

NEW HAMPSHIRE SUNDAY NEWS • JUNE 14/15, 2025

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THE WORD BARN

An intimate venue to celebrate the sung and spoken word

■ **Spring renovation:** A new outdoor stage is ready to go for this summer.

By Kathleen D. Bailey
Special to the Union Leader

BEN ANDERSON used to direct an organization that drew more than 100,000 people every summer, for a mainstage Broadway musical, concerts, dance productions, a film series and children's programming, with thousands of guests spread out over a sprawling waterfront park. Now he hosts smaller groups, just steps from his living room.

Anderson, former executive director of the Prescott Park Arts Festival, is the co-founder and co-owner of The Word Barn, on Newfields Road in Exeter. The intimate venue suits both him and his wife Sarah, a poet and member of a local writing community. They've been able to shape the project to their tastes, while creating a platform for the sung and spoken word.

And that's a literal platform. On a sunny May morning, Anderson was supervising construction on a new outdoor stage. The facility's official name is The Word Barn and Meadow, and the summer shows are held outdoors.

The vintage shingled barn is surrounded by stone walls and perennials. On that May morning the porch was crowded with a stone lion, lobster traps and an antique diesel pump. Anderson led the way into a dark, cool space. There's a main seating area on the first floor, plus an

overflow area upstairs. "We can hold 100 people, 75 downstairs and 25 upstairs," he said, adding that most of their shows, like a recent performance by Twisted Pine, sell out.

The new outdoor stage is part of an overall redo, according to Anderson. Part of the renovations include a handicapped-accessible bathroom on the main floor, he said.

The complex also includes an Air B&B unit. Anderson said he and Sarah are adding a second Air B&B apartment. "We're also renovating our 'green room,' so artists can crash here and not have to get a hotel room," he said.

The indoor stage area is festooned with keepsakes, oddities and a pair of blue glass doors, which Anderson inherited from his grandfather in Nova Scotia. The ambience fits with the items on the back porch and in the back yard. It's a cool, thrifted vibe.

But as soon as the calendar flips to May, the Andersons and their guests are back outside in the rambling meadow behind the barn. Guests can bring their own chairs or blankets, but seating is also available, Anderson said. People are welcome to bring their picnic dinners, beverages are available, and there's an ice-cream stand on the premises.

The new stage will be timber framed, with a roof for protection of his artists from the elements.



KATHLEEN BAILEY

The Word Barn on Newfields Road in Exeter is an intimate space for locals or visitors to hear music and poetry.

"It is magical," he said, "to be outdoors in the dark."

The Andersons purchased the property, which included a historic barn from the Raynes Farm, in 2011. He left Prescott Park in 2019. They used the barn for poetry readings by Sarah and her colleagues, but he thought the barn was too small for concerts. The band Stray Birds was coming through the area, and he decided to take a chance. "The show sold out," he recalled,

"and the energy was amazing."

He had always dreamed of having his own performance space. Local music and literary fans said, "We want more," and he went full-time with the venue in 2019.

It was just in time for the pandemic, Anderson recalled. "Our indoor facility is so intimate, I thought we were toast," he said. But the weather was warm that year, he built the first outdoor stage, and the Word Barn sur-

vived.

Since then, he's hosted artists such as Tyler Childers and Sierra Ferrell, who recently played the State Theater in Portland, Maine. "We have a lot of up-and-coming artists, and it's a neat way to experience them, in such an intimate setting," he said. Local groups also perform. There are comedy nights and theatrical evenings.

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"We have a lot of up-and-coming artists, and it's a neat way to experience them in such an intimate setting."

BEN ANDERSON

Co-owner of The Word Barn



Word Barn

From Page 4

Sarah has developed a local writing community, and they share their words on the Word Barn stage. The couple also works closely with Exeter LitFest and other events for authors.

The intimate nature of the venue lends itself to the singer-songwriter format, though they also host jazz, blues and bluegrass artists.

Though they work hard, it never gets tiring, according to Anderson. “We’re

presenting the things we love and want to share,” he said. He doesn’t plan to expand or franchise, and working with a small town like Exeter is comparatively easy, from a business point of view, with far less red tape for things like his renovations.

“We pinch ourselves all the time,” he said of himself and Sarah. “We have been incredibly lucky.”

For more information on upcoming events, visit www.thewordbarn.com.

At left, these blue glass doors were salvaged from Ben Anderson’s grandfather’s home in Nova Scotia, and add to the thrifted charm of the Word Barn, Anderson’s performance facility in Exeter. At right, Anderson walks around the grounds at The Word Barn.

KATHLEEN BAILEY



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GENEVA POINT CENTER

Relax, reset and reconnect in a beautiful lake setting

■ **Family retreat:** In addition to conferences, camps and concerts, Geneva Point has lodging that's great for families looking to enjoy some downtime.

By Kathleen D. Bailey
Special to the Union Leader

ON A HOT SUMMER night, it's not unusual to see 100 people milling around the Geneva Point Center in Moultonborough. Some come for the acoustic concerts in the circa-1930s chapel. Others attend one of the many camps the center hosts over the summer. Still others are community members who stop by to enjoy the ice cream, the music — or both — according to Executive Director Peter Claypoole.

The center, casually known as Geneva Point, has been making memories in Moultonborough for more than 100 years. Claypoole looks forward to his 17th summer of music, sports, nurturing families — and ice cream.

Making memories in Moultonborough

The Geneva Point Conference Center began life as the Rockmont Poultry Farm. The Greene brothers, Moultonborough movers and shakers, built a barn on the property, but remodeled it as the Winnepesaukee Inn in 1919 and began hosting church camps and Sunday school teacher training. With a mountain view and a mile of lake frontage, the site soon became a popular spot for religious retreats and camps. The National Council of Churches acquired the proper-



PHOTO PROVIDED BY PETER CLAYPOOLE

On a summer night, patrons gather in the Chapel at Geneva Point for one of many acoustic concerts.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY PETER CLAYPOOLE

The Chapel at Geneva Point Center in Moultonborough hosts everything from religious services to concerts.

ty and ran it as one of its three conference centers.

In 1987 the National Council “got out of the conference business,” according to Claypoole. Geneva Point became an independent nonprofit facility. While they still serve the faith community, they also host a “broad spectrum” of colleges

and universities, health care agencies, sports camps and more. “We have,” he said, “a wonderful collection of events.”

The Point hosts hosts SAMW, or the Summer Acoustic Music Week, organized by the University of Massachusetts-Boston and WUMB radio. It's a music camp for adults, he said, and

offers its own concert series.

They also host the Family Camp of the New England Hemophilia Association, which “fills up every little corner” of the venue, he said. They host the Becoming an Outdoor Woman educational program offered by the New Hampshire Department of Fish and Game, and a girls' volleyball camp sponsored by Plymouth State University. And the center is still a home for church camps and conferences, he noted.

Artists and writers enjoy working in peace at the Point, “and photographers love us,” he said.

For families needing a rewind, the center offers its own Family Camp option. It's mostly DIY, according to Claypoole. Families can take advantage of the swimming, hike, play games or just relax. The program offers families a place to stay, meals in the dining hall, all the swimming and hiking they want, disc golf and free concerts. The ice

cream shack is a major draw, he said. And the center staff makes sure these guest families know about other attractions in the area, such as the Castle in the Clouds and the Moultonborough Country Store.

In an average summer, 3,000 to 3,500 people flock to the Point. That translates to 150 to 300 per week, according to Claypoole.

The historic buildings include the inn, a horse barn that was converted by the Greenes into an Adirondack-style hotel. Now it has guest rooms and the dining hall. The Lake View Lodge offers rooms for visitors. The Emily Gibbes House is open year-round. A bunkhouse called Geneva Woods is semi-autonomous, with its own road to the beach, and is used primarily for youth groups.

There are also cabins such as “Lakeview Cottages” and “Shoreline Cottages.” The cottages look old-fashioned but many have bathrooms with showers and comfortable beds, he said, adding, “It's not ‘roughing it.’” Others have a half-bath and a short walk to the shower house.

The complex also includes tent and RV sites for those who do want to rough it, he said.

The Barn is the oldest building on the compound, built in approximately 1800, he said. It was recently restored and now hosts camp and conference meetings.

The Chapel was built in 1930, on the site of a previous chapel. “It was a former chicken coop and it stank,” Claypoole said of the predecessor. The new Chapel is white and stately. On the inside, wood-paneled walls soar to a cathedral ceiling. Musicians love the new Chapel, according

See **Geneva Point**, Page 8

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Geneva Point

From Page 6

to Claypoole: “The acoustics are really good, and it gives a ‘warm’ sound.”

The Chapel offers high arched windows, an upright piano and a balcony with a “great view,” Claypoole said. He added that it’s a good venue for WUMB to broadcast shows from its summer music camp.

Going outdoors

The complex boasts a mile of frontage on Lake Winnepesaukee, including views of Ossipee Mountain and Castle in the Clouds. The waterfront is staffed by a lifeguard eight hours of the day, Claypoole said. “An unguarded beach,” he said, “is not worth the risk.”

The waterfront is open for swimming beginning at 7 a.m., according to Claypoole, and it’s a unique experience for early risers. “You have an eagle flying overhead, you have a loon swimming beside you,” he said.

The compound also has an outdoor amphitheater for al fresco performances and lectures. A Memorial Garden honors former Geneva Point guests or their loved ones.

In its 100-year history, the center has seen generations grow up and come back. The ashes of many are interred in the Memorial Garden. “It’s a connection for their survivors,” he said. “They always feel at home.”

He recently got to thank a nine-year board member on their retirement. The person was “born into a family that came to an annual conference here,” he said, and both parents are interred in the Memorial Garden. Another

family has “a history that goes so far back” that the outdoor memorial chapel was named for its matriarch, Helen Gould.

The point of the Point Claypoole readily admits that the atmosphere at Geneva Point is different from some summer attractions. While the center does allow WiFi in certain areas, there are no television sets in the rooms, and attendees are encouraged to converse and enjoy nature. It’s a change from venues that are heavy on commercial attractions. There are no arcades, no hot dog stands, and no hustle.

“We do have T-shirts,” he said, “but not the fried dough.”

Claypoole supervises a year-round staff of eight, which expands to 60 over the summer. Geneva Point is a popular spot for international students to work, he said, exposing them to a rich variety of American culture.

The center’s philosophy includes community engagement for its year-round workers. Claypoole said it is not unusual to see a Geneva Point staffer on the Planning Board, library committees, or another form of civic engagement.

Claypoole is in his 17th summer as executive director, and he’s not going anywhere soon. He likes his job because of its uniqueness. “I get to be a part of so many other amazing organizations, that make the world better,” he mused.

Claypoole’s goal is to see more of the same. “I want to see more and more people engage with us, for themselves or their



PHOTO PROVIDED BY PETER CLAYPOOLE

The Barn is Geneva Point’s oldest building, dating back to the early 1800s.

families,” he said. “I also want to partner with more nonprofits, for events that won’t fit in anywhere else.”

Whatever the need, the Point provides a break for all its guests, according to Claypoole. “Visitors have told me that the minute they get here, their blood pressure goes down,” he said.

“People feel at peace here, they feel safe,” he said. For repeat customers, “It’s not their primary home, but a home they will have all their lives.”

For Claypoole, it all comes together on those hot summer nights. “I like to stand in the middle field, and quietly listen,” he said. “People are having a good time at the ice cream shop. There’s a concert going on in the Chapel. There are two or three campfires going, and kids are playing games in the meadow. I stand here and think, ‘This is what I do.’”

For more information, visit genevapoint.org.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY PETER CLAYPOOLE

A sunrise view of the Inn at the Geneva Point Center in Moultonborough.

On the cover

Hiking trips through New Hampshire's White Mountains often lead to beautiful cascading waterfalls.

To learn more about trails that lead to these hidden gems, check out these websites:

- visitwhitemountains.com
- visitnh.gov
- newenglandwaterfalls.com

Photo credit: Mark Goldstein

N.H. Brewers Assn. plans reimagined NH Beer Trail Basecamp Festival

This summer the New Hampshire Brewers Association is put a new twist on an old favorite. After a decade of hosting the former Keep NH Brewing Festival, this year the group takes the party on the road with the all-new New Hampshire Beer Trail Basecamp Festival.

According to nhbrewers.org, the festival will be set against a White Mountains backdrop at Tuckerman Brewing Co. in Conway. Save the date for Saturday, June 28. The festival will get underway at noon.

About 40 Granite State breweries will offer more than 100 craft beer varieties. The festival will also offer local food trucks, live music, and local vendors and artisans selling their goods.

The N.H. Brewers Association is relaunching the "NH Beer Trail Guidebook" — a passport with exclusive discounts at NHBA member breweries. The revamped festival is meant "to capture the spirit of exploration and discovery

that makes New Hampshire's craft beer scene so special," according to events.nhbrewers.org.

Breweries expected to attend include 603 Brewery, Canterbury Aleworks, Dam Brewhouse, Daydreaming Brewing, Feathered Friend Brewing, Great North Aleworks, Henniker Brewing, Hobbs Brewing, Iron Furnace Brewing, Last Chair Brewery, Ledge Brewing Company, Loaded Question Brewing, Moat Mountain Brewing, Muddy Road Brewery, Northwood Brewing, Oddball Brewing, Post & Beam Brewing, Rek-Lis Brewing, Rockingham Brewing, Saco River Brewing, Shackett's Brewing, Smuttynose Brewing, Spyglass Brewing, Throwback Brewery, Twin Barns Brewing, White Mountain Brewing, Woodstock Inn Brewery and more.

All guests must be 21. Tickets are priced at \$65 for VIP, \$50 for general admission, and \$20 for designated drivers. Visit nhbrewers.org to purchase tickets.



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PHOTO PROVIDED BY GRANITE GORGE

In the summer months, ski area Granite Gorge in Roxbury becomes a play land for mountain bikers. Dynamic Cycling Adventures of Vermont will offer three clinics at the Gorge this summer.

GRANITE GORGE MOUNTAIN PARK

Summer brings mountain bikes, live music, outdoor dining

■ **The lift is open:** Riders have the option to buy a full day ticket or a season pass with a few perks.

By Darrell Halen
Special to the Union Leader

A SMALL DOWNHILL ski area near Keene that welcomes skiers and snow tubers during the winter also has fun activities available for visitors during the warm months – the opportunity to enjoy music outdoors and mountain bike on trails.

Granite Gorge Mountain Park, located at 341 NH-9 in Roxbury, on Pinnacle Mountain, is bringing back its summer music series, Granite Gigs.

According to General Manager Keith Kreischer, a pair of bands has been lined up: In

Clover, an alternative/classic rock band, on Friday, July 25, and The Lake Effect, which he describes as a country cover band, on Friday, Aug. 29.

Acts that the park books are typically from the Keene and Southern New Hampshire areas, and the performances are family friendly.

“They play classic rock, blues, Reggae, a nice assortment of easy listening,” Kreischer said.

“We have some seating but we encourage people to bring blankets and chairs as well.”

Two more community events are also planned: Jam Fest on June 28 with multiple bands, and Fall Fest on Sept. 20, which will feature live music, scenic

skyrides, vendors, bounce house, food and drinks.

The park’s restaurant, Roxbury Bar & Grill, offers signature burgers and mixed cocktails, according to the company, and features a lively bar and a welcoming patio.

The restaurant is also available for private events, such as graduations and corporate gatherings. Capacity is around 400, according to Kreischer.

This is the third year that Granite Gorge, which has a chair lift, has opened trails for mountain biking. Six downhill trails are open, plus a pedal-up beginner area.

Mountain biking can be done by purchasing full day tickets or a 2025 Season Pass. The pass perks include 10 percent discounts on restaurant food items and GGMP merchandise.

Also available is the Up-

hill Summer Season Pass, for experienced riders only. This is advanced terrain with an intense uphill slope and is not intended for beginner and intermediate riders, according to the park.

Uphill pass riders like to challenge themselves physically.

“There are a lot of people who like to take their e-bikes up the hill,” Kreischer said. “It’s definitely a lot steeper of a climb (compared) to other small mountains.”

Information on the GGMP trails, including difficulty ratings, distance, descent and climb is available at trailforks.com.

For people who want to bike ride but don’t own bikes, GGMP has teamed up with Alpine Bike Works, a mountain bike-focused shop at 15 King Court in Keene, where customers can rent bikes

to bring to Granite Gorge.

This summer bike riding clinics conducted by Dynamic Cycling Adventures of East Burke, Vermont, will be held at Granite Gorge.

Participants will progress – skills will develop, speeds will gradually increase, and comfort levels will grow, according to the company.

Two-day clinics are scheduled for three weekends: June 21-22; July 26- 27; and Aug. 23-24.

GGMP is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Starting June 19 the park will also be open 4 to 7 p.m. on Thursdays and Fridays.

For information about ticket prices, gift cards, music performances, weather information and more, visit granitegorge.com. People are encouraged to visit the company’s social media for updates.



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DOX ON WINNISQUAM

'It's a wonderful' restaurant in the Lakes Region

■ **Mariano Restaurant Group:** With growing success in New Hampshire, owners also recently opened Dox on Winnepesaukee and The Alamo.

By Kaarin L. Clausen
Special to the Union Leader

YOU NEVER KNOW where inspiration will strike. For the family founders of the Mariano Restaurant Group (MRG), it came on the Silver Screen.

In the 1946 holiday classic "It's a Wonderful Life," protagonist George Bailey had an epiphany at the end of the film: He realized that his actions had a ripple effect on the lives of his neighbors and loved ones within the community of Bedford Falls. The lesson has resonated with viewers for over 60 years and had a profound effect on Al Mariano, one of the owners of MRG.

According to his daughter, Jill Schrader, Mariano views the film about 25 times per year, and he and his wife, Pamela, love it so much that they even decided to name one of their first restaurants after the film — Bailey's Bar & Grille, which they opened 16 years ago in Townsend, Mass.

The themes of community and personal impact are the touchstones of the restaurant group's philosophy, and the family business shares this love



KAARIN L. CLAUSEN

Dox on Winnisquam offers both indoor and outdoor seating with lake views.

of community through their growing number of restaurants that dot towns throughout the Lakes Region, including one of their latest ventures — Dox on Winnisquam, located at 927 Laconia Road in Tilton.

The brainchild of Mariano's daughter, the lakeside eatery opened its doors in July of 2023. As seasonal visitors who vacationed in the Lakes Region, the family often

commented on the lack of restaurants in the area, prompting Schrader to submit proposal menus to the landlord of an available restaurant space in Tilton. Her proposal was accepted, and the family set to work transforming the building that would become home to Dox on Winnisquam.

"I credit my dad for coming up with the look and feel of the restaurant, but it was really a joint

effort," said Schrader. "We raised the ceilings, and my mom came up with the 'Winnisquam' sign that lights up the bar area. This is the first of our restaurants that I was given creative freedom in designing, but my dad and husband did a lot of the labor work." Their hard work resulted in an open-air concept eatery that provides guests with a year-round vacation atmosphere, complete with

friendly, laid-back vibes.

Catering to the Lakes Region

One of the unique features of Dox is its lakefront location, sheltered on an inlet and accessible by boat. Visitors can arrive by car or dock their vessels at one of the five "Dox Docks," located behind the eatery's back deck. Reservations are not necessary, and slips are available on a first-come,

first-served basis.

Five nights per week — Thursday through Monday — guests will be greeted by live music showcasing New Hampshire solo artists playing a range of musical styles from soft rock to country music covers.

Dox offers a variety of handcrafted drinks inspired by the islands. Favorites include "Dox Loves Peg" — a tribute to the infamous graffiti below the Mosquito Bridge over Lake Winnisquam that says, "Dick Loves Peg." The signature cocktail is made with El Mayor tequila, watermelon, lime juice and prosecco, and the "Java-tinis," made with various espresso martini flavors, are another local favorite. The restaurant's "Martini Mondays" provide martini-lovers with different martini flights each week, and "Wine Wednesdays" feature mini-charcuterie boards that rest on top of each first glass of wine.

A top appetizer is the Steak & Cheese Rangoon — a traditional-style rangoon stuffed with shaved steak, cheese, peppers and onions. The craft nachos are crowd-pleasers, with a favorite being the "Cheeseburger Nachos," created with ground beef, lettuce, tomato, onion, pickle, and Dox sauce — their homemade version of Thousand Island dressing. The owners say the short ribs are also high on the list of visitor favorites and are served over mashed potatoes, topped

See **Dox restaurant**, Page 13

Dox restaurant

From Page 12

with a layer of cranberry sauce.

In addition to Martini Mondays and Wine Wednesdays, Dox on Winnisquam also host Trivia Night on Tuesday and Ladies Night on Thursday. Trivia Night provides an evening of brain-teasing fun and friendly competition from 7 to 9 p.m., and Ladies Night, held every Thursday, features a Trivia Night on Tuesdays and Ladies Night on Thursdays. Trivia Night provides an evening of brain-teasing fun and friendly competition from 7 to 9 p.m., and Ladies Night features a different women-owned local business every week along with a special cocktail.

Every weekday from 4 to 5 p.m., visitors are invited to come unwind and enjoy the best deals of the day at Dox on Winnisquam's Happy Hour. It's a perfect location to relax by the water and enjoy a favorite

cocktail, cold beer or glass of wine at half the price, while relishing the stunning lakeside views.

Opportunities for expansion

Following the rapid success of Dox on Winnisquam, Mariano Restaurant Group expanded once again and opened Dox on Winnepesaukee a year later.

"We weren't planning on opening two restaurants within a year of each other," said Schrader, "but our landlord saw how well we were doing here and asked if we wanted to open another location, so we opened Dox on Winnepesaukee."

The developments didn't stop there. Because their restaurant The Alamo in Brookline was so popular, the family decided to open a second location with the same name at 70 Endicott St. North in Weirs Beach, Laconia. The traditional Texas-style

barbecue opened on Memorial Day weekend and has a rooftop deck and bar that will feature music all summer.

For MRG, it's all about community, and the family feels strongly about providing opportunities and venues for visitors and natives in the Lakes Region to celebrate their most important moments in life. An entrée on the menu at Dox at Winnisquam sums it all up — the George Bailey Burger, named for the beloved character in "It's a Wonderful Life." A portion of every burger sold is donated monthly to a selected charity and encapsulates the lessons learned by Mr. Bailey — the power of doing good and the impact that small acts can have on the world around us.

For more information about Dox on Winnisquam, visit doxonwinnisquam.com.



KAARIN L. CLAUSEN

Jill Schrader is part of the ownership group for Dox on Winnisquam, located in Tilton.

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■ **Running a business their way:** The drinks are made from locally grown fruits; the eatery serves farm-to-table food; and the Listening Room is a “profound experience.”

By Kaarin L. Clausen
Special to the Union Leader

THE VISION FOR Hermit Woods Winery & Eatery in Meredith began with three friends who were fascinated by wine and breaking the rules. Ken Hardcastle, Bob Manley and Chuck Lawrence, known respectively as the “Vintner/PhD,” “Troublemaker-in-Chief” and “Unabashed Idealist,” began their journey together in a small outbuilding behind Hardcastle’s house that served as a brewery.

The friends spent countless hours concocting and drinking homemade beer, soon realizing that they would also be skilled at making wine. Rudimentary equipment was purchased, and the trio began experimenting with winemaking using imported grapes. But they decided to take it one step further than that.

“It didn’t take long before we realized that we had an abundance of fruit growing right here in New Hampshire, and we took an interest in figuring out what could we do with that,” said Manley. “We started harvesting fruit that grew in our neighborhood — blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, elderberries — and we made wine. We then made mead using honey from Ken’s beehives and cider from our apple trees.”

The wine, mead and cider created from their “hobby gone wild” began to take up more of their time, and the group decided to take their new passion to the next level — it was time to open a business, Hermit Woods

Winery. And the creativity, experimentation and clientele has been growing ever since those early days.

An experience for the senses

In addition to turning traditional winemaking on its head, Hermit Woods is also reviving a musical tradition from the past — the musical “listening room.” Since opening Hermit Woods, Hanley had a vision of bringing music to the winery. He suggested that they turn the third floor of their space into a listening room, reminiscent of old music listening bars in New York City and Tokyo.

The result was a chic, inviting and intimate space for musical performance, in which artists create special bonds with their audiences. On performance nights, doors open at 6 p.m. and guests are led upstairs for a pre-show wine-tasting. Once the audience is settled and food has been ordered, scheduled musical acts generally begin at 7 p.m. Guests are asked to refrain from talking during the performances; however, snapping, tapping and applauding are always encouraged.

“The Listening Room experience is profound,” said Hanley. “Imagine this room with 60 people in it, a band on the stage, and not a peep from the audience — not a peep. That’s the expectation. You come to hear music, and we bring artists onto the stage who appreciate and know what to do with that. It’s magical, and I fell in love with it after my first experience.”

Hanley doesn’t have a background in music management,



Bob Manley, affectionately known as “Troublemaker-in-Chief,” co-founded Hermit Woods Winery in Meredith with companions Ken Hardcastle and Chuck Lawrence.

but he has an innate sense of what does and doesn’t work in business. He builds on what he loves through constant learning and education.

“I’m always looking for something to learn or some way to expand my knowledge and understanding of the world,” he said. “With Hermit Woods, there’s always another thing to unfold, another layer to peel off the onion. We’ve been unpeeling those layers now for years, and sometimes Ken and Chuck

must think, ‘There he goes again.’ But they’ve enjoyed the ride. I just keep learning, growing and spreading my wings. I think I have enough to inspire me here for the next decade.”

In addition to the vast list of musical artists who perform in the Loft Listening Room, the winery also hosts a “Music on the Patio” series, featuring live local music on the patio every Friday evening from 5 to 8 p.m. and Saturday afternoons from noon to 3 p.m. throughout the

summer. Guests can sip wine, listen to live music and savor a farm-to-table lunch, proudly created by chef Kaylon Sweet, or “Sweets,” as he is affectionately known.

Taste sensations

The winery’s food philosophy is in sync with their wine philosophy — letting nature shine with minimal intervention. Sweet, along with Hardcastle, Hanley and Lawrence, believes in bringing together the widest variety of fresh, high quality and locally sourced ingredients to create dishes made with love and attention.

“I pride myself on making sure that every meal at Hermit Woods is a unique experience,” said Sweet. “I think the coolest thing about working here is I don’t have to worry about sourcing wine because we have them all here and they’re all delicious.”

Lunch is served at Hermit Woods seven days a week from Memorial Day to Columbus Day. During winter, lunch is served five days a week, in addition to dinner Wednesday through Saturday and brunch on Sundays.

All of one’s senses are used with each visit to Hermit Woods, but it all centers around the wine. Hanley encourages people to visit them with an open heart and mind.

“Wine is about time and place,” he said. “It’s not necessarily about which wine is better. It’s about which wine is better in this time and how it affects you now. We don’t realize it, but we consume wine with all of our senses. Environment, temperature, time of year, people we’re with, music we’re listening to and food we’re eat-

Hermit Woods

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ing — all of these things impact how we think and feel about what we’re consuming. I always encourage people to keep an open mind — break out of that Chardonnay, Merlot and Cabernet mindset and think about things that broaden your power. Experiment, and you’ll learn a lot.”

Inspired by the ‘original contrarian’

Knowing the winery’s origin story will help visitors understand the founders’ philosophy and passion for their craft. The friends initially operated their business out of Manley’s bedroom but soon outgrew the space.

In 2014, they purchased a building in Meredith and named their new winery after a local hermit named Joseph Plumer. Coined on their website as the “original contrarian,” Plumer lived a solitary life in the woods near Meredith and had a gift for fermenting cider from the apples grown in his small orchard.

Hardcastle, Manley and Lawrence like to think they are following in his footsteps by creating beverages out of local fruit. Given the cool climate of New Hampshire as well as its modest growing season, this seemed like a better alternative than making wine from grapes.

It also provided Hermit Woods with an identity. The challenge of a native product

The partners decided they did not want their wines to be produced from grapes that had to be imported. *Vitis vinifera*, the common grape vine, is native to the Mediterranean region, Central Europe and southwestern Asia and is not sustainable in New Hampshire. That wasn’t a good option.

Many wineries in New England also use a hybrid grape for their wines — a cross between *Vitis vinifera* and *Vitis labrusca*, a species of wild grape

See **Hermit Woods**, Page 16



KAARIN L. CLAUSEN

The Listening Room, built in the loft space at Hermit Woods Winery in Meredith, holds 60 guests who are asked to listen to the musical guest “without making a peep.”

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Hermit Woods

From Page 15

native to North America. This still wasn't the answer because Hardcastle, Hanley and Lawrence wanted to use fruit that was "happy to grow" in New Hampshire's climate.

They decided to make their wine, mead and cider from fruit native to New Hampshire, but the only problem was how to create them without the sweetness typically associated with beverages made from fruit.

"When we toured New England and tasted wine made from fruit local to New Hampshire, none of us liked it," remembers Hanley. "It didn't taste like the wine that we cut our teeth on, which was

Californian, French, European and South American wines. The fruit wine here was sweet — very fruity and unidimensional. It wasn't wine as we understood wine, and it didn't interest us. So we set ourselves on a mission: How can we take the fruit that grows here and craft wine that stylistically gives us the same enjoyment as classic wine? That's been our mission for the past 25 years."

The challenge was how to create wine from fruit that delivers the same components as those from grapes. Hanley explained that the wine grape is the "perfect package" and contains everything a

winemaker needs to make a wonderful wine, whereas many New England fruits do not come with those essential elements.

To "build the grape" out of fruit, the winery's scientist, Hardcastle, began experimenting with blending different fruits to create the wine's "tannins." Tannins come from a fruit's woody parts — skins, seeds and stems combined with oak barrels that create the complexity, intensity, acidity and sugars present in dry and interesting wines. Through much experimentation, Hardcastle said he discovered that unexpected fruits often produced the best tan-

nins, and Hermit's wines now use such ingredients for tannins as autumn berries, staghorn sumac, blueberries, pears, apples and aronia berries.

The wines produced by Hermit Woods are generally dry and often barrel-aged. They are food-friendly, have complexity and are reminiscent of wines from Europe. Hardcastle said he creates about 50 to 75 wines per year, using recipes generated through trial and error and developed with various fruits and yeasts.

From the onset, the partners made a commitment to purchasing local and organic fruit when-

ever possible, and they go to extensive lengths to gather the fruits needed to create their wines. Their Lake House White, for example, is a White Burgundy containing a blend of peaches, rhubarb and rosehips. These rosehips are foraged by Hardcastle, Hanley, Lawrence, and a host of volunteers who make an annual sojourn to New Hampshire's Seacoast where they gather rosehips from wild beach roses.

Blueberries from Merrill Blueberry Farm, lavender from Stillwater Ranch, Dolgo crabapples and quince from Alyson's Orchard and honeyberries from Wayside Farm

are just a handful of local growers who also supply Hermit Woods with the plethora of fruit used to make their thoughtfully produced wines.

The Hermit Woods trio prides themselves on breaking the established rules of traditional winemaking and dub themselves as "proudly contrarian." They insist that their business is not led by rules but by the heart. Their story and passion for wine is shared with guests through their tasting experience, winery tour, and website.

"I tell all of our team it is not our job — and it never has been our job — to sell wine," said Hanley. "That's another contrarian concept! What we're offering here is education, experience and entertainment. We hope our guests leave us with a great feeling." He smiled and said, "And maybe they'll decide to purchase a bottle of wine."

Hanley and his partners are also trying to remove some of the stigma and intimidation surrounding wine tasting.

"From the beginning, we've had a philosophy that we want to meet everybody where they're at," he explained. "You don't need to know anything to appreciate and enjoy wine. What defines a nice glass of wine to you is not how anybody else defines it. Everyone has different tastes. We allow people to enter our world of wine in a way that's friendly, easy and accessible and give them an opportunity to learn."

Hermit Woods Winery & Eatery is located at 72 Main St. in Meredith. To learn more, visit hermitwoods.com.

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Gundalow Company hosts 5th annual Piscataqua Riverfest

The Gundalow Company will present the 5th annual Piscataqua Riverfest on Saturday, July 12, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the grounds of Strawberry Banke in Portsmouth.

Piscataqua Riverfest is Portsmouth's annual celebration of the area's rivers and bays featuring a boat show, food, music, historical demonstrations, activities and local vendors.

According to piscataquariverfest.com, wooden boats will be displayed on the grounds of Strawberry Banke and visiting Coast Guard boats will offer free dockside tours. Gundalow sails and dockside tours will be available.

Entry to Strawberry Banke Museum is free all day. Maritime demonstrations will include a blacksmith, oar making, rope maker, touch tank and more, ac-

ording to the website.

Patrons can also enjoy fare from food trucks, fresh oysters and desserts. Maeve's Mobile Cocktail Hour will serve a beer garden with local brews.

Live entertainment will include local musicians; Lindsay & Her Puppet Pals; children's music from Sammie Haynes; and free face painting.

The Gundalow Company's mission is to protect the maritim heritage and environment with education and action. Learn more about the programs at gundalow.org.

More information and a gallery of photos from pervious Piscataqua Riverfest celebrations can be found at piscataquariverfest.com. Vendor and exhibitor registration forms can also be found on the website.



DAVID J. MURRAY/CLEAR EYE PHOTO

Golden sunshine illuminates the Gundalow Company's boat off the shores of Portsmouth.

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REVO CASINO CONWAY

Mt. Washington Valley welcomes new casino

■ **New entertainment option up north:** Now your trip to the mountains can include casino games, live music and new dining options.

By Darrell Halen
Special to the Union Leader

A NEW GAMING establishment in Conway, the fifth of a chain of similar casinos in the Granite State, is touted by its owner as an ultimate entertainment destination, featuring casino games, poker tournaments, dining, and high-energy music.

Revo Casino and Social House, located at 234 White Mountain Highway, opened earlier this year and brought what the business describes as a “new vibe” to the Mount Washington Valley.

“It’s exciting to open Revo Casino and Social House and see the community’s enthusiasm for our gaming, entertainment and dining options,” Revo President Aaron Gomes said at the time of the February grand opening. “Beyond entertainment, Revo Casino and Social House will also support nonprofits across the Mount Washington Valley. We’re proud to be part of this community and contribute to its success.”

The new establishment joins fellow Revo casinos in Dover, Lebanon, Manchester and Keene. The word Revo, according to an announcement of the Conway site opening, is rooted in the word revolution and it honors New Hampshire’s role in the American Revolution and the state’s independent nature.

The new casino, according to the announcement, features 75 gaming machines including Devils Lock, Ultimate Fire Link Explosion, and Huff N Even

More Puff, along with table games such as blackjack, poker and roulette.

“It’s not your average night out – Revo Conway brings big energy, bold flavors, and table action to the heart of the valley,” said spokesperson Tiffany Eddy. “For locals and visitors alike, it’s a whole new vibe.”

The new casino, she said, complements the area’s natural beauty, shopping outlets, and other popular features. Visitors can wrap up a fun day with a great meal and an exciting night on the floor at Revo Conway.

“Come up and enjoy the outdoors and go hiking, enjoy the beauty of Conway and the area and what the Mount Washington area has to offer and come to us when you’re done exploring the great outdoors, enjoy our offerings, have some fun and maybe win some money.”

One lucky man won more than \$21,000. Another man took home over \$10,000. “So you never know what’s going to happen,” Eddy said.

The establishment’s restaurant, Rebels, is described as a “bold dining experience” with a full bar and great game-day energy. Popular dishes include Rebel Smash Burger, prime rib, and flatbread pizzas.

Rebel Stage features live music every weekend. Upcoming acts in June include: rock cover band 3Alarm (June 14), guitar-musician Nathan Michaud (June 20), indie-soul artist Timbear (June 21), high energy rock band Ask Alice (June 27) and Sunapee-based band Soul Circuit (June 28). Shows begin at 8 p.m.

“What we like to focus on is high-energy, crowd-pleasing acts that appeal to a wide audience,” Eddy said. “We try to go with regional acts.”

Another feature is Revo Studio, powered by iHeartMedia – an in-house broadcast center featuring live iHeart broadcasts. The studio, according to the company, also drives the Soundtrack of the Revolution, a curated music selection that sets the property’s energy and vibe.

Revo is owned and operated by the New Hampshire Group (NHG), a subsidiary of Peninsula Pacific Entertainment (P2E).

Revo’s charitable program makes a difference by helping nonprofits care for some of New Hampshire’s most vulnerable residents, according to the company, and its casinos contributed more than \$12 million to nearly 300 nonprofits last year.

Charitable gaming is a unique fundraising mechanism in New Hampshire that allows nonprofits based in the state to raise money with one of the licensed charity gaming facilities in the Granite State through games of chance, including poker and roulette, and historic horse-racing machines, according to Eddy.

This public benefit helps the state fund education and supports local nonprofits doing important work in their communities.

The Conway casino will benefit 72 organizations.

“This facility will make such an incredible difference for so many nonprofits in the Mount Washington Valley,” said Lisa DuFault, executive director of Mount Valley Promotions, a local nonprofit collaborative that promotes nonprofit events and fundraising endeavors.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY REVO CASINO

The newest Revo Casino, which opened in Conway in February, is already seeing lucky winners.

“The support that Revo Casino and Social House provides allows organizations like ours to better serve our communities and care for those in need. The impact is truly life changing.”

Organizations that have benefited or will benefit from the Conway casino include the North Conway Community Center, VFW and American Legion posts, Altrusa International of Carroll County, Bartlett Historical Society, Coos Economic Development Corporation, and the Conway Area Humane Society.

All five Revo locations are available for special private events.

“We’ve done birthday parties, engagement celebrations, cor-

porate gatherings,” Eddy said. “We would love to have people consider us for their special event.”

According to Eddy, before Revo Conway opened, many people in the area would cross over the Maine border and drive about an hour to Oxford Casino Hotel.

“So now that money is staying in the Mount Washington Valley and here in New Hampshire,” she said.

Revo Conway is open 8 a.m. to 1 a.m. Sunday through Thursday, and 8 a.m. to 2 a.m. on Friday and Saturday. Customers must be 21 or older at all five locations.

For more information, visit revocasino.com.



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