

## **Down East groups team up for kids' summer program**

Tuesday, June 24, 2008 - Bangor  
Daily News

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**By Steve Colhoun**

*Special to The News*

CHERRYFIELD, Maine - Two coastal Washington County organizations are cooperating to mix fun and learning for elementary and junior high children during the warm summer weather.

The Maine Sea Coast Mission's EdGE program is working with the 20-year-old Great Auk Land Trust to introduce third- to eighth-graders to the beauty and wonder of the coastal environment. With nearly 1,000 acres of preservation land in Steuben, Milbridge and Addison, Great Auk will open its island and shorefront properties to kayaking, hiking and photography trips for 40 to 50 children.

The Sea Coast Mission was founded in 1905 to promote "spiritual, health and youth development programs in coastal and island communities," according to its Web site. The group began the EdGE after-school and summer activities six years ago and now serves communities from Sullivan and Gouldsboro to Jonesport.

In 2006 the program was recognized by the Maine Afterschool Network for its outstanding work, and last month was awarded a \$300,000 21st century grant from the U.S. Department of Education for its programs in the next year.

Up to 350 elementary and middle school students participate in the EdGE program during the winter months, but only about 60 take part in the summer activities, according to program director Charlie Harrington, speaking from the Sea Coast Mission's headquarters in Cherryfield. This year there will be 20 weeklong camp experiences for five weeks in July and August, he said.

Three of those camps will involve trips to conservation areas Great Auk owns or has easements for, including 18 miles of shoreline featuring an array of animal and plant species.

The first excursion on July 3 will be for 15 fourth- to sixth-graders to learn about "eagles, bugs and slugs," according to Great Auk executive director Tom Boutureira. Professional photographer Henry Hosley of Addison will lead an arts and media program on July 10 to Pigeon Hill in Steuben; and an intensive sea kayaking course and trip on the Pleasant River, where Great Auk manages almost 200 acres, will take place the week of July 15.

With the joint efforts this summer as a test, future collaboration between the two organizations will continue to strengthen ties between youths and adult mentors to learn about the region's natural environment, Boutureira said from the Great Auk office in Milbridge.

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