

What will new year bring? We have answers (we think)

By DAVID HENCH, Staff Writer Tuesday, January 2, 2007

Tea leaves, tarot cards, the Psychic Hotline.

Many devices are employed to see the future, but seldom does the daily newspaper wade into the perilous waters of prediction.

It's a good way to get bitten by the unseen and unexpected.

Still, the intrepid reporters of the Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram fanned out across their beats, surveyed the experts and compiled a list of trends, styles and technology that readers can expect to see in 2007.

You'll see extensive new hiking trails in Maine's western mountains and a growing governmental reaction to global climate change. Students can expect bans on certain trendy footwear, and fashion followers can look for styles inspired by their grandparents.

Groundfishing may be on its way out, while smaller plates of food, hip-hop and volunteerism are on the rise.

The computer-driven explosion in access to information will continue to reshape the way people interact, enhancing law enforcement and expanding educational opportunities.

Politically, legislators will grapple with changing laws dealing with convicted sex offenders.

Major construction projects in Portland, Kennebunk, South Portland and Scarborough could change the retail landscape in 2007.

You will find love and get a promotion.

Or not.

GLOBAL HEAT

The conversation about climate change will heat up, locally and globally. Melting ice sheets, receding glaciers and stranded polar bears helped catch the public's attention in 2006. But several factors are sure to intensify the discussion in the coming year.

Maine's Legislature will decide whether the state joins the nation's first carbon-dioxide cap-and-trade system to limit power plant pollution that heats the planet. The seven-state Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative is set to take effect in 2009.

Nationally, the new Democratic majority in Congress will push for a more aggressive policy to combat global warming. The Bush administration has said it wants to talk with the new Congressional leaders about the issue. Don't expect a dramatic shift in U.S. policy in 2007, but there is sure to be a lot more debate.

The Supreme Court also could turn up the political heat in Washington, D.C., if the justices go along with Maine and other states and rule that global warming pollution should be regulated under federal law.

Globally, meanwhile, the premier group of experts -- the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change -- will release its first climate assessment in four years. Anticipation is already building for the February publication and the panel's latest projections about the rate of climate change and impacts such as rising sea levels.

Unfortunately, according to preliminary reports, the panel won't say the problem is going away.

-- John Richardson

HEALTHY STORE WARS

A couple nationally recognized leaders in natural and organic foods are expected to enter Portland's supermarket boxing ring, going toe to toe with one another for their share of the marketplace.

In 2003, Wild Oats Marketplace was considered bold when it opened a new store virtually next door to the city's long-established Whole Grocer on Marginal Way. Both stores continued to draw customers, but in January of 2006, Texas-based Whole Foods Markets acquired the Whole Grocer.

The competition with Wild Oats could heat up significantly in 2007 when Whole Foods Markets opens a 46,000-square-foot new store near Wild Oats at Somerset Street and Franklin Arterial.

Founded in 1980, Whole Foods Markets' Web site touts the company as the world's leading retailer of natural and organic foods, with 189 stores in North America and the United Kingdom. Wild Oats is ranked third in the world.

The winner may not be either store, but Portland consumers, who could be looking at increased competition and lower product prices.

-- Dennis Hoey

PORTLAND DEVELOPMENT

Development in Portland is expected to continue at a brisk pace in 2007, especially on the downtown peninsula.

The Ocean Gateway cruise-ship terminal is scheduled to be completed by fall on the eastern waterfront, City Manager Joseph Gray Jr. said.

Construction of a parking garage at Fore and Hancock streets is expected to start early this year, with The Longfellow condominium and retail complex breaking ground at India and Commercial streets soon after.

Other eastern waterfront projects in the works this year include a Residence Inn by Marriott on Fore Street and the proposed redevelopment of the city-owned Maine State Pier.

In Bayside, construction of a medical office building and student housing at Marginal Way and Preble Street Extension is expected to start by spring and city officials are talking about seeking federal funding to build a proposed parking garage at Somerset and Pearl streets, Gray said.

Elsewhere on the peninsula, expansion projects are expected to continue at Maine Medical Center and Mercy Hospital's Fore River Campus.

-- Kelly Bouchard

MUSICIAN TO WATCH

The Maine musician to watch in 2007 might just be 23-year-old Pete Kilpatrick. Raised near Boston, he's made Portland his home for the last four years and has spent that time establishing a huge and loyal fan base. He began in the local clubs, and immediately gained a reputation for a strong pop voice that seems to remind some people of John Mayer, some of Pete Dinklage. His guitar playing, both acoustic and electric, along with his song-writing, show a guy with obvious talent.

Kilpatrick, who has a band but also plays solo, released his third album in August, called "Louder than the Storm." The album has gotten rave reviews all over the Internet, and features appearances by fellow Portland-based musicians Spencer Albee of As Fast As and Adam Gardner of Guster.

He also had some heavy-duty producing help, from Jonathan Wyman, and also from Adam Ayan at Gateway Mastering Studio. Even though Gateway is in Portland, its clientele includes some of the biggest names in pop music, from Bruce Springsteen to Eric Clapton and lots in between. Kilpatrick is yet to be signed to a record label, but continues to attract attention with his music and his shows.

In the past year or so he's shared the stage with such prominent acts as Guster, Gavin DeGraw, Blues Traveler and many others. On Jan. 26, 2007, he'll play the venerable Paradise Rock Club in Boston.

-- Ray Routhier

THE HIP-HOP SCENE

Maine's hip-hop scene will continue to raise its profile in 2007 as a number of artists release new albums and line up shows in the coming months.

Santiago is working on a new album with Montreal-based independent label Endemik Music. Endemik has released albums from artists such as Bleubird and Skyrider.

Known just as much for her advocacy work with programs such as Say It Loud, she is a regular contributor to other rappers and DJs work. Santiago's sound is that of a seasoned songstress with a blend of conscious lyricism. Her first album, "Abuse My Adoration," was released in 2004. DJ Mike Clouds, who has released albums with rapper A-Frame as well as a collaboration with DJ Moshe, is completing work on "Blown Speaker Project," which is expected during the first half of 2007 from local

outfit Milled Pavement Records. Clouds is man of the people, DJing at the Iron Mic MC battle as well as several shows around town with the likes of Moshe and J.Hjort.

Indie hip-hop group Lab Seven is still riding the wave of success from their recently released album "North Winds," and is scheduled to play a number of shows around Portland and New England next year. The five-member crew are known for it's breakneck rhymes, harmonies and high-energy live performances. Members Hectic, J.J. King, Mello the Verbal Wonder, Autonomous, Reinstatah and recurring beatmaker DJ Shade, are always a draw for the group's growing fan base.

-- Justin Ellis

CLASSICAL MUSIC

The Portland Symphony Orchestra will have a new leader in 2007. The orchestra is in the process of hiring a replacement for Toshiyuki Shimada, who left the PSO in 2006 after a 20-year tenure.

The orchestra has interviewed and auditioned many possible replacements, and the parade of candidates will continue through the symphony season in the spring.

If all goes according to plan, the orchestra will make an offer to Shimada's successor in the spring, with the hope that the new conductor will be able to help assume a leadership role with the 2007-08 season.

-- Bob Keyes

ART IN BRUNSWICK

The Bowdoin Museum of Art will reopen in the fall. The Walker Art Center on the college's Brunswick campus has been closed since 2005 while undergoing an \$18 million renovation and expansion. The work will preserve and protect the 100-year-old building, while improving internal systems related to storage, and security. Access also will be improved.

The work is on track, and is scheduled to be completed with the fall semester.

-Bob Keyes

PORTLAND DINING

Expect to keep seeing alternatives to formal dining in Portland's restaurant scene. Small plates, tapas-inspired offerings and lounge seating are some of the casual trends on the rise.

On some menus, conventional courses like appetizers and entrees are being supplanted by new categories like "bites" and "large plates." The smallest of these courses may not be more than a couple nibbles, like the grilled oyster with beurre blanc at Bar Lola on Munjoy Hill. Others, like the mixed olives or shrimp and garlic at Local 188, encourage dining partners to reach over to steal a taste.

The lounge at Fore Street is intended to be a waiting area for the main part of the restaurant, but people are feeling more comfortable assembling a meal out of appetizers, said Dana Street, the restaurateur who is also behind Street & Co. Other establishments are jumping on the trend.

Five fifty-five on Congress Street opened a lounge next door to its original restaurant in 2006. The Point 5 Lounge menu offers items like an upscale take on the normally humble mac and cheese; this version is made with shaved black truffles and white truffle oil.

- Ann S. Kim

FASHION FORECAST

While it's said fashion trends come full circle, there is no fashion faux pas against jumping from one era to another. That in mind, fashion experts say 1980s-style garb will be faded out in 2007 for 1950s-inspired attire.

"Above all, the No. 1 trend to watch out for in 2007 will be the skinny-leg, high-waisted pant that flairs out at bottom," said Michelle Bolduck, store manager of Bliss boutique, 58 Exchange St.

Fashion forecasts for 2007 are defined by clean classic lines and muted colors -- the exception in accessories, shoes and those Audrey Hepburn-esque cuts, worn in black.

Last year's colors were black and white punched out by red. This year will feature neutrals with a pop, according to Maryann Lawton, manager of Stiletto, 97 Exchange St.

Among the neutral classics, funky designs and bright colors will still have a place in hot new accessories and shoes. "To complement the neutral clothing, metallics and animal prints are going to be huge on shoes and bags," said Lawton. They'll range from sky-high heels to flats, wedges, high chunky heels and kitten heels.

-- Anna Fiorentino

LENDING A HAND

Volunteering in Portland will get a boost in 2007 when the city establishes a Web site for people looking for ways to give time, money or items to city programs.

Volunteer Portland is expected to be operating by spring, said Councilor James Cohen. He started developing the volunteer project with city staff last summer, when he was mayor.

Volunteer Portland is modeled after Volunteer Maine, a Web site operated by the 10 United Ways of Maine. Cohen said other cities, including New York, Los Angeles and Houston, Texas, have established similar sites.

A Volunteer Portland icon will appear on the home page of the city's Web site, www.portlandmaine.gov. People will be able to click on the icon and learn more about city programs that need support, such as caring for a roadside flower bed, giving money to build a new skate park or buying art supplies for the city's schools. "It's my belief that people want to give back to their community," Cohen said. "Volunteer Portland will help make that happen."

--Kelley Bouchard

NO HEELYS HERE...

Heelys are hot with kids but not with schools.

The pricey sneakers, which retail between \$60 and \$100, turn into roller skates with wheels that pop out from the heel, so wearers can suddenly start surfing down hallways.

But some say the shoes are a menace and schools are beginning to crack down. This month administrators at the Mast Landing School in Freeport sent out the following announcement; "Parents, please take note: Mast Landing School is requesting that you do not send your child to school wearing Heelys -- those fancy sneakers with rollers in the heels. These present a danger and a distraction in school."

Expect more schools to follow Mast Landing.
-- Beth Quimby

IN THE WILD

In 2007 there will be more opportunity to enjoy "wild" places in Maine.

In western Maine, a 180-mile trail system moved closer to reality as the Western Mountains Foundation raised most of the \$4.5 million needed to start the Huts & Trails system there.

The foundation expects to break ground on the first 40-person hut in 2007. The Trust for Public Land concluded a \$14 million fund-raising campaign that added 6,015 acres to Baxter State Park, and completed Gov. Baxter's dream.
-- Deirdre Fleming

CHANGES IN KENNEBUNK

While popular with tourists on their way to its richer cousin Kennebunkport, the quaint town of Kennebunk has never been known as a shopper's mecca.

That will change in May when the York County town gets its first mega-grocery store, a 65,665-- square-foot Stop & Shop -- the first in the state -- and several yet-to-be-named retail stores on Route 1.

Now without a full-size chain grocery store, Kennebunk residents had mixed feelings about the project when it first was proposed. A contingent of residents concerned about store's impact on existing business, like the locally owned Garden Street Market, put a referendum before voters to block the project, but it was defeated. The latest word is the Stop & Shop will come equipped with a Starbucks Coffee shop, another town first.
-- Beth Quimby

SEX OFFENDERS' RIGHTS

What to do with sex offenders may be one of the most emotionally charged issue in politics today. How much privacy do they deserve, and how much should their rights be restricted in the effort to protect children?

Starting in February, the Maine Legislature's Criminal Justice Committee is expected to weigh into these thorny debates.

Measures to be considered include limits on how close sex offenders can live to schools, and restrictions on them congregating in areas where children play. The committee also is expected to consider legislation that would make distinctions in the state's sex offender registry between the most dangerous sexual predators and those who pose a less severe threat.

"I think these sex-offender bills will probably be as emotional and as high-priority as any we get," said Sen. Bill Diamond, D-Windham, the committee's co-chair. "There's a lot at stake. Legislators don't want to be perceived as soft on sex offenders."
-- Kevin Wack

BIG BUSINESS

Maine's top companies have certainly shifted about over the past few decades, but there are still a few mainstays.

Bath Iron Works will start cutting steel on its last Arleigh-Burke destroyer in '07 -- it has seven left to build and deliver. It's likely BIW will get the Navy contract for construction of the next-gen destroyer, the Zumwalt. There won't be any actual building of the "destroyer formerly known as DD(X), " but BIW will be able to start doing detail design work and begin ordering materials for the ship.

Another top company synonymous with Maine is L.L. Bean, and 2007 will be busy for that business too. Bean plans to open a new 14,000-square-foot factory store behind its flagship in Freeport, and is looking to increase its presence in Japan, with stores in Niigata and Sapporo. Bean's exploring sites in Latin America, other parts of Asia and Canada, too.

- Matt Wickenheiser

BRUNSWICK NAVAL AIR STATION

For those expecting big changes at the Brunswick Naval Air Station in 2007, you should look elsewhere. Most of the year will be spent on planning redevelopment options.

Though mapping out a plan for reuse might seem dull, it won't be; there are at least seven entrepreneurs with diverse proposals in hand.

From a hydrogen energy center and outdoor activity center to a world-class garden and high-tech manufacturing facility for unmanned military vehicles, there will be no shortage of private development projects lined up once the Navy declares which lands and buildings will be available for private use.

After the Navy makes that declaration in January, members of the Brunswick Local Redevelopment Authority will have until November to finalize its master redevelopment plan, which will likely include a host of zone changes affecting the 3,330-acre installation.

Once that process is completed, an implementation authority will be formed to do what its name implies -- implement the reuse plan. However, the air base won't become available for private reuse until 2010 at the earliest.

With environmental cleanup issues still to address and competition for the property, it's unlikely the public will see any significant changes at the base before 2011 when BNAS is scheduled to close and move its squadrons and airplanes to a Navy base in Jacksonville, Fla.

-- Dennis Hoey

LOCAL SPORTS

The Portland Sea Dogs will kick off the season by raising the Eastern League championship banner at Hadlock Field. And they'll celebrate the championship with a new manager. Arnie Beyeler takes over for Todd Claus, who received a promotion from the Red Sox.

High school football's Fitzpatrick Trophy will be awarded in January, while Mr. and Miss Basketball and the Travis Roy Award for Class A's top senior hockey player will be awarded in March, and the Dr. John Winkin Mr. Baseball and Miss Maine Softball awards will be awarded in June.

The TD Banknorth Beach to Beacon 10-kilometer road race has become a staple of the summer in Cape Elizabeth, but Joan Benoit Samuelson's signature road race will mark a milestone in August when it celebrates its 10th anniversary. The big question -- what elite runners will be in Cape Elizabeth to help celebrate the anniversary?

The University of Maine hockey team and the University of Southern Maine's women's basketball team eye a return to the national championship tournaments. In 2006, the Black Bears reached the NCAA's Frozen Four, while the Huskies reached the NCAA Division III women's championship game.

-- Rachel Lenzi

NATIONAL SPORTS

Baseball's most hallowed record, the 755 home runs hit by Hank Aaron, is in jeopardy in 2007 and Boston fans might get to see it fall. Barry Bonds, the much-maligned slugger who re-signed with the San Francisco Giants, is just 22 home runs away from breaking Aaron's mark. And the Giants play a three-game series in Fenway Park June 15-17. Of course, the question is whether the 41-year-old Bonds, subject of steroids speculation, can stay healthy long enough to catch Aaron.

The New England Patriots will make another run at a Super Bowl championship. They have won three of the last five and could come out of the AFC again this year. Super Bowl XLI is in Miami on Feb. 4.

Red Sox fans, of course, will be excited to see their newest million dollar right arm: Japanese superstar pitcher Daisuke Matsuzaka, who signed a six-year, \$52 million contract (with escalating clauses that could push it to \$60 million) with Boston in mid-December. The Red Sox, desperate to pass the New York Yankees, paid \$51.1 million to Matsuzaka's old team, the Seibu Lions, just to talk to him. While Dice-K, as he's called, was the MVP of the 2006 Baseball World Classic, won by Japan, it'll be interesting to see how he holds up in Boston's fevered fandom.

-- Mike Lowe

VIRTUAL EDUCATION

Mandarin Chinese, bioethics and entrepreneurship.

Those are among a list of 250 courses that a growing number of Maine high schools will offer students in 2007. And the teachers who teach the students those subjects could be across the country -- or around the world.

The students will take the courses through a nonprofit Massachusetts-based organization called Virtual High School, which offers a host of accredited classes taught over the Internet by experienced teachers. Already participating in Maine are high schools in Biddeford, Calais, Falmouth, Madison, Poland, Hiram and Scarborough, said Carol Arnold, a VHS spokeswoman. Greely High School in Cumberland, Kennebunk High School and Jay High School also have signed up for the spring semester. Annual membership fees for schools range from \$1,000 to \$6,500, she said.

Schools in 26 countries around the world participate in VHS. Arnold said it's a particular boon for rural states like Maine, which has small schools that can't afford to hire a teacher to teach advanced placement math and science classes for only a handful of students who need them.

-- Tess Nacelewicz

COMPUTER COPS

Beginning this year, a Portland officer questioning a suspect will be able to use a computer in the cruiser to summon the person's mug shot, bail conditions and criminal record from the Cumberland County Jail.

Assistant district attorneys will know what bail conditions to seek based on police intelligence files.

As Portland area law enforcement agencies enter 2007, they will be working more cooperatively and using technology to help improve the criminal justice system from investigations to incarceration.

Under a pilot program, Portland police, the Cumberland County Sheriff's Office and the Cumberland County District Attorney's office will be able to have immediate access to each other's computer databases. The program will provide a much-needed link between the records maintained by the agencies and the people who need the information, said Portland Police Chief Tim Burton.

Cumberland County Sheriff Mark Dion said the system takes advantage of the large amount of data the jail collects on offenders, from whether they've been known to have firearms to what tattoos they have.

-- David Hench

FISHING INDUSTRY

Fishing for groundfish, like cod and haddock, is Maine's oldest industry. It has been around for more than 400 years. But 2007 may be the year the industry ceases to exist as a significant economic factor.

The future of the Portland Fish Exchange, the city-owned auction through which about 90 percent of Maine's groundfish catch is sold, also is in question. The nonprofit exchange has lost money throughout 2006 and cash reserves are thin. Landings in November were half the amount the exchange handled in November 2005.

It's not that fishermen aren't catching fish in the Gulf Maine. They are, although tightening regulations are making it hard. Rather, fishermen are moving to Massachusetts, commuting there or delivering their fish there. In Massachusetts, fishermen are allowed to sell lobsters that wind up in their nets as "by-catch." Maine prohibits the practice. Fish Exchange officials say the difference is the primary reason Maine is losing groundfishing boats to the Bay State.

Maine's lobster industry, which wields enormous political influence, has vowed to defeat any measure that would allow groundfishermen to land lobster by-catch.
-- Tom Bell

SHIPBUILDING

Celebrations this summer will mark the 400th anniversary of Popham Colony, the first organized attempt to establish an English colony in New England.

The colonists, who settled at the mouth of the Kennebec River in the summer of 1607, abandoned the site the following year. However, they managed to complete one major project: they built a 30-ton ship, the Virginia, the first ship the English built in North America.

The colonists in 1608 sailed the vessel back home to England. It was later used to ferry supplies to Jamestown, which had also been settled in 1607.

For years, a nonprofit called Maine's First Ship has been campaigning to raise \$2.2 million to build a replica of the Virginia and launch it in 2007. That's not going to happen this year. But organizers say they'll soon finish raising the \$900,000 they need to start construction in April. It will be built in Bath at the Maine Maritime Museum and launched in 2008. The museum this summer will also feature an exhibit on the Popham Colony.

The Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram this summer will publish a series dedicated to the 400th anniversary of shipbuilding in Maine, which began with construction of the Virginia. The newspaper's Web site, MaineToday.com, also will have special content devoted to the anniversary.

The Popham Colony's remains, discovered only 11 years ago in Phippsburg, have been called one of the most significant archaeological sites in the country, providing archaeologists with an undisturbed time capsule of an early settlement. Because colonies in Jamestown and Plymouth were successful, their early archaeological features were destroyed as the settlements grew.
-- Tom Bell