

Maine Sea Coast Mission to honor philanthropist, historian at annual gala

By Sharon Kiley Mack, BDN Staff
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BAR HARBOR, Maine — Philanthropist Edith Robb Dixon and wooden boat builder and historian Ralph Stanley will be honored by the Maine Sea Coast Mission for their contributions to the well-being of the communities the mission serves at the eighth annual Sunbeam Awards Gala.

The gala will be held at the Bar Harbor Club on Friday, Aug. 19. It is not only a fundraiser for the mission's programs, but it also provides an opportunity for the mission to publicly acknowledge individuals who have furthered the social, cultural, financial and-or educational experiences of those living along the Down East coast and on Maine's offshore islands.

Dixon has a long history of philanthropy both in Down East Maine, where she has summered for 60 years, and in Philadelphia. Dixon and her late husband, Fitz Dixon, have supported the [Maine Coast Memorial Hospital](#) for years and were pivotal in ensuring funding for the hospital's recent expansion. She also has been a supporter of the The Grand in Ellsworth.

Dixon also supports Frenchman Bay Conservancy, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, and the Schoodic Education and Research Center. She has donated two islands to Maine Coast Heritage Trust. Ned Island is just south of Grindstone Neck in Winter Harbor while Flat Island is due west of Grindstone Neck and in Frenchman Bay.



Ralph Stanley

Courtesy photo



Edith Dixon

Courtesy photo

[Acadia National Park](#) superintendent Sheridan Steele called Dixon a "terrific leader" and credits her with playing a major role in helping the park convert the former Navy base at Schoodic into a dynamic science and education campus. Recently Dixon donated a lead gift of \$1 million to accelerate the restoration of the historic Rockefeller building, a building that will become the welcome center and focal point for facilities on the Schoodic campus.

Stanley grew up in Southwest Harbor and has a long-standing association with boats. Stanley began building boats for a number of people, and by the time he sold his business to his son, his shop had built about 70 boats, boats that not only range from small sailboats to large offshore lobster boats, but boats that are crafted out of local pine, cedar and oak.

In 1999, the National Endowment for the Arts named Stanley "a master boat builder" and awarded him a National Heritage Fellowship for his work in building wooden boats and in restoring and building Friendship sloops, sailboats used by commercial fishermen in the late 1800s and built in Friendship, Maine.

He also makes violins, which he plays regularly at grange dances in Union, Northport and Searsport. He also is an expert on wooden boats and their uses. In mid-July, he spoke on Great Cranberry Island about rum-running during the prohibition.

Stanley serves on the board of a number of historical societies — [Penobscot Maritime Museum](#), Mount Desert Island Historical Society and the historical societies of Islesford, Tremont and Southwest Harbor.

The gala will begin with cocktails at 6 p.m. followed by dinner and the recognition of the honorees. Brian Catell and the Jump City Jazz at will provide music after the program.

Fundraising events such as the Sunbeam Awards Gala, allow the mission to continue its programs to residents of offshore islands and [Down East Maine](#).

For information about the Sunbeam Awards Gala, call Sarah Clemens at 288-5097.