

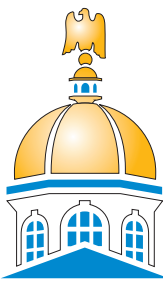
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HARMONY MONTGOMERY

DCYF: Missing child a 'societal failure'

Questions remain on how a young girl could quietly go missing for two years

By **TEDDY ROSENBLUTH**
Monitor staff

The disappearance of Harmony Montgomery has captured local and national attention in recent weeks. The young girl, age 5 at the time she was last seen, has been missing

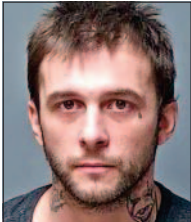
since 2019, but her disappearance was not reported until late 2021. She was in the legal custody of her father, Adam Montgomery, when she vanished. He has since been charged with several counts, including failing to have Harmony in his custody, and has pleaded not guilty. For many Granite Staters, the case raises an alarming question: how does a child go missing for two years without authorities knowing? More recent reports reveal that

there was clear evidence of child abuse. In an interview with police, Harmony's great uncle told officers he saw her with a black eye in July 2019. He said Montgomery told him he hit her after he had seen his daughter holding her hand over her younger brother's mouth to stop him from crying, according to the police documents. Manchester police records show

SEE **HARMONY A8**



Harmony Montgomery, shown in 2019 when she was 5.



Harmony's father Adam Montgomery is facing several charges.

EDUCATION

Law casts shadow on MLK lessons

Some teachers have curtailed discussions on racism due to new 'divisive concepts' rule

By **EILEEN O'GRADY**
Monitor staff

For Jocelyn Merrill, a ninth grade English teacher at Nashua High School North, this school year has brought a few changes to her usual curriculum. She has removed Tim Wise's 2013 documentary *White Like Me* from her curriculum, along with an accompanying sheet of discussion questions. She has also removed several articles from her classroom materials, including an op-ed that explains the concept of systemic racism, and an info sheet titled "discussing difficult topics in the classroom" that has definitions of systemic racism and white privilege from Learning for Justice, and also an essay assignment that would typically incorporate those articles alongside the book *The Other Wes Moore*. Merrill made the changes in order to comply with New Hampshire's "Freedom from Discrimination in Education" law, which passed in June 2021, restricting how teachers can teach about discrimination. "Those are a lot of those things that I've felt like I've had to stay away from," Merrill said. "I just felt like with the way that things were

SEE **EDUCATION A4**

BLACK ICE POND HOCKEY TOURNAMENT:

Annual event to return after COVID hiatus – only this time with a backup plan



GEOFF FORESTER / Monitor staff

FROM THIS

Concord Parks and Recreation workers pour water on the pond at White Park to smooth out the surface in anticipation of skating and the Black Ice Tournament. The event runs Jan. 28-30.

THE FREEZE IS ON

By **CASSIDY JENSEN**
Monitor staff

The Black Ice Pond Hockey Championships will return this year with some changes to mitigate the frustrating rescheduling that often comes with unpredictable and increasingly warm January weather. The 2021 hockey tournament was canceled because of COVID-19, and in 2020 warm temperatures followed by a snowstorm shortened the tournament by two days. This year, if organizers determine the weather – or COVID – prove too big a challenge, the games set for Jan. 27 through Jan. 30 will be rescheduled for March 18 through 22 at Concord's

SEE **BLACK ICE A3**



Monitor file

TO THIS

Concord's Black Ice Pond Hockey always packs White Park with hockey players and fans from across the region.

DEERING

Falconer, author Cowan dies

By **RAY DUCKLER**
Monitor columnist

Before they arrived at his parents' house in Deering, Jim Cowan warned his future wife that his mother and father were unique. Elizabeth waved it off as something unspectacular, a quirky trait that Cowan saw as embarrassing. Sure enough, though, the couple pulled into the driveway and saw Nancy Cowan out front, wearing a protective vest, thick gloves and a whistle around her neck, charging toward the car in a panic, yelling, 'Don't get out, don't get, don't get out!' Once quiet, with Elizabeth still digesting the greeting, Nancy continued teaching her survival class for

SEE **COWAN A4**

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OPINION

WORKING TOWARD A KINDER WORLD

Hatred is lazy – understanding and respect take work, writes Pembroke's Aaron Baker. **C1**

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High hopes for Black Ice to return to White Park for outdoor games

BLACK ICE FROM A1

Everett Arena. Ideally, they can make that decision by Jan. 24, before volunteers begin setting up White Park for the first games.

“The important distinction we made this year is if it looks iffy, we’ll just make the call,” said Dan Luker, president of the 1883 Black Ice Hockey Association.

The board seeks to avoid repeating the cumbersome process of setting up White Park again on short notice if the weather turns during the original dates.

“It’s not the same as pond hockey, but everyone will get their games,” Luker said.

Another change this year is that only about 80 teams will play, instead of the usual 95. That’s because there will be seven rinks rather than eight, excluding a rink located at the edge of the ponds. “The thought was to have one less rink to maximize the good ice,” Luker said.

Luker said some measures are in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19, including a separate registration tent. Signs will remind spectators to wear masks and warn attendees to stay away from the event if they are experiencing COVID symptoms.

In addition to the adult hockey teams, youth teams will also play, and tournament attendees can enjoy food from local vendors, fireworks, games, a rock wall and a bonfire.

The Concord Parks and Recreation Department maintains the ice at White Park each winter, flooding the



GEOFF FORESTER / Monitor staff

Concord Parks and Recreation workers pour water on the pond at White Park to smooth out the surface in anticipation of skating and the Black Ice Tournament later this month.

“It’s turned out to be a wonderful new tradition for Concord. It brings a lot of people back to Concord who moved away and celebrates the roots of hockey, but it’s also good for downtown businesses.”

DAVID GILL, Concord Parks and Recreation

ponds and moving snow off the ice for public skating. During the tournament, Parks staff will assist Black Ice tournament volunteers in clearing ice shavings and making sure the rinks are ready between games.

Parks and Recreation Director David Gill said Black Ice is a great way for families to celebrate winter in Concord, but that the event has been challenged in recent years by the warming climate in New Hampshire. However, last year, when the tournament was canceled, good weather for ice formation allowed the pond to stay open for 40 days.

“It’s turned out to be a wonderful new tradition for Concord. It brings a lot of people back to Concord who moved away and celebrates the roots of hockey, but it’s also good for downtown businesses,” Gill said.

During the weekend, hockey teams from other states will flock to Concord, where tournament organizers say the first organized game of hockey in the U.S. was played at St. Paul’s School in 1883.

“All we need is the weather gods to cooperate,” Luker said.

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ELECTIONS

Some urge lawmakers to outlaw ballot machines

Fueled by misinformation, some want a return to hand-counting process

By **CASEY MCDERMOTT**
New Hampshire Public Radio

An effort to outlaw ballot-counting machines in New Hampshire elections drew dozens of supporters to the State House for a public hearing on Thursday, but the same proposal drew hesitation from election officials who said it was neither necessary nor practical.

Those urging lawmakers to get rid of the state's voting machines expressed deep skepticism about New Hampshire's election systems and state institutions at large. Many said their doubts were reinforced by errors in the town of Windham's 2020 machine count that was quickly corrected and later thoroughly investigated. At the same time, many also cited distorted statistics and other falsehoods to justify their claims that voting machines can't be trusted to produce accurate results.

For decades, only one model of vote-counting machine has been approved for use in New Hampshire elections. That device, the Accu-Vote OS, doesn't connect to the internet and "predates modern network technologies," according to an overview compiled by an outside expert. And right now, the state doesn't mandate that cities or towns use any machines — it's up to individual communities to decide.

"The machines we use are the most basic of devices," said Milford Town Clerk Joan Dargie, testifying on behalf of the New Hampshire City and Town Clerks Association.

"They are only reading the marks on the ballot."

Dargie said forcing communities to go back to hand-counting would add too much extra labor for local poll workers who are already putting in 16 to 17 hours of work on Election Day. With machines in use, Dargie said her town, Milford, usually has about 200 volunteers working at the polls, and recruiting those volunteers is a persistent challenge for many communities; if they had to hand count, she estimates they'd need to find an additional 150 people.

Newly appointed Secretary of State Dave Scanlan didn't take a formal position on the proposal to do away with the machines altogether, saying his office generally defers to municipalities and the Legislature on how they're used. But he did offer reassurances that New Hampshire's machines have largely proven accurate — more so than hand counting.

"If we did away with the machines, if we got rid of them completely, I don't believe the problem is going to be solved, because there are many, many instances where there are hand counts that have been done in elections, that have been off to a much greater de-

gree than machine counts," Scanlan said. "As long as there are humans involved in the election process, we're going to have errors."

At the same time, Scanlan said he recognized that many who support mandatory hand-counting are motivated by a lack of faith in the election process, and said he's open to working on solutions to rebuild that trust.

Scanlan suggested that election audits, and greater transparency in general, could help. New Hampshire's lack of routine election audits has been cited as an election security flaw by outside experts in the past.

Among other things, those in favor of mandatory hand-counts frequently pointed to problems with voting machine tallies of some races in Windham's 2020 election results, suggesting those errors were indicative of more systemic issues statewide. However, a hand recount quickly detected those errors and a comprehensive, independent audit later determined that the initial miscount stemmed from problems with how the town's absentee ballots were folded.

"We found no basis to believe that the miscounts found in Windham indicate a pattern

of partisan bias or a failed election," the election auditors wrote in a report summarizing their investigation.

The state's top election authorities have also endorsed several proposed reforms, such as risk-limiting audits and increased training for election officials, meant to prevent another repeat of what happened in Windham.

Many of those rallying behind the push to mandate hand-counted elections have said they don't trust the audit's conclusion — and have consequently turned their attention to changing the rules for ballot counting at the state

and local level. That includes one such effort in the town of Greenland, where last month voters overwhelmingly decided to stick with their traditional ballot counting devices.

Some of those organizing the local movements against ballot-counting machines are also among those who've most vigorously protested the state's pandemic response. Some of the same people lobbying lawmakers on the ballot counting measure were, on the same day, amplifying false claims about COVID-19 vaccines in another legislative hearing about immunization mandates at schools and

childcare centers.

"We have lost our jobs, our schools, our hospitals, our families and we're not going away, and we're paying attention," Terese Grinnell, who was arrested while protesting an Executive Council meeting last fall, told the House Election Law Committee on Thursday. "And we are going to get our voter integrity back, because without that we have nothing."

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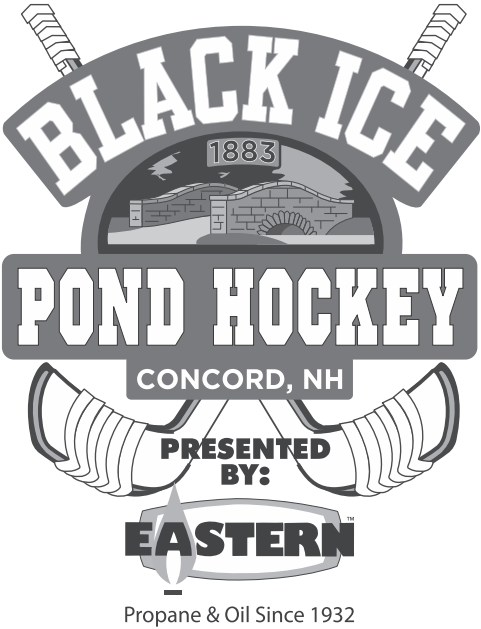
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