



The Weathervane

Summer

A Quarterly for and from West Gardiner

2021

Commander Couture to Lead the Maine American Legion for 2021-2022

by Donna Radovich

Debra Couture was elected as the Maine's State Commander of the American Legion during the 102nd State Convention in Brewer, Maine on June 12, 2021. She is the first member of Litchfield's William R. Bold Post 181 to hold this position. Deb was born in Augusta, Maine and attended Hall-Dale High School and the University of Maine. She graduated from Hawaii Pacific University in 1978 and Central Michigan University in 1986 with a Masters' degree in Health Care Administration and was commissioned a Lieutenant Junior Grade (LTJG) in the US Navy in 1987. Deb retired as a Captain in the Medical Service Corps in 2012 with over 24 years of active and reserve service. She served in South Korea, Guam, Kuwait, Qatar, Iraq, and Spain and at several bases in the US, including Little Creek, VA, The Pentagon, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, USCENTCOM, and at several Naval Hospitals. Deb is also a Seabee and is Seabee Combat Warfare Qualified.

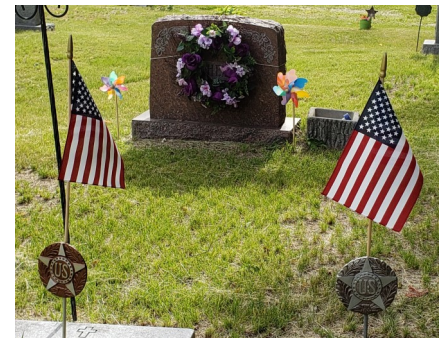
Deb has been a member of the American Legion for over 27 years and is a member of the William R. Bold, American Legion Post 181 in Litchfield, Maine. She has served on several National Committees and in many officer positions at the State, District and Post levels.

Deb and her husband Greg reside in West Gardiner, Maine and have 2 daughters and 6 grandchildren.



Thank You for Your Service

The Town of West Gardiner has been supplying Elaine Goodwin with flags for the Veteran's graves at the 7 cemeteries in town for over 20 years. Elaine has done a wonderful job at placing the flags and veteran markers on those graves every year. We thank you, Elaine, for the beautiful job that you do



West Gardiner Historical Society News

Do you want to know more about the history of the town you live in? Please join us. Meetings are held on the 3rd Wednesday of the month and start at 7 PM. We will be having a clean-up morning on June 26th from 9 to 12 AM at the property adjacent to the Auxiliary Hall where the future Historical Society building will be built. We will be cleaning out the garage so that it can be used for storage of larger historical items.

From the Porch

Water Well by Mike Wing

I was a city boy growing up on processed water. It tasted a little like Cobbossee Stream, other days like a swimming pool. Twenty years ago, Susan and I relocated to West Gardiner and were introduced to local well water. We drank it every day, fresh and clean with a trace of manganese in the filter. No aftertaste of frogs or chlorine. We lived on a hill and got plenty of water at 300 feet. Now we live down near a stream where a spring across the road runs about all year. We were surprised when our new well came in at 700 feet and was fracked to get less than 2 gallons a minute. I'm flummoxed. The drill guy said not to worry because the reservoir holds about 500 gallons. We were again surprised when two houses away the well was drilled less than 200 feet, a gusher. "Life is like a box of wells. You never know what you're gonna get."

I looked up the aquifer map for West Gardiner, just to convince myself more of my water ignorance. It worked. The maps were a maze of colorful grids that made about as much sense as my GPS. A better source might be a dowser, if any still practice. We dug a well years ago with a backhoe after asking an ancient local to mark a spot. He held a whittled apple crotch, and it really did bend down toward the magic spot. In two hours, we opened a gurgling clean pool at the depth he predicted. He lowered a cup, took a swallow, and claimed it perfect. So much for state testing. We lined it with four well tiles. It has never dried up.

The more I learn about water, the more I am surprised about where it is, how it works, and where it fits in our environment. We are fortunate in West Gardiner to have access to its purity that sustains our daily lives, but this summer is predicted to be threatened by drought. Lack of substantial rain calls for conservation when watering gardens, washing vehicles, and using sinks, toilets, and showers. Nature does not always provide, but we can avoid being wasteful when things run short. Water well this summer.

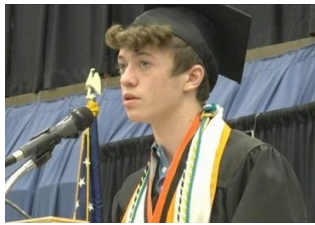
West Gardiner Garden Club Scholarship Recipient~ James Rinderknecht

On Saturday, June 5th, the West Gardiner Garden Club held its annual Plant Sale in the parking lot of the Town Office and also sold cards in the Auxiliary Hall. Club members

want to extend a heartfelt thanks to all those who donated plants, bought plants, or otherwise made donations. The Sale far exceeded the Club's expectations for this year.

Plant sales, card sales, an occasional educational program, and a biannual garden tour (canceled due to Covid) are the ways the Club raises money. The Club funds scholarship(s) for West Gardiner high school seniors who are continuing their education in an agricultural or environmental field. The Club offers between one and three scholarship each year. The Club also undertakes various gardening projects within the Town from time to time.

The Club also announces the recipient of its 2021 scholarship: James Rinderknecht of 35 Turtle Cove Road, West Gardiner. James graduated from Gardner Area High School as valedictorian and will attend the Colorado School of Mines, where he will study Quantitative Biosciences and Engineering.



During high school he participated in varsity athletics, including lacrosse, wrestling, and cross-country, and has volunteered throughout the pandemic as a member of the Interact Club, helping to staff the high school food bank, which provides food and other necessities to area families. James was featured in an article in the KJ on June 9th highlighting his achievements, including receipt of the Maine Principal's Award. Congratulations to James!



T Minus 10 minutes

Valerie Kenney

T minus 10 minutes until graduation starts and our high school career is officially over. We are all lined up in our rows, shaking and on the verge of tears. Acquaintances hold hands and praise each other on how far we have all come. Despite not being close with my marching partner, sensing her anxiety, I offered my hand to her, not expecting her to take it and squeeze it tightly. For the first time, we were truly one class, no matter background, previous relationships, or anything. We were simply a group of young adults happy to be with each other, finally graduating.

My favorite part of graduation? The teachers. They were all so excited and sweet and happy to see us in our cap and gowns. They all worked so hard to get us all here today. At the beginning of the year, we weren't even sure if we would have a prom or official graduation, but the school board pulled it through in the end. Ms. Benedict took a picture of Emily Brown and me, hugging us close, reflecting on the past years. Mrs. Butterfield clapped and waved as I left the auditorium. Reaching her hand out, I grabbed it and squeezed it tightly, smiling and holding back tears.

Even now, eight days later, I'm still finding it hard to believe that I'm a graduate. Even after all of the cards and "congratulations" Facebook posts and hugs, it still doesn't feel real. After the end of every year, it was always known that the next school year would follow, but that's not the case anymore. It feels scary not knowing what's to come. Some of my friends will be taking that big step in the fall and going off to college. For the first time, I have to stand on my own two feet and decide what I want to do in the fall, a scary proposition. My friends and I are ready to go out into the world and find out who we are without the pressure of school. It's easy to get overwhelmed about what is to come later in the year, but like a rubber band, my mind snaps back and for the first time I feel excited (albeit nervous), about what I can do next. Wish me luck!

Gary Sinise Foundation Grant Award

Deb Couture and Mike Dovinsky wrote a grant requesting 21 pagers for the West Gardiner Fire Department (WGFD) through the Gary Sinise Foundation in February, 2021. "The Gary Sinise Foundation believes that our firefighters, police, and EMTs are indispensable to the safety of our communities. It's a perilous job, and oftentimes these heroes must perform with limited resources. Through the Gary Sinise Foundation's First Responders Outreach, they provide help to critical funding for emergency relief, training, and essential equipment to ensure these heroes perform to the best of their abilities." The Foundation awarded the 21 pagers, valued at over \$9300, to the WGFD in April, 2021. This picture is a thank you picture to the Foundation from the WGFD and will be posted on the Foundation's website. We are very grateful for this award.





Mister Smith goes into Retirement!

Kyle Smith was born and raised in West Gardiner. He graduated from the University of Maine-Farmington in 1983 with a degree in elementary education and certification in special education. In 2005, Kyle completed his Master's in Education at UNE.

Kyle taught US History and remedial Math and English at GAHS from 1983-1985. In 1985, he transferred to West Gardiner Central School (which was later renamed Helen Thompson School) to become a Resource Room teacher. After those initial 5 years, Kyle moved to Grade 3 from 1990 to 2004; Kindergarten from 2004 to 2011; and has been teaching Grade 5 students at HTS from 2011 until his retirement in June of this year. He has spent 36 of his 38 years of teaching at HTS.

Kyle knew from an early age that he would be a teacher. His 1st grade teacher was Judy Marsh. She was also his 4H leader. He was also a conservation aide on Swan Island. He enjoyed leadership positions and sharing information. Kyle says the only difference between kids at the elementary, middle, and high school level is the size of the kid.

Kyle's most memorable and funny teaching story: One day, when I was teaching Kindergarten, I was asking each student which choice they wanted for lunch - Chicken Patty or Chicken Quesadilla. When I got to Johnny and I asked him, he just stared off into space so I repeated the choices - "Chicken Patty or Chicken Quesadilla?" Still Johnny failed to give me a response so again I asked, "Chicken Patty or Chicken Quesadilla?" Finally, Johnny blurted out, "Okay, okay ...I'll have the Chicken Patty and a case of beer!"

Kyle may be bush hogging along the highway, watering geraniums at Longfellow's, or horseback riding in retirement. He says he is open to suggestions on what he should do. Kyle, thank you so much for your many years of educating our children.

Helen Thompson School news – by Kady Gould, Principal

What a school year it has been! After starting the year in a hybrid learning model (2 days in school and 3 days remote learning), most of our students returned to in-person learning during our phased approach to implementing a 4 day in-person model. In February, our PreK students began attending school four days a week following the traditional half-day structure. Students in grades K-2 returned to school in early March, and students in grades 3-5 returned to school in mid-March at the start of the 3rd trimester. Some of our students have continued to participate in the remote learning academy, accessing daily instruction and learning activities outside of the school building through the use of technology. At Helen Thompson School, we are fortunate to have remained open all year without being required to switch to the district remote learning schedule due to illness or staffing shortages. Staying open has been an incredible accomplishment and has greatly benefited our students!

This year we have faced unprecedented challenges as we have remained committed to operating our school safely, while meeting the needs of our students. In order to do this, we have taught daily lessons in person and via remote learning platforms, held Physical Education classes outside, created smaller groups at lunch to allow for safe distancing, redesigned classroom layouts to promote safety, built mask breaks into daily classroom schedules, converted to paperless communication when possible, integrated cleaning into each routine and transition throughout the day, and distributed take-home food to students every week.

Due to the creativity and dedication of our incredible staff, we have also maintained our student service group, the HT PACK. This year the HT PACK created a beautiful flower garden at our school. Many classes have made the most of outdoor learning space in our outdoor classrooms. Our PTA donated buckets that are used to store and carry student materials outside - and can be turned upside down for seating! Our 5th graders were also able to return to in-person band lessons with Mr. Newton during this 3rd trimester. Our library created online ordering forms to allow our remote learners to access books from our school library, and Mrs. Natalie Brann created a Little Free Library for our community. This is open to all citizens in West Gardiner and is located between the bus loop and parking lot. Thanks to our Memory Book volunteers, we will also continue to offer our annual Memory Book keepsake to students.

We would not have been able to remain open all year without the support of our students' families. Families have been vigilant about using the self-screener each morning and supportive when symptoms of a head cold resulted in the need for a student to stay home out of precaution. Statewide guidance continues to change and most recently, changes have allowed us to remove masks when we are outside and able to maintain distance. We are planning for the return to school in the fall, and expecting to return to full 5 day school weeks. Since guidance continues to change, we will need to stay tuned for updates regarding the need to continue wearing masks and providing 3'-6' distance at school.

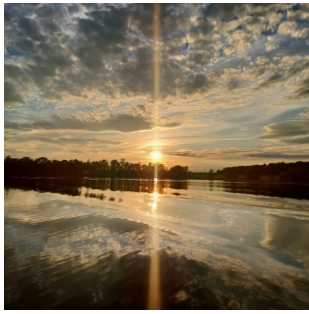
Over the summer, we will have a lot going on at HTS. Construction will begin to modify space for the STEPS program (this is the MSAD 11 program for students with autism), along with the arrival of a modular unit that will provide 4 new classrooms and office spaces. So while we await guidance from the CDC, we'll be busy preparing our building for the return of students in the fall. Back to school plans will include an Open House event so our families should stay tuned for more information coming in August. On behalf of our entire school team, I would like to express sincere gratitude for the support of our community and wish you all a safe and fun-filled summer!

Retirement News ~ Linda Miles will be retiring as MSAD 11's Speech/Language Pathologist this year. Linda graduated from the University of Maine, Orono in 1986 with a Bachelor of Science in Animal Studies and received a Master of Arts in Communication Sciences and Disorders from UMO in 2003. She works with students from Pre-K through high school.

Linda found that she loved working with children and collaborating with educators and parents. Linda came to MSAD 11 in 2017, where she has worked at Helen Thompson School, Pittston-Randolph, GRMS, and GAHS. Linda believes that if you can establish a rapport with a young person, you receive a gift. When you can help them learn to communicate, to speak more clearly, to be more confident using language, and that light of pride sparks in their eyes, it's a deeply rewarding experience.

In retirement, Linda plans to travel some with her husband, spend more time with her daughters, continue to care for her parents, and enjoy her garden. She may continue to work in some area after taking the summer off. Thank you, Linda, for your years of helping the children of MSAD 11. You are very much appreciated.

Deep Roots in West Gardiner by Susan Emmet



Seven years ago, at Margaret Peacock’s invitation, I joined the Weathervane staff and loved writing about people and places in West Gardiner. At our most recent planning meeting, it was suggested I write about those we’ve lost and how their families carry on their legacies.

Annual town reports include vital statistics about deaths and marriages. From the last five years, I sought names of elders who have died, a loss to their families and to our community. Their roots run deep in West Gardiner and they include families named Adams, Allen, Bailey, Beaulieu, Blen, Bodge, Brann, Buckle, Burke, Caldwell, Clark, Cobb, Cumming, Curtis, Danforth, Dennis, Dodge, Doughty, Elcik, Emery, Fairbairn, Fearon, Fellows, Flynn, Fuller, Gates, Gilley, Goodwin, Gowen, Grasse, Greenleaf, Gregoire, Hickey, Hinton, Jacobsohn, Jamison, Kenney, Koven, Lamoreau, Laney, Lanphier, Larrabee, Lecompte, Levesque, Luken, MacDonald, MacInnes, McCollett, McCormick, McGee, McLaughlin, Marks, Marston, Morgan, Neary, Nightingale,

Oakes, O’Ben, O’Neill, Palmer, Peacock, Peckham, Plourde, Richards, Russell, Sherburne, Shoener, Small, Smith, Spencer, Thompson, Torgeson, Vanasse, Vermillion, Wade, Walls, White and Zarbo. Like trees, people bear fruit and provide shade and warmth to those near and dear to them. There is a wisdom in trees.

Imagine a huge and ancient tree, maybe birch or fir, whose off shoots are connected underground through mycorrhizal networks which are huge, hundreds or thousands of times the length of one tree root. They connect to each other and send nutrients to each other through microscopic fungi that are the bridge between the trees. Individuals plant and sink roots to be harvested by their descendants. Stories, treasured items, deeds cemented in memory - the history of each family is remembered and shared. Given the length and breadth of elders’ lives, it is exciting to contemplate how young people will add to the history of their families in West Gardiner, exciting to see what they will do and become, rooted in the lives of their ancestors.

Tina Adams, United States Marine Corps (USMC)



Tina enlisted in the Marines during her senior year at Gardiner Area High School. She had completed all her high school requirements and graduated early in 1981. She reported to Parris Island, South Carolina in March and graduated from boot camp in May, 1981. After boot camp, Tina attended school at Parris Island to attain her Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) 0151, Personnel Administration.

After graduation in July, 1981, Tina reported to Kaneohe Marine Corps Air Station, Oahu, Hawaii. She loved her job as personnel administrator for Headquarters Company, 1st Marine Brigade and was promoted to the rank of Corporal during her tour at Kaneohe. She served there

until her discharge in March, 1984. Tina loved her time in the Marines. As the youngest of 4 children, she knows it was a huge accomplishment to become a United States Marine. Looking back, Tina knows that she was not the same person when she was discharged as when she went into the Marines. The Marines taught her discipline, responsibility, and accountability. Tina believes that any young person would benefit from serving in the military. Honesty and integrity are part of the Marines Corp’s values. They would learn all that she has learned and achieved and would become a better person because of their service. She would do it all again. Tina, thank you for your service. Semper Fi.



WEST GARDINER NEWSLETTER

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The Weathervane is a non-profit quarterly informational newsletter intended to be unbiased, non-denominational, non-partisan, accurate, and enjoyable.

Schedules of town events, organizations and activities as well as local businesses will be listed in the spring issues.

The Weathervane welcomes story ideas from our readers.

Call 441-9752 or write coleneoneill1@gmail.com