



Tiny-house enthusiasts aim to build a village

Southern Mainer eyes rent-to-own concept

BY JULIA BAYLY
BDN STAFF

Alan Plummer has some big plans for tiny houses in Maine, combining elements of a planned community with 1960s-style communal living.

“I want to build a compact community designed to encourage, educate and demonstrate how to live simply, respectfully and lovingly in cooperation,” Plummer said. “By living simply, each member of the community would be helping our environment on a personal level, by living each day simply and responsibly.”

Plummer, the Maine representative to the American Tiny House Association, is building his own tiny house on a small piece of land in Manchester. The next step, if all goes according to plan, is finding and purchasing a larger plot of land for what he envisions as a sort of startup community for others interested in the tiny house lifestyle.



SONYA CONNELLY

Living in a small space forces one to ask a lot of questions before acquiring more possessions, according to Sonya Connelly. Connelly is among a group of people who have taken to tiny house living and hope to establish a tiny house village in southern Maine.

There is no legal definition of a tiny house, but a residential structure under 500 square feet is generally accepted to be a tiny home, according to various online groups advocating the simplified lifestyle.

Plummer wants to bring them together.

“Through my work with the [American Tiny House Association] I have a lot of contact with people interested in tiny houses,” he said. “I also work with municipal code enforcement, so I am on top of codes when it comes to building tiny houses in Maine.”

Still largely on paper, Plummer’s planned Tiny Soul-ar Eco Village would cover between 10 and 15 acres in southern Maine and be an affordable temporary home for up to 25 people at a time, *See Tiny, Page C5*



ASHLEY L. CONTI | BDN

For 70 years, the Kiwanis Auction in Orono has been a regional mainstay. This is where bargain-hungry locals rub elbows with impoverished graduate students, Amish from Aroostook County and many others to find the perfect kitchenware, furniture, books, records, toys and much more to adorn their homes. This year’s auction will take place July 21-23.

70 years of ‘wonderful bargains’

Why an auction tradition lures so many bidders to Orono barns

BY ABIGAIL CURTIS
BDN STAFF

If you are planning to go to opening day of Orono’s famous Kiwanis Auction on Thursday, July 21, die-hard attendees suggest you bring a few things with you.

Those things include bug repellent, cash, a capacious bag to stash your treasures, a sunhat and — perhaps most importantly — comfortable shoes.

The shoes will be strategic, because Larry Wade, a longtime Kiwanian and a retired commodore with the United States Maritime Service, is readying his small saluting cannon to mark the Thursday afternoon opening. At the sound of the blast, the gathered crowd of people — among them eager locals, impoverished graduate students, bargain-hunting Amish families and more — will surge forward in a rush to locate the very best treasures in the Kiwanis barns.

“It’s thrilling,” Mark Bilyk, who has volunteered with the Orono-Old Town branch of the international service organization since 1992, said of the human stampede that opens the auction every year. “It you’re not expecting this cannon, it’s a surprise. It goes off, and they storm the area, heading towards their favorite places to go.”



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Mary Skaggs looks through a bin of toys to sort in one of the Kiwanis Auction barns in Orono on Tuesday.



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Clair Wood organizes books in one of the Kiwanis Auction barns in Orono on Tuesday.

This summer marks the 70th year the local Kiwanians have held their auction and yard sale event, which raises funds for local charities and scholarships. Last year, the event raised nearly \$50,000 for charity.

Bilyk, who took a break from the pre-auction labors of unpacking, sorting and arranging donated items, said that for *See Auction, Page C2*

Co-ops working to stay fresh, survive

More members, shoppers needed

BY ABIGAIL CURTIS
BDN STAFF

BROOKS — If the word “co-op” make you think hazily of the 1970s, Birkenstock sandals and bulk containers of carob, think again.

The burgeoning local food movement and the farming renaissance in Maine have helped usher in a new age of member-owned food cooperatives around the state. In 2014 alone, new co-ops opened their doors in Fort Kent, Brooks, Eastport, Portland and Houlton. And although these businesses share a focus on building stronger communities and providing good food, the new co-ops are not cut from the same cloth.

In fact, a couple of them already are facing major challenges, including the Market Street Co-op in Fort Kent, which is in danger of closing for good.

“Right now the co-op is going through a really big struggle,” Jodi Guy, who has served the Market Street Co-op in many capacities since it started, said this week. “There’s a really big chance it will have to close its doors, which is sad because it’s such a good place.”

What she and several others involved in the state’s new batch of co-ops have found is that while many people say they want to support this kind of business model in their town, those intentions do not always translate into action.

In Brooks, where the Marsh River Co-op is located in the old hardware store in the heart of town, most of the work is done by volunteers who keep the books, work the cash register and keep things on track. Although the board of directors has hired a part-time manager since it opened in 2014, more help and customers are needed, according to Kim Jacobs, the president of the board and a founding member of the co-op.

“It’s been well-received in the community across the board,” Jacobs said recently of the co-op, which grew out of a downtown farmers market. “But some of the people who came to the farmers market did not come to the co-op, and producers did not sell as much. And to get them to come in and work became difficult. ... We’re really determined to keep it going, but it’s really a challenge. We need more people to help. We need more business.”

Some good news

The wide front porch of *See Co-ops, Page C2*

City slickers turned farmers find peace, prosperity on 17 acres

BY KATHLEEN PIERCE
BDN STAFF

GRAY — They escaped Manhattan 13 years ago.

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Margaret Hathaway and Karl Schatz ended up in Maine. The collapse of the twin towers sent Schatz, former photo editor of Time.com, and Hathaway, manager at famous cupcake shop Magnolia Bakery, on a quest to see the country and visit goat farms.

“We went across the country looking for a model. We visited big operations, small operations, commercial hobbyists,” Schatz said.

Hathaway wrote a book, “The Year of the Goat,” published in 2007, chronicling their adventure. That year — long before goats started trending — has spun into a decade of goat farming, goat hikes and goat cheese making at Ten

Apple Farm in Gray.

On a rolling, 17-acre spread the couple, who now have three girls, lead a modern homesteading life. After milking goats in the morning, he goes to an office in Portland. She tends the farm. With 10 goats, chickens, pigs, lambs, ducks, turkeys, geese and a vegetable garden, their daily rounds are head-spinning and chore-laden.

All around the 1901 farmhouse with an attached barn and hidden apple orchard, goats bleat, chickens cluck, screen doors slam and children romp. Their dedication to the seasons, the land and healthy living is a full-time obsession.

“What felt the best to us is an integrated homestead that closes the loop between production and consumption,” they explained. “So the waste from the garden goes to the chickens and the goats and pigs. All the goat

manure goes back into the garden. The excess milk from the goats goes to the pigs and the chickens.”

In this Cumberland County bedroom community, Ten Apple Farm has become a low-key destination for those seeking tranquility. In the summer, they lead goat hikes, showing the hidden charms of their pastoral oasis. A cozy house in the woods, where Hathaway’s father once lived, is now a popular Airbnb farm retreat, complete with amenities such as learning to milk goats. It’s often seasonally booked.

When they slaughter chickens, they announce on their Facebook page that the public is invited to come over to learn about backyard poultry. This is not a commercial enterprise. They don’t have anything to sell, yet they have much to share.

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KATHLEEN PIERCE | BDN

Margaret Hathaway and Karl Schatz inspect one of two large pigs in their backyard at Ten Apple Farm in Gray.