

What do you know about **NH?**

An occasional opportunity to test the depth of your Granite State knowledge.

Q: Besides Adam Sandler, other superstar comedians hail from the Manchester area?

A: Late night host Seth Meyers grew up in Bedford along with his brother Josh, and standup and TV star Sarah Silverman grew up in Bedford and Manchester.

NH Life

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Young artists wanted

Do you have a budding artist in the family? We're using this corner of NHLife to display the artwork of elementary school-age readers.

If you'd like to submit your young artist's handiwork, scan it and email it in jpeg format to lifestyles@unionleader.com. Put "Young Artists" in the subject line. Make sure to let us know the artist's name, age and hometown, and include your name and contact info in case we need to get in touch.



Molly Stevens, age 6, of Goffstown

CELEBRATING MANCHESTER



PROVIDED BY THE PURITAN BACKROOM

Adam Sandler poses for a picture with Puritan Backroom kitchen staff in November 2024.



PROVIDED BY LAUREN FOUCHER VIA FACEBOOK

In September 2023, Adam Sandler hung out at Webster School in Manchester, playing ball with students just as he did when he attended the school back in the day.

Enter Sandman: The Queen City's Hollywood icon

Adam Sandler sightings keep unassuming superstar in the Manchester zeitgeist

By **Dave Pierce**
Union Leader Staff

Whether you've seen him pop into the Puritan Backroom in his oversized basketball shorts or sitting in a corner of the Red Arrow in his legendary red-hooded sweatshirt, Adam Sandler is seemingly omnipresent in Manchester while at the same time one of Hollywood's most successful stars.

It's so common to see him patronizing businesses in his hometown that it seems like you can't swing a hockey-stick-shaped golf putter without running into the star of "Happy Gilmore," a story based loosely on one of his friends from Manchester, Kyle McDonough.

Sandler, a 1984 graduate of Manchester Central High School, never misses a chance to represent the Queen City, whether it's building sets for movies such as "Grown Ups" and "Grown Ups 2" that resemble the Red Arrow or the Goldenrod Drive-In, or basing characters and using names of his friends. Easter eggs for New Hampshire and the Boston area are too numerous to count. Perhaps even "Hubie Halloween" was a name check on Kyle's legendary hockey-playing brother Hubie McDonough.

And local eateries pay back the favor, not just with photos of him and social media posts when he visits, but they find quiet corners for him and don't make a fuss when he politely waits in line for ice cream like any other ham-and-egger. The Red Arrow not only has an Adam Sandler Burger — topped with lettuce, tomato, raw onion and mayo — it also has this reporter's favorite breakfast, Stan the Man's Favorite, named for Sandler's father Stanley,

"He's a great representation of Manchester, I think, and the spirit here."

VICTORIA RIESE
manager at
the Puritan Backroom

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UNION LEADER FILE

Actor Adam Sandler returned to his alma mater in 2010 to speak at Manchester Central High School's graduation. Sandler graduated in 1984.



PROVIDED BY FIREFLY BISTRO & BAR VIA INSTAGRAM

Adam Sandler has brunch at the Firefly Bistro & Bar in Manchester in November 2024.



PROVIDED BY THE RED ARROW DINER

Adam Sandler doesn't limit his Red Arrow visits to the Manchester diner. Here, he posed with his family during a 2018 stop at the diner's Londonderry location.



PROVIDED BY MANCHESTER INFORMATION VIA FACEBOOK

Kim Shaw, who has known Adam Sandler for a long time, took a photo with him while he was visiting the Puritan Backroom in June. Shaw shared the photo with Manchester Information's Facebook page.

Beyond the stage and gallery: Manchester's creative core is thriving

By **Sydney Green**
Union Leader Staff

Once known for its mill town past, Manchester has emerged as a vibrant cultural destination in New Hampshire, with a deeply rooted and thriving arts scene.

Anchored by institutions like the Palace Theatre, Currier Museum of Art, and Majestic Theatre, the city has proved that art, performance, and community are integral to its identity — and its future.

The Palace Theatre: A century of stage magic

Walk into the Palace Theatre on Hanover Street and you'll step into a preserved slice of 1915.

"We upkeep it so it maintains its historical value," Director of

Operations Katie Lovell said. "The grand theater is similar to how it looked back then. We have tried to keep the historic integrity of it over the years."

Originally opened for vaudeville acts and silent films, the Palace faced its share of near-closures over the years. But in 1974, thanks to a push from the mayor at the time, Sylvio S. Dupuis, it reopened with new energy. Today, the Palace is a nonprofit organization with zero debt and over 11,000 members, spanning seven buildings across downtown Manchester.

From professional Broadway-style musicals to community dance recitals and comedy acts, the Palace does it all. It even produces its own shows in-house — choreography, directing, casting, set-building



PROVIDED BY THE PALACE THEATRE

"A Christmas Carol" is a beloved play that returns to the Palace Theatre in Manchester every year around Christmas.

— ensuring high-quality productions that run for multiple weekends.

"When we pick the season,

we make sure there's a variety that everyone enjoys," Lovell said.

The Palace continues to

adapt to a changing Manchester. Once focused on theatergoers 65 and older, it's now trying to reach younger audiences.

"What do people want to come and see? That's always changing, especially in Manchester," Lovell said. "We've had to shift from marketing in newspapers and radio to relying much more on social media."

According to Lovell, the Palace Theatre has a strong partnership with local businesses.

"People come to the Palace to see a show, which is what gets them to Manchester," Lovell said. "Then that makes all the businesses think, 'How do we get them to stay?'"

The Palace is also behind the

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People play healing drums during the We Are One Festival on Saturday, Aug. 16, held at Veterans Memorial Park in Manchester.



JODIE ANDRUSKEVICH/
UNION LEADER

We Are One Festival is one of many events at Veterans Park

The We Are One Festival, which happened last weekend at Veterans Memorial Park in Manchester, brings together Latino and African cultural festivals in a celebration of unique ancestry, common cultural heritage and our shared interests. It's one of many events held at the park this summer, including the Granite State Blues Festival, the Manchester Pride Festival & Parade, and outdoor summer movies.



Left: Kelly White performs at the We Are One Festival on Aug. 16 at Veterans Memorial Park.



Right: Adell Pellerin-Williams, right, tries her hand at playing the drums alongside Theo Martey of the Akawabaa Ensemble.



Roberto Kortright of Pal Carajo Restaurant stirs up some rice with chicken and vegetables at the We Are One Festival.

JODIE ANDRUSKEVICH/
UNION LEADER

Arts

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Manchester Citywide Arts Festival, a weeklong event celebrating the city's growing arts community with open studios, workshops and a massive Saturday street fair.

This year, the arts festival will be held Sept. 7-13.

The Currier Museum: Art, resilience and accessibility

Just down the road, the Currier Museum of Art, at 150 Ash St., is preparing to celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2029. Founded by Moody Currier and Hannah Slade, the museum has long embodied the idea that art is essential during both prosperity and hardship.

"The museum opened in 1929, just before the stock market crash, and then came World War II," Director of Marketing and Communications Ali Goldstein

said. "Through every challenge, we have kept coming back to the idea that art is born out of those moments — and is even more important in them."

The Currier has become known not just for its world-class holdings, but for its community-centered programming. Thousands of students visit each year through free school tours and a dedicated bus fund that removes financial barriers.

Wellness programs are a major part of the Currier's identity, too. With around 11 active wellness initiatives, the museum supports veterans, individuals with disabilities, cancer survivors and people affected by substance use disorder.

"Participants say the most valuable thing is being able to connect with people who share

that story," Goldstein said. "And then they also enjoy being able to experiment with creativity."

Access and storytelling are core values of the museum. The museum recently launched its first digital guide via the Bloomberg Connects app and is expanding evening hours and accessibility features.

"We can't just tell stories for people who already love art," Goldstein said. "We have to widen the lens and convince people to come in and fall in love in their own way."

The Majestic Theatre: Where community takes center stage

For those looking to get on-stage themselves, The Majestic Theatre at 880 Page St. has been a part of Manchester's cultural fabric since 1991. A full-time

community theater for all ages, it is the largest producing community theater in New Hampshire, with a nonstop schedule of plays and musicals.

After years of operating without a permanent space, The Majestic secured its own stage in 2016.

"If you don't have a place to perform, you're cut off at the knees," founder and Artistic Director Robert Dionne said. "We have never had a lot of extra money lying around, and we don't want to charge an exorbitant amount to people who want to see the arts."

The theater provides a vital complement to the Palace's larger productions, staging more intimate or offbeat shows that otherwise wouldn't reach Manchester audiences. It also serves as a home for multigenerational perform-

ers — some who now bring their grandchildren to audition.

"It's exciting to see that younger people are getting more involved. There's a whole new generation of theater people growing up in Manchester," Dionne said.

Looking ahead

Plans are even in the works to officially designate the area between Hanover and Amherst streets as the "Theater District," cementing what locals already refer to by that name.

"This is more than entertainment," Lovell said. "This is about community, resilience and keeping Manchester thriving."

As the arts continue to bloom across the Queen City, one thing is clear: Manchester's creative spirit isn't just surviving — it's leading the way.

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Sandler

From Page D1

restaurant staff said. "His dad and he used to come in here every Saturday or Sunday," said Amanda Wibby, co-owner of the Red Arrow Diner. "Our most popular menu item is named after him. That's what he always ordered. Not Adam. His dad." The Red Arrow on Lowell Street is a must-visit for presidential candidates and has a politico-star-studded wall of pictures, right along side a picture of Sandler. That begged the question, who would they rather have visit the diner, the Sandman or the next leader of the free world? "I think we'd take Adam Sandler, right?" general manager Jayme McKenzie said while looking at Wibby. "I don't know, there's always Judy Sandler, too," Wibby replied, referring to Adam's mother. Truth be told, it sounded like Judy was their favorite Sandler.

Puritanical roots

Before he was Opera Man or Canteen Boy on "Saturday Night Live," Sandler may well have been a busboy at the Puritan Backroom. Some folks are certain of this. Others said it might be a bit of a legend. "There's a rumor that he worked here very briefly, but I cannot confirm," said Victoria Riese, one of the managers of the Puritan. Either way, Sandler might even visit the Puritan these days more than Rep. Chris Pappas, scion of the restaurant's founding family. Rich Webber, co-owner of the Goldenrod with Ron DiBurro, previously worked at the Puritan and said he was certain Sandler bused tables, albeit for a short time. "Yeah, he was a busser. In one of his movies, it's



In September 2023, Adam Sandler hung out at Webster School in Manchester, playing ball with students just as he did when he attended the school back in the day.

PROVIDED BY LAUREN FOUCHER VIA FACEBOOK

actually really funny he goes, 'You know, I couldn't hold a job. I had a job once. I was a busser. Couldn't put butters on the table. I got fired,'" Webber said. "And he mentions Old Man Pappas, Arthur Pappas, at the ice cream stand (in 'Grown Ups 2')." Riese said Sandler has been to the Puritan two or three times in the past few months, and like other restaurant staff, yes, she has taken a selfie with him. "He's such a nice person," she said. "He used to be able to sit in the restaurant and eat, but he's too well-known now and that can't happen. So I always try to work to accommodate him so that he can enjoy his meal. ... We find corners and places to put him where the general public would not necessar-

ily know he's here." She said he also comes to the ice cream stand once in a while. **Representing Manchester** Sandler is the embodiment of the city and its values, Riese and Webber said. He's not just true to his hometown, he's modest and not at all a Hollywood big shot, even though he's worth an estimated \$440 million, according to celebritynetworth.com. "He's a great representation of Manchester, I think, and the spirit here," Riese said. "And he spends time here still. It's not like he got all famous. I know he lives in California, but he still spends a lot of time up here in New Hampshire because his family is here." Sandler is the youngest

of four siblings, including his brother, Scott, and two sisters, Valerie and dentist Elizabeth Spindel. The funnyman paid tribute to his family during his acceptance speech for the 2023 Mark Twain Prize at the Kennedy Center. "To my family who all flew in from New Hampshire and Florida to watch me get this award, yes, I will pay for your hotel rooms," he said. "But you gotta pay for your own incidentals, mother. How many pistachios can one woman eat?" His brother helped get Sandler into doing standup in Boston while he was still a 17-year-old high school student. Sandler spoke at his alma mater Central's 2010 graduation ceremony

and recently paid tribute to longtime high school teacher Don Tibbetts, who died this June. **Manchester loves him back** During an interview at the Goldenrod, Webber couldn't say enough about Sandler. "He's just a very nice, humble guy. I've run into him places before. He's come in just in the ice cream line and got an ice cream just like a regular guy," Webber said. "And it's funny because he's actually a little shy. If someone comes up to him, he will talk to them, but you try to respect that boundary." Webber said his first interaction with Sandler was at the Puritan Backroom: "I was actually closing up shop one night. It's

like 10:30 and I was doing some dishes, putting some stuff away, and I walk around and there was this guy in these oversized shorts. I think they were lime green, and he had a Knicks jersey on that was oversized. We almost ran into each other, and he goes, 'Oh, sorry. I was just sneaking in the back.' And I was like, 'Oh, that's all right.' He looked at me and could tell I recognized him. He goes, 'Yeah, Adam Sandler, nice to meet you.'" Webber said Sandler's generosity often goes without any fanfare. A few years back during a fundraiser for a Manchester Memorial High School student who had cancer, Sandler donated a PlayStation 3, which was hard to come by due to its popularity. Sandler donated one for an auction. Back at the Red Arrow, McKenzie and Wibby said they are both huge fans of the man, his family and his movies. "My kids sat down and watched 'Happy Gilmore 2' with us as soon as it came out," McKenzie said. "We watched the first one all together on Thursday and then it came out on Friday and we watched the second one right away." McKenzie said when Sandler comes to the Red Arrow, a line quickly forms for people to take pictures with him, and Sandler obliges. But sometimes, he comes in under the radar, either with family or alone. "I have served him when I worked third shift," McKenzie said. "I served him at 5 in the morning. He was just sitting there, reading the paper and drinking coffee." Nothing more Manchester than that. dpierce@unionleader.com



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