A quarterly publication featuring Main Street Programs and Downtown Alliances in our communities

Augusta Downtown Alliance
Gardiner Main Street
Our Town Belfast
Main Street Skowhegan
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It is Spring in Maine

Time to put away the snow shovels and get out to explore your local downtowns. Take daytrips to communities you have always wanted to explore, dine at that great restaurant you have heard so much about for Mother’s Day.

The communities featured in Downtown Quarterly all have something in common. They are all Members of the Maine Downtown Center and The National Main Street Center. This means they all have a historic character and standards they are working with to make their downtowns the heart of the community they represent. They are walkable and offer healthy activities.

Take advantage of these communities when you are looking for a new adventure, a new place to visit. Attend events, shop, dine, and explore locally. Go to the Farmers Market, enjoy Maine-grown food at an eatery.

Stop into unique shops and galleries, meet the owner and discover why they have their businesses in that community. Visit a local museum or Visitors Center and learn some local history.

Maine downtowns offer great backyard adventures, get out and visit one today!
More active Skowhegan revitalization initiatives

BY KRISTINA CANNON  
Executive Director

If you didn’t already know, let me be the first to tell you – Skowhegan is on the move. Locally owned businesses are growing, collaboration within the community is at an all-time high, and there’s an unmistakable positive vibe that’s spreading.

Main Street Skowhegan is excited to be a part of this movement, and we’ve been working behind the scenes to continue the revitalization of Skowhegan. By the end of May, we’ll have a polished strategic plan — informed by feedback from more than 500 members of the community — that will include action steps for implementation. But we haven’t been sitting idle waiting for direction from this plan. We’ve been listening to our stakeholders and have already begun working on several initiatives that will bring positive change to Skowhegan:

We’re working with the Run of River Committee to help bring this project to fruition. An economic impact study and business plan are in progress, and we’re working on a communications plan that will keep the community informed about future progress.

The Business Enhancement Committee is working with other economic development groups in town to create a comprehensive business incentive package that will entice entrepreneurs and business owners to start a business or expand to Skowhegan. Once we have an attractive package, we’ll use it as a tool to attract new businesses to town.

We now own the domain VisitSkowhegan.com, and over the next several months we’ll create a website that will serve as a marketing tool for Skowhegan.

We’re planning a Quickbooks workshop for local business owners — stay tuned for details.

The Design Committee is raising money to add a Barry Norling sculpture to our public art collection. We’re building a relationship with the Maine Motorcoach Network to bring bus tours back to Skowhegan.

We’re committed to being a marketing vehicle for Skowhegan area businesses. In March we sent out our first business news email — something we’ll now send out monthly. We’ll also promote news via our Facebook page. Please send your business news to info@mainstreet-skowhegan.org.

From now on, we’ll welcome all new businesses to Skowhegan with a special event that includes a ribbon-cutting ceremony, presentation of a certificate from Skowhegan Economic Development, and a plant from the Skowhegan Fleuriste. We’ll also draft a press release and promote the opening via Facebook and our email newsletter.

Also, we’re still planning several community engagement events for the upcoming year, including River Fest, the Holiday Stroll, and the first-ever Skowhegan Craft Brew Festival. Check out MainStreetSkowhegan.org for more information.

Have questions? Want to help? Contact us at info@mainstreetskowhegan.org or 612-2571.

Welcome to Downtown Skowhegan

Skowhegan businesses are growing, moving and adding products

Maine Barkery owner Amanda Clark, with her mother, Linda Quirion, busy cutting and rolling dog treats in her new commercial kitchen space at 134 Water Street.

The Maine Barkery preparing for grand opening

Amanda Clark, owner of The Maine Barkery and winner of the Main Street Skowhegan Savings Entrepreneur Challenge, has been painting walls, ordering equipment, and inventorying new dog toys — all while baking dog treats - in preparation for her grand opening at 134 Water Street. The Maine Barkery’s new location will feature a commercial kitchen for increased production of Clark’s all-natural dog treats and a retail space to sell dog treats, toys, and other products direct to consumer.

Since winning the Main Street Skowhegan Savings Entrepreneur Challenge, Clark has increased her wholesale accounts from 12 to 17. After officially testing her new commercial kitchen, Clark was excited by the increased production potential. In one day she was able to produce the same amount of dog treats that would have taken a week in her home-based kitchen.

As winner of the Entrepreneur Challenge, Clark was awarded a $20,000 benefits package to help expand her home-based business into a downtown storefront. An official grand opening date hasn’t been set, but Clark is planning for the end of April or early May.

The Bankery and Skowhegan Fleuriste & Formalwear Expanding

Eight years ago, Matt DuBois and Michael Hunt opened The Bankery and began selling artistically designed cakes and fine pastries. Three years later they acquired the adjacent Skowhegan Fleuriste shop and created a one-stop shopping experience for weddings and special events.

Since then, The Bankery has steadily expanded its business to include homemade soups, quiche, lasagna, and meat pies, and have recently created retail space for other products from local businesses including Maine Grains, The Maine Barkery, ATK Bloody Mary Mix, October Fields candles, Stonewall Kitchen and more.

Their wholesale business serves area restaurants and has recently extended to West Forks locations.

Rolling Fatties Food Truck in Skowhegan this summer

Rolling Fatties, a Kingfield-based restaurant that specializes in burritos made from locally sourced harvests, will make regular appear-

More BUSINESSES, PAGE 5
Businesses
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

ances in Skowhegan this summer. Owners Polly and Rob MacMichael will sell burritos from their food truck in Pocket Park on Fridays from noon to 2 p.m. starting in May. Pocket Park is located on the corner of Madison Avenue and Commercial Street.

Recently Quinn expanded her product line to include ketchup, barbeque sauce, and cocktail sauce.

Teakettle business has done just that. Quinn was recently featured on ABC 7’s Made in Maine and is one of the newest Maine Made companies in the state. Since contracting with the Skowhegan Masons and updating the Lodge’s kitchen, her Ass Over Teakettle now crafting ketchup and sauces

Two years ago, entrepreneur Katie Quinn was looking for a kitchen to brew her bloody mary mix hoping to increase her production ability and get her business off the ground. Since contacting with the Skowhegan Masons and updating the Lodge’s kitchen, her Ass Over Teakettle now crafting ketchup and sauces.

Teakettle business has done just that. Quinn was recently featured on ABC 7’s Made in Maine and is one of the newest Maine Made companies. Maine Made is a Maine Department of Economic and Community Development program recognized for representing some of the finest craftspeople and Community Development program recognized for representing some of the finest craftsmen available today.

The Children’s Cottage adds Carhartt and Bogs

Just three years ago, Karen Lewia and Kirk Karkos moved their children’s clothing and toy store, The Children’s Cottage, to Skowhegan. Since buying the three-story building at 66 Water Street, they have expanded their product lines from primarily “gently used” clothing, toys, and books to include new, name-brand items from Bogs, Carhartt, Keen, and Melissa & Doug, as well as books by local Maine authors like Lynn Plourde.

When Lewia bought the old McClellan Department Store building, the upper two stories had been vacant for years and conditions had deteriorated. With help from Main Street Skowhegan, Lewia applied for and received a grant from the Elmia B. Sewall Foundation to kick start the rehabilitation process. Newly renovated, the second floor has now hosted several businesses including Mudge’s Theater Arts Studio, Kid Friendly Photo, Pilates classes and yoga classes.

Other businesses news

Maine Grains at the Somerset Grist Mill will add a wood-fired pizza oven and re-open the Pickup Café under a new name, with plans to add a cheese cave, family activity tables, free raffles, and kid-friendly music are some of the highlights for this year’s event. This is a free event. FMI: 859-1514

Run for the Roses Kentucky Derby Party

Saturday, May 7, 5-7 p.m.
Bigelow Brewing Company
GFWC Semper Fidelis and GFWC Skowhegan Woman’s Club present the Kentucky Derby fundraiser at Bigelow Brewing. Cost is $15 per person or $25 per couple and includes light refreshments and four sample-sized beers. Tickets are available at the SACC office, Ames Home Center in Canaan, and at Bigelow Brewing. Derby attire encouraged.

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UPCOMING SKOWHEGAN EVENTS

Past Seasons Designs Sale at River Roads Artisan Gallery
Saturday, April 16, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
75 Water St
River Roads Artisan Gallery is holding their annual pre-opening art sale on 2015 designs. FMI: RiverRoadsArtisanGallery.com

Skowpendous Family Fun Day
Friday, April 22, 5-7:30 p.m.
Downtown Skowhegan
Wood-fired oven pizza, hot dogs, popcorn, fire pit, s’mores, fire truck, ambulance, police vehicle tours, children’s crafts, family activity tables, free raffles, and kid-friendly music are some of the highlights for this year’s event. This is a free event. FMI: 859-1514

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Skowhegan History House
“1885 Skowhegan”
Tuesday, May 10, 7-9 p.m.
Margaret Chase Smith Library
This presentation will explore what it was like in Skowhegan at or around 1885. Enhanced images and period documents will reveal how small business and industry depended on the rail system for transporting raw materials, goods, and manufactured products throughout the country, how folks relied on the system for transportation to and from, and how the railroad helped Skowhegan to establish itself as a vital, spirited, and industrial Maine Community. FMI: 474-6632

Dance & Dine
Wood Fired Pizza Night
Thursday, May 19, 4-7 p.m.
Skowhegan Town Office parking lot
Main Street Skowhegan and the Maine Grain Alliance will offer wood fired pizza as a shared fundraiser during Bradley’s School of Dance dress rehearsal. Drinks and desserts available. FMI: MainStreetSkowhegan.org

Memorial Day Parade
Monday, May 30
Downtown Skowhegan
Details TBA

FMI: Skowhegan.org

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Welcome to Downtown Augusta

Downtown Augusta is on the move and experiencing rapid changes. Since the start of the New Year, we’ve seen two new businesses open up on Water Street, including Alnaeem Market, a halal shop, and Brother Express — a Chinese restaurant. The coming months are also bringing in new business for our downtown as we have a new Irish pub opening up on Bridge Street called Black and Tan serving up traditional Irish and Scotch pub fare; and a new American fare (steak and lobster) restaurant going in the old Farrell building.

On the development side of things, two new market-rate apartments are currently being constructed over the old Stacy's building. In addition, big changes were also made with the recent demolition of the old green canopy and shingle siding on the Farrell building. The resulting changes have exposed the original granite work and columns, which had previously been covered up for the last forty years.

Organizationaly, the Augusta Downtown Alliance is working on several cultural and entertainment events for this spring and summer including Raw Space, an upcoming art walk in which we are showcasing our empty spaces with avant-garde art work on May 13; the Color Dash, a color run we are partnering on with the KV Chamber of Commerce, set to take place on Water Street and the Rail Trail, with activities commencing and ending at Old Fort Western on June 4; a masquerade ball fundraiser at the Calumet Club, with a portion of the proceeds benefitting the Colonial Theatre restoration on June 24; a river fest called Chicken River Blues, an all-day outdoor festival featuring — you guessed it — blues music, chicken, a bike-a-thon, and water-based activities, including kayak races and swimming on August 6; and a farm-to-table dinner, with the ADA working in tandem with farmers from our Farmer's Market on August 14.

There’s simply far too much happening Downtown to capture all of it in one issue, but with the continued support of the City of Augusta along with the ADA’s developers, merchants and stakeholders, there’s sure to be a lot more to report on in the future!

UPCOMING DOWNTOWN AUGUSTA EVENTS

RAW SPACE (ART WALK)
Where: Water Street When: Friday, May 13, 2016 Time: 5-8PM
Raw Space is a different kind of art walk. Drawing upon the juxtaposition of beauty and grit, it unleashes the untapped potential of pure urban rawness that lies within empty spaces. Showcase your art against the most basic of canvasses, and let its true form shine through.

COLOR DASH (5K)
Where: Old Fort Western When: Saturday, June 4, 2016 Time: TBD
Often referred to as “the world’s brightest 5k”, Color Dash is a race like no other. Join sponsored runners as they get blasted with hues of every shade. With proceeds benefitting the Augusta Downtown Alliance, as well as the Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce, this is one event where you’ll want to put your true colors out on display. To learn more on these events, go to www.augustadowntownalliance.org.

Welcome to Downtown Gardiner

“A love interaction with the car enthusiasts and spectators and I enjoy playing music for all listeners to enjoy, young and old. That is part of my passion for putting on these types of events.”

JASON EVERETT, ORGANIZER

CLASSIC CAR CRUISE-IN NIGHTS

Ainslie’s Classic Car Cruise-In Nights moves to Gardiner Waterfront Park

BY JULIE KRAVETZ
Gardiner Main Street Volunteer

For the past 19 years, every year, something special has been happening in Gardiner, Maine. It started with one man, Walter DuPont, and his passion for sharing his love of classic cars with others. Walter started Classic Car Cruise-In Nights at Ainslie’s Market and it became one of the first, as well as the biggest, in the state.

This tradition in Gardiner continues to grow with each passing year. To accommodate the interest of this event, the location of the show will transition this year from Ainslie’s Market to the beautiful Waterfront Park in Gardiner. Thursday evenings, May through September, from 5 to 7pm downtown Gardiner will hum with the sounds of revving engines, the chatter of car enthusiasts, and up-beat, fun music from the same era as the cars.

Even those who aren’t necessarily car enthusiasts will enjoy the atmosphere and the beauty of Gardiner’s Waterfront Park. The organizer and DJ of this event, Jason Everett, will entertain with music provided by The Music Crew.

New this year, Central Maine Meats, the Cruise-In’s top sponsor, will sell and provide samples of their local meat products, and other local food producers will be on hand to highlight the bountiful array of locally produced food in Central Maine. Community groups, like Gardiner’s First Baptist Church, will contribute to the atmosphere each week by selling other goodies. Fabulous Giveaways and Door Prizes donated from Napa and other area businesses will be handed out each evening.

Ainslie’s Classic Cruise-In Nights are very much an interactive experience. The event gets planned throughout the year by Everett who finds distributors who want to show off products that car enthusiasts will enjoy.

Showcasing classic cars is only part of what makes the Cruise-In Nights so special.

“I love the interaction with the car enthusiasts and spectators,” Everett said. “I enjoy playing music for all listeners to enjoy, young and old. That is part of my passion for putting on these types of events.”

Community involvement and the people are what make Ainslie’s so special. Gardiner has a reputation for community togetherness and that makes it a great location. Without enthusiastic people, there would be no Cruise-In Nights.

Long-timers have shown their dedication to the event. Everett said he has gotten great feedback from the crowd over the years and loves hearing from the people who make everything possible. Any questions on the Classic Car Cruise-In can be directed to Everett at 592-7019 or themu-
siccrew@rocketmail.com.

So, come May, cruise on down to Gardiner’s Waterfront Park and be a part of something exciting that brings everyone a little closer together.
Gardiner is increasingly becoming known as a local foods hub, with a vibrant farmers market and expanded capacity to process chicken, lamb, pork, and steak. However, Gardiner has also recently exploded as a mecca for craft libations, too. The city is an up-and-coming hot spot for the growing craft alcohol movement. Craft beer, cider, and soon a distillery that will produce gin, barrel-aged rum, and several other spirits.

The craft alcohol industry has grown several exciting businesses in Gardiner in recent months and years. Lost Orchard Brewing Company brought hard cider to the city along with new life to the Congregational Church building that sat empty for years on the Church Street hillside. Crooked Halo Cider is already available at retailers throughout the state, and a tasting room will open in June on Church St.

The Craft Beer Cellar is a growing franchise, currently in 25 markets with 10 more planned. The local owner revitalized 339 Water Street, a building that once housed a local bakery and a marketplace near Gardiner’s busiest intersection. Craft Beer Cellar carries all the labels any “Beer Geek” could ask for and more, with monthly tastings and events to introduce new flavors to beer lovers’ palates.

Just a few doors down at 325 Water Street, Rick McCormick at Maniac Brewing & Supply has all of the equipment, ingredients, and know-how to help you successfully homebrew and create your own beer, wine, cider, mead and soda.

There is always room for more in Gardiner’s Craft Beverage Industry

Gardiner’s Creativity Fund is all about culture and interaction

May and June are fun-filled months in this river-side community. This year there are several creative happenings funded by The Creativity Fund for Gardiner which the people of the community and visitors will be able to experience.

Upstream, a group working to bring back fish passage on the Cobbossee Stream has created decorative wooden fish hung by fishing poles to mark artists’ venues for Gardiner’s ArtWalk on May 6. The group will be at Johnson Hall Theater during the event, offering creative activities for adults and children, including opportunities for wooden fish painting, fish print making and face painting.

Leading up to the Greater Gardiner River Festival on June 18th, Upstream will also place sculptures around the downtown, streamside and at the waterfront park. All are encouraged to stroll around town during the event and enjoy sculptures made by community members of all ages who attended workshops concerning Cobbossee Stream and its ecological health.

Also during the River Festival, artists Denise Rohdin and Kimberly Bentley invite anyone interested to create in clay down by the riverside from 1 to 5 p.m. This project, also supported by the Creativity Fund, will be an immersion into nature, combining unfired clay slip, rocks, and greenery from the landscape to build a sturgeon community installation diorama. The piece created will be left until it naturally just wears away.

Previous projects made possible by The Creativity Fund continue to be enjoyed by the community. A sculpture of an ice harvester by Nicholas Genovese is on view at the Gardiner Public Library. “Creating Gardiner,” a film documenting the arts and culture of Gardiner by Lee Arnott is available on DVD at the library. And an Art in the Schools program which is designed to bring performing artists to local schools.

If you are interested in submitting a proposal to the Creativity Fund, stop into Monktree (280 Water Street) to pick up request for proposal information.
Welcome to Downtown Waterville

Business and art continue to blossom in Waterville

Business of the year celebration
Join Waterville Main Street and the City of Waterville for champagne, wine, sparkling cider and hors d’oeuvres as the Downtown Business of the Year Award is presented along with recognition of Waterville Main Street’s many volunteers. Waterville Main Street celebrates a downtown business, nominated by its peers and voted on by all of you. City officials, Mayor Nick Isgro and City Manager Mike Roy, along with last year’s winner, Charlie Giguere of Silver Street Tavern, will award a key to the city and a framed picture depicting different Waterville landmarks centered around downtown created by local artist Brian Vigue. This event is open to the public and is being held at Selah Tea Café from 5 - 7 p.m. on May 5. Thanks to all who took the time to vote.

The Downtown Business of the Year celebration is sponsored by Maine State Credit Union. Don’t miss this fun opportunity to celebrate downtown accomplishments and a look forward to the future.

Farmers’ Market
On Thursday, April 28 the spring/summer/fall farmers’ market will resume operations in The Concourse on the corner of Appleton & Main Streets. In addition to promoting locally produced food, the Farmers’ Market is another project that brings people to downtown. The market offers everything from herbs to eggs, vegetables to goat cheese. Other products that are available at the market include meat products, cut and dried flowers, seedlings, maple products, berries, annuals and perennials, baked goods, jams and fresh baked breads. The vendors participating in the market represent farms from a dozen Maine communities, including neighboring Oakland, Winslow and Fairfield. Not all vendors will be at the market on opening day, but as the weather warms, and the growing season takes hold, you can expect to see your favorite, familiar faces. The Downtown Waterville Farmers’ Market is sponsored by MaineGeneral Health & Waterville Main Street. The market is in The Concourse every Thursday, 2 – 6 p.m. beginning April 28 and continuing through November 17th. Stop in to enjoy the tastes of summer!

Maine Open Juried Art Show
The 26th Maine Open Juried Art Show, featuring the work of Maine artists, will come to a close soon. The final day is Friday, April 22nd. Hours are 10 a.m.-7 p.m. This year’s show drew registrations from 95 artists from 53 Maine towns, with a total of 177 pieces entered. The judges chose 129 original pieces for exhibition and awarded 29 prizes. The 26th Maine Open Juried Art Show is sponsored by Colby College Museum of Art, The FrameMakers, Kennebec Wealth Management, Kennebec Savings Bank, and Maine State Credit Union. Please visit watervilllemainstreet.org to learn more. Voting for the People’s Choice Award is taking place at the library. The Maine Open Juried Art Show is organized and administered by Waterville Main Street, Waterville Area Art Society and Waterville Public Library.

Thomas College Interns
As part of their marketing class at Thomas College, seniors Lukas Bohman and Blaine Guido are conducting a consumer survey. Thoughtful and carefully prepared questions will be used to measure visitor and consumer satisfaction related to downtown Waterville. The answers and results will be kept confidential and be given to Waterville Main Street’s Economic Restructuring Committee. Bohman is from Gnesta, a small town located an hour outside Stockholm, Sweden’s capital. He will graduate in May with a major in Marketing Management and a minor in International Business. “I have loved every second of my four years studying at Thomas,” he said, “I now look forward to the possibility of giving back to the community and town that has become my home away from home.”

Guido was born in Belfast, Maine and grew up in Montville until age 12. After graduating as valedictorian from Lee Academy, Blaine followed his older brother, Ben, to Colby College but later transferred to Thomas to pursue a marketing degree. He worked as Resident Assistant at Thomas for two years, has been an active member of the Student Senate, and is on the lacrosse team.

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**What’s a Cash Mob?**

“Cash Mobs” are organized by people trying to make a positive impact on the businesses in their communities. And to that end, a Cash Mob is planned for downtown Waterville during Small Business Week. The aim is to target a downtown Waterville business which helps make Main Street special.

With that goal in mind, a public survey was conducted, and after ballots were cast and votes tallied, we are happy to announce Day’s Jewelers, located at 80 Main Street in Downtown Waterville is the business to host the mob. The event will take place on Friday May 6 from 11a.m. to 1 p.m. This is an opportunity to make a positive impact on a local business and have a great time doing it!

**Small Business Week Waterville May 2 – May 6, 2016**

Small Business Waterville is honoring Small Business Week by offering a week of free programs for small business development including digital marketing tips, creative enterprising, business start-up, QuickBooks, and more! To learn more about the sessions and to register: www.eventbrite.com/o/small-business-waterville-2757778236. Walk-ins welcome but seating is not guaranteed without registration! Small Business Week is sponsored by Key Bank.

**Colby Cares Day April 30**

About 300 Colby College students, staff members, administrators and faculty members will lend a helping hand throughout our community on Saturday, April 30. This annual volunteer day is organized by the student-run Colby Volunteer Center (CVC). In the morning, volunteers will help spruce up parks and trails, offer sports clinics at Head of Falls, help organize food and clothing for the needy, and lend a hand at many other local organizations. At noon, all the volunteers will congregate at Head of Falls for lunch. The public is invited to stop by to meet and mingle with the volunteers. There is no admission and various Colby groups and musicians will be on hand to provide entertainment. This is a rain or shine event.

**LET’S GO! Fly a Kite!**

Saturday, May 14, 1-4 pm
Head of Falls, Front Street

Inland Hospital’s LET’S GO! Family Fun Series free event. Come share in the joy of kite flying, a fun activity for kids and adults of all ages! Make and fly your own kite (free kit for first 200 kids) with Common Street Arts and the Nor’eastern Kite Club. And don’t miss Kites Over New England’s spectacular display of giant kites along the river’s edge! FM1 visit inlandhospital.org or call 861-3292. Sponsored in part by Waterville Main Street.

Library Events For May

**Monday, May 2**
Digital Marketing Amp-Up Strategies
Jason Clay
Director of Marketing and Technology for Governor’s Restaurant
1:30 – 3 p.m. at Alfond Youth Center
126 North Street, Waterville

**Tuesday, May 3**
How to Market & Connect with Other Creatives Through the CreativeGround Cultural Directory
Dee Schneidman
New England Foundation for the Arts
10:30 - 11:30 a.m. Live Online Demo Broadcast at Waterville Public Library
73 Elm Street, Waterville

**Wednesday, May 4**
How to Start a Small Business
Jean Dempster
New Ventures Maine
William S. Card
U.S. Small Business Administration
4:30 - 6 p.m. at Waterville Public Library
73 Elm Street, Waterville

**Thursday, May 5**
QuickBooks Intermediate
Janet Roderick
Maine Small Business Development Center
1 - 3 p.m. at Mid-Maine Chamber
50 Elm Street, Waterville

**Thursday, May 5**
12th Annual Downtown Business of the Year Recognition
Waterville Main Street Event
5 - 7 p.m. at Selah Tea Cafe
177 Main Street, Waterville

**Friday, May 6 from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.**
Downtown Waterville Cash Mob
Day’s Jewelers
80 Main Street, Waterville

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Insurance is sometimes a required purchase for those who pay a mortgage or need to register a car in Maine. But people also buy insurance to protect their assets and feel some peace of mind. Whatever your needs, GHM Insurance covers them.

“We can offer competitive pricing in virtually every line of insurance because we have access to so many different carriers and so many different products,” said owner and GHM CEO, Bill Mitchell.

An independent agency, GHM represents more than 20 national carriers, among them Hanover, Acadia and MEMIC, who offer extensive coverage: home, auto, general liability, workers’ compensation, cyber liability, employee life, disability and health insurance.

GHM also occupies a growing niche in insuring microbreweries. Account Executive James Sanborn insures craft brewers in 15 to 20 states, and, as a connoisseur, keeps his own industry blog.

Mitchell said GHM works closely with its carriers to negotiate better deals for customers, and that the company forms a three-way relationship with its customers and their insurers, represented by the triangle in their new logo.

“We solve insurance challenges with customers and insurance carriers in the customer’s best interest.”

He also said the insurance industry encompasses all parts of business, which make it a great opportunity: financial management, marketing, sales, technology, analytical studies, statistical analysis, loss-prevention, claims and risk management.

Mitchell said he always had his eye on being in business. While he grew up, he ran lemonade stands and yard sales, and mowed and raked lawns. He also credits his parents, Paul and Yvette, for instilling in him and his three siblings a solid work ethic in leading by example while encouraging them to attend college and to do their best. Other relatives, notably former U.S. Senator George Mitchell, Paul Mitchell’s brother and Bill Mitchell’s uncle, also served as a role model.

Bill Mitchell’s roots and connections would have seemed to provide an easy start to his career. While he attended the University of Maine at Augusta for his Business Administration degree in 1981, he approached his father, Paul, for work. However, his father was a little reluctant at first and conditioned his employment on Bill Mitchell’s staying in college – once he finished his degree, he could work part-time.

“I was the GHM custodian for the first couple years I worked here. It was a great experience,” Bill Mitchell said. After he graduated in 1984, he received his property casualty and life and health licenses. He became a Certified Insurance Counselor (CIC) in 1987 and to keep that designation, he regularly attends several seminars through the CIC program.

GHM started as J.B. Friel & Co. in 1901 on Common Street, around the corner from its current location. Upon founder J.B. Friel’s passing in 1935, Friel’s son-in-law, Paul Jullien, became owner and manager, and when he died, With Mitchell leadership through the years, the GHM agency developed and expanded.
GHM
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Paul Mitchell bought ownership from Hodgdon and Goddard in 1978 and 1991. Bill Mitchell began acquiring interest around the time his father fully owned the agency and has since bought the remaining assets from his father. Paul Mitchell, now in his 90s, remains company president.
Building upon the business’s success and its relationships, under the younger Mitchell’s ownership and leadership, the business opened an Auburn location in 2007 and now has 30 employees.

“It’s a complex business and it’s very important to all of us that we provide a high-level of service and communication to our customers and the general public.”

Mitchell said GHM takes pride in their close relationships with customers and insurance carriers and in their focus on customers and the general public.

Through the years, GHM has collected an impressive array of accolades. In 1989, it was the twelfth insurance agency out of 40,000 nationwide to receive independent insurance trade journal Rough Notes’ Marketing Agency of the Month; recent recogni- tion includes making Best Companies Group’s 2015 Best Places to Work in Maine and GHM has been named an Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America and Reagan Consulting Best Practices agency for six years straight.

Mitchell and his employees contribute to the community through their involvement with The Waterville Opera House, The Humane Society, Inland Hospital and MaineGeneral, among others. Mitchell also started a successful Snack Pack Program for the Boys and Girls Club at The Alford Youth Center to provide meals for kids after school; Mitchell funded it along with GHM insurance providers and other donors to give 60 to 70 children in need the food to carry them through the weekend.

“We work hard to be engaged in the community and give back as much as possible. The community has been incredibly supportive of GHM and we’re very fortunate to be able to give back.”

As a sideline, Mitchell develops commercial real estate and owns six Waterville properties, including the GHM building: two on Kennedy Memorial Drive, two on Main Street. He recently bought 14 to 18 and 20 to 24 on Common Street.

“They’re wonderful, classic buildings built in 1890 — one of them is a Masonic building and they have great character and beautiful features,” he said of the Common Street properties. “I own the building Mr. Friel started his company in, which is kind of cool.”

Mitchell and Fred Ouellette, one of the owners of The Last Unicorn, plan to open a pub called The Proper Pig at 14 Common Street in May.

“It will be completely different from any other pub or restaurant in Waterville, and we’re very excited to bring this new pub downtown. Fred does an amazing job running The Last Unicorn and will bring that expertise to The Proper Pig. It will have a unique menu and a great selection of microbrews, wines and a full bar.”

Mitchell is among the investors who are restoring downtown properties, spearheaded by Colby College.

“Waterville, over the next two to three years is going to see a transformation like none we’ve seen before and it is because of the great vision of David Greene, current president of Colby College, and it’s really exciting to be part of it.”

GHM has two locations: one at 34 Center Street in Auburn and the other at 51 Main Street in Waterville. They’re open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information, call (800) 244-9046, visit them on Facebook or at their website, ghmagency.com.

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