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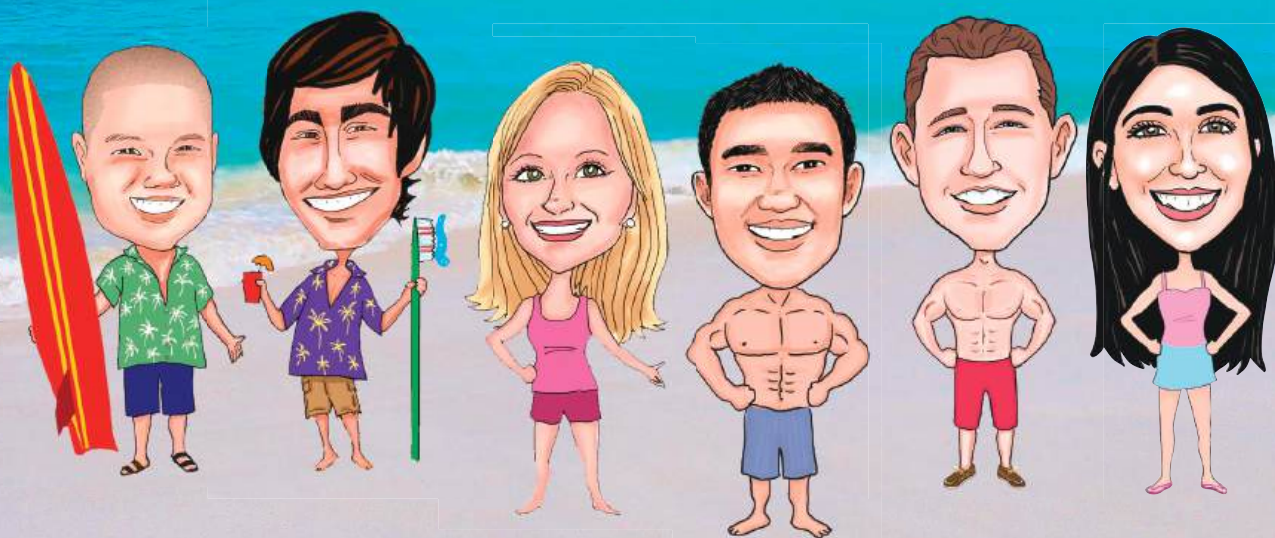
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Cover photo by Alex Miller

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Experiencing the world

Like the seasons, every edition of this magazine is different. Each stands out in its own way. It's been over a year since I became editor of Around Concord, and I still can't stop reveling in the process of the stories coalescing on the page, that inimitable feeling of seeing the glossy cover in vibrant color for the first time.



Usually, I bring a bunch of ideas to the table and our reporters breathe life into them. This time around, however, the magazine took shape in a different way. Our wonderful news editor, Rebeca Pereira, pitched me a story about the power of nature to facilitate healing. As soon as she described her vision, I knew it would be a perfect fit for our cover story. Editing the finished piece months later, I was struck by the poignancy of the human stories she showcases against the background of lavender and beekeeping. Several times, I found myself blinking back the beginnings of tears.

Even weeks later, I find myself still thinking about Jodie Fennessy, who sought solace among the fields at Pumpkin Blossom Farm while battling terminal brain cancer. Or Greg Wortman, who turned to apiaries as places of comfort after returning from combat. Rebeca's work moved me. (It often does!) I hope this story moves you, too.

Then, Charlotte Matherly, our fabulous State House reporter, told me she wanted to go on a tour of the New Hampshire state capitol with a class of fourth-graders. Charlotte captured the excitement of students exploring the seat of the Granite State's government for the first time, including young Arie Chauvette, who said, "It felt like I had the power to vote."

I hope these stories transport you just as they've done for me and that they linger the next time you seek peace in the outdoors or drive past the State House.

Happy reading, and enjoy the summer!

Rachel Wachman
Editor

Contact us >> editor@aroundconcord.com

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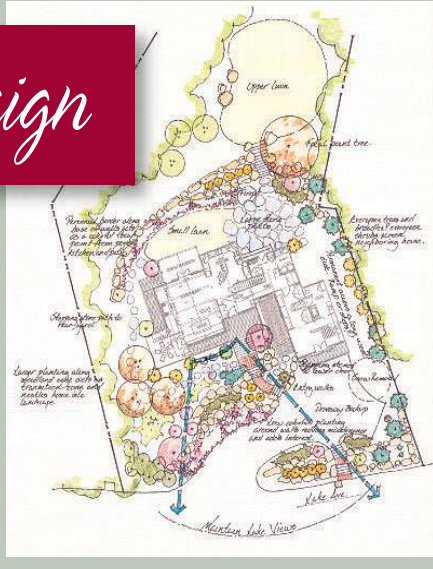
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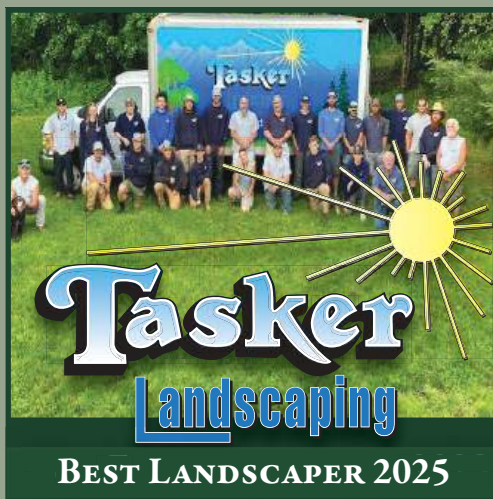
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CELEBRATE SUMMER



Fourth of July Celebration: July 4

This Fourth of July celebration will be a special one, as it marks America's 250th and Concord's 300th anniversary.

The day starts bright and early on Saturday, with the annual parade on Main Street beginning at 9 a.m. An hour later, live performances and family-friendly activities will be hosted on the State House lawn.

The New Hampshire Historical Society will have an open house starting at 11 a.m., allowing the public to view its archives during this monumental anniversary. Finally, the fireworks show will light up Concord's skies around 9 p.m.

Check out the City of Concord's website closer to the date as more information becomes available.

Market Days June 25-27

Market Days, hosted by InTown Concord, is returning to downtown Concord for its 52nd year. Each year, the festival attracts more than 150 vendors selling clothes, jewelry, food and more along Main Street. The festival also features several free activities for children and their parents.

The festival hosts two main stages on South Main Street and Bicentennial Square that will feature several local and national musical acts. Head down to the State House lawn, the beer tent and Eagle Square for additional areas to explore.

The festival is open from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. all three days.

Entry to the festival is free with food and drink to purchase at various vendors.

Suncook Valley Rotary Hot Air Balloon Rally July 31 – Aug. 2

Colorful balloons dot the sky around Pittsfield for the 44th annual Hot Air Balloon Rally this year. The first event kicks off in the final hours of July, with several balloons burning with bright light for the Night Glow at 8 p.m.

The weekend is packed with on-the-ground events, such as yoga sessions, a river raft regatta race, a craft fair and a 5K road race. Helicopter rides are offered at \$75 per person at the Thyng Memorial on Barnstead Road. Balloons arrive early in the morning each day, but actual flight times depend on wind and weather and may be subject to last-minute changes.

Balloons and events will take place on Drake Field in Pittsfield. The event is free for all to attend, with food, drink and tethered balloon rides offered at separate costs. Free shuttle service is available to attendees parked on Leavitt Road or Barnstead Road.



Sunflower Bloom Festival Aug. 8-16

The largest sunflower field in New Hampshire is welcoming guests of all ages to come and experience the magic.

The festival at Sunfox Farm in Concord features live music, over 20 local craft vendors and food trucks to fulfill every craving. Professional photographers can take photos at no

extra cost during the festival's hours but are also available after hours through prior booking.

The festival is open every day from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tickets for adults are \$13, while children 10 and under are free. Guests may cut their own flowers for \$2 per stem.

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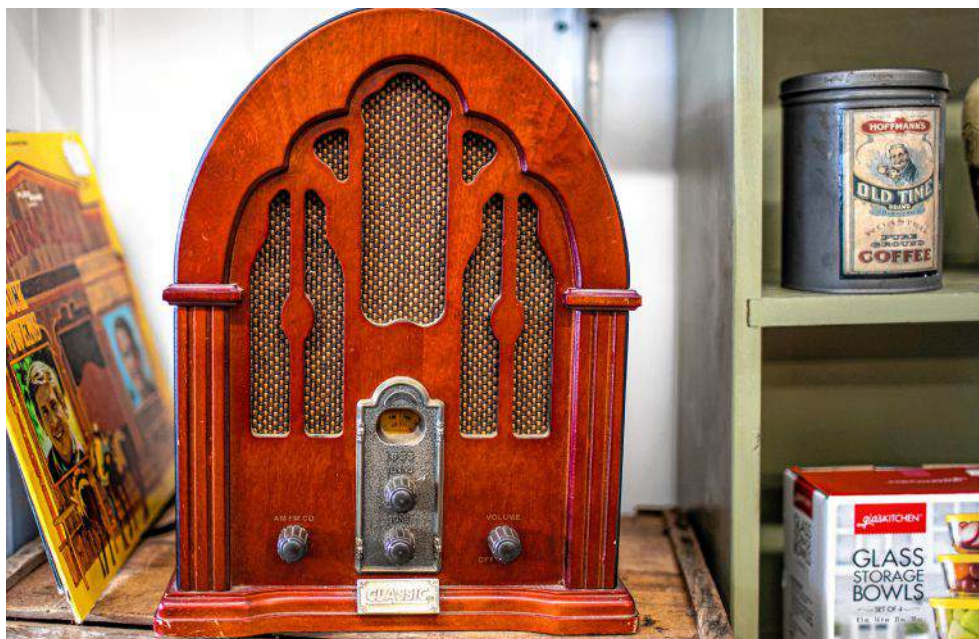


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Fast faves



Meme Exum relocated to Bow with her husband, Will, and their two daughters five years ago. Coming from Atlanta, Georgia, Exum said her family gravitated to the Granite State for its strong public school system and beautiful nature. Exum owns The Glimpse Gallery and Meme's Website Design, both located off Park St. in Concord's historic Patriot Building, across from the State House. Learn more about Exum's favorite parts of the Capital Region.



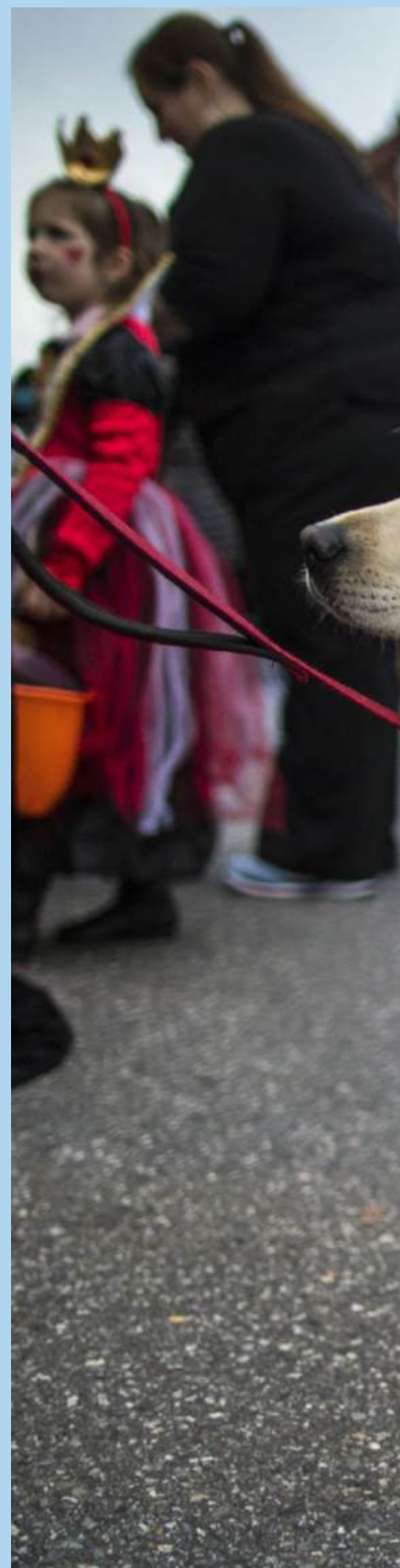
Tell us about your favorite places in the area to spend time while you're not working

It is really nice to visit with Sue McCoo at Hilltop Consignment on Main Street. Her store is constantly filled with interesting things, and she always has fun commentary on what's going on in town.



A go-to spot for clothes or other fun things

Godwana constantly has fresh fashion, and for alterations, I could not recommend Susana's Studio more highly!



Your favorite Concord event



I would have to say it is a toss-up between the Market Days Festival and Halloween Howl. Our girls love dressing up in their Halloween costumes and walking up and down Main Street. There is such a wonderful sense of playfulness at that specific event.

A local place you've recently discovered

Flanagan's South Ender Deli & Market seasonally opens "The Backyard." You can sit at tables outside and enjoy beer on tap and their made-to-order naan pizza. So good!

A local restaurant or dish you haven't been able to get out of your mind

One night, Will and I went to Angelina's and ordered numerous appetizers instead of entrees for our dinner. The varied appetizers in conjunction with a smooth bottle of wine and staring into Prince Charming's eyes left a lasting impression.

What you want to see more of in or around Concord

Concord has a wealth of arts-centered businesses and non-profits. That said, sometimes I think it can be overlooked just how many incredibly talented artists actually live right here in the community. They may be loosely associated with these businesses and nonprofits or simply not at all. It would be ideal if Concord continued on the track it's on, encouraging more and more of these artists to come out of the woodwork by offering events that showcase their work in one way or another. The artists living in and around Concord don't need to go to Portsmouth, the Lakes Region or elsewhere. They can be uplifted right here in Concord!

Anything else?

The Glimpse Gallery's upcoming show will run from August to Sept. 9. The Glimpse Gallery is located at 4 Park St. in Concord.



HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

I picked up some valuable skills and techniques during my visit to **Black Olive Pottery Studio** in Concord, but none more important than learning to appreciate – and even love – the imperfections

By **RACHEL WACHMAN**

Slick clay glided beneath my fingers as the wheel turned.

So many things to remember at once: Keep my elbows steady at waist-level, hold my fingers in place at 3 o'clock as the forming bowl spun, apply pressure at the base, keep the clay wet.

My head spun almost as fast as the wheel as I scrambled to remember these simple instructions. And in the back of my mind, a faint voice urged, "Don't mess it up!"

Contrary to the nerves of spinning clay on a pottery wheel for the first time (and who knew the wheel kept turning even when you

took your foot off the pedal?!) I felt comforted by the first thing Jackie Ose, the owner of Black Olive Pottery Studio in Concord, told me when we began the short demo: It's OK to be rough with the clay. It's harder to mess up than you think.

There was something exhilarating about the process. Maybe it was the fact that any slight tilt of my wrist or change in pressure of my fingers could turn my bowl into a vase, a cup, an orb or anything in between. All it took was one slight adjustment. The infinite possibilities felt at once thrilling and terrifying. I got a rush of adrenaline just sitting there in my apron watching as the mound of clay I'd quite literally thrown at the center of the

RIGHT: Black Olive Pottery Studio owner Jackie Ose gets to work at the pottery wheel.

TOP: Around Concord editor Rachel Wachman's handmade bowl that she created while reporting this piece is now a convenient landing spot for her car keys.



wheel only minutes before steadily became ... well, something. Not quite a bowl like any I'd seen before. But something nonetheless.

The rhythm of the wheel turning felt at once hypnotic and intoxicating. I wanted it to keep rotating. I wanted the clay to continue taking shape. The whole process felt almost as if watching someone else's hands do the work and yet, as I looked down, I had a humorous moment of realization that those hands were, indeed, mine.

My first time at the pottery wheel and I was feeling on top of the world. Or as far on top of it as you can be when there's clay encrusted under your nails, on the knees of your jeans and caked halfway up your arms.

Yet being in that creative zone transported me into the same immersive calm that I used to feel back when I painted. It's indescribable, really. The way my hands seem to know what I'm doing even when my brain very much does not. The trust that comes with letting instinct lead.

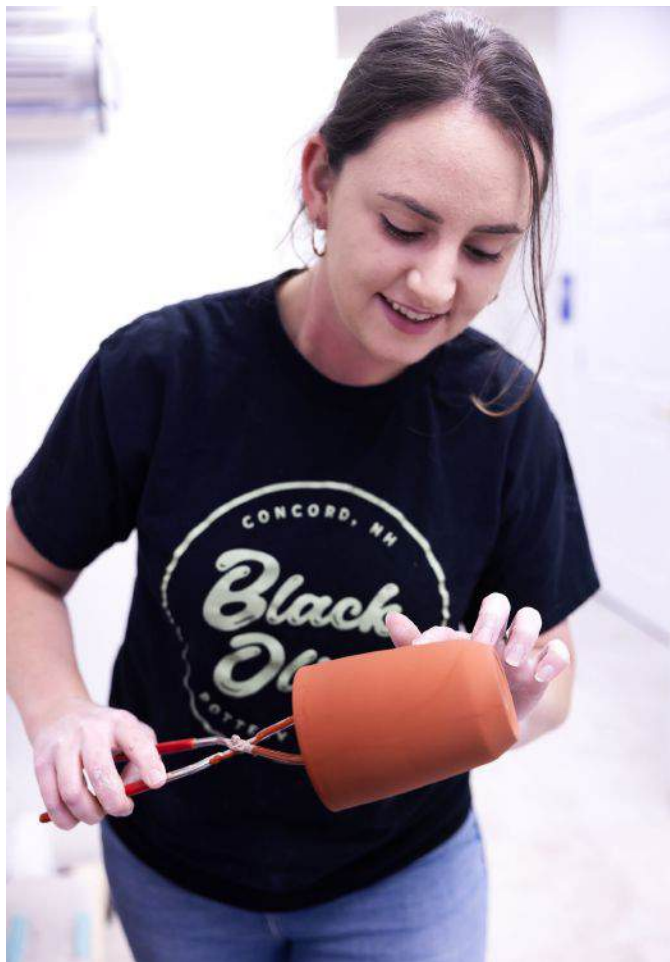
Only when it was time to loosen the bowl from the wheel did I remember just how little I knew what to do. It had never even occurred to me to wonder how people maneuver pottery off the wheel.

Jackie explained what to do, and I must have pulled a face. I feared slic-

My first time at the pottery wheel and I was feeling on top of the world. Or as far on top of it as you can be when there's clay encrusted under your nails, on the knees of your jeans and caked halfway up your arms.



Geoff Forester



ing incorrectly and severing my creation in two. But then I'd be able to boast, "Look, I made half a bowl!" Which was still more than I could say before.

I held my breath as my fingers tugged the wire underneath the base, praying with every fiber of my being that the bowl would still be intact when the wire emerged on the other side. It snagged. I tugged harder. And then the bowl slid free of its origin spot at the center of the wheel. I heaved a sigh of relief, one tinged with pride.

This was the single time I've used a pottery wheel in my life. And yet it was one of the coolest experiences, turning a cold, moist, shapeless lump into something with a distinct form and flair, something I could spoon soup out of or use to store my rings. Something I could hold and carry, that could hold and carry in return. Something I could wrap my hands around and think to myself, "I made you."

And it didn't need to be perfect. Not by a long shot.

When I slid my bowl onto the tray to be moved to the pre-firing area of the studio, I noted a slight lump on one side and an unintentional groove on the other.

A smile pressed my lips upwards. I'd left my mark on the piece.

Geoff Forester

Owner Jackie Ose dips a piece of pottery into the signature color of the Black Olive Pottery Studio on Loudon Road.



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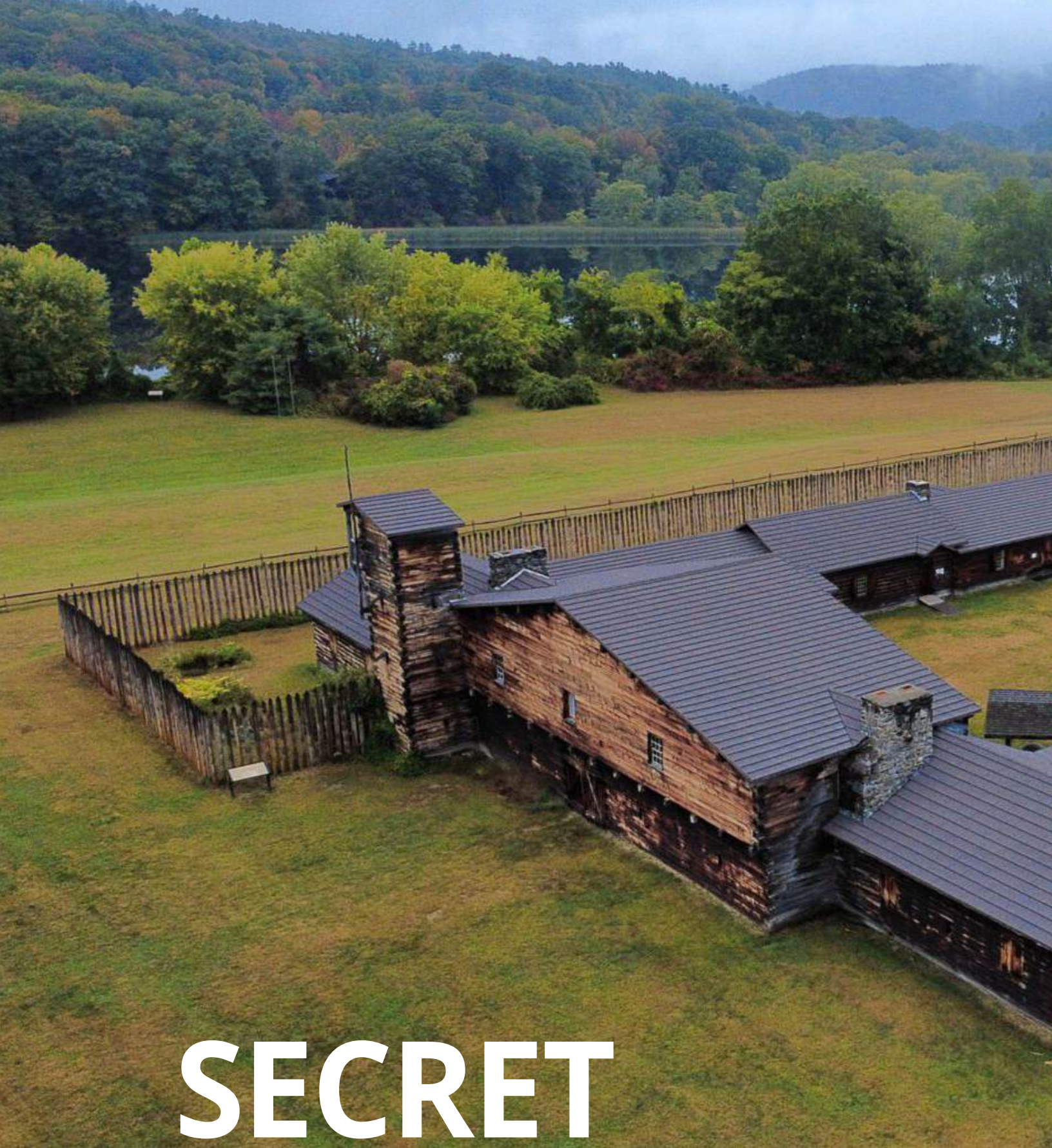
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SECRET ESCAPES

Unique local
museums to pique
your interest



FORT AT NO. 4: Head over to Charlestown near the Vermont border and learn about life in the Colonial Era. The fort is a faithful reconstruction of the 1746 stockade fortification that once stood as the northernmost British settlement on the Connecticut River. For nearly 80 years, this open-air living history museum has brought this period to vivid reality with a backdrop of the valley's sweeping landscape.



The best local museum?
Well, that's a tough call



Kearsarge Indian Museum

The Kearsarge Indian Museum includes indoor galleries and outdoor areas.

habitants. It features not just the discoveries of anthropology and archaeology but also modern creations by Native Americans. The mission is to connect people with 20,000 years of Native American cultural expression that continues to this day.

There are also outdoor areas, including the Medicine Woods Trail, which teaches some of the ways Natives historically used plants for food, medicine, dye, shelter and tools; the Betsy Janeway Arboretum; and an activity area

with a spectacular view of the Mink Hills.

Open Monday – Saturday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., Sunday from 12 p.m. – 4 p.m. Adults are \$15. indianmuseum.org.

America's Stonehenge

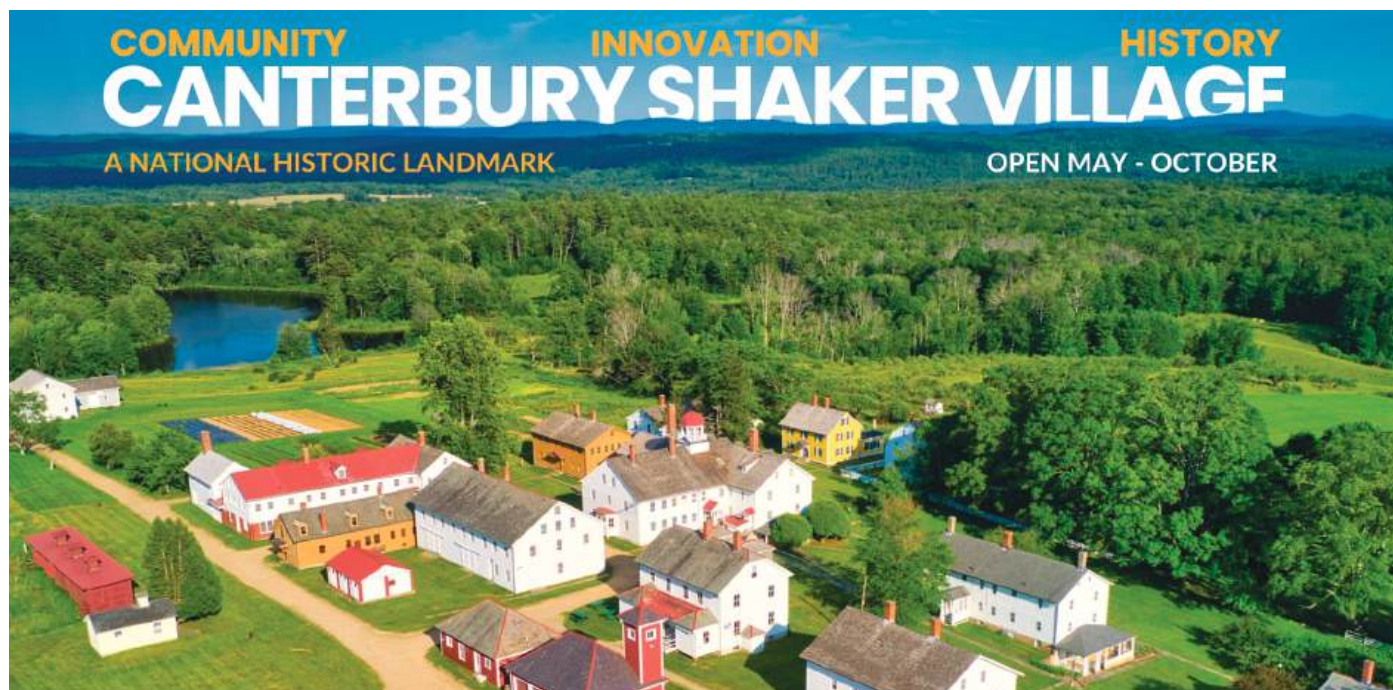
This isn't exactly a museum, and you need to take many of its claims with a very large grain of salt, but the place once known as Mystery Hill is still fun to visit.

The 100-acre site in Salem, near the Massachusetts border, contains some stone foundations, small caves and interesting rocks that the site says are an indication of prehistoric usage. A previous owner was sure they had been created by Irish monks who came over cen-

turies before Columbus, although historians note that he moved rocks around to support his theory. Archaeologists are, to say the least, dubious.

Still, the stories are intriguing even if they're unconvincing, such as the "sacrificial stone" with carved channels to drain off blood from animal sacrifices. It looks exactly like stones shaped by early settlers to extract lye from wood ash as part of making soap.

And this is a beautiful site in both summer and winter



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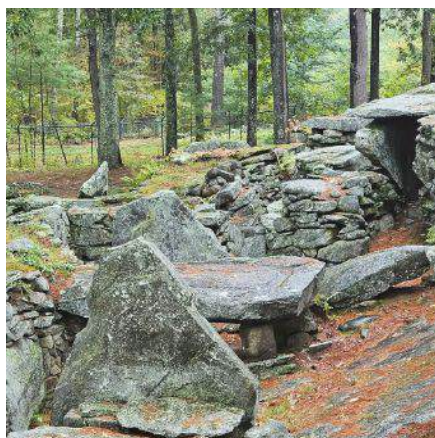


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Aviation Museum

This small but potent collection of artifacts from the Granite State's surprisingly long aviation history sits in the quirky 1937 terminal for Manch-



Aviation Museum

The 1937 terminal for Manchester's airport is now a museum.

ester's airport, an Art Deco building moved to the far side of the Manchester-Boston Regional Airport main runway back in 2004.

Historic items include the 1929 Doodlebug, the first biplane built in New Hampshire; memories of Northeast Airlines with its "yellowbird" planes; a Norden bombsight, crucial World War II technology that was taught to airmen in Manchester during the fight against the Nazis; and the "send-help" message written in

lipstick by a stewardess after a passenger jet crashed on Mount Success in 1954.

It also has a huge library of aviation-related books as well as a top-notch flight simulator that visitors can try at certain times.

7 Navigator Road, Londonderry. \$10 adults.

Wednesdays through Saturdays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sundays from 1 to 4 p.m.

Call (603) 669-4820 ext. 404. aviationmuseumofnh.org.

The Fort at No. 4

The Fort at No. 4 is an open-air, living-history museum dedicated to the rich heritage of the Upper Connecticut River Valley. The original fort was a stockade fortification protecting Plantation Number 4, the northernmost British settlement along the Connecticut River in the Province of New Hampshire until after the French and Indian War.

Now located in the town of Charleston, for almost 80 years the Fort at No. 4 has shown life as it was during the Colonial Era, faithfully recreating the details of the structures that existed in 1746.

Tours and live performances are regularly scheduled events for families and history buffs.

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'I've seen it in action'

Those seeking relief turn to unexpected places

By REBECA PEREIRA

For precious moments at a time, Jodie Fennessy could slough off the heaviness of illness by stepping outside the door of her family home in Claremont.

Although she'd always been a strong person, in her final years Fennessy saw her quality of life steadily erode, diminished by a terminal brain cancer. Nature, as near as her personal fairy garden and as distant as the Nubble Lighthouse at Cape Nedick in York, Maine, provided a temporary reprieve.

In the summer of 2020, five years after her brain surgery, Fennessy found another retreat. Her daughter, Brittany Brooks, and granddaughter, then-7-year-old Molly, accompanied her first visit to Pumpkin Blossom Farm in Warner, where aromatic lavender fields and clucking chickens envelop the senses. Years later, it still bemuses Brooks to remember how her mother, it seemed, "already knew what she was doing."

"She would pick out each little stem to bundle up together. She was really quiet; she would smell everything and take everything in for at least an hour every time," Brooks said. "She would go sit on the bench. Molly

The farm has provided an oasis of serenity for a multitude of visitors since owners Missy and Mike Biagiotti opened their 14 acres to the public.



Missy Biagiotti, shown here and on the facing page, owns Pumpkin Blossom Farm in Warner.

Alex Miller





Jodie Fennessy gathers springs of lavender with her granddaughter, Molly, at Pumpkin Blossom Farm.

Courtesy

was very patient.”

Fennessy passed away in 2023. Brooks said her mother never made her affinity for the lavender fields explicit in so many words — she didn’t have to.

“She meant a lot to a lot of people, and that place meant a lot to her,” Brooks said.

The farm has provided an oasis of serenity for a multitude of visitors since owners Missy and Mike Biagiotti opened their 14 acres to the public.

They support their business with every variety of lavender infusion, from candles and linen sprays that freshen living spaces to personal care products and all the accoutrements that elevate a beverage: lavender simple syrup, woven coasters and, more recently, lavender lemonades. But access to the lavender fields, to view and stroll through and commune with their beauty, never comes at any cost to visitors.

Nature is like medicine, the rare panacea touted for its preventative and palliative properties while warranting minimal disclosures about possible side effects, depending on how it’s experienced.

“It’s something I know works, I’ve seen it in action,” said Missy Biagiotti.

She remembers how her father would come home from work promptly at 4:15 p.m. and dig into all kinds of outdoor projects. When the time came to raise her own children in South Florida, Biagiotti felt the undeniable pull of her own childhood. She made it a priority to spend summers in New Hampshire, fishing and hiking in the Sunapee region. Some days, her family would cluster in the threshold of their home and their three children would team up in a game of “left-right,” guiding the day’s adventure with simple directions de-

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cided on a whim: one step to the left, another to the right, and eventually they would arrive somewhere scenic and interesting.

But it was hardship that cemented Biagiotti's belief in the remedy that surrounded her, the clean air that fills lungs with peace and empties them of worry, the meditative waltz of shadows and sunlight that focuses the overburdened mind on something bigger, steadier, more grounded.

In 2012, Biagiotti's sister, Kelly, was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a blood cancer that develops in bone marrow. It took time to find the right treatment center, but in February of the following year, Kelly underwent stem cell transfer at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston. Faithfully by her sister's side for the duration of those delicate six weeks, Biagiotti can recall the chatter of the nurses' station, the cacophony of beeping medical instrumentation, the constant stimulation of the environment they couldn't escape.

"There was really no break from the lights and the noise," Biagiotti said.

Then they took the elevator up to the Stoneman Healing Garden: "I remember vividly the sounds. The fountain trickling water, little subtle sounds. We took big deep breaths."

She couldn't replicate the indoor garden, designed by landscape architects, at her family's farm, but she decided she could offer others a slice of reprieve that might help them along their own path.

"You carry this responsibility to them. They're coming with a lot of heavy things on their shoulders," she said. "We know this place is really special, and we're happy to share it with other people."

Life, not destruction

The news that his year of service in one of Iraq's most volatile regions would be extended by another six months walloped 23-year-old Greg Wortman. The fact that it arrived over

CNN, his platoon bent over the television, rather than from a superior officer, only added insult to injury.

"Talk about a soul-sucking morale killer," he recalled.

The previous months had been anything but easy, as Wortman and the 19 soldiers subordinate to him trudged through the insurgent-riddled area south of Baghdad known as the "Triangle of Death." They built schools and provided community assistance. They also withstood raids and reacted to explosions and firefights.

Wortman and his brother had grown up simulating combat with their G.I. Joe figurines, and when he joined the armed forces, he felt self-actualized, but there was "a lot of shit they left off the recruitment poster."

During their first 15 months in the war zone, between 2006 and 2007, 55 soldiers belonging to his brigade were killed. None of the soldiers in Wortman's platoon died in action during that first stint, although as he prepared to reunite with those fellow ser-

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Rebeca Pereira

Greg Wortman uses a small amount of smoke to calm honeybees at the apiary at the Manchester VA Medical Center.

vicemen on the 20th anniversary of their deployment in June, he recalled mournfully how some had died by suicide after coming home.

“You were dropped into a foreign country to do something you knew nothing about. Geopolitical tensions and tribal infighting? There are no college classes on that,” he said. “A lot of vets you talk to, they don’t seem fazed by anything because you have to come to grips with death. [...] It desensitizes you.”

When Wortman left the army at 32, having been deployed twice more during his nearly 10 years of military service, he was forced to look inward. He does that still as he enters one of the six beehives in his backyard or the apiary at the Manchester VA Medical Center, wedged into a grassy ravine between the parking lot and the busy curvature of Smyth Road.

The center’s recreational therapists introduced a new queen into one of the hives in early May. Wortman, who started his beekeeping journey there five

years ago and returns regularly to lend a hand, shielded himself with a protective suit, deactivated the electric fence around the hives and flourished his smoker around the hives to tranquilize the honeybees. He wouldn’t need to necessarily find the queen to determine whether she had been accepted by the hive; he only needed evidence of her survival.

Boxes, unstacked one by one, opened to reveal a catalogue of panels that Wortman handled with care, maneuvering the corners between his thumb and index fingers to avoid killing any bees with an accidental pinch. The landscape of a hive can be savage — whereas many people think the queen enjoys her domination, Wortman sees her as a slave to the perpetuation of the hive, laying as many as 2,000 eggs per day until she dies. He finds the new queen in the bottom box, and like a soldier having completed the objective of his mission, he begins to return the hive to its original configuration.

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"I spent a lot of time overseas destroying things, on one side of the equation. And when I came back, I asked myself: 'What would I do that I found joy in? How do I make the most of the time I have left?' And it was nature," he said.

Looking after bees doesn't soften his unvarnished view of military service, but "time with nature helps to counterbalance it. I can make a difference growing things and regenerating things."

Wortman has big aspirations for his backyard farm in Allentown. Already, he has a commercial honey extraction line in his basement. He sells his honey directly to customers on Facebook and through an acquaintance's store in Scituate, Mass. He hopes to grow his apiary from six to 50 hives, and he envisions his operation, Farm 310, becoming a nonprofit, employing veteran farmers and helping to mitigate food insecurity in the region.

"Will I get there? Probably not. But you do what you can; you do a little bit every day," he said.

He knows farming isn't profitable but,



Gregory Wortman searches for the hive's new queen.

Rebeca Pereira

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someday, he hopes it will pay dividends as an investment in his children's future, particularly for his 16-year-old son, who has cerebral palsy and may depend on his siblings long after his parents are gone. Even now, the farm serves a purpose.

"Before gender integration, to ask for help was a massive sign of weakness. So many folks from that era were afraid to be seen as weak, and they lived on an island of isolation," he said. "The longer you don't deal with it, the longer you can't live life to the fullest. For me, it's been grounding."

Filling your cup first

One day this summer, after the Blossom Hill Farm opens for the season, several dozen providers from Riverbend Community Mental Health will come together to decompress at Pumpkin Blossom Farm. Biagiotti provides everything they need — scavenger hunts, therapeutic crafts and permission to roam freely — taking

some of the pressure off of organizers like Amy Stultz, a psychologist with the organization's Children's Intervention Program.

Even so, Stultz makes a point of arriving early and leaving late, allowing herself a sliver of solitude to take in the lavender fields before the buzz of dessert competitions and raffles starts up.

Stultz is familiar with the idea of taking care of herself so she can better care for others; the workplace culture at Riverbend, where she's built her career over the past 23 years, reinforces self-care often, given "the high level of absorption of people's needs that we take on as therapists," she said. She's learned to stay as steady as possible for the sake of her patients, some of whom experience suicidal ideation or non-suicidal self-injury and widened that practice to the outer reaches of her personal life.

When she received an unexpected diagnosis in 2021, forced by pandemic-era precautions to receive

treatment alone, she drew on her professional training and the strength of that muscle — mindfulness — to carry on. And in the lavender fields, she lets that sense of presence, awareness, groundedness grow.

"If I'm at church, then I'm at church. If I'm with my kids or my family, then I'm with my kids and my family. And if I'm working, then I'm doing whatever I can do [to] be here, present with the people I'm with," Stultz said.

The lavender fields fill Stultz's cup so that, later, she might be able to pour out from it for others' benefit. At lunch recently, she asked her colleagues what they got out of their trips to the farm: "It is a beautiful, relaxing environment where I can just exist without demands or pressures from work and enjoying community," one provider's response came later in the day.

"It's really just a day of giving back to people who work really hard for other people," Stultz said.



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A photograph of two young children in red karate uniforms with orange and yellow belts, bowing in a dojo. The background shows a dark blue wall with a red and white circular logo and an 'EXIT' sign above a door.

INSIDE

THE DOJO

From homework to high kicks: Concord Karate Studio fosters a family culture, self-defense skills and an after school program

From left, Larry Hutchins, Hadley Kenneally-Horton and RJ Lorina bow their heads to their sensei during Concord Karate Studio's after-school program.

Alexander Rapp



Building skills from within



Alexander Rapp

From left, Henrietta Hanson, Ty Babalis, Xzavier Welch and Quinn Perkins stand proudly at Concord Karate Studio with their new belts.

By ALEXANDER RAPP

A framed image of a tiger with red eyes and a bright tongue between its teeth hangs on the wall at Concord Karate Studio. It's the first thing families see when they walk in. And then they read the inscription: "A black belt is a white belt who refused to give up."

Next, their eyes gravitate toward their senseis, who greet them. Trained in the art of American Kenpo Karate, the Cote family — Jason, Sia and Ana — are the main drivers behind the studio.

From teen and adult classes to self-defense and Little Ninjas, there's something for everyone here, including an integrated family class where parents can join their children.

But what really sets Concord Karate Studio apart is its after-school program.

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Alexander Rapp

Ana Cote, left, Sia Cote, right, guide their fledgling karate students.

“The whole concept of it takes a village. We want to be part of the village. I want families to know that we’re there for them. It’s not a transactional thing. When you join here, you literally become family,” Sia said.

Caring through karate

The Cotes wanted to go beyond kicking and punching when they opened their martial arts space.

Through the state’s Department of

Health and Human Services, the studio offers a unique, certified, and fully community-focused program for students enrolled in grades one through six. The certification allows them to give out scholarships and reduce barriers to entry for families.

Sia worked as a Spanish and French teacher for two decades before opening the studio with her family. Her husband, Jason, on the other hand, worked in IT for a long time

and as a Boy Scouts leader.

Together alongside their daughter, Ana, they aim for a holistic program.

The family knows the strain on parents trying to find an after-school program. So they give them peace of mind.

“We’re the only structured one,” Jason explained. Instead of doing karate and then devolving into chaos, their program ramps up and comprehensively touches on multiple skills.




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Alexander Rapp

Ana Cote receives hits from Hadley Kenneally-Horton and RJ Lorina during an afternoon after-school class.

The program runs from 2:30 to 6 p.m. to accommodate working parents. First, the kids come in and have some homework time in the study area, which has seating and ample space for comfort.

The kids lounge as they go over schoolwork and then have some game time to wind down before ratcheting it up for karate.

They learn how to block a punch. Plus, they get a snack — you need to fuel the karate and brain somehow.

The program is all about “character development” and becoming productive community members, with kicking and punching as a “happy byproduct.”

“They’ve already had their activities, they’ve had their snacks,

they’ve done their homework. Now they do karate,” said Jason.

Kenpo

Concord Karate Studio Student Creed:

■ “I will develop myself in a positive manner and avoid anything that would reduce my mental growth or my physical health.”

■ “I will develop self-discipline in order to bring out the best in myself and others.”

■ “I will use the art of Kenpo constructively and defensively, to help myself and my fellow man, and never to be abusive or offensive.”

■ “I will live by the principles of black belt modesty, integrity, perseverance, self-control and in-

domitable spirit.”

The belts line the wall on either side of the studio’s logo. White to blue to red to black, with the word “family” above the rack.

Sia and her daughter, Ana, are the senseis in the dojo. All three Cotes are black belts, but to different degrees. Jason handles the administrative work, mostly, but joins in on the mat to teach, too.

Their karate journey began when Sia enrolled their son, who is now a college student, and decided to join herself. She was hooked. The karate bug spread throughout the family, and they all got their black belts in quick succession before opening the studio two years ago.

The science behind human

anatomy and motion fascinated Sia from the moment she began.

The ability to learn how to defend oneself and train one's self-discipline is also crucial. American Kenpo, the type the family practices and teaches, was designed by American martial artists Ed Parker.

"It was basically the science of motion. So you look at how the anatomy of the body works, how the muscles interact, how the skeletal structure works," Sia said.

Philosophically, the art focuses on modesty, integrity, perseverance, self-control and indomitable spirit.

Ana said it has helped her release pent-up energy. She's the competitor in the family and although the studio does not specialize in competitive sparring karate, she trains for both.

"Scoring the way you would score points wouldn't necessarily be effective in a fight," she explained.

Moving up

Students start quite young. They learn how to move their body. They learn discipline, and new moves and how to respect others.

Their movements mimic the conversations had with their senseis. Confidence emerges from within as they tie their belts around their gi.

The discipline and lessons of self-respect were evident during the belt ceremony in early May.

Four students, Henrietta Hanson, Tyler Babalis, Xzavier Welch and Quinn Perkins — all first graders— were honored.

On the left, they placed their old belt, in the middle, their new one, and on the right, an open space was left.

This symbolized their past and present, and left space for what's yet to come.

"Our big philosophy here is we hope that you never, ever, ever have to use what we teach you to defend yourself, but if you needed to, you know it's there," Sia said.

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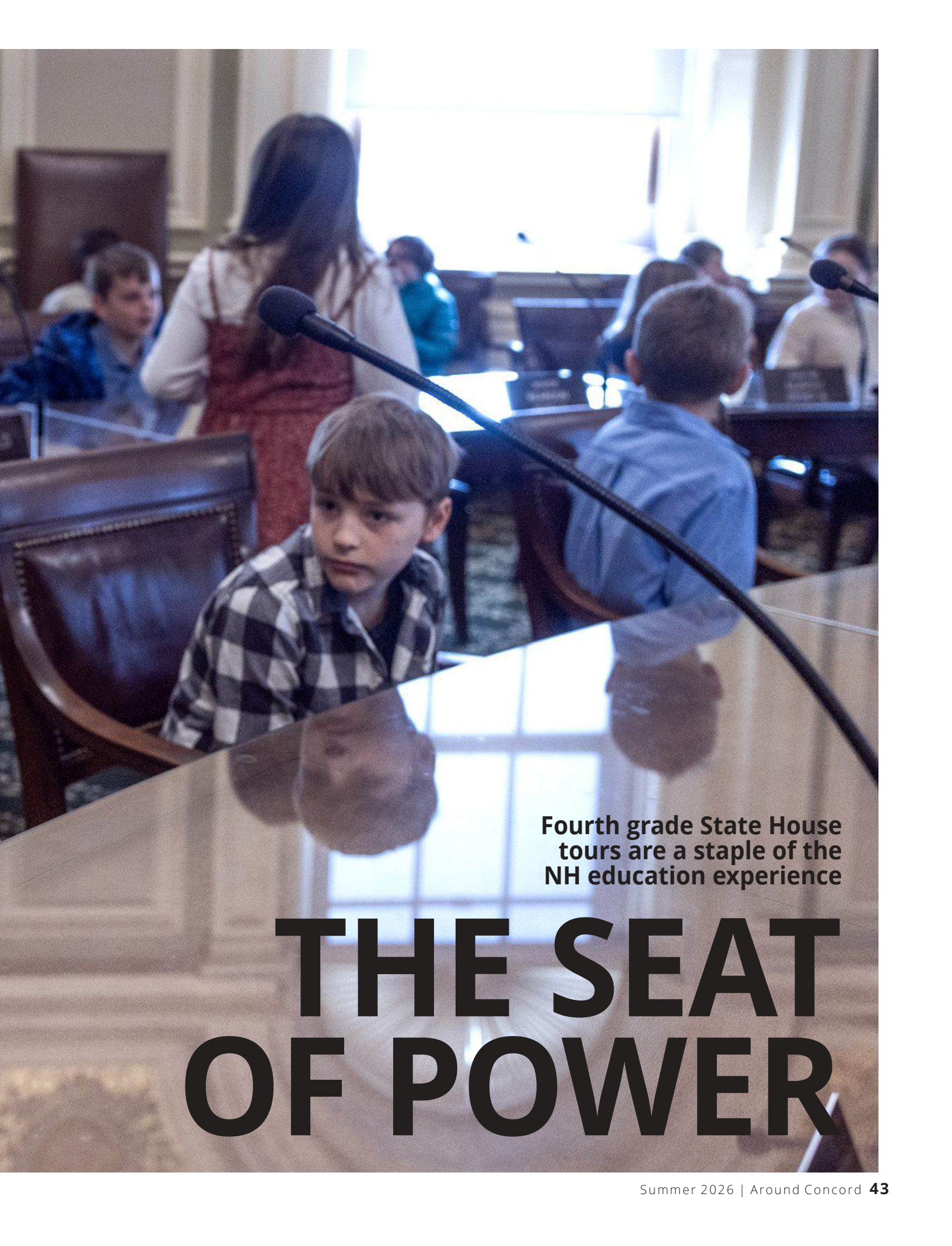
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Arie Chauvette said she “felt like I had the power to vote” while sitting in state Sen. David Rochefort’s chair on a tour of the State House on May 15.

Geoff Forester



Fourth grade State House
tours are a staple of the
NH education experience

THE SEAT OF POWER

An annual discovery



Geoff Forester

Shawn Bergeron, a fourth-grader at Epsom Central School, explores a wall of foreign money at the State House Visitors Center with his classmates on May 15.

By CHARLOTTE MATHERLY

Arie Chauvette beamed as she sat in a tall, leather-backed chair, her legs dangling below.

On any normal day, she's a fourth-grader at Epsom Central School. But in that moment, she assumed the seat of state Sen. David Rochefort of Littleton.

Arie leaned forward, enraptured. Her eyes locked on Virginia Drew, director of the State House Visitor Center.

"Senator David Rochefort represents over 57 towns — the whole top of New Hampshire," Drew told her, drawing her words out for maximum effect.

Arie, surrounded by her classmates in



Mason Smith, a student at Epsom Central School, looks around the State House Visitor Center. Each week during the legislative session, hundreds of students make their fourth-grade visit to the State House.



Geoff Forester

Above: Jace Currier peers up at the wall of the Senate chambers.

Left: Gwenyth Kaplan (right) and Sadie Cushing act as governor and a nominated judge to demonstrate an Executive Council vote.

the Senate chamber, was mesmerized.

“It felt like I had the power to vote,” she said.

Each week during the legislative session, hundreds of students make their fourth-grade sojourn to the New Hampshire State House, learning about the history of their state and the legislative process.

The tour focuses on New Hampshire firsts — the first state to write its own constitution, the first to ratify the U.S. Constitution, the first in a string of presidential pri-

maries — and the storied past of the State House, the oldest in the country where lawmakers still meet in their original chambers.

Kids marveled at what’s jokingly dubbed the “wall of losers” in the visitor center, which boasts a treasure trove of merchandise from presidential hopefuls who’ve passed through New Hampshire.

Some were more confusing than others.

“Why does that one say ‘MATH?’” Shawn Bergeron

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asked, pointing to a sign that brandished the slogan of 2020 candidate Andrew Yang: Make America Think Harder. "Who is MATH?"

The students greeted their state representatives, Carol and Dan McGuire, then peppered Drew with questions as she led the group of about 50 around the building in a single-file line, wet shoes squeaking on the pristine tile floors. The first stop was the Hall of Flags, where Drew regaled them with stories of battle flags

hundreds of years old.

This tour was a special one for Drew, who also serves as chair of the Select Board in Epsom. She told the kids from her hometown's school about Andrew McClary, who lived in their town and was killed in the Battle of Bunker Hill.

"We try to find the connection to their state capital," Drew said after the tour. She and her staff spend time researching before each group comes so they can personalize it. After 26

years leading these, her repertoire is expansive.

Next up was the Senate chamber, where Drew asked the kids to guess how much money state legislators make in New Hampshire. "One thousand dollars a week," one said. Arie suggested \$170 each week, only to learn that state representatives and senators make only \$100 each year.

"How many of you would vote to pay the lawmakers more?" Drew asked them. Most of the kids raised their hands. "How many of you would vote to pay them more money if it had to come from your own money?"

Their hands dropped like flies.

In the busiest season, Drew and her team host three schools every morning. The visitor center runs like a well-oiled machine, with staff members conveying their movements on walkie-talkies. There can be unexpected hiccups, however, like a security meeting in Representatives Hall that rerouted the tour.

In the Executive Council chamber, next to the governor's office, the kids role-played as elected officials and took a mock vote.

Drew pulled one student, Jamie Guth, out of the crowd to demonstrate what the governor and Council do.

"Jamie's friends are gonna be the people that he hires to do things, and Jamie, you also get to pick the judges. Would it be helpful if they were all your best friends?" Drew asked. "Then, if anyone has a problem with what Governor Jamie is doing, then they can just go to the judges who are his best friends. Ladies and gentlemen, do you like that? Do you think that's a fair way of doing it?"

The kids responded with a dutiful "no."

They concluded in Representatives Hall, where only a day prior, state representatives had spent nearly 10 hours voting on bills.

Drew proposed a bill for the kids' consideration: What if they extended lunchtime by 15 minutes, added 15



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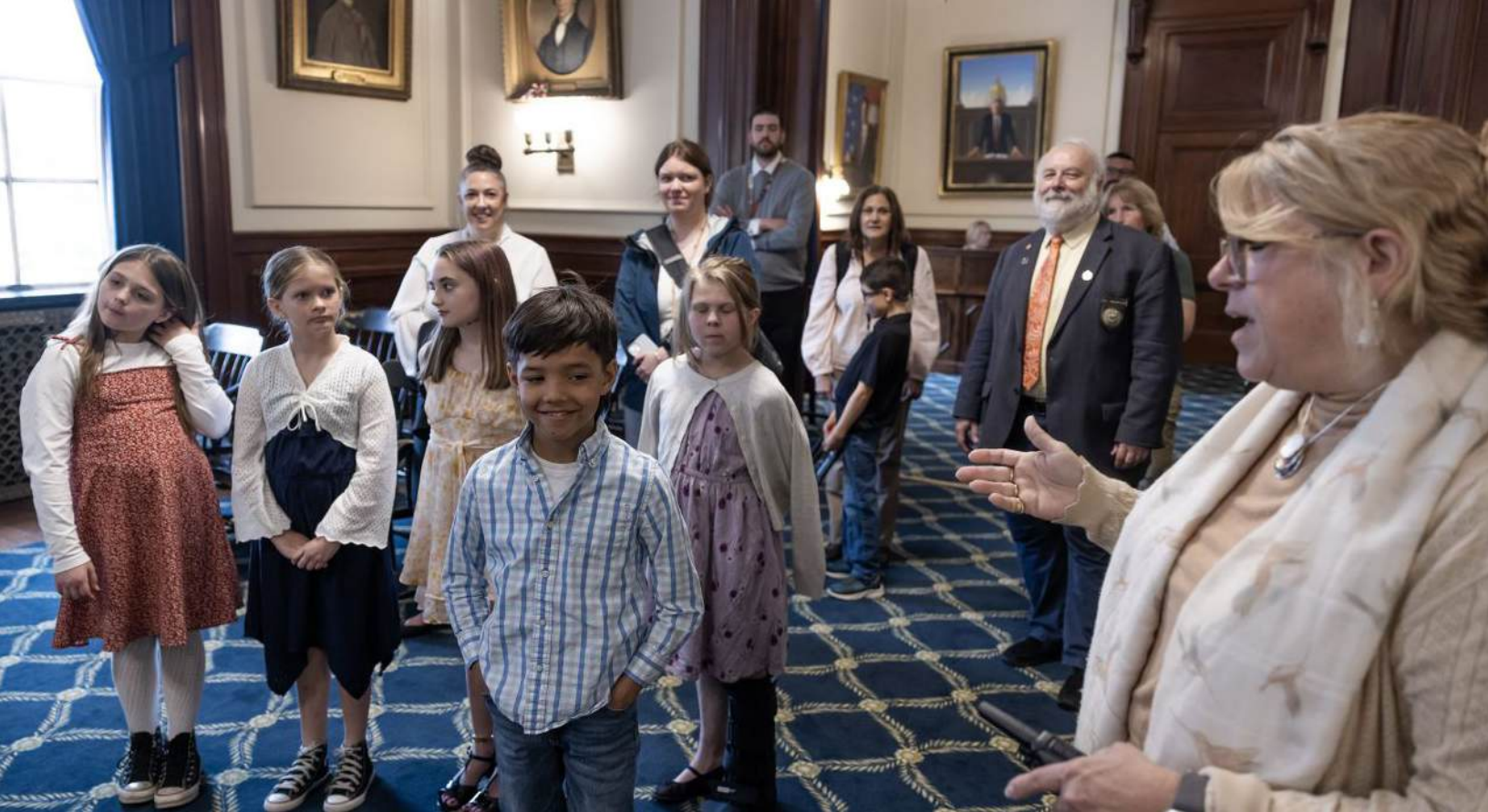
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Virginia Drew, right, pulls Epsom Central School student Jamie Guth from the crowd to demonstrate what the governor and Executive Council do during a tour on May 15.

more minutes to recess and an extra half hour of classroom time to help with tough subjects?

The students all thought it sounded like a good idea — until Drew pointed out that it would mean an extra hour of school every day, which caused the kids to erupt in a mix of cheers and boos.

“Now you sound like a legislature,” Drew joked. “Do you always agree with your friends? Is it OK to disagree?”

The class debated her proposal.

“Yes, because if someone’s bad at a subject” then they can get extra help, said Mason Smith from the back row.

Others, like Arie, thought it wasn’t a good idea. An extra hour of school would take away time for clubs and activities, she said. Her classmates ultimately rejected the law.

After another loop through the visitor center, Drew saw the kids out to their school bus and waved good-bye, then turned around and climbed the steps again. She was off to the next one.

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Megan Locker

Megan Locker started NH Craft Club in the spring of 2025.

CRAFTING AND THE ART OF UNITY

**NH Craft Club
fosters a new kind
of social space**

Creative connections



Megan Locker

NH Craft Club participants try their hands at mosaics.

By **RACHEL WACHMAN**

Glue guns, paint brushes, colorful markers, sequins and more litter the tables. The steady hum of conversation fills the room with a warmth more palpable than any music could.

Something electric happens when strangers shift to friends. NH Craft Club makes this easy.

“There is just something about getting together with people and doing something that you enjoy collectively, that kind of brings this rejuvenation, I suppose, to one’s life, to have something on the calendar to look forward to, to go spend an evening laughing with people and just communicating,” said Megan Locker, who founded the group last year.

It started with a question posed on social media last



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Megan Locker

NH Craft Club participants assemble their projects while connecting during a recent session.

spring. Locker wanted to know if people wanted to come together and craft. She had been looking for sources of community. It's hard as an adult to make friends, she said, and joining a run club or a book group didn't call to her in the same way.

"I think a lot of people have a similar sentiment of not really knowing how to meet new people and not really knowing how to get involved," said Locker, who lives in Canterbury. "And I think something like Craft Club or a similar community event is a good way to introduce people to the aspect of showing up alone to something and leaving with a new friend or a new acquaintance."

But nothing like Craft Club existed yet. So, she started it herself, launching a community craft group open to anyone interested in collective creativity. Locker connected with the Concord Makerspace in Boscawen, Imagine Art and Play in Hampton Falls and Sunstone Brewing in Londonderry. Each business was thrilled at the prospect of hosting the group, which rotates locations and activities to make crafting accessible to people across the Granite State.

From pottery and block printing to mosaic trays and beaded plants, Locker selects crafts that people may

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not pursue at home, given the niche supplies required. She wants people to be able to explore as many niche areas as possible.

For Kiera Kennedy, who lives in Nashua, attending Craft Club has been transformative.

"I cannot even describe how much I actually love it, because I also love crafting, but I don't love buying all the supplies, because you have to buy them in bulk pieces, and you're left over with all this stuff," she said. "And

then also, just having a group, I have so many new friends through the Craft Club, like where we hang out outside of the club."

She first heard about the group through TikTok, right when Locker issued her initial call-out. After attending the first session last year, Kennedy was hooked.

Fall wreaths and witches' brooms have been two of her favorite activities so far. And even though she lives in southern New Hampshire, she'll

drive to wherever an event is being held on a given weekend — and she keeps making friends in the process

"Megan has been very open in being like, 'If you've crafted before, come join us. If you haven't crafted before, come join us.' So, regardless of where you are with your abilities, she's always able to accommodate everybody. I think that's why I continue to go, because it's just such a welcoming group," Kennedy said.

As the group gained traction, with new people attending each session alongside dedicated returnees like Kennedy, Locker quickly saw how many people had been looking for the same community as she had been.

"Once I realized that the response was larger than I expected, a goal of mine has been to put Craft Club in as many pockets of New Hampshire as we can," she said.

She tries to keep the participation costs as low as possible while accommodating for her purchase of all the necessary materials. Her roster has al-



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Megan Locker

Megan Locker says she'd love to bring her concept to a space in downtown Concord.

ready grown to encompass Brookline, New Hampshire and White River Junction, Vermont, with Plymouth being her next target area.

Locker works in real estate by day, although she dedicates much of her spare time to preparing for the different sessions.

"Dreaming as big as I can, Craft Club will become my full-time job," she said. "We would have a cute little studio, ideally somewhere on Main Street in Concord, but that's just like wishful thinking. But we would have a cute little studio where we could host more frequently and at a lower cost."

Beyond that, she wants a space where people can come in for free with their own supplies and just sit together as they work.

A crafter herself, Locker sees tremendous value in having time to pursue a creative passion.

"When you graduate and you're kind of thrown into the adult world of working nine-to-five and figuring out how to pay bills, I feel like sometimes those hobbies take a back seat," she said. "And it was really important to me as, like, a little bit older, to fall

back into the hobbies."

For her, as for Kennedy, it all comes back to the people she meets.

"Crafting is a secondary to wanting to build this community and form friendships," said Locker.

For more information, visit nhcraftclub.com.

Upcoming events include

June 19: Bedazzle Bar in Londonderry

June 20: Mosaic Trays in Concord

June 20: Block Printing in Hampton Falls

June 21: Tin Embossing in White River Junction, VT

July 9: "Summer Nights" free crafting event with NHPR in Concord

August 21: Craft Camp with Suncook River Camp

There will also be a series of events with Lucky Bug Farm in Amherst on June 28, July 12 and September 13, with the exact crafts to be announced soon.



Every community has a place where people come together- where conversations flow easily, the food feels familiar yet inspired, and the atmosphere invites you to stay a little longer.



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IN THE CONE ZONE

New Hampshire's Ice Cream Trail has existed in some form since 2012 and was re-launched this year with a total of 69 stops across the state.

The launchpad for the announcement made by Gov. Kelly Ayotte and state tourism officials was Richardson Farm in Boscawen, which was one of the first participants.

The revamped trail includes locations around the state, including the Lakes Region and Merrimack Valley.

For her part, Ayotte said she would try to visit every stop along the trail. Her favorite

ABOVE: Lauren Silvestri, 1, digs into her strawberry rhubarb ice cream as she sits with her family outside the Richardson's Ice Cream stand in Boscawen last summer.

Geoff Forester

flavor, for those who are wondering, is black raspberry.

Those of us at Around Concord have our own favorites, some of which aren't listed on the official 2026 trail map (shoutout to Arnie's in Concord and Beech Hill Farm in Hopkinton), so give them and others a visit too.

Here's a list of the local shops that are on this list in the Capital Area and a few in the Lakes Region.

Merrimack Valley

Ilsley's Ice Cream: 33 South Sugar Hill Rd., Weare 603-529-6455

Richardson's Farm: 170 Water St., Boscawen 603-796-2788

Social Club Creamery: 138 N Main St., Concord 603-333-2111

Superscoops: 58 Main St., Henniker 603-717-0661

Sweet Dreamz: 325 Village St., Penacook 603-581-8112

Devriendt Farm Products: 178 South Mast St., Goffstown 603-

497-2799

Dudley's Ice Cream: 846 NH-106, Loudon 603-783-4800

Gould Hill Farm: 656 Gould Hill Rd., Contoocook 603-746-3811

Granite State Candy Shoppe: 13 Warren St., Concord 603-225-2591



Courtesy

Lakes Region

Bailey's Bubble: 5 Railroad Ave., Wolfeboro 603-569-3612

Happy Cow Ice Cream Shop: 385 Union Ave., Laconia 603-524-7772

Kellerhaus: 259 Endicott St. N., Laconia 603-366-4466

Milltuck Farm and Creamery: 728 New Hampton Rd., Sanbornton 603-630-7961

M 'N M Scoops: 67 Main St., Plymouth 603-536-4850

Papa Bean's Ice Cream: 301 Wing Rd., North Sandwich 603-393-6948

Social Club Creamery: 51 Elm St., Laconia 603-619-5098

The Sandwich Creamery: 2 Maple Ridge Rd., North Sandwich 603-284-6675

Wolfeboro Dockside Grille & Dairy Bar: 2 Maple Ridge Rd., North Sandwich 603-284-6675

Yum Yum Shop: 16 N Main St., Wolfeboro 603-569-1919

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THE SCENE



CATHERINE MCLAUGHLIN

Clint Klose will retire this year after 35 years in Concord School District and 15 leading Concord High School productions. Above, he sits with the cast and crew of the recent product of *Dear Evan Hansen* during a rehearsal at Concord High School.

Savoring the moments



Geoff Forester

Rock 'N Race committee members Pat Bourgault and Jeremiah Gould run between the tents and the raindrops as they prepare for the race at the State House grounds.



Rebeca Pereira

Dakota Matott (center) approaches the platform flanked by friends at NHTI's graduation ceremony on Friday, May 15.



Geoff Forester

John Stark senior Megan Flaherty (center) dances with one of her best buddies, John Stark freshman Maddie Stevenson, before the Best Buddies Friendship Walk at the State House in Concord. Flaherty is in the school's life skills program.



Geoff Forester

Ellie Brown from the Kawasiwajo Community Land Trust looks over the full barn at the Foster Farm in Warner in early May. The barn sits across from the farm house on the 70-acre historic homestead that hasn't been in active agricultural use for decades.



Alexander Rapp

Concord's Junior Venuste plays an Ed Sheeran song on his saxophone during the Project S.T.O.R.Y. nonprofit's five-year anniversary talent show.



Geoff Forester

Picturesque but powerful

The Concord region is known to be an hour from everywhere – the mountains, the coast and Boston. But what is uniquely our own are the rivers that line our landscape. Summer is a time to escape, even if it's in your own back yard. But like any adventure, kayaking or swimming requires some preparation. If you are heading into area rivers like the Contoocook, shown above, the Merrimack or others, make safety a priority. Strong and unpredictable currents can make seemingly placid waters a life-threatening situation for those who are unprepared. Enjoy the summer!

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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