A Mission Moment

Maine Seacoast Mission
seacoastmission.org
Friends of the Mission,

COVID-19 is quickly becoming the defining moment of this generation. Lives, economies, and routines have been upended on a global scale. Nothing like this has happened before in our lifetimes, and we long to know the path forward.

With this uncertainty comes anxiety and restlessness, but also an invitation: to be present and to help.

When people comment on all the Mission is doing to help during this pandemic, I have found myself saying, “All we can do is all we can do.” That’s what I love most about the Mission: we adapt. Our food pantry becomes a drive-thru. EdGE becomes Zoom-based. Hundreds of phone calls to our communities make sure they have what they need.

With all the uncertainty, it feels right to publish a Bulletin that tells a few small Mission stories of the moment. Think of it as a record, a time capsule, a meditation on these days.

These days have added images to our social iconography—images that we will forever associate with the early stages of this crisis: neighbors singing from balconies, heroic nurses with face shield rashes, shoppers queuing up in masks, and co-workers’ faces stacked Brady Bunch-style on a video call.

For me, thinking of the early days of the pandemic response brings a cascade of pictures of Mission staff. They are adapting to the pandemic’s realities while maintaining the Mission’s core values. They are being flexible, creative, kind. They work with love and compassion. They work like they are made for this moment.

The beauty of this moment is being reminded that the future is murky and unknown. That lesson comes with a terrible price—anxiety, isolation, and loss—but brings the opportunity to be present in this moment. Uncertainty surrounds us, but we reach out in help. All we can do is all we can do.

For the Mission!

John Zavodny
President
Scott Shaw runs the Mission’s housing rehab program, but these days he’s helping out at the Mission’s food pantry, along with his son Levi. Here’s what they had to say.

SCOTT: I’ve been with the Mission seventeen years now. It’s an amazing place to work.

LEVI: I’m a senior at Narraguagus High School. I’ve joined the Air Force and will be shipping out this fall.

SCOTT: Levi got accepted as an air refueler. A boomer, they call them.

The food pantry needed help, so I pitched in. Visits to the food pantry have doubled since January. A lot of new people are coming. Maybe they got laid off and they’re just thankful the Mission’s here. People can drive in and not have that scary feeling of going into an unfamiliar building. We have people outside who welcome everybody. And then we’ve got Muscles here to load cars. [nudges Levi]

LEVI: Yeah, that’s my role. [Laughs]

SCOTT: I greet people and collect information while Levi starts loading food in the trunk with boxes based on the family’s size. It’s pretty smooth, actually.

The Mission was given a donation that we used to purchase Hannaford gift cards. People who visit the food pantry get a gift card to purchase things that the food pantry can’t provide. People are stunned to receive them. It’s amazing to see their surprise and hear their gratitude.

LEVI: I’ve worked in blueberry warehouses and been a sternman, but this has been my first job working with the public (but at a distance, of course). All in a second, school is out and I’m working in a new job. We’ve been having Zoom meetings with the senior class and the principal and the vice-principal. I go to Narraguagus, and thankfully, it is planning on having a graduation and prom for us.

It’s been awesome to be part of this work. People all work together like a team. I was going to play baseball this spring and working for the Mission’s food pantry feels like a team in the same way. It’s a great feeling to know that you’re helping people every day. They are so appreciative. They say “Thank you” so many times.

SCOTT: There have been some real feel-good moments. One day we were setting up our “Food Pantry Open” sign, and this woman pulled over and said, “I just want to thank you guys for what you’re doing for the community. You got creative in getting food to the people who need it.”

LEVI: I know that when I look back on this time, I’ll think about how everything changed so quick, from your regular day going to school and this ‘n’ that. Then suddenly you’re cut off and everything’s changed. I’ll think about how important it is for people to stay together.

SCOTT: Levi’s right. We’re all together in this. And what a community we’ve got, thank God. We’re able to get food right out to these folks who need it. We’re here.

And I love having my boy working with me, because I know he’s going soon. It is great having some extra time with him.

LEVI: I think Mom’s a little jealous. 😊
Father and daughter make videos for EdGE kids

Rick Parker is co-coordinator of the EdGE program at Milbridge Elementary School, where half the enrolled students participate in EdGE. Rick’s daughter Lily attends Milbridge and is in EdGE.

**RICK:** I like what EdGE offers to our students. It provides them a place to be after school. EdGE offers kids time be with people who care for them and play with them. EdGE gives kids a sense of belonging with people caring about them.

**LILY:** I’m in first grade at the school where my dad works. My favorite part of school is recess. The second best is math class. I’m in EdGE, and I like that we go outside, even in winter.

**RICK:** When the school closed for the pandemic, Lily and I decided to make videos of some simple games people can play at home. We tried to make the games simple so you didn’t need to buy a lot of stuff. We did one with dice.

**LILY:** And one with two decks of cards mixed together.

**RICK:** We used common things that people have at home. With the weather cold and damp, we tried to make games kids could do inside, but wouldn’t get their parents angry for breaking windows or causing other trouble.

**LILY:** I was in the videos. It was fun, especially the art one.

**RICK:** Lily’s right. We also did a craft activity. The video showed Lily and me coloring our fingers with erasable markers and making fingerprints on paper. Then we took black markers and turned the fingerprints into little figures.

**LILY:** I’m going to be an artist. I made pictures of me, and my daddy, and a cat and a bunny and a duck.

**RICK:** The videos were uploaded to the EdGE Facebook page for anyone to watch. We’ve heard nice comments back from people who said they were going to try the activities with their families at home.

**LILY:** We’re going to do more videos. I’m a better actor than Daddy. In the first video, I won the game we taught twice.

**RICK:** I hope the videos will help people be less bored in this time of isolation. I see families going back to basics in a way. We still have our technology and videos, but we’re seeing families do more things together. When I think about these videos, I envision families getting out cards or dice and playing a game. They interact with each other instead of going to separate corners of the house to be on an electronic device.

I think it’s more difficult now because we’re competing with Facebook and Netflix and smart phones. Maybe we’ve forgotten about when we were kids and it was a snow day or the power was off. You were sitting around a table playing a board game with your mom or dad. Now we’re seeing that again: families are brought together to do some of those simple things that we’ve forgotten about.

I also make videos to help kids with math. I wasn’t a good math student and I want to help kids figure out math in different ways. Because I like fishing so much, I’ve started a YouTube series called Tackle Box Math, where all the problems have to do with fishing.

**LILY:** My grandma always gets them right. She’s good at math.
On Easter Sunday, a group of islanders and I gathered on laptops, phones, and tablets. We sang, prayed, waved, and smiled at one another. We shared in the joy of Easter and its promise of hope. Easter is traditionally the time when Christians remember Christ’s resurrection and its meaning. However, this Easter, I did not choose the resurrection as the focus of my Easter message. Instead, I chose Mary Magdalene and the moment she realized it was Christ to whom she was speaking outside of the tomb.

My message emphasized the importance of remaining physically and emotionally present during catastrophic times, as Mary did in the days following Christ’s crucifixion. Mary was the first person to encounter the risen Christ. She experienced hope because she remained present at the tomb. I ended my message with a reminder that hope does exist in the midst of crisis. Our opportunity to witness and experience it increases when our body, mind, and soul are available to notice it.

This Easter, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the most life-altering moment was the sheer love and joy expressed on people’s faces as they entered the virtual sanctuary and saw family and friends from whom they are separated.

A wife, living here in Maine, saw her husband who is waiting out the pandemic in England. Islanders who are currently off-island saw neighbors for the first time since parting last fall. People joined from mid-Atlantic states and the west coast. Even folks currently living on the same tiny island radiated an extra special kind of joy when they saw their neighbors living just down the way.

The smiles when eyes met were heartwarming. The little hand waves to one another, even after the service began, fed my soul. Though my message, to remain present in order to encounter hope, was certainly relevant, the connection felt between people was inspiring. Island people and the communities they embody were the true Easter message this year. I am eternally grateful, and honored to be included.

I enjoyed your online Easter service because I could hear your message and be with others. But I was also alone in my surroundings watching the waves crash along the shore and the seagulls coasting in the wind.

I loved the hymns Katherine Rhoda sang as she played the piano. This Easter I sang those songs at the top of my lungs (with my mute button on) and they stayed with me all day.

The online service gave me fellowship. I was able to read the scripture aloud, something I would have never done in a regular setting. Thank you for this Easter service, Douglas.

Douglas Cornman, the Mission’s Director of Island Outreach and Chaplain, reflects on this year’s Easter Service.

Douglas Cornman

Cynthia joined the Easter service remotely, and wrote this note to Douglas.
Within COVID-19’s local and global complexities, one truth particularly bittersweet is this: Class of 2020 graduates will not be walking cap and gown across their graduation stages amid the cheers and tears of family and friends.

Mission Class of 2020 Scholars: We see you, celebrate you, and offer here applause for you to see, if not hear. You are first-generation college graduates, researchers, artists, world travelers, athletes, and community-service champions in your local communities. You gave and learned in college communities from Husson to Smith, Kennebec Valley Community College to Bowdoin, University of Maine to Worcester Polytechnic Institute. With passion and persistence, you delved into psychology and music, electrical engineering and philosophy, art education and occupational therapy, nursing and environmental science. Alongside your families from Eastport to Bucksport, Cherryfield to Stonington, Franklin to Vinalhaven, we applaud the stretch of your minds and depth of your hearts as you worked toward completing your degrees. Here at Maine Seacoast Mission,

When I think of you, Class of 2020 Scholars, I honor where you come from and how you have each worked through trying times to reach your graduation.

How incredibly proud I am to have had a small part in your lives.

TERRI RODICK
Mission Scholarship Director
we have been lighting the way and changing the lives of Maine families for over 100 years. This graduation season, you light the way for us through your courage, kindness, and purpose. Congratulations to you and your families!

Thanks to the creativity of Scholarship Director Terri Rodick, Class of 2020 Mission graduates will each receive a “Graduation in a Box.” This gift of whimsy, practicality, and care is a simple way to say that even here, even now—and perhaps especially since our here is disparate and our now is uncharted—we are with you. Physically distanced though we may be, this present holds our presence!

These June days, we also recognize high school graduates in our Downeast and island communities, as well as our Journey and island eighth graders as they complete middle school. Program Coordinator Briana West has created “Graduations in a Box” for Journey eighth graders, and our island eighth graders were recognized during this year’s Middle to High School Transition Program Retreat in Bar Harbor.

Not pictured: Julia Zavala, Bucksport, Univ. of Maine Orono, Business

---

TATE DOLLEY
Machias
Univ. of Maine at Machias Business

ALLISON EATON
Stonington
Univ. of Maine Orono Biology

CHRIS FARNSWORTH
Bar Harbor
Kennebec Valley Community Coll. Electrical Lineman Cert.

DREW GREENLAW
Eastport
Univ. of Maine Orono Survey Engineering Technology

ISAMAR LARA
Milbridge
Univ. of Maine at Machias Psychology & Community Studies

KAYLA MURDAUGH
East Machias
Univ. of Maine Orono Nursing

SHAINA MURDAUGH
East Machias
Univ. of Maine Orono Art Educ. & Fine Arts

RYE MURRAY
Southwest Harbor
Saint Lawrence Univ. Philosophy & Environmental Studies

MARYLOUISE K. ROSS
Sorrento
Worcester Polytechnic Inst. Biomedical Engineering

CIARA SCHOPPEE
Machias
Univ. of Maine at Machias Psychology & Community Studies

AUSTIN STOVER
Ellsworth
Univ. of Maine Orono Electrical Engineering

COURTNEY WILLEY
Cherryfield
Bowdoin College Biology and Sociology

Blessings and hopeful wishes, Class of 2020!
Eleven years ago, I proposed an Eldercare Conference for island residents caring for their elderly neighbors, and the Maine Seacoast Mission agreed to sponsor it. That first conference led to annual Eldercare Conferences and the Island Eldercare Communications Network. At that time, no one could have predicted how valuable that network would be to its members and the elderly populations they serve, especially during this time of coronavirus lockdowns and physical distancing.

Eldercare home administrators and health workers from Chebeague Island, Cliff Island, Isle au Haut, Islesboro, Islesford, Long Island, North Haven, Peaks Island, and Vinalhaven make up the communications network. Maura Michael, administrator of Boardman Cottage on Islesboro, said, “Prior to that first Eldercare Conference, the administrators on the other islands knew of each other but never communicated, not like we truly communicate now.”

Each eldercare home deals with its own community issues, but the administrators find a great deal of support in getting together with weekly Zoom meetings. Conference calls and emails offer a chance for healthcare administrators and workers to talk to each other about what’s going on and the challenges they’re running into. It’s a time to ask questions and share knowledge.

The smaller islands have to worry about people isolated in their own homes, increasing the risk for confusion, falls, all kinds of things. All islanders have to watch out for the most vulnerable people in their communities. Many residents need groceries delivered and help with meals. They need people to check on them.

As Maura Michael says, “So many things are changing for our smaller eldercare homes with all the federal CDC and Maine CDC regulations. We have to help each other stay on top of everything. A lot of times we have to make our own decisions. It really helps to be able to talk things over with the group.”

“I feel very supported by the communications network, and there is absolute trust among network participants,” says Lindsey Beverage, administrator of Southern Harbor House on North Haven. “The group nurtures itself. We have no inhibitions. We are able to talk about anything we want to talk about. We can be as emotional as we want. I think everyone just feels like they’re in a safe secure place within our group. We’ve established that now.”

Sharon Daley, RN, directs the Mission’s Island Health Services. Over the years she and other island healthcare staff have built a network for those working in eldercare. The importance of this network has never been more apparent than now during the pandemic. Sharon took a couple of minutes to talk about the network’s origin and development.

It really helps to be able to talk things over with the group.

MAURA MICHAEL

Lindsey Beverage, Southern Harbor House
Week after week, Geri Valentine’s Monday morning yoga classes fill the beautiful post-and-beam meeting room at the Mission’s Weald Bethel Community Center. Our group comprises men and women, sometimes in equal measure. Our ages range across 50 years or more. And although our abilities and experience vary, we all relish this shared physical workout. With Geri’s guidance, we are always learning to align mind, body, and spirit. I’ve practiced yoga with Geri for a handful of years now, but I’m just a fledgling. Others in the class have been working with her for 25 years.

During our ninety-minute class, we practice, in Geri’s words, “to slow the mind down to body speed and come into the moment.” We are relearning “to lead with our bellies,” she says, “like toddlers learning to walk.” Through our time together, she leads us to sync our breath to our movements. As we hold stretching and strengthening postures, Geri gently reminds us to return our focus to the moment and focus on the next breath. At the conclusion of challenging postures, her words nudge us toward feeling the letting go of the muscle tension required by the pose. Through a series of postures, we breathe, relax, balance, meditate, stretch, and strengthen. With her guidance, we come home to our bodies.

During our ninety-minute class, we practice, in Geri’s words, “to slow the mind down to body speed and come into the moment.” We are relearning “to lead with our bellies,” she says, “like toddlers learning to walk.” Through our time together, she leads us to sync our breath to our movements. As we hold stretching and strengthening postures, Geri gently reminds us to return our focus to the moment and focus on the next breath. At the conclusion of challenging postures, her words nudge us toward feeling the letting go of the muscle tension required by the pose. Through a series of postures, we breathe, relax, balance, meditate, stretch, and strengthen. With her guidance, we come home to our bodies.

In mid-March, when it looked like life was about to change dramatically, Geri and I decided to record a yoga class. Then, if public classes had to stop, there would be a video people could watch and continue (or start) yoga. I contacted Aaron and Art, two regular participants, and Geri led a class for the three of us while the Mission’s Hunter Billings recorded us. The finished video was posted to YouTube only two days later. And, boy, is it nice to have this video available during these unprecedented times.

For years, when people expressed curiosity about our yoga classes, I described Geri’s classes as comforting. Geri’s knowledge and experience guides us gently and safely. Yoga is known for its ability to soothe tension and anxiety in the mind and body. I asked Geri for her advice for dealing with pandemic fears, and she said, “Two words. Breathe. Relax.” She recommends taking big, slow breaths into a soft belly. “Take these relaxing breaths three times in a row every hour or so.”

Geri, who lives off the grid in Addison, describes a new-found “spaciousness” with her regular schedule stripped away. She told me she felt “heightened appreciation for everything that occurs in the day. Everything is okay; the phoebes are back and building a nest on my porch.”

If you’ve never done yoga before, give the video class a try (youtu.be/-FREyO43Ck). And when we are safe to gather together again, come to Cherryfield and try a class. We meet Monday mornings from 8:30 to 10:00. Oh, and after class we hang out and share a cuppa. 😊
The Sunbeam is once again looking like the Sunbeam! After months of work on the mechanical systems, the salon and galley are now being reassembled. As those spaces take shape, they remind me more and more of the warmth and hospitality we cherish. I am admittedly impatient to get on the water and share our boat with our extended Mission family.

We have encountered a series of hurdles along the way. More rust was discovered on the interior surfaces than expected, and the paint coating in the engine room was compromised by the marine air. This required an almost complete disassembly of the interior, adding months to the project. Nothing compares, however, to the extra-tall hurdle of COVID-19. Work did not cease entirely, but distancing measures and restrictions on subcontractors have taken their toll, further delaying our launch.

But the important good news is that we’re getting one heck of a boat. In the twenty-five years since Sunbeam’s original launch, technologies have improved dramatically. From the primers and insulation used, to the electronics on the helm, the increase in crew comfort and safety is considerable. The Sunbeam will be quieter and warmer with much more crew privacy. On the bridge, I will have greatly enhanced radar technology and better visibility in inclement weather due to heated windows and better wipers.

Through this long and complex refit, I have developed deep respect and appreciation for Front Street Shipyard. This is a group of craftsmen who excel not only in their trade, but in their ability to communicate ideas and suggestions for improvement. The refit was designed by naval architect John Gilbert and overseen by me, yet it is the steady stream of small alterations by the shipyard crew that have made the project a huge success.

As we get closer to launch, you will be hearing details about Sunbeam’s return to service. There may be some delay, and we may need to find alternative ways to mark the occasion, depending on what COVID-19 restrictions are in place. But crew is ready to show off the Sunbeam and get her back to work.

Mike Johnson, Captain
Sunbeam V
Dear Mission Friends,

In this Bulletin, you’ve read some of the ways the Maine Seacoast Mission is responding to the challenges of COVID-19. It is the same work we’ve been doing for five generations: being a faithful friend to those Downeast who need a helping hand.

We can do this work because of donors like you.

Thank you for your past generosity. I ask you to give today so the Mission can continue its work in these unprecedented times. There is so much to do.

Since the pandemic began, the Mission has:

- Turned our food pantry into a drive-thru to serve people safely and manage the growing need
- Moved EdGE programs online with videos for youth about things they can do at home by themselves and with family
- Used the eldercare network on the outer islands to make sure seniors are safe and cared for
- Created Project ReachOut whose volunteers have been friendly, reassuring voices on calls to people who are alone and anxious
- Held its Easter service live on Zoom and connected islanders and relatives in places near and far

Our supporters trust the Mission to be steadfast in its delivery of compassionate care. The Mission listens. The Mission responds. And every day we witness so much resilience in our communities.

The Mission is grateful for the many gifts it has already received. Please consider your gift today and put our hands to work when it matters most. Help us be a beacon of hope.

Thank you.

John Zavadny, President

P.S. You’ll find a return envelope in the Bulletin. You can also give online at seacoastmission.org. Click DONATE on the home page.
Food pantry usage has doubled since January.

The Mission Adapts

The effects of COVID-19 created a surge in food pantry usage, but physical distancing rules made the pantry inaccessible. The solution? The food pantry became a drive-thru.

Left: Gena Norgaard, Food Pantry Manager, shows off some white gold in the midst of a pandemic shortage.

Front cover: Wren Wakeman packing a food box that will be loaded into a client’s car. Wren says, “People order by phone or online, I pack their box, and it is loaded in their car, avoiding all direct contact.”