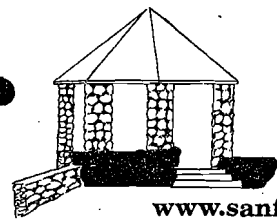


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## Officials investigate contamination in Sanford

By **Reneé Worthing**  
*Register Reporter*

Federal and state officials were called to investigate soil contamination at 46 High St., the building that formerly housed Alexson's Cleaners and the surrounding area.

The Sanford Town Council met July 18 to discuss several issues, including the soil and air contamination.

A solvent, perchloroethylene, also known as tetrachloroethylene, PCE or perc, commonly used by dry cleaners, has seeped into the soil of the property located on the corner of Brook St. and High St.

Sanford Town Manager Mark Green was advised of the contamination following a routine inspection conducted

when a local church expressed interest in purchasing the property for use as a youth center.

Green said the contamination has apparently spread "in both directions" on the street as well as across the street to the building where Paras Pizza and an upstairs apartment are located.

The Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MDEP) was called in to further test the air and soil for the presence of the solvent. When MDEP testing revealed high levels of the chemical in the soil on the property and in an upstairs apartment, they contacted the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Additional soil tests of the property confirmed the DEP's initial findings.

Tenants of the apartment located above Paras Pizza have been notified of the hazard and "arrangements have been made to clean up the area," Green said.

The EPA has installed a large PVC pipe on the southwest exterior of the Paras Pizza building from the basement to the outdoors.

"The pipe is collecting vapors from the basement and venting to the outside," said Michael J. Nalipinski, on-scene coordinator for the EPA. "This should reduce the levels dramatically."

Nalipinski said, "My main concern is that people are breathing clean air."

(Please turn to page 14)

## New arrival: Register debuts in Sanford area homes

The Sanford area has a new weekly newspaper starting today — the Sanford-Springvale Register.

Every Friday, a total of 12,130 copies of the Register will be mailed to all of the residences of Sanford, Springvale, Shapleigh and Acton. With newsstand copies, the total press run of the Register is 14,000.

This is the sixth paper being published by Mainely Newspapers, Inc., owned by Carolyn and David Flood of Saco. The Floods started the company with the Biddeford-Saco-OOB Courier in 1989 and have since added the Scarborough Leader, the South Portland-Cape Elizabeth Sentry, the Kennebunk Post, and the Gorham-Westbrook Gazette. In addition, the company publishes a summer paper for the Old Orchard Beach area, the Summer Beacon.

"This is a natural extension of our papers in Biddeford-Saco and in the Kennebunks," said David Flood. "We had a number of customers who wanted a good way to reach the Sanford market and we decided to provide it for them."

The trick, Flood said, isn't in starting the paper — it's in providing a good newspaper week after week after week.

"We're expanding our business for the same reason any other company expands," he said. "We think we can have a more profitable company by doing so."

"But," he added, "this will only work if we publish a paper that is read and enjoyed by the people receiving it. That's what we have to do. We recognize there is competition. We

(Please turn to page 7)

## Sanford schools plan to decrease teen dropout rate

By **Reneé Worthing**  
*Register Reporter*

Sanford schools are embarking on a vigorous study to improve the graduation rate of its students and reduce the impact of dropouts on local businesses.

The first step in this study has been the hiring of Franklin Schargel as a consultant to work with the Sanford School Department.

Recipient of the 2005 National Dropout Prevention Center's Crystal Star Award of Excellence, Schargel's message was two-fold. Speaking at a luncheon attended by school, town and state officials at the Knights of Columbus on Tuesday, he predicted low-skill jobs would be replaced by technology.

Outlining his views of a future where technology replaced humans, he used Radio Frequency Identification Tags (RFID) as an example.

"RFID's are specially coded pieces of plastic which will be embedded in consumer products. The RFIDs will transmit information over a radio frequency and, unlike bar codes, do not need to be scanned," he said. "Instead, antennas far away from the product can receive the information."

Schargel said this type of technology is already in use at a Wal-Mart test site.

When he asked he audience to guess when this new tech-

(Please turn to page 8)



## Life on the ranch



**WHO ARE YOU?** — Alpaca Annabelle Gold, above, takes a closer look at things.

**FURRY FRIENDS** — Donna Ferrera, right, shares a treat with two of the 18 alpacas that live on her family's Oakhill Alpaca Ranch in Shapleigh. Alpacas, a relative to the llama, are good-natured creatures known for their fiber.

For full story, see Page 6. (Colleen Marshall photos)

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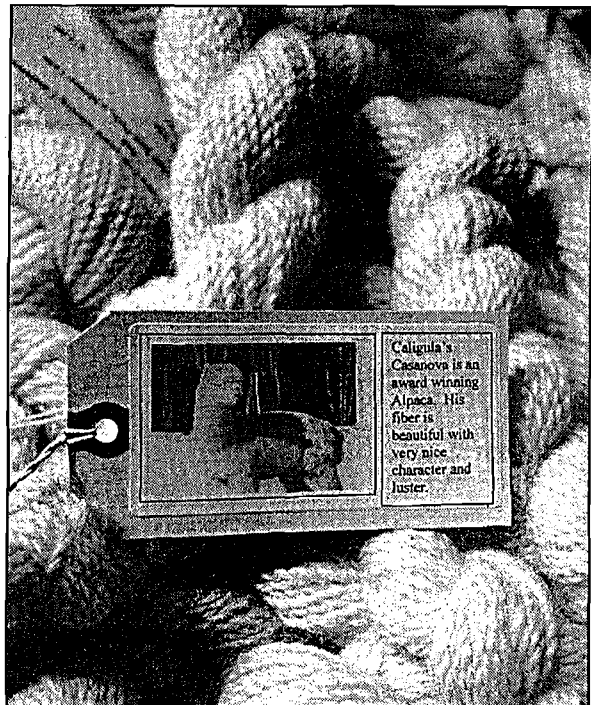
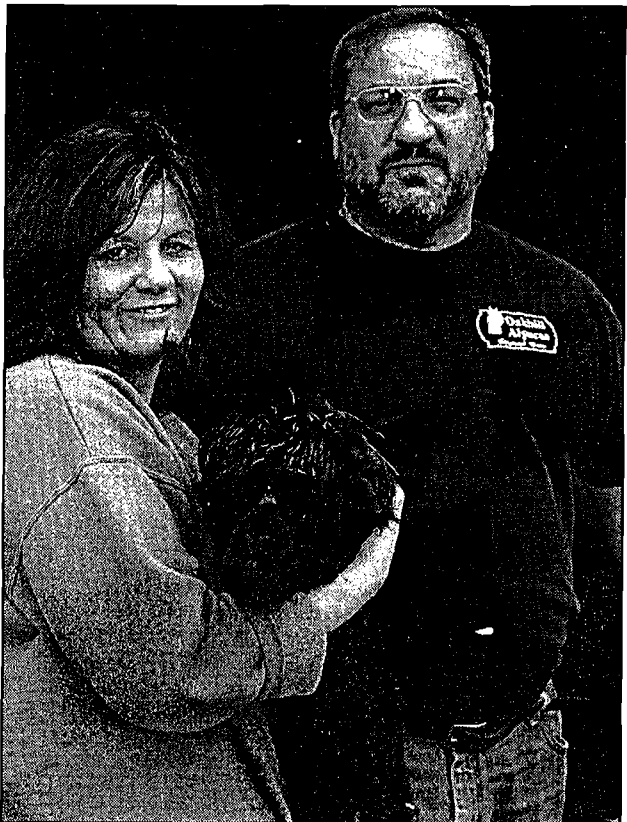
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# Weekly Interview

## Donna and Bob Ferrera



### Alpaca farm is a vision turned reality for this Shapleigh family

By Colleen Marshall  
Gazette Editor

Donna and Bob Ferrera live a seemingly typical Maine life.

They prepare a hearty breakfast for their kids every morning and make sure they get outside to run around for plenty of exercise. They laugh as the teen-agers exert their independence by mischievously pushing one another to see which one will start a fight. And, they scold them when that

playfulness turns too serious.

However, their Shapleigh home is anything but typical – the majority of its members are not even human. But that doesn't make the 18 alpacas that live on their Oakhill Alpaca Ranch any less part of the family.

"Personality wise, I think they are a cross between a dog and a cat," Bob says. "They all definitely have their own personalities, and the ones raised here we can call by name and they come. But there are definitely times with some of them that they look at you and if you haven't got food they give you a look as if to say, 'I'll think about it.'"

With large eyes and a tuft of fluffy hair jutting up in a haphazard manner in front of their raised ears, the alpacas scope out visitors from a careful distance, twisting their neck forward in what appears to be reserved interest. A cousin to the llama, the alpacas are native to the Andes Mountains of South America, Bob says, noting they are extremely gentle and friendly.

The alpacas, ranging in color from snow white to dark black, dot the landscape of the Ferrera's nearly 80-acre farm off of Shapleigh Corner Road, in stark contrast to what the family's life was like just a few years ago.

"It all started with a chick and ducks," Bob says. "Then we got a rare breed of sheep called Old South Down Miniature Baby Dolls."

Arriving at the Topsfield Fairgrounds in the late 1990s for an annual livestock event, the Ferreras took their first look at some alpacas on display – and their lives changed forever.

"We went to check them out and that was it," Bob says, with a shrug. "We were just captivated. We sold the sheep and alpacas bought two to see if we could get a feel for it."

Soon, they decided to relocate from their Middleton, Mass. home to Maine where they could have more land for their ever-expanding alpaca family. Bob commuted between Shapleigh and Massachusetts, often driving four hours on a daily basis, to clear the land of trees with antique farm equipment.

"We were willing to put the hours in, that was the big thing," Bob says of the efforts to clear the land for the farm and relocate. "That was really the thing – it all came down to sweat equity. That was all we really had – and what was really needed. It's the sacrifice you have to make if you want to do something like this."

Kaylee, a black and white rescue dog, jumps up from her spot in front of the barn doors where she has longingly been seeking out someone to throw her a saliva-saturated stick. Donna's mother, Carol, arrives armed with a container of pastries, and a pocketful of hidden carrots which she – none too subtly – sneaks to the alpacas while the attention is turned to the baked goods. Then Donna's father, Bruce, arrives with a wide smile on his face, and rubber casings to cover his shoes.

"They are 'poop shoes,'" the self-proclaimed "head of maintenance" announces before entering each of the gated

**A FAMILY AFFAIR** — Donna and Bob Ferrera, left, pose for a family photo with their alpaca Annabelle Gold. Alpaca's are known for their fiber, which the Ferrera's sell in various forms in their farm gift shop, including this yarn, which comes with an introductory message about its origin. (Colleen Marshall photos)

areas that house the separated male and female alpacas.

"They are much easier than caring for dogs, goats or sheep, mostly because they have communal poop areas," Bob says. "They also are very efficient with the food they eat."

Donna says their 16-year-old son Rob, as well as her parents, and Bob's parents, all live on the property and lend a hand with the animals. Everyone has a caretaking role, but watching her parents as her mother sneaks treats and her father eggs them on until they spit at him, it's clear they are simply being grandparents.

Donna says she works full-time at Pierce Atwood while Bob works full-time at Pratt and Whitney, but they hope in the future that raising alpacas will be their main employment. For this to happen, they must add more females to their herd.

"You need to have 10 females to earn a good living, so that they produce enough, that's what the average is," Donna says. "We only have five right now, but four of them are pregnant."

A female alpaca can typically be sold for anywhere between \$15,000 to \$25,000, while breeder males start out at \$3,000 and can sell for upwards of \$30,000, the Ferreras say.

But it's the fiber that the Ferreras have been concentrating on lately. They shear the alpacas once a year, which results in 10 to 12 pounds of fiber. Donna says it then is sent to mini-mills for processing and it is then turned into clothing, including sweaters, socks, mittens and shawls.

"Most people just love the softness of it and I love to talk about the beneficial characteristics of it," Donna says, as she points out details of a scarf in their farm store. "It's lighter and warmer than any kind of wool and it's hypoallergenic. Alpaca fiber is just a higher quality than other materials with its luster and shine."

Gearing up for guests during the state's July 23 Open Farms Day, the Ferreras display educational information for their visitors. However, many people in the area already know all about the animals – right down to their names and personalities – as they stop by often on weekends for a visit.

"They stand back to see who you are at first, but once they trust you, then they come right up to you," Donna says. "They are just so friendly and warm."

The Oakhill Alpaca Farm and Gift Shop is open to the public on Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For more information, call 793-3414 or visit [www.oakhill-ranch.com](http://www.oakhill-ranch.com)

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