



# The Weathervane

Winter

A Quarterly for and from West Gardiner 2017

## DIY Network TV Stars Call West Gardiner Home



*The Weathervane's own Kim Greenleaf got the scoop on the DIY Network stars, Ryan and Ashley. Here's the story!*

My wife Ashley and I officially moved to West Gardiner last year to a piece of property I had purchased a decade or so earlier. I was living in Jackson Hole in 2005 when my brother called with a “good deal” on land in West G. I sent him all the money I had and the land sat there for quite a while; I really never had any plans on moving out there. The land was very raw and unattractive, there were old cars and parts strewn everywhere and the land was cut in a very poor way. All of which made us think of it as an investment and not really somewhere we wanted to live. Over time, we cleaned up the property and its potential came to light. It is now one of our favorite places on earth, right in West Gardiner, Maine! Since then, we have built a workshop, acquired the neighboring property, and are now building a house. There are many reasons why we really love West Gardiner, most of which revolve around the people and the location. It still has that small town feel, people still wave and say hi, and the taxes are very fair. It often feels like we are many hours further up North than we really are; there is abundant wildlife and many places where all you can hear is nature, no man-made sounds or noise pollution, (that's not an easy place to find within 15 minutes of Augusta!). Many people ask what would you like to see different in West Gardiner? I would have to say it is pretty darn perfect the way it is. If you need something fancy, you can hit the big City of Augusta, if you need everyday items, you can swing in to the up and coming City of Gardiner.

We look forward to Maine Cabin Masters airing for another season on the DIY channel on Mondays at ten pm. (Past episodes are available on Youtube.) The production company does a great job of showcasing our work and focusing on Maine and the great things it has to offer. On most of the episodes we use other craftsmen/artists for a special part of the project, showcasing their work and giving them some great exposure. A major part of the show is reusing old materials and saving pieces of the building history. There is so much potential in our state to save more camps, to highlight different areas, and to give exposure to other artists and craftsman. Hopefully we'll continue to get high ratings and the opportunity to stay on this amazing path, in the meantime, we will keep on working to make our little piece of West Gardiner a better place.

- Ryan Eldridge

## Four Hands Goat Farm

- Nick Bucci

Donnie and Kari Presley, of Four Hands Goat Farm, met me in the driveway as I arrived at their house behind Fullers Market to discuss their business. They seemed to be as nervous to be interviewed as I was to interview since I hadn't conducted one in several years. Yet, after we shook hands and walked into their kitchen, past rows of goat milk soap, the anxiety faded and we began the exchange of information.

Donnie and Kari began their goat farm in June of 2014, after Kari's sister developed cancer. In an effort to raise money, they held a pig roast, rather than the conventional spaghetti supper. The man they bought the pig from happened to have a goat, which Kari found appealing. So, she purchased the goat, (whose name is William Bonney) as well. After a week, the couple acquired another goat and Kari got talked into attending a soap making class with her friend. They "fell" into the business of making soap.

Two years later, the couple has a dozen goats, three dogs, a couple of cats, two kids and a cow named Rose Beef, who thinks she's a goat. Each animal provides entertainment for the family and visitors. While the number of goats they own fluctuates, the passion for their animals does not. Donnie and Kari are teaching their kids to respect nature by having tablet-free summers and using only local produce. They pride themselves on being local consumers and producers.

Donnie and Kari welcome those who wish to purchase soap directly from them. Single bars of soap are \$4 and three bars go for \$10. They offer twelve bars plus scraps for \$55, while a mix and match basket of ten fragrances can be paid for with \$45. Four Hands Goat Farm sells out of their farm, at Fullers Market, and in Betsy's Consignment Store on Water Street in Augusta.

The soaps that they provide are all natural with various oils and animal products. Before the interview, Kari gave me one that smelled of "woodland". I used it every day for a month, and it left me smelling fantastic, leading to compliments from friends and coworkers! Donnie and Kari are taking it day by day with their business, and are in the process of putting up a website. This is a business that serves West Gardiner well.



## More on Barbara Astbury, as Promised in the Fall Issue

- Margaret Peacock

Barbara's childhood experience riding the bus was short-lived. Moving to West Gardiner at twelve years old, she attended West Gardiner Central School's seventh and eighth grade, where she was able to take the bus. But the high school in Gardiner had no bus service and students had to find their own way. She was able to find rides with Margaret Harris and Louis (Bud) Babb. On days when Barbara had band practice and missed her regular ride, she walked to what is now called the A1 Diner, and had a glass of the "coldest milk", (which she says she can still taste now) and a brownie. After that refreshment, she walked to Depot Square for a ride in a black limousine-like vehicle from a transport service that carried passengers from Gardiner to Lewiston. Luckily it traveled on Route 126, and the driver dropped her off at her home where she still lives today. Now, Barbara's bus experiences have expanded many-fold.

*The following is one of her favorite stories as a bus driver.*

### The Pinball Story

I haven't seen marbles on the bus for quite some time, but years ago, playing marbles used to be a favorite springtime activity. One day a boy got on the bus with a bag of marbles clutched in his hand. (This was before the era of the backpack). He went to the very back seat, sat down, and everything was great until he dropped the bag. Wouldn't you know, the same time he lost his bag of marbles I was stopping for another pick-up – on a downhill slope! Of course, every one of his 5000 marbles escaped, (well, maybe only 50) and started for the front at warp speed, pinging off every metal seat support on their way. I wasn't sure if I got transported from being in a school bus to being inside a pin-ball machine, but it sure sounded like it!

- Barbara Astbury

*My Apologizes:*

*I received a call after the fall issue of the Weathervane regarding the story titled, "Retiring After Forty-six Years." It was Barbara Astbury. "Whatever gave you the idea that I was retiring? I felt like my five-year-old self climbing the stairs onto a big yellow bus. She continued, "I've always said, I'll keep driving as long as I feel good, enjoy it and continue to drive safely." I apologized; she was gracious, especially gracious since she had to clarify to so many people who asked her, "So. You're retiring???"*

## The Spectacular Sarah Hanley

West Gardiner's Helen Thompson School has many amazing parts and pieces, such as a beautiful playground, a happy environment, and an opportunity to learn. But, to me, when it comes to creating a space where students feel welcomed and inspired to learn, one classroom stands out. Sarah Hanley's. She has been a 4th grade teacher at Helen Thompson for 17 years and was inspired to teach by her grandmother, the first female head teacher in Maine.

Spending time with Mrs. Hanley's students, or just hanging out in her colorful classroom for a short time, you will see students who are intrigued and excited. By helping to teach lessons and taking part in hands-on learning, this classroom environment can't help but encourage students to flourish. The activities not only teach the students the academics, but also valuable life lessons. Within their lessons, she teaches students how to be responsible for their own assignments and to work in groups as well.

Not only does she teach them lessons in the classroom, but she provides opportunities on how they can make a difference in their community. Working alongside Friends of Cobbossee Watershed, the students make slide shows about the importance of keeping the water clean. They hear from professionals on how their ideas would work and connect with property owners around the lake in West Gardiner who also give feedback on their projects.

In speaking of the best parts of being a teacher and how her students inspire her, Mrs. Hanley says there is rarely ever a typical day. Because the students always bring something new to the table, "They teach me everyday how to be a better teacher. When something clicks with a student, that's got to be the most rewarding. Being able to see them understand a lesson and run with it is amazing." It's easy to see, even at such a young age, the students speak eloquently of Mrs. Hanley and how much they love to spend the day with her.

Enriching the minds of students as they grow and learn, forming a positive generation of kids who never lose the spark to learn something new, and having a great time all the while, is what Sarah Hanley loves to do.

- Abi Weston

## He Didn't Pay for the Coffee

Once when I was at a local store paying for gas, a fellow came in all dressed up in his hunting clothes, and got himself a cup of coffee at the self-serve. He stood around for a while acting like a big shot sipping on his coffee. Then he asked the person who was cutting up vegetables behind the counter, "Is anything in this store fit to eat?" Well, she happened to be the owner. Fire came out her eyes, and out from behind the counter she came with her twelve-inch butcher knife and said, "Nothing in this store is fit to eat, and I will slit your throat if you don't get out."

He turned around without a word, dripping coffee on the floor as he left.

A true story - Mert Hickey

## Vietnam Era Veteran

- Deb Couture

Ron Dixon enlisted in the Maine Army National Guard in May 1963. He attended basic training at Ft. Dix, NJ and then went on to Ft. Devens, MA. for supply school. He also completed advanced infantry training. Ron served in the National Guard until 1970. He joined the US Army Reserves later that same year. Ron served with the 76th Training Division with the Army Reserve. He trained active and reserve personnel across the state on the use of M-60's, M-16's, Grenades, and all other weapons used by the Army. After his promotion First Sergeant (E-8), he led all S-3 Battalion Operations. He also continued to lead training operations, training personnel at Ft. Devens, MA.; Ft. Jackson, MS.; Ft. Dix, NJ.; Ft. Gordon, GA.; Ft. Benning, GA.; Ft. Campbell, KY.; and Ft. Lewis, WA. He was at Ft. Lewis during Desert Shield/Desert Storm in 1990/91. Ron received the Army Commendation Medal for his innovative training plans. He also received the Meritorious Service Medal before his retirement in 1991 after 27 years of military service. *Ron, thank you for your service.*



## On The Ballot

### Town Clerk Candidate

*Running Unopposed*

#### Angela Phillis Current Town Clerk

"Because I love my job. I love working for the town office. I love working for the town's people."



### School Board Candidate

*Running Unopposed*

#### Earle McCormick

"I've seen the education picture from all sides: as a teacher in MSAD 11; as a state senator working on budgets; and as a selectman working on the town budgets. I think I have the experience and time to make a contribution to the schools."



### Selectmen Candidates

#### Merton Hickey Current Selectmen

"McLaughlin will do a good job. He did a good job as fire chief. But some people told me they thought I should run and I like working with the people in town."

#### Christopher McLaughlin

"I love West Gardiner; have lived here 33 years and enjoy working for the Town. I ran for selectman last year and came up just short. I hope some day soon I will be a selectman."

## FROM THE PORCH

### Wait A Minute

By: Mike Wing

When we look down over the stone wall this winter, the view has been our own Storm Center. One day, the morning is above freezing and windless. A few days later, the birches are bowed to the ground under a foot of a heavy wet white blanket. Today it was glistening crust that we could almost walk on. Seems as if we plan the day around the temperature and snow conditions, which are about as consistent as my bipolar grandmother.



The weather pattern in West Gardiner provides a study on the challenges of snow removal. The basic shovel isn't even one-size-fits-all anymore. You see the funky ergonomic and usually colorful favorites, the grain shovel, (now made in plastic) and the designer scoop. Sleek snow blowers are blasting away the deep stuff, as well as those yard toys the kids left around in November. Frisbees really take off in the plume of a roaring Toro. But, plows are the local first choice, usually bright yellow blades, six to eight feet wide, dual lights on top. Since West Gardiner's principal vehicle is the pickup, plow attachment is a natural progression each December. You can almost predict a coming storm by the number of plows on the roads.

Of course the mammoths of snow removal are our town plows and sanders. It's a welcome sound in a fierce storm when the plowmen go rattling and banging by. Secure in the work they do, we often head out onto a cleared main road on some unnecessary errand. From our adventures this winter, West Gardiner's plow crew has no compare. When we cross into another town, the immediate difference (after taxes) is the condition of the highway. Maybe our men work harder.

Snow is Nature's physician. It insulates the ground, removes weak trees, and exercises our weakened backs and cabin-fevered minds. Nothing teaches patience like the weird weather so far this year, with snow alternating with ice, rain, cold, then sunshine. Wait a minute and the plans will change with the weather. With a bucket of sand, a shovel, a chain, and a hot coffee, getting out and about town is a natural compromise.

## Connections...Gardiner Public Library

- Susan Emmet

The connections between West Gardiner and the public and school libraries are strong in part because Gardiner Public Library staff and volunteers include residents Ginni Nichols, Scott Handville, Audrey Littlefield, Judy Abbott, Ralph Littlefield and on the Board of Trustees, Tom Abbott.

As of 2015, based on a population of more than 3,400 West Gardiner residents ([Maine Register](#)), a total of 1137 cards (adult, young adult, children, teachers) were issued. This is about a third of the population.

The total circulation of materials to WG cardholders numbered 14, 211 during 2014-15. Every three years the state-wide MINERVA system culls inactive cards except for those who owe fees for damaged or missing materials and books. These numbers are current. West Gardiner's circulation number is the largest among the library's sharing towns with the exception of Gardiner.

After spending a lot of time at GPL, here are things I learned:

- \* The public library is asking WG to approve \$34, 748 of a \$373,000 proposed operating budget. This is not for employee costs or building renovations. The latter is funded over time by investments, bequests and grants. Building GPL's operating budget relies on known revenue streams. The effects of decreased revenue sharing is certainly apparent in building the library's and RSU 11 town budgets.
- \* The \$218, 371 Book Fund (49 separate accounts with varying amounts and purposes) includes 5 bequests from WG folks, ranging from \$1000 to nearly \$20,000. These funds are spent as designated by the donors and are not part of the operating budget.
- \* Ginni Nichols, the Children's Librarian, pays weekly visits to Helen Thompson School to read aloud and share books.
- \* The bus backpack program, now on 11 buses, includes Ginni as one of the selectors.
- \* The Teen Program on Thursdays from 2:30-5:30 allows around 30 middle and high school students to roam the library, share food and visit with kids they may not often see, play board games, explore the children's, teen and archive areas, and learn about and use all the library offers.
- \* Additionally, 34 WG students are home schooled or in private (primarily religious) schools. Three students are enrolled in charter schools according to the State Department of Education. Ginni Nichols has presented 3 workshops to a dozen parents of home schooled children, teaching them the MARVEL system to aid in research and finding challenging curriculum, books and other materials. These parents depend on library resources.
- \* In the library's Archives are books and materials that came from Helen Ware Peacock who grew up on the Merrill Farm on Spears Corner Road.

Libraries are learning laboratories, places for research, sharing and learning of all sorts, driven by professional staff who are very strong advocates for life-long learning.

Access is opportunity. Supporting libraries can "raise up" individuals and communities because the concept of a common good is real and critical for our future. The connections between our town and the library have deep roots.

### Lunch is Being Served!

The Friendly Neighbors senior group wish to extend their appreciation to all involved in allotting a sum of money for our catered summer dinners. West Gardiner resident seniors enjoy the half-hour social and announcements before the noon meal. Wayne Mitten provides a delicious spread at the West Gardiner Fire Station, 322 Spears Corner Road. A special thanks for our local firemen for setting up the tables and chairs. Pending approval at the town meeting, the meals will begin May 19th. Others will always be the 3rd Friday of the month. Bob White and Mary Blen are in charge.

Reservations must be made before the due date. Call on the weekend at 724-7494.



### Weathervane Staff Expanding

The Weathervane welcomes Abigayle (Abi) Weston, GAHS student writer and "re-welcomes" Nick Bucci, now a UMF graduate. Also joining is Jeremy Bourque a West Gardiner resident and teaches in Skowhegan, he will be working on our layout.

## COBBOSSEECONTEE SNOWMOBILE CLUB NEWS



Informational/directional signs with map of our snowmobile trails have been posted at 6 major intersections. In addition, Welcome to Cobbosseecontee Snowmobile Club Trails signs with the map were posted where our trails connect with surrounding towns. The late December snow/ice storm raised havoc on our trails. Thanks to all who spent endless hours/days clearing so all could ride.

Riding on a landowner's property is a privilege. Please respect the property as if it were your own. Remember, landowners have every right to revoke this privilege and close down a trail as we have seen in the past. It is illegal for ATV's to operate on snowmobile trails and are subject to fines, however, ATV's with tracks that have been registered as a snowmobile are legal. Permission is granted for snowmobiles only; anyone wanting to use trails for anything else, please contact the landowner for permission.

We are in the process of updating our records of landowner permissions. If you are a landowner and a club trail crosses your land or have concerns, please contact David Cogley, Trailmaster, 724-7041

## Mark your Calendar

### **West Gardiner Election**

March 18th 8am - Noon  
West Gardiner Fire Station,  
322 Spears Corner Road.

### **Town Meeting**

March 18th @ 1:30pm  
West Gardiner Fire Station,  
322 Spears Corner Road.

### **Not Keeping your Town Report?**

Drop it off to an attendant at the  
Transfer Station to be recycled at  
the Town Meeting.



WEST GARDINER NEWSLETTER

# *The Weathervane*

A Quarterly For and From Our Town

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## POSTAL CUSTOMER

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.*

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