

DARTMOUTH HEALTH

124 laid off, 303 open positions eliminated

By ALEX EBRAHIMI
Valley News Staff Writer

LEBANON — Dartmouth Health has laid off 124 employees and eliminated 303 open positions across Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon and the Dartmouth Hitchcock Clinics Southern Region.

In an announcement issued at 5:32 p.m. on Tuesday, the health system justified the job cuts as a means to “improve long-term sustainability.”

Dartmouth Health, a Lebanon-based non-profit organization with more than \$1 billion in assets, previously faced a \$63.5 million

deficit, the Valley News reported in June.

Changes include the restructuring of executive roles and administrative leadership positions, as well as the elimination of select programs, the organization said.

The health system doesn’t expect “these employment actions to negatively impact patients, as they have been carefully planned with patient needs at top consideration.”

Rising operating expenses, which have grown by 12%, are outpacing patient revenues, Dartmouth Health said.

“Labor, supply and drug costs continue to rise, while insurance companies are paying less and taking longer to pay,” officials said in

a prepared statement.

The current pace of expenses, DH said, “is unsustainable and further adjustments were necessary.”

“The employees affected by these changes have made meaningful contributions to Dartmouth Health, our patients and our communities,” Dr. Joanne Conroy, CEO and president of Dartmouth Health, said in a statement. “Some have spent many years serving this organization. The decision to eliminate a position or program does not diminish the value of the work these colleagues

SEE DARTMOUTH HEALTH A4

WOODSTOCK

Board fills two more seats

Reed, Ford appointed as some residents walk out

By SOFIA LANGLOIS
Valley News Staff Writer

WOODSTOCK — The Selectboard has appointed two residents to fill vacant seats until the next election, after most of the original board resigned this year.

Clay Reed and Ben Ford are the newest members and will serve until Town Meeting 2027, when the original terms end.

With a full house at the Tuesday meeting, the Selectboard of three — including original member Norm Frates Jr. and recently elected members MaryAnn Sweeney and Susan Chiefsky — considered six applicants for the two open seats. After an approximately 10-minute executive session, the board unanimously appointed Reed and Ford, prompting some residents to walk out.

Several attendees expressed support for Byron Kelly, a former Woodstock police chief, and were unhappy with the decision.

“When you didn’t take the offer from Byron, all of his institutional knowledge, all of his caring, all of his experience, you’re just throwing it away,” said Gay Travers, who had been appointed as a temporary Selectboard member in May.

The turmoil follows a period of turnover on the Selectboard, leaving only one member elected by a Town Meeting vote. Since May, six newcomers have joined, either by special election or temporary appointment.

Some residents stuck around and participated in the general public comment opportunity. Village resident Elise Tarlow told the members she feels they made a huge mistake overlooking Kelly. She added that Reed’s wife, Brenda Blakeman, serves as a trustee and therefore the couple would act together on the joint board.

“To choose him when he has less votes and you know a huge portion of your constituents do not feel comfortable with that layout, it’s shocking, and it’s really not okay,” said Tarlow.

Travers, in her comment, pointed out that the current members are newcomers, but Kelly lived his whole life in Woodstock and

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SEE WOODSTOCK A5

LEBANON

‘Something that’s needed’



ALEX DRIEHAUS / Valley News

Billy, left, and Larissa Sharff refresh a wooden playset at Cloud Street Kids indoor playroom in Lebanon on Monday. The Sharffs hope to open to the public in mid-October and plan to host birthday parties in addition to their regular open play hours.

With help from advisors, couple is bringing indoor play space to Upper Valley

By LIZ SAUCHELLI
Valley News Staff Writer

LEBANON — When they’re looking for a place for their children to play inside, Billy and Larissa Sharff often have to travel an hour away for indoor play spaces.

“Why is there not enough to do in the Upper Valley for kids?” Larissa Sharff would wonder as her family traveled back to Cornish from Manchester or Keene, among other locations.

The Sharffs decided to do something about it: start an indoor playroom of their own. They’re currently renovating a roughly 2,000-square-foot space in the former Revo Casino Spot next to Lebanon Village Pizza

on Hanover Street. They’re calling it Cloud Street Kids, and they hope to open in mid-October.

“There’s a wide variety in what play spaces can look like,” Larissa Sharff said. “We’re more of a playroom with some climbing structures, but also hands-on toys, things for children ages zero to 10.”

The Sharffs have two children, ages 5 and 10. Billy Sharff is a filmmaker and children’s book author; and Larissa Sharff previously worked at the Upper Valley Food Co-Op in White River Junction. Cloud Street Kids will be their first brick-and-mortar business together.

Larissa Sharff had been thinking of starting an indoor play space for about two years,

and around five months ago the couple started to get more serious about their plans. They went looking at commercial spaces in the Lebanon area and connected with SCORE, a nonprofit organization that helps people looking to start small businesses.

“Lebanon has always been our dream spot,” Billy Sharff said during a recent phone interview that Larissa joined, too. “The Upper Valley is spread out, but it feels like downtown Lebanon is the center of everywhere.”

When people think about play areas for children, often they picture blaring music

SEE PLAY SPACE A4

ART NOTES

Debut novel a love letter to Finland

By MARION UMPLEBY
Valley News Correspondent

The first time Ford von Reyn visited Finland, before he’d even disembarked the plane, he felt an affinity for the country.

The Finnish classical music playing over the speakers at touchdown stirred something in him. Later he’d hear locals speaking Finnish on the streets of Helsinki and become enamored with the language’s complexity – its subtleties of pronunciation and the long list of noun cases.

That trip was in 1984, when von Reyn, a physician and professor emeritus of medicine who special-

izes in infectious diseases, journeyed to Finland with International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, a nonpartisan federation of doctors. The group won the Nobel Peace Prize the following year for its research and anti-war efforts.

Decades later, von Reyn, a Thetford resident who retired as a researcher at the Geisel School of Medicine last November, has never lost his love for Finland and its language.

“I’m a great advocate for Finland. I’m a real Fennophile,” von Reyn said in a recent interview in Hanover.

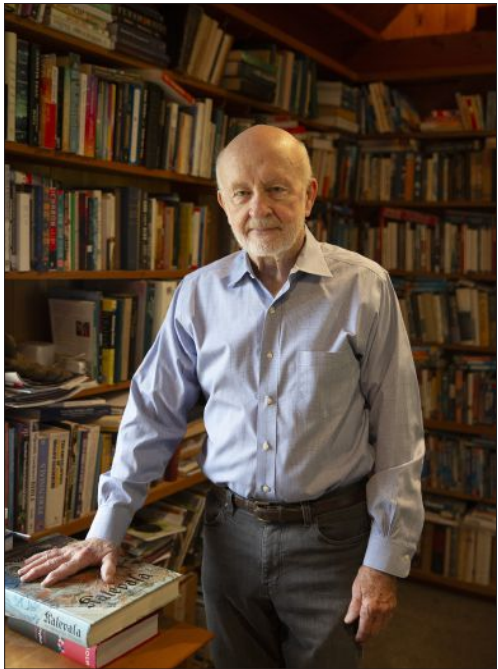
That adoration comes through

in von Reyn’s debut novel “Love from Afar: Finland,” in which a New Hampshire ski salesman shares a decades-long correspondence with a Finnish woman he meets while participating in a Quaker peace delegation in Helsinki during the Cold War.

Writing the novel marked a return to creative writing for von Reyn, a practice that he began as an English major at Dartmouth

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ALEX DRIEHAUS / Valley News
Ford von Reyn, of Thetford, recently published his debut novel “Love from Afar: Finland.”



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