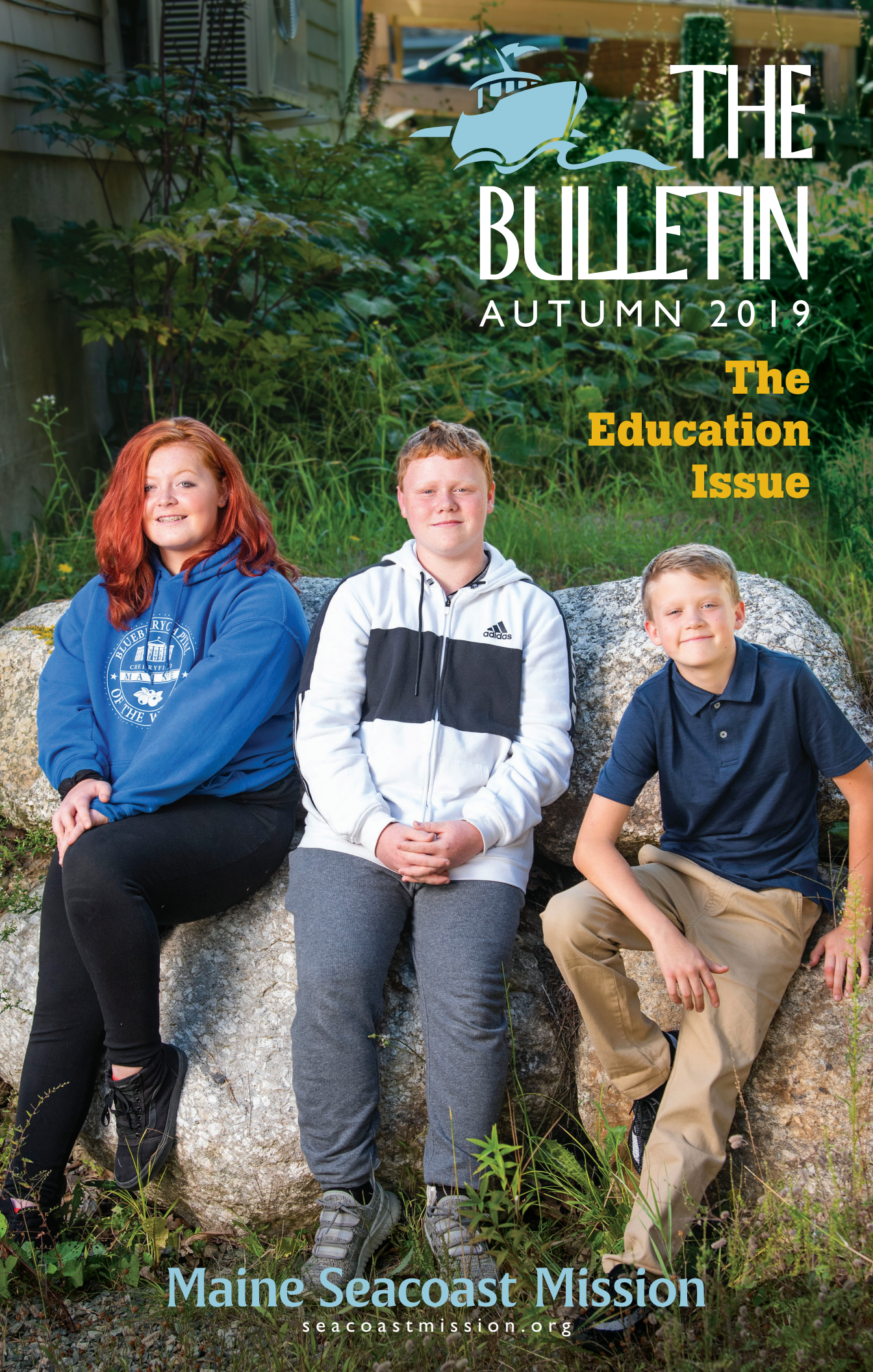

THE BULLETIN

AUTUMN 2019

The Education Issue

Maine Seacoast Mission

seacoastmission.org

OUR MISSION

Rooted in a history of compassionate service and mutual trust, the Mission seeks to strengthen coastal and island communities by educating youth, supporting families, and promoting good health.

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WAYS WE CAN HELP

MITIGATE ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

STRENGTHEN
economic supports to families

PROVIDE
quality care and education early in life

CHANGE
social norms to support parents and positive parenting

ENHANCE
parenting skills to promote healthy child development

INTERVENE
to lessen harms and prevent future risk

The Mission's new FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM supports parents and families of children in EdGE programs by

COORDINATING SERVICES
offered to EdGE families at the Mission's Downeast Campus

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES
for children and parents to learn and play together

PROVIDING WORKSHOPS
for parents and families

OFFERING REFERRALS
to parents for additional support

BUILDING LINKS
between school, after school, and home

Cover: three fabulous students who agreed to be on the cover of this issue of the Bulletin focused on education. Three cheers to (left to right) Brittany, 7th grade, Cherryfield Elementary School; Laine, sophomore, Narraguagus High School; Sullivan, 5th grade, Cherryfield Elementary School. (Photo by Rogier van Bakel, Eager Eye Photography.)

Message from the President

The Littles, the Middles, and the Bigs
A Focus on Education

As a long-time educator—and student—this is the first fall in a very, very long time that I have not been headed back to school. This year, instead of planning first semester classes, I'm working with Mission staff; board and community members; and students and their families to fine-tune how our education programs can best serve our students, their families, and our communities.

Appropriately, this edition of the Bulletin is dedicated to the *Littles,* the *Middles,* and the *Bigs,* students from kindergarten through college we help educate and to the families who support them.

First, some amazing news! This fall, we are announcing a new education partnership with the Shelby Cullom Davis Charitable Fund. Once the program is mature, the Davis Maine Scholarship will result in full-ride scholarships for select Maine Seacoast Mission students. See page 8 for details.

The Davis Maine Scholarship may be our newest, but Mission education programs go back to its earliest days, when the Sigma Kappa sorority adopted the Mission as its official philanthropy, the scholarship program began, and a science teacher for the islands was hired—all before 1920. The Mission currently has seven education programs serving well over a thousand students and their family members from two counties and eight islands.

This fall we will be looking to better understand the impact we are having on our students and how to craft seamless transitions from one program to the next. Some children stick with Mission education programs right into young adulthood, moving from EdGE after-school programs, to summer camps to our college readiness programs and into a Mission scholarship. Some enter Mission programs for a year, or a summer, and move on. For some, help with the huge transition from an island school to a mainland high school is what they need.

Of course, a supportive environment is key to a child's success, but research has opened eyes to the truly staggering impact of "adverse childhood experiences," (ACEs), many of which are associated with family circumstances (see graphic, left).

The Mission's new Family Engagement program works with EdGE kids in the context of their families. Activities and events engage family members, giving them a chance to connect with resources to help build a flourishing family environment.

As we dig into education at the Mission, the goals are pretty simple: 1) to honor and build on the Mission's tradition of education success; 2) to better integrate education programming across the Mission; and 3) to establish thoughtfully aligned and lapse-free continuity of programming for all students, be they Littles, Middles, or Bigs.

For the Mission!

John Zavodny, President

FOOD SECURITY FOR CHILDREN

THROUGH THE BACKPACK PROGRAM

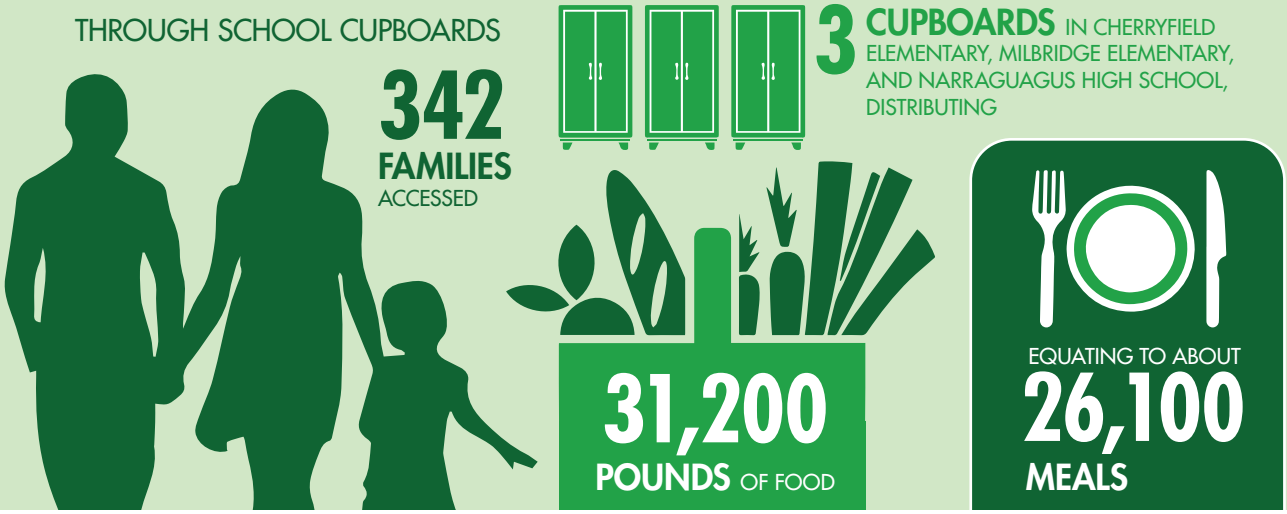
Source: Maine Seacoast Mission Food Security Program

The Littles: Nourishing Aspirations

Experiential, creative, thought-provoking. As we consider the path of youth development, starting with kindergartners, we celebrate and promote the natural tendency of children to explore and question the world around them with enriching afterschool programming, through EdGE (Ed Greaves Education).

We start from a foundation of basic building blocks, including access to nutritious foods. To address high food insecurity in our communities, the Mission partners with schools, volunteers, and other nonprofits since we all know that a hungry child will not make the most of educational opportunities. Basic literacy is also foundational. Developing reading skills among children in kindergarten through third grade is essential. After third grade, children are expected to use their reading skills to learn other subjects. When students are poor readers in third grade, they lack the skills to read for knowledge and this contributes to an achievement gap between struggling and fluent readers.

One response is the Mission's Summer Literacy Camp, a series of four week-long day camps for students from kindergarten through third grade. Each week focuses on a different book. This year's selections were *Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie* (Connie Roop), *Down to the Sea with Mr. Magee* (Chris Van Dusen), *Fox in Socks* (Dr. Seuss), and *One Morning in Maine* (Robert McCloskey). Children received their own copy of the book to use and then take home "for keeps!" at the end of camp. The camps provide children with extra attention and enrichment, helping them develop their reading proficiency.



To widen their horizons, after-school offerings present an abundant menu for exploration by our Littles. EdGE provides homework help, STEM education, lifetime fitness, mentoring, team-building, art and culture, and food and nutrition activities. Any given afternoon may find students biking on a nature trail, experimenting with pasta sauces, programming robots, or creating art from found beach objects.

While the children may not necessarily discern the program goals behind each activity, our aims are clear: to motivate students to attend school regularly, see themselves as learners, and aspire to high educational goals.

In addition to opportunities for growth in school, after-school, and through summer, our approach understands that a child thrives when the family thrives. We reach out to parents in a number of ways. We engage them with enriching opportunities for families to come together throughout the year. Over the first six months of 2019, approximately 420 children and adults attended 20 different free family events such as winter skating and movie nights.

The Littles dream big, developing skills and confidence throughout their early years. As one of our kids put it: "I am unique. I am special. I am me."

Opposite: Three girls dive into books they had just been given for keeps. Below: A fourth-grader shows that EdGE makes strong and confident kids (left), and a young artist shows his work.

WHY EdGE MATTERS
FOR STUDENTS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Economically disadvantaged students enter high school with literacy skills

5 YEARS

behind their high-income peers.

ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED

28% have proficient reading skills

23% have proficient math skills

NON-ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED

47% have proficient reading skills

45% have proficient math skills

Source: Educate Maine

The Middles: Navigating Transitions

The dreams of the Littles are often challenged during the tumultuous middle-school years when physical, emotional, and social changes can be overwhelming. Helping kids hold tight to their aspirations is essential to their long-term success.

Hiking to the ropes course with its challenges and successes

EdGE activities continue to provide numerous paths for discovery and exploration. For the Middles, much of this journey is internal. To help students navigate through this period of their lives, two years ago the Mission began a mentoring program called EdGE Journey, as part of the Lerner Foundation's Aspirations Incubator, focused on sustaining the aspirations of rural Maine middle- and high-school students. Each year, seventh grade students are recruited, encouraged to apply, and interviewed. From that group, fifteen (per group) are selected to join Journey. They are mentored and share experiences as a group for six years until graduation. Journey participants have comprehensive support in school and out. Currently there are 45 students in the program.

Classes meet twice a month. They plan their trips. They work to improve their academic success. They learn life skills from cooking to writing a proper email to balancing a checkbook. They explore, find interests, and learn to strive. All this is done in the context of their group with an emphasis on teamwork. In Journey, "learning to cook" isn't just about how to follow a recipe. It's about learning to create workspace and divide up tasks. It about sharing ideas and coming to agreement. It's about accepting challenges and persevering through them. This matrix of skills is the context woven throughout Journey. Social, emotional, academic, and practical skills that together help kids keep their aspirations, refining and changing as they learn more about themselves and the world.

Middles also benefit from EdGE's Marion Kane Leadership program, named after

KIDS SAY EdGE HELPS THEM BE BETTER STUDENTS

ACCORDING TO 5–6TH GRADERS PARTICIPATING IN EdGE PROGRAMS

81%
STICK
with new things

79%
WORK WELL
with others

74%
THINK
before making choices

Source: surveys conducted with EdGE participants

the visionary leader who saw enormous potential in the people and communities of Downeast Maine. Mission program staff work with local schools to bring seventh and eighth graders to the Downeast Campus for three days of interactive workshops, indoors and outdoors.

The Marion Kane Leadership program develops self-confidence, teamwork, and gives the joy of accomplishment.

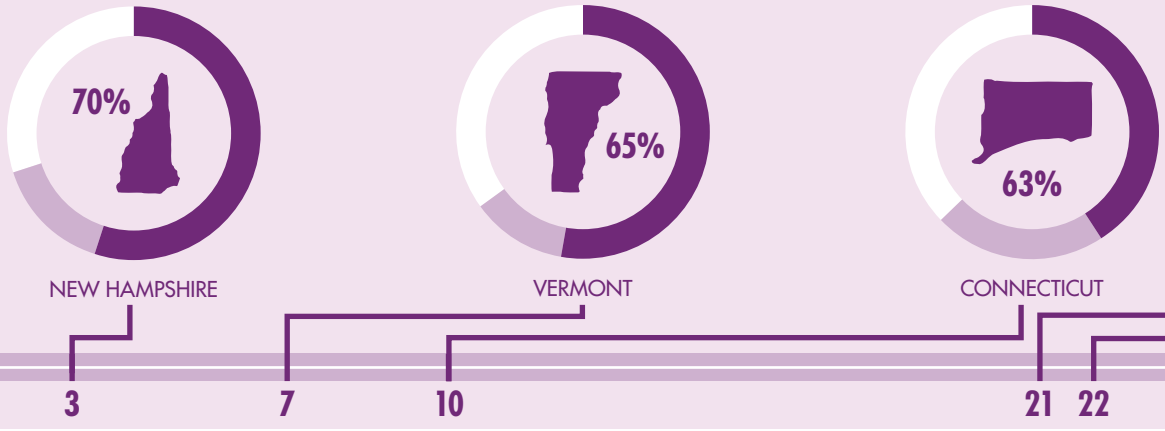
The goal is for participants to develop leadership skills while guiding them to recognize their innate strengths. Quick-paced and participatory, activities get kids thinking critically about challenging topics—bullying, peer pressure, trust, making good decisions, stereotypes, and substance use. Participants face personal challenges on a ropes course. They analyze the dynamics of working in teams and building trust.

Middles living on the unbridged islands face a particular challenge—they will need to leave their homes in order to attend high school. A middle to high school transition program, including workshops and retreats, supports these students from different islands who gather together over the course of three middle school years as they grapple with the emotional and logistical challenges of attending a mainland school with a larger population than their entire island.

In each of these programs, students are supported as they discover their own abilities while developing their capacity to draw strength from peers. As Gabe, a seventh grader attending the Marion Kane Leadership Program said, "Here at EdGE, there are no differences. We all worked as a team, not like at school where everyone is in their own group."

NEW ENGLAND GRADUATION RATES

FROM PUBLIC FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES



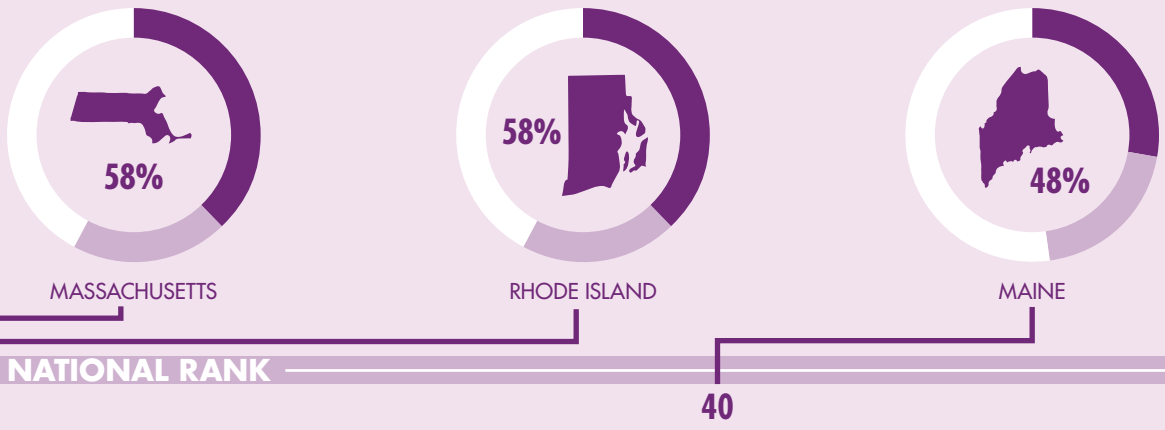
The Bigs: Building Success

"This scholarship has taken a lot of stress off me and my family. Now I can focus more on what I'm actually going to school for," says Mission Scholarship recipient, Lily, a freshman at Maine Maritime Academy. The first Mission Scholarship dates from 1918, made possible by a gift from Sigma Kappa Sorority. One hundred dollars may have gone a long way in covering costs a century ago but today the expense of higher education is daunting. The Mission awards nearly 100 partial scholarships each year, ranging from $1,500 to $5,000. Recipients such as Matt, a first-year student pursuing a fire science degree, express their relief at avoiding student loans. Currently, Mission scholars from 39 different Downeast communities are attending 36 different colleges. With transition assistance from program director, Terri Rodick, college persistence rates are far higher than the Maine average and are rising as supports such as financial workshops have been added to the mix.

This year, two initiatives have been launched to further benefit Downeast high schoolers. The first, Davis Maine Scholarship, is a new, full-ride, four-year scholarship for first-generation college students from eastern Hancock and Washington counties. Key partners in this extraordinary effort are the Shelby Cullom Davis Charitable Fund and three partner colleges—Clark University (Worcester, Mass.), University of New England (Biddeford, Maine), and Wheaton College (Norton, Mass.). The first group of Davis Maine Scholars will enter college in the fall of 2022. The initial partner high schools are Narraguagus High School (Harrington) and Sumner Memorial High School (Sullivan).

Reflection, friendship, and writing during the College Readiness Summer Retreat

The second initiative is a college readiness program which serves potential Davis Maine Scholars and other students as they prepare for post-secondary success. This past summer, the program

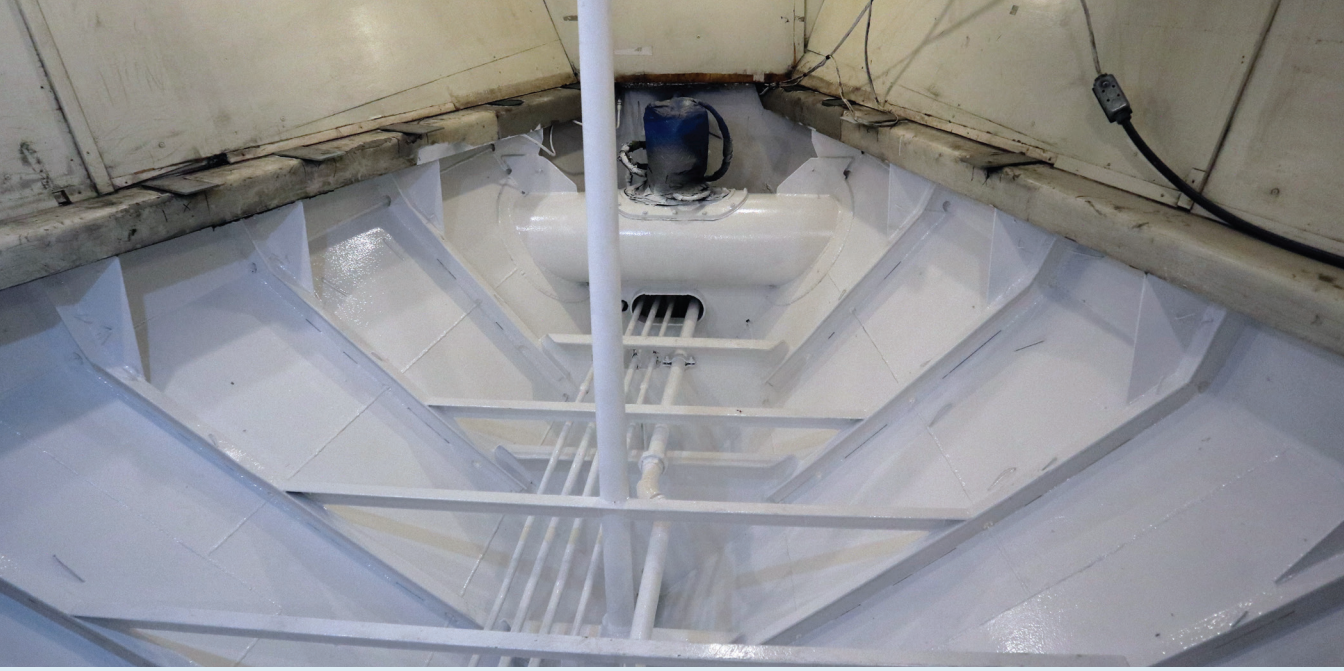


High school students attending the College Readiness Summer Retreat

held a three-day retreat for motivated high school sophomores at the College of the Atlantic. Students will continue to receive mentoring as they prepare for college and develop skills for personal and academic success.

Christina Griffith, Director of Student Pathways and Davis Maine Scholarship, speaks about why this work is so important to her: "My work as an educator resides in hope: the hope I witness in communities, on college and high school campuses, in families, and within each of these brave and promising students. I believe in the power of education to embolden hope in single lives and across communities."

Mission president John Zavodny adds, "Providing greater access to college for Downeast students, combined with support during the students' college years, means more college graduates with greater economic opportunities and brighter futures." Zavodny also notes that the focus is on the students, in keeping with the Mission's tradition of honoring people's strengths and autonomy, while standing ready to give assistance and support.



The Sunbeam*'s $1.5 million refit began last spring, and will ready the boat for another 20 years of island service. Above, the interior of the hull shines after sandblasting and painting. Below, rust was discovered in the pilot house. It was caused by condensation running down the windows and working its way behind the console. With the* Sunbeam*'s new heated windows, this problem will not recur.*

Captain Mike's Refit Log

Work on the *Sunbeam*'s lower levels has progressed nicely. Sandblasting is complete and carpenters stand ready to install the flooring and walls. But sandblasting continues in the salon and pilot house. There is extensive superficial rust to remove so the new paint will adhere properly.

My days at the yard are intense, but predictable. Most days are spent talking with the lead plumber or lead carpenter to make decisions, aiming always for the best blend of practicality and cost. Front Street Shipyard has been the perfect partner. It has a small-yard feel with a personal touch, while commanding the resources to keep the job moving smoothly.

The only major deviation from the original specifications is the pervasive rust discovered on the salon walls and ceilings, as well as under the pilot house console. The console is the nerve center of the boat and its removal affects most boat systems, as well as our schedule. Our mid-December completion goal will not be possible, and while that is frustrating, I can't overstate how rewarding it is to get into the depths of the boat and make essential repairs to keep our ship ready for her next chapter.

Surely, she is thanking us.

Mike Johnson, Captain
Sunbeam V

Welcome, New Board Members

Rex Garrett, DMin, is an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ. For more than thirty years, he directed chaplaincy services at Eastern Maine Medical Center in Bangor. Now retired, he and his wife, Renee, live in Holden and summer on Deer Isle.

Rex feels a kinship with the Mission. His physician grandfather had his first medical practice on Vinalhaven. "During his years there," Rex says, "not only was my mother born, but my grandfather traveled by boat to deliver other babies, perform surgeries, and look after the needs of the island people. It is my personal privilege to be part of the Maine Seacoast Mission."

Christopher F. Murphy currently serves as chief administrative officer of BB&T Insurance's wholesale and specialty division, and is vice chairman of CRC Group's insurance programs division. A resident of Short Hills, N.J., he met his wife to be, Heidi, when they were both counselors at Maine summer camps. They now have a seasonal home on Mount Desert Island.

"The appeal to me of the Maine Seacoast Mission is twofold," Chris says. "Its focused mission appears to be pure; just helping to improve the lives of people in need. Also, it is genuine Maine—the *Sunbeam* and *Moonbeam,* the islands, Washington County—nothing like this exists anywhere else."

Charlie Retires

Carolyn Nadeau, former EdGE student, gave this tribute at Charlie Harrington's "graduation day," in June.

"When I think about you, Charlie, I think of all the lessons I learned. You taught me to embrace challenges for the growth I would gain. You taught me friendship, teamwork, and problem-solving. I learned the value of role models, along with the caring and empathy required to be a role model for others. These lessons are threads woven into the fabric of who I am.

"Charlie, thank you for your heart, your dedication, and your faith in me. Thank you for creating an environment where I felt valued...where I learned to believe I had a place in this world. Thank you allowing me to find things within myself I didn't know were there. I am so blessed to have been one of your EdGE kids."

Charlie Harrington, EdGE Founding Director, 2002–2019, (center) with former Mission board members Les Coleman (left) and Connie Greaves Bates (right) standing next to the trail marker commissioned to honor Charlie's dedication to youth development.

Maine Seacoast Mission

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Diane Bennekamper, pastor at the Congregational Church in Cumberland, returned for a ninth consecutive year with members of the congregation to spend a week rehabbing homes in coastal Washington County. Pastor Bennekamper knows their work helps the homeowners, but she is equally enthusiastic about how this service benefits the volunteers. "Most church volunteer work involves a lot of meetings and happens in familiar surroundings," she said. "That limits what volunteers gain from the experience."

"When we spend a week together doing rehab, people get to know each other in different ways. They share meals, and learn skills from one another. They share powerful feelings of giving to others and the satisfaction of accomplishment. That builds a sense of community they bring back to the church, and the whole congregation benefits."

"It's particularly good for teens. They appreciate interacting with adults who aren't parents or teachers. They earn respect from their fellow volunteers. They come back changed."

As is so often the case, giving to others also helps the givers in important ways. Contact Scott Shaw at sshaw@seacoastmission.org or 207-546-5869 to learn more about volunteering for the Mission's Housing Rehab program.