



HOME

for the holidays

A festive evening awaits

Hampton Falls brings the holidays home with its first Christmas Market

By Kathleen D. Bailey
Special to the Union Leader

KAREN SABATINI, coordinator for the Hampton Falls Farmers Market, listened as market baker Liz Blankenship discussed what she'll be bringing to the first Christmas Market. When Sabatini mentioned her sourdough starter, Sabatini said, "I need to buy one for my niece."

The town of Hampton Falls will once again gather for its annual Christmas tree lighting on Saturday, Dec. 6. But this year the event will be a full holiday festival, with several town departments and organizations pitching in to create memories.

The town's first Christmas Market goes up Saturday, Dec. 6, from 4 to 7 p.m., on the Town Common. There will be something for everybody, even the organizers.

Sabatini said the Christmas market is an outgrowth of the spring, summer and fall markets. The town hasn't been without holiday cheer, according to her.

"The Rec Department coordinates the tree lighting. Santa and Mrs. Claus arrive by fire truck, there's hot chocolate and cookies, there's music." It's "heartwarming" and "quintessential New England," she said.

But she and Rec Committee member Linda Savoy wanted to see more, and they brainstormed. They came up with the idea of the Christmas Market and ran it by others.

Savoy said, "This year we wanted to get as many departments involved as possible." So they reached out.

Librarian Erin Sniderman has



The Clauses will make a triumphant return to Hampton Falls in the Dec. 6 Christmas Market on the Common.

COURTESY

traditionally set up displays on how different cultures celebrate in December, and she agreed to take her Festival of Lights to the Common.

The Historical Society agreed to provide the cocoa and cookies, while the Friends of the Band-

stand signed on for hot cider and doughnuts and at least one live band.

They reached out to local businesses, too. Dodge's, the Agway store, agreed to run a tree-and-wreath sale, while the Tonry Tree Farm donated both a fresh tree to

raffle and the town tree to light.

The Rec Department will have a make-and-take ornament activity, so families can decorate the tree they win or buy at the event.

Then there's the market itself, modeled in part on the classic German Christmas markets.

According to Sabatini, about 20 vendors have signed on, and she expects more. Some are hold-overs from the summer market, some new.

Blankenship, who bakes sour-

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Three seasonal shows highlight Weathervane Theatre's winter stage



COURTESY/GRACE L. KRAMER

Marisa Kirby reprises her star turn as Cindy Lou Who for a third year in "Who's Holiday" at the Mountain View Grand in Whitefield.

By Kathleen D. Bailey
Special to the Union Leader

Ethan Paulini, artistic director for Whitefield's Weathervane Theatre, remembers one patron who bought tickets for one of the theater's holiday shows, "Who's Holiday," as soon as they went on sale. "They told me, 'I'm going to bring my elderly mother and watch her blush,'" Paulini recalled with glee.

Weathervane's fourth holiday show season brings a little spice and a lot of nice to the North Country. The three productions may appeal to different demographics, but they all aim to bring a little more Christmas spirit to the Great North Woods.

The holiday shows are staged at the Mountain View Grand Resort, also in Whitefield.

First up is "Who's Holiday," described on the website as "a wildly funny

adults-only comedy about The Grinch's Cindy Lou Who, who is now all grown up, just released from jail and lives in a trailer park."

Weathervane is in its third year of staging the comedy. Paulini was as surprised as anyone when the raunchy piece got accepted by his audiences.

"We were doing 'Mama Mia' in the summer repertory season, and I announced the holiday programming in my curtain speech," he said.

By the next day, 78 of the venue's 200 seats were already sold, and all three shows sold out within a week.

He knew he was on to something. Last year there were four performances, sold out by September, and this year he's considering adding a fifth.

"Who's Holiday" was written by Matt Lombardo

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The sleighbell creations of Diane Louise Paul will be among the fine crafts offered in the Christmas Market to be held Saturday, Dec. 6, on the Hampton Falls Town Common.

COURTESY

Hampton

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dough bread for the summer market, will have her breads on hand along with homemade pretzels.

“We’ll have fine jewelry, Liz’s bread, goat soap, honey, meat and seafood,” Sabatini said.

The Police Department will hand out goodie bags and safety information, and the Fire Department will wire the community tree.

But the holidays aren’t just about cocoa and shopping, and with this event, the committee intends to touch townspeople’s hearts. Resident Anne Lane has run her own food collection event for four years. “She calls it the ‘Reverse Advent Calendar’ food drive,” Blankenship contributed.

Lane puts out lists of components for a holiday dinner, townspeople pick them up along with boxes, and they add an item to their box every day for the month of December.

Last year 215 boxes were filled and returned to Lane; this year the hope is for 250, according to Blankenship.

She added that Lane has two or three specific lists, depending on what local food pantries are short on.

“For example, St. Vincent de Paul might be short on cranberry sauce, so that goes on the St. Vincent list,” she said.

The Lincoln Akerman School PTO also will have a presence with their Giving Tree, Savoy said.

And the town’s Nativity scene will be on display, Sabatini said.

Sniderman has been offering her Festival of Lights inside the library for several years, but now she’s ready to take it to the community.

“The idea is looking at how other cultures celebrate light,” she said. She’s



KATHLEEN BAILEY PHOTO

From left, Erin Sniderman, Linda Savoy, Liz Blankenship and Karen Sabatini go over holiday-themed books in preparation for the Dec. 6 Christmas Market, an expansion on the town Christmas tree lighting.



COURTESY

The Hampton Falls bandstand will be aglow when the town tree lighting and other events combine with the town’s first Christmas Market on Dec. 6.

been mounting displays on Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Diwali and more.

“It expands the conversation,” Sniderman explained. “It may expose somebody to the greater conversation. It brings us together.”

And that’s the committee’s goal: To bring Hampton Falls together for one magical night. While the

town is closely knit, all the women noticed that the same people showed up for everything. With the Christmas market, Blankenship said, they hope to see a full community turn-out.

“We’re going to make it happen,” she said, adding, “It’s a wonderful environment to pull everyone together.”

And, Savoy said, “to dis-

connect from their phones, even if just for one hour.”

The Christmas Market is hosted by the Hampton Falls town committees and departments; the library; recreation department; police and fire departments; and the Hampton Falls Farmers Market.

For more information, visit hamptonfallsfarmersmarket.com.

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Weatherwane Theatre brings back a holiday version of Tom Dudzick’s “Miracle on South Division Street,” first performed in 2020. From left are Marisa Kirby, Jorge Donoso, Monica Rosenblatt and Deborah Osborne.



Jorge Donoso returns to the wardrobe in the family-friendly favorite “The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe,” playing at the Mountain View Grand in Whitefield as part of the Weatherwane Theatre’s holiday offerings.

Weatherwane

From Page C1

and had a New York run, in addition to being performed all over the country, according to Paulini. “The audiences love it,” he said. “It’s a little naughty, and they think, ‘We’re laughing at things that shouldn’t be laughed at.’”

The play is now a tradition with his northern audiences, he said. “It’s like ‘The Nutcracker,’ ‘A Christmas Carol,’ only it’s rated R,” he quipped.

Paulini aims to reach all audiences with his programming, so the second show of the season will be “The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe,” based on the beloved children’s classic by C.S. Lewis. This play has been a staple in their repertoire, and Paulini likes the idea that it’s more than just one night. “People will seek out the movie version, they’ll read the book with their grandchildren,” he said.

The third production is “Miracle on South Division Street,” and it’s new to the North

‘Who’s Holiday’
When: Friday, Nov. 28, at 7 p.m.; Saturday, Nov. 29, at 4 and 7 p.m.; and Thursday, Dec. 4, at 7 p.m.

Country, Paulini said. It involves a family in Buffalo, a father who moved from Poland in World War II, three children and a statue of the Virgin Mary that may not be Mary after all.

“Miracle” has been a harder sell than the first two shows, perhaps because it’s unfamiliar, but Paulini promised that those who see it will love it. The play provides the ambience of a family gathered around the TV, laughing together at an old sitcom, he said, adding, “When word gets out, this will be our best show.”

The Weatherwane has been in existence for 60 years, pro-

‘The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe’
When: Sunday, Nov. 30, at 1 p.m., and Saturday, Dec. 6, at 11 a.m.

viding the North Country with professional repertory theater. The partnership with Mountain View Grand began three years ago, according to Paulini. “We were doing fall shows and small holiday shows,” he recalled. “The resort was looking for an experience for their guests.”

So they teamed up. The first year featured the first performance of “Who’s Holiday” and a show called “Winter Wonderettes” based on a Ronettes-type girl singing group.

In the second year, “Who’s Holiday” returned, by popular demand, and the rep crew did

‘Miracle on South Division Street’
When: Tuesday, Dec. 2, at 7 p.m.; Wednesday, Dec. 3, at 2 p.m.; Friday, Dec. 5, at 7 p.m.; and Saturday, Dec. 6, at 2 p.m.

its first “The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.” That production of the Lewis classic brought hundreds of schoolchildren, he recalled.

“We have other ideas, but the ones that are popular, people ask for time and time again,” he said. Last year brought a “Who’s” reprise and a musical review, “North Country Christmas,” which he plans to offer again on a rotating basis.

Despite the busyness of the season, and the weather, Paulini has no trouble filling the seats at the Mountain View Grand. “The draw,” he said, “is tradition.

It’s sharing the experience with people you love, in a celebratory way.”

The Weatherwane is the northernmost professional theater in New Hampshire, one hour from the Canadian border, and the area gets the worst of Granite State winters.

But that doesn’t stop his hardy audiences, Paulini said. “We’re used to it up here.”

Paulini, who grew up in Boston and lives in New York on the off-season, said, “I’ve always had the best of the best at my fingertips. The arts have given me my identity, my career.”

The North Country deserves the “best of the best” too, he believes. He’s eager to see young people experience the options and the different viewpoints the arts bring.

And for “Who’s Holiday,” he advised, “Get a sitter.”

For more information, visit weathervanenh.org.

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Global Christmas Market blends world traditions with local giving

Area artists, vendors and nonprofits unite to support families facing rising food insecurity

By Darrell Halen
Special to the Union Leader

During the early 2000s, while he was in Germany for the Air Force, Phil Meyer visited Christmas markets in Europe and enjoyed, as he recalls, “the food, the smells, the lights, the vendors, the overall experience of performers.”

Now, Meyer, who lives in Pelham, is teaming up with other good-hearted people to create a similar experience for shoppers that will raise money to help feed the food-insecure in the Nashua and Merrimack areas.

New Hampshire World Christmas Market, a new family-friendly holiday celebration, will feature some of New England’s best foods and beverages, along with products made by talented local artists and artisans, according to organizers.

The event, they say, will “bring together the magic of Christmas with the rich cultural heritage of New England and beyond” and will celebrate craftsmanship, community spirit and global holiday traditions.

The market will be held Dec. 13 and 14 at Anheuser-Busch Biergarten, 221 Daniel Webster Highway, Merrimack.

The event will be presented by Nourish New England, a nonprofit, all-volunteer organization that was officially launched close to a year ago. One of its main objectives is to support food banks and soup kitchens.

“What we’re attempting to do at events like this one, and others we’ve been a part of, is to raise funds to actually fund and also support and supply those other



Sunny Valley Farms out of Amherst is a garden center, specialty food store and gift shop. For the market, it is providing hot cider donuts, hot cider, coffee, hot dogs, Christmas decorations and the Christmas greens shown above.



Abella Gourmet Nuts out of Claremont will deliver the aroma of fresh-roasted glazed cashews, almonds, pecans and walnuts to the market.

nonprofits that are other supporting people in need,” said Meyer, one of the organization’s leaders.

Although inspired by celebrations in Europe, Christmas around the world is

the event’s theme.

Food will include Brazilian cuisine; roasted glazed nuts made by a Filipino couple; boba tea, a Taiwanese drink; and raclette sandwiches, known for

their cheese from Switzerland and France.

Santa and Mrs. Claus will be there. So, too, will elves. There will be a DJ and music throughout the event, including at least

two bands, and the Granite State Ringers, a hand-bell choir. Activities will include a photo booth and a Kids Zone featuring face painting, games and more. Anheuser also will open its gift shop.

The event’s participating artists and artisans will have a variety of items to purchase including cutting boards, ornaments, candles, carved wood, felt gnomes, dream catchers, soaps, stained glass and crocheted items.

Although three local places providing food access will be the chief beneficiaries of the event’s proceeds, Meyer hopes the Christmas market

will become an annual event, whose help spreads throughout New England.

“I love it because it gives back to community,” said Kendra Smith, owner of Soel Sistas, a Nashua cafe, catering and food truck business, and one of the event’s food vendors.

The cause is close to her heart. Smith heads Feed the Kids, a Nashua organization that amongst its good works provides food to students during summers.

A former lunch lady for the Nashua School District, Smith saw students who experienced food inse-

▶ See **Market**, Page C8



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La'Peony Desserts out of Derry is a real highlight to what a World Christmas Market is all about and is expecting to sell, clockwise from top left, Greek baklava, oreshki (Slavic walnut-shaped cookies), Austrian-style apple strudel and French macarons.

Market

From Page C6

curity — and had been no stranger herself to the problem.

For \$5, she said, a hot dinnertime meal can be provided to a child. Feed the Kids also will have a booth at the event, which will inform the public about its mission and how the public can help.

Jessica Moores, owner of Manchester Craft Market at the Mall of New Hampshire in Manchester, whose store features the works of 260 local artists, authors and small businesses, will be participating, too.

“I will be there with a selection of products from the store. Just to give people just a little sample, an opportunity to do a little bit of shopping, if they can’t get to the mall to check us out,” said Moores, who expects to have paint-your-own ceramic kits, works of local authors of

children’s books and other items for sale.

“I believe in what Nourish New England is doing as a nonprofit working (to fight) food insecurity. I thought it was a great opportunity to get out of the mall a little bit, support a cause, get together with a bunch of other local businesses and nonprofits,” she said.

For Linda Comrie, owner of Sweet Dreams Confections in Derry, being a food vendor at an event that will help the hungry fits with her company’s support of the anti-hunger cause — she donates half of her profits to food banks and other organizations.

“I think in general food insecurity is growing and has been growing exponentially over the past 10, 20 years,” Comrie said. “Most recently, the past few years, our food

banks, pantries and soup kitchens have noticed a growth of sometimes over 65 percent of who they’re serving.”

“I come from a humble beginning. My husband as well. Our thought is we want to continue to help support our community. How can we do that? We volunteer, do all those things. But how else can I be more impactful? How else can my family be more impactful? I noticed that there are a lot of organizations that are struggling to support those who really needed the support most.”

Food insecurity, she said, is not confined to the homeless, she said.

“It could be a two-income family that had to replace their roof or their septic or their furnace. Something large happened and now, all their money

is going to that, and they need some help feeding their family,” she said.

Comrie plans to offer a variety of items for sale, including sourdough, chocolate-covered peanut butter balls, dried craft cocktail infusions, snack mixes and a hand-created hot cocoa blend.

“It’s very creamy, smooth,” she said. “A lot of kids love that.”

The event will run from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 13, and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 14.

General admission tickets cost \$10. Tickets cost \$8 for first responders, military and seniors age 65 and older with an ID. Kids 12 and younger are admitted free of charge.

Purchase of tickets online prior to the event is encouraged.

Visit nhworldchristmasmarket.com.

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

Looking for more festive fun?
Check out these events across NH

• **Christmas at the Castle** returns to Castle in the Clouds (455 Old Mountain Road, Moultonborough) for another season in 2025, on Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., through Dec. 7. Tours of the historic Lucknow Mansion are available with festive decorations by local businesses. Each day also includes complimentary hot cocoa and cookies, holiday crafts and photos with Santa Claus, and lunch served in the Carriage House Restaurant. Tickets are \$25 for adults, \$15 for kids and teens ages 5-17, and free for kids ages 4 and under. Visit castleinthecLOUDS.org.

• **Charmingfare Farm** in Candia is hosting several fun holiday events in November and December including **The Christmas Tree Spree**, **Santa’s Christmas, Encore of the Lights** and a **New Year’s Eve Ride**. Go to the farm’s website for information on times and tickets for these family-friendly events: visitthefarm.com.

• Derry will celebrate **A Very Derry Holiday** on Saturday, Nov. 29, featuring several events in and around town throughout the day, including a holiday parade at 1 p.m. from West Broadway to Crystal Avenue. Activities also include crafts, cookie decorating and photo opportunities with Santa Claus from 2 to 5 p.m. at Veterans Hall (31 W. Broadway) and a tree lighting ceremony at 5 p.m. at 1 W. Broadway. See the full schedule of events at gdlchamber.org.

• **Intown Concord’s Mid-night Merriment** returns to downtown Concord on Friday, Dec. 5, from 5 p.m. to midnight. Get started

on your holiday shopping from participating local businesses along Main Street while enjoying lights, s’mores, cocoa, music and more. Admission is free. Visit intownconcord.org.

• **Christmas at the Crossing** returns to Crossing Life Church (122 N. Lowell Road, Windham) on Friday, Dec. 5, and Saturday, Dec. 6, from 5 to 9 p.m. each evening. Enjoy festive wagon rides, an indoor Christmas market, a kids’ zone with games, face-painting and crafts, photo opportunities with Santa Claus, bonfires, hot cocoa and more. Admission is free. See windhamcrossing.org.

• Don’t miss the fourth annual **Light Up the Village** event in Hooksett on Saturday, Dec. 6, from 4 to 8 p.m., which will feature food and drinks from Robbie’s Country Store, musical performances, holiday storytimes, caroling, photo opportunities with Santa Claus and more. Visit lightupthevillage.wordpress.com.

• Join the Children’s Museum of New Hampshire (6 Washington St., Dover) for its annual **Jingle Bell Extravaganza** on Sunday, Dec. 7, and Sunday, Dec. 14. Attendees can choose one of two ticketed time slots (1 to 2:45 p.m. or 3:15 to 5 p.m.) to enjoy photo opportunities with Santa Claus, hands-on holiday craft activities and a magical science experiment, all while they explore the museum. Tickets are \$20 for museum members and \$25 for nonmembers. Online preregistration is required, and pajamas are welcome. See childrensmuseum.org.

— Matt Ingersoll

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COURTESY
The flavors of pumpkin and chocolate chip elevated each other at last year’s Currier and Ives Cookie Tour. This year’s event is Saturday, Dec. 13.

Currier and Ives Cookie Tour marks 20 years of sweet tradition

By Kathleen D. Bailey
Special to the Union Leader

Holly LeClair, one of the organizers for the Currier and Ives Cookie Tour, remembers one year when an ice storm struck the Monadnock region in December. “It hit the weekend of the tour, so it put a slight damper on things,” she said, adding that Jaffrey was without power for 13 days. She doesn’t know what her Jaffrey hosts did with all their uneaten cookies. “Maybe they ate them,” she said, adding, “But they probably gave them to charity.” Everybody wins in the Cookie Tour, now in its 20th year. The guests get to sample cookies, the businesses get to court new customers,

and a local nonprofit reaps the financial results. The tour gets its title from the nickname for this corner of the state, and it has its roots in the Inn at East Hill Farm in Troy. Sally Adams, the late owner of the inn, got the idea and went to her staff, including LeClair. “She said, ‘I want you to do this,’ and I said, ‘Oh, OK,’” LeClair recalled. “The first year, we had eight stops.” They sold 26 tickets, at \$5 a ticket. But a tradition was born. Adams’s plan for the tour was to focus on the area’s inns and B&Bs, LeClair said. But the B&Bs, true to their name, served breakfast, and there was too tight a window between breakfast and the Cookie Tour. Also, she said, there are

comparatively few B&Bs in her area, compared to the North Country. So they opened the tour to other hosts. “Over the years, we’ve had libraries, historical societies and small businesses as hosts,” she said. The plan for this year includes 16 stops, according to LeClair, with four more on a waitlist for next year. They don’t want the tour to get unwieldy, she said. And they’re now pulling in upwards of 200 people. LeClair was the first chairman and ran the event for several years. She now assists Perri Ammann, Adams’s granddaughter and the current chair. “I’m a sub-chairman,” LeClair said with a smile.

► See **Cookies**, Page C10

Stops on the Currier and Ives Cookie Tour

- Jaffrey:** Terrapin Glassblowing Studio, Jaffrey Historical Society, The Optimist Cafe, The Park Theatre, The Jaffrey Civic Center, Maura’s Embroidery Unlimited, Monadnock Country Cafe and The Monadnock Inn.
- New Ipswich:** Sleeping Monk Farm Alpacas.

◆

Mason: Earthly Elan.

◆

Swanzey: Frogg Brewing and The She Shed.
- Harrisville:** Granite Oak Farm.

◆

Troy: Troy Historical Society, The Inn at East Hill Farm and The Cozy Cottage.

Dec. 6
11 AM - 2:00 PM

PLYMOUTH
REGIONAL
SENIOR
CENTER

Calling All Bakers!

The Tenth Annual Veterans Holiday Cookie Walk is looking for great bakers

Volunteers to bake at least 6 dozen small treats—but more are always welcome!

Some favorite holiday cookies include:

- biscotti, spritz, snickerdoodles, gingersnaps, coconut kisses, turtle bars, and much more!

Please package treats carefully with ingredient card and the elves will arrange them for all the shoppers!

For sign-up or info, contact Denise Castonguay at denise@bhshelter.org or call (603) 238-7511

Drop off locations and times:
Bridge House, Thursday, Dec 4 & 5 from 9 am to 4 pm
Senior Center, Friday, Dec 5 from 6 to 7 pm

Find us on Facebook

"SHE SAVED MY LIFE"

Concord resident Dawn R. had been experiencing the painful side effects of Peripheral Neuropathy, **"My feet and legs were extremely painful and my doctor told me there was nothing they could do. That I would have to take Gabapentin for the rest of my life.** Then she met Concord’s very own Dr. Kristen Markwith, Licensed Acupuncturist.

Peripheral Neuropathy is the pain, discomfort and numbness caused by nerve damage of the peripheral nervous system. Dawn explained that daily tasks like opening doors and using the bathroom were overwhelmingly painful. “How can you live for the next 30 years when you don’t even want to get out of bed and do simple things?”

She was experiencing the burning, numbness, tingling and sharp pains that those suffering with neuropathy often describe. “The way I would describe it, it’s equivalent to walking on glass.” Dawn hadn’t worn socks in five years and was wearing shoes two sizes too big so that nothing would ‘touch’ her feet.

Unfortunately, Dawn’s story is all too familiar for the over 3 million people in the U.S. suffering from Peripheral Neuropathy.

If you’re unfortunate enough to be facing the same disheartening prognosis, you’re not sleeping at night because of the burning in your feet. You have difficulty walking, shopping or doing any activity for more than 30 minutes because of the pain. You’re struggling with balance and living in fear that you might fall. Your doctor told you to, ‘just live with the pain’ and you’re taking medications that aren’t working or have uncomfortable side effects.

Fortunately, four months ago Dawn read an article about Dr. Kristen Markwith and the work she was doing to treat those suffering from Peripheral Neuropathy, without invasive surgeries or medications.

Dr. Kristen Markwith, founder of Trend Acupuncture and Integrative Medicine in

Concord, NH. is using the time tested science of Acupuncture and a technology originally developed by NASA that assists in increasing blood flow and expediting recovery and healing to treat the debilitating disease.

“Now when I go to bed at night I don’t have those shooting pains. I don’t have that burning sensation. I don’t have pain coming up my legs,” Dawn enthusiastically describes life after receiving Dr. Kristen’s treatments. “I can wear socks and shoes!”

Dawn and his sister now operate a successful dog walking business, sometimes covering up to 5 miles a day.

“It’s life altering. As far as I’m concerned Dr. Kristen saved my life!”

Dr. Kristen Markwith has been helping the senior community for over 10 years using the most cutting edge innovative integrative medicine. Specializing in chronic pain cases, specifically those that have been deemed ‘hopeless’ or ‘untreatable,’ she consistently generates unparalleled results.

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If you’ve missed too many tee times because of pain or you passed on taking that walk down on Main Street because you are afraid of falling, it's time to call Dr. Kristen Markwith and the staff at Trend.

It’s time you let your golden years be GOLDEN!

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www.trendacupuncture.com



The Currier and Ives Cookie Tour in the Monadnock region will be held Saturday, Dec. 13.

COURTESY

Cookies

From Page C9

Among other things, she manages the website and the maps.

For businesses, the tour opens up new possibilities. “It broadens the awareness of their companies,” LeClair said. “We’ll hear things like, ‘I’ve driven by here for years and never stopped in.’”

The tour is also a good Christmas-spirit-builder, according to LeClair. “It’s fun to do. It’s not crazy expensive, and everybody wants to see how you decorate for the holidays.”

While the guests come back year after year, the cookies change accordingly, she said. The first offering from the Inn at East Hill was a “rich, soft, chewy, dark” molasses cookie. They’ve also done a mint truffle, and for LeClair, a “mint-and-chocolate girl,” that was the best so far.

The cookies offered

can be simple, or they can be complex. LeClair remembered one year a business in Peterborough produced “Ugly Sweater” sugar cookies. All recipes are available at the sites on postcards, she said.

The inn has a commercial kitchen, and each year she and Ammann take recipe suggestions to Chef Mark Drury. They winnow down the ideas, and Drury goes to work.

LeClair warns the businesses to plan for at least 200 people. Sometimes they run out. It’s not a problem at the inn, because Drury can just whip up a couple more batches, but it is an issue when the smaller businesses run out.

“The customers,” she said, “do not like that.”

It’s recommended that each guest take one cookie, though some sneak a couple more, she said. They can either eat

the cookie onsite or put it in their tin for later. Beverages are served at each stop, she added.

Though LeClair and Ammann have been associated with the tour since its founding, they never get out and visit the other businesses or taste their cookies. They’re too busy at the Inn at East Hill Farm.

But for these hosts, the best part of the holiday is not eating, but giving. This year they’ve chosen to donate proceeds to “End 68 Hours of Hunger,” a program that provides weekend meals for food-insecure children.

“We have a handful of nonprofits we rotate through, but it’s always something to do with feeding people or clothing them for the winter,” LeClair said.

Tickets are \$20 per person, cash only, and available at The Inn at East Hill

Farm, Troy; Frogg Brewing, Swanzey; and The Park Theatre, Jaffrey. Maps and directions are available on the website. Participants should bring a cookie tin or plastic container.

This year’s participants are Sleeping Monk Farm Alpacas, New Ipswich; Terapin Glassblowing Studio, Jaffrey; Jaffrey Historical Society; The Optimist Cafe, Jaffrey; The Park Theatre, Jaffrey; The Jaffrey Civic Center; Maura’s Embroidery Unlimited, Jaffrey; Monadnock Country Cafe, Jaffrey; The Monadnock Inn, Jaffrey; Earthly Elan, Mason; Frogg Brewing, Swanzey; The She Shed, Swanzey; Granite Oak Farm, Harrisville; Troy Historical Society, Troy; The Inn at East Hill Farm, Troy; and The Cozy Cottage, Troy.

For more information, visit currierandivescookietour.com.

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

Celebrate the season: Tree lightings and festivals

• The **Bekdash Shriners of New Hampshire** will hold its **25th annual Festival of Trees** through Sunday, Nov. 30 (except on Thursday, Nov. 27). The event features decorated trees donated by local businesses, organizations and families that will be raffled off at the center (189 Pembroke Road, Concord) on Nov. 30. Raffle tickets are \$5, free for kids under 12. Visit bektashshriners.org.

• **Concord’s 40th annual Christmas Tree Lighting** is set for Friday, Nov. 28, from 4 to 7 p.m., at the State House plaza (107 N. Main St., Concord). Follow the “Concord’s Christmas Tree Lighting Celebration” page on Facebook for updates.

• Check out more than 50 decorated trees and gift baskets that will be raffled off at the sixth annual **Milford Festival of Trees** to benefit Share Outreach at the First Congregational Church Parish House (10 Union St.), from Nov. 28-30, Friday and Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Sunday, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Admission is \$5 per person, \$20 per family.

• Pelham Community Spirit will hold its annual **Southern New Hampshire Festival of Trees** at Sherburne Hall (6 Village Green, Pelham). The nine-day event begins Friday, Nov. 28, and runs through Saturday, Dec. 6, when the trees will be raffled off. The festival features live entertainment, a scavenger hunt, Santa Claus and more. Visit pelhamcommunityspirit.org.

• **Rochester Main Street’s Festival of Trees** returns to Studley’s Flower Gardens (82 Wakefield St.) from

Thursday, Dec. 4, through Saturday, Dec. 6. Local businesses and organizations decorate and donate themed Christmas trees that are raffled off. Raffle tickets are \$20 for every 25 tickets sold. See rochestermainstreet.org.

• The **Bedford Women’s Club’s fourth annual Festival of Trees** will be held in the Fellowship Hall of the Bedford Presbyterian Church (4 Church Road) on Friday, Dec. 5, from 4 to 7 p.m., and Saturday, Dec. 6, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Visit bedfordwomensclub.org.

• **Amherst’s Tree Lighting Ceremony** is scheduled for Friday, Dec. 5, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Follow “Amherst Tree Lighting Festival” on Facebook for updates.

• **Friday Night Under the Lights** returns to Main Street in Goffstown on Friday, Dec. 5, from 5 to 8 p.m. Visit goffstownmainstreet.org for updates.

• **Windham’s annual Tree Lighting** is Saturday, Dec. 6, from 2:30 to 5 p.m., on the town common. Enjoy photos with Santa Claus, hot chocolate and cookies, a DJ, crafts and more. Visit windhamnh.gov.

• Don’t miss **Portsmouth’s annual Illuminated Holiday Parade** on Saturday, Dec. 6, which starts at 5:30 p.m. with a tree lighting ceremony in Market Square. At 6 p.m. the parade will step off from Islington and Summer streets. Visit portsmouthchamber.org.

• **Merrimack’s annual Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony** will be held at Abbie Griffin Park (6 Baboosic Lake Road) on Sunday, Dec. 7, at 3:45 p.m. Visit merrimackparksandrec.org.

— Matt Ingersoll

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HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

Granite State spreads cheer with parades, runs

• The annual **Manchester Holiday Parade** is set for Saturday, Dec. 6, kicking off at 4 p.m. on Elm Street in downtown Manchester. The parade directly follows the annual Lil' Elf Runs and the BASC Santa Claus Shuffle, respectively beginning at 2:30 and 3:30 p.m. at Veterans Memorial Park (723 Elm St.). Follow the "MHT Holiday Parade" page on Facebook for updates, or email mhtholidayparade@gmail.com.

• Always the first Saturday in December, the **Exeter Holiday Parade** returns on Saturday, Dec. 6, kicking off at 5:30 p.m. from Osram on Portsmouth Avenue and winding down to Water Street past the Bandstand.

The parade will be held rain or shine. Visit exeternh.holidayparade.com.

• Don your most festive outfit and head to North-east Delta Dental (2 Delta Drive, Concord) for the annual **Jingle Bell Run** on Sunday, Dec. 7, at 8:30 a.m. The run will benefit the Arthritis Foundation. Register online at jbr.org/newhampshire.

• **Merrimack's 33rd annual Holiday Parade** is set for Sunday, Dec. 7, stepping off at 3 p.m. at The Commons Shopping Plaza (515 Daniel Webster Hwy.) and ending in the Town Hall parking lot (6 Baboosic Lake Road). See merrimackparksandrec.org for more details.

• The annual **Rochester**

Holiday Parade will take place Sunday, Dec. 7, from 4 to 5:30 p.m., in downtown Rochester. The theme is "Christmas in Candyland." Visit rochesternh.org/parade.

• The **Ugly Sweater 4-Miler** is back for a 10th year on Saturday, Dec. 13, starting at 9 a.m. at Backyard Brewery & Kitchen (1211 S. Mammoth Road, Manchester). This 21-plus only event will include a post-race party, music, drinks and more to benefit the Humane Society for Greater Nashua SPCA and the Monadnock Humane Society. Registration is \$40 and is available at runsignup.com.

— Matt Ingersoll



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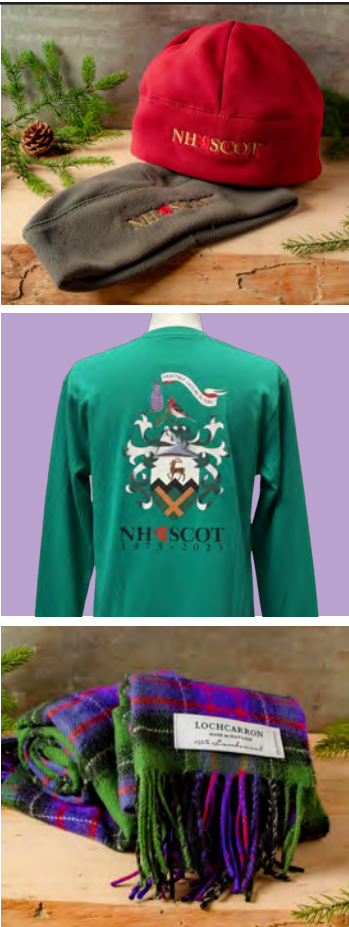
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The Holly Jolly Journey boasts more than 3 million festive lights across the grounds of Mel’s Funway Park in Litchfield.



The Holly Jolly Journey is open through Jan. 11.

New England’s largest holiday light show shines in Litchfield

By Rob Levey
Special to the Union Leader

One hour north of Boston, Holly Jolly Journey at Mel’s Funway Park in Litchfield has become New England’s largest holiday light show, with more than one million additional lights added to this year’s display.

“We have added to our scenes and brought in life-like elements to each corner,” said President and Co-Owner Michael Accomando, who noted 2024 was their first year. “With this year’s show, you walk through 40 different life-size holiday scenes — every scene is different.”

These scenes range from “a zoo of lights” to a candy cane forest and their version of Central Park,

all of which is illuminated by more than 3 million “perfectly placed” lights. “All scenes have their own musical soundtrack, so when you’re going through it, you’re not hearing the same music and seeing the same lights — you’re experiencing true magical memories,” he added.

This year’s experience also features expanded refreshment stations, ensuring guests can enjoy hot or cold beverages and sweet treats with “less waiting and more enjoyment.”

What visitors experience as a breathtaking evening stroll, however, represents a full year of meticulous planning and preparation.

The most intense period comes after Halloween, when Accomando and his team transform the space

from their popular Spooky World Halloween attraction into a winter wonderland. “We have approximately 3 weeks to make all of Spooky World disappear and transform Mel’s Funway Park into the Holly Jolly Journey,” he said.

For Accomando, creating this holiday spectacle fulfills a lifelong dream rooted in cherished childhood memories. His father taught him that every light must be placed perfectly, while his mother decorated their home to feel “like a scene out of a holiday special.”

“I have always loved the holidays,” he said. “I was very fortunate to have two parents who made my holidays very magical growing up.”

This attention to detail is

“*I want families and friends to gather at the Holly Jolly Journey and build their own holiday memories.*”

MICHAEL ACCOMANDO
Co-owner of Mel’s Funway Park

evident throughout Holly Jolly Journey — from the color coordination and twinkling of trees to the strategic placement of wreaths and garland. “We don’t take any of this lightly,” noted Accomando, who said his ultimate goal extends far beyond the impressive light display. “I want families and friends to gather at the Holly Jolly Journey and build their own holiday memories.”

For those who have yet to experience this magical journey, Accomando extended a heartfelt invitation.

“If you would like to experience a show that is so magical that it warms your heart and will leave you with memories for life, then you must visit the Holly Jolly Journey,” he said. “Our small little town promises to leave you with memories of our version of the North Pole.”

Holly Jolly Journey runs through Jan. 11. To learn more or purchase tickets online in advance, visit hollyjollyjourney.com.

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

More ways to light up the season across the state

• **LaBelle Lights** returns for a fifth year to LaBelle Winery in Derry (14 Route 111). The display runs most Tuesdays through Sundays from 4:30 to 9:30 p.m. in November and December, and Thursdays through Sundays from 4:30 to 9:30 p.m. in January, wrapping up Jan. 18. General admission tickets are \$20 for adults, \$15 for seniors, \$10 for kids ages 4-12 and free for kids under 3. Purchase your tickets at labellewinery.com.

• The **Gift of Lights** returns to New Hampshire Motor Speedway (1122 Route 106, Loudon), beginning Thursday, Nov. 27, and running through Jan. 4. Now in its 15th season,

this 2.5-mile drive-thru light show has become a family tradition. Hours of operation are 4:30 to 9 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, and 4:30 to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday, with extended hours from 4:30 to 10 p.m. Dec. 21 through Dec. 28. See giftoflightsnhms.com.

• A Gate City tradition, the **Nashua Holiday Stroll** returns to downtown Main Street for its 30th year on Saturday, Nov. 29. Drawing more than 30,000 attendees annually, this free, family-friendly event features a candlelit walk, three live entertainment stages, street performances, food vendors, visits with Santa Claus and more. Visit downtown

nashua.org for a complete schedule of events.

• The **Candlelight Stroll** returns to Strawberry Banke Museum (14 Hancock St., Portsmouth) for a 46th year in 2025. Guests can walk through historic houses adorned in festive decorations while enjoying music, demonstrations and seasonal displays. Dates are Fridays through Sundays, from Dec. 5 through Dec. 21, from 4:30 to 8:30 p.m. New this year is a Daylight Stroll scheduled for Sunday, Dec. 14, from 2 to 4 p.m. Nonmember ticket rates are \$35 for adults; \$17.50 for kids and teens ages 3-17; and free for kids under 3. See strawberrybanke.org.

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HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

Festive concerts spread cheer across the Granite State this season

Here’s a roundup of where to hear your holiday cheer this season.

• Multi-platinum symphonic metal group **Trans-Siberian Orchestra** brings its “**Ghosts of Christmas Eve**” winter tour to the SNHU Arena (555 Elm St., Manchester) on Friday, Nov. 28, with showtimes at 2:30 and 7:30 p.m. Tickets start at \$55. See snhuarena.com.

• Boston-based rock powerhouse **Divas with a Twist** will perform a holiday concert at the Palace Theatre (80 Hanover St., Manchester) on Sunday, Nov. 30, at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$40. Visit palacetheatre.org.

• See **Mannheim Steamroller Christmas** by Grammy Award-winner Chip Davis at the Capitol Center for the Arts’ Chubb Theatre (44 S. Main St., Concord) on Friday, Dec. 5, at 7:30 p.m. Tickets range from \$63.50-\$138.50. Purchase them online at ccanh.com.

• See **A Country Christmas with the Ayla Brown Band** at Saint Anselm College’s Dana Center for the Performing Arts (100 St. Anselm Drive, Manchester) on Friday, Dec. 5, at 7:30 p.m. Tickets range from \$19.50-\$49.50. See tickets.anselm.edu.

• The **New Hampshire Gay Men’s Chorus** has several upcoming “**Peace & Goodwill**” holiday performances, including at Christ the King Lutheran Church (3 Lutheran Drive, Nashua) on Saturday, Dec. 6, at 7 p.m.; the Capitol Center for the Arts’ BNH Stage (16 S. Main St., Concord) on Sunday, Dec. 7, at 3 p.m.; Stratham Community Church (6 Emery Lane) on Saturday, Dec. 13, at 7 p.m.; and the Rex Theatre (23 Amherst St., Manchester) on Sunday, Dec. 14, at 3 p.m. See



CCANH.ORG

The Heather Pierson Trio will perform A Charlie Brown Jazz Christmas on Sunday, Dec. 14, at 2 and 7 p.m., at the Capitol Center for the Arts’ BNH Stage in Concord.

nhgmc.com for pricing details on each show.

• The **Scott Spradling Band** presents a **Rockin’ Big Band Christmas** at the Rex Theatre (23 Amherst St., Manchester) on Saturday, Dec. 6, at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$34. See palacetheatre.org.

• **Symphony NH** presents **Jingle Brass** at the Capitol Center for the Arts’ BNH Stage (16 S. Main St., Concord) on Saturday, Dec. 6, at 3 p.m. Tickets are \$34. Visit ccanh.com.

• Enjoy an “**Un-Silent Night: An Epic Sing Holiday Sing Along**” at the Rex Theatre (23 Amherst St., Manchester) on Sunday, Dec. 7, at 2 p.m. Tickets range from \$45-\$50. See palacetheatre.org.

org.
• Catch the **Boston Pops Holiday Concert** at the SNHU Arena (555 Elm St., Manchester) on Sunday, Dec. 7, at 6 p.m. Tickets start at \$78.25. See snhuarena.com.

• **Jane Lynch’s A Swingin’ Little Christmas** takes the stage at the Nashua Center for the Arts (201 Main St.) on Sunday, Dec. 7, at 7 p.m. Tickets range from \$86-\$110. Visit nashuacenterforthearts.com.

• **A Celtic Christmas**, featuring local Irish groups The Jordan Tirrell-Wysocki Trio and The Spain Brothers, will be at the Rex Theatre (23 Amherst St., Manchester) on Saturday,

Dec. 13. Performances are at 2 and 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$34. Visit palacetheatre.org.

• **Symphony NH** performs its **annual Holiday Pops concert** at the Keefe Center for the Arts (117 Elm St., Nashua) on Saturday, Dec. 13, at 7:30 p.m. Tickets range from \$20-\$60. Visit symphonynh.org.

• The **Manchester Choral Society** presents the **Duke Ellington Sacred Concert and Holiday Pops** at Manchester Memorial High School (1 Crusader Way) on Saturday, Dec. 13, at 7 p.m., and Sunday, Dec. 14, at 3 p.m. Tickets are \$30 general admission. Visit mcsnh.org for details..

• Enjoy a **Celtic Family Christmas** with Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy at the Nashua Center for the Arts (201 Main St.) on Sunday, Dec. 14, at 7 p.m. Tickets range from \$54-\$110. See nashuacenterforthearts.com.

• The **Heather Pierson Trio** performs **A Charlie Brown Jazz Christmas** at the Capitol Center for the Arts’ BNH Stage (16 S. Main St., Concord) on Sunday, Dec. 14, at 2 and 7 p.m. Tickets are \$31 in advance, \$36 at the door. See ccanh.com.

• The **Capital Jazz Orchestra** presents its **Holiday Pops concert** at the Capitol Center for the Arts’ Chubb Theatre (44 S. Main St.,

Concord) on Sunday, Dec. 14, at 4 p.m. Tickets range from \$46.25-\$61.25. Visit ccanh.com.

• **Candlelight: Christmas Classics** will be presented Wednesday, Dec. 17, at 6 and 8:30 p.m., and Thursday, Dec. 18, at 8:30 p.m., at the Rex Theatre (23 Amherst St., Manchester). This candlelight concert is a live, multi-sensory experience featuring holiday classics including “Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy” from “The Nutcracker,” “Greensleeves,” “Carol of the Bells,” “O Holy Night” and more. Tickets are \$40-\$63. Visit palacetheatre.org.

• See the **Canadian Brass** perform “**Making Spirits Bright**” at the Nashua Center for the Arts (201 Main St.) on Friday, Dec. 19, at 7:30 p.m. Tickets range from \$54-\$99. Visit nashuacenterforthearts.com.

• The **Eric Mintel Quartet** will perform **A Charlie Brown Christmas** at the Rex Theatre (23 Amherst St., Manchester) on Friday, Dec. 19, at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$34. Visit palacetheatre.org.

• Holiday rockers **The Wizards of Winter** take the stage at the Tupelo Music Hall (10 A St., Derry) on Friday, Dec. 19, at 7 p.m. Tickets range from \$50-\$65. Visit tupelohall.com.

• See **David Clark’s Music of Billy Joel with a Christmas Twist** at the Rex Theatre (23 Amherst St., Manchester) on Saturday, Dec. 20, at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$34. See palacetheatre.org.

• Enjoy **A Sinatra Christmas with Rich DiMare and the Ron Poster Trio** at the Rex Theatre (23 Amherst St., Manchester) on Sunday, Dec. 21, at 1 p.m. Tickets range from \$34-\$40. Visit palacetheatre.org.

— Matt Ingersoll



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