

Fire pushes back closing on sale of Laconia State School — see page 5

The Laconia Daily Sun

WEEKEND

SATURDAY, AUGUST 8, 2026

VOL. 27 NO. 39

LACONIA, N.H.

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A gift that keeps on giving: Partnership sends 300+ kids on Lake Winni cruise



Children from the Boys & Girls Club of the Lakes Region board the M/S Mount Washington on Wednesday morning, for their complementary cruise thanks to fundraising efforts from the Christmas in July Cruise, organized by the Greater Lakes Region Children's Fund. See story, page 4. (Delaney Nickerson/The Laconia Daily Sun photo)

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Tickets purchased for Children's Fund's Christmas in July Cruise matched by Mount Washington Cruises

By DELANEY NICKERSON
THE LACONIA DAILY SUN

WEIRS BEACH — Following a successful Christmas in July Cruise, hosted by the Greater Lakes Region Children's Fund on July 9, each ticket sold was matched by Jared Maraio, general manager of Mount Washington Cruises, to provide a free experience on the Mount to Lakes Region children Wednesday morning for the fourth year running.

Jennifer Kelley, executive director of the Children's Fund, said more than 256 people purchased tickets for the Christmas in July Cruise. There were 323 kids from the Boys & Girls Club of the Lakes Region, the Lakes Region Community Services Family Resource Center, and other area children who wanted to come on the cruise, so Maraio and Mount Washington Cruises made up the difference, so every kid could get the chance to cruise around Lake Winnepesaukee.

Onboard, kids were met with a variety of games and

festive Christmas-themed activities. Lakes Region singer-songwriter Katie Dobbins played dance music and led sing-alongs. Free ice cream and face painting were also available for the hundreds of kids on board, courtesy of Ideal Concrete Block and Lakes Region Home Builders Association. For the first time, children had the opportunity to write letters to Santa, as well as meet him, and tell him their holiday wishes.

Santa was portrayed by Mike Grandmont, a bus driver for the Boys & Girls Club of the Lakes Region. He worked in construction for 45 years.

"When I worked alongside the road, putting waterline pipe in, I'd see a school bus go by. I'd say, 'Wow.' The kids seemed like they were having fun, yelling and screaming, giving the bus driver a hard time," Grandmont said. "It just felt like, wow, when I retire, I want to drive a school bus."

Grandmont is now in his sixth year at the Boys & Girls Club, and his first year portraying Santa. "I love it. The

kids are super, and they all love me."

"Each year, our community engagement team grows, and with that, each event offers more activities. And this is just one of the events that the Greater Lakes Region Children's Fund offers now year-round, instead of just the auction and Pub Mania," said Paige Thompson, chair of the Children's Fund Community Engagement Committee.

"With the Greater Lakes Region Children's Fund, not only do they support us with grants and funding to help us do more programming, but they are fantastic sponsors of the Mount Washington cruise trip for us. We are able to go every single summer with our kids, and they kind of light up. A lot of them, even though they're from this area, don't actually ever get this opportunity to go on the cruise. So, they really love it," said Bob Carter, director of operations at the Boys & Girls Club and currently serving as interim area director for Lakes Region after school programs.



Santa, portrayed by Mike Grandmont, bus driver for the Boys & Girls Club of the Lakes Region, prepares to board the M/S Mount Washington on Wednesday morning for the Kids Cruise, made possible by the Greater Lakes Region Children's Fund. (Delaney Nickerson/The Laconia Daily Sun photo)

Carol Stone, community implementation team coordinator at the Family Resource Center, said on the Kids Cruise this year, her team brought children ranging in age from a 3-month-old in a carrier, to teenagers.

"I had a couple of moms email me back and say, 'Oh

my gosh, my daughter talks about this all the time, I can't believe she's going to get to go on it,'" Stone said. "Because it's not cheap, you know it's an expensive thing. And to be able to take your children for free onto this boat for the morning is just absolutely amazing."



Saturday, Aug 15, 2026 • 7:00 PM

*Harmony on Lake Winnepesaukee!
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MORE INFORMATION

- SCHEDULE
- LOCATIONS
- TICKETS

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FRIDAY - Singing & socializing at the Jamboree Dinner
SATURDAY - Joe Kopka Memorial Mini-Golf Tournament, Open Mic Quartet Singing, Tag "Jamb," and don't miss the Great Gathering Show & Afterglow on Saturday evening

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