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COVID-19. Community Adjusts To New Normal,
State Mulls Federal Relief Funds. See Inside.



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Local State Rep. Appointed To Governor's COVID-19 Advisory Board

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

A local lawmaker has been appointed to serve on the new bipartisan legislative advisory board within the Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery that will be tasked with deciding how to spend the \$1.25 billion in COVID-19 relief money slated for New Hampshire and with overseeing the investment.

On Friday, state Rep. Erin Hennessey, R-Littleton, was called by Gov. Chris Sununu to fill the board seat of state Rep. Ken Weyler, R-Kingston, who is recovering from an illness.

Hennessey will be among eight lawmakers on the board, two Democrats and two Republicans from each legislative branch, the New Hampshire House of Representatives and the New Hampshire Senate, making for a total of four Republicans and four Democrats.

Although her Grafton-1 House district encompasses two towns, Littleton and Bethlehem, her district serving on GOFERR will cover the entire state north of Concord, making for many stakeholders, from towns and counties to businesses and nonprofits, that she will be communicating with to assess their needs both during the coronavirus pandemic and afterward, during the recovery.

"I was honored to get the call from the governor appointing me to the position and am excited to work for what will be half the state of New Hampshire," she said.

While specifics on how the money can be spent are not yet available, Hennessey said the board is being proactive to assess where the needs are.

"We had our first meeting yesterday on how we are going to do this and who we want to hear from," she said Tuesday.

That meeting included Gerald Little, commis-

sioner of the New Hampshire Banking Department, who Hennessey said will be in charge of coordinating the investment.

"Right now, we will meet Monday, Wednesday and Friday, phone meetings for now, and then we may start meeting daily depending on how much information comes in and how many people we want to hear from," she said.

In addition to a current lack of details from the federal government on how the state can spend the money, Hennessey said it's not yet determined if New Hampshire will have to put up matching money to receive the federal money.

"We still want to move ahead before we know how we can spend it and see where the needs are," she said. "There are no specific details yet, but we are going to hear from municipalities, and all municipalities have been told to keep track of all their COVID-19 spending."

Some are setting up separate accounts for COVID expenses.

"All of us on the advisory board will go back to our constituents at all different levels, the businesses and nonprofits and municipalities, to find out what their needs are and what is happening," said Hennessey.

Under the rules, the money must be spent in the 2020 calendar year, before the end of December, meaning GOFERR and the state have about eight months to get the funds out the door, she said.

On Monday, remotely via the Zoom video conferencing platform, Hennessey joined the Littleton Chamber of Commerce for a coffee and conversation meeting that included representatives from the Littleton Area Senior Center and United Way, both speaking of their needs.

"I plan on doing things like that so I can hear from all businesses and community members," said Hennessey.

If any constituent north of Concord needs to



Grafton-1 House Rep. Erin Hennessey campaigns outside the polling station in Littleton, N.H., on Tuesday, Nov. 6, 2018. (Photo by Paul Hayes)

contact her, Hennessey said they can do so through her legislative email address, erin.hennessey@leg.state.nh.us, or through their local state representative.

In the COVID recovery and relief process for New Hampshire, Hennessey will serve in two roles - as a GOFERR member and also as a member of the Joint Legislative Fiscal Committee, which approves any federal funds before they go before New Hampshire Governor and Council.

Hennessey will keep the roles separate.

"Whatever comes before the fiscal committee, I'll deal with it there, and whatever comes before the advisory board, I'll deal with it there," she said. Sununu established GOFERR on April 7.

In a statement, he said, "Unlike the 2009 stimulus investment process that used the budget to ensure legislative input, the urgency and timing of this crisis does not allow for that course of action. We are creating a bipartisan Legislative Advisory Board within GOFERR to ensure transparency and input to the process. It is important that this process has as much accountability, transparency, and integrity as possible, and I look forward to having legislative leadership advise this critically important office."

At the moment, though, GOFERR is the subject of a litigation after several leading Democratic lawmakers on Monday argued it violates the state's separation of powers. They filed a lawsuit in Hillsborough Superior Court Northern District to prevent Sununu from spending the \$1.25 billion in federal relief money without approval by the New Hampshire Legislature.

Sununu argues he has the ultimate authority on the expenditures under a 2002 New Hampshire law, RSA 4:45, on emergency spending.

The Democratic lawmakers filing suit - state Rep. Mary Jane Wallner, D-Concord; state Sen. Lou D'Allesandro, D-Manchester; state Rep. and Speaker of the House Stephen Shurtleff, D-Penacook; and state Sen. and Senate President Donna Soucy, D-Manchester - argue the Joint Legislative Fiscal Committee must first approve the expenditure of the federal money.

Under its setup by Sununu, GOFERR is tasked with managing the accounting, auditing, legal, and information technology requirements involved in the investment to ensure transparency and accountability.

North Country: Rep. Sue Ford Announces Candidacy For Senate District-1

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

State Rep. Sue Ford, D-Easton, has announced her candidacy for New Hampshire Senate District-1, which represents all of Coos County and towns in northern Grafton County.

The retired teacher and school administrator who is in her fourth term in the Grafton-3 House district, which represents Bath, Benton, Easton, Landaff, Orford, Piermont and Warren, is focused on a number of issues, at the top of which are creating sufficient funding for the state's rural communities and developing educational opportunities for the region.

Ford is the current chair of the New Hampshire House of Representatives' Finance Committee Division II, responsible for developing House budgets for the departments of education, safety, transportation and other state departments, and is a member of the House's Children and Law Committee.

She said her work in examining the Department of Education's budget sparked her interest in running for Senate District-1.

"It's clear that the current adequacy funding for New Hampshire's rural communities is not sufficient," Ford said in a statement issued Tuesday. "There is a commission looking at state funding of education, with a member from our area. However, the commission will only make recommendations. It will be the House and Senate that will need to implement those recommendations."

Ford said her more than 40 years serving as a teacher, principal and central office administrator gave her a background in education and experience on the House Finance Committee that will help her ask the right questions and support North Country schools by demanding adequate funding while keeping local property taxes in check.

As a member of the House, Ford said she supported efforts to eliminate property tax downshifting

and ease the burden on local taxpayers.

She is also running to spur the economy in the district.

"We need to develop economic opportunities without sacrificing our natural environment," said Ford. "Cell and Internet service is spotty. Health care costs are rising."

Some of the issues will likely need to be addressed at the federal level, and Ford said she has worked effectively with New Hampshire's federal delegation and will continue to do so.

To date, 71 New Hampshire representatives have

endorsed Ford for New Hampshire Senate.

The District-1 seat is currently held by state Sen. David Starr, R-Franconia, who in November 2018 defeated former state Sen. Jeff Woodburn, D-Whitefield, who had served three terms.

The Democratic primary election is scheduled for Sept. 8 and the general election for Nov. 3.

Because of the COVID-19 shutdown, Ford said it will not be possible to meet in person or in groups until the virus subsides. She asks residents with questions to contact her at sueford4nhsenate1@gmail.com.

ON THE COVER: Lory Grimes, right, gestures skyward during a musical performance at the Faith Bible Church's drive-in Easter service in Littleton on Sunday. The service was designed to obey social distancing rules but allow churchgoers the gather together for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic struck a month ago. (Photo by Paul Hayes)

DALTON: Casella Takes On Landfill Opponents In Defamation Lawsuit

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

Taking on its opponents, Casella Waste Systems on Monday filed a defamation lawsuit against a Dalton man and two citizen groups opposed to a 180-acre landfill beside Forest Lake State Park in Dalton.

At Merrimack Superior Court, CWS filed suit against Jon Swan, also known as Jon Alvarez, the Forest Lake Association, and Save Forest Lake for what the company argues are damages "arising from Alvarez's nearly year-long campaign on behalf of himself and the officers and participating members" of the Forest Lake Association and Save Forest Lake, who the company calls "Doe Defendants 1-20" and whose identities "are not yet known to [Casella]."

The company argues the intent of the alleged campaign is to "disparage [Casella's] reputation by publishing and disseminating throughout the state of New Hampshire false statements of fact about the plaintiff online, in print, and in person."

CWS, run by CEO John Casella, alleges the intent of Swan/Alvarez and the co-defendants

"is to prevent [the company] from engaging in business in New Hampshire altogether and from developing landfill capacity in Dalton ... and they have published a multitude of falsehoods to accomplish that goal, all of which are defamatory statements for which the law makes defendants liable."

Casella also argues that Swan/Alvarez has sought to interfere in the company's "prospective economic advantage."

In addition, the company alleges that many of Swan's/Alvarez's statements have been directed to state executive branch officials and lawmakers in Concord "with the purpose of damaging Casella's reputation in state government."

Swan/Alvarez, argues Casella, made false statements of fact and made statements "with the intent and effect of lowering Casella's esteem in the community."

After learning of the lawsuit on Tuesday, Swan said, "I stand by everything I've done, and when I have made error, I correct it. I try to make sure everything I say is supported by fact and data. I stand by what I've said."

In the 16-page two-count defamation of character lawsuit, Casella asks the court to issue

an injunction against the defendants to prevent them from "defaming" the company, issue an order declaring that the defendants have defamed the company with their words and conduct, and award the company monetary damages for compensation and reasonable attorney's fees and costs.

The lawsuit was filed by Casella attorneys Bryan Gould and Cooley Arroyo, of the Cleveland, Waters and Bass law firm, who are two of six lobbyists at the New Hampshire statehouse for Casella (another six lobbyists work for Casella subsidiary North Country Environmental Services), according to a recent check of lobbyists registered with the New Hampshire Secretary of State's office.

In a statement about the lawsuit, the company on Tuesday targeted Swan/Alvarez directly, saying "Casella has witnessed Swan's relentless attacks and false statements. As a result, he has damaged the reputation of Casella employees, our ability to responsibly do business in New Hampshire, and set a dangerous precedent for civic involvement on critical issues."

"Enough is enough," said company representatives. "We're not a society, or a company, that

turns the other way when we and others are personally and wrongfully attacked. Swan's actions over the past year have infringed upon the livelihood and freedoms of the people of New Hampshire and have taken the time and attention away from civic leaders, residents, and others who are attempting to make important, difficult decisions based on fact.

"While the use of the courts is not preferable, it is a necessary and just action considering Mr. Swan's attacks and false claims," they said.

"We are hopeful that this action results in Mr. Swan immediately ceasing any further false statements about Casella and helps move discussion about the project in Dalton to a more positive and productive track," said company representatives.

The company has not yet filed an application for a landfill in Dalton.

The new lawsuit against opponents in Dalton comes after previous lawsuits filed by Casella against the town of Bethlehem that were part of efforts to expand its landfill there that the company bought in the mid-1990s.

Recently, opposition to a new landfill in Dal-

See Casella, Page 15

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 <p>BULK Local • Organic GrandyOats High Antioxidant Trail Mix \$9.99 Lb</p>	 <p>750 mL Apothic Wines \$9.99</p>	 <p>Whole Boneless Pork Butts \$1.89 Lb</p>	 <p>64 oz Natalie's Orange Juice \$4.99</p>

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14 Toddler's cry
15 Speed gun
16 Trickle down
17 Belief systems
18 Punic War city
19 Wire thicknesses
20 Responds to stimuli
22 Trouseau item
24 Moby Dick pursuer
26 Mover and shaker
27 Invite along
30 Female relatives
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35 Buys and sells
38 Bouquet
39 Place for laundry
40 Impassive
42 Quip
43 Ne plus —
46 Famed violin, briefly
48 Yves' summer
49 Attempts
51 Ousted
53 Beowulf's drink
55 Passable (hyph.)
56 Ignores
60 Prone
64 Stow
65 UFO movie (hyph.)
67 Send packing
68 Pod veggie
69 Consumed
70 Omen
71 Summer job seeker
72 Hurlled
73 Famous lioness

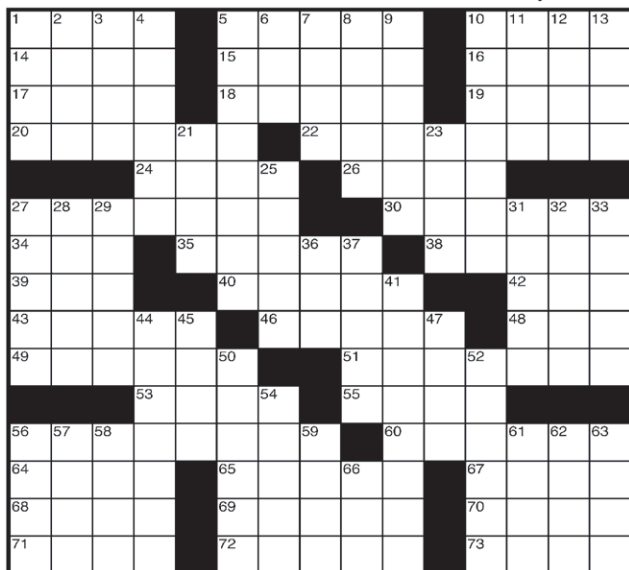
PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED



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DOWN

- 1 Sultan's cousin
2 Place for posies
3 Jane Austen novel
4 Scoundrel
5 Medieval wars
6 Checkroom item
7 Thor's father
8 Competed at Indy
9 Chinese festival sight
10 Fan
11 Guardhouse
12 Liver secretion
13 Church part
21 Clonk
23 Han Solo's love
25 Outscores
27 Infuse
28 Manicurist's concern
29 Pennies
31 Supergirl's horse
32 Ham it up
33 Too full
36 Realty offering
37 Names on pedigrees
41 Wheeling
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Cynthia Louise Griffin

Cynthia Louise Griffin, RN, 61, of Berlin, N.H., passed away unexpectedly at her home on Friday, April 10, 2020. She was born in St. Johnsbury, Vt. on April 17, 1958 the daughter of Frederick and Ferne (Arthur) Brown. She was raised in Monroe, N.H. and graduated St. Johnsbury Academy class of 1976 and the Concord Hospital School of Nursing. She worked as a Registered Nurse for many years at Littleton Hospital, North Country Home Health and Coos County Family Health Services. Cindy was a member of Holy Family Parish in Gorham, Catholic Daughters of America, Pastoral Council at St. Kieran Church and was a volunteer at Guardian Angel Thrift Shop (formerly St. Vincent de Paul) and the Marie Rivier Food Pantry.

She is survived by her husband Steven Griffin of Berlin; son Nicholas Griffin and fiancé Shelby Barney of Gorham; and mother Ferne Young of Berlin formerly of Monroe, N.H. She was predeceased by her father Frederick Brown, step-father Howard Young, and a brother James Young.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be live-streamed Wednesday, April 15, 2020 at 11 a.m. on the Good Shepherd and Holy Family Parish Facebook page or online at www.berlingorhamcatholics.org. Due to the current restrictions on public gatherings, you are not able to attend in person but are encouraged to watch the Mass online.

Memories and messages of sympathy may be shared with the family on Cindy's Tribute Wall available at www.bryant-funeralhome.net. Donations in Cindy's memory may be made to the Conway Area Humane Society, PO Box 260, Conway, NH 03818 or online at www.conwayshepherd.org.

Arrangements are entrusted to the Bryant Funeral Homes, Berlin and Gorham, NH.

Ruth Marie Bjerre

Announced by the first thunderstorm of the season, on March 29, 2020, Ruth Marie Bjerre left this earth bound for heaven. She went out like a LION. She found her voice!

Born Dec. 9, 1945, in Boston, Mass., to Aage Soren and Ruth (Svenson) Bjerre, together with brother Donald, Ruth thrived on the beach of Savin Hill, Mass.

Ruth's mother and father died when she was 10 and 13 respectively. Her extended family was her mother's best friends and their children.



Cynthia Griffin

Obituaries

Ruth attended Wellesley High School (Class of '63) which thankfully brought her the love and sisterhood of Marilyn (Lucas) Reed and her family. Graduating from Cazenovia (N.Y.) Junior College, "CAZ," became one of the best things that ever happened to Ruth.

With studies at Boston University, Concord Hospital School of Nursing, and the N.E. Deaconess Hospital in Boston, Ruth became a Certified Dental Assistant and Operating Room Technician. Working in an office of three oral surgeons in Wellesley Hills, Mass., a small child looked up at Ruth in her white scrubs and asked, "Are you the Tooth Fairy?"

Years later, Ruth worked for Dr. Ron Spaulding, DDS in St. Johnsbury, Vt. With her empathy and kindness, she made appointments easier for patients. For many years since, Ron has brought his humor, love and cookies!

A Rehabilitation Aide at Crotched Mtn, Greenville, N.H., Ruth assisted with Adult Daily Living Care and recuperating children. It was here, she met, the of love of her life...

Later, in St. Johnsbury, Vt., Ruth was an Aide at both the Adams School and Portland Street School for multi-handicapped children. A young student gazed up at her saying, "Mz Berry, you're eyes are as blue as blueberries!"

For over 20 years, Ruth, herself, was an empathic Patient Caregiver. This preceded her needing much care over her last 30 years because of Parkinson's Disease. In her Danville, Vt. home and for the last three and a half years, at the St. Johnsbury Health and Rehab Center, several Earth Angels surrounded Ruth. They made a loving difference.

A resident of Waterford, St. Johnsbury and Danville, Vt., Ruth maintained many lasting friendships. Two of which were her beloved Reverend Jack and Barb Timm. Ruth was instrumental in their opening of the Friendship House in Bethlehem, N.H., a substance use treatment and rehab center.

A Merry Heart and forever grateful, Ruth also had "The Look." She was plucky! Proud of her Danish/Swedish heritage, with her beautiful hair often in Swedish braids, Ruth saw a long life through those startling blue eyes.

With her lifetime love of the ocean, The Anchorage By The Sea in Ogunquit, Maine became her Heaven-on-Earth. Ruth also had a huge sea of friends! She loved all cats and some lucky dogs, the color blue, matching clothes, writing and receiving

cards, The Shaw Brothers, hymn sings and little things, winning at SCRABBLE and endless shopping – buying gifts for everyone. A good (or bad) joke – enter her longtime friends, crazy Jonathan and sweet Kirk, Symphony milk chocolate bars, Sour Patch Kids and Pepperidge Farm cookies... these were a few of her favorite things.

Ruth was a member of the Danville Congregational church. A faithful servant of God, Ruth never wavered in her faith. Facing Parkinson's Disease like a Scandinavian Viking, she adjusted her sails and bravely navigated its rough waters – telling an irreverent Parkinson's joke just three weeks before she died with it.

Surviving Ruth is her brother, Donald Soren Bjerre of Mattapoisett, Mass., nephew Erik Bjerre and family, and niece, Krista-Lee Bjerre Nye. Ruth's second families include David Glod, Jane Parant, Judy Bourgeois, David Anderson and all of their family members.

Ruth is predeceased by her loving parents, her Auntie Amelia and Stanley Glod, Auntie Evelyn, "Chet" and Phillip Anderson, and her beloved sister-in-law, Mae Bjerre, "Poppe", her Norwegian forest cat, and "Little Bear" – her collie/shepherd.

Despite this heartbreaking time of C-19 isolation, Ruth was not alone at sea. Outside her window, LOVE signs were planted. A stream of friends sang, prayed and danced. Ruth died surrounded by much sweetness, love, care and prayer by caregivers Amber, Sandy, Gus and God. Ruth's longtime companion bear, "Gus," is now entrusted to her longtime friend, Jody Blaney.

A funeral service and hymn sing will be held at a later date at the Danville Congregational Church. An engraved paver placed in the Memory Garden at the Waterford Congregational Church in Ruth's honor will read: RUTH MARIE BJERRE, A GRATEFUL HEART 1945 – 2020

As in her favorite Shaw Brothers' song, now Ruth knows, "What It Feels Like To Be Free."

Donations in Ruth's memory made be made to: NEK Council on Aging (the Pet Program) 481 Summer St., Suite 101, St. Johnsbury, VT 05810; Kingdom Community Services (Food Shelf), PO Box 735, St. Johnsbury, VT 05819; Kingdom Animal Shelter, 1161 Portland Street, St. Johnsbury, VT 05819.

Memories and condolences may be shared at www.saylesfh.com.

Kenneth MacKay

A Celebration of Life service planned for Kenneth MacKay, who died Feb. 5, 2020, has been postponed to July 11, 2020. It will at the St. Rose of Lima Church, 77 Clay St., Littleton, N.H. at 11 a.m. A reception will follow at the Elks Lodge immediately after the mass.



Ruth Bjerre

News Briefs

Town To Ease Virus' Impact On Taxpayers, Businesses

LITTLETON — In early March, town meeting voters approved a number of warrant articles, from road projects to vehicle leases, and repairing dams and retaining walls.

Less than two weeks later, the North Country became a different world.

While the COVID-19 shutdown will ease and people will return to work, the economic impact and some job losses will remain into the future.

Exactly how long is anyone's guess.

To help out the many residents and business owners who will be struggling in the meantime, selectmen are looking at delaying projects that can be delayed for a savings that, while too late to appear on the June property tax bill, will appear on the second tax bill of the year issued in December.

"We are taking a deep dive into our budget to give the taxpayers the confidence that we are seriously looking out for their best interests," Carrie Gendreau, chair of the Board of Selectmen, said Friday. "We are really cutting and shaving and we want the taxpayers to know that we do care and their tax impact is of utmost concern ... We can put off projects if we have to."

Selectmen are also encouraging the Littleton School Board to look at reductions in the school district budget, which makes up two-thirds of the total town-school budget, she said.

Although there is federal financial assistance available to nearly every individual and business, it might not be enough to fully lift them out of financial struggles, said Town Manager Andrew Dorsett.

"There will likely be negative impacts to the community economically," he said. "In talking with the board, we wanted to be proactive. We want the public to know that taxes have to be due and they have to be paid, but we want to find a way to lessen the impact."

Any project or planned expenditure that can be delayed and not hamstringing the town is on the table, said Dorsett.

As of Friday, the town has already taken some action that includes some employee layoffs and hourly reductions, hiring freezes in certain areas, reduced or eliminated budget items, and eliminated staff travel expenses, all of which would equate to a savings of \$60,000 to \$120,000, he said.

The town has identified another \$500,000 to \$650,000 savings through the delay or cancellation of certain projects, mostly road and paving projects, as well as some dam and retaining wall projects that had been scheduled.

"We are willing to set aside the \$500,000 paving project," said Gendreau.

The town is also seeing if the Dells Dam that is a red-listed dam in need of a \$20,000 upgrade to get it up to state standards can be delayed another year, said Dorsett.

A highway department backhoe that had been scheduled for a trade-in this year still functions and can function for another year, meaning the town can keep it for a while, equating to a significant savings, he said.

At the Littleton Parks and Recreation Department, many programs have been canceled and the staff to facilitate them were not brought on, equating to savings in that department.

"We are trying to identify things in each department budget that might not have to be done this year," said Dorsett. "If there is a paving project and the road won't collapse, we can put that off. If we're in the process of upgrading some system that can be delayed, we will delay it. Right now, we are going through to see what we can freeze, limit, or remove."

This week, he sent an email to town department heads asking them to look at their budgets for potential reductions and proactively limit financial impacts to taxpayers.

"Please review your budget and find areas where a project or expense could be cut or delayed for this year," he instructed the department heads.

Department heads are also to list anything that has already been suspended stemming from the virus.

In addition to cost reductions and project cancellations, many town department activities have already been impacted and the ways services are provided have changed, said Dorsett.

At the same time, the town, under law, must provide the services at the police, fire, highway, transfer station and other departments and it will seek ways to provide them, he said.

Cross-training among municipal employees is one measure that is taking place, so if a transfer station employee, for instance, falls ill and is out, someone at the highway department or parks and recreation department can fill in.

"We are trying to do that as much as we can," said Dorsett.

Municipal employees are talented and dedicated and understand the impact of the current situation, he said.

Gendreau and Dorsett said Littleton will bounce back strongly and the town government wants its taxpayers and businesses to be resilient at the restart of the economy.

"When the restart happens, we will be in a great position to welcome people back to Littleton for recreation, business and the great quality of life," said Dorsett.

After Concerns, Town Officials Call Off Mill Street Project

LITTLETON — Although town officials had been hoping to complete another project in the river district this spring, they called it off.

During Monday's Board of Selectmen's meeting, they announced a less invasive plan to keep the sewer lines from future clogs in the area of Mill Street.

In March, business owners voiced concerns about the disruption from construction, including Jim Alden, owner of Chutters candy store, who said the street is used for store deliveries and the work that would take place during the time of the coronavirus and its negative economic impacts would hurt all the more his businesses and others in the area.

For several years, the town has been planning to upgrade the sewer and storm water lines under Mill Street.

The plan, as advanced, settled on a project that would see Mill Street closed during the workdays and a three-week schedule extended to six weeks after the project scope was given a closer look.

After the concerns, town officials looked deeper into the project, including what Littleton Town Manager Andrew Dorsett said were weighing its objectives with the negative impacts.

"It doesn't make sense to have all that disruption from that work," said Littleton Department of Public Works Director Doug Damko.

"After reviewing it, Doug found this is a project that can be called off," said Dorsett.

The Mill Street construction that had initially been set to begin this month and continue into May falls under the town's larger Sub-Area 5 sewer and storm water management project approved by town meeting voters in 2017.

Sub-area 5 construction began in 2018.

The larger project initially included Mill Street, which was later removed because of constraints on the budget.

In late 2019, the work on the town's Sub-Area 5 was completed, with \$140,000 remaining from a cost savings that town officials at the time said could be used to complete the Mill Street work as initially planned.

The Mill Street project, as originally envi-

sioned, involves replacing the existing sewer main, extending a new storm drain line, and installing new catch basins. Planned for the south side of the street was new granite curbing, and planned for the entire width of the road, new asphalt.

With the concerns raised by Mill Street property owners and selectmen last month, Dorsett said he and Damko tried to find out if the work could be done at night and if the the state funding portion of it could be extended into the future.

Both answers were no.

The area includes a number of businesses, including the largest, Schilling Beer Co., as well as businesses and residences in the Tilton Opera Block.

Fortunately, although the sewer pipes have some sags that could easily become clogged with debris building up and result in backups to businesses, the pipes themselves are in adequate condition, said Damko.

The initial project sought to separate all storm water lines from sewer lines.

Currently, there is a catch basin near the Tilton Block that connects the storm water line to the sewer system.


That setup, while not ideal, would help eliminate some sags and debris in the sewer line, said Damko.

"Having some extra storm water to flush it out might be helpful," he said.

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Groups Find New Focus In PPE Production

BY PAUL HAYES
Staff Writer

LITTLETON — The Upstage Players have joined the COVID-19 fight.

Their weapons? Needles and thread.

When the pandemic postponed their spring production of *Urinetown: The Musical*, the community theatre group improvised a new role, and began to make personal protective equipment (PPE) in its costume shop.

In three weeks they have produced nearly 500 masks and dozens of gowns for front-line medical workers in the North Country.

The effort has given purpose to a group of about 25 volunteers.

"They have been so happy to do something where they feel like they're helping," said Upstage Players artistic director Andrew Lidestri.

Across the country grassroots groups have been sewing non-surgical masks and gowns to address a PPE shortage at American hospitals, and other essential workplaces, during the coronavirus crisis.

Clothing company Burgeon Outdoor in Lincoln has made and distributed nearly 2,000 masks to various local medical, first responder and community agencies.

Opened in November, the company slammed the brakes on production of jackets, fleeces and T-shirts in order to assist with the COVID-19 response.

They took existing items in their inventory (cotton for bandanas,

elastic from crew neck shirts) and followed a pattern from Deaconess Hospital in Spokane, Wash.

"Three weeks ago our employees brought it to my attention. They said there's this mass shortage we think we can help with," said Burgeon founder Rudy Glocker. "That was on Saturday afternoon. By Monday we had shifted all of our production to making reusable masks."

Through their efforts, The Upstage Players and Burgeon Outdoor have made a difference.

Both have donated PPE to Ammonoosuc Community Health Services in Littleton, which serves 10,000 patients through locations in Littleton, Franconia, Warren, Whitefield and Woodsville.

ACHS has distributed the cloth masks to staff and patients.

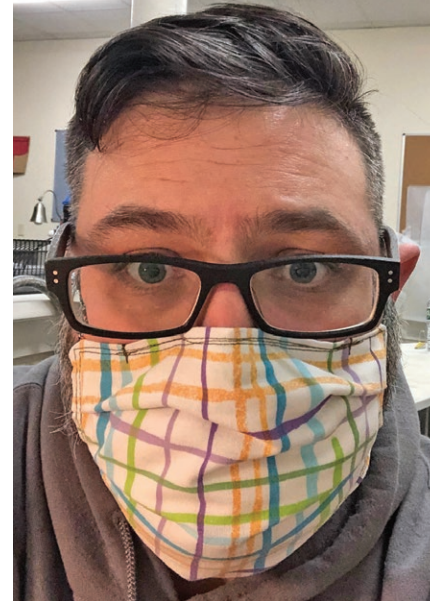
Staff wear them for day-to-day use, allowing ACHS to conserve higher-level N95 respirator masks for direct COVID-19 testing and treatment, and patients take the masks home, providing them with face cover, a CDC-recommended approach to slow the virus' spread.

"It's really helped the community at large," said CEO Ed Shanshala about the PPE donations. "We're thrilled that both organizations reached out to us."

The Upstage Players were well into rehearsals for *Urinetown* when the outbreak hit.

Rules and regulations to protect the public health (social distancing, gathering limits, etc.) forced the production to shut down.

That's when Upstage Players Board President Courtney Vashaw



Upstage Players artistic director Andrew Lidestri wears one of the cotton face masks made by the Littleton-based community theater group. Their grassroots effort has produced nearly 500 masks and dozens of gowns for local healthcare workers at Ammonoosuc Community Health Services, Littleton Regional Healthcare and Weeks Hospital. (Courtesy Photo)

spoke with her brother, Riley, an emergency room nurse and pandemic response team member at Littleton Regional Healthcare.

"I asked, 'Are you guys really in need of supplies?'" and he said "Yes, we could really use PPE," she said.

Within minutes she saw similar messages posted on Facebook by representative from Weeks Hospital and ACHS.

"I was like, oh my God, this is an actual, real emergent need right now," she said. "So I reached out to Andrew [Lidestri]."

"I knew our season was blown at that point. Normally we'd be building hundreds of costumes right then. I said we know all of those amazingly talented people who sew. Can they help with this?"

The answer? An emphatic yes.

Lidestri and costume designer Sage Couture went to work creating patterns for masks and gowns. They worked closely with medical staff at ACHS, to ensure the final products were as safe and functional as possible.

They designed masks that are fastened with ties (which last longer than elastics) and include a nose wire (so they can be shaped to allow for glasses), and sleeved gowns that are made with synthetic fabric (which can repel fluids) and feature easy to reach ties (so they can be put on/taken off without help).

Like a theater production, everyone has a part to play.

Lidestri and Couture work out of the costume shop in downtown Littleton. They lead a core group in making gowns and creating

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Franconia: Library Provides Homemade Face Masks

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

Ann Steuernagel, director of the Abbie Greenleaf Library in Franconia, put the word out — is anyone willing to provide face masks to keep residents safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Library patron Laura Gawel answered the call, making and delivering 15 reusable and washable face masks that on Wednesday were put at the front door of the library, one mask per person and theirs to keep.

"The first batch went in an eye blink," Steuernagel said Friday.

On Friday, she put out another batch of 15 masks, double-ply and made of cotton material with an elastic band to hold it on a face, that were placed in a cooking pot so they wouldn't get wet from the snow and rain.

The masks by Gawel fill a need outside of medical facilities, and if the demand is there by residents, the library will try to continue it, said Steuernagel.

"Other people are making masks, too, but they are going to the hospital and clinics," she said.

She's been sending emails to the library's patrons on the library email list to see if others want to make masks.

They do need to be washed, and Steuernagel said she will be washing hers every few days.

"It's our job to put a mask on, just to show people that it's okay," she said.

The masks are helpful to the community by not only helping wearers avoid catching the virus from someone, but also by helping someone wearing a mask who has the virus, but doesn't know it, from transmitting the virus to someone else, said Steuernagel.

"Whenever Laura has a batch, I will put

them out," she said.

Steuernagel said the community will get through the pandemic.

"Every should take care, stay home, and ride it out," she said. "This, too, shall pass."

Those wanting more information on the masks and updates, can visit www.abbie-library.org.

On Friday, Ocean State Job Lot announced it will launch the Mask Fabric for Free campaign at its stores throughout New England and the mid-Atlantic to supply its customers with the fabric needed to make 2 million homemade face masks, recommended to be worn in public by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Customers are invited to visit the new displays in the stores and pick up the cotton-polyester blended fabric to make their own masks.



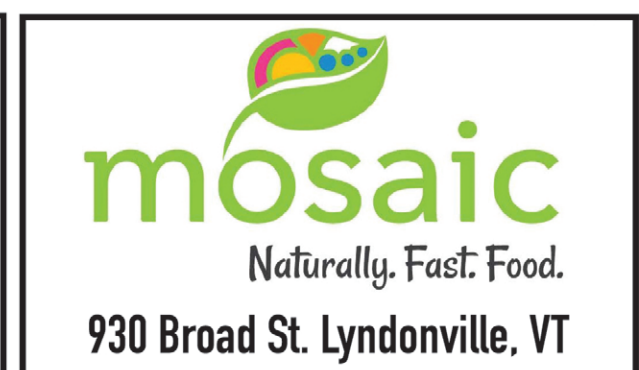
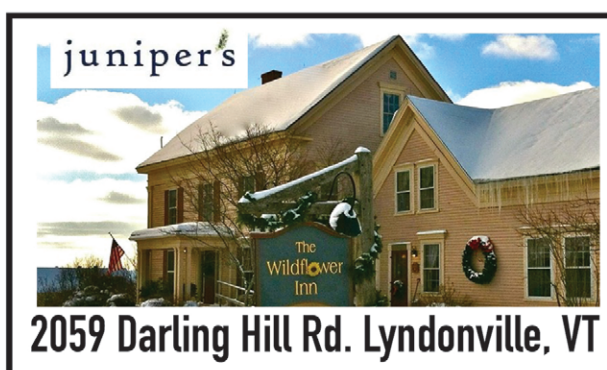
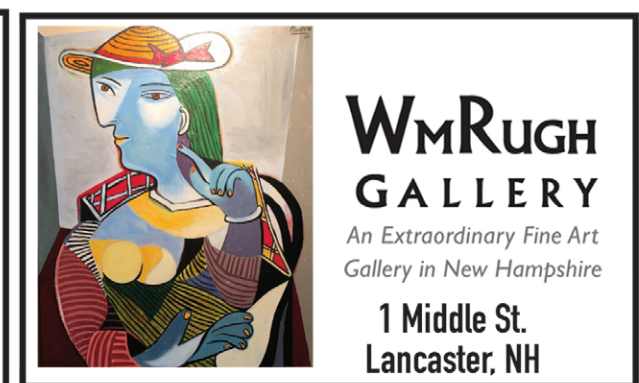
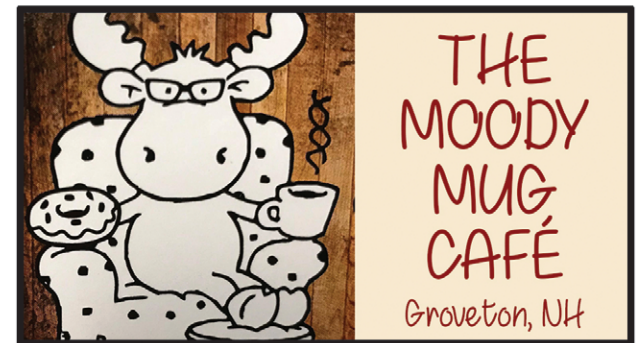
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Despite Pandemic, Women's Recovery Home Opens In Littleton

BY PAUL HAYES
Staff Writer

They could have stayed home until the pandemic passed.

Instead they went to work.

A newly launched non-profit, Lifting Others Valuing Everyone (LOVE), opened its first women's recovery home in Littleton earlier this month.

The eight-bed facility has started to welcome clients despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Why not wait? Because women remain susceptible to substance abuse and physical violence, even during the coronavirus crisis.

"We thought about waiting," said founder Tim Hickey, an independent pastor based in Glencliff. "There's a lot of reasons we could have said 'Not now.' But for me, it just wasn't acceptable for us to sit around in our houses while people are dying."

The facility is designed to rebuild lives.

The goal is for LOVE to welcome at-risk women, surround them with multiple mentors, and empower them to live independently.

The mentors will advise residents in areas such as personal finance, employment, parenthood and personal relationships.

LOVE will also provide substance abuse and alcohol recovery services for those who need them.

"We don't just say 'Stay with us for 30 days.' We wrap them with people who can be positive influences. It's a layered approach," said Hickey.

The organization chose to focus on helping women to address a regional need, Hickey said.

"There are several homes that service men; none that service women," he said.

LOVE was born out of a homeless initiative in the Haverhill area. Through that initiative, Hickey visited homeless and rehabilitation facilities across New England to study procedures and best practices.

What he found: Large facilities in more pop-

ulated areas were doing great things. But they would not translate to rural New Hampshire.

"There are a lot of demographic reasons that prevent [a larger facility] from being a sustainable model in the North Country," Hickey said. From that, Hickey devised a solution.

That solution was to create a series of small-scale facilities that rely on volunteer assistance, one-on-one services, and a personal approach.

LOVE's goal is to open multiple women's recovery homes across the region. A second facility, a six-bed facility in Haverhill, is currently under development.

"By having a small enough footprint in each town, we can make it a more sustainable model, and start to take care of our neighbors," Hickey said.

The pandemic impacted hiring for LOVE's Littleton recovery home.

Members of the board of directors are running the facility until a full-time manager, part-time assistant manager, recruiter (to identify and interview residents), and caretaker can be hired.

Meanwhile, volunteer training has been suspended indefinitely due to public health guidelines (social distancing, etc.) intended to slow the virus spread.

However, despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, LOVE moved ahead with its Littleton opening.

Even during a global health crisis, local people still need help.

"We're not able to fully implement what we want to do," Hickey said, "but the fact is some women need a safe place to live, and we can provide that right now."

HOW TO HELP

Those wanting to volunteer with LOVE can call (603) 731-3517, email timberlandranch@aol.com or visit the organization's web site at liftingothersvaluingeveryone.org.

Those interested in becoming mentors, cooking meals or providing transportation are encouraged to contact the organization.

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While calling off the Mill Street construction, the town is still moving forward with the sidewalk reconstruction project that Dorsett on Friday said is much less invasive.

The town is working on securing a federal grant to complete the sidewalks project, which as of Monday has no current time line as to when construction might begin.

"We're trying to get that as shovel ready as possible," said Dorsett. "We want to get as many projects as shovel ready as possible because there could be a release of money from the federal government."

Stump Jumpers Donate \$500 To Meals On Wheels

In a time of need, the local Meals On Wheels program that

delivers meals to the homes of seniors in nine Littleton area towns has received a boost through a \$500 donation by the Lisbon Stump Jumper Snowmobile Club.

Each February, the club raises money through its vintage snowmobile race, which receives tremendous support from local businesses and communities, that without such support would make it very difficult for the club to exist, said Joe Wiggett, a Stump Jumper member and chairman of the club's vintage snowmobile race.

No support means the club would be unable to maintain the equipment to groom the nearly 100 miles of trails that are used for not only snowmobilers, but also for hikers, cross-country skiers, and others enjoying the North Country's winter scenery, he said.

For the Stump Jumpers, it was a particularly challenging year because a fire destroyed the club's 10-year-old Prinoth snow groomer, and the insurance money won't cover nearly as much as the machine was worth, leaving the club at the moment not knowing what it's going to do for replacement.

During the pandemic, though, Wiggett said it is important for the club to give back.

"The coronavirus, as we all know, has made it even more difficult for those who depend on Meals and Wheels, not only with

food, but for a familiar face to see every day," he said. "We know this is not a lot of money, but it is our way of saying thank you to all those who support us every year."

On Monday, Wiggett, of Landaff, delivered the \$500 donation to the Littleton Area Senior Center, which runs the Meals on Wheels program for the towns of Littleton, Bethlehem, Franconia, Sugar Hill, Easton, Monroe, Landaff, and Lyman and Lisbon.

"People help us all of the time, and under the circumstances, we thought if we could help a little bit it would be great," he said.

About a week ago, Wiggett sent an email to Stump Jumper members about donating to Meals on Wheels.

"Everyone said it's a great idea and let's do it," he said. "There was no hesitation by any of the directors. I was not surprised. What the communities do for us every year is great and if we can help out even a little bit that's even better. We are all concerned about one another. We hope this helps people who simply have trouble now getting out of the house, let alone before this pandemic happened."

The Meals on Wheels program, running on a tight budget even before the pandemic, has operated out of the Littleton Area Senior Center for decades, typically delivering a hot meal each day to an upward of 200 residents.

Because of COVID-19 and the need for social distancing and self-isolation, however, deliveries are being done twice a week and recipients are now receiving frozen meals to last for a week.

Need has increased to currently more than 210 people.

Hometown Girl Now Dean Of PSU Business School

Plymouth State University's School of Business has a new leader - Lisa Perras, a Groveton native and recently the principal of Groveton High School, is now dean of the PSU's business school.

"I've had a great trajectory in my career and have been very lucky and very fortunate to have great support from my family and this great small town," Perras said Monday. "This is kind of exciting for a small town girl."

She also wants to let North Country students who will be attending PSU to know that she is there as a resource as they transition from high school to the brand new world of college.

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Perras, who prior to serving 3 1/2 years GHS principal served for 25 years at White Mountains Regional High School, spending most of that time as a business teacher before four years as an administrator, began the job as PSU business school dean in late February.

She was on campus for less than three weeks when the coronavirus shutdown began, prompting her and all administrators and teaching staff to work remotely since then.

PSU's business school serves 700 students, mostly undergraduates, and encompass full-time and part-time students to adult learners.

Bachelor of science degrees are offered in accounting, finance, management, marketing, and sports management.

The school also includes about 150 graduate students and offers two graduate degree programs, a master of business administration and master of science in accounting.

"A friend of mine let me know there was a position available there and I threw my hat in the ring," said Perras, who has a bachelor's degree in business administration from Southern New Hampshire University and an MBA from Plymouth State University. "Then I heard they were interested in moving forward and I was interested in moving forward."

Although she will be teaching some business courses in the future, Perras is currently acclimating to her administrative role.

"I'll be taking care of all the faculty, making sure that everyone has a full teaching load, depending up on their collective bargaining agreement and whether they are tenured or teachers or contracted or teacher-lecturers. There are lots of different categories that teaching staff fall into."

As she ensures that all university teaching staff members have what they need to be successful in the classroom, she will also take care of any student anomalies that might need a review, such as scheduling anomalies or an override of a prerequisite, all falling under the academic and not disciplinary issues.

While Perras enjoyed being GHS principal, she said she won't miss the disciplinary component of the job.

Her new role comes with different supporting structure.

"There is a great support system for post-secondary administration and best practices," said Perras. "There is a great deal of learning that is constantly taking place. It's refreshing that there is so much available for that professional development."

As she settles into the job, she will be completing a doctorate degree in educational leadership.

"One of the real draws of this position is that I can earn that as a benefit and I will be tuition-free to work on my doctoral program," said Perras. "In addition, I have access to a world-class library at Plymouth State."

As an administrator, Perras, a morning swimmer, will also have access to all university pool and gym facilities and all health care facilities.

The cultural diversity not only of the staff but of the students, as well as the culture of Plymouth, were also big draws, she said.

"I just love to be a part of that environment," said Perras.

Although she will mostly commute from Groveton, a drive of a little more than an hour each way, she has the option when days or nights run long to stay in the home of her eldest son, Matthew, and his new wife, Luz, who recently bought a house in Plymouth. Her second eldest son, Beau, lives in nearby Laconia, where he works at a police officer.

As Perras prepares to teach courses at PSU, it will not be uncharted waters.

"All of the curriculum areas at the business school are very familiar to me because I taught most of those courses at the high school level," said Perras. "Although my knowledge in teaching those courses is cursory, of course, because they are high school courses, I at least have a good knowledge of those curriculum areas. It's a good fit for me."

And on campus, her North Country connections remain.

"In just a few weeks on campus, I had contact with a lot of people from the North Country," said Perras.

While other college campuses in New Hampshire are larger than PSU, for some North Country students entering Plymouth State, it will be a big transition, said Perras.

She said she is there to support them, and has already had some reach out to her.

"It's a nice connection and I hope I can continue to do that," she said. "To walk across campus and hear someone say, 'Hey, Mrs. Perras.' Its' a great feeling. I can certainly answer some questions and bring some resources to them ... If any student is considering Plymouth State University and would like to connect, they can certainly connect with me."

Firefighters Out Of Quarantine After Patient Tests Negative For COVID-19

LITTLETON — Littleton Fire Rescue is back to normal full-time staffing now that four firefighters going into self-quarantine Monday evening after coming into contact with a patient exhibiting symptoms similar to COVID-19 have been released after the resident tested negative for the virus.

"We already have the rapid test results and everybody is back to work," Littleton Town Manager Andrew Dorsett said Wednesday morning.

Littleton Regional Healthcare has rolled out rapid testing locally, he said.

First responders across the state, because of the the importance of their work and their regular close contact with the public, have been given priority testing.

"We have a protocol where if a potential exposure happens, they get tested," said Dorsett.

In addition to eight full-time firefighters, LFR has part-time and on-call firefighters.

Although the tests were negative, the quarantine of half of LFR's full-time staff was a test for the department, which Dorsett said is now conducting an after-action analysis of Monday night's medical call to see how its firefighters and EMTs can best limit their exposure to possible infected patients in the future.

LFR is not alone as other first responders across the North Country work to keep a steady supply of protective gear, to include gowns, gloves, masks and visors, and limit their exposure on the many calls to which they respond.

Had the test been positive, LFR would have utilized its non-quarantined full-time staff to cover shifts and qualified part-time staff to fill in for shifts, a procedure that is part of Littleton's emergency management plan, which includes how to respond during a pandemic.

On Tuesday, LFR Chief Joe Mercieri called the pandemic and its impact on first responders "an extremely complicated dynamic," and Littleton's first responders regularly receive the latest information and guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and the state of New Hampshire.

Dorsett called the precaution by LFR to quarantine its four firefighters and the negative test results a good outcome.

"We're glad that everyone is okay," he said.

Nursing Home Workers To Get More Money, Virus Testing

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — Front-line workers at New Hampshire nursing homes and other long-term care facilities will get extra pay and many will be tested for the coronavirus, Gov. Chris Sununu said Tuesday.

Starting this week, workers at Medicaid-funded residential facilities and social service organizations that serve Medicaid clients at home will be eligible for \$300 weekly stipends. The state will cover the costs initially while seeking reimbursement from the federal government.

"This program ensures that the critical staff that supports some of New Hampshire's most vulnerable individuals, including those with physical disabilities, developmental disabilities and older adults," Sununu said. "New Hampshire must strengthen its commitment to this workforce during the emergency."

About 25,000 workers statewide are eligible. And the 6,600 who work in Rockingham and Hillsborough counties also will be tested for the virus through a partnership with ConvenientMD, which will deploy mobile testing units to the facilities.

Residents of long-term care facilities make up more than half of the state's deaths due to COVID-19. Eight have died at the Hanover Hill nursing home in Manchester, six at the Huntington at Nashua assisted-living facility and one at a group home run by the Crotched Mountain Foundation in Greenfield. At least 90 staff members have tested positive.

Brendan Williams, president of the New Hampshire Health Care Association, which represents nursing homes, called the new stipends essential. He said staff recruitment and retention already was a challenge prior to the pandemic given the gap between costs and Medicaid payments.

"It's a labor of love for staff, because too often you can get poor caring for the poor," he said. "Maybe this terrible calamity will refocus us so we treat this essential work as a priority worthy of living wages."

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COVID-19 LOCAL BUSINESS UPDATES

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Pastor Nick DeYoung participates in a post-service prayer circle follwing a drive-in easter worship at Faith Bible Church in Littleton on Easter Sunday. The service was designed to obey social distancing rules but allow churchgoers the gather together for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic struck a month ago. (Photo by Paul Hayes)

Park & Pray

Drive-in Service Offers Encouragement Amid Pandemic

BY PAUL HAYES
Staff Writer

LITTLETON — The pulpit was a dump truck. The pews were power seats. And a beep was an ‘Amen.’ Faith Bible Church ended a month of virtual worship with a drive-in service at its Union Street parking lot on Easter Sunday. Nearly 100 turned out for the unusual event,

which allowed members of the congregation to gather together but remain apart, as they balanced their spirituality with social distancing. The event slogan was: Come as you are, stay in your car. “We are living in a unique time,” said pastor Nick DeYoung, speaking from the bed of a one-and-a-half ton Dodge Ram 5500. “I don’t think anyone here has probably witnessed a set of events quite like what we are experiencing right

now.” For churchgoers, the service was a moment of hope amid the coronavirus crisis. Speaking through a crack in her passenger side window, Maureen Ferland said it offered encouragement in a way that Facebook videos and Zoom meetings could not. “We’re Zooming, but it’s a different experience to be here. I’m elated,” she said. Those in attendance tuned their car radios

to 96.7 FM or 1400 AM and sounded their car horns when the service began just after 10 a.m. They listened as DeYoung addressed the on-going pandemic. “This is a challenging time,” he said. “There is not a single one of us here who is not feeling the burden of the COVID-19 virus and the anxiety or uncertainty that comes with it. Even if we avoid contracting the virus ourselves, we’ve

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Drive-In

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all suffered a loss or separation from the people that we love, the things that we enjoy, and the normal routines of the day.”

“I imagine that for almost every single one of us here our days have been turned upside down.”

In the face of those challenges and uncertainties, DeYoung offered the Easter holiday — and its story of suffering, sacrifice and rebirth — as a source of inspiration.

He asked those in attendance, and others listening at home, to question how they will face COVID-19.

“What will your story be?” he asked. “Will it be one surrounded by hope or maybe surrounded by fear? Will the story be one of isolation or one of a community that has move forward together? Will your story be one of families that walked through this together, or did we let this tear us apart? Did we focus on hoarding for ourselves or did we look out for those friends and neighbors in need?”

In addition to DeYoung’s words, the service featured elements that encouraged fellowship. People were asked to text prayers (which DeYoung read aloud) and took communion in their cars (they were given pre-packaged juice and wafers). The church music team performed three selections, and some in their vehicles could be heard singing along.

“I thought this was an awesome opportunity to feel like we’re still worshipping together while worshipping separately at the same time,” said Faith Bible music director Jessica Matheis. “Now more than ever it’s important for the church to stand together and say we’re still here.”

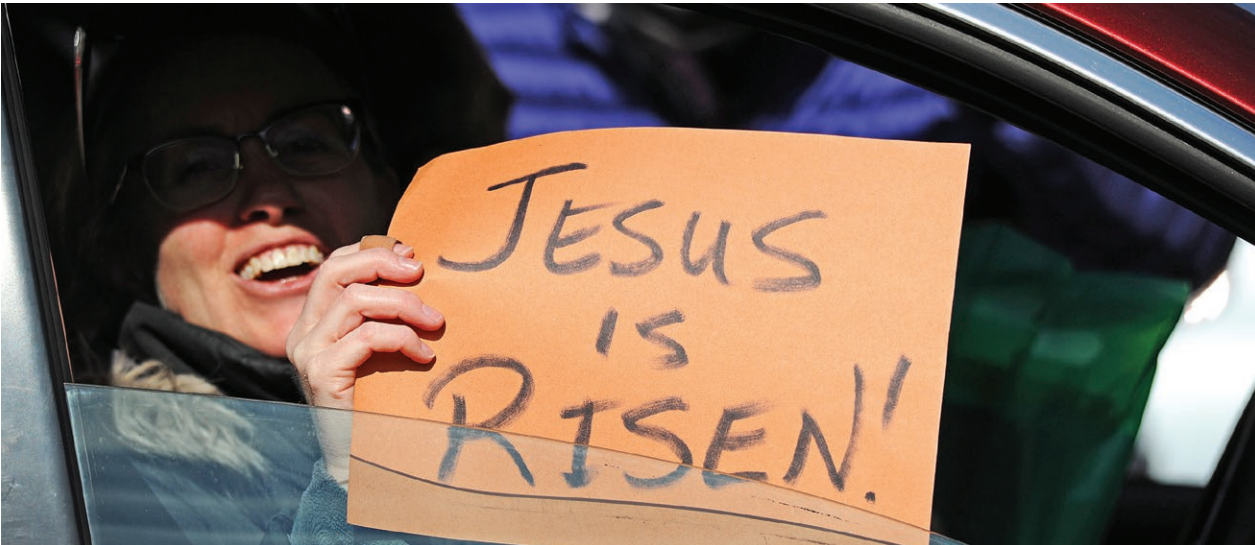
The service ended with another round of horns beeping and lights flashing. Then people drove past the temporary pulpit, most smiling, waving or both.

That reaction, DeYoung said, demonstrated the importance of community.

“I think people who attended took away some hope,” DeYoung said. “Having this opportunity in the midst of this, to come together and see some familiar faces and wave to each other — even at a distance — is special.”



Nearly 100 turned out for a drive-in service at Faith Bible Church in Littleton on Easter Sunday. The service was designed to obey social distancing rules but allow churchgoers the gather together for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic struck a month ago. (Photos by Paul Hayes)



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THE NUMBERS

As of Tuesday, 1,091 people in New Hampshire have been diagnosed with COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, and 27 have died.

For most people, the virus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and the infirm, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, or death.

Dr. Benjamin Chan, the state epidemiologist, said Tuesday that the daily count of hospitalized patients has been holding fairly steady over the last week, indicating hospitals have not been overwhelmed by a surge of patients.

NEIGHBOR OUTREACH

New Hampshire isn't joining a regional council to plan its reopening once the COVID-19 pandemic subsides, Gov. Chris Sununu said Tuesday, but he has been talking to governors of neighboring states.

Seven Northeastern states have agreed to a working group that will develop a regional blueprint. Meanwhile, Sununu said he has spoken to the governors of Maine, Vermont and Massachusetts about their own plans. He said they won't act in lockstep but want to understand how their actions affect other states.

AIRPORT FUNDS

New Hampshire airports will receive \$15.2 million through the federal coronavirus aid package.

The state's congressional delegation said the bulk of the money — about \$12 million — will go to the Manchester-Boston Regional Airport, with lower amounts for smaller airports.

VIRTUAL FUNDRAISER

The Prouty, an annual event to raise money for cancer research, is going virtual this year due to concerns about the coronavirus.

Organizers said the Prouty will not be bringing 4,000 people together in Hanover in July for what traditionally has been a two-day event to benefit the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Norris Cotton Cancer Center. Instead, participants will be encouraged to take part between June 1 and July 11 to bike, walk, row, golf or do any other event from home or outdoors, allowing for physical distancing.

INMATE REQUEST DENIED

A man accused of shooting a church pastor and bride during a wedding and later attacking his own lawyer won't be released to house arrest due to coronavirus concerns.

A judge on Tuesday denied the request from Dale Holloway, who has asthma, saying there was no evidence of significant risk to the jail. He concluded that Holloway presented a danger to himself and the community.

Holloway pleaded not guilty to attempted murder, assault and other charges related to the October shooting at a Pelham church and the lawyer attack.

Unemployment Rate For March Doesn't Show Effects Of Virus

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — New Hampshire's unemployment rate for March was 2.6%, according to a survey that predated many business closures due to the coronavirus.

The unemployment rate was unchanged from the February rate. A year ago, the rate was 2.5%.

The survey covered businesses through March 12. Many businesses closed after that date because of state emergency orders regarding the coronavirus. One requiring nonessential businesses to close was issued March 26. The state has received over 100,000 new unemployment claims since March 17.

According to the survey, the state estimated that 748,970 people were employed last month, a decrease of 10,630 from February and 2,290 from a year ago.

Nationally, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for March was 4.4%. That was nearly a percentage point higher than the February rate and an increase of 0.6 percentage points from the previous year.

Lawmakers Sue Governor Over Relief Money; Hikers Out Of Luck

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — Democratic leaders of the New Hampshire Legislature went to court Monday to stop Republican Gov. Chris Sununu from spending federal COVID-19 relief funds without their permission.

House Speaker Steve Shurtleff, Senate President Donna Soucy and top Democrats on the Legislature's joint fiscal committee filed a motion seeking an emergency order to halt Sununu's newly created Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery.

They argue only the committee has the power to act on the \$1.25 billion that the state is expected to begin receiving later this month.

Rep. Mary Jane Wallner said the committee she leads is the fastest way to distribute money to families, communities, businesses and nonprofits "effectively, equitably and constitutionally."

"Unfortunately, Gov. Sununu has chosen to disregard the legislative branch, which represents the voice of the people," Wallner, D-Concord, said in a statement. "His refusal to compromise led us to the judicial branch today."

Sununu's spokesman said the governor's office will continue to follow the 2002 law granting the governor authority to take immediate action during a statewide crisis.

It is the legislature's prerogative to check in with the courts and we will always maintain a collaborative relationship with them," Ben Vihstadt said in a statement. "Ensuring New Hampshire families receive immediate emergency relief is paramount and the Governor remains committed to that goal."

Sununu told reporters last week that while lawmakers will have input via an advisory panel, the usual approval process is too slow.

In their motion, filed in Hillsborough County Superior Court, lawmakers disagree on both counts.

COMMUNITY VOICES

A Quiet Easter, A Chaotic World



BY AMY LAWTON
McKEEVER

We celebrated Easter last weekend. In some ways the day was similar to Easters in the past — we dyed eggs, the kids ran around the house looking for their hidden Easter baskets, and then they headed outside to scour the yard for the dozens of little plastic eggs the Easter Bunny had scattered everywhere. In many ways, though, the day was different, and it reflected the way the COVID 19 pandemic has created a "new normal" for us.

The biggest difference, of course, was that we celebrated by ourselves. Easter has never been a huge holiday at our house, but my dad usually comes for the weekend, and our neighbors sometimes join us, and we always share a huge Easter brunch. This year, the brunch table was set for four. It wasn't a bad thing, and we still kept up with our traditions — yellow tulips, monkey bread, my daughter's homemade name cards telling us where to sit — but it was much quieter than normal. Sorry to say, but no one at our house got dressed up — no cute Easter dresses or button down shirts for us. I was probably wearing sweatpants (I do that a lot right now). We did some new things this year: I tried a new dish (sausage and chard strata — so yum!), we had mimosas (sparkling cider for the kids), and after brunch, the kids hid all the eggs again so my husband and I could have our own egg hunt.

We connected with family on zoom — which has become a staple for our life in this pandemic, as it has for so many people. My sisters, nieces and nephews, cousins, aunts and uncles — from Pennsylvania to New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and even far away England — all tucked into our own homes, we smiled and waved at each other through the computer screen, talking over each other and trying to catch up. It was nice but not really the same.

After that, we ... well, we hung out, just the four of us. Like we have been doing a lot lately.

We've been keeping busy with house projects, and Easter Sunday was no different. My husband and I worked on the stone wall we are building, my son having a blast driving the mower back and forth to bring us rocks from the pile in the woods. My daughter swung in

the hammock and read a few chapters in her book before hopping on to the mower, holding on tightly and laughing as her brother drove her around the yard. After the kids got tired of helping, they made their way through the woods to the fort they've been building.

I've been extra thankful, these long days at home, for the woods that surround us here in the North Country. This was no different on Easter. Most of the afternoon we were outside, just as we try to be

every day. My life right now is like a scene in D.B. Johnson's fabulous picture book, *Henry Builds a Cabin*, where he describes Henry David Thoreau building his small cabin on the shores of Walden Pond. When his friends comment on how tiny the cabin is, Henry replies: "This is just the room I wear when it's raining!" That's how my house feels right now — as much as possible, we are outside. Imagine living through this pandemic in a crowded city? I couldn't.

Despite being outside a lot, I was never too far away from my phone on Easter Sunday. This is true of me all the time now — I'm constantly checking the news, in a way that is probably very unhealthy. I can't help it. I'm obsessed with tracking the number of new COVID 19 cases in New Hampshire, watching as they creep in above the notch, first in Littleton, then Franconia and Whitefield, and now Bethlehem. Who knows what towns will be shaded in on that map tomorrow, or by the time this article is published. It's terrifying but I am unable to look away.

In this way, Easter Sunday illustrated a real dichotomy in my life right now. It's been quiet here at home, so quiet. But outside, the world feels noisy and scary. There's already talk about when and how to "re-open" the country. I know it has to happen at some point. But honestly, I'm not ready yet to leave the quiet of home and head out into that noisy, scary world ... and I'm not sure what it will take for me to feel safe again.

Amy Lawton McKeever is a teacher/librarian over at the Monroe Consolidated School. More of her writing can be found in the New York Times Motherlode blog and on her home computer under "future book." She lives in Easton with her family.



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News Briefs

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They argue that the governor's general powers under the law Sununu cites do not override a more specific law that says during an emergency, "the governor may, with the advice and consent of the fiscal committee, authorize such expenditures, by any department or agency, as may be necessary."

And they point out that the committee can act quickly. It met on Friday and approved spending \$1.2 million to bolster Meals on Wheels programs during the pandemic.

There was no mention of the lawsuit Monday, when the advisory panel met via phone conference with Sununu and Banking Commissioner Jerry Little, the head of the governor's relief office. The panel includes the four Democrats who sued and four Republican lawmakers.

Little said he expects guidance from the U.S. Treasury around April 24. The group decided to meet three times a week to start, with more frequent meetings possible.

"We want to make good use of the time we're given and get a lot of work done, so as soon as the funds arrive we can start putting them out there and start doing some good," Little said.

PPE

Continued from Page 6

mask kits. Those kits are distributed to volunteers, who sew at home. Finished products have been donated to ACHS, LRH and Weeks.

"We had to cancel the show, like everyone else in theater," he said. "This allows us all to still work together."

The Upstage Players have used their own stockpile of fabric. The result is an eclectic collection of PPE.

"It comes in all sorts of funny patterns and colors," Vashaw said. "It's whatever random fabric we had in the costume department. It could be anything."

Meanwhile Burgeon Outdoor's masks are uniformly black.

Three weeks in, Glocker expressed no regrets about taking his fledgling business offline to assist the coronavirus response.

Burgeon's masks have drawn significant attention — a giveaway program was suspended due to overwhelming demand — and an increasing number of community organizations and essential employers have submitted requests.

"One of the reasons I founded the company is that I was fortunate to have great experiences in the White Mountains as a kid," Glocker said. "I want to help these communities flourish. It seems the best way to make them flourish now is to help keep people safe on the front lines."

Considering the time, manpower and sacrifice that has gone into The Upstage Players and Burgeon Outdoor's efforts, Shanshala wondered aloud: Who was helping who?

Yes, the volunteers are providing essential protective gear. At the same time, they have also given their lives direction and meaning during a difficult stretch, when people worldwide find themselves confronting an invisible threat and an uncertain future.

"It gave opportunities for both organizations to have a sense of contribution, and they did contribute," Shanshala said.

With needles and thread, they have strengthened the social fabric. Even in a time of social distancing.

Said Shanshala, "They are trying to bring the community together — but not too close."

HOW TO HELP

The Upstage Players are currently seeking fabric donations, sewing help, or financial donations to cover the costs of some purchased materials. 100 percent cotton is used for masks and synthetics for gowns so all fabrics are welcome. They can be reached at upartistic@gmail.com. Fabric can also be dropped off any time at 2 Cottage St., Littleton, N.H. Please place in a plastic bag to protect from any weather.

IMMIGRANT RELEASED

A Guatemalan man in New Hampshire has been released from federal immigration detention over concerns of contracting the coronavirus in jail.

The American Civil Liberties Union of New Hampshire said Pedro Gonzalez Guarcas was released Friday after it filed an emergency lawsuit. Guarcas had been at the Strafford County Department of Corrections in Dover since Feb. 28.

PEAK BAGGING PAUSED

Hikers seeking official recognition for climbing the 48 tallest peaks in New Hampshire won't be able to count any summits they reach while the state remains under a stay-at-home order.

Starting Monday, The Four Thousand Footer Club run by the Appalachian Mountain Club won't be accepting peaks ascended during the duration of the order. They said it was necessary because so many people haven't heeded recommendations to "hike low and local," increasing the risk of spreading the virus.

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Maintaining social distance, Meadowstone Farm employees Sam Brown, Tim Wennrich and Matt Gordon prepare a section of farmland known as The Oxbow for the upcoming season. Located in Bethlehem, Meadowstone has seen increased interest since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. (Photo by Paul Hayes)

Farms See Increased Interest During Coronavirus Outbreak

BY PAUL HAYES
Staff Writer

BETHLEHEM, NH — Tim Wennrich was busy planning for the upcoming season.

The owner of Meadowstone Farm stood on a plot of farmland known as The Oxbow on Wednesday, inspecting four acres where hardy crops like beets, carrots and potatoes will be planted.

Those vegetables will help meet increased demand.

Amid product shortages and coronavirus fears, a growing number of shoppers have ditched supermarkets for farms, as they seek out safe and reliable food sources during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Our farm stand has been incredibly busy and we pretty much have already sold out our summer CSA,” said Wennrich. “We’ve never had this many people sign up this early, and a lot of those people are new CSA members.”

Asked to explain the increased interest, he said, “I think people have become more aware of their food supply and how fragile it can be.”

To meet demand, Meadowstone will plant 25 percent more crops this season, with the potential to grow even more.

They will focus on popular crops like toma-

atoes and cucumbers to satisfy the sudden surge of customers.

Meadowstone also sells meat and cheese through its farm stand, local retailers, and as add-on packages to its CSA subscriptions.

“I’ve always been a pretty big proponent of local food, that it can supply northern New Hampshire,” Wennrich said. “That’s been our goal all along, to provide as much food as we can to as many people as we can.”

Not every farm has been impacted equally by coronavirus.

Some lost access to key revenue streams when states ordered closed restaurants and farmers markets.

Prospect Farm in Lunenburg had sold its pork, poultry and beef through six eateries and four farmers markets in Vermont and New Hampshire.

Those losses have been offset by growing interest in their farm stand, meat CSA, and online meat orders.

“We’ve been hearing from a lot of new customers,” said Prospect Farm Co-owner Meryl Nevins.

For Prospect, meat CSA subscriptions are up during a normally slow time of year, and online orders were so strong, mirroring the run on toilet paper and other goods, that the farm had to suspend them.

“People wanted to buy a lot at once, and we shifted gears and took them off the web site,” Nevins said. Remaining stock was moved to the CSA program, to ensure it could handle additional members, and feed a greater number of people. “This allows households to only take what they need now, rather than permit a food frenzy.”

At a time when public health experts have urged social distancing as a way to slow the spread of the virus, farmers find themselves caught between their landscape and their labor.

They can remain six feet apart in open fields, but often find themselves working together in close quarters. Some farm tasks require manpower and cannot be done alone.

“Sometimes you have to work hand-to-hand,” said Bill Half of Harvest Hill Farm in Walden. “If you have to lift something together or repair something, you have to be close together, you can’t be totally apart.”

On a recent day, Half and others planted 40,000 onion seeds in a greenhouse where they maintained proper social distance. Still, old habits die hard.

“Somebody that was working with me, I said ‘Thanks’ and patted him on the shoulder,” Half said. “He’s a friend of mine, I’ve known him for two years and hadn’t seen him for two months. So many things are so common it’s easy to for-

get.”

At Meadowstone, staff meet regularly to discuss and update safety procedures during the ongoing pandemic.

Some have started to wear masks and gloves, particularly when working in close proximity to each other.

Farm stand access is restricted to one customer at a time; it is disinfected throughout the day; previously loose products are now bagged; and a hand sanitizer dispenser has been installed near the farm stand entrance.

“We’ve had a bunch of staff meetings on it to make sure we’re all on the same page, that we’re keeping us, the customers and the food supply safe,” Wennrich said. “It hasn’t changed what we do. We’re still planting and picking. But it’s changed how we do it.”

Farmers have been deemed essential workers during the outbreak.

They are thankful to continue working at a time when many other businesses have closed and unemployment has skyrocketed to record levels.

And they are poised to continue their mission, which they believe in deeply: To feed the region.

Said Wennrich, “For me personally, it’s nice to still be able to come to work, and to have that work be productive and meaningful.”

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Casella

Continued from Page 3

ton, as well as an expanded Casella landfill in Bethlehem, has extended beyond Swan and Dalton.

At town meeting in March, Whitefield residents voted almost unanimously to approve a resolution opposing a Casella Waste landfill at Forest Lake in Dalton that the article states would negatively impact the quality of life in Whitefield much more than in Dalton.

The resolution was sent to the governor and executive council, state senators and state representatives, and New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services.

Afterward, on March 16, the Sugar Hill Board of Selectmen wrote letter to the governor in support for the Whitefield resolution opposing the landfill, citing adverse impacts such as increased truck traffic, unwanted odors, and declining property values.

Bethlehem voters in 2017 and 2018 voted against a proposal to expand the 61-acre Casella landfill to 161 acres, prompting the company to look elsewhere as it faces a landfill closure in Bethlehem in about 2026.

In July, Dalton residents, in a 154-129 vote at a special town meeting, approved temporary, emergency, zoning for Dalton in response to the proposed landfill.

In March, the New Hampshire House of Representatives, in 189-123 vote, passed House Bill 1319, sponsored by state Rep. Elaine French, D-Littleton, which seeks to prohibit the siting of new landfills or expanded landfills within two miles of the boundary of any state or national park.

Swan said he believes the defamation lawsuit could be an attempt to deflect and to defeat HB 1319.

"They lost in the House, they lost in Bethlehem, lost in Dalton twice, so they come after me," he said. "Like I said all along, it's like shooting fish in a barrel. I have been at war to save our lake and our state as I kept going down that rabbit hole called Casella. It will be an interesting trial. Goliath sues David."

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