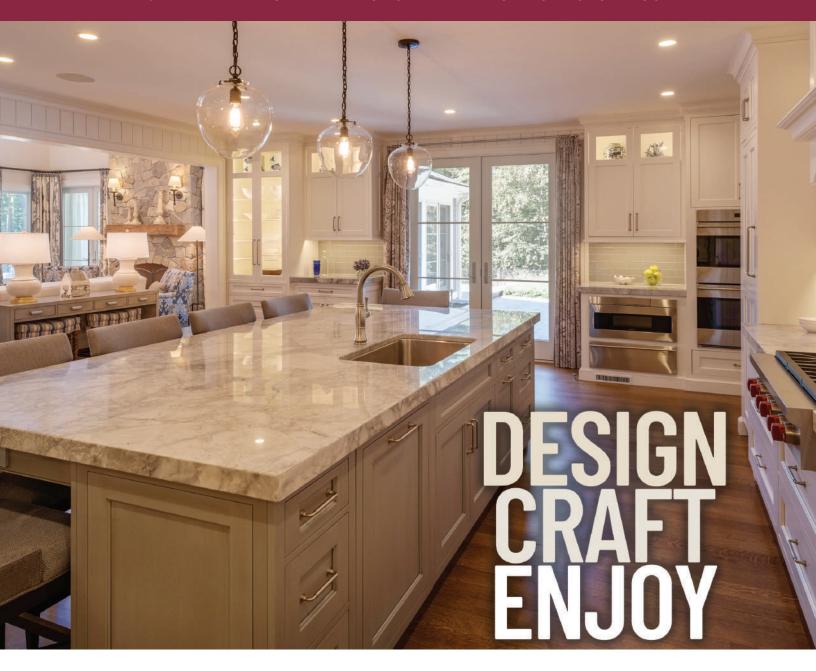




AT HOME IN THE WILD

Concord homeowner makes backyard connections

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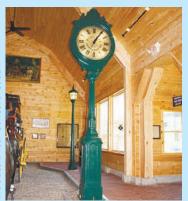


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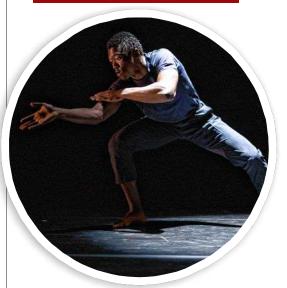
CONCORD ORTHODONTICS

"Enhance Your Smile"



- For your spring reading list: New books from New Hampshire authors
- Q&A: Tom Raffio talks about how local businesses can prep for the next crisis
- A Concord homeowner has a unique connection to backyard wildlife
- Mark your calendars: What events to look for in the months ahead

On the cover: Photo by Geoff Forester



Meet Concord's Clinton Mungeta





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Concord's Showcase

Concord found itself the butt of jokes a few weeks ago when a contestant on the Price is Right won a trip to New Hampshire's capital city.

The joke was that Catherine Graham lives right down the road in Massachusetts. She loves New Hampshire but she's been here a thousand times. She mentioned a trip to Tahiti might have

been nice, or maybe Bora Bora.

In response to the lighthearted snicker from away, the state's chambers of commerce worked to come up with a most excellent vacation for Graham during her five-night stay at the upscale Hotel Concord.

She'll get free tickets to see a movie at Red River Theatres, just a short walk from her stay. She can spend the day at Pat's Peak ski area in Henniker or Cranmore Mountain in North Conway. She can choose a day in the Lakes Region to cruise around on a jet ski. She can head south and go to Canobie Lake Park or go east and spend time at the Straw-

berry Banke Museum or Hampton Beach. All of these options underscore the cool things to do in and around Con-

cord. One of the many reasons people say Concord is such a good place to live is location – it's an hour drive from wherever you want to go - Boston, the White Mountains, the beach.

However, being able to easily leave somewhere is not what makes it a nice place to call home.

The Concord area is special because of the people here. They're open, honest, hardworking folks who almost always mean well and look out for one another. Concord is a city with a small-town feel. You can leave your house unlocked without worry.

You read about many of these people every day in the Concord Monitor newspaper, which is the publisher of this magazine.

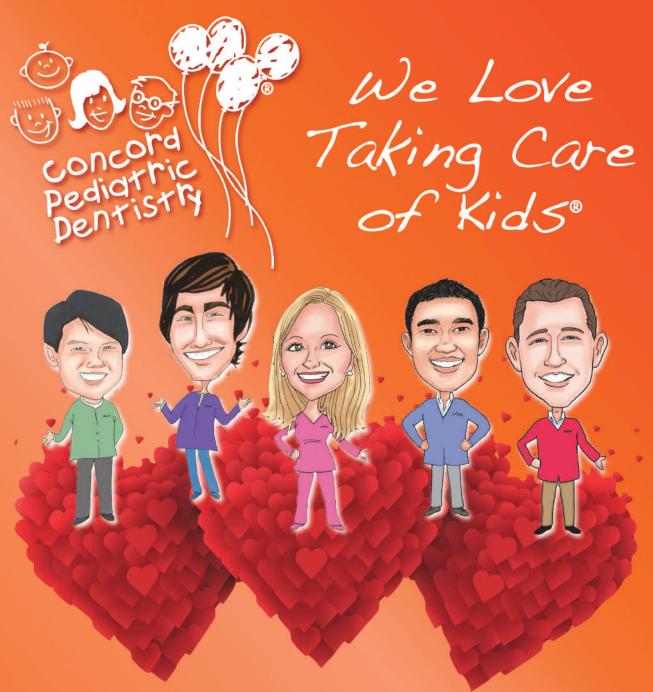
In this edition of Around Concord, you get to meet some more of those people who've had interesting twists in their lives.

> **Jonathan Van Fleet** Editor



Catherine Graham, a Massachusetts resident, won a trip to Concord on "The Price is Right."

Contact us >> editor@aroundconcord.com



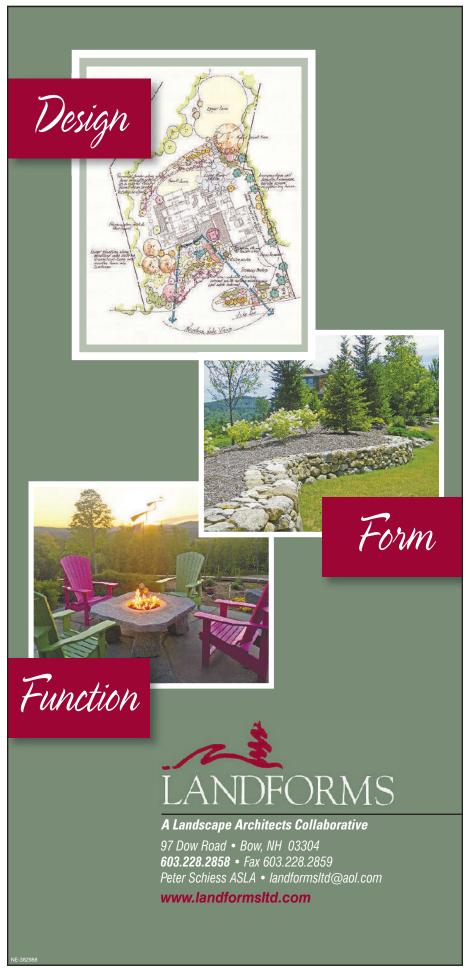
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MONITOR PUBLISHING CO.

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THE TIP LIST

Fast faves

As the executive director of Kimball Jenkins, it's no surprise that Julianne Gadoury of Concord loves the arts. So we asked about her favorite ways to enjoy all kinds of art — both indoors and outdoors — in the springtime, either with her husband, David Shore, and their two middle school-aged kids, or with a group of friends, because Gadoury believes it's important to make time for friendships as an adult.

Kimball Jenkins

Of course, Kimball Jenkins (Can you blame me?) There is a history of craftsmanship past and present all around you. The woodwork is glowing and the pottery wheels hum. Kimball Jenkins is a meeting place. You can feel the energy of hundreds of years of human creativity having fertile ground to be messy and thrive.





Coffee shops – a place to meet, gather

I love Concord's coffee shops – Revelstoke Coffee, Brothers Cortado, White Mountain Gourmet Coffee, Gibson's Cafe, The Works Cafe – they all have their own mood. In my opinion, we could use even more restaurants and coffee shops downtown. I would love to see Katmandu Bazaar, at the Lamplighter Plaza in the Heights, bring their potato samosas downtown.

Inspired by the arts

I'm a sucker for arts and enjoy attending arts events of all kinds. It's not just the final performance or dance or artwork on display. For me, the artwork – whether music or dance or a handcrafted mug in your hand - contains all the humanity that was poured into it. The final product we see is bravery, curiosity, dedication, risk-taking, joy and laughter. Someone (or a lot of people) put a ton of work in to make that final event happen.





Multicultural Festival and Sindy Chown

Among my favorites

Some of my favorites include seeing live music at many local restaurants and bars across our supportive local music scene; attending the Concord Multicultural Festival (get there early for food!) or being brave and jumping into a traditional Colombian and Salsa dance class with Sindy Chown of Barranguilla Flavor. Of course, the blockbuster hits always have something great, like Hatbox Theatre, Red River Theatres, the Community Players and Concord Community Music School, The Cap Center & Bank of NH Stage, and all the business owners who put that extra effort into creative and artistic store windows and displays. I see you, and it's appreciated.



A MATCH MADE IN **WEEKEND HEAVEN**

Backyard cornhole and food trucks come together in May

The Olympics are over, but that doesn't mean we have to put away our athletic ambitions. (Yes, we're talking to you curling fans.) So touch those toes, limber up and sign up for Concord's first cornhole tourney.

For the uninitiated, cornhole is a lot like horseshoes, bocce and, yes, curling. But instead of tossing iron, a heavy round ball or whatever it is that curlers curl, you'll be flinging a bean bag onto a wooden board a few yards away. For those cornhole aficionados used to a different kind of curling - that of the 16 ounce liquid variety - just know that there will be no alcohol at this

event because of park rules.

When you've had enough of all that "exercise," they'll be food trucks waiting to help you to fuel up.

Sign your team up now. The list of food trucks was coming together at press time.

All this comes together on May 15 at White Park for the first Bags & Bites event. It's a tournament, but it's also a fundraiser to help remodel the park's Monkey Around Playground.

The playground was built in 1994 so it could use some updating. And let's face it - we could all use a day in the park.

Sign up at friendsofwhitepark.org/bagsandbites.

Off the shelf

Compiled by SARAH PEARSON

New Hampshire authors have not slowed their pace in releasing new books. In fact, some have utilized extra time spent at home during the last two years of pandemic waves to work more fervently on their writing, some publishing their very first novel. Here are some of the latest titles penned by Granite State residents:



The Treasure of Hampton Beach

By Jed Power

After suffering a massive stroke, renowned crime-fiction author Jed Power overcame his paralysis and wrote the eighth book in the acclaimed



Dan Marlowe/Hampton Beach, crime series. Power admits that writing after a stroke had major obstacles. "Typing with one finger was the least of it," Power said. He continued, "It brought me confidence, just getting it done. In my eyes anyhow, it was an accomplishment."

There's a sickness raging through Hampton Beach, an epidemic more contagious and deadly than any pandemic virus.

Gold fever.

And Dan Marlowe — along with his friends has been bitten by the bug. Joining the hunt for

treasure are a half-mad ex-Prohibition agent, an infamous Irish Boston gang leader, and other assorted thugs. Of course, the always bumbling small-time hustlers — Eddie Hoar and Derwood Doller — have to get in on the action ... along with anyone within driving distance who can beg, borrow, or steal a shovel or metal detector.

When a treasure hunter is found beaten to death, Dan has to — once again — prove his innocence while battling his own dark demons. Only this time the demons might win.

If These Flames Could Talk

By Michael Burnham

Canaan author Michael Burnham took advantage of the COVID-19 lockdown to



research, write and self-publish his debut novel If These Flames Could Talk.

In the year 1999, the small Vermont town of White River Junction was shaken to its core by the violent hitand-run killing of

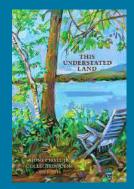
beloved detective and father, David Demick Sr. Years pass by without a break and the case grows cold, leaving behind a blood-soaked mystery, and a son motivated to follow his late father's footsteps into law enforcement.

When Nicole Schaffer arrives more than 20 years later to reunite with the family she left behind, a brutal murder takes place in front of her eyes, forcing the killer to drag her to his barbarous underground workshop: an abandoned cemetery vault.

With David Demick Jr. now patrolling the earth above, and victims lining the walls below, tensions blaze and a connection linking Nicole to the town's dark history surfaces. Beneath the chaos lies the impossible task of helping her captor solve the infamous cop killing, or feed his hunger to cure the afflicted.

Will Nicole find a way out of her subterranean prison, or suffer a dance with the flames at the hands of a faith-driven vigilante?

This Understated Land



By Sidney Hall Jr.

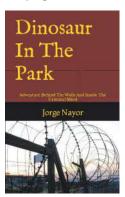
This Understated Land brings together nearly four decades of Sidney Hall Jr.'s work more than 250 poems traverse these 400 pages. The collection contains several unpublished book-length poems, as well as translations, wedding and occasional poems, prose poems, and lyrics, arranged chronologically and providing a poetic record of a lifetime.

"I have mixed my peculiar compost into the tilled soil when it is barely warm, and scattered my poetic lettuce seed into it, throwing the newest rocks with admiration over the fence and under the stone wall," Hall writes in the preface. "I've mixed the dregs of last year's leaves and added eggshells and Emerson to the clay, and watered it with my children and my chickadees while I watched the lettuce sprout."

Hall is the founder of Hobblebush Books, an independent press in New Hampshire, which is dedicated to publishing books that feature a unique voice and make a difference. His poems have appeared in magazines and journals, in venues such as Garrison Keillor's Writer's Almanac and in a number of poetry anthologies. His book reviews also appeared in the Los Angeles Times Book Review. He was the editor of "Nestled Here," a history of the town of Brookline, New Hampshire. He is the author of three books of poems and a book of memoirs.

Dinosaur in the Park

By Jorge William Nayor Jorge William Nayor's journey through childhood was disrupted at an early age. His schooling was below av-



erage, and his military service was tumultuous but honorable. A criminal path was inevitable but short-lived. If continued, it was a path that would have his life being just as short. Only the

removal of his criminal environment and the love of a woman saved him from certain doom.

Nayor's memoir, Dinosaur in the Park: Adventure Behind The Walls and Inside The Criminal Mind, told in the third person, is an account of his nu-

merous stays in California penitentiaries, including the infamous San Quentin.

In 1950, at the age of three, Billy's father was deported back to Cuba, which left him to grow up with only one parent on the tough streets of New York City. He was forced to grow up quickly after being molested and after an attempted abduction. To compound those frightening encounters, it was at the innocent age of 14, that he was violated by the opposite sex for his first sexual encounter.



Monitor file

Scarred and confused, it's no wonder that Billy hung around with the wrong crowd. In his late 20s, he absconded from the horrors of a drug rehab, and eventually wound up behind the walls at San Quentin.

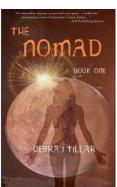
Billy pursues unconventional methods to mentally escape. He works within a hostile environment to accomplish thrill-seeking, daredevil hi-jinks behind high prison walls.

Nayor now lives in Manchester.

The Nomad

By Debra J. Tillar

Seacoast author Debra J. Tillar has recently published a two-volume science fiction novel, The Nomad. The story is about a young female scien-



tist who becomes involved in her eccentric family's quest to invent a time machine. An unavoidable tragedy leads her to a life-altering decision, and she now lives in a world

of starships, exoplanets, and hybrid aliens. Recovering from a vicious attack on an alien world, Zara discovers her crew has abandoned her. She is held captive on a disreputable space station and must seek a way to survive and escape.

Tillar is a retired teacher, as well as a former archeologist and travel writer. This is her debut novel. The idea for the story came to her when she reread the H.G. Wells' 1895 classic, The Time Machine. Toward the end of the book, the Time Traveler names a character only once: "I seemed to see Hillyer for a moment; but he passed like a flash." Tillar wondered who the character was supposed to be, and the idea came to her that he was the Time Traveler's assistant. That idea turned into this duet of books.

ARE YOU AN AVID READER?

Make sure to pick up the Sunday Monitor to read reviews of the latest books and to catch up on the latest top 10 bestsellers in both fiction and nonfiction.

Also, make sure you visit your local bookstore! They're a vital part of our communities.

Proof of Me and Other Stories

By Erica Plouffe Lazure

All things are delicately interconnected in these powerful and moving



stories, many laced with richly textured dark humor, set in a small town in eastern North Carolina. From the rambunctious antics of an erstwhile shad queen to the guilt-throttled grief of a secret affair gone wrong, *Proof of Me* stitches together the lives and adventures of each of its characters, in unexpected and peculiar ways, from one story to the next.

This beautiful and masterful collection calls to mind Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty, Barry Hannah and others whose stories so vividly evoke the

dimensionality of the American South, but the compelling and confident prose is all her own.

These shimmering and satisfying stories are the perfect companion to usher in spring.

Lazure lives in Exeter and has taught English at Phillips Exeter Academy. Proof of Me will be released March 24 with New American Press and is the winner of the New American Fiction Prize. (Book descriptions submitted by authors or publishers.)

SOONER OR LATER...













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THE SIT-DOWN



Courtesy

Tom Raffio, president and CEO of Northeast Delta Dental, takes inventory of PPE for dentists during the height of the lockdown.

Tom Raffio shares his thoughts on being crisis-ready and how all businesses can prepare for the next big challenge

Like most of us, Tom Raffio was a little slow to recognize COVID-19 for what it ultimately became – a pandemic that would challenge our businesses and our institutions like never before. In fact, Raffio, an avid basketball fan, was at a packed TD Garden watching the Boston Celtics just days before we'd all retreat to the sidelines.

Though Raffio didn't necessarily recognize the signs of this specific pandemic in March 2020 - really, who did? - he did have one major advantage. Raffio and the leadership team at Northeast Delta Dental, headquartered in Concord, had spent significant time and thought on building out crisis plans for a host of potentially disastrous events, including a pandemic. So, once the lockdown hit, Raffio, like a veteran basketball coach, already had the next few plays drawn up.

Now, Raffio has written the book on how businesses can prepare for the next major challenge, whatever that may be. While he references the principles of the Baldrige Excellence Framework, a

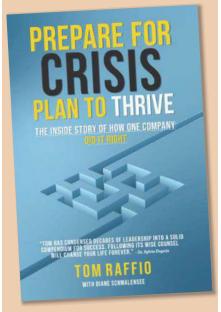
system that has helped guide his career, readers of the book, "Prepare for Crisis, Plan to Thrive," can easily get a game plan for how preparation can put them a step ahead and build a more robust business, even if that crisis never hits.

Around Concord publisher Steve Leone sat down with Raffio in February to discuss the book, what readers can learn and what a post-pandemic business climate will look like. The interview was edited for clarity and length.

Around Concord: I first want to get to your concept of even writing this book. And I assume it's probably because we all have a hard time even conceptualizing a crisis. Why do we all have such a hard time preparing for a crisis?

Tom Raffio: Well, until recently, probably because it seems so theoretical. And even with us, we had literally prepared for a pandemic and crisis. The train line that goes by behind the building here carries dangerous cargo. So it's probably a little less theoretical for us. I'm not here to say that I predicted COVID, but we actually had planned for the pandemic including buying surgical masks, which of course we then gave away to Dartmouth Hitchcock. So I think it's because it's so theoretical that people have a hard time planning for something that they think is so, so unlikely. I think that's going to change now because people know that a biological crisis is real. I think the value of the book is for the next crisis. I actually believe it's going to be a major cyber crisis. And so I think now people are seeing that crises are real.

When we were doing our disaster recovery exercises, we have a backup site in Manchester and we'd go through the whole thing on a weekend and even for us, sometimes it was like, you know, do we really have to go through the full nine yards in terms of preparation? But we did and because we did, including building up our financial reserves, we were in a way



PICK UP A COPY

Tom Raffio's "Prepare for Crisis, Plan to Thrive: The Inside Story of How One Company Did It Right" can be purchased at Gibson's Bookstore in Concord, Bookery Manchester and Amazon. Proceeds go to Northeast Delta Dental Foundation for oral health initiatives for under-served populations.

better spot to pivot and succeed and give back money to the community and succeed ourselves.

AC: In your book, you present what you did right, but you also note that you didn't see everything coming. How could you? A lot of it is really thinking on your feet. One thing that struck me as an interesting anecdote was that before the pandemic you identified that you needed a new computer system able to handle remote work. So you put in your order. Then the pandemic hit and the phone hadn't arrived yet.

TR: It was frustrating because we knew we needed an automatic call distribution system that customer service reps could do from home. Anybody can take a call from home but the challenge is, if you have 25 people, it has to go to the next available agent. They have to be set up. Our customers want statistics on how fast you're answering the phone. So we knew we needed that because we have a great call center here. But obviously, if people were working from home, we'd be in trouble. So we planned for it. It's just that instead of arriving in March when the pandemic hit, it arrived during the summer. So what we did was we had the 25 people in customer service spaced out because by then because everybody else was working from home. So we knew that but it still comes down to timing and we were a few months late. But once it got installed, our numbers are incredible, they're better than ever. I don't know how you've experienced either calling your utility or bank or credit card company. Now, we went the other way, which was faster and more expeditious. And that's because of the phone system.

AC: I think if somebody back in 2018 said, 'you know, we really need to prepare for a pandemic,' I would hope I would have listened. You mentioned cybersecurity as something that we need to be watching out for. What should people be doing around cybersecurity, and why cybersecurity?

TR: Well, we know, of course, biological crises are real. And so I think now people are hopefully prepared for that. Hopefully, they've outfitted their companies with surgical masks, they have a pandemic committee - we have a pandemic committee that meets regularly, daily for a long time, monitoring the statistics and so forth. So I think we've gotten that to the point where if there's another biological crisis or omicron, I think we're well situated.

I think that I'm just seeing already the millions of dollars that we spend to fight current scams and making sure that there are no HIPAA violations. I think that is still the biggest exposure point because I think it's staying one step ahead of the bad guys in terms of cybercrime. We spent millions of dollars as do a lot of companies just trying to do that. I just kind of feel whether it's by another country, or whether it's just creative Americans with time on their hands, I do think that's going to be the next super crisis.

It's going down to the smaller employer level as well. I do think most companies are making the necessary investment in cybersecurity software, but a lot of it honestly comes down to employee education too. I know sometimes myself, when I get an email, I'm thinking, 'okay, this is just a test?'

AC: You're a pretty big company around these parts. So you have a lot of resources that your one-person or five-person company doesn't have. That means you're able to invest a lot of time into preparation for a crisis. What advice would you have for a really small business?

TR: We use the Baldrige Performance Excellence standard. And I get this question a lot because I'm doing a lot of stuff for what's called Excellence North Alliance, which is the state's version of the Baldrige. And I always say that whether you're a company of five or you're 250, like us, the basic principles of strategic planning, the human side of the enterprise servant leadership, still apply. The best example, I think, of a small organization using Baldrige is Dancing Lion Chocolate on Elm Street in Manchester — the proprietor Richard and two or three other people. That's their whole company, but they use the Baldrige framework, including disaster recovery planning. And they're thriving. So any company large or small can follow this book and you won't be in a position of saying, 'Well, I can't do what Delta Dental did.' You can, actually.

AC: Communication is obviously very big in what you do. And you know, there's a lot of vulnerability there. You're communicating about things you're uncertain about. How



For 10 years we built our reserves, well over statutory requirements, because it would allow us to make this pivot, which we wouldn't have been able to do.

do you balance the honesty that people are looking for with the confidence that you're trying to project in difficult situations?

TR: Well over 400 daily emails have gone to our employees, well over 100 to our dentists. Many, many others to other stakeholders. And what I learned is people want you to be human, which is why I started to include pictures of my granddaughter, and then people loved that. So it's a balance. People want to know that our future is bright, but they also want the realistic view. So we actually had to lay people off because between March 16 and May 11 of 2020, you could not go to the dentist.

What everybody wanted to know is 'will the future be okay?' Once we worked with the governor's office to get the dentists back up and running, I could tell the furloughed employees that 'hey, as soon as the claims start coming back in, you'll be coming back in and getting re-employed.' So servant leadership is you want to be realistic and define reality. You want to be human, but you have to, obviously if it's warranted, give a dose of optimism.

AC: The pandemic forced people to find a different way. When you're preparing for these crisis moments and going through the discovery, are there things you found you can apply without actually having to go through the crisis?

TR: Definitely. We were going to buy that new phone system regardless of whether COVID-19 ever hit. When you go through disaster recovery, you uncover things that you just automatically do for continuous improvement. Remember Y2K? Everybody thought the world was gonna end so all these

systems enhancements occurred in 1999, which ultimately, weren't needed for Y2K, but made the systems better for like the first five years of the new century. So I think that's what basically happens when you really do prepare for a crisis. And the other thing is we built up our reserves. So without affecting our vitality, we could give back almost \$20 million to our customers so they didn't have to worry about paying their premiums.

A lot of companies were in trouble. And the last thing we wanted them to do was to drop dental coverage. Here's how I thought of it: we got our employees safe. Then we gave the dentists \$7 million so they can keep running. When they weren't seeing patients we gave them free PPE. Okay, so now they're up and running, but if nobody goes to the dentist because employers have dropped dental insurance, what's the point of that? Then we gave the premium holidays for a total of \$19 million. So people then flocked back to the dentist. But we wouldn't have been able to do it had we not built up the reserves. For 10 years we built our reserves, well over statutory requirements, because it would allow us to make this pivot, which we wouldn't have been able to do.

AC: Your book mentions working from home and that's probably among the most useful things for businesses to consider, how do we approach this? What advice would you give to business owners on this seemingly simple yet incredibly complex question of how much work from home do you

TR: Well, there's no one size fits all. Obviously, if you're running a

restaurant, most if not all the employees need to be on site. If you're in an industry like ours, the hybrid options work. So my advice is, get your employees engaged in the process.

What I worry about is not current and even next year, but it's more like four years from now because the reason why we're a juggernaut in terms of service is we all know each other, we've all grown up together. But during the last 18 months, we've hired five or six people who I've just literally met in the parking lot. So 10 years from now, when maybe 40% of your company are people that you hired virtually, are you going to have that same level of trust? So I think you constantly have to revisit it to make sure that you're keeping the culture. I think you want to constantly be doing a climate survey of your employees just to see what they're thinking, what their mental health is.

Another thing I worry about is people who are established in their career, like age 40, 50, 60, for them working remotely might be actually really cool. You put in a load of laundry and cut back on the commute, do some work, walk your dog. But if you're like 30, you used to just stick your head in my office for visibility and things like that. All that has now gone away. So if you have to look at this, what are you going to do to make sure to keep your culture? You may need to start bringing people back in, just so they can connect with you as leadership.

AC: It almost sounds like a crisis in itself. If you really value culture and culture is essentially the defining principle of your company, well, there's no quicker way to start eroding your culture than not being in the same room.

TR: There's a famous business person that said culture trumps everything. And clearly, culture has changed during the pandemic. If you're not seeing people, ultimately that's going to come back to bite certain organizations.

Servant leadership is all about giving back to the community. And people want to do business with companies small or large that they know give back to the community.

AC: What should businesses be doing to think beyond their own immediate financial goals, thinking about their community?

TR: Servant leadership is all about giving back to the community. And people want to do business with companies small or large that they know give back to the community. So even if you're a small employer, you still need to give back to the community because your customers are looking at that too. Whether you're a company of five people in dry cleaning or whatever, and you're sponsoring the local Little League team. That is really, really important. And that's been a huge success of the health of Delta Dental. But any small employer can do that. I think you pick one or two things you want to get behind and get out there in the community. That strategy, particularly in New Hampshire, works. I can't tell you the number of times customers tell us where vou weren't the lowest price but my kid played on the soccer field. All that stuff comes back to you in the long run. You have to take a little bit of a long view of things.

AC: You think that sense of community is starting to erode a little bit? More than ever people are doing business elsewhere through their computers.

TR: It's a concern. I mean, as decisions are made outside of Concord and Manchester, those decisions are made and someone with a spreadsheet is looking at things. It definitely changes things and this was pre-pandemic. There are lots of examples I could cite where a formerly entrenched local company is bought out by an out-of-state company. And they say, 'well, we'll keep things as is' but within a year or two, it's totally changed and you can't get them to sponsor anything. You can't get their employees to help out and volunteer. A good example is Books a Million. It was extremely easy for me to get this book into Gibson's and the Bookery (in Manchester). We tried to get this into Books a Million and it was impossible because you're dealing with some person behind a computer somewhere else. So that's definitely going to hurt New Hampshire because we're not the home of many Fortune 500 companies.

But I'm very optimistic, too, when I think about a simple thing like road racing. We were road racing all through 2020, whereas other states stopped come March. But Millennium Running and others convinced the governor's task force that we could do safe road racing, which was basically like lining up on a Southwest Airlines flight. It wasn't that sophisticated, but it worked perfectly.

AC: Well, great. Is there anything you think I've left out or anything you'd like to add?

TR: It's just that when planning for a crisis, everybody can do it, large or small. The Baldrige Performance Excellence is a long-term strategy. And even though we're right still in the middle of a pandemic, you have to kind of start planning for the next one. But if you can get ahead of it, then you can be successful and it all comes down to the people we had, board members, volunteers. You saw board members volunteering, distributing PPE to people's homes because the dentists were stuck home, they couldn't go in their office. So if you just stick together and do a plethora of communication, you can come through. ◆



Concord Monitor file

Above: Clinton Mungeta climbs out of the soccer net after attempting to save a goal during a pickup soccer game during the Love Your Neighbor summer celebration at Keach Park in 2013. Mungeta still has lots of family in Concord.

EYES AHEAD

Clinton Mungeta

arrived in
Concord from
the Democratic
Republic of the
Congo with
little idea of the
world that
awaited him.

"There is a period near the beginning of every man's life when he has little to cling to except his unmanageable dream, little to support him except good health, and nowhere to go but all over the place." — E. B. White

By PAUL MILLER

Clinton Mungeta's story, evolving as it might be, is a fascinating tapestry — colorful threads that reflect a life of journey, challenge, individuality, and unequivocal accomplishment.

His is a story of perseverance. The youngest of seven children in a family that immigrated to Concord from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) as refugees, Mungeta graduated in December with dual degrees from Keene State College, nearly 7,000 miles from his homeland, a mostly landlocked country in central Africa beset by decades of war and violence. In May, Mungeta, 22, will walk across a bright, adorned stage, and receive his diploma. The juxtaposition is impossible to ignore.

His is a story of hope and resolve. He arrived in the U.S. as a young teen,



relocated in an alien environment. Feeling many times that his back was to the wall with no way out, Mungeta — eyes ahead — summoned the courage to press on. He discovered inspiration and staying power in the pursuit of a liberal-arts college education; a desire to make his mother, Sabine, proud; and a quest — his quest — for a better future.

His is a story of example and unbowed spirit, ultimately. Growing up in Uvira, a main city of South Kivu along the eastern flank of the DRC where school was fee-based and inaccessible to many, Mungeta collected small scraps, often rocks

desirable for building walkways and patios to sell to people of more means to help to support his large family.

That hard-scrabble road that shaped his early life may feel growingly distant, but it remains, he said, a big part of the person he is, and serves as real-life context for his journey so far and destinations still imagined.

The classroom and college soccer standout,



not to mention dance prodigy with an infectious personality and draw-you-in movie-screen smile, is also a father. He and his girlfriend, Jessica Houle, also a Keene State student, are parents to a precocious 2-year-old son, Cedric.

"I remember paying money to access a computer and Googling New Hampshire," Mungeta recalled when he learned that he, his mother, and his siblings were headed to live in Concord in

Mungeta started 10 games his senior season. Next, he's planning to get his Master's.

Soren Frantz / **KSCEquinox**





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2012. He was 13 then. "I remember a lot of photos of trees; I had a lot of doubts.

"But it worked out. My mom was big on education, and she means everything to me," he added. "That's why I worked hard in school every day. I know she didn't bring us here for just any reason. It was always about us; she wanted us to succeed in life. I look at it today and think, this is for me and my mom; I graduated from college."

In December, Mungeta fulfilled degree requirements in elementary education and French. Beginning in the fall, he plans to continue his pursuit of a master's degree in

Safety and Occupational Health Applied Sciences, a well-known and highly regarded major at Keene State, to expand his career options.

He found a home and a community at Keene State, one of 29 public liberal arts colleges and universities in the U.S., set at the foot of the city's downtown, which is rimmed with locally owned shops, restaurants and cafes, and a centerpiece



performing arts theater.

Mungeta is the first person in his family to receive a bachelor's degree, in this case from a college that typically welcomes anywhere from 40 to 50 percent first-generation students as part of its first-year class, Peggy Richmond, director of admissions, said.

A brother, Freddy, is taking classes at a com-

Mungeta at **Evening of Dance** in 2021, where he performs "Before they Sleep."

Soren Frantz / Keene State College







From left, eighth-grader Trezo Ndutiye and Concord High School freshmen Clinton Mungeta and David Tumaini rehearse backstage for their performance during International Night sponsored by the Be the Change Club at Concord High School in May 2014.

munity college in Iowa. Mungeta's three sisters — Noella, Denise, Mireille — all work at Concord Hospital. Two have families. A brother, Sebastien, the second youngest, lives with his mother in Concord. The oldest sibling, Joel, chose not to leave the DRC, Mungeta said. The family's patriarch, Christien, died earlier.

Community, shared experiences

Other refugee and international student-athletes, including a handful from Mungeta's homeland, were there to greet Mungeta when he arrived at Keene State. Jacob Chiza was one. Chiza relocated from the DRC to Manchester and played high school soccer at Central before enrolling at Keene State.

"I met (Mungeta) through soccer, and we had different groups of friends, but those groups were together," Chiza, who works as a safety manager in construction, said. "When I think of Bongo, I think of a hard worker. When he puts his mind to something, he goes after it; he never gives up. He's the type of person who is going to keep trying until he gets it right. It was that way with dance."

Manchester is a designated area of national refugee resettlement. Lewiston, Maine; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; and Tallahassee, Florida, are among others. Nearly 200 evacuees from Afghanistan, where U.S. troops mired for two decades in civil war completed a full withdrawal in August of 2021, are finding new hope and residence along southern portions of New Hampshire, the Concord Monitor reported. Of Lewiston's 36,000 residents, several thousand are now African refugees and asylum-seekers.

Those who flee, on their own or with assistance from non-governmental agencies, are often cornered in some of the world's most dangerous places, including Mungeta's native Congo.

Mungeta said the Institute of Operations Management was instrumental in helping his family in its transition from the DRC to Concord.

He does not take the good that he and his family have found for granted. It drives his desire to learn and to share, he said.

Embracing rhythm of learning

His college soccer coach, Rick Scott, describes Mungeta, the young man most know better as "Bongo," as a person defined by his realness. "So sincere," Scott said of the student-athlete he recruited from Concord High School. "I see that quality in him all the time.

"He's comfortable in every situation; he's not afraid to challenge himself. And he knows how to survive ... he knows what it takes to survive."

Cynthia McLaughlin — an associate professor and the coordinator of dance at Keene State — said charisma begins to define Mungeta, but it doesn't cover it. "Brilliance," she said, "is a better word, in the way that he lights up space and a topic of inquiry."

Added McLaughlin: "He was someone who always wanted to know more. Not just about a shape your body was in, or a tempo or a rhythm. There are so many ways to question material. I always looked forward to his interpretation and his questions."

John Sturtz, associate professor, had Mungeta for three education classes. He said Mungeta's ability and want to assimilate stood out immediately, and his humility and openheartedness drew other students in class naturally to him and to his story.

"The fact that he was able to bring warmth of character, humor, his intelligence for everything and his sheer determination, that made seeing him come to class every day great," Sturtz explained. "Having his perspective in class I think helped all the students out and helped me out in terms of perspective and relevancy of the subject matter. It was not a theoretical academic assessment of information ... it was real. That just doesn't happen that often."

Houle, a holocaust and genocide studies major, and Mungeta met in an elementary education class. Houle was a freshman, Mungeta a sophomore volunteering as a peer mentor. They had mutual Keene State friends, too. Houle said.

"He's comfortable in every situation; he's not afraid to challenge himself. And he knows how to survive ... he knows what it takes to survive."

> RICK SCOTT. college soccer coach

Houle is quick to describe Mungeta as "impactful." She explained: "Bongo loves to share what he knows, his culture, and everyone learns something from him."

He's an open book, she added, noting that Mungeta would prefer that others ask questions of him than assume knowledge of the Congolese culture or other aspects of his heritage. The "neat" part of that culture, Houle said, "is that when one person

succeeds, everybody succeeds; it carries over. It's an awesome, family-oriented way of life."

Not without challenge

Mungeta speaks four languages: Swahili, English, French and Lingala. French is the official language in Congo, and while taught, English is spoken there infrequently, so it was the fundamental barrier for Mungeta as a refugee arriving on U.S. soil and integrating into a new, formal school system, he said.

"In the beginning, I hated every minute of it," he said. "I got here in the 8th grade; I felt completely lost and wanted to go home." Turning the corner, he said, meant hanging out with people who spoke English, being willing to listen and to learn, and getting out of his comfort zone. "My choice eventually," he said, "was to immerse myself and learned as much as I could."

Fortunately, he adds, "learning is a



marathon and not a sprint," so time was on his side.

And about that nickname? Its origin, Mungeta said, is underwhelming, really. "In 8th grade," he said, "the other kids said Clinton was too plain; we gotta figure something out, they said. Bongo rhymed with Congo ... there you go."

Mungeta would not be where he is today, he admitted, without soccer and his adopted friendships with coaches who were genuinely interested in his

personal growth, and other players in the program.

"He's a great teammate, a great friend and a great student," Scott said. "To see how he has balanced everything since Cedric came into his life, and stayed committed and driven, it has been incredible to watch."

Scott called Mungeta a natural with children.

"When we hold youth clinics, and there are a hundred or more kids, it's only a day or two into camp that Clinton is the Pied Piper. They flock to him, and you can't get them away."

On so many levels, most agree, Mungeta's journey is inspirational, if not a reminder of all things that are possible.

He has much to be thankful for, he feels, and he wants to give back.

"I come from a life in another place," he said. "I want to

"If I can make it possible for other children to have opportunities that I didn't when I was that age, I want to do that too (as a teacher)."

CLINTON MUNGETA

take Cedric there, so he can know where I came from. If I can make it possible for other children to have opportunities that I didn't when I was that age, I want to do that too (as a teacher)."

It's no coincidence that his son today attends the same daycare that Mungeta served at as a volunteer when he was a Keene State freshman. Rather, it reflects who he is and where he is bound, Scott

Mungeta's heritage, and the perceptions it might trigger, force you as a teacher to question your own assumptions, McLaughlin and Sturtz agreed.

"He'll always be a special, memorable student," Sturtz said of Mungeta, "not so much for what I taught him, but what he's taught me, and shown me, which is that I need to keep my eyes open and be aware of all individuals in our community."

"His determination, his resiliency, his humanity ... just recognizing he had experienced difficulties, that's a testament to his strength of character," Sturtz added. "His story unfortunately is not unique. The question should be: How can we learn from someone like Bongo? How many talented individuals are out there, possibly from backgrounds like his, that can contribute as much as he has?"



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Front-row dancer

"He took a technique class with me," McLaughlin said. "He was that student that always got in front, no matter what. Even when he didn't know (the technique), no matter how unsure he was. 'I'm going to go for it; I'm not going to hold back. If I stumble, I'll smile and laugh and move on.' That was his attitude."

"That sense of identity ... not being afraid to bring his own story in ... it's a real mixture of him being just any other student who grapples with the same sort of things all students grapple with yet having this personal history that's very different than the others he's around."

Patricia Wilson, an adjunct professor at the college, recalled immediately being in awe of Mungeta's dance talents and his "ebullient spirit that could fill a room."

That, and his laser-like focus, she said, prompted her to involve Mungeta in an annual Dunham Technique Intensive with other dancers of color. They fashioned a plan for Mungeta to travel to Indiana in the summer of 2019, along with another local dancer, Diane Duffy, for that experience.

Dunham, she said, is an African diasporic technique.

"Quickly," Wilson said, "Bongo made friends, became part of the family, and danced his way into everyone's heart."

Dance was a big part of the Congolese culture, Mungeta said. "But it was free form ... no instruction," he said. "You were just feeling the beat and moving to the beat and the rhythm."

Mungeta was not the standout player on the soccer team. He started 10 games his senior season. He was a called-on performer that Scott could use up top as a striker or outside on the wing. His name more than once graced the Little East Conference Academic Honor Roll.

"He gave you everything he had," the veteran coach said. "Probably the



Will Wrobel / Keene State College

Clinton Mungeta and girlfriend Jessica Houle outside the Redfern Arts Center on the campus of Keene State. Mungeta completed his undergraduate degree work in December; Houle, of Littleton, will graduate in May with a bachelor's degree in Holocaust and Genocide Studies from the college's Cohen Center. They are parents to a 2-year-old boy, Cedric.

hardest working player on the team who always led by example at practice."

That push to improve and excel, that poetic soul that McLaughlin said his stage dance revealed, that approachable and friendly nature that stood out, are a few of the qualities threads in that work-in-progress tapestry — that define Mungeta and

account for the wings he's earned.

"Yes," Scott said, "he's an incredibly nice person, respectful of everybody. Talented."

"And he carries himself very professionally. His mother, I think, is a big motivational piece of Bongo's amazing success. He really wanted to please her and make her proud of him. And he did." ◆





With a 'vegan-food-for-everyone,' approach, Col's Kitchen owner Jordan Reynolds continues a plant-based legacy on Concord's Main Street



By CASSIDY JENSEN

t Col's Kitchen, the latest vegan restaurant in a downtown Concord tradition, owner Jordan Reynolds has set out to make a casual plant-based restaurant that appeals to hungry vegans and omnivores alike.

"I like vegan junk food as well as creative upscale foods," Reynolds said. "I thought it was really important that Concord would have a place that offered the entire spectrum of options for vegan food." That spectrum includes everything from fancier entrees like pad thai and vegetable ravioli to comfort foods like burgers, milkshakes, seitan nuggets and cauliflower wings.

Col's concept is American food, or "food Americans have hijacked" as Reynolds says, but made with locally sourced ingredients and without any animal products. The menu balances providing healthy choices for those with allergies or food restrictions while making classic, approachable dishes for the average eater.

Building on a legacy

Col's Kitchen became the latest in a string of vegan restaurants at 55 South Main Street when it replaced Wil-

low's Plant-Based Eatery, which closed in 2020.

Willow's was run by Willow Mauck, whose mother Norma Koski founded vegan cafe Susty's in Northwood. Susty's was one of the first vegan restaurants in New Hampshire. It closed in 2021.

Susty's was also where Reynolds, now 35, ate



one of his first vegan meals in 2004, after a punk girl he was dating convinced him to try out veganism. Back then, many people didn't know even how to pronounce the label correctly, he said.

"The day after I went vegan, I had a friend take me to Susty's and it probably reinforced the The pad thai at Col's Kitchen in **Concord includes** seared tofu, rice noodles, carrots, cabbage, spinach, basil and peanuts.





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"It's regular food. It's really recognizable, it's not, like, 'argula with the blushing whisper of quinoa.' I don't love that type of food at all. I just like to be vegan."

Elyssa Alfieri, owner of Lilise Designer Resale on Main Street and regular Col's customer

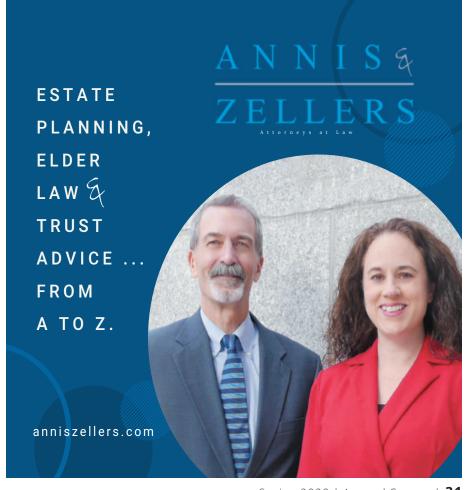
idea that vegan food is out there, and maybe I wouldn't be here today if it didn't," he said. He saw that influential ex-girlfriend a few years ago, eating an egg sandwich at a bagel shop.

Before asking Mauck to open her Concord restaurant, building owner Charles Lachtis ran a vegan community kitchen in the spot that later became Rasa's Vegan Kitchen and then Spoon Revolution Vegan Bistro.

Col's, which is named for Reynolds' pit bull, is in some ways a break from the site's crunchy history, serving milkshakes with pieces of pie inside instead of hippie mainstays like fruit smoothies.

While Willow's was painted bright purple and emphasized health foods, Reynolds went for a strong brand and a punchy logo that spells out the restaurant name in a baseball script. "When somebody first described us as a masculine brand, I was offended," he said. "But I guess we are a little less purple and a little sharper."

Reynolds took a meandering path



to his long-held dream of opening a restaurant. He studied music at Keene State University, cooking and managing kitchens while he was in college. When he got back to the Concord area, he worked at the Concord Country Club, the Common Man and Dos Amigos. After a stint at Murphy's Taproom in Manchester, he left the restaurant industry for five years to work in auto sales.

A tricky start

In 2020, Reynolds was preparing to quit his job to run a food truck selling grain bowls with colorful sauces and fancy fresh sodas. When

COVID-19 hit, the truck gigs he had booked for the summer evaporated. When he learned that Willow's would be closing, it was the perfect opportunity.

Col's opened in August 2020, at a time when other restaurants were still recovering from the first few months of COVID.



"I had anticipated that we wouldn't be busy," Reynolds said. "I thought we would be playing solitaire for six months, and I thought that we would just ride it out. Nobody knew that two years later we would still be wearing masks."

On Aug. 12, the restaurant opened with two full-time workers and one part-time worker. On Yes, you can get plenty of servings of veggies at Col's, but you can also feast on things like pie and shakes.



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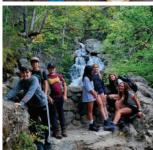
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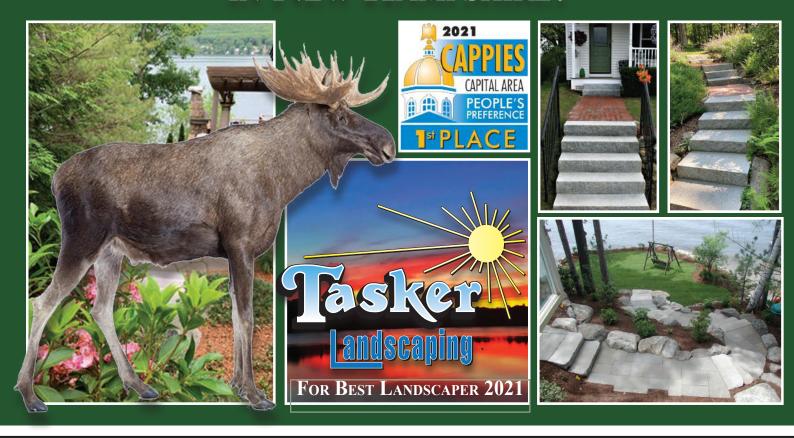


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There are many reasons people choose to eat vegan. For some, it's for health reasons. Others cite animal welfare and environmental concerns. Allergies can lead many others into a different eating style.

its first day, the line went out the door and the kitchen ran out of food three times.

The pandemic's effect on business has been unpredictable, but customers have generally ebbed and flowed with waves of the virus. "We would get bad news about the pandemic and business would be cut in half, less than half, for a couple of weeks and then people get sick of it and you're super busy," Reynolds said.

Reynolds didn't encounter any issues hiring or retaining staff, but planning around the inconsistencies caused by news about COVID proved a challenge. Last winter's surge forced Col's to adapt, which it did by expanding delivery and takeout op-

Col's has kept up with alternatives to sit-down service since. The restaurant also sells subscription boxes for take-and-bake meals and has recently partnered with bakery Love and Joy to sell desserts. Soon, Reynolds plans to begin bottling and selling Col's sauces.

Hungry vegans

Col's has a solid customer base among people who work downtown, some eating there at least once or twice a week. During the tourist season, drivers taking I-93 or I-89 to go leaf-peeping or hiking in the White Mountains also stop in for a bite.

Elyssa Alfieri, owner of Lilise Designer Resale on Main Street, described herself as a member of the Col's fan club when she picked up takeout on a Wednesday afternoon.

"It's one of the only spots where I can just come in and order myself something off the menu," Alfieri said. Col's is a goto spot for lunch for her and her staff, and the menu's variety makes it easy to account for various allergies.

"It's regular food. It's really recognizable, it's not, like, 'argula with the blushing whisper of quinoa," she said. "I don't love that type of food at all. I just like to be vegan."

Vegans forgo meat and other animal products for a variety of reasons, including environmental concerns, animal welfare,

health and food allergies. Foods that cater to vegans have become more mainstream, with plantbased milks making up 15% of milk sales in 2021.

According to a 2016 Pew study, 3% of Americans are strict vegans or vegetarians, while another 6% are mostly vegan or vegetarian. Reynolds sees Col's Kitchen as serving the Con-



cord community first, but also as a participant in a broader movement for eating fewer animals.

"I think that we do really well, and I think it's going to be a service to the larger plant-based and vegetarian community, to share our concept," Reynolds said. "And it's a good time to do it." ◆

In addition to sit-down service, Col's has added subscription boxes for takeand-bake meals.





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Lpcphotograp Michelle Lovely feeds a hummingbird.

All around the Concord home of Michelle Lovely, you'll run into an assortment of animals that instantly tells you about her love of nature and her ability to connect.

CREATURE

COMFORTS







By TEDDY ROSENBLUTH

The first thing you notice when entering Michelle Lovely's home is a bubbling, 75-gallon saltwater tank filled with fish. Then, you'll see four cats scamper by. Eventually, you'll be introduced to seven other animals.

The current occupants of Michelle Lovely's house are as follows: one dog, four cats, one bearded dragon, several fish, four frogs, one gecko, a chameleon, and one 17-year-old boy. Her office, also known as the "reptile room," houses the gecko, frogs named after characters in "Vampire Diaries," and a bearded dragon who accompanies Lovely to the store in a baby sling. The kitchen has multiple tanks for fish. The rest of the animals roam free.

Despite her impressive collection of domesticated animals, Lovely is perhaps most well known for her relationship with animals outside the confines of her quaint home in Concord. During the spring and summer, Lovely posts videos of her handfeeding hummingbirds on her back porch.

Her posts are reminiscent of a Disney movie. The four-inch birds fly right up to Lovely, sit on her finger, and sip sugar water. A Facebook group in which she posts videos of her encounters with wildlife has amassed more than 700 followers of regular watchers. At Petsmart, where Lovely has worked since the pandemic made her home childcare business untenable, she is recognized so often by customers that

Michelle Lovely holds her Bearded Dragon, which she takes everywhere.

Geoff Forester



Michelle Lovely shows her hummingbird tattoo below her left shoulder.

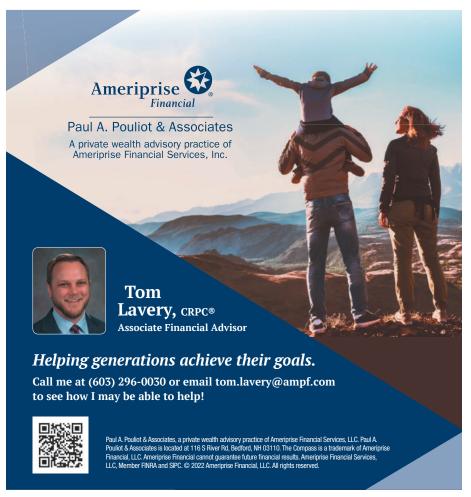
her supervisors call her their "local celebrity."

"There will be customers that will come in and say 'that's the hummingbird lady," she said. "I say 'what gave it away, the big hair?"

Her fascination with backyard animals started in 2011 when she noticed the tiny birds zipping inches from her face. She brought all of her outdoor flowers inside and decided to test how close the birds would come.

She sits, barely breathing or blinking, while the tiny birds perch on her handmade feeders. During hummingbird season, she'll feed the birds every day, even if the weather dictates that she stand under an umbrellahummingbirds actually need more food during rainstorms because they burn more energy flapping wet wings, she explained.

She has also developed a knack for interacting with the chipmunk that



hibernates near her house, whom she named Stanley. Lovely spends hours setting up elaborate sets on a vinyl backdrop and lures Stanley in with strategically placed nuts.

In one of the sets, Stanley is atop a toy boat as a news helicopter circles above. In another, he is peaking his head out of a pumpkin while surrounded by fall foliage.

Lovely also figured out a way to get Stanley to interact with the props with expertly laid peanut butter. Photos of Stanley show him playing the saxophone and a harmonica.

Lovely loves almost all animals ("the only good spider for me is a dead one") but hummingbirds have a special place in her heart. Quite literally, she has a hummingbird

tattooed on the skin right above her heart.

She loves that the delicate and largely unsocial birds would put their trust in a mammal many times their size. She remembered last summer, when a mother bird she



Lpcphotography A fox in Michelle Lovely's backyard.

named Miss Bella, led her two babies to the feeder Lovely was holding. The babies, with their plumage still growing in, flew up with their tiny feathers coiffed into a Mohawk.

"They really do help with stress," she said. "I go out and feed my hummingbirds and it's just like, everything goes away."

Lovely's Recipe for Sugar Water

- Pour four cups of hot water into a container with two cups of sugar.
- Shake the mixture until the sugar has dissolved.
- Keep the sugar water refrigerated for 24 hours, then add to a hummingbird feeder.

Extra tips: Avoid using the

red-dyed mixtures sold at pet stores. Lovely says red coloring on the ports are enough to attract the birds. Also, regularly check the mixture to ensure it has not grown mold or attracted ants. •



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Photographs by John Hessian

Fording the Stream, Franconia Mountains: Oil on canvas, 1857; Collection of P. Andrews and Linda H. McLane.

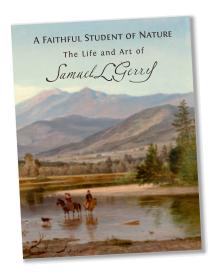
RARE VIEW

19th century artist **Samuel L. Gerry** helped shape how world saw N.H. Many pieces on display are from private collections.

In a multi-faceted project developed over the past five years, the New Hampshire Historical Society offers an unprecedented look at the life and art of Samuel L. Gerry, one of the most prolific White Mountain artists.

"A Faithful Student of Nature: The Life and Art of Samuel L. Gerry" showcases the work of this important artist using a variety of media and features many of Gerry's paintings held in private collections. This project affords the public a rare opportunity to see these works, which are not normally on view.

Gerry created more than 140 paintings depicting majestic views of New Hampshire. His work was realistic, yet it also idealized the natural world, emphasizing its grandeur and its vastness. From the mid-1830s until 1890, he traveled nearly every summer from his Boston home and studio to the White Mountains or the Lakes Region of New Hampshire. Here, he explored, sketched, and painted the natural world around him, one that, when he first visited the area, had been only lightly



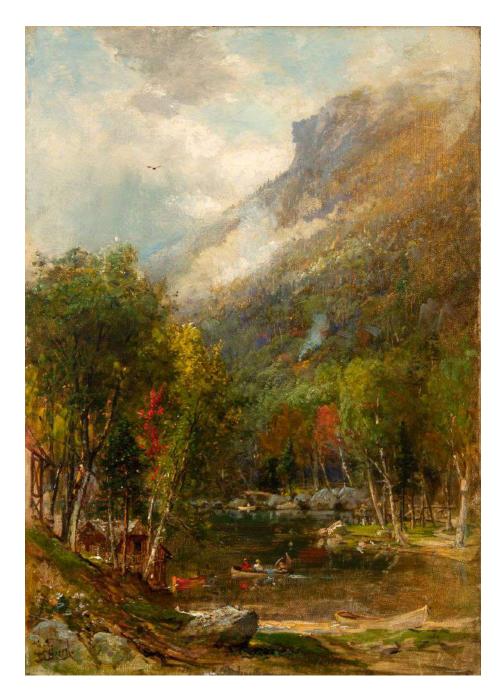
touched by man. His depictions of New Hampshire's natural beauty, including such iconic sites as the Old Man of the Mountain, Mount Washington, and the Flume, helped shape the way Americans viewed the state.

Gerry was part of a new order of artists, centered in Boston and New York, who were intent on establishing America's cultural reputation. They aimed to show that the nation's scenery and its artists rivaled what they had seen when studying in Europe. Together they redefined American art in the 19th century.

A special issue of *Historical New* Hampshire, published in January, features 52 full-color plates of Gerry's works along with articles by Gerry scholar Charles Vogel and art historian Melissa Geisler Trafton. The issue also appears in book form and is available for purchase at the Society, online at nhhistory.org, and by calling 603-228-6688.

An exhibition of Gerry's art is offered in two formats: virtual and onsite. The virtual exhibition includes the works featured in the publication, and the onsite exhibition showcases 38 of the artist's most significant works, with the majority coming from private collections. Also featured are paintings from the Society's own collection and from the collections of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Historic New England, Fenimore Art Museum, Revolutionary Spaces, and the New Bedford Whaling Museum.

> New Hampshire Historical Society



ABOVE: Old Man of the Mountains: Oil on canvas, circa 1886; Collection of P. Andrews and Linda H. McLane.

BELOW: View of Centre Harbor: Oil on canvas, 1847; Courtesy NH Historical Society; gift of D. Bruce Montgomery.



A tribute to Katie



For this dad, only lilacs can capture daughter's beauty

By RAY DUCKLER

The idea hit John Bentley at the West Salisbury Cemetery.

A horticultural geek since childhood, Bentley always loved lilacs best. His daughter, Katie, buried in the cemetery, always loved purple best. And the lilac just happened to be New Hampshire's state flower, bold, adventurous, colorful, just like Katie had been.

Plus, if properly cared for, lilacs can re-bloom in the same spot for 100 years or more. Perfect. That's the kind of tribute Bentley wanted to create for Katie. Alive and beautiful, always returning.

Katie's final resting place is now regularly adorned with lilacs, weather permitting. And Bentley, a Sal-





Geoff Forester (left) / Courtesy (right)

John Bentley, left, founded the Katie Bentley Lilac Project, a organization that helps individuals, institutions, schools, and municipalities promote the love of lilacs. He has gotten the support from Assistant Superintendent Randy Wormald of the Merrimack Valley School District, where many of the lilacs have been planted.

isbury native and 1982 graduate of Kearsarge Regional High School, took it way beyond that. He founded the Katie Bentley Lilac Project, a simple organization with a simple vision that officially reads, "a popular way for individuals, institutions, schools, and municipalities to promote the love of lilacs in America."

Bentley is also the treasurer for the

International Lilac Society, (yes, it exists), networking and promoting and planting, sparked by a tragedy no one saw coming.

Katie was 4 when she died suddenly 15 years ago from a rare lung infection. John created his own program - facilitator for all things lilac – in memory of Katie in 2009. He joined the national entity that same year.

Since then, John, a carpenter, has planted this hearty, dependable, miracle of nature everywhere. Libraries, grade schools, colleges.

There's a memorial bench in honor of Katie on the grounds of NHTI, and purple posies are due back there in the spring for their encore performance. Just like every year.

That's what John had in mind.

"We wanted something that would be alive long after we're gone," Bentley said. "A perennial shrub."

The man knows his shrubs. And his flowers. Especially his lilacs. He said he could prune and propagate "almost anything" by 10 years old, and he said the few houses in Salisbury in which he lived, and so many others, loved lilacs.

"My father taught us," John said.
"We knew how to graft anything. We played at it all the time. Our house was surrounded by lilac."



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He lives on a 9-acre farm in Salisbury, plenty of room for his blueberries and apples. He's in a remote area and prefers to plant his lilacs in livelier places, such as spots in his hometown, Boscawen and Franklin.

He told stories about Katie. Hilarious episodes, like the time she left their table at Olive Garden to visit another table nearby.

She introduced herself to the strangers: "Hi, my name is Katie."

Later, she visited again, after the dinner dishes had been cleared.

Dessert had been served.

"Can I have a bite?"

"She was wild," Bentley said. "Always looking for the next adventure."

Katie was 4 and seemed fine. She loved daycare. She loved music and singing. No one noticed any signs that the effects of a fatal illness were nearing.

Then she had a fever of 104, shortly after daycare. She had a barking cough and a stomachache. She was airlifted from Concord Hospital to Boston Children's Hospital, later slipping into a coma.

MRSA bacterial pneumonia caused an infection in her lungs. Katie died three weeks later, on Oct. 12, 2007.

"It was tough early on," Bentley said. "The empty chair at the supper table. You have to be able to power through it."

"It was tough
early on. The
empty chair at
the supper table.
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to power through it."

John Bentley, speaking about losing his daughter, Katie

There's been light. John and Cheryl have since had another daughter, Kelly, now 13. Molly is 17. Bentley also wrote a book, due out soon, chronicling his experience with Katie, talking about the deadly ambush, honestly, to his children and other members of the family.

"I wanted a record of what happened," Bentley said. "I wanted to get it all down. I wanted them to know."

They'll learn about Katie's tour of the Olive Garden. They'll come to understand Bentley's almost obsessive dedication to, and interest in, lilacs.

He teaches fourth-graders in and around Warner, Franklin and Salisbury, trying to keep their attention focused on a color code and the history of lilacs.

He tells them that the first lilacs officially documented in North America were found at Wentworth Estate, in Portsmouth. You can look it up.

"They come back each year," Bentley said, "and some of them are originals from 1750."

He plants them, tends to them, buys them in bulk from local nurseries and hands them out, always seeking permission from the town before digging.

He follows the bylaws written by the International Lilac Society.

(Yes, that exists, too).

"By the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and facts gained by members," it reads, "it is proposed that the individual members will increase their knowledge of the lilac and thereby help to promote a broadened public understanding and awareness."

That's what Bentley is doing. He

"They come back each year, and some of them are originals from 1750."

John Bentley, about the first lilacs in North America, found in Portsmouth

wants you to meet Katie. He wants you to know about her. Or at least admire the colors that represent her annual rebirth. That's enough.

The ideas - planting lilacs everywhere and joining two lilac-centric organizations - emerged after Katie's death. John, Cheryl and Molly visited Katie's gravesite at West Salisbury Cemetery.

Molly was 4, the same age as Katie when she died. They noticed petunias at Katie's grave, but wanted something else planted. Something heartier, stronger, more vibrant.

Something they all could agree on. Something that would endure.

"We were inspired," Bentley said. "I've never been disappointed by a lilac. Tough, tough, tough." ◆





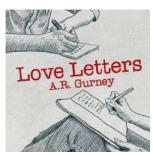


MARCH 19-20

Maple Weekend: The sweet taste of the season

Give cabin fever the boot in March and get out for Maple Month in New Hampshire. Support your local sugarhouses to help support the sugaring tradition all month but especially during Maple Weekend. There are plentny of places that participate and many are in the Concord area.

nhmapleproducers.com



MARCH 11-20

'Love Letters'

Andrew Makepeace Ladd III and Melissa Gardner, both born to wealth and position, are childhood friends whose lifelong correspondence began in second grade and continued for fifty or more years! The letters trace not only the arc of their friendship in both good times and bad, but are also a glimpse into twentieth century history and changing times from the 1930s to the 1980s. The play traces a lifetime between two people who grew up together, went their separate ways, but continued to share confidences. Produced by Hatbox Theatre. Show times: Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30pm; Sundays at 2pm. hatboxnh.com







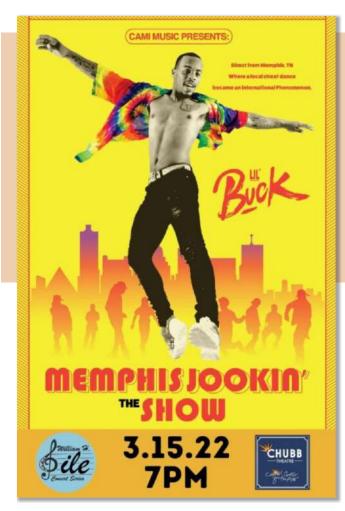
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MARCH 15

Memphis Jookin' feat. Lil' Buck

Renowned dance artist Lil Buck conceives, choreographs and performs in a new touring production called "Memphis Jookin': The Show" an ode to Lil Buck's hometown of Memphis, TN, birthplace of the singular dance style known as Memphis Jookin'. The 90-minute stage show takes us on a journey to the fabled city to chronicle how the artform emerged from local street dance to international phenomenon.

This show is presented free of charge for Concord-area residents by the William H. Gile Concert Series.

Show starts at 7 p.m.

Chubb Theatre, 44 S. Main St., Concord

ccanh.com

MARCH 17

Comedy Out of the 'Box

Each month, talented comedians from around the Northeast come to the Capital City to make you think and make you laugh.

Hatbox Theatre, 7:30 p.m.

hatbox.com



Art Classes at the Currier

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The Currier Museum of Art offers online and in-person art classes for all ages and abilities inspired by the museum's permanent collection and special exhibitions. Below is a sample of some our classes. Visit Currier.org for full list of classes.



Landscape Sketching: Simplification and Value with Amy Wynne Online five week class April 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 10 am to noon \$350 Non-Member \$315 Member



The White Line Woodcut and **Beyond with Kate Hanlon** In-Person Workshop April 2 and 3 10 am to 3 pm \$300 Non-Member \$270 Member



The Dynamic Figure in Space with Amy Wynne Online three-day workshop April 8, 9, 10, Friday 1 to 3 pm 10 am to 12pm and 1 to 3 pm \$375 Non-member \$337.50 Member



Embrace the Painting Practice with Lisa Daria Kennedy Online two-day workshop April 9 and 10 10 am to 12:15 pm and 1:45 to 3:45 pm \$250 Non-Member \$225 Member

Discounts available for members. Scholarships are available.

150 Ash Street, Manchester, NH | classes@currier.org | 603.518.4922



MARCH 18

Jordan Tirrell-Wysocki Trio

Putting a fresh spin on traditional Celtic music, the Jordan TW Trio delivers a dynamic show full of lively fiddle tunes, haunting airs and classic sing-alongs.

Bank of N.H. Stage, 16 S Main St. Doors open at 7 p.m., show at 8 p.m.

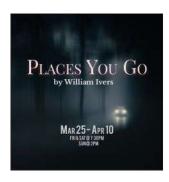
ccanh.com

MARCH 23

Postmodern Jukebox

The pop-jazz phenomenon makes its longawaited return to live performance with a celebration of the new Roaring '20s traveling across the U.S., Canada, U.K. and Europe. Tickets start at \$39. Chubb Theatre, 44 S. Main St., Concord. Doors open at 7 p.m., show starts at 8 p.m.

ccanh.com



MARCH 25 - APRIL 10 Places You Go

A promising young musician is faced with turmoil after a car accident, the result shows what family is willing to do to protect those they love and what destruction can occur in the process. Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m.; Sundays at 2 p.m.

hatboxnh.com

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MAY 21

Tour the Historic New Hampshire State House

Enjoy this limited opportunity to tour the historic New Hampshire State Building while visiting the other amenities that downtown Concord has to offer such as the Concord Farmers Market, ample dining experiences, and unique boutique shopping.

Free guided tours will begin every half hour starting at 10 a.m. and last approximately 45 minutes. The final tour will begin at 1:30 p.m. There is no registration for this event.

Masks are not required but are highly encouraged by the organizers. 107 N. Main St., Concord; 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

intownconcord.org

APRIL 2

Heart by Heart

Steve Fossen and Michael Derosier, bassist and drummer for the band Heart during the 1970s and early 1980s, are now touring as Heart By Heart. "Our mission is to perform the classic Heart music as faithfully as we can," Fossen says. The band features vocalist Somar Macek, guitarist/keyboardist/vocalist Lizzy Daymont and guitarist Chad Quist. Heart By Heart presents a powerful, dynamic show that includes all the favorite Heart hits as well as deep album cuts that fans will love.

Bank of N.H. Stage, 16 S. Main St. Doors open at 7 p.m., show starts at 8 p.m.

ccanh.com

MAY 6

Jeffrey Foucault

In two decades on the road, leffrey Foucault has become one of the most distinctive voices in American music, refining a sound instantly recognizable for its simplicity and emotional power, a decidedly Midwestern amalgam of blues, country, rock 'n' roll, and folk.

Bank of N.H. Stage, 16 S. Main St., Concord; Doors open at 7 p.m., show at 8 p.m.

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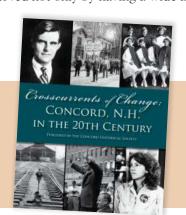
One of the stained glass windows at Centerpoint Church, originally the First Baptist Church, on North State Street.

Tidings of faith

Concord has a rich history centered on its religious institutions. Ever since Timothy Walker was called to serve as the first settled minister of First Congregational Church in 1730, Concord's churches have multiplied and diversified. Concord was well served not only by having a wide array of religious options, but equally important, by the myriad of social services that these churches provided.

The original meetinghouse for the First Congregationalist Society, which is also known a North Congregational Church or North Church, served as a defensive structure for the new settlement. Built originally on the corner of Chapel and Main Streets, "a tax on the ratable property and on all the inhabitants" supported the institution.

A new meetinghouse was built in 1751 at the intersection of North Main and Church Streets - Walker School later occupied that site - and, like the old meetinghouse, was a public building used for Town Meeting sessions, legislative meetings, and, perhaps its most historic role, the elected convention that ratified the United States



Learn More

'Crosscurrents of Change" Concord, N.H. in the 20th Century'

This 400-plus page hardcover edition introduces you to the people who helped shape a city, and it takes you through tragedy and triumph with some of the defining moments in Concord history. To purchase a copy or to learn more, visit concordhistoricalsociety.org/store.



The sanctuary of First Congregational Church on North Main Street in Concord.

Constitution in 1788. (New Hampshire was the ninth state to ratify, bringing the Constitution into effect.) The state's Toleration Act of 1819 ended tax support to religious institutions. The building was sold to the First Congregationalist Society on March 11, 1828.

First Congregational Church moved to the corner of North Main and Washington Streets in 1842. In this building the Reverend Doctor Nathaniel Bouton preached abolitionism in 1855.

In the first part of the twentieth century First Congregational Church actively welcomed refugees from Armenia, who came to Concord to work in the granite quarries. North Church provided food, clothing and English lessons as well as a haven from what has been widely described as genocidal violence in their homeland. This early example of ministering to refugees served the congregation well at the beginning of the 21st century as Concord, once again, became a settlement site for refugees. The church provided a focal point for the newcomers, offering food and clothing, and, in conjunction with Lutheran Social Services, taught English classes.



The Old North Church in Concord was the gathering place for both worship and public meetings for our ancestors.

While North Church may have been the "mother of churches" in Concord, South Congregational stood out as the city's most prominent. As the city grew and prospered, expanding to the north and south, the new church was founded in 1837. Its original meetinghouse was on the corner of Pleasant and Main streets, with North Church donating one-third of the funds needed. The church was small, beset by the Crash of 1837 and by the divisive question of slavery. The church passed a resolution condemning slavery but would not commit to any course of action, closing the building to abolitionist speakers.

In 1859, a fire further challenged the congregation. Parishioners quickly rebounded, purchasing the lot on which stood the historic home of William A. Kent, a town moderator. justice of the peace, state representative, merchant, banker and colonel of the military staff of Governor John Tavlor Gilman. The home was moved to Spring Street, and the new church, dedicated in 1860, stood on the Kent site, at 27 Pleasant Street.

This exerpt written by Cheryl Bourassa appears in Chapter 8 of "Crosscurrents of Change: Concord, N.H. in the 20th Century."



Geoff Forester

Larry Moore of Windswept Maples Farm in Loudon boils down the sap to make into syrup.

The old way

Sugaring in the north woods, frosty nights and a warm day,

placing taps and buckets, horse drawn wagon the old way.

Gathering the sweet sap to boil, memories now sepia-toned and old,

maple sugaring with grandfather, in another time doing as I was told.

The fire burning hot into the night, our sap house all aglow,

the sweet nectar provided by nature, over freshly fallen snow.

Work was hard but honest, my fond memories stay,

sugaring in the north woods, frosty nights and a warm day.

James W. Spain

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THE SCENE



Geoff Forester photos

Janet Dulfuoco looks out at employees of Innovative Roofing NH as they work on a new roof for her Northwood home on Jan. 6. A different contractor installed Dulfuoco's roof, but it soon fell into disrepair. Innovative Roofing NH read about her situation and jumped in to rebuild the roof for free.

Frozen moments





Above: Concord 170-pound class wrestler Odeyi Kizungu battles Salem wrestler Matt Breton during the winter sports season.

Left: Veteran Lamar Burrell from Texas leads participants in the Walk For Vets as they head down South Main Street in Concord on Feb. 4 in the sleet, snow and rain. They were walking to raise awareness of issues facing our veterans.



Dellie Champagne of Concord is prepped for giving blood by Red Cross Phlebotomist Brandi Kibane at the Department of Transportation headquarters on Jan. 31. The Red Cross continues to deal with a critical blood shortage.







Above: Abe Smith (left) and Tommy Donohue battle for the puck during the Black Ice Tournament at White Park on Jan. 28.

Above left: Merrimack Valley fans and bench players cheer after a score during the second half of action against Pembroke on Jan. 21.

Left: Benjamin Wright, 4, of Hopkinton snowboards down the beginners' hill at Pats Peak in February.

A THOUSAND WORDS



A portrait of Agnes and Sumner Marshall sits amid a bouquet of fresh flowers at Marshall's Florist in Boscawen.

For florist, a shining example

Lorrie Carey, who runs Marshall's Florist in Boscawen, recounts how the family business started amid tragedy 65 years ago. Carey's grandfather, Sumner, was helping a driver who broke down on the side of the road when he was struck by another vehicle. Sumner spent a year in the hospital, and his injuries, which he carried the remainder of his life, kept him from farming. So Sumner and his wife, Agnes, started the flower business. Sumner did the growing and Agnes did what Carey describes as the "fancy work." Plus, Agnes, who is now 102, worked off of the farm to help support the family and pay for her kids' education. Generations later, Marshall's still helps families mark the important milestones, and we found it interesting that this family business grew from the seeds of such a challenging time.

Contribute

Welcome to 'A Thousand Words,' a quarterly feature that ends the magazine with an iconic photo. Share your image with us, and we may be able to use it in a coming issue. Only high-resolution photos are accepted, and despite the intent of the feature, we will need to accompany your image with a few words. So please send your photo and a brief description to editor@aroundconcord.com.











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