



The Littleton Weekly Record

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2025

LITTLETON

Business Owner
Questions ICE Arrests
Of Employees

FREE



Cyan Magenta Yellow Black

- **Easton Man Committed to Psych Unit After Insanity Plea In Hammer Killing**
- **Canadian Tourism Decline Hits North Country Businesses**
- **Former Border Patrol Agent Sentenced in Child Pornography Case**

NEWS BRIEFS

Easton Man Committed to Psychiatric Unit After Insanity Plea

LITTLETON — A Pennsylvania man who killed his grandmother with a hammer at her Easton home in 2024 was sentenced Friday in Grafton Superior Court to a minimum five-year commitment in New Hampshire's secured psychiatric unit after pleading not guilty by reason of insanity.

Joshua Lanchester, 24, had been charged with second-degree murder in the Sept. 28, 2024 killing of Cynthia Lanchester, 77. Prosecutors alleged the killing was committed "under circumstances manifesting an extreme indifference to the value of human life."

Under the negotiated plea, the murder charge was disposed of, and Lanchester was committed pursuant to state law governing insanity acquittals.

Assistant Attorney General Nicholas Chong Yen outlined the state's evidence, stating that Easton Fire Department responder Kevin Ryan arrived at the home on North Peak Drive after a 9-1-1 call reporting a fall. Ryan encountered Lanchester, who said his grandmother was dead and that there was blood in the home. Cynthia Lanchester was found deceased inside, with no other occupants present.

Lanchester later waived his Miranda rights and spoke with New Hampshire State Police detectives, telling them he had retrieved his late grandfather's hammer from the basement before encountering his grandmother in the hallway. He told investigators her appearance seemed "distorted" and struck her multiple times.

An autopsy conducted by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner found blunt-force trauma to the head as the cause of death, with defensive injuries to Cynthia Lanchester's hands.

Digital evidence showed Lanchester attempted to call 9-1-1 dozens of times and wrote a note expressing guilt and remorse.

Defense attorneys Aileen O'Connell and Maria Danielle Savarese did not contest the state's evidence, and both prosecution and defense experts agreed Lanchester suffered from a mental disease or defect at the time of the killing. The diagnosis remains sealed.

Cynthia Lanchester's son, Eric Annis, addressed the court, describing his mother as a lifelong caregiver and expressing support for the plea agreement, saying it aligned with what she would have wanted.

Judge Lawrence MacLeod imposed the mandatory five-year commitment under RSA 651:8, noting Lanchester could face additional commitments if deemed a continued danger. Lanchester declined to speak before being escorted to the psychiatric facility.

Franconia Students Connect With Ukrainian Peers

FRANCONIA — For the fifth year, Lafayette Regional School students are participating in the nonprofit iEARN program, using it this year to connect with children in Ukraine and learn firsthand about life in a country at war.

As part of the 2025 collaboration, LRS fifth- and sixth-graders — nearly 30 students from Franconia, Sugar Hill, and Easton — sent cards and care packages to students at Vinnytsia Lyceum, located about 40 miles west of Kyiv. Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, and the war continues to disrupt daily life and education.

Earlier this week, the students also took part in a Zoom call with their Ukrainian counterparts, coordinated by LRS librarian and enrichment coordinator Shelley Koehler and English teacher

Natalia Zlotnyk. The virtual exchange spanned roughly 4,500 miles and depended on electricity being available amid ongoing shelling.

"I learned that living in Ukraine can be a very troubling childhood because of all the war going on," said sixth-grader Leif Newcombe-Chesley. "It made me realize how lucky we are in the USA."

The LRS students' letters described hobbies, holiday traditions, and school life, while gifts included card games, board games, and arts-and-crafts supplies. Principal Amy Kopp said students were moved to send more than cards after learning about the conditions Ukrainian children face, including rotating schedules between shelters and online classes due to overcrowding and safety concerns.

The experience focused on empathy and connection. During the Zoom call, students exchanged smiles, hand-heart gestures, and stories, moments Kopp described as emotional and inspiring.

Through iEARN, LRS students have previously connected with peers in countries including Taiwan and Romania. The Lafayette Parent Teacher Association covers membership and shipping costs.

For Leif, the exchange left a lasting impression.

"The saddest part is the kids can't live a normal life," he said. "This school helped, and I'm proud of that."

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Sixth-grader Leif Newcombe-Chesley puts the finishing touches on a group of cards. (Contributed photo)

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NEWS BRIEFS

Littleton Business Owner Questions ICE Arrests Of Employees

LITTLETON — The owner of a Littleton smoke shop says he does not understand why two of his employees were taken into federal custody during a recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement operation in Carroll.

Rocky Patel, owner of E-Smoke & Beer Island, said employees Harshal Taru of India and Widyaastuti Putu of Indonesia were legally in the United States and had no criminal histories when they were apprehended on the morning of Dec. 3.

"They're great people," Patel said. "The customers are missing them."

Taru and Putu were among seven individuals taken into custody during the ICE operation. According to New Hampshire court records, three of those detained had recent interactions with law enforcement, including two charged with driving under the influence about a week earlier. No court cases were found for the remaining four detainees, including Taru and Putu.

"They never landed in trouble, never had any issues," Patel said. "The fact that they were swept up, it's kind of amazing to me."

Patel said he respects immigration law enforcement but questioned why individuals who appeared to have proper documentation and steady employment were detained. He described both employees as reliable and well regarded by customers and co-workers.

Taru had worked at the store for nearly two years, while Putu had been employed for about four months. Patel said he has been in contact with Taru's family in India to provide reassurance.

ICE declined to provide case-specific details. Agency records

show the seven detainees are being held at facilities in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Louisiana. Taru is being held at the Strafford County House of Corrections, while Putu is at the South Louisiana ICE Processing Center.

An ICE spokesperson said the agency conducts enforcement operations throughout New Hampshire and arrests individuals who commit crimes or violate immigration laws, noting that all such individuals may be subject to detention and removal.

Three of those arrested worked at the Omni Mount Washington Hotel, and two were employees of an Applebee's restaurant in Littleton.

Friends of those detained said the arrests have heightened fear among foreign workers, with some changing daily routines to avoid scrutiny. Recent reports indicate immigration arrests and detentions in New England have risen sharply over the past year.

Vermont Eighth-Graders Take Part in First Street Law Mock Trials

LITTLETON — St. Johnsbury School eighth-graders participated in two mock trials at Littleton District Court this week through a new interstate collaboration that marks the first time a Vermont school has taken part in the Street Law program.

Street Law is a national legal and civic education initiative that pairs attorneys with teachers and students to provide hands-on learning about the court system. The effort brought together St. Johnsbury School humanities teacher Brenda Kendall, Littleton Police Department prosecutor Aaron Agnew, Lancaster defense attorney Leonard Harden, and retired judge Gerard Boyle.

Kendall, who completed Street Law training in the summer of 2025, taught the curriculum to 73 eighth-graders over two and a half weeks, covering courtroom roles, trial procedures, evidence

rules, and differences between criminal and civil cases. The students then traveled to Littleton District Court to conduct two full mock trials developed with the attorneys.

One case involved an assault and battery charge with a self-defense claim. The second was a civil dispute in which a landlord sued a tenant for unpaid rent, while the tenant alleged unsafe living conditions. Boyle presided over both trials.

Students assumed a wide



On Wednesday at Littleton District Court, local defense attorney Len Harden, at far left, joined forces with St. Johnsbury School eighth-grade students and their teacher, Brenda Kendall; Littleton police prosecutor Aaron Agnew; and the New Hampshire Bar Association for two mock trials that were part of Street Law, a civics and legal education program for youth. (Contributed photo)

range of roles, including attorneys, jurors, witnesses, bailiff, court reporter, sketch artist, newspaper reporter, and gallery members portraying family and friends. Attorneys Agnew and Harden provided pretrial guidance and real-time coaching during the proceedings.

The criminal case was nearly dismissed after a student attorney raised an objection regarding the prosecution's failure to identify the defendant, while the civil case concluded with a 6-6 hung jury.

Kendall said students remained highly engaged and overwhelmingly recommended repeating the experience. Attorneys involved praised the students' preparation, adaptability, and respect for the judicial process.

Kendall said she hopes to return to the courthouse with a new group of students in 2026, continuing the partnership and expanding hands-on civics education for Vermont youth.

Canadian Tourism Decline Hits North Country Businesses

COLEBROOK, N.H. — Businesses in northern New Hampshire and Vermont are reporting sharp declines in Canadian tourism, as political tensions, tariffs and uncertainty at the border deter visitors, according to a report released Dec. 10 by the Joint Economic Committee – Minority.

In Colebrook, Elizabeth Guerin, owner of Fiddleheads, said Canadian customers typically account for 15% to 25% of her

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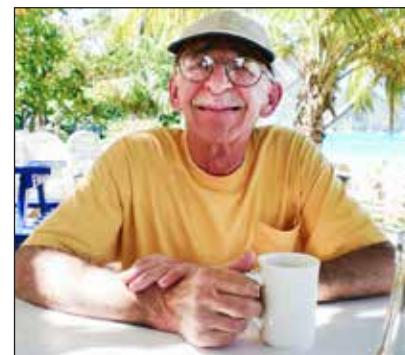
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OBITUARIES

JAMES SEVERYN



James (Sep) Severyn of Bethlehem, N.H., passed away on Dec. 8, 2025 in Lancaster, New Hampshire. He had just celebrated his 80th birthday a week earlier. For a brittle diabetic who was diagnosed with juvenile onset diabetes at age 37, this was an extraordinary achievement; he had exceeded the average life expectancy of someone with his condition by at least 15 years. He leaves behind his ex-wife of 34 years, Marilinne Cooper, his daughter Genevieve, his stepson Jamaica McCarthy and wife Alison, as well as step-granddaughters Aurora and Ayla and a beloved cat named Mabel.

Sep was born on Nov. 30, 1945 in Springfield, Massachusetts, the only child of John and Josephine Severyn. As a teenager in Wilbraham he excelled as a gymnast on his high school team. In 1965, after two years of college, he chose to divert from the straight and narrow career path and headed off to South America on a Harley Davidson with his best friend, Paul Murray. After several months of travel, the trip went awry on a rough road in Panama and they were forced to return home. By 1967 he was living in Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco, working as a longshoreman and being a next door neighbor to the Grateful Dead during the Summer of Love.

In 1969, Sep headed to the island of St. John in the Virgin Islands where he made a living doing construction work and diving for lobsters until he met Kitty Oppenheimer, (the widow of Robert Oppenheimer) who was in residence at Hawksnest Bay. In what would become known to his family and friends as "The Mrs. Oppenheimer Story," Sep joined up as a crew member on Kitty's yacht, the Moonraker, and began what intended to be a trip around the world. However, once again, he never got farther than Panama. While they navigated the locks of the Panama Canal on the way west to Japan, Kitty passed away, apparently never having revealed to the crew that she was dying of cancer when they embarked on the journey. With another crew member, Sep sailed the boat back to Fort Lauderdale and returned to New Hampshire to tell the adventurous tale that would define his life for decades to come.

As it turned out, Sep was a talented electrician and heating systems technician. In the 1970s, he was hired to install solar electric systems at the Appalachian Mountain huts throughout the White Mountains. He was the go-to fix-it man in the Fran-

conia/Bethlehem area for many years, doing everything from changing light bulbs to installing furnaces. There was not a toaster oven or broken zipper that he couldn't repair. He could pretty much fix anything, as long as it didn't involve a computer. Once a year, he also went to

New York City for a week to work as a film technician at the American Film Festival. He vacationed on the island of Jamaica for a number of winters, enjoying the lifestyle of the beach in Negril. In 1991, at the age of 45, he married Marilinne Cooper, on the island of Grenada; soon daughter Genevieve was born and immediately became the light of his life. For the next several years, he devoted himself to parenting Genevieve, while enjoying the annual family vacations to the Caribbean that his wife engineered along with one memorable extended trip to the South Pacific.

When the Colonial Theater of Bethlehem reopened in 2000, Sep became the house technician, wrangling the old projector into shape for running movies and making sure the aging electrical system made it through season after season. For two decades, he was devoted to the Colonial, on call at any time of day or night to splice up the next film on the antique projector, take tickets or train a new volunteer. After the conversion to the ease of digital film, he finally retired, much appreciated by all who worked with him there.

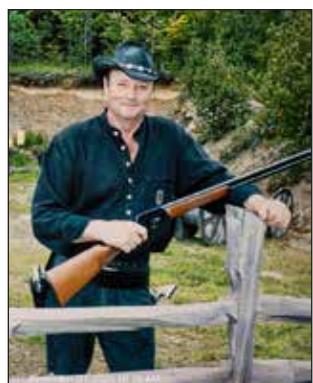
Second only to his daughter, his greatest love in life was coffee, of which he consumed several cups both day and night without any obvious ill effects. For many years he was a fixture every morning at the Maia Papaya in Bethlehem, regaling all who would listen with his stories about his daughter. He also loved his cats, of which there have been many. He never wore a seat belt unless it was necessary and secretly smoked cigarettes any chance he could get. In his later years, his lifelong habits of socializing and risktaking gave way to a more traditional sedentary lifestyle of watching football games and, of course, drinking coffee.

Gifts in Sep's memory can be made to Friends of The Colonial Theatre, PO Box 204, Bethlehem NH 03574 (or online at bethlehemcolonial.org/donate) or to the Diabetes Research Institute at supportdiabetesresearch.org. A Celebration of Life will be held next summer; date to be announced.

OBITUARIES

DONALD MOONEY

Donald Fayette Mooney, 88, of Dalton, N.H., passed away peacefully at the home he shared with his loving wife of 67 years, on Dec. 4, 2025. He was a loving husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather and friend, and his presence will be deeply missed.



Donald was born on Nov. 25, 1937 in Dalton, N.H. to Howard Fayette Mooney and Agnes Harriet (Ambrose) Mooney. On June 25, 1958 he married the love of his life, Nancy Louise (Beland) Mooney. They went on to have two daughters Pam (Mooney) Kathan of Dalton, N.H. and Vanessa (Mooney) Jones of Bethlehem, N.H.

His love for flying led him to flying lessons at 16, and he caddied at the Mountain View Hotel. He worked at the Gilman Paper Mill cutting cores and fighting river rats who lived in the cores. Later he moved on to the Connors and Hoffman Shoe Shop in Littleton starting as a short line employee and quickly moving up to the supervisor of that line. He spent many years in retail, starting as a basic clerk and moving to store manager, and then to the position of store opener for many FW Woolworth stores throughout New England. After 17 years in retail, he retired and moved back to his hometown of Dalton, building a log cabin and returned to the then-named Simpson Paper Mill in Gilman, Vt, starting in the stock room and rising to supervisor of shipping. One of the amazing feats he ac-

complished was the shipping department floor completely replaced without missing a single day of shipments. At the same time, he became the first executive director of the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce, and was also a Selectman for the Town of Dalton. At age 58, he retired again, and opened the Dalton Gang Shooting Range at age 60 and ran that for 20 years.

He served his country by being in the Air Force and Army. His time in the Guards saw him to the rank of 2nd Lieutenant.

Don was predeceased by his parents Howard and Agnes (Ambrose) Mooney. Don is survived by his wife of 67 years, Nancy Louise (Beland) Mooney, his daughters Pam (Mooney) Kathan and her husband Tom Kathan of Dalton, Vanessa (Mooney) Jones and her husband Tony Jones of Bethlehem, granddaughter Heather Linn Rodgers and her husband Adam Rodgers of Lynchburg, S.C., a grandson Gregory Tyson Filgate of Rockvale Colorado, a granddaughter Ashley (Bellus) Wilson of Chandler Arizona, a great-granddaughter Abby Jade Rodgers of Lynchburg, S.C., a great-grandson Addison Rodgers of Dalton, N.H., a great-granddaughter Aubrey Wilson of Chandler, Arizona.

Per wishes of the family there will be no services. In the spring there will be a spreading of ashes at some of Don's favorite places.

ELAINE RICHARDS



Elaine M. Richards 92, died peacefully at her home in Lisbon, N.H., Friday, Dec. 5, 2025. She was born in Littleton, N.H., the daughter of George J. Drapeau and Hannah B. (Pageau) Drapeau. She married her husband Roland on May 31, 1952, in Littleton, N.H. After they wed they moved to Norfolk, Va., where they resided for four years while Roland served in the Navy. They returned to Littleton, N.H., to live.

Elaine and her husband resided at the Willowdale Farm on the town line of Littleton and Lisbon, N.H. They had six children of their own and took care of many foster children. Elaine was a door-to-door Avon representative until later when she worked for Harrison Publishing House in Sugar Hill, N.H., which eventually relocated to their new location in the Littleton Industrial Park.

Elaine and her husband eventually sold the farm and moved to a smaller house in Lisbon, N.H. Elaine was known for her strong belief in the Catholic religion and attended masses regularly until her health declined. She then practiced her belief through live online masses, television masses, and home visits from priests and EMHC's.

Elaine loved to bake, knit, garden, and read

(Harlequin Romance Novels). She also loved to go camping, snowmobiling (member of the Lisbon Stump Jumpers), NASCAR and support her husband's love for building race cars and watching them compete at the WMMP in North Woodstock, N.H.

She was predeceased by her husband Roland L. Richards, brothers Richard and Robert Drapeau and grandson Michael Richards Jr.

She is survived by three sons, Gary Richards and wife Jan of Chesapeake, Va., Michael Richards and wife Cindy of Lisbon, N.H., and David Richards of Woodsville, N.H.; three daughters, Diane Thompson and husband George of Littleton, N.H., Debora Shifflett and husband Richard of Littleton, N.H., and Laurie Richards of Lisbon, N.H.; 10 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren; one brother, Russell Drapeau and wife Barbara of Littleton, N.H. and many nieces and nephews.

A graveside service will be held in the spring at the St. Rose of Lima Cemetery, Littleton. Donations may be made in Elaine's memory to The Saint Rose of Lima Church, 77 Clay St., Littleton, NH 03561 To offer your condolences to the family please visit www.rossfuneral.com

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OBITUARIES

BARBARA ASHLEY

It truly was a Wonderful Life. Barbara Ashley was born Feb. 15, 1938, in Woodsville, N.H., to Mary Frances Fullerton, and Charles Clarence Ashley. She immediately set out to get the most out of her life. She played clarinet in the band, and broke scoring records in basketball. She could hunt and fish with the boys, and learned how to make clothes, and decorate cakes from her mother. She required no angelic intervention to see purpose in her life.

Barbara attended Plymouth Teachers College, earning her degree in Physical Education and Recreation in 1961, with minors to also teach Music, History, English, and Science. In a world

with defined gender roles, Barbara followed no rules, and participated in whichever group or club she saw fit. She was the first woman ever voted into the Good Ole Boys Club of Woodsville.

Barbara started her teaching career in Hanover, N.H., teaching Physical Education for grades K-12. She then moved to Concord, N.H. and taught Physical Education. She was the first girl's Track and Field coach, and the first girl's Ski coach in Concord. She also served on the NHIAA Board to develop varsity sports for girls.

Everywhere there were sports, there was Barbara. She worked in the Concord City Athletic Department, the St. Paul's Summer Program, and the Concord Athletic Club, spearheading, and promoting girl's and women's athletics. At the YWCA, she started the state's first baby swim program. She would later serve as the President of the New Hampshire Association for Physical Education, Health and Recreation.

All the while, Barbara started a family, marrying Peter Gauthier in 1962, and by 1966 had three sons. An accomplished badminton player, and a member of the NH Badminton Association, Barbara was also an excellent bowler, and enjoyed skiing and golf. She sang in choirs, and with her barbershop quartet group, Three Winds and a Gale.

She developed the first exercise to music program at Nashua YWCA. She also created the first Physical Education and Recreation program for the handicapped youth of Mt. Hope School in Nashua.

In 1973, Barbara and her family moved to Littleton, N.H. She began a new career in banking, starting with Littleton National Bank, and Lafayette National Bank. She worked in Customer Service, as a Loan Officer, and as a Senior Executive, and the only woman there on many committees.

At Indian Head Bank, she managed branches in Bethlehem and Lisbon. Naturally, she also served on the Bicentennial and Winter Carnival Committees. Ultimately, Indian Head promoted her to the statewide Manager for Training and Development. Like George Bailey, Barbara was having a positive influence on a great many lives.

Throughout her career, Barbara also served the north country as the fiscal agent for her longtime friend, Executive Counselor, Ray Burton. She and Ray were inseparable for over 25 years, making hundreds of appearances at parades, festivals, and events all over Coos and Grafton counties. Her political career made her a popular community advocate for every governor of New Hampshire, many of whom she knew on a first name basis.

Barbara joined Woodsville Guarantee Savings bank, which later became Siwooganock Bank, serving as a Loan Officer, and Assistant Vice President. She served on the Grafton County Economic Development Council to help reorganize and develop a branch for Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank in Lisbon. She also served on the NH DOT Bureau of Right-of-Way Commission.

Because of her long career in banking, Barbara has literally heard the same words that George Bailey heard, "I wouldn't have a roof over my head, if it weren't for you."

While in Littleton, Barbara was very active in the community, serving on multiple committees, such as the Littleton and Whitefield Bicentennial celebrations, Beauty Pageants, and Frostbite

Follies. She was the only woman on the board of the "Moore Dam Fun" Hydroplane Boat Racing Events in Littleton.

She served on the Grafton County Economic Development Council in Haverhill and Plymouth; and the Cottage Hospital Board of Directors. Barbara was also a member of the NH Community Development Finance Authority, and the Governor's Commission on Lilacs and Wildflowers.

Barbara was active in local theaters, including the Weather-vane theater, serving on the Board of Directors; and the Upstage Players, serving as President. She also loved acting, singing, and directing plays. She was a member of the North Country Chorus of Littleton, and McClure's Alumni Band. She was also a Theater Adjudicator with the NH Theater Alliance.

In tandem with her remarkable career, Barbara enjoyed golf most of all, especially with her children and grandchildren. Even though she had a family of single digit handicappers, Barbara had the only Hole-In-One in the family, accomplishing that feat in 1992.

As if her career wasn't rich enough, Barbara then served with multiple Chambers of Commerce in the north country. She was President of the Lisbon CC, the Littleton CC, the Franconia Notch CC, and Executive Director of the Littleton CC, and the Franconia Notch CC.

While in Lisbon, Barbara, and a group of enthusiastic citizens, founded the annual Lisbon Lilac Time Festival. She has received multiple accommodations from state governors, and the festival continues on, over 40 years later.

Barbara was the recipient of the 2013 Pollyanna Signature Award, and PSU's 2025 Raymond S. Burton Public Service Award.

Barbara is survived by son, Michael Gauthier, and wife Jacqueline Moore Gauthier, of Rutland, Vt. Grandchildren, Zachary Gauthier, Kathleen Gauthier, and Alison Gauthier.

Son, Kenneth Gauthier, and wife Susan of Sugar Hill, N.H. Grandchildren, Cuyler Gauthier, and wife Kathleen, of Grantham, N.H., Great-Grandchildren Waverly Gauthier, and Julius Gauthier; Traynor Gauthier and wife Corinne, of Gorham, Maine.

Son, Daniel Gauthier, wife Kelley of Melbourne, Florida; and Grandson, Cameron Gauthier.

Brother Bradley F. Ashley, wife Janet Warner-Ashley of St. Johnsbury, Vt. Nephews Dr. Charles Warner Ashley, and Eamon Rouke of Berlin, Germany.

Niece Elizabeth Ashley, of Newmarket, N.H.; Niece Deborah Zampieri Gaskin, of Dover; Nephew Richard Zampieri of Brookline, N.H.

Several Grand Nieces and Nephews.

In addition to her parents, Barbara was predeceased by her sisters Mary Jane Ashley; Beverly May Ashley Zampieri, and her husband Angelo Richard Zampieri of New London and Lehigh Acres, Florida; Brother Dr. Charles H. Ashley of Lee, N.H.; Granddaughter Taylor Gauthier, of Bow, N.H.

And her former husband, Peter Gauthier, of Littleton, the father of their three sons.

Barbara never sought wealth and luxuries for herself, instead spending her money on her family, and helping others. In the end, she was the richest woman in town.

We invite you all to a Celebration of Life at the Shared Ministry Church, 49 South Main Str. in Lisbon, N.H., on January 5, 2026, at 11 a.m., with reception to follow at the church. Donations in Barbara's name can be made to the Shared Ministry Church in Lisbon, or the Old Man of the Mountain Legacy Fund.

To offer the family an online condolence, please visit www.rickerfh.com Ricker Funeral Home & Cremation Care of Woodsville is assisting the family with arrangements.




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NEWS BRIEFS

business. This year, she said, visits have nearly vanished.

"Now, I can probably count the number of Canadian visitors on one hand," Guerin said. "I'm just trying to plug along and keep my nose above the waterline."

Kyle Daley, owner of Solomon's Store in West Stewartstown, said longtime Canadian customers have expressed reluctance to cross the border due to political tensions and concerns about enforcement and tariffs. The usual flow of Quebec families traveling through the area toward Maine failed to materialize this year, he said, leaving an empty parking lot that has become "a threat to our livelihood."

The report outlines broader impacts statewide. New Hampshire officials reported a 30% drop in Canadian visitors over the summer. Retailers in the Mount Washington Valley experienced similar declines, including a North Conway hotel that recorded a 30% vacancy rate on summer weekends, traditionally peak periods. Mount Washington State Park also reported a noticeable decline in Canadian visitors.

Canadian reservations at state-run New Hampshire campgrounds were down 71% during the first five months of 2025 compared with the same period in 2024, with private campgrounds seeing comparable decreases.

In Vermont, border crossings fell more than 28% during the first 10 months of the year compared to 2024. Credit card spending by Canadian visitors declined 49% between January and September. Jay Peak Resort reported its golf business finished the 2025 season down 20%, while Parker Pie and the Old Stagecoach Inn cited revenue losses and staff reductions tied to fewer Canadian patrons.

The report concludes that the downturn extends across the U.S.-Canada border region, leaving hotel rooms empty, reducing seasonal revenue and straining long-standing cross-border relationships.

Former Border Patrol Agent Sentenced in Child Pornography Case

BURLINGTON, Vt. — A former U.S. Border Patrol agent from Colebrook who served in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom was sentenced Monday in U.S. District Court to 25 months in federal prison for possessing child pornography, followed by 10 years of supervised release.

Joshua Hartness, 45, pleaded guilty in July. He had been detained since March after violating the conditions of his pretrial release by attempting to unlawfully take possession of a rifle.

According to federal prosecutors, Hartness possessed child sexual abuse material on his cellphone while working as a Border Patrol agent and engaged in a pattern of online "grooming" of young girls. Prosecutors also said he took photographs of himself in his Border Patrol uniform with his genitals exposed.

The case began in September 2022 when Hartness returned from Europe and underwent a border inspection at Logan International Airport in Boston. A search of his cellphone revealed suspected child sexual abuse material, which a forensic review later

confirmed included video of a prepubescent girl being sexually assaulted and photographs of a naked female child posed sexually.

In a Dec. 5 sentencing memorandum, Assistant U.S. Attorney Jonathan Ophardt wrote that investigators found 375 images of potential child exploitation and multiple online communications with minor girls. In those exchanges, Ophardt said, Hartness complimented minors on their appearance and sent nude photographs of himself.

The investigation determined Hartness possessed the material while in Vermont and actively employed as a Border Patrol agent. Prosecutors said his conduct was aggravated by his position of public trust.

Hartness was also cited for additional criminal behavior while on release. On March 12, he attempted to obtain a commemorative Border Patrol rifle at a Colebrook gun shop, despite being prohibited from possessing firearms, and falsely stated on a federal background check form that he was not under felony indictment, prosecutors said.

U.S. District Judge Christina Reiss imposed a sentence below the 30 months jointly recommended by prosecutors and defense counsel. Hartness was represented by assistant federal public defenders Carmen Brooks and Emily Kenyon.

The case was prosecuted as part of Project Safe Childhood, a federal initiative launched in 2006 to combat child sexual exploitation.

Littleton to Transfer HAZMAT Truck to Regional Fire Group

LITTLETON — The hazardous materials response truck and equipment purchased by the town of Littleton several years ago with grant funding will be transferred to the Twin State Fire Mutual Aid Association, formalizing the creation of a regional HAZMAT team.

Following a public hearing Monday, the Littleton Select Board

voted 4-0 to donate the truck and equipment to Twin State, pending approval by the association's board of directors. Littleton is one of 26 fire departments that make up the mutual aid district.

Littleton Fire Rescue Chief Chad Miller said the transfer fulfills the original intent of the grant-funded purchase, which was to support a regional response capability rather than a town-owned asset.

"There's been a number of iterations to reestablish a HAZMAT team in our general area," Miller said, noting that the region has lacked a coordinated team since the 1990s.

Because Twin State was not initially eligible to receive federal funding, Littleton served as the fiscal agent and took ownership of

See News Briefs, Page 10



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NEWS BRIEFS

the equipment. Miller said Twin State has since made changes to its governance, fiscal structure, and address, making it eligible for Department of Homeland Security and HAZMAT grants.

Under the new arrangement, Twin State will assume responsibility for equipment maintenance, insurance, and vehicle registration. While Littleton will contribute financially to the program, costs will ultimately be shared among member departments.

The equipment was purchased entirely with grant funding, though Littleton covered some maintenance costs. Miller said the department has also received about \$22,000 in training reimbursements through the HAZMAT program.

Sugar Hill Fire Chief Allan Clark, president of Twin State, said the association is prepared to maintain the equipment and expand the number of trained HAZMAT technicians serving the region.

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For the first two years, the estimated \$25,000 annual budget will be covered without assessments to member towns as a trial period.

The truck is currently housed at the Franconia Fire Station and is expected to remain there permanently. If the regional team were ever to dissolve, ownership provisions would allow equipment to be reclaimed or redistributed to area towns.

Police Investigate Theft of School Robotics Trailer

LITTLETON — Littleton police are investigating the theft of a robotics trailer belonging to the Littleton School District, taken from a school parking lot earlier this month.

The trailer, valued at approximately \$4,500, was stolen from the Maple Street parking lot on Nov. 11 and reported missing to police on Monday. The trailer was parked alongside other district-owned trailers and was empty at the time of the theft.

Rachelle Cox, principal of the Hugh J. Gallen Career and Technical Education Center, said the theft was captured on surveillance video.

"We can show on camera when they lifted it," Cox said Tuesday. "It's not a big trailer, but it's clearly labeled."

Cox said the perpetrator cut the lock, hitched the trailer to a truck, and drove away. Surveillance footage shows the truck leaving the area around 9:15 p.m. on Veterans Day, heading from High Street toward Elm Street, though the license plate is not visible.

Cox said another clearly labeled trailer used for building trades had its lock cut as well, though it was not taken. She said it is unclear whether the suspect was looking for tools or decided the second trailer was too large to move.

The trailer was last used by the district's Crusader Robotics team in late October. The team has an event scheduled in January and competitions planned for March. Cox said the district will file an insurance claim to replace the trailer.

"We're really hoping we can track it down," she said, noting the trailer is registered to the Littleton School District and marked with decals and VIN numbers.

Following the theft, the district has upgraded locks and additional security measures on its remaining trailers.

The Littleton Police Department is asking for the public's help in locating the trailer. Anyone with information is encouraged to contact police. Anonymous tips are accepted.

Under New Hampshire law, theft of property valued at more than \$1,500 is classified as a Class A felony.

ON THE COVER

In 2025, for their annual collaboration with international students, the Lafayette Regional School's fifth- and sixth-grade classes communicated with students in Ukraine and sent them cards and gifts. On Wednesday morning, the LRS students participated in a Zoom video call (pictured) with the Ukrainian kids and their teacher. (Contributed photo)

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THE RECORD

Thursday, December 18, 2025 • 11

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SAU #84

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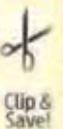
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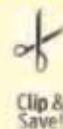
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