

# The CABINET PRESS

July 10, 2017 | Submit News

## Martial arts studio features all-ages Special Abilities program

BEDFORD NEWS

JUN 8, 2012

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TWEET



Emily Therrien is determined that all of her students will succeed.

The American Taekwondo Association, Martial Arts of Southern New Hampshire co-owner and senior instructor teaches the Special Abilities class, which she created in 2010, twice a week to children and adults.

“We had a lot of kids who were special-abilities-classified, and we noticed that some kids succeeded, yet others stayed where they were and they weren’t reaching their goals,” Therrien said.

She added that students with ADD and ADHD benefit from martial arts because it helps their concentration. “A lot of people came to us with these abilities, and they had been turned down by other schools, so we wanted to find a way to work with them.”

The studio accepts students throughout the special-needs spectrum, including those with high- and low-functioning abilities such as ADD and extreme autism or Asberger’s.

Since 2007, ATA Martial Arts has expanded to two locations in Bedford and Derry.

In 2010, instructors met with SpedPac of Bedford, a special education parent advisory council, where “one parent invited us to sit in on the group to learn what, as the parents of students with special abilities, needed,” which is information the studio uses to tailor its program.

“We have one-on-one interviews with the parents and child so that we can get to know the family, and what they need, and how we can adjust this program to suit their needs.” The studio also has a form for parents to fill out.

“Our real mission is to be a place where people can come together and be family,” Therrien said.

“Before coming here, we really looked around at what other places had to offer,” said parent Kate Sussman. “But this was the best choice, because it was appropriate for our children.”

“We go to tournaments, and we go out to dinner, and we’ve become friends,” Sussman gestured to another parent. “The kids become friends, too.”

At their sister school in Derry, Dianna DeNapoli, a certified instructor and fourth-degree black belt, teaches Special Abilities, during which time she works with adults and has worked with adolescents.

The needs of the Special Abilities class is approached “day by day. If they are having a hard day, then I follow their lead.” Therrien said she listens to what the students say, as well as their body language. “If they’re not getting the kicks, then I don’t force it. We’re teaching the kids to be flexible, and we’re showing that we’re willing to be flexible, too.”

The students in the Special Abilities class go through the regular belt progressions on four-month cycles, instead of two-month cycles like other classes, so they work toward “leveling up” at their own pace.

“One of our students last week learned to jump rope,” Therrien said. “It sounds easy, but he is 13 and has never been able to do this. But with a lot of repetition and practice, he’s able to jump rope. He has been with our class since the very beginning. When he came to us he wasn’t very talkative, but now he’s able to express to his parents what he is thinking and he smiles a lot. Now, he’s a camo belt.

“We work with the parents, and they work with us. I’ll have parents come over to me and say, ‘This is what we’re teaching them at home. Can you reinforce this?’ and we will. We use repetition and routine, so the kids can build confidence and be successful in school now and later in their lives.”

Sam Sussman, a brown belt and one of Therrien’s class assistants, has been at the studio since February, and he said, “I just like getting a good stretch and helping people.”

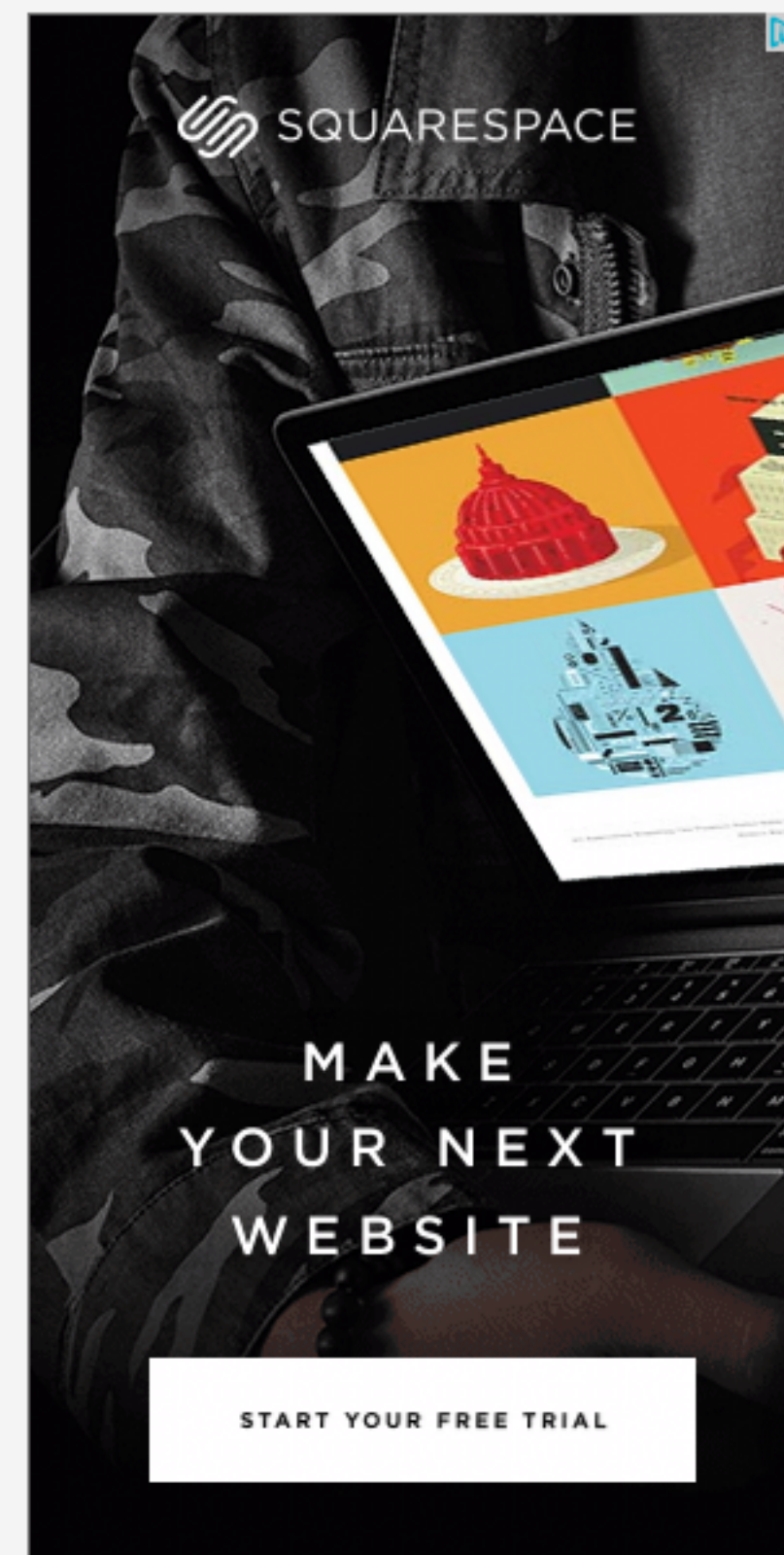
Monika Dumais, a first-degree black belt and assistant, has been in the program for three years and helps redirect the kids. Fellow student and father Rick sometimes fills in for Therrien, where “My faithful, right-hand ninja helps me run the class, too.”

ATA Martial Arts has a variety of programs, including a leadership class that sets new goals each month. In January, the theme was “Goals,” during which time instructors asked students to consider “What is a good goal? What is not?”

“We are always setting goals in class, like being a good listener and standing up a little straighter,” Therrien said.

The ATA Martial Arts of Southern NH mission statement is “Building tomorrow’s leaders ... one black belt at a time.”

The Special Abilities class meets Monday and Saturday. The full schedule may be viewed on its website at [www.bedfordata.com](http://www.bedfordata.com).



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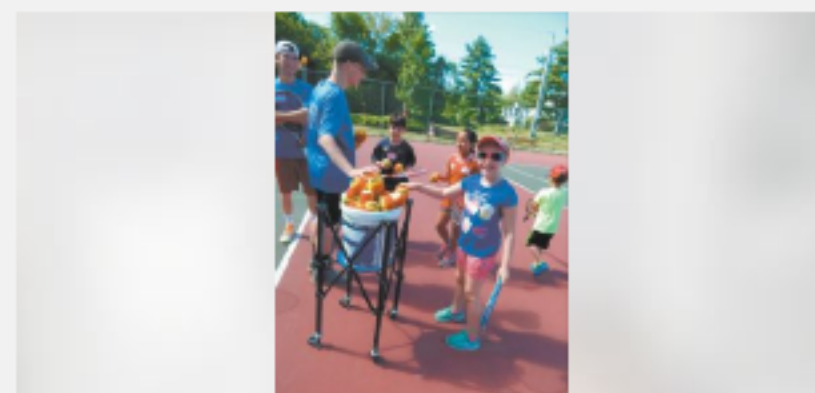
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## Recovery after fire at Perry Hill Farm

BEDFORD NEWS

SEP 14, 2012

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Harriet and Elissa Finks, owners of Perry Hill Farm at 32 Perry Road, are focused on caring for their eight surviving ponies after a three-alarm fire destroyed their 10,000 square foot barn Sept. 6.

The surviving ponies are staying at a friend of the family’s farm so they can each have their space and not be kept in a single paddock.

The two animals remaining on the farm are Miss Colby, the famous 900-pound pig, and a miniature stallion named Puffy. The immediate concern is building a structure to keep these two animals warm throughout the winter.

The Finkses are in need of materials and assistance to complete the structure before winter comes, according to Amy Ats, a Bedford mother who’s daughter took riding lessons there.

There is no way to continue programming at the moment at the farm, which once offered summer camp, riding lessons and birthday parties to thousands of children.

The barn completely burned down, yet the main structure remains with a kitchen and party room. The party room is now home to Puffy and Miss Colby, although Ats said this structure, in time, will be demolished.

Nothing has come to light in the fire investigation.

The Red Cross Emergency Response Vehicle provided a safe place for firefighters, from 10 surrounding towns, to regroup and recharge while fighting the fire, according to a statement released by the American Red Cross.

The 14 horses who did not survive, including Bahia, the horse who made Elissa Finks a three-time world champion, were known by their nicknames: Katie, Itchy, Cisco, Taylor, Layla, Stoney, Sully, Bauble, Bado, Cash, Angie, Happy and Luke.

The horses were buried together Saturday at a farm in Fremont.

Bedford resident Julie Lagasse, who worked for Harriet Finks, set up a donation fund through TD Bank. Money received through the Perry Hill Fire Fund will be used for immediate cleanup and to cover the cost of the horses’ burial.

The Finkses said in an official statement, we “understand insurance is likely to be inadequate to rebuild, our current goal is to ensure the continued care and safety for the surviving animals.” The surviving animals were checked over by a veterinarian and appear to be in good health, they said.

Elissa Fink is coping the best she can, while caring for Puffy and working with the attorney, said Ats.

“We do want to encourage everyone to visit if they would like, especially those who need closure of their own, but I ask that you please be respectful of the property by staying towards the front,” Elissa Finks said in an official statement.

The barn is taped off, so you can’t see much, according to Ats.

“I’m still here and I’d like to know you,” Harriet Finks said in a statement. “Don’t hesitate to stop.”

Harriet and Elissa are looking into putting up a guestbook, so people can stop by the side of the road and put their name and a message, according to Ats.

“My mother, Harriet, and I would like to extend our deepest gratitude for the outpouring of support everyone has shown us,” Elissa Finks said in her statement.

Perry Hill is a tight-knit group with a core of about 10 children, who took riding lessons there and some of whom have been riding there since the day the farm opened, Ats said.

Harriet Finks bought Cricket Hill Farm and renamed it Perry Hill Farm in 2007.

“We have been there every day, even the day of the fire, sitting with the owner and talking, and I think it’s been the best thing for the kids. I was a bit hesitant at first, but the moms and their children came in, bringing pictures and telling stories,” Ats said.

When there is no one at the farm, Harriet Finks thinks of what she could have done differently.

Ats said.

“I asked them flat out yesterday if they were going to rebuild the business and they said once they can focus on what they’re going to do next, we’ll have a better idea.”

Ats’ daughter heard the birthday parties at Perry Hill Farm were incredible, so she had her 9th birthday party there this year. Ats said she was impressed with Harriet, Elissa, the horses, the amount of animals they had, and the famous pig.

Donations to the Perry Hill Fire Fund may be made through any regional TD Bank branch. The tax ID is 80-0847620.

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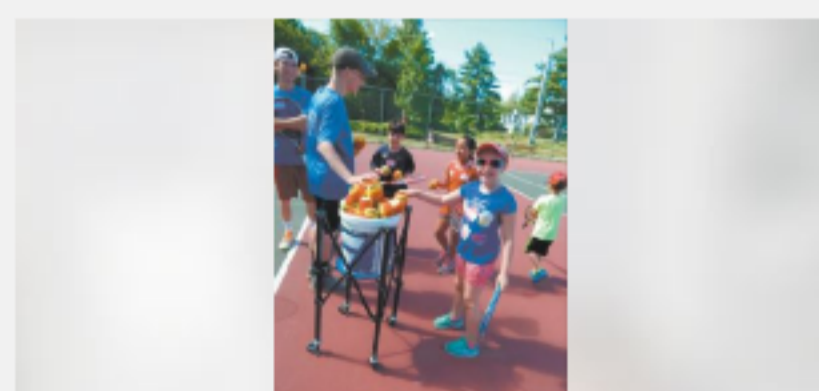
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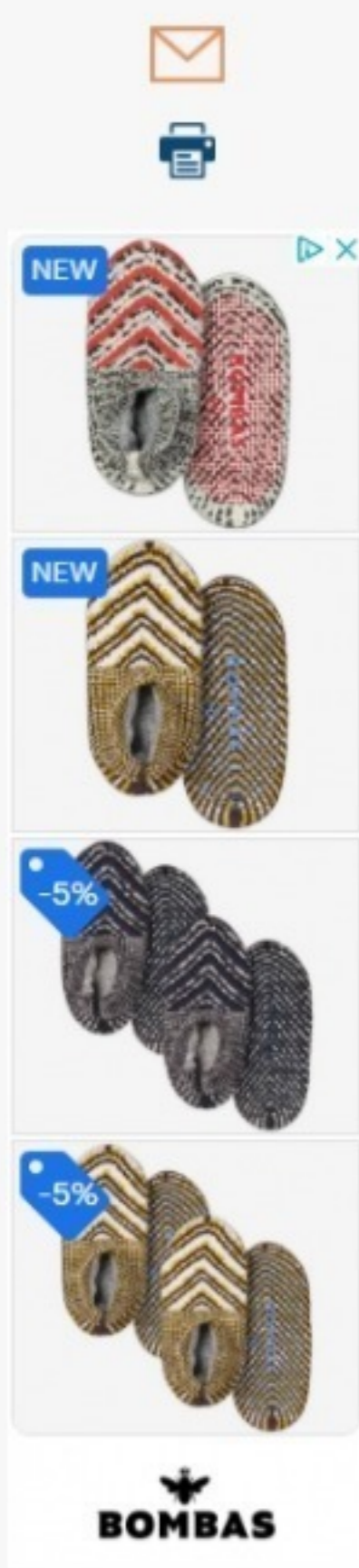
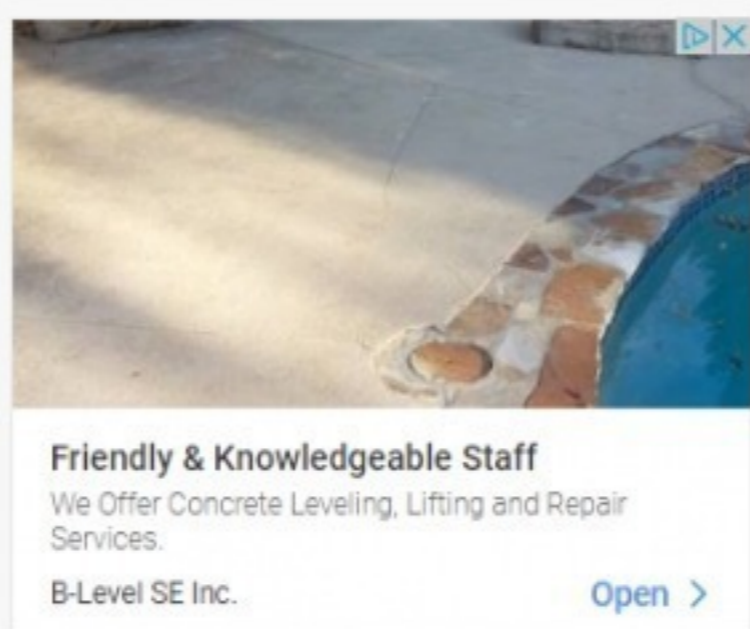
Bedford student reaches National Geographic Bee Top 10

BEDFORD NEWS JUN 1, 2012

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Seventh-grader Neelam Sandhu, 13, from Ross A. Lurgio Middle School, placed in the top 10 at the National Geographic Bee national finals held at the National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C., on Thursday, May 24.

"Sandhu is the fifth student to compete in the National Geography Bee from Bedford, the first female to win the New Hampshire state championship in 24 years and the only female in the top 10 at the national competition," according to the Bedford School District.



She was also the lone girl in the finals.

"A lot of the boys were really nice," Neelam said. "They talked to me a lot, and they didn't make me feel like I was excluded."

Once in Washington, D.C., "We didn't act competitive toward each other," she said. "A lot of us really got along, and we still keep in touch."

The National Geographic Bee grand prize was a \$25,000 college scholarship, lifetime membership in the National Geographic Society and a trip to the Galapagos Islands.

On Tuesday, May 22, 54 state and territory winners participated in the preliminary rounds, where Neelam placed in the top 10 and received \$500, "which made me really happy, of course."

Two days later, Neelam competed as one of 54 students in a final round moderated by "Jeopardy!" host Alex Trebek.

"I was really proud of myself because all my work paid off. I felt really happy."

"A lot of people organized social events for us," in D.C., Neelam said. "My teacher arranged a personal tour of the White House. We had a picnic with all the other kids. We became close with all the kids there. I have pen pals I can write to over the summer."

Each student also brought a gift from their state. "My favorite is popcorn-on-the-cob, which are kernels on a stick that pop when you put it in the microwave, from Iowa. I talked to my friend in Florida, who ate hers and she said it's so good, so I can't wait to eat mine."

Neelam mentioned that the gifts were one of her favorite parts, in addition to the social events. "Some of the gifts I received were pins; mostly little, portable gifts."

"What's funny is that Vermont and New Hampshire both gave maple syrup, which became a joke between everyone. Massachusetts gave a Patriots banner, which I definitely loved."

In a "Meet the Finalists" video on the National Geographic website, Neelam said, "When I grow up, I would like to be an author writing fiction or fantasy books, maybe incorporating geography into those somewhere."

"Yeah, I love writing," Neelam said. "I definitely love writing fiction stories. My teacher told me a lot of authors that are out there nowadays incorporate geography into their books, but you can hardly tell it's there, like the Lord of the Rings books. She said you have to picture what it's really like."

Neelam said geography is a strength of hers "because I like to visit places. We visit England every other summer because my mom's family lives there. I always think of the geographical part (of places) in the back of my mind."

"A lot of my friends and family are from around the world, so I started looking up places to find out where they were. I kept going, and then I found out there was a competition for it, so I tried out."

The National Geographic Bee is designed to encourage teachers to include geography in their classrooms, spark student interest in the subject and increase public awareness about geography.

Neelam said her brother, who made it to nationals five years ago, gave her some tips. "He said, 'Stay calm, and don't get nervous when you get a question wrong, because then you will be more nervous and get more questions wrong.'"

"That definitely came in handy," she said, as well as her brothers quizzing her.

"I think I'm going to try it again next year," Neelam said. "I would probably prepare the same, but go into a bit more detail. A lot of the questions asked were about very small things in the world. I would study more intensely, but not too intense. I would look up things they asked us about this year."

Each year, thousands of schools in the U.S. and nearby territories participate in the National Geographic Bee using materials prepared by the National Geographic Society, which are available to students in grades four through eight.

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## Police, residents initiate neighborhood watch

BEDFORD NEWS

OCT 5, 2012

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It was a celebration Oct. 1 as Lt. Michael Bernard, police officer Amy Champagne, Dennis “Mac” McMahan and neighbors in The Wines, the area around Suzanne Drive, gathered at the initiation of Bedford’s first neighborhood watch group.

“This is the first neighborhood watch in town, but we’ve always had community policing,” Bernard said.

The Bedford Police Department has divided community policing into four categories: Senior Citizens Program, Youth Programs, Neighborhood Watch, and Business and Retail.

Each program serves the community by reaching out to people of all ages and situations, from playing basketball with kids at the New Morning School to addressing businesses in town about fraud prevention.

About two months ago, McMahan contacted Champagne about starting up a neighborhood watch.

Champagne volunteered to head up this watch, and now, neighborhood watch signs are posted at each end of the neighborhood.

“We actually have a mass email list, so we can all communicate, which enabled us to get the signs up,” said resident Ursula Lariviere.

By reaching out, residents help “the Bedford police to reduce crime, solve problems and improve the quality of life in the town of Bedford,” according to the Police Department’s website.

“Bedford is generally not high-crime, so this is more about neighbors,” Champagne said about the difference between a crime watch and a neighborhood watch.

When neighbors go on vacation, they can let the Police Department know by filling out a form at the station with the dates they will be gone. From there, the day shift will watch over the property, noting which cars are in the driveway, while being mindful of people who may still be in the house.

Bernard said the forms should soon be available online.

“On a vacant property check, if anything seems out of place, we call the owners,” Champagne said. “In one case, the pipes burst on a property and the owners were in Florida. We called the owners so they could take care of the problem.”

Champagne said the only hesitation she has received about a neighborhood watch is from what people see in the media.

McMahan, who initiated the first neighborhood watch here, has been involved in many neighborhood watches. “I have seen how they work and they do work,” he said.

Since The Wines neighborhood watch started about the same time as the Florida incident in which teenager Trayvon Martin was allegedly killed by a member of a neighborhood watch, McMahan has reassured people that what happened in Florida is not part of the neighborhood watch.

“Keeping an eye on each other, that’s the big thing,” Bernard said. “It’s just a community coming together to watch out for each other.”

Two more areas in Bedford are establishing neighborhood watches.

“We want people to reach out to us,” Champagne said. “Then, it becomes a matter of neighbors helping neighbors.”

Bedford residents are encouraged to report anything suspicious in their neighborhood or one they’re driving through by calling the Bedford Police Department at 472-5113.

To contact Champagne, email [achampagne@bedfordnh.org](mailto:achampagne@bedfordnh.org).

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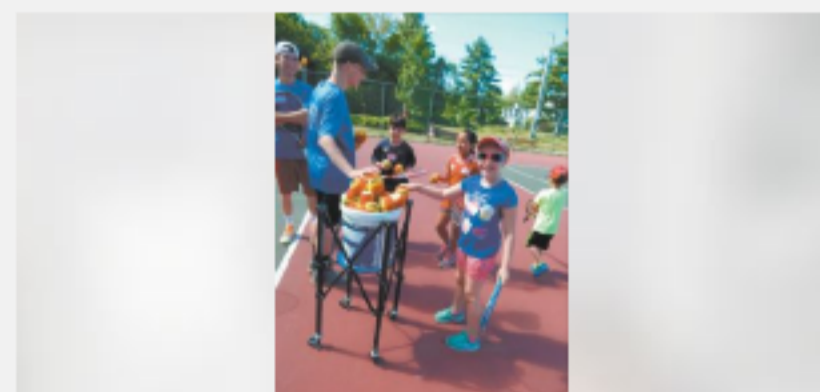
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## NiNi Bambini center holds grand opening

**BEDFORD NEWS**  
OCT 5, 2012

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What started as a yard sale has become a local Bedford festival, and this year, NiNi Palooza! also served as a housewarming, of sorts.

NiNi Bambini, a maternal wellness center at 166 S. River Road, celebrated its recent move with a grand opening celebration, NiNi Palooza!, on Sept. 29.

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NiNi Palooza! featured pony rides, a petting zoo, train rides, children's concerts with Steve Blunt and Sammie Haynes, and a reading by children's author Eric Pinder.

The beaming smile on one little girl's face, who rode a pony around the parking lot, represented the carnival-like atmosphere created by owner Nina Cullen and her business partner, Julie Mudd.

Forty-eight vendors participated in the fourth annual NiNi Palooza!, and hundreds of people showed up.

"NiNi Palooza! started out as a yard sale and evolved into a family meeting day, where families meet each other for the first time, their kids as their bond," Cullen said.

This move has more than doubled NiNi Bambini's amount of retail and classroom space to a total of 4,000 square feet.

In the new space, NiNi Bambini is offering more group and class options, including toddler art classes where moms paint too, as well as mom and baby yoga and fitness. Cullen and Mudd also have plans to add a Zumba certified class for postpartum moms. New online offerings are still in the works.

Four years ago, Maureen Reno started at NiNi Bambini with a Preparing for Birth class.

"Even at CMC, where they have nurses helping you, you have to leave eventually," she said. "When I found NiNi, it was a godsend. This is a great space."

NiNi Bambini teaches parenting in a healthy way, Cullen said. "There are so many parenting styles, there's no right way. We respect every one."

"These classes are neutral – I don't know your background or your financial situation," Cullen said. "We have a lot of ER doctors, salespeople, nurses, PTs and chiro who take these classes."

"Here, you're just a mom," Mudd added.

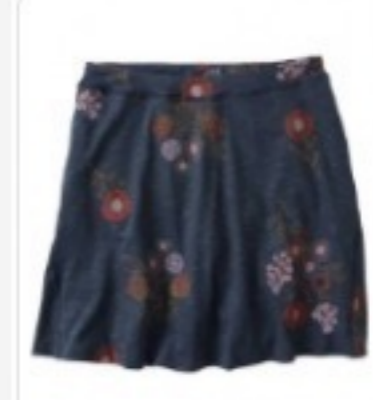

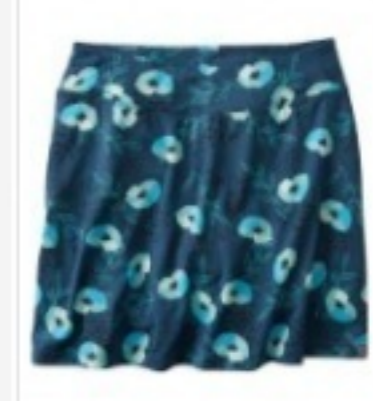



"We've tried everything that we sell, so we know it works. We charge a nominal fee for our classes," Cullen said. NiNi Bambini serves mothers from pregnancy to parenting children 3 and younger.

"When they put you in the car with your brand-new baby and you look at each other and you wonder, 'What the hell are you going to do now?' you come here," said Bob Evans, stay-at-home dad of an 18-month-old.

"My employees are all people who have been here for classes, who come back week after week," Cullen said. "We make a difference, and they come back here because they feel passionate about it."

NiNi Bambini has 1,753 members in its open group on Facebook, which allows families and moms to come together from all over the U.S. "Once, it was a village that raised kids, so we're just reinstating that," Mudd said.


"People are always saying, 'Will you open up a store near me?'" Cullen said. She would like to expand within a few years and is considering locations on the New Hampshire Seacoast and in Pennsylvania and Connecticut.

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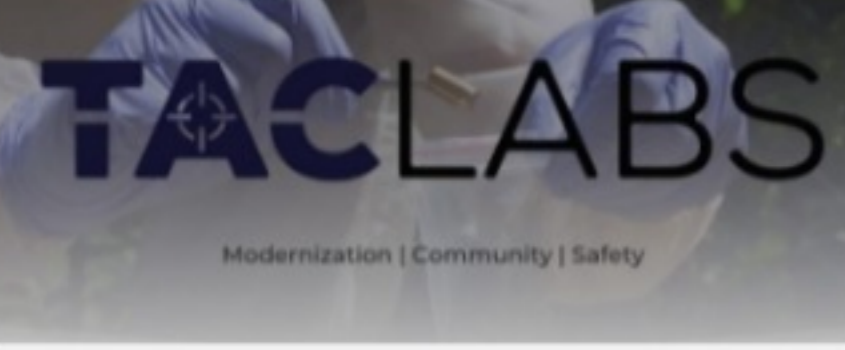
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