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Students on campus hope to bridge the political divide through free speech discussion

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Cover Photo: Krysteana Scribner / Editor-in-chief

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Krysteana Scribner
Editor-in-chief

Welcome back from February break, fellow USM students! Vacation was a nice break from the reality of responsibilities, but once again it is time to buckle down and work toward the goal of finishing up the semester. If you missed out on the event before vacation, Representative Larry Lockman made a visit to the Portland campus after much controversy arose about his political perspectives on immigration. The event itself was well attended, predominantly by older Caucasian community members, and the atmosphere was tense as protesters rallied outside to make their voices heard.

In the Woodbury campus center, students gathered at an event called “Candid Conversations” which was meant to be an event for people to come together and discuss the difficulties of finding common ground in such a politically divided world today. Of course, this event wasn’t nearly as well-attended as the rally and Lockman’s speech, but it should have been.

Take a look at the article we wrote about the “Candid Conversations” event and learn about what took place. Here at the Free Press, we learned that protestors actually went into the event in opposition to candid conversations, making it clear that they would rather



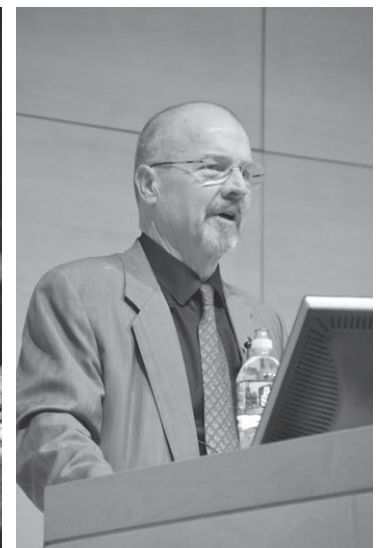
Krysteana Scribner / Editor-in-chief

fight the ideologies of Lockman than sit together to find a solution to these difficult answers.

While I personally don’t think it was appropriate for protestors to express frustration toward people trying to have a civil conversation, the event leader Muna Adan expressed happiness that all in attendance, regardless of opinion, made an appearance to express their concerns about Lockman and other issues in the world today. You can find our in-depth article covering the Lockman event online, but we recommend opening this issue and taking a look at some of the things happening on your campus. It’s important to keep yourself in the know of what occurs at your uni-

versity, and you can count on us to report the most important things going on.

In addition, I want to make it clear that anyone is welcome to join the team in whatever capacity they desire! Working at the Free Press is a great way to gain resume experience, make new friends and learn some new skills. Just email me at editor@usmfreepress.org for more information, and I’ll get right back to you! We also welcome critiques, both positive and negative, as they help us to grow and learn as student Journalists. Happy reading!



Top right: A protestor and Trump supporter push one another after a disagreement on immigrant rights. **Bottom Left:** Protestors gathered outside Glickman before Lockman’s speech. **Bottom Right:** Lockman during his speech in Abromson.

Students on campus host candid conversations on political divide

Julie Pike
Free Press Staff

While Rep. Larry Lockman spoke in Hanford Hall on what he calls the “immigration crisis,” Muna Adan, a sophomore political science major, and other USM faculty and staff members brought a group of students and community members together to have a constructive conversation about free speech on campus.

In the Woodbury Amphitheater, Adan and Professor Ronald Schmidt served as co-moderators at the event. They encouraged the audience, composed of students, faculty, staff and community members to engage in a discussion about freedom of speech and hate speech.

This was the first event of a future series called Candid Conversations. The topic of this event was Campus Speech in an Age of Political Polarization. Adan, who is credited with the original idea of the event, stated that the idea was to have a space to allow staff, faculty, students and community members to come and engage with one another on different topics.

Adan noted that recent events have created a divide between students on campus, and she wanted to bring the community back together.

“There has been this divide between conservative and liberal students,” Adan said. “I’ve noticed that there has been this sort of opposition between them and I felt that it would be effective to start an ongoing moderated forum that allowed students to discuss controversial issues in a constructive manner.”

USM faculty and staff helped Adan launch the event. Schmidt agreed to help her run the event and others in the future. Adam Tuchinsky, dean of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, helped Adan obtain a space for the event, as well as obtain food and other supplies.

“Muna’s idea was to foster campus discussion about issues that students feel deeply about,” Schmidt stated. “These conversations don’t often happen in class because they may not be relevant to the syllabus or [may be] time consuming.”

To start off the discussion, Professor Dan Panici from the Communications and Media Studies Department spoke about the legal history of free speech debates on college campuses. The first 15 minutes of the event included mostly faculty and students from student government speaking. After that, a discussion involving other students took place.

Schmidt emphasized that the idea for the



Muna Adan / Contributor

USM students and faculty as well as community members participate in a conversation on free speech in the Woodbury Campus Center.

event was for the audience members to be able to engage in a thoughtful discussion about campus speech, not for the event to be run by faculty members

“The idea behind this is that students are having conversations and faculty would be there more as a resource,” Schmidt stated. “We struggled with how to set up the space so that students wouldn’t assume that the faculty, or who[ever] was sitting in the focus area, would be giving a presentation.”

Adan stated that she believed the event went well. Approximately 20 to 30 people attended, with others going in and out of the event. While it took awhile for students to become active in the event, they were still able to get a good conversation going, as Schmidt stated.

“After we got into it people spoke and they gave their varying sides on the issues,” Adan stated. “It was important because we understood that there was this disparity among students, but then people were able to understand where the other side was coming from. It shows people that even though we’re all different, we can still understand where the other person comes from.”

About an hour into the discussion, a group of people who were protesting the Lochman event came into the amphitheater. Schmidt stated that after they came in the meeting naturally shifted in tone.

The protesters played loud music as they walked into the event and began to become involved with the discussion as well, sharing their own views on campus speech.

“From my understanding of what they were protesting about,” Adan stated, “they didn’t like the idea that there was another event happening. They wanted us to all join together in solidarity.”

While the protesters did interrupt the conversation, they also provided their own point of views to the discussion, which is one of the goals Adan had in mind for the event: for students to feel comfortable sharing their views.

“I thought it was important that those voices were heard. A lot of the things that they said were things that were important for the people that came to the event to hear, because that’s how people were feeling,” Adan said. “They were expressing their opinion and people go about doing that differently.”

Even though the event came to an end after the group of protesters came in, Adan and Schmidt considered it a success and will continue to host similar events in the future. The goal is to have a bi-weekly event to allow people to talk about a variety of topics, in a safe and constructive manner.

“Some of the goals that I had in mind [were] that it would be a place for students to be challenged on their stance on big issues as well as an opportunity to hear a point of view that they may not have heard before,” Adan stated.

Adan and Schmidt are in the midst of planning their next event. Through the use of suggestion boxes, social media and online polls, Adan is getting feedback from those who attended on what important issues they would like to have a discussion on. She is working with several school departments to sponsor upcoming events.

“The most important part of these events will be to provide a space where people can come together and learn from one another,” she said.

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Portland Police shoot, kill man on St. John Street

The death of a 22 year old in Portland sparks grief and outrage

Johnna Ossie
News Editor

Twenty-two-year-old Chance David Baker was shot and killed by Portland Police on St. John Street in Portland on the morning of Saturday, Feb. 18. Reports say Baker purchased a rifle-style pellet gun from a pawn shop, Coastal Trading & Pawn, in Union Station Plaza and shortly after police received calls that a man was screaming and pointing a gun at cars. Baker was killed on the sidewalk outside of the Subway while witnesses looked on. He was transported to Maine Medical Center where he died from a gunshot wound to the forehead.

Baker was shot and killed by fourteen year police veteran, Sgt. Nicholas Goodman. This is not the first time Goodman has used deadly force in his career. In 2008, Goodman shot and killed a 48-year-old man in a traffic stop when he was dragged 300 ft down the road in the man's moving vehicle. The man died later at Maine Medical Center from gunshot wounds. The incident was ruled a justifiable homicide.

Baker's friends, as well as staff from Portland's Preble Street Teen Center where Baker spent time, expressed shock and grief at his death. Baker struggled on and off with homelessness, and reports say that his family, who live outside of Maine, had not heard from him in several years. Many could not believe that the young man they knew was the same young man witnesses say was shouting and waving what may have appeared to be a rifle, but which later turned out to be a pellet gun.



Johnna Ossie / News Editor

Community members gathered on Friday to mourn the death of Chance Baker.

Local activists have demanded that the Portland Police Department (PPD) start wearing body cameras immediately after the incident. Before the shooting, the PPD had planned to start outfitting officers with body cameras in 2019.

"Witness reports are not completely consistent, and it's far too soon to engage in speculation. But one thing is clear: If the incident had been recorded by police body cameras, we wouldn't be so dependent on inconsistent eyewitness accounts," reads a petition by local group Progressive Portland. "In the wake of this tragedy, the city should move that timeline up and include the purchase of body cameras in this year's budget."

Later in the week, a group of roughly twelve protesters disrupted a ceremony honoring Portland Police Chief Michael Sauschuck. The protesters stood with their arms raised over their heads and can be seen on video speaking to Sauschuck. In a video released by WMTW, a protestor can be heard asking, "How come you are silent when black people are killed?" Portland Mayor Ethan Strimling called the meeting to recess and the protestors exited to the steps of City Hall. As the protestors left the building, one person can be heard saying "Good job, murderer," as she walked past Sauschuck. They could be seen outside chanting "Black Lives Matter," as Sauschuck exited the building.

At a conference the next day, Sauschuck said he was "disgusted" by the "politicizing" of the fatal shooting and by the calls that PPD officers immediately begin to wear body cameras.

On Friday, a quiet and saddened crowd gathered in Monument Square in remembrance of Baker. They held candles and flowers as friends and former coworkers remembered Baker as a funny, kind and generous young man and mourned his loss.

Amanda Nobbe, a 26-year-old Portland resident and Baker's former boss at Nickelodeon Cinemas, spoke about the two years she worked with Baker, noting how hard he worked to improve his life and how much passion he had.

"I watched him secure housing, get a second job, and work forty hours or more every single week," she said toward the end of the vigil ceremony. "Life didn't give Chance a lot of opportunities, so he made his own. He had so much joy and made everyone around him smile...Everybody deserves a chance, everyone deserves opportunities. If someone is asking you for a hand up and you can give it, then reach out your hand."

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Photo courtesy of Betty Nelson

Chance David Baker, 22, was shot and killed by a Portland Police officer last weekend. His death has sparked demands for PPD to begin immediately wearing body cameras.

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In Brief...



Local

Maine budget panel OKs \$29M package funding addiction treatment, higher ed

BANGOR DAILY NEWS - The Maine Legislature's budget committee unanimously approved a \$29 million emergency spending package Friday that funds addiction treatment and higher education and bails out a state-run equipment refurbishing outfit in Aroostook County.

That recommendation puts the uncontroversial supplemental budget package for this year — a compromise between Gov. Paul LePage and legislative leaders in both parties — on track to sail through the full Legislature in votes that could happen as early as next week.

The highest-profile item is a modest step in tackling Maine's opiate crisis, leveraging \$4.8 million in state and federal money to provide medication-assisted treatment to 400 Mainers this year. More than one person per day died of drug overdoses in Maine last year, an all-time record.

The proposal was developed by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services after a push from Senate Democrats, including Minority Leader Troy Jackson of Allagash. It would be built on an integrated, outpatient model run by existing providers that gives medication, counseling and other services to patients.

"Let's see if this model works," said Sen. James Hamper, R-Oxford, the co-chairman of the Legislature's Appropriations and Financial Services Committee. "That's a good way to start."

The budget also would give \$7.1 million to the University of Maine System, including \$5 million to maintain a tuition freeze. The Maine Military Authority would get \$7 million to help the Limestone-based outfit recover from an underbid contract to refurbish Massachusetts transit buses.

Another \$4.9 million would go toward rehabilitating fish hatcheries and the package also includes a \$35 million transfer into the state's surplus account.

The committee's agreement precedes what will be a more contentious issue: how the Legislature will find consensus around LePage's two-year budget proposal, in which the Republican governor has proposed drastic changes to Maine's tax and welfare structures.

"I'm very pleased with the work the committee did, and the optimist in me thinks it bodes well for our future ability to work together on these very difficult issues," Rep. Drew Gattine, D-Westbrook, the other committee co-chairman, said.

National

Trump Intensifies His Attacks on Journalists and Condemns F.B.I. 'Leakers'

NEW YORK TIMES — President Trump turned the power of the White House against the news media on Friday, escalating his attacks on journalists as "the enemy of the people" and berating members of his own F.B.I. as "leakers" who he said were putting the nation at risk.

In a speech to the Conservative Political Action Conference, Mr. Trump criticized as "fake news" organizations that publish anonymously sourced reports that reflect poorly on him. And in a series of Twitter posts, he assailed the F.B.I. as a dangerously porous agency, condemning unauthorized revelations of classified information from within its ranks and calling for an immediate hunt for leakers.

Hours after the speech, as if to demonstrate Mr. Trump's determination to punish reporters whose coverage he dislikes, Sean Spicer, the White House press secretary, barred journalists from The New York Times and several other news organizations from attending his daily briefing, a highly unusual breach of relations between the White House and its press corps.

Mr. Trump's barrage against the news media continued well into Friday night. "FAKE NEWS media knowingly doesn't tell the truth," he wrote on Twitter shortly after 10 p.m., singling out The Times and CNN. "A great danger to our country."

The moves underscored the degree to which Mr. Trump and members of his inner circle are eager to use the prerogatives of the presidency to undercut those who scrutinize him, dismissing negative stories as lies and confining press access at the White House to a few chosen news organizations considered friendly. The Trump White House has also vowed new efforts to punish leakers.

Mr. Trump's attacks on the press came as the White House pushed back on a report by CNN on Thursday night that a White House official had asked the F.B.I. to rebut a New York Times article last week detailing contacts between Mr. Trump's associates and Russian intelligence officials. The report asserted that a senior White House official had called top leaders at the F.B.I. to request that they contact reporters to dispute the Times's account.

International

Olathe shooting: India shocked after national killed in US

BBC WORLD NEWS-

Srinivas Kuchibhotla died shortly after Wednesday's attack at a bar in Olathe, Kansas. His friend Alok Madasani, also from India, and an American were hurt.

Adam Purinton has been charged with premeditated first-degree murder.

The killing dominated news bulletins in India and social media, where some blamed Donald Trump's presidency.

Mr Kuchibhotla's wife, Sunayana Dumala, described her husband as a "loveable soul"

Speaking at a news conference, she described the US as "the country that he loved so much" and called the shooting a "hate crime".

White House spokesman Sean Spicer said that any loss of life was tragic but that it would be absurd to link events to Mr Trump's rhetoric.

The FBI is now investigating possible motives for the crime at Austins Bar and Grill, with race among them. Witnesses said that just before opening fire the gunman shouted: "Get out of my country."

A barman also told local media that the attacker used racial slurs before the shooting on Wednesday night.

Mr Kuchibhotla and Mr Madasani, both aged 32, were engineers at US technology company Garmin. The two studied initially in India and later took postgraduate degrees in the US.

Mr Madasani has now been released from hospital.

The other injured man, Ian Grillot, 24, said he was shot while intervening to try and stop the violence.

Speaking from his hospital bed, he brushed aside suggestions that he was a hero.

"I was just doing what anyone should have done for another human being."

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Police Beat

*Selections from the
USM Department of
Public Safety police log
Dec. 2 to Dec. 11*

12/02/2016

We have to stop meeting like this

Suspicious person, Glickman Library. Staff reports that a person known to Police is back at the library. Subject arrested on an outstanding warrant.

12/04/2016

Toga! Toga! Toga!

Disturbance, Upper Class Hall. Officer and RA out dispersing a party.

Anyone for a midnight snack?

Vandalism, Anderson Hall. RD called advising of Criminal Mischief, vandalism to a vending machine, occurred overnight. Officer investigating.

12/05/2016

Please help us

Assist other agency, Gorham P.D. Motor vehicle crash off campus.

Really, we need help

Assist other agency, Gorham P.D. Officer looking for subject for Gorham Police Department.

12/09/2016

It's lit in the lib

Suspicious incident, Glickman Library. Possible drug activity reported. Report made.

12/11/2016

Tequila and treadmills don't mix

Suspicious Person, Costello Complex. Report of an intoxicated person in Costello Complex. Officer checked area, gone on arrival.

We've all been there...

Wellbeing check, Parking Garage. Officer checking on a subject in the garage.

Have any insider news tips?
editor@usmfreepress.org

Arts & Culture

Top Five places to sit and do nothing on campus / 8
The Vagina Monologues Review / 9

Dedicated artists in action

Gorham exhibit encourages exploration of art beyond the classroom setting

Jordan Castaldo
Free Press Staff

At USM's Gorham campus art museum, there is a brand new exhibit amongst the many brilliant pieces of art. This exhibit, titled "Portals" is a compilation of creative works by art educators from the state of Maine to encourage studio practice and to explore the process that takes place beyond their classrooms. The mission was for the art educators to create their own interpretations

did therefore showing off the uniqueness of this exposition.

"It is our opportunity to work with a very important community group in Maine," Eyler said. "It shows how teachers are also dedicated artists and it shows the strengths and depths of the art of artists in Maine."

Eyler also discussed the importance of being able to dual focus on both the artist's studio times and teaching. This shows students and staff that they have the ability to learn while still pursuing what they love, as these

"It is our opportunity to work with a very important community in Maine... It shows how teachers are also dedicated artists and it shows the strengths and depths of the art of artists in Maine."

- Carolyn Eyler
Director of Exhibitions and Programs at USM

of the concept of a portal. A portal can be defined as an entrance, especially a large, detailed one.

The artists in this show teach at public and private schools, along with countless universities throughout the state. Additionally, the artists are all members of the Maine Art Education Association, which helps students by encouraging practices of learner-centered visual arts within classrooms and allows for the exchange of ideas and support among educators to ensure quality teaching programs. Asked to participate were just average art educators around the state. Some of which included high school art teachers, such as Joe McLaughlin from Windham High School. Ten alumni and one student teacher were also featured in the exhibit.

Carolyn Eyler, Director of Exhibitions and Programs here at USM, paired up with Alison Price, exhibition curator, to co-organize this special exhibition. Eyler mentions that this was her way of hosting a more in-depth show, considering the exhibition showed all forms of media that every particular artist

great artists did.

There was also an art workshop given to the art teachers taking place in this exposition in order to help professional development. The workshop was done through paper and rubber mold making and students in the art major field were allowed to help the professors with this workshop. In addition to that, USM's introduced the work at an opening ceremony back in January.

If you are interested in furthering your development of art, USM offers a strong program through a BSA major, where you are required more studio time to work on projects, with a community arts track. If you are intrigued by the exhibit, it is definitely worth checking out and will be available to do so until March 2. The art gallery in Gorham at 5 University Way, Gorham, is open Wednesday through Sunday. Wednesday and Thursday, it is open from 12:00 through 6:00 and Friday through Sunday, it is open 12:00 to 4:00. Admission is always free.

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Matthew Craig / Arts & Culture Editor

An eclectic mix of sculptures, paintings, drawings and combinations of those things fill the new exhibit. From mars-like landscapes to baboon sculptures, Portals has it all.

TOP 5

Places to sit and do nothing on the Portland Campus

Dionne Smith
Free Press Staff

All students need some relaxation time to themselves, whether it be to sleep, study or to simply hide out and be to themselves. To some, it may seem like there are only a few spots on campus in which one can relax, and some of them may not be ideal spots.

A secret spot on campus is in Masterson Hall, Room 113. When not used by a class, the big lecture hall in Masterson is often left open. Most of the day, it will be completely empty, perfect for anyone who wants to momentarily disconnect from the world and have a little time to themselves. It could even serve as a hiding space for a few friends to sit around and chat without the background noise and large crowds of people often present in Luther Bonney.

In the Abromson Center, there is an area in the left corner from the front entrance that is full of light and a few comfortable couches. It is convenient,

comfortable and mostly quiet, allowing students to go and relax, to do homework or to even take a quick nap before class. Another bonus is Abromson's connection to the parking garage, allowing quick access.

The second floor of Abromson has the same advantages as the lobby in terms of great seating, lighting and accessibility. The mezzanine area is connected to the skybridge, allowing for easy access to the other buildings on campus. The area also has its own set of couches. The large windows allow for bright lighting and make it an ideal spot for studying.

Another perfect spot for studying is the reading room on the seventh floor of Glickman Library. This room is a quiet zone, allowing students to relax and work hard in a quiet, friendly environment. The long tables offer plenty of space for computers, books, notes and anything else. There are also single-person cushioned chairs facing toward Forest Avenue for people who want to relax and enjoy the view. Due to its

quiet nature, it's also an area where someone could easily fall asleep.

While not as quiet as some of the other locations mentioned, the amphitheater in Woodbury, which is next to the bookstore, is a great place to relax on a soft couch. The advantage of being very close to the food court is that students can grab a snack and then go relax. There are round tables, couches, a few computers and benches in the amphitheater, so students can easily find a spot to sit. It's not uncommon for students to go and nap there, or to use their computer in peace.

The above are just a few of the many spots on campus for people to go and relax. Students need to be able to have some time to themselves so they don't accumulate stress, or burn themselves out during a long day of classes. These areas are perfect for anyone who wants to either fall asleep, study hard or do anything in between.

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Matthew Craig / Arts & Culture Editor

A photo of the quiet room on the seventh floor of Glickman library. It is a fine place to max, relax, or even study some facts.

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WHAT CAUGHT THE EYES AND EARS OF OUR STAFF THIS WEEK

The Vagina Monologues: Empowering with knowledge

Matthew Craig
Arts & Culture Editor

On Friday, February 17th, USM's Student Performing Artists (SPA) group performed Eve Ensler's The Vagina Monologues. The play, which, in 1997, won an Obie award for playwriting, is used each year in an effort to the V-DAY and One Billion Rising movements. Director Brittany Burke organized a raffle and sale of some various items, some donated and some made by her. All of the proceeds from admission and raffle tickets, as well as items sold, were donated to SARSSM (Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine). The total amount donated came to over \$400.

Eve Ensler is principally a writer of political theatre, and The Vagina Monologues is her most popular work to date. Early in life, Ensler had some difficult experiences that influenced much of what she has done in her writing career.

In addition to her playwriting, she has written a memoir, worked on films, and served as a feminist media consultant.

Burke feels very strongly about the material and the movement that TVM represents each February, and thus took on the role of directing despite the fact that she "had never done any marketing, fundraising or directing before."

The project was completed in a very short amount of time, and "because of all the snow days [they] had, [they] were only able to run through the show one time before performing it." Burke certainly had her hands full for her first time directing, with a cast of 13 to manage. Ultimately, like so many things born under pressure, those involved felt passionate about their product and turnout. Burke hopes that "by performing the Vagina Monologues, we were able to create awareness and even change."

The Vagina Monologues has, since its release, become a bastion of women's

rights and empowerment, as well as a very important force for spreading sexual assault awareness. VDAY, a global activist and awareness group for violence against women, sponsors Ensler's play each year. In the month of February, it is free to put on a production of the work.

Founded in 1973, the Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine was originally called the Rape Crisis Center and was organized by a small group of women. By 1978, the center had been incorporated and occupied a small office.

Only a year later, the organization provided a 24 hour hotline for victims of rape and sexual assault. Today, SARSSM still provides people with these invaluable services, and is one of nine organizations that comprise the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault.

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A&C Listings

Monday, February 27

Return to Great Mother's Infinity (exhibit)
Space Gallery
538 Congress St.

Open during normal gallery hours

Tuesday, February 28

Think and Drink (community event)
Space Gallery
538 Congress St.

Doors: 6:00 Starts: 6:30

Wednesday, March 1

Mike Doughty
Port City Music Hall
504 Congress St.
Doors: 7:00 Starts: 8:00

Thursday, March 2

Yonatan Gat
Space Gallery
538 Congress St.
Doors: 8:30 Starts: 9:00

Friday, March 3

GIRLS ROCK!
Port City Music Hall
504 Congress St.
Doors: 5:00 Starts: 5:30

Saturday, March 4

Max Creek
Port City Music Hall
504 Congress St.
Doors: 7:00 Starts: 8:00

Sunday, March 5

The Gawler Family Band
One Longfellow Square
Doors: 6:00 Starts: 7:00

Want to submit an event?
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Perspectives

Our Opinion: Trump on the Media / 11
 Advising Advice: Internships 101 / 12
 Passages from the Quran / 12

Science Talks

Take a look at the nearest garden in your vicinity

Do you know which plants have negative effects on your ecosystem? Most people don't

Haley Depner
 Contributor

Invasive species can cause a variety of problems for an ecosystem, ranging from the introduction and/or spread of parasites and disease to outcompeting native species for their resources. Any of these scenarios have the potential to be devastating for an ecosystem and everyone, including the humans, that depend on it.

When a species is introduced to an ecosystem in which there is no existing population of that species, a variety of outcomes are possible: the introduced species could die off relatively uneventfully. It could survive to establish a population and become integrated into the ecosystem and become depended upon by local species, as apple trees have in North America. It could also survive to establish a population that can't be integrated into the ecosystem. In this case the introduced species is taking or altering resources depended upon by other species without anything to counterbalance its reproduction and spread, such as predators.

These resources may include food, water, space, light and adequate quality soil (in the case of flora), and (in the case of fauna) a place to raise their young. If a resource is taken over by a new species and/or altered by that species so that native species that rely upon it can no longer make use of the resource, then the flow of energy in the ecosystem can be significantly altered and can lead to entire populations dying off. The introduced species can also cause die offs of native species via the introduction of parasites and diseases of which native species have no immunity to or by facilitating the growth and spread of already present parasites and diseases.

Which of these outcomes ends up being the result relies on a variety of factors including the suitability of the habitat for the species introduced as well as when and where it is introduced and the overall health of the specimens when they reach the new ecosystem. Loss of biodiversity is a slippery slope that, once started down, is a lot harder to backpedal. Losing one species can quickly lead to the loss of others that rely on it, which in turn affects still more species throughout the food web.

It is not only flora and fauna that are affected; changes in the ecosystem can affect an environment right down to its landforms and its soil quality; a different composition of communities leads to different compositions of decomposing matter, different ways that the soil is agitated (or not), and how the land is impacted by weather (e.g. how much rain the soil it is directly exposed to, susceptibility to erosion, how flood prone the area is, or how much sun exposure is allowed, etc.).

To answer the question I posed in the opening sentence of the article, I reached out to Nancy Olmstead, an invasive plant biologist from the Maine Natural Areas Program.

"We heard that you work with the Maine Natural Areas Program. What is this program and how are you involved?"

"The Maine Natural Areas Program is a program within the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. The mission of the Natural Areas Program is to protect Biodiversity in Maine. We do that through a variety of programs. We do botanical inventories, rare plant survey, provide information for review of development projects and forestry projects. We also have this invasive plant initiative. My position as invasive plant biologist was created in 2014 to be a full time resource for terrestrial and wetland invasive plants. You may know that our sister department, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, already has had, for many years, a robust program for aquatic invasive plants, but we haven't had anyone in state government working exclusively on terrestrial and wetland invasive plants, so that's my role."

"At what point is a plant species considered invasive?"

"There are several sort of definitions of what is considered an invasive plant. We generally agree that an invasive species is one that is not native to the habitat, the area where it is exhibiting invasive tendencies, and it causes economic or environmental harm, or harm to human health or with the potential to cause economic or environmental harm,



Calin Darabus / Flickr User Images

or harm to human health. So, that's kind of a working definition. Different states and Canadian provinces have different definitions for the sake of regulation, but when I talk about it from a scientific perspective as to what makes a plant invasive, it has to be not native to that area, it has to cause some kind of harm to the natural environment."

"What invasive species should landscapers and gardeners in Maine be particularly aware of and why?"

"Boy, that could be a long answer. There are many species that have traditionally been used in landscaping and in gardening which are now known to be invasive. I'll start by listing several shrubs."

- Winged Dewnamis, or Burning Bush (*Euonymus alatus*). That's a shrub that's been widely used in landscaping and it definitely invades forests, as well as forest edges and open habitats.

- Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*). Which is a thorny shrub that was promoted as a sort of "living fence" that is also a very invasive plant in forests and forest edges and also in open areas.

- Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*). In some circles it is being promoted as sort of

a permaculture plant for human consumption. The fruits can be consumed, and that is a plant which is invasive, mostly in sunnier habitats, open habitats, forest edges, and those kind of habitats.

- Rugosa Rose (*Rosa rugosa*), which is unfortunately invasive in coastal habitats. Which is a plant which has widely been used in landscaping, both in the coastal area and also inland. It's of much less concern inland, because of the primary way that it spreads, by the rose hips getting taken by the tide and spread along the coast in that fashion.

- Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*) is another plant which has become invasive. It is a tree, as opposed to a shrub, but it's very invasive. It can invade intact forests and is a very prolific reproducer.

- I hope that most gardeners are aware, and wouldn't be planting Asiatic bittersweet vines (*Celastrus orbiculatus*). That's a woody vine that will climb trees in forests, forest edges. But people do like to make wreaths out of their vines in the fall, because they have very distinctive orange and yellow fruits. So, that's definitely one that landscapers and gardeners should be aware of.

- [Invasive bittersweet species can easily be confused with the locally native species,

See **INVASIVE** on page 11

From **INVASIVE** on page 10

American bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*). According to the Maine Natural Areas Program, “[the two can be distinguished by examining the locations of the clusters of flowers or fruits on the stems. American bittersweet flowers and fruits are always found in clusters at the ends of stems, while Asiatic bittersweet flowers are found in the joints where the leaves grow out of the stems.”

- A couple of additional showy herbaceous plants that I think are still sometimes planted. There is a yellow iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) that has a very showy, approximately 2” flower, and unfortunately that one can escape from the garden and can invade wetlands, it can invade some salt marshes as well as freshwater marshes. So that’s a very dangerous plant, because our wetlands are so important for many ecosystem processes.

- Another plant I know is in some parts of Maine and is spreading is ornamental jewelweed, which is sometimes called Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*). It’s a tall, flowering plant, has a large pink flower. It’s in the jewelweed group. When you touch the mature seed pods, seeds are expelled violently. It spreads along waterways. I was just working on a site on Friday to remove some of this ornamental jewelweed along the Union river. And unfortunately, it can be really bad, forming dense monoculture along our waterways.

- The jewelweed with the orange-yellow flower is our native jewelweed, (*Impatiens capensis*). Ornamental jewelweed is a different species, (*Impatiens glandulifera*), has a much larger flower, is more showy, it’s a taller plant overall.

Those are just a subset of species, I could go on, but those are the ones I’m most concerned about.”

“Has there been any economic repercussions as a result of these species invading Maine?”

“Well, sure, there definitely are economic consequences for individual land owners as well as for the state of Maine as a landowner. For example, the state has spent significant staff time and money treating invasive plants on public lands, including state parks, as well as our forested timberland. And for individual landowners, getting rid of invasive plant infestations can be a long term project, so definitely in terms of taking people’s time, which for many of us time is one of our most important resources, so there is a financial cost to that, as well as the direct cost of any tools or herbicide you might need to get rid of the plants.

More broadly speaking, there are studies that show the impacts of invasive species in general, not just invasive plants but invasive species, are in the billions of dollars world wide. The federal government, including in Maine, like at Acadia National Park and at our US Fish and Wildlife refuges, they spend lots of money every year to get rid of invasive plant because they are trying to manage those habitats for wildlife or for natural communities, and invasive plants negatively impact wildlife habitats, they negatively impact native biodiversity, so there definitely are financial consequences that we as taxpayers are helping to fund, but it’s a cost to our economy.

To be clear, foresters are seeing a definite impact. There are foresters in Southern Maine who now spend lot of time treating invasive plants before they can recommend to a landowner to go ahead and do a timber harvest.”

“Do you have any advice you think might be useful to gardeners and landscapers in Maine?”

“I really strongly suggest that they consider native plants when they are planning their gardens and landscapes. There are a variety of resources available suggesting native plants for the lawn and garden landscapes. If you look up the cooperative extension’s website, there are some great resources there, including a brochure called “Gardening to Conserve Maine’s Native Landscapes: plants to use and plants to avoid” [view it at <https://extension.umaine.edu/publications/2500e/>]

That is available online from the University of Maine cooperative extension. Many of our local garden centers are knowledgeable about native plants and can provide advice.

So I would just encourage folks to consider using native plants because they are going to provide habitat for native pollinating insects and other beneficial insects, like parasitoids that attack pests. Native plants are also probably more resilient to some changes in the system, although, you know, invasive plants can be pretty resilient too. We are hoping to maintain some of the native biodiversity of our landscape, so planting native plants is a good step in that direction.”

“What does the future look like for ecosystems in Maine inhabited by these species?”

“That’s a good question. Because of the low overall impact of humans on the land, I’m hopeful there are places we can protect from invasive plants. There’s certainly many places in Southern Maine and along the coast where many invasive plants are already present, but I’m hopeful that we can protect some of the more inland and Northern areas of the state from serious damage by invasive plants. But it’s going to take a concerted effort on the part of folks who live and work in those regions to keep an eye out and monitor the spread, and go ahead and nip any new infestations in the bud before they spread and become well established. So that’s kind of a broad answer.

More generally, I’m concerned about our native system’s ability to cope with things like changing climate, but what I understand is that systems that are already perturbed and disturbed by invasive plants are likely to be less resilient to change in the climate. So reducing stress, reducing the burdens on our natural systems due to invasive plants is a good step towards protecting those environments and helping them be more resilient to climate change.”

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Editorial

Trump administration continues attacks on media organizations

While reporters do their duty, labels of fake news undermine their work

Editorial Staff
 The Free Press

After a few weeks of debate at USM surrounding free speech, and what that means in today’s political climate, a new concern arises: the freedom of the press. President Trump and his administration have been discrediting news sources since before the inauguration on Jan. 20, and have been openly calling trusted outlets such as the New York Times, NBC and CNN “fake news.”

On Friday, just hours after Trump called the media “the enemy of the people,” reporters from CNN, The New York Times, Politico and the Los Angeles Times were blocked from a White House press briefing, while reporters from Breitbart, Fox News and the Washington Post were allowed inside. President Trump has been publicly at odds with CNN and the New York Times for some time. An American Civil Liberties director called the incident on Friday “yet another disturbing example of the Trump administration’s contempt for the vital role a free press plays in our democracy.”

According to the New York Times, even Fox News chief White House correspondent John Roberts said the network will join others in protesting the exclusion of certain media outlets, citing a time that CNN spoke on behalf of Fox News when the Obama administration attempted to block Fox News from a round of TV interviews eight years ago.

Established right-wing politician John McCain has publicly criticized Trump for calling the media “the enemy,” saying, “If you want to preserve democracy as we know it, you have to have a free and, many times, adversarial press... without it, I am afraid that we would lose so much of our individual liberties over time. That’s how dictators get started.”

In fact, the United States Holocaust Museum reports that gaining control over the free press was one of the first steps that the Third Reich took on its rise to power.

An alarming trend is beginning to show, as the Trump administration continues to attempt to silence those who disagree with or portray the administration in a negative light. What does it mean for Trump to block media access to press briefings because he disagrees with the way they

report? What does it mean for Trump, who has been caught in numerous lies since the start of his presidency less than six weeks ago, to be calling news sources fake news?

Many reporters risk and sometimes lose their lives to report news. Reporters often face extreme obstacles in order to report the truth. Freedom of the press is guaranteed under the First Amendment, right there with freedom of speech. While some conservatives have been critical of Trumps actions, others remain silent. Conservatives cannot champion and demand freedom of speech while simultaneously silencing the press. Our champion of free speech, Rep. Larry Lockman, who openly criticized USM student protesters for attempting to bar him from campus, has been silent so far on this issue. Where do the conservatives who just weeks ago at USM were demanding their right to free speech stand? Their silence raises the questions: Who gets to speak? Who is silenced? Who is heard? Who decides?

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Advising Advice

Internships: How they can help you

Travis Blair
Coordinator of Internships

This personal account, by Travis Blair, UNH '09 graduate, shares his personal story to explain what internships can do for you:

When I graduated from college in 2009, I had no idea what I wanted to do for a career. My major, Tourism Planning and Development, didn't neatly correlate to a specific career path like some of my friends' majors such as Marketing and Computer Science. It didn't help that the recession was in full force and many companies were in a hiring freeze. I survived, and eventually found my current job that I love as USM's Coordinator of Internships. I've learned a number of truths along the way about the world of work, and one of the most important is this: the most effective way to transition from the insulated academic bubble into the dynamic world of real work is through experiential learning such as an internship.

An internship is meant to integrate the knowledge and theory that you have learned in the classroom with practical applications and skills development in a professional setting. For this reason it is best to complete an internship in the second half of your time in school, so that you have a foundation of academic knowledge to draw from. For example, USM has chemistry and biology students that complete their introductory courses and labs in their first two years, giving them the skills necessary to assist in cutting edge research at IDEXX Laboratories and Maine Medical Center Research Institute during their junior and senior years.

There are many benefits to completing an internship, including that it is a perfect way to try out a company or line of work to see if

it's a good fit for you. It's also a great way to build your network in your field. Most internships are now paid, at rates around \$10 - \$14 an hour or even more. Finally, studies have shown that an internship leads to a full time job offer 65 percent of the time.

When I was an undergraduate student, I assumed that I wasn't the kind of person who could do an internship – maybe I thought I wasn't qualified or competent enough. What I failed to realize is that I was just as qualified as all the students who were actually out there doing internships. The only difference is that they understood that an internship is meant to be a learning experience, and all that employers are looking for are students passionate to learn and contribute.

So if you're like me and have ever thought "I'm not good/smart/qualified enough to do an internship," remember this: the 1,000+ USM students who interned during the 2015-2016 academic year were also undergraduate students who only had a partial grasp of their field, and most had little work experience.

If you are interested in an internship for credit, ask within your department about the options available to you. If you are looking to find a paid internship site, you can search the USMCareerConnections database available through your myUSM Portal. If you ever have any questions at all related to internships, service, or careers, reach out to our office, Community Engagement and Career Development. You can visit us on the web at www.usm.maine.edu/cecd, in Luther Bonney 140, or by phone at 207-228-8091.

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Letter to the Editor

What neutrality means in 2017

Madison Raymond
Contributor

I was privileged and honored to have acted as an ally to black and brown student leaders and their supporting community members at the February 16th protest against Representative Larry Lockman. More than two hundred people showed up and spoke out against the wanton peddling of xenophobic white nationalism on our University campus. An important thing to note is that the student organization that invited Lockman, the Young Americans for Freedom, has been labelled a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center due to its national ties to Neo-Nazi organizations through prominent past members such as Kyle Bristow and Preston Wiginton. The shared ideals of diversity and inclusion that the protesters championed Thursday night in the face of naked white supremacy filled me with a hopeful optimism for the future of our university.

Unfortunately, that idealism must be tempered by the realization that some groups and individuals are not our allies, and actively seek to delegitimize our essential personhood. The administration's "neutral" position to the hateful and dangerous rhetoric Representative Lockman utilizes lays bare the spineless and cowardly nature of their political compromises. To quote the famous anti-Apartheid activist Desmond Tutu: "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you



are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality."

Perhaps most disheartening was President Glenn Cummings' speech to the Student Senate, advising the Student Government Association to back the administration's position of established neutrality, silence, and inaction. If we consider the fact that the number of lecture attendees was only half that of the protesters, we realize the Student Government Association and the University administration are not fairly or proportionately representing our needs and desires as a community. If these institutions and individuals wish to be trusted as our representatives, than they absolutely must stand firm against xenophobic white nationalism on campus, and join us on the front lines the next time a bigot comes to town.

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Passages from Quran

Hajj, the Pilgrimage to Mecca

For Muslims, it is a time to reflect on the past

Nairus Abdullahi
Contributor

Every year millions of Muslims make their journey to Mecca. It is a time of worship, reflection and removal of past sins. This is one of the five pillars of Islam. It requires that one makes a pilgrimage once in their lifetime given that they are physically and financially capable. It occurs annually; this year it will be August 30 - September 4. It runs by lunar calendar therefore the dates change every year.

For Muslims, it is a time to reflect on the past and look forward to the future. Islam is unique in that there is a purpose

in everything we do. Going to the Hajj is particularly interesting in that we believe, according to hadiths, that all our sins will be washed away. It's comparable to rebirth in that you have a new clean slate. Isn't that neat?

Thank you to all who read. If any of these articles have you made question, feel intrigued or confused, take it upon yourself to research and speak to individuals who practice. We can only overcome ignorance when we seek answers. The mini series is coming to a close as we only have two more pillars to learn about.

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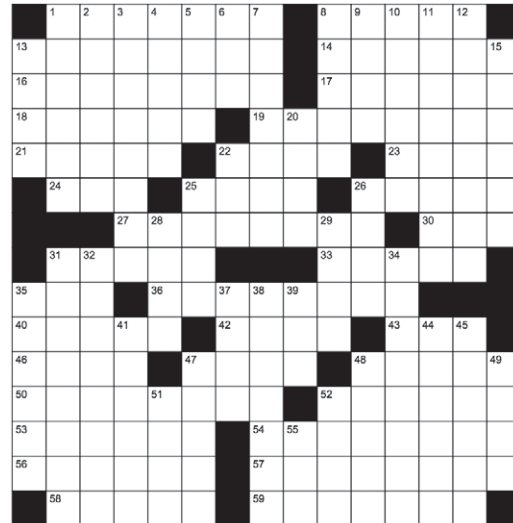
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Crossword

Across

1. Perturb
8. Attend sans invitation
13. Kind of indicator
14. Wayside waste
16. "Rock the Casbah" band
17. Owner of an infamous cow
18. Like the nobility
19. Imitated
21. Missed, in baseball
22. Clothed in
23. Silence
24. Bib. book
25. Actor and songwriter Novello
26. Former air carrier name
27. Casey Jones, e.g.
30. Some toy cars, for short
31. Paula ____ (singer)
33. Critical times
35. My and thy
36. Ready to take over the ship, perhaps
40. Cookie morsel
42. Grad
43. Langley-based org.
46. Home of "The Wiz"
47. "Fire Woman" band
48. Charters
50. Use to excess
52. Bait fish
53. Word with mouth or candy
54. He plays McSteamy on "Grey's Anatomy"
56. Writing a bad check
57. Swiped
58. Budget ____-Car
59. "Beware ____ of March"



Down

1. In pain
2. German poet
3. Not level
4. Apartment vacancy sign
5. "Diary of ____ Black Woman"
6. Carol contraction
7. Tier
8. Cumulus
9. Junior brook
10. Varsity groups
11. Museum collection
12. Inquisition targets
13. Ides of March utterance
15. Winona, et al.
20. Stallion's mate
22. 106 to Cato
25. Arctic abode: Var.
26. Muslim language
28. Asleep, as a foot
29. Biblical land
31. Parting words, in Paris
32. Brown-haired woman
34. Went up
35. Hour designation
37. Bull (prefix)
38. Kind of secret
39. Fruitcake
41. Comic Short
44. Present at birth
45. Makes up (for)
47. Latin line dance
48. Lake of "Hairspray"
49. Scand. nation
51. "____ Get Fooled Again" (Who tune)
52. Computer adjuncts
55. "Ruh ____!" (Scooby-Doo utterance)

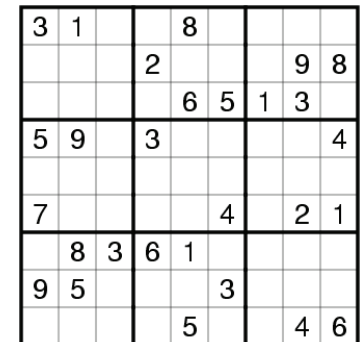
The solution to last issue's crossword



Sudoku

Level of difficulty: Very Hard

The object of a sudoku is to fill in the remaining squares so that every row, every column, and every 3 x 3 box contains each of the numbers from 1 to 9 exactly once.



Word Search

Theme: Book characters

Search for the list of words in the grid of letters. Grab a pen and circle each word as you find them.



Harry Potter
Tyrion
John Watson
Nurse Ratched
Locke Lamora
Kvothe
Mark Watney
Ophelia
Bilbo Baggins
Ender
Katniss
Frankenstein
Daisy Buchanan
Juliet

Cryptogram

Every letter in a cryptogram stands for another letter. Use the hint to crack the code.

UNDGWBNCRN JGCCENBB VK RNE OWN-
BC UNH LB BV XLEJ, LC DENG CNB SVCB VX
RGEH XNNSLKOB.

And here is your hint: O = G



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USM Community Page

A closer look at the effects of marijuana

Mary Ellen Aldrich, *Comm. Editor*
Cara DeRose, *Chief Copy Editor*

Recreational marijuana is officially legal in Maine for those who are twenty-one and older. Although recreational marijuana's previous illicit status never deterred people from using it, people can now smoke marijuana without the usual obstacles of accessibility and unlawfulness (so long as a person does not possess more than two-and-a-half ounces).

Experts and civilians alike generally agree marijuana is not the gateway drug staunch opponents of its use make it out to be, but research has emerged that heavy use can potentially pose cognitive risks, particularly for those who have mental health conditions, such as schizophrenia, and those whose family histories predispose them to mental health conditions.

Rikki Miller, a research psychologist and lecturer at USM, has studied the effects of marijuana on the brain. From 2007 to 2010, Miller conducted research on the effects of cannabinoids (using analogs of THC created by chemists) on the attention and memory of rats, as well as on their eating habits, at Edinboro University. She spoke to the Free Press about what she has gleaned from her research.

"Much of the pros and cons publicized on this issue often enhance the facts that suit the argument [either side] wants to support," Miller remarked. "Marijuana is neither a deadly, dangerous drug nor a harmless plant."

In regards to its use among those with mental health conditions, studies and anecdotal testimonies point in both directions: that marijuana is helpful and provides relief to those with mental health conditions, and that heavy marijuana use can also lead to the exacerbation of symptoms and to cognitive impairment. Because this debate could continue endlessly,

Miller has recommended ignoring the anecdotal testimonies and, instead, looking at the facts.



"The major documented risk of using marijuana," Miller said, "is its impact on the brain's ability to store long-term memories while under the influence."

According to Miller, while under the influence of marijuana, the brain's ability to form long-term memories is impaired. This impairment is due to marijuana's impact on the hippocampus, which is the region of the brain responsible for long-term memory formation. Heavy marijuana use can impair the formation of long-term memories and negatively impact neurogenesis, or the growth of new neurons. When neurogenesis is inhibited, an individual's ability to learn suffers.

With that in mind, research has shown that heavy marijuana use, particularly during adolescence, can potentially aggravate mental health conditions, with one study involving an Australian cohort showing a connection between marijuana use and an exacerbation of symptoms among those genetically predisposed to develop schizophrenia. Another year-long study, involving 69 schizophrenia patients who occasionally used marijuana and 24 who were heavy marijuana users, showed a correlation between heavy marijuana use and psychotic relapse.

Additionally, a study found that, within certain genetic subgroups, schizophrenia patients who used marijuana frequently had smaller frontotemporal white matter volumes than schizophrenia patients who used marijuana infrequently, suggesting a correlation between heavy

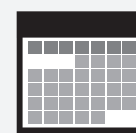
marijuana use and increased cognitive impairment among schizophrenia patients with certain genes.

Yet while this research indicates that it is possible that, in some cases, marijuana can exacerbate symptoms and lead to cognitive impairment, a sufficient number of studies have not been conducted, with large enough sample group sizes, to conclusively support or disprove this.

"There are multiple factors to consider," Miller said, "such as the reverse that individuals [who] have a predisposition to mental illness could be more likely to use marijuana, and that the use of marijuana can interact with medications used to treat psychological disorders or other medical conditions."

Marijuana is also not always the cause of symptoms but can be, rather, a source of alleviation. Those with mental health conditions use marijuana to mitigate symptoms, sometimes in conjunction with their medications. Some of these self-medicating individuals find relief in the relaxing effects marijuana imparts. However, those taking stimulant drugs, such as Adderall or Concerta, for ADHD/ADD would benefit from knowing that marijuana has the opposite effect of their medications, so using marijuana and stimulant drugs is counter intuitive.

Read the full version online:
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Community Events

Monday, February 27

Wisdom to Know
The Recovery Oriented Campus Center
Starts: 4:00 p.m. / Ends: 5:00 p.m.

Tuesday, February 28

Reel in The Closet: Free Screening
USM Portland Campus
Glickman Family Library 7th floor
Starts: 5:30 p.m. / Ends: 8:00 p.m.

Wednesday, March 1

Student Support Network Training
USM Portland Campus
The Recovery Oriented Student Center
Starts: 2:00 p.m. / Ends: 3:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 2

USM 2017 Job Fair
USM Portland campus
Sullivan Gym
Starts: 11:00 a.m. / Ends: 3:00 p.m.

Friday, March 3

Overdose Prevention and Response Training
USM Portland Campus
The Recovery Oriented Campus Center
Starts: 3:30 p.m. / Ends: 5:00 p.m.

Saturday, March 4

Maine Science Bowl
USM Gorham Campus
Bailey Hall Room 106
Starts: 9:00 a.m. / Ends: 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, March 5

The Merry Wives of Windsor
USM Gorham Campus, Russell Hall
Starts: 5:00 p.m.

Want us to include your event?
maryellen@usmfreepress.org



Sports

Wednesday

Men's Lacrosse

@ MIT
4:00 p.m.

Friday

Women's Indoor Track and Field

@ Tufts Last Chance Meet

Friday

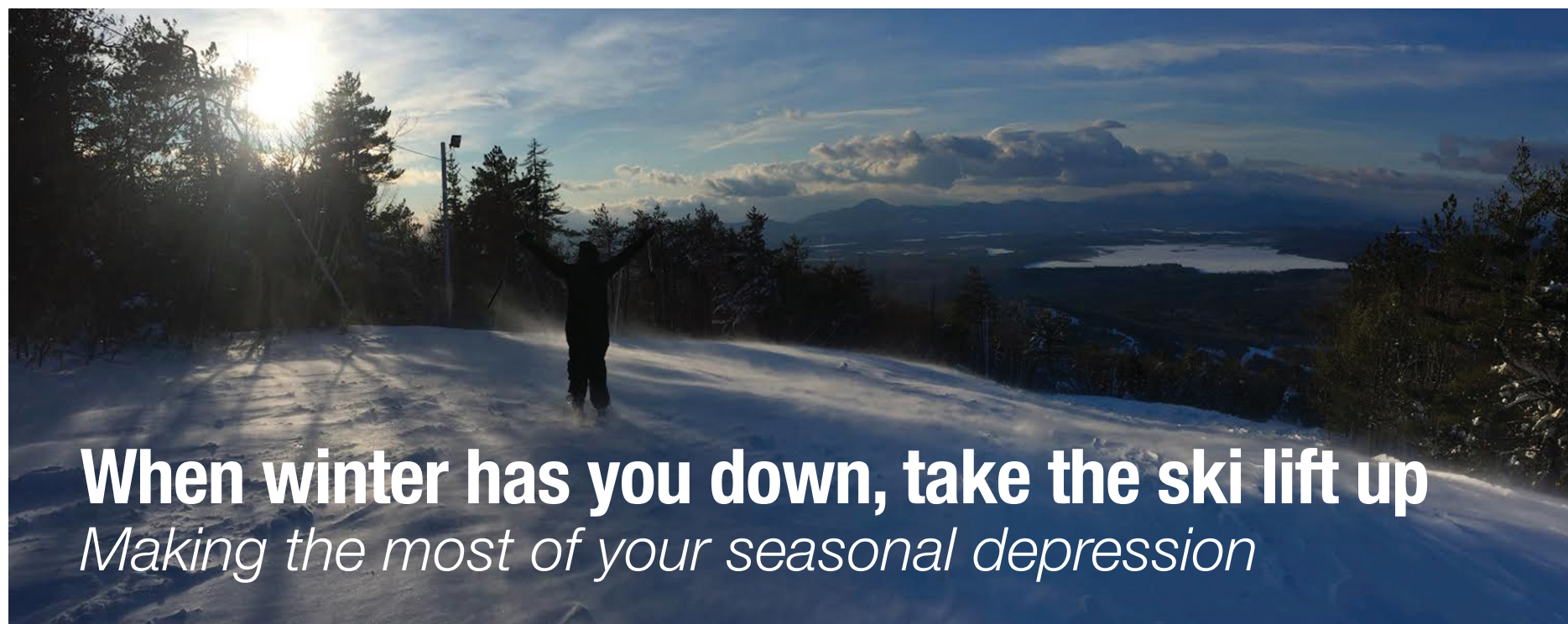
Men's Indoor Track and Field

@ Tufts Last Chance Meet

Saturday

Men's Lacrosse

vs. Maine Maritime
12:00 p.m.



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Erin Brown / Sports Editor

Erin Brown
Sports Editor

Though shoveling the driveway and clearing off my car has gotten pretty old over the past month, the three feet of snow we've gotten in the past couple of weeks has been amazing. At this point of the winter saying this yields some strange looks. Everyone is tired of the snowy, slippery roads, ruining their shoes because of salt and sand and being constantly cold.

But for me, and lots of other Mainers, this winter has been a good one. Last month, on a whim, I went up to Shawnee Peak and picked up a college student season's pass. After the past couple of weeks, I'm so glad I did it. For more reasons than just all the powder and open trails I've been able to ski on.

I practically grew up on skis, I started when I was three years old. Some of my earliest memories were spent at a ski club my family belonged to. I started racing when I turned six or seven and continued with that throughout high school. I have always loved being on the mountain, there's something about standing at the top of the trail pushing off your poles and turning your way down the mountain through the snow that is irreplaceable. Everything else always feels so far away when I'm skiing and for a few hours a day all I'm worried

about is how many runs I can get in before the place closes.

After this semester I'll have six courses left to take at USM then it's onto the job search and I'm currently taking a full course load and working three jobs including a full-time nanny job where I'm helping out with 5 children. Like every USM student, I have a lot on my plate and not a lot of good ways to deal with my stress and daily anxieties. I find myself overeating, drinking and binge watching Shameless to try and cope.

One day in the midst of this slump I've living in, I decided I needed a break and something to do so I started looking up lift ticket prices. I checked out Shawnee Peak and saw I could do \$25 for an afternoon, but I also saw I could spend \$249 and buy a season's pass. All I could think was that I'd lose money if I didn't buy it. So, I did. Then packed my skis up and was taking my pass photo an hour later then was off to the lift about to take my first run. The second I got off that lift and was gliding through moguls on a pretty much empty trail I knew that was what I had needed.

After the first day I was nervous that I had wasted \$249 on a season's pass I'd use twice. But after going up at least three times a week for the past month, I've got to say I've gotten my money's worth. \$249 for eight days of skiing has surely cheaper

than eight sessions with a therapist.

And that is essentially what skiing has been for me. It's my very own type of therapy. It's the time for me to clear my head, be at peace, and make sure I stay sane with everything else that's going around.

That's what I love about this sport and it's the same for many other individuals and their sport of choice. It's always been my way to escape everyday stressors. Being on the mountain makes everything else seem small, even just for a few hours. For that, I'm grateful to have this as my outlet.

I think especially during this time of the year where people seem to be stressed out or down in the dumps it is important to have an outlet to release any negative energy. School picks up at this time of the year, it's tax season, your funds you saved up all summer start to get very low, and of course seasonal affective disorder takes its toll on all of us. It's slump season and the winter blues get the best of all of us all cooped up here in Maine and finding our own version of "therapy" is important to our mental well-being. There is a lot that everyone could find like skiing that is a release from everyday life. You don't need to spend \$249 on a season's pass to take care of your mental health, but if that's your thing; do it.

There is a ton of evidence and studies that suggests that physical activity increases

dopamine levels, the chemical in the brain responsible for mood stabilization. Plus it is good for your physical well-being as well. So, colder temperatures and a little prescription shouldn't be holding you back from taking care of your mental and physical health. The cold can't scare you away from taking care of yourself.

So, go find your release. Try skiing, alpine or cross country. Maybe snowboarding is your thing. Snowshoeing is also a fun, cheap activity to get you outside and get you moving during the winter. Really let yourself have fun by grabbing your old, plastic sled and head to a sledding hill with your friends. Even if you just go for a walk around town on a nice sunny day to get your spirits up.

The options are endless when it comes to getting out and about during the winter months, especially around here. Winter comes around every year so we might as well make the most of it and enjoy it. Plus, soon enough it will be hot and humid and we will all be covered in bug bites, so enjoy not scratching your skin constantly for now. So, forget those winter blues and I will be seeing you all on the mountain for a couple of runs.

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