

Blind athlete files suit against Dartmouth citing lack of academic resources

By MEGHAN PIERCE
Union Leader Correspondent

HANOVER — In a lawsuit filed against Dartmouth College, a student who has been touted by the Ivy League school for her accomplishments as a legally blind Paralympian and member of the Dartmouth equestrian team, the school is accused of not making the proper accommodations in the classroom for her disability.

Staci Mannella, 21, a Dartmouth junior from Randolph, N.J., was born with achromatopsia, a genetic disorder that is characterized by decreased vision.

Mannella is pursuing a degree in pre-veterinary science and came to Dartmouth after competing as a Paralympic Alpine skier.

"I love that I am on the Dartmouth equestrian team because it's kind of the first time that I've been able to compete with able-bodied athletes, too," Mannella said in a video posted on the college's sports website. "It's really cool now that I can see that I can kind of hold my own."

In the video, Dartmouth riding coach Sally Batton said the Dartmouth staff was excited to have an Olympic athlete, but were unsure how Mannella would handle riding different horses since she was used to riding her own. It turns out that wasn't a problem, Batton said in the video.

"She's can ride any horse. She's developed her other sense and horses love her," Batton said. "She's not Staci with the visual disability. She's just Staci."

Mannella said she chose Dartmouth because she could ski and ride horses in the Upper Valley and because of the school's reputation for high academics.

However, in the lawsuit filed in the federal U.S. Dis-

trict Court of New Jersey, her academic pursuits at Dartmouth were thwarted by Dartmouth administrators who did not provide her with the resources she needed to pursue her degree.

She is seeking \$75,000 in damages.

Dartmouth, she said, did not provide note takers for class as well as reading material for her courses in a format she could read.

The lawsuit states she was also not provided with test readers and in some cases tests could only be taken by those with vision.

"She failed her first biology test because the test required her to identify microscope images which are very visual," the lawsuit said.

When she approached the professor during the test for help, the lawsuit said, the professor told her that the course "was very visual and that" she "should think about transferring to a school that was less academically challenging, with a longer term and slower curriculum."

Additionally, professors who were using visual presentations in the classroom refused to provide the same information in a format readable by someone visually impaired, the lawsuit said.

"Dartmouth disputes the claims that Staci has made in her lawsuit alleging that the College failed to provide the accommodations that she needed to be successful in the classroom. We continue to work with Staci to provide the resources she needs to achieve both academically and athletically. She is a valued member of our community," Dartmouth spokesperson Diana Lawrence said in an email Monday.

"We are going to decline to comment further on pending litigation."

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JOHN KOZIOL/UNION LEADER CORRESPONDENT

Mell Brooks, left, and Dan Heath explore the progress of construction Friday at the \$25.6 million Summit by Morrison senior living community in Whitefield. A portion of the facility is expected to open in October while the rest will open in March 2018.

Senior living community on schedule

■ **Summit by Morrison:** Project is only one of its kind north of the notches.

By JOHN KOZIOL
Union Leader Correspondent

WHITEFIELD — Construction is both on time and on budget for the \$25.6 million Summit by Morrison, the only such senior living community north of the notches.

At the groundbreaking ceremony last September, the project — which will feature 33 independent-living apartments, 14 independent-living cottages, 24 assisted-living apartments and 12 memory-care/Alzheimer's units — was known simply as the White-

field Senior Living Community.

But earlier this month, it got a more formal, albeit shorter, moniker: Summit by Morrison.

Located on Terrace Street in downtown Whitefield, the Morrison since 1903 has provided skilled nursing, rehabilitation, long-term care, respite care, Alzheimer's adult day care and assisted living services.

More than three years ago, the Morrison leadership team did a community-needs assessment that confirmed the need for a supportive-living facility, where North Country residents can "age in place," said David Haas, the chairman of the Morrison's board of trustees.

The site for such a facility

was found on a 25-acre parcel off Littleton Road, about a mile west of the Morrison. The facility is being funded in large part thanks to two low-interest loans totaling \$24,973,788 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development agency.

The Summit is expected to be a boost to the North Country economy as some 75 companies, many of them local, are involved in the construction that began in December. Already Whitefield's largest employer, the Summit will create as many as 35 new full-time jobs, said Mell Brooks, the Summit's director of development, on Friday.

The Summit, which will provide the Town of Littlefield with a payment in

lieu of taxes, will open in two steps, with the independent-living cottages expected to open in October, and the rest of the facility coming online sometime in March 2018.

With its combination of living and health care options, there is no place like the Summit anywhere in the North Country, said Brooks.

"The Morrison keeps families together and (the Summit) will also help keep families together," Brooks said, either by allowing families to keep a loved one close to home, or by permitting their return to the North Country.

So far, and despite the lack of any marketing, there have been expressions of interest for 26 of the units at the Summit, Brooks said.

Nation in Brief

Christie vetoes bill seeking Trump's tax returns

New Jersey Governor Chris Christie on Monday vetoed a bill that would have required President Donald Trump to release his tax returns in order to run for re-election in the state, calling it "politics at its worst." The Democrat-controlled state legislature had passed the bill in March in response to Trump's refusal to make public his tax returns when he ran for president as a Republican last year. Under the law, any candidate for president or vice president could not appear on the ballot without releasing at least five years of returns.

Trump questions why Civil War had to happen

Donald Trump has shown a fascination with populist 19th-century U.S. President Andrew Jackson since he

Clarification

A story in Monday's New Hampshire Union Leader about a new Dartmouth Toxic Metals Superfund Research Program should have noted that arsenic in New Hampshire well water is found naturally, but can also be from pesticides once used at orchards years ago in certain parts of the state.

Correction

A story published Monday about a Manchester homeowner who discovered part of his property was in Hooksett and had been seized for back taxes should have said the parcel was valued at \$6,800 and \$6,500 was owed in back taxes.

has occupied the Oval Office, hanging Old Hickory's portrait in the Oval Office, visiting his plantation in Tennessee and placing a wreath at his tomb. In an interview that aired on Sirius XM satellite radio on Monday, Trump suggested that if Jackson had governed a little later than his 1829-1837 terms, the American Civil War might have been averted. And Trump questioned why the bloody conflict had to happen.

One student killed, three wounded in University of Texas stabbings

A man thought to be enrolled at the University of Texas went on a stabbing spree with a large hunting knife at the school's Austin campus on Monday, killing one student and wounding three others also believed to be students, police said. The suspect, identified as Kendrick White, was apprehended about two minutes after campus police received reports of the attack on the school's main grounds. White was being questioned by police and charges were likely to come later.

Suspect in paramedic shooting found dead

A man suspected of shooting a Dallas paramedic on Monday was found dead of an apparent suicide after a police robot search of a local home, which also uncovered the body of a second man in the same residence, officials told a news conference. The paramedic underwent surgery and was in a Dallas hospital intensive care unit, Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings and police said, without releasing the names of anyone involved in the incident.

Raymond Fire Chief Kevin Pratt retires

■ **Says farewell on May 6:** Pratt joined the Fire Department in 1975 and served as chief for the last 29 years.

By JASON SCHREIBER
Union Leader Correspondent

RAYMOND — Having responded to more than 6,000 calls over 42 years with the Raymond Fire Department, Fire Chief Kevin Pratt has decided to call it a career.

Saturday was the last day on the job for the Raymond native who joined the Fire Department in 1975 and has served as chief for the last 29 years.

"I enjoyed helping people. That was the best part of the job. You at least helped one person with every call," he said.

Pratt, 59, said he's going to miss the job, but for the moment he plans to continue as the town's emergency management director and as a forest ranger — a position his grandfather, Ray Smith, held for many years while Pratt was growing up in town.

Pratt said he remembers how his grandfather used to respond to calls in a fire truck that he kept at his house. He was inspired by his grandfather and others in his family who also joined the Fire Department, including his father and brother. Pratt's daughter and son-in-law are also firefighters.

"I think the department has come a long way. We've got a great bunch of firefighters," said Pratt,



COURTESY

Raymond Fire Chief Kevin Pratt has retired after 42 years with the department.

who now plans to spend more time with his young grandchildren and working around his house.

Assistant Fire Chief Paul Hammond was appointed acting chief until a replacement is found in the coming months.

Hammond came on board two years after Pratt and worked closely with him over the past four decades.

"We've got quite a bit of history together," Hammond said.

"He's very good with people. He's an excellent person. He could have a conversation with anyone," Hammond said.

Town Manager Craig Wheeler wished Pratt well in his retirement.

"The town of Raymond has been fortunate to have a fire chief who has dedicated his entire professional career serving the residents and public in the town. Chief Pratt's record speaks for itself. He has served the town with only one mission in mind: helping the people," Wheeler said.

Wheeler recalled that when he asked Pratt to share his fondest memory of his time with the department, Pratt replied, "Helping the people."

"He was always there in time (of) need, always willing to lend a helping hand, and has served with honor and dignity. He leaves behind a long legacy of public service. The town should be very grateful for his years of commitment and service," Wheeler said.

A retirement open house will be held on May 6 at 2 p.m. at the fire station at 1 Scribner Road.

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