

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 9, 2015

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**League of NH Craftsmen WELCOMES a New Fine Craft Gallery
at the Hooksett Welcome Center**



(L to R) Reviewing construction progress of the League of NH Craftsmen gallery at the new Hooksett Welcome Center is League Standards and Gallery Manager Catherine Green, League Operations Manager Terri Wiltse, Granite State Hospitality Partner Rusty McLear, and League Executive Director Susie Lowe-Stockwell

CONCORD, NH – Under an agreement with Granite State Hospitality (a partnership between Alex Ray, owner of the Common Man, and Rusty McLear, owner of Mill Falls at the Lake), the League of NH Craftsmen will have a small fine craft gallery in the new Hooksett Welcome Center on the northbound side of I-93. A Grand Opening will be held on Saturday, February 14 (Valentine’s Day) at 2 pm. Visitors and local commuters will be able to purchase handcrafted gift items ranging from mugs, jewelry, glass tumblers, scarfs, mittens, wood bowls, miniature sculptures, wine glasses, stoppers, prints and more – all handcrafted by juried members of the League. Many of these items are suitable for travelers looking for hostess, wedding, graduation, birthday gifts, or gifts for themselves. The gallery will also feature live fine craft demonstrations by juried League members throughout the year.

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“We are honored to have an opportunity to be part of this impressive location providing visitors and commuters with a real New Hampshire experience.” says Susie Lowe-Stockwell, executive director of the League of NH Craftsmen. The League is grateful to the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation for providing a matching grant to assist in the start-up of this new venue along with the following sponsors: The Duprey Companies, Mount Sunapee Resort, an anonymous donor and the Curtis and Alice DeSouza Little Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. “Our hotels are delighted to support the League as we view this as a great opportunity to encourage visitors to stop in Concord.” said Steve Duprey.

The League gallery will have a New England storefront facade in keeping with the unique New Hampshire theme of the visitor center, which features an indoor waterfall and covered bridge. An indoor faux park surrounds the League gallery on the northbound side.

Alex Ray and Rusty McLear of Granite State Hospitality developed the new Hooksett Welcome Center to be a destination for visitors. “It’s an innovative, unique approach to interstate highways and the needs of the traveling public,” said Alex Ray. “What’s different about it is there are no national brands there and there’s not multiple layers of ownership or operators – it’s just Rusty and I and the state of New Hampshire all the way, from owning the buildings to operating the businesses.”

In addition to the League’s Gallery, the Hooksett Visitor Center includes: 16 Irving gas pumps; a New Hampshire liquor store; a diner and other eateries managed by The Common Man family of restaurants; Merrimack County Savings Bank; a convenience store featuring NH Made products; and the State Welcome and Information Center. Instead of 'chain' fast food vendors, there will be specialty food stands for visitors to eat in or take-out meals. There is local access from Route 3A at the back of the center.

According to Susie Lowe-Stockwell, the gallery at the Hooksett Welcome Center will introduce visitors to high-quality, creative, and functional craft made by the League’s master craftspeople, and

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encourage visits to the League's seven affiliated fine craft galleries located in Concord, Hanover, Littleton, Meredith, Nashua, North Conway and seasonally in Center Sandwich (open May to October). The League is a nonprofit arts organization and runs educational and promotional events year-round, including an exhibition Gallery, the Grodin Permanent Collection Museum, and fine craft classes at The Craft Center in the League headquarters in Concord; the Annual Craftsmen's Fair the first nine days of August; the *CraftAlive!* benefit auction; and NH Open Doors, a statewide shopping and touring event in November.

The League of NH Craftsmen is a non-profit, craft education organization. Its mission is to encourage, nurture, and promote the creation, use, and preservation of fine contemporary and traditional craft through the inspiration and education of artists and the broader community. For more information about the new League gallery at the Hooksett Visitor Center and/or the League of NH Craftsmen, call 603-224-3375 or visit www.nhcrafts.org.



The League of NH Craftsmen is supported in part by a grant from the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation.



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