



Portsmouth boys win third straight state title

SPORTS, 1B

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Il Cornicello ranks high



Il Cornicello has added a new face to its leadership team: Jackie Bradley, an alumna of several well-known restaurants around the Seacoast. BRANDON NG/SEACOASTONLINE

Exeter's restaurant among highest 10% of U.S. restaurants on Resy

Brandon Ng Portsmouth Herald | USA TODAY NETWORK

EXETER — Il Cornicello is among some elite company. • The rustic Italian eatery on Water Street, renowned for its handmade pasta and rotating menu, was among the top 10% of all U.S. restaurants on Resy, the reservation platform owned by American Express that connects diners with high-end restaurants. • The platform hosts restaurants across many major cities, including New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago and Washington, D.C. Il Cornicello, led by executive chef Joshua Herlihy, has put Exeter on the map. • “For a local spot in Exeter to be performing in that same elite decile — outperforming 90% of venues on the platform — is a massive win for our community,” said Tim Ober, who owns Il Cornicello with his wife, Susan. **See IL CORNICELLO, Page 2A**

Sen. Collins officially running for sixth term

Margie Cullen USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW ENGLAND

Maine Republican Sen. Susan Collins is officially running for re-election, setting up what may be one of the most competitive and closely watched U.S. Senate races in the country.

Collins announced her campaign in a social media video where she unboxed a pair of gray New Balance sneakers.

“This is perfect for 2026,” she said as she took out the shoe. “Because I’m running.”

While the five-term senator had been expected to run again, the announcement confirms what is set to be a showdown for Senate.



Collins

Collins, a centrist Republican, has been criticized for expressing disagreement with President Donald Trump but providing a reliable Republican vote when the margin is slim. Polls have found her to be unpopular in the state, but she has proven resilient in elections: in 2020, when former President Joe Biden won the state by nine points, Collins defeated well-funded Democrat Sara Gideon by nearly as much.

This year, she is likely to face another steep challenge. Maine Gov. Janet Mills, backed by Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-NY, and oyster farmer Graham Platner, backed by Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-VT, are locked in a competitive primary battle for the chance to oppose her, and Democrats are hoping her seat will be one they can flip in their quest to retake the Senate.

According to the Federal Election Commission, Collins has the most cash on hand with just over \$8 million as of Dec. 31. Platner has about half, with \$3.7 million, and Mills trails with \$1.3 million.

Dover Market and Deli replaces former Duston's Bakery

Sarah Donovan Foster's Daily Democrat USA TODAY NETWORK

DOVER — Dover Market and Deli, a new convenience store and deli, has officially replaced the former Duston's Bakery and Deli at 153 Portland Ave.

Owner Kevin Patel said the store opened Feb. 6. A major draw of his store, he said, is beer, wine and tobacco will be

sold for low prices, the same as Market Basket. Craft beers will also be sold. He said he has multiple other shops with similar offerings in Maine.

The convenience store offers food, too, including deli items, pizza and fresh baked cookies. Hot food includes French fries, wings, chopped cheese and mac and cheese bites, among other items. Chips, candy, soda, granola bars and other convenience-store items are available

as well.

The former business closed in 2024 amid a lengthy legal dispute between founders Robert and Barbara Duston, and Dennis and Krista LaBrasca who had bought the business in 2022. Business partners Kevin Patel and Saumin Patel, who previously said he's the owner of downtown convenience store Smiley's Discount Beverage in Dover, purchased it at auction. An overhang, which currently

sits over the front of the building that still says Duston's will be changed, said Kevin Patel.

Seating area, food can be ordered

There's a seating area at the front of the shop, said Kevin Patel, with coffee and a Red Bull station. Flavors are

See DELI, Page 2A

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