially, teaches that lesson. Snow arrives when it's ready. Ice melts when it feels like it.

You can plan all you want, but nature has the final say. Around here, we've learned to work with that rather than against it.

Maybe that's why the ticking doesn't feel quite so sharp in places like this. Time is still time, but it's allowed to breathe.

If you find yourself feeling rushed this week, try letting one thing take as long as it needs to. Finish the conversation. Sit through the wait. Ignore the clock for a few minutes.

The hands will keep moving. They always do. But you might find that the day feels a little fuller when you stop trying to outrun it.

~ Comfort Keepers ~

Healing the heart

BY MARTHA SWATS
Owner/Administrator
Comfort Keepers

The impact of heart disease in the United States is significant, and it is most strikingly significant in the older population. It is the most prevalent cause of death in the United States, and 80 percent of those who die of cardiovascular disease are age 65 or older. Every year nearly 720,000 Americans suffer a heart attack. The chances that those who suffer from a heart attack will end up back in the hospital within 30 days of being discharged for the first attack is also great, and the financial impact is tremendous, accounting for \$108.9 billion in medical costs each year. While these statistics are notable, the real impact is with the seniors suffering from heart disease, and the question they have after they suffer a heart attack is, "How can I prevent this from happening again?"

There are many factors that come into play that can cause older adults to end up back in the hospital after a heart attack, and many of these factors may be beyond their control. A failure to properly care for themselves, however, is one factor that they can control. In particular, seniors can help themselves stay out of the hospital by visiting with their physicians for follow-up care, taking the appropriate medications at the prescribed times, following through with prescribed therapies, reducing stress, stopping smoking, and following their physicians' guidance for diet and exercise.

While this may seem like a simple instruction, very often these older adults become overwhelmed as they try to deal with their illness and drastic lifestyle changes. Studies show that many patients leave the hospital without fully understanding their disease or their plan of care

and may inadvertently stop taking medications that are essential for their recovery. Supporting patients when they leave the hospital is therefore critical to help them help themselves.

To help older adults adjust and cope with their illness, medical professionals can offer specific medical support and education; it is also important that these seniors get support within the community. Having family members, friends, or professional caregivers help them can relieve much of the stress they may feel thereby allowing them to focus on getting better. Simple help such as providing transportation to follow-up care, helping to prepare meals, or reminding the senior when a medication is due can alleviate anxiety about managing daily tasks and can help increase the older adult's compliance with medical directives. This in turn may just keep that senior out of the hospital and on the road to recovery. To learn more about how in-home care can assist you or a loved one during recovery from an illness, contact your local Comfort Keepers® office today.

exploring innovative solutions to meet the evolving needs of our community. To learn more, call 603-536-6060 or visit NHComfortKeepers.com.

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Matter of Law



What is revocable trust?

BY ORA SCHWARTZBERG

Attorney
Schwartzberg Law

A revocable trust holds property for your benefit during your lifetime. You can change or cancel it anytime while you are mentally capable. In most New Hampshire plans, you serve as trustee and keep control of the assets.

Because the trust is revocable, it stays flexible. You can add or remove property, update instructions or dissolve it if your goals change.

How revocable trusts work in New Hampshire

In New Hampshire, a revocable trust allows you to manage assets during life and transfers them after death. The state follows a modified Uniform Trust

Code that governs trusts.

A trust does not replace all estate planning documents. It works alongside a will, powers of attorney and health care directives. Many people place certain assets in revocable trust, including:

- A primary home or vacation property in New Hampshire

- Non-retirement investment accounts

- Personal property with clear ownership

- Out-of-state real estate

You can also name the trust as a beneficiary of your retirement accounts and make your other bank accounts payable to the trust, at the time of your death.

The goal is to own

nothing at the time of your death so that nothing you own will go through probate.

What revocable trusts do and do not do

A revocable trust does not protect assets from creditors, during your lifetime and does not reduce estate taxes alone. These issues need separate planning.

Planning with flexibility



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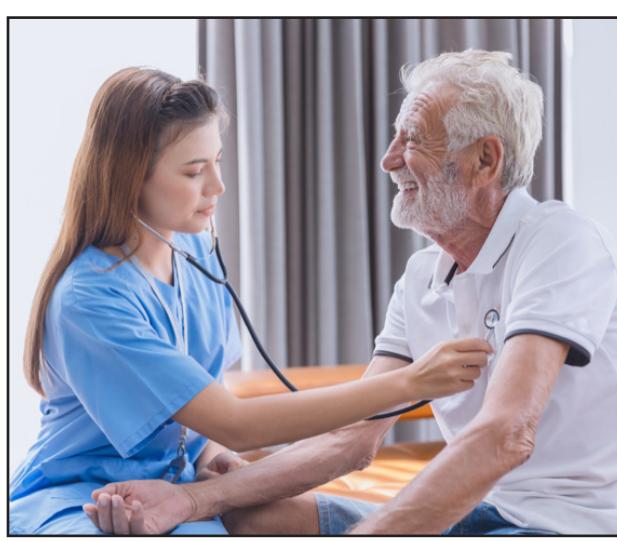


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February is National Heart Health Month: How Pemi-Baker Hospice & Home Health Supports Patients and Families

ANNA SWANSON

PLYMOUTH, MEREDITH, LINCOLN, NH- February is National Heart Health Month, a time to focus on cardiovascular wellness and the resources available to support patients recovering from heart conditions. Pemi-Baker Hospice & Home Health is proud to provide compassionate, high-quality care to individuals transitioning home after heart surgery and families living with terminal heart disease.

For those recovering from heart surgery, the journey back to health can be daunting. Pemi-Baker's dedicated home health team ensures that patients receive expert care in the comfort of their own homes. Our skilled nurses, therapists, and caregivers work together to create personalized care plans tailored to the unique needs of each patient.

"Our home health services focus on a holistic approach to recovery," says Aubrey Engle, Executive Director. "From monitoring vital signs and administering medications to guiding patients through cardiac rehabilitation exercises, our team is here to help patients regain strength and confidence after surgery."

Transitioning home after heart surgery often requires significant lifestyle adjustments, including managing medications, maintaining a heart-healthy diet, and adhering to physical activity recommendations. Pemi-Baker's team provides essential education and support to both patients and their families, empowering them to take control of their health and reduce the risk of complications or hospital readmissions.

In addition to post-surgery care, Pemi-Baker Hospice & Home Health offers specialized hospice services for families facing terminal heart disease. Many people delay seeking hospice care, but early enrollment can provide invaluable benefits to both patients and their loved ones.

"Our hospice services are about more than end-of-life care," says Engle. "We focus on enhancing quality of life, providing emotional and spiritual support, and ensuring patients can spend their remaining time with dignity and comfort."

The Pemi-Baker team includes skilled clinicians, social workers, chaplains, and trained volunteers who provide a network of support. This comprehensive care helps families navigate the physical, emotional, and logistical challenges of terminal heart disease. From managing symptoms like shortness of breath and fatigue to addressing emotional concerns, Pemi-Baker's hospice team is committed to helping patients and families find peace during a difficult time.

National Heart Health Month is an ideal time to prioritize your heart health and learn about the resources available to support recovery and long-term care. Whether you or a loved one are recovering from heart surgery or facing a terminal diagnosis, Pemi-Baker Hospice & Home Health is here to help.

Pemi-Baker Hospice & Home Health is a trusted, nonprofit agency proudly serving 32 towns in central and northern NH since 1967. Expert services include at-home healthcare and physical therapies (VNA), hospice and palliative care, and community programs including American Red Cross CPR/AED/FA, Caregiver and Bereavement Support Groups and Ask A Pemi-Baker Nurse days at your local senior centers. Providing compassionate care with experienced staff who are trained, certified professionals and your neighbors. Caring for our community with compassion, dignity and trust.

Pemi-Baker is located at 101 Boulder Point Drive, Suite 3, Plymouth, NH. To contact us please call: 603-536-2232 or email: info@phha.org Like our Facebook Page: [@pemibakerhospicehomehealth](https://www.facebook.com/pemibakerhospicehomehealth)

###

US figure skaters get off to a strong start

Team USA wins figure skating gold in dramatic style



JOSHUA SPAULDING

Team USA poses atop the medal stand after winning the figure skating team competition on Sunday night in Milan. Left to right, Evan Bates, Madison Chock, Danny O'Shea, Ellie Kam, Alyssa Liu, Amber Glenn and Ilia Malinin.

BY JOSHUA SPAULDING

Sports Editor

MILAN, Italy — Unlike four years ago, there is no waiting for the medal this time around.

Team USA edged out Japan in the final portion of the figure skating team competition over the weekend in Milan to bring home the gold medal, four years after they finished second to Russia, only to get the gold two years later due to the Russian doping scandal.

The team competition started on Friday, Feb. 6, prior to the Opening Ceremony at the Milano Ice Skating Rink with the ice dancing rhythm dance, pairs short program and women's short program all taking the ice.

The US ice dancing pair of Madison Chock and Evan Bates got the US off on the right foot with a very strong performance in the rhythm dance, putting up a season best score of 91.06 much to the delight of the pro-Team USA crowd assembled in the arena.

"Team USA is off to a great start," said Chock. "We've got a ton of amazing athletes, so I have all the confidence in the world in them."

"We're happy with how it went today and taking it one day at a time," Bates said.

The pair of Ellie Kam and Danny O'Shea were up next for Team USA and a fall on one of their elements dampened their score a bit, as they finished with a score of 66.59 points. That score put them in fifth place overall in that discipline, but teamed with the performance from Chock and Bates still had the US in first place after the first two rounds of competition.

"Throws have been something we've been having to spend a lot of time working on since the start of this partnership," Kam said of her fall. "Compared to some other teams here, we're still relatively new and still working out some of the kinks. Sometimes we get it right and it's solid and no question, but today the timing was a little bit off."

"We put the past in the past, and step right into the next element," O'Shea said "(Ellie) didn't need me to pick her up. She got up and went after the next thing. We are really proud of our resilience as a team and individually."

Alyssa Liu finished second in the women's short program portion of

the event, finishing with a score of 74.9.

"I love my program, it is my dream to go on a stage with so many eyes and perform for people to see," Liu said. "I want them (the audience) to see my hair, my dress, my makeup, the way I skate. I want people to see everything about me."

"That is the best part, especially for today," she said of the team element of the performance. "I am so glad I did the team event, that energy is what I crave."

Ilia Malinin competed in the men's short program on Saturday night and earned a score of 98, which placed him second overall. That put Team USA in first place by one point over Japan and also advanced the United States skaters into the finals.

"I was not expecting to walk here and win the competition," Malinin said. "It was not my goal for the team event — it was to focus on myself and how I was feeling overall."

"I am pretty happy with what I did because it was just 50 percent of my full potential," he continued. "Overall, I'm very proud

of everything I have done so far."

Chock and Bates returned to the ice on Saturday night for the first competition of the finals and won the free dance portion of the competition with a score of 133.23 to give the US a five-point lead over Japan heading to the final day of competition.

O'Shea and Kam charged back as the openers in the free program on Sunday night, putting up a season best score of 135.36. They finished in fourth overall and the US took a two-point lead over Japan heading to the final day of competition.

Malinin, despite a slight slip in his free program, scored a 200.03, which was just enough to edge the Shun Sato of Japan and Team USA took the gold medal by one point.

two competitions.

Amber Glenn skated the women's free skate for Team USA and finished third with 138.62 points and with Japan's win in the event, the two countries entered the final event tied at 59 points apiece.

Malinin, despite a slight slip in his free program, scored a 200.03, which was just enough to edge the Shun Sato of Japan and Team USA took the gold medal by one point.

Sports Editor Joshua Spaulding can be reached at 279-4516, ext. 155 or josh@salmonpress.news.

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TILTON

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

Additional capital reserve proposals include deposits to the Highway Equipment Capital Reserve Fund (\$35,044) and the Town Buildings Infrastructure Capital Reserve Fund (\$20,000).

The warrant also includes several smaller funding articles, including additions to the Assessing Revaluation Capital Re-

serve Fund (\$17,503), Tilton Island Preservation and Improvements Capital Reserve Fund (\$10,000), Lake Improvement and Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund for milfoil control (\$3,000), and the Tilton Senior Center Expendable Trust Fund (\$2,500).

Another article asks voters whether to increase the disabled veterans property tax exemption from \$2,000 to \$2,750 for service-con-

nected total disabilities, as allowed under state law.

Town officials encourage residents to review the full warrant in advance of Town Meeting to understand how the proposed articles may affect municipal services, long-term planning and the tax rate.

A complete copy of the 2026 town warrant and proposed operating budget are available on the town Web site.

Belmont alpine closes out regular season at Gunstock

BY JOSHUA SPAULDING

Sports Editor

GUNSTOCK — The Belmont alpine ski team got in one final tune-up for the Division III State Meet,

skiing at Gunstock on Friday, Feb. 6, with Gilford, Plymouth, Oyster River, Trinity, Bishop Brady, St. Thomas, Prospect Mountain and Laconia also in attendance.

In the morning giant slalom for the Raider boys, Ryan Cribbie was 11th overall in 1:05.82, Eva Ashworth was 15th in 1:06.3 and McDonald finished in 33rd place in 1:20.87.

In the morning giant slalom for the girls, Riley DeGange led the way with

a time of 1:02.72 for 15th place.

Anna McDonald was 35th overall in a time of 1:13.86.

16th in 1:00.92.

Ashworth finished in 26th place in the afternoon slalom with a time of 1:12.91.

The Raiders took part in the Division III State Meets after deadline on Monday and Tuesday.

Sports Editor Joshua Spaulding can be reached at 279-4516, ext. 155 or josh@salmonpress.news.

For starters, it was definitely something different



JOSHUA SPAULDING

It was great to see my third straight Olympic Opening Ceremony on Sunday night in Milan. It wasn't ideal from my standpoint, but it's always nice to be a part of it.

Paris made headlines for its much different approach to the Opening Ceremony for the Olympics in the summer of 2024. Their idea to have athletes ride on boats down the Seine instead of the traditional parade was certainly unusual and it probably would've been a better experience for most involved, myself included, if it hadn't rained almost the entire time.

From my point of view as a member of the media, the biggest problem was that there was no shelter from the rain and no place to plug in phones and computers to charge, which made it tough to get back to the hotel or do any work.

However, the idea was valiant and so was Milan-Cortina's idea to have Opening Ceremonies in four different locations. Oftentimes, athletes who compete in events the day after the Opening Ceremony don't get the chance to take part. This goes doubly if they are in sports that might be an hour or so away from the venue where the ceremony takes place.

So, when the Olympics are taking place in ven-

SPORTING CHANCE



By JOSHUA SPAULDING

ues that are more than five hours apart, it makes sense to try something new and have multiple ceremonies so that all the athletes can take part. However, making that work for people in the stadium(s) where its taking place is really not feasible, or at least it wasn't feasible on Sunday night.

First and foremost, I am grateful to Bill Hancock from The US Olympic and Paralympic Team, who handles the high demand ticket requests. He has always found a way to get me a ticket when I've asked and he got me one for the Opening Ceremony for the fifth time in a row. The first two I ended up giving back because I could not make it in time and I've now been to three in a row. And I also know that I am likely going to get a non-tabled seat, which means sitting in a regular seat in the stands reserved for press. The tabled seats

have, well, a table, and power outlets and chairs. I had one of those seats in Beijing but did not in Paris or on Sunday night.

What we watched was a bunch of placards enter a stadium with a country name and no athletes or flags. Up on the screen they were showing athletes from that country simultaneously entering ceremonies in Livigno, Cortina and Predazzo. The problem was, at least from where I was sitting on one of the "long" sides of the stadium, you could not read the writing on the relatively small screen on the other side of the stadium. The only way I knew where each one was was by looking through my lens of my camera.

And that was the same for the lighting of the Olympic cauldrons, which also didn't take place in the stadium. It was cool that Alberto Tomba and Sofia Goggia were two of the people lighting the torch but I wouldn't have known that without my zoom lens.

I like the idea of including everyone, but maybe there are some kinks to work out in the system. France is planning a similar Olympics in 2030, if my understanding of their bid is correct, so maybe with a little time they'll figure something out.

But also, I guess it doesn't matter on a television screen where everyone is.

Joshua Spaulding is the Sports Editor for the Granite State News, Carroll County Independent, Meredith News, Gilford Steamer, Winnisquam Echo, Plymouth Record-Enterprise, Littleton Courier, Coos County Democrat and The Baysider. He can be reached at josh@salmonpress.news at 279-4516, or PO Box 729, Meredith, NH 03253.

BY JOSHUA SPAULDING

Sports Editor

PLYMOUTH — A trio of athletes represented Winnisquam Regional High School at the Division II indoor track championships at Plymouth State University on Sunday.

For the Bear girls, Phoebe Timmons finished in 11th place in the shot put with a toss of 25 feet, 3.5 inches while teammate Denessa Williams finished in 12th place in the 300 meters in 47.04 seconds.

For the Winnisquam boys, Nolan Abbott was eighth in the 600 meters in 1:30.41 and he also placed 12th in the 1,000 meters in 3:07.08.

Sports Editor Joshua Spaulding can be reached at 279-4516, ext. 155 or josh@salmonpress.news.

CLUES ACROSS

CLUES DOWN

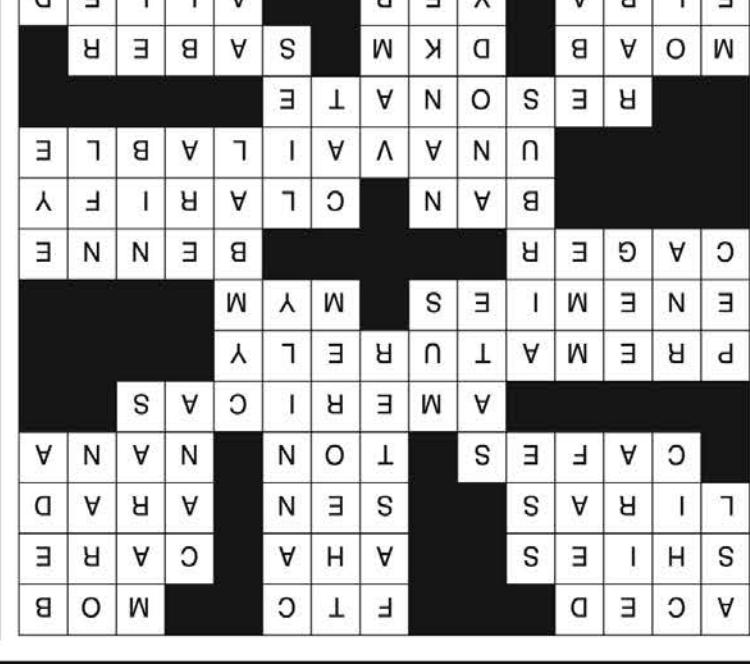
- 1. Breezed through
- 5. Consumer protection agency
- 8. Criminal syndicate
- 11. Moves back from
- 13. Satisfaction
- 14. Feel concern or interest
- 15. Monetary units
- 16. Congressman (abbr.)
- 17. Israeli city
- 18. Restaurants
- 20. 2,000 lbs.
- 21. Grandmother
- 22. North, South and Central
- 25. In an early way
- 30. Foes
- 31. Social networking platform
- 32. Early term for basketball player

- 33. Another name for sesame plant
- 38. Disallow
- 41. Provide greater detail
- 43. Inaccessible
- 45. Evoke emotions
- 47. Ancient kingdom near Dead Sea
- 49. Celtic punk rockers
- 50. A fencing sword
- 55. Actor Idris
- 56. Affirmative (slang)
- 57. Afflicted in mind or body
- 59. One point north of northeast
- 60. Born of
- 61. Social media hand gesture
- 62. Hong Kong food stall — pai dong
- 63. Opposite of beginning
- 64. Email function

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Sign language
- 2. Fashionable
- 3. Borough in Helsinki
- 4. Inability to hear
- 5. More quickly
- 6. An idea accepted as a demonstrable truth
- 7. Shrewdly
- 8. Rooney and Kate are two
- 9. Mediterranean port
- 10. Benedictine monk
- 12. Midway between south and southeast
- 14. Town in Galilee
- 19. Satisfy
- 23. Mice genus
- 24. Brass instrument
- 25. Chest muscle (slang)
- 26. Transmits genetic information from DNA
- 27. Records electric currents generated by the brain

- 28. Woman (French)
- 29. Short route aircraft
- 34. Pitching statistic
- 35. Pointed end of a pen
- 36. Popular sports league
- 37. Body part
- 39. Inoffensive
- 40. Yellowish cotton cloth
- 41. Feline
- 42. Does not tell the truth
- 44. Seduced
- 45. Spiritual leader
- 46. Abba __, Israeli politician
- 47. Repair
- 48. Olive genus
- 51. Swiss river
- 52. Prejudice
- 53. C. European river
- 54. Keep under control
- 58. Father



PUZZLE SOLUTION

Shorthanded Bears fall in Raymond

BY JOSHUA SPAULDING

Sports Editor

TILTON — While the Winnisquam hoop girls were not able to completely overcome the loss of leading scorer Caidyn Carter early in last week's matchup in Raymond, coach Mark Dawalga liked

what he saw out of the rest of the crew in her stead, led by ninth grader Alissa Jean.

"With Caidyn going down early in the second quarter, AJ really had to step up and she did," Dawalga said. "AJ has really picked up her game the

second half of the season, her scoring is up, rebounds as well as assists are up.

"She is becoming the all-around player we believe she can be and it is fun to watch her grow and expand her game," the Bear coach added.

Down a few players, the Bears did fall to the Rams by a 60-35 score, but Dawalga praised some of the players that have stepped up. Ninth grader Claire Hart had 10 rebounds and the Bear coach noted her game is starting

to grow and her rebounding has gotten better as the season has gone along. Mia Wolfe added five points and five rebounds and Kaylyn Reagan added four points. The defense was led by Abby Meunier, Rachel Burke and Jaylianana Brown.

"We still have a lot to work on, but tonight's effort was great to see," Dawalga said. "Being shorthanded this team never stopped playing, I was very proud of our team effort tonight."

In a close game at the half on Friday, the Bears trailed Stevens 19-12, but the Cardinals turned things on in the third quarter and opened the lead to 43-26 on the way to the 57-30 win.

"The third quarter was the difference in the game, we got ourselves into foul trouble and could not recover from it," Dawalga said. "This young group has really improved all year. They work hard every day in practice and it is starting to show in games."

Carter had 15 points while ninth grader Mia Wolfe had a career high 10 points and seven rebounds while Claire Hart grabbed 12 rebounds to go along with four points.

The Bears are scheduled to close out the regular season at home against Fall Mountain at 7 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 13.

Sports Editor Joshua Spaulding can be reached at 279-4516, ext. 155 or josh@salmonpress.news.

Johnson wins downhill for Team USA's first Olympic medal

Lindsey Vonn crashes seconds into race, airlifted off mountain

CORTINA d'AMPEZZO, Italy — Breezy Johnson gave Team USA its first medal of any hue at the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026, striking gold in the women's downhill Sunday at the Tofane Alpine Skiing Center.

The sixth racer out of the starting gate, she blistered the bottom portion of the course to reach the finish line in 1:36.10. Her closest challenge came from Germany's Emma Aicher, who claimed the silver medal with her time of 1:36.14, a mere 0.04 behind Johnson. Aicher was 0.16 ahead of Johnson at the third intermediate point but lost that edge over the final section. Italy's Sofia Goggia won the bronze medal, placing third with her 1:36.69, 0.59 off Johnson's pace.

"I had a good feeling about today. I still can't believe it. I don't know when it will sink in," Johnson said. "I knew I had to push and go harder than I did in training. I had to be super clean, and I felt like I did that."

"I got a little bit swirly off some of the jumps, but I tried to just keep it rolling," she continued. "And I knew the speeds were good, so I hoped it would be enough."

Jackie Wiles finished in a tie for fourth place with Austria's Cornelia Huetter; both covered the course in 1:36.96, 0.27 seconds away from a podium finish. Isabella Wright also raced for Team USA and posted a time of 1:38.85, good for 21st place.

"It is hard being in fourth, after everything I've been through in my career," Wiles said. "At my age (33), I don't have many chances left. It hurts."

"It's really hard, but I am trying to look ahead. I still have more racing," she continued. "That is all I can do."

The anticipated run by 41-year-old Lindsey Vonn, who was skiing with a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament in her left knee, ended abruptly with a crash. Her right ski pole snagged a gate, knocking her off balance and out of control. She was airlifted from the mountain, a common practice for injuries during alpine competition.

"My heart goes out to her. I hope it is not as bad as it looked," Johnson said of her veteran teammate. "I know how difficult it is to ski this course and how sometimes, because you love this course so much, when you crash on it, and it hurts you like that, it hurts you that much worse."

"Watching Lindsey go down from the start was pretty awful," Wiles said. "We have such a sisterhood. We travel with each other on the road. We're a family. To watch someone that you care about so much, it sucks."

"My heart broke for her in that moment, but that is the inherent risk of the sport," Wiles continued. "We all know what can happen, and we all have a lot of love and respect for each other because of the inherent risk."

HIGH SCHOOL SLATE

Thursday, Feb. 12

WINNISQUAM

Wrestling vs. ConVal, Franklin; 6

Friday, Feb. 13

BELMONT

Boys' Hoops vs. Conant; 6

Girls' Hoops at Conant; 6

GILFORD

Boys' Hoops at Kearsarge; 6:30

Girls' Hoops vs. Kearsarge; 6:30

WINNISQUAM

Boys' Hoops at Fall Mountain; 6:30

Girls' Hoops vs. Fall Mountain; 7

Saturday, Feb. 14

BELMONT-GILFORD

Hockey vs. John Stark-Hopkinton; 8:30

WINNISQUAM

Hockey vs. Kennett; 6:30

Wrestling at Hollis-Brookline; 10

Wednesday, Feb. 18

BELMONT-GILFORD

Hockey vs. Laconia; 5

WINNISQUAM

Hockey at Belmont-Gilford; 5

All schedules are subject to change.

Aviation summer camp takes off



COURTESY
ACE Academy graduate, now licensed pilot, Ethan Seeler, gets ready for takeoff. Since attending ACE Academy, Seeler, currently a college student, has earned his private and commercial pilot's license, is rated to fly single and multi-engine aircraft, has his instrument rating and is licensed as an Airframe and Power Point Mechanic.

GILFORD — WinnAero, the STEM aviation/aerospace education non-profit, announces its summer day camp schedule with a new twist. Due to increasing applications, WinnAero has engaged RegPack, a computerized on-line registration and payment software company to expedite the registration process.

"Our increasing enrollments each year dictated we offer an on-line registration and payment option for parents," said WinnAero Education Director Dan Caron.

The new online process will apply to this summer's ACE Academies held at the Laconia Airport.

Parents can now submit their student's application fully on-line, reserve a seat early, pay tuition securely and submit required

documentation as well," added Caron.

The results have been immediate said Zach Glennon of Meredith. Glennon joined WinnAero as its Technology Consultant responsible for on-boarding the RegPack System. For the previous three years, the ACE Academies have averaged 100 students enrolled.

Thus far in 2026, RegPack has already processed 56 applications for the July summer camps.

The dates, times, themes and tuition costs for the ACE Academies summer camps are available at www.winnaero.org or by contacting Camp Director Caron at dan.caron@winnaero.org.

The 2026 session themes include Air Traffic Control, Search & Rescue Techniques, Aerospace Engineering, Pre-Ground School for future

pilots, a Space Academy, Drone Operations, and Aeromedical Effects of High Altitude Flight. All sessions are taught by current certified N.H. teachers augmented by subject matter experts. The ACE

Academies are day camps for grades 3 through 12 students the weeks of July 6-10 and July 13-17. For more information, visit www.winnaero.org.

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Meet Lolo!



safe. Lolo is a little extra special though because he has a birth defect that impacted his leg, he's lived with it for his whole life. It doesn't slow him down a bit—he's still active and curious—but he moves a bit differently, often with an adorable "army crawl". His leg looks a little wonky but so was Nemo's fin! Our orange and white boy is a little insecure about it and doesn't like to show it to just anybody so he really needs that special person to build up his confidence and let him see that it's okay to be weird.

All schedules are subject to change.

Audubon announces grassland birds program by Pam Hunt

MOULTONBOROUGH — On Thursday, Feb. 19 at 7 p.m. at the Loon Center in Moultonborough, the Lakes Region Chapter of the New Hampshire Audubon Society will present a program on "The Ecology and Conservation of Grassland Birds," by Dr. Pam Hunt.

Grassland birds such as the Bobolink and Eastern

Meadowlark are declining throughout their ranges. In this talk we review the history and ecology of these species, with a focus on New Hampshire and the Northeast U.S., then shift to the conservation challenges they face and some of the things people can do to overcome these threats.

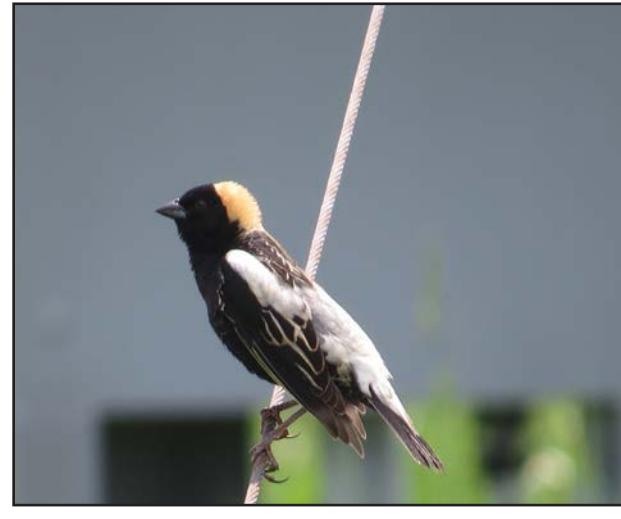
All grassland birds are

threatened by habitat loss and management practices that make it difficult for the birds to breed successfully. At airfields, periodic mowing is required for safety reasons, while in hayfields it's needed to obtain quality forage for livestock. Either way, mowing during the breeding season is a sure-fire way to destroy nests or

young, and conservation biologists regularly need to balance these economic interests with those of the birds they're trying to protect.

Dr. Pam Hunt is Senior Biologist for Avian Conservation with NH Audubon.

The Loon Center is located on Lee's Mill Road; follow the signs on Blake Road



from Route 25 near the Moultonborough Central School, or from Route 109,

turn on to Lee Road and turn left on Lee's Mill Road.



The Frates Team spotted a "ghost" during an earlier Historic Laconia Scavenger Hunt! Join LHMS for a fun, interactive way to explore Laconia's history on Sunday, Feb. 15 at 11 a.m. What surprises will you uncover?! Registration is required.



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Powerhouse wins Best Musical at NHTA's for third straight year!

LACONIA — On Saturday, Jan. 31, nearly 60 members of Powerhouse Theatre Collaborative got dressed up in their finest and made the trek to the Capital Center for the Arts in Concord for the 21st Annual New Hampshire Theatre Alliance Theatre Awards. Powerhouse was a semi-finalist in more than 20 categories in the community theatre division for its two entered 2025 shows, "The Diary of Anne Frank" and "The Hunchback of Notre Dame."

For the third year in a row, Powerhouse took home the top prize for Best Community Musical for its production of "Hunchback" last spring. In addition, "Hunchback" was recognized for direction (Meg King and Bryan Halperin), music direction (Laura Iwaskiewicz and Jillian Spring), and two supporting actors (Jacob Stone as Frollo, Alex Hunton as Phoebus).

"The Diary of Anne Frank" was a runner-up for best production to "Escanaba in da Moonlight" produced by The Village Players in Wolfeboro. Halperin was recognized for direction again, and Tyler Soucy won the award for lighting.

These directing awards

bring Halperin's total to 10 in the more than 20 years he has been directing professional, community and youth theatre in New Hampshire, and 4 for Powerhouse in the last three years.

Says Halperin, "Being recognized for direction is definitely a reflection of the people around you, both onstage and behind the scenes, helping you to achieve your vision. At Powerhouse, I'm surrounded by talent making me look good, and while I appreciate the statewide recognition, I more appreciate the experiences themselves of working with my talented friends and sharing these stories with our community on the beautiful Colonial Theatre stage!"

Powerhouse will participate in the 2026 NHTA's as well, entering the New Hampshire Premiere of the musical "The Magician's Elephant" in May, and the play Peter and the Starcatcher in October. Tickets for these shows as well as all of Powerhouse's 2026 Colonial Series shows are already on sale via coloniallaconia.com or powerhousenh.org. Don't miss out on your chance to catch the magic on our local stage from this award-winning theatre company.

For all the details on Powerhouse Theatre Collaborative, auditions, and other events in the 2026 season, check out powerhousenh.org or email info@powerhousenh.org. There are still opportunities available for businesses to sponsor events in the 2026 season.

The Colonial Theatre of Laconia

The original owner, Benjamin Piscopo, was from Italy, and the theatre featured a fire curtain depicting Venice as seen from the water. In August of 2002, the theatre closed after 87 years of operation. On June 15, 2015, the City of Laconia announced a partnership with the Belknap Economic Development Council (BEDC) to purchase, renovate, and reopen the Colonial. The newly reopened Colonial Theatre has a seating capacity of 750 and plays host to various performances, including music, theatre, comedy, and civic events. Spectacle Management manages the Colonial Theatre and is home to the Powerhouse Theatre Collaborative. The Colonial Theatre is located at 609 Main St., Laconia, NH 03246. www.coloniallaconia.com



COURTESY
Meg King and Bryan Halperin display their awards for outstanding direction of "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" and "The Diary of Anne Frank."

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Congregation X returns to The Loft at Hermit Woods



MEREDITH — Hermit Woods Winery welcomes Congregation X, a New Hampshire Seacoast-based contemporary band focused on original music infused with Rock, Soul, Fusion, and R&B, to The Loft on Feb. 12 for an intimate evening of live music, fine wine, and dinner.

The evening begins with a complimentary wine tasting from 5:30-6 p.m. Doors open and dinner service begins at 6 p.m., with the kitchen clos-

ing at 7 p.m. as the show begins. Drinks and dessert will be available during the performance.

Congregation X formed after a chance meeting at an open mic between guitarist Nevin Brown and vocalist Alexandria Brocato, evolving into a five-piece band dedicated to original music. The group has performed at notable New Hampshire venues including The Stone Church Music Club, Rockingham Ballroom, Auspicious

Brew, and Milk Street Studio.

Get tickets at hermitwoods.com/music.

The Loft at Hermit Woods offers a listening-room experience and asks guests to remain quiet during the featured performance to fully immerse themselves in the music. Guests are encouraged to arrive early for wine and dinner and are invited to meet the artists after the show.

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Shiffrin excited to kick off fourth Olympic experience

BY JOSHUA SPAULDING

Sports Editor

CORTINA, Italy — One of the top athletes in the world struggled four years ago when the Olympics rolled around. This year, Mikaela Shiffrin is determined to not let those struggles get to her as she prepares for competition in Milan-Cortina.

"I have been to four different Games and they have been wildly different experiences," Shiffrin said in a press conference over the weekend. "And with those experiences, being able to show up to Cortina and still be wide-eyed and just as excited and motivated as the first is really great."

Shiffrin's goal is to compete in the slalom, giant slalom and the team competition and she said she is excited about how her giant slalom has come along as she comes back from an injury suffered more than a year ago in a World Cup race at Killington.

While she's dominated

in the slalom at the World Cup level, the giant slalom is making its way back to form.

"In GS, it's been so cool to experience that kind of building momentum, building comfort," Shiffrin said. "The (GS) races this season, a lot of them have been really challenging and really dark and real tough conditions."

"When I compared this season to last season, when I was returning from the injury and I couldn't imagine skiing faster GS, I couldn't imagine ever getting to a place where I could be contending for top 10s, top fives, let alone podiums in GS."

She picked up her first giant slalom podium since returning from injury when she placed third in Czechia at the end of January.

"There are (times) where I still back off. The top, top women who consistently win races drive harder, they push harder," Shiffrin said. "We talk (of)



JOSHUA SPAULDING

Mikaela Shiffrin, seen talking to reporters after a race in PyeongChang, South Korea in 2018, is gearing up for the Milan-Cortina games.

it like stretching the rubber band of your comfort zone, and they stretch that rubber band more.

"I'm continuing to work on it, obviously," she continued. "But to have my first World Cup podium again, and to be consistently in the top five, top six, top 10s, this World Cup season is certainly a motivating factor."

And like much of the country, she was excited to watch her teammate, Lindsey Vonn, race in the downhill on Sunday morning. Vonn, who was having a spectacular season as she comes out of retirement,

tore her ACL in a race one week prior to the Olympics and was racing with a ruptured ACL.

"Her tenacity and grit, and what she's showing up with at this Olympics," said Shiffrin, who grew up in the Upper Valley of New Hampshire and went to school at Burke Mountain Academy just over the border in Vermont. "And staying true to her own values. That's straight-up beautiful. And I'm so excited to see Lindsey and (Breezy) Johnson and (Jacqueline)

Wiles, all of my teammates competing."

"I'm so excited to watch. I trained today, and I actually have a recovery day tomorrow, so I will be cheering," she said. "I have 100 percent belief that anything is possible. She's done such incredible things, despite injury, through injury, before."

"I have a lot of belief and I'm just crossing my fingers for all my teammates," Shiffrin concluded.

Shiffrin's first chance at Olympic competition

was the team event, which took place Tuesday. The giant slalom is Sunday, Feb. 15, with the first run at 10 a.m. in Cortina (4 a.m. on the East Coast) and the second run at 1:30 p.m. in Cortina (7:30 a.m. on the East Coast). The slalom takes place on Wednesday, Feb. 18, with the same start times as the giant slalom.

Sports Editor Joshua Spaulding can be reached at 279-4516, ext. 155 or josh@salmonpress.news.

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