

CMCA Provides Free Art-Making Kits for LGBTQ+ Youth and Teens



The Center for Maine Contemporary Art (CMCA) is providing free art kits for 30 of OUT Maine's LGBTQ+ youth for virtual art classes in February and March. The program will include a virtual tour of CMCA's Biennial exhibition, as well as a discussion of the artists' expressions of identity, gender and inclusivity.

This program filled up almost immediately! Thank you to the CMCA for sharing these great resources with LGBTQ+ and allied youth!

OUT Maine works toward a welcoming and affirming Maine for all rural young people of diverse sexual orientations, gender expressions and gender identities. In partnership with their allies and families, OUT Maine supports, educates and empowers these youth in their journey from adolescence to adulthood. For more information, or to support OUT's critical work on behalf of LGBTQ+ youth, please visit their website, www.outmaine.org.



Read OPINION by Glen Birbeck on page 2.

WRFR Local Love Special on Valentines Day, Sunday Feb. 14

- 3-4 Camden Shakespear Festival - love scenes
- 4-5 Chuck Kruger and friends - love songs
- 5-6 Downeast Singers - virtual chorus
- 6-8 Everyman Repertory Theater - play

Listen on WRFR or watch on MCTV

Down Maine Street With Phil Groce A Big Success

Looking at the photo of Jay Watts on the sidewalk on North Main, you are to know that one of the reasons that the mail must go through is because of him. Before his postal job, I remember many years ago when he delivered oil to our home in Union, during the day for Butler, Maxcy and Heath (BMH). At night he drove a tractor trailer hauling oil for Maritime Oil to supply customers like BMH, and then on the weekends he drove delivery for Payson Transport. Made me tired just to hear about it.

Jay grew up in Thomaston and graduated from Georges Valley High School. "It was pretty basic," he says. "The last two years I attended vocational school where I learned carpentry and also truck driving. My father had an ice business at one time, and later worked for an oil company. My mother worked many years at Staples, a grocery store in Thomaston, now gone, and later at Hannaford's. My father became disabled, and he stayed at home with us three kids." What happened after high school?

"I drove a dump truck for Art Henry, but we all got laid off during the winter. In the winter I delivered oil for Dunn and Elliot and Kalloch's, then fulltime with Maritime Oil, then BMH in Union. One day their secretary asked me why I didn't get a job like at the Post Office where I could have regular hours, good pay, and a retirement plan. She kept at me, and I began to think about it. Her husband, Tom, a friend of mine, delivered mail in Thomaston. I decided to try. I took the test, and I was surprised that I ended in the top section. It took 3 years before I could get the job." Why so long?

"They interviewed 6 people at a time for an opening, and if anyone in the group was in the military, they got preference. Finally, I was in a group with no military, and it ended up between this other fellow and me. I got the job because of my clean driving record. I started in 1996." Close to retirement? "You can retire after 20 years, but if I wait until I'm 62, I get 10% more. That will be in October." How has the post office changed in the last 20 years?

"It has changed a lot. Now, when someone retires, it is unlikely that person will be replaced. It is the same work with a smaller workforce. Less reserve, and if someone gets sick, or maybe has to take their kid to the doctor, then we all have to fill in—using time from many of us, while still having to do our regular routes. Union rules don't allow clerks to fill in for carriers and visa versa. Now it is getting tougher to keep employees after they see all the work involved.

"It used to be that the busiest time was the three weeks before Christmas. With Covid, it's that busy all the time. People don't want to get out of home, and so we are delivering stuff they would ordinarily buy at the grocery store—big packages of Dog food, Amazon parcels. I have a little truck, and I may have to make 2 trips just because of the load." How many hours do you work?

"52 this week, and 63 before that. They pay over-time after 40 hours. I start at 7:30, and last night I got home nearly at 8:00." How many miles do you walk? "At least 9 everyday on the walking loops, likely closer to 13 if you include all the driving and dismounting deliveries. I have to plan packing my truck so I can reach what I need at the time. I park, then make loops for efficiency, and when I return, I have the driving and dismounting to businesses. I need to fit in the express mail to deliver before noon—and packages I couldn't deliver when walking. Every day is different. Takes some getting used to." That's a lot of calories you burn. "Yeah, I usually eat two large platefuls at night. But as you get older, you work smarter." Are you that organized at home? "No, I'm always looking around for my tools."

I don't hear any resentment when you talk about work. "That's probably because I try to treat all people the way I want to be treated. I remember my first boss in oil delivery told me that I needed to remember that the people you deliver to are the ones responsible for your paycheck. I've always remembered that. People are always more responsive if I am positive, rather than negative. You don't have to go out of your way just to do something small for someone, but that turns out the most important."

You are unionized? "National Letter Carriers." Is it beneficial? "More beneficial than not. They have to protect each of us. Sometimes there is an over-reach, where maybe discipline might be a better choice. Pros and Cons. They protect our rights, and every 4 years we negotiate a new contract—cost of living and all that. After 6 years, a carrier is guaranteed 8 hours a day of work, and they cannot be laid off. Friction can happen if everyone has to frequently pitch in to fill in someone else's work. Can wear you down."

Who is your boss? "The postmaster. He has a supervisor under him who does the everyday oversight. Above the postmaster is the district office, and they are responsible for putting pressure on the postmaster to deliver the mail with the fewest people—time oriented. Creates a lot of pressure on the postmaster."

What is your wife doing? She's retired from being the office manager at Courier Publications in Belfast. She helps with her mother now. We're married 40 years with two daughters. All in all, Maine is a great place to live and have a family.

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Comments welcomed: buzzingdownmain@gmail.com



FOUR YEARS---ONE HERO

An Ode for Eugene Goodman,
US Capitol Policeman

Charging up the hill
of the Senate steps
he lured the horned ones
away from the duly elected
just about to count
the legal votes
of the wavering nation
he distracted the mob
with his baton
no gun, no club
the doors were shut
at just the right time
protecting the older lords and ladies
chosen to run the country
by Washington's, Jefferson's servants
now elected in Georgia
on their own
now he is U. S. royalty
by his simple deed
of courage, faithfulness
after four years of miscreancy
at the top
his deed gleams
like gold
the gold of the Congressional Medal of Honor
he deserves

Kendall Merriam, Home, 1/23/2021 9:46 PM
Listening to Phyllis put up my pills.

by Phyllis Merriam

Finally, there is enough snow for children, teens and their families to enjoy sledding the hill at Snow Marine Park. This has essentially been a non-winter or maybe a late winter as far as winter sports go. The only thing needed is for Rockland's city council to ask CMP to install a streetlight for the safety of after-dark sliders, of whom there are many. It's the best place in our little city for this sport. A couple of years ago I asked a city council member to approach CMP, as required by CMP. Nothing came of it.

Our mid-coast availability to vaccines seems to be gradually increasing. We have relatives who will get appointments soon. Other anti-vaxers-relatives refuse vaccines. Patient, kindly persuasion has had no effect or a different outcome. The starkness of not being able to gather with them in future is alarming and sad – not to mention their own risks and the risks they pose to others. Conspiracy theories seem to attract the aggressiveness of our Ids vs. our Super-Egos that contain compassion.

After days of steel grey skies, the late afternoon sunlight is glorious. Mother Nature hasn't forgotten us, after all.

More snow in a catch-up winter weather pattern enralls local kids and their families. The cold is no barrier to fun. Crows are light enough to walk their funny pigeon-toed-crow-walk across the snow without sinking.

Tried the Sunday PPH Food Section re-print of the late, great Chef Anthony Bourdain's recipe for Boeuf Bourguignon. I make really good beef stew but this was sublime. I'll never make beef stew again. If you want to read a hilarious and scary book about the culinary world, I highly recommend Bourdain's "Kitchen Confidential." I miss his curiosity, charm, charisma and cooking wisdom. His 2004 cookbook, "Anthony Bourdain's Les Halles Cookbook" (2004) is worthwhile having.

Early morning sunlight creates the reflection of a large fish outline, head side down.

I'm curious as to how this fascinating image is created. Sheltering in place for so long has me interested in the mundane and the odd that I happen upon.

Went to Rock City Coffee this morning to snag some beans when I saw one of their barista's in a fantastic, large pink and teal tulle "headdress", with a matching mask.

Covid-Fashionista! Made my day. Made the rest of us look highly drab and boring.

Watched a lot of the impeachments hearings today and was horrified all over again at the videos of the insurgency, including security videos never before made public.

These are historic events and days that historians in the future will write about. The GOP my father belonged to would be appalled.

OPINION by Glen Birbeck

As I write this the senate is winding up its trial of former president Trump. It is a foregone conclusion that Trump will not be found guilty of the charges, not by the two thirds majority needed to convict. Not guilty of inciting a mob to attack the physical heart of our democracy? The evidence or lack thereof has nothing to do with the outcome. Fealty will determine the senate vote. Fealty sounds like a word from the middle ages. The dictionary agrees. It says fidelity is loyalty of a vassal or feudal tenant to his lord. The feudal lord enforced this loyalty the way a mafia boss does, through violence. Trump enforces it with followers who vote. The Republican party has become a group with loyalty, fealty, to an individual. It once swore loyalty to principals, conservatism, fiscal and social. If a candidate crossed a line of principal they lost votes. Now they lose if they don't bow to Trump personally. Even remaining silent is seen as disloyal. To be identified by Trump as disloyal brings death threats in addition to political extinction. Many voters who have identified with the principals of the party have left it in the wake of the riot on 6 January. The GOP is no longer a party of principals aligned with theirs - it's now the cult of a demagogue. As GOP senator Sasse of Nebraska said last week, "Politics is not about the weird worship of one dude". He said that the party could purge Trump skeptics but doing so would be bad for the party and bad for the country. Nebraska might not be typical of Red states so Sasse might survive his display of principal rather than fealty. He might but others in the GOP think things have reached the point where the party can not cleanse itself of Trump. They are talking about a new party, a center right party, in other words, a "Rump Republican Party". Ben Sasse's honesty and loyalty to principal makes me proud to be a cornhusker, a native of Nebraska, the state he represents in the senate. He is young. If he survives Trump's censure and eventually lands on a national ticket, maybe as the "Rump GOP" candidate, he might even get my vote.

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Winter is for the Birds - by Steve Carroll

This morning as I gazed out my sun room window on our back yard lightly covered with a fresh blanket of snow, I could not help but notice the birds or maybe it was that pesky squirrel had once again devoured the entire helping of seed I had left just a few days ago. I would need to make yet another trek through the snow to refill both feeders so our frail little friends would not go hungry. Mostly tiny little finches comprise our customer base although this year I have noticed two blue jays and a beautiful red cardinal have joined the others to share in the wealth. I have a retired friend who lives on the Cape and likes to tell the story of his gang of fat squirrels that have devised several creative methods to gain access to his feeders. Trying to stay at least one step ahead he has erected ingenious barriers including, springs, wires and even a "slinky" to foil their criminal activity. Yet somehow they always find a way to get past and seem to delight in their victory. We are now in what most people would call "the dead of winter" and probably the most difficult time for any wild creature to satisfy their hunger. So I like many others feel it is my duty to do what I can to help in their cause. Taking care of our birds and squirrels especially at this time of year is a satisfying and worthwhile chore. I must admit that I am in no way as experienced in the care and feeding of our feathered friends as some others I know, especially my older retired friends who have established quite an operation complete with various styles of feeders, binoculars and even books on the subject. All seem to have a cozy chair by a warm wood fire and large window that creates the perfect viewing stand to enjoy their indoor winter sport. I am all too often not even here this time of year. Generally my winters are spent further south, but with the virus raging in many of the southern states I decided Maine wasn't such a bad place to hang out this winter and maybe even learn a few new tricks like how to foil a fat squirrel's treasure hunt.



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