

The Laconia Daily Sun

WEDNESDAY

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 8, 2018

VOL. 19 NO. 47

LACONIA, N.H.

527-9299

FREE

Cafe offers homeless a place to land

By ADAM DRAPCHO
THE LACONIA DAILY SUN

LACONIA — If you're homeless, you can theoretically occupy any public space. But that doesn't mean you'd feel welcome. But there is now a place downtown where the doors open for six hours, five days a week, and anyone is indeed welcome.

The Isaiah 61 Cafe, located at 100 New Salem Street, is the creation of Dawn and Dave Longval, who started the cafe to reach out to people who, in some cases, don't feel welcome anywhere else.

Both of the Longvals grew up in Amherst and lived all over southern New Hampshire, where she pursued a career in public accounting and he built a business-to-business marketing company. They also found time to have six children over a 10-year span. Then, in 2012, they bought a summer place and some rental properties in the Lakes Region, and for the past three years have been year-round locals.

As they got to know their new home, Dawn said, she thought of the 1269 Cafe in Manchester, which provides food and a space for people struggling to survive through day-to-day life.

"I said, you know what, Laconia needs this," Dawn explained. Driven by Christian faith, she began to connect with Laconia's homeless population by bring-



Tricia Sanville stirs meatballs, while, in the background, Matt Therrien tests a noodle. The two volunteers prepared a lunch for the guests at Isaiah 61 Cafe in downtown Laconia. (Adam Drapcho/The Laconia Daily Sun)

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Marchand brings pro-business approach to run for governor

By RICK GREEN
THE LACONIA DAILY SUN

LACONIA — Steve Marchand, the former Portsmouth mayor who ran for governor two years ago, said he's now much better prepared to be New Hampshire's top executive.

In the 2016 Democratic primary for governor, Marchand received 25 percent of the vote and came in second to Colin Van Ostern, who went on to lose to Chris Sununu.

"I started with a base of about 20,000 voters from last time," he said in an interview Tuesday at The Laconia Daily Sun. "We've done 280 meet-and-greet events. We've done the work and

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Democratic candidate for governor Steve Marchand makes a point during a visit to the Daily Sun on Tuesday. (Adam Drapcho/The Laconia Daily Sun)

Freedom Fuel still providing warm help for state's veterans

By ROGER AMSDEN
FOR THE LACONIA DAILY SUN

LACONIA — Freedom Fuel has provided home heating assistance to more than 70 veterans and their families since it was founded a little over two years ago.

And, despite the death of its founder, Michael Dutile earlier this year, the company continues to provide one-time emergency assistance statewide to veterans.

Dutile, a Coast Guard veteran, was a master oil heat technician for the family-owned firm, Dutile and Sons, for 46 years.

He was motivated to start Freedom Fuel after being sought for a service call by a Korean War veteran. When

he showed up he found that the veteran had died and left his 90-year-old wife with a faulty furnace and empty oil tanks. He fixed the furnace and brought 150 gallons of heating oil to the home, at no cost to the veteran's widow.

Dutile was determined to see that assistance was available to veterans and worked with other oil dealers statewide to establish a network that could provide emergency help for the veterans.

Among those who have been helped by Freedom Fuel is Jean Ferreira of Gilford, who, in a letter published in the Laconia Daily Sun in January of this year, described how Kevin Dutile of Dutile & Sons helped her when she

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Health tips for the summer season

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Congressional hopefuls holding local forum

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ing her guitar, coffee, bottles of water and sandwiches to public spaces where homeless people congregate. Once a week, starting in May of last year, she began to develop a rapport with her new friends, and a handful of people grew to a dozen and beyond.

“As I saw these people and got to know them, I said, we need a building, we need a home for them,” Dawn said.

She and Dave closed on the New Salem Street building in January and spent the next five months giving it a “major renovation.” When the Isaiah 61 Cafe opened in June, it offered all who entered hot coffee, fresh fruit and bagels for breakfast and comfortable furniture to sit in until lunch is ready. On a busy day, about 50 people will visit.

Isaiah Cafe is about more than food, though. In fact, the Longvals don’t want their guests to think of it as a food pantry or soup kitchen. It also has two bathrooms with showers, laundry facilities and lockers for people to keep their valuables — such as prescription medication — secure.

There’s still more work to do. The building will need a new roof and the brick exterior is in need of repair. Dave is also renovating a second floor so that he can move his office there and they can hold Bible studies and life skills workshops there.

“We knew we didn’t have everything in place, but we knew our friends needed a place where they were wanted in the city,” said Dave.

Isaiah 61 Cafe, which opens at 10 a.m. and closes at 2 p.m., Monday through Friday, fills some basic needs — hygiene, food and water — but is really

aimed at a deeper need — a sense of belonging and self-worth.

“Obviously, they have issues. Addiction, mental illness, incapable of taking care of themselves,” said Dave. “What we do is love them, persuade them to get into rehab, that this isn’t God’s plan for their life.”

But if the person isn’t interested in rehabilitation, or experiences a relapse, or even if they show up under the influence, the Longvals will only turn them away if they present a danger to others in their current state. Their only rule is that there’s no drinking or drug use on the property.

“When you continue to love them, that’s what keeps them going,” Dawn said, as she prepared to throw a baby shower at the cafe.

“They’re incredible people in a bad rut in their life,” Dave said. “If people would take the time to get to know them instead of judging them, they would see that they’ve had a hard life.”

Isaiah 61 is an all-volunteer operation organized as a nonprofit. Right now, the proceeds from Dave’s business, Concept Communications, are keeping the cafe going. The Longvals, with their board of directors, are looking to build a network of supporters to keep the operation sustainable.

Slipping a cup of black coffee and eating a banana, Wayne Otis said the Isaiah Cafe offers a place to relax without harassment, where he can come to catch up with friends without worrying about being told to move.

“It gives homeless people a place to congregate, be safe, have something to eat. I can’t tell you what it means to me,” he said. “These are good people that do this.”

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found out that her furnace would need to be replaced.

She said the news, coming just two years after her husband Mike lost his battle to Agent Orange-induced cancer, prompted an emotional reaction on her part.

Ferreira wrote: “Kevin had been on his mobile phone. When he hung up the phone, he said, ‘We can help you.’ This made me stop in my tracks, and say, ‘What? What do you mean?’ Kevin had been on the phone with his dad, Mike, who had started a program to help veterans with their heating costs and concerns. Kevin said, ‘We can fix the furnace for no

cost to you.’ ‘How?’ I asked. He told me about how his dad had started this program several years ago to help our veterans. It started with donations from local people and it grew into something that is now called Freedom Fuel.”

Greg Waugh, who retired several years ago after 30 years as a captain for United Airlines, now heads Freedom Fuel.

He said that the organization can be contacted through the Dutile and Sons website and stands ready to provide the one-time emergency assistance to veterans. Freedom Fuel is a nonprofit charity. Donations are welcome and are tax deductible. For more information visit the Dutile and Sons website.

Winnisquam forum to discuss elementary school options

TILTON — Residents of the Winnisquam Regional School District will have a chance to weigh in on space needs for kindergarten through Grade 5 during a public forum on Thursday.

The School Board decided last spring to schedule a special meeting during the summer to allow the community to look at some possible options, according to Superintendent Rob Seaward.

“This Thursday’s meeting will provide just that, a platform for discussing the future of our space needs and how to best meet them,” he said. “I think it will be a great conversation and hopefully will help the long-term planning committee continue its work in looking for the right path forward.”

Winnisquam, like other school districts across the state, has seen fluctuating enrollments, and Thursday’s discussion will include the future of the Union-Sanborn Elementary School, fifth grade at the middle school, development of the K-8 schools, and possible additions at Southwick Elementary School, Sanbornton Central School, and Winnisquam Regional Middle School.

The long-term planning committee is looking at possible changes at the school district buildings and in the education system over the next few years.

The meeting will take place in the middle school cafeteria at 6 p.m. Babysitting will be available.

— Thomas P. Caldwell

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