

Mount Desert Islander

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Written by Gary A. DeLong



Friday, December 12, 2008

To the Editor:

The board and staff of the Maine Sea Coast Mission want to thank the many people who over the years have donated clothing for our thrift shop in Cherryfield serving Downeast Maine. Your generosity made it possible for us to help people who did not have the resources to buy new clothing.

We recently made a difficult decision to close the thrift shop effective Dec.3. One of the outcomes of this decision is that we will no longer be accepting donations of used clothing.

The thrift shop was closed for two reasons. First and foremost, our goal is to use our limited resources to serve those most needy. The mission will now provide vouchers to people in need of clothing so they can purchase the clothing that they need most. Priority will be placed upon winter clothing for families with young children, the elderly, and those who need clothing for work. Providing vouchers is a more cost effective way of meeting the clothing needs of those most in need of clothing.

Second, we plan on expanding our Downeast Food Pantry which will move into the space formerly used by the thrift shop. We have found that there is a greater need for food than clothing in Down East Maine. Recent figures from the U.S. Department of Agriculture indicate that 13.3 percent of Maine households were having difficulty getting adequate food. Maine and Minnesota were the two states with the largest increases in households needing food assistance. The situation is worse in Washington County where 33.3 percent of children receive food stamps and 55.4 percent of children receive subsidized school lunches, more than double the statewide number. For these reasons, we have decided that we need to do more to meet the growing need for food assistance in Down East Maine.

The Maine Sea Coast Mission remains committed to meeting critical needs of residents of island and coastal communities as it has been doing for 103 years. However, we also need to be responsive to the changing needs of the communities we serve and make decisions on how our resources can do the most good. Our predecessors made these difficult decisions in years past and we must do the same today in keeping faith with our supporters who expect us to make the best use of the money entrusted to us.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who supports the Maine Sea Coast Mission with their contributions of time, talent, and money. We could not do our work without your help.

Gary A. DeLong
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