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# BOOMERS

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# Fill the Plate Breakfast 2024 to feature Maine humorist Gary Crocker

LEWISTON - The belly laughs that Gary Crocker generates warm both the heart and soul of his audiences – the perfect cold weather remedy. The beloved Maine humorist is the keynote speaker for the 2024 Fill the Plate Breakfast to benefit the Meals on Wheels nutrition program at SeniorsPlus.

The 2024 Fill the Plate Breakfast will be held on Friday, March 22, from 7 to 9 a.m. at the Hilton Garden Inn Riverwatch in Auburn. Tickets are \$30 per person (\$35 at the door) and are available at [www.seniorsplus.org/march-for-meals](http://www.seniorsplus.org/march-for-meals) or by calling 207-795-4010. Seats are limited and advance registration is recommended.

Born in Lewiston and raised in North Monmouth, Crocker will offer remarks and observations about Maine and her people in the classic Maine tradition. He has been known to wax poetic on subjects as diverse as rummage sales and duct tape.

After teaching public speaking at Cony HS in Augusta, Crocker joined the Waterville Police Department. He then served as Adult Ed Director at CMVTI (now CMCC) in Auburn and eventually became the spokesman for the Community College System at the Maine State Legislature. “These experiences put me in touch with people from all walks of life and prepared me to become a Maine humorist,” he said, noting that many of his friends may be featured in his remarks and observations.



Gary Crocker

The Breakfast will include the presentation of the 2024 Ikaria Award to Lucy Bisson, a longtime SeniorsPlus volunteer and current Executive Director of the Lewiston/Auburn Senior College. The Ikaria Award is presented annually to recognize “an individual or organization for singular and outstanding contributions toward improving the lives of older adults.”

Ikaria is a Greek island in the Aegean Sea. It is considered one of the world’s five “Blue Zones” – places where an estimated one in three members of the population regularly live an active life into their 90s.

The Fill the Plate Breakfast is presented in conjunction with March for Meals, a national campaign of the Meals on Wheels Association of America.

Last year, SeniorsPlus delivered more than 170,000 meals to 1,800 homebound older adults and adults with disabilities in Androscoggin, Franklin and Oxford counties through its Meals on Wheels program. Each meal provides one-third of the recommended daily allowance of nutrition, a safety check and a visit to these vulnerable adults. The majority of the clients of Meals on Wheels are lower-income or on fixed income.

The overall program goal of SeniorsPlus is to assist older adults and adults with disabilities in our tri-county area to remain at home safely for as long as possible. The overwhelming majority of older adults (greater than 95% in an AARP survey) wish to remain at home until they die. The Meals on Wheels program provides nourishment, socialization and regular safety checks.

Since 1972, SeniorsPlus has been improving the lives of older adults and adults with

Gary  
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## Maine

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



George McGregor

The first Boomer issue of 2024 is on shelves and we are in the beginning of February 2024. Hard to believe that next month is March. I always love this time of the year as it gives me a chance to go out on the ice and put a few holes down and hang out on hopefully a sunny day plunking my lines in the water. Doesn't matter if I catch a thing as for me ice fishing consists of hanging with friends and loved ones and enjoying the sun and chat while being on the lake. I try to go every year at least once. Hoping I can fish with my thirteen year old grandson in a few weeks. As well it's the time of year that I go up to camp, slap on the snowshoes and walk around in the woods. Love the exercise and nature I see along the way. I also check my game cameras as you never know what you might see. I always get a fire going first so that when I come back from my clumsy walk I can sit around the campfire while drinking a cup of hot chocolate. The fresh and cold air of February is invigorating and makes me feel like a little kid again. It's not often I hang outside in the winter and usually never in December and January so I like to take advantage of the free time in February while I can. Soon it will be March and then one more month till spring starts showing its wonderful face. Golf is coming and gives me one more thing to look forward to. Stay warm and enjoy the winter while you can. Daylight savings time and putting the clock an hour ahead is just around the corner.

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**Gary**  
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disabilities. As the designated Area Agency on Aging for Western Maine, SeniorsPlus provides statewide services with an emphasis on Androscoggin, Franklin and Oxford counties for core services (i.e. nutrition and information and assistance) that support independent living, healthy aging, and fight isolation. The mission of SeniorsPlus is to enrich the lives of older people and adults with disabilities, their families and communities, and to support them to make informed choices. SeniorsPlus envisions

a future where all older adults and individuals with disabilities are engaged and respected while living quality, independent lives in the communities of their choice. Annually, SeniorsPlus serves 8,000 individuals and fields 170,000 phone inquiries. SeniorsPlus offers a network of support, including information and assistance, short-term care management, Medicare counseling, caregiver support and respite, health and wellness education, benefits counseling, and Meals on Wheels and congregate dining.

-Sarah Cecil, Director of Marketing and Development, SeniorsPlus

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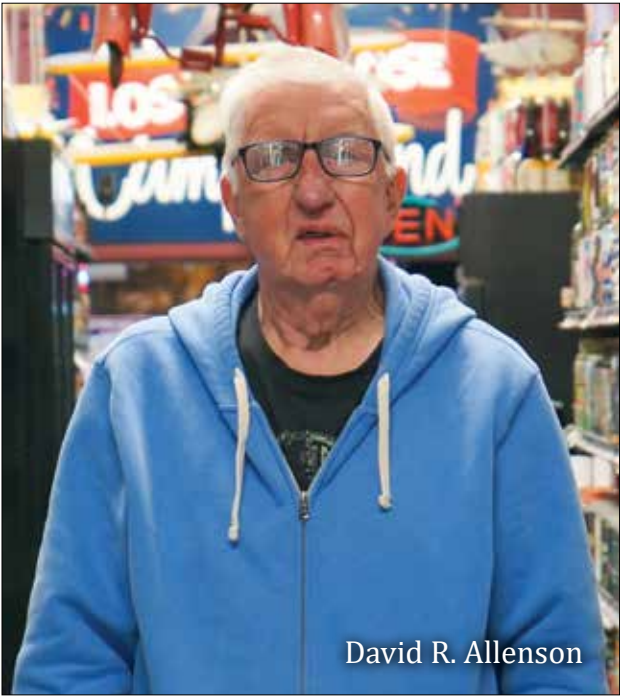
Business Profile

# It's a Bird, it's a Plane, it's UFO

By Liz Lane  
*Liz is a writer, podcaster located in Southern Maine*

David R. Allenson takes his antiques like his alcohol: neat. Some might include the adjectives sorted, copious, or impressively arranged. He's the kind of guy who can leave a bank with a 30-year loan in his mid-seventies. Allenson has broadened his horizons so much that it now includes a liquor outlet, a campground, a fleet of flying machines, and five other buildings under one umbrella with 300+ other antiques and bumbershoots roosting beneath.

Offering 5,300 varieties of adult beverages makes sense when establishing Naples as the unofficial wine capital of Maine, but why throw airplanes in with the mixers? To



David R. Allenson

complement the craft beer runway, of course. While Allenson may lack hours in a cockpit, his aptitude for conquering space is astounding. He doesn't need wings to defy the gravity of others' expectations. Since his flying leap from store manager to store owner in 2004, the newly dubbed Umbrella Factory Outlet has nearly quintupled in square footage. But not all at once, of course.

Allenson was already intimate with the location and culture of Naples, having been employed there since 1995 and with decades of grocery experience before purchasing the establishment. With the change of hands came a change in names, and in 2004, Tony's Foodland became a memory and the Umbrella Factory Outlet began to unfold.

"I've added on to the supermarket five times. I took every chance when somebody left the shopping center to take over their lease. I went from 5000 square feet to 24,000," proclaimed Allenson. "I didn't plan on adding as much as I did at the beginning because of finances, but to stand a chance against the competition, I had to grow."

The evolution and expansion of the grocery store prompted Allenson to move his beer, wine, and spirits into an independent but adjacent store. Besides biding his time while real estate opportunities developed, two other hurdles Allenson soared over were financing and his time on earth.

"I had the chance to put a liquor store in my supermarket, but I wanted to put my liquor in a private store. The state didn't want me to do that because I did more business in

my supermarket, but I convinced them because I've been doing it for a long time," recalled Allenson. "I was very fortunate when it came to borrowing money because the bank couldn't discriminate against my age. I was born on a leap day, so while I do turn 20 in February, I was 74 when I received my 30-year loan."

Other transitional opportunities opened after replacing all shelving and cold cases in the first remodel—namely, open skies for planes. UFO is fully stocked with other striking decorations: a jukebox from the 70s still spinning 45s, 30-plus neon lights, and a functional coke machine from 1964 that they've converted from dimes to dollars. While some suspended vehicles are still functional, others approached UFO from a different angle.

Allenson and his wife, Gail, are antique fiends whose trophy finds complement the beverage selection. Inspired by an unused corridor in an adjacent former salon, Allenson conceived the idea of an illuminated landing strip guiding patrons through an impressive array of over a thousand varieties of craft brewskis ready to take off.

"We have a plane from an airport hanging in the liquor part of the store. We brought it down the highway on a flatbed to get it here in parts, and it was the first thing we suspended from the ceiling. It's a triplane, a two-seater remote-controlled airplane," Allenson added thoughtfully. "We have a Red Bull aircraft hanging upside down because that's how it's supposed to be done."

After years of feeding and providing for the people of Naples, a former competitor

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became a crucial distribution connection. “In 2009, we became one of 39 stores to become an Independent Hannaford. You can only get involved with them if they offer, so it was awesome that they approached me,” expressed Allenson. “It’s helped me expand, and when the lease is up in 2027 on the Subway next door, I’m taking it over and putting in a pizza shop.”

While the craft beer runway is eye-catching, there are so many distinct features of the Umbrella Factory that it’s a challenge to choose what notable sight to mention first, but the massive stockpile of booze is a front-runner for most.

“I have over 1000 craft beers in my store, over 1900 different kinds of wine, 1800 different kinds of liquor, over 400 ciders, and hundreds of nips,” boasted Allenson. “I have four full spirit aisles, including a 24-foot long one just for vodka, our biggest seller. “We sell a lot of Tito’s Vodka, and I have over 100 cases displayed with a big neon sign. No one else in Maine has nearly the variety we do.”

Allenson has you covered for those with a fear of flying but a love of the outdoors. Formerly the salon’s location, the Factory has ex-

panded to take the outside in. The Lost Moose Campground section of the store features coolers and displays, along with some charming misdirection involving a newly renovated bathroom and the door to a port-a-john, as, according to Allenson, every camp needs an outhouse.

This is the kind of business where they have so many cool things going on that you almost forget the namesake. The airplanes on the ceiling have competition: over 250 unique umbrellas that the Allensons have purchased or been gifted that are strictly not for sale. Unsurprisingly, the store is more than just a town necessity- it’s a hit with tourists, too.

“There’s not many people that live here all year long. My business triples in June, July, and August. It’s unbelievable how many people shop and stay in camps, motels, and bed and breakfasts near the big lakes,” explained Allenson. “It’s a tourist town more than anything, but I try

to build my business around them for three months of the year, and for the other nine months, I cater to elderly people on fixed incomes because that’s the locale.”

Despite soon entering the octogenarian arena, Allenson is still determined to expand and continue adapting to the needs of the people in Naples and celebrate the connectedness of the community.

“Many facilities don’t know who you are because people just buy their product and leave. If I don’t know you, our meat manager Micheal does. If he doesn’t, Thad our co-manager does. And if he doesn’t, my secretary Bev does. Most of my employees live in the area and have been here so long; we know people by first name.”

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# AARP Maine announces Bangor resident, André Chassé, as New Volunteer State President

BANGOR - AARP Maine has selected Bangor resident, André Chassé, to serve as its new Volunteer State President. This key volunteer role is part of a venerable tradition that spans every one of AARP’s 53 state offices nationwide. In Maine, Chassé will serve as a leader and spokesperson for the hundreds of volunteers and more than 200,000 AARP members who reside here.

For the last two years, André Chassé has been serving on the AARP Maine Executive Council and spearheading many initiatives and events to support his community. Originally from Maine, Chassé spent 30 years in Southern California before returning to Maine in 2014, where he settled back in his hometown of Bangor, working for Northern Light Health as a Retirement Benefits Manager.

Before embarking on his career in human resources and employee benefits, Chassé studied music performance at the University of Maine and the University of California, Irvine. Chassé continues to be involved in music at his home church, Hammond Street Congregational Church, UCC (HSCC), in Bangor, as well as singing with the Black Bear Men’s Chorus at the University of Maine in Orono.

Chassé will serve as Volunteer State President for a two-year term. As part of his role, Chassé



André Chassé

will continue to serve as an active member of the AARP Maine Volunteer Executive Council and an integral member of the AARP Maine Tuesdays

at the State House volunteer corps. The group works with AARP Maine staff members to review legislation, engage state legislators, draft testimony, and monitor legislative committee meetings.

When asked what he hopes to accomplish as the AARP Maine Volunteer State President, Chassé said: “Much of the success that AARP Maine has achieved is a direct result of the efforts of its volunteer corps who work tirelessly on behalf of older Mainers. AARP is a powerful, non-partisan organization for the entire age 50+ community and I look forward to expanding our reach so we can increase engagement with AARP members and their families throughout our state.”

If you are interested in volunteering with AARP Maine and working with volunteers like André Chassé, send an email to [me@aarp.org](mailto:me@aarp.org) or call 1-866-554-5380. You can also visit [www.aarp.org/me](http://www.aarp.org/me) and follow us on Facebook, X and Instagram [@aarpmaine](https://www.instagram.com/aarpmaine).

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- 2 Landlords and business owners are required by law to keep their property safe. This includes places like shopping centers, restaurants, and apartment complexes.
- 3 After a slip and fall, it’s important to photograph the accident scene and also your injury. Make note of the conditions and time of day, and be sure to speak to any witnesses and get their contact information.
- 4 If you or a loved one suffer a bad fall, you shouldn’t have to bear the financial burden. Never sign any paperwork from an insurance company without knowing your legal rights.

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# Happy New Year Cleanse

**Jodi Cornelio**



Live Long, Live Well  
Jodi R. Cornelio, AS, BA, MBA  
Nutritionist, Personal Trainer  
and Motivational Speaker  
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Happy New Year! The new year brings possibilities. It is time to freshen up your thoughts, your health, your outlook, and your house. Make the New Year a time to re-evaluate and cleanse.



Metro photo

Something about that makes me feel ten pounds lighter. I found a brand-new Neddy pot in my closet this go-around that had been there for over 10 years. Does anyone even use a Neddy pot anymore? I do not even think I know how to use one. In any event, one closet down with a few more to go for multiple daily mood lifts. I wonder what I will find next.

**Cleanse your vibe!**

The universe will give you back what you dish out. If you are always walking around grumpy and punchy the world will look back at you with many punches. Lighten up, think positively and bring positive vibes your way. It is just like golf. If you tell yourself not to hit your ball into the water, your mind focuses on the water and sure enough, that is where your mind will send the ball. Focus on hitting the green next time and you will be surprised with the outcome. The same applies to your life. If you tell yourself you are going to have a bad day, the universe will deliver. Tell yourself that you are going to have a momentous day, meet great people, and invite the universe to present you with a robust life filled with good friends and good times.

Live long, live well

**Yoga meditation Cleanse**

Start your year off with daily meditation and a time to focus on yourself. Set a regular daily time to relax for 10 minutes. Make it a safe and quiet place where you can be alone. Lay on your back on a soft mat. The lights should be dim and a candle for aroma therapy burning to help you relax. Be mindful of your breath and thoughts. Let your thoughts come and quickly go. Practice deep diaphragmatic breathing by inhaling to a count of 5 seconds and slowly exhaling for 10 seconds. Place your hand on your abdomen so you can feel the gentle flow of your breath. Repeat and relax.

**Cleanse your diet!**

I would not be writing this if I did not add something about nutrition for the new year. Your New Year’s resolution may be to give up fats and sugars or pick up a new fad diet to make you feel better and drop ten pounds. Whatever your goal is, commit to it. I prefer to keep it simple and enhance my nutrition by adding lemon to my diet. A simple everyday routine of freshly squeezed lemon into a cup of boiling water, cooled by another cup of cool water is a great chemical detox and a good daily practice. This helps with digestion and cuts through fats and bad bacteria in your system.

It also adds much-needed Vitamin C for the winter blues and helps ward off colds and flu. Bottoms up daily.

**House cleansing**

Get rid of the baggage and freshen up the décor. Winter is the perfect time of year for this. This not only frees you from stress, but it brightens your mood. Just think about how good it feels just to clean out your refrigerator. Start one closet at a time. Empty the entire closet. Vacuum, clean and maybe even paint the walls or line the shelves. Throw away unneeded stuff. I love throwing things away.



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# A refresher course on COVID-19

It's understandable if people want to put the COVID-19 virus in the rearview mirror. Since it first surfaced in late 2019, the COVID-19 virus has claimed the lives of millions of people across the globe. In 2020, the virus upset every aspect of life, from work to school to recreation and more.

Though COVID-19 has not disrupted most people's daily lives for quite some time, it still poses a threat to anyone who contracts the virus. And since 2019, researchers have learned and continue to learn more about COVID-19. As another cold and flu season begins, it can't hurt for people to reacquaint themselves with some basic information about COVID-19.

## What is COVID-19?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that COVID-19 is a disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. While millions of people have survived COVID-19 after contracting the virus, the World Health Organization reports that, as of the first week of October 2023, the virus caused more than 6.9 million deaths.

## Is the virus highly contagious?

The CDC reports that COVID-19 remains highly contagious and spreads very quickly. That's one reason why a pre-winter refresher course on COVID-19 makes so much sense. Though the virus is contagious throughout the year, cases may spike in winter, when individuals spend more time indoors around other people.

## What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The WHO reports that the most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, chills and a sore throat. But the WHO also notes there are some additional, if less common, symptoms, including:

- muscle aches
- severe fatigue or tiredness
- runny or blocked nose, or sneezing
- headache
- sore eyes
- dizziness
- new and persistent cough
- tight chest or chest pain
- shortness of breath
- hoarse voice
- heavy arms/legs



- numbness/tingling
- nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain/ belly ache, or diarrhea
- appetite loss
- loss or change of sense of taste or smell
- difficulty sleeping

The WHO urges anyone to seek immediate medical attention if they are experiencing difficulty breathing; an inability to speak in sentences; confusion; drowsiness or loss of consciousness; persistent pain or pressure in the chest; cold or clammy skin; or a loss of speech or movement.

## Who is most at risk of severe illness from COVID-19?

Individuals age 60 and older and people with underlying medical problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes, low immune function, and cancer are among the groups considered most at-risk for severe illness from COVID-19. In addition, people with chronic conditions affecting the heart, lungs, kidneys, or brain and individuals who qualify as obese also are at risk of severe illness.

## When should I get tested?

The WHO recommends testing for anyone with symptoms such as acute onset of fever and cough. Anyone who has come in close contact with an infected person, even if they are not presenting symptoms, also should be tested for COVID-19.

COVID-19 may no longer be the disruptive force it was at the onset of the pandemic. However, the virus remains a threat, and it's worth anyone's time to reacquaint themselves with the basics of COVID-19. More information is available at [who.int](https://www.who.int).



# Want to get better at something? Dare to take risks

Diane Atwood

I want to be a better artist, but the reality is I probably don't have decades of practice time ahead of me, so I've been pushing myself and taking some risks. The first big one was to join my artist brother-in-law Russ Lamer at Art in the Park in South Portland last summer.

Russ encouraged me to take the left side of his setup to display some of my art. When it comes to his art, which he started to pursue in earnest when he retired, Russ doesn't hold back on themes, colors, or his imagination. He even comes up with a story for each painting.

The sketches in front are digital drawings that he does with his fingers. People loved them and he sold quite a few. He also sold some of his acrylic paintings, including one he called "Oooohhhh I'M COLORFUL."

Here's the story Russ made up about that painting: "Imagine yourself having a dream,



waking up, and looking in the mirror only to discover that your dream had become reality".

My painting style is way more subdued and restrained than Russ' although I am working toward being more loose and expressive. It's


a journey and fortunately, one that is fun and rewarding.

I almost backed out of the show because the idea of doing it was quite scary. Putting yourself out there within earshot of people commenting on your work. Yikes. I've got a bold streak though, and even asked one couple what they were saying to each other about one of my paintings. Turns out they were discussing the lighting and color choices I'd made. They liked them and bought the painting. I was thrilled! I went on to sell two more paintings at the show, which was a real confidence booster.

All in all, a good day for both of us, albeit a tiring one. It is A LOT of work getting ready for a show, being there for about eight hours, and then breaking it all down at the end of the day. It was also a lot of fun meeting and talking with people and getting to see all the art other people had made.

Yes, Art in the Park was worth taking the risk!

## Scam Alert Bulletin Board



### Fraud Watch Network

#### AI For Good AND Bad

If there is one thing we know, it's that criminal scammers are not stupid. They often use cutting-edge technologies to make their schemes more sophisticated and harder to detect. However, these same technologies can – and should – be used to protect people as well.

The most recent case in point is Artificial Intelligence (AI). We are already seeing celebrity "deep fake" videos trying to sell non-existent products. Likewise, simple AI tools - like Chat GPT - are cleaning up many grammatical issues that can make scam emails easier to spot. The question is, how can we use this technology for good?

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) hopes to use AI to weed out something that plagues anyone with a phone – illegal robocalls. The FCC recently announced that they are seeking ideas from the public on how to better screen out these illegal and unwanted calls using this technology.

Unfortunately, it will take some time for the good uses to catch up with the bad ones, which is reflected in a recent Presidential Executive Order on AI. The order includes requirements for more oversight of and openness from tech companies, the development of systems to protect private data, and concrete efforts to prevent the spread of misinformation.

Be a fraud fighter! If you can spot a scam, you can stop a scam.

**Visit the AARP Fraud Watch Network at [aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork](https://aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork) or call the AARP Fraud Watch Helpline at 1-877-908-3360.**

**Need a scam prevention speaker for your group? Go to [aarp.org/me](https://aarp.org/me) or call 1-866-554-5380.**

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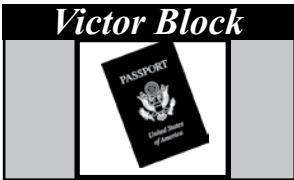
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# Historic DC dining



After gallivanting throughout the United States and over 75 other countries, and writing about what he sees, does and learns, Victor Block retains the travel bug. He believes that travel is the best possible education, and still has a lot to learn. His stories have won a number of writing awards.

Vice President Lyndon Johnson and Speaker of the House of Representatives Sam Rayburn used to frequent a booth in the busy restaurant, sharing food and discussing political tactics. Harry and Bess Truman, and their daughter Margaret, dined in another cubicle. Nearby is the table where John F. Kennedy proposed to Jackie Bouvier.

These scenes provide flashbacks in time at a history-rich restaurant in Washington, DC. Visitors to the Nation's Capital may relive chapters of history at some of the city's oldest eateries.

The likes of Kennedy, Johnson and the Trumans gathered at Martin's Tavern to share food, fun and discussion of politics and world events. The restaurant has remained in the same family since it was established in 1933. The cozy dark wood bar, stained glass light fixtures and vintage paintings of Washington harken back to that time. ([martinstaverndc.com](http://martinstaverndc.com))

Kennedy and Richard Nixon were among the political luminaries who have entered the doors of The Monocle. Since it opened in 1960, it's estimated that half of the members of Congress have come there for food or drink. The walls are covered with photographs of presidents and members of Congress. The second-floor dining room is a favorite among the President's Cabinet. ([themonocle.com](http://themonocle.com))

The original Old Ebbitt Grill was founded in 1856 when William Ebbitt purchased a boarding house whose guest list included several future presidents. Regular patrons include politicians, entertainers and others seeking to enjoy the history and décor.

The setting mimics the restaurant in the 1960s. Animal trophies said to have been shot by President Theodore Roosevelt look down over the bar, and ceiling murals, oil paintings and carved waterfowl decoys add to the atmosphere. ([ebbitt.com](http://ebbitt.com))

The Tabard Inn has offered lodging and luscious food since 1922. It occupies three Victorian-era row houses, and its 35 low-frills rooms serve as throwbacks to its founding. Breakfast, brunch, lunch and dinner are enjoyed in the intimate dining rooms and cov-



Iron Gate Inn

ered patio, and light fare and beverages are available in the cozy fireplace lounge. ([taberdinn.com/dining](http://taberdinn.com/dining))

The 1789 restaurant is named for the year when the building that houses it was erected. In 1960, a bistro called The Tombs opened in the basement and later the upstairs evolved into an elegant restaurant that serves classic French cuisine. The ambiance includes American antique furniture, elegant early American relics, a fireplace and gas chandelier. A "Parliament Clock" dates back to colonial days, when the English legislature enacted a tax on watches, and gargoyles behind a bar were salvaged from a 16th-century monastery in Ireland. ([www.1789restaurant.com](http://www.1789restaurant.com))

The atmosphere is different, but no less nostalgic, at The Iron Gate Inn, named for its decorative entrance gateway. The edifice was constructed in 1875, and the builder's wife planted wisteria vines that still shade the garden patio. The dining room occupies a former horse stable which was built in 1898. Over the decades, the location has been a tearoom, wedding reception hall and hang-out for the writer Tom Wolfe.

Some guests have claimed they heard or saw ghosts on the premises. One such apparition is reported to have emptied a bottle of whiskey, knocked over a chair and left a stain on the carpet.

Annie's Paramount Steak House has been family-owned and operated since it was opened in 1948, as the Paramount Steak House, by a Greek immigrant named George Katinas and his five sisters. Later, George added Annie to the name to honor that sister's devoted service to her

customers. It has received a James Beard Foundation "America's Classics Award" for its "timeless appeal . . . and quality of food that



Old Ebbitt Grill



Submitted photos


Monocle exterior

reflects the character of its community. Annie's has no Internet service for customers and no TV sets over the bar. That way, a waiter explained to me, "People spend their time here speaking with each other." ([annies-paramountdc.com](http://annies-paramountdc.com))

No story about venerable places to sup and sip in Washington would be complete without reference to Ben's Chili Bowl. That non-assuming eat-in-carry-out has been serving down-home fare including half smokes, hot dogs, sweet potato pie, and, of course, chili since 1958.


It quickly became a favorite among jazz greats like Duke Ellington and Nat King Cole. Bon Appetit magazine has recognized Ben's as one of the country's "Best chili spots," and the James Beard Foundation honored it among "eateries that have carved out a special place on the American culinary landscape." ([benschilibowl.com](http://benschilibowl.com))

Opportunities to dine with history await discovery in many cities and towns throughout the United States.



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# Did You Know?

## As a family caregiver, you may be eligible for a grant through the Respite for ME Program

Maine is home to nearly 166,000 family caregivers who provide support for their loved ones enabling them to remain at home, where they want to be, and out of costly nursing homes. The economic value of the care these unsung heroes provide is valued at \$2.9 billion in Maine alone according to the latest AARP Valuing the Invaluable series report which was released in 2023. Family caregivers play a vital role in Maine’s healthcare system. We want to make sure all family caregivers have the financial, emotional, and social support they need, because the care they provide is, indeed, invaluable both to those receiving it and to their community. Despite the economic value they give our state, many caregivers have out-of-pocket expenses associated with the care they provide. In fact, the typical annual out-of-pocket expense is



significant: \$7,242. Recognizing this, AARP Maine advocated for the Respite for ME grant program.

According to the Maine.gov website, these grants, funded by the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan, will “allow caregivers to access respite care as well as other services not currently covered by existing programs. Eligible caregivers may receive up to \$5,171 to access needed services.”

**Some ways caregivers have been able to utilize the grant money includes:**

- Private duty care at home

- Adult day centers
- Legal Fees
- Housecleaning
- Yardwork
- Snow plowing
- Transportation to dialysis
- And more

Caregivers often face financial and emotional stress related to their care work and the Respite for ME could help ease that burden. Eligibility criteria include the caregiver being able to show proof of economic hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic and the caregiver must also participate in a caregiver assessment (over the phone). To learn more, visit the Maine.gov website here or call 1-877-353-3771.

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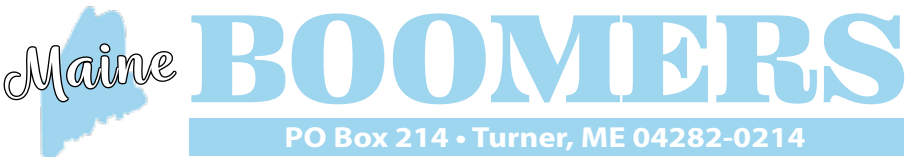
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# Winter Cannabis and Creativity: A New England Perspective

By Beverly Ann Soucy  
*Soucy is a writer, herbalist, and artist with a background in photography living in the mountains of western Maine living the dream surrounded by her wine collection, guitars, paints and books.*

Hardcore. Survivors. Fierce. Independent. Those are just some of the words that speak to who we are as born and bred Mainers.

Living in New England during the winter months can be challenging with its time change, long nights, and the length of cold days limiting outdoor activities and things to do. Let's face it. There are a lot of us who prefer cozying up, eating good food, and catching up on sleep in favor of getting outdoors to play.

New England's snowy cold winters can be long and challenging leaving many to seek alternative ways to pass the time.

The relationship between smoking pot and creativity is an intricate dance that Mainers have two-stepped to since the beginning of time. No better way to pass the long months of dark and cold. There is nothing like a big pot of something stewing, your favorite slippers, a great movie, or a good book, and a fatty.

I have to laugh as I type the word, "fatty" into this article. Growing up in a time when marijuana was illegal and mostly bad by definition, fatty was one of the "secret" words. Most of us know what it means to "roll a fatty". It's an act that crosses all adult generations. Trust me, your grandparents know this one. Just think about it for a moment. Today's grandparents are the generation that were at Woodstock, who were still protesting the war, and who followed The Grateful Dead around.

They know. Only now, instead of smoking to get high, most if not all of that same generation are using it as it was intended. As plant medicine for a better quality of life. Simply that.

However, it is worth noting for the rest of the hippies who still prefer the smoke, that it can be a very comfortable wintertime with an occasional puff in front of the fireplace, to enhance the downtime and the dark days of winter.

Winter in New England is long.  
The days of garbage weed are long gone.

Depending on the individual strains, the role of cannabis plays an interesting part in interacting with your brain's receptors and can change your perception, your mood, and your creativity in a snap. It is not news that it has been used for hundreds of years and has been reported to enhance one's imagination and as a way of stimulating creativity.

It is also known to promote and improve focus and concentration for some people. Add to it all a heightened sense of perception and it is cannabis for the win when looking to enhance the long winter season. Experimenting with different strains and consumption is worth noting.

If this is something you have never tried or even if you are a long-time participant, just be mindful of your dosage by taking a couple of puffs, or "hits" and give it a minute to see how you feel. And much like learning the art of drinking wine, it doesn't hurt one bit to keep a journal for making notes on the individual strains and what you do and don't like about each. Pay attention to your mood or your increased energy that the sativa strains help with, or perhaps you prefer something to wind down your day, while you are watching the snow coming down. Look for a good indicator for those moments, and again, keep your notes. For any newbie, those will be valuable for recreating similar moments.

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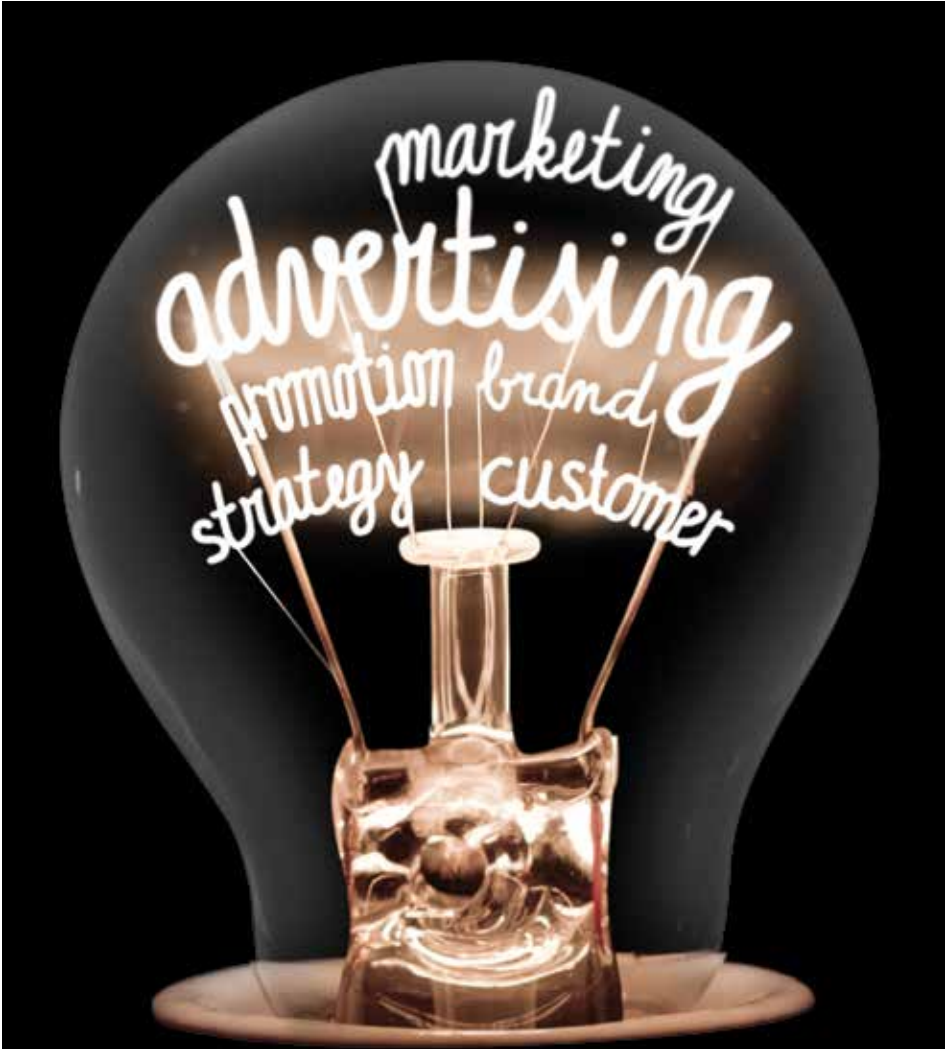


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The art of cannabis is so much different than the Mexican brick of the seventies. The potency is much higher and the choices are endless. This is when it matters where you shop and who you make friends with within the cannabis business that you shop at.

Perhaps you just want a good night's sleep or something to help with anxiety, or maybe you want to dig out your paints or woodworking tools and get creative. No matter what it is that you seek, there is a strain for you. Those shopkeepers that offer cannabis are very knowledgeable about exactly what you are looking for. They are the ones who understand the strength, the strain, and what works for your individual needs and are the path to success for it all.

It might also be noted that throughout history, artists and writers have been known to use a variety of methods to enhance their creativity from caffeine to alcohol, from opium to cannabis. In fact, many of the great Master of Art Literature have been rumored to have used marijuana as a way to boost their inspiration, their imaginations, and their creativity.

One of the most famous examples of this is the painter Henry Matisse, who was known to smoke marijuana while working on his paintings. Matisse was part of a group of artists, known as the Fauves, who were known for their bold use of color and innovative techniques.

It's possible that the altered state of consciousness induced by marijuana helped to tap into his inner creativity and his artistic genius. Another artist rumored to have used marijuana for creative purposes was Vincent van Gogh. While there's no concrete evidence to support this claim the style in many of his paintings is recognizable for their swirling dream-like quality and vivid colors, which could suggest that he was experiencing altered states of consciousness during his creative process.

Writers too have been known to use marijuana to enhance their creativity. One notable example is the American author Karrack who wrote the iconic novel ON THE ROAD while smoking marijuana and drinking coffee. It is possible that marijuana helped him to get into a



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state of flow and tap into his inner muse, allowing him to write with greater spontaneity and freedom.

Another famous writer who is rumored to have used marijuana for creative purposes was the Greek poet and novelist Nikos Kasantzakis. He was known for his vivid poetic writing style and the use of marijuana may have helped him tap into his innermost thoughts and emotions, allowing him to create more freely and honestly.

Of course, the use of marijuana for creative purposes is still to this day a very controversial topic, sadly. There are many factors to consider when exploring this idea. While some artists and writers have used the drug to great effect others have struggled with side effects or even became addicted to their own drugs of choice that had much bigger effects and implications.

It's also worth noting that marijuana can affect each person differently and what works for one artist might not work for another. But I promise this, if you find yourself smoking more than you are used to you are not going to die from the effects. Just give it a little time and have a bite to eat. You will be just fine. And remember to make your notes for next if you are

new to this.

As the chilly winter months arrive in New England many people find themselves longing for ways to stay entertained and to beat the winter blues and while some turn to hot cocoa, cozy fires and a favorite aperitif, those same people might find that a little creative stimulation in the form of a joint is just the ticket. What better way to tap into your inner artist, than with a little help from Mother Nature?

Marijuana has been used for centuries both as a medicine and a recreational drug. Its effects on the human brain can be profound and quite wonderful. From being relaxed to euphoric, or as a way to stimulate creativity. There is a lot of research to suggest that the drug can stimulate certain parts of the brain that are associated with creativity and imagination many artists and writers have reported using marijuana to boost their creativity and inspiration, from the beat poets to the countercultural icons of the 60s and 70s. Many of the greatest songs of that time were born from those moments of sharing a good smoke, being surrounded by friends, and writing music.

Marijuana has been a staple of the bohemian lifestyle for generations and has always been

such a big part of everyday culture similar to offering up a cup of coffee and conversation as an offering to your guests.

In the dead of winter, it is the perfect time to experiment with it all.

With a warm comfy blanket, a steaming cup of tea, and a little bit of a great bud-strain, you can settle in for a cozy winter afternoon and perhaps tap into your inner artist. Try your hand at painting, playing music, writing or just looking out the window and daydreaming. Used in moderation marijuana can be fun, creative and a pretty great way to pass the time during those long winter months.

Whether you're exploring your innermost thoughts and feelings through writing or getting lost in the swirls and colors of a painting there's no better time to tap into your inner artist than right now. So, fire up that joint or take a few hits from your trustee vaporizer, and let the creativity flow. Who knows, you just might create a masterpiece that will be remembered for generations to come. At the very least you will have created something to mark those long winter nights in New England.

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