



The Littleton Weekly Record

THURSDAY, JULY 24, 2025

LITTLETON

Police Arrest Three
After Stabbings At
Boat Launch

FREE



Six Months Out, Local Woman Intensifies Prep For Solo Atlantic Row

- ◆ School District Partners Up To Serve Families Through Free Home Repairs
- ◆ LPD Partners With State, County For Homophobic Spray Paint Investigation
- ◆ Local Crypto Swindler To Forfeit \$2.25 Million

School District Partners Up To Serve Families Through Free Home Repairs

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

LITTLETON — In July, more than two dozen local families welcomed new guests into the community — scores of volunteer youth who are part of workcampNE, a faith-based nonprofit that serves families through free home repairs.

The kids and their chaperones spent the last two weeks camping in Littleton High School/Daisy Bronson Middle School classrooms at night and going out into the community by day to create accessibility ramps and second

egresses at homes that needed them, as well as complete other jobs, such as house painting.

For sisters Betty Placey-Dube and Norma Lique, of North Haverhill, the second exit for safety that they needed at their home for years is now complete.

Although there have been similar efforts in the past involving the Littleton School District SAU 84 and other groups, it's the first time that the district has hosted the Litchfield, N.H.-based workcampNE, which invites members of different churches to join in.

As part of its outreach to schools in the Northeast, workcampNE reached out to SAU 84



The Littleton School District has formed a new partnership with workcampNE, whose students and chaperones visited the community and spent the last two weeks completing free home repairs for residents and families in need. (Contributed photo)

last year to gauge the district's interest in hosting. The school board approved the request.

"The essence of it is they solicit from towns work that needs to be done on people's homes," said Steve Nilhas, SAU 84 superintendent, who attended a dinner with the group and the resident beneficiaries on Thursday, the evening before the group completes its last day and departs for another community.

"On Thursday night, we invite all the residents whose homes we're working on to join us for dinner," said Ken Therrien, a workcampNE director. "This is the night the kids really look forward to."

Five of the seven families attended the dinner.

As for work crews, workcampNE had 150 people last week and 70 this week, said Therrien.

Among those providing the names of residents were John Fouch, a Littleton middle-high school physical education teacher, and Veterans 2 Veterans, based in Franconia.

"We had a lot of veterans that we worked with," said Therrien.

At the homes, crews did everything from sheetrocking to some flooring, a few roofs, and some painting, as well as stoops, he said.

"We did one ramp that was not in good shape," said Therrien. "We basically took it down and put it back up again."

Some mobile homes, too, don't have a second means of egress, and sometimes the primary egress is not in good shape, he said.

And some residents in need have limited financial means and mobility issues, making repairs on their own difficult.

"We try to find a school that would accommodate us for two weeks or one week," said Therrien. "Once we find a community that will house you, finding folks that need our help is not super-difficult. There's always a contingent of folks who need a little bit of assistance. We are usually scouting schools two years out."

As soon as an accommodating school is found, workcampNE looks for social services agencies and asks people at the school if

they know of anyone needing help.

Many families are renters, and sometimes upgrades can increase rent, which is why workcampNE looks for tenants who are family of a landlord.

"The crews that work on the homes are made up of either four or five students and a leader," said Therrien. "They'll work on the same home all week long."

Nineteen crews last week and seven this week served 26 Littleton area families, he said.

"That's a lot," said Nilhas.

"We're hoping we get enough where we'll be invited back," said Therrien. "From our standpoint, it's gone exceptionally well. The school has been extremely accommodating. They're taking good care of us. Hopefully, we're taking good care of them."

Camping out in classrooms, crew members bring air mattresses.

"We never know what kind of room we're going to get," said Therrien. "But it works. We've been doing this long enough now where we can get along with whatever school programs there are. We're not here from 8 to 4."

They swung into Littleton as a heat wave began.

"This is the first time we've had A/C," he said. "We're telling all of our first-timers, don't get used to it."

Although the temperatures were hot, the rains of the spring had mostly abated, and rain forecast for Thursday didn't materialize.

"We dodged all the bullets," said Therrien.

The students who return for successive years are glad to be part of a service-oriented project, he said.

"We wouldn't have it any other way," he said. "We just love getting out there and being able to serve families that ultimately wouldn't be able to do these repairs on their own."

One resident took a fall in her home, prompting workcampNE to shift from making a stoop to a wheelchair ramp.

"It's always a challenge," he said. "A chaperone might think they're doing painting, then all of a sudden they're throwing a stoop at you."

See **Repairs**, Page 10

Shippee Family Eye Care is thrilled to welcome Ophthalmologist - Michelle Overturf, M.D., as she joins Dr. Steven Phipps, M.D. and our growing surgical care team.

Dr. Overturf received her Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Colorado, completed her residency in Ophthalmology at the University of South Carolina, and received her board certification from the American Board of Ophthalmology in 2016.

Dr. Overturf is relocating from Denver, Colorado, and is excited to join us here in our local communities.

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OBITUARIES

DOROTHY HODGDON

Dorothy M. Hodgdon “Naughty Dottie,” 70, made a beautiful and peaceful passing into the arms of our Lord on Monday morning, July 21, 2025, at The Jack Byrne Center at DHMC. Dottie’s loving family was by her side.

Dottie was born on Oct. 26, 1954, in Lancaster to Faye Emerson Hodge and Charles Hodge. She was born sixth of seven children and lived her childhood in Lancaster.

She married the love of her life, Vaughn Hodgdon in September of 1973, and moved to Guildhall, Vt. with him. It was on the Hodgdon homestead where they raised their family and ran their trucking business.

Dottie was a lifelong member of Christ United Methodist Church in Lancaster and she served many roles for the church, the longest of which was Treasurer. She belonged to the Lions Club in Lancaster whose claim to fame there was selling raffle tickets at Old Tyme Christmas in town. Dottie was also a long-time member of TOPS club of Lancaster as well.



You were a stranger for only a minute after the first hello from the well-known icon of our area, Naughty Dottie.

She is survived by her loving husband of 51 years, Vaughn and her three children: Stephen (Lisa) Hodgdon, Jennifer (Kevin) Poulton and John (Nicole) Hodgdon – A beloved big sister, Cathy Bishop and six grandchildren: Zoe, Makenna, K-Leigh, Kasen, Windsor and Tyson; as well as nieces, nephews, cousins and friends too numerous to count.

Calling hours will be held on Thursday, July 24, 5-7 p.m. at Bailey Funeral Home. A funeral service will be held on Friday, July 25, at 10 a.m. at Lancaster United Methodist Church, Main Street, Lancaster. A celebration of her life will follow the funeral at the Lancaster Fairgrounds.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to help with funeral costs directly to Bailey Funeral Home.



Renee Blacken, of Bethlehem, visits Bethlehem Elementary School for a presentation about her upcoming 3,200-mile solo row across the Atlantic Ocean that begins Jan. 24. (Contributed photo)

LOCAL & WORLD

Six Months Out, Local Woman Intensifies Preparations For Solo Atlantic Row

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

With six months to go before her boat eases into the ocean for a 3,200-mile solo row across the Atlantic, Renee Blacken is ramping up preparations.

She spoke of what the planning entails — including how the vessel will stay on course as she sleeps — as well as her current mindset, all the while keeping her eye on the larger goal to raise money for her nonprofit, Outdoor Adventuring For Good, which supports local survivors of physical and psychological trauma.

To date, two American women have rowed what is called the Atlantic Dash, an east-to-west voyage from the isle of Lanzarote, in Spain’s Canary Islands near the coast of Africa, to the isle of Antigua in the Caribbean, which is considered one of the world’s toughest endurance events.

Another American woman, from Nebraska, is slated to leave in December.

“Should she be successful, I would be the fourth,” said Blacken.

She launches into the Atlantic on Jan. 24.

Origins

In 2017, Blacken, 42, of Bethlehem, and the mother of a 13-year-old son, read Roz Savage’s “Rowing the Atlantic: Lessons Learned on the Open Ocean.”

“At the time, I was a single mom teaching boarding school and thought that is a fascinating story,” she said. “I had been a rower in high school



Renee Blacken, of Bethlehem, trains for her upcoming 3,200-mile solo row across the Atlantic Ocean, which begins Jan. 24. (Contributed photo)

and college and am a lifelong lover of the outdoors and an adventurer. I knew it was a thing that was out there, but didn’t really put myself in that situation at the time, and put the book back on the shelf.”

Fast forward a few years, as she began getting in shape again after overcoming pelvic neuropathy, which began in her mid-20s and marked a

See **Blacken**, Page 5

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ON THE COVER

Renee Blacken trains with river crouch rowing as she prepares for her 3,200-mile solo row across the Atlantic Ocean beginning Jan. 24. (Contributed photo)

Blacken

Continued from Page 4

major setback from what had been years of running ultra-marathons, as well as chronic pain in her 30s.

“Over the next six years or so, I did a lot of work on my own journey through some of the trauma I have experienced in my life,” said Blacken. “We often think of trauma as an event or series of events that happened, but it is also the imprint of those experiences on our mind and body and what we carry with us through our lives. There can be an acute occurrence, but there can also be complex trauma that compounds over time and can leave lasting physiological and psychological imprints on the individual. It wasn’t all that long ago that I remember hearing for the first time that we store trauma in our physical bodies.”

Seeking to address it, she found support programs.

Then, as she regained her strength and stamina, Blacken found herself once again thinking about rowing, about the Atlantic Dash and those who have done it.

The pieces came together as she began to reclaim what she called her own narrative and “instead of asking myself why I can’t do this, what if I can?”

Amid going down “a rabbit hole of rowing stuff again,” a video of Savage popped up.

“I know this story,” said Blacken. “I remember sitting there during the 20-minute video and thinking, ‘Why not me?’, and in that moment realizing that the row was bigger than just me.”

In December 2023, she made the decision to do the transatlantic row. A few weeks later, she founded Outdoor Adventuring For Good, after resolving to herself, “This is what I’m rowing for.”

Blacken’s campaign is “Team fOARtysomething: Rowing the Atlantic for Trauma Survivors.”

Savage’s book was given to Blacken by her father.

“I reminded him of that when I told him I’m going to row the Atlantic,” she said.

As for trauma, dealing with day-to-day mental and physical challenges is a part of the human condition, said Blacken.

“And I can row an ocean,” she said.

Preparations

The Lanzarote-to-Antigua route is chosen for its favorable trade winds and westerly currents.

The January start date is selected to avoid the June-to-November hurricane season.

It’s a journey of about 60 to 90 days.

Blacken’s physical training — which includes rowing machines and other workouts at Mt. Washington Crossfit in Lisbon, exercises to toughen up her hands, and long-distance running, bicycling, hiking, and yoga — is par for the course, and somewhat glides along on autopilot.

The logistical piece is another beast entirely, and has been a full-time job on top of her full-time job at Lahout’s.

“The preparation phase has been absolutely, mind-bogglingly challenging,” said Blacken. “The bigger reason of what I’m rowing for is what I have to come back to at the end of the day.”

On her 41st birthday, in December 2023, she had her first conversation with Billy Taylor, co-founder of Atlantic Dash.

“From then to now, it’s been wild,” said Blacken. “It’s meant having to find a boat, being able to train with the boat, getting all of the loose equipment that needs to go with the boat in terms of safety equipment, getting new electronics installed for navigation, taking my sea safety classes, my navigation classes, First-Aid at sea. It’s been a lot of learning about what will be the day-to-day.”

Including learning how to rebuild a water-maker.

“I have to replace the membrane in my water-maker that desalinizes all my water,” she said.

Then, there are the compasses and chart plotters and the needed certifications through the Federal Communications Commission and numbers registered with the Maritime Mobile Service Identity.

“I had to get my radio operator’s license and ship station license through the FCC and had to register all of my emergency beacons and get MMSI numbers for all of my communication devices — all the back end of just making the row happen,” she said. “There are so many details.”

Her boat — a plywood vessel with a glass-reinforced plastic finish that is just shy of 20 feet long — is in Britain, where she



Renee Blacken, of Bethlehem, plots charts as she prepares for her 3,200-mile solo row across the Atlantic Ocean beginning Jan. 24. (Contributed photo)

conducts training with the boat and is scheduled to spend another week training in August.

“It was built in 2023 and came from Poland and has done one crossing already, so it’s relatively new and has been tested,” said Blacken.

In addition to potential cell phone satellite compatibility, she will have a satellite phone, which is expected to function for the full route, and she will have daily check-ins with Atlantic Dash for weather, safety, and any medical issues that might arise.

“There’s a lot of redundancy built in,” said Blacken. “The boat has solar panels to power electronics, but then I’ll have backups in the event those go awry. Backups of backups is standard practice.”

Despite all of the strength conditioning, humans need to sleep.

Blacken won’t have the advantage of rowing with a crew, where members can rotate rowing and sleeping and stay on course.

That’s where her non-human partner, called an auto-helm or auto-tiller, comes into play.

“It’s an arm connected to the rudder that you can program with a compass heading within a range of tolerance,” said Blacken. “Say I’m off the oars and generally want to head 270, I’d program that in, and if it finds me going too far one way or the other, it will move the rudder. If the weather is horrendous and you’re worried about being blown off course, especially when you’re not rowing, you would throw the parachute anchor to hold your position. It’s a giant parachute that inflates with seawater that keeps you generally in the same location.”

What will help her on the ocean is using technology to communicate back to friends and loved ones, and asking them to write letters she can read during a tough day.

“It’s not just me alone in a rowboat for three months until I get back,” said Blacken. “It’s how do I bring everybody on this journey? How do I get stuff back to my social media? How can I send pictures and stories back to show what a day looks like? How can people track me when I’m out there?”

And they can track, with an app.

“It’s not just about leaving and coming back two months later,” said Blacken. “It’s about staying connected and allowing people to journey with me as I’m out there and continue that conversation about the importance of having access to trauma recovery in our lives and communities.”

This spring, she spoke in local classrooms about her upcoming journey and why she’s taking it and why it’s important to give kids the language to ask for help if they need it and talk about what they might be going

through.

Those youth, too, will be part of the journey as she seeks to communicate with and update them remotely, possibly via video chat and imparting education about ocean currents and geography, as well as trauma recovery.

“For me, that’s been a powerful piece of the mental puzzle, figuring out how to stay connected and bringing people along on that journey,” said Blacken.

Still, the reality of soon being physically alone on an ocean remains.

“Six months out now, those thoughts are crossing more, but I think another piece that is the whole point of this is a fundraiser for Outdoor Adventuring for Good,” said Blacken. “

After The Row

To date, her nonprofit has raised more than \$24,000 and has been able to make grants to trauma recovery programs in the area.

“We’re currently supporting a program for survivors of domestic abuse and sexual assault,” said Blacken. “We’re so excited to be at that point, where I haven’t yet taken to the water, but

See **Blacken**, Page 6



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Four-Month Investigation
Nets 17 Arrests

STAFF REPORTS

COOS COUNTY — Seventeen people have been arrested on various drug-related and criminal charges following a four-month investigation into narcotics activity in northern New Hampshire, authorities said.

The New Hampshire State Police Narcotics Investigations Unit, in collaboration with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's Manchester District Office, announced the arrests this week.

The joint operation aimed to disrupt the distribution of crack cocaine, fentanyl, methamphetamine and cocaine throughout the state. Charges include hindering apprehension or prosecution, fugitive from justice, possession of controlled drugs in a motor vehicle, conspiracy to commit narcotics sales, sale of controlled narcotics, and possession with intent to distribute, officials said.

Investigators seized quantities of crack cocaine, fentanyl, methamphetamine and cocaine, along with other evidence consistent with narcotics trafficking.

"This investigation reflects our ongoing commitment to working with our federal and local partners to aggressively target those responsible for fueling the opioid epidemic in our communities," said Col. Mark B. Hall, director of the New Hampshire State Police.

"The individuals arrested were part of a network contributing to the supply of dangerous drugs throughout our state. Their removal is a step toward safer neighborhoods."

The names of those arrested are: Anthony Cushing, Beth Cameron, Blake Hann, Brannan Lacourse, Brian Rancourt, Corey Rancloes, Crystal Harding, Devin Marsh, Dylan Carney, Heather Cass, Herman Rose Jr., Kelly Lacourse, Samantha Goldstein, Samantha Morabito, Sterne Toussaint, Tanya Rancloes, and Joshua Cismowski. Ages and hometowns were not provided.

"New Hampshire is in the midst of a devastating opioid crisis, as deaths from fentanyl continue," said Jarod Forget, special agent in charge of the DEA's New England Division. "These 17 individuals were specifically targeted as being responsible for the majority of the fentanyl and methamphetamine distribution in the county."

"The DEA would like to thank the New Hampshire State Police, the Colebrook Police Department, and the Berlin Police Department for their outstanding collaboration on this investigation to identify those who are contributing to the crisis."

Anyone with information that may assist the investigation is asked to contact Lt. Shane W. Larkin of the Narcotics Investigations Unit at (603) 234-0707. Anonymous tips can be sent to nabdope@dos.nh.gov.

Blacken

Continued from Page 5

we're enacting our mission, which is raising awareness of and funding for trauma recovery programs that integrate mind and body healing in northern New Hampshire. It's essential, and when you reach out, help needs to be there."

Northern New Hampshire has the most unmet primary care and mental health needs in the state, and that's where Outdoor Adventuring For Good (www.outdooradventuringforgood.org for more information or to make donations) aims to help by expanding services, she said.

A good story like rowing the Atlantic can draw people into the discussion of trauma recovery and encourage them to make the first steps toward seeking help and leaning into others for support, said Blacken.

"I think the row continues to be part of the story we tell as an organization, because that's how it started," she said. "My ocean was the Atlantic Ocean, but what's your ocean? How can people take some of this story and find their own story? What's their challenge? What's that thing they might be asking, 'What if I can instead of what if I can't?'"

The nonprofit — which has raised money through community events that included a re-

cent 5K walk/run race in Littleton that brought in \$10,000 for trauma recovery as well as a 12-hour row-athon in Franconia that is back for 2025 on Aug. 2 — can be the fundraising model for others who develop their own adventure, said Blacken.

"Our hope is to inspire and attract other people to come to our organization with a project, an outdoor adventure, to raise money," she said. "The next big adventure isn't going to be Renee rowing the Atlantic, but maybe Tom running the Appalachian Trail."

Outdoor Adventuring For Good seeks to draw in funding to support a broad range of populations.

"While currently supporting survivors of domestic abuse and sexual assault, the plan is to broaden it to support veterans, people dealing with PTSD, and anybody that's experienced acute or complex trauma and is living with the impacts those can have in their lives," said Blacken. "As an organization, we don't offer the programming, but we support programs in the region and connect people to these resources, the idea being that geography and economic situations shouldn't be a barrier to accessing these programs. The goal is to be able to provide these trauma recovery programs free to the participant and also to make sure they have the funding to run."

LITTLETON

Police Arrest Three After Stabbings At Boat Launch

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

Four people sustained stab wounds during what Littleton police said was a “chaotic” altercation at a boat launch along the shore of Moore Reservoir during a gathering of dozens of people.

Three people were arrested on unrelated warrants as police advance what they call a complicated investigation that is compounded by conflicting witness statements and some people unwilling to divulge information.

The incident drew a multi-agency response, which included a K-9 search team and off-duty first responders called in, and included a two-hour search for two people who had fled into the woods.

At about 8:37 p.m. Tuesday, Grafton County Dispatch received a report of a person being stabbed at the Dodge Hill boat launch, also known as Nocky’s Landing, at the end of Old Waterford Road in Littleton.

Officers from the Littleton Police Department responded immediately and determined that four people had sustained minor lacerations resulting from an altercation involving edged weapons and all four individuals had fled into the surrounding woods prior to police arrival, Littleton police of-

ficials said in a statement issued Wednesday.

The scene was chaotic, and about 40 people were present, they said.

A search of the wooded area near the boat landing led to the discovery of two of the individuals, who were located by officers and returned to the landing, where they were treated for minor injuries.

The Littleton Police Department was assisted by the New Hampshire State Police, Franconia police, and Littleton Fire Rescue.

LFR treated two people at the scene for non-life-threatening injuries. They were not transported to Littleton Regional Healthcare.

A search was launched for the two individuals who fled, and NHSP deployed a K-9 tracking unit to assist the effort.

Shortly after 11 p.m., they were found on North Littleton Road and treated for minor injuries.

All four people involved in the altercation — a 21-year-old female, a 29-year-old male, a 21-year-old male, and an 18-year-old male — were detained for questioning.

Numerous witnesses were interviewed, though not all were forthcoming with information, said police.

Because of the number of people present and conflicting accounts, the investigation remains active.



On Tuesday night, Littleton Fire Rescue set up a staging area at Moore Reservoir in response to what turned out to be four people suffering stab-related injuries at Nocky’s Landing. (Contributed photo)

Unrelated to the primary investigation, three people were arrested at the scene:

- * Carlie Mason, 21, of Laconia, who was arrested on a superior court warrant and transported to the Grafton County House of Corrections.
- * Dominic Sumner, 29, of Jonesville, North Carolina, and also of Dalton, who was arrested on a superior court warrant and transported to the GCHOC.
- * Danielle F. Leach, 39, of Littleton, who was arrested on a superior court warrant and transported to the GCHOC.

The case remains an open and active criminal investigation.

If sufficient evidence is gathered, felony indictments will be sought.

On Wednesday, Littleton Police Chief Paul Smith said his department is currently not

ing with accurate information. We’re trying to flesh out the incident. There were a lot of witnesses that were not involved that provided good information, and we appreciate those individuals coming forward. This is a multi-layered investigation. Most likely, we would consult with the county attorney’s office with the evidence that we have to proceed with indictments.”

That process will involve sifting through all the numerous statements and collecting more evidence.

“The case has a lot of different layers and we need to do our due diligence and proceed in the appropriate manner and at the appropriate speed and not rush to conclusions and take an incorrect course action,” said Smith.

Such incidents involving dozens of people and multiple people injured from assaults are not frequent, he said.

“The amount of people involved and the remoteness of the location makes these kinds of cases difficult, but not impossible,” he said. “It takes

time to investigate them.”

Police urge any members of the public who might have witnessed the incident or who have relevant information to contact the Littleton Police Department at 603-444-7711.

There is no ongoing threat to the public at this time, said Smith.

Out of respect for the integrity of the investigation and those involved, Smith said no additional information will be released at the present time.

LFR Sets Up Incident Staging

In his report to the public, Littleton Fire Rescue Chief Chad Miller described the staging put into place by first responders and said the initial call was quickly upgraded when dispatch reported people screaming in the woods and additional persons stabbed.

Ambulance 1 went en route and requested the availability of air medical.

A staffing recall was transmitted, bringing in off-duty and call members.

See **Stabbing**, Page 11



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U.S. DISTRICT COURT

Local Crypto Swindler To Forfeit \$2.25 Million

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

A Bethlehem man who in February pleaded guilty to his part in an international crypto-currency scheme that prosecutors said defrauded investors out of millions of dollars has agreed to forfeit more than \$2 million in exchange for keeping his house.

In a court filing made on Monday, Thomas "Papa" Smith, 36, is scheduled to be sentenced on Nov. 25 at New York State's eastern district federal court, where he was charged with two co-defendants.

On Feb. 20, Smith pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit securities fraud and conspiracy to commit wire fraud in exchange for prosecutors dismissing a count of conspiracy to commit money laundering.

According to the order of forfeiture, Smith has consented to the entry of a forfeiture money judgment in the amount

of \$2,250,322.96 "in lieu of the forfeiture of the real property and premises located at 240 Valley View Lane, Bethlehem, New Hampshire, and all proceeds traceable thereto, as any property, real or personal, constituting, or derived from, proceeds obtained directly or indirectly as a result of the defendant's violations ..."

The proceeds are payable to the court's asset recovery section, and must be paid in full 30 days prior to his date of sentencing.

If not paid, Smith shall forfeit any other property up to the value of his outstanding balance.

He is also required to assist the government with the payment, including executing necessary documents, and shall not file a claim or petition contesting any forfeiture.

The forfeiture is not considered payment of a fine, penalty, restitution, loss amount, or a payment of any income taxes that might be due, and will sur-



Thomas "Papa" Smith.

vive any bankruptcy action.

Smith's 80-acre Bethlehem property, which he purchased in 2021, sits at the end of Valley View Lane. It is the former Highlands Inn, which features 14 bedrooms, a heated outdoor swimming pool, and spas.

The property has a current total assessed value of \$965,000, according to town property records.

In 2023, a grand jury indicted Smith and co-defendants

Braden John Karony, of Provo, Utah, who served as CEO of the Utah-registered SafeMoon US LLC, and Kyle Nagy, of Vero Beach, Florida.

In 2021, according to court documents, Smith became a principal of SafeMoon and called himself its technology officer.

Afterward, prosecutors said he lied to investors and directed their money to his purchases of property, personal investments, and luxury cars.

From 2021 through 2023, SafeMoon used a public blockchain technology to issue a digital asset called SafeMoon Token (SFM), which was a decentralized digital currency not tied to a centralized authority through a bank or government.

For each SFM investor transaction, a 10-percent tax was imposed.

At one time, the SFM asset reached a market capitalization of more than \$8 billion and had more than 2 million holders.

During that time, authorities

said the trio retained access to the SFM liquidity pools to intentionally misappropriate and divert millions of dollars worth of tokens intended for investors.

Although denying publicly that they held or traded SFM, the defendants repeatedly bought and sold SFM for their benefit, including at the peak of SFM's market price, which generated profits in the millions of dollars, said prosecutors.

Smith, for example, using crypto-currency addresses he controlled, sent 2,900 Binance Coin (BNB) worth more than \$860,000 and traceable to the SFM liquidity pool to a third party's crypto-currency address in order to purchase a custom Porsche 911 sports car and non-fungible token, they said.

As investors acquired SFM, thereby pushing up its market capitalization, the trio secretly misappropriated and diverted millions of dollars in investors' funds, laundered them through a number of financial trans-

actions created to hide their scheme, and used the money for their personal gain, said authorities.

Smith and his partners engaged in what prosecutors called a "rug pull," a term used to describe a scheme in which the issuer of a digital asset solicits money from prospective asset investors while promising them certain benefits.

Once the purchasers' money is used to buy the digital asset, the developers then abruptly abandon the project and fail to deliver the promised benefits while fraudulently retaining the purchasers' money, said prosecutors.

Under federal statute, a count of wire fraud carries a maximum prison sentence of up to 20 years. A count of securities fraud carries a maximum of 25 years.

In September, Smith, who is represented by three attorneys from the federal defenders office, unsuccessfully asked the court to dismiss his charges.

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Florida Tourist Found Dead On Mount Washington

The body of a 79-year-old Florida man was found on Mt. Washington on Friday during the third day of an extensive search for the man who wandered away from the summit.

About 11 a.m. on Friday, volunteer searchers located the body of William Davis, of Jacksonville, Fla., 400 feet off Lion Head Trail between Alpine Garden Trail and Tuckerman Ravine Trail, reported Lieutenant Mark W. Ober, Jr. from

the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. Davis had ascended the mountain by Cog Railway on Wednesday and was last seen in the observation deck area of the summit at 3:20 p.m. that day.

A full scale rescue began after 6 p.m. Wednesday and continued into early Thursday. After a brief suspension until daylight, the search resumed throughout Thursday until it was suspended again for the

night. The search began in earnest again on Friday morning.

Once Davis's body was found, an Army National Guard Blackhawk Helicopter encountered heavy winds and cloud cover, the lieutenant reported, but found a window of opportunity just before 1 p.m. to land nearby and remove the body.

Lt. Ober said the cause of Davis's death will be determined through an autopsy by the State Medical Examiner's

Office, but officials do know that Davis fell.

"It was clear at the scene that Davis suffered a significant fall from a steep, rocky slope," reported the lieutenant.

Lt. Ober said the Fish and Game Department is grateful to all volunteer and staff rescuers "who worked tirelessly to bring Davis back to his family."

It was a "tragic end to a tough search mission," he said.



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Cannon Tramway Nears Closure In Preparation Of Replacement

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

In operation for 45 years, the second-generation Cannon Mountain Aerial Tramway is set to wind down public operations and retire sometime in the autumn to prepare for its replacement, a project that is likely to suspend tram operations for two years.

For the better part of a century, the tram has been among New Hampshire's top attractions, and in recent years, it has generated about \$2 million annually in revenue for the state and the mountain.

On Tuesday, following the state's announcement on Monday, Jace Wirth, general manager of the state-owned Cannon Mountain Ski Area and Franconia Notch State Park, provided some updates and stated that the timeline remains fluid.

The replacement was boosted with a \$27.2 million state appropriation in House Bill 25.

"We have more capital resources anticipated, too, but the \$27.2 million in House Bill 25 is tremendous and shows the state supports the project," he said. "It gets us going on the right track and gets this project going again. That's an important key to all of this, including the structural analysis and the rebidding of the tram. It's a tremendously exciting time for the mountain and the state."

A date for when exactly the 80-passenger tram will cease public operations and when its replacement could be up and running is still being determined. Residents will be provided with updates on these and other matters later in the summer, said Wirth.

"It's pretty early in the process, and it's hard to commit to a date," he said. "It takes a little while to design and engineer these types of systems. It's something we can continue to provide updates on."

Generally, similar projects take about two years, he said. "There's a lot of variables, but the process is underway, the planning is underway, and we're grateful for the investment from the state," said Wirth.

The project will begin with a structural analysis of the existing towers, terminals, and foundations to confirm a possible renovation strategy for those components, if they can continue to be used.

"That will help us refine some of the design and load considerations for the next-generation tram," he said. "For sure, we're going to release details on an active and ongoing basis."

Although Cannon Mountain has several ski lifts, skiers have traditionally used the tram to reach the summit, which stands at 4,080 feet.

As the ski season approaches, alternative transportation options are being explored. "Utility use is ongoing and is going to require ongoing review," said Wirth. "It will be an important part of what we do going forward. That's still to be determined, and we're working closely with the New Hampshire Passenger Tramway Safety Board, Doppelmayer Service Partners, and others to develop a plan there."

Summit access will involve chairlifts. "Some of the access will continue to come by way of Peabody and Cannonball, and the summit facilities will remain open," said Wirth. "There will be no real change to summit amenities and services. It's a good lift system and a good ski experience. It's very well balanced. Summit access will be maintained by way of Cannonball ... Cannon's summit facilities, including Summit Lodge and 4080, will remain open this winter. We are actively planning for the winter present-

ly."

Also being explored is finding ways and alternatives to offset revenue loss from suspended tram operations.

"It's a work in progress and involves both revenue and disciplined financial management," said Wirth. "We've got some great contemporary processes and controls."

Cannon Mountain is home to the nation's first aerial tramway, launched in 1938, and is the only mountain in North America to reach a third-generation tram.

Since 1980, the current tram has carried more than nine million passengers to the summit, covering a one-mile span in less than seven minutes, making it one of the most iconic lifts in the East, state officials said in Monday's announcement.

The additional capital resources for the replacement are pending approval from the New Hampshire Governor and Council.

"The Cannon tram is a symbol of New Hampshire," Sarah Stewart, commissioner of the New Hampshire Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, said

in a statement. "Governor Ayotte has declared 2025 the 'Year of New Hampshire State Parks,' and this project ensures we continue investing in our most treasured places. We're excited for what's ahead."

Wirth said he's excited about the state's investment in the third-generation tram.


"The next-generation tram system is coming soon," he said. "This is a moment we've been preparing for. While we know the transition will bring change, it's also an opportunity to honor the legacy of the tram while ensuring we move forward with purpose."

It's premature to say if the tram will have the same look as the existing two-car tram system, the red and yellow cars nicknamed


"Ketchup" and "Mustard."

"We still have quite a bit of work to do, starting first with the structural analysis on existing infrastructure," said Wirth. "Some of those findings will help dictate what the end design looks like and what it is. There are still some details we have to work out, but it's an exciting future ahead ... Our mission is to provide outstanding experiences through responsible management and cooperative stewardship. The next-generation system will continue to build on the legacy of Tram I and Tram II toward this end — an engineering marvel, an icon of and asset to New Hampshire, and an incredible guest experience found in few other places in North America."


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LPD Partners With State, County For Homophobic Spray Paint Investigation

One month after a Nazi SS symbol and a homophobic slur were spray-painted on a Mill Street storefront, local police are partnering with Grafton County and the New Hampshire attorney general's office for the investigation.

The business targeted in the

early morning hours of June 21, possibly around 1:40 a.m., was the Fenix Highlanders Club Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, which is a short walk across the footbridge from where the first annual North Country Pride Fest was held that afternoon.

A month later, no arrests have

been made, but Littleton Police Chief Paul Smith said the law enforcement partners continue to move forward with the investigation, and considerable time has been devoted to it.

"Since the first week of this incident, we have collaborated very closely with the attorney

general's office," he said. "They have an individual who's assigned to civil rights violations and hate crimes. We're also working with the county attorney's office. They're working jointly with us as we move forward in this investigation ... We've put a lot of hours into

this case We continue to move forward on it ... We're partnering up with a lot of good people and a lot of investigators."

It still hasn't been determined if the incident meets the threshold under New Hampshire statute to qualify as a hate crime.

"Right off the bat, it is hateful, but to prove the crime and call something hate speech criminally is a standard we have to prove," said Smith. "If we can connect all of those dots and prove those things, we will bring them to justice."

--By Robert Blechl

Littleton Bucks Population Growth Trends In North Country, New Report Shows

LITTLETON — A new report from the New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute highlights how Littleton stands out as an exception in New Hampshire's population shifts, showing little to no growth while other parts of the North Country inch upward.

Released this month, the NHFPI analysis found that while New Hampshire's population grew by an estimated 30,300 people between 2020 and 2024 — a 2.2 percent increase — the gains

were uneven and driven largely by amenity-rich regions such as the Lakes Region and White Mountains. In contrast, many northern and interior communities saw stagnation or decline.

Littleton, with a population of just over 6,000 in the 2020 Census, showed minimal change over the past decade, making it one of the more notable outliers. Unlike southern and lakeside towns attracting retirees and remote workers, Littleton has

not shared in the recent wave of in-migration.

Migration — both domestic and international — accounted for all of New Hampshire's growth during the period, the report said. Natural population change (births minus deaths) was negative statewide.

Yet within the northern tier, one area did see modest gains: the Profile School District towns of Bethlehem, Franconia, Easton, and Sugar Hill. Together, they

added more than 100 residents since 2020. That growth, while modest compared to southern hotspots, stands out in Coös and northern Grafton counties.

"Most of the state's recent population increases occurred in areas with natural amenities or proximity to recreation," the NHFPI report stated. "These areas have drawn older adults, retirees, and people with the flexibility to work remotely."

Coös County — the state's

northernmost and least populous — remains largely unchanged demographically. With just over 30,000 residents, the region still trails booming southern counties, and even moderate growth in places like Carroll and Grafton counties.

Lancaster, the county seat, had 3,218 residents in 2020, with about 1,900 in the central village. Like Littleton, it has seen little movement in either direction, reflecting broader regional patterns of flat growth.

Experts say persistent barriers — including a lack of child care, high housing costs, and limited broadband — continue to make it difficult for many northern towns to attract and retain younger families.

As New Hampshire's population approaches 1.4 million, the NHFPI report suggests that demographic shifts are likely to deepen regional divides unless new policies address workforce housing and rural infrastructure needs.

BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS & SERVICES GUIDE



Repairs

Continued from Page 2

And team leaders never know how a first-time student population will work.

"Most of these kids haven't worked a full day, never mind a full week," said Therrien.

On hand are several people skilled in the trades who will oversee several sites and offer expertise for the person on the ground, he said.

Plans are in place before any work begins, and building inspectors are consulted for all jobs that require their expertise.

"In March and April, we're visiting the families, who know it's coming and are comfortable with kids doing the work," said Therrien.

Different-colored shirts differentiate between first-time students and those who have returned after several years.

Placey-Dube and Lique appreciated the help.

"We live together," said Lique. "We lost both our husbands the same year. We help take care of each other."

They had been looking to make a second egress for a while. "They put in a little stoop

and stairs so we have a back entrance if we have to get out of the house," said Placey-Dube. "We were a couple of years without. We had a deck out back, but it wasn't safe and the steps were all rotting."

The youth crew, which was seated for dinner with the two sisters, began working at their home on Monday.

Placey-Dube said it was a good team.

"They are fantastic," said Lique. "The kids were unreal. They really did a fantastic job. They were a blessing to us."

One team member for Placey-Dube and Lique was Aaron Modini, a freshman at Londonderry High School, who came up with St. Mark the Evangelist Church in Londonderry. It's his third time visiting work-campNE towns.

"I enjoy helping all the people and meeting all the residents," he said.

Nilhas thanked SAU 84 operations director Dale Prior and his custodial staff and LHS/DBMS principal Al Smith for their support.

"Dale said it's a great thing to do for the community and was the biggest fan from the get-go," said Nilhas.

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Stabbing

Continued from Page 7

A staging area was established at Old Waterford Road, where Ambulance 1 was joined Ambulance 2 while Littleton police secured the scene, said Miller.

“With the scene secured, a command post was established at the boat launch,” he said.

“Ambulance 3 was staffed and held in quarters. Two victims were treated and released for minor injuries while a search was conducted for two victims who were reportedly stabbed, but fled into the woods ... Our crews responded quickly and worked closely with Littleton Police Department and other law enforcement to provide immediate care to the injured. Two individuals were treated

on scene for minor wounds, while two others had fled into the surrounding woods prior to our arrival. With injured people missing in the woods, it was critical we ensured everyone who was on scene was accounted for and safe. We remain committed to supporting our public safety partners and ensuring the well-being of everyone involved.”

Those Arrested

According to court records, Leach, who has also lived in East Concord, Vt., failed to appear at a June 6 Grafton Superior Court hearing for three felony charges of possessing cocaine, fentanyl, and methamphetamine in Littleton in March 2023.

On Wednesday, following her arrest on Tuesday, she attended a hearing for bail, which was set at \$2,000 cash with

conditions.

In March 2024, Leach and Nathan Lounsbury, 34, were arrested in Lunenburg after police said a pound of methamphetamine was found in a camper on the River Road property. Leach was charged with felony intent to sell or dispense meth and possession of brass knuckles and a slingshot.

On Monday, Sumner failed to appear at a Grafton Superior

Court hearing on a felony charge of possessing fentanyl in Littleton in June 2024.

On June 9, Mason failed to appear for a Coos Superior Court hearing for violating a court order in a 2023 felony burglary case in Northumberland that Coos prosecutors later downgraded in return for her pleading guilty to a misdemeanor count of criminal trespass.

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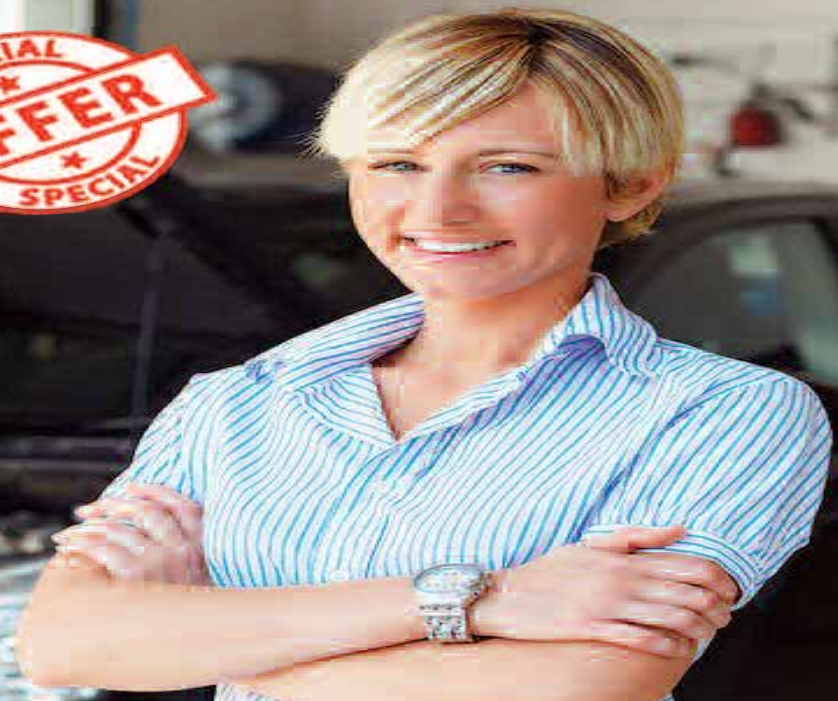
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