

Downtown Bangor Public Humanities Day returns

BY SHELBY HARTIN
BDN STAFF

What happens when you read the newspaper or describe what's it's like to hike in the woods? What happens when you explore your family genealogy or consider a piece of public art you walk by every day on your way to work? The humanities — literature, history, art, music and philosophy — seep into our lives in ways we sometimes don't realize, and it is the mission of the University of Maine Humanities Center to help us recognize, celebrate and support that. The humanities will take center stage in downtown Bangor with a kickoff event Jan. 29 and a day of humanities-themed pro-

grams Jan. 30 as Downtown Bangor Public Humanities Day, hosted by the UMaine Humanities Center, returns to the Queen City. "This will be the fourth year in a row that the UMaine Humanities Center has organized public humanities events in downtown Bangor," Liam Riordan, director of the UMaine Humanities Center, said. "The goal of the event is to better connect UMaine students, staff and faculty with local institutions and the general public in the region." The UMaine Humanities Center was established in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in 2010. "We have a threefold goal," Riordan said. "One is to improve *See Bangor, Page C2*



COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY OF MAINE
Artist Dan Dowd (right) discusses his exhibit "thick skinned" at a recent University of Maine Museum of Art reception. Dowd will present at PechaKucha on Friday and lead a gallery talk on Saturday as part of the Downtown Bangor Public Humanities Day events.



MICKY BEDELL | BDN
Barbara Jean O'Brien plays her harp at her Northport home Tuesday. O'Brien is the only certified music-thanatologist in the state, creating responsive or prescriptive music for people in the stages leading up to the end of life.

A vigil of music

Northport musician offers end-of-life care

BY SHELBY HARTIN
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Penelope Wolfe's mother had been battling dementia for nearly eight years when she had a stroke in May 2013. She was transferred to a nursing home, and her health steadily declined. Wolfe and her family watched, helplessly, as their mother slowly faded. But Wolfe didn't want things to end that way. She knew a woman named Barbara Jean O'Brien, a harpist who was her church's musician at the time. O'Brien, a resident of Northport, is the only certified music-thanatologist in the state. Wolfe asked if she would provide her services for her mother.

"Music-thanatology is a process of creating responsive or prescriptive music for people in the stages leading up to the end of life," O'Brien said. It wasn't long before O'Brien was in the room, crafting a music vigil for Wolfe's mother. "She began to play, and she sang as well. It was the most peaceful, soothing experience," Wolfe said. "It was not just for my mother but for everybody who was in the room." Everything became very still and calm. All eyes were focused on Wolfe's mother. There was no way to tell whether she could hear the music, but something told Wolfe her mother knew it was for her. "There was a sense that she could hear it because there was an attentiveness of her being," Wolfe said.

O'Brien does not enter patients' rooms to put on a production. Her work is very focused, starting first with the gathering of important information about patients' health from caregivers and family members. Family members and patients, if they're responsive, are informed of O'Brien's purpose and encouraged to make themselves comfortable. Then the music vigil, which can last from 45 minutes to over an hour, begins. "We create a foundation for the music that's in relation to the breath," O'Brien explained. O'Brien uses the harp, a polyphonic and portable instrument, and her own voice — the tools used by all music-thanatologists — at the bedside of patients during the *See Music, Page C2*

Acadia names first poet laureate

Bar Harbor man accepts park post

BAR HARBOR — Acadia National Park and Friends of Acadia have announced the appointment of Christian Barter of Bar Harbor as the park's first poet laureate. He will serve in the honorary post throughout 2016, the centennial year of both Acadia and the National Park Service. "We are grateful to Chris Barter for accepting the responsibilities of poet laureate," said Mike Madell, Acadia's acting superintendent, in a press release. "He is not only a published poet of distinction, but also a respected work supervisor on the park's professional trail crew."



Barter

"Chris Barter's poems and trails are works of art that provide us access and insight into Acadia National Park and the wonders of the natural world. There is no better person to help Maine and the nation celebrate Acadia and its 100-year history," said David MacDonald, president and CEO of Friends of Acadia, in a press release. Madell and MacDonald said the laureate's duties may include composing poetry that celebrates the park, readings at select events in Maine, and leading trail walks to discuss the influence of the natural scene on his poetry and how reading and writing poems have affected his trail building. "It's an honor to be chosen for this position," said Barter in a press release. "My work includes natural themes but also centers on personal relationships and other human interactions. I look forward to the year ahead." Barter's first book, "The Singers I Prefer," was a finalist for the Lenore Marshall Prize, Academy of American Poets. His second, "In Someone Else's House," from BkMk Press, was the 2014 winner of the Maine Literary Award for Poetry. A third volume is forthcoming from BOA Editions. His work has appeared in Ploughshares, Georgia Review, The American Scholar, Epoch, Friends of Acadia Journal (of which he served as poetry editor) and other magazines, and his work has been featured on Poetry Daily, Verse Daily, The PBS NewsHour and The Writer's Almanac with Garrison Keillor. A graduate of Bates College in music composition, Barter also *See Poet, Page C2*

University of Maine offers students folklore minor

BY SHELBY HARTIN
BDN STAFF

The state of Maine overflows with traditional beliefs, customs and stories that have passed from generation to generation by word of mouth. That's why University of Maine professors Pauleena MacDougall and Sarah Harlan-Haughey created a folklore minor for students about two years ago.

"I like to think of [folklore] as the intangible culture rather than the tangible," Pauleena MacDougall, director of the Maine Folklife Center, said. "We have a beautiful Indian basket — that's the tangible. So how do you make it? That's the intangible." From myths, epics and legends to music, song and dance, the study of folklore is an attempt to understand others as well as our-

selves. As a state, the minor made sense because of the richness of our own folklore. The university also was uniquely situated to offer the resources for this course of study with the Maine Folklife Center right on campus, whose goal is to "preserve, publish and provide public programming and engage communities in the vernacular arts and culture of Maine and the Maritime Provinces," ac-

cording to its website. "Because we're so resource based in this state, we have wonderful traditions. There are traditions of boat building, traditions of heating your home with wood, traditions of having a summer camp. People don't realize that those are some things you don't have anywhere else. Those things are Maine based," MacDougall *See Folklore, Page C2*

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arts

January 13 – February 27 / *Common Street Arts*
Monhegan...the Muse: Selected works from the Lupine Gallery Collection,
Reception January 28th, 5 – 7 PM

February 11, 6 - 8 PM / *Colby College Museum of Art*
Night at the Museum: Winter Open House

film

February 15, 7 PM / *Waterville Opera House*
The Wild Child Sponsored by: Colby College Department of French + Italian

theater + dance

January 29 - 31 + February 5 - 7 / *Waterville Opera House*
The Game's Afoot
For tickets + times visit: www.operahouse.org

PechaKucha Volume 19

Waterville Public Library
@ Thomas College, Spann Student Center

January 29

Doors Open: 6:30 PM
Presentations: 7:20 PM
Free + Open to the public