

# Books

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bookstores in Maine dedicated to children's reading materials, creative playthings and art supplies.

"I'm in my mid-60s. My husband has been retired for several years, and we have other things to do," Anderson said in a conversation this week. And, she added, "I just don't have the energy for it anymore. I used to be able to say I had read about 75 percent of what was in the store, but now there are so many new books out there I have to rely on book reviews and the recommendations of the sales representatives when I order. I can't keep up with it."

Fortunately, Anderson didn't have to look far to find an enthusiastic buyer for the business she has nurtured for the last 21 years. Graham has worked at the store for the past five years, supplementing other income sources and in-

dulging his lifelong affinity for the world of books and literature. When Anderson confided her interest in finding a buyer, Graham, who also sits on the Bangor City Council, was ready to talk turkey.

They're still researching the options, but it seems likely Anderson will help finance Graham's purchase of the business and the inventory. "I want to facilitate his success," Anderson said. "I hope to be able to offer better terms than a bank would offer." They expect the transition to take effect next year at this time.

## Outside income helps pay the bills

In Bath, The Mustard Seed bookstore has been open for only a year. But the store, owned by 58-year-old Julie Shea, is built on the strong foundations of the Bath Book Shop, a fixture on Front Street since 1999.

"The owner was ready to retire, and I was ready to open a store," Shea said. "It was

something I always dreamed of doing." She worked up a business plan, took out a loan and bought the business and the inventory, moving a few doors down the street to larger space where she could include a tea shop.

Because Shea and her husband are retired, they're not dependent on the store for their livelihood. "I'm not sure we'd be able to meet all our needs," relying on revenue from the store, she said.

Further down the coast in the college town of Brunswick, poet and publisher Gary Lawless, who co-owns the Gulf of Maine bookstore with his wife, Beth Leonard, says both of them have worked at "outside" jobs ever since they opened in 1979. Beth's full-time work with the U.S. Postal Service was what paid their household bills many months, as the store's fortunes rose and fell over the years.

With the store doing a steady if not exactly booming business, Lawless, now 64, said they have begun to think

seriously about selling the store and retiring. "I'd really like to do some traveling before I start to fall apart," he said.

A few people have expressed some interest in taking over at Gulf of Maine, he said, but there have been no serious discussions yet.

"Most people just tell us they expect us to stay on for another 30 years," Lawless said with a laugh. "And I say, 'What are you thinking? You really want to come in here when I'm 95?'"

## Books and community — the real upside of the business

Longfellow Books in Portland's Monument Square may be one of the largest and most popular independent bookstores in Maine, but owner Ari Gersen, 39, says it still provides all the personal service and community functions of a smaller store.

He spends his days packing and unpacking books, putting

books away, talking about books, recommending books, planning how to get more books into the hands of his book-loving customers.

"If you don't enjoy doing that kind of stuff, there's really no upside to having a bookstore," he said. "You can't get rich doing this. No one buys or opens a bookstore with dreams of retiring to the Caribbean. It's really a lifestyle choice."

Gersen took the reins at Longfellow Books about a year ago, after his father, Stuart Gersen, who established the business in 2000, died following a long illness. He said the Portland community was extremely supportive during his father's illness and even launched a fundraiser after a broken water pipe flooded the store and destroyed much of the inventory. "They wanted to be sure that Longfellow Books was able to replace the stock, pay the staff and pay the rent," he said. "I realized then that this store really meant something to the community."

Gerson, who grew up steeped in the culture of the book business, said keeping the store open honors his father's long commitment to the Portland community as well as Portland's abiding support of the independent bookstore.

Back in Bangor, Graham is looking ahead to a bright future for The Briar Patch. With a background in online marketing and social media, he expects to make a few changes but not many. He'll maintain the high-quality inventory and steer clear of trendy tie-in merchandise drawn from popular movies and television. Developing a website is on his agenda, with the possibility of being able to sell books online.

Mostly, he said, he'll focus on maintaining and growing the store's presence as a destination for children and their families, drawing business to Bangor's creative downtown district.

"Every downtown needs a bookstore," Graham said. "It's a cultural beacon for the community."

# Curves

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As Easter renews our spirits, life popping out of the bare ground and springing from woody branches gives us pause to take a deep breath before plunging headlong into the next season.

Grief can be like that too.

Counselors will teach you there are generally seven accepted stages of grief: shock or disbelief, denial, bargaining, guilt, anger, depression, and acceptance or hope. Not everyone progresses through them all, or in the same order or at the same rate.

I wouldn't argue with the experts necessarily, but I think grief goes through seasons of winter, spring, summer and fall. It seems cyclical rather than lineal. Just as the seasons vary in their intensity from year to year, so

does grief vary in its seasons.

One winter may not be as bad as the last or the next winter may be worse than the one before. It depends on what triggers the storms. But the thing to always remember is that seasons constantly change. The vibrant colors and lushness of summer will fade into the browns of fall, which become hidden under winter's blanket. Winter's cold white intensity will lessen and the bright greens of spring will come.

But even spring is not all growth and green grass. There are still brown patches blotching the landscape, where disease, insects or lack of soil slow growth. There are times when our own spirits feel like they have dead patches that never will grow anything again, and suddenly we notice the bare ground has cracked and a new shoot is making its way toward the sun.

If we nurture it, the shoot will grow into a lush plant of summer; if we ignore it, the shoot will wither into fall and die winter's death.

My minister planted the idea in my head one Sunday of the dead places in our lives. As he talked about what that meant to daily life and to us as Christians, I began to understand more about my grief. It gave me a new way to relate to what I have come to view as relapses in my grieving process.

Rough patches. Places where bare rock carries no soil for growing.

It also helped me understand there is room for bare places because they usually are surrounded by growth, and we get to choose which prevails.

I have gone through many of these seasons in my grief process. Some expected and some unexpected. Just when I think I am "coming around"

to something people might consider normal, something happens that causes me to shrink back into the ground.

Sometimes it doesn't take much. It can be as simple as knowing I have to fit in dealing with the vehicle registrations, which is something Jim did every spring and becomes larger than life on my to-do list. Or it can be complex, like a serious problem with the house, one of the dogs or the health of a family member or myself. Or simply a memory that is too painful to bear at that moment.

The person I have turned to in times of uncertainty or despair is not here in the same way anymore. Jim died of pancreatic cancer in 2010, my worst winter season ever. Now my discussions with him are in my head or my heart. And the realization that I have to deal myself with whatever situation comes up if it's going to be

dealt with can send me into fall or plunge me headlong into winter.

My visits to winter have become briefer and less frequent than they were at first, and I seem to recover from them more quickly than I did. But I always know they are a possibility. Winter will come again, but so will spring.

Spring always comes.

As a longtime employee of the Bangor Daily News, Julie Harris has served many roles over the years, but she now has her dream job as community editor. She lives in Hermon with her four Brittany dogs: Sassy, Bullet, Thistle and Quincy, who keep her busy in various dog sports. She was widowed at age 51 when her husband, Jim, died of pancreatic cancer. Follow her blog at [curves.bangordailynews.com](http://curves.bangordailynews.com).

# Honorees

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the MHCA's annual "Remember Me" portrait exhibit and slide show, and a trip to Augusta for breakfast and an awards ceremony. This year, awards will be given by first lady Ann LePage.

Until two years ago, the event was held in the Hall of Flags at the state house, where it was intended to draw the attention of lawmakers. Grosso said the event outgrew that venue and was moved to the Augusta Civic Center, which is easier for honorees and their invited guests to navigate. Lawmakers are invited and several will be in attendance this year, she said.

Also in attendance will be Paul Vestal, his ex-wife, Marjory, some old friends and about a dozen former colleagues from the Maine Human Rights Commission, the Juvenile Justice Advisory Group and other organizations that bear his stamp. A spokesman for the United Bikers of Maine was unsure whether anyone from that organization would be on hand.

# Noonan

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we just don't see as much of this in the winter or summer.

For patients who suffer with weather changes, there is help beyond painkillers. The wellness approach to this type of chronic pain and inflammation is to address the problem at its source — or, more commonly, its many sources.

For more localized problems, chronic muscle tension can be treated with electrotherapy, deep-tissue release and stretching. Joint problems are common with long-term pain and respond best to manipulation. The actual style of manipulation can be adapted for the patient. We are trained to modify our treatments for seniors, patients with arthritis or osteoporosis.

Anti-inflammatory herbs also are very effective. Turmeric, boswellia and willow bark have been used for centuries for chronic pain and inflammation. Unlike anti-inflammatory drugs, which use a chemically altered version of the natural substances in the herbs, they do not damage the stomach, heart or liver with long-term use.

Finally, one of the most effective treatments for chronic pain and inflammation is acupuncture. Patients often ask how acupuncture

works. I think the best explanation is that it jump-starts the healing process. Chronic pain may have been started by an injury, but a healthy body should be able to heal itself. If the pain persists, it can be seen as a failure of the healing process. It may be blocked because of a poor diet, a lack of activity and exercise, or chronic mental and emotional stress. Whatever the reason, acupuncture helps many people heal injuries that have been stuck, failing to heal, for years.

It also is important to treat chronic inflammation and pain from a dietary perspective. Our modern diets are very "pro-inflammatory."

We tend to eat foods with a fatty acid balance that favors inflammation, such as grains, grain-fed meats and vegetable oils. We also eat lots of processed foods: soda, sugars, artificial sweeteners and

flavorings, refined cereals and pastries. A healthier diet of whole foods, grass-fed meats, minimal sweets and pastries and water to drink will improve your body's natural healing process and possibly help you to dread

weather changes a little bit less.

Dr. Michael Noonan practices chiropractic, chiropractic acupuncture and other wellness therapies in Old Town. He can be reached at [noonanchiropractic@gmail.com](mailto:noonanchiropractic@gmail.com).



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