

HILLTOPPER

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Thank you, Brian Stillson, for sharing your
Holiday Gala photos.

Please send news, views and photos to
rlphprkns@yahoo.com or to mailbox #1.

COMING EVENTS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15

4 P.M. Hilltop House

SAVING OUR SURROUNDINGS

Deborah Stanley, Executive Director of Austin Sargent Preservation Trust will present an interactive program on land conservation. If you've ever hiked in this area, chances are you have benefited from the work of this organization which is responsible for conserving nearly 12,000 acres including some of the most popular trails near Hilltop. If a scenic drive is your preference, this is the organization that most likely saved your favorite view. A social hour will follow; BYOB and an appetizer.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12

4 P.M. Hilltop House

TBA program followed by social hour.



2020: A Year to Look Back and Ahead

Sick of politics? Who *isn't*? The year 2020 has much more to offer than just elections. It will be a year to commemorate past events and to look toward the future, as well as to vote.

Celebrations will occur on both sides of the Atlantic to honor the 400th anniversary of the pilgrims' crossing. Plymouth and Provincetown, MA, will host many events, including landings of the Mayflower II (shown at left), newly restored for the occasion.

The 250th birthday of composer Ludwig von Beethoven will be recognized in concerts throughout the world. Locally, New London's Summer Music Series artists will perform works by Beethoven, and a program about the composer is being planned for Hilltop.

2020 also marks the Centennial of Women's Suffrage. Before the Nineteenth Amendment was passed, a number of New Hampshire women were instrumental bringing the cause of voter equity to state, national and local attention through civil disobedience and petitions. An exhibit at the New Hampshire Institute of Politics in Manchester highlights this state's suffragettes. It is open weekdays through March 2020.

The United Nations will observe a special anniversary, its 75th, by collecting problem-solving ideas from the public in what's being called a "global conversation." You can be a part by requesting an interview at un75@un.org (mailtoun75@un.org).

Looking toward the future, watch for the launch of a new NASA Mars rover mission in summer 2020, this one intended specifically to investigate the planet's potential for human habitation.

Ralph's Field Notes: Outing Rudolph

JANUARY 2020

Now that I don't have to worry about messing up anybody's Christmas, I can talk frankly about Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer. Not about what makes his nose red, or about what makes him fly. It's time we knew if the other reindeer are correct in calling "him" names.

The deer family is bigger than you might think, and includes moose, elk, deer and caribou (often called "reindeer") and many Old World animals. Near and commonly within Hilltop are two family members, the moose and the white-tailed deer. Family members range in size from the moose (1600 pounds) to the Andean pudu (20 pounds); the prehistoric Irish elk's antlers spread up to 11 feet, tip to tip. Deer usually browse on twigs, shoots, leaves, etc., but sometimes graze on grass.

One fall when I lived in Vermont several years ago, a nearby moose became accustomed to eating tourists' handouts. These people insisted that the moose loved day-old donuts. This was even though state wildlife biologists explained that moose cannot digest donuts, especially in the fall when the guts are changing over to a twiggy winter diet. Sure enough, after several weeks of exchanges between the feeders and the dumb wildlife biologist, the moose was found starving and too weak to stand. It had to be euthanized.

Back to the antlers. Each spring, adult male deer (with one exception, as you'll see) grow antlers, often bigger each year, encased in a fuzzy "skin" full of blood vessels; the deer are said to be "in velvet." At the end of summer, this velvet dries up and is rubbed off against a nearby small sapling; sometimes the increasingly aggressive animal spars



Comfort and Joy

Above, a cozy scene from December's Holiday Gala: Hilltop's old and new residents gathered to celebrate the season and enjoy each other's company. Bill and Ruth Zimmerman returned from their new home in Keene, continuing the tradition of singing around the piano.

Don't Miss a Thing

Laura Guion contacted us after reading our list of events in the December issue to tell us about website www.kearsargecalendar.com which joins the events of seven area towns on one calendar. She also has started a Hilltop Facebook group that is private to members only who request membership: "Hilltop Place" www.facebook.com/groups/168367171525.

**"Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow."
—Albert Einstein**

with the sapling in preparation for the fall mating season, or "rut", when it may threaten, spar with, or fight a rival. You may have seen an exhibit last year at Potter Place or in Springfield of two bull moose who locked antlers and then starved. It happens. Antlers are honeycombed, bony structures which, unlike the fused-hair horns of cows, rhinos and other animals, are *not* permanent but are shed after each mating season.

Back to Rudolph's secret. The one exception to only male deer growing antlers is the reindeer, as both sexes grow and shed antlers. The difference here is that males shed theirs before Christmas Eve, while females keep theirs until spring. Hence, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and others point out that Rudolph, Blitzen and all of Santa's other reindeer are females. There could be very rare exceptions, such as disease or castrated animals. However, how much magic can you swallow?

