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Q&A WITH JODI PICOULT

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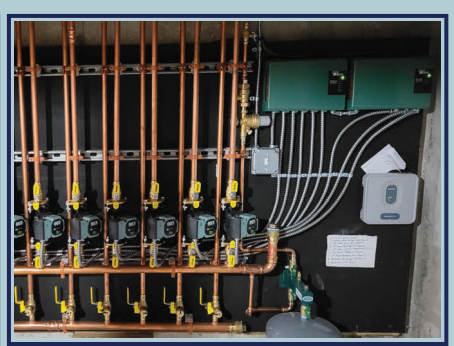




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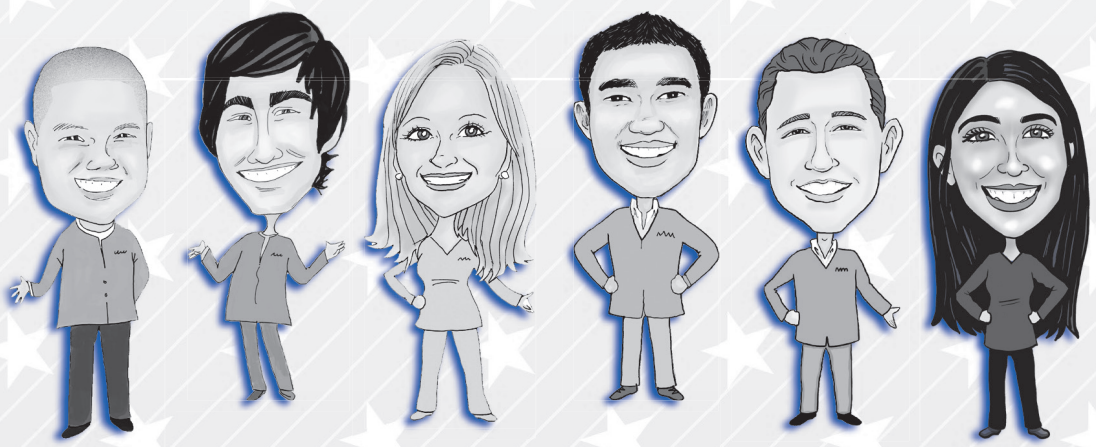
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30 **Mr. Aaron has found his groove**

14 **Mark your calendars for an autumn full of festivals and local flavor**

17 **NH author Jodi Picoult sits down for a Q&A; plus a look ahead at Book Fest**

36 **Go back in time with a modern flair at the Capital Pinball Club in Concord**

42 **Franklin shop takes you deep into the art of wool and craftmaking**



24 **A guide to local thrift shops**

ON THE COVER: Photo by Alexander Rapp taken at Gibson's Bookstore in Concord

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Captivated by the art of the storyteller

It was a Friday afternoon in mid-August. I sat at my desk, back straight, palms sweating, waiting for Jodi Picoult to pop up on my computer screen.

From the moment I heard she would be headlining this year's New Hampshire Book Festival, I knew I wanted to interview her.



There's something so captivating about her writing — complex characters, murky moral conundrums, immersive plots that leave the reader yearning for more.

After Picoult joined the video meeting and we began chatting, it dawned on me that I would have great trouble capturing our conversation in print. She's vibrant and passionate, her enthusiasm for writing present in every word she speaks. In other words, she's three-dimensional, all the way.

Yet I wanted every reader to get to experience what I did: a storyteller who seeks to illuminate the truths of humanity through the lens of the people she renders on the page.

I decided to let our conversation speak for itself, rather than trying to write it into a story. You can follow along in The Sitdown, our quarterly Q&A feature.

Alexander Rapp's piece on pinball is another example of something three-dimensional. His photography is colorful, eye-catching, dynamic. His writing brings the sport to life.

Emilia Wisniewski does the same in illuminating Eagle Aerie, "a crafty realm of possibilities" outside of downtown Franklin, as she describes the store and workshop space.

This whole magazine, hopefully, should draw you from the two-dimensional work into the three-dimensional spaces, people and ideas all around us.

Enjoy the exploration!

Rachel Wachman
Editor

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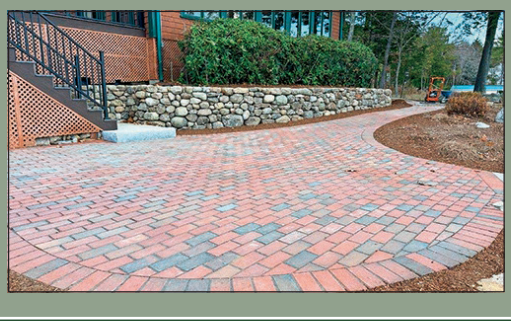
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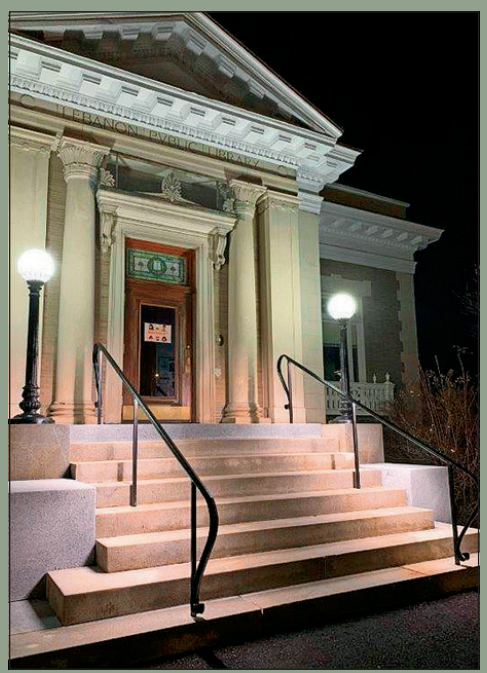






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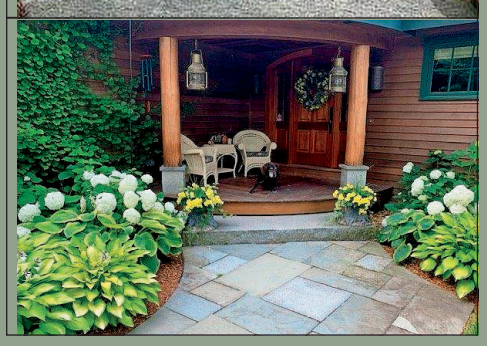
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Fast faves



Angie Lane is the executive director of Red River Theatres, a non-profit independent cinema situated on Concord's Main Street. Lane lived in Concord for nearly 20 years before moving to Manchester, but because of Red River, she still spends a lot of her time in the city. "Concord continues to feel like home," she said. Learn more about Angie's favorite parts of life in the Granite State's capital.



What do you like most about Concord?

Concord has an amazing sense of community. It's a smaller city that really punches above its weight, from its vibrant Main Street and beautiful parks to its festivals, independent shops, coffee shops and restaurants. All of these things make Concord feel alive with creativity and energy. I also love that it's the kind of place where you're always running into someone you know.



What's a local place you've recently discovered?

I recently visited the Eleventh Letter Writing Gallery on Main Street and met the owner, Jocelynn Winn, and I can't wait to go back!



Any go-to stores for clothes or other fun things?



There are so many! Penumbra is a favorite. The owners, Alison and Alyssa, are wonderful and always helpful when I'm choosing plants, especially since I haven't always had the best track record keeping them alive! Gibson's Bookstore is another favorite. It's a wonderful independent bookstore with an amazing staff and cafe. The Concord Farmers Market is always great for local produce and other great local products. But let's be honest, it's also an excellent place to see lots of dogs out with their humans! Coffee & Cars is a newer seasonal event to Main Street. I'm not necessarily a car enthusiast, but you don't have to be to enjoy it.

What's your favorite Concord event?
It has to be Intown Concord's Market Days Festival. It's a Concord classic, and I've loved watching it grow and evolve over the years. Between the live music, food trucks, shopping and community atmosphere, there's always something happening. It's also one of those events where you're guaranteed to run into people you know, which I love!

Where's your favorite local outdoor spot?
I love all the trails in Concord and walked them often during the pandemic. We are *so* lucky to live in a city where you can be in the forest in minutes. The Marjorie Swope Park Trails are a favorite.

What do you want to see more of in or around Concord?
I love Concord and have loved seeing it grow and evolve over the years, welcoming new people to the city each year. As Concord continues to grow, I hope we'll keep supporting independent businesses, expanding community events, and embracing new ideas that add to the creativity and energy that make our city so special.

Anything else to add?
I say this a lot, especially if I am talking about how special Red River Theatres is, but if aliens were to come to Concord and scan our city for "proof of life," they would find an indie movie theatre, an indie bookstore and an indie music store.

OPTIONS ABOUND



Festivals, foliage, howls, food dominate the season

The days may be getting shorter and the temperatures dropping, but they herald the spectacular display of fall colors on the trees, something New Hampshire is proud to showcase.

Residents and visitors will be able to see these warm shades of red, orange and yellow while enjoying these five events coming up this fall season.

Warner Fall Foliage Festival — Oct. 9, 10, 11

The 78th foliage festival in downtown Warner is a classic fall event: booths of local crafts, baked goods and trinkets line either side of the street, amid the spectacular colors that tourists love and residents treasure.

Activities will run all weekend, including an oxen competition, a 5K road race and the grand parade. Plenty of food trucks will be on hand to quell the biggest appetites, and there are lobster dinners both Saturday and Sunday.

The event is free to attend for all ages. Information about vendors, performances and events are pending, so check the festival's website for updates.

Concord Multicultural Festival — Sept. 20



The 19th annual festival is coming back to Concord, bringing together rich cultures from around the world, represented by local Granite Staters. The festival aims to create "opportunities for people to share traditions, build relationships, and celebrate the diversity that strengthens our community," according to its website. Some hallmark features of the event include a variety of performances, food, art and activities that represent over 70 cultures from across the globe. The event will take place from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Keach Park. Information on how to participate as a vendor or a donor will be available soon on the festival's website.

Concord Farmers' Market — ends Oct. 31



Saturday mornings in downtown Concord have been bustling since the farmers' market opened in May. Local shoppers hunt for the freshest foods and top-quality artisan goods offered by vendors who arrive from across NH.

It's one of the oldest operating farmers' markets in the state, with dozens of vendors participating every year. It wraps up at the end of October, so stop by to get your fix of local coffee, produce, flowers, baked goods and heaven knows what else.

Halloween Howl — Oct. 23



After sunset, Concord will be packed with witches, ghouls and beasts — but don't worry; they're just trick-or-treating around Main Street. Family and friends will enjoy this community Halloween event featuring music, food trucks and games.

Trick-or-treating starts at 5:30 p.m., and individuals and businesses can participate in Trunk or Treat if they register by Oct. 16. If you have a costume that'll strike fear or get laughs, sign up for the contest before 6 p.m. A flash mob, a pumpkin contest and games will amplify the spirit; the events will finish at 7:30. Learn more at intownconcord.org.



Deerfield State Fair — Oct. 1-4

The beloved state fair kicks off October's fall festivities, offering plenty of fun for all visitors.

Fairgoers can expect dazzling live music and circus shows, a vast array of local food and products, and even an excavator rodeo. You can count on finding all the classic fair staples, such as amusement park rides and fried food vendors.

Adult tickets at the gate will be $12 but discounts are offered if tickets are bought online before October. Children 12 and younger and members of the military get in free. More information about events, vendors and other attractions are at deerfieldfair.com.

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New Hampshire's own **Jodi Picoult** on her 30th novel and what drives her

By RACHEL WACHMAN

For Jodi Picoult, stories transcend geography, politics, time, gender, socioeconomics and far more.

Her work dwells in the gray area, the places people might fear to venture alone but will do so willingly through the lens of a character who feels real. She wants her readers to think, for perspectives to shift, for conversations to spark — about suicide, abortions, transgender rights, criminal justice, gun violence.

Picoult, who lives in Hanover, has written three dozen books. A No. 1 New York Times bestselling author and the recipient of numerous accolades, she prides herself in thorough research, vivid storytelling and challenging moral dilemmas.

All of these elements will take the stage with Picoult to kick off the New Hampshire Book Festival on Friday, Oct. 2. As the adult keynote speaker, she will talk to an audience of readers at the Capitol Center for the Arts about her newest release, "Hollow Bones," as well as many other aspects of her writing.

" I'm not going to tell you that you're wrong, but I am going to ask you to listen, and maybe ask yourself, why do I believe what I believe?"

Around Concord Editor Rachel Wachman chatted with Picoult ahead of her visit to Concord.

Rachel Wachman: Tell me a little bit about that feeling of coming home and being able to share your work with people right here in your own state.

Jodi Picoult: To be headlining this festival, it feels like synchronicity, like everything coming together at once. It was the perfect time of year because my book just came out, and I love meeting New Hampshire fans. There's nothing I love more than repping the state and telling people why I love living here.

RW: This year marks the 25th anniversary of 9/11. I'm curious to learn more about the idea for Hollow Bones and what it means to you to share this story with the world.

JP: This book came about actually because of a text that an author friend sent me. It was from an Instagram handle called Post Secret ... Basically, people send in their deepest, darkest secrets on a postcard, and they're published anonymously. And this one said, "Everyone who knew me before 9/11 thinks that I'm dead."

She just sent me this, like out of the blue, and I did what authors do: I called dibs on it. And then I couldn't stop thinking about it, and I just kept thinking, what would make someone use a tragedy of that magnitude to disappear? And maybe more interestingly, what would make them come back?

And that is what Hollow Bones blossomed from. It is the story of Molly Fitzgerald. We hear about her when she's two months old. Her mom goes to a doctor's appointment and never comes home on 9/11. And when we meet her, it's 25 years later. She is married to Jesse Fitzgerald from one of my earlier books, "My Sister's Keeper." He's all grown up now. They're expecting a baby. Life is great. She's the head of Emergency Preparedness and Response for the whole state of Rhode Island, basically trying to keep people from feeling what she did in the aftermath of a catastrophe. And then she realizes when disaster hits close to home that that's a lot easier said than done. That being prepared is not being protected. So that's the focus of the story. It's about motherhood. It's about the lies that we tell to protect the people we love, and it's a lot about gender discrimination in healthcare.

RW: Your work tackles some really big, engaging, and often controversial topics. It feels like you start conversations. Is that something that you've always set out to do? Did it happen over time?

JP: My parents came to visit last week, and the last conversation I had with them before they left me this morning was about how did I develop this sense of fairness and ethics? I don't remember that being something that we talked about at the dinner table, for example. I think it was just kind of implicit in the way that my parents were living their lives and the things that were important to them. I think that's something that I carry with me now, and hopefully have passed on to my kids as well.

I don't think it's my job as an author to tell you what to think. I do believe it's my job to ask you why your opinions are what they are. Most of us form our opinions when we're very young because our parents have them, our clergy have them, our friends have them, and then we don't ever rethink those opinions. And I think that my books allow you to hear the other side's point of view, maybe for the first time. I'm not going to tell you that you're wrong, but I am going to ask you to listen, and maybe ask yourself, why do I believe what I believe? That is a conversation. That's the first conversation that you have is with yourself. And then you're equipped to have it with others.

RW: How do you choose which topics to delve into?

JP: The reason I choose a topic is because it's something that I can't stop thinking about at all. I just told you the whole Post Secret story. What would that have been like? What would I have done if I were in that situation, and that whole sense of asking myself to walk a mile in somebody else's shoes is very much the foundation of most of my novels.

One of the superpowers of fiction, I think, is that a lot of people don't want to discuss a difficult topic. Nobody goes and checks out of the library the FBI report on school shooters, right? It's just not a fun read. But I think that when you write fiction, what you're actually doing is creating characters and scenarios that are supposed to sweep your reader away. But if you've really done your job, by the end of the book, they're still thinking about these big issues that have been filtered through the life of a character. If you can't meet a person face-to-face who has experienced one of these issues or one of these controversies, the second best thing is to read about a character who has.

RW: Your characters are so vivid that they basically just jump right off the page. Part of what makes them compelling is how complicated they

"It's not like I can tell you how I make up characters because, in many ways, they kind of arrive fully formed in my head. I just hear them."

are. What does your study of people look like that allows you to render such complicated characters?

JP: I just sit there at airports, and I make up backstories for people. It's not like I can tell you how I make up characters because, in many ways, they kind of arrive fully formed in my head. I just hear them. I hear their voices, and when I can hear them, I usually stop everything and then try to do all the research that I can because I need to know who they are, what they do, and be able to speak with authority for them. So I never feel like I create characters. I sort of feel like, I guess, more like a medium, like I hear them talking to me.

RW: Often you begin with an acknowledgement of the professionals that you consulted or different elements of what your process looked like. And I know that you have had research experiences really around the globe. What percentage of your writing process is creative or imaginative versus researched, and how do you figure out which part to rely on at different points?

JP: Everyone asks me, Oh, do you have a whole research team? I do not. I don't even have an assistant. What you see is what you get. I do everything from mailings to answering fan mail. So I don't have a research assistant, and I wouldn't want one because that's the best part of the job.

When I know what my story is going to be, and I figure out who my characters are — in the case of Molly, for example, in "Hollow Bones," I knew I was going to have to learn about emergency preparedness and response. So I wound up talking to her real-life counterpart in Rhode Island. I did probably 50 hours of interviews with her by Zoom, and then went down to attend one of the surprise training sessions that she runs, which was absolutely insane to be there in the thick of it to see what that feels like was amazing. For Jesse's character, I wound up connecting with networking till I got to a deputy sheriff who is in charge of polygraphy in the state of New Hampshire for the State Police. I went in. He taught me how to run the machine, and then he hooked me up to the machine.

The big question I usually get is, how do you know when to stop research? It's sometimes hard because some of the research is really fun and you just want to keep doing it forever. When I'm sitting in front of someone like...the emergency preparedness director, she might say something, and in the back of my mind, I'm going to go, "I'm going to use that in this part of the book." When I have enough of those, it's very weird. It feels like a little tornado in my head, and it touches down in a first line. And when I have the first line of the book, that's when I know I can write.

RW: It sounds like you have really well-developed systems that you've honed throughout your career. I'm curious what has surprised you the most about your trajectory and the stories that you've told.

JP: That I'm here talking to you! Seriously, the odds of becoming a published writer are so slim, and the odds of becoming a published writer with people who buy books that are not my mother and her friends are huge, right? I actually do remember being young and thinking, okay, at this point my mom just doesn't have that many friends, you know, so someone's got to be reading my books out there. To be a best-selling author, to have the name recognition that I have to have, to have had the level of success that I've had with 30 books — just even to have 30 books that are not just published but are all still in print — very few writers have that.

That is mind-boggling to me. I don't consider that actually a function of me or my talent or anything like that. I actually consider that a function of my fans, for whom I am extremely grateful, because I do not write the same book over and over. I have fans that are like so willing to go anywhere I want to take them. I cannot think of another writer who has a fan base with that level of trust. I'm just so fortunate to have that.

RW: If there was one final burning question that I could ask you, it's what work do you see stories doing in the world in which we live, and what does storytelling mean to you?

JP: We are living in a time when facts are fictional, when lies are presented as truths. And when that happens, sometimes the only real way to get to the truth is through fiction, ironically.

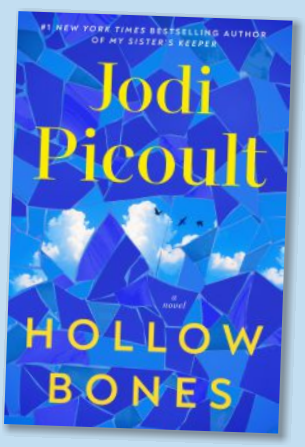
So I think that we are living in a world right now where fiction is so important because it's giving people the resources and the knowledge that nonfiction should and may not be at this moment because of people in power who are manipulating the truth. For me, stories start conversations. Stories allow you to hear another point of view and to get yourself out of your echo chamber. Stories bridge differences, and with any luck, stories open minds and hearts a little bit.

This interview has been edited for concision and clarity.

BOOK EXCERPT

HOLLOW BONES

SNEAK PEEK: An excerpt from New Hampshire author Jodi Picoult's 30th novel, which comes out in September



Jodi Picoult is the No. 1 New York Times bestselling author of 30 novels, including "By Any Other Name," "Mad Honey" (co-authored with Jennifer Finney Boylan), "Wish You Were Here," "The Book of Two Ways," "A Spark of Light," "Small Great Things," "Leaving Time," and "My Sister's Keeper", and, with daughter Samantha van Leer, two young adult novels, "Between the Lines" and "Off the Page." Her 30th novel, "Hollow Bones," releases mid-September. She lives in New Hampshire with her husband.

An unexpected wind picks up from the north and the wall of fire becomes a living thing, a dragon roaring toward the first responders who try to tame it. I'm frozen in place, watching this hellscape. These thirty-mile-per-hour gusts have seemingly arrived out of, well, thin air.

The flames lick to the sky and then swoop back against the crashed Southwest jet, making it harder to see the passengers still trapped inside. Smoke rolls across the tarmac and heat beats against my face. My phone buzzes incessantly: Alert 3 at TF Green; plane has crashed on runway, on fire, evacuating passengers; plus calls to nearby police and EMS and fire departments for mutual aid. There's a scream of sirens as two ladder engines from the Warwick Fire Department join forces with the struggling firemen from the Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting Team, spraying the chemical foam used to extinguish jet fuel.

A dozen EMTs stand at a safe distance like runners at a gate, raring for the go-ahead to treat the passengers, but there's no way to get them out of the plane until the fire's been subdued. Which would have happened by now if the wind hadn't changed direction. This is quickly becoming an even greater disaster.

As the Chief of the Center for Emergency Preparedness and Response at the Rhode Island Department of Health, I was among the first to be notified about the crash. By the time I ran out the door to get to the Emergency Operations Center at the airport, I was already texting my team. My deputy chief, Toby, had put out the initial notification to all Rhode Island

BOOK EXCERPT

hospitals: A plane has crashed at TF Green. Estimated 168 souls on board. EMS is assessing. Please provide your bed availability. The more time they had to determine their capacity, call in their trauma teams, clear beds in the emergency department, or prep the burn cart, the better.

A whip of wind blows some of my hair out of my braid. By the time I brush it from my eyes, the yellow tongue of the evacuation slide has deployed.

Shit.

While we need to get the passengers safely cleared, having them slide through an active blaze is a mistake. But the EMTs surge forward, and passengers begin deplaning. The airport fire chief grimaces, then directs his team to pivot so they can create a physical barrier between the slide and the flames.

Passengers reach the tarmac, sobbing. A flight attendant shepherds a woman with a piece of metal protruding from her upper arm. One middle-aged man sees the fire and panics, racing in the opposite direction. Another stumbles toward the firefighters, hands clasped over his eyes, shrieking in pain.

A pumper truck arrives, along with the first ambulances. The triage coordinator—an EMT at the bottom of the evacuation slide—evaluates each passenger. Those who can walk get directed to the Temporary Reception Center, a tent where a Southwest rep will check them in and make them as comfortable as possible until law enforcement can interview them. Passengers who can't move lie on the ground, moaning, or—worse—in silence. Paramedics pinball between victims, tagging them with triage tape—red, yellow, and green.

Although I've been doing this job for six years, every disaster feels like the first time. The minutes pass differently. It seems to take aeons until the fire is subdued, foam coating the plane and the tarmac below. By then, anyone able to get off the plane by themself has been evacuated, and firefighters have deployed ladders to rescue those who remain. Injured passengers litter the tarmac like a macabre quilt. An ambulance zooms into view, and two paramedics leap out with a backboard. They rush to





ALL ABOUT NH BOOK FEST



AP

Author Jeff Kinney will be among the big names visiting Concord for the annual book festival.

The New Hampshire Book Festival's 2026 lineup features more than 60 acclaimed authors, poets, illustrators and literary moderators who will gather for two days of conversations, book signings and family-friendly programming this fall.

The free, all-day festival will take place on Saturday, October 3 in downtown Concord. It is supported by ticketed keynote events for schoolchildren, adults and families. This year's headliners are international bestselling author Jodi Picoult, who will deliver the festival's Opening Keynote on October 2 at 7 p.m., and bestselling author and cartoonist Jeff Kinney, creator of the Diary of a Wimpy Kid series, who will present the Children's Keynote on October 2 at 10:30 a.m., and the Family Keynote on October 3 at 6:30 p.m.

The 2026 festival showcases an extraordinary range of voices from national and local literary communities representing fiction, nonfiction, poetry, children's literature, young adult novels, and graphic storytelling. Panels will be moderated by authors and literary professionals, including contributors from the Concord Monitor and NHPR.

"We're really excited about this year's lineup, with its wide range of authors, genres, and subjects," said New Hampshire Book Festival co-founder Sarah McCraw Crow. "Some of this year's authors have won multiple awards and have longtime readerships, while others are debut authors. The festival offers readers of all ages the chance to engage directly with the people behind the books they love."

The 2026 author lineup includes:

Jodi Picoult, Jeff Kinney, M. T. Anderson, Diane Les Becquets, Rebecca Bendheim, Susan Donovan Bernhard, Winsome Bingham, Jenna Blum, Valerie Bolling, Lisa Borders, Emilie Christie Burack, Nora Shalaway Carpenter, Brinda Charry, Wyn Cooper, Lynette

BOOK EXCERPT

a teenage girl, red-tagged and unmoving, her head haloed by a puddle of blood.

I find myself staring at the spill of red; the horror it evokes. In situations like this, it's hard to remember what is real and what isn't.

The Teams app on my phone pings with a member of my department who has been monitoring social media. There was a very pregnant woman on board. Anyone have eyes on her?

A flurry of responses scroll in—nos from the Temporary Reception Center and the transport officer. Has someone already found her? Is she still on the plane? My gaze roams over the wounded, falling on a woman with her back to me, a yellow tag on her shirt and burns on her arms. When she rolls to the side, I see a swollen belly. She lets out an unearthly groan.

Before I can even text that I've found her, an EMT rushes over. He replaces her yellow strip of tape with a red one. "I need transport now," he shouts.

My phone rings—the call I have been waiting for. "The manifest is in," says Sue, a Southwest Airlines rep, referring to the list of crew and passengers. "Meet at the EOC?" The Emergency Operations Center is located in a nearby maintenance building with windows that overlook the scene. The room is jammed with people.

I take a seat beside Sue. She pulls up the manifest on her phone as I pull up the patient tracking system—which allows me to see who's been transported by ambulance, and where, for the last four hours. There are so many legal issues around turning over a list to Southwest that best practice is to sit next to each other and read off names.

A guy from EMS who only started a month ago—Robert? Roger?—blusters in. "Sorry I'm late," he apologizes. "State police just showed up." He clutches the third master list—the dossier of who is or was sitting on the tarmac, and who has been cataloged at the Temporary

BOOK EXCERPT

Reception Center. By cross-referencing the three documents, we make sure that everyone has been accounted for.

Sometimes, it's how we figure out who is dead, too.

We start the reconciliation with Sue reading the names of the crew. The pilot and copilot are on Roger's list with minor injuries treated in the field. The flight attendants have all been accounted for, one having been sent to South County Hospital and the rest still in the Temporary Reception Center. "Alice Kennedy," Sue reads, and I scan my tracking system.

"Sent to Roger Williams Medical Center," I reply.

Roland Gresham. Chinara Adebayo. Alika Adebayo.

"Minh Nguyen?"

I scroll and scroll but cannot find that name.

Roger's is flipping through a spreadsheet on his laptop. "Negative," he says finally.

From the background chatter behind us, the deputy chief of EMS interrupts. "Sorry, did you say Nguyen?" Paul asks. "We have a Nguyen ID'd as a decedent."

Sue checks her manifest. "First name?"

He shakes his head. "Don't have it."

"This one is a twenty-six-year-old female?"

Paul hunches away, speaking into a radio before turning back to us. "Mine's an elderly man," he replies.

Sue nods, moving down the manifest list and putting a check mark next to another Nguyen.

"Ah, got her," Roger says. "Minh Nguyen. Her name was misspelled. Uninjured and checked in at 2:24 p.m."

We continue methodically for over an hour, tuning out the updates from the field when the plane is fully evacuated and cleanup of the firefighting foam has begun—it's been linked to PFOS in groundwater, which is a battle we'll have to fight another day. An alert comes in that Rhode Island Hospital is at capacity. Finally, we each scan our lists to make sure all 168 passengers and crew have been checked.

"I only have one sixty-seven," Sue mutters. "Let me count again." And then: "There's a lap infant. Twenty-three months."

"Who was the child with?" I ask.

"Elisabeth Abbott," Sue answers. "Age twenty-nine."

For a moment we are all lost in our silos, trying to find something—anything—about an infant. "Elisabeth got transported to Kent Hospital," I announce.

Roger's eyes are on his screen. "Youngest kid I've got is five."

I dial Kent Hospital and the Emergency Department picks up. "Hi, this is Molly Fitzgerald from Emergency Preparedness and Response," I say. "Do you have an Elisabeth Abbott registered?"

After a brief conversation, I turn back to Sue. "The patient is in open-heart surgery, but there's no record of an infant coming in with her. And no unaccompanied toddler in the ED."

My fingers start flying, texting in our Teams app. We've accounted for 167 of the 168.

Missing person is a child, age 2. Can everyone please check for a 2-year-old child? One by one the responses trickle in:

No minors. No children. Negative.

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For more information, visit nhbookfestival.org.



Courtesy

New Hampshire's own Rebecca Rule.



THE SHIFT TO THRIFT

From vintage band tees to porcelain cats – Find your next treasure at these shops



By EMILIA WISNIEWSKI

Within the walls of small, unassuming storefronts around the Concord area hide many treasures waiting to find their next home.

These thrift stores and antique shops are jam-packed with items and decor that fulfill a secondhand shopper's dream — and bring togetherness to communities.

Here are some must-visit shops that may hold your next favorite item.

Johnny Huston, owner of Capital Vintage in downtown Concord, shows off a 1990 Alice in Chains tour T-shirt at his shop.

Emilia Wisniewski



Emilia Wisniewski

Lilise Designer Resale owner Elyssa Alfieri readjusts a top that was falling off a hanger.

Lilise Designer Resale: Concord

Lilise Designer Resale, near the start of North Main Street in downtown, offers all your fashion needs at many different price points. You can see a $6 J.Crew white T-shirt right across from a $1,000 vintage Chanel handbag.

Elyssa Alfieri, owner of the consignment store, said that was the goal in starting the business. She originally worked down the street at Zoë & Co. Professional Bra Fitters for seven years and has been a lover of fashion and thrifting. When the building went on sale in 2016, she jumped at the opportunity to take it on — and transform it.

"It was just an older kind of clientele, and a little bit more based on professional dress versus all kinds," Alfieri said. "So when I purchased it, I just changed the business model to be a little bit more inclusive of all demographics and all levels of dress too."

She wanted the store to be a place where daughters, mothers and grandmothers can shop together and come out of the store with something they love.

On the main floor of Lilise Designer Resale, shoppers can give items and earn back 40% of the sale price. In the basement of the store are 21 booths people can rent and sell their own closet of clothes — with the ability to control the price and gain 66% of the profit.

Alfieri said she is not picky about the kinds of things that come to the store. It is sometimes surprising, she said, to receive vintage name-brand items, but she also appreciates the crazy clothes that end up on the racks.

"If you want to have fun with fashion, you have to be able to access fashion," she said.

The store at 7 North Main St. is open 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday, with Sundays closing two hours early. It is not open on Mondays.

Capital Vintage: Concord

Farther up the street and around the corner is Capital Vintage: racks of graphic T-shirts line the perimeter of the store, with neon signs, full-sized posters, trinkets and cardboard cutouts as decor.



Emilia Wisniewski

Johnny Huston shows off some of the coolest T-shirts at Capital Vintage.

Owner Johnny Huston can never get enough of finding things for the store, which he's owned and operated for the past three years. He scours in and out of the Granite State to look for items he know someone out there is looking for.

"There are so many freaks and geeks in this industry, and I'm truly one of them," he said. "We're just so passionate about the antiques, how well the things were made, the nostalgia behind them. I just love the constant hit of euphoria when you find a cool piece that you can send off to the next home."

A recent find that blew Huston away was a 1990 Alice in Chains tour shirt. A man from South Carolina dropped off a bin of donation items, which included that shirt. Huston — who handpicks everything in the store — said a lot of the clothes come to him that way, but many others come from flea markets, estate sales and private sourcing.

Huston has been in the thrift scene "since I was able to walk" and prides himself on offering the widest selection of items for everyone who comes in.

"Don't stop thrifting. It's the most fun thing in the world," he said. "It can seem arduous and tedious to dig through whatever you want to dig through ... but it's the most sustainable thing in the world."

Capital Vintage at 19 Pleasant St., Suite 1, is open every day between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Out of Your Attic Thrift Shop: Chichester

Carol Hendee started Baby Threads in Chichester 20 years ago, crotcheting blankets for newborns in hospitals. When those hospitals could no longer accept the handmade crafts, she had to pivot. In 2020, Out of Your Attic Thrift Store was born — and it began to sell a lot more than baby blankets.

The donation-fueled thrift store is packed with clothes for all ages, knickknacks, puzzles, games, electronics and small appliances. Eighteen regular volunteers help run the store



Emilia Wisniewski

Carol Hendee checks out a customer at Out of Your Attic Thrift Shop in Chichester.

and many regulars come to see what's new and for connection.

"It's a place where they come in and talk," Hendee said. They know each other, and it's really nice."

Not only is it a place where some community members gather, but it's also a place that helps its community. Most items in the store cost only $1 to $2, and can cost even less during the store's monthly half-price days.

Hendee said if there are people who experienced a tragedy, such as losing their home or belongings to a fire, Out of Your Attic can give whatever items they need for free.

"If we have some people that might need a toaster, something as simple as that, and they really don't have the money, we can take care of that for fire victims [or] any tragedy," Hendee said.

The store supports many organizations in and around Chichester. It donates regularly to food pantries, gave clothes for costumes in the showing of "Matilda" at Chichester Central School, and contributed to Pittsfield's youth fishing derby.



Emilia Wisniewski

Mark Winzeler holds up a handmade sign, something he sells at his antique shop Union House Oddities in Contoocook.

The thrift store, 345 Suncook Valley Road in Chichester, is open noon to 4 p.m. on Tuesdays, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Wednesday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays. It is closed Mondays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays.

Union House Oddities: Contoocook

A grandstanding clock tower peeks out of the landscape in Contoocook's downtown. Though you may not hear a steady tick and a booming bell, the tower still makes its presence known.

It has gone through many transfor-







Emilia Wisniewski

Just some of the oddities you'll be able to find in Contoocook.

mations since it was built in 1837: a town meetinghouse, a multidenominational church, a post office and a veterans home. For the past 10 years, it's been the home of Union House Oddities, an eclectic antique store owned by Mark Winzeler and his wife, Libby.

"I've always been a collector. My folks were collectors. We just love the stuff," Winzeler said. "So we opened the store, and it's been very well received."

He often gets calls to visit local homes of people who had moved out or passed away, and take what isn't wanted (his favorite homes, he said, are the ones where he can take everything). He is sometimes surprised to find a rare or old item that's being tossed away — but the "adventure" of findings those things are what excite him the most.

There are many distinct corners of Union House Oddities that could appeal to nearly anyone. Fine china and glassware greet you at the front of the store; paintings, furniture and home decor are sprinkled throughout the circular main room; pastel figurines and dishes are housed in a small offshoot space; a kids room is fitted with toys, baseball cards and a classic gumball machine.

Even smaller sections of the store include glass-protected tables with fine costume jewelry, a dimly lit hallway with bedside lamps and painting repurposed by Libby, and a tiny shelf with small porcelain cats. "My cats don't bite me," he said.

"Over the years, we've gotten really good at knowing what people want," Winzeler said.

Union House Oddities sits on 53 Maple St. in Contoocook and is open Thursday through Sunday from noon to 5:30 p.m. The store is closed Monday to Wednesday.



MR. AARON'S 10 YEARS OF TUNES

It's more than just music for kids, says Concord musician



Aaron Jones, performing in May, is celebrating 10 years in the Concord area as Mr. Aaron.

Catherine McLaughlin





Catherine McLaughlin

In one bit, Jones has students voice a phrase, which he loops into a rap track and has kids beatbox along.

'I'm just getting started'

By CATHERINE MCLAUGHLIN

As Aaron Jones carefully clipped a set of wires onto his houseplant, whom he calls Phil, a throng of 9-, 10- and 11-year-olds stared up at him in awe.

Slowly, an oozing synth note came through Jones' sound system, and he improvised a gentle, strumming rhythm on his acoustic guitar. He explained how the plant's inner electrical charges were being picked up by sensors in the clips. As the charges fluctuated, he explained, Phil sang.

Jones, known around Concord as Mr. Aaron, had his audience dancing, beatboxing, singing and even chanting "Chug! Chug! Chug!" during his half-hour set. (The performance was at the New Hampshire State Drinking Water Festival, and the crowd of students was all for hydration.)

Jones' career in music has spanned everything from opera to punk to mommy-and-me classes, but he's celebrating 10 years of Mr. Aaron in New Hampshire this summer. In his decade in the capital region, Mr. Aaron has become a mainstay of youth entertainment.

To Jones, children's music does more than people give it credit for. It's more than just music for kids.

"This is really a way that a wide range of people can all come together and, for an hour, be creative, appreciate the playful, silly absurdity of young children and sing and dance together," he said.

Jones got his start with a niche undergraduate degree, creative music technology, from a small school

in Georgia. He moved to New York City to study graduate musical theater writing and landed work writing for theater and opera.

But he was still looking for further steady creative work. He found a listing for mommy-and-me music classes at a preschool in the West Village.

He was apprehensive, at first.

"You know — it was a paycheck," he said. But he realized over time how naturally it came to him. He could teach classes during the day, and do gigs and shows at night. When he put ego aside, he said, he had fun.

"It clicked for me: This is a way that I can write music that's theatrical and tells a story," he said.

Jones and his wife, Anna, met in grad school. She's a lyricist. They wrote a musical together. Got married. Settled in Brooklyn with their first child.

When the Joneses welcomed a second daughter, they realized they wanted to be closer to family, who could help form their "village." So



Catherine McLaughlin

Aaron Jones, performing at the N.H. Drinking Water Festival, shows students how plants can be harnessed to make electronic music.

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"There's a willingness of young audiences to participate, in a way that more mature audiences are not always willing."

MR. AARON, about the energy of his live shows

they moved to Hopkinton.

The move from the music scene in New York to New Hampshire was an adjustment for Jones, but also a fresh start.

"I had gotten kind of burned out," he said. "At that point, I was like, I don't know, maybe making a living doing music is not for me."

Jones had always had a passion for aviation and had a private helicopter pilot's license. He started training on the Seacoast for a commercial license.

"But the music never really went away," he said.

The Concord Community Art Center had an available space, and Jones opened a recording studio in 2016, called Rattlebox. He started teaching youth classes again, and things took off.

Mr. Aaron built up a regular rotation of shows at libraries and other community events with Anna as a co-songwriter, costumer and business partner. He began recording his own children's albums — and now has six in his discography.

When COVID descended a few years later, he had to pivot. Mr. Aaron began livestreaming shows five days a week and closed his studio. It became a season of saying "yes" to everything: Zoom shows, masked classes, socially distanced concerts on baseball fields.

"Everybody needed something to do, and their kids needed something to do," he said.

In the years since, Mr. Aaron has solidified his presence in the region more as a performer than a teacher.

Shows feature mostly his own music. "The La La La Song" opens every one. Themes, add-ons, movement and audience participation are the main ingredients.

"This morning I did this song called 'Gravity Can't Hold Me Down,' " Jones said, describing the tune as a musical journey to the moon; it was featured on his space-themed album, "Intergalactic Music Spectacular." "It's basically different ways of jumping around. It gets kids up and bouncing, and we blast off at the end."

Jones' shows feature a cornucopia of instruments and soundmakers: everything from his guitar and harmonica to a loop machine and, lately, plants.

The magic of a Mr. Aaron show, to Jones, is in the creative minds of the audience.

"There's a willingness of young audiences to participate, in a way that more mature audiences are not always willing," he said.

At a springtime show, he'd asked kids to freestyle phrases about spring into the microphone. He'd use the looper to make a rap track out of it. But with one silly "Happy Halloween," the song ended up as an ode to fall spookiness.

'Those are the best moments for me, I'm finding," Jones said. "More than, 'Let me sing to you my perfectly crafted song,' I'm like, 'How can I make these musical moments where unexpected things can happen, and we can all go on this zany journey together?' "

Entering his second decade in New Hampshire, Jones is still experimenting: with DJ-ing events and parties (where kids now in their teens say, "Wait, aren't you Mr. Aaron?"), with new instruments and sounds, with house plants in a project called Bosey Joe.

"Mr. Aaron is definitely a side of me," Jones said. "But it feels like I'm just getting started."





Catherine McLaughlin

Aaron Jones, known on stage as Mr. Aaron, has been performing for children in Concord for 10 years.





Catherine McLaughlin

Young audiences let loose as Concord's Mr. Aaron jams on stage.



Capital Pinball's machines come in all sorts of themes, from classic old-timey stuff to The Incredible Hulk.

Alexander Rapp



THE GAME IS ON

How Capital Pinball Club built a thriving community in Concord

Home of the Pinball Wizards

By ALEXANDER RAPP

Finding a welcoming social space can be hard. Creating community takes time. Building a pinball arcade from the ground up in the 2020s? Ludicrous to some.

Jeremy Corson and Courtney Bazarian dived all in on the idea and created the club of their dreams.

Corson and Bazarian have day jobs in the software industry. The couple works from home and desperately needed something to do outside of work in Concord but found their options to be, well, limited.

The two loved pinball and arcades. They were driving out to Dover for Token's Taproom, Funspot in Laconia and down south in the state for variety. It was a long ride every time.

So, what better way to solve their problems than to open up their own place? They explored the "barcade" option, but the licensing, liability and kitchen setup required too big of an investment to dump into a new, niche small business they weren't sure would even work.

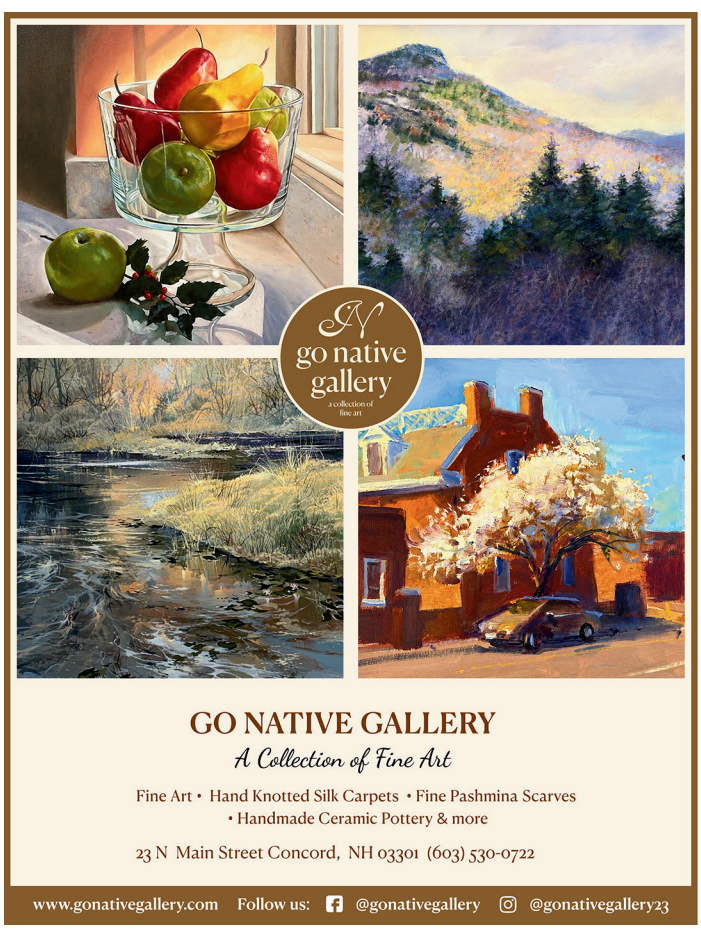
They went for a club model instead. Now, Capital Pinball Club boasts over 70 members with 24/7 access, leagues, board game nights, a book club and limitless pinball.



Alexander Rapp

Jeremy Corson lights up as he plays the Pokemon pinball game in the middle of Capital Pinball. Courtney Bazarian is in the background.

"What it's become has quickly, quickly grown. So that's been pretty crazy. But yeah, it just started out as an idea to create a community space and just do something with friends that quickly turned into a third space," Bazarian said.





The machines and the playfield

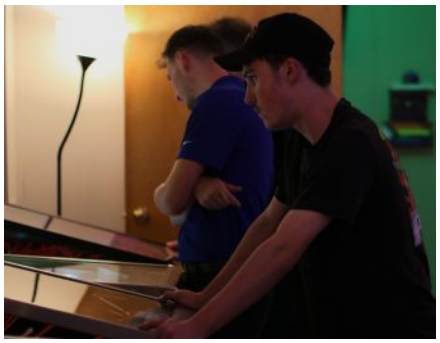
The neon boards, pinging of flippers, dings and sound effects fill the room with life.

Every member, and pinball player for that matter, has his or her own taste in machines. Some people like the classic, old-school stuff with no frills and a simple, spread-out playfield. Others enjoy the fancy, zany, video-heavy new stuff with all sorts of challenges and nuances.

They're all challenging in their own way, and each individual has his or her own style of play, too. Think of it like golf or tennis, adjusting from place to place, opponent (in this case the machine, yourself or in league play) and having preferred methods of playing each ball.

What makes the club a bit different from a regular arcade is the structure of bringing the machines in, maintaining them and playing them.

"It's about transferring what we do to other people and enabling them to do it," Corson said. "Keeping the same amount of space that we have, putting new policies in place that make things run better, be more self-sufficient, and that's very much the phase that we are in."



Alexander Rapp

Josh Moran, the No. 1 pinball player in New Hampshire, is a frequent visitor of Capital Pinball in Concord.

One game-changer has been the club's "re-pin" program, to keep the inventory of games fresh.

New machines get the classic coin-drop treatment and everyone pays to use them, which pays for the depreciation of the new machines. Once they bring in the next machine, they'll sell the old one to a member under the condition it stays in-house for a few extra months. Some members just choose to keep it there longer, too.

It's connected to another innovation Bazarian and Corson implemented. They developed QR codes and an app that allows members to track their progress over time, enter tournaments and pay for new machine plays.

Keeping the machines running entails teaching people how to repair them. In the club, tucked away in a back corner, a room lights up the hallway. Circuit boards and the guts of a pinball machine are sprawled in orderly fashion.

It's all about members knowing the ins and outs of the club. Everyone plays a part in keeping it going.

Community building

It would all be for naught if nobody was playing pinball. Fortunately, the community is alive and well.

On a Friday evening, the club fills up slowly. Friday nights are New England Pinball League nights.

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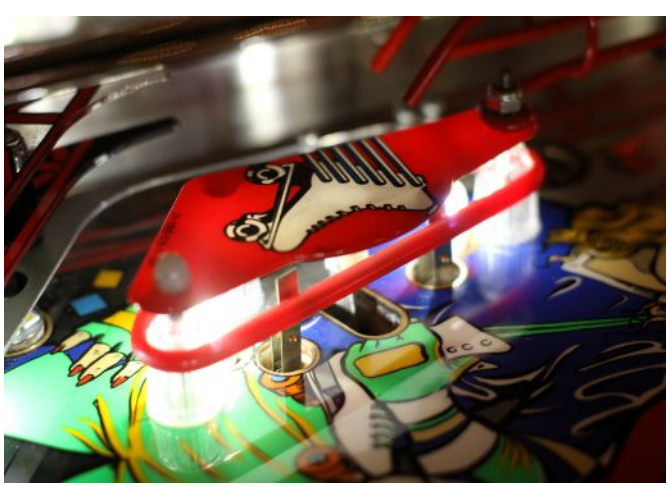
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Each machine has small details that give it personality, style and affect game play in one way or another, making each game unique but still familiar.

Alexander Rapp







Josh Moran of Hopkinton, an 18-year-old pinball phenom, warms up and goes around playing a few different machines. He's the No. 1 player in New Hampshire.

"This place helped me build into a very competitive, very good player. I only say that because the first tournament I ever won was the first tournament held here," Moran said.

He's tough to beat and holds quite a few high scores, but Capital Pinball isn't just for competitors.

It's meant to be leisurely and inclusive, too, and that shows through its programming. Video game night, board game night, Magic: The Gathering, Queer Pinball night and a book club are all part of it.

One of the rooms features over 300 board games to pick from, a couch with a video game system, tables and a fridge for members to store snacks.

Two other frequent members, Andy Hoffman and Will Prescott, are old enough to be Moran's parents' age. The love for pinball connects generations, from Boomers to Gen Z.



Alexander Rapp

Memorabilia is scattered about.

Hoffman, from Barrington, and Prescott, from Londonderry, grew up playing in arcades back when the scene was thriving. They found Capital Pinball in the early days and blossomed into engaged members.

Hoffman runs video game and pinball streaming for some events. Prescott runs board game night. They love it all.

"The thing about this place that's special is in between the cracks," Hoffman said. "Sometimes it'll be like 10 o'clock on a Friday night, you might have a conversation with someone that's insightful or hilarious. ... When you hang around long enough, you see more sides of people than you would certainly at just like a bar or an arcade."

Bazarian and Corson said the same thing. Their circle of friends has expanded greatly through the creation of Capital Pinball. Between plays, there's always time to talk and socialize, and the rotating league matchups allow everyone to get to know each other.

They hope people can continue coming, whether they're a kid who grew up playing at home or someone looking to get back into it after losing their favorite arcade.

The space will be there for people when they need it most.

"Someone will pull you aside and then tear up and just be like, 'Thank you for this.' And then you forget, like, holy crap! I put 80 hours into this month behind the scenes. Now, it's all worthwhile. So that's our reward out of the whole thing is those people that need that space," Corson said.











FUN WITH FIBER

Eagle Aerie in Franklin shares knowledge of fiber processing and love of craftmaking

Rickie Bauer, owner and operator of Eagle Aerie located in Franklin, spins wool in her North Main Street fiber store.

Geoff Forester

The making of a ‘micro mill’

By EMILIA WISNIEWSKI

A crafty realm of possibilities waits to be unlocked just outside Franklin’s downtown area.

While unassuming from the outside, Eagle Aerie will fill a visitor’s eyes with awe: large bunches of thread hanging on hooks, fibers dyed in every color imaginable set out to dry and displays of handmade goods crafted by visitors.

On a recent Saturday, five women embarked on a crafty journey to felt a flower field landscape. Covering the folding tables in the center of the store was fluff of all colors, delicately teased into tiny pieces and pinpointed into place with thin needles.

In the middle of the semicircle sat Eagle Aerie’s owner, Rickie Bauer, on her Ashford Country



Geoff Forester

Kyara Gardiner separates wool before putting it in a machine that straightens out the fiber.



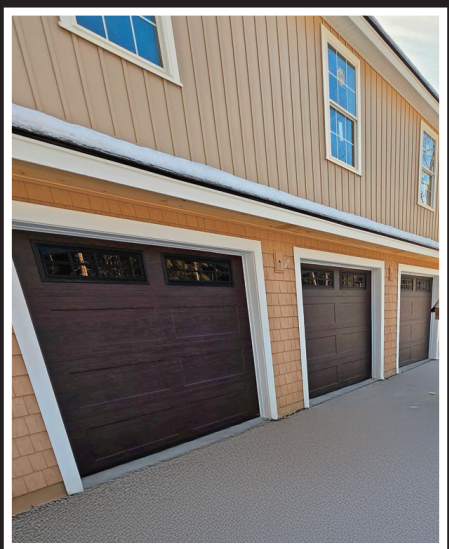
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Spinner, weaving together two different strands of wool while rhythmically pedaling her feet back and forth. The large bobbin at the top can hold enough material for a sweater, she said.

"There are so many spinning wheels in this state that we are unaware of," Bauer said. "And we try to get them out and brush the dust of off them and get them used, or sold to someone who will use them."

In a lot of ways, that's the goal of Eagle Aerie: to bring fiber craftspeople across New Hampshire together and use materials that would otherwise be thrown out.

The material displayed in the store mostly comes from the backs of woolly animals across the state. Bauer said many farmers tuck away wool in the far corners of their barns when the time comes to shear their animals.

"We found through our community that fiber processing is a thing that is being shut down all over the country," she said. "The bigger mills are shutting down and there are many, many farms wondering what to do with their wool."

Eagle Aerie wanted to be a "micro mill" that took donations of unused wool, big or small, and repurposed it in a variety of crafts. That process starts in the store's basement.

On the floor, several pounds of donated wool and fur lay dormant in plastic bags. All kinds of debris is caught up in the hairs that were once on the animal: twigs, rocks, dirt and even toenails.

Kyara Gardiner, who has worked at Eagle Aerie for over a year, lumped alpaca wool onto the conveyer belt of a picker machine. Piece by piece, she gently pulled the tufts apart to make the wool cleaner, wispier and softer. She's not doing all the hard work, though — the picker's spinning roller further separates the strands and feeds into a large container.

Gardiner said she processes up to 10 pounds of wool per day. She came

"We found through our community that fiber processing is a thing that is being shut down all over the country. The bigger mills are shutting down and there are many, many farms wondering what to do with their wool."

RICKIE BAUER, owner and operator of Eagle Aerie



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into Eagle Aerie regularly when the business opened two years ago, and it wasn't long before Bauer offered her a job to help with processing.

"I want to learn everything about the fiber crafts," said Gardiner, who has been knitting for 10 years. The farmers and customers she has met through the job have been "really inspiring to my own work."

After going through the picker, the fiber goes through a carding machine. Its velcro-like teeth help realign the strands that eventually make a solid sheet of wool called roving. This can be used for yarn, hand spinning, felting and other crafts.

Bauer — who works full-time in construction around Boston — has been spinning for 35 years and operates Eagle Aerie exclusively on Friday and the weekends. What started as a tiny operation with starter processing equipment has grown rapidly, adding classes and workshops to help teach people about every aspect of wool work.

"I called it 'jumping of the cliff,' and either you hit jagged rock and shatter or you hit water and you swim," she said. "We hit water and we swam."

Classes at Eagle Aerie, offered on most weekends, are plentiful: learn how to spin, make goat's milk soap or weave rugs alongside Bauer or other specialized instructors.

During the Saturday felting class, Kelley Watkins said she feels no pressure to perform well like she does in her health care job. The Sanbornton resident has been quilting and sewing for years and recently learned how to weave using looms.

Watkins said her dream is to start a practice that combines her psychiatric background and farming to help people in recovery. She wants to be the catalyst for positive change in people's lives and help them "find their tribe." Being at Eagle Aerie propelled that dream.

"All six of us siblings, we still all get together and do things because that's the way we were raised, but people fractured in their lives haven't had it," she said while felting a sunflower. "Now this will hopefully show them that there is a different way and feel safe."

Bauer finds joy in teaching others, especially young people who are quick to learn and likely to stick with the craft for a while. She also wants to find existing craftspeople around the state — that's why she started the 1,400-member-strong New Hampshire Fiber Friends Facebook page that shares projects, circulates events and creates community.

"We all go down one solid rabbit hole and there you are for life — and you're very happy being there," she said. "You open up your cupboard and wonder why all that wool is there, but you're happy."





THE STAGE

Kids take the stage in newly restored town hall space



IS THEIRS



Geoff Forester

The girls from the Dunbarton Children's Theatre production of "Where the Wild Things Are" are, from left, Addison Pelham-Starkey, Ayvah Bowser, Amelia Vandenberg, Cecelia Worsman and Eliza White. The production was held at the Dunbarton Town Hall.

Showtime at newly restored space



Geoff Forester

Cecelia Worsman, left, and Addison Pelham-Starkey draw for the production staging for the play "Where the Wild Things Are" at the Dunbarton Town Hall.

By SRUTHI GOPALAKRISHNAN

For years, the second floor of the Dunbarton Town Hall sat empty, a stretch of old wooden floors and tall ceilings waiting for a purpose.

Now it's a space that echoes with the voices of children rehearsing lines, running scenes and bringing the space to life for the first time in years.

Natalie Pelham-Starkey, director of the Dunbarton Children's Theatre, is one of the driving forces behind the project.

Growing up, Pelham-Starkey did theater throughout elementary school, and when she moved to Dunbarton 3½ years ago, she noticed something missing.

"There were sports, but there

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Eliza White draws for the production staging of "Where the Wild Things Are" at the Dunbarton Town Hall in preparation of the play at Old Home Day in August.

wasn't anything that was creatively focused," she said. "I just wanted to bring something to the table for the kids that weren't necessarily interested in sports. Theater was a great place to start because it has that social component and it's engaging on so many levels."

The empty second floor of the town hall, built in 1909, turned out to be the perfect opportunity after it was restored a few years ago. Pelham-Starkey and others in Dunbarton teamed up with Theatre KAPOW to help build a youth theater program in that space.

For one week in August, the Dunbarton Recreation Committee ran an afternoon program for kids ages 7 to 12, culminating in a performance after the Old Home Day Parade.

For Carey Cahoon of Theatre KAPOW, working with the kids in the beautifully renovated space felt special. She said this type of performance space is common in many New Hampshire town halls and public buildings and that commonality made the experience all the more meaningful.

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Natalie Pelham, right, helps Alivia Bandt, left, Eliza White, middle, and Alexandra Cummings set up the staging art at the Dunbarton Town Hall in preparation of the production of "Where the Wild Things Are."

of town life and business throughout the 20th century, until safety concerns eventually shut it down. The first floor is home to the town library.

With the children's theater program starting again, Cahoon and the kids spend a lot of time talking through the story together and figuring out which parts stuck with the kids most as they prepared for the presentation.

"Almost all of them knew each other person in the room, but they hadn't necessarily either been in class together or done an activity like this together," Cahoon said. "So it was a lot of fun, kind of watching them build this connection with one another."

A six-week program for children is also planned for the fall.



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The second-floor space is used for concerts, community group meetings, pageants and all kinds of performances on its stage.

But it sat unused for decades after the building fell out of compliance with safety codes, including old plumbing, an aging sprinkler system and requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The town restored the space after town meeting voters approved the project in 2022.

The first performance by the kids there was based on "Where the Wild Things Are," an illustrated children's book.

The space also gives Dunbarton Elementary School students something they never had before: a theater space, said Pelham-Starkey.

"It's phenomenal. The kids just open up the space. It's really a sweet thing to witness and be part of," she said. "Hopefully it opens up more and more usability for other programs that might want to set up there."



Geoff Forester

The girls from the Dunbarton Children's Theatre production of "Where the Wild Things Are" are, from left, Alivia Bandt, Alexandra Cummings, Lillian Cummings, Abby Tassias, Addison Pelham-Starkey, Ayvah Bowser, Amelia Vandenberg, Cecelia Worsman and Eliza White.

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Bill Finney

The campus of New Hampshire Technical Institute in the late 1970s.

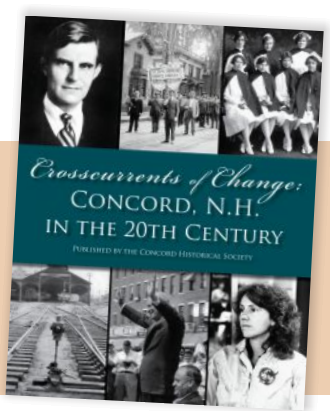
Rise of NHTI: 'A cut above'

Almost two-thirds of the 20th century passed before a state-supported institution of higher learning was established in Concord.

On Sept. 13, 1965, New Hampshire Technical Institute opened its doors to its first entering class of 254 students. Occupying 175 acres between the Merrimack River and Interstate 93, NHTI stood on the site of an encampment of Mohawk Indians, traditional enemies of the local Penacooks. There was one academic building, soon to be named for Earl H. Little, retiring chief of the New Hampshire Department of Education's Postsecondary Education Division.

There were 16 faculty members, a librarian and several staff members. A men's dormitory housed 108 students. Among the original faculty members was a young man from Maine named William G. Simonton, who lived for nine months in "the green house," an old farm house on the college grounds. New Hampshire opened a number of vocational colleges following World War II, and Concord's NHTI was, in the description of Education Commissioner Robert Brunelle, "a cut above."

Its two-year academic program



Learn More

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was designed for "the preparation of technicians and assistants to professionals." Among that entering class, 201 enrolled in engineering technology programs and the other 53 studied electronic data processing. All earned credits toward an associate in applied science degree. The 1961 New Hampshire Legislature had appropriated $1.6 million "to establish one technical institute with dormitory facilities, such institute to be centrally located where, in the opinion of the Board, it will serve most advantageously the purpose of this Chapter."

Concord had won the new technical college after a battle with Manchester, and construction began in 1963. The decision to build in Concord was influenced by local lawyer Franklin Hollis, who chaired the state Board of Education, and city Planning Director Gustaf H. Lehtinen, who recommended the state-owned site in the Merrimack River floodplain.

NHTI received more applications coming in from Concord High School than any other school. Some students commuted from outside the city, and 35 were housed with Concord residents. Full-year tuition was $30 for New Hampshire residents and $800 for out-of-state students; it cost $675 for a single room in the dorm, including meals. Books were estimated to cost $175.

Two years later, in 1967, a library and health education building were built to prepare for health science programs.

In 1969, NHTI became the first public technical college in New England to earn full accreditation from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. When classes began in September 1970, programs had been added in nursing, dental hygiene and radiologic technology. There were 414 full-time day students.

NHTI grew steadily in number of students and in its range of academic programs. By 1983, more than 800 students were enrolled in its day programs. There were 13 associate degree programs plus two professional certificate programs, taught by 62 full-time faculty members. A women's residence hall was added in 1972, and a third dormitory was built in 1998. Dr. George M. Strout, the college's first "director," was succeeded by Dr. David Larrabee in 1972, and his title was changed to "president" in 1979. Larrabee served until 1995 when Simonton, a member of the original faculty, became president of NHTI and later commissioner of the entire Community Technical College System.

By the turn of the century, NHTI was a thriving two-year college with extensive academic programs and robust student activities. Its evening division served thousands of part time adult students. Enrollment grew to nearly 5,000 and it was by far the largest college in the Community Technical College System. Graduates included engineering technologists, nurses, dental hygienists and human service workers. Other graduates transferred into four-year colleges.

One of Concord's needs had been fulfilled.







Geoff Forester

Concord High School graduates throw their caps into the air at the end of their 2026 graduation at NHTI.

Season of celebration





Geoff Forester

ABOVE: Bow graduates Dirk van der Merwe, left, and Derek Baier, with their illuminated caps, get ready for the Bow High School graduation.

LEFT: Merrimack Valley High graduate Hannah Mason looks over at her family while being recognized for her academic achievements.

Catherine McLaughlin

A view of downtown Concord's Main Street reflected off the retro Airstream that serves as a full bar at Rooftop Social, which takes up the top floor of the recently built Arts Alley. The building is among the recent developments that are continuing to shape downtown Concord.





Geoff Forester

ABOVE: Sisters Amanda (left) and Haley Charnley react to being in an Abbot-Downing coach at the National Night Out event in August.

LEFT: Artist Saad Hindal removes tape around his sign as he paints the outside of his new studio space on South Main Street.



Geoff Forester

Father time on the lookout

Those who drive along the rural and winding stretch of Route 28 through Chichester may recognize this old 1950s-era truck that thoughtfully peers out from an equally rustic barn. This view, captured from longtime photojournalist Geoff Forester, stands as a testament to the longevity and perseverance of our rugged landscape and the people and technologies that have endured across the Suncook Valley and the rest of the Granite State.

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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