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Entrepreneur of the Year • A5



IMMEDIATE IMPACT
Hinsdale's Nardolillo
a freshman star in RI • B3

KEENE
Crash kills two people
and their dog • A3

"There is nothing so powerful as truth"
 DANIEL WEBSTER



NEW HAMPSHIRE
UNION LEADER

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EDUCATION

Finalized EFA rules rife special educators

■ Board of Ed OK's rules saying medical professionals can certify children have special needs, making them eligible for more funds.

By Kevin Landrigan
 New Hampshire Union Leader

CONCORD — The state Board of Education approved final rules for optional education grants Thursday, over the objection of special education administrators who charged they were a "raid on the public treasury."

The rules permit any medical professional licensed to practice in any state to deem a student has a disability, which would make the parents eligible for an additional \$2,037.

"Education Freedom Accounts" are tuition or school cost grants given to parents of students who choose to send their children to private, religious, alternative public or home school programs.

Each student with an EFA starts with the base state adequacy aid of \$3,866.

Parents get additional money if the child has special needs, is low-income and receives free or reduced lunch or has underperformed on state tests in lower grades.

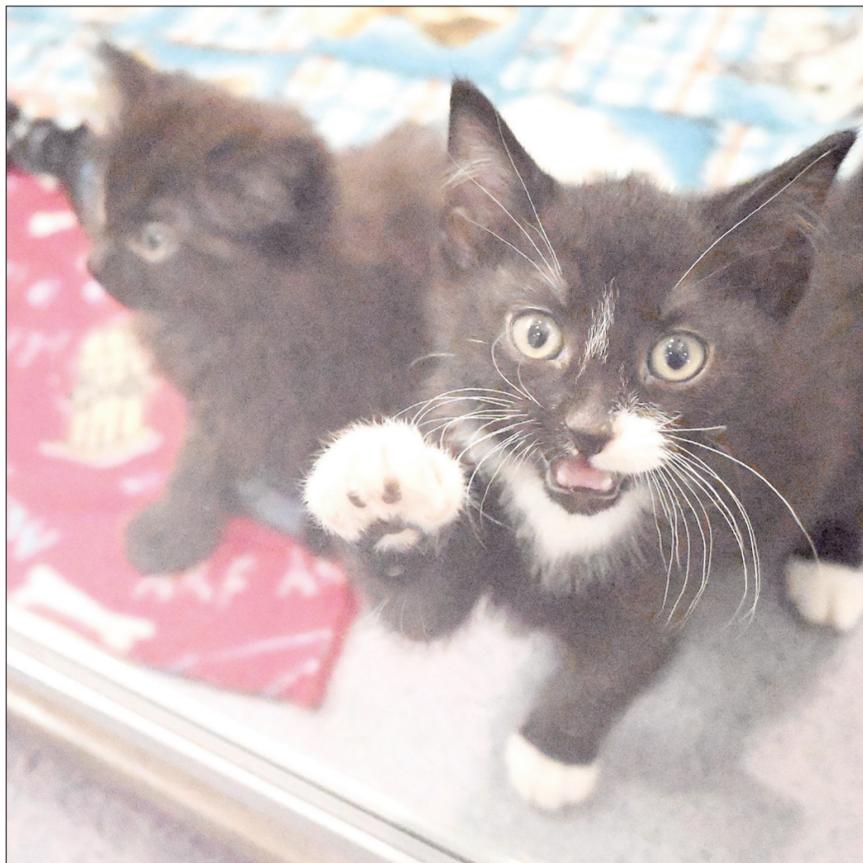
Education Commissioner Frank Edelbut said the average EFA is \$4,952 for the 1,635 families approved for the first year of the program.

Supporters maintain the cost of these grants won't raise local property taxes because the student would be costing nearly \$20,000 a year if he or she remained in the public school.

Critics maintain this medical professional option would bypass the

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THEY'RE NOT ALONE



NEW HAMPSHIRE SPCA

These two kittens are among the 67 cats taken from a Kensington home on Wednesday.

67 cats found in Kensington house after homeowner's accidental gunshot wound

By Josie Albertson-Grove
 New Hampshire Union Leader



NEW HAMPSHIRE SPCA

Workers carry some of the 67 cats removed from a home in Kensington into the New Hampshire SPCA's recently expanded Stratham shelter, where the cats will be kept until cleared for adoption.

Rescuers scooped up dozens of black-and-white cats on Wednesday in a Kensington home "overrun" with felines and reeking with toxic levels of ammonia — after one of the homeowners accidentally shot himself in the stomach.

About 8 a.m. Wednesday, a man in his late 60s or early 70s showed up at Exeter Hospital with a gunshot wound in his abdomen, said Kensington Police Chief Scott Cain.

Cain said the man had been trying to clean the rust off a .22-caliber rifle he had purchased at a yard sale when the gun fell off his workbench and discharged, hitting him in the stomach.

Cain said the wounded man's wife drove him five miles to Exeter Hospital. From Exeter, Cain said, the man was rushed to a Boston hospital for surgery.

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MANCHESTER

COVID cases in city 20 times higher than 'substantial'

■ Health department offers walk-in vaccination clinics on Monday mornings and Wednesday afternoons.

By Paul Feely
 New Hampshire Union Leader

Efforts to connect Manchester residents with vaccinations and booster shots are ramping up ahead of the holidays, as data show infection rates in the Queen City well above this time last year.

Manchester Health Director Anna Thomas told aldermen this week the city's COVID-19 infection rate over the past 14 days is almost 1,090 new cases per 100,000 people, nearly 20 times the threshold for "substantial" transmission status, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

"Where that needs to be for us to be comfortable is less than 50," said Thomas. "These next four to six weeks will be our most difficult. Every predictive analytic that we have is telling us that."

The most recent seven-day positivity rate for antigen and PCR tests in Manchester was 13.3%, also well above "substantial."

Thomas said that since the beginning of the pandemic, 18,000 cases of COVID-19 have been reported in Manchester and 254 Queen City

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COVID-19 update

Thursday's statistics from the state Department of Health & Human Services:

New cases: 1,581
New deaths: 5
Current cases: 10,648
Now hospitalized: 479
Cases to date: 173,089
Deaths to date: 1,773
Population vaccinated:
At least one dose: 869,558 (61.4%)
Fully vaccinated: 775,641 (55.2%)

Strawbery Banke by candlelight offers a dose of holiday charm

WE TOOK A WALK through time last weekend in Portsmouth.

Now in its 42nd year, Strawberry Banke Museum's Candlelight Stroll Under the Stars gives guests the opportunity to wander through the illuminated museum grounds after dark and learn the stories of holiday life over the 300 years of a Portsmouth neighborhood's history.

With my friend and fellow educator Lily Woo, I entered the museum at Governor Goodwin's



NH Winter

Jill Armstrong

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mansion. The two of us meandered through the garden adjacent to the house, following pathways illuminated by strings of elegant white lights, until we emerged onto an open street lined with houses, transporting us back in time.

Our first stop was the Walsh House, a large white Colonial decorated with a single wreath on the front door.

An integral part of the experience, costumed role-players stand in front

of the houses and engage in character with guests.

As we approached the fenced-in yard, a woman named Sarah Walsh introduced herself and began explaining how her husband and son — one of their five children — were at sea, sailing to Havana, and would be gone most of the winter. The year was 1802, and the rest of the family was getting ready for New Year's celebrations. Leaving the Walsh

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JILL ARMSTRONG

Festive lights adorn pathways that lead guests through neighborhood gardens at Strawberry Banke's Candlelight Stroll under the Stars.

In this weekend's **NEW HAMPSHIRE SUNDAY NEWS**

Sports: High school hoops begin

News: The legacy of one of Santa's best helpers

NHLife: The sisterhood of tackle football

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In the markets:

S&P 500: 4667.45
 (-33.76) -0.72%

Today's Chuckle

The most common cause of love at first sight is a poorly lit room.

A Small Prayer

Thank You Lord for all our blessings. Amen

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