



A good economy starts with kindness

BY RUSS VAN ARSDALE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
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As you're heading into a store intending to be the smartest consumer in the place, take a moment to hold the door for a shopper who's carrying a lot of packages.

Between stops on your last-minute Christmas shopping list, pause to look at the lights, listen to the sounds of the time and smell the cool, crisp air. Do these little things for one good reason. You matter.

The pace of our busy lives goes up a few notches at this time of year. It's easy to forget that we are more than the shoppers who fuel our largely consumer economy. It's important to remind ourselves to do things for ourselves, as well as for others, because we matter.

Go beyond a simple "Thank you," and let them know that what they've done really matters ... and that they matter

Doing for ourselves right now also involves doing for others, thus the blitz of requests for charitable contributions. This is the spot when we advise readers to give locally, so you can see how your gifts work, and avoid the sound-alike pseudo-charities that tend to benefit the fund seekers more than the good causes they purport to assist.

This year, we'll also ask readers to show their holiday spirit in another way. Make it known to people who have done you a favor or simply done their jobs well that you appreciate what they've done. Go beyond a simple "Thank you," and let them know that what they've done really matters ... and that they matter.

If all this sounds a bit beyond the scope of consumer advice, consider this. A fair and smooth-running marketplace needs a lot of things to work well; appreciation of the people involved — for who they are and what they do — can only add to the process.

Here's a personal experience from a trip to Home Depot in Bangor not long ago. Among my purchases were some hinges for a needed repair. Arms full of other packages, I managed to leave the hinges behind. Less thoughtful staff could have tossed them back on the shelf and forgotten the deal; these folks kept a record of my purchase in a computer file, apparently, for the memory challenged.

I thanked the employee who reunited me with my hinges, making it clear that the people who made that happen mattered more than the purchase price of more hinges. Appreciation for a job well done clearly made that employee happy, and that happiness may have been paid forward in any number of ways.

See *Consumer*, Page C2

Tom's of Maine faces scrutiny

Claims rolling in over questionably labeled 'natural' products

BY DARREN FISHELL
BDN STAFF

PORTLAND — More than 61,000 Tom's of Maine customers have sought their portion of a \$4.5 million settlement over allegations that the company mislabeled certain products as "natural."

A U.S. District Court judge earlier this year gave preliminary approval to the settlement over a complaint led by plaintiff Allison Gay of Florida, who alleged dam-

ages to customers who "paid more per ounce than they would have for toothpaste that does not claim to be natural."

Attorneys for the four plaintiffs leading the case wrote last week that 61,294 people have filed claims in the case that they estimate will eventually attract as many as 120,000 claimants and deliver an average of \$25 to past customers.

Dahl Administrators, employed to manage notification to possible class-action members, began issu-

ing notices of the claims in late September and will accept claims through May 7, 2016.

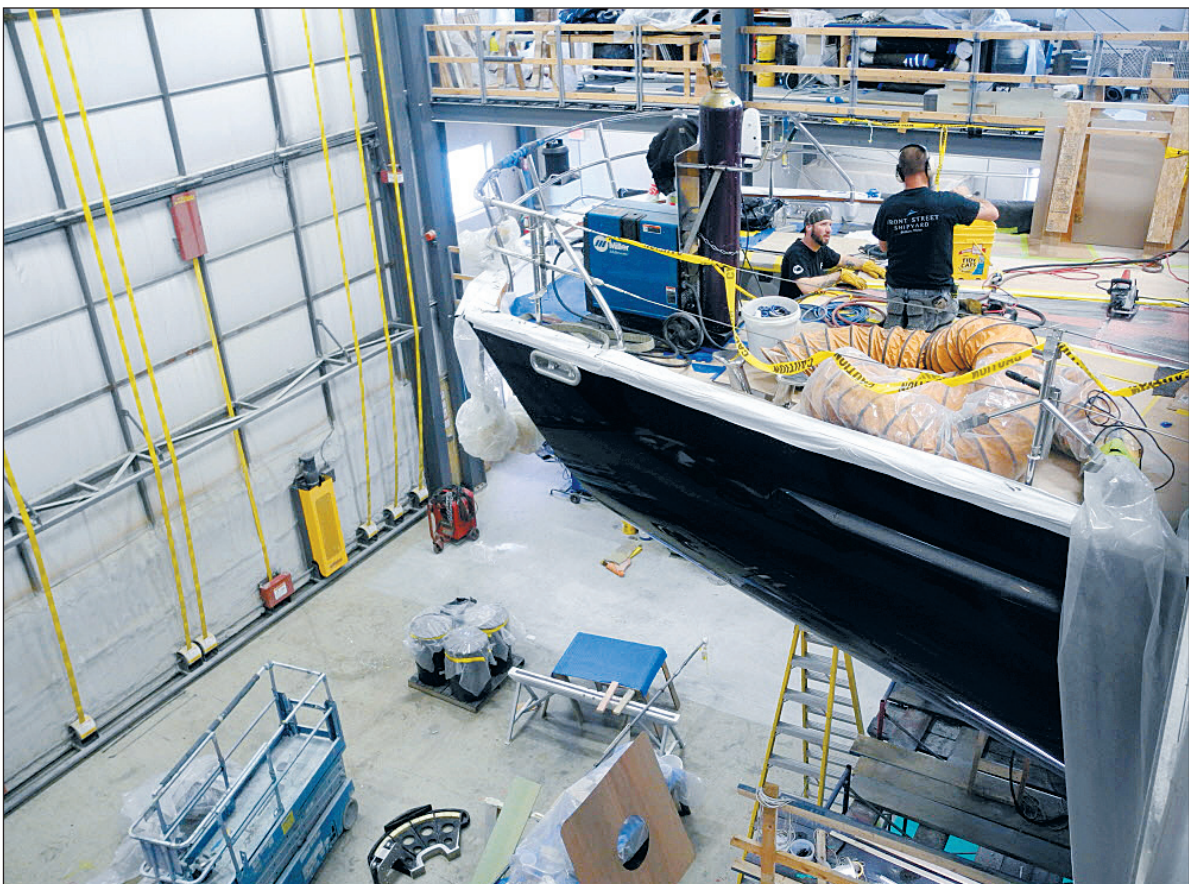
The settlement, which still requires final court approval, allows for customers to be reimbursed at least \$4 for every covered purchase, for up to seven products, with no proof of purchase required, according to court records.

The company admitted no wrongdoing as part of the settlement but agreed to change some

of its labeling and advertising for at least three years.

The changes include a link to a page listing the ingredients in certain Tom's products on the company's website and another page listing the company's standards for calling products "natural," "sustainable" and "responsible."

The Kennebunk-based Tom's of Maine is a subsidiary of Colgate-Palmolive Co., which bought Tom's in 2006 in a \$100 million cash sale.



BDN FILE

Front Street Shipyard employees work on refitting a yacht in Building 5 in October 2014.

Deal with Norway could mean more jobs in Belfast

BY ABIGAIL CURTIS
BDN STAFF

BELFAST — A proposed partnership between Front Street Shipyard and a Norwegian shipbuilding company to build carbon-fiber ferries in Maine could mean as many as 100 new jobs in Belfast.

The deal, which would create a new Belfast-based company called Arcadia Alliance, is close to being finalized, according to JB Turner of Front Street Shipyard. He has signed a memorandum of understanding with Brodrene Aa of Norway and said Wednesday that the two companies are waiting for completion of the paperwork and "then selling a ferry to somebody."

"It could be really cool," Turner said of the partnership. "We've invested a fair bit in this already."

Front Street Shipyard, which employs just over 100 people in downtown Belfast, became introduced to the Norwegian shipbuilding company thanks to Martin Grimnes, a composites industry entrepreneur who lives in Brunswick and who was born in Norway. He also has a special interest in passenger and vehicle ferries.

"I got married on Vinalhaven Island. I've been traveling on those ferries since 1972," Grimnes said last week, adding that his wife's grandfather, Everett Libby, has been referred to as the father of the Maine state ferry service.

A ferry named after Libby still plies the cold waters of Penobscot Bay between Rockland and Matinicus Island. The M/V Everett Libby, though, is made of steel — a heavy medium that requires significant maintenance and operating costs, Grimnes said. In com-



BDN FILE

Front Street Shipyard President JB Turner stands in front of one of the yachts being refitted by his company in 2013.

parison, boats built of carbon fiber composites are lighter, noncorrosive, nonrusting and use much less fuel.

"In much of the technologically-developed world, they don't build ferries in steel anymore," Grimnes said. "They build them in aluminum, and now in composites."

But those technical improvements have largely skipped over American passenger and vehicle ferries, he said. That may be at least in part because the Jones Act, the federal law that promotes and maintains the American merchant marine, prohibits ships from carrying cargo and passengers from port to port in this country unless the ships were built in America.

"In a sense, that might not have

helped U.S. technology," Grimnes said, adding that the new company could turn that around. "We will be the first in the U.S. to construct ferry boats or commercial vessels this way."

Brodrene Aa, located on the banks of a fjord in Norway, introduced the world's first carbon-fiber passenger vessel more than 10 years ago, according to the Front Street Shipyard website. But it cannot sell those ferries directly to customers in the United States, and that is where the new partnership comes in.

"Given Front Street Shipyard's modern facility and boat building capacities, we believe their team can deliver the same high-quality vessels in the United States that

See *Belfast*, Page C2

How a little red ribbon made a big difference

Sometimes the spirit of the season finds you in unexpected ways. For me, it was during a recent shopping trip for wrapping paper and assorted holiday supplies. As I approached my car in the store parking lot, I saw something odd on my windshield.

As I got closer I discovered that it was a small ball of red ribbon, still in the package. Then a gentleman who was parked next to me with a service dog by his side said, "You dropped your ribbon, so I put it on your windshield for you."

I thanked him and his pup for their gesture. I was so moved and taken aback by their kindness and generosity. In all the hustle and bustle of the season, the ribbon must have fallen out of my car.

As I was getting ready to pull out of the parking lot, two young women came around to my car window and said, "You dropped your ribbon."

Evidently there was a second ball of red ribbon beside my car. I was leaving a trail of ribbon everywhere. I thanked them for their kindness.

After a day of hearing nothing but sad and tragic stories in the news, these gestures made me smile and tear up a little. It wasn't about the ribbon as much as it was about the kindness of strangers, which I won't soon forget.

It was my own personal "Christmas miracle" that reminded me, in the rush of getting everything done, what the season is really about. I went about the rest of that day paying those gestures forward to strangers, who planned to pay it forward as well.

Those balls of ribbon began a chain of spreading holiday cheer that I hope will continue well after the holidays are over.

Two balls of red ribbon now hang on my tree and will do so every year from now on to remind me about what this season is really about.

It's the little things we can do for others that are truly the big things. You never know how a small gesture on your part can make a huge difference for someone else. Thank you to those strangers who picked up my ribbon and my spirits this season.

Merry Christmas and all the best to you in the New Year.

Read Deb Neuman's *Back to Business* blog at backtobusiness.bangordailynews.com.



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