



**NEWS
FOR THE
FUTURE**



 THE KEENE SENTINEL

COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT **2022**

WELCOME

During a time of national media attention on the challenging prospects for local news organizations, we find readers more frequently wanting to know how The Sentinel is weathering the current environment. In one sense, it's comforting and encouraging to hear this, as it shows their heartwarming level of engagement with and concern for this community news organization and their understanding that a local news enterprise can play an important role in strengthening its community.

But it also suggests that we should do a better job telling valued subscribers, readers and the community what we've been up to as we strive, on an increasingly 24/7 basis, to fulfill the same mission of serving the news and information needs of the region that has guided us for over 220 years.

With that in mind, we have prepared this report to highlight some significant recent examples that we believe demonstrate the impact of our journalism.

As you read through these pages, I hope you will appreciate how dedicated our staff is in service to

the region. And I hope this report will also help demonstrate how critical the support and commitment of the community is to us in continuing that service, whether that support comes through print and digital subscriptions or from generous crowdfunding or other philanthropic funding that, over the past couple of years, has made possible expanding our coverage of the region.

So, this document aims to give you a flavor that, at a time some other newsrooms are reducing staff or shuttering and there is talk of local "news deserts" in other parts of the country, The Sentinel's ongoing service to the Monadnock Region continues and is even growing stronger. We know that wouldn't be possible without the community's support. We're extremely grateful for it, and it inspires us to continue making an impact.



Tom Ewing, Owner and Publisher

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Ewing".

MISSION STATEMENT

The reader of The Sentinel will feel a sense of belonging and will be inspired and empowered to engage in community. This is made possible by an innovative, proactive, caring and responsive news organization that serves as a trusted source and civic partner.

OUR PLEDGE TO READERS

The Sentinel keeps watch over the Monadnock Region, standing as a trusted source and community partner since 1799, always locally owned, always produced by your neighbors and always delivering the news you need to help make our community stronger, together.

MEET THE TEAM



Tom Ewing
Owner and Publisher



Bill Bilodeau
Managing Editor-News
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Rick Green
Statehouse Reporter



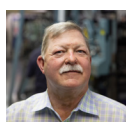
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Director of Digital & Design



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Visual Journalist
(Photography and Video)



Kelvin Parker
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Kevin Pearson
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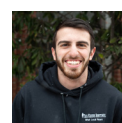
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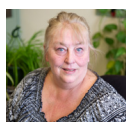
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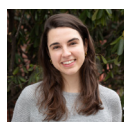
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STORIES WITH IMPACT

'THIS SHOULDN'T HAPPEN': INSIDE CHESHIRE MEDICAL'S ICU

By Olivia Belanger
Photos by Hannah Schroeder
January 14, 2022



Andrea, an LNA at Cheshire Medical who did not wish to share her last name, dons a gown to respond to a call in a patient's room in the Thompson Unit at Cheshire Medical.

It was the height of the latest surge of the COVID-19 pandemic, and I kept hearing how bad the influx of these patients was for local hospitals. For weeks, we reported hospitals' struggles with high case rates and bed shortages through quick phone calls with officials. And yes, those stories are important. But what we weren't getting was access to see these issues firsthand.

What we weren't reporting was the human aspect.

I fought hard to convince Cheshire Medical Center in Keene to let me talk with staff and to witness the chaos unfold. Typically, its protocol — like many hospitals — doesn't allow reporters to be in the trenches. It took months of pushing, but eventually the hospital realized that the best way they can convince people to get vaccinated and take COVID-19 seriously was with our help. I'm really proud of [how this story came out](#), and for how hard I worked to make it happen.



STORIES WITH IMPACT

AT LEAST THREE INJURED IN LATE-NIGHT BLAZE IN DOWNTOWN KEENE

By Molly Bolan
Photos by Hannah Schroeder
January 8, 2022



I had just settled into bed the night of Jan. 8 when my roommate knocked on my door.

She apologized, but knowing I was the Sentinel's reporter-on-call that evening, she figured I'd want to see what her friend had just sent her – a video of flames pouring out of Cobblestone Ale House on Main Street.

I called my editor, put on my warmest turtleneck and was out the door.

I joined dozens of other people who gathered to watch several local fire departments tackle the flames, which ultimately destroyed all the businesses at 151 Main Street. I remained at the scene for hours, chatting with onlookers and first responders, until Keene Fire Chief Mark Howard had a free minute [to share the details](#).

I had covered a handful of fires before, but this was

something else – a downtown staple, beloved by Keene State students and locals alike, completely destroyed.

In the following days, the fire revealed not just how much the community cared about the business, but how much residents cared for each other. GoFundME campaigns were created for the bar's staff, as well as tenants of the second-floor apartment.

On Jan 9., I walked back to 151 Main Street to photograph the aftermath, and spent the day reaching out to people who had been nearby when the fire started. We [pieced together a story](#) of how the evening played out, documenting a moment in local history when a beloved downtown bar went up in flames.

As reporters, what we write isn't necessarily just for today's readers. We ensure that the human elements of these historic moments are recorded for those who call the Monadnock Region home in the coming decades.

STORIES WITH IMPACT

PUBLIC SCHOOL ACADEMIC PROFICIENCY DOWN, TRUANCY UP

By Rick Green | Photo by Hannah Schroeder
March 19, 2022

Camilla Bryans, 13, of Marlborough attends a protest at Keene High with her dad.



The Keene Sentinel story, “**Public school academic proficiency down, truancy up**,” on March 19 provided important coverage of significant deficiencies at local schools.

Problems of fighting, vandalism, disrespectfulness, truancy involving almost half of high school students along with widespread failure to meet academic proficiency standards have roiled local schools after two years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some of these issues extend statewide. Statistics provided by the N.H. Department of Education and interviews with local stakeholders informed the story.

This news article together with coverage of protests and a police response at Keene High School led parents to confront school officials, who promised transparent and constructive efforts to solve these problems.

Educators quoted in the story outlined potential solutions for

students who feel they have fallen behind academically and steps the school district is taking to make improvements.

Good news coverage makes the public aware of problems so that solutions can be identified and so that public officials can be held to account. By those measures, this story was a success, but much more work needs to be done to cover issues of public concern in education, and The Keene Sentinel is committed to those efforts.

STORIES WITH IMPACT

LAURIE LIST RELEASE SHEDS DIM LIGHT ON OFFICERS' INCLUSION

By Ryan Spencer | Photo by Hannah Schroeder
January 8, 2022



File Photo by Olivia Belanger

STORIES WITH IMPACT

WITH RENT RISING AT DOWNTOWN APARTMENTS, TENANTS WORRY ABOUT FUTURE

By Caleb Symons

Photos by Hannah Schroeder

July 17, 2021



Laura Tobin in her Central Square apartment.

It's no secret that affordable housing is scarce in the Monadnock Region. So, when we learned last July that the new owner of an apartment building on Keene's Central Square planned to raise rents, reporter Caleb Symons (who has since left The Sentinel to continue his journalism career in New York City) looked at **the impact this decision would have on tenants**.

One of them, a 38-year-old woman named Laura who had been living there since 2016, saw her rent go from \$800 to \$1,200 a month, leaving her uncertain about her ability to afford living there.

The day after the story published, **multiple people contacted Caleb** to offer their assistance helping Laura find a new home. In a letter to Sentinel readers last November, Caleb wrote of his reaction to this outpouring of support:

"We work hard to uncover the truth, telling stories like Laura's, because we care about keeping our community informed.

But while reporters can expose injustice — housing insecurity, political corruption, environmental decay — only you can correct it. So often you take our work and do just that. By putting faith in us, and in each other, you've renewed mine. Thank you."



When I joined The Sentinel in January, the N.H. Attorney General's Office had just released the first portion of the Exculpatory Evidence Schedule, or Laurie List. The list, which had long been secret, includes police officers whose credibility could be called into question in court.

It was a big topic to tackle in my first week as the criminal justice and public safety reporter but one

that had clear importance to the local community, whom police are supposed to serve. With the



help of the full newsroom, I was able to **pull together an account of what we do — and do not — know** about the incidents that landed the officers on the list. The resulting article **raised questions** about what information about police misconduct the public is entitled to, while at the same time holding officers and the attorney general's office to account for the community they serve.

CLOSING

When I came to The Keene Sentinel nine years ago, I was struck by the strong bonds among this newspaper, its readers and the residents of the Monadnock Region. I found it unusual, encouraging and something to build upon. After all, news about newspapers hasn't been uplifting of late – more than 2,000 have shuttered in this country in the last few years. Here, though, things seemed different. Here, things seem sustainable.

But not if we stood still.

You read earlier of our mission, and a part about being a trusted civic partner. Without earning trust from the public, we can't be effective; without being a partner with our readers, we can't be responsive. So, those two aspects of our mission – trust and partnership – serve as guiding principles of work and have led to the following and more:

The recent launch of the Monadnock Region Health Reporting Lab, an ambitious solutions journalism approach exploring many of the access challenges this region experiences with health care.

The addition, late last year, of a Statehouse reporter who covers the politics and policies coming out of Concord and make sense of those impacts on this region.

The addition of a digital audience engagement journalist who monitors our social media interactions in order to be more responsive to matters raised on these platforms and to make sure we are adding factual, collegial information to community conversations.

The launch, in 2018, of a partnership with the Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship to establish Radically Rural, a two-day summit that brings experts to Keene to share knowledge and ideas on how to make small towns more successful. As part of that summit, which attracts hundreds to the region each year, a community journalism track is included to foster a strong national network of rural journalists.

The inclusion this year of The Sentinel in Trusting News training, a proven process by which we will become more transparent with the public on our reporting methods and practices.

Training in Solutions Journalism, which identifies problems to be solved and then finds those individuals, institutions and communities who are having success.

Implicit in our mission is that we be a good community citizen, and this takes place in numerous, traditional ways of supporting charitable causes, such as the Monadnock United Way and the recent renovation of the Colonial Performing Arts Center. But in some untraditional ways, too, like recognizing folks who make meaningful local impact, including:

The Ruth and James Ewing Arts Awards, which, each year, pay tribute to excellence among local artists.

The Business Journal's annual Trendsetters' Awards, which honor young professionals who are making a difference in this community.

The annual Extraordinary Women Awards, which recognize outstanding achievement by women throughout the area.

And, for the first time this year, the Keene Sentinel Athlete of the Year Awards, which round up a year's worth of weekly athletic accomplishments.

There's much to balance and much to do to fulfill our mission of civic responsibility. We don't always succeed; we don't always get it right; we are not perfect. But in all that we do, we look to build trust and a reputation as a caring organization.

In those pursuits, we won't stand still.



Terrence Williams, President and COO

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terrence L. Williams".