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eat for an upcoming winter.

Sometimes, Damon said, it's not the faces, but the voices that the Mission seeks to serve. "Voices that are tense, and too embarrassed to ask for help," he said. "This year there is a lot of additional fear and concern. Anxiety runs rampant when we are in the tough times we are in this year."

But it is through the work that Maine Sea Coast Mission was celebrating Friday night that comfort and care is delivered to families and individuals in need. Damon talked about the growth of the mission's reach, which initially extended help from two to five communities, and has since then expanded to include 17 communities. The mission is also working island to island to get telemedicine up and running more broadly, and provides scholarships to students with limited resources who might not otherwise go to college.

The mission's work would not be possible if it were not for the generosity and goodness of people like Sabah-Maren, said Damon. A seasonal resident of Salisbury Cove, Damon said that Sabah-Maren has worked as a philanthropist "under the

radar" for many years.

"She takes her philanthropy very seriously, and she gives where it will do the most good," said Damon. In addition to the Maine Sea Coast Mission's EdGE program, some of the groups and organizations that have benefited from Sabah-Maren's generosity include Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory, the Jesup Memorial Library, MDI YMCA, the YWCA of Mount Desert Island, Island Connections, the Beth Wright Cancer Care Center, and Friends of Acadia, to name a few.

Her latest venture was borne of her concern for those working on MDI who could not afford to live on the island. So, Damon said, she subdivided land she owns into four lots on which she is constructing homes for families qualified by the Island Housing Trust.

Taking the podium after accepting the first of two Sunbeam Awards for Extraordinary Service to Down East Maine, Sabah-Maren told a story about money and wealth, with the moral, "you can't take it with you."

"Even if you thought you had a foolproof way to take it with you when you die, someone will fool your plan," she said, after describing how instead of putting intended

cash into a casket, a check was placed inside with the newly departed.

Sabah-Maren said she learned many lessons about the goodness of generosity, and thanked her many teachers, which included her ex-husband and her parents, among others. Time, love, approval and teaching were the lessons she learned, and it was her late husband, Tom Maren, a researcher at MDI Biological Laboratory and the University of Florida, who shared her idea for helping working islanders live on the island she and her husband had grown to love more each summer.

"I wanted to help those individuals who wanted to live and work on the island, but could not afford the high price of real estate. And how did I do it? I had help, and I found a first family to build for," said Sabah-Maren. She said that when people need help, they need it now, not after one dies.

She credited author Steven King with helping her hone her feelings about philanthropy, that giving isn't about the receiving.

"Giving is to take the focus off the money and put it where it belongs, on the people. Take the focus off ourselves too, and put it on the people," said Sabah-Maren. In return,

Sabah-Maren thanked those who helped her along the way, which included friends, family and those she worked with at Jesup Library after her husband died.

"Those who give of themselves are those we should emulate," said Sabah-Maren. "And I'm doubly honored for your not making me feel so like I'm from away. This is one of the most honored times of my life."

Also honored with a Sunbeam Award for Extraordinary Service was the Rev. Gary A. DeLong, who has served as executive director of the Mission since May 1999. Damon said that DeLong's early focus was on reaching out to those on rural islands to find out how the Mission could impact their lives. DeLong came away with two things early on, the first being that islanders needed access to high quality healthcare. The second was that some type of program needed to be developed to break the cycle of drug and alcohol abuse, dropping out of school, domestic violence, and poverty in Down East Maine.

So DeLong created Island Health Services to connect islands to much-needed healthcare and he determined that breaking the cycle of despair needed to start with the young. For the latter, DeLong

created the EdGE program, an award-winning after-school resource for students that is making a difference for island youth.

DeLong's award was made bittersweet by the fact he was ending his tenure with the Mission, and so was not only thanking many of his friends and co-workers but saying goodbye, as well. He credited his father for instilling an early awareness of how crucial community service is to well-being.

He said his father had an affinity for those caught up by alcoholism, especially men, and fishermen.

"He had a way of finding, respecting and protecting a man's dignity," said DeLong. "He was always able to get down to their level and work alongside them."

It's a way of serving that DeLong emulated, and he had the fisherman's waders and fireman's boots to show for it. More importantly, DeLong garnered the respect of the people he worked with, whether he was helping haul traps or helping haul a fire hose.

"In similar fashion, the Mission has been honored to work with people who, when treated with honor and respect, find their way back to life," said DeLong. "They are told that someone believes in you, you have what it takes,

even in the face of enormous challenge. This is in some ways the single lesson, the message of the mission. We will respect and care for you, but be here to follow up and make sure you survive. We will nurture your own resilience and you will be whatever it is you want to be."

DeLong also took a few moments to thank the Mission's board members and staff, whom he called "the real heroes of the Mission."

"It has been a joy to work with so many of these people," said DeLong. "No organization that I can think of is better served by its board of directors than Maine Sea Coast Mission. Their due diligence, personal generosity and willingness to do the right thing has been my frustration and my joy. They have taught me volumes."

The Maine Sea Coast Mission's inaugural Sunbeam Awards Gala was held in 2004. Past honorees have included F. Eugene Dixon Jr. and Jill M. Goldthwaite (2004), Ruth M. and Tristan C. Colkert Jr. and Myron A. Sprague Jr. (2005), Cornelia Greaves Bates and Alf Wakeman (2006), James M. Gower and Henry F. Harris (2007), Charlotte T. Bordeaux and Richard C. Dimond (2008), and Marianne S. Barnicle and Curtis L. Blake (2009).