

Firm aims to sell 10,000 Maine-made flags

BY **DARREN FISHELL**
BDN STAFF

PORTLAND — Out of a small Skowhegan factory, Maine Stitching Specialties this year is jumping into the centuries-old American flag market.

Maine Stitching began stitching and shipping its American flags this spring, two years after buying and restarting the former Dirigo Stitching factory. In advance of the Independence Day holiday, it has put out “a few thousand” flags at retailers around the state, according to owner Bill Swain.

“It’s an additional focus, and we do it because we take pride in making the American flag,” Swain said.

The company’s bread and butter is in draperies and curtains for hotels and hospitals, as well as its line of pet products, which Swain said took up all of the company’s focus through 2015. Swain

said he hopes the line of flags will grow to be a bigger part of the business next year.

“Our goal for next year is to sell 10,000,” Swain said. “That’s really what we’re working toward, and at that level it’s profitable and efficient to manufacture.”

National flag sales are estimated at around 150 million each year, with the value of those flag sales at more than \$302 million, according to the last product-specific economic census figures in 2007.

“It’s really almost impossible for us to compete at large volumes,” Swain said. “Where we set ourselves apart is we believe we put a little more hand craftsmanship into ours.”

Right now, Swain said one employee is dedicated solely to making the flags that have individually stitched nylon stripes and come in three sizes. The medium size —

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COURTESY OF BILL SWAIN

Sherry Jewel, a production supervisor for Maine Stitching Specialties, stitches together an American flag at the former Dirigo Stitching factory that was restarted two years ago. This is the first Independence Day holiday for which the company produced the flags.

Job gap widens between college, high school grads

BY **DANIELLE DOUGLAS-GABRIEL**
THE WASHINGTON POST

A structural shift in the job market following the most recent economic recession has radically changed the composition of the American workforce, with four-year college graduates for the first time constituting a larger share of the workforce than those who got a high school diploma but don’t have a college degree, according to a report released Thursday by the Georgetown University Center on Education.

Researchers at the center found that out of the 11.6 million jobs created in the post-recession economy, 11.5 million went to people with at least some college education. Of those jobs, 8.4 million went to workers with a bachelor’s degree or higher. People with a high school diploma or less education landed 80,000 jobs in the recovery, the report said.

“The trend away from an economy that was anchored in high school to an economy anchored in post-secondary education and training has accelerated in the last two to three recessions,” Anthony Carnevale, director of the Georgetown Center and lead author of the report, said. “If you can afford to send your kids to college, this is good news. If not, it’s bad news.”

People with at least a bachelor’s degree make up 36 percent of the workforce, the largest share on record. Those with a high school diploma but no college education make up 34 percent of the working population, while people who have taken some college classes comprise the remaining 30 percent.

Graduate degree holders gained 3.8 million jobs in the recovery, bachelor’s degree holders gained 4.6 million jobs and associate degree holders pulled in more than 3 million jobs, according to the report. Roughly 5.8 million high-skill jobs in the recovery are going to people with at least a bachelor’s degree, whereas low-skilled jobs are the only area of growth for workers with a high school diploma or less.

The recession laid waste to blue-collar and clerical jobs, shrinking a segment of the labor market that has been in decline for decades. Industries, such as manufacturing, construction and natural resources, moved from employing nearly half of the workforce in 1947 to just 19 percent in 2016, according to the report. Manufacturing added the second-highest number of jobs — 1.7 million — in the recovery, though the sector still has 1 million fewer jobs

than it did before the recession began. Similarly, the construction sector, which added 834,000 jobs during the recovery, remains 1.6 million jobs short of its pre-recession numbers.

Office and administrative support positions, the largest occupational group in the American economy, lost 1.4 million jobs during the recession and recovery because of the rise in digital information storage and automation, the report said. These jobs were a primary source of work for people with limited education, which is why the disappearance of this work is hitting that population so hard, Carnevale said.

The report, he said, “reaffirms the trend that continues to leave Donald Trump voters behind. They tend to be in specific industries, high school educated and remembering that in the 1970s they were the dominant workforce. This is a new world.”

The recovery has been a boon for managerial and professional workers — those in health care, financial, education and government services. People in those fields went from 28 percent of the workforce in 1947 to 46 percent of the workforce today. Consulting and business services added the largest number of jobs in the recovery, 2.5 million. Health care professionals and technical occupations pumped 1.5 million jobs into the economy.

The changing landscape of the American workforce has far-reaching implications for higher education. The zeitgeist of the moment insists educational programs should be aligned with the needs of the labor market for students to get the most out of their degrees. Policymakers have at times derided liberal arts studies as having little value in the job market, forcing some colleges and universities, particularly liberal arts schools, to defend or even alter their mission to heed the call for more graduates in science, technology, engineering and math. But the data contradict that overall view: College graduates across the board have the lowest unemployment rates.

“There is a tension there,” Carnevale said. “It is clear in the minds of most Americans that the enduring mission for colleges is to promote human flourishing, not just to make foot soldiers for capitalism.”

In the era of five-figure student debt, it is increasingly difficult to argue against the importance of sustainable employment, and graduates in STEM fields have the highest earn-

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Bangor music studio moves to Brewer

BY **NICK MCCREA**
BDN STAFF

BANGOR — Main Street Music Studios is moving out of its downtown Bangor storefront, relocating to its own building along the Penobscot River in Brewer.

Andrew Clifford, who started the studio eight years ago at the Bangor location, said Friday that the move was always in his 10-year plan.

“We wanted to invest and own a property so we can control our future and expand,” Clifford said.

The company moved Friday to 379 South Main St. in Brewer, the white building across the street from Van Raymond Outfitters that was formerly home to a bakery and cafe.

Clifford said the deal closed on Thursday on the property.



NICK MCCREA | BDN

Main Street Music Studios, a downtown Bangor business for the past eight years, moved to a larger space in Brewer on Friday.

He said he’d build a new studio in the former cafe, and the attached house will hold rooms for the eight instructors who provide music lessons to students on

a range of instruments. Those teaching rooms won’t be nearly as cramped as the ones instructors had in Bangor.

“Ultimately, all of us had

outgrown that space,” Clifford said.

In addition, the new location has its own parking and a view of the Penobscot River.

The 2,500-square-foot space in downtown Bangor is up for lease by the owner of Rebecca’s, which shared a building with Main Street Music Studios.

Rick Vigue, the owner of the building and Rebecca’s, said a potential tenant is already eyeing the former studio. He declined to reveal Friday who was looking at the property and what they hoped to open.

“They’re very interested in the space,” Vigue said. “It’s a new business that wants to be in the middle of downtown. They like the location here.”

Follow Nick McCrea on Twitter at @nmccrea213.

On the Job

Erika Bryant has been promoted to loan officer at Maine State Credit Union, based in Augusta, and will work with the loan department and the indirect lending team. Bryant is active in the social responsibility crew, volunteering for the annual Ending Hunger Walk and helping organize other events for the credit union. She has worked for the organization for 11 years as teller, receptionist, loan servicing clerk and most recently in card services. She is a grad-



Bryant

uate of Gardiner High School and lives in Randolph with her daughter, Ellie.

Kutak Rock LLP in Omaha, Nebraska, has announced that Brewer native and Atlanta public finance partner **David L. Amsden** was elected as the firm’s new vice chair, effective April 1. Amsden succeeds Robert Irvin, who had served in the position since 2008. Kutak Rock has more than 500 lawyers with offices in 18 cities across the country. Its lawyers work in dozens of practice areas, serving America’s industries in public finance, litigation, real estate and business law. Amsden is a 1975 graduate of Brewer High School and a 1979 graduate of the University of Maine

at Orono with a degree in public administration. Amsden joined Kutak Rock in 1982 after earning his Juris Doctor degree with honors from University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law. Amsden has served as managing partner of the firm’s Atlanta office and as a member of the firm’s Executive Committee since 1999. He has been a public finance lawyer, with an emphasis on single-family housing, multifamily housing and tax allocation district finance. He serves as bond counsel to six state housing finance authori-



Amsden

ties and regularly represents regional and national investment banking firms in transactions for numerous state and local housing finance authorities throughout the country. Amsden has served as bond counsel and underwriter’s counsel in connection with tax allocation bonds for Atlanta, and regularly acts as disclosure counsel for general obligation bond issues of Georgia.

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