



NEW HAMPSHIRE
UNION LEADER
WEDNESDAY, NOV. 27, 2024 • PAGE C1

Enjoy sweet and savory goodies

Set your GPS for the White Mountains

Lodging packages are available for Dec. 14-15 Cookie Tour; limited number of individual tickets go on sale starting Dec. 2.

By Kathleen D. Bailey
Special to the Union Leader

THERE'S A SANTA STATUE sitting in the back of Jill Marinau's car, and the general manager of the Purity Spring Resort couldn't be happier. Come December, her St. Nick will welcome visitors for the first time to the Inn to Inn Cookie Tour, a 27-year White Mountains tradition.

This year's Cookie Tour will be held Dec. 14 and 15 and welcomes both guests from the eight participating inns and the general public to sample fresh-baked cookies, enjoy the decked halls of the inns, and take home not only goodies but a sample of the Christmas spirit.

The tour is sponsored by the Country Inns of the White Mountains, a professional organization. Tim Ostendorf is the current president of the group.

Ostendorf and his partner Bobby Barker bought the Inn at Crystal Springs, Eaton Center, in 2001. They went on the tour themselves in 2002 at the request of friends who formerly owned the Snowvillage Inn, and were immediately drawn in by the goodwill and the goodies. They signed on. "The only year we didn't do it was 2020," Ostendorf said.

In the past the tour has featured up to 16 inns, but Ostendorf likes the current size of eight. "It's more manageable," he said.

Ostendorf tells new participants to "make a lot of cookies" (his goal is 2,000) and "be nice to people."

He doesn't remember what he and Barker baked that first year, but he noted that one of their most popular cookies was a cornmeal-apricot-sage concoction. "It was a little bit sweet, a little bit savory," he recalled.

Each inn is responsible for serving two varieties of cookies, and he and Barker veer toward the classic and simple. "We want it to be something you can actually make at home," he said.

He doesn't remember any 'failed' cookies, but pointed out that the owners test them for weeks in advance and make little tweaks.

Ostendorf and Barker's plans for this year's tour include a Boston-based cabaret singer and pianist playing the songs of the season. The atmosphere will be festive but low-key, with tour-goers welcome to gather round the piano and sing along. "It's heart-warming," he said, "to

Eight stops on this year's Inn to Inn Cookie Tour

The Farmstand B&B <i>Tamworth</i>	Snowvillage Inn <i>Eaton</i>	Inn at Ellis River <i>Jackson</i>	Cranmore Mountain Lodge <i>North Conway</i>
◆	◆	◆	◆
Inn at Crystal Lake <i>Eaton</i>	Samuel O'Reilly House <i>North Conway</i>	Christmas Farm Inn <i>Jackson</i>	Purity Spring Resort <i>East Madison</i>



BILL LEE

► See **Cookies**, Page C4 The Inn at Ellis River, Jackson, offered these treats as part of last year's Inn to Inn Cookie Tour.

'Tis the season to meet the artisans

Three upcoming GNE Craft & Artisans Shows

Holiday Craft Market
at LaBelle Winery
Derry
Nov. 29-20

◆
Holiday Shopping
Extravaganza
at Nashua Community
Nashua
Dec. 7-8

◆
Holiday Handmade Market
at the University
of New Hampshire
Durham
Dec. 13-14



CASSIOPEIA TURCOTTE

Artist Cassiopeia Turcotte has sold her one-of-a-kind resin art at Greater New England Craft & Artisans Shows.

Shopping at artisan shows and craft fairs is a staple of the New England holiday season

The artists look forward to meeting customers and discussing their work with interested buyers this time of year.

By Kaarin L. Clausen
Special to the Union Leader

THE SEASON OF HUSTLE and bustle has arrived, and with it comes a long list of holiday to-dos — from crafting a delicious meal and selecting the perfect tree to making travel arrangements for family members and sending out holiday cards. One item on the list, however, might feel more like an enjoyable day out rather than just another holiday chore — shopping for one-of-a-kind gifts at the Great New England Craft & Artisan Shows.

The brainchild of owner and director Jody Donohue, the Great New England Craft & Artisan Shows (GNE) is entering its ninth year. Each event is carefully cu-

rated by Donohue and features an array of products and activities that cater to different interests and preferences. For Donohue, it's not just about the shopping; it's about the whole experience.

"Our shows are curated, and we limit the number of products at each event," said Donohue. "You're not going to come in and find all jewelry or candles at one of our shows. We're very selective about the products we put into each category. For our holiday shows this year, we received over 1,800 applications, but we only select about 100-200 carefully chosen vendors per event. We really pick and choose what we want to put in the shows."

Donohue also infuses each event

► See **Artisans**, Page C2

Artisans

From Page C1

with an abundance of holiday spirit. Highlights of November and December events feature visits by Santa, door prizes, lunch options and cocktails (sip and shop), and festive holiday music. Each show draws between 2,000 and 4,000 attendees.

One may wonder what the difference is between an artisan and a crafter. Donahue explained that a crafter is someone who takes materials that already exist and puts them together to create something. They might have assistance from a machine, or they may put together different items to create the finished product. An example of this could be a card maker. An artisan is someone who begins with raw materials and creates something out of those materials, such as skincare products made with honey. In this example, the artisan collects the honey, pasteurizes it and creates something that can be used for personal care.

“We have thousands of products at our shows,” Donohue said. “I just can’t market these artisans and craftsmen enough. I try to provide a platform for them to offer the community these products and give them exposure. It’s why I do this.”

Upcoming events

• The Great New England Holiday Craft Market at LaBelle Winery, Derry; Black Friday, Nov. 29, noon to 9 p.m. and Small Business Saturday, Nov. 30, noon to 9 p.m.

This show is partnered with LaBelle Lights — an outdoor lighting experience featuring millions of twinkling lights that illuminate magical displays along a walking path. The craft and artisan show will have 50 booths of handmade creations — a perfect opportunity for holiday shoppers to find one-of-a-kind gifts, while also supporting local artists and small businesses.

• The Great New England Holiday Shopping Extravaganza at Nashua Community College, Nashua; Saturday, Dec. 7, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Sunday, Dec. 8, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

This favorite Southern New Hampshire holiday show features

85 fine artisans, craftsmen and specialty food creators, now in its eighth year.

• The Great New England Holiday Handmade Market at UNH, Durham; Friday, Dec. 13, 4 to 8 p.m. and Saturday, Dec. 14, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Whittemore Center at UNH will be transformed into a holiday wonderland at the 2nd annual Fine Handmade Holiday Market, featuring more than 100 craftsmen, artisans and specialty food makers displaying and offering their handmade products. Additional highlights include a visit from Santa, food offerings, holiday music, door prizes and raffles and easy parking in Lot A. Admission is \$6, with ages 14 and under free. Entrance is free for UNH students, faculty and staff (with photo ID). Entry is valid for both days.

Meet The Artful Carver

Paul Ringuette, also known as “The Artful Carver,” has participated in the Great New England Craft & Artisan Shows for the past three years. Ringuette creates artistic and whimsical items out of wood, such as American flags, time and tide clocks of New England landmarks and waterways, and coasters featuring sports teams and stadiums. He started his “serious hobby” four years ago after being inspired by a talented graphic designer he had worked with in previous years.

The Portsmouth-based artist began by learning some design basics on YouTube. Ringuette then decided he wanted to create artistic pieces that were tangible. He experimented with the Dremel high-speed rotary tool and eventually progressed to CNC and laser machines to cut his wood designs.

“What I do is functional art,” Ringuette said. “They are typically everyday items, but sort of different and often conversation pieces. I think a lot of people found that to be interesting.”

Ringuette started his business by making clocks specific to different geographical areas, such as the Lakes Region and Cape Cod. Made of quarter-inch Baltic birch wood, locally sourced from



PAUL RINGUETTE

Artist Paul Ringuette, the creative mind behind The Artful Carver, creates functional art like clocks and coasters featuring New England landmarks and bodies of water.

Vermont, the clocks come in four sizes: 8-, 14-, 22.5- and 30-inch. They have proven to be one of Ringuette’s top sellers at craft and artisan shows, as well as on his website (theartfulcarver.myshopify.com). The inspiration for his new projects is typically derived from customer feedback.

“The items I make have been a progression of what I feel is interesting,” he said. “I never approach it as what’s going to make me the most money. I think a lot of artisans and crafters approach it that way. I just keep iterating on customer feedback and what people ask me to design or make.”

The Great New England Craft & Artisan Shows are among Ringuette’s favorite shows, specifically because of the passion and dedication of owner and director Donahue.

“These shows are sort of a mission of Jody’s,” he said. “She really loves what she does, and it shows. She’s very organized and does a great job of marketing, creating awareness about the shows and getting people in the doors.”

This year, Ringuette’s work has doubled, and he’s slated to finish the year with about 40 shows

under his belt for 2024. Part of the satisfaction he receives from his work is putting smiles on the faces of his customers when they order or purchase an item depicting a region close to their heart.

“The thing that I’ve found is that people just love where they live and where they work,” he said. “People go crazy over having something that connects them to where they live. And that’s part of the fun of what I do. I love creating something that enhances and emphasizes that they are local to an area. And people appreciate that.”

To learn more about The Artful Carver, visit Instagram @paul-ringuette2024 or Facebook @artfulcarverportsmouth.

Discover Cassiopeia: Art through items lost then found

Treasure hunting has always played a vital role in the artistic endeavors of Maine artist Cassiopeia Turcotte and her family. From a young age, Turcotte learned from her artist mother and aunt that, often, the most simple and unconventional items can be turned into stunning visual displays. Her mother, who owned a business named “Barn-

tiques,” would turn reclaimed old barn wood — usually found by Turcotte and her father — into unique artistic pieces featuring birds, Santas and snowmen on wooden shingles, ladder prongs and beams.

“I grew up in a family where art was celebrated at home, but we were also treasure hunters,” Turcotte said. “I also grew up in a quarry, digging for rocks and gems. It’s been a lifelong hobby, which led to metal detecting and digging for bottles in the woods. I would find things out in nature and think, ‘What can I do with these?’”

Turcotte found her calling while visiting her aunt one weekend in northern Maine; she was invited to a class on making resin windows. She took the knowledge she acquired from the class and applied it to her own version of resin art — combining both natural and vintage elements with resin to create one-of-a-kind creations. Her art has charmed visitors at the Great New England Craft & Artisan Shows for the past three years.

“I’m like Indiana Jones

► See Artisans, Page C3



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Artisans

— schoolteacher in Groveton on weekdays and treasure hunter on weekends. I also lead student trips overseas and while I'm there, I'll fill baggies with sand from beaches across Greece or pick up sea glass from Salzburg. When creating a piece, I put down a frame and think about what would fit into it, such as a piece of driftwood that goes well with an artifact I found at a vintage market. I move everything around until I finally like it and then I pour in the resin."

Turcotte tailors the pieces she brings to shows on the aesthetic of the locations, such as lighthouse, crabs and lobster motifs for a Seacoast event or loons, moose and bear themes for shows in the North Woods. Participating in Donohue's shows was a huge artistic steppingstone for Turcotte, as they were the first shows she attended that were juried.

"It was scary for me to go into a show that was juried because I was still pretty fresh with being an 'artisan,'" Turcotte said. "At my first show, however, I didn't have a lull in traffic for two straight days. People loved to have conversations about my pieces because something might have reminded them

of a knick-knack in their grandmother's house. Or they might realize that a particular piece had sand from Normandy Beach worked into it, and then they'd tell me about their grandfather. People would look at every single piece in the tent."

Shared human experiences, as well as Donohue's interest in her work, has not only provided more exposure to Turcotte's work but has also increased the confidence she has in her own abilities. She credits a lot of her success at the Great New England Craft & Artisan Shows with Donohue's expertise in advertising, social media and attention paid to the competition.

Turcotte also acknowledges that people increasingly have a desire to purchase items and gifts that display a personal touch from the gift giver as well as by the artist who created them.

"I think what sets these shows apart from others is that when people come into an artisan market, they're appreciating that someone's hands and time went into creating the artwork. It's all about the human connection."

To learn more about Cassiopeia, visit Facebook @ CassiopeiaLostandFound.



Finished works by Cassiopeia Turcotte, who arranges items inside a frame and secures them using resin.



From Page C2

Exeter plans Holiday Block Party for Dec. 5

The Exeter Area Chamber of Commerce and Exeter Parks and Recreation Department will host a Holiday Block Party in downtown Exeter on Thursday, Dec. 5, kicking off at 4 p.m.

A delightful mix of holiday music, from classic carols to the latest hits, will be provided by the Exeter High School Vocal Ensemble and Party Time DJ. New this year, Santa makes a grand entrance on his sleigh. At 5 p.m., Santa will head to the bandstand to help light the town for the holidays. Before or after visiting Santa, have pictures taken on Santa's sleigh, stationed right in front of the Exeter Town Office building. The sleigh, along with Santa, bids farewell at 6:45 p.m.

Stroll through local businesses, offering up holiday gifts for everyone. Visit the Festival of Trees in Town Hall and Gingerbread House contest at the Congregational Church — both of which support the Community Children's Fund providing warm clothing and blankets for local families in need. Visit the American Independence Museum for tours, crafts and refreshments.

Jennifer Wheeler, president of the Exeter Area Chamber of Commerce, said, "This holiday bash is a staple for families in the Exeter Area. We're gearing up for a fantastic evening, bringing our community together to revel in the holiday spirit and support our local businesses."

Greg Bisson, Parks and Recreation director, added, "This is one event that makes Exeter magical and the entire town looks forward to."

Visit exeterarea.org for more information.

Canterbury Shaker Village hosts Symphony NH on Dec. 7


Canterbury Shaker Village invites Granite Staters to celebrate the season with music from the Symphony NH String Quartet.

"Merry Merry Canterbury Concert and Cocktails" is scheduled for 4 to 7 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 7.

The event leads off with the concert in the Dwelling House Chapel at 4 p.m., followed by a festive reception with appetizers and drinks in the Hubbard Gallery.

Tickets cost \$35 per person, and seating is limited to 60 seats. Visit shakers.org to purchase tickets or to learn more about the concert.

Sitting on nearly 700 acres, Canterbury Shaker Village features 30 historic building and a network of nature trails, ponds and gardens for outdoor exploration. The Village offers guided tours for families, small and large groups, as well as school groups. After a tour, visitors are invited to enjoy a nature walk or visit the Museum Store.



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Cookies

From Page C1

see a half-dozen people singing together who don't know each other."

While some hosts feature several trees, Ostendorf and Barker will have one. In recognition of being gay, they've planned a rainbow tree. "It's hard," he said, "to find plain yellow Christmas ornaments."

This year the innkeepers are looking at a "high energy" cookie incorporating oats, apricots and walnuts. Their second creation: a cinnamon-chocolate cookie with a tang. "I may add a little cayenne," Ostendorf mused.

While Marineau has never personally participated in the tour, her sales manager, Heidi Glavin, has been a cookie-sampler for several years. "It puts you in the holiday spirit," Glavin said. "And the cookies are fantastic."

The tour was a bit of a "busman's holiday" for Glavin, who said, "The hosts were inns I'd never gotten to visit before."

Like Ostendorf, she likes the current size of eight participants, observing, "In other years there were more inns, and they were really spread out. Visiting them was more of a rush."

While Glavin doesn't remember any particular inn for its holiday style, she does remember her favorite

cookie, from an inn that no longer exists. "It was the Lavender Flower Inn, and they did a lemon-lavender cookie," she recalled. "Another inn did a savory pastry, and that was a nice contrast with all those sweets."

Glavin observed that some tourgoers become saturated with all the sugar, and they bring plastic containers to hold the leftovers.

Marineau is already planning her decorations. She's aiming for a "classy and classic" vibe. For cookies she's settled on a "soft gingersnap" and a Peppermint Chocolate Krinkle. "They are classic and simple," she said.

And both Marineau and Ostendorf urge their guests, "Do try this at home." Tourgoers receive a keepsake cookbook containing all the cookie recipes.

Longtime participants in the tour include The Farmstand B&B in Tamworth; Inn at Crystal Lake and Snowvillage Inn in Eaton; the Samuel O'Reilly House in North Conway; and in Jackson, the Inn at Ellis River. Newcomers this year are the Christmas Farm Inn in Jackson, Cranmore Mountain Lodge in North Conway and Purity Spring Resort in East Madison.

Each participating inn offers a VIP Lodging Pack-



Tim Ostendorf, co-owner of the Inn at Crystal Lake, chats with visitors during last year's Inn to Inn Cookie Tour.

age including two-night accommodations, two tour tickets (\$70 value), the 2024 Holiday Recipe Cookbook, a keepsake ornament and the chance to win a \$250 getaway gift certificate from the Country Inns of the White Mountains. Some inns offer sleigh rides, dinners or live music as part of the package. For

more information on all lodging packages, visit the Cookie Tour packages page at countryinnsinthewhitewhitemountains.com.

A limited number of single day tickets will be offered for sale Dec. 2-8. Single tickets cost \$35 per person by purchasing tickets online at cookietour.square.site.



The Farmstand B&B in Tamworth showed its holiday style in last year's Inn to Inn Cookie Tour.



Gingerbread people were on the menu last year at the Inn to Inn Cookie Tour at the Inn at Ellis River, Jackson.

Brookford Farm presents 'Christmas with the Cows' for two weekends

Brookford Farm will host "Christmas with the Cows" — two weekends of German-inspired holiday cheer — from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Nov. 30-Dec. 1 and Dec. 7-8.

Sing holiday classics with the cows at this family-friendly event. Peruse the German

Christmas market featuring local vendors, and explore the farm store stocked with specialty items and gifts to treat your loved ones.

Other activities will include make your own candles, decorate a wreath, and pick the perfect pre-cut Christmas tree to

bring the festivities home. Swing by the seasonal farm-to-table food tent for a hearty menu of German wurst, sauerkraut, and hot mulled beverages. Taste the traditional flavors of Opa's Goulash and Oma's Dresdner Stollen.

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 - Professional photography mini-sessions with the animals
 - Campfire and hayrides
 - Holiday music and cheer

- Musician-led caroling with the cows from 3 to 5 p.m. daily
- General admission (13 and older): \$10 in advance or \$15 at the door; children (ages 3-12): \$7 in advance or \$10 at the door; and free for kids 2 and under. No pets please. Visit brookfordfarm.com to learn more.

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Holiday happenings at The Rocks Christmas Tree Farm

If you are craving the scent of natural balsam fir or Fraser fir, look no further than The Forest Society's Christmas Tree Farm at The Rocks located at 113 Glessner Road in Bethlehem. For over 35 years, The Rocks Christmas Tree Farm has welcomed families and visitors during the holiday season for cut-your-own trees, wreaths, gifts, and the quintessential holiday experience.

Described by many as a "modern-day Norman Rockwell Christmas scene," The Rocks offers row upon row of trees on its 40 acres of fields in Bethlehem. Jack Savage, president of the Society for the Protection of N.H. Forests, agreed. "For many Granite Staters and visitors, selecting and cutting

down a Christmas Tree is a family tradition that creates treasured memories. We take that tradition seriously at The Rocks. Each one of our 26,000 trees was hand-pruned this summer, with thousands ready for harvesting. From mowing paths, to shearing and shaping the trees, to planting for the next year, care for the trees is a years-long endeavor, culminating in this most joyous season."

Visitors can wander the farm in search of their perfect family tree. All trees this year will be cut-your-own — fresh-cut trees will not be offered. Unlike other tree farms, proceeds from The Rocks Christmas trees help support forest conservation across New Hampshire. And the tree you cut will be replaced in the

spring with a new seedling that will be sequestering carbon and providing wildlife habitat for at least seven years, when it reaches harvest-size. Handmade wreaths of all sizes, garland, and kissing balls will be available through Dec. 15.

This year visitors can enjoy a free horse-drawn wagon ride on Friday-Sunday, Nov. 29-Dec. 1; Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 7-8; and Saturday, Dec. 14. Wagon rides are available on a first-come, first-served basis from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Fresh kettle corn will be available and there will be a fire pit with s'mores kits and hot chocolate available for purchase in the Carriage Barn.

"There's no better place to get into the holiday spirit than at the Forest Society's

Christmas Tree Farm at The Rocks," said Savage. "Since reopening the Carriage Barn, the Forest Society has really expanded our opportunity to be a part of the local community, offering more programming and inviting the public to enjoy this wonderful property through programs like Thursday Walks at The Rocks. We couldn't be more excited for this holiday season."

The gift shop will remain open daily through Saturday, Dec. 21.

The Rocks is the North Country Conservation and Education Center of the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (www.forestsociety.org).

For more information, visit therocks.org or call 603-444-6228.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE ROCKS CHRISTMAS TREE FARM

A visit to The Rocks Christmas Tree Farm in Bethlehem provides winter fun for the whole family.



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Outdoor Holiday Shoppes thriving at Tuscan Village

■ More than 30,000 visitors expected at holiday shopping marketplace with about 75 participating vendors.

By Darrell Halen
Special to the Union Leader

JENN BUKOWSKI, OWNER of The Makers Bazaar, a multi-artisan marketplace in Wolfeboro, is selling a variety of items at this year's Holiday Shoppes at Tuscan Village. Among the offerings: mini light up Christmas trees, holiday-theme pencils, braided rugs, hand-made ceramic ornaments, snow globes. Even holiday-them nail files.

This time of year, her Lakes Region town is quieter, and Bukowski was drawn to the opportunity to feature her merchandise at a large customer base.

"This is where people come. You can't wait for people to come to you," said Bukowski, a first-year participant. "You have to go where people are. It's been good so far."

The Maker Bazaar is one of approximately 75 outdoor vendors at the Salem shopping, dining and lodging complex, located just off Route 28 and I-93 Exit 1.

With a focus on craftsmen, creators and artists, many of which work at home, the festive, multiple-week shopping event features a wide variety of products, including jewelry, games and toys, home goods, apparel, holiday ornaments, and kitchen and garden items.

"We have pretty much everything you could imagine here at Holiday Shoppes," said Peter "Diggy" Lawson, who works in marketing for Tuscan Brands. "Crafts people are a big part of it."

Last year's event drew more than 20,000 visitors from across New England, Lawson said.

"This year it's going to be upwards of 30,000 because we're doing events bigger and better," he said.

A 55-foot Christmas tree will be



At left, The Makers Bazaar, a multi-artisan marketplace in Wolfeboro, offered a variety of items, including braided rugs. Owner Jenn Bukowski said since the Lakes Region is quiet this time of year, the Tuscan Village is a great place to find holiday crowds.

DARRELL HALEN

lit up at dusk on Saturday, Dec. 7, a day that will be full of festivities, including Christmas caroling, dancers, family fun activities and food.

"We want our guests to feel like they're in a winter wonderland at Tuscan Village," Lawson said.

There is also a Festival of Trees, which opened a couple of weeks ago on Nov. 15 and runs through Dec 8. More than 40 Christmas trees, sponsored and decorated by local businesses and organizations, are featured in the veranda outside the Artisan Hotel at the Tuscan complex.

Tickets cost \$10 per person, and kids 10 and younger are admitted free. Proceeds from the event, which will feature light bites and a full bar, will benefit the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Salem. The trees are raffled off at the end of the event.

Vendors participating in the Holiday Shoppes are each doing business in a separate three-sided covered structure with an open façade. The site is decorated with wreaths and hanging lights and customers can sit outside next to fire pits.

"We try to get a wide variety of vendors. The vendors do a great job adding to the holiday spirit

around Tuscan Village here," Lawson said. "We have a lot of repeat vendors because they enjoyed it so much last year. It's a great way to get their business name out there."

Peter Viteritti, who owns VPV Photography with his wife Vicki in Beverly, Mass., decided to participate this year after being told by a vendor that they had previously drawn a good amount of business. Viteritti, whose company creates coasters and wall art, hasn't been disappointed.

"We're very happy with this. Already, we hope to be here every year," said Viteritti during the event's second weekend. "It was good all weekend, very busy."

Viteritti's products are in approximately 150 stores wholesale. The company has created coasters for actor Steve Carell's general store in Marshfield Hills, Mass., and for the Plainville, Mass., bookstore, An Unlikely Story, co-owned by "Diary of a Wimpy Kid" book series author Jeff Kinney.

Kathleen Barone, owner of KB Bead Designs, a hand-crafted jewelry business in Bradford, Mass., first came to Tuscan Village as a pop up and is now a re-



DARRELL HALEN

Peter Viteritti, who owns VPV Photography with his wife Vicki, decided to participate this year after learning from another vendor that they had experienced good business at the event.

peating Holiday Shoppes vendor. Some of her featured products, she said, make for nice stocking stuffers.

Like Bukowski, a strong customer turnout is appealing for her business.

"I thought it would be a nice venue," she said. "I did a lot of private home shows in people's homes. This is a better opportunity for me to reach a broader audience. Plus, this place is incredible. It's really a family-oriented place."

Customers are curious how her products are made, Barone said. Viteritti said many people want to know if his products — his coasters feature a textured or crackled finish — are original.

Like other vendors, Meredith Thomas enjoys interacting with customers. But she also enjoyed bonding with the event's other merchants.

"It's a great community," said Thomas, who operates Ken's Corn, a maker of flavored popcorn, in Derry with her husband, Scott. "We've made friends that have become like family. And sales — there's a good customer base here."

The Holiday Shoppes at Tuscan Village are open from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Friday through Sunday in November and expanded to Thursday through Sunday in December. The last day is Tuesday, Dec. 24, when the shoppes close at 4 p.m.

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SCAN ME

Special 10-year anniversary event planned for Labrie Family Skate

Strawbery Banke Museum in Portsmouth invites the community to come together for the 10th anniversary of Labrie Family Skate at Puddle Dock Pond. An evening of skating, music, food and drinks is scheduled for 6 to 8:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 11.

Tickets are available at StrawberyBanke.org/tenth-anniversary.

The rink is slated to open for the season on Friday (depending on weather), kicking off another winter of outdoor skating.

This anniversary event will feature a live DJ, special performances by Ice Dance International, and a champagne toast. Each \$95 ticket includes skating admission, skate rentals, hors d'oeuvres, two drink tickets (21 and older), and a commemorative ornament. Proceeds from the evening will support necessary upgrades to the rink, ensuring its continued role as a Portsmouth gathering place for years to come.

"Labrie Family Skate at Puddle Dock Pond has become an integral part of Portsmouth's winter season and a gathering spot for residents and visitors alike,"

said Linnea Grim, president and CEO. "Bringing the rink to life 10 years ago was a true community effort, and we're grateful to everyone who helped make it a reality. To celebrate this milestone, the rink committee has planned this event along with other special activities throughout the season."

This celebration will not only honor a decade of winter memories but will also kick off a season of special events to further connect the community through skating.

Enjoy ice skating all winter

Labrie Family Skate offers daily public skating, private rink rentals, skating lessons and pick-up pond hockey throughout the winter. Ice skate rentals, training aids and skate sharpening services are also available.

According to the Strawberry Banke website, ticket sales begin each week on Sundays at 5 p.m. when the weekly schedule is published. Tickets can be purchased online or in person at the Lawrence J. Yerdon Visitors Center in Portsmouth.



DAVID J. MURRAY/CLEAREYEPHOTO.COM

Special live performances by Ice Dance International will be a part of the 10th anniversary celebration for Labrie Family Skate at Puddle Dock Pond at Strawberry Banke on Dec. 11.

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Visit Santa at the Cog’s Waumbek Wonderland

■ New Bretton Woods vacation package includes ride on The Cog Railway and a visit with jolly old St. Nick.

By Kathleen D. Bailey
Special to the Union Leader

NEW HAMPSHIRE is made for Santa sightings — the pristine woods, the majestic mountains, the fairytale villages. Now Granite State children and visitors have one more way to hang with the Clauses in their natural habitat. Due to an initiative by the Cog Railway, they can visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus in a setting resembling the North Pole. And thanks to a partnership with a local hospitality organization, mom and dad will find it easier on the wallet.

Rob Arey, marketing director for the Cog, said that the famous train service scaling Mount Washington began offering winter trips halfway up the mountain about five years ago. The train rides go about halfway up the mountain, 4,000 feet, a safe distance for civilians in the winter. Passengers take a 20-minute ride up the mountainside, disembark, and are offered the view from a warming hut or by a firepit with hot chocolate. It’s 20 minutes up, 20 minutes at the Waumbek Station site, and 20 minutes down, according to Arey.

The winter trips have been



PHOTO PROVIDED BY KATHY BENNETT MARKETING

Families can enjoy hot cocoa with Santa and Mrs. Claus at the Cog Railway’s Waumbek Station. Bretton Woods Vacations offers exclusive packages including lodging and Waumbek Wonderland tickets.

successful, according to Arey. “There’s not much to do in the North Country in winter if you’re not a skier,” he pointed out. “There are the Ice Castles, and then there’s us.” The winter trips have grown in participation 20 to 30% over the five years, Arey said.

Adding Santa Claus in December “seemed like a natural thing,” he said. Santa and Mrs. Claus began visiting the base lodge on weekends about four years ago, hearing Christmas wishes and giving children a free memento,

usually an ornament.

The visits are popular with people traveling up in the North Country to cut their own trees, he said. And children love them. “Kids love trains. There’s the joy of the holidays. And they get a present.”

Santa stays at the base lodge because of the weather, Arey noted. But he’s available to visit with the children before and after their Cog trips. He’s even there on Christmas Eve, according to Arey.

This year the Cog has partnered with a local vacation rental company, Bretton Woods Vacations, to offer lodging, Cog and Santa. Bretton Woods Vacations has more than 125 vacation homes for rent in its Waumbek Wonderland package.

Alex Foti, president of Bretton Woods Vacations, was charmed with the idea of Santa visits combined with the Cog in winter. He’s been up to Waumbek and said, “It’s a beautiful place, so serene. There’s a firepit, there’s shelter.

It’s a place to make great memories.” The father of two children, Foti said, “They love this kind of thing.”

Many of his guests come to New Hampshire for a specific purpose such as skiing or hiking. Foti, an eight-year transplant from Massachusetts, wants them to experience as much of New Hampshire as possible. And it’s working, he said: “We had one family who said they usually do a summer trip to Yosemite, but they came here instead.”

Waumbek Wonderland takes place weekends starting Friday, Nov. 29, through Dec. 22, with a special Santa Stop on Dec. 24. For more information, visit thecog.com.

Fun around the North Country

Other opportunities to see Santa in the North Country include the following:

- Santa’s Village, Jefferson. The theme park holds winter hours Saturdays and Sundays, Dec. 1 through 22, from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturdays and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sundays. Visit santas-village.com.
- Santa Express Train, Granite State Scenic Railway, formerly Hobo Railroad. Nov. 29 through Dec. 23, starts at \$24.99. 64 Railroad St., Lincoln. Visit santatrains.com.
- Journey to the North Pole, offered in two locations, North Conway (Conway Scenic Railroad) and Lincoln (Granite State Scenic Railway). Nov. 29 through Dec. 22, \$60 and up. Visit journeytothenorthpole.org.

North Conway tops USA Today 10Best list for best ski town

The votes are in and North Conway tops the list for “Best Ski Town” in USA Today 10BEST 2024 Readers’ Choice Award.

Executive Director Michelle Cruz of the Mt. Washington Valley Chamber of Commerce shared, “We are so proud to be recognized as the Best Ski Town

in the U.S. With our seven alpine and six cross-country ski areas, plus our famous apres ski, dining, shopping and winter attractions, North Conway and the greater Mt. Washington Valley is like no other ski destination in the world. We thank the editors and readers of USA Today for recogniz-

ing the unparalleled experience our members bring to the skiing public.”

North Conway beat out many top ski destinations nationwide including Vail, Colorado and Stowe, Vermont, and Banff, Alberta, Canada. The complete list of winners for Best Ski Town are

ranked as follows:

1. North Conway, New Hampshire
2. Mammoth Lakes, California
3. Stowe, Vermont
4. Banff, Alberta, Canada
5. Jackson Hole, Wyoming
6. Red River, New Mexico

7. Vail, Colorado
8. Steamboat Springs, Colorado
9. Taos, New Mexico
10. McCall, Idaho

The official list with descriptions can be viewed here: 10best.usatoday.com/awards/travel/best-ski-town-2024.



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Mel's Funway Park hosts Holly Jolly Journey

Mel's Funway Park in Litchfield will host the grand opening of the all-new walk-through Christmas lights experience — Holly Jolly Journey — on Friday. The Holly Jolly Journey is a holiday light show spanning more than two-thirds of a mile as you to stroll through the Zoo of Lights, down Candy Cane Lane, inside the Ice Cave and into the North Pole. Holiday music, tons of photo opportunities, food and refreshment stations are all part of the experience. Your walk through the Holly Jolly Journey is not timed — you can take

your time, enjoy refreshments and walk the trail multiple times if you wish. You can find a map of the Mel's Funway Park campus with the holiday exhibits marked at hollyjollyjourney.com. Tickets are \$25 for adults; \$15 for children ages 4 to 12; \$20 for seniors; and free for children age 3 and younger. Ticket booth opens at 4 p.m. nightly, but making reservations and purchasing tickets online is highly recommended. Holly Jolly Journey is open most nights through Jan. 12. Check the website for the schedule.



'Shop Local' special section coming Dec. 4

Coming next week: The New Hampshire Union Leader's coverage of the holiday season continues with another special section — "Shop Local this Holiday Season" — with feature stories on a handful of local Granite State shops decked out and ready for this year's holiday shoppers.

KATHLEEN BAILEY

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Santa Claus nuzzles one of the horses pulling a sleigh at Charmingfare Farm in Candia.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY CHARMINGFARE FARM

Holiday happenings at Charmingfare Farm

■ Santa’s Christmas and Encore of Lights are popular events at the Candia farm.

By Robert Levey
Special to the Union Leader

FOR THOSE LOOKING FOR a classic holiday experience this season, Charmingfare Farm in Candia may represent a proverbial one-stop shop, beginning with the Holiday Gift Barn Open House on Friday, Nov. 29. “This year, we’re partnering with the Candia Farmers Market as part of our Holiday Gift Barn Open House,” said John Pyteraf, owner of Charmingfare Farm. “They have vendors that have great gifts for the holidays.” Featuring horse-drawn sleigh and logging sled rides, Santa’s Christmas also begins that day. “We have beautiful light displays,” he said. “It’s interesting during daytime or at night, but the lights are brighter when you come in evening.”

According to Pyteraf, rides travel through the 25- to 30-minute Christmas Trail to get to the North Pole. “We go on a trail that first passes a log cabin scene, which is very country-like,” he said. “We have a live nativity, old fashioned little schoolhouse scene, and a snowmen scene.” Other scenes include a church in the middle of the woods, a mine that looks like the Grinch’s home, old red truck, Christmas tree, polar bears, gnomes, and a candy house scene. Santa’s Christmas also features an Express Ticket, first introduced in 2023. “The Express tractor train ride is good for those people who are maybe only a family of three and don’t want the cost of the sleigh ride,” explained Pyteraf. “The Express Ticket offers everything except for the 25- to 30-minute through trail and Christmas lights. You still can see Santa, reindeer, and visit animals — it was very popular last year.” While snow is ideal, these rides take place regardless of its presence. “We always pray at the very least we have a couple inches of snow to illu-

minate lights, but the ride is no different — it’s just wheels versus runners,” he said. “It’s still smooth ... You can still hear horses jingling.” Beginning Friday, Dec. 27, Charmingfare Farm also offers Encore of the Lights, which takes people on a 30-minute ride through their Christmas light displays to see the real live reindeer at the North Pole and drink complimentary hot cocoa around the barnyard campfire. “The only difference between (Santa’s Christmas and Encore of Lights) is for Encore of Lights Santa is ‘napping,’” Pyteraf said. With a federal zoo license, Charmingfare Farm also has a petting zoo. “We have all the agricultural animals — sheep, goats, rabbits, and jersey cows,” said Pyteraf. If it’s a bright sunny day, visitors might be in for a special treat, too. “Baxter the Bear — almost 30 years old — might be out,” he added. To learn more about Santa’s Christmas, Encore of the Lights, and other holiday-themed events, visit visitthefarm.com.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY PORTSMOUTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Last year’s best first-time entry award went to Penny and Charlotte for Christmas at John’s House. This year’s Gingerbread House Contest and Exhibition opens on Friday at the Portsmouth Historical Society.

Portsmouth Historical Society showcases annual gingerbread contest

The 34th Annual Gingerbread House Contest and Exhibition opens at the Portsmouth Historical Society on Friday. This year’s theme is “Holiday Memories,” where participants were encouraged to make their favorite holiday memories out of gingerbread. Featuring a reception and Judges’ Award presentation on Friday, Dec. 6 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., the exhibition closes on Dec. 30. “This year’s gingerbread displays promise to bring the spirit of the holidays to life through warm family memories and winter pastimes,” said Marketing Manager Sabina Ion. “This annual event is a truly unique way to celebrate the magic of the season.” To learn more about this and other holiday-themed events at Portsmouth Historical Society, visit portsmouthhistory.org. According to Jeff Barraclough, president of the New Hampshire Heritage Museum Trail, the 34th annual Gingerbread House Contest and Exhibition is “one of many festive events” on the trail. “From Portsmouth to the Lakes Region and Manchester, there is plenty of holiday cheer for all ages on the trail this season,” he said. “Explore and share the holidays with us.” In addition to the Portsmouth Historical Society in Portsmouth, member institutions on the New Hampshire Heritage Museum Trail are located in the Lakes Region, Merrimack Valley, and Seacoast. A full list can be found at nhmuseumtrail.org. Save the date — Jan. 4 — for the Gingerbread Smash event a few days after the exhibition closes.

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Christmas at the Castle continues through Dec. 7-8

■ ‘Home for the Holidays’ theme celebrates the Lucknow Mansion and the legacy of original owners Tom and Olive Plant.

By Robert Levey
Special to the Union Leader

THERE MAY BE no place like “home for the holidays” unless you visit “Christmas at the Castle” at Castle in the Clouds in Moultonborough on Nov. 30-Dec. 1 and Dec. 7-8.

“Our theme is ‘Home for the Holidays’ with festive displays by local businesses and organizations,” explained Executive Director Charles Clark.

This theme comes to life, he said, in tours of the historic Lucknow Mansion, which he described as “beautifully decorated for the holidays.” According to Clark, what makes these tours particularly meaningful and unique, however, is the history of Lucknow Mansion, which connects the holiday season to the legacy of its

original owners, Tom and Olive Plant.

“‘Home for the Holidays’ celebrates Lucknow as their home,” he explained. “Lucknow Mansion is a place filled with personal touches, early 20th-century innovations, and stunning views that create a sense of warmth and hospitality.”

As guests tour the mansion decorated in a modern style for the holidays, they can experience life as it was for the Plants. “We hope to bring to light the spirit of togetherness and cheer that defines the holiday season,” added Clark, who said these tours reflect Castle in the Clouds’ mission. “We are here to preserve, interpret, and share Castle in the Clouds as a cultural resource.”

By inviting guests to step back in time and experience Lucknow Mansion as the Plants once did, he said they create a shared sense

of community and connection to history. “Each visit helps preserve this New Hampshire treasure for generations to come, offering an immersive experience that captures the warmth, charm, and legacy of Lucknow Mansion,” he remarked.

In addition to tours of Lucknow Mansion, Christmas at the Castle features dining at the Carriage House Restaurant, an Artisan Fair with unique gifts from the local community, hot cocoa, holiday cookies, a craft table, and more. “You can also take photos with Santa,” added Clark. “It truly is a magical experience for all ages ... come experience Christmas at the Castle with us.”

Christmas at the Castle event hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tickets are available for advanced purchase online or on-site at the Carriage House until 3 p.m. on event days. Adult tickets are \$25 each, ages 5-17 are \$15 each, and ages 4 and under are free.

To learn more, visit castleintheclouds.org.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY CASTLE IN THE CLOUDS

The Lucknow Mansion at Castle in the Clouds will celebrate “Home for the Holidays” during this year’s Christmas and the Castle event.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY CASTLE IN THE CLOUDS

The entrance to Castle in the Clouds in Moultonborough is elegantly adorned for the holiday season.

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