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# The Laconia Daily Sun

WEDNESDAY

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FREE

## Laconia Rotary takes 'Walk' on the wild side

By RON COLE

FOR THE LACONIA DAILY SUN

GILFORD – If you don't count "mud" as its own season, Granite Staters acknowledge four seasons like the rest of the country, but Jan Hooper coined an addition to summer, fall, winter and spring this past weekend.

"I call it spring awakening," said the woman who has fostered much of the awareness of a little known, but long appreciated location on the edge of Gunstock Park.

The words "hidden gem" can describe many things and this past weekend a large group of area residents gathered to spruce up a place that many think fits that description: the Wetlands Walk at Gunstock.

The Wetlands Walk is a quarter mile of boardwalk that loops through a forest of pines, hemlock and birch, and is part of Poor Farm Brook.

In response to a planned event held by the Laconia Rotary Club and the Belknap County Conservation District, an army of volunteers from across the Lakes Region came equipped with a variety of garden and forestry implements, and attended to a number of projects. Some cleaned and trimmed from the winter's effects, while others replaced and built birdhouses, blazed trails, created habitats for rabbits, planted asters and Shasta



Collin Meaney, Kathryn Holt, Randall John Holt, Caitlin Meaney and Debbie Bolduc clean up winter debris along the Wetlands Walk at Gunstock Resort during Laconia Rotary's volunteer service project on Saturday morning. (Karen Bobotas/for The Laconia Daily Sun)

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## For some, pending loss of St. Joseph already painful

By ADAM DRAPCHO  
THE LACONIA DAILY SUN

LACONIA — On Tuesday, around lunch time, Patty and Steve Giguere stopped in to St. Joseph Church to light candles and pray. They chose that church because it's more convenient to their home, but they sometimes choose to worship at Sacred Heart.

Come fall, the Giguere's won't

have a choice, as Laconia will be down to just one Catholic church. On Sunday, Father Marc Drouin announced that St. André Besette Parish plans to sell the St. Joseph lot, which includes the Busiel mansion and the Holy Trinity School building. Before the sale goes through, though, the church, which was built in 1929, will be torn down.

The razing of the church comes at the direction of Bishop Peter

Libasci, Drouin said. Though Libasci was not immediately available for an interview, the Diocese of Manchester provided a letter Libasci sent to Drouin in January 2017, after the latter informed the Diocese of the Parish's intention to sell the property in order to consolidate parish activities onto the Sacred Heart campus.

In that letter, Libasci granted

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## Senators hear budget pleas

By HOLLY RAMER  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

CONCORD — New Hampshire senators crafting a two-year state budget on Tuesday heard personal pleas to include increased funding for education and programs that benefit people with disabilities and mental illness.

Hundreds of people attended the first of two public hearings on the budget being hosted by the Senate Finance Committee. Many of those who spoke at the hearing got underway urged members to go along

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(603) 267-6547 CLOSED MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND

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daisies and engaged in general beautification.

“We’ve got our mojo working,” quipped Mo Drouin of Meredith as he and Gilford’s Jo Clark acknowledged the famous Muddy Watters tune. They were part of the large gathering sprucing up and rehabbing the location early Saturday morning.

Clark has been active in event for years. “I grew up here in Gilford,” she said, “and think of this time of year as one of five seasons. I love this place, and want everybody to as well,” said the longtime member of the Gilford Conservation Commission.

A group of volunteer landscape professionals answered the Rotary call and worked in the woods like a synchronized team while breaking ground for the concrete footing for a new bike rack.

Several of the projects were ecology oriented. The birdhouses were refurbished and replaced. The houses were designed as habitat for bluebirds, which eat as many as 2,000 mosquitoes a day, providing obvious benefits for people.

Gary and Liza Maheu were joined by daughter Mayah, a 12-year-old Laconia Middle School student who said she enjoyed her day and liked that the event “gets people outside working and walking.”

Laconia marketing professional Debbie Bolduc said she is fond



Caitlin Meaney and Lauren Kane hang birdhouses throughout the camping areas at Gunstock Resort during Laconia Rotary’s volunteer service project on Saturday. (Karen Bobotas/for The Laconia Daily Sun)

of taking part in events like the cleanup. “Being outdoors is my church, and today is very positive

for the community.”

“This is a wonderful and enthusiastic group of people,” said Jan Hooper of the 50-plus volunteers. She was Wetlands Walk coordinator for the BCCD for years, and is now a very knowledgeable volunteer. “I see caring people of all ages and walks of life,” said Hooper, observing volunteers from 8 to 80.

Randell Holt, 8, said he saw the value of the Wetland Walk. “I would recommend this for children,” said the Laconia Christian Academy third-grader.

Kevin Conway, president of the sponsoring Laconia Rotary, said he was pleased with the event and looked forward to a continuing relationship with the Wetlands Walk.

The board structure of the Wetlands Walk has stood up well throughout the years, said Hooper, and been a boon over the years for people with mobility issues. She said her grandmother used a similar walkway when she was in her 90s, and “she loved getting back into the great outdoors.”

The effort has another, less evident benefit: It will count for 94.65 hours toward a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s Forest and Rivers Fund.

A former elementary school science teacher, Hooper quoted Miguel Cervantes, author of the book “Don Quixote,” who wrote that “We have to take care of our surroundings, or what will become of us?”

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with education funding provisions included in the budget passed by the House last month. The House proposal would restore so-called stabilization grants to schools and adjust the formula used to distribute education money to benefit towns and cities with lower property values and a larger percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. That would amount to about an increase of \$160 million in state aid over two years and would be paid for largely by extending the 5% interest and dividends tax to cover capital gains.

Frank Sprague, chairman of the Claremont school board and a former school administrator, said decreases in the stabilization grants has made it impossible for his district to hire and retain teachers, and that property taxpayers are at a breaking point when it comes to paying for schools. He urged lawmakers to find the courage to stand up to Republican Gov. Chris Sununu’s possible veto and to “face the fact that additional sources of revenue must be found.”

“Public schools are the canary in the coal mine for New Hampshire communities,” he said. “If life support for schools is cut off, the economic health of the entire community is thereby compromised.”

Berlin Mayor Paul Grenier delivered an equally dire warning. Without restoration of the stabilization grants, the state’s struggling northernmost city will have to eliminate two police officer positions, two firefighters and a public works employee, he said.

“We’re at the point now where we are going to collapse,” he said.

Fellow Berlin resident Ellen Tavino urged senators to fund peer support organizations in the North Country, which she called “the frozen chosen.” She described her struggles

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# BLOCK PARTY

**FRIDAY MAY 10th**

**MICHAEL VINCENT BAND • DELANEY SLEEPSPRIT • THE BLACKOUT SUMMERS**

**DJ KADENCE**

**SATURDAY MAY 11th**

**RILEY PARKHURST PROJECT**

**PAPER MONSTERS • THE SUN GOES NOVA**

**COOL YA JETS • SINN • TESTER**

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