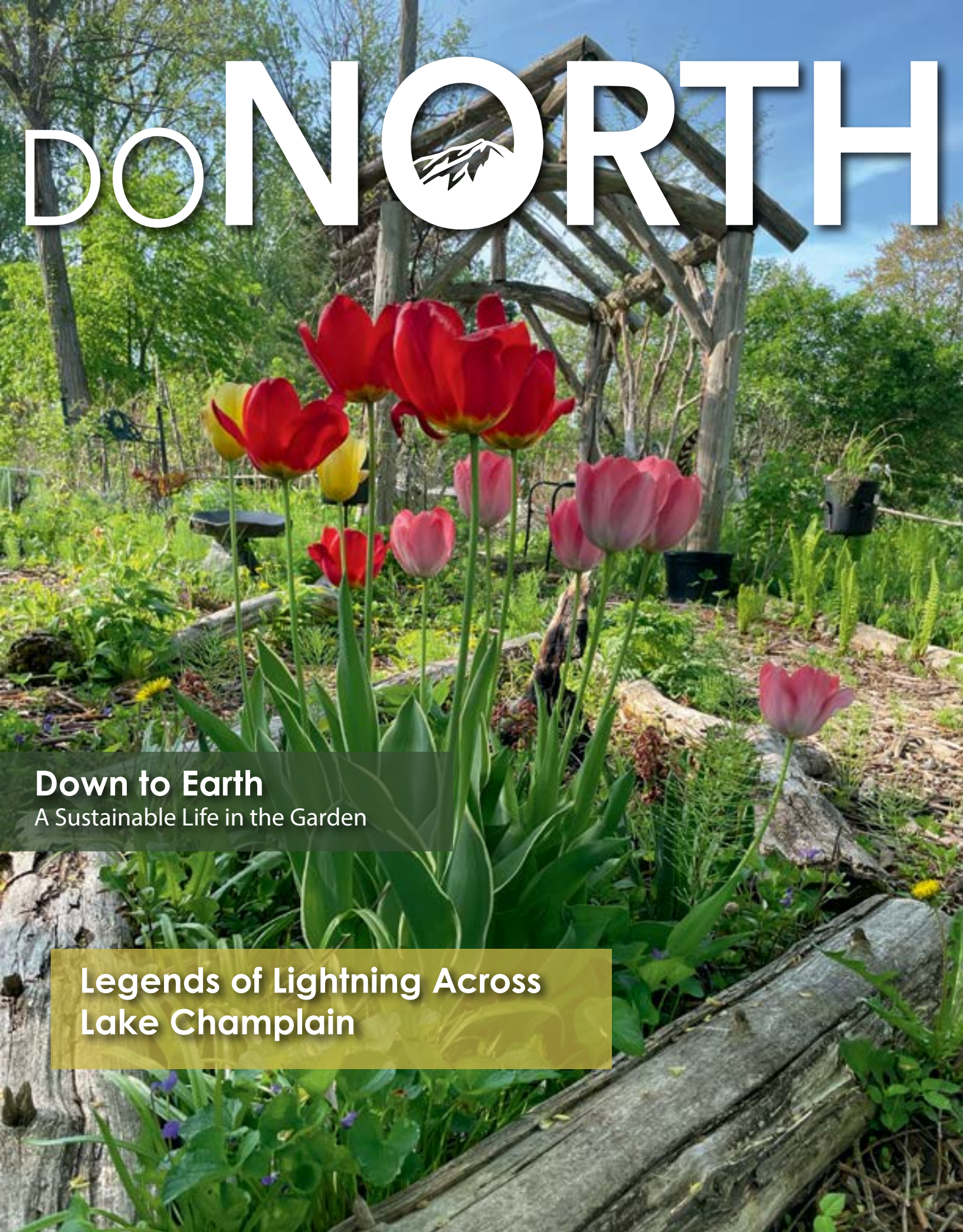


DO NORTH

The background image is a vibrant garden scene. In the foreground, several tulips in shades of red and pink are in full bloom, their green leaves reaching upwards. Behind them, a rustic wooden trellis structure made of weathered logs stands against a backdrop of lush green trees. A butterfly is visible on one of the flowers. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

Down to Earth

A Sustainable Life in the Garden

Legends of Lightning Across
Lake Champlain

Valcour

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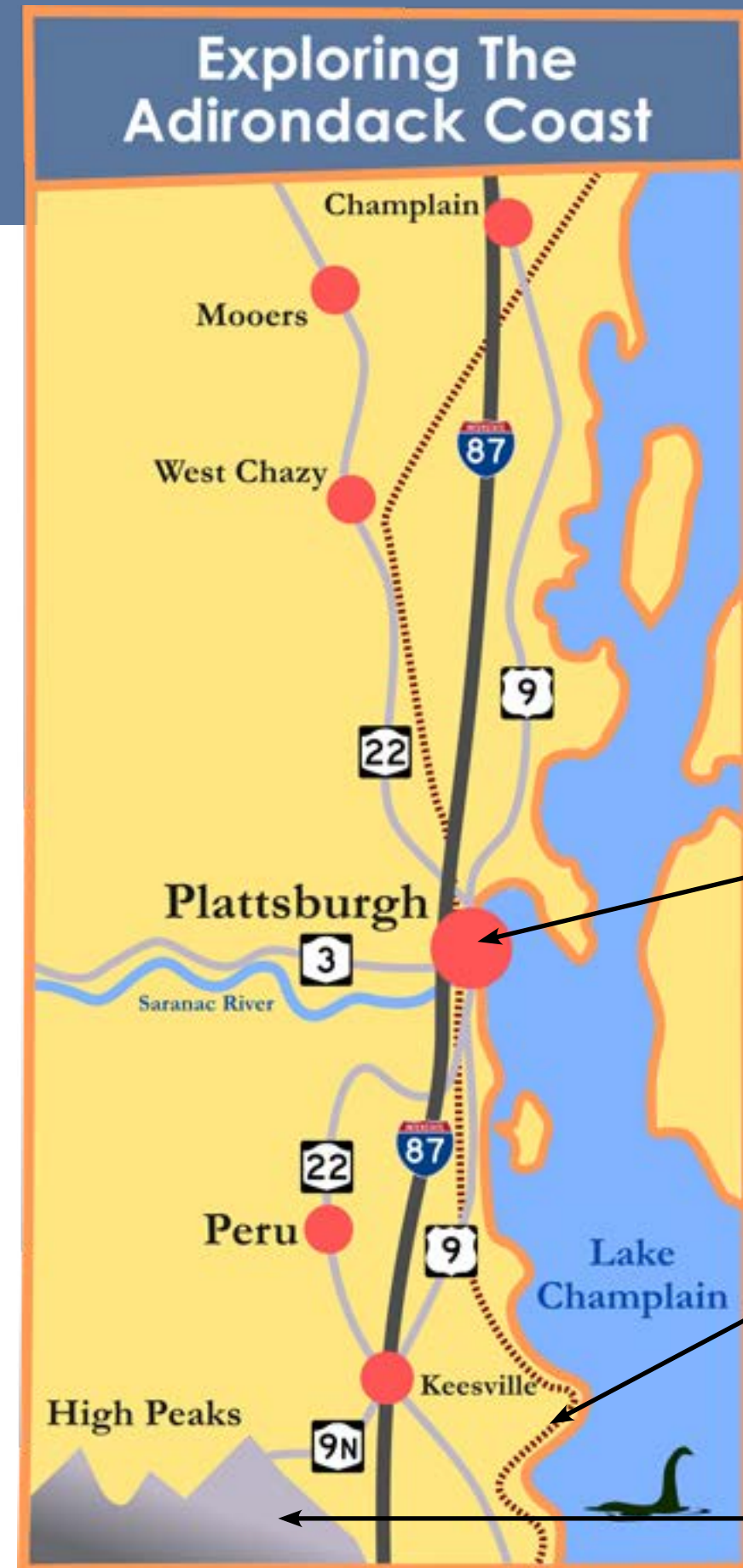
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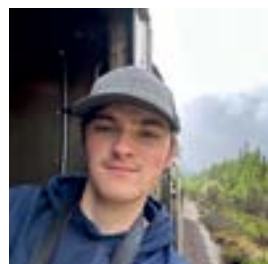


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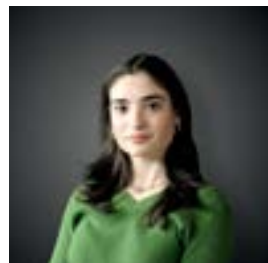
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Cold

WRITERS



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Managing Editor

Harrison Smith studies TV-Video and Audio-Radio production at SUNY Plattsburgh, with an interest in documentary film and journalism. Harrison is passionate about the railroad industry and its impact on tourism. He enjoys playing bluegrass music and traveling.



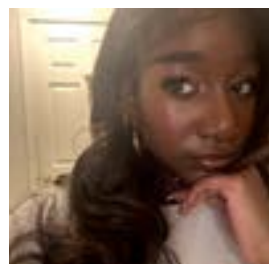
Sophia Gambino
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Sophia is a senior at SUNY Plattsburgh, studying environmental studies, Latin American studies, and journalism. She is from western New York, and enjoys thrifting and spending time outside. This is her first semester with DoNorth.



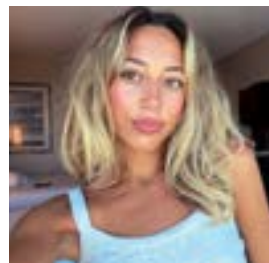
Anna Reisman
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Anna Reisman is a junior at SUNY Plattsburgh with a major in English, and a journalism minor. She is from Long Island, New York, with interests in writing fiction and journalism. She enjoys reading, thrifting, and spending time with her loved ones. This is Anna's first semester writing for DoNorth.



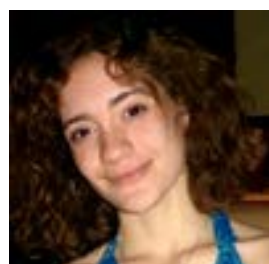
Brionne Thompson
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Brionne is a senior at SUNY Plattsburgh, majoring in Journalism with a minor in Political Science. She is from Yonkers, New York and when she is not writing she can be found baking or painting & drawing. This is Brionne's second semester at DoNorth.



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Kiersten is a senior at SUNY Plattsburgh majoring in Public Relations. She is from Long Island, New York. In her free time she enjoys traveling, reading, listening to music, and hiking.



Jada Del Rio
Writer

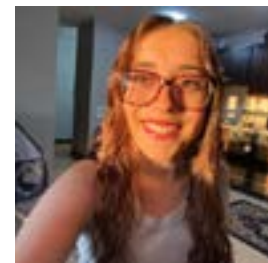
Jada is a sophomore majoring in Law and Justice/English minoring in Philosophy. From Central New York, looking to become a lawyer, studying in New York City. She participated in traveling to many different countries along with volunteering.

DESIGNERS



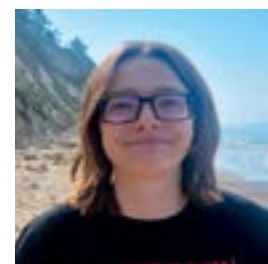
Harper Poulin
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Harper Poulin is a sophomore majoring in Digital Media Production and minoring in Graphic Design at SUNY Plattsburgh. Harper is a person who loves all forms of crafts and expressing their creativity. They enjoy arts, puzzles, and design.



Zena O'Leary-Cumber
Designer

Zena is a senior at SUNY Plattsburgh and joined DoNorth in her last semester. She enjoyed getting to join us this semester and learn the ins-and-outs of magazine design.



Katherine Frey
Designer

Katherine is a junior at SUNY Plattsburgh majoring in Art who has lived in Plattsburgh since childhood. This is her first semester teaming-up with DoNorth as a designer for the magazine, something she's been wanting to be a part of for a very long time. She also always had an interest in film, writing and photography, and on her free time likes listening to music and taking walks.

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Sophia Gambino
Jada Del Rio

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Faculty Adviser

Jack Downs

Photo Contributors

Ryan Baker
Hugh Strobel
Jane Desotelle

MEET THE TEAM

DoNORTH



EDITOR'S LETTERS

I have a confession: I'm not a big fan of talking to strangers. Walking up to somebody I've never met before isn't usually my idea of a great time. However, taking on the role of distributor for DoNorth magazine required me to do just that. From car dealerships and coffee shops around Plattsburgh to the bustling Albany-Rensselaer train station, the only way to get DoNorth into the hands of the people was by talking my way up to the tables, racks and shelves of the community.

And something strange happened. Instead of dreading each new introduction, I began to look forward to it. At each stop on the distribution route, I found enthusiasm and enticing aromas at Island Vybz, appreciation at Pray's Farmers Market, and positive remarks at Beartown Ski Area.

DoNorth's circulation is entirely dependent on local businesses, establishments, organizations and community spaces. The positive reception I found while traveling around the Adirondack Coast showed me that we're all on the same page about how we thrive as communities in a region.

The idea of DoNorth and its funder, the Clinton County Chamber of Commerce, is simple: when we collaborate and cooperate, we're able to grow business, community, and culture together.

And here at DoNorth, we work toward that goal one magazine at a time.

Sincerely,
Harrison Smith



Thank you for reading our 2026 edition of DoNorth magazine. DoNorth is dedicated to celebrating the North Country through history, exploration and culture.

At the start of my time at SUNY Plattsburgh, I didn't have a lot of knowledge about the outdoors and exploring the nature around me. DoNorth helped me in that exploration. This magazine is a great way to get to know the people of Plattsburgh, their lives and the beautiful creations they bring to this city, whether it be pieces of art, cuisine or businesses.

I'm from Yonkers, six hours south of Plattsburgh. I grew up surrounded by people and in a loud city with a lot of community. At first, I was pretty intimidated by Plattsburgh, with how quiet it was and how tight-knit this city can be at times.

I began at DoNorth in Spring 2023 as a staff writer and had the opportunity to step into the shoes of an editor position in my senior year in 2025. My first article was on a boathouse and inn. It was so exciting to bring a new personality and business to the forefront of our magazine.

This publication has been such a rewarding experience to close off my college career, and I wanted to thank my staff writers and designers as well for making the magazine come to life this semester.

I hope you enjoy the magnificent stories that go across these pages and open your eyes to the beauty of the North County region.

Sincerely,
Brionne Thompson



Art & Activism

Rockwell Kent's Legacy Lives On In Plattsburgh Gallery Story & Photographs by Brionne Thompson



Inside the walls of SUNY Plattsburgh's Feinberg Library is one of the most significant art collections in the world, and most people unknowingly pass it by.

The Rockwell Kent Gallery is often seen as a quiet corner of campus, but stepping inside reveals something much bigger. The gallery shows the life of a man who used his art, his voice and his career to stand up for human rights during one of the most difficult periods in American history.

Rockwell Kent's career went far beyond his work as a painter of the Adirondacks. He was a printmaker, illustrator, author, farmer, businessman and political activist.

During the Jim Crow era, when racial segregation and discrimination consumed our daily life in America, Kent spoke openly about human rights and labor rights. He believed in fairness for working people and that artists

deserved ownership of their work and fair pay.

Because of his political views, Kent was labeled a communist and blacklisted by major institutions. Exhibitions closed their doors to him, and museums started to distance themselves. Despite this, he continued to create outstanding art.

What makes the Rockwell Kent Gallery so remarkable is that it not only displays his landscapes, but it also shows the full range of his life. Visitors can see detailed pen and ink drawings that show the work he produced just with his hand.

They can also view prints made from metal plates, understanding how he mastered the printing process to create works that could reach almost anyone. His illustrations for *Moby Dick*, published in 1930, helped gain an interest in the novel, and this work remains one of the most requested works connected to his name.





His commercial pieces included textiles and a dinnerware series called “Our America,” which showcased different regions and industries of the United States. Kent was strategic about the business of art and dedicated himself early in his career to protect his copyright and ensure he was paid for his work

Beyond the artwork, the Rockwell Kent collection includes photographs, letters, exhibition materials and political resources that connect his art to the world events that happened around his time. Kent traveled to Greenland, Russia and other foreign lands; those experiences shaped both the images he created and his activism. His engagement with Russian literature influenced his thinking, and some of his paintings draw inspiration directly from Russian plays and authors. Kent later donated a large number of works to museums in the former Soviet Union, primarily because he felt rejected by American institutions during times of political tension.

Art enthusiasts continue to travel to Plattsburgh because this campus holds the largest single showing of Kent’s work. Recently, Molly Eckel, assistant curator of American art at the Columbus Museum of Art, visited to conduct research for her love of American art and Kent’s work. For curators like her, seeing the work in person is essential. Eckel noted that what stands out in this gallery is how it presents the full scope of Kent’s practice, from fine art to commercial design. The access students have here is rare: Many major cities do not offer this kind of direct connection to an artist of this level of significance.

Despite all of this, most students walk past the gallery without realizing its importance. Rockwell Kent is known around the world, but in his own North Country setting, his legacy can often feel quiet. That quiet feeling is part of why visiting the gallery feels less like a routine museum stop and more like discovering something hidden in plain sight.

Visiting the Rockwell Kent gallery is a chance to see how art and activism can exist in the same life, even when the political tensions are high.



Kara Jefts showing her favorite art piece





On a typical morning at In the Mix Bakeshop, customers step in from Durkee Street and head straight for the display case. Some scan the shelves for the week's cupcake flavors, others grab a bagel or croissant and a fresh cup of coffee before work.

For owner Karen Davis, moments like this represent years of work that began in her own home kitchen.

"I had a home business for many years and it was becoming prosperous," Davis said. "It was time to open a storefront. It's been a dream for a long time, so I just made it happen."

Davis opened In the Mix in July 2025, turning a longtime side business into a downtown presence. The bakery offers more than cupcakes and cookies: alongside rotating sweets are breakfast staples and Sunday brunch specials making it a part of many local morning routines. A couple of cozy tables offer the option to stay and enjoy the bright and inviting atmosphere.

The shop's name reflects Davis' approach to baking.



In The Mix

Fresh baked deliciousness for any occasion

Story by: Kirsten Donahue

“When most bakeries make cupcakes or cakes, they use a base vanilla or chocolate cake and add flavor through fillings or toppings,” Davis said. “My philosophy is you get more depth of flavor when you put it all in the mix.”

This philosophy helped her build a loyal following long before the storefront opened. However the transition from home baker to brick-and-mortar owner came with its challenges.

“Opening a brick-and-mortar is completely different than baking at home,” she said. “There is a lot more to think about, including space, equipment and staffing. It was definitely a learning curve.”

From the beginning Davis was intentional about making the bakery welcoming and

accessible. Nearly everything in the shop aside from certain pastries, can also be purchased gluten-free, and customers pay the same price regardless.

“Pretty much everything we make except for the pastries has a gluten-free option,” Davis said. Although gluten and gluten-free baking is done in a shared space, Davis works hard to avoid contamination. “I don’t want to penalize somebody who’s gluten-free. Everyone should be able to walk in and have choices.”

The response has been encouraging. “People have been really supportive,” she said. “We’ve had a lot of repeat customers already.”

Flavors rotate weekly, keeping regulars curious about what will appear next.

“People love the raspberry bar,” she said. “The chocolate chip cookies are pretty amazing, and the cheesecakes fly out of here,” For Davis, the most rewarding part has been watching the community embrace the space she had once imagined.

“It’s something I’ve wanted for a long time,” she said. “To see people coming in and enjoying it, that’s the best part.”

On Sundays, the bakery offers brunch specials with pancake squares, stuffed waffles, breakfast sliders and tot waffles with rotating flavors.

In the Mix Bakeshop is open Wednesday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sundays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Stop by and get in the mix.



Winter Hiking the High Peaks: A Beginner's Guide

Story by Jada Del Rio, Photos by Ryan Baker



When the first light snowfall covers the Adirondacks, most people imagine shoveling the driveway and setting up for the holidays. But for others, that snow signals the start of High Peaks winter hiking: quiet trails, frosted summits and multicolored skies stretching across stunning landscapes. It's this stillness and opportunity that bring in our visitors and locals alike. Matthew Pennise and Ryan Baker, expeditionary studies majors at SUNY Plattsburgh, have a passion for the outdoors

and the High Peaks that eventually led them to winter hiking. Baker, who is originally from Ontario, New York, began hiking about four years ago and was introduced to the Adirondacks by his girlfriend's family. Before that, his visits to Lake Placid were mostly touristy, but summer trips with them led him to tackle the High Peaks which are full of northern hardwood and Canadian boreal forests consisting of vast, beautiful blue lakes and grassy mountain summits. Once he met Pennise, the two

quickly became hiking partners.

For Pennise, a love of the outdoors started even earlier through Boy Scouts. Frequent trips to a camp near Long Lake sparked his interest in mountain hiking, which eventually led him to the High Peaks. Over time, he became a 46er, a milestone reflecting his dedication to summing all 46 Adirondack High Peaks. Meeting Baker added a new dynamic to his adventures, and together they continued exploring the mountains they both cherish.



Matthew Pennise and Sage Kite.



What to Pack?

In the winter, the lakes of the Adirondacks freeze into sheets of ice and the mountains sleep under fresh crisp snow, turning the region into a beautiful, quiet atmosphere. These conditions require the proper gear, more than you would need for the summer trails. Starting with the hiking essentials of food and water, the winter weather adds the need for warm, waterproof boots and a

good pair of socks to keep your feet dry and to prevent blisters. Traction devices such as microspikes, snowshoes, or skis are also a necessity.

"We do a lot of backcountry skiing," Pennise mentioned. "With touring skis, the heel pops out so you can move freely uphill with skins on the bottom, then lock the heel down for the descent."

Headlamps and extra batteries are also

critical. Baker added another tip for safety: "You never know what might happen. You could take a wrong turn or lose your tracks in the snow, and suddenly you're alone in the backcountry."

Even with all the right gear, it's important to know what to do if you become lost.

Stay on Course: Avoid Getting Lost

Winter trails can be tricky with deep snow often hiding footprints, and familiar paths can look completely different blanketed in white. For these conditions, personal accounts are your best defense against the unpredictable. They can offer firsthand advice on navigating the route's trickier stretches.

"Sometimes signs that would usually be visible in the summer can be buried or lower down in the snow," Pennise said. "Just knowing where you are and where you're going makes a huge difference."

A compass and map can add extra precaution to help with navigation. By orienting the map to true north and using bearings to follow a specific direction that lines up with the trail markers, you can match landmarks on the map to what you see in the terrain, track your position and avoid getting lost.

With improving technology like apps such as AllTrails, along with local knowledge of the trail and the conditions, it's become a lot easier to navigate any High Peak, even when deep in winter.



Taeke Beckers

Be Bold, Start Cold

The philosophy behind Be Bold, Start Cold is simple: your hike should start slightly chilly, not bundled up.

Any hike in the Adirondacks is going to be straining; once you start moving, you are going to warm up. Overdressing is going to lead to overheating and eventually sweating. This is far more dangerous than being slightly cold. If you start to sweat, your layers



will become wet and they'll lose their insulation, allowing the wind and cold to strip heat from your body.

Lighter layers are key: start with a base layer, then put on a fleece or a thin windbreaker. Heavier puffy or insulated jackets are best for when you stop moving, or when you finally reach that beautiful, breathtaking summit.

However, if you do find yourself overheating and getting drenched, Baker offered this advice: "Keep moving and take layers off. It can get scary fast, and it's not safe to stay in wet clothes. The best way to handle it is to prevent it in the first place."

Pennise also added one more tip for emergencies:

"You can also use hot drinks to warm up. Fill a bottle with hot water and keep it close to your body, it helps dry wet layers and keeps you warm."

When to Turn Back & Go Home

We've all been in a situation where a task takes longer than we anticipated. In winter

hiking, delays or changing situations can quickly become dangerous. Conditions can change rapidly: daylight fades faster this time of year, and even experienced hikers can find themselves pushing too hard. Before setting out on any hike, always let someone know your destination, the trailhead you'll use and your expected return time.

Baker explained why sticking to a turnaround time matters: "If you haven't reached your goal by a certain time, you need to turn around. It's easy to get zoned in on reaching the summit, but pushing too late puts you and the people who might have to rescue you in danger."

Summit fever and ego can cloud your judgment. Pennise added how important it is to know your limits: "You have to know when you're exhausted or not going to make it back safely. Recognizing that in the moment and choosing to turn around is crucial."

Baker put it simply: "The mountains aren't going anywhere. You can always go back."

"The mountains aren't going anywhere. You can always go back."

-Ryan Baker



Amelia DeGilio



Is It Worth It?

Nothing about hiking a High Peak is easy, especially in winter, and Baker is honest about that.

"It's tough. Sometimes it really does suck," he said, "But you're somewhere that barely anybody goes. Even fewer people hike the Adirondacks in the winter. Everything is white and snow-covered. Personally, I think it's even more beautiful than summer."

For both Baker and Pennise, part of the appeal for the pair is the challenge itself.

"I'd rather add layers and adjust than just be hot and sweating. And honestly, part of it is the challenge."

Both students hope to continue tackling outdoor challenges beyond their time at Plattsburgh.

After college, Baker plans to become a forest ranger or to join some form of the police force.

Pennise, on the other hand, wants to become a rock climbing guide out West, ideally in California's Joshua Tree National Park, eventually returning to the Adirondacks in hopes of continuing guide work right here in the North Country.

Winter hiking definitely isn't for everyone. It requires some experience, preparation, patience and a love for winter weather. But for those who are willing to take the time to prepare, the stunning snowy views and triumph of the journey are reward enough for the effort.



Are you ready to accept the challenge? Here are a few resources to help you get started on your winter hiking journey.
Adirondack Winter Mountaineering School
<https://www.winterschool.org/programs>
Adirondack Mountain Club
<https://adk.org/>



Plattsburgh's Pieces of Hope

Story by: Anna Reisman

Affordable prices to help aid Plattsburgh residents, claws and all.

Putting together the perfect outfit or building an entirely new wardrobe can be expensive. But buying used at a thrift store benefits you and the community, as these stores often donate to charitable causes.

At Cat's Meow Thrift Shoppe, every cent goes to CATS Rescue & Adoption Services in Plattsburgh. The second-hand store opened on the former Plattsburgh Air Force Base in 2014, the brainchild Lillian Cassidy, the previous manager of the Adirondack Humane Society.

Cassidy, now the president of the CATS board, reopened the shop at 61 Champlain St. in Plattsburgh to continue her mission of helping felines.

The Cat's Meow and CATS Rescue & Adoption Services work hand-in-hand. Together, they have helped over 1,000 cats in the past year through spaying, neutering and adoption.

CATs's new 5,500 square foot shelter at 7196 Route 9 in Plattsburgh is renovated and open to the public by appointment at 518-569-5157.

The Cat's Meow shop is open everyday except Tuesday and Sunday; the store would expand hours if they had more volunteers. Everyone working there is a volunteer, with two or three helpers on staff each day.

Tom Salka, who has been volunteering at The Cat's Meow since 2010, said more help is needed.

"We're always looking for people who want to do something for the community," Salka said.

Besides all proceeds going to CATS Rescue & Adoption Services, The Cat's Meow Thrift Shop doesn't just help cats: it's there for the people as well.

Everything in the shop is donated and sold for one-tenth of its original price, helping those looking for good deals within the community.

"This place does a lot for more than just the cats," Salka said. "It does a lot for the people."

Another used-clothing store that donates to Plattsburgh charities is Dresscode, a consignment shop on Bridge Street.

Dresscode sells a curated stock of men's, women's, plus-size and even some children's clothing for prices they deem fit. Dresscode owners, Katie Steffy and Jenna Whiteman, took over the store in 2022.

When you first walk in, you see racks of clothes to your left and right amongst many accessories. To the left, there is a small staircase leading to another section of the store with many options to choose from. In the back, you can follow the staircase up to their discounted clothes loft.

The store is bright and welcoming, showcasing many pieces that will surely catch your eye.

The owners bring in some of their own clothes to sell or receive items from friends. Steffy and Whiteman make appointments with their clothing providers, allowing them to pick through the clothing and select what they want to sell. The clothing that doesn't make the cut is donated or returned to the provider.

After being received, the clothing in the store gets processed. Steffy and Whiteman put price tags on the items with barcodes that scan to credit the consignor with a portion of the sale. This helps them keep track of their sales on their computer.

Dresscode donates clothes to benefit local charities a couple of times a year. They also run an occasional bag sale at their store.

Dresscode sells clothing at the price they think is the most fair second-hand market value. However, clothes that don't sell are discounted, with prices cut by 25%, 50% and then 75% at the five month mark. When the clothes have been unsold for six months, they go on sale for \$1.

These discounted clothes can be found in the sales loft on the second floor. "When people that are coming in for the cheapest stuff, I usually refer them to go upstairs," Steffy said.

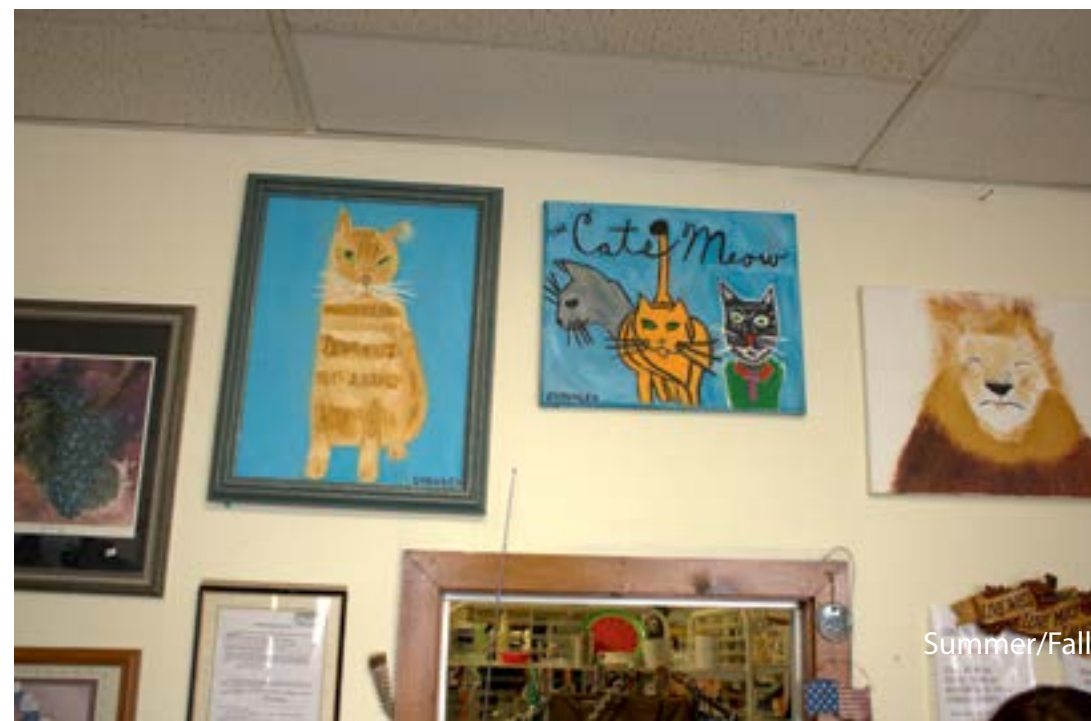
Dresscode briefly opened and plans to reopen a separate Dresscode for Kids store.

At the time of publication, there is a small kids section in the store with kids clothing like baby jumpers, but they do not have room for expanded children's offerings.

While Dresscode for Kids is on pause at the moment, Steffy said they are hoping to get it running in the spring.

"We're seeing the way the wind blows with that."

At the Cat's Meow Thrift Shoppe and Dresscode, your purchases benefit the Plattsburgh community. What's better than finding unique pieces for an affordable price for a good cause?



Legends of Lightning Along Lake Champlain

Story by: Harrison Smith

The CPKC Holiday Train crosses South Bay at the southern end of Lake Champlain, just north of Whitehall, New York, on November 26, 2024.

I pause my rapid, rocky ascent for a moment, standing perfectly still to listen for any warning sounds of my quarry approaching. Part of me knows that listening is all but pointless; the snow dampens any sound that these surprisingly stealthy beasts make as they rumble up and down Lake Champlain.

A couple of hand warmers tucked into my boots and a pair of insulated ski gloves are making the single-digit temperatures and howling wind tolerable, but I still question my sanity as I press onward, occasionally glancing down at Lake Champlain, over 100 feet below me.

I don't carry a rifle or a crossbow. Instead, my weapon of choice is a Canon R6 Mark ii stowed safely inside my heavy winter coat.

I'm not hunting deer, I'm after something far more endangered: The elusive freight trains that operate up and down the rails of the Delaware & Hudson.

The Route that Almost Wasn't

The history of the rails that hug Lake Champlain's west shore is long and storied, spanning two centuries of change. The Delaware & Hudson was chartered as a canal company in 1823, making it the oldest continuously operated transportation company in the United States.

Unfortunately for the builders of the canal, which was constructed between Honesdale, Pennsylvania and Kingston, New

York, this method of transportation was quickly rendered obsolete by steel wheels on steel rails. The slow-moving barges of the D&H canal couldn't compete with the mighty iron horse, and the future for the company appeared to be a certain dead-end.

Fortunately, the D&H pivoted to become a railroad, a significant move that would bring its network much farther north, eventually reaching Canadian connections in 1875 through a series of acquisitions.

The route along Lake Champlain, blasted and carved into the side of rocky cliffs at heights of up to 150 feet above the water, wasn't supposed to be built. D&H predecessor Whitehall & Plattsburgh planned to construct an inland route between Port Henry and Plattsburgh, having determined that following the west shore of Lake Champlain would be nearly impossible to complete.

The Whitehall & Plattsburgh constructed a line south from Plattsburgh to Ausable Forks, New York, following the Ausable River. The company anticipated continuing through the tough but manageable terrain from Elizabethtown to Port Henry, but a series of organisational changes led to D&H control and a determination to blast a direct – and incredibly scenic – route along Lake Champlain. This decision would cement the D&H as one of the most sought-after routes for railroad photographers, a legacy that continues over a century later.

CPKC train 228 rolls south along Red Rocks in Willsboro on January 5, 2026.

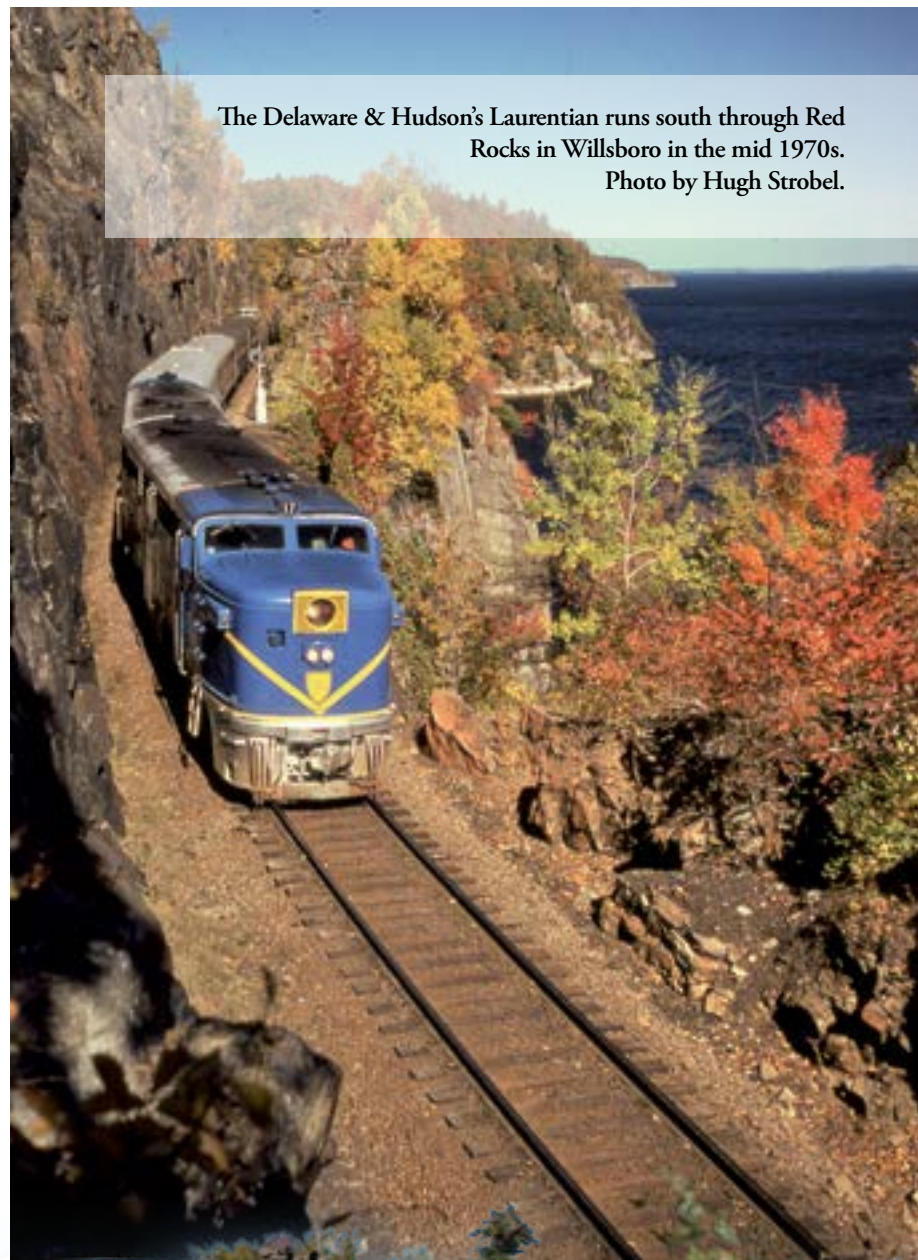
Generations of Change

Jim Shaughnessy was the man who put the Delaware & Hudson on the map. Born in Troy, New York, Shaughnessy began photographing the D&H in the late 1940s, venturing north in the 1950s and '60s to pioneer and create some of the most recognizable railroad photographs of all time. Shaughnessy was especially drawn to "Red Rocks," the stretch of railroad north of Willsboro, the few miles of track that the Whitehall & Plattsburgh deemed impossible to construct.

Shaughnessy's work, which culminated in "Delaware & Hudson," published in 1967, inspired the next generation of railroad photographers to explore the D&H. Hugh Strobel was among the first to walk in Shaughnessy's footsteps, followed by many others in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. "I knew the passenger schedule, so I could catch those trains, and then I kind of expanded my horizons," Strobel said. "Shaughnessy was one of my mentors. I liked the style of his photography."

Strobel documented decades of changing times for the railroad, from the shiny, classic, blue-and-grey passenger trains of the 1970s to modern Canadian Pacific Railway freights, which began to operate following CPR's acquisition of the railroad in 1991.

This era of Canadian Pacific operation is when I began to photograph trains in the late 2010s. At the time, Plattsburgh was still served by a Delaware & Hudson locomotive, one of two remaining in the classic Lightning Stripe livery made famous by Shaughnessy's work. A few cell phone photos are all that I have of this legendary locomotive, but they sparked a decade of railroad photography, a pursuit I refined by taking heavy inspiration from the photographers who came before me.



The Delaware & Hudson's Laurentian runs south through Red Rocks in Willsboro in the mid 1970s.
Photo by Hugh Strobel.



Delaware & Hudson No. 7303 rests in Plattsburgh in April 2018.

Seeking New Heights

I'm no rock climber, but I'm not exactly afraid of heights, either. Glancing down at the cold, dark waters of Lake Champlain, I wonder if Shaughnessy, Strobel, and the other photographers who stood here before me experienced any fear of losing their footing while making this climb. "What kind of drone do you use?" is a question I'm often asked by casual enthusiasts who see my photographs, assuming that these absurd locations were reached aerially. These comments always make me chuckle—I've never touched a drone in my life, and I have no intention to anytime soon.

Standing at a location known as Shaughnessy's Red Rocks, I patiently wait for my target freight no. 228 heading south from Montreal to Saratoga. Despite the forecast, the sun is shining, and I'm desperately hoping it stays. Unfortunately for me, train 228 would take over 45 minutes to reach my location, and the perfect morning light would be reduced to a soft glow by clouds.

Once a daily train, No. 228 now only operates on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday. The trains have become slightly longer, but this change represents a long-term decline in freight traffic moving up and down the shores of Lake Champlain. A morning along the lake would yield about four trains a decade ago; one or two is consid-

ered a good haul these days.

On this day, No. 228 had a Canadian Pacific locomotive followed by a Kansas City Southern unit, a reminder that Canadian Pacific became CPKC following the merger of the two railroads in 2023. Another Canadian Pacific unit was buried about halfway through the 120-car train, working remotely to bring the tonnage south.

A few days later, I'm a mile north of Red Rocks to attempt an angle I've been eying for several weeks — a rocky overlook south of a large inverted truss bridge. My first attempt was thwarted when train 228 was canceled, and I called

CPKC train 228 crosses a bridge north of Willsboro on January 21, 2026.

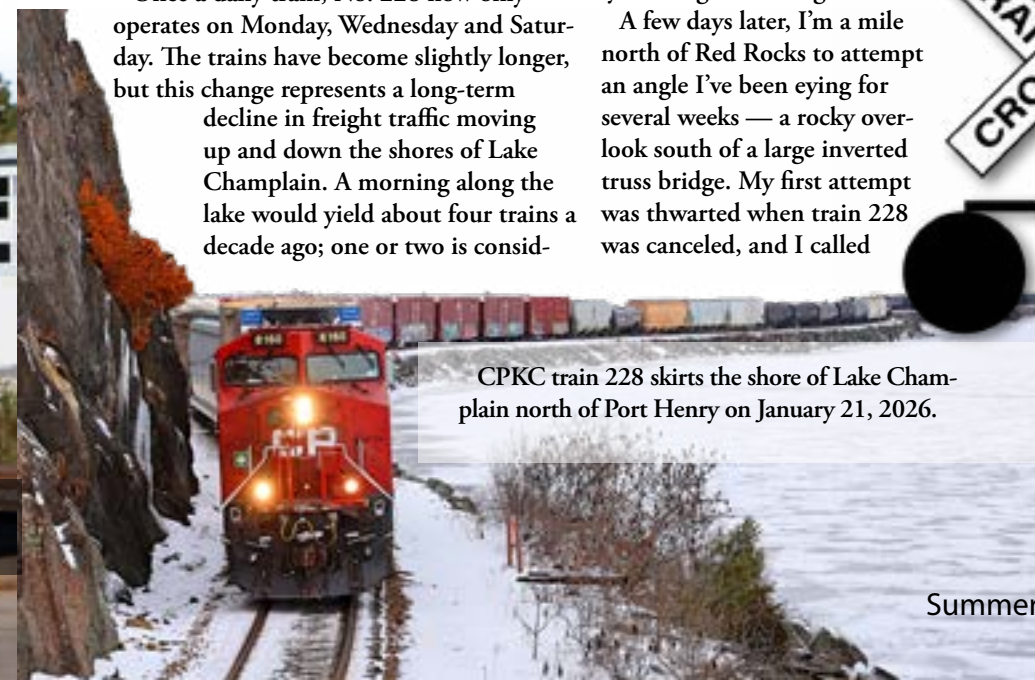


off my second attempt after failing to find a safe place to park my vehicle in snowy conditions.

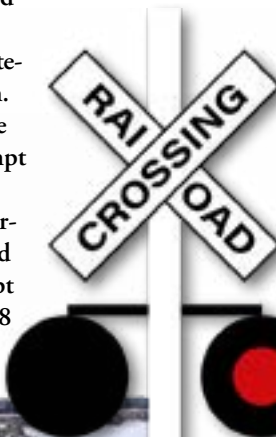
This time, my third attempt, I felt confident I would succeed. I carefully climbed the backside of the overlook, estimating that I would be waiting approximately half an hour for the late-running 228 to arrive. This particular shot requires an afternoon southbound to avoid poor lighting, something that only happens occasionally on this section of the railroad.

When it does, I jump on the opportunity to capture angles from the other side— the west side— of the tracks, allowing the lake to become a proper backdrop for the train.

228 arrives, and I make my image— it's nice, but I think a lower composition would work better. I'll try again in the future. Right now, I'm on my way south to Port Henry, preparing to frame the train at a second location, taking advan-



CPKC train 228 skirts the shore of Lake Champlain north of Port Henry on January 21, 2026.





Amtrak's Adirondack runs south at Rockland siding in Port Douglas on May 6, 2025.

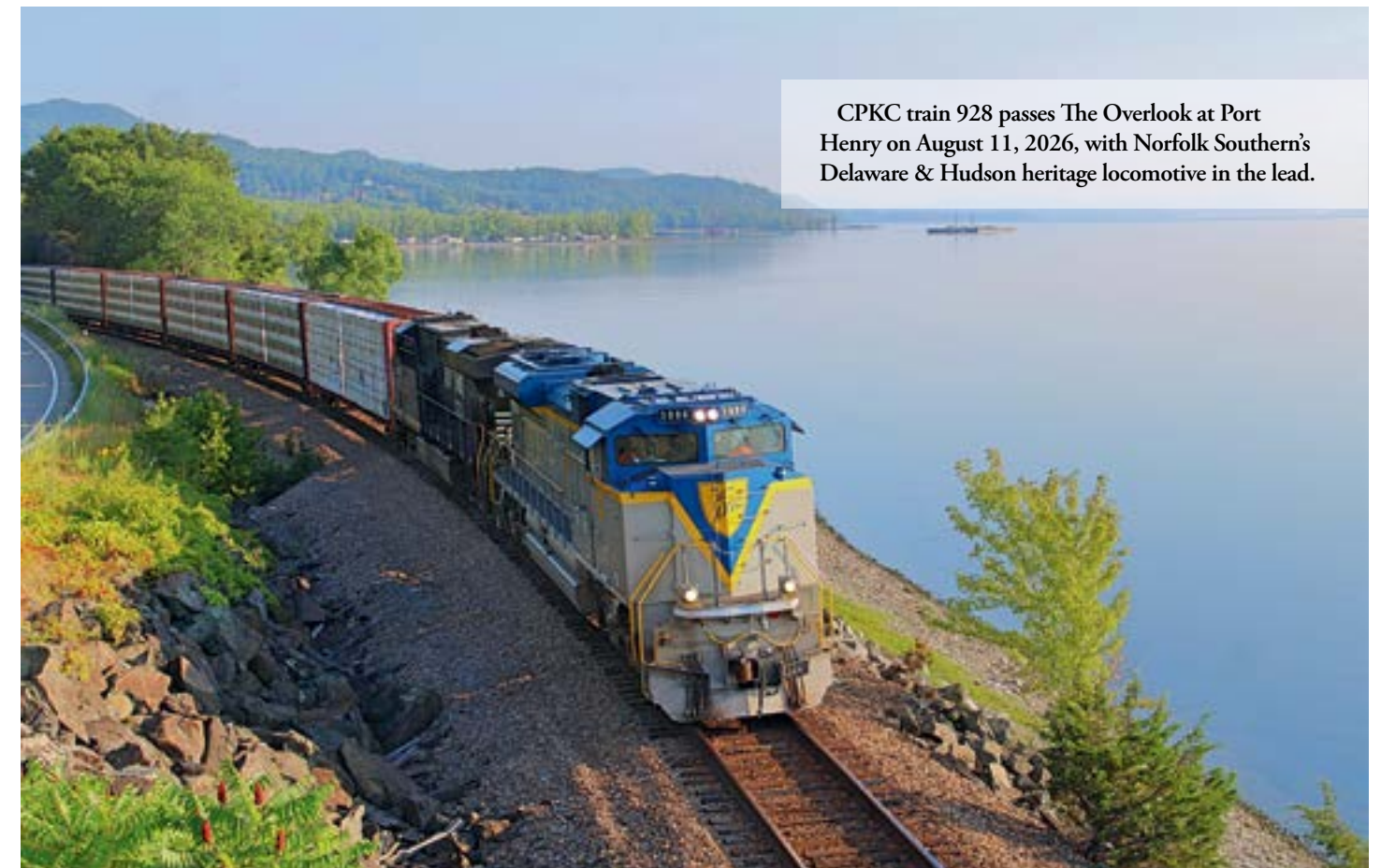
tage of the frozen lake to travel north along the rocky right-of-way. Even the toe warmers and gloves weren't able to mitigate the cold during this windy trek, but the resulting image was worth the effort.

A Dying Trend

Trekking, climbing and hiking after new angles has become a dying art of railroad photography. New technology allows enthusiasts to create these scenes virtually or access them via aerial technology, such as the aforementioned drone cameras. The trains themselves continue to become fewer, harder to find, and less attractive to photographers. Despite this decline, photographers like Strobel do it for the scenes, not the subjects. "I've never been a fan of 'roster shots,'" Strobel said. "I like to integrate something artistic."

As I watch the former Delaware & Hudson lose business to trucks, competing railroads and economic shifts, I can only ponder what the future holds for the legendary rails along Lake Champlain. One thing is for certain — as long as trains continue to ply the rails of the D&H, I'll continue to find new ways to frame them against the natural beauty of the Adirondack Coast.

“*The D&H.*”®



CPKC train 928 passes The Overlook at Port Henry on August 11, 2026, with Norfolk Southern's Delaware & Hudson heritage locomotive in the lead.

Down To Earth

A Sustainable Life In a Garden

Story by Sophia Gambino

Photos by Sophia Gambino and Jane Desotelle



I walked into Jane Desotelle's plant room, greeted warmly by her and her plants. "Would you like some tea?" she asked. I gladly let her pour me a cup of wildflower tea. Her sunroom was well lit in the late-afternoon light, around us were plants high and low, capturing a small part of her collection during the winter months.

Desotelle has spent her entire life connected to the earth. Having seen and experienced different facets of life, she has made a point to live her life in a way that harms the earth as little as possible. "I ended up in a business, but I'm very ethical about it, everything. You know, in fact, one of the PowerPoints I have is ethical collecting," Desotelle said. Her business, Underwood Herbs, promotes botanical education. As an experienced forager who lived off the grid for 35 years, Desotelle spends her days in Plattsburgh gardening, reading and educating others about herbs.

Origins of Underwood Herbs

Having graduated from SUNY Plattsburgh with a philosophy degree, Jane was not always set on becoming an herbalist. Post-grad, she worked on a grant at a crisis center where she found her calling.

"At the crisis center, I met a woman who was having problems. She was, like, hemorrhaging every month, and she would miss a day or two of work," Desotelle said. "Her doctor said, 'Some women are like that, you just gotta deal with it.'" Desotelle, however, saw her suffering and recommended plantain leaf as an herbal alternative. "And so I said, 'Well, you know, there's this weed that might help,'" she said.

Surely enough, the plantain leaf relieved the hemorrhaging, so much so that Desotelle's colleague offered to buy it from her. Desotelle, being the person that she is, insisted that her colleague learn to forage. "She said, 'I need some more, and I'll buy it from you.' And I'll say, you'll buy it from me? I'll teach you! I'll show you the plant, and you can go out and get it yourself. It's probably in your backyard," Desotelle said.

The colleague insisted on paying Desotelle, who realized that she had the oppor-

tunity to create a business with her knowledge. "So I'm like, alright, I have only got a few more months left on this grant, there's no prospects of any work opening up," she said. Desotelle's colleague was an artist, who encouraged Desotelle to open up a business and helped her design the logo.





Wild Foods and Medicinal Plant Education

Since its beginning, Underwood Herbs has been an outlet in the North Country community where Desotelle provides herbs and knowledge to curious foragers and plant enthusiasts. She also offers a work-study program for botany and environmental science students at SUNY Plattsburgh, allowing them to pursue their interests in the field. Students from other majors have come to the Plattsburgh botanical sanctuary to help out, saying “I need to spend time outdoors and feel useful” as Jane puts it.

“It depends what they’re interested in. Some are more interested in wild foods, because they’re hikers. They want to know in case they get lost or whatever, you know, what’s edible and what’s poisonous,” Desotelle said. Foraging in the North Country is relatively safe, as most poisonous plants are easily identifiable to the educated eye. “There are very few plants out here that can really make you sick. It’s good to know them though,” she said.

“Some volunteers were interested in the medicinal uses,” she added. Desotelle combines wild ginger root with blackberry root

to make a tea that helps with colds. She also grows elderberries. “You can make a tea out of the flowers, and it’s good for fevers. That’s one of the first things I learned from my grandmother in Ohio,” Desotelle said. Desotelle attributes her love for gardening and foraging to her childhood and family. Her grandmother’s maiden name was Underwood, the inspiration for Desotelle’s business name.

“Elderberry, the berry syrup is really good for sore throats and coughs,” she added. Unfortunately, New York state does not recognize clinical herbalists. Desotelle still goes through the process of educating and is a certified herbalist and wild foods expert. “I feel like I’m a pretty good resource... to help other people,” she said.

“You know, some of them are just going through chemotherapy, and they wanna try and get through it a little better, to help with the symptoms,” Desotelle said. Through her business, she is able to provide herbs that aid with pain and symptoms of illness.

Herbal medicine prevents sickness and chronic ailments by building up the immune system, she said. Desotelle shared that her family, on both sides, has a brutal

history of liver problems linked to disease and cancer. “So I’m always very careful about my liver, and the number one herb for livers is dandelion,” she said. Desotelle drinks dandelion tea regularly to prevent suffering from complications with her liver.

Nutrition is important in any healthy lifestyle. Herbs aren’t often recognized for their nutritional benefits. “Stinging nettles are super nutritious. It’s like a really dark green plant to begin with, so that kind of is a sign” she said. Full of vitamins and minerals, nettles are more nutritious than spinach, students have told her.

Desotelle grows and harvests nettles in her own half-acre plot of land. “So I dry nettles, they crumble up very easily, and you can not only just make a tea with it, but you can throw it in soups and stews and all sorts of stuff. Like you would with parsley,” Desotelle said. “But it’s even bet-

ter to eat than parsley. A lot of minerals, it’s really good stuff.”

Stinging nettles are just one of many herbs that provide incredible nutritional value. Desotelle understands well what each herb provides. “I have very few vegetables growing out there because over the years I’ve learned that a lot of these herbs that I’m drinking the tea of, have more nutritious value than the vegetables that we’re growing,” she said.

Flavor Guide

Dandelion roots offer health benefits, but they make for bitter tea if not prepared properly. Desotelle expressed that even though the taste of some herbal teas is unattractive, drinking them is worth it for the health benefits. Desotelle provides a flavor guide to her customers so they can make taste judgments for teas they haven’t tried yet.

“People always ask me what teas taste like when I’m selling them, right? So I tried to describe the flavors in, but a lot of them just taste like green tea,” Desotelle said.

Sustainability

A part of Desotelle’s values is sustainable collecting and lifestyle. Being a resourceful and mindful person, Desotelle learned to forage within her rural community. “I told everybody,

I’m very ethical about my collecting,” Jane said that she never collected from land without the owner’s permission. “One of my power points is a presentation on ethical harvesting.”

Desotelle takes the opportunities to forage where the farmers have unwanted vegetation. While foraging too much from one area can be harmful in nature, Desotelle found that in these cases, she could get a lot at once from land that was set to be otherwise cleared.

Even so, healthy foraging habits can help restore growth. “There’s actually patches that I picked off of for decades, that improved after I collected from them,” Desotelle said. She has been growing on the plot in her backyard since she was a child, so she understands how to keep soil healthy and successfully fill her garden every year. “I also opened the Plattsburgh Botanical Sanctuary for guided tours of the approximately 400 varieties of plants, and have given away many plants.”

Keeping a garden helps protect the environment because you are sourcing your food locally, and growing it with your own resources. Desotelle’s garden, also called the Plattsburgh Botanical Sanctuary, is a member of the United Plant Savers Sanctuary, a program around the world that helps protect medicinal plants. Her garden is the

vehicle for her mission to impact the environment as little as possible. Her mission is expressed through the way she lives her life.

Somebody came to the door of Desotelle’s sunroom while we were talking. “People donate their wreaths when they’re done with them,” she said as she got up to take it from them. “A future balsam pillow,” she added. Leading a sustainable life takes creativity and resourcefulness. For Desotelle, this lifestyle is where she is most comfortable.

“You get outta college, you get a choice right? You can go find jobs that pays well, you know, some people just want really good paying jobs. ... You know, to me it was about quality of life,” Desotelle said. She found quality not in material wealth, but in nature and present living.

“It’s healthy to be thankful,” Desotelle said. From the hours I spent with Desotelle in her sunroom talking, I had no doubt that Desotelle was fulfilled with her life. While materialism shapes the values of many, Desotelle’s simpler approach has created a life of presence and spiritual wealth. Very down to earth, literally and figuratively, she said, “It makes me feel good, good quality of life. I like working outdoors.”



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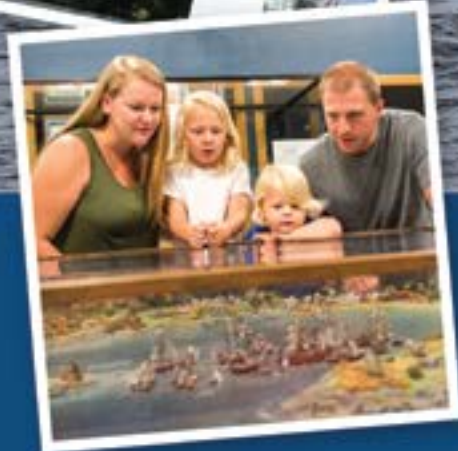
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