

Volume 14, Issue 1 The Windham Eagle.com



Gazing again into my psychic crystal ball

I probably don't follow many traditions about New Year's Eve, but back in the 1990s I never missed a Dec. 31 episode of ABC's Nightline television program because that was their annual predictions show.

The Nightline anchor at the time, Ted Koppel, would host a distinguished prognostication panel every year that featured Pulitzer Prize winning columnist and former presidential speechwriter William Safire; economist Arthur Laffer, the so-called "architect of the 1980s supply side economics" movement; and former Sports Illustrated writer Frank Deford, the dean of American sports commentary. Koppel would lead the panel through a discussion of their thoughts about the coming year in various topics and then each panelist would each make three bold predictions for the new year after a review of their previous yearly predictions.

This was always a fast-moving hour of television, and I've always appreciated the keen insight of Koppel, who was able to move with ease from topics ranging from politics to religion to business to sports, all while keeping panelist egos in check and discussions clearly focused on what would be in the news in the unknown year ahead.

When Koppel retired as Nightline host in 2005, the annual prediction show came to an end. Safire died of pancreatic cancer in 2009 and Deford passed away at age 78 in 2017 from pneumonia.

Today in JANUARY 2 1788 – Georgia becomes the fourth state to ratify the U.S. Constitution. 1842 – In Fairmount, PA, the first wire suspension bridge is opened to traffic.

> 1893 – The first commemorative postage stamps are issued.

1900 – American statesman and diplomat John Hay announces the "Open Door Policy" to promote trade with China.

1906 – Willis Carrier of Buffalo, New York receives a U.S. patent for the world's first air conditioner.

1965 – Quarterback Joe Namath signs the largest rookie contract ever awarded to that point (\$400,000) in the history of pro football, joining the New York Jets of the American Football League.

1971 – In the U.S. a federally imposed ban on television cigarette advertisements goes into effect.

1983 – The Broadway musical "Annie" closes at

On New Year's Eve in 2021, I revived the spirit of Nightline's annual predictions show by sharing a few annual predictions of my own right here in the newspaper's weekly Insight column. To recap my predictions for 2025 in The Windham Eagle, it's always interesting to see how accurate or lacking my sixth sense for the past year.

I predicted that "Conclave" would win the Academy Award for Best Picture with Timothée Chalamet winning Best Actor for "A Complete Unknown," Kate Winslet winning Best Actress for "Lee" and Ridley Scott winning Best Director for "Gladiator II." I'm sorry to say that none of those predictions were correct.

In sports, I envisioned Houston beating Mississippi State to win the NCAA men's college basketball championship, the Baltimore Ravens defeating the Philadelphia Eagles to win the Super Bowl in February, the Atlanta Braves knocking off the Kansas City Royals to win the World Series, and Notre Dame downing Oregon to win the NCAA College Football Championship last January. I was wrong on all four predictions, but Houston and Notre Dame each reached NCAA football and basketball title games, and Philadelphia actually won the Super Bowl.

Here are my new predictions for 2026 and when we revisit this end-of-year column in The Windham Eagle once again a year from now, let's see how accurate my conjectures turn out to be.

** A magnitude 7.6 earthquake will strike near Blytheville, Arkansas early in the year and leave thousands without food or shelter for weeks as flooding from the Mississippi River will produce treacherous conditions for searchers looking for

** Violent clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan led to a nationwide conflict that has become one of the world's largest humanitarian crises. Right now nearly half of Sudan's population requires some form of humanitarian assistance and the situation shows no signs of improving. An initiative launched by French President Emmanuel Macron will bring lasting peace to Sudan.

** Rhea Seehorn will win the Emmy Award as Best Actress for her role as Carol Sturka in television's "Pluribus." In an upset, "Hamnet" will win the Academy Award for Best Picture in March. Ethan Hawke will win the Academy Award for Best Actor for "Blue Moon." Jessie Buckley will win the Academy Award for Best Actress for "Hamnet."

** NASA's Artemis II astronauts Christina Koch, Victor Glover, Reid Wiseman and Jeremy Hansen will successfully complete a 10-day flyby mission to circle the moon and return safely to earth in February, igniting America's renewed interest in the exploration of space.

** The Seattle Seahawks will defeat the Buffalo Bills in the Super Bowl in February while the Carolina Hurricanes will knock off the Colorado Avalanche to win hockey's Stanley Cup in June. Iowa State will edge Arizona to win the NCAA men's college basketball championship in April. The Oklahoma City Thunder will beat the Detroit Pistons to win the NBA title in June. The Detroit Tigers will win baseball's World Series toppling the San Francisco Giants in October.

** Solar tiles will start to be embedded in public roads and highway surfaces in 2026 and will become a significant improvement for towns and cities across America. The embedded solar tiles will be used to power municipal streetlights, roadway signs and traffic signals, and their use will save communities thousands in monthly

While I may not be in the league of Nostradamus or the distinguished celebrity Nightline panel in making predictions for the year ahead, as deep thinker Yogi Ber-

the Uris Theatre after 2,377 performances. ra once said, "The future ain't what it used to be." < ~ Ed Pierce **MAILED TO 10,900 HOMES AND BUSINESSES WINDHAM EAGLE** IN WINDHAM & RAYMOND. **TOTAL CIRCULATION 13,000** 585 Roosevelt Tr, Windham, ME 04062 • Call 207-894-3500 (text friendly) FLIP THROUGH OUR DIGITAL EDITION: WWW.THEWINDHAMEAGLE.COM Melissa Carter Kelly Mank Sales Manager/Designer Publisher Melissa@TheWindhamEagle.com Kelly@TheWindhamEagle.com Dina Mendros, Kira Pilot, Matt Pascarella **Becky Knox** Kendra Raymond, Erin Rose, Administrative **Ed Pierce** & Lorraine Glowczak Office@TheWindhamEagle.com Managing Editor Office hours: Wednesdays 8-2 Thursday 9am-Noon Editor@TheWindhamEagle.com Follow us on Facebook & Twitter to view additional content and news EDITORIAL POLICYThe Windham Eagle newspaper has a mission to be a positive and solutions based newspaper. As a positive and solutions-based newspaper, we are committed

to providing our readers with accurate, informative, and constructive news and information that uplifts and inspires. We recognize that certain content may not align with our mission and values,

and therefore reserve the right to not publish certain types of content. For complete details about submissions and our letters policy, visit thewindhameagle.com/Information.pdf

List three words to describe this past year for you.

> "Went by fast!" Whitney Seitz Traylor

"Grateful, stressful and **blessed."** – Bree Rainey

"Stressful, Very Warm." - Cheryl L. Page

"Productive, Amazing, **Grateful."** – Miki Mayberry

"Blessed, Grateful, Mindful." – Bill Keller

> "Keep on Truckin'" - William D. Reiner

"Glad living America!" Ruthie Jackson

"I am blessed." – Mertie Porter

"Nova Scotia vacation." – Dean A. Smalley

"Divorce, college, working." Isabella Mongon

"Chemotherapy, healing, doctors." – Chris Macklin

"Bought a house." Sarah Singer-Miller

"Patriots, Celtics, Bruins." Jerry Greene

"Cruise to Bahamas." – Oscar F. Kellner

"Job, bills, kids."

 Mia Potenzio-Ransey "Fishing. Camping. Medicine."

Anne Glotchshuk

"Remodeled our kitchen." Deirdre Schulte

"Deep sea diving."

 Mitchell B. Robinson "Promotion and

responsibility." – Rick Seacroft "Living the dream."

– Melissa Carter

Inspirational Quote of the Week

"A new year is another opportunity of seeing life with little more caring, compassion, maturity and beauty." ~ Amit Ray

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Richard Nickerson Concert benefits WHS choral graduates

By Ed Pierce

STAFF WRITER

The holidays may be over for another year, but those in search of great music are just getting started as the Richard Nickerson Scholarship Concert is returning for the 29th year at 6 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 3 to the Windham High School Performing Arts Center.

Staged by Windham High School alumni, the concert is a high-energy, soul-stirring musical homecoming as every year on the first Saturday of January, former students from the WHS choral program travel back from across the country to reunite on stage. These former students, many of whom have gone on to professional music careers, join their voices to honor the legacy of Dr. Richard Nickerson, the man who has spent decades shaping Windham into a musical powerhouse.

The evening is filled with laughter, nostalgia, world-class choral performances, and serves a vital purpose as it is the only fundraising event of the year for the Richard Nickerson Scholarship Fund. The concert is the only opportunity for the community to support this specific scholarship.

WHS alumni who are performing in the concert say that every ticket sold or donation goes directly toward a \$1,000 scholarship award for graduating seniors who have committed to keeping choral music in their lives during college. They say that those who attend the concert aren't just buying a seat at a show, they are ensuring that Windham's rich musical heritage continues to thrive in the next generation.

The Richard Nickerson Scholarship Committee was formed in 1997 by parents of Windham Chamber



The Richard Nickerson Scholarship Concert, named for Windham High School choral director Dr. Richard Nickerson, is returning for the 29th year at 6 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 3 to the Windham High School Performing Arts Center. Staged by WHS alumni, the concert is a high-energy, soul-stirring performance to fund scholarships for graduating WHS choral students. SUBMITTED PHOTO

Singers students in appreciation of Dr. Richard Nickerson, the Director of Choral Activities at Windham High School. Since its formation, the Richard Nickerson Scholarship Committee has awarded thousands of dollars in scholarships to Windham High School graduating seniors pursuing choral music as part of their college experience. All past scholarship recipients continue to be involved in music, either as a career or as a personal passion.

No matter if you are a WHS graduate, the parent of a current student, or simply a fan of great music, the atmosphere surrounding the concert is electric. From heartfelt ballads to soaring choral classics, the talent on display is a testament to the program's excellence.

Nickerson says while he has nothing to do with the concert or choosing what students receive the scholarships, he is pleased to lend his name to such a wonderful legacy.

"According to the website, 38 students have received the scholarship since 1997," Nickerson said. "The concerts feature former students of mine and I enjoy hearing them perform and seeing how they have grown as musicians. I also enjoy re-connecting with former students and the concerts give us a chance to catch up."

As in previous years, Nickerson will be on the sidelines as an audience member.

"As far as the concerts go, my only responsibility is to sit in the audience and enjoy the performance," he said. "After a long December filled with performances it is a welcome change. Every few years I will volunteer to conduct an alumni chorus. That will

not be happening this year, as the Windham Chamber Singers will be having a reunion concert in June."

Having announced his intention to retire at the end of this school year, Nickerson says that his pending retirement will not have an impact on the scholarships, or the annual scholarship concert.

He said that having the Richard Nickerson Scholarship is humbling but an odd experience.

"Initially, I felt funny about having a scholarship in my name since the namesake of scholarships is often deceased." Nickerson said. "I consider it a great honor and am so proud that the scholarship has helped so many students to continue singing in choirs beyond the high school level."

If you are unable to attend the 29th Annual Richard Nickerson Scholarship Concert but wish to make a donation to the program, details are available at www.richardnickersonscholarship.org

Concert tickets will be sold at the door for the event. <



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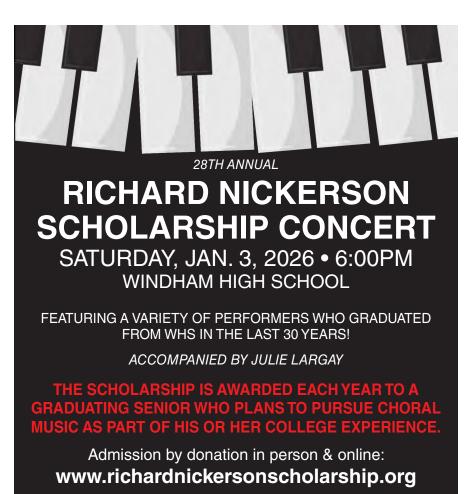
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LELT receives \$10,000 for Pleasant Mountain trail work

Loon Echo Land Trust (LELT) has been awarded \$10,000 through the L.L. Bean Maine Land Trust Grant Program, which Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT) administers.

Entering its 21st year, the program continues L.L. Bean's long-standing commitment to support public access, habitat protection, and outdoor recreation across the state of Maine, bringing total funding to \$558,750 for 129 projects since 2004. LELT is one of nine land trusts across the state to receive this year's award.

The grant will be used to hire a trail crew to conduct significant trail work on Pleasant Mountain, one of southern Maine's most-visited recreation destinations. The work will include stone staircase construction, tread hardening, erosion mitigation, and repairs to areas degraded by high use on the Ledges and Bald Peak trails. These improvements are part of LELT's multiyear maintenance plan for the 10-mile trail network, backed by visitor data showing about 7,000 to 9,000 users annually on each of these trails alone.

Over the past decade, LELT has invested over \$100,000 to construct and expand trailhead parking areas, improve trails and signage, and pursue formal access agreements over private lands on the mountain.

"We are proud and humbled by the responsibility of caring for a place with such deep cultural, ecological, and economic importance," said Matt Markot, LELT's Executive Director. "The work planned for next summer will help the Ledges and Bald Peak trails better handle heavy visitor traffic while preventing erosion, improving the trail experience, and protecting important plant species."

Maine Coast Heritage Trust officials agree.

"The entire land trust community continues to deeply appreciate L.L. Bean's enduring investment in Maine's lands, waters, wildlife, and communities," said Angela Twitchell, senior director of community and government relations at MCHT. "As nonprofit organizations, Maine's land trusts rely heavily on private donations and grants to carry out their work. Support from partners like L.L. Bean is essential to protecting the remarkable places that make Maine so special."

According to Twitchell, land trusts are involved in an incredible breadth of work, from conserving important outdoor places to saving wildlife habitat and building trails that communities rely on. The 2025 Census Report from the Maine Land Trust Network shows that land trusts now care for nearly 3 million acres – close to 15

percent of the state – while supporting efforts that range from restoring marshes and rivers to improving fish passage and maintaining well-loved trail systems.

"The support of partners like L.L. Bean helps make this work possible," Twitchell said.

Loon Echo Land Trust conserves and stewards land in the Lake Region of Maine to ensure public access, protect natural resources, and support the wellbeing of local communities. Learn more about places to explore, upcoming events, and ways to get involved at LELT.org or the Loon Echo Land Trust Facebook page.

The Maine Land Trust Network (MLTN) enhances the quality and effectiveness of land conservation organizations across the state. Since its establishment in 1995, MLTN has served as a central hub for conservation collaboration, technical assistance, and grant administration, ensuring sustainable and impactful conservation efforts. A program of Maine Coast Heritage Trust, MLTN is led by a Steering Committee representing up to 25-member land trusts.

Learn more at mltn.org. <





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Well-deserved recognition



The Windham Police Department is grateful to Windham Rental for their continued support in helping raise donations for the annual Windham Police Holiday Shopping Event. Thanks to their incredible kindness and generosity, Windham Rental donated \$3,850, helping WPD provide holiday gifts for 22 families right here in the Windham community. Partnerships like this make a meaningful difference and truly embody the spirit of the season and the Windham Police Department is very appreciative of Windham Rental for its ongoing commitment to supporting our community and those in need. Their generous donation helped to brighten the holiday season for many here in Windham. COURTESY PHOTO

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Birthday wishes & sentiment



Barbara Bagshaw (R-Windham) recently had the opportunity to sponsor a celebratory legislative sentiment from the Maine Legislature for Hannelore Harding of Windham, who is turning 90 on Jan.

13. 'I had the pleasure of sponsoring this celebratory legislative sentiment," said Rep. Bagshaw. "I met Hannelore several years ago while I was knocking on doors. Harding taught in Windham schools for 20 years. Join me and Cosponsor State Representative Mark Cooper (R-Windham) in wishing her a very happy and blessed birthday.' Bagshaw visited Harding's home in Windham to wish her a happy birthday and present her with the legislative sentiment. SUBMITTED PHOTO









Reviewing what happened over the past year is always a significant opportunity for all of us to assess and reflect on what has been achieved in the Windham and Raymond communities and to determine the direction of where our towns may be heading in 2026.

For residents of the Lakes Region of Maine, there were plenty of milestones and newsworthy accomplishments in 2025 to celebrate but much more could be attained in the new year ahead as changes and potential adjustments await our communities. Windham and Raymond have sworn in new elected leaders and representatives following November's election and changes will soon be visible in the towns with a new middle school under construction, roads and bridges repaired and replaced, Maine's new Paid Family and Medical Leave Program starting for

employees and how the race for governor shapes the state in the months ahead.

Following a thorough review of all issues of The Windham Eagle from 2025, we've chosen to highlight the top story for each edition as featured in the newspaper and we wish everyone a healthy, safe, and prosperous year ahead in 2026.

IANUARY

JAN. 3's top story was about preparations under way for the Dr. Richard Nickerson Annual Scholarship Concert on Jan. 4 at the Windham High School Performing Arts Center. Back in the spring of 1997, Dr. Nickerson and his choral students called the Windham Chamber Singers went to Vienna to participate in a music festival and won the most prestigious award of the festi-

val. They were very thankful for all the work that Dr. Nickerson did to bring the group to that place and to show their gratitude and give back, they decided to start a scholarship specifically for choral music. Daniel Griffin is a Windham High School alumnus and was a Windham Chamber Singer back in the day. His daughter, who also attended RSU 14, was fortunate enough to also be a Windham Chamber Singer, making it a full circle. Now, Griffin is a part of the Scholarship Committee setting up the annual fundraising concert. "We have a small committee that meets throughout the year and plans the one fundraising event, the scholarship concert, which happens on the first Saturday of every January," says Griffin. "We have been doing this for 28 years and we have all musical alumni from Windham High School come back for this. It is a great type of family event that we are trying to keep on going." A \$1,000 scholarship is awarded each year to a high school senior that is planning to make choral music a part of their college experience. "This gives them an opportunity to find their people in the college or university that they are going to and start making friends," Griffin said. "Choral music or being part of some sort of music program is very similar to sports teams; everybody comes together for one particular purpose to improve and work together and harmonize to produce something wonderful."

The top story for **JAN. 10** was a visit by a new Maine organization which trains service dogs, therapy dogs, and facility dogs for those with disabilities as it made a stop in Windham, showcas-

ing its work for veterans and their families at the Windham Veterans Center. Based in Oxford at a 10-building facility on a 12-acre site, Mission Working Dogs was founded by Christy Gardner as a non-profit to help Mainers in need. Gardner was serving in the U.S. Army overseas when she was attacked and sustained a serious a brain injury, facial fractures, internal injuries, a spinal cord injury, and the amputation of both of her legs in the line of duty. Her initial diagnosis was that she would be 100 percent disabled and never lead a normal life. Spending more than a year and a half in the hospital, doctors at Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington, D.C. paired her with a service dog named Moxie to help her recover. That act boosted Gardner's confidence, and it eventually led her to return home to Maine, to reestablish her life, and to become a member of the United States National Sled Hockey team, and an alternate for Team USA in the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics. She had been involved in training puppies in Maine for about 10 years before founding Mission Working Dogs in July 2020. "My own service dog, Moxie, made me want to start Mission Working Dogs," Gardner said. "She was incredible and allowed me so much more independence than was imaginable after I was injured in the Army. I had volunteered at a Labrador breeder and helped other organizations temperament test puppies for possible service work and eventually became a puppy raiser." Gardener said Mission Working Dogs has partnered with the Maine Department of the

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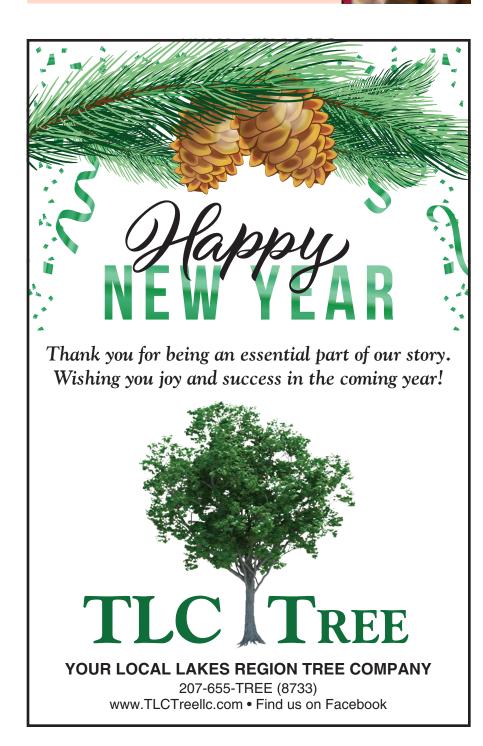
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American Legion for a year-long project to support service dogs for Maine veterans and she traveled with several of her dogs to Windham to promote the effort

JAN. 17's top story reported that repair work on Babb's Bridge has started in Windham, and sooner than expected. The historic crossing over the Presumpscot River has been closed to traffic since the previous summer after sustaining damage in an accident and typically carries more than 360 vehicles per day over the wooden Queenspost truss structure. At about 12:45 p.m. Aug. 23, 2024, police say a Ford F750 truck loaded with 36,000 pounds of crushed gravel attempted to cross Babbs Bridge from Gorham east into Windham on Hurricane Road. The truck's excessive weight caused planks on the wooden bridge floor to collapse and sent the truck crashing into the Presumpscot River below. The posted weight limit for traveling across the Babbs Bridge span is 3 tons, or 6,000 pounds, and police said the truck weighed roughly six times the legal limit for crossing the bridge. The truck was owned by The Driveway Guys Company of Biddeford and was driven by Joshua Polewarzyk of Limington, 37, who was able to free himself from the truck in the water and sustained minor injuries in the crash. He was cited for excessive truck weight in crossing the bridge and was fined \$2,500. Maine Department of Transportation engineers were tasked with evaluating the structural status of the bridge for public safety and come up with a plan for repairs and restoration of the structure. A note posted on social media by the Windham Town Manager's Office on Jan. 10 said the MDOT has launched repairs to Babb's Bridge about four months ahead of schedule. MDOT estimates it will take about six weeks to complete repairs on the bridge at a cost of \$110,000 before it can be reopened to the public.

The top story for JAN. 24 was about the debut on YouTube of the "Early Bird Show," an interview program sponsored by the Raymond-Casco Historical Society. It is the brainchild of Raymond-Casco Historical Society member Greg Plummer and features a different town celebrity on each episode. During the show, Pummer chats with guests in his makeshift studio, complete with a host's desk and chairs. The "set" is decorated with local historical pieces, and the place appears quite cozy. "The Early Bird Show is designed to have the appearance of a low-budget late-night talk show parody. The host is yours truly and each month I will interview a featured guest, a senior member of our community and someone with a story to tell," Plummer said. "My vision is to document and share as much history and local lore as I can from the people who have lived in this area for decades. Plus, I like talking with old people. Old people rule." Plummer aptly kicked off a conversation by telling his guest, Wayne Whitney, "This will be perfect. It's just you and I, it's all it is. That's what we're gonna' do." That seemed to summarize the tone of the entertaining and witty conversation. Known primarily as a poultry farmer, Whitney explained how his family got into farming and highlighted some memories from his childhood on Raymond Cape Road. The next episode of



the Early Bird Show will feature the one-and-only iconic Raymond resident Trudy Files. The show is sure to include many laughs and witty stories. "Trudy is a hoot," said Plummer. "She is a dear friend and will be the featured guest on Episode 2 of The Early Bird Show. Born and raised in Raymond, Maine, Trudy has quite a collection of interesting stories and anecdotes to share. It's hard to choose just one, and I won't give away all the details, but let's just say that she may have been involved in a high-speed chase pursuing Elvis Presley."

The top story for JAN. 31 was about a Windham resident searching for a kidney transplant donor. Katie St. Pierre was diagnosed with IGA nephropathy last April. It is a chronic kidney disease characterized by deposits of immunoglobulin A (IgA) antibodies in one of her kidneys, leading to inflam-

mation and damage to the glomeruli, tiny filters that remove waste products from the blood. "I was first diagnosed with IGA in April 2024," St. Pierre said. "My case is considered hereditary, and I've probably had it my whole life, although I do not have any close family members with a similar condition." The biggest issues St Pierre has been experiencing are the extreme exhaustion that comes with IGA neuropathy and the buildup of fluids it causes. "Imagine jumping in a pool fully clothed then walking around the rest of the day like that," St. Pierre said. "I wake up every morning feeling like my limbs are made of lead." St. Pierre is a familiar face to many in the area, having worked in the bakery department at the North Windham Hannaford store since 2019. Born in South Portland, she is married and

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has lived in Windham since she was 5. Upon receiving her IGA diagnosis last year and immediately starting on dialysis, doctors have advised St. Pierre that a kidney transplant is her best option for survival and to improve her quality of life. "I was told I needed a transplant on the same day I got my diagnosis. I ended up being hospitalized for a little over a week after some blood work came back," she said. "During that time, I had many tests done but for a definitive answer they had to do a kidney biopsy, basically taking a small sliver of your kidney and putting it under a microscope to see what's wrong." According to St. Pierre, she chose to undergo home dialysis treatment, called peritoneal dialysis or PD for short. "At first I was doing five days a week but now I am doing a treatment every day," she said. ""If you or someone you know is willing to consider being a living kidney donor, I would be deeply grateful," she said. "A living donation is a life-saving gift, and you could make all the difference in my journey or even someone else's. This experience has shown me the difficulties that so many are going through right now. All potential donors will be fully evaluated by medical professionals to ensure safety for both the donor and the recipient."

FEBRUARY

FEB. 7's top story detailed a last-minute Board of Selectmen meeting in Raymond conducted on ZOOM for select board members to vote on making a warrant available for easements requested by Sebago WIFI LLC during a Special Town Meeting. An oversight regarding a Sebago WiFi project was discovered by the Town of Raymond's attorney, and it came to light last week. However, Raymond Select Board members were able to pull together an emergency meeting and voted to approve a Special Town Meeting Warrant authorizing a Special Town Meeting. Raymond Town Manager Sue Look explained the oversight details prompting the meeting. "In talking to our attorney about the Broadband Contract, I found that the Select Board does not have the authority to grant the easement needed to allow Sebago Fiber to build the proposed building on the Public Safety property for the broadband project, only (a) Town Meeting can do that," she said. The Special Town Meeting Warrant was approved with the required votes of at least three Raymond Select Board members. There was no opposition. Look said this will allow for the Special Town Meeting to be called so it can be voted on by residents. The town is hoping to move forward with the project, so the broadband installation doesn't get held up. The Special Town Meeting Warrant stipulates a town vote to authorize the Select Board to grant to Sebago Fiber & WIFI LLC a perpetual easement over and under a portion of town-owned property identified as Tax Assessor's Map 04 Lot 106A support the installation of a fiber optic network ring connecting all municipal buildings and public safety radio towers and for the purpose of erecting, installing and maintaining a structure of about 400 square feet to be used as a central office, two new utility poles and underground conduit, and solar panels.

The top story for Feb. 14 reported on the efforts of a Windham hairstylist who was vying for the title of "United States of America Mrs. Maine" and seeking to raise awareness about infertility issues affecting women during the upcoming statewide pageant. Nichole Burke, 41, and her husband moved to Windham in November 2023, and in March 2024, they became the parents of a son. "Something many people may not know about me is that after four years of struggle, I became a first-time mom at 40, welcoming a beautiful son just 10 months ago," Burke said. "My husband and I had a whirlwind year we got married in June 2023, bought our first home five months later, and then, just four months after that, became parents." She was asked by the director a few months ago to join the pageant. "I have some friends who have done pageants, so I talked with them and got a lot of encouragement," Burke said. "I decided that this experience would be something just for me, where I could step out of my comfort zone and grow personally. A motivation to get back into self-care and regular exercise, something that I miss. Also, an opportunity to get more acquainted with our new community and be of service. Doing service work has been very fulfilling for me, and I am looking forward to it again. Another important part of my journey is that I have been in recovery for almost 16 years, a path that has shaped me into the resilient and compassionate person I am today." If honored as the pageant winner, Burke hopes to use this platform to amplify the conversation around infertility, breaking the stigma and fostering a community of support for women facing similar struggles.

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FEB. 21's top story was regarding the Windham Police Department as a new K9 officer has joined its ranks. K9 Zeus is a 16-month-old Belgian Malinois who is partnered with his handler, Windham Officer Sam Pattee, a four year-veteran of the department. They are currently involved in training for Zeus to become a fully certified patrol dog, meaning he'll be certified in tracking, article searches, apprehension work and narcotics certification. "I grew an interest in being a K9 handler almost as soon as I got started on the road with Windham PD," Pattee said. K9 Zeus came from Boston Police Department's training barracks and was selected by him with the help of K9 trainers from both the Cumberland County Sheriff's Office and Scarbrough PD. "I was looking for a dual purpose K9, meaning a K9 fully capable of patrol work and narcotics detection," Pattee said. "I viewed multiple possible K9s. but when I met Zeus, I quickly knew he was the one. He was full of energy, fearless and I felt a bond with him from the start." According to Pattee, K9 training is not an easy task. "It takes a lot of time, dedication and patience. It takes a level of commitment that you can't truly understand until you've done it yourself. I train with the group called Law Enforcement Dogs of Maine (LEDME) and it requires at least 480 hours of training with a certified trainer before a K9 team can be certified in patrol work," he said. "In training we work on tracking, article searching, which is locating items that someone may have dropped or thrown, and suspect apprehension. We also conduct scenario-based training which puts both the K9 and the han-

dler through real world situations and helps us be better prepared to make the right decisions on real deployments. The group has a great team of trainers with years of combined K9 experience to learn from and I appreciate everything they've taught me." The Windham Police Department last had a K9 team about four years ago.

The top story for FEB. 28 was about the Town of Windham restricting public access to the three electric vehicle charging stations at the Windham Town Hall. During a scheduled meeting for Windham town councilors, Windham Town Manager Barry Tibbetts discussed posting signs and installing locks on the EV chargers after town employees could not charge their municipal EVs because the public was using them. Tibbetts said that the town obtained grants in 2015 to install two charging stations at Windham Town Hall and added a third one several years later. Through the years the town has been working to increase its fleet of municipal electric vehicles and decrease its dependence upon gas-powered vehicles, Tibbetts told the council. He said that as more residents purchase EVs, finding places to charge them has led them to use the charging stations at Windham Town Hall. "I thought it was important to bring this before the council," Tibbetts said. "When municipal vehicles are unable to be charged because all three stations are in use by the public, we need to do something. It's like in essence that they're getting a free tank of gas." A high-speed charger typically can add 200 to 250 miles of range per hour to an electric-powered vehicle. Tibbetts said without the council objec-



tion, he will order restricting use of the three EV charging stations at the town hall, posting signage that they are for municipal vehicle use only and securing them with locks.

MARCH

MARCH 7's top story was about Windham High School's boys' basketball team defeating South Portland at the Cross Insurance Arena in Portland on Saturday, March 1 to win its second straight Class AA state basketball championship, 55-52. South Portland had led most of the game but late in the fourth quarter Windham turned things around before a foul shot by Creighty Dickson tied the game at 47-47. As the clock ticked away, and the game tied at 52-52, Windham's Tyrie James sank two crucial free throws to give Windham an edge and the victory. "At the Edward Little game I missed four free throws," James said. "In practice I started taking them more seriously, working on my breath; I had the coaches help me with that. Last year we started off strong and then Gorham came back. This year I felt like we were behind and kept moving the ball ... we just kept going. The only difference (between last year's team and this year's) is people are stepping into different roles. The week leading up we each had to focus, and I feel like we did that. I feel like in the second half, we boxed out more and got more rebounds ... we started to understand where they were getting their points, and we started to stop that from happening." Windham Coach Chad Pulkkinen said he was super happy for his players. "As a longtime resident of Windham, I'm just really proud of the young men ... we get -> continued on page 10

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to coach every day. South Portland ... didn't want to go away ... we knew they weren't just going to lay down for us - we wanted it the hard way, the guys enjoy those challenges and was just a testament to what this group is capable of. These guys had to answer the bell every night ... and that's really hard to do as a teenager and really hard to do when the target is on your back. It was a collective effort, and we take a lot of pride in that."

The top story for MARCH 14 reported on the Town of Raymond establishing a selection process to choose a new town manager following the resignation of Raymond Town Manager Susan Look. She had been serving in that role since January 2024 but quit, citing more than an hour's commute from her home in Richmond. Look had been working as the Raymond Town Clerk

when she was appointed by the Raymond Select Board to replace Don Willard as interim town manager in July 2023. Willard officially retired in January 2024 after being out on Paid Medical Leave and Look took over as permanent town manager at that time. Look had worked as Raymond Town Clerk for more than a decade prior to her serving in the town manager's position. The Town Manager job is a full-time position and appointed by the Raymond Select Board. The town manager is responsible for administering policies as established by the Select Board and the Town Charter. The Town Manager serves as the chief administrative officer and head of the administrative branch of the town's government. To fill in until a new permanent town manager can be hired, the Raymond Select Board has appointed Raymond Parks and Recreation Director Joe Crocker as Raymond's interim town manager.

MARCH 21's top story was about RSU 14 expanding its early childhood education services to reach more young families and support early learning opportunities for children in Windham and Raymond. This expansion includes increasing Pre-K offerings in elementary schools in Windham and Raymond and strengthening partnerships with community organizations. The district currently serves 66 Pre-K students, providing them with essential early learning opportunities. Yet as the school district continues to grow, school officials say that its early childhood programs must also grow to provide more families with access to high-quality preschool education, helping set a strong foundation for future academic success. "The district currently provides Pre-K services at Raymond Elementary School and Tu Casa Childcare in Raymond, as well as A Child's World Preschool Center in Windham," said Christine Frost-Bertinet, RSU 14 Assistant Superintendent. "For the 2025-2026 school year, we are hoping to expand these services to accommodate 59 more children from Raymond and Windham with a funding gap of just \$1,604 per student for the entire school year." She said that in total, RSU 14 would need to invest about \$102,700 beyond what state funding provides, what she calls "a modest investment in our youngest learners' futures." To support this growth, the district will introduce new Pre-K spaces at Windham Primary School and partner with A Space to Thrive, a newly established childcare center that broke ground last month at 184 Pope Road in Windham. By working with community partners such as A Space To Thrive, Tu Casa, and A Child's World, this school and community mixed delivery system can better provide high-quality, affordable Pre-K options for local families, Frost-Bertinet said.

The top story for MARCH 28 was about Windham Middle School's alternative pathway program called Altitude using maple syrup collection to teach students. Altitude focuses on service, experiential learning, and community building, aiming to create more handson learning opportunities for students who may find the traditional school setting challenging. As maple syrup season drew closer, Altitude teachers Lisa Anderson, Autumn Carlsen Cook and

continued on page 11







Allison Muir decided to use this opportunity to teach their seventh grade Altitude students a variety of lessons, some of which include science, math, history, and the natural world. Prior to going outside, students learned about the sugaring process and had guest speaker Scott Dunn from Dunn Family Farm speak to them about the task of collecting and boiling maple syrup. They learned about how to identify healthy maple trees, understanding the timing of sap flow, proper tapping techniques, and basic sap handling and boiling procedures to ensure a good quality syrup. Then, the students walked around campus, marking off and tapping 15 maple trees and plotting their locations on a map. Mathematics was used as students collected data from the amount of sap they got from each tree and learned about how many taps a tree can have depending on its diameter and size. While outside, Altitude students set up a "kitchen" of four propane heaters to boil the sap for it to become maple syrup.

APRIL

APRIL 4's top story reported how Windham High Windham senior Tayla Pelletier has set nine indoor track and field school records, competed in four Pentathlons since her sophomore year and navigated five championship meets in a row to finish third nationally in the Adidas Track Nationals at Virgina Beach, Virgina. She exceeded her goal and scored 3,241 points in the pentathlon; an event which consists of hurdles, high jump, shot put, long jump and an 800-meter run. Pelletier is the first Windham High School athlete to

qualify for a Nationals Pentathlon competition. "I was definitely nervous," said Pelletier, about competing in the Adidas Track Nationals. "I wanted to keep a positive mindset because if you think positive, you can do good and you got to believe in yourself. If you don't believe in yourself, you're not going to do good. I wanted to do the best I could do on the given day; I knew I could reach 3,000 points, which was my goal." Pelletier's Pentathlon score from the 2025 New Year's Invitational at the University of Southern Maine in Gorham in January earned her entry to compete in the Pentathlon at the 2025 Adidas Track Nationals. "Tayla's accomplishments and her medals truly represent what no one ever sees behind the scenes," said Windham High indoor track and field coach Jeff Riddle. "That's where the magic happens. The symbol of the medal, the place in the podium and the state championships is a validation of all of her hard work put in, her work on her mindset to build that capacity. It was an honor to watch her perform it."

The top story for APRIL 11 was about the television series "Hearts of New England" to debut a third season on Amazon Prime later in the year. The series is a drama based in Maine and filmed using Windham locations with an all-New England cast. "Hearts of New England" is created, written, and directed by Justin Fortin and he also stars as a soldier who returns to his Maine home after serving in a war, only to become embroiled in a war at home as he learns that his father is deeply connected to the mob. He's also caught in a love triangle between characters played



by Caitlynn McCauley and Kris Salvi, and it seems like his quest for peace in his life turns out to be a never-ending war. When not filming "Hearts of New England," Fortin works as the Assistant Director for Shaw's Supermarket in Windham and formerly worked for the Windham Walmart as a manager. "We film in Windham all the time. Local businesses here in Windham have been very good to us," Fortin said. "Filming









ence when it was selected to air on Amazon Prime in 2023.

For **APRIL 18**, the top story detailed how a Windham Lions Club member was awarded the highest form of recognition possible for a Lions Club member. Evelyn Brissette was presented with the Melvin Jones Fellowship Award during its April meeting for her humanitarian qualities such as compassion, concern, and generosity to the Windham community. The award is named after the original founder, secretary and treasurer of Lions International who established the organiza-

tion to improve health and well-being, strengthen communities and support those in need through humanitarian services and grants that impact lives locally and globally, and encourage peace and international understanding. Brissette served as president of the Windham Lions Club for several years and created the club's Adopt-A-Family program that provides Christmas gifts to families in need in the Windham Community. She also has participated in community meals and the RSU 14 Backpack Program and volunteers for the Windham Parks and Recreation

Department and at senior citizen luncheons. She's active in the Lions Club's eyeglass screening, Touch-A-Truck, the Windham Lions Annual Craft Fair, Stuff the Bus, and many other community activities. "I have always enjoyed doing whatever I can to make life as good as possible for others," Brissette said. "The Windham Lions Club has given me the opportunities that I needed to get out there and do even more."

APRIL 25's top story reported on Windham's Pearl Grant being presented with the Boston Post Cane by Windham Town Clerk Linda Morrell as the oldest town resident. Grant turned 100 in June and remains an active churchgoer and hosts a bible study group at her home every week. She graduated from Windham High School in 1943 and says that her family and God are key elements of her life as she's about to reach the centenarian milestone that only 0.027 percent of Americans live to. "Now that I've lived this long, I honestly can't see a big difference from being 99 and being 100," Grant said. "It's about the same to me. God has certainly blessed me to live this long." During her visit with Grant, Morrell read a citation recognizing Grant's longevity and Pearl recalled that she was present when Morrell gave the cane to her mother Ethel in 2001. Ethel Verrill had the cane as Windham's oldest resident until she passed away in 2007. Windham's first Boston Post Cane recipient was Elijah Cook in 1909, and now that distinction belongs to Grant, who succeeds the late Hazel Gilman as the cane recipient. Gilman died last October at the age of 106.

MAY

MAY 2's top story was about Windham High School graduate Robyn Hurder, who stars in the new hit Broadway musical "Smash" that opened at the Imperial Theatre in New York City on April 10. It's a role that secures her place in Broadway history after years of performing in the cast of 22 Broadway shows and receiving a Tony Award nomination in 2020 for her part in "Moulin Rouge." She graduated in 2000 from Windham High School and is a former member of the Windham Chamber Singers and studied dance at the Maine State Ballet. Her mother enrolled Robyn at age 7 in a dance studio in Scarborough. She says that she liked the tap and ballet lessons there but by age 8, she wanted out to spend time playing with her friends from school. When the dance studio added jazz dance that spring, her interest in choreography intensified. Dr. Richard Nickerson, the director of the Windham Chamber Singers, said Hurder was a special talent. "There are some students that, from

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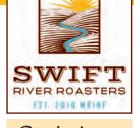
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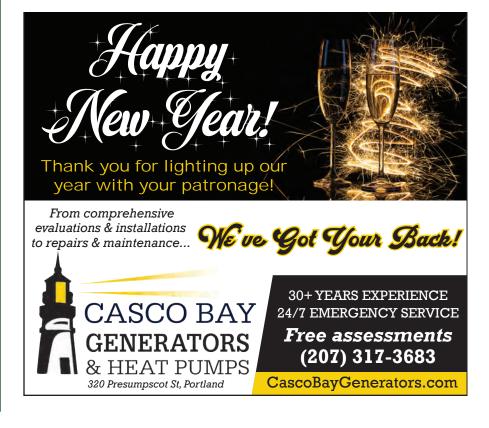
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the moment you meet them, you know they are destined for greatness," Nickerson said. "Robyn was one of those students I knew that she could do whatever she set her mind to. She is as genuine a person as you will ever meet. She has a positive energy about her that lights up a room. She always worked incredibly hard yet never complained. She is the kind of person that everyone wants to be around because she always makes you feel like a better person. I remember her singing voice, but what really sticks out in my memory is her laugh. She truly loves life."

For **MAY 9**, the top story was The Pat Moody Foundation offering a \$2,500 scholarship to a graduating Windham student-athlete. It will be given to someone who knows and displays the meaning of community, volunteerism, school pride, work ethic, sportsmanship and is a positive influence on those around them – just like the late Pat Moody was. This scholarship is currently targeted towards student-athletes, although athletic achievement is only one of the criteria, and not the primary factor in decision making. They are looking for the most community-minded athlete who is a great role model, not necessarily the most successful athlete. While they do focus on Moody's love of basketball, the foundation wants to support as many students in as many ways as possible. "He would be thrilled to see this opportunity provided to someone that he probably watched grow up (at least these first few years)," said Moody's older sister Tracey Lydon, president of The Pat Moody Foundation. "He would love the fact that the community has supported this foundation in such a huge way that

is allowing for these opportunities, but he was always one to do things quietly without fanfare. He would be very much supporting this from the fact that it is helping to bring about positive impacts and change in the community he loved. Imagine the community we can continue to build upon if our first thoughts were about others and how we could support them; this scholarship aims to be a catalyst for change not just to its recipients, but those that choose to apply knowing the expectations asked of them to be eligible."

MAY 16's top story was about a dramatic successful search to find a lost dog named Pearl, who is owned by Dawn Elwell of Raymond. Pearl had escaped from a groomer in Raymond and had disappeared on April 30 and after four days of searching for Pearl and running out of hope, Elwell hired Rob Russell's 2A TAC Air Ops Drone Services of Barrington, New Hampshire to see if he could do something to help. Russell is a former police officer and U.S. Army infantryman who was wounded in combat in Afghanistan. He now owns a drone equipped with thermal technology that can be used in searches for missing people and pets. Russell contacted Carmen Brothers of Professional Pet Trackers of Virgina to assist in the search for Pearl, and she brought along her almost 2-year-old black lab named K9 Finley whom Brothers had trained and has been working on cases with her since December. Russell said during their extensive search they had to figure out where Pearl was bedding down and hiding and Pearl was ultimately recovered roughly 18 hours after they finished the tracking activities, and the



drone landed. On Sunday, May 4, she received a phone call informing her that Pearl had been found. "That feeling was something I had dreamt about for the longest five days of my life," she said. "I do not believe I could have done this without this team of experts."

For MAY 23, the top story covered plans by the Maine State Society for the Protection of Animals in Windham for a new \$1.5 million fundraising campaign to assist the organization in building a new intake barn for abused and neglected horses to heal and recover. Kathy Woodbrey, MSSPA's Executive Director, said that plans for the

"Safe Place to Land" intake barn have been carefully weighed and discussed for the past two years, and the fundraising campaign has already reached more than halfway toward its \$1.5 million goal. MSSPA Advancement Director Peg Keyser said that in the last five years, the number of horses arriving at MSSPA has surged with many coming from cases of severe neglect, abuse, or with significant medical challenges. As the complexity of these cases grows, so does the urgency for a dedicated space where incoming horses can receive the care they desperately need. The "Safe continued on page 14





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Place to Land" campaign has already a matching gift of \$500,000 from the Mc-Culloch Family of Southern Maine who will be extended the opportunity to name the new barn. The site for the new intake barn sits on 7 acres of MS-SPA's 124-acre property on River Road in Windham. Plans call for the intake barn to be open-air with eight wooden stalls. The contractor for the intake barn project will be Jim Brown and site-

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work will be completed by Shaw Brothers Construction.

MAY 30's top story reported on the announcement by Windham Town Manager Barry Tibbetts that he will step down from the position effective June 30 and the Windham Town Council appointing Assistant Town Manager Robert Burns to succeed Tibbetts as Town Manager. Tibbetts has served as Windham's Town Manager since November 2019, first on an interim basis and then was made the permanent town manager in March 2020. He came to Windham with extensive municipal experience and experience in local government, administrative operations, budgeting, regulatory functions, and community relations and had served as the Kennebunk Town Manager through 2017. Burns joined Windham as the town's first Assistant Town Manager in December 2021. He graduated from Yarmouth High School before obtaining a Bachelor of Science degree in Forest Engineering from the University of Maine at Orono. Following college, Burns worked both in Maryland in Public Works and in Florida as a consulting environmental engineer. After that, he returned to Maine and served as the Public Works Director and Town Engineer in Gorham for 18 years.

JUNE

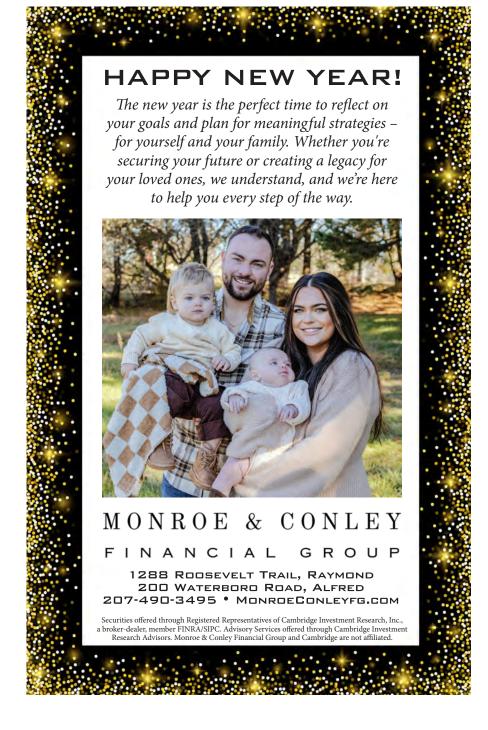
For **JUNE 6**, the top story was about

Afomiya Timerga, who personifies the definition of overcoming personal challenges to achieve joy and happiness among Windham High School's Class of 2025 graduates. She moved to the United States at the age of 5 from her birthplace of Ethiopia, speaking very little English but embracing the endless possibilities of freedom and living in a nation free of war, poverty, disease, and a daily struggle to survive. It wasn't easy at first to fit in, but she did her best to adapt to her new life with her mother in Portland. "The hardest part was adjusting to a new country," Timerga said. "When you're younger it is easier to pick up on things. I tried to make friends and learn the language." Having attended elementary school in Portland, another huge transition took place in Timerga's life when her mother, Abebanesh Abdela, purchased a home in Windham and her family, including Afomiya, her brother Musea Timo, and her sister Minaida Timon, relocated here when she was halfway through seventh grade. "It was like I was starting over again," she said. "At my school in Portland I knew everyone, but here I didn't know anybody in Windham and felt isolated and alone. But eventually I made friends at Windham Middle School and things gradually improved." In 2015, she joined her mother in becoming a U.S. citizen during a ceremony in Portland. During her time at Windham High School, she tried to avoid the spotlight to some extent but worked to consistently make a positive impact at the school. "Whether it was through my involvement in the Black Student Union, where I worked to create a more inclusive and supportive environment, or simply by encouraging

others and staying true to who I am, I've always aimed to lead by example," Timerga said.

JUNE 13's top story was the passage by a margin of 200 votes of the RSU 14 annual budget by voters in Windham and Raymond during an election. In Windham, voters rejected the proposed \$67.8 million budget, with 651 votes in favor and 676 voting no. But 408 voters in Raymond cast ballots approving the budget and 183 voted no. The combined totals resulted in 1,059 votes to approve the budget with 859 opposed. The budget represents a 12.75 percent increase over last year's \$60,185,403 budget, with a 6.4 percent increase stemming from the construction of the new Windham Raymond Middle School. To offset that, the school district will receive an additional state subsidy to cover almost half of the increase, resulting in an impact to taxpayers of 6.5 percent. Included in the RSU 14 budget are regular operating expense increases and a Pre-K expansion program. In Raymond, two new members of the town's Board of Selectmen were elected for three-year terms. Christopher Hanson received 350 votes, and Kaela Gonzalez tallied 328 votes to earn seats on the Select Board. Hanson is the code enforcement officer for Raymond and graduated from the University of Maine Orono. He also serves as a member of Raymond's Budget-Finance Committee. Gonzalez is a program coordinator with the city of Portland and has a degree in Health Science. She has served on various town committees including the town's most recent Comprehensive Plan Com-

continued on page 16







The Windham Eagle Page 15



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mittee and she formerly worked for the Town of Raymond.

For JUNE 20, the top story was about Windham's \$8.9 million municipal budget passing through a series of unexpected developments during a marathon 4 ½ hour Annual Town Meeting on Saturday, June 14. Voters questioned nearly each of the 30 town warrant articles, wanting explanations for increases in spending and sharing

their opinions about budgeting proposals put forward by the Windham Town Council. Voters rejected Article 7 asking for approval of a municipal budget of \$39.9 million, and that meant votes were required for each of the next 11 articles. Among those, only Article 8, asking for an increase of 11.39 percent and \$8.9 million funding general government operations for fiscal year 2025-2026 was defeated by voters as

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determined by the moderator. Article 8 included funding for Windham Town Hall offices and services and some contractual expenses, such as benefits for town police officers. Article 22, a proposal to construct a new North Windham Public Safety Building behind Hannaford Supermarket off Route 302, involved a lengthy discussion and many questions raised by voters about acquiring the site property, housing a Cumberland County Sheriff's Patrol Office in the building, and the need to replace the current North Windham Fire Station on Route 302, a structure built in 1960. Approving the article would add 5 cents to the town's millage rate yet voters approved it, agreeing to its \$10 million cost through a combination of \$4 million in Tax Increment Financing, using \$2.4 million from the town's General Fund, using impact fees of \$1.1 million and obtaining a general obligation bond of \$2.5 million. After the 30 articles had been discussed and voted upon, the implications of the rejection of Article 8 would mean, including the difficulty of rescheduling and legally posting another town meeting, shutting down Windham Town Hall on July 1, potentially laying off employees and not having necessary revenue to meet contractual bills and defaulting on town obligations was reviewed. Following a discussion about amending the budget, a vote to amend the \$8.9 million was voted down and then Article 8 as originally proposed was then passed by those remaining in attendance.

JUNE 27'S top story was a celebration for Windham High School's varsity girls' lacrosse and softball teams, which both made program history on Saturday, June 21 by winning state championships. The second-ranked WHS girls' lacrosse team won the program's first-ever Class A State Title in defeating top-ranked Kennebunk 12-9 at Fitzpatrick Stadium in Portland. The second-ranked WHS softball team won its second-ever Class A State Championship in three years when it shut out seventh-ranked Edward Little 7-0 at Saint Joseph's College. Both Windham teams had amazing seasons with lacrosse winning 17 games consecutively with only one loss during the entire season, and softball finished its season with a record of 18-2. WHS girls' lacrosse members include seniors Sophie Allen, Grace Joly, Lauren Jordan; juniors Abby Trainor, Neve Ledbetter, Demetria Nicholas, Elizabeth Baker, Mady Donnelly, Brianna Duarte, Alyssa Cooper, Olivia McPherson; sophomores Morgan McLain, Grayson Cornish, Gracie McPherson, Charlie Scanlon, Libby Hartwell, Avery Adams, manager Allegresse Kawaya; freshmen Brooklyn Roy, Anna Bowie, Morgan Clark, Maria Rose, Madison Buzulchuck. and Lauren Valle. WHS softball team members include seniors Stella Jarvais, Kyla Harvie, Lydia Marden, Chloe Edwards, Kennedy Kimball; juniors Oakley McLeod, Jezabelle Pinto, Nola Bryant, Lacie Higgins, Addison Caiazzo, Chloe Delewski; sophomores Kaylee Napolitano, Evelyn Anderson, Kiley Card, Sarah Smyth, Abhilasha Jain and freshmen Evelyn Robinson and Yani Kostopoulos.

JULY

JULY 4's top story was about Raycontinued on page 17



The Windham Eagle Page 17

mond's new Code Enforcement Officer Jason Williamson, who had been serving as the town's assistant Code Enforcement Officer, but was promoted to his new position after Chris Hanson was selected to the Raymond Select Board in June. A graduate of the University of New Hampshire with a background in carpentry and building, Williamson says he finds his code enforcement job to be both challenging and rewarding. "The biggest challenges, I would say are when you're dealing with some issues that crop up with neighbors," he said. "It seems like you're taking sides ... but you're really trying to be fair and not infringe on anybody's rights." Getting people to see the other side's point of view "can be extremely difficult," he said. An important part of the job, Williamson says, has to do with enforcing shoreline zoning and protecting the waterways, as much of the building that takes place in Raymond is along or near lakes. "Protecting the water quality, making sure and informing homeowners when they are doing projects in and around the lakes and showing them how to do it in a manner that's going to be respectful to the lake," is one of his biggest responsibilities. Williamson said, "Everybody wants to do what they want with their property, but most people understand that there's a responsibility of being down by the water. When you get people who understand is the most rewarding, I would say."

The top story for JULY 11 reported on the Town of Raymond's intention to apply for a grant later this summer to help the town prepare for climate change. The Raymond Select Board conducted a workshop where residents

and Select Board members discussed priorities of how the grant, if approved, could be best be put to use. During the workshop, which was led by Lucy Perkins of Siler Climate Consulting, community members were invited to share their thoughts about how the town could use grant funding to make the town more resilient in planning for climate change. Funds can be used to support projects that reduce energy use and costs and make communities more resilient to climate change effects, such as flooding, extreme weather, drought, and public health impacts. The town of Raymond has contracted with Siler Climate Consulting, together with North Star Planning, for assistance in enrolling in the Community Resilience Partnership, a program under the Maine Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future and applying for a Community Action Grant that would range between \$50,000 and \$75,000. The grants are funded through a mix of federal and state sources. According to Perkins, so far 263 Maine municipalities have enrolled in the program, which encompasses about two-thirds of the state's population; and a large percentage of those communities have received funding.

JULY 18's top story was about Windham High School graduate Brady Afthim, who has dreamed of playing Major League Baseball since he was a child competing in Windham Little League. His dream took a step closer when the Cincinnati Reds selected him in the 13th round of the 2025 MLB Draft with the 384th pick this week. A right-handed pitcher who dominated opponents while playing for Windham



High School, Afthim, 22, was the closer for the University of Connecticut Huskies after graduating from WHS in 2021. At Windham, he was honored as Maine Gatorade Player of the Year, was USA Today Player of the Year in Maine, and was recognized as First Team All-Southern Maine Athletic Association as both a pitcher and a catcher. He also won the John Winkin Award designating him as the top senior high school baseball player in Maine in 2021 and he was named as the recipient of the 2021 Mr. Baseball in Maine Award. This year as a senior, Afthim closed out his college career as second

in UConn history with 92 appearances. He was tied for 8th place overall in team history with 17 career saves and he posted the lowest opponent batting average in Huskies' history at just .211. Afthim also had a career-low 2.45 ERA, earned nine saves and had two wins as the team's closer. In 22 appearances, he racked up 53 strikeouts. Afthim signed with Cincinnati and played for its Rookie League team in Goodyear, Arizona and was promoted to its Single-A affiliate at Daytona Beach in the Florida State League by the end of the season.

The top story for **JULY 25** was about

continued on page 17





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Mason Hall, 11, a skilled artist who has been honored as the first-ever winner of the Finance Authority of Maine's (FAME) "Design Your Dream Money Contest." The contest was created this spring and intended to help raise awareness of the importance of teaching financial skills to younger students in partnership with the Alfond Scholarship Foundation. Students in first grade through sixth grade were invited to cresummer in June, Jordan-Small Middle

ate their own \$500 bill using a template created by FAME. Hall was a student in Lynne Latham's fifth-grade classroom at Jordan-Small Middle School this past spring and he joined his classmates in learning about basic financial education, capped off by the students entering FAME's "Design Your Dream Money Contest." During a school assembly before classes let out for the

School students cheered when Hall was announced as this year's "Design Your Dream Money" contest winner. For his winning design, Hall received an Amazon gift card and a box of prizes including a T-shirt with his \$500 bill design printed on it. "I was really surprised by winning," he said. "I truly felt like I accomplished something."

AUGUST

AUG. 1's top article told the story of Brysen Sheridan of Raymond, 10, whose dream of building his own boat and taking it out on the water came true. He spent more than 10 months designing his own boat and working to pay for materials to build it. The son of Rob and Chanelle Sheridan of Raymond, Brysen came up with the idea for a small boat last fall. "I just had the idea and wanted to make it happen," he said. "I thought of the idea before bed one night and I drew it out and started making it the next day." He first had to figure out how to pay for the building materials he needed to construct the boat and then saved to purchase them. Throughout the winter, Brysen shoveled snow from driveways and sidewalks for his neighbors and helped them with yard work. As the weather slowly warmed up this spring, he earned some additional money from mowing lawns and stacking firewood. Working steadily in his family's garage and outside in his yard from his initial design, the boat project began to take shape. The project was wrapped up on July 11 and resulted in a vessel measuring about 6 feet by 2 feet. He named his new boat "the unsinkable" and tested it out with his family watching to ensure it was safe to be out on the water. During the summer, Brysen has taken his younger brother Bennett (Benny), 5, out on the water for a fishing trip on "the unsinkable" on a small cove near Jordan Bay in Raymond. "You can do whatever you put your mind to," he said. "I'd tell other kids wanting to build a boat to stick with it even if it's hard."

The top story for AUG. 8 reported how a Windham family had their faith tested and strengthened their resolve when their 22-year-old son, who was working as an electrician and was installing solar panels on a roof in Kingfield, suddenly fell 20 feet to the ground and sustained multiple breaks in his T-11 vertebrae which smashed and put pressure on his spinal cord. It left him paralyzed and struggling to cope while his parents did their best to lift his spirits and motivate him to go on. "One of the hardest things for me is not being able to make things better for him," said his mother, Kathleen March. "I can't heal his broken heart. I can't promise or even tell him he will get better because it's an unknown of time and faith. It's

continued on page 19









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been hard to see our son who was just beginning his life in his chosen career, enjoying it and doing well to lose it all, including the possibility to be able to return to that job as he did it." Parishioners at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church in Windham rallied to help and support Brian and Kathleeen March and so did American Legion Post 148 in Windham. The couple's son, Ethan, is doing better now and in a motorized wheelchair and aiming to become a pilot.

AUG. 15's top story was about Greta Paulding, a 2023 Windham High School graduate, who has found swing dance to be her way of not only coping with stress, but also noticed improvements physically, mentally, and socially. This is the second year that Paulding has served as president of the Windham Swing Dance Club, a group she founded. When she left for college in the fall of 2023, she decided to join a swing dance club for an extra-curricular activity and found that she not only enjoyed it, but also noticed improvements in her life mentally, physically, and socially. She decided to bring the idea back home when she came to Windham for summer break and started a high school swing dance club, open for incoming students, current high school students, and recent graduates. "We started off very small withia group of around eight people," says Paulding. "It was small, but the people who attended were loyal and would invite other people; we had a lot of fun. Coming back this year, we have grown to between 20 to 30 regulars and about 20 attendees each event." Since the club's inception students from South Portland, Durham, and even students from New Hampshire have traveled to swing dance with the Windham Swing Dance Club.

The top story for **AUG. 22** was about Windham attorney, Katie Winchenbach, who won the National United States Mrs. 2025 Pageant. After winning the title of United States of America's Mrs. Maine for 2024, Winchenbach was crowned National United States Mrs. 2025 at the National United States Pageant, held in Hershey, Pennsylvania from July 28 to Aug. 1. "In 2024 I competed for the United States of America (USOA) pageant system. This time I competed in the National United States pageant," Winchenbach said. "I chose to switch to National United States because the pageant has a significant community service focus through the 'Crowns Making an Impact' initiative and I felt that it was more closely aligned with my personal values and goals." Beside winning the national title, Winchenbach was honored at the pageant with the Diamond Crowns Making an Impact [™] Award for her dedication to volunteering and community service. She is passionate about advancing women's leadership, breaking barriers, and inspiring confidence in women of all ages. Winchenbach is the founder of Lead Fearlessly, a movement and podcast dedicated to elevating women's voices, sharing stories of resilience, and providing actionable strategies for personal and professional growth. She is also the designer behind a new clothing line created to inspire confidence through bold, empowering designs. "This title means more than a crown and sash. To me, it's a platform to encourage women to



embrace their full potential, trust their intuition, and step boldly into leadership," Winchenbach said. "I'm honored to represent the National United States Pageant system and to connect with women across the country who are ready to lead fearlessly."

AUG. 29's top story reported about the new Roosevelt Trail Maine History Tour featuring eight important local historical sites which will be open to the public with free admission. The self-guided auto or bike tour includes open houses and some guided tours and stretches all the way from Westbrook to Harrison along the historic

Roosevelt Trail. Brochures are available throughout the area and include a list of participating historical sites and museums, a trail map, and museum profiles and missions. Margaret Myatt is the publicity coordinator for Nathaniel Hawthorne's Boyhood Home and the Hawthorne Community Association in Raymond and says that she is looking forward to the tour and hopes to spread the word to the community. "It should be a fun event if we can get people out there. I hope it is a well-received event," she said. "It is sort of an open-house road show of history sites, informal,

continued on page 22







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- ★ S'MORES & SKATE NIGHT February 19 at Donnabeth Lippman Park. Bring your own skates
- ★ AUTUMN & WINTER PHOTO CONTEST Submissions due by April 5th
- ★ EASTER CELEBRATION Grades 3 and under Saturday, April 4 at Windham Town Hall
- ★ SPRINGTIME SEARCH April 1 April 30
 Scavenger hunt at Windham's local parks!



- ★ FEBRUARY FORMAL Friday, February 6 at Windham Middle School
- ★ LIGHT UP THE NIGHT Friday, March 13 at Windham Middle School
- ★ FAMILY TRIVIA NIGHT Friday, March 27 at Windham Town Hall

PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR AGES 5 & UNDER:

- ★ KIDDIE GYM at Windham Town Hall Gym Every Monday & Wednesday 8:30-10AM until April 15
- ★ CREATIVE MOVEMENT Mondays, Jan 26 March 9 at Windham Public Library
- ★ KIDDIE CRAFT Wednesdays at Windham Town Hall Gym
 - February 11 Valentine Cookie Decorating
 - April 1 Easter Basket Decorating & Easter Egg Hunt

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

For the most up-to-date ways to learn about our programs, check our website, opt into our email notifications, request to receive our Senior newsletter by mail & follow us on Facebook.

For more information or to register for any of our programs, please go to rec.us/windham or visit us at Windham Town Hall, 8 School Road. Please note that there are registration start and end dates for many of our programs. Registration may be allowed after the registration deadline if space allows. Please call 207-892-1905 or email: parks&recreation@windhammaine.us to check for availability.



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YOUTH PROGRAMS

- FOR GRADES K-5:
- ★ HIGH TOUCH HIGH TECH at Windham Primary School Art Room
 - Wednesdays, January 7 February
 - Wednesdays, March 4 April 8 I
- ★ DISCOVERY SCIENCE: SLIN at Manchester School Music Room
 - Wednesdays, January 7 March 11
- ★ KARATE Grades K-5
 at Windham Primary School Gym
 - Tuesdays, March 17 June 9
- ★ NO SCHOOL DAYS Grades K Windham Town Hall Gym
 - February 19 FAMILY TIME D
 February 20 SEACOAST ADVI
 - March 20 BOWLING AT SPA

MIDDLE SCHOOL PR FOR GRADES 6-8:

- ★ MINDS IN MOTION
 - at Windham Middle School Cafeteria
 - Wednesdays, January 21 March 1
- **★** WMS EARLY RELEASE DAY
 - Wednesday, February 4 at Pleasan



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IPCOMING PROGRAMS/EVENTS

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- Grades K-3

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ME MASTERS - Grades 4 & 5



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OGRAMS



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ı our website

ADULT PROGRAMS & EVENTS:

- ★ MEN'S 4X4 BASKETBALL LEAGUE at Town Hall and Manchester Gyms
 Thursday nights beginning January 29th
- ★ ADULT PICK-UP BASKETBALL –
 at Windham Primary School & Manchester Elementary Monday,
 Tuesday & Thursday nights; new session begins January 5
- ★ SUNDAY OPEN GYM at Windham High School Next session begins February 8
 - Basketball 8:00am 10:00am
 - Volleyball 10:00am 1:00pm
- ★ ADULT PICKLEBALL at Foreside Fitness in Falmouth
 Saturdays in January, February & March starting January 3rd
 - BEGINNER PICKLEBALL 10:30am-11:30am
 - COACHED PICKLEBALL PLAY 11:30am-12:30pm
- ★ AGE FRIENDLY LUNCHEON January 19 & March 16 at Windham Town Hall Gym

ADULT & SENIOR TRIPS:

- ★ MYSTERY LUNCHES January 7, February 11 & March 11
- ★ PORTLAND JETPORT TOUR January 20 & January 21
- **★ SEA LOVE CANDLE MAKING January 28**
- **★ MAINE MILL MUSEUM February 18**
- ★ ALMOST MAINE, SHOW & LUNCH February 22
- ★ MAINE MINERAL & GEM MUSEUM March 19
- **★ MAPLE SATURDAY AT PINELAND FARMS March 21**

SENIOR PROGRAMS:

- ★ BINGO at the Town Hall Gym January 5 & 26, February 9 & 23, March 9 & 23
- ★ CANDLEPIN BOWLING at Westport Lanes
 January 13, February 3, March 3
- ★ CRIBBAGE in the Town Hall Council Chambers Thursdays, January 8-March 26
- ★ FITNESS FOUNDATIONS in the Town Hall Gym Tuesdays & Thursdays, January 6-March 26
 - Tuesdays: Chair Yoga 9:30am-10:15am, Sit/Stand Fitness 10:30am-11:15am
 - Thursdays: Chair Fitness 9:30am-10:15am, Sit/Stand Yoga 10:30am-11:15am





but easy. I think Windham Recreation caught wind of it and may do a van or bus." Myatt also said that they plan to distribute brochures at adult recreation and assisted living facilities in the area. She said that the tour is perfect for all age groups from youngsters and teens to families and seniors.

SEPTEMBER

SEPT. 5's top story covered the death of former Windham State Senator and State Representative Bill Diamond, who died Aug. 31 at the age of 80 following a hard-fought battle with cancer. He spent more than 40 years in politics and Diamond also served as Maine's Secretary

of State from 1989 to 1997. He left behind a legacy few will equal. Diamond grew up on his grandfather's farm in West Gardiner and came to Southern Maine to study to become a teacher at Gorham State Teacher's College, earning a bachelor's degree and master's degree in education. He married his wife Jane in 1968, and the couple raised two daughters, Kristin and Karyn, in Windham and now have eight grandchildren. He taught from 1968 to 1986 in Windham schools and was the first principal of Windham's Manchester School. He went on to lead Field-Allen Junior High School and Windham Middle School as principal and was Superintendent of Schools for Raymond. As the cost of heating homes rose in the early 2000s, Diamond co-founded and served as president of Windham Neighbors Helping Neighbors in 2007, an all-volunteer effort which raised money to provide emergency heating oil to community residents in need. He also served as a board member for the Maine State Society for the Protection of Animals in Windham and Hospice of Southern Maine. In 2023, Diamond launched the "Walk A Mile In Their Shoes Foundation," a non-profit dedicated to preventing child homicides and the abuse of children who are under the supervision or direct care of the State of Maine or who are or have been associated with the state's Child Protective System.

The top story for **SEPT. 12** reported on significant progress made on the construction of the new Windham Raymond Middle School on Windham Center Road, including moving the horse barn on the property for future use as an outdoor classroom. Christopher Howell, RSU 14 Superintendent of Schools, says that construction costs for the school have remained constant

and the project continues to be on schedule for a planned opening of September 2027. The new school will be a free-standing multi-story building with more than 260,000 gross square feet of new construction for learning space, an auditorium, gymnasium, and dining facilities. Howell says that the new school will use a team-teaching concept where students will be divided into 12 teams to provide personal connection and then broken up into smaller instructional teams. It will incorporate Integrative Project Based Learning through team teaching, a method of instruction where a group of teachers work together to plan, conduct, and evaluate learning activities for the same group of students and the school's design takes all of that into account with the team areas of the building allowing for a science teacher, math teacher, social studies teacher, and an English teacher to be in the same teaming area. "It's just been an amazing process to watch and see the large precision of this process," Howell said. "We are \$16 million under the original budget and expect things to remain that way."

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SEPT. 19's top story was about Tia's Prom Project, an initiative to memorialize the late Tatiana "Tia" Morrell of Windham, who tragically died at age 28 in a moped accident. She was a real estate agent and business professional who loved proms. Her friends and family say that they wanted to find a way to remember Tia in a meaningful and lasting way because of the type of person she was. Tia's Prom Project will provide dresses to high school and middle school students in Cumberland County for prom, homecoming, or any other formal or semi-formal school events at no cost to the student. The inspiration for remembering Tia through Tia's Prom Project stems from an event that took place when she was just in eighth grade. A new girl started school in Windham and Tia, her mother said, wanted to help the girl by buying her a dress to attend a semi-formal dance cruise that eighth grade students were attending at the end of the school year. Tia enlisted the assistance of her mother and together they bought a dress and on the day of the dance cruise, Worthing helped the new student with her hair and makeup. Her mother said that story helped inspire this new initiative.

The top story for **SEPT. 26** detailed the opening of the Space to Thrive non-profit childcare organization's new facility, located on Pope Road in Windham. The 6,000-square-foot facility welcomed families, community members, and local and state leaders for a music-filled event to celebrate the grand opening. Colorful chalk decorated the sidewalks, as families enjoyed music, snacks and an opportunity to explore the new building. The building's five classrooms are welcoming spaces, with activity-specific areas dotted around each, and doors leading directly to a new playground. Each teacher assembled and arranged their classrooms to



fit their students' needs, ensuring that children will find enrichment wherever they turn. The event was attended by Maine Gov. Janet Mills and State Senator Tim Nangle. "Parents across the state need consistent, affordable care for their children, not only so they can go to work, but so their children can have a great place to learn and grow," she said, while touting her administration's accomplishments in helping to expand

childcare access in Maine. As someone who raised five daughters and as someone who is now a grandmother to five, I deeply appreciate the work that childcare providers do every day, and I know it isn't easy," Mills said.

OCTOBER

OCT. 3's top story was about the resignation of Joseph Crocker as Raycontinued on page 26









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The Windham Eagle Page 25

THE ROOKIE MAMA THE ADVENTURES OF MOTHERHOOD



WE'LL TAKE A CUP O' KINDNESS YET AND ALL THE PEANUT BRITTLE

By Michelle Cote
SPECIAL TO THE WINDHAM EAGLE

For all the joy and cheer and mer-

riment that comes

with the rise of the



holiday season as it peaks toward December's end, there are little moments that catch me pen-

sive, nostalgic.

As a mom, I can't be the only one feeling these whirlwind feels during winter's rapid rise to yuletide shenan-

Christmastime shines a star-ofwonder sized spotlight on this true passage of time marked by traditions of old - and some very, very old - that stand in stark contrast to what doesn't - and can't - remain still (or still, still, still, as the old Christmas choral tune sug-

Each year, I pull out my hidden trove of vintage-style Santa wrapping paper in anticipation of preparing for that magical work in which many of us parents participate each year.

I've had several of these rolls for many years, purchased at one of my many day-after-Christmas sprees at our local surplus and salvage store. At 17¢ a roll, I was on a roll, and despite my appreciation for all things minimalist, I don't apply this mindset to two things - garden seedlings and Christmas wrapping paper.

I can never have enough - But I di-

This past year, I snuck in little moments to wrap when I could, and as one of my favorite vintage Noel rolls of paper unrolled to its vey last scrap, a bit of sadness washed over me.

That paper had lasted me a few years

and embraced many a gift as I often fought with Scotch tape and tidy creases and many a hot ol' mess.

As I was marking up my kiddos' names in fancy North Pole-ian script, these gifts were marking passage of time. Same wrap, different contents representing the boys' evolving interests through the years.

When I first began writing this column, I reflected on my first baby's first Christmas. That little dude is now 14 years old, and we've got three others in tow - four different flavors who share a love for laughing all the way.

Alas, the passage of time.

It's in the rare, quiet moments that I breathe in this realization that regardless of holiday traditions, wrapping paper, dishes put forth, the boys are gonna grow up.

I can wrap many a gift, but I can't wrap my mind around just how quickly they've been sprouting up be-



fore our eyes.

Perhaps that strange time warp between Christmas and New Year's when everyone seems to forget what day it is as they assemble gifts and eat leftover peanut brittle in their pajamas is a needed break for parents as well as the kiddos.

We need that decompression and time for reflection as much as they need time to test out their new Hot Wheels and Lego sets.

We need time for deep breaths and dust – and tissue paper – to settle as the little ones continue on excitedly, completely unaware that once we box up Christmas magic and decorations and store away in the basement, these won't come out again until everyone is one year older.

Time marches on.

These reflective, hibernatory moments are truly poignant as we high five our partners and prepare to carry on into a new year. After all, Easter decorations are lining up store shelves - Go look and see, if you don't

But in the meantime, our crew started up a new tradition last year which we certainly did not invent and hope you'll try, too.

An empty jar sits on a counter each January by a small notepad, and each time a memorable moment takes place – be it sentimental, funny, or something in between – one of us jots down the memory and folds it up in the jar. At the end of the year, we'll open up the notes and read them aloud, reflecting on small memories we may have otherwise forgotten.

Call it a modern-day Auld Lang Syne if you will, filled to the brink of a cup of kindness yet we share to button up the year gone by.

So cheers to 2026 and enjoy your Hot Wheels.

Don't forget to pick up your holiday wrap for next year at clearance

And enjoy the moments intentionally all year through with loved ones. Glad tidings, readers!

Columnst Michelle Cote lives in southern Maine with her husband and four sons, and enjoys camping, distance running, biking, gardening, road trips to new regions, arts and crafts, soccer, and singing to musical showtunes - often several or more at the same time! <

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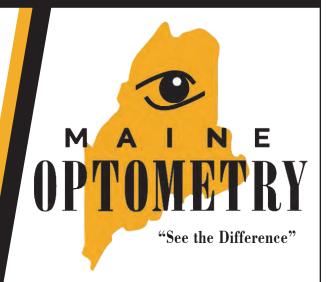
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mond Town Manager. Crocker, 37, had formerly served the town as Parks and Recreation Director, and was appointed to the Town Manager position in May succeeding Sue Look, who resigned in March. The Raymond Select Board had then tapped Crocker to serve as the interim Town Manager until a permanent replacement could be hired. Look had served as Raymond Town Clerk before succeeding longtime Town Manager Don Willard in January 2024 upon his retirement. Crocker was hired for the town manager position after a competitive recruiting and hiring process conducted by HR Maine Consulting,

LLC. All told, there were 46 applicants for the town manager position. Nine of those candidates participated in a rigorous essay and pre-screening process, with four candidates moving forward in the panel interview process, consisting of the Raymond Select Board Chair, Vice-Chair, a community member, town department heads, a Town Manager from another community, and Betsy Oulton from HR Maine Consulting. His contract was for three years at an annual salary of \$100,000. "When you provide services to a small town for so long, they become your friends," Crocker said. "All I can say is I have given my best effort to make the Town of Raymond better, and all I ask is that our elected officials act in good faith to do the same."

The top story for **OCT. 10** reported on the return of the Presumpscot River Revival Race after an absence of three decades. The race is sponsored by the Friends of the Presumpscot River at Dundee Park for a day of friendly paddle competition and celebration. The 2.5-mile race and festivities at the river will span several hours to include paddling, food trucks, leaf-peeping, and more. The goal of the event is to "bring awareness and community to the river," says Leah Zwain of FOPR. The organization has been increasing its outreach efforts to help build connection with the river and to each other. It provides that opportunity to connect through Community Paddle and Grill events and Evening Paddles on the Presumpscot and hosts conversations and presentations at local libraries or yacht clubs, partnering with other nonprofits such as Friends of Casco Bay. Some of the proceeds from the races will help with the FOPR school outreach program which is designed to get students in Gorham, Westbrook, Windham, Portland, and Falmouth out on the water, and the program introduces children to the river. Students are taught paddling techniques and learn about the Wabanaki and industrial history of the waterway, while also discussing the river's future.

For **OCT.** 17, the top story unveiled plans for the final segment to extend the Mountain Division Trail from Windham to be added to Maine Department of Transportation's Three-Year Plan. During a meeting of the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System's Advisory Committee, PACTS members voted to recommend the project to be included on MaineDOT's Three-Year Plan spanning 2026-2027-2028. Aubrey Miller, Senior Transportation Program Manager for the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG), said that following the Draft Plan's adoption by the committee, the GPCOG Policy Board will review and consider adopting the Regional Trail Plan on Oct. 23. The \$16.2 million

continued on page 27





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The Windham Eagle Page 27

project will extend the Mountain Division Trail from its current end at Main Street (Route 202), in Windham, and extend the trail about 5 miles south to Bridge Street in Westbrook. Doing this will create a continuous, nearly 10-mile off-road bicycle and pedestrian transportation link running from Standish to Westbrook. Once funded by Maine-DOT, project work will include new pavement, gravel, curbing, drainage, signing and striping, retaining walls, fencing, and rectangular rapid flashing beacons located at the trail crossings on Bridge Street in Westbrook, Depot Street in Windham, and Main Street (Route 202) in Windham.

OCT. 24's top story covered the induction of Windham High School boys' basketball coach Chad Pulkkinen into the Saint Joesph's College Athletics Hall of Fame. He has led Windham High School to consecutive state boys' basketball championships and competed for Saint Joesph's as a player in the 1990s. In his freshman year at Saint Joseph's College, Pulkkinen tore his Anterior Cruciate Ligament. Less than a year later, he tore his ACL again in what he described as "extremely dark moments" for his first two years playing college ball. Being injured was a life lesson for him. It took away everything he loved. He said he thought it was the best thing for him because he looked at

the game differently; he appreciated it differently, especially after the second injury. He overcame that adversity and finished his college career strong and eventually went on to play professionally in England for the Northampton Neptunes in the European Basketball League. "I want Windham alumni to be proud and hopefully my experiences including failures and successes can help my current players," said Pulkkinen.

The top story for **OCT. 31** was about the Windham Town Council choosing Anthony Blasi to succeed longtime Windham Town Clerk Linda Morrell, who is retiring. Blasi will be sworn in Nov. 4 and understands that he has big shoes to fill. "Linda is a tough act to follow. I can only hope to command the love, respect, and trust that the people of Windham have bestowed upon her," Blasi said. "Linda is so helpful. You see the way she interacts with people, and she is always willing to help. If she cannot do something or is not sure, she always finds out the answer. I learned more about resourcefulness from her and hope to be as resourceful as she is." Blasi is originally from Auburn and graduated in 2015 from Edward Little High School. He then earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in history from the University of Maine Farmington in 2019. Before coming to work in Windham, Blasi served as the Town Clerk of Wool-



wich for about a year and a half, and he applied for the Windham job because it posed more of a challenge. He is a Certified Municipal Clerk by the Maine Town and City Clerks Association and is a Notary Public.

NOVEMBER

NOV. 7's top story reported on the Nov. 4 municipal election in Windham as three new Windham Town Councilors and two members of the RSU 14 Board of Directors will be sworn in following the election. In Windham's North District, Margaret "Maggie" Terry defeated Deborah Devou, while in the South District, Doug Fortier beat Michael Russin for the council seat. In a race for an At-Large council seat, Katie Cook defeated Clayton Haskell and Joseph Campbell, and a recount challenge confirmed her victory. In a five-candidate race with the top two vote tallies

O-WORKER OWNED

earning seats for three-year terms on the RSU 14 Board of Directors, incumbent Christina Small and first-time candidate Matthew Irving received the most votes and won seats on the school board, over candidates Adam Zajac, Megan Potter and Destiny Johnson. Voters in Windham and Raymond were among state residents casting ballots in Tuesday's election to decide the fate of two statewide referendum questions. Question 1 about requiring voter identification and eliminating two days of absentee voting failed statewide, while Question 2 prohibiting individuals posing potential harm to others from having dangerous weapons was approved

For NOV. 14, the top story covered the 2025 Veterans Day observance hosted by VFW Post 10643 at the Windham Veterans Center on Veterans

continued on page 28

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Day. Featuring guest speaker Elizabeth Cormier of Honor Flight Maine, VFW Post 10643's new commander Jeffrey Cook served the master of ceremonies and local essay winners for the VFW's Patriot's Pen for grades 6 to 8 and Voice of Democracy audio essay contest for grades 9 to 12 were announced. The Patriot's Pen winner was Windham Christian Academy eighth grader Elsa Pearson with second place awarded to Annaelle Kawaya. The Voices of Democracy winner was Windham sophomore Shea Carey. Pearson spoke of the importance of volunteering and how when she was in fifth and sixth grade, she volunteered at the local food pantry setting up Thanksgiving baskets. She said helping our community is one step closer to making our country better. She and her class have also traveled across southern Maine to perform juggling acts for nursing homes and spread the gospel, while visiting with the residents of these homes. Carey's essay was about the many ways to display patriotism. Her version of patriotism involves the simplest acts of kindness and integrity. She values being a kind person and hopes those who heard her essay take those words and strive to make a difference where they can.

NOV. 21's top story was about a Windham parent who enlisted teens and members of the community for a food drive that raised more than \$500 to purchase food items for the Windham Food Pantry, along with collecting additional food donations from Windham residents. Angela Libby spent a little under two weeks collecting funds and donations, ending up with more than four shopping carts full of food for the food pantry. She assembled a group of teens from Windham High School to help with both collecting donations and with a shopping trip to Market Basket in Westbrook. "I wanted to help, and

I wanted my youngest daughter to be involved and see that there are people who are less fortunate than us" in the community, she said. "Having the kids hear about how many are in need, how many people come [to the Food Pantry], and what is available was really eye opening for them, which is exactly what I was looking for." Libby said that hearing from a food pantry volunteer that there are 38 families from the Windham Primary School seeking help from the community organization really hit home for the kids. Upon hearing about recent cuts to SNAP benefits, the mother of three daughters used a group chat from a group of teens who attended Homecoming together to reach out to parents and their kids to see if any would be interested in participating. "Everybody of course said yes," she said. "Some kids came over with boxes of food they had collected, and others collected money."

For NOV. 28, the top story reported on a Windham veteran who was surprised by every aspect of her Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. earlier this year and describes it "as an experience of a lifetime." Alola Giffin Morrison, 88, grew up as the daughter of a U.S. Coast

Guard captain, and lived in eight different cities ranging from New Orleans to throughout the Northeastern U.S. and as far north as Agentia, Newfoundland in Canada growing up. After earning dual Bachelor of Science degrees in nutrition and home economics in 1959 from the University of Maine, she completed a one-year dietetic internship at Beth Israel Hospital in Massachusetts, qualifying her to become a registered dietitian in 1960. Later that same year, she became a commissioned officer in the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) in Boston and was sworn in by her father as a Lieutenant Junior Grade. She married her University of Maine classmate and sweetheart Joe Morrison in November 1961 at Hanscom Air Force Base in Massachusetts and resigned from the Public Health Service in June 1962 to move to Orono, Maine to start her family in August 1962. Resuming her military career by re-enlisting in the U.S. Army Reserve Medical Corps (USARMC) as a captain in 1974, she was assigned to the 1125th Medical Unit out of Auburn, Maine and Section 1 in Bangor for 12 years as a registered dietitian. She retired from the USARMC in 1986 having obtained the rank of Major. The Honor Flight experience was very humbling and Morrison said going to the Women's Military Memorial was her favorite. Her military story was officially entered into the Women's Military Memorial. She was one of 77 veterans from Maine and was the only female veteran on this trip.

Windham Raymond Schools RSU14 Cere Biefet Figure F

AT-A-GLANCE

Discussion topics are subject to change. Please check meeting agendas for the most up-to-date information.

RSU 14 BOARD OF DIRECTORS Upcoming School Board Work:

- Instructional Coaches & Interventionists Presentation
- Instructional Coaches & Interventionists resenta
- Jordan Small State of the School Presentation
- IGDJ: Athletic / Co-curricular Eligibility School Board Governance Policies
- BEAA: Standard Operating Procedures Guide of Communication with Public
- Board Goals Review
- Budget 101 Workshop

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Upcoming Committee Work:

- Year-to-date Spending
- Capital Reserve Planning
- Budget Planning
- Budget Communication

POLICY COMMITTEE

Upcoming Committee Work:

- BEDH: Public Comment At School Board Meeting
- GBEC: Drug-Free Workplace
- GCC: Professional Staff Hiring
- GBO: Family Care Leave

CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Upcoming Committee Work:

• Middle School Math Coaching

FACILITIES COMMITTEE

Upcoming Committee Work:

New Committee Member Update

SCHOOL BOARD UPDATE

UPCOMING MEETINGS

All meetings are open to the public and subject to change.

January 6, 2026

9:30 a.m. at District Office: Finance Committee

January 7, 2026

6:30 p.m. at Windham High School: Board Meeting

January 12, 2026

9:30 a.m. at Central Office: Policy Committee

January 12, 2026

3:00 p.m. at Central Office: Curriculum Committee

January 13, 2026

5:00 p.m. at 61 Windham Center Road: Facilities Committee

January 21, 2026

6:30 p.m. at Jordan Small Middle School: Board Meeting

January 26, 2026

9:30 a.m. at Central Office: Policy Committee



SCAN HERE TO SEE BOARD MEETING AGENDAS, MEETING VIDEOS, BOARD MEMBERS, FINANCES, SCHOOL POLICIES & MORE

DECEMBER

For **DEC.** 5, the top story was about the Maine Dance Company and the Maine Dance Center's upcoming new holiday dance production, Christmas at the Castle, premiering Dec. 20 at the Donald M. Gay Performing Arts Center located at Edward Little High School in Auburn. Dancers of all ages from the Maine Dance Company and the Maine Dance Center, located on Roosevelt Trail in Raymond, will take the stage to help the Sugar Plum Fairy retrieve her lost wand to ensure Christmas magic will carry Santa Claus across the globe. "If Sugarplum Fairy doesn't have her wand, Christmas is in jeopardy," said Adrienne Pelletier, one of the two authors of the show's storyline, when detailing the adventures the cast will face. Pelletier, along with her sister and co-author, Rhiannon Pelletier-Guerrette, worked to develop the show for almost two years, after a performance at Windham's Summerfest in 2023. Once the duo founded the company in 2024, they realized they had talented dancers to fill the roles and develop a full performance. They began writing in January of that year and spent almost two years finishing a script and patching the music together. Both Pelletier and Pelletier-Guerrette are each principal dancers with the Maine State Ballet. Family support will be essential as the Maine Dance Center expands in a new location in the North Windham Shopping Center behind Windham Jewelers in February 2026.

DEC. 12's top story was Raymond residents voicing both support and criticism of their town's Select Board chair, and vice chair during a packed public hearing on a recall election that could remove them from office. Former Raymond Select Board member Teresa Sadak initiated the recall petition against

continued on page 29

Chair Denis Morse and Vice Chair Kaela Gonzalez. The election is scheduled for Dec. 30. In her petition, Sadak listed four reasons for the recall including failing to put Raymond's interests first, creating division, micromanaging, and denigrating employees during public meetings. Sadak detailed actions she said supported her claims, many tied to the board's treatment of former Town Manager Joseph Crocker. Crocker, who resigned earlier this fall, had served as director of Parks and Recreation before becoming interim town manager in March and the permanent town manager in May. He continues part-time work on a special project for the town. Glenn Michalowski, formerly Lisbon's town manager, was appointed interim town manager on Nov. 18. During the public hearing, Sadak accused Morse and Gonzalez of violating board protocols, citing emails obtained through a Freedom of Information request and accounts from staff. She said the two Select Board members berated Crocker over a septic issue at a church leased for town programs, their voices loud enough to be heard by staff and residents. She also criticized Morse and Gonzalez for contacting staff, attorneys, and other town managers without board authorization. Raymond Select Board members Chris Hanson and Derek Ray acknowledged some of those actions occurred. Crocker himself wrote a letter that constant questioning of his decisions from certain board members contributed to his resignation. Despite the support for the recall, many Raymond residents defended Morse and Gonzalez during the public hearing, praising their efforts to address longstanding town issues and

urging that Morse and Gonzalez to not face a recall vote.

For **DEC. 19**, the top story was about Amanda Lessard being designated to serve as interim assistant town manager for the Town of Windham until a permanent candidate can be hired by the Windham Town Council. Windham Town Manager Robert Burns appointed Lessard to the role last week. Lessard had been serving as Senior Planner/Project Manager for the town. Burns became the first person to hold the position of Assistant Town Manager for Windham with his appointment to the role in December 2021 and was named Windham Town Manager by town councilors when Barry Tibbetts stepped down from that position June 30. Lessard had served as Windham's Planning Director from 2019 to 2024 when she joined Royal River Conservation Trust in Yarmouth as Conservation Director. She subsequently was rehired by the town and will now assist Burns in his duties on an interim basis until councilors appoint a permanent assistant town manager. As a town planner, Lessard was involved in everything from the creation of Windham's Comprehensive Plan, handling zoning issues, reviewing subdivision and commercial building plans to the development of the town's Open Space Master Plan. As Planning Director, Lessard led Windham to partner with Presumpscot Regional Land Trust to purchase and conserve 661 acres near Little Duck Pond in East Windham. Called the East Windham Conservation Area, the project acquired the forested acreage for recreational opportunities in Windham while also adding 1,545 feet



of undeveloped water frontage on Little Duck Pond, the 150-acre Deer Wintering Area for hunting, and Atherton Hill. She helped Windham obtain a \$1 million grant from the Land for Maine's Future initiative for the project. <

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Windham swim team starts strong in season opener

By Matt Pascarella

STAFF WRITER

Windham High School's swimming team opened the season against Yarmouth at Greely High School in Cumberland on Saturday, Dec. 20. Windham finished first in several events and when they didn't place first, they weren't far behind in a strong season opener.

"I think this sets a very optimistic tone," said Windham swim coach Peter Small. "It's early in the season and it's your first race so we use it as a litmus test to say, 'where are you now?' Yes, we want to beat Yarmouth, but ultimately, it's where we are right now, and how do we improve to get to March 6. Everybody had a couple things that we want to improve upon, and I think we were able to measure improvement on every single one of them. Even if they were disappointed in their time, it's more about the technique. I'm very optimistic going forward, and I think our turns were better than they ever have been ... we really put a specialty focus on it this week. We've really been focusing on length over stroke so we're really propelling ourselves forward and I think we've greatly improved over that. Our arm placement in the water (needs work). It's time to ramp up the habits of efficiency in the water."

The Eagles hit the water ready to get this season going.

Sophomore Rocco DiDonato finished first in the 200-yard freestyle with a time of 2:13.88 minutes.

In the girls 50-freestyle, sophomore Stephanie Roghelia had a first-place





(L to R) Windham sophomore Beckett Bragdon showcases his speed in the prep swimming season opener against Yarmouth at Greely High School in Cumberland on Saturday, Dec. 20. Sophomore Stephanie Roghelia competes in the butterfly race. PHOTOS BY MATT PASCARELLA

finish with a time of 28.36 seconds.

Beckett Bragdon, a Windham sophomore, finished first in the boys 50-freestyle with a 26.82 time. He also finished first in the 100-breaststroke with a 1:18.39 time.

In the 100-freestyle freshman Lauren Nickel finished second with a 1:13.20 time.

In the 500-freestyle, junior Maya Fitts finished second with an 8:50.94 time.

DiDonato had another first-place finish in the 500-freestyle with a 5:53.91 time, almost a full minute ahead of his competitor.

"I think the relay carnival was good to see where we're starting at," said DiDonato. "Now that we'll practice more, it'll be good to see where everyone is going to be in a few weeks. I think we were very strong today. I think our sportsmanship was very good today, and many of the swimmers improved their times a lot. Our starts and our turns (need work) and those can always be better. I think it's going to be a great season. Even though we have less people, we're stronger this year as a team."

In the 100-breaststroke, Roghelia finished almost a full five seconds ahead of her opponent in her first-place finish where she had a 1:20.38 time.

"I think it went pretty good, we're at the beginning of the season and working on technique and building

that endurance you need for swim," said Roghelia. "I'm pretty happy with how the first few weeks have been going. Things I think went really well were everyone's turns and dives we've been working really hard on. Also, just everyone's pushing themselves because for some people this is the first time they've swam (in a high school meet), and they did very well. I think some things that need work are bringing some more energy to the table, more technique and more endurance. I think this meet sets the tone of determination; this is some people's first time swimming, and I think we can really just go from here and this is just a starting point." <

TANKER OF AREA WARRENES

Mason Caron

Age: 18

Team: Windham/Westbrook/Bonny Eagle Trail Blazers ice hockey

Coach: Ben Haskell

Parent's names: Nicole and Rob Caron

Reason for selection: Mason plays with an edge and has the fighter mentality. It's an emotional game and he plays emotionally; the team recognizes that. He

works hard in practice. He's really good with his teammates, and that's where his captain position came from; it was all on the team. He makes a lot of plays happen; he turns it on when he needs to turn it on and reels it in when he needs to reel it in. He shares plays or scoring opportunities with his teammates. He practices hard with his teammates and holds them accountable. When they've done something good, he's there to congratulate them.





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Junior Maya Fitts moves quickly down the lane.



The Windham Eagle

WHS graduate applies intensity of athletics to academics

By Matt Pascarella STAFF WRITER

Windham High School 2019 graduate Meghan Hoffses played soccer and basketball while at Windham High School and then went on to attend the University of Southern Maine at the Gorham and Portland campuses. She played soccer there her sophomore year but chose academics over athletics and focused hard to achieve her degree in public health in 2023. She received her Advanced Certificate in Diagnostic Medical Sonography from the Maine College of Health Professions in Lewiston on Dec. 12.

"Ultrasound school was both humbling and rewarding," said Hoffses. "I am so excited to have recently graduated from Maine College of Health Professions and look forward to working at Maternal Fetal Medicine post-graduation. Being able to work with women during such a pivotal chapter of their lives is incredibly rewarding and fulfilling."

She always knew she wanted to work in healthcare. She toured the Maine College of Health Professions during her sophomore year and knew that after she graduated from USM, she wanted to go into sonography. Hoffses has an interest in anatomy and physiology with a passion for working in women's health.

When she attended USM, she made the Dean's List five times and was also a member of the National Honor Society. As a student at the Maine College of Health Professions she made the Deans List three times and was a Lamda Nu Radiologic and Imaging Sciences National Honor Society member.

During her one year of soccer at USM, she received the William B. Wise Scholar Athlete Award for the 2020 season. After choosing academics over playing a college sport, she stressed the importance of staying active by going to the gym, taking spin classes, attending yoga classes,

weightlifting running.

"As someone who was an athlete throughout high school and part of college, I was able to exercise in new ways and at whatever times best suited my schedule," said Hoffses. "I typically exercise four to five times a week. Staying active has always been a priority for me and is a core part of who I am. Exercise is not only something that I enjoy, but it gives me structure in my day, and I feel my most energized and grounded when I make it a priority."

She does miss playing both soccer and basketball. Hoffses enjoyed being part of a team and feeling like she was part of something bigger than herself. She made lifelong friendships and connections through playing basketball. While it's been a while since she last played, she said it would be fun for her to help coach young girls at some point down the road.

"Meg has been one of my closest friends for as long as I can remember," said former WHS teammate and friend Tara Flanders. "She has always been an extremely loyal friend and teammate. Although Meg and I didn't get the chance to play sports together in college, our time playing basketball at Windham are memories I will cherish forever—all the practices, Saturday morning youth clinics, games, and everything in between. As a friend, you always want to see the people you care about grow and succeed, and Meg has done exactly that. In high school, Meg ... brought high intensity every time she stepped on the field and court. I knew that as soon as I grabbed a re-

(Left) Windham High 2019 graduate Meghan Hoffses during her sophomore year in 2020 where she was on the soccer team at the University of Southern Maine. PHOTO BY USM ATHLETICS (Below) Meghan Hoffses, center, with mom Lisa and brother Cameron during a pinning ceremony where she receives her advanced certificate in diagnostic medical sonography at the Maine College of Health Professions in Lewiston on Dec. 12. PHOTO BY MICHAEL SALVADOR



bound, I could always count on her to already be flying up the court ahead of everyone else."

Hoffses said her advice for current athletes looking to play collegiately, is to give 100 percent effort and dedicate their time in the off-season. She also said to stay on top of academics because doing so will ensure that every door is open when deciding to play at the college level. Time management with practice and homework is an important skill to learn while in high school, which can pay off in college.

Lastly, Hoffses said to enjoy every moment. Being part of a team is a special feeling, and people are not lying when they say it goes by fast. <



Windham Raymond Schools

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Why not 12 instead of 10?

By Andy Young STAFF COLUMNIST

The United States will mark the 250th anniversary of its nominal founding this July and as you're reading this, wholesalers, retailers, and aspiring entrepreneurs are busily imagining, manufacturing, preparing, and/or ordering officially licensed semiquincentennial they hope to peddle for a profit as the celebration approaches.

Recent history suggests those ambitious go-getters might be onto something. After all, who wouldn't want to find an "America250" hoodie, t-shirt, coffee mug, or refrigerator magnet under the tree next Christmas?





Grade: 3rd

School: Windham Christian Academy

Teacher: Mrs. Milroy

Favorite subject(s): Math and Physical Education

Parents' Name: Troy and Kristin Dore

Reason for selection: Landon encourages his classmates and teachers alike with his desire for knowledge and fair play- whether in the classroom or in the gym! His enthusiasm for God's Word has touched many hearts over the years at WCA. In the classroom, he is

one of the first to raise his hand to answer. Every time he does, he invigorates others to join in and wonderful discussions transpire! His teachers and friends benefit from his Godly insight and depth of wisdom. God is already working through this young man with his classmates and teammates, and we know that God has very exciting plans for Landon's future!



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Fifty years ago, America's bicentennial was all the rage. Those extant at the time remember spectacular fireworks displays over most major cities on July 4th, 1976, tall ships sailing

into New York City and Boston harbors, and the 26-car "Freedom Train" full of national memorabilia (including, among other things, a moon rock, Judy Garland's dress from The Wizard of Oz, and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s pulpit and robes) that traveled nearly 26,000 miles through all 48 of the contiguous states. Some amateur investors began hoarding the bicentennial quarters the treasury department minted that year. And while their foresight hasn't paid off as handsomely as they might have hoped, no one's lost money, since at last look each of those now-50-year-old coins is still worth at least 25 cents. Today nostalgic types yearning for keepsakes of those events can occasionally find them at Goodwill stores, where Bicentennial coffee mugs or shot glasses often sell for as little as two dollars, or eight bicentennial quarters.

Human beings seem to have a fixation about numbers that end in zero. How else to explain the significance people associate with birthdays ending with that digit? After all, the difference between turning 29 and 30, 49 or 50, or 69 or 70 is only a year, but good luck finding a Hallmark card that says, "Happy Birthday, 49-year-old."

Attaching significance to multiples of ten seems pretty random. Why aren't people hung up on some other number, like 12, for example? Eggs are sold by the dozen; so are roses, bagels, and rolls of toilet paper. Cans of soda or beer are sold in half-dozens, and decent pastry shop owners often send regular patrons home with a baker's dozen of doughnuts on Sunday mornings. There are 12 numbers on a clock face, and two 12-hour periods of time

equals one day. Operating under the duodecimal system makes no less sense than society's current fixation on Base 10.

AMERICA

Suppose the founding fathers had decided twelve was a more significant number than ten. America wouldn't have had any centennial, sesquicentennial, or bicentennial celebrations. Instead, there's have been ceremonies marking the fledgling nation's first half-duodecade in 1848. But patriotic fervor in the United States would have peaked in 1920, on the occasion of the country's 144th (Gross?) anniversary. There might be a few crackpot decimal system advocates insisting on referring to it as the Dozentennial, but like today's Flat Earthers, they'd have been dismissed as lunatic fringers.

A society running on Base 12 would see 2026 as just another year. However, those born in 1954 would be marking a major milestone, the completion of their half-dozenth duodecade.

It's a good thing the United States doesn't use the duodecimal system. If it did baby boomers would have no chance to experience the patriotic gala surrounding a Gross National Celebration, because they didn't exist in 1920, and few of them are likely to still be around in 2064.

Thankfully though, that's not the case. If it were, the best boomers could do would be to take some commemorative Gross anniversary 1920 quarters down to Goodwill and purchase a vintage 1992 coffee mug, t-shirt, or refrigerator magnet. <

LEGAL NOTICE

TOWN OF RAYMOND, MAINE

PLANNING BOARD **MEETING**

Wednesday, January 7, 2025 • 7:00 PM

Broadcast Studio - 423 Webbs Mills Road, Via ZOOM, & on YouTube

- 1. Call to order
- 2. Approval of minutes: December 10, 2025
- 3. New Business None
- 4. Old Business

Land Use Ordinance

- 1. Banquet Halls a. Definition b. Allowable Uses c. Performance Standards
- 2. Outdoor Medical Cannabis Growing Operations
 - a. Adding Definitions
 - b. Allowable Uses
 - c. Performance Standards
- 3. Short Term Rentals a. Adding Definition and Parking Standards
- 5. Staff Communications
- 6. Adjournment

The meeting will be streamed in real time from the local Government channel. This live stream is also hosted on YouTube (www.raymondmaine.org/content/live-video-streaming), so make sure your computer or router/firewall does not block YouTube content.

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The Windham Eagle — Page 33

Eagle Right A The State of the

Navigating a mixed real estate market: What today's conditions mean for buyers and sellers

► By The Libby Starnes Team SPECIAL TO THE WINDHAM EAGLE

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estate



tle confusing right now, you're not alone. Head-lines alternate

between stories of price reductions and multiple offers, slower activity and sudden bidding wars. That's because we are in what many professionals are calling a mixed market – a market where conditions vary widely depending on price point, property type, and location.

In a mixed market, there is no single narrative. Some homes are selling quickly with strong demand, while others are sitting longer and requiring strategic price adjustments. Understanding this shift is essential for both buyers and sellers who want to make confident, informed decisions.

For sellers, the days of "list it and they will come" are largely behind us – at least for now. Today's buyers are more cautious and more educated. They are paying close attention to condition, pricing, and value. Homes that are well-maintained, properly priced, and thoughtfully marketed are still selling—and often selling

well. On the other hand, properties that are overpriced or need significant updates may require more time, flexibility, and patience.

This is where realistic pricing matters more than ever. Pricing a home correctly from the start helps generate early interest, which is critical in a market where buyers have options. Professional photography, strong online exposure, and clear communication about a home's features and updates can make a meaningful difference in how quickly a property attracts attention.

For buyers, a mixed market can present real opportunities. While interest rates remain higher than in recent years, there is often less competition than during the peak frenzy. This can mean more room to negotiate on price, inspections, or closing terms – especially on homes that have been on the market longer. Buyers who are prepared, pre-approved, and working with a knowledgeable agent are well-positioned to take advantage of these moments.





It's also important for buyers to recognize that not every property will come with leverage. Desirable homes in sought-after neighborhoods or at popular price points may still receive multiple offers. Understanding which situations call for patience and which require decisiveness is key.

A mixed market rewards strategy over speed. It favors those who take the time to understand local trends rather than relying on national headlines. What's happening in one town – or even one neighborhood – can look very different just a few miles away.

At The Libby Starnes Team, we believe education and communication are the foundation of success in any market, especially a mixed one. Our role is to help clients interpret the data, set realistic expectations, and create a plan that aligns with their goals. Whether you are considering selling, buying, or simply staying informed, having a trusted advisor makes all the difference.

Markets will always shift, but smart decisions are timeless. With the right guidance, a mixed real estate market doesn't have to feel uncertain – it can be an opportunity.

If you have questions about what today's market means for you or your property, we're always happy to help.

This article was brought to you by The Libby Starnes Team. For more updates, listings, or to schedule a consultation, visit www.libbystarnesteamhomes.com or follow The Libby Starnes Team on social media. <









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Solve the code to discover words related to the new year. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 21 = O)

8 21 23 22 4 **13** 21 A.

Clue: Made on January 1

В. **20** 24 21 2 **13**

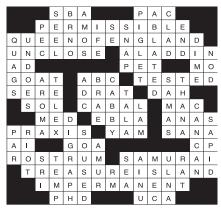
Clue: Pledge

11 3 23 4

Clue: Good for you

Clue: Objective

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS





15 16 18 19 31 36 38 54 63 64 66 68 **CLUES ACROSS** 1. Lakes 38. Unpolished 39. Drenches

- 6. Electromotive force
- 9. Invests in little enterprises
- 13. Longtime Utah Jazz coach
- 14. Small sailboat
- 15. Actor Idris
- 16. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls
- 17. System that detects objects under water
- 18. Harsh, grating noise
- 19. Steward
- 21. A fencing sword
- 22. Infections
- 23. Actress Ryan 24. Sodium
- 25. Swedish castle
- 28. A lump of slime
- 29. African antelope
- 31. Insurance providers
- 33. Choosy
- 36. Ringworm

- 41. Pant style
- 44. Son of Noah
- 45. Spiritual being
- 46. Upton Sinclair novel
- 48. Journalist Tarbell
- 49. Popular sports highlight show
- 51. Born of
- 52. Rich tapestry
- 54. S. China seaport
- 56. State of being unclothed
- 60. Surrounded by
- 61. Residue
- 62. Away from wind 63. Dried-up
- 64. Visionary
- 65. A very large body of water
- 66. Garden tools
- 67. Screen type
- 68. Ancient Scandinavian poet

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Millisecond
- 2. Spanish city
- 3. A sudden very loud sound
- 4. "The Indiana Jones of beer"
- 5. Tin

Answers:

₽

resolution

B. promise C. healthy

. goal

- 6. Sea eagles
- 7. Volcanic crater
- 8. Type of coat
- 9. Women's apartments in Ottoman palace
- 10. Divulge a secret
- 11. Norwegian playwright
- 12. "It's a Wonderful Life" director
- 14. Poisonous perennial plant
- 17. 18-year astronomical period
- 20. Clothes
- 21. Places to sit
- 23. Family of regulator genes
- 25. New York ballplayer
- 26. Impressive in size or scope
- 27. Jacques ___, French biologist

- 29. One from the Big Apple
- 30. Genus of woolly lemurs
- 32. Songs to one's beloved
- 34. Indigenous person of N.E. Thailand 35. Supplemented with difficulty
- 37. Farewell
- 40. Investment account (abbr.) 42. One from Utah
- 43. Begets
- 47. A male child 49. Break apart
- 50. Brief appearance
- 52. Partner to "oohed"
- 53. A light informal meal 55. Fabric with smooth, shiny surface
- 56. One billionth of a second
- 57. Ancient Italian-Greek colony
- 58. Close tightly
- 59. Mail out
- 61. Language
- 65. Computer characteristic

SUDOKU

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HOW TO SOLVE:

Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

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PLEASE NOTE: THE BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT IS A PAID ADVERTISEMENT. TO HAVE YOUR BUSINESS HIGHLIGHTED CALL MELISSA: 207-894-3500

A recent nationwide trend has seen private out-of-state investment companies taking over area funeral homes, including in Windham, but the owner of Casco Bay Cremation and Funeral Services is committed to providing local families with expertise and affordable exceptional care that is truly owned by a local family who understands local needs.

Longtime funeral professional Jeffrey Dobson established Casco Bay Cremation and Funeral Services in 2024 and offers full burial and cremation services, green burials, church services, graveside services, direct cremation, direct burials, prearrangements and international shipping. It serves all Southern Maine and parts of New Hampshire with extensive experience in Windham and the Greater Portland area. It offers a large array of lasting memorial products, and its highly trained staff are highly experienced in arranging funeral services and can help families celebrate loved ones no matter what their religion, culture, or budget.

Because the company is locally owned and operated with no outside shareholders, Dobson has been able to keep costs low and highly affordable for area families.

"For the level of service that we provide and for a provider that meets families in person or remotely, and also for a provider who provides the family with an urn for no additional cost, we are currently the most afford-

Casco Bay Cremation & Funeral Services

able in the Greater Portland Area," Dobson said. "We are also adding services such as traditional burials, casket burials, church services and services at the graveside."

He says pricing for services offered by Casco Bay Cremation and Funeral Services will never contain hidden costs driven by out-of-state investor profit.

"We are extremely transparent and are one of only a few funeral establishments that I know of in Southern Maine that fully publish all our prices on our website," Dobson said. "We do not hide anything, nor do we require a family to come in and see us to get the basic information they need to make informed choices."

Dobson has been a funeral professional for more than 15 years and he started working in Portland at a funeral home assisting the funeral directors there. That led him to go back to school to obtain his mortuary science degree.

"I personally have spent over eight years working in the Portland area," he said. "I recently noticed the cost in the Portland area increasing and wanted to use my ability to offer families an option that provides dignified and professional cremation and burial services without the high costs."

According to Dobson, a funeral professional is essential because they help families navigate the complex process of planning a funeral or memorial service for their loved one. They provide guidance, support, and expertise in areas such as arranging for cremations, obtaining necessary permits and certificates, and coordinating with other professionals involved in the funeral process. Additionally, he said they can help families make important decisions and provide emotional support during a most challenging time.

"We are truly family owned and locally operated. We have spent our entire life growing up and attending local schools," Dobson said. "We don't answer to outside investors. We answer only to the families that entrust their loved ones to our care. These families are truly our investors. We offer services of a full-service funeral establishment; the only service we do not offer at this time is in-house chapel services. We choose to specialize in offsite services at a family's church or

if a family has no church. we do work with several local spaces that we can use to hold funerals and memorial services at a much more affordable cost. We do not sacrifice a high level of service for a lower cost, and we believe a family should obtain the same professional services without the higher price."

He said that the quality of the services Casco Bay Cremation and Funeral Services offers is of the highest importance to them and they will never sacrifice quality and compassion. We also offer a 100 percent service guarantee, meaning if a family is not pleased or our services did not meet their expectations, we will adjust the overall cost for the family, which could include no cost at all. Dobson believes that the cost of services should never be a factor in the quality of the service that a family receives.

"We respond to families 24 hours a day and families see that and they know that if they call us, we are going to be there for them," Dobson said. "We believe in fairness, ensuring that our services are reasonably priced, allowing you to focus on honoring the memory of your loved one. In times of grief, we extend our hand to help you, believing in the power of a local family to guide you through this challenging period."

To reach Casco Bay Cremation and Funeral Services call 207-747-8240 and review its transparent pricing at www.cascobaycremation.com. <



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Vinyasa Yoga

The free, in-person, Vinyasa Yoga Flow series returns to the Windham Public Library with Amber Carey from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 3. Participants will physically and energetically ground and nourish, lift and lengthen, resource and release, to encourage balance and peace from within. While familiarity with yoga is of benefit, all levels are welcome, as this practice meets participants wherever they are at. Bring a mat and block(s). FMI, or to reserve your class spot, contact Ray at the library's Help Desk at 207-892-1908 ext. 5 or by email at rmarcotte@ windhammaine.us.

Mad Science Program

Raymond Parks and Rec is sponsoring "READY STEM GO," a Mad Science program packed with curiosity, creativity, and discovery from 5 to 6 p.m. every Tuesday from Jan. 6 to March 3. Mad Science is science brought to life and is engaging and interactive. Open to students in grades K to 6. To register, visit raymond.recdesk.com/Community/Program

Calendars available

The Sebago Lake to Casco Bay Calendar for 2026 is available now through the Portland Water District.

The public can pick up a copy from the outdoor receptacle at the Sebago Lake Protection Office, located at 1 White Rock Road in Standish or at the water district's Customer Service Lobby at 225 Douglass St. in Portland. Calendars are available Mon. through Fri. from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., while supplies last. FMI, call 207-523-5265.

Youth Lacrosse

Registration for Windham Youth Lacrosse's 2026 season runs from Jan. 1 to March 1, 2026, and is open to any student in grade K to 8 in Windham, Raymond and the surrounding communities. To learn more about how to register and costs, visit windhamlacrosse.com

Meals on Wheels

The Meals on Wheels program provides up to five meals for homebound participants each week. Volunteers and agency staff deliver meals four days a week. No deliveries are made on Wednesdays. Meals generally arrive between 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. and are delivered either frozen or preheated based upon request. There is a suggested donation of \$3.50 per meal. This service is provided by the Southern Maine Agency on Aging. Call 1-800-400-6325 for more details.

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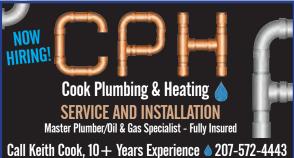
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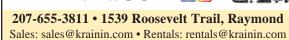
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