

'Hard Times' looks behind the numbers - KEY POINTS

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BACKGROUND: The Telegraph recently concluded its weeklong "Hard Times" series, a six-day examination of the economic recession on residents of Greater Nashua.

CONCLUSION: It's sometimes easy to forget there are real people behind all these gloomy financial reports.

Economic statistics play an important role in helping to put the world economy into perspective, not to mention fueling the daily ups and downs of stock markets around the globe.

By their very nature, however, they also tend to desensitize everything they touch. Job losses are up; home sales are down. Foreclosures are up; retail sales are down.

Numbers. Percentages. Charts. Graphs.

What sometimes gets lost in all this number crunching is - you guessed it - people.

That's one of the primary reasons why The Telegraph committed so many resources to "Hard Times," a six-day series of stories that was published between the last Sunday of 2008 and the first Sunday of 2009.

During this span of eight days, a half-dozen reporters, three photographers and our page designers attempted - in the words of the introductory note to readers - to explain how "individuals, companies and institutions are coping with the recession."

(The entire series, along with a multimedia presentation based on interviews with five local people about their financial hopes and fears in the new year, is available under "Special Reports" on our Web site, www.nashuatelegraph.com.)

The journey started with a look at the state's economy through the eyes of the owner of a private employment agency and ended with stories that examined the impact of the bad economy on pawnshops, private aircraft

owners and the stock market.

In between, we reported on municipal welfare budgets, gambling and state lottery sales, dining out and what type of jobs remain in high demand. (In case you missed it, those fields are engineering, finance, administrative support and health care.)

But, as we said at the outset, this was a series first and foremost about people. Among the individuals we introduced you to along the way were:

Ron Gelinas, a onetime homeless veteran who now works to help other unemployed veterans find jobs through his work for **Harbor Homes** .

"For me, it's not a job," he says. "It's training as a person."

Michael Della Paolera, owner of Nashua Loan and Jewelry, who as a Nashua pawnshop owner gets to see the ravages of the recession up close and personal.

"It's sad," he says. "It's good for business right now, but it's sad to see people coming in and selling their goods to survive."
