



The Weathervane

Fall

A Quarterly for and from West Gardiner

2022



Friends for Life

by Colene O'Neill

Rickey McKenna, originally from West Gardiner, is living with diabetes and a donated new liver thanks to his friend since kindergarten, Vaughn Smith, of West Gardiner. Vaughn donated 62% of his liver to Rickey, August 31st at Lahey Hospital & Medical Center.

Rickey still struggles to talk about what this gift and his friend did for him. When he found out he needed a transplant, the hospital told him that finding a live donor would speed up the process even though he had been placed on the transplant list. He told his wife, Dina, that he did not want their family and friends to be tested as he would be devastated if anything happened to them during surgery or recovery. Thankfully, friends and family did not listen to Rick. Many of us went through the initial questionnaire and were halted as we didn't meet certain criteria. Vaughn moved through the questionnaire and was scheduled for many appointments at Lahey to see if he was a match and a good candidate for a transplant. He was a match! Without hesitation he agreed to donate his liver to

his lifelong friend, Rickey.

These guys, along with others from their graduating class of 1983 at Gardiner High School, forged a strong bond. They were in each other's weddings, watched the birth of each other's children, and mourned with them as they lost parents. They camp, hunt, fish and just enjoy each other's company. Their friendship has stood the test of time.

Over the years, Vaughn has done many heroic things: he saved a man from drowning and rescued injured pets. However, nothing compares to unselfishly donating his liver to Rickey. Vaughn's wife Cindy said it best. "There are some things in life you cannot put a price on, family, friendship and health being at the top of the list." These two friends embarked on a journey of lifelong connection and road to wellness. They are both home recovering nicely and are an inspiration to all.



New Town Treasurer/Tax Collector

by Debra Couture

Raelyn Spencer is the Town of West Gardiner's new Treasurer/Tax Collector. Raelyn grew up in West Gardiner and lives in town with her fiancé Ben and dog Maverick. Some of you have probably seen Raelyn at Four Corners General store where she worked many years during high school and now works there part time. She also worked at Gardiner Federal Credit Union for several years serving many West Gardiner residents. She is glad to be working for the Town of West Gardiner and seeing all your familiar faces.

West Gardiner Historical Society

by Debra Couture

The West Gardiner Historical Society continues to meet on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 7 PM. The next meeting is scheduled for November 16th at 7 PM. Everyone is invited to attend. Progress continues to be made at the site, with the septic and well connected and the slab complete with radiant heat installed in the slab. The next step will be to complete the building specifications to allow the Town of West Gardiner to initiate the bidding process for the first stages of the new building.

Get out and VOTE! Tuesday, November 8, 2022, 8:00 am to 8:00 pm at the West Gardiner Fire Station. Absentee ballots are available at the town office. The new absentee ballot drop off box to be installed soon.



From the Porch- “The Passage”

by Mike Wing

Cold Steam flows southerly under High Street, bordering open fields, stands of softwoods, locust trees, and orchards before meeting Route 126 and feeding into Cobbossee Stream. Along its meandering, it provides habitat to a vast array of flora and fauna. This summer's drought and several beaver dams have reduced the stream to a murky trickle that I can wade across. Good time as any for improvement.

That sounds easy enough, with the right equipment, material and expertise, which were available. The High Street flowage ran through a metal culvert which was showing signs of deterioration. Smart people sat down and designed a concrete conduit. The stream would be dammed, pumped, and diverted. The old metal and muck would come out, material would be layered in and aligned to receive a modern passage. Bull frogs and beaver beat feet.

The estimated detour time was 45 days. We moaned, steered around town to find the shortest way, and eventually got used to it. Twenty-eight days later, voila. A modern marvel to behold channeled the Cold Stream trickle safely beneath a smooth and shiny roadway. Bullfrogs only detoured as long as we did, and soon the beavers will engineer their own structures.

We will see this spring how it holds up handling runoff, if one comes. The expense to me was extraordinary, around \$800,000. The work was well done, the deadline well met, and the environment will recover. I wonder what the old stream thinks.

The Past Comes Alive

by Morgan Millett

Gardiner Area High School's Little Theater will see Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* come to life on November 3, 4 and 5 at 7 p.m. Written in 1953, the play focuses on the hysteria and tragedy of the Salem Witch Trials (1692) which saw 19 people killed and five who died while in custody. A group of girls claimed that recent immigrants from Barbados had bewitched them. Many of us have read the play in English classes where parallels between 1692 and the McCarthy hearings of the early 1950s are explored. I decided to dive deeper, seeking to know how the young actors have experienced the play.



I was curious to know what specifically drew these students to the production. Many had read the play in class or on their own. Morgan Hart (who plays Elizabeth Proctor) mentioned that “*The Salem Witch Trials* had always intrigued me, and *The Crucible*, as a whole, is a sophisticated and timely show that I thought would be a new challenge for me.” I wondered if cast members had learned anything new from their participation. Gigi Grant (who plays Rebecca Nurse) said, “I love historical fiction plays because they involve learning about the past. Something I found interesting, but didn't know beforehand, was how it took little to no evidence to convince the public that someone was a witch.”

This play's meticulous depiction of human nature continues to prove its applicability to the present. Its relevance will continue to surge over time. The cast's production is both entertaining and educational, an experience that should not be passed up! Join the cast as the lights dim and you enter the past in the present.

Life Lessons Through Sports

By Cassidy Clark

I have been an athlete my entire life. When I was a kid, playing sports was all for fun and to try something new. As I matured, I realized how much playing competitive sports had taught me. Throughout high school, I have been a part of the field hockey, swim, and tennis teams. Each sport, very different from the others, has taught me valuable life lessons.

Field hockey has been a part of my life for seven years. For six years, I have been a goalie. Field hockey goalies have to be loud and in charge, which is the hardest thing for me to do. Even though it was uncomfortable for me to yell at my teammates, I knew that it was the most essential part of my job as the leader on the field. Forcing myself to face that fear in order to direct my teammates has made me the player I am today.

Two years ago, I became a competitive swimmer. Swimming has taught me one of my biggest life lessons: how to self-discipline and push myself. Swimming is a physically and mentally challenging sport. You must train both your mind and body to allow yourself to be the best you can be. At meets, you must mentally allow your body to swim as fast as possible, even if it hurts.

Tennis has always been a favorite, but I never realized just how much the sport has taught me. The biggest lesson is how to stay positive. You could be in a peak physical condition, but as soon as you let mental distractions get in your way, you set yourself up to lose. Sometimes you play your best and still lose. Although I love to win, I am fine with losing to a worthy opponent who has outplayed me. Maintaining a positive attitude can make or break your game.



Facing fear, self-discipline and a positive attitude have shaped my life for the better.

Dubbin' Around With Mert**"To The Rescue"****by Gary Crocker**

Having trapped a skunk in a Have-A-Heart trap, I needed to move it far from our home. At the time, I had no pick-up truck. I asked my wife if I could use her SUV. "No!" was her emphatic reply and she walked away after giving me that "I can't believe you asked me that" look. So I called my friend Merton Hickey to ask if I could borrow his pick-up. "Yup," he said without hesitation. "It's parked in my dooryard and the keys are in the ignition." I went to his house.

He and Gary were taking down a tree somewhere so I was on my own. When I started the truck, every single idiot light on the dash came on and stayed on! I tried pounding the dash with my fist and kicking it once or twice, but the light stayed on.

I called Gary's cell and asked for Mert. "Well," said Gary, "he's up in the bucket with a chainsaw, but I'll holler up and explain your problem." I could hear him yelling about the oil, temperature and brake lights and a few other unfamiliar lights that simply would not turn off. Mert asked if the truck was running. Told it was, he said, "Tell him to just drive it!" The lights posed no further problems.

I did have a bit of an issue when I loaded the skunk in the truck bed. I washed it out pretty good. But I never heard a word from Mert about the idiot lights or the idiot that loaded a skunk in his truck. He may have burned it in the dooryard for all I know. But whatever he did, I never saw that truck again!

More Dubbin' Around with Mert**by Mike Flynn**

In 1971 my parents built our home next to Mert's home-6 Hickey kids, 6 Flynn kids. Gigantic ball games, horse rides - cow rides - a Saint Bernard to ride. The gigantic goose wasn't too interested in offering rides. Dubbin' around with Mert was GIGANTIC!

Dubbin' around with gigantic firewood piles, trucks, skidders and chores was the norm. As a kid you could learn important things like hold on to the electric fence to see if it is on or split wood faster and you could have three cords done in the same time you finished two. You'd try not to be a dub so you'd start timing your output. Now as a cook I can peel more carrots than any cook I know. The trick is to stack them like firewood so you can do an extra cord of carrots faster than the next cook.

One day, dubbin' on Monkey Lane, Mert was on one skidder and me on another. He was hauling a twitch out and I was on my way back in. he lane is wide enough for one skidder so I got out of the way, driving up the hill facing Burke's Farm. I noticed how beautiful the day was and how spectacular the farm looked in the sun with fresh snow on the ground, Mert stopped and said something. I couldn't hear him over the noise of the skidders so I did what every person with exceptional carrot peeling skills does: I shut the skidder off. Next thing I knew my skidder started rolling faster and faster towards Mert. It smashed into Mert's skidder and bounced off. Mert shut his skidder off, and repeated what he was saying so I could hear: "It's a beautiful day isn't it?" Then, he offered his wisdom. "Brakes don't work when you shut it off."

On August 1, 2022, Kim, Emalee, Jon, and I moved into Mert's home. My family loves dubbin' around with Mert

The Hickey Family would like to thank everyone who attended and contributed to the Mert Hickey memorial corn roast. The number of people who stopped by was over whelming. Mert would have been so happy to see so many people. The stories that everyone shared brought back lots of fond memories that we will forever cherish.

We would also like to thank the Rod and Gun Club for dedicating the shooting range in Mert's memory. The plaque is beautiful and a great example of who Mert was.

This town meant a great deal to Mert. He will be greatly missed. His memory will live on through all of us. "Never give up, work hard and don't be a dub!"

Cobbosseecontee Snowmobile Club News**by Charlene McFarland**

The 2022-2023 snowmobile season is underway. Crews meet at the Auxiliary Hall (clubhouse) every Sunday at 8 a.m. With 25+ miles of trails that connect to surrounding towns of Litchfield, Farmingdale, Gardiner and Hallowell, there is a lot of work to be done before snow flies, appreciate any and all help. Any concerns with the trails or if you would like to help, contact David Cogley, Trailmaster, at 724-7041.

Club meetings are held the 1st & 3rd Tuesday each month at 7 p.m. On the 3rd Tuesday a potluck supper is served prior to the meeting at 6:15 p.m. Memberships are: \$30 for family, \$35 for business, \$10 for associate (member of another club as well). Check us out on our website at www.cobbosseeconteesnowmobileclub.com for membership application, updates on trail conditions and club news.

If you have a student that is in need of community service hours, we can help by putting them to work on trail maintenance, such as clearing brush, contact David Cogley, Trailmaster or Chuck McFarland, President. A huge thank you to the landowners who allow us to use their property for our trails. Please stay on marked trails and respect their property. Our annual Landowner Appreciation Supper, for landowners who have snowmobile trails that cross their property, will be held Sunday, November 13, 4 p.m. RSVP is requested, contact Charlene at 582-7239.

Run Amok Meadery Opens in WG

by Judy Jamison

When the ribbon was cut at Run Amok Meadery's Grand Opening on September 30, it marked not only the official beginning of Christy Hemenway's new business venture, but also the realization of a dream years in the making.

Christy has been in the beekeeping business since 2007, when she started Gold Star Honeybees. The meadery bug bit when she and her husband Geoff Keller moved to North Carolina. NC has several meaderies, and after taking a class at a bee store, she connected with mentors, especially the owners of Starrlight Meadery in Pittsboro, who taught her the basics on points of sale, how to set up a tasting room, and the step by step process of brewing mead.

The plan had been to open her meadery in North Carolina, and the couple looked at several properties, but none panned out. Fate intervened - COVID hit, Geoff lost his job, and Christy realized NC wasn't such a great fit after all. It was a good time to return to Maine.

Hoping to rent, they wound up in Winslow, but the pandemic rental market was crazy, and it was impossible to find a place that would fit their needs. In June 2021, they started to search for a property to buy, and in October of that year moved to the beautiful old Smith farm at 1043 High Street.

In under a year, they transformed a space in the ell into a fermentation facility (which they have dubbed The Amok) and created an outdoor tasting room. Receiving the necessary permits in January, they had enough of the renovations done to start the first batch of mead on May 16. Christy is especially grateful for one piece of advice given her by a NC mentor- everything in the fermentation room goes on wheels! So six of the fermentation tanks, the corker, filter, and bottler are on wheels, and thus can be repositioned for use or stored away as necessary.



Although mead is often called honey wine, it isn't wine per se, as wine is fruit based. The brewing process, though, is similar; mead is made by mixing honey, water, and yeast and allowing the mixture to ferment for around 90 days. The logistics of mead production are different because honey can last. It isn't perishable, like fruit, so the brewing schedule isn't dependent on harvest. Christy can brew mead year round. All she needs is a consistent source of honey.

It takes two pails of honey to produce a 40 gallon batch of mead, which works out to about 12 cases. Obviously, Christy can't produce the amount of honey she needs at Run Amok, so she relies on suppliers including Swan's in Albion, a company in Billerica, Massachusetts, and a supplier in the Midwest who works with traditional farmers in Brazil.

Run Amok makes traditional meads to showcase how different the honeys are. For instance, she can get blueberry and cranberry honey, which come from migratory pollinators - the bees that are trucked to various fields for pollination from her Maine and MA suppliers. The Brazilian honey, with its own distinctive flavor, comes from marmeleiro and angico trees. The meads made from these various types of honey have different flavor profiles.

Currently, Run Amok Mead can be purchased at the meadery or online (runamokmead.com). Christy is also doing direct - to- consumer sales, such as at the Swine and Stein in Gardiner. Eventually they hope to see the mead in local stores like Damon's or the Maine Local Market in Hallowell.

Christy has additional plans for Run Amok. At some point she hopes to have a separate, larger fermentation facility. She also wants to create an inside tasting room. Once the beautiful old barn is renovated, perhaps it will be there, along with space for events - business group meetings, community gatherings, house concerts and Pecha Kucha presentations. She envisions using the space behind the barn for outdoor weddings - it is already called the Wedding Ring. So the venerable old farm will be finding new life in all kinds of exciting ways.



Asked how she juggles two businesses, Christy replies, "If you run a business and it's in your house, it's in your life 24/7. You work on it all the time, you integrate it with everything else. You have to think about life/work balance." But she's happy to be able to set the schedule for that balance on her terms, and happy to have found the old farmstead in West Gardiner where she could do it.



Helen Thompson School News

by Katy Gould, Principal

The 2022-23 school year is off to a wonderful start! We have welcomed many new staff members and students, which has given us opportunities to focus on our school vision and mission. This important work helps keep us grounded in our shared values while focusing on robust goals for our students. Our fall testing in the areas of reading and mathematics has been completed, and our PTA is hosting our Scholastic Book Fair to align with 1st trimester conferences during this last week in October. As you may know, we have started the school year without drinking water as we were required to have a water filtration system installed. Our system was installed earlier this month and we are eagerly awaiting the necessary testing results to begin drinking the water at school again. This year, Helen Thompson School is working to reduce the number of students with chronic absenteeism. This means that students miss at least 10% of school days (17 or more days) over the course of the school year. Our school percentage of students with chronic absenteeism is higher than that of the school district and we are working to bring this number down. Staying healthy is key to this number so on behalf of the staff at HTS, we wish you a happy and healthy fall!

Helen Thompson School (HTS) Welcomes 21 New Staff

by Debra Couture



This was a big year for HTS with the addition of 21 new staff members. Many of the new staff are not new to MSAD 11, as their programs may have transferred from another school to HTS. However, they are new to HTS. The new staff members are:

STEPS Program: Ali Craig, Special Educator; Amy McGee, Ed Tech; Alicia Nichols, Ed Tech; Chandra Stanley, Ed Tech; and Noel Walker, Ed Tech. STARS Program: Peter Thomas, Special Educator; Sean Cochrane, LCSW; Marie Woodcock, Ed Tech. Other new HTS staff include: Katie McLaughlin, Speech Pathologist; Elysia Sparacio, Administrative Assistant; Laurie Babineau, Art Teacher; Tabbitha Johnston, Grade 4 teacher; Nicole Barton, Assistant Principal/Instructional Support, Natalie Brann, Grade 1; Linda Pare, Grade 4, Cindy Kropp, PreK Assistant, Heidi Thompson, School Nutrition; Jessica Freeman, Kindergarten Teacher; Amy Melendez, District Ed Tech; Makayla Ross, Evening Custodian; and Amy Belanger, Physical Therapist. West Gardiner welcomes all of you to HTS.

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2022 Veteran's Day and Wreaths Across America

by Debra Couture

World War I – known at the time as “The Great War” - officially ended when the Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919, in the Palace of Versailles near the town of Versailles, France. However, fighting ceased seven months earlier when an armistice, or temporary cessation of hostilities, between the Allied nations and Germany went into effect on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. For that reason, November 11, 1918, is regarded as the end of “the war to end all wars.” In November 1919, President Wilson proclaimed November 11th as the first commemoration of “Armistice Day” – a day set aside to honor veterans of World War I. With the Act of 1938, November 11th became a legal holiday.

In 1954, after World War II had required the greatest mobilization of soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen in the Nation's history and after American forces had fought aggression in Korea, the 83rd Congress, amended the Act of 1938 by striking out the word “Armistice” and inserting in its place the word “Veterans.” With the approval of this legislation (Public Law 380) on June 1, 1954, November 11th became a day to honor American veterans of all wars. Veterans Day should not be confused with Memorial Day. Memorial Day honors American service members who died in service to their country or as a result of injuries incurred during service, while Veterans Day pays tribute to all American veterans, living or dead; but especially gives thanks to living veterans who served their country honorably during or peacetime. There are approximately 200 veterans who have served this great country of ours who live in West Gardiner. We no longer have any WWII or Korean War Veterans still living, but we have many Vietnam, Cold War, and Iraq/Afghanistan Veterans who have made West Gardiner their home. On November 11th and all days, we thank them for their service. If you see a veteran, please thank them for their service.

Wreaths Across America: Additionally, West Gardiner has 200 veterans who are buried in our town's cemeteries. On the 3rd Saturday of December, we honor our fallen veterans as we Remember, Honor, and Teach all about the sacrifices that these servicemembers have made for our freedoms by placing wreaths on their graves and saying their names. This year, our ceremony will be on **December 17th at 9AM** at the West Gardiner Fire Station. We hope to be able to place a wreath on all 200 graves that day. We have yet to reach our goal of 200 wreaths for this year. The wreaths are \$15 each. Because we are listed as a non-profit for WAA, if you purchase 2 wreaths for \$30, we will receive a 3rd wreath free. Our deadline for purchasing wreaths this year is November 26th. You may send a check to the Town Office made out to Wreaths Across America and note West Gardiner Cemeteries on the check's comment line or you may donate directly at this website link: <https://www.wreathscrossamerica.org/pages/163359> If you would like to designate your wreath for a specific veteran's grave, please add that information with your check or note it when ordering your wreath(s) online. If you would like to lay the wreath on a specific veteran's grave in West Gardiner, please contact me at 215-6775.

West Gardiner Garden Club – 2022 Scholarship Recipient: Isaac Dostie

Each year in June, the West Gardiner Garden Club holds a plant sale to raise money for scholarships for 2 Gardiner Area High School graduating seniors who reside in West Gardiner. This year, there was only one scholarship awarded in the amount of \$1000. That scholarship went to Isaac Dostie.

Isaac’s participated in many activities during his high school years. They included Jazz and Concert band for 4 years; 4 musicals; Cross Country for 4 years and Captain for 3 years; Track for 4 years and Captain for 2 years; Summer Track; and National Honor Society for 2 years. Isaac will attend Colby College this fall.

Isaac’s major at Colby will be Biochemistry. At this point in time, he is not sure if he will follow a pre-med or environmental track. Isaac is extremely interested in laboratory work and is looking forward to his biology and chemistry classes at Colby. Because of COVID, his opportunity for hands on participation in his AP Biology and Chemistry classes for the past 2 years has been minimal.

Isaac’s roommate is from Beijing, China. Colby College has all their students participate in a variety of outdoor activities prior to beginning the school year. Isaac participated in base camping at Acadia in August as one of his activities.

Note: The West Gardiner Garden Club meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month at 6:30 PM in the Auxiliary Hall. All are invited to attend.

FEMA Grant – Assistance to Firefighters Grant

The Town of West Gardiner’s Emergency Management Director (EMD) has been writing grants for the West Gardiner Fire Department for 6 years. Each year 2 FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) grant applications are submitted to the FEMA, as well as to other agencies who accept emergency preparedness grant applications. The Town has been fortunate with grants awarded for Thermal Imaging Cameras, AEDs, Pagers, COVID supplies, and other emergency equipment and supplies. The Town’s EMD, Debra Couture, was notified in September 2022 that the latest grant application had been selected and approved for over \$300,000 to purchase a new fire truck. The Request for Proposals for the new truck will go out to bidders in November 2022. The anticipated delivery time for the new truck will be in 2024.

Join artist El Costell of West Gardiner at the opening reception of *Crimson: The Blueberry Barrens of Maine* on **Friday December 2, 5-8:30pm** at the Costell & Costell Gallery, 225 Water Street, downtown Gardiner.



“Crimson 8” by El Costell, gouache and ink on board.



WEST GARDINER NEWSLETTER

The Weathervane

A Quarterly For and From Our Town

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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 coleneoneill@gmail.com