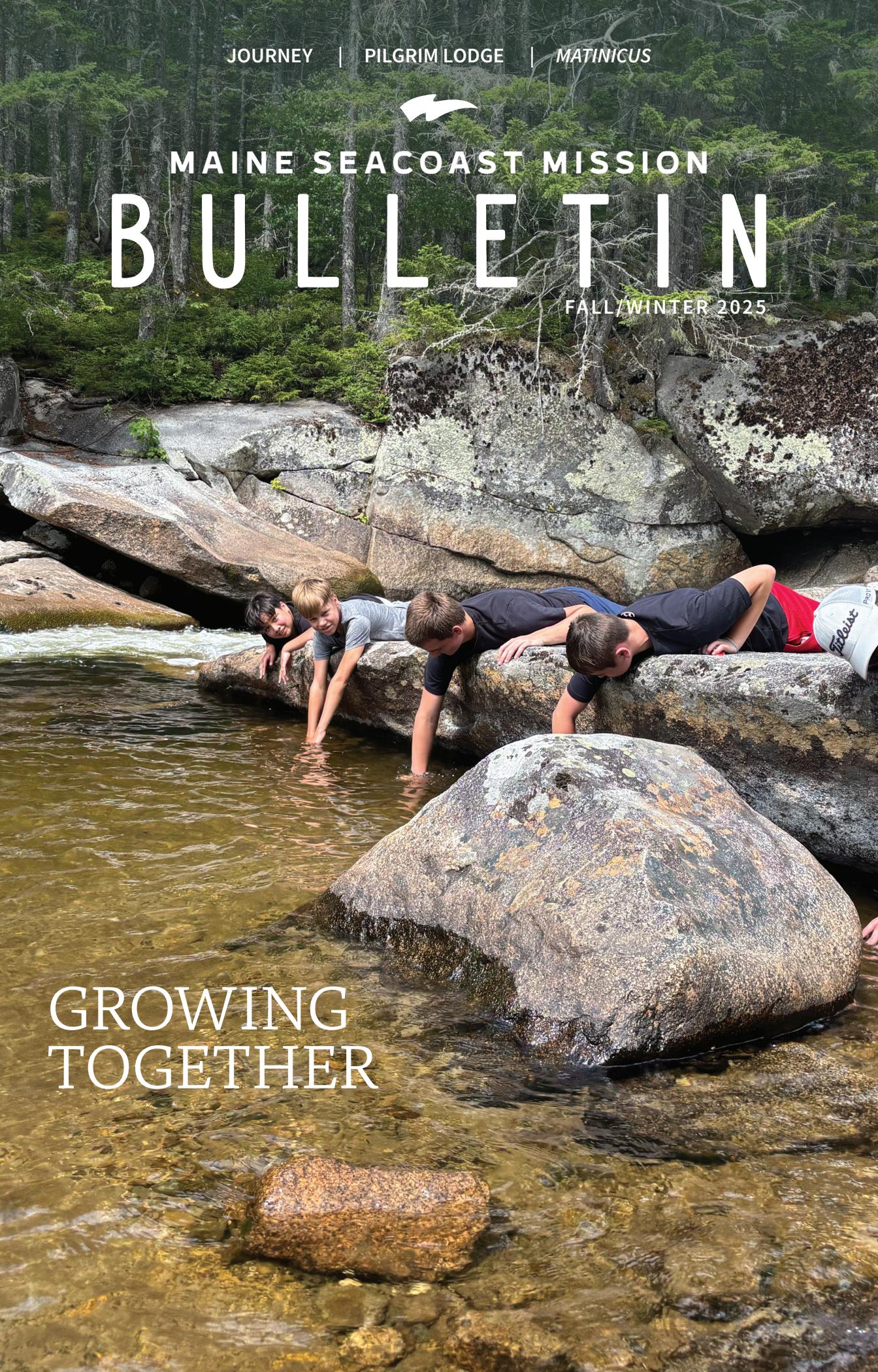


JOURNEY | PILGRIM LODGE | MATINICUS



MAINE SEACOAST MISSION BULLETIN

FALL/WINTER 2025



GROWING
TOGETHER

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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SEACOASTMISSION.ORG



The communities served by Maine Seacoast Mission are vulnerable. Families on the islands and Downeast are stretched thin even in the best of times. Now, high prices, unstable health care, unaffordable housing, and expanding holes in the safety net have many scrambling for answers. As it has been since 1905, the Mission is a trusted part of the solution for many. Consistently, quietly, always there and every day.

In partnership with our communities, we are responding. Over the past 11 months, the Mission food pantry has welcomed and fed more families than ever before. In response to more requests for housing help, we are growing Service Tours, the program that welcomes volunteer groups for weeklong service trips to help make homes warm, safe, and dry. As young people and adults look for economic opportunity in the trades, the Mission, in partnership with a visionary family, is rolling out a significant new scholarship to help them find just that.

While the Mission answers the urgent call from those in immediate distress, we also work toward a hopeful future with Downeast and island communities. In these pages, we share a few stories of hope in action: a life-changing scholarship, a group of teens that grow aspirations together, a community theatre project that celebrates an island town 20 miles out to sea.

As the need continues to grow, the Mission will continue to show up. Every day. In every kind of weather. With every resource we can muster. Support from friends and donors like you ensures that the Mission can continue to be a safe place in an uncertain world. Thank you.

For the Mission!



John Zavodny
President, Maine Seacoast Mission

Front cover: Journey Class of 2028 tests the waters during a camping trip to Baxter State Park last summer.



A Journey student helps prepare their annual Thanksgiving meal for friends and family.

FOSTERING GROWTH AND ASPIRATIONS IN TEENS

When Journey alumni Chloe Look spoke at 2025 Sunbeam Award Gala, she observed, “Some Mission programs have been around for a very long time. By comparison, Journey is relatively young.” While new, the program quickly achieved tangible, life-changing results for youth.

Started in 2018, Journey was designed to provide students with six years of dedicated mentoring to support educational and career aspirations. To date, 28 students have completed the program, and they have achieved great academic and post-secondary career success. Alumni have



Class of 2028 explores Baxter State Park during the group's cohort trip over the summer.



JOURNEY in 2024

751

hours of programming offered including 11 college campus visits, 15 adventures, and 10 overnight trips

230

hours of peer mentoring conducted by 3 Journey students

70

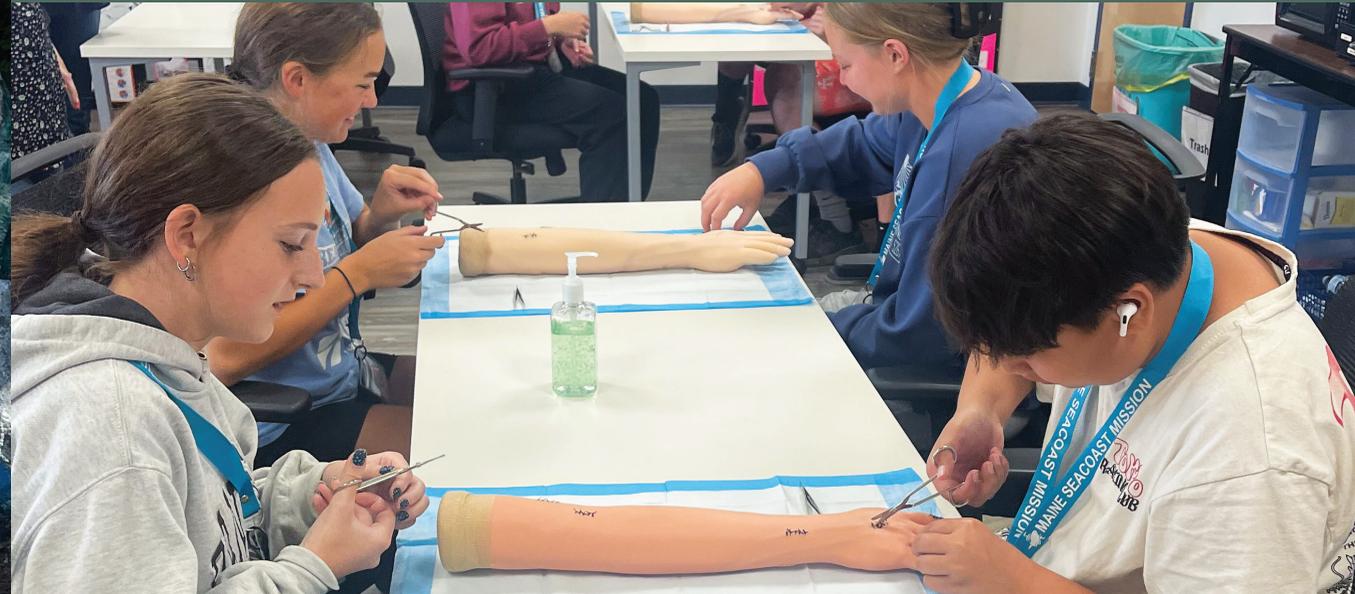
participating students spanning ages 12 to 18

30

hours spent volunteering in the community

40

colleges applied to by graduating Journey students



Journey students experience medical stitching in an anatomy lab.

won awards for both academic and athletic achievements. Some have become valedictorians or salutatorians, others have earned a Mission Scholarship or Davis Maine Scholarship. Chloe herself was the valedictorian of the graduating class of 2024 from Narraguagus Jr/Sr High School.

Journey opens doors to opportunities that students might not access on their own and broadens their horizons significantly. The program encourages exploration of the local area through activities like hiking, visiting colleges, and meeting professionals in a myriad of career fields. It also includes opportunities to travel outside Washington County and the state. This includes a ninth-grade trip to the Katahdin area and an eleventh-grade visit to Massachusetts.

Tours of colleges and universities begin early, in seventh grade. These trips give students a glimpse of diverse post-secondary schooling—ranging from small,

liberal arts colleges like College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor, to trade schools like Washington County Community College, to large universities like the University of Maine and University of New England.

While the program emphasizes education and career readiness, it also fosters strong personal growth and mentorship. Students gather for fun excursions designed to expand their horizons and foster self-discovery. Core summer trips, which are three- to four-night getaways to various locations, are a favorite among participants. The ninth-grade camping trip to Millinocket includes the perennial favorite activity of white-water rafting.

EdGE Youth Development Coordinator Jake Hunkler notes the bonding that occurs during the rafting experience: “The students face the adrenaline laced fear of the rapids together, encouraging each other, and happily cheering each other on. There

is something to be said about bonding in extreme circumstances and after we saw the students engaging with each other in a whole new way, balanced between competition and comradery.”

The camaraderie cultivated on trips helps students view the EdGE Youth Development Coordinators as trusted adults they can rely on. Coordinators meet with students regularly, staying informed about their lives, checking on academic progress, and offering support if they struggle. As students get older, coordinators assist with skill-building, including interviewing for jobs and college admissions, navigating the college application process, and workshopping resumes and scholarship applications.

Recently, Journey students gained access to the Downeast Exploration Fund. Created by Gigi Georges, the author of *Downeast: Five Maine Girls and the Unseen Story of Rural America*, and her husband Jeff

Oxman, the fund specifically supports students living in the Downeast region. Students who apply can receive funds to pursue activities and experiences that align with their educational and career goals, from attending a specialized camp to job shadowing.

These experiences and opportunities have proven life-changing for the students involved. Cody Leighton, another Journey student who spoke at the Gala, shared: “The Mission and all its educational programs changed my life. At a young age, my parents enrolled me in the Mission’s EdGE afterschool and summer camp programs. As a pre-teen, Journey helped to open up my world. The program is essential to prepare and transition students like us from middle school to high school, when we need to start thinking about our futures.”

A Heartfelt Commitment to Downeast Maine's Future

A community's heart beats strongest when its people are supported to thrive. At the Mission, we understand that for many, finding a clear path to a stable, fulfilling career can be a challenge. That's why the Mission is so grateful to share a truly transformative gift: The Cushman Family Foundation has generously donated \$1 million dollars to the Mission to establish the R.H. Cushman Scholarship.

ANSWERING THE CALL FOR SKILLED TRADES

This scholarship comes at a critical time, reflecting a deep, nationwide need for skilled, dedicated professionals. Earlier this year, nearly 400,000 skilled trade jobs remained unfilled across the country, and this number is expected to

continue to rise. The demand is enormous. A Bureau of Labor Statistics study found that essential roles—such as welders, construction workers, and electricians—could have an average of 20 new job openings for every tradesperson by 2032.

In addition, the State of Maine has established a goal for 2025 that 60% of working adults hold a degree or credential; Washington County lags far behind having achieved 32.8%.

These statistics and their impact on communities are a call to action.

SUPPORTING EVERY STEP OF THE JOURNEY

The Cushman Family Foundation saw the need. The R.H. Cushman Scholarship

was designed for Downeast residents looking to complete a certificate, licensure, or degree program in vocational studies. The scholarship is a powerful step in closing the gap and strengthening the economic foundation in our Maine communities. It also provides opportunities for individuals and families to develop a stable income.

Who is eligible?

The scholarship will be open to both graduating high school students and adult learners with a high school diploma, GED, or HiSET.

What is the focus?

Scholars who demonstrate a strong commitment to their chosen vocation and can articulate how completing a certification or earning a license or degree will enrich their personal, professional, and community life.



NEWS volunteers from Connecticut help in the Housing Improvement program.

THE MISSION'S PROMISE: WE "STICK WITH" OUR SCHOLARS

In 2025, the Mission distributed \$264,000 through the existing Scholarship program. Many Scholars point to the Mission's support as instrumental in completing their college degree. The R.H. Cushman Scholarship makes a similar

commitment to its future Scholars. The scholarship will be renewable through the completion of a student's educational program.

Consistent support makes all the difference as current Scholars attest. Lillian Frank who graduated from Bowdoin College shared, "A scholarship from the Mission allowed me to move through school with less financial stress. This has allowed me to participate in



NEWS volunteers replace a window for a family in need as part of the Housing Improvement program.

extracurricular activities and obtain leadership roles in community organizations."

The fund's commitment is to "stick with" each student, assuming the student remains in good academic standing. The Mission understands "life happens," so students

can "step out" of studies for personal reasons and remain fully eligible upon their return, as long as scholarship funds are available.

Zachary Wentworth, who graduated from the University of Maine, adds, "Without a scholarship I would have had to work significantly more and not focus on my academic and extracurriculars which have allowed me and will continue to allow me to serve Maine and the communities that have helped me grow personally and professionally." Zachary was recognized as an Outstanding Graduate by the University's College of Education and Human Development.

The Mission is thrilled to extend this instrumental support to the next generation of talented Downeast tradespeople, no matter their age. The R.H. Cushman Scholarship will help these aspiring professionals focus on their studies while maintaining community involvement without the crushing burden of financial stress. 🏠

Greetings from the
MAINE COAST

Experience Downeast Maine. Make a difference.

Each year, volunteers visit with the Mission to share in the transformative experience of service for others. Volunteers help make much needed improvements on homes, clean beaches, and explore what Maine has to offer.

To learn more visit seacoastmission.org/service-tours

THANK YOU

When you give to Maine Seacoast Mission, you have a direct impact on communities and people living in Maine's Downeast and outer islands regions.

You make a difference.

"I am so happy to be supporting island children!"

—ANONYMOUS DONOR

"The co-founders of our organization loved Downeast Maine and believed strongly in the work of the Maine Seacoast Mission supporting the food security, health, and education of the children and families of the coastal communities and outer islands. Our foundation's current Trustees are excited to continue our partnership with the Mission in this important work."

—EVELYN S. AND K.E. BARRETT FOUNDATION



"We are thinking of you as you navigate the challenges while you continue to provide vital aid of all kinds to your communities. We're behind you!"

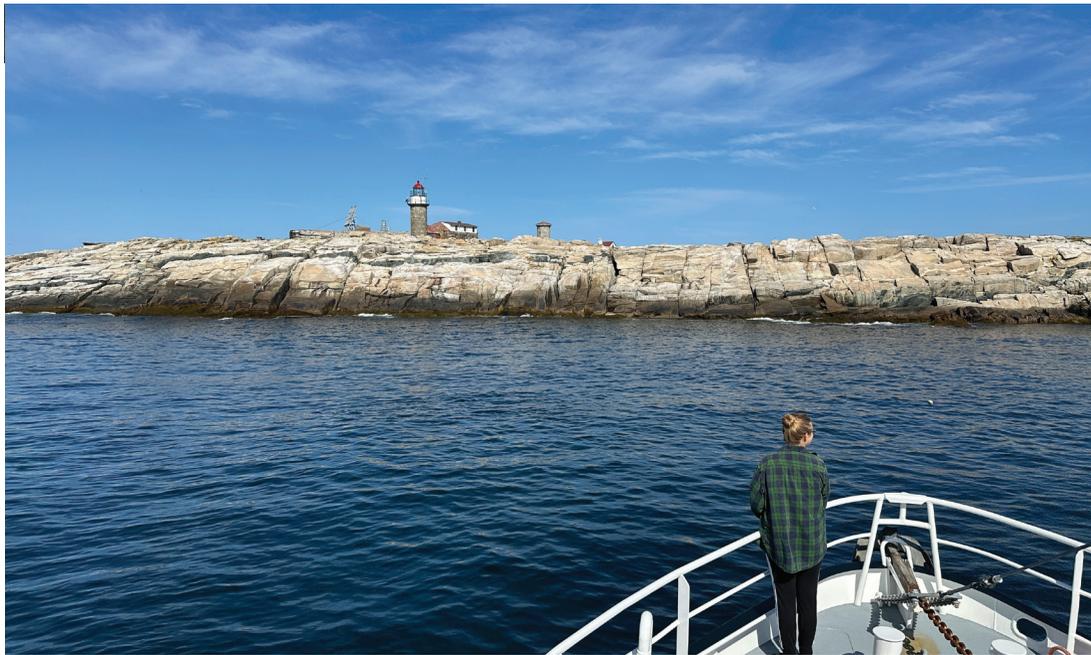
—DAVID AND ANN INGRAM

"The Mission is serving so many children in Washington County... we are so happy to support you!"

—MATT HORTON,
MACHIAS SAVING BANK



Students support each other on the low ropes course on the Mission's Downeast Campus.



Clockwise from top left: Congregational Church of Matinicus; actor Katie Peabody as Abbie Burgess stands atop the lighthouse; *Sunbeam* cruises by Matinicus Rock as it looks today.

Matinicus Makes a Splash on Islands

On a warm July day, as the sun waned over the Matinicus Congregational Church, folks in the pews sat rapt. Used for spiritual and community functions, island churches bustle with activity. Sunday services welcome islanders and visitors alike to worship. Families, neighbors, and the occasional out-of-towner share community meals at indoor tables that spill onto the lawn. These buildings host town halls, recitals, weddings, funerals, and outdoor markets on the lawn—an island church brings people together physically, emotionally, spiritually.

On that day, the crowd—standing room only—watched a single actor weave an intimate, momentous story of loneliness, joy, desperation, and hope. In *Matinicus: A Lighthouse Play*, actor Katie Peabody played a 16-year-old girl named Abbie Burgess, who in 1856, single-handedly operated the lighthouse on nearby Matinicus Rock for nearly a month.

Written by Jenny Connell Davis, *Matinicus* tells the true story of the distinctive, Maine historical figure. During one particularly harsh winter, Abbie's lighthouse keeper father left the island to seek supplies. When a large storm overtook the Rock, Abbie manned the lighthouse alone while protecting her

younger siblings and an ailing mother. Her story and impact on the small, two-by-six-mile island is especially significant to residents of Maine's remote, unbridged islands: Abbie's experience is a testament to the grit of those who choose to live there.

After a successful, three-week run at the Bangor Opera House, professional theatre Penobscot Theatre Company (PTC) partnered with the Mission to deliver the performance on remote, unbridged islands last summer. Traveling aboard the *Sunbeam*, boat and crew carried PTC's team of three to Great Cranberry Island, Isle au Haut, and Matinicus.

The playwright's portrayal of Abbie and of island life is one many found poignant and inspiring. The three performances drew close to 250 attendees, unheard of according to *Sunbeam* Director Douglas Cornman. "Islanders grow up hearing Abbie's story. To have her come to life was an amazing experience for them. A childhood hero became a real, living woman who overcame adversity to keep the light burning. They are asking us to bring it back."

When faced with where to host the play, communities had to be creative. In small, rural places, churches have a feeling of shared ownership. Douglas says, "Matinicus doesn't have

a dedicated space for this type of event. Frenchboro and Monhegan don't have one either. The physical church is a house of faith for the faithful, but it also functions as a community gathering space."

Each island came together in a fun, positive way not to simply watch the performance but to make it happen. "The show was a big undertaking. But it was so successful," Douglas shared. "It took a lot of hands, ingenuity, and creativity for our staff. And islanders wanted to help. We'd reach out and say, 'We need a seven-foot wooden ladder and a trunk for props,' and the items would show up."

That type of togetherness builds resilience and advances the sense of belonging, which is exactly what the Mission aims for in all of its work.

Year-round and across three *Sunbeam* programs, Mission staff provide health, educational, and community building services to residents of all fifteen of Maine's unbridged islands. With the astounding success and immeasurable impact of *Matinicus: A Lighthouse Play*, the Mission's Island Outreach program intends to bring more artistic experiential activities to the islands visited by *Sunbeam* and her crew. 🐟



ISLAND OUTREACH in 2024

16
island communities reached

89
island visits with **137 days** spent on an island

53
pieces submitted to the 18th volume of *The Island Reader* by residents of **14 islands**

236
hours of programming with **7 island schools**

17
partners provided enrichment and programs to islanders

1,264
meals served and **2,539 cookies** baked for island residents

117
contractor bags of storm debris removed from **4 islands** after the January 2024 storms

3,600
push-ups, sit-ups, and jumping jacks completed by students

2,055
in-person interactions with island residents

2,543
conversations by phone, text, and email



Pilgrim Lodge on Lake Cobbosseecontee.



Pilgrim Lodge Director Elizabeth Charles McGough.

Partner Profile

PILGRIM LODGE

Every year, the Mission partners with organizations across Maine and beyond to provide services, education, and more to communities on Maine's islands and in the Downeast region. The Mission recently chatted with Elizabeth (Liz) Charles McGough, the Director of Pilgrim Lodge in West Gardiner about their connection with the Mission.

What is your name? What organization do you represent?

My name is Elizabeth Charles McGough and I'm the Director of Pilgrim Lodge. Pilgrim Lodge is the Outdoor Ministries program of The Maine Conference United Church of Christ. In other words, we're a summer camp program and retreat facility

here in West Gardiner, right on Lake Cobbosseecontee. We get to spend all summer long providing purposeful, fun retreat and camp programming for youth, families, and adults.

Aside from what you would expect from a traditional summer camp, we offer faith-based programming that invites people from around the state and beyond to come together in a beautiful, natural environment. I like sharing that the average age of a Pilgrim Lodge camper is 33 years old! We are more than just a summer camp for kids. We welcome families with children and babies all the way up to grandparents with their grandchildren who want to make memories and share time together.

How long has the Mission been working with Pilgrim Lodge? How has the partnership evolved over the years?

Pilgrim Lodge and Maine Seacoast Mission have a long relationship of connection. Most recently, Pilgrim Lodge hosted the Mission last summer and Chief Development Officer Erica Hutchinson shared the organization's programs with our campers.

In the early years when the Mission was based in Bar Harbor, there was a goal to send ministers out to the islands. One Mission minister, Reverend Stan Haskell, was also one of the earliest leaders of Pilgrim Lodge. Another family with ties to both Pilgrim

Lodge and the Mission is the Stillman family.

Reverend David Stillman was the chair of Pilgrim Lodge's Outdoor Ministries Committee, and he also was a minister based out of North Haven and involved with Island Outreach. Together with his wife, Dottie Kay Stillman, they conducted a Pilgrim Lodge program geared toward high school youth with the Mission. The Stillmans wove the best of Pilgrim Lodge programming into the Mission's island-based programming and delivered that to islands via the *Sunbeam*.

Can you share a little bit about how Pilgrim Lodge and campers have supported the Mission?

Each summer at Pilgrim Lodge, we have what we call our "summer mission program." In the summer

of 2024, we were honored to reconnect with the Mission and featured the organization as our summer mission recipient. Through this connection, Erica visited camp once a week to talk to our campers about the Mission's work and the connection to Maine islands. She demonstrated why it is so valuable and important to get involved with and support the work of the Mission. It was great for our campers to hear how the Mission tailors programming to serve the needs of Downeast residents and islanders.

At Pilgrim Lodge, we are thinking about how we as humans connect with our neighbors in the world beyond camp. We want to really listen and understand how we can support them. The Mission really role models for us so

beautifully. The organization understands how relationships happen in partnership and in relationship with the people that you serve.

Is there a memorable moment from the work together that has stood out to you?

One really special moment happened when Erica visited to talk to our campers. During the talk, an adult camper stood up and shared that she had been the recipient of a Mission scholarship. It drives home the impact of the Mission's work when you find people impacted by an organization's work moving about in the world years later.

It was also special to thank the Mission for the work it does, celebrate what we do together, and look to partner more in the future. ➡

Welcome



SARAH HASKELL NEW BOARD MEMBER

Based in Maryland and having grown up summering in Maine, Northeast Harbor holds a special place in Sarah's heart. Having a professional career holding various positions, Sarah brings a unique set of skills and experiences to her role on the Mission's Board of Directors. She has served as a portfolio manager at Northeast Investment Management, as a school administrator at The Silver Spring Day School in Maryland, and most recently was Head of Operations for Bellwether Insurance Partners. With a passion for community building and volunteer work, Sarah has dedicated her time to various organizations that align with her values and interests, including board service for The McLean School of Maryland, Neighborhood House, and Northeast Harbor Tennis Club. Through these roles, she has gained valuable insights into governance, strategy, and the importance of building strong, supportive communities. Committed to bringing her experience and energy for service to the Mission, Sarah will contribute to the continued success and growth of the organization.



JOSH ROSEN NEW BOARD MEMBER

Josh is a native of Lincoln, Maine, a graduate of the University of Maine (JD/MBA), and a resident of Boston. As an energy and climate attorney at the law firm Foley Hoag LLP, his practice primarily includes regulatory, permitting, and other governmental matters in Maine, Massachusetts, and New York. Before starting his practice, Josh consulted for several state and municipal government organizations in Maine, including the Maine Department of Energy Resources, the Maine International Trade Center, and the City of Bangor. For nearly ten years, he worked at the University of Maine Advanced Structures and Composites Center on a team working to commercialize floating offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine. He previously served as a city councilor in Bangor, Maine, and as a board member of the Bangor Symphony Orchestra and Temple Beth El of Portland. Josh remains deeply committed to Maine and is excited to support the Mission's ever-critical efforts to strengthen Maine's rural, coastal, and island communities.

Thank you

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The Mission's corporate sponsors and donors support our work all year. Through their generosity and the generosity of all of our donors, the Mission can help sustain and strengthen families and communities.

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We wish to thank each sponsor for believing in the thriving communities the Mission seeks to assist on Maine's islands and Downeast coast. Become a sponsor for our organization and create a customized package to best fit your organization's goals.

To learn more about corporate sponsorship opportunities, please contact Scholarships and Development Director Devin Mack at dmack@seacoastmission.org or (207) 801-6010.



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