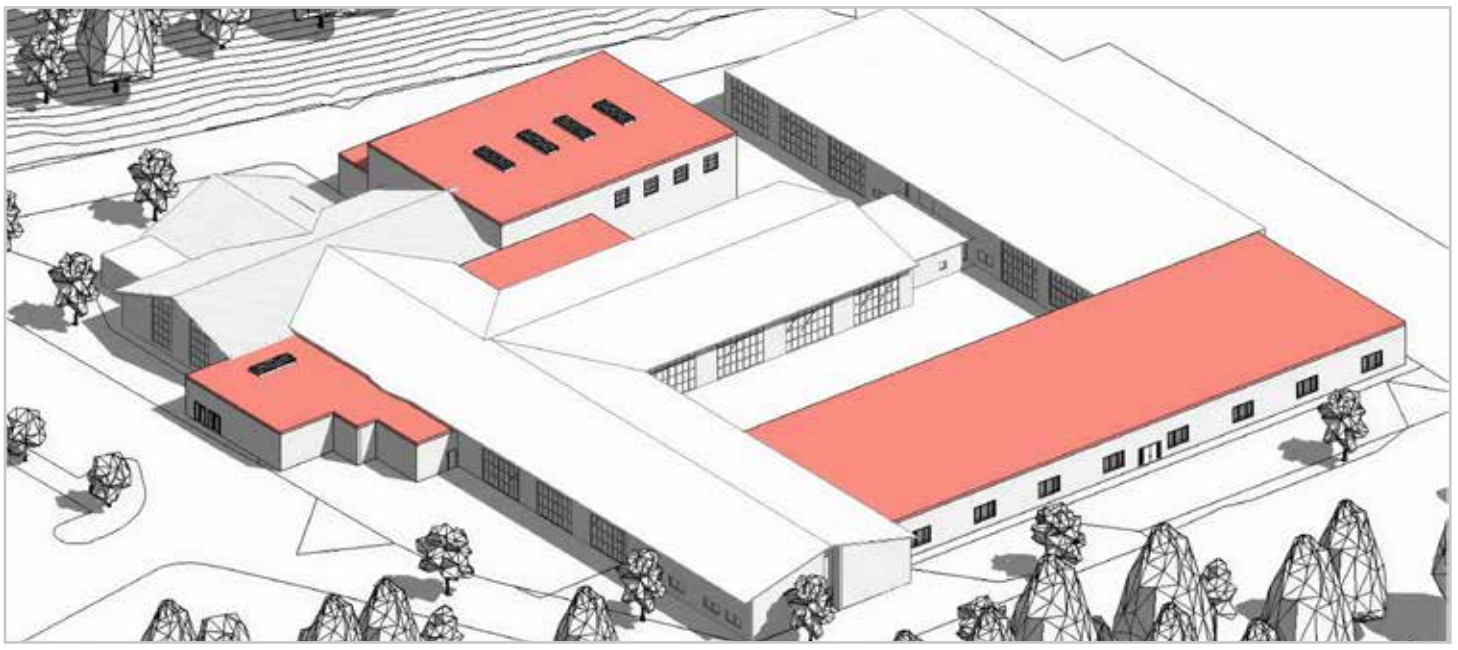
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In this rendering, the red roofs show the proposed additions to Wilkins School, including a new gymnasium at the far left and a corridor of permanent classrooms at the far right. The proposal also includes a loop road around the building to help alleviate traffic on Boston Post Road during peak drop-off and dismissal times. (Image courtesy of SAU 39.)

School board moves forward with new, lower-cost Wilkins renovation proposal

Plan addresses long-standing facility and space needs

BY STACEY MORISON

After years of unsuccessful attempts to address the aging Wilkins Elementary School, the Amherst School Board is moving forward with a new proposal that would renovate the existing building and add new classroom and program space.

The proposal marks a significant shift from previous efforts, in both its scope and its projected cost. Of note, all five members of the Amherst School Board voted on Sept. 9 to move the current project forward.

The current concept has a preliminary estimated cost of approximately $33 million, substantially below the $52.9 million proposal that appeared on the 2025 ballot. Earlier versions of the project were estimated at $49.9 million in 2024, $54.2 million in 2023, and $66 million in 2020. The most ambitious proposal appeared in 2022, at an estimated $83.3 million.

The new proposal grew out of a renewed examination of what the district needs at Wilkins and what can realistically be accomplished within a lower budget. The current concept calls for renovating 50,729 square feet of the existing school and adding approximately 30,000 square feet. Unlike earlier proposals, the plan retains Clark School for preschool and kindergarten and keeps fifth grade at Amherst Middle School.

"This proposal is in the strongest position to earn the support of the Amherst School Board and community because it reflects a fresh review of Wilkins' documented facility and educational needs, updated enrollment projections, and careful consideration of affordability following the outcomes of prior proposals," said Michael Berry, superintendent of SAU 39.

Long-standing needs at Wilkins

The need for improvements at Wilkins has remained largely unchanged through the various proposals. Built in 1967, the school is now 59 years old. Dis-

Continued on page 3

Veterans Day: A community tradition of honor and remembrance

Students, veterans and community members gather at Souhegan

BY MARTI WARREN

For the past six years, Souhegan High School has marked Veterans Day with an assembly that brings students, faculty, local veterans and community members together to pause, reflect, and express gratitude for those who have served in the U.S. military. The annual program is organized by Amherst resident Marie Grella in partnership with Brad Botto, dean of students at Souhegan, and has become a meaningful community tradition.

This year's Veterans Day Assembly will be held Tuesday, Nov. 10, at 11 a.m. at Souhegan High School. Veterans and members of the public are invited to attend. No registration is required.

The assembly includes performances by the Souhegan Saber Band and Chorus, including a rendition of the National Anthem. The seven branches of the U.S. military will be recognized as their respective service songs are performed by the band. Students and faculty also participate in the program.

Continued on page 2



A POW/MIA Missing Man Table honors American service members who are prisoners of war or remain missing in action. Each element of the table carries a symbolic meaning of remembrance, sacrifice, and hope for their return. (Photo: M. Warren.)

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School News
Clark-Wilkins faculty and staff scooped sweet treats at the Amherst PTA-sponsored Ice Cream Social in September. More school news, pp. 6-7. (Photo: Emily Gould.)



Sports
Junior captain Madison Behn advanced the ball upfield during the Sept. 21 game against Bow. More sports news, pp. 8-9. (Photo: Robert Tyszko.)



The Simple Things
Tom Fisher, center, explores the benefits of road-tripping with friends in this month's column, p. 13. (Courtesy photo.)



Time To Trot
Amherst's annual Trot Off Your Turkey 5K and Fun Run is back for its 27th year. More details, p. 16. (Photo: Tracey Hanlon.)

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The Amherst Bear

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The Amherst Bear is a 501(c)3 nonprofit monthly community newspaper that is mailed for free to every Amherst address, sharing reliable local news and practical resources for residents of all ages. We rely on donations and paid advertising to fulfill our mission. Please consider making a contribution to support The Amherst Bear. Visit **www.amherstbear.org** to learn more.

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Veterans Day, *continued from page 1*

Grella became involved after a local veteran suggested that the community should organize a Veterans Day program. Grella, who has been active in supporting local veterans, approached Souhegan High School and worked with the school's administration to launch an annual assembly that would bring students and community members together to honor veterans. Today, Botto facilitates the program on the school's end, while Grella coordinates with the Milford VFW Color Guard and local veterans to participate each year.

"Over the past six years, our Veterans Day Assembly has become a really special tradition at Souhegan," Principal Dana Curran said. "It brings our students and community together to recognize our veterans, but just as importantly, it gives students the opportunity to hear their stories and better understand service, sacrifice, and citizenship. We're incredibly grateful to the veterans who are willing to share their experiences with our students and to Marie Grella and our community partners who help make the day possible."

One part of the assembly is the POW/MIA Missing Man Table, which is set for one person and placed in the center of the gymnasium. The table symbolizes the vulnerability and isolation of a prisoner of war who is separated from fellow service members. It also represents those who are missing from the ranks. Each item placed on the table has a specific meaning, which attendees will learn about during the program.

The history of Veterans Day dates to World War I. The war ended in 1918 with an armistice between the Allied nations and Germany, with fighting ending at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed Nov. 11 as Armistice Day.



Local veterans and their families recited the Pledge of Allegiance during the 2025 Veterans Day Assembly. All seven branches of the U.S. military were represented. (Photo: M. Warren.)

Following World War II, Congress changed the name of the holiday to Veterans Day to honor those who have served in the U.S. military.

Amherst resident Dan Protzmann, who retired as a major after 20 years of military service, reflected on what Veterans Day means to him.

"Veterans Day reminds me of two things: an enormous amount of pride and belonging," Protzmann said. "The pride is for my love of America and that I was able to contribute just a little bit to its greatness and that, personally, I had what it takes to serve. The belonging is the brothers I served with and the lifelong bonds the military created."

The Veterans Day Assembly at the high school offers the Amherst community an opportunity to pause, reflect, and recognize local veterans while learning more about their experiences and service.

TOWN AND STATE GOVERNMENT

State general election information for Nov. 3

BY DONNI HODGKINS, SYDNEY IRVING, AND JEANNE LUDT
Amherst Supervisors of the Checklist

The New Hampshire general election will be held on Tuesday, Nov. 3. Polls will be open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. in the gym at Souhegan High School (412 Boston Post Road).

A sample ballot can be found on the town website at **amherstnh.gov**.

All voters must present an acceptable government-issued photo ID. Student identification cards are no longer accepted as voter identification.

The last day to register before the election is Oct. 28 from 6 to 7 p.m. at the Supervisors of the Checklist session in the town clerk's office. New voters may register at the polls on Election Day. Those registering for the first time should bring the required documents to prove age, identity, Amherst residency, and U.S. citizenship. A new law also requires documentation for any name change. Full details at **sos.nh.gov/elections/register-vote**.

Voters who qualify to vote by absentee ballot — including those who will be out of town, have a disability or illness, or have an employment or caregiving obligation that prevents them from voting during polling hours — can find information at **sos.nh.gov/elections/absentee-ballots**.

Mailed absentee ballots must arrive at the Amherst post office by 5 p.m. on Election Day. Voters may personally return absentee ballots to the town clerk's office until 5 p.m. the day before the election. On Election Day, an authorized delivery agent (usually a relative) may deliver an absentee ballot to the polls by 5 p.m.

Questions about voter registration or absentee ballots may be directed to the town clerk at 603-673-6041, ext. 208. Voter registration status can be confirmed at the town hall checklist or online at **app.sos.nh.gov/viphome**.

Wilkins, *continued from page 1*

trict documents describe aging building systems, an outdated layout, inadequate space for current educational programming, and continued reliance on portable classrooms. Several major building systems — including HVAC, ventilation, electrical, plumbing, lighting, and roofing — are identified for modernization in the current proposal.

Space is another major concern. The current building does not provide enough appropriately sized or dedicated space for small-group instruction, intervention, special education, counseling, therapies, and other student services. The existing layout also requires the multipurpose room to serve as both cafeteria and gymnasium, limiting how the school can schedule those activities. The proposed project would add permanent classrooms, dedicated spaces for student services, a new gym, and designated areas for art, music, and technology.

The project also includes improvements intended to address building-code and accessibility requirements, as well as a more secure main entrance and changes to traffic circulation and emergency access.

"At approximately $33 million, the renovation-and-addition plan addresses aging infrastructure, safety, accessibility, and instructional space while preserving the community's investment in the existing school," said Berry.

For Amherst, the proposal represents another attempt to find a workable solution to a problem that has been on the district's agenda for more than a decade. Previous proposals have failed to secure the 60 percent voter approval required for school construction bonds. The current proposal is expected to continue through design and planning before coming to Amherst voters for consideration in March 2027.

Residents are invited to attend a Community Forum on Tuesday, Nov. 17, at 7 p.m. at Wilkins School to hear more about the proposed project. There will be an opportunity for questions and public comment. More information about the proposed project, including project details, floor plans, and an option to sign up for emailed project updates, is available at **wilkinsproject.sau39.org**.



At left in blue, a third portable classroom building was installed behind Wilkins School this summer. All three units are being used for instructional space, including four fourth-grade classrooms. The two older portables, at right, were installed roughly 25 years ago as a temporary response to overcrowding and are now described in district project materials as being at the end of their useful life. (Photo: M. Warren.)

DID YOU KNOW?

Clark-Wilkins Elementary School ranks as the fourth-largest school serving elementary grades in New Hampshire, with 676 students, according to Niche's 2027 rankings.





Why I support The Bear

BY BETH SECOR

There are so many communities that make up the town of Amherst. You are likely part of several, keeping up with more than you realize. Think about it: your neighborhood, your social circle, schools, churches, athletics, civic and professional organizations — you name it. Whatever you are engaged in creates its own community.

As our lives change, our engagement with these communities naturally waxes and wanes. For example, right now, if you have children, you may be very well informed about what's going on in the schools. Over time, your children get older, your attention goes elsewhere, and it's harder to keep current. But that doesn't mean you aren't interested. How many times have you missed a bit of news or an event and said, "Oh gosh, I wish I had known about that!"

The Bear fills that void for me. The Amherst Citizen is gone, and the Milford Cabinet doesn't cover the local scene the way it used to. Relying on social media to fill that void wasn't working. I was glad to see The Bear come along, and I look forward to finding it in my mailbox each month.



Beth Secor and her dog, Maggie, caught up on the latest local news. The Bear helps Secor stay connected to what's happening throughout Amherst. (Photo: M. Warren.)

I find The Bear presents a good mix of stories from lots of different communities in each issue. For me, it's like the CliffsNotes version of what's going on in town. (I think I just aged myself!) Just like CliffsNotes, it helps me figure out what's important, as well as what's interesting and relevant to me, so that I can dig a little deeper. I always learn something, all with an upbeat approach. That more than justifies my support.

BECOME A SUPPORTER TODAY! Your support makes it possible for The Bear to continue telling the stories that keep our community connected.

To donate online, visit **AmherstBear.org/Support-Our-Cause**. Donation checks can be mailed to The Amherst Bear, PO Box 104, Amherst, NH 03031.

TOWN AND STATE GOVERNMENT

Amherst moves forward with public safety communications tower

BY CHIEF ANTHONY CIAMPOLI
Amherst Police Department

Last March, Amherst voters approved Article 39, authorizing the Board of Selectmen to negotiate and finalize a long-term land lease with American Tower Corporation (ATC) for a communications tower on the town-owned Police and Fire/EMS property. The town has now finalized that agreement, bringing us closer to replacing our aging public safety radio tower and improving communications for emergency responders.

The need to replace the existing tower is not new. A structural engineering evaluation identified significant deficiencies, including excessive loading, improperly configured support cables, and visible bowing. The tower, which is attached to the police station, failed to meet structural requirements, and its attachment to the building no longer follows accepted industry practices.

Initially, construction of a new tower was expected to depend on securing a cellular carrier as its first tenant. Given the condition of the existing tower, however, the town and ATC explored an alternative that would allow construction to move forward sooner. Under the current proposal, the town would become the initial tenant, placing its public safety communications equipment on the new tower. Cellular carriers could join in the future, potentially improving coverage and service in areas where it is currently limited.

The arrangement could also reduce costs to the town. Building a replacement tower independently would require a substantial town investment, along with responsibility for future maintenance and replacement. Under the partnership, ATC would fund permitting, engineering, design and construction of the new tower.

Although the long-term land lease has been finalized, a separate agreement covering the town's communications equipment is still under discussion. Under the proposed arrangement, the town would initially make a monthly lease payment that would decrease when the first cellular carrier becomes a tenant. The town would also receive a share of carrier revenue. If a second carrier joins the tower, the town's lease payment would end permanently while its share of carrier revenue would continue. These financial benefits depend on future carrier participation and completion of the necessary agreements.

I am also exploring whether tower revenue could be used to establish a revolving account for future communications equipment maintenance, repairs, and replacement.

On Oct. 5, the town and ATC hosted a public information meeting at the Amherst Fire and EMS Department. Residents raised questions about public safety, neighborhood impacts, cellular coverage, and financial considerations.

The proposal will next move through the town's permitting process, with review by the Planning Board, Zoning Board, and Historic District Commission. Those proceedings will provide additional opportunities for public input.

Regardless of whether the ATC proposal receives the necessary approvals, the town must replace its existing public safety radio tower. If the combined-use tower does not move forward, the town would return to its original plan to construct a 165-foot lattice tower dedicated solely to public safety communications. That alternative would require town funding and would not offer the potential cellular coverage improvements or carrier revenue associated with the ATC proposal.

I encourage residents to stay involved and attend upcoming meetings. Our responsibility is to ensure Amherst's emergency responders have safe, reliable communications equipment, and that need will remain regardless of which option ultimately moves forward.



(Image courtesy of Amherst Police Department.)

Can't speak? You can text 911 in New Hampshire

BY CAPT. JUSTIN GEROME
Amherst Police Department

Most people know to call 911 during an emergency, but what if you can't safely speak? New Hampshire's Text-to-911 service gives residents another way to reach emergency services.

The New Hampshire Division of Emergency Services and Communications (DESC) recommends calling 911 whenever possible and texting 911 when a voice call isn't an option.

To text 911, open your phone's messaging app, enter **911** as the recipient, and send your message. Start with your exact location, including an address, apartment number, intersection, landmark, or other information that will help responders find you. Then explain what is happening and what type of help you need.

For example: "I am at 175 Amherst St. in Amherst. I need police. Someone is trying to get into my house."

Be prepared to answer questions from the 911 telecommunicator and follow their instructions.

Text-to-911 can be particularly useful when someone cannot safely speak, including situations in which speaking could put the person in danger. It also provides an important communication option for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability.

There are a few things to remember when using the service. Do not send photos, videos, emojis, or group texts to 911. Text messages can also take longer to process than a voice call, so if you can safely make a voice call, that remains the preferred option.

Most importantly, don't assume 911 automatically knows exactly where you are when you text. Providing your location in the first message can help emergency personnel reach you as quickly as possible.

Call 911 if you can. Text 911 if you can't.

For more information, visit **desc.dos.nh.gov/resources/text-911**.



(Image courtesy of New Hampshire DESC.)

Chimney fires: What to watch for this heating season

BY STEVE ELWIN
Amherst Fire and EMS

Before the first fire of the season, have your chimney cleaned and inspected by a qualified chimney sweep, burn seasoned wood, and follow your appliance manufacturer's instructions. Even with these precautions, creosote and other deposits in a chimney or stovepipe can ignite, damaging the chimney, spreading to the house and endangering your household.

Will you always see smoke indoors?
Not necessarily. A chimney fire can burn mostly in the flue with little or no smoke indoors, especially in its early stages.

When should you call 911?
Call 911 immediately if you hear a loud roaring or rumbling in the chimney, see dense smoke, sparks or flames coming from the chimney top, notice that a chimney or stovepipe is glowing or unusually hot, or smell burning creosote. Treat any of these signs as an emergency.

Fireplace or woodstove?
The hazard is the same. A woodstove is enclosed and has a pipe, damper, and other hardware, while a fireplace is more open. In either case, get everyone to safety, call 911 and leave firefighting to the fire department.

Should you close the damper or cut the draft?
No. Doing so can push heat and gases into the house. Get everyone to safety and call 911.

Should you put a fire extinguisher into the stove so the powder goes up the chimney?
No. Call 911 first, then evacuate if there is any doubt and wait for emergency responders. Discharging an extinguisher into the stove is unreliable, may worsen conditions, and can delay evacuation.

Bottom line: Prevent chimney fires with regular cleaning and inspection, along with safe burning practices. If you suspect a chimney fire, get everyone to safety, call 911 and wait for Amherst Fire and EMS. Do not attempt to fight the fire yourself.

TOWN AND STATE GOVERNMENT

School tax cap question will appear on November ballot

BY STEPHANIE GRUND
State Representative

New Hampshire voters will see a school tax cap question on their ballot on Nov. 3. This is due not to a constitutional amendment but to a law that requires the question to be placed on the November ballot — House Bill 1300, which was signed by Gov. Kelly Ayotte.

Multiple towns placed tax cap warrant articles on their ballots earlier in 2026. All failed to receive the majority vote required for passage. HB 1300 requires the tax cap question to be placed on the November 2026 and November 2028 ballots.

The wording of the Amherst question is:

"Shall the Town of AMHERST limit property tax growth for AMHERST SCHOOL DISTRICT (SAU #39) AND SOUHEGAN COOPERATIVE SCHOOL DISTRICT (SAU #39) under RSA 32:5-i? If adopted for a two-year period: (1) the local property tax levy may not grow beyond the prior year's amount, adjusted for inflation and new construction; (2) SAU central office spending may not exceed 6 percent of total school district appropriations; and (3) bonded capital costs are excluded from both limits. These caps apply only to administrative operations of the SAU central office and do not affect classroom instruction, school-based services, or other municipal expenditures. These limits may be overridden as provided in RSA 32:5-i. Adoption requires a three-fifths (3/5) majority vote."

There are two separate limits described in the ballot question, but voters will cast a single "yes" or "no" vote.

The first part asks voters whether to approve a local tax cap. This would limit growth in the local property taxes raised for the school districts that could not exceed the prior year's budget, adjusted for inflation and taxable property growth resulting from new construction. The adjustment does not include changes in property valuations resulting from revaluation. Bonded capital projects are excluded from the tax cap.

The second part would establish a 6 percent cap on certain School Administrative Unit (SAU) expenses. These include functions such as superintendent and assistant superintendent services, business and finance operations, human resources, payroll, purchasing, district-level information technology administration, legal services, public relations, and certain district-level curriculum positions. It does not include classroom instruction, school-based administrators, special education, transportation, food service, or building operations and maintenance.

The ballot measure requires approval by at least three-fifths, or 60 percent, of those voting "yes" or "no" on the question. A "yes" vote means you support both the tax cap and the administrative spending cap. A "no" vote means you do not support imposing either limit.

If approved, the limits will begin with the fiscal year 2028 budgets and apply to fiscal years 2028 and 2029. The caps can be overridden if at least three-fifths, or 60 percent, of voters approve a budget in any given year.

The ballot measure applies to the Amherst School District, the Mont Vernon School District, and the Souhegan Cooperative School District. All three are part of SAU 39.

The results could produce different rules for different portions of the education budget. Amherst voters could reject the measure for the Amherst School District, while the Souhegan Cooperative School District could approve it through the combined vote of Amherst and Mont Vernon. As a result, the same town could face different rules for different portions of its education budget.

In the current fiscal year, which runs from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027, SAU 39 does not exceed the 6 percent threshold. However, if the ballot measure passes, the SAU would need to account for the complicated impact of potentially different votes in the individual towns and the combined vote for the cooperative district. For voters, the challenge will be understanding that one short ballot question may create a patchwork of fiscal rules across districts that serve the same community.

DID YOU KNOW?

A 2026 study found that counties that lost their local newspapers experienced a small but statistically significant decline in voter turnout. Researchers also found increased political polarization in communities that became local news deserts.
—Source: Journal of Regional Science, 2026

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SCHOOL NEWS

AMS students take science into the field during Ecology Week

BY GEOFFREY GRIFFITHS
Teacher, Amherst Middle School

Amherst Middle School eighth graders took science beyond the classroom during a September week of hands-on ecology experiences at the Souhegan River and Parker River National Wildlife Refuge on Plum Island in Massachusetts.

Ecology Week has been an AMS tradition for more than 40 years, with past programs including a five-day field trip to Saco, Maine. This year, the program shifted its focus closer to home, using the Souhegan River and surrounding habitats to show students how ecological concepts can be studied in their own backyard.

Teachers Jenna Reynolds, Beth Penney, and Geoffrey Griffiths planned the activities to help students explore local ecosystems and better understand the connections among rivers, watersheds and habitats.

Students began the week learning about the region's waterways from Eric Doberstein of the Souhegan River Watershed Association. Doberstein described how the Nashua River once flowed bright orange or pink as dyes from nearby textile mills were discharged into the water. Students also learned how waterways are connected: Like the Souhegan, the Nashua is a tributary of the Merrimack River, part of a watershed covering more than 5,000 square miles.

At the Souhegan River behind AMS, students donned waders and used nets, containers and measuring tools provided by New Hampshire Fish and Game to search for signs of life. Sifting through sand and sediment from the river bottom, students discovered organisms that can easily go unnoticed from the riverbank. They found minnows, eels, mayflies, dragonfly larvae and other invertebrates, giving them a firsthand look at the river's food web and the variety of life it supports.

Students also measured water temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH and turbidity — indicators that can help assess the health of a river. Back in the classroom, they used microscopes to examine macroinvertebrates collected from the water. Their observations and measurements provided data for further classroom inquiry and a baseline for documenting changes over time.

Students also compared fields, forests and the "edges" where different habitats meet, observing differences in sunlight, plant species and other conditions. Urban forestry consultant Kelly Ravdin joined students for part of the fieldwork, reminding them that "nature is everywhere." The work led to discussions about habitat fragmentation, invasive species, and biodiversity.

A field trip to Parker River National Wildlife Refuge on Plum Island gave students an opportunity to explore ecosystems not found in Amherst, including beaches, dunes, salt marshes and coastal forests. Wind and waves from a nor'easter provided a firsthand look at erosion and dune formation, while refuge staff led students through salt marshes to identify plants, examine soil and learn how organisms adapt to high-salt, low-oxygen environments. The trip allowed students to compare those coastal habitats with the freshwater ecosystems they had studied closer to home.

Students concluded the week with classroom "Town Hall" discussions in which they debated the fate of a hypothetical river property, applying what they had learned while considering different perspectives.

From collecting organisms in the Souhegan River to exploring salt marshes on Plum Island, Ecology Week gave AMS students an opportunity to see ecological concepts in action.



From left, eighth graders Andrew, Gabriela, Violet, and Asher collected samples from the Souhegan River. (Photo: Geoffrey Griffiths.)

School Administrative Unit 39
Fiscal Year 2028 Budget Hearing and Meeting

Monday, November 23, 6:00 p.m.
Souhegan High School

This Public Hearing is being held for the purposes of presenting the SAU 39 proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2028.

A School Administrative Unit 39 Board Meeting will be held immediately following the Public Hearing for the purpose of voting approval of the FY28 SAU 39 Budget as required by RSA 194-C:10 and to transact any other necessary and appropriate business.

The people behind strong schools in SAU 39

BY MICHAEL BERRY
Superintendent of Schools SAU 39



A successful school day may appear to begin when students enter their classrooms, but the work that makes it possible starts much earlier and extends beyond the school day.

Strong schools depend on people serving in different roles. Teachers design meaningful learning experiences and respond to individual needs. Paraprofessionals provide essential academic, behavioral, and personal support. Counselors, nurses, psychologists, and specialists care for students' well-being. Administrators lead instruction, coordinate services, and maintain safe, welcoming schools. These contributions are visible daily across our schools.

Custodians keep facilities safe and ready for learning. Food-service employees prepare and serve meals, often knowing students by name. Transportation staff navigate rural roads, changing conditions, and complex schedules. Our technology team supports instructional tools, communications, cybersecurity, and infrastructure. Coaches and activity leaders help students build confidence and connections. Office managers and administrative assistants welcome families, coordinate countless details, and provide help when questions arise. Their work may not always be visible, but it is indispensable.

Attracting, supporting, and retaining exceptional employees are essential to student success. Our employees must feel valued, have the resources to do their jobs well, and have opportunities to grow. Professional learning and collaboration strengthen teaching and help us respond effectively to students.

Strong schools also require facilities that support and reflect the quality of the work taking place within them. Wilkins Elementary School is filled with dedicated educators and staff members who serve Amherst's children with skill and care each day. That work, however, takes place in a building constructed in 1967, with aging systems and limitations related to safety, accessibility, instructional space, specialized student services, and daily operations. The proposed renovation and addition represent an opportunity to provide the people of Wilkins with a learning environment that better supports their work and meets the needs of current and future students. Amherst has strong people doing important work in its schools; they need a building that reflects the importance of that work.

Community members can contribute by volunteering, attending school board meetings and forums, reviewing reliable information, and engaging respectfully. This year includes important discussions about SAU 39 strategic planning, the Souhegan High School strategic study, the Wilkins Elementary School building and renovation project, and the potential impact of HB 1300.

Healthy dialogue is evidence of a community that cares. Our schools are strongest when employees, families, and community members recognize their shared responsibility and work together for students.

SCHOOL NEWS

Free and reduced-price school meals available to eligible families

BY STACEY MORISON

Amherst families may qualify for free or reduced-price school meals during the 2026-27 school year based on household income and family size. The income guidelines listed below have been established by the United States Department of Agriculture's Child Nutrition Program.

Students whose households receive certain public assistance benefits, including SNAP, TANF, or WIC, are automatically eligible for free meals.

Only one application is needed for all children in a household attending schools within the district. Families may apply at any point during the school year, including if a parent or guardian becomes unemployed or experiences a financial hardship.

"We are happy to help families understand the application process and make sure they have access to the benefits available to them," said Krystal Gendreau, director of child nutrition for SAU 39. "We want every student to have access to a nutritious meal at school, and we know that circumstances can change for families throughout the year, sometimes in an instant."

Eligibility from the previous school year carries over for up to 30 operating days into the new school year, or until a new eligibility determination is made. After that period, families must have an approved application or be directly certified for free or reduced-price meals to continue receiving them.

Families interested in applying or with questions about the process can contact Gendreau at 603-673-2690, ext. 2114, or **kgendreau@sau39.org**.

	Reduced Price Meals - 185%					Free meals - 130%				
Household size	Annual	Monthly	Twice per month	Every two weeks	Weekly	Annual	Monthly	Twice per month	Every two weeks	Weekly
1	29,526	2,461	1,231	1,136	568	20,748	1,729	865	798	399
2	40,034	3,336	1,669	1,540	770	28,132	2,345	1,173	1,082	541
3	50,542	4,212	2,106	1,944	972	35,516	2,960	1,480	1,366	683
4	61,050	5,088	2,544	2,349	1,175	42,900	3,575	1,788	1,650	825
5	71,558	5,964	2,982	2,753	1,377	50,284	4,191	2,096	1,934	967
6	82,066	6,839	3,420	3,157	1,579	57,668	4,806	2,403	2,218	1,109
7	92,574	7,715	3,858	3,561	1,781	65,052	5,421	2,711	2,502	1,251
8	103,082	8,591	4,296	3,965	1,983	72,436	6,037	3,019	2,786	1,393
For each additional family member, add	10,508	876	438	405	203	7,384	616	308	284	142

Income eligibility guidelines for the 2026-27 school year. (Image courtesy of the United States Department of Agriculture.)

Community volunteers needed for 2027 Senior Projects

BY CHARLES SWIFT
Senior Project Coordinator, Souhegan High School

The Senior Project is a cornerstone of the Souhegan High School experience. An integral part of this process is the inclusion of Amherst and Mont Vernon community members. We are looking for community members to join Souhegan staff in guiding our seniors throughout this year-long process.

Each community member will work alongside two Souhegan staff members on a panel that follows several students through their Senior Projects. Panels meet with students and formally check on their progress multiple times before the students give their final public exhibition. During these meetings, students will present their work, and panel members will provide feedback to assess whether the student's work is passing or incomplete.

Community panel members should be supportive and approachable, comfortable providing students with thoughtful and constructive feedback, and willing to collaborate with Souhegan staff. Because panelists follow the same students throughout the Senior Project process, ***volunteers must be able to attend all panel meetings and final presentations.***

New and returning community members should plan to attend training with the Senior Project coordinators and will receive support from Souhegan staff members serving on their panels.

Important Dates

- **Community Member Training:** Nov. 17, 3:10-4 p.m.
- **Meeting #1:** Dec. 9, 1:15-3 p.m.
- **Meeting #2:** Feb. 4, 3:10-4:30 p.m.
- **Meeting #3:** March 31, 1:15-3 p.m.
- **Meeting #4:** May 6, 3:10-4:30 p.m.
- **Senior Project Public Exhibitions:** May 27-28

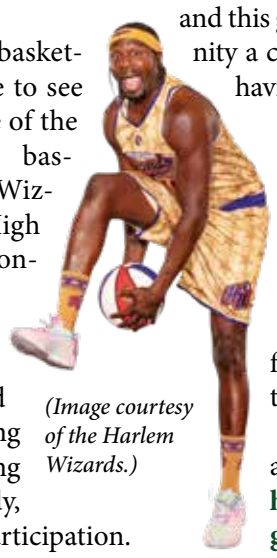
Those interested in serving on a panel should contact Charles Swift at **cswift@sau39.org** by Nov. 12. Additional information is available at **sites.google.com/sau39.org/shs/home**.

Scan here to volunteer!

Harlem Wizards to bring basketball, laughs to Amherst

BY STACEY MORISON

Amherst families and basketball fans will have a chance to see local teachers take on some of the best-known showmen in basketball when the Harlem Wizards come to Souhegan High School on the evening of Monday, Nov. 16.



(Image courtesy of the Harlem Wizards.)

The Wizards will face a team of Amherst Middle School teachers, staff and administrators in an evening that promises high-flying dunks, trick shots, comedy, and plenty of audience participation. The event is being organized by the Amherst PTA, with all proceeds benefiting Amherst Middle School.

According to the organization, the Harlem Wizards have played more than 15,000 games worldwide since 1962 and have helped raise more than $25 million for schools and community causes.

"It's incredibly exciting to bring a name as big as the Harlem Wizards to Amherst," said Lindsay Harrison, president of the Amherst PTA. "Our teachers and staff are at the heart of our schools, and this game gives our whole community a chance to cheer them on while having a blast."

Tickets are $30 (or $25 for students and senior citizens) when purchased online; prices increase slightly at the door. Reserved seating closer to the action is $35. Specialty packages will give fans additional opportunities to get up close to the action.

Tickets and specialty packages are available in advance at **harlemwizardsinabox.com/game/event/amherstnh11-16-26-06-30pm/**. The PTA encourages families to purchase tickets ahead of time, particularly for the limited-availability packages.

The Amherst PTA raises approximately $20,000 each year to support programs and resources at Amherst Middle School, including author visits, artist-in-residence programming, playground upgrades, teacher grants, and staff recognition.

Scan for more details and ticket information.

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SPORTS

Teamwork, leadership shape Souhegan girls soccer season

BY OWEN CONFORTI
Junior, Souhegan High School

In many ways, the Souhegan High School girls varsity soccer team has flown under the radar this season. But through the team's first 12 games, players and coaches remained optimistic about what the Sabers could accomplish.

After early October, the team's record stood at 4-5-3, placing the Sabers near the middle of the Division II standings.

Junior Evie Schiele said the team hoped to return to the semifinals this year "and further." She credited the team's ability to work well together as one of its strengths.

Coach Steve Hansberry said that teamwork has helped the Sabers develop throughout the season.

"Contributions from a large roster in practice, game prep, and game day have pushed us to grow," Hansberry said. "All members of the squad have worked hard to get to the next level."

Junior captains Madison Behn and Carissa Littlefield and senior captain Ava Fisher have "set the tone" this season, according to Hansberry. Seniors Gabby Benson, Alayna Ek, Hana Nagai, Charlotte Pepper, Julia Skelton, and Hannah Stone have also helped foster a strong team environment as upperclassmen.

Younger players have made contributions as well. Freshman fullback Evie McGregor has been a strong defender, according to Hansberry, playing alongside Lanai Hickman in the backfield. Hickman's speed and pursuit of the ball have also earned praise from teammates.

In goal, Camille Britcho has turned in several strong performances. During an early-season matchup with Bow, Britcho made 21 saves in a 0-0 tie at home. She recorded three shutouts during the team's first 12 games, and the Sabers allowed no more than one goal in nine of those contests.

Souhegan also earned a 2-1 win over rival Coe-Brown and a 4-1 victory over Manchester Memorial in September. The scoreless tie against Bow came against a team that spent much of the season near the top of the Division II standings.

As the Sabers approached the final stretch of the regular season, Schiele identified assertiveness and spacing as areas where the team could continue to improve.

Hansberry was also looking for the team to build on its progress in the remaining games.

"We're hoping to make a push for a home playoff spot," he said.



Sophomore Brynn Lavigne challenged for an aerial ball during Souhegan's 0-0 tie game against Bow. (Photo: Robert Tyszko.)



Junior captain Carissa Littlefield worked to control the ball under pressure from a Bow defender. (Photo: Robert Tyszko.)

AMS field hockey builds skills, opportunities for young athletes

BY AMANDA ROGERS
Coach, AMS Field Hockey

When the Amherst Middle School field hockey program adopted a non-cut philosophy, the goal was to give young athletes time to learn and develop in a sport that may be new to them.

The approach grew out of the program's early years, when players who had not mastered the sport during a short tryout period sometimes had to be cut from the team. The program eventually introduced a two-team system, with Red and White teams providing opportunities for players at different stages of development.

Parent Katie Tracey said she has seen that approach benefit players during her three years with the program.

"The AMS field hockey program has been such a supportive place for our kiddos to grow as athletes, friends, and members of their communities," Tracey said. "I'm still constantly amazed by how the teams lift each other up."

This season, 40 athletes in grades six through eight participated across the two rosters. Fifth-grade student managers Sharlotte Corey and Margot Reis also received an early introduction to the program.

AMS field hockey has won the league championship for the past four years. This season, the Red team entered the final stretch of the regular season undefeated and in first place. Eighth-grade captains Kinsli Hrycuna, Kendall Lebell, and Carys Montwell, who have played together since sixth grade, help lead the team.

Goalkeepers Samantha Yates and Charlie Thompson share responsibilities in the cage, while eighth-grader Ceci Gauthier has developed into a key part of the defense after working during the offseason to improve her skills at center fullback.

The White team provides developing players with additional opportunities to compete, often against schools that field only one roster with more experienced athletes. Sixth-grade goalkeeper Amelie Gauthier has gained experience facing those older teams in one of the game's most technical positions. On offense, sixth-grader Sarah Williams moved to forward mid-season and scored a hat trick in her first game at the position. Fellow sixth-grader Elyse Labonte, who stands under five feet tall, has also made an impact with her ability to drive the ball with power typically seen from older, more experienced players.

The program maintains a strong connection with Souhegan High School field hockey. High school players regularly attend AMS practices to work with younger athletes; AMS players, in turn, attend high school games and support the older players.

Souhegan varsity field hockey coach and SAU 39 Athletic Director Kelli Braley works with the middle school program to maintain that connection and provide a pathway for players as they progress from AMS to high school.

Along the way, the program aims to develop more than field hockey skills. Players learn to work as a team, persevere through challenges, support one another, and handle both wins and losses with grace — lessons that can remain with athletes long after their competitive playing days are over.



Red team left midfielder Ashley Howell (No. 2) drove the ball downfield against Hollis-Brookline as co-captain Kinsli Hrycuna (No. 7) moved in to support the play. (Photo: M. Warren.)



Red team center midfielder and co-captain Carys Montwell battled for possession during Amherst's 3-1 win over Hollis-Brookline on Oct. 5. (Photo: M. Warren.)

SPORTS

Souhegan cross country teams build strong seasons

BY JD CONFORTI
Junior, Souhegan High School

The Souhegan High School boys and girls cross country teams have put together strong seasons this fall, combining experienced runners with newcomers as both squads compete among the top teams in Division II.

Coaches Jeff Wilson, Janet Dickinson and Tivan Casavant lead the program, which includes several experienced captains and team leaders. Seniors Aaron Coleman, Tom Arnoldy, Keenan Burke and Ryan Quinn have helped lead the boys team, while seniors Madelyn Mooney, Dylan Walker and Samantha Swanbon have taken on leadership roles for the girls.

Wilson said the boys team has exceeded expectations.

"The boys team, led by junior Jacob Spencer and senior Aaron Coleman, is much deeper than anticipated and, through their hard work and cohesiveness, has steadily improved," Wilson said.

On the girls side, returning All-State runners Brynn Siska and Swanbon, along with Caroline Ridings, have helped the team develop into one of the top squads in Division II.

The teams entered the season with ambitious goals. The boys hoped to have every runner complete a 5K in 21 minutes or less, while both varsity teams set their sights on advancing beyond the Division II championship and earning spots at the New England Championships.

Souhegan faced an early test at the Manchester Invitational on Sept. 19 at Derryfield Park. Competing on a challenging course against a large field, both the boys and girls teams finished sixth. Sophomore Siska placed 23rd overall in the girls race, while Spencer finished eighth in the boys race.

A few weeks later, the Sabers competed against teams from across New England at the Woods Trail Run at Thetford Academy in Thetford, Vermont. The boys varsity team finished ninth among 37 teams, while the girls placed 10th among 35.

Each varsity squad consists of seven runners, with another 18 boys and 13 girls competing at the junior varsity level.



Brynn Siska (No. 757) and Caroline Ridings (No. 756) were among Souhegan's top five female finishers at the Oct. 3 meet in Thetford, Vermont. Madelyn Mooney, Emery Trudel, and Dylan Walker rounded out the Sabers' top five. (Photo: Andrea Arnoldy.)



The annual Woods Trail Run in Thetford, Vermont, has been held on the first Saturday of October since 1991. From left, Souhegan's top five male finishers were Ryan Quinn, Aaron Coleman, Tom Arnoldy, Joel Habert, and Jacob Spencer. (Photo: Andrea Arnoldy.)

The performances have kept both teams in contention among Division II programs. Wilson said during the season that he expected the boys to be among the top four teams at the Division II state championship and believed both the boys and girls had a strong chance of advancing to the New England Championships.

For the Sabers, those postseason goals provided motivation throughout a season marked by steady improvement, depth, and strong performances against competition from across New Hampshire and New England.

Learn to ski and ride programs for 2027

Amherst-area students have several nearby options for ski and snowboard lessons this winter. Programs at Crotched Mountain, Pats Peak, and McIntyre Ski Area offer lessons for children and teens at a range of skill levels.

Crotched Mountain Tuesday Night Lights Program: Open to students in grades 5-9, this five-week program starts on Jan. 5. Amherst Recreation provides transportation and supervision from Amherst Middle School to the mountain and back; lift tickets, rentals, and lessons must be purchased separately through Crotched Mountain. More details at **amherstnh.recdesk.com**.



Crotched Mountain Friday Night Lights Program for Amherst/Mont Vernon: The six-week program is open to students in grades K-12 and offers Friday lessons at either 4 or 5 p.m. beginning Jan. 8. Packages include a one-hour lesson, with options to add equipment rentals. Registration deadline is Dec. 11. To register, visit **crotchedmtn.com/plan-your-trip/ski-and-ride-lessons/voyager-program.aspx**. Once registered, contact Colleen Sweeney at **colleen.sweeney427@gmail.com** to complete the required town tracking form and be added to the group email list for weekly program information.

Pats Peak Learn to Ski & Ride Program: Open to students in grades 1-12, the five-week program meets Wednesdays at 4:30 p.m. beginning Jan. 6. Participants receive a one-hour lesson and can ski/ride after their lesson until the lifts close. Equipment rental packages are available. There is no bus; parents are responsible for transportation. Register at **patspeak.com/LTSR** using access code **amherst2027**. Early pricing is available through Dec. 1. For more information, contact Kristin Lavigne at **kblavigne@yahoo.com**.

Mighty Macs at McIntyre Ski Area: McIntyre Ski Area in Manchester offers its Mighty Macs ski and snowboard program for children ages 6-16. Weekday sessions include two-hour lessons with a variety of days and afternoon/evening times available; weekend sessions are also available. Equipment rentals are available. Three sessions are offered throughout the winter; registration deadline for the first session is Dec. 30. For schedules, pricing and registration information, visit **mcintyreskiarea.com/kids-6-16-years-old**.



COMMUNITY

Amherst author spotlights female veterans in new book

BY SARAH HETU

When Amherst resident Susan Combs attended a military conference in Atlanta in 2025, she had what she describes as a "lightning bolt moment."

Combs, who grew up in a military family, realized that the stories and accomplishments of female veterans often go unrecognized.

"When you're walking down the street and see a vet, 99% of the time they're male, and male vets tend to wear that out loud, while women vets don't," Combs said.

That realization became the inspiration for "Wonder Women: The Untold Stories of Female Veterans," published in August. The book shares the stories of 12 women whose military experiences span boot camp, West Point, 9/11, and deployment. Their stories also explore experiences unique to women in the military, including their experiences as mothers leaving children behind to deploy and, in some cases, remaining home while their own children serve. The book follows the women beyond their time in uniform, examining how they returned home, rebuilt their lives, and found new ways to serve.

Although their experiences differ, Combs found common threads in the qualities the women carried from military service into civilian life: resilience, leadership, grit, and purpose.

Among those featured is Cally Ideus, who served in military intelligence and later found equine therapy helpful in coping with post-traumatic stress disorder. She went on to establish Odyssey Mission, an indoor riding facility designed to help others experience the connection between people and animals.

Another chapter features Maj. Elizabeth M. Fahey, an Army nurse whose service included volunteering to go to Vietnam and later leaving her 3-month-old baby at home while caring for patients at the Naval Training Center in Chicago. Her willingness to serve reminded Combs of her own father, Maj. Gen. Roger E. Combs.

Her father's influence runs through much of Combs' work. She cared for him as he battled Agent Orange-related throat cancer before his death in 2018. She later wrote about the lessons he taught her in "Pancakes for Roger: A Mentorship Guide for Slaying Dragons," published in 2022. She also serves as executive director of Pancakes for Roger, a nonprofit that provides housing support and grants to veterans across the country.



Author Susan Combs at her Amherst home with a copy of her new book, "Wonder Women." Combs and her husband, Sean O'Rourke, moved to Amherst in 2024. (Photo: Sarah Hetu.)

Even the cover of "Wonder Women" contains tributes to her father, including two CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters and two white stars. Three women pictured with their backs to the reader represent another theme of the book: female veterans are often living and working in communities without the people around them knowing about their service.

With "Wonder Women," Combs hopes readers will recognize not only the sacrifices made by female veterans, but also the qualities they carry with them long after their military service ends.

"This isn't just a book about military service," said Combs. "I think that's why the stories resonate whether you've served or not."



At right, Combs held a book signing at the Coworking House in Milford on Aug. 27. Seated next to her is Mel, one of the veterans featured in her book. (Photo: Sarah Hetu.)

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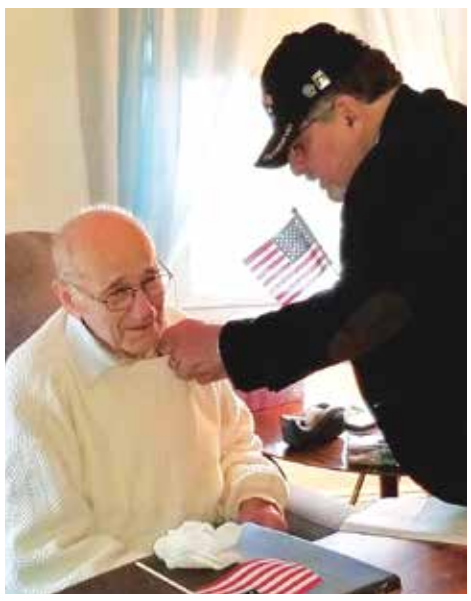
COMMUNITY

Veterans program pays tribute to those who served

BY DIANE TROVATO

For many veterans, a lifetime of service can go largely unrecognized. Through Home Health & Hospice Care's (HHHC) We Honor Veterans Program, fellow veterans are helping ensure that service receives meaningful recognition.

"It's a beautiful thing to witness," said Sandy Duggan, chair of the We Honor Veterans Program at HHHC in Merrimack.



At right, the late Bob Alamshah placed a pin on a fellow veteran during a recognition ceremony. Veteran volunteers often visit nursing homes and private homes for these intimate ceremonies. (Courtesy photo.)

The program, developed by the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and the Department of Veterans Affairs, meets the unique physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual needs of veterans at the end of life. Its recognition ceremonies thank veterans for their service and sacrifices.

HHHC has veteran volunteers representing all branches of the military, most of whom are Vietnam veterans. Duggan and ceremony facilitators accompany the volunteers to ceremonies at the Hospice House in Merrimack, as well as nursing homes and private homes throughout 25 communities in southern New Hampshire.

During a ceremony, a veteran team member expresses gratitude and pins the honoree with a We Honor Veterans pin. Attendees stand as "The Star-Spangled Banner" is played, and the veteran is saluted. The honoree receives a certificate and a star from a retired American flag bearing a message of appreciation. Family members are invited to share memories and reflections.

HHHC has conducted more than 1,000 ceremonies since 2013.

For Duggan, the importance is simple: veterans deserve to hear "thank you" face-to-face while they can still receive it. Many veterans, she said, carry feelings of guilt or believe they do not deserve recognition.

She recalled one Vietnam veteran who whispered during a ceremony, "I've waited for this my whole life."

The team researches each veteran's service before a ceremony, learning about their era, branch, and military role. That preparation can create unexpected connections.

Gary Backus, an Amherst resident and retired Air Force senior master sergeant, recently participated in a ceremony for a Navy veteran who had served aboard a destroyer in the North Atlantic. Backus researched the ship and found a photograph of it at sea during the veteran's years of service.

The veteran, a radioman, was drifting in and out of sleep during the ceremony. When Backus began giving the ship's call sign, the veteran finished it.

"The family was amazed," Backus said.

Sally Hooper, an Amherst resident and volunteer facilitator, also understands the importance of recognizing veterans face-to-face. Her husband is an Army veteran who served in Vietnam.

"They served so we can all be here," Hooper said.

In addition to ceremonies, the program provides companionship visits and respite care for veterans. Volunteers also prepare special packages, cards and videos for veteran patients around the Fourth of July and Veterans Day.



At right, Amherst resident Gary Backus received the 2026 Alamshah Award in recognition of his community service. Backus, a veteran, volunteers with HHHC's We Honor Veterans Program, helping recognize fellow veterans for their military service. (Courtesy photo.)

There are an estimated 81,000 veterans in southern New Hampshire, including approximately 24,000 in Hillsborough County, according to HHHC.

For the volunteers, the ceremonies are an opportunity to remind veterans that their service has not been forgotten.

"Because our service matters," Backus said. "We gave up part of the American way of life to serve our nation and what it stands for."

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Attorney Peter Moustakis is a longtime Amherst resident, a proud father, and an enthusiastic T-ball coach. Over the years, he has served the Amherst community as Town Moderator, Assistant Town Moderator, and Chair of the Ways and Means Committee.

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It's also important to confirm that the people named to serve as executor, trustee, health care agent, or power of attorney are still able and willing to act on your behalf. An outdated plan can lead to delays, confusion, and unintended outcomes for your loved ones.

A periodic review can help ensure your estate plan continues to protect the people and goals that matter most.

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Holiday cards for a cause

BY RACHEL BARKER SWEENEY

For Amherst resident and Souhegan High School senior Tessa Avery, holiday cards have provided an avenue for creativity while raising funds for the Child Life Services department at Boston Children's Hospital.

Avery was introduced to the work of Child Life Services in first grade, when a classmate was admitted to Boston Children's Hospital for an extended stay.

"My 6-year-old mind couldn't fathom being isolated in a hospital bed," Avery said. She soon learned that Child Life Services specialists help children navigating medical challenges "feel like kids and not just patients."

As Avery watched other classmates benefit from Child Life Services over the years, she knew she wanted to find her own way to contribute. In 2015, she began assembling and donating care packages for pediatric patients. Later, Avery began selling holiday cards and donating 100 percent of the profits to Child Life Services.

Interested in pursuing fundraising as a potential career path, Avery took the initiative in 2025 to shadow the Child Life Services and fundraising departments at Boston Children's. The experience gave her a better understanding of how the program operates and how heavily it relies on philanthropic support.



Tessa Avery's holiday art aims to raise $10,000 for Child Life Services at Boston Children's Hospital. (Photo: M. Warren.)

Each card features a high-quality print of one of Avery's original hand-painted designs, inspired by New England living and the joy of the holiday season.

"I thoroughly enjoy the creativity behind painting the cards," Avery said. "However, I find it most rewarding to promote connection in our community in a way that can additionally raise the spirits of hospital patients at Boston Children's Hospital."

To date, Avery has donated more than $6,000 to the department.

"It would be a dream to hit $10,000 in total donations," Avery said. "Many thanks to all who have supported my fundraising efforts through the years!"

Cards cost $12.99 per pack and are hand-delivered to Amherst residents. They can be purchased through Avery's Etsy shop at **SaltWaterLove.com**.

LIBRARY NEWS

Your next favorite read

BY AMY LAPOINTE
Amherst Town Library Director

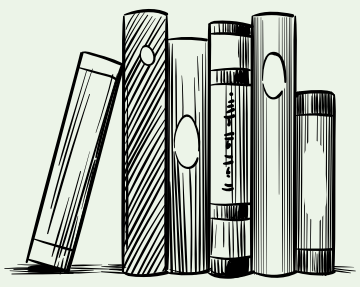
PEREGRINE HILL
by Nina de Gramont
Set in the Gilded Age in New York, a young woman forced into an unwelcome marriage to a much older man strives to reclaim her independence. This novel is loosely based on the life of the author's great-grandmother.

ALL IN
by David Baldacci
Another exciting thriller from a favorite author. Expect billion-dollar secrets, international power plays, a professional hit team, and Baldacci's 6:20 Man, a former Army Ranger turned federal investigator.

PECULIAR STARS
by Rebecca Yarros
When a routine sailing trip goes awry and survivors are stranded on a remote island, a slow-burn romance ensues as a woman rethinks the future she had mapped out for herself.

SPLIT SECOND: THIRTY-TWO SWITCHEROO
by Janet Evanovich
The planned million-copy print run for the latest installment in the Stephanie Plum series is a testament to Evanovich's massive fan base, drawn to her brand of lighthearted mystery, laugh-out-loud comedy, and relatable characters.

SECRETS
by Bob Woodward
Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist Bob Woodward's memoir traces his career from his youth through decades of reporting on every American president from Nixon through Trump. It even lifts the lid on some of his secret sources.





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The Simple Things

On our road

BY TOM FISHER



Jack Kerouac's 1957 novel "On the Road" catalyzed my brief adolescent rebellious phase.

To an overwhelmed teen juggling sports, homework, SATs and incessant lectures about colleges and career aspirations, cutting loose in a fast car with lively, eclectic companions had irresistible appeal.

Eventually we settle down and abandon such frivolous notions. It happens. Heck, even Ramblin' Man Bob Seger eventually traded "turning the page" for decidedly adult "deadlines and commitments."

Still, setting off for unknown destinations still has a powerful allure — even if we must return to the office grind on Monday.

I've been friends with Hank and Josh Thayer for nearly 45 years. They're the kind of erudite, adventurous friends you cherish. We have different life experiences and sensibilities but enjoy time together and spirited debate on wide-ranging (occasionally inane) topics.

Also inspired by Kerouac's wanderlust and movable salons, Hank first suggested an annual two-day road trip. His concept was simple: pack a bag, fill the gas tank, toss a dart at the map, and go.

We've been to some unorthodox locations.

We ate poutine in Fort Kent. Drank Allen's coffee brandy in Bangor. Explored the Erie Canal towpath in Utica. Toured a vintage caboose in Chester, MA. Saw Pudge Fisk's 1975 game six bat in Cooperstown (those *weren't* tears — there was something in my eye!) and met a New York City chef who expounded on the culinary merits of duck eggs.

Mostly we connected, laughed, ate well and relaxed. Proper vacation stuff — and essential human stuff.

My wife, Laura, also loves spontaneous adventure. Recently we heard Lyle Lovett perform on a starry night in Shelburne, VT, followed by a late-night burger at Al's French Fry. We saw the dizzying cliffs of Smuggler's and Franconia Notches, marveled at the enormity of Lake Champlain, and shared an insanely good margherita pizza and Czech Pilsner in Littleton, NH. All in 24 short hours!

These recuperative getaways momentarily slow the pace of life and provide new perspectives and places to dream about.

Here are some helpful planning tips:

Companions:

- Funny, unconventional people make fine travel companions.

Planning:

- The journey IS the destination.
- Go where tourists aren't.
- Stay local. In New England, there's LOTS to see within 3-5 hours of home.

Transportation:

- Blue roads are far more scenic and interesting than dreary interstates.
- Disconnect from technology; use a road atlas.
- Stop and experience *anything* that moves you: a scenic view, rail-car diner, cool road sign, historic monument or museum. Remember, there's no schedule to keep.

Packing:

- Indulge hobbies. We bring bird-watching binoculars, ultralight fishing rods and a small tackle box. Just in case.

Lodging:

- A grand hotel, retro motor inn, or B&B is preferable to anodyne hotel chains.

Dining:

- Make meals memorable by avoiding chains or fast food.
- Eat where and what the locals do. Don't hesitate to ask for recommendations.

Connection:

- Engage with people. Ask questions, show appreciation, hear their stories, and laugh.
- Leave work worries at home. They'll wait for you.



From left, the author and travel buddy Josh Thayer. Why is there a 31-foot statue of Paul Bunyan in Bangor? Who knows, but fun memories are where you find them! (Photo: Hank Thayer.)

- Pay attention to unique local details.
- Pet every friendly dog you meet.

What are you waiting for? The road's calling and has a lot to offer.

See you on the lakes, trails, and blue roads.

KIDS' CORNER

Book review: The Hunger Games

BY DAX PARENT, *age 10*



(Courtesy photo.)

"The Hunger Games," by Suzanne Collins, is a story with exciting adventures and friendships. People from all different districts are forced to come together to fight to the death. Only one person can win. Through the games, they find heartbreak and traitors while they try to survive. But they also find good people who help along the way.

The story is good and the characters are better. "The Hunger Games" is such a good book because it has a strong emotional cling to the characters. Some of these big ties come from beloved characters and their strong relationships, like what we see between Rue and Katniss. This friendship is so important to the book and the bigger series.

In short, "The Hunger Games" is a **must-read** for adventure, drama and characters like Rue and Buttercup. Read the book first before you see the movie.

Hey kids! Want to see your work in the newspaper?



Send us your poems, recipes, book or movie reviews, pet spotlights, original puzzles, and more! We can't wait to see what you create!

Submit at **amherstbear.org/submissions**. Be sure to include your name, age, and a photo.

Meet my dog!

BY FELICITY FARRELL, *age 10*

Hi! My name is Felicity Farrell, and I am going to tell you about my dog, Piper.

She is a 2-year-old cockapoo. A cockapoo is a cross between a poodle and a cocker spaniel. I got her as a Christmas present when I was in second grade. She came from a place called Dutch Haven Pups.

Her name was initially Ribbon because she was born the week a carnival was in town. All the puppies in her litter were named after things at the carnival. But we named her Piper because I was watching a show called "Just Add Magic," and my favorite character was Piper.

My favorite thing to do with Piper is cuddle up on the couch and watch a movie when it's raining. My favorite experience with her was when I took her to dog training. It was so fun, and I think Piper liked it, too!

Piper is a chill, happy, pampered dog. She probably gets more haircuts than I do! What sets her apart from other dogs is that she is loving and caring but often looks at you with judging eyes. She is most herself when she is being spoiled.

Although Piper is very judgmental, she likes almost all people — NOT all dogs. She thinks she rules the town! When my family was looking for a dog, we wanted a chill, laid-back dog that did not have a lot of energy and did not require a lot of exercise. We definitely got what we asked for.

I would recommend a cockapoo over any dog! She is probably the most judgmental, pampered, loving dog you will ever meet!



(Courtesy photo.)

ALL AROUND TOWN

Town Calendar

SUN 11/1: Tickets on sale for annual Breakfast with Santa at the Congregational Church. Event date is 12/5. More details and registration at **CCAmherst.org/BWS**.

SUN 11/1: Tickets on sale for Christmas in the Village House Tour. Event date is 12/12. Tour five historic homes in the Village. Information at **CCAmherst.org/CAV**.

TUE 11/3, 6AM-8PM: Election Day at Souhegan High School. No school for SAU 39. Voter information on p. 2.

WED 11/4, 4:30-6PM: Financial Wellness Workshop Series at United Way (20 Broad Street, Nashua). This month's topic is "Saving Money." Details at **unitedwaynashua.org/financial-wellness-workshops**.

THUR 11/5, 10:15AM: Amherst Garden Club presents "Embrace the Holiday Season with Flowers," with renowned floral designer Maureen Christmas. All are welcome. At Messiah Lutheran Church. Details at **amherstgardenclub.org**.

SAT 11/7 AND SUN 11/8, 9AM-4PM: 32nd Annual Holiday Open House at Treasures Antiques (106 Ponemah Road). Free event featuring 50+ local vendors, food, and live music. To benefit Kitty Angels, an all-volunteer cat shelter.

SAT 11/7, 8AM-12PM: Household Hazardous Waste Collection. 25 Crown St, Nashua. Details at **nashuarpc.org/hhw/**.

MON 11/9, 10AM: Magic in Months program for ages 3-6 at Peabody Mill Environmental Center. Celebrate the changing seasons. Registration required at **amherstnh.recdesk.com**.

TUES 11/10, 11AM: Veterans Day Assembly at Souhegan High School. All are welcome. More details on p. 1.

TUES 11/10, 3:30PM: Orienteering program for ages 11-14 at Peabody Mill Environmental Center. Three sessions. Registration required at **amherstnh.recdesk.com**.

WED 11/11: Veterans Day. No school for SAU 39; town buildings are closed.

THUR 11/12, 6-8PM: Souhegan Cooperative School Board meeting at Daland Memorial Library (8 Lilac Lane, Mont Vernon).

THUR 11/12, 7-8PM: Holiday Magic Through Floral Arrangements and Decor: An Amherst Garden Club Side Shoots Event. Join speaker Barbara Williams at the Amherst Library. Registration required at **amherstlibrary.org**.

FRI 11/13 AND SAT 11/14: Souhegan High School fall production of "A Voice in the Dark: A Salem Story." For ages 13+. Three performances. Show times and tickets at **souhegantheatre.ludus.com**.

SAT 11/14, 9AM-3PM: Free wreath making event at Live Tree or Die Christmas Tree Farm. Make a wreath to take home and one to donate to a veteran. All supplies provided. More details at **livetreeordiefarm.com**.

SAT 11/14, 5-7PM: Campfire Nights for middle schoolers (ages 11-14) at Peabody Mill Environmental Center. A night hike, crafts, games, and campfire fun. Register at **amherstnh.recdesk.com**.

MON 11/16, 6:30PM: Harlem Wizards at Souhegan High School. An action-packed evening of entertainment for the whole family. More details on p. 7.

TUES 11/17, 7PM: Community Forum at Wilkins School regarding the Wilkins School Project. Opportunity for questions and public comment. More details on p. 1.

WED 11/18, 10AM: The Nipmugs Chapter of Questers presents author Ken Sheldon reading from his new book, "Captain John Manley: Patriot, Privateer, and America's Forgotten Hero." At Messiah Lutheran Church.

THUR 11/19, 5:30-7:30PM: Amherst School Board meeting at Clark School.

THUR 11/19, 6-7PM: ATL Reads discussion of "Children of Blood and Bone" by Tomi Adeyemi. At the Amherst Library. Registration required at **amherstlibrary.org**.

FRI 11/20, 1-2PM: ATL Reads discussion of "Children of Blood and Bone" by Tomi Adeyemi. At the Amherst Library. Registration required at **amherstlibrary.org**.

SAT 11/21: International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day. More details on p. 15.

SAT 11/21, 9AM-2PM: Holiday Craft Fair at the Congregational Church. Holiday decor, wreaths, gifts, baked goods, raffles, and more. More details at **ccamherst.org**.

SAT 11/21, 5-6:30PM: Full Moon Hike at Peabody Mill Environmental Center. Discover the sights and sounds of the nighttime forest. Registration required at **amherstnh.recdesk.com**.

SAT 11/21, 5-9PM: Annual Gala to benefit the Boys and Girls Club of Souhegan Valley. At the Manchester Country Club. Details at **svbgc.org**.

MON 11/23, 6-8PM: SAU 39 Board Public Hearing and Board Meeting at Souhegan High School.

TUES 11/24, 2-3PM: Free digital literacy workshop for older adults at YMCA (24 Stadium Drive, Nashua). Topic is "Banking Safety & Fraud Prevention." Register at **unitedwaynashua.org/digital-literacy/**.

THUR 11/26: Thanksgiving Day. Town buildings are closed today and 11/27.

FRI 11/27, 9AM: Annual Trot Off Your Turkey 5K and 1-mile Fun Run, sponsored by the Amherst Junior Women's Club. More details on p. 16.

FRI 11/27-SUN 11/29, 10AM: 7th Annual Festival of Trees to benefit SHARE Outreach. Tour a display of 60+ holiday trees and gift baskets; all will be raffled. At the First Congregational Church (10 Union Street, Milford). More details at **festivaloftreesforshare.org**.







Survivor Day offers support and connection

BY STEVE BOCZENOWSKI

For more than 25 years, survivors of suicide loss have gathered around the world on the Saturday before Thanksgiving for International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day, also known as Survivor Day. The day provides an opportunity for survivors to connect with others who have experienced a similar loss and find support.

In 1999, Sen. Harry Reid, who lost his father to suicide, introduced a resolution in the U.S. Senate that led to the creation of Survivor Day. Sponsored by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), the observance will take place in all 50 states and many countries around the world on Saturday, Nov. 21.

Several Survivor Day events will be held throughout New Hampshire, including in Concord, Dover, Keene, and Nashua. Manchester will host an event specifically for veterans.

Events include opportunities for participants to share their experiences, connect with other survivors, and learn about available resources.

A complete list of Survivor Day events is available through the AFSP's Survivor Day event finder at **afsp.org/international-survivors-of-suicide-loss-day**.



Photo: Amherst resident Steve Boczenowski lost his 21-year-old son, Jeffrey, to suicide in 2009. Since then, he has advocated for teen mental health and suicide prevention. Boczenowski serves on the New Hampshire Suicide Prevention Council as a representative of families who have lost loved ones to suicide and co-chairs its Survivor of Suicide Loss subcommittee. (Courtesy photo.)

New Hampshire also has several monthly support groups for survivors of suicide loss. A list of support groups is available at **bit.ly/NHSOSLgroups**.

Additional resources can be found at **preventsuicidenh.org**.

September Amherst Home Sales

Town Transaction Report Provided by The Corr Group



Office: 603.213.8257
20A Northwest Blvd #155
Nashua NH 03063

Address	Beds	Baths	Sq Ft	List Price	Sale Price	Sale Date
24 Cricket Hill Drive	4	3	2,835	$719,000	$775,000	9/1/2026
32 Peacock Brook Lane	2	3	1,376	$550,000	$550,000	9/3/2026
135 Amherst Street	2	3	1,824	$459,000	$445,000	9/3/2026
68 Merrimack Road	3	2	2,075	$650,000	$620,000	9/4/2026
21 Mulberry Lane	2	2	1,366	$375,000	$373,000	9/4/2026
3 Lake Front Street	3	1	898	$450,000	$500,000	9/8/2026
19 Tamarack Lane	4	4	2,529	$747,900	$840,000	9/9/2026
451 Boston Post Road	3	2	2,016	$625,000	$620,000	9/9/2026
34 Old Milford Road	4	3	2,211	$649,900	$660,000	9/10/2026
3 Captain Danforth Lane	3	3	1,700	$675,000	$685,000	9/11/2026
22 Old Coach Lane	4	2	2,119	$629,000	$592,050	9/15/2026
19 Highland Drive	4	2	3,029	$1,300,000	$1,100,000	9/16/2026
17 Ravine Road	3	2	1,456	$525,000	$528,660	9/18/2026
9 Taconic Drive	4	3	2,714	$924,900	$875,000	9/18/2026
6 Veterans Road	2	2	1,280	$422,000	$420,000	9/18/2026
14 Fieldstone Drive	3	3	2,759	$725,000	$725,000	9/18/2026
74 Spring Road	5	3	3,356	$719,000	$750,000	9/18/2026
4 Monticello Drive	4	3	3,076	$899,900	$900,000	9/22/2026
21 Nathaniel Drive	3	3	1,972	$620,000	$600,000	9/24/2026
1 Old Milford Road	3	3	3,000	$734,900	$705,000	9/25/2026
14 Veterans Road	3	2	1,832	$448,000	$480,000	9/25/2026
6 Veterans Road	3	2	1,280	$449,900	$460,000	9/28/2026
9 Victoria Ridge	4	4	4,295	$1,600,000	$1,600,000	9/29/2026
117 Boston Post Road	5	5	6,192	$1,789,000	$1,625,000	9/29/2026
62 Boston Post Road	5	4	2,950	$649,900	$570,000	9/30/2026
33 Baboosic Lake Road	5	4	4,083	$725,000	$737,500	9/30/2026

Note: Square footage is above grade.
Average days on market: 19

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Trot Off Your Turkey returns for 27th year

BY STACEY MORISON

For many Amherst families, Thanksgiving isn't quite over until they've laced up their sneakers for a post-holiday jog around the Village. On Friday, Nov. 27, the annual Trot Off Your Turkey returns to the Green for its 27th year.

The annual 5K and 1-mile Fun Run, organized by the Amherst Junior Women's Club, often draws more than 300 runners and walkers, making it a popular way for the community to get outside, work off some of the holiday meal, and spend time with friends and neighbors.

The event happens rain or shine; historically, "rain or shine" has often meant rain, snow, freezing rain, or frigid temperatures. Participants don't let the weather stop the tradition, and many arrive in turkey costumes and other festive attire, adding a little extra fun to the morning.

"This event has become a cherished post-Thanksgiving tradition that brings our community together year after year," said Daisie Ross, the event chair. "It's a wonderful way for families, friends, runners, and walkers of all ages to start the holiday season together while supporting a great cause."

The 1-mile Fun Run is another popular part of the morning. Children can run or walk a shorter course and receive a swag bag filled with goodies at the finish line. The event, which starts at 9 a.m., gives younger participants a chance to be part of the Thanksgiving weekend tradition.

The 5K starts at 9:30 a.m. and is open to all ages. The first 200 registrants will receive a race shirt along with other assorted swag. Participants are invited to run or walk along the stroller-friendly course.

Longtime participants have made the event an annual tradition.

"I look forward to the trot every year," said longtime Amherst resident Tom Ventura, who has participated in the event since its inception in 1999. "It's a great chance to catch up with friends, and it feels like stepping into a Thanksgiving Norman Rockwell painting."

The race is one of many community events hosted by the Amherst Junior Women's Club, a local nonprofit organization that supports the community through events, service projects, and fundraising throughout the year. Other annual events include the Easter Egg Hunt and Pumpkin Carving, both on the Green, and Handbag Game Night, held at LaBelle Winery each summer.

Registration information for this year's Trot Off Your Turkey, including race times, fees and course details, is available at **runreg.com/13770**.



Fun Run participant Zoey Cadorette greeted the turkey mascot at last year's event.



Clear skies and chilly air made for a great race in 2025. Race timing is provided by Millennium Running. (Photos: S. Morison.)

