

PORTSMOUTH

CITY LIFESTYLE™



The Holiday Issue

DECEMBER 2024
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inside *the issue*

DECEMBER 2024 | HOLIDAYS & GIVING



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On the Cover

The beloved Lobster Trap Holiday tree at The Beachmere Inn in Ogunquit, a holiday tradition for 87 years. Thank you to owner Sarah Diment for graciously sharing this image with us.

Photography:
Sarah Diment

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ARTICLE BY ANN KATHRYN KELLY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY FRIENDS FOREVER INTERNATIONAL

DEVELOPING SOCIAL CHANGEMAKERS THROUGH LESSONS IN RESILIENCE,
INCLUSIVITY, EMPATHY, AND ACTION

Stephen Martineau



PRAGMATIC POSITIVITY

World Peace, Grown Locally: It's at the center of everything Friends Forever International (FFI) does. The organization—a political and non-denominational—is a not-for-profit 501(3)(c) with roots in Portsmouth and now headquartered in Durham. FFI started nearly

communities wanted and needed all along. We'd heard from local school administrators that there were incorrect and hurtful perceptions among students in their own halls." He paused, adding: "So, we began to imagine how we can translate the work we've done

"WE WANT TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE BECOME THE BEST VERSION OF THEMSELVES."

40 years ago with a focus on Northern Ireland, rocked by sectarian violence.

"Our founder and Portsmouth Rotarian Bob Raiche brought the first group of Northern Irish teenage boys—five Catholic and five Protestant—to the Seacoast in 1986," FFI Executive Director Stephen Martineau says. That first cohort discovered a life-changing truth when they arrived. They saw they were more alike than different and could change long-held beliefs by working with, not against, each other. It's a foundational value FFI continues to emphasize decades later.

Sitting down with Martineau was a welcome reunion. Having served on the FFI board of directors 15 years ago, I was familiar with its international mission of youth-focused conflict resolution, which has graduated more than 2,000 alumni from around the globe. Yet I learned that FFI, four years ago, turned the lens back to where it all started: New Hampshire.

"COVID contributed to this shift when travel stopped, sidelining our cross-cultural immersion programs," Martineau explains. "But really, the pivot was something our local

internationally to address issues in our own backyard."

FFI developed programs exclusively for New Hampshire youth to nurture social changemakers with the desire and capability to take on issues affecting them and their peers, right here. Courses instill lifelong lessons in resilience, inclusivity, empathy, and action that youth will carry into their adult lives, jobs, and locales far and wide. Martineau calls it "pragmatic positivity." He underscores that these programs require focus, teamwork, deep self-reflection, and a willingness to be honest, vulnerable, and fair. FFI expects commitment from applicants to put in the work to better themselves and the world around them.

In addition to a structured curriculum, every program centers around giving back, with participants volunteering hours of time to local nonprofits like Gather and the Pope Humane Society. "We want to help young people become the best version of themselves so they can help their community be the best version of itself," Martineau continues. "I remind them: This is not just about you. It's about the impact

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“COST MUST NOT BE A BARRIER TO DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS LEADERS HERE ON THE SEACOAST.”

you’ll have on 10, 20, 50 people this year and over the next 40 to 50 years.”

He points to Luna Landers, a high school junior from New London, who completed an empathetic debating program. FFI offers a different take, teaching that it’s not about one team winning and the other losing, but both teams reaching an unbiased middle ground. Conscious listening and respect for all points of view are paramount. Inspired by the FFI course, Luna planned a daylong event where she invited state representatives to workshop with her and classmates until reaching a consensus on differing political views. Enthusiasm for the event was strong, with many students from neighboring schools also in attendance.

More than 150 youth from across the state have graduated from FFI programs to date, earning high school credits that New Hampshire’s Department of Education recognizes. The best part? Programming is 100% funded through scholarships. “Cost must not be a barrier to developing the next generation of community and business leaders here on the Seacoast,” Martineau says.

Bob Raiche passed in 2014, but Martineau is certain he would be thrilled with FFI’s expanded mission that, while still global, is also wholly New Hampshire-focused. Learn more about FFI’s programs, application process, and ways to get involved at ff.international.

BUSINESS INFO

Friends Forever International
1 Morgan Way | Durham
ff.international



Luna Landers



FFI Students Summer, Eva and Luna



FFI participants Adelle, May, & Hannah