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WINTER 2020-21 VOLUME 13, NO. 4 \$4.95

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backs - do we have theirs?**

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50 issues - a look back**



18 **Your guide to
shopping local**


We take you from the area's
bookshelves to Antique Alley

Top: Cobblestone always sets a
festive scene in downtown Concord.

Above: Among the many finds at
the state prison store in Concord.

Cover: "This Must Be The Place"
at Penumbra in Concord.

Photos by Allie St Peter

A man and a woman are smiling and embracing each other. The woman is leaning over the man's shoulder, and both are looking towards the camera with bright, happy expressions. They are wearing light-colored clothing.

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Gondwana & Divine Clothing Co. boutique on North Main Street in Concord, owned by Pam Peterson, left, and her daughter, Amanda Perkins, has been in business 25 years.

Where you shop, where you live

When my wife and I were deciding where to live in Concord, we had two main criteria – we wanted to be near the schools and within walking distance to downtown.

The school part of the equation was simple preservation. We didn't want to shuffle our kids back and forth to practices and after-school activities. But we really wanted to be near downtown so we could enjoy life in a small city. We do so as often as we can, and these days it's hard to walk along the new Main Street and not think about the future.

It's no secret that restaurants and local business have had to deal with unprecedented challenges in 2020. My concern, though, has less to do with our collective ability to weather the next few months, and more about what comes after that. The emergence of Covid-19 is scary enough. But the takeover of behemoths like Amazon may turn out to be the legacy of the pandemic of 2020.

This holiday season, online shopping is expected to grow at least 33 percent over last year. We all see the value of online shopping – the deals, the ease, the instant reviews. What we don't see is the slow erosion of the brick-and-mortar world around us. Our local shops just can't keep up with Amazon. And when fewer people come to shop downtown, fewer go to the area restaurants. That cycle works in reverse, too. If our restaurants can't lure shoppers downtown, which sadly may be the case this year, local retailers suffer.

So, what are we to do? Well, controlling the unfettered growth of corporate giants like Amazon is likely out of your control. But shopping, eating and living local is not. The future of our downtowns may in fact depend on it.

Steve Leone
Publisher

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READER CONTEST



Joe and Shelley Speer

TAKE A RIDE! WIN A WATCH!

There was a time when the best way around Concord was a ride in a Concord Coach. This issue we continue a reader contest: Find the four wheels of a Concord Coach hidden within four different ads in this magazine. All winning submissions received by February 15 will be entered into a random drawing for a New Hampshire Watch Company wristwatch, up to \$400 retail value, supplied by Speer's Fine Jewelry.



There are two ways to enter:

- Write down the page numbers of the ads in which the wheels appear on a sheet of paper with your name, address, phone number and email and mail to: Advertising Sales Manager, Around Concord, P.O. Box 1177, Concord, NH 03302-1177; or
- Go to the online form at aroundconcord.com/coach and submit the page numbers of the ads along with your name, address, phone number and email.

Limit one entry per household. The winner's name will appear in the fall issue. Good luck!

Employees of Newspapers of New England and their families are not eligible to enter.



Joe and Shelley Speer of Speer's Fine Jewelry congratulate Claudette Laroche of Hooksett on winning a \$400 New Hampshire Watch Company watch as part of the Take A Ride! promotion in the fall issue of *Around Concord* magazine. The Concord Coach wheel was embedded in ads in the fall edition on pages 11, 30, 35 and 39.

The contest continues this issue.



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Elizabeth Frantz

Longtime volunteer Frank Muller passes over the trails at White Farm in Concord with a snow-groomer as his wife, Kate Fox, skis behind him a few years back.

This season, the best way to keep your distance

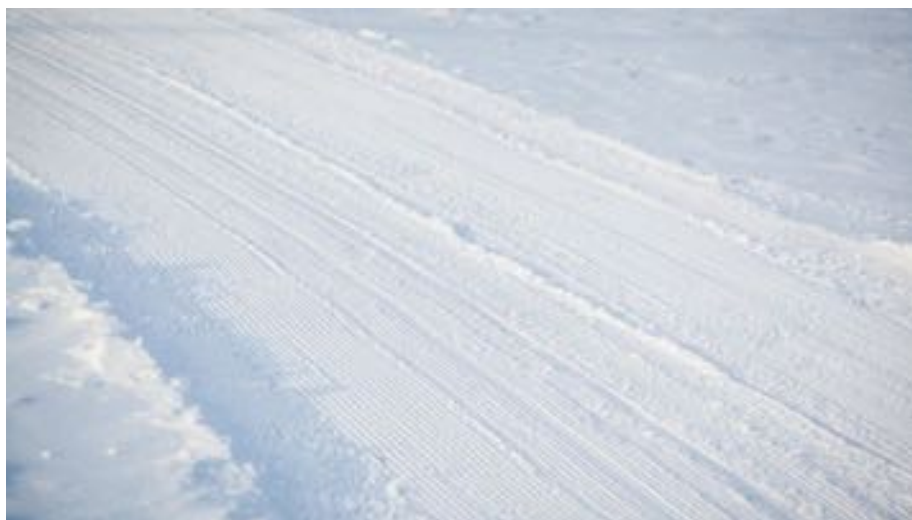
By JONATHAN VAN FLEET

The Capital City is home to three groomed cross-country ski trails at White Farm, Carter Hill Orchard and Beaver Meadow Golf Course. All are free to the public.

White Farm and Carter Hill are groomed by volunteers who use equipment owned by the Capital Ski and Outing Club.

For those without skis, the club provides low-cost rentals at Carter Hill. The ski track at Beaver Meadow Golf Course, which is owned by the city, is maintained by municipal workers.

The trails are groomed for both skate and classic skiing. The major difference between the two forms is that classic skiers move their legs forward in a straight line, while skate skiers



Elizabeth Frantz

Fresh corduroy is seen on a ski trail after they are groomed at White Farm.

push their skis side-to-side. While classic generally requires a parallel, indented track, skate requires a wide, smooth surface.

While the volunteers spend hours of unpaid time driving Ski-doo's around the trails at 4 a.m., the effort doesn't come without cost. The Capital Ski and Skate Club purchases and maintains the equipment through donations. A mailbox sticks out of the snow at the start of the White Farm trail and includes donation slips. The club is famous for hosting the annual ski and skate sale, their largest fundraiser, which was canceled this year due to COVID-19.

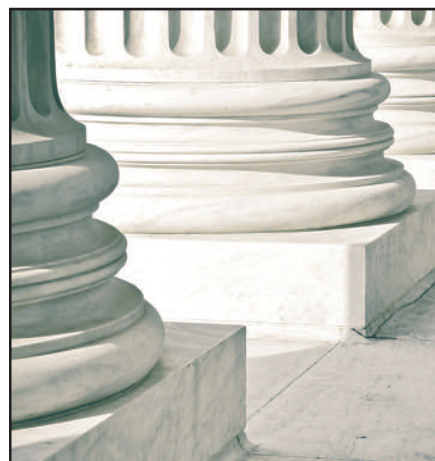
Trail information

White Farm is at 144 Clinton St. Skiers can park there and link up

with the trails, located behind the complex. Skiers can also park at Memorial Field, off South Fruit Street, and connect with the trails there. The trails loop through the cornfield, go under Langley Parkway, pass by the White Farm complex and circle through a field off Clinton Street. The terrain is mostly flat, with some small hills, and is definitely good for beginners.

Carter Hill Orchard is at 73 Carter Hill Road. Skiers can park in the orchard's lot and ski rentals are available in the barn. The trails begin at the parking lot and pass through the rows of apple trees, up and down steep hills.

Beaver Meadow Golf Course is at 1 Beaver Meadow Drive and includes mostly flat terrain. ♦



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THE SIT-DOWN



Geoff Forester

Developer Mark Ciborowski in the center of Phenix Hall in downtown Concord in the summer of 2019.

QA

Even amid all the uncertainty,
Mark Ciborowski
continues to move
ahead with his
vision for Concord

Mark Ciborowski and his family were the subjects of one of the first articles in the premiere issue of *Around Concord* magazine in the winter of 2007-2008. His family has been developing real estate in the Concord area since the mid-1960s. As part of our 50th Issue Celebration, John Mattes caught up with Ciborowski downtown at one of his landmark buildings, Phenix Hall on Main Street.

John Mattes: How many properties do you own now in Concord?

Mark Ciborowski: Myself and my family own 14 properties of which we're kind of going through a transition now. My grandfather, Jacob, started buying the properties in the mid-1960s. I came to Concord just before 1980 and started working with my grandfather in real estate, and kinda took over. It was really his dream that I would come to Concord and some day work with him. And through fate, the fate mainly being a car ac-



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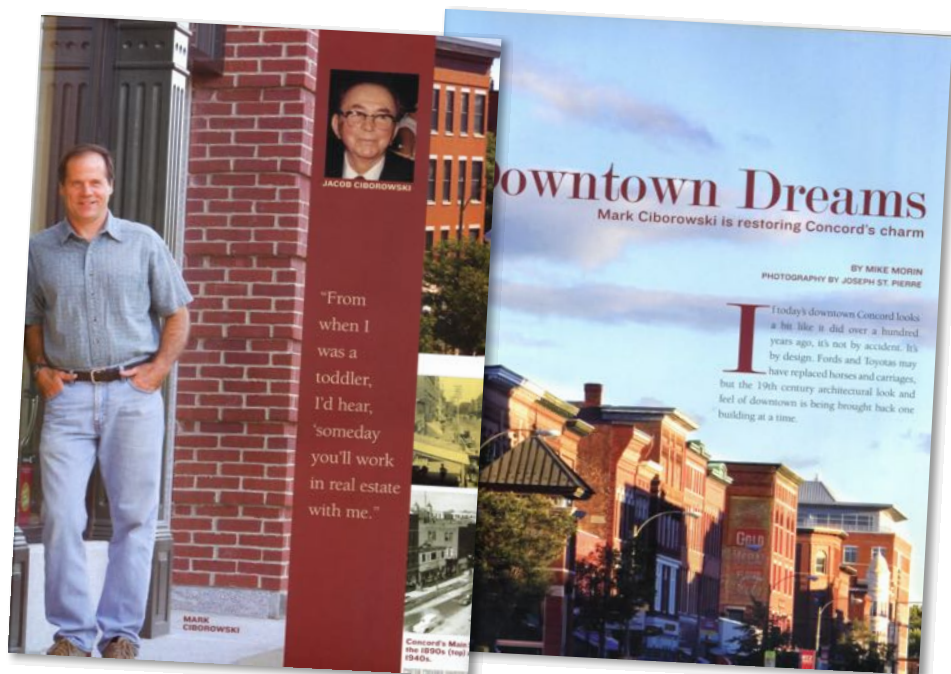
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cident that brought me here to help him out (during his recovery), that it came to be. I guess the accident was a blessing in disguise because I don't know what would have happened. But it brought me here and it's been a great journey, and the journey continues. And Concord has come so far since the first issue (of *Around Concord*). We've also had the Main Street Project, which was an overwhelming success and transformation of downtown. You used to come downtown on a weekend, Saturday or Sunday, and it was pretty dead. Spaces were pretty much empty with not a lot happening. You come downtown on a Saturday or Sunday now, all the spaces are full. People are out walking about. It's a very walkable, enjoyable downtown. Obviously now we have a very challenging time with COVID. And we're all trying to hang on and get through to the other side of this pandemic, which is hurting, businesses, families, people. Very challenging.

JM: No question. But one of the bright spots downtown is where we're standing right now, Phenix Hall. Could you give us a little bit of its history?

MC: Yes, absolutely. It was originally built in 1855. Abraham Lincoln spoke here on March 1, 1860. Gave a rousing speech to the big issues of the day. He was contemplating a run for the presidency at that time. He gave a speech to a packed house about the pending civil war, slavery. It was a few months after speaking here that he actually declared his candidacy and went on to become the 16th president of the United States. And ironically, Edwin Wilkes Booth, the brother of John Wilkes Booth, who assassinated President Lincoln, was a Shakespearean Vaudeville actor, and he performed here. So, Lincoln spoke here and the brother of the guy who shot Lincoln performed here. So, the history of this room is incredible. If these walls could talk! Unfortunately, in 1893 there was a large fire in the building here that pretty much gutted the inte-



Mark Ciborowski's visions for downtown Concord were featured in the premiere issue of *Around Concord* magazine in the winter of 2007-08. The magazine is celebrating its 50th issue. Look back on some covers through the years, starting on Page 54.

rior. It was rebuilt pretty much entirely from what we can tell. And then in 1912 Teddy Roosevelt spoke on this stage. Presidential speeches, big parties, big dances, big public gatherings, weddings, funerals, you name it. This is where the community gathered for about a hundred years until I believe it was 1956 when the upper floors of the Phenix Hotel (now CVS Pharmacy) burnt off and there was a walkway over Phenix Avenue that went with it and cut off access to the building at that time. And the building went silent, or dormant, until the mid-1960s when my grandfather bought it. In 1973 he put in this elevator and the stairwell that's here now. But there's still only one good means of egress and no lobby, and he really didn't have any plans to utilize the space after the renovations that he did do. Now I'm hoping to carry the Renaissance of Main Street to the next level. I think Phenix Hall renovated would be an incredibly vibrant nighttime attraction. Nightlife is something that would add a quality of life for the residents, even for economic develop-

ment, when a family or a business considers moving to Concord I think they look at amenities like this. And I think a renovated Phenix Hall would be of amenities that really moves the needle and makes Concord an even more desirable place. It's already an extremely desirable place. And it would be another plus in the column. And it will complement the Capitol Center for the Arts and the Red River Theatres. We have some great institutions downtown now already. This will be a little bit different, more of a nightclub feel. There will always be live music when it's open. It'll be a full restaurant, so that you can sit down, have a meal and hear some nice background music during dinnertime. And then after dinner, have full bands. You could sit in the balcony or sit at an incredible Brunswick bar (50-plus feet long) that's going to be a statement piece in the room. But I also see it being used for other events, for political events. I want to bring presidential politics back. It has this perfect town hall feel to it. I could see presidential primary debates happening here. Cer-

tainly, at the very least, it could be a place for candidates to give their stump speeches.

I think it'll be yet another reason for people to come downtown, add that much more vibrancy, that much more nightlife, which helps the area restaurants, the area stores. It helps commerce in that way. And I see this as just the first step of a very, very ambitious project. Step Two is to tear down the CVS building and put a new five-story building there, and on that building I want to have a living roof deck with trees and plants and have an incredible rooftop venue. So, whether you want rooftop dining, or rooftop weddings or other parties, you'd have a spectacular rooftop venue. And if you're having a big event and the weather doesn't cooperate, you could always have Phenix Hall as your fall back place. So, I think the two together will be a very powerful combination of venue spaces.

CVS right now is what we call a gap tooth. It's a gap in the skyline. So we want to get that back up to the four- or five-story height and fill that hole in the city street, as well as add to the tax base to the city, the rooftop deck. And at the same time CVS when I redo that I want to have some basement retail, so that we'd have a B-level Main Street down on Low Avenue. A lot of cities like Portsmouth and Portland have their own back alleys that are like restaurant rows. And in the North End right now we have Chuck's Barber Shop and Tandy's. And unfortunately Eagle Square Deli was a victim of the COVID, but I'm sure we'll have another restaurant go in there, so there will be three restaurants in the North End. In the South End we have Angelina's, Revival and Cheers. So we've already got three restaurants on each end and if we upgrade Low Avenue with a few more retail shops and restaurants, that could be a nice vibrant B-level Main Street. And Storrs Street is going through a whole transformation right now with Starbuck's and the Club 110 that's going to go in there. ... We've got

"CVS right now is what we call a gap tooth. It's a gap in the skyline. So we want to get that back up to the four- or five-story height and fill that hole in the city street, as well as add to the tax base to the city, the rooftop deck."

MARK CIBOROWSKI

some big presence right now on Storrs Street. You've got Hermanos Restaurant, you've got Cheers, you've got Concord Craft Brewery. So, I think that Main Street has always been very linear north and south. We've been long and skinny. If we can get a little wider, and if we can step up Low Avenue to be more vibrant with a lot more pedestrian activity and then bring up Storrs Street as well it will really get downtown that more balanced feel with more variety.

JM: One of the things you discussed in the original issue was the Riverfront and wondering if that could turn into a public park area, getting rid of the shopping plaza. That's not part of the plan now, right?

MC: It's not part of the plan right now. There have been numerous subgroups, committees and plans. Way back when they were doing improvements to Exit 13 of I-93 there was talk of maybe moving the highway to other side of the river. But now, with all the improvements they've made to Exit 13 it's my understanding is that's completely off the table right now. There's been talk about putting the highway lower for a stretch to make for more park and walking area down by the river.

JM: A Tiny Dig?

MC: Yeah, exactly, a Mini-Dig instead of a Boston Big Dig. That would be incredible. I don't know whether it happens. Of course, we've talked about pedestrian walkway bridges over the river to the nice farmland, and the other trails right along the other side of the Merrimack River and that section's going in now.

JM: What's the greater vision? When you spoke to us the first time

in the first issue, it was a lot about keeping the architecture of the 1850s downtown. Are people still talking about that? Is that one of the reasons you want to redo Phenix Hall?

MC: Yes, well, I want to do it for many reasons. I feel I'm a steward of this historic site. ... We're fortunate that we have some of our 1880s buildings that are still intact, so Concord's architecture is beautiful. In all of my properties and renovations I strive to maintain and restore that architecture, I love that period of architecture. I think the craftsmanship is incredible. It adds to the charm and beauty of what Concord is.

JM: We talked just a little bit about how long (the Phenix Hall) project was going to take.

MC: We certainly had planned to have it under construction by now. Certainly, Covid set the schedule back on a lot of things, this included. There are still some hurdles to be worked out. I would like to break ground in the spring and . . . then be open by the spring of '22. It would be a great boost for the downtown post-pandemic. Hopefully there will be a day once again when people can get together and congregate again, and be in a place and raise a glass and eat, drink and be merry.

There are still a few challenges that I need to work out with the city. Access to and through the alley way and use of the alley way. Those are certainly key to being able to move forward. But we're working hard and soon it will be here..

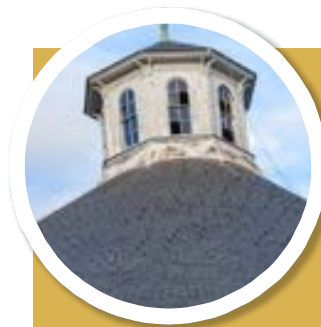
JM: We can't wait for those days to be back.

MC: Yeah, no question. It'll be wonderful. ♦

THE TIP LIST

Fast faves

You don't have to look far to find Jayme Simões, a communications professional who is unabashedly proud of the Capital City and the major steps forward it has taken in recent years. In fact, we decided to turn to Simões for this issue's Fast Faves, and his responses found on this page came back in about a half-hour, easily an *Around Concord* record! Simões is head of Louis Karno & Co., and a lover of all things Concord. But these are among his favorites.



The historic (and crooked) gasholder

Yes, we have done a terrible job keeping it up, but this brick dinosaur is today a unicorn, and a welcome sign to our city – it's unique and intriguing, and I hope we can save it! It'd make a fun post-industrial park!



Concord
Handmade

The theme of the issue – shop local!

Concord Handmade: This shop makes you hometown-proud! Great local items, fun unexpected locations either at the Arts Market or the Holiday Pop-up. It is such a great local place to shop!

Gibson's: Who would want to live in a city without a great local book store, and we have one of the best in New England, right on Main Street. They have everything, and if they don't have it, they can get it! We are so lucky!

Ideas for local shopping start on Page 18



Gas Lighter

I grew up in a Greek neighborhood in Chicago, so this is like going home – very good gyros plus outstanding Pastitsio. And yes, the coldest beer in town!



Swope Park

Such a great hike. Easy but fun loop, ending with sweeping views of Long Pond – all a few miles from downtown.



Gallen State Office Park:

One of the prettiest urban parks. Big lawns, creepy abandoned hospital buildings, a little pond, ball fields, ruins, and most of all – no people!



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Geoff Forester

TIME TO READ

Pick out a book for yourself or a loved one. Some options to make it through the winter.

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DOWNTOWN

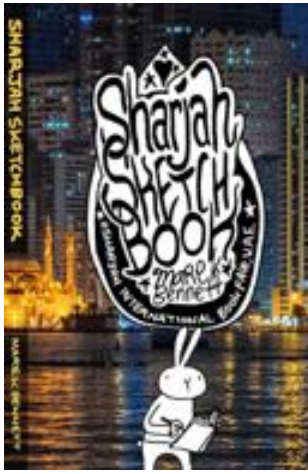
It's not too late to pick up a final gift. A tour of some of the many places worth your time.

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OFF MAIN

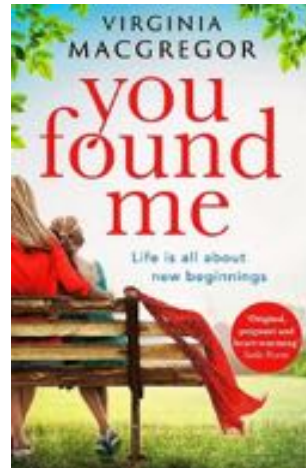
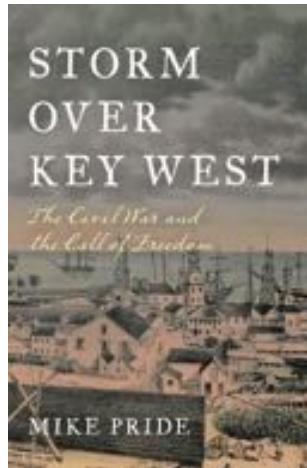
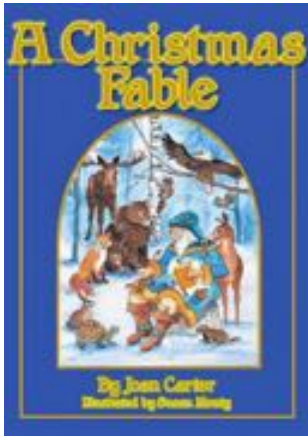
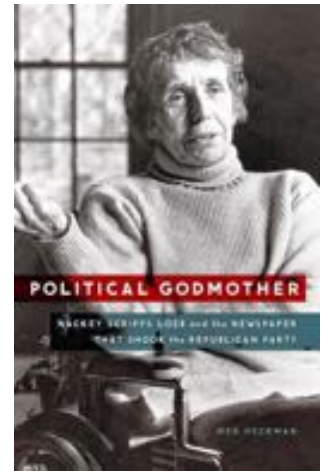
We went beyond Concord's downtown to help you uncover some gems.

Page 38



WINTER READING LIST

Warm up with local authors



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There's nothing quite like cozying up next to the fire with a mug of cocoa, book in hand with maybe a blanket or cat in your lap. This winter, more than ever, we'll be keeping closer to home. So here are some books written by authors who live around Concord. – *By Sarah Pearson*

THE HISTORY SECTION

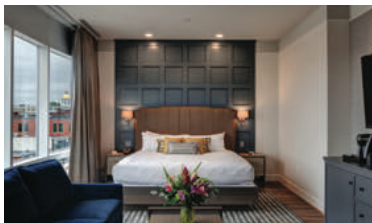
“Political Godmother: Nackey Scripps Loeb and the Newspaper that Shook the Republican Party”

Meg Heckman, an assistant professor at Northeastern University's School of Journalism in Boston and journalist, delves into Nackey Loeb's life and work from her behind-the-scenes influence at the *Union Leader* to her upfront leadership as publisher after her husband's death and more than a thousand editorials, many of which made the front page. Her unapologetic conservatism and position in the first-in-the-nation primary state gave her an outsized role in American politics, which is often overlooked in history, focusing rather on her newspaper and her husband's work. She pushed boundaries in male-dominated areas of publishing and politics, most notably Patrick Buchanan's primary challenge against George Bush in 1992, followed by another run in 1996. The title of the book is inspired by Buchanan's 1996 speech after winning the N.H. primary.



“Storm Over Key West: The Civil War and the Call of Freedom”

Mike Pride, former *Concord Monitor* editor and Pulitzer Prize administrator, weaves together stories of racial inequality and the Gulf's naval bastions during the mid-1800s. A few weeks after the Emancipation Proclamation took effect, James Montgomery sailed into Key West harbor looking for Black men to join the Union army, and he left with 126. As Key West's slaves flocked to freedom during the summer of 1862, the white residents worked to deny remaining Black residents civil rights, education and dignity. It is told largely through the voices of those who lived through it: letters of soldiers, sailors, enslaved people and politics; through newspaper accounts and diaries.



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Shake Strain Done

The former national food editor for the Associated Press and editorial director of Milk Street, J.M. Hirsch has put together a compilation of more than 200 craft cocktails you can make using pantry staples and basic liquors. The perfect book for a year like 2020.

FICTION SECTION



"You Found Me"

In the latest released by Virginia Macgregor, a Brit now living in Concord, characters Isabel and daughter River discover a man sitting on a park bench in the rain. He is physically fine, but can't remember anything about himself, including his name. Isabel brings the man to the hospital where she works, but can't just leave him. She promises her daughter that they will help him, but worries what his locked away memories might be hiding.



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A story shared by four generations of a New England family is now available to share with your family. Joan Carter wrote "A Christmas Fable" late in life and read it to her grandchildren until she was 92 years old. The family continues to read the story every Christmas eve. Her daughter and grand-daughter, Alice Duston of Hampstead and Debbie Ryan of Sandown, have worked with illustrator Susan Monty of Derry to bring Carter's tale to the page. The story depicts a cold Christmas Eve where the animals of the forest gather around Saint Nicolas as he tells the creatures the amazing story of how Joseph and his wife Mary arrived in Bethlehem just in time for the baby Jesus to be born. Saint Nicolas reminds them of the amazing events that happened that wondrous night. Monty's watercolor illustrations inspired by nature were a perfect fit to bring the charming forest animals alive in "A Christmas Fable."



GRAPHIC NOVELS

Sharjah Sketchbook

Henniker artist and educator Marek Bennett created a graphic novel-style travel memoir during a teaching trip to Sharjah (United Arab Emirates). Through the character of Rabbit, Bennett's comic diary explores themes are migration, travel, language, education, religion, and the role of images and storytelling in a community. He has previously published volumes one and two of "The Civil War Diary of Freeman Colby," with the third volume in progress.



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Once idyllic, now divided

How the small town of Grafton became a Libertarian stronghold

By MATTHEW HONGOLTZ-HETLING

The ultimate goal of the Free Towners is described in Ayn Rand's novel *Atlas Shrugged*, in which a hidden valley of industrialists form Galt's Gulch, a rogue society ruled by a pure free market. Their capitalist utopia stands in stark contrast to mainstream America, where parasitic governmental interference causes interdependent businesses — railroad lines, copper mines, and steel mills — to fail for want of basic materials, dragging those outside the valley toward a lawless dark age.

For Grafton's Free Towners, Rand's vision of a market-driven society was what kept them privatizing and deregulating everything they could. For seven long years, they joined thrift-minded allies in issuing vociferous challenges to every rule and tax dollar in sight; one by one, expenditures were flayed from the municipal budget, bits of services peeled away like so much flesh.

They permanently extinguished most of the town's streetlights to save on electricity bills and dis-

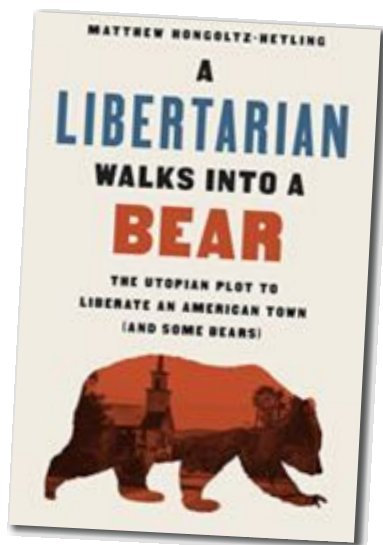


Courtesy

The iconic meetinghouse is shown at right in Grafton Center in a 1950s photograph. In some ways, the town remains unchanged, and in others ways, it's vastly different.



Contrary to the libertarians' expectations, however, real life in the Free Town seemed to be almost the reverse of Rand's fictional vision – by 2011, the holes in Grafton's public services gaped stubbornly, creating a spreading malaise.



"A Libertarian Walks Into a Bear: The Utopian Plot to Liberate an American Town (And Some Bears)"

Matthew Hongoltz-Hetling is a freelance journalist. He has been named a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and won a George Polk Award.

Pick up the book at Gibson's Bookstore in Concord.

continued long stretches of dirt road to save on highway materials and equipment. The town rejected funding for frills like community Christmas lights and Fourth of July fireworks. And though the planning board survived, Free Towners and other like-minded residents gutted its \$2,000 budget, first cutting it to \$500, then to a token \$50.

Contrary to the libertarians' expectations, however, real life in the Free Town seemed to be almost the reverse of Rand's fictional vision – by 2011, while the rest of America was chugging along unperturbed, the holes in Grafton's public services gaped stubbornly, creating a spreading malaise.

Despite several promising efforts, a robust Randian private sector failed to emerge to replace public services. A theoretical private fire department run by Bob Hull never seemed to actually stop fires. A freedom-themed farmers' market sputtered along for a while, then faded. A proposed public-service militia never got off the

ground.

Meanwhile, the constant bloodletting was turning the once-vibrant town government into a symbol of societal decay. On the town's few miles of paved roads, untended blacktop cracks first blossomed into fissures, then bloomed into grassy potholes. After voters rejected a funding request for \$40,000 to purchase asphalt and other supplies, embattled town officials warned that Grafton was in serious danger of losing the roads altogether. The town was also put on notice by the state that two small bridges were in danger of collapse, due to neglect.

Grafton's municipal offices declined from a state of mere shabbiness to downright decrepitude. As the town clerk and a few other staffers processed paperwork and fielded citizen complaints, they stood beneath exposed electrical wires hanging from the ceiling like copper-headed mistletoe. With no money to replace the hot water system when it failed, staff were forced to wash their hands in icy wa-



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ter. And when the building's envelope was breached, nature took full advantage: rainwater poured through major roof leaks and seeped into the side walls, while a biological torrent of ants and termites entered a thousand unseen cracks, crawling over walls, floors, ceilings, desks and, if they did not move frequently enough, people. Tracey Colburn, the town's administrative assistant (seemingly one of the few people in town who did not own a firearm and who did not care for politics), resigned.

As libertarians continued to worry away services, what emerged from the fray was not an idealized culture of personal responsibility, but a ragged assortment of those ad-hoc camps in the woods, some of which began to generate complaints about seeping sewage and other unsanitary living conditions. Other indicators also seemed to be moving in the wrong direction. Recycling rates dropped from 60 percent to 40 percent. The number of annual sex offender registrations reported by po-

lice increased steadily, from eight in 2006 to twenty-two in 2010—one in sixty residents. In 2006, Chief Kenyon joined state authorities in arresting three Grafton men connected with a meth production lab in the town, and in 2011, Grafton was home to its first murder in living memory. After a man was accused of being a “freeloader” by two roommates in a temporary shared living situation, he killed them both, using a 9 millimeter handgun and a .45 to shoot one of them sixteen times. In 2013, police shot and killed another Grafton man in the wake of an armed robbery. In all, the number of police calls went up by more than two hundred per year.

In many small New England communities, the growing sense of lawlessness might have triggered an increased police presence, but Grafton's police department was suffering the same fiscal anemia that was affecting everything else. Because of funding constraints, the department's lone twelve-year-old cruiser was frequently in the shop for repairs; as the

police chief (whose request for a salary increase was defeated by voters in 2010) noted in his annual report, the need for repairs “created a lot of down time throughout the year.”

All of these public services—roads, bridges, town offices, lighting, police mobility, and more—were sacrificed as casualties in the all-important battle to keep property taxes low.

So how low are Grafton's taxes?

Municipal property tax rates in New Hampshire (which, remember, has no state income tax or sales tax) vary wildly. For example, the city of Claremont, a former mill town, had a 2010 rate of \$11.94 per \$1,000 of home value, among the highest in the state, and it spends that money on a robust offering of parks, infrastructure, economic planning, and public safety resources for its residents.

Like Claremont, Grafton is legally required by the state to provide emergency services, road plowing and upkeep, environmentally responsible waste disposal, insurance and legal services, the licensing of dogs, the



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maintenance of bridges, the keeping of publicly accessible town records, and other services deemed essential.

Small, rural towns tend to carry out these mandates on a shoestring budget, but some towns' shoestrings are more frayed than others. For example, Grafton and its northern neighbor, Canaan, have similar household income stats but meet their obligations very differently. While almost all public officials in Canaan would describe themselves as fiscally conservative, Grafton has shown a savant-like talent for weaseling out of public costs.

It's always been that way. Even in the late 1700s, when Grafton and Canaan were neighboring settlements with just a few hundred residents each, Canaan spent public dollars to feed its militia members during military training exercises, while Grafton voted against doing the same. Back then, those sorts of decisions kept Grafton's tax rate at two pounds per thousand pounds of valuation (British currency), while Canaan residents were taxed more heavily, at two pounds, three shillings.

Both communities taxed residents with the same fiscal goal in mind of growing their populations. If a community attracts and retains people, it spreads the tax burden over more taxpayers and creates a virtuous cycle of economic growth and prosperity, but the difference between the two towns was that, where Canaan tried to attract people by emphasizing tax-funded services, Grafton emphasized lower taxes.

Inherently statist, the Canaan approach is based on the idea that elected officials are better qualified to spend taxpayer money than the taxpayers themselves. The Grafton approach, on the other hand, is individualistic: people with the freedom to spend their own money make better, more rational decisions than the government.

For two hundred years, the towns carried these differences through the quick boom and then the slow decline



Geoff Forester

Sometimes bears look awfully cute, like this cub seen climbing a tree on School Street near Concord Hospital in the spring of 2018.

of the New England agricultural economy. During the boom years and up through the Civil War, both Grafton and Canaan were buoyed by the capitalistic forces that prevailed in an age of prosperity, with Grafton's population swelling to 1,259 in 1850 and Canaan's going a bit higher, to 1,682.

Following the American Civil War, New England's agricultural economy migrated west, and both communities lost population. Canaan responded by investing in its future, building the sort of public infrastructure it believed would appeal to new residents.

Grafton took a different approach. In 1881, when good times created a surplus in the town treasury, they voted at a town meeting to give everyone a tax-free year. And in 1909, not long after it first declined to fund a fire department, Grafton stymied a plan to build a \$150 police station, leaving a chain of police chiefs no choice but to work, conduct inter-

views, and store criminal records in their own homes for the next eighty-two years.

Grafton's population in 2010 was 1,340, just a hair more than in 1850. But over that same time period Canaan's population ballooned to 3,909, despite its higher taxes.

It was possible to think that Canaan had the better tax plan. But maybe, as the Free Towners likely believed, it was exactly the opposite: maybe Grafton's taxes were still too high. So Grafton doubled down on its anti-tax war.

In 2001, the municipal budget included \$520,000 in local tax money (a figure that doesn't account for other revenue sources, like state grants). By 2011, the municipal budget contained just \$491,000 in taxes. Factoring in inflation, the town had reduced its buying power by 25 percent, even though the population increased by 18 percent over the same time period. Not

every service was being cut. Indeed, certain expense categories were expanding. Before the Free Town Project began, the town's legal expenses were usually less than \$1,000 per year — they totaled \$275 in 2004. But after the Free Town Project began, a more litigious mind-set emerged in Grafton and the town's legal bills began to mount, reaching \$9,400 in 2011.

Grafton is also legally required to provide public assistance to income-qualified residents who apply. Before the beginning of the Free Town Project, providing public assistance tended to cost the town less than \$10,000. But by 2010 that expense had more than quadrupled, to more than \$40,000.

Grafton and Canaan have drifted so far apart that no one would guess they started as virtually identical settlements. After 150 years of community building, Canaan had an elementary school, churches, restaurants, banks, a gift shop, two bakeries, pet boarding facilities, a metalsmithing shop, meeting halls, convenience stores, farms, an arts community, a veterinary clinic, and dozens of small businesses, each of which added something to the town's identity and sense of community.

Grafton, by contrast, had a single, struggling general store, one tourist attraction in the Ruggles Mine, a suite of chronically underfunded municipal services, and a church celebrating the singular ideas of John Connell.

But Grafton had low taxes. Or, to be more accurate, taxes that were low in theory. I assumed that, after all those years of resistance, Grafton's tax rate would be a fraction of Canaan's, but I learned that the difference is actually quite modest. Because it has managed to maintain larger populations over the decades, Canaan can spend much more on public goods, while keeping tax rates in check. In 2010, the tax rate in Grafton was \$4.49 per \$1,000 of valuation, as compared to \$6.20 in Canaan. That means the owner of a \$150,000 home would get an annual municipal tax bill of \$673.50



Jennifer Hauck

Ruggles Mine was once Grafton's lone attraction, but it has since closed.

in Grafton, and \$930 in Canaan.

In other words, Grafton taxpayers have traded away all of the advantages enjoyed by Canaan residents to keep about 70 cents a day in their pockets.

Did Canaan's relative success really say something about taxes, or was that a coincidence? After all, high taxes can drive people out of a community, which is why many regularly vote against tax-hiking public frills like libraries, street lighting, well-maintained roads, swimming pools, tennis courts, agricultural fairs, museums, playgrounds, and gardens.

In 2019, a group of Baylor University researchers decided to check in on people who favored low taxes over these sorts of "frills." They looked at thirty years of data on public spending on optional public services and compared them to self-reported levels of happiness. Their findings suggest that Canaan's success is no fluke, but in fact an entirely predictable outcome: states with well-funded public services have happier residents than those that don't.

This happiness gap held up among all sectors of society—rich and poor,

well-educated and poorly educated, married and single, old and young, healthy and sick.

The researchers said that the data bore out the commonsense observation that, "when states invest in public goods . . . they often can have the effect of bringing people together in a common space and enhancing the likelihood of social interaction and engagement." Over time, they wrote, "these subtle interactions can help to strengthen social ties among citizens and, in doing so, promote greater well-being."

But there is one caveat. Public spending is associated with happiness, but it might not actually cause happiness, said the study authors. It's also plausible that happy people of all income levels are simply more willing to spend tax money.

If that's true, it would suggest that Grafton's miserly approach to public spending didn't necessarily cause unhappiness among its residents. Rather, the low tax rate may have been a predictable outcome for a town that had, over the years, become a haven for miserable people. ♦



Allie St Peter

Baby Booties (\$24) by Rip en Stitch available at The Concord Handmade pop up shop just off Main Street.

Destination **DOWNTOWN**

As the 11th hour nears on the holiday shopping season, take a stroll downtown and visit some of our favorite shops, which have put safety policies in place

By TIM O'SULLIVAN

Downtown Concord pulls off the trick of being both timeless and timely. Main Street mixes the nostalgia of old facades and familiar landmarks with glowing neon from new theaters and aromas from boutique coffee shops.

Shopping on Concord's central thoroughfare offers a similarly rare combination – buying local with a wide variety of choices. Nearly every store on Main Street is independently owned, and as a group they could



Above: Stone necklaces (\$15)
created by Good Gaud Designs.

Below: Brew your own kombucha (\$50)
with this kit from Revival Homestead.

**Concord
Handmade**



Allie St Peter



Geoff Forester photos

Gibson's Bookstore

Gibson's Bookstore was founded in 1898 and is the oldest continuously operating retailer in the Concord area. Current owner Michael Herrmann bought the bookstore in 1994, and in 2013 moved it to its current location on South Main Street. The tote bag above goes for \$20.

handle most of your holiday shopping needs. You can find handcrafted goods from local artisans, handmade candy from local institutions or hand-selected books from local curators. You can also pick up gifts that are sustainable, or living, or intoxicating.

Main Street has so many stores it's definitely worth your shopping time to stroll the wide sidewalks and peek at them all, but here are a few of my

personal favorites to get you started.

Concord Handmade

This is the 10th year owner Alison Murphy has been offering local artists a place to sell their wares in her pop-up holiday shop. About half of the 65 New England artists with goods in the store are from New Hampshire and about a third of those are from the Concord area. There are best-sell-

ing favorites like the upcycled earrings from Heidi Kind Finds, beeswax candles from hive & home and ocean resin art from Kathryn Dziadowicz, and, as always, Murphy has included new artists.

"People have said long-term craft fair," Murphy said when asked to describe the store's aesthetic, "or in-person Etsy. That's my favorite."

This year's shop popped up in the same space it occupied last year at 20 South Main Street, but the heat in that building stopped working so Murphy had to move everything to an open space in Capital Plaza off School Street less than a block from Main.

Gibson's Bookstore

This Main Street staple can fill all kinds of holes in your holiday shopping list with its selection of games, calendars, cards, knick-knacks and, of course, books. The staff's book recommendations and display tables are a great place to start looking, and if

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Allie St Peter

Bona Fide Green Goods

Above: Reusable Unpaper Towels and wooded towel roll (\$84) by Marley's Monsters.

Left: 100% Bee's Wax hand-dipped taper candles (\$12) by Big Dipper Wax Works.

you can't find anything there, the rest of the store is well organized and marked by genre. Page-turning treasures can also be found in the used section and on the sale tables.

The locally owned store is spacious and has multiple entrances, so it's easier to stay socially distant while shopping at Gibson's than many other stores. Holiday hours are scheduled to be 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday and noon to 4 p.m. on Sundays, but check the website for any potential changes before going. The site also shows some of what you can see on the store's display tables, and it has all of the books in stock or available to order. But if you do shop in-person at the 45 North Main St. location, you really should check out those quirky card games and wacky magnets.

Bona Fide Green Goods

Do a nice thing for someone *and* for the environment when you buy a

gift from this eco-friendly boutique at 25 North Main St. The owners make sure all of their products are good for the Earth and for your body so you don't have to do homework with each purchase, and these green products are also affordable. The store is full of great gifts like lavender eye pillows, handmade organic baby bibs, upcycled wallets and bags, and a hot sauce that comes in a grenade-shaped con-

tainer. They also have health and beauty items like toothpaste and beard oil; home goods like reusable UNpapertowels and silicone plastic bags; and tons of items from N.H.-based companies.

You can book a personal shopping appointment at the store on Sundays between 4-6 p.m. for up to five people by calling 224-9700 or visiting bonafidegreengoods.com. You can

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Always a favorite as a last-minute stop for stocking stuffers, Granite State Candy Shoppe offers all sorts of traditional candies, Christmas-themed treats and even gifts like maple syrup in their downtown shop in Concord.

Granite State Candy Shoppe



Geoff Forester

also shop on the website, which is easy to navigate and thorough in its descriptions, and you can pick up on-line orders in the store or curbside. If you want an item sent somewhere else it will be packaged using repurposed shipping materials.

Granite State Candy Shoppe

Handmade candy makes for a great gift – a small decadence you might

not buy for yourself but will happily take. Plus, it's a present you know won't become unused clutter. Honestly, candy from Granite State probably won't make it until the New Year.

This "Shoppe" at 13 Warren Street has a massive selection of chocolates, candies and nuts with plenty of holiday-themed treats like chocolate-dipped candy canes, reindeer corn (candy corn in green and red), sugar

plums (plum-flavored jell candies) and chocolate Star of David Hanukkah pops. Seeing, and smelling, everything on display is a treat in itself, but the store can be tight during busy shopping times. With that in mind, curbside pickup is available after shopping on the website, granitestate-candyshoppe.com, and online orders of \$60 or more get free ground shipping.



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Wine on Main

Reusable stainless steel Wine Growler (29.99) by True, an insulated cooler backpack (\$72) by Foster & Rye and a rose gold corkscrew wine opener (\$13.99) by Santa Barbara Design Studio can be found at Wine on Main.

Wine on Main

Stop into this new store in a charming old space at 9 North Main Street to browse a selection of limited-production wines not easily accessible in New Hampshire. The inventory is always changing, but you can be sure to get an informed opinion on whatever the selection might be. You can also schedule a private shopping appointment or buy a gift card from the website, wineon-mainnh.com, that will be emailed directly to the recipient. They can use it to order wines from all around the world, including numerous choices in the \$15-40 range, or to book a private wine tasting. Add it all up and a gift card from Wine on Main is like a trifecta of sustainable gifting – consumable, experiential and electronically delivered.

OFF MAIN STREET
More local shopping
ideas start on Page 38

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Allie St Peter

Lilise Designer Resale

Geode Necklace (\$15) can be found at Lilise Designer Resale on Main Street.

Lilise Designer Resale

It may not seem as sustainable as a set of bamboo utensils, but buying used clothing from a consignment shop like this one is certainly eco-friendly. It can also be a lot of fun. You'll find designer, luxury and vintage goodies at affordable prices, and there are also new items for sale. Owner Elyssa Alfieri has high-end labels like Chanel and Louis Vuitton, and, as it says on the store's website, liliseresale.com, she's also strived to "create an atmosphere that allows any shopper to feel comfortable and to have fun exploring." She's also stocked more unisex clothing this year in an effort to create a more inclusive shopping experience.

Penumbra

A gift from this new plant store can add some life and vibrancy to a home, which will be especially welcome as we head into a winter where most of us will be spending a lot of time at home. The plants range from a 2-inch zebra for \$4 to an Audrey ficus tree for \$330. Even if someone has no experience with plants, chances are they can care for a plant from Penumbra since the store's aesthetic, as it



Allie St Peter



Penumbra

Above: Wild Soap Sampler (\$14.50) by AWSB can be found at Penumbra located on North State Street.

Left: Small house planter (\$26) and Polka Dot Plant (\$4.50).



bra since the store's aesthetic, as it says on its website (penumbra.shop), is, "plants we can't kill." There are other gift items like jewelry, soap, candles, stickers and pins, and the store is planning a huge holiday window display. There will be a scavenger hunt inside the display, which will wrap around all the windows at Penumbra's corner location at 10

North State Street.

Honorable Mention

Here are seven more downtown Concord stores that great holiday shopping destinations: League of NH Craftsmen, Things Are Cooking, Concord Antiques, Joe King's Shoe Shop, Pitchfork Records, Viking House, Gondwana. ♦



Allie St Peter

It's game on with the New Hampshire-shaped cribbage board (\$40) found at The Prison Store.

Destination **OFF MAIN**

We all love our downtown, but we also know that the city boasts plenty of gems in all directions. Buckle up and go for a ride.

By TIM O'SULLIVAN

Shopping in crowds can be a holiday downer, and avoiding throngs of people is even more important this year.

Buying online is one way to miss the masses, but if you want the in-person shopping experience that's off the beaten path, there are more than a few places to go around Concord.

Here are some of my favorites, and what makes each one worth a visit.

The Prison Store

The real name is New Hampshire Department of Corrections Retail Showroom, but that doesn't exactly roll off the tongue or convey the hand-crafted care that goes into the goods at 312 North State Street in Concord. The woodshop products are stunning – hand-made with old-fashioned methods and sturdy woods. There are oak queen platform beds and wraparound cherry desks if you're looking for big-ticket items, but there are also high-quality wooden cutting boards, toy cars, jewelry boxes, plant stands and cribbage sets that make for more reasonable gifts from the woodshop.

There are plenty of non-wooden items, too, like piggy banks crafted from old post office boxes, leather belts and wallets, ceramic mugs and beaded jewelry. Most of these items come from the hobby/craft program, where the incarcerated individuals provide their own materials and keep 65% of the profit. The woodshop is part of the industries program, where the materials are provided and the inmates receive training that can help with a successful re-entry into society.

"It's definitely a positive outlet for them and some of them do very well when they get out," said New Hampshire Correctional Industries Sales & Marketing Director Laura Williams, who will take a shift or two working the cash register at the store, which is open Tuesday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. "You have to take a negative and turn it into a positive, which is not easy, but that's what we're trying to do here."

Indigo Blues & Co., Contoocook

The charm of Fountain Square seems to curl up the wooden front steps, across the old-fashioned porch and then bloom into this store full of inspired gift ideas. As the name implies, Indigo Blues & Co. is a jeans boutique at heart, but there is so much more at 902 Main Street in Contoocook Village, and owner



Allie St Peter

The Prison Store

Above: This fruit bowl (\$69) can be found at the New Hampshire Department of Corrections Retail Showroom, where inmates at the state prison across the street can hone their skills for a successful re-entry into the workforce.

Left: Real-deal crafted leather bracelets go for between \$4-\$9.

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Allie St Peter

Indigo Blues & Co.

Clockwise from bottom left, Beadorable Belt & Buckle (\$65), handcrafted resin necklaces (\$40) made by Kelly Holmes Jewelry, crossbody with wristlet (\$35) by Burano and a shaving brush with a stand (\$39.99) and post shave lotion (\$15) can be found at Indigo Blues & Co in Contoocook.

LeeAnne Vance has put all the best gift items on creative display at her flagship store (there's also a downtown Concord location in Capital Square Plaza) for the holiday season. There are tons of winter hats, mittens, scarves and socks that are fun or cozy or both. There's doughnut bath bombs, organic lip balm and a huge

selection of soaps and creams from Beekman 1802. There's a kid's section with things like sidewalk chalk and wooden cars and a men's section with a nice selection of flannel shirts and beanies.

And, of course, there's an incredible array of women's clothing that, as it says at indigobluesandco.com,

ranges, "from eclectic to classic" and "will be a staple in your wardrobe for years to come."

Twigg's Gallery, Boscawen

Visiting this gallery at 254 King Street in Boscawen is a worthwhile holiday experience even without the shopping. The current exhibit, Sleigh-

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Twiggs Gallery

Shaker Parlor Broom (left, \$75) and Hawk Tail Whisk Broom (right, \$55).

Copper Tree Sculpture (\$25) created by Custom Copper Creation.

Pottery Pouring Vessel (\$65) by Lori Rollason.



Allie St Peter

bell Studio 2020, has a cheery, Santa's workshop feel that can put just about anyone in a festive mood. But not shopping would be a missed opportunity since the exhibit is made up of locally made fine art and craft that's affordably priced. There's also a gift shop with fun socks, funky magnets, wall hangings and craft tools.

If you can't find anything in the exhibit or gift store, owner Adele Sanborn also offers calligraphy services through her company Cornerstone Design, which she started in 1984 in Concord. Sanborn also owned the Concord retail store Caardvark, opened The Paint Box studio in Webster in 2005 and most recently initiated the Route 3 Art Trail, a collaborative partnership with Kimball Jenkins in Concord, Making Matters NH in Penacook and other local artists to, "encourage people to participate in and enjoy local art, artists and creative events along the Route 3 corridor between Concord, Penacook and Boscowen," as it says on the Twiggs Gallery website, twigsgallery.wordpress.com.

Antique Alley along Route 4

Traveling is part of this shopping experience. Make your way east on Route 4 from Concord and you'll find more than 20 antique shops with goods from about 500 dealers. Even if you're not looking for a piece of antique furniture to put under the tree, there are lots of smaller gift ideas like sports and music memorabilia, vintage advertising, folk art, prints and architectural salvage pieces. You'll also find plenty of vintage jewelry and clothing, fine china and glassware, collectable pottery and antique accessories. Even though these shops are focused on the past, they do have a website, nhantiquealley.com, which describes "Antique Alley" as "New England's oldest antiques shopping district," and gives a few details on what you might find in each store.



File

Antique Alley

Set aside some time to browse the day away at 20 stores featuring more than 500 dealers.

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Allie St Peter

Cole Gardens

Even during the winter, a visit to this Concord outdoor favorite can bring a rush of color. Poinsettias can be picked up for \$12.99.

Cole Gardens

With so many people becoming new, or newly committed, gardeners during the last year, chances are good someone on your list might like some tools, decorations or plants for their garden. You can find all that and then some at this spacious, exposed-beam store at 430 Loudon Road on the outskirts of Concord.

For the green-minded, there are high-end Sneeboer tools, eco-friendly gardening gloves, sundials, wind chimes, solar lights, trellises and a full array of annuals, perennials, vegetables, herbs and shrubs. But there are also non-gardening gifts like balms from Badger, candles from Seawicks, preserves from Stonewall Kitchen as well as socks, gloves, stuffed animals and other small gift items.

Sandy's Pet Food Center

Not only has the pandemic created a new crop of gardeners, it's also spawned a new group of pet owners. You can help them keep those new animal companions healthy with a gift from this natural pet food store at 141 Old Turnpike Road in Concord. Owner Adam Burr-Mecum and his staff make sure all of the food meets their strict guidelines and doesn't contain any by-products, artificial preservatives or cheap fillers. They also carry lots of other great pet products like Pawz dog boots, Musher's Secret paw wax, oils to keep coats healthy, sweaters and toys galore. If you can't decide or don't know what to get, a gift certificate is a great idea and will help new pet owners discover this local gem. And, if you're looking for a holiday card ideas, you



Allie St Peter

Sandy's Pet Food Center

Don't forget the dog! This plush Mallard Squeaky Toy (\$10.99) is made by Tall Tails.

can bring your pet in for a holiday-themed photo shoot on Dec. 6 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. for only \$10, and all of the profits from the photo shoot will go to Pope Memorial SPCA.

L.L. Bean Outlet

Since it's an outlet, you never really know what you might find at 55 Fort Eddy Road, but more often than not there are discounted treasures on the shelves and racks. It may not be the complete selection from the latest catalog, but there's tons to choose from when it comes to men's, women's and kids' clothing and outerwear. Not all of it is drastically marked down, but there's always a chance you'll find an incredible deal. The store also carries outdoor gear ranging from tents and snowshoes to pocket knives and flashlights; backpacks, suitcases and other travel necessities; and home goods like flannel sheets and dog beds. Plus, getting a present from L.L. Bean brings a certain comfort as winter begins. ♦



Allie St Peter

L.L. Bean


Traditional LL Bean boots (\$60) can be found on the clearance rack at the outlet in Concord.

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Nonprofits have had
New Hampshire's back
during this time of crisis.

**It's time we show
that we have theirs.**

THOSE WHO'VE HELPED

**By KATHLEEN REARDON,
RICHARD OBER and
KATY EASTERLY MARTEY**

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, New Hampshire's nonprofit organizations did what had to be done: they adapted – and kept meeting their missions.

Homeless shelter staff figured out how to keep roofs over people's heads, even when that meant scrambling to find room for people to isolate.

People who run food pantries and the New Hampshire Food Bank figured out how to safely continue distributing groceries in our communities – even while seeing a huge surge in demand.

Workers at family resource centers figured out how to keep isolated kids from struggling families connected with summer activities – delivering supplies to homes and meeting over Zoom.

Museums that usually host school groups created online programs and connected families with remote-learning resources. Arts organizations, dealt a staggering blow from loss of revenue, found creative ways



Courtesy photos

Fran Philippe in the program pantry at Friends of Forgotten Children.



Nancy Mellitt, left, and Jennifer Lennox at the New Hampshire Food Bank.

THE HEROES OF 2020

to safely offer programming to uplift and inspire.

Nonprofit child care centers adapted to keep doors open for the children of essential workers.

The list goes on. And on. And on.

And nonprofits met this unprecedented need in our communities despite facing mounting and unexpected costs, forced cancellations of fundraisers that many rely on to keep their budgets in the black, closures that sent revenues into tailspins – all while facing down the enormous complexities of a global pandemic.

Many New Hampshire people have rallied to acknowledge and support that heroic work. In June, the NH Center for Nonprofits' one-day giving event, NH Gives, shattered all previous records – raising more in 2020 for nonprofits in New Hampshire than it had in the previous four years combined.

Many people and businesses have given generously to support the critical work that keeps our communities strong. You gave money and time – and you gave food and toilet paper, when those things were in short supply. Every donation was appreciated. Many gave to United Way relief funds, to the NH Charitable Foundation's Community Crisis Action Fund, to the Community Development Finance Authority's Response Fund or directly to those organizations that you see doing good and vital work in your communities every day.

Our three organizations worked together to create a grant program and to help the state administer the Nonprofit Emergency Relief Program – helping the Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery to efficiently and effectively distribute millions in federal CARES Act funding to help New Hampshire's nonprofits keep going through this crisis.



Courtesy photos

Toys for Tots remains a great way to connect this holiday.

But nonprofits need more, and continued, support. These organizations remain – and will remain – on the front lines: continuing to manage the public-health crisis, fighting for racial justice, addressing increased need for basic services, protecting people's right to vote, building local economic opportunities. And so much more.

And nonprofits will be a critical wellspring of resilience to help rebuild the vibrancy, shared purpose and connectedness that New Hampshire communities pride ourselves on.

The NH Center for Nonprofits, the NH Charitable Foundation, and the Community Development Finance Authority will continue to serve the nonprofit sector: making grants, advocating, providing technical assistance. We urge federal and state policy-makers to make more funds available to support nonprofits as we continue to navigate and rebuild from this crisis. And we encourage the state to continue to work with private philan-

thropic partners and the nonprofit sector to find solutions to our shared challenges.

In this extraordinarily challenging time, nonprofits have not failed or even faltered in their missions for our communities. The staff and volunteers of these remarkable organizations masked up, gloved up, and went right on with the work.

Nonprofits had New Hampshire's back when our communities needed them the most, and they continue to have our back. Now, they need everyone who is able to show that we have theirs: Please, give as generously as you can this holiday season to help New Hampshire's nonprofits keep meeting their critical missions.

Kathleen Reardon is CEO of the NH Center for Nonprofits; Richard Ober is president and CEO of the NH Charitable Foundation; and Katy Easterly Martey is executive director of the Community Development Finance Authority.

NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE





Smooth Transition

Pembroke's
Josh Philbrick
traded in his
construction job
to dig into the
smoothie
business by
launching a
delivery
operation and a
new storefront
in Concord

Story, Page 50

**Josh Philbrick makes a
Blueberry Bliss smoothie at his
new smoothie shop on Pleasant
Street in downtown Concord.**

Geoff Forester

By RAY DUCKLER

You never know where life will lead.

Sometimes, it takes you into your boss's office, where your life changes.

Just ask Josh Philbrick. One day, he was in the construction business working for his father, managing subcontractors and crews, maintaining schedules, doing what was part of his

family DNA.

And on a subsequent day, at nearly 40 years old, Philbrick was giving his two-week notice and chasing a dream, blending and mixing things like a mad scientist in his laboratory, searching for the right formula in his new and somewhat unrelated career path:

Making smoothies. Selling smooth-

ies. Smoothies, smoothies, smoothies. He opened on Pleasant Street last June.

"I was smoothing all the time," said Philbrick, yet another new local business owner trying to build something during the pandemic. "It's a great way to open the day, but it was a passing thought."

Then, it was more.

He's lived in Pembroke for five years. He opened Smoothie Bus Shoppe in Concord last June, once the COVID-19 quarantine was lifted. He had opened his first shop on Elm Street in Manchester nearly two years ago.

The Smoothie Bus is a real piece to his business model, a seasonal ride, March through October, delivering pre-ordered smoothies in an old ice cream truck that's gutted, with new floors and a blinding sunshine-yellow paint job. He has two in his fleet, and they surfaced before his storefronts did.

During the pre-coronavirus days of 2018 and '19, Philbrick gladly recalled long shifts working at Southern New Hampshire University on Commercial Street in Manchester. The bus rolled in each Friday that first season. Philbrick said he sold 250 smoothies there in 2018, then again in '19. He said sometimes there was a two-hour wait. He also made regular stops at business parking lots, serving a minimum order of five smoothies.

But COVID-19 sort of stopped that program in its tracks. Workers stayed home and quarantined last summer, the peak season for mobile smoothie sales. Lunchtime smoothie bashes dried up, and that took a huge bite from Philbrick's financial plan.

"We ran one bus this year," Philbrick said. "It was a lot slower than usual."

Philbrick says walk-in business is good, quick in, quick out, and in fact he's hoping to one day expand. Meanwhile, he never saw any of this coming. Not really. Not at first.

But it must have been tucked away

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somewhere. Philbrick worked for his dad's construction company in high school, learning about remodeling during summer breaks. He did construction in the Granite State and Florida, where he was a project superintendent for a custom home builder in Tampa.

He studied informational technology and architectural engineering in college, but over-seeing a construction site was his forte. He met his wife, Sonya, in Florida, and she was the one who convinced her husband to think about blending fruity things, not concrete, after the couple settled in Pembroke five years ago.

"She asked, 'Why don't we open a smoothie place,' " Philbrick said. "That was it. I pondered it for a bit and said sure, why not, and I went online and looked at vehicles and I saw this old ice cream truck out of Pennsylvania and my dad got it and brought it back and we made it into the Smoothie Bus."

He did the paperwork, satisfied the health inspector, filled in all the blanks to launch his idea. Driving something that looked like it came straight from the 1960s, he took his bus to area car dealerships and introduced his new product. Sales were great. That was on a Friday.

Philbrick gave his two-week notice on Monday, three days later.

He's since added a transit bus from Massachusetts to his smoothie magical mystery tour. He said he missed the construction business, but only to a point.

"Somewhat," he said. "I enjoy what I do now, though. I don't miss the schedules, but I miss the work and the guys I worked with. I enjoy working with my hands, but I knew that on-site construction was not the career path I wanted."

Making smoothies for a line of smoothie lovers means hard work. "It's fast-paced," Philbrick said, "but construction is fast-paced, so it was not a hard transition for me."

The biggest transition is the



Geoff Forester
Josh Philbrick makes a Blueberry Bliss smoothie at his smoothie shop.

smoothie itself. Or how it's made now, by a professional, not an amateur, and how it tastes now, with its fancy, unending flavors.

"We always made our own smoothies," Philbrick said. "It was a mix of whatever was in the refrigerator. Bananas, apples, oranges, toss them in and then drink it."

He's experimented with different mixtures, searching for the elusive smoothie that brings a July 4 fireworks celebration to your mouth. As well as a smile.

Philbrick's favorite flavor is peanut butter power. He's sipped a lot of them, and others, too.

"We created all of these after that first summer," Philbrick said. "Narrowing it down, we had to figure out which combination would give you the best flavor. We had to taste them to make sure."

"I did not want another smoothie for a while after that. I'd had enough." ♦

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The Works Café



Alex Ray
The Common Man



Beth Slepian
CRVNA



Christopher Emond
Boys and Girls Clubs



Jayme Simões
Louis Karno & Co.



Phil Sletten
NHFPI

The Pinnacle of Concord

Local businesses and leaders recognized with annual awards

The Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce's Pinnacle Awards Ceremony looked a bit different in 2020 but the significance of the event has not diminished. The contributions of this year's honorees during a year of unprecedented challenges speaks to

their professional excellence and dedication to the community.

On Nov. 19, the Chamber livestreamed the event sponsored by Eversource Energy Services, Sanel NAPA and *Business NH Magazine*, with the assistance of ConcordTV,

bringing positive stories and energy to all who wanted to attend and recognize three businesses, one business leader, a young professional and a volunteer who have all served our community in outstanding ways.

Small Business of the Year

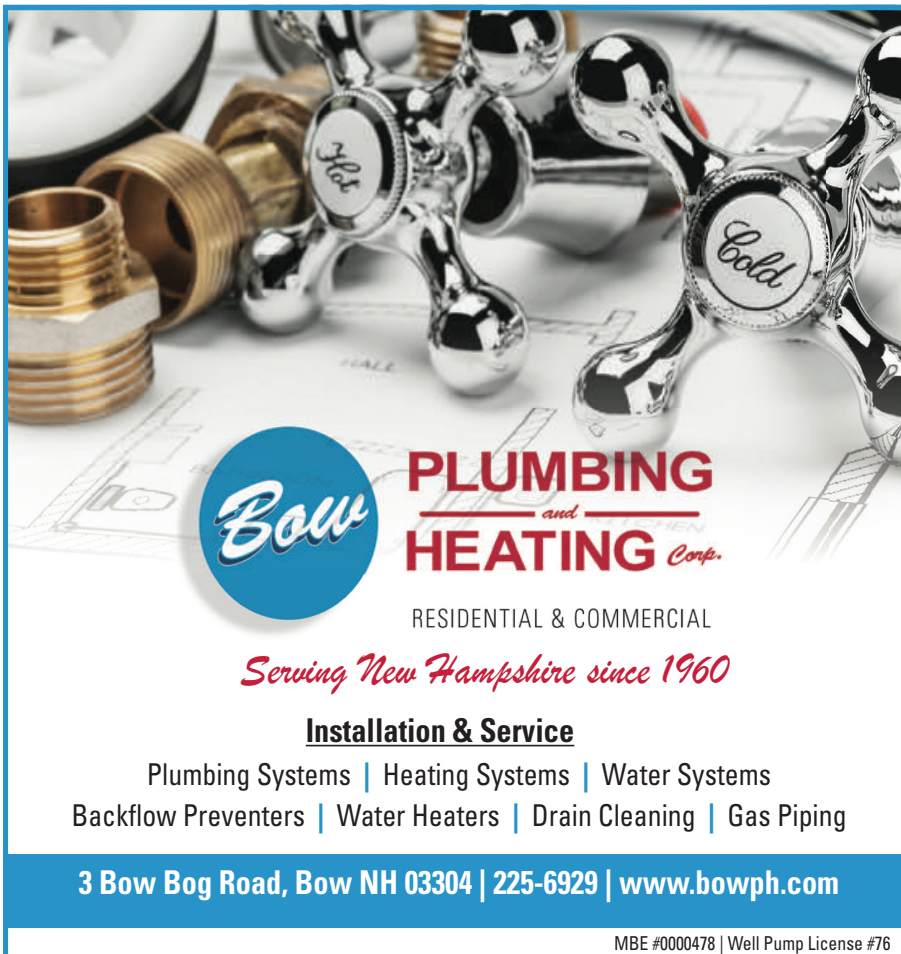
Established downtown in 1994, The Works Café invites conversation and connection. It's not uncommon to stumble upon community members discussing local politics or to spot presidential candidates chatting up customers.

This civic-minded business supports countless nonprofits, causes and events in our community. The Works Café encourages its employees to get involved in civic engagement, providing lunch on election days for staff who vote. The Works Café further supports the community by paying staff to volunteer for a day at a nonprofit of their choice.

Business of the Year

As part of The Common Man Family, the Concord restaurant abides by the values guiding this independently owned hospitality business: to provide stellar customer service, honest food, and do good in the community.

This year, despite being hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, The Common Man continued to put their com-



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CELEBRATING CONCORD

munity first. To support furloughed staff, the organization provided family-size meals to affected households daily, extended health benefits, and distributed grocery and baby supply funds through an Employee Emergency Assistance Fund.

Nonprofit Business of the Year

The Concord Regional Visiting Nurse Association, incorporated in 1899, provides health and wellness services through all stages of life. Today, CRVNA offers home care, hospice care, palliative care, personal home services, pediatric and maternal child health services and wellness programming. CRVNA is the state's largest home health and hospice care provider, with more than 400 clinicians and staff serving an average of more than 8,000 NH residents every year.

Business Leader of the Year

Christopher Emond of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Central New Hampshire has been executive director for twenty years. His tireless work to improve the accessibility of safe and affordable child care – with enormous success – made a dramatic impact on the Capital area and Lakes region. This essential service allows thousands of parents and caretakers to serve in our state's workforce and supports the next generation of New Hampshire residents to reach their full potential as productive, caring and responsible citizens.

Volunteer of the Year

Jayme Simões of Louis Karno & Company Communications, LLC, is the pulse behind the Chamber's award-winning VisitConcord-NH.com website and social media presence that promotes Greater Concord as a travel destination. The blog-based site receives 6,000-9,000 visitors monthly promoting Chamber members and Capital area businesses to prospective

customers.

Young Professional of the Year

Phil Sletten of New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute is a Senior Policy Analyst who researches and informs public debate on policy issues, particularly state budget and revenue poli-

cies and their effects on low- and middle-income families. Phil does a tremendous job of not only educating his peers and writing reports for the public, but presenting to audiences like the Chamber's Legislative Outlook Forum.

Photos by Kristina C Carlson

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Celebrating 50 issues



Premiere issue, Winter 2007-08

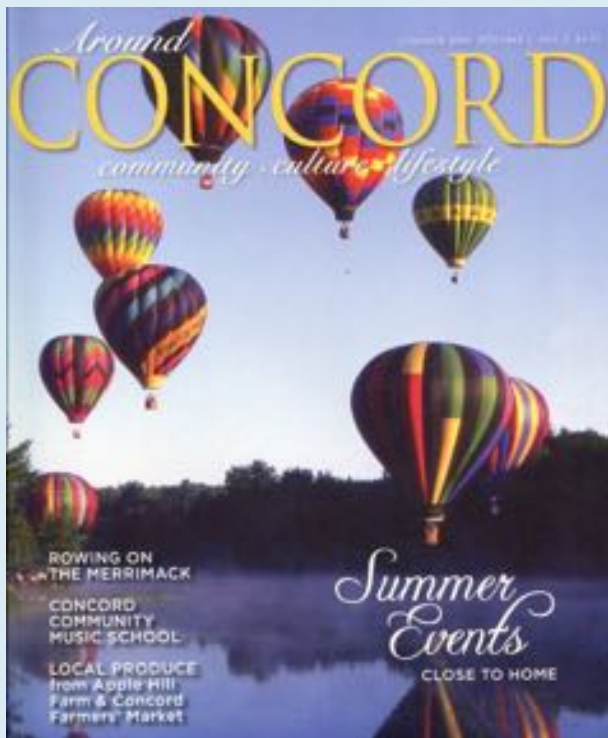
Gifts for the season, one man's downtown vision (see a revisit on Page 12 of this issue), a look at Concord Coach, plus local artist Colin Callahan.

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CONCORD

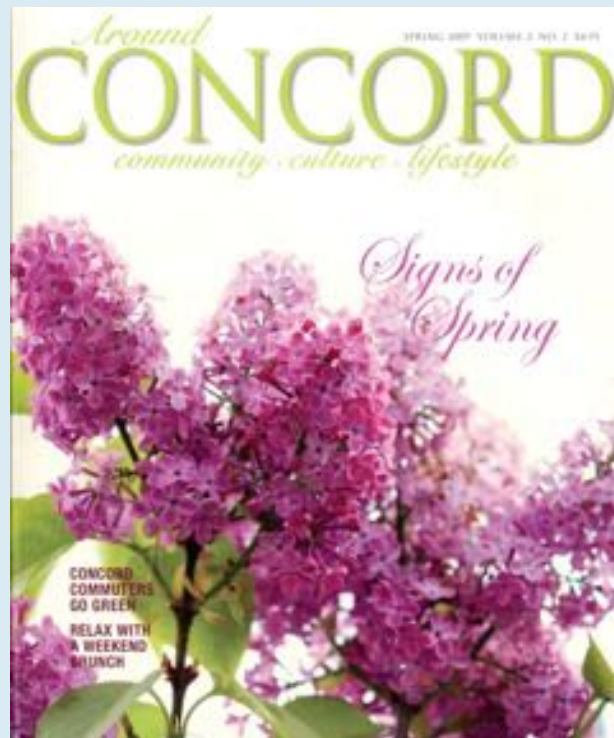
A rewind on some of the past issues

Celebrating 50 issues



Summer 2008

What's up for summer, rowing on the Merrimack River, inside Concord Community Music School, local produce with Apple Hill Farm and the Concord Farmers Market.



Spring 2009

Concord commuters go green, relax with a weekend spring-themed brunch, local flavors at the Barley House, local artist Jane Ryan, for the love of hydrangea.



Summer 2010

The history of Concord's Eagle Hotel, interview with Ken Burns, expert tips on the best burgers, tour of wine country in New Hampshire and wedding planning advice.



Winter 2011-2012

Snowshoeing the Greenway, Marklin Candle, a New Hampshire macaroni and cheese bake-off, a chat with Valerie Blake and local flavors for the holidays.

Celebrating 50 issues



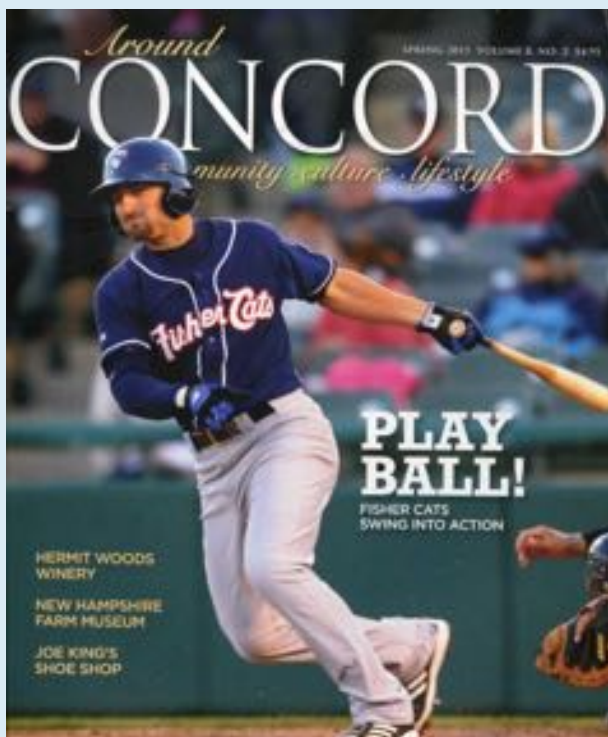
Winter 2012-13

Tomorrow's heirlooms start today, wreaths create a warm welcome, a sit-down with Byron Champlin, a new home for the Friendly Kitchen and gift wrap goes green.



Fall 2014

Vintage car show at Canterbury Shaker Village, WWII veterans share their stories, Rwandan refugees find a new home and behind the lens with Concord Camera.



Spring 2015

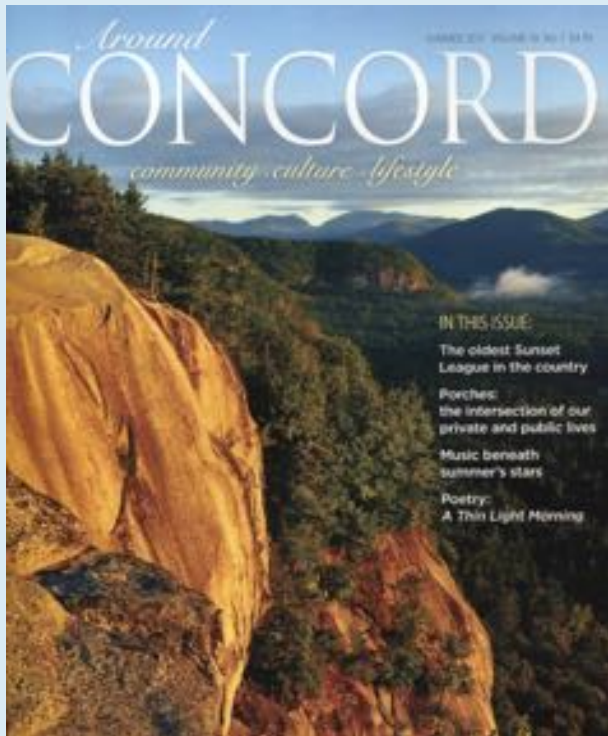
Catch a ball game with the Fisher Cats, the terroir of Hermit Woods Winery, in the shoe shop at Joe King's and McGowan Fine Arts celebrates 35 years.



Fall 2016

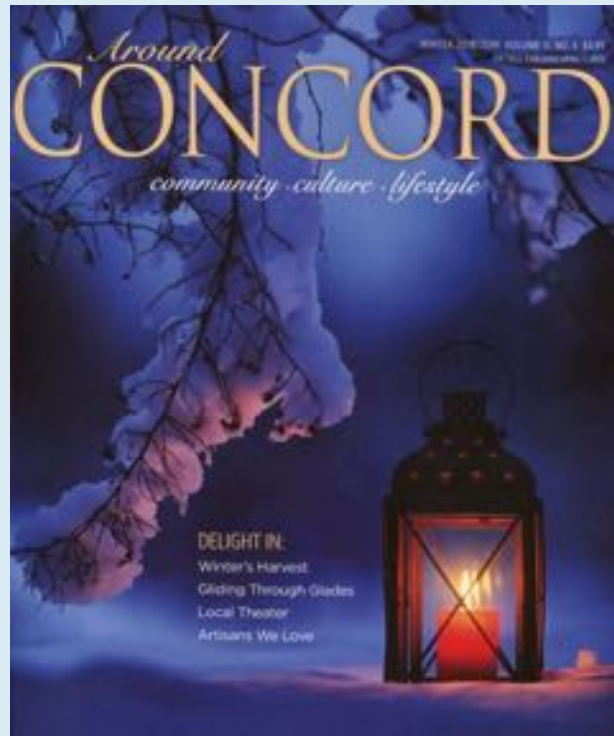
A locally produced harvest dinner, the poetry of Glenn Currie, the multisensory art of Debbie Kinson and sitting on the corner of Change and Main.

Celebrating 50 issues



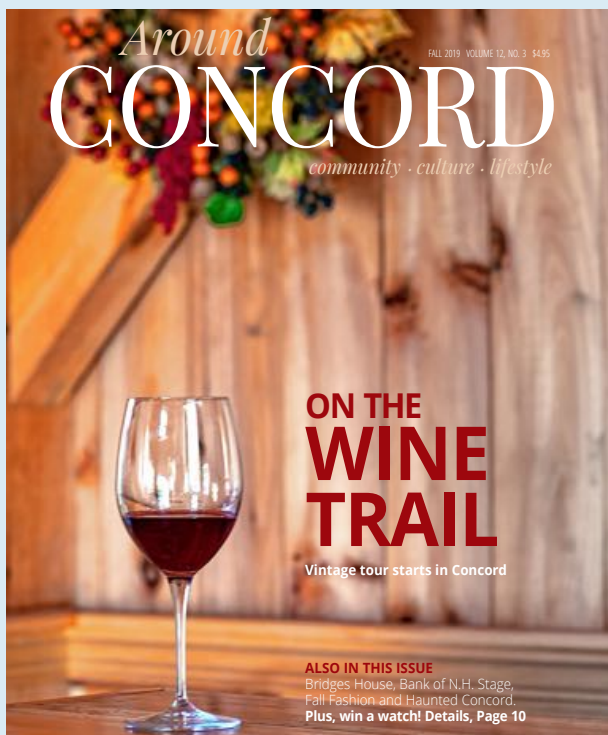
Summer 2017

Traveling the North Country, the oldest Sunset League in the country, music beneath the summer stars and drive right in for barbecue and ice cream at Arnie's Place.



Winter 2018-2019

A New Englander's winter style guide, the small town of Warner discovers its Black history, gliding through the glades and an ode to our gold-covered dome.



Fall 2019

The bounty of local wineries, the Discovery Center's Jeanne Gerulskis, inside the new Bank of N.H. Stage and Susan Lynch and Valerie Sununu on the Bridges House.



Spring 2020

A spring birding adventure, go inside the downtown Sacred Heart condos, Mr. Aaron strikes a chord with local kids and a Loudon farm delves into the divinity of duck.



Concord Public Library Photographic Collection

Concord High School students march to the mayor's office to advocate for a pool at the YMCA in 1948.

Steady path toward change

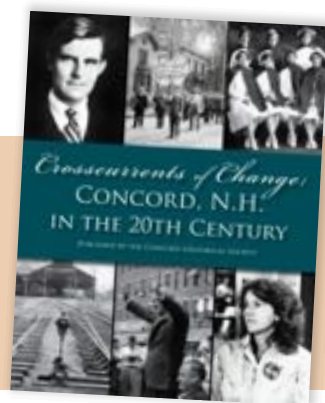
Concord's history of charitable and philanthropic organizations can be traced to the colonial period. By the beginning of the twentieth century, causes ranged from creating parks and libraries to ensuring that the intellectual, physical and artistic needs of the city were addressed. Often,

those who came together did so out of religious conviction; others applied secular values to problems.

If philanthropy involves giving to improve living conditions, then the creation of Concord's parks system was largely philanthropic. James O. Lyford, in his history of the city, suggests that creating parks "helped educate the public mind to the desirability of such resorts of healthy rest and recreation." In 1884, Armenia White

gave the city the deed to "certain premises on the northerly side of Washington and Centre streets for a public park." This land became White Park.

The Woman's Club of Concord best illustrates how socially prominent women improved the lives of others while enhancing their own personal development. Founded in 1893 by Lillian Carpenter Streeter, the club's original goal was to "unite



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Photos Courtesy
Concord Woman's Club

ABOVE: Lillian Carpenter Streeter founded the Woman's Club of Concord in 1893. The club's original goal was to "unite thought and action."

LEFT: Bertha Rosen, president of the Woman's Club of Concord, gives out the summer reading awards at the City Auditorium in 1955.

thought and action." At its first annual meeting, she addressed the club as the president, with pride:

"Although Concord may still be justly entitled to its reputation for having more cliques to the square mile than any other city in the state, it has also something else which no other city in the state has – a woman's club – where all the varying elements meet, and dropping all individual prejudices, work together harmoniously for the common good of all."

Among Concord's many programs that helped to maintain a safety net, the Boys and Girls Club is the oldest. Its core mission has remained constant:

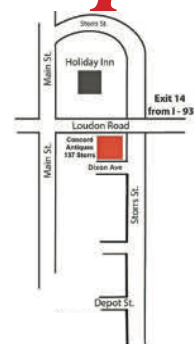
"Too much idle time breeds boredom, which may result in undesirable activity and juvenile delinquency. ... The priority of our service is to provide recreational, cultural and counseling programs oriented primarily towards the socially and economically disadvantaged boys and girls of Concord." ♦



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POETRY

Full Moon

A full moon,
this hallowed eve night,

sleep is elusive,
not a soul in sight.

This year is very different,
life is not like it used to be,

not just the silent streets,
but many other things you see.

The world, it is changing,
thoughts once common now gone,

perhaps a foreboding experience,
and a bit forlorn.



Library of Congress

Our routine has been interrupted,
the past not remembered the same,

gatherings that do not happen,
celebrations that never came.

As the holiday season approaches ,
hold your friends and family tight,

a full moon,
this hallowed eve night.

James W. Spain

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Geoff Forester

The morning fog lifts off the Merrimack River at sunrise in Concord in mid-November.

The word 'Silver'

The word silver reaches
beyond simple shimmering

past predictable fingers
of moon

reflected on dark
river, to a place

where everything
is unexpected

and nothing is what
I had hoped

for myself, or for you
or for the bright

color itself, or for anyone
who ever anticipated

anything.

Sara Willingham

My community in Concord found new ways to connect while staying at home: sidewalk art, graduation lawn signs, window messages of hope and gratitude. During one of my daily walks, I realized I was seeing my same old neighborhood with new eyes and suddenly, the whole world burst into bloom. That day I found five whirling pinwheels in my front yard with the message, "let happiness spin ... spread joy."

This poem and others are published in "COVID Spring: Granite State Pandemic Poems," edited by Alexandria Peary

Share with us >> Do you have poetry or scenic images you'd like to share? Send them to editor@aroundconcord.com.

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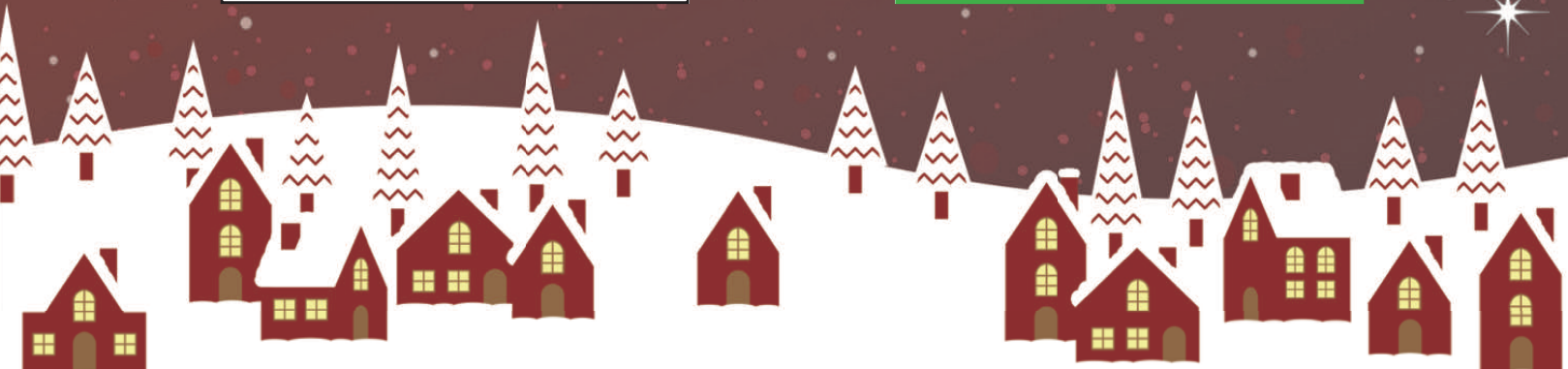
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THE SCENE



Students from Mrs. Frost's first grade class at Abbot-Downing School wave at a passing parade on Nov. 10.

Resolve and purpose



Abigail Doyle, 10, works on her school computer at the dining room table in her Pembroke home on Oct. 29.



Cousins Lindsey Andrews (left) and Carrie Hobi have opened the School Street Cafe in Dunbarton right in the center of town.



ABOVE: A pumpkin sits on the front lawn of a house on Mountain Road in Concord in the middle of September. The mask says, "Please, cover Urself."



RIGHT: Bette Soloway waves her flags outside the Salisbury Fire Station during voting on Tuesday, Nov. 3.

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A bench collects snow on Main Street in downtown Concord on March 23, 2020.

Geoff Forester

After the storm, new paths emerge

This photo may stand as a stark reminder of the looming cold, and the potential economic challenge ahead for Concord, its downtown and many of the small economic hubs that dot New Hampshire's landscape. But these streets will once again fill with dog walkers, outdoor cafes, sidewalk sales, musicians, kids on bikes and folks about their daily business. We can't wait until the next iteration of Market Days and the Concord Multicultural Festival, two events that always draw hoards downtown. In the meantime, please support your local businesses, your local institutions and your neighbors. Thanks to all for reading and for continuing to support *Around Concord* magazine.

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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