

Hosts

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hookups for water and electricity. She seldom has trouble keeping them filled throughout the park's busy season.

"We could not make it without our volunteers," said Hood. With 62 individual sites for tents and campers, and two large group sites, she said, there's more work than her regular staff can handle. Volunteer hosts like Duford pick up the loose ends and let her regular staff focus on big-picture projects, like building the new boat launch in the park.

Hood also manages another public boat launch, at Branch Lake in Ellsworth. While the facility doesn't include a public campground, it is staffed by volunteers who conduct mandatory checks for milfoil and other invasive

aquatic species, clean the public toilet and pick up trash on the nearby swimming beach. In return, they get to set up their campers for the summer on one of three spacious sites in a private area near the launch.

Vera and Warren Dowling of Hancock are preparing to spend their second summer as volunteer hosts at the Branch Lake boat launch. They also have hosted at Lamoine State Park. Vera, 70, would be glad to venture farther afield through the campground host program; she has her eye on Lily Bay State Park on Moosehead Lake. But Warren, 61 and retired after a work-related injury, prefers to stay closer to home, so he can tend to their house and lawn as well as his duties at the boat launch.

"You make new friends," Vera Dowling said of the host program. Last year, they became acquainted with a couple from Florida who co-host

ed at the boat launch. "They're on their way to a park in Arizona now," she said. She sounded a little wistful.

As she looks forward to her summer on the lake, Vera said, she is pleased to be serving her home state through the host program.

"I take pride in cleaning the outhouse and picking up the beach," she said. "I really take pride in whatever we do. This is our state, and I'm proud to represent it."

Over in the mountains of western Maine, Mount Blue State Park also relies on volunteer campground hosts to take care of routine tasks like cleaning, mowing and staffing the nature center.

"We take advantage of whatever knowledge and skills they have," said park manager Bruce Farnham. He keeps three sites open for volunteer hosts. One is reserved for a local camper who, like Armon Duford, has been com-

ing back for several years. The second site changes each year; Farnham selects from a stack of applications filled out online. The third site he typically fills with someone who comes early in the season and spontaneously decides to stay on for several weeks or through the whole season.

"Most of our hosts are retired," he said, "but we also get a lot of teachers and other folks who are still working but have the summers off."

Ready for another summer

For Armon Duford, the camping season at Lamoine State Park is already off to a good start. He's been on site since the middle of April, and the campground is just about ready to welcome guests to another summer on the coast of Maine.

"I've camped at every state park in Maine, but this one is the best," Duford said with a

proprietary air. He appreciates the park's rolling terrain, the mix of forest and open field, the salt air and sandy beach and, especially, the fine views across Eastern Bay to the rugged mountains of Mount Desert Island and Acadia National Park. It's kept him coming back for seven seasons as a volunteer host.

His 24-foot recreational vehicle provides all the comforts of home and he lives comfortably on his modest retirement income. It's a lifestyle he hopes to continue for years to come.

"I'm a full-time RV'er now," he said. "This is the best way to retire."

Volunteer campground host positions are still being filled for the coming season at parks in Maine. For information or to apply online, visit the website of the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, maine.gov/dacf.

Haskell

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tango chorus and some terrific instrumentals. In addition to our full-house performance at the First United Methodist Church in Bangor, we sang for the residents at the Sylvia Ross Home, an independent living facility for older folks.

I still look to the stronger members of the alto section for reassurance that I'm hitting the right notes, but I'm slowly becoming more confident in my own understanding of the music. It helps that I recently started piano lessons — another shock to my aging brain — and can pick out some of the passages on my keyboard at home.

I'm a little sorry that it took me so long to get brave enough to join a choral group. Maybe if I had stayed with it all these years, I'd be fabulous by now. But I would have missed the sweet discovery that it's almost never too late to set and achieve new goals — and to meet a vibrant community of creative peers in the process.

Savvy

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You need to meet them there, not try to make them understand things — because they can't anymore."

For Florence Churchill, that meant learning, among other things, to defuse her bouts of frustration and cultivate a more patient and compassionate attitude. Now, when she finds herself becoming angry or speaking harshly, she said, "I just step back and walk away, get out of the situation for a few minutes. When I come back, it's over. We just start over."

Role-playing with others in the class was helpful, too, she said, allowing participants to explore different ways of responding to a given situation. "I learned ways to change my wording, to speak more kindly to him and more simply," Churchill said. "I learned to use a couple of words instead of a whole sentence when I was explaining something to him."

For Sue O'Roak, who took the caregiving course along with her husband and his sister, it meant recognizing when their loved one was "sundowning" — a common phenomenon of pronounced con-

fusion and agitation frequently observed for a couple of hours in the evening — and knowing it would pass. Many caregivers in her class were familiar with the behavior, which is thought to be caused by a combination of visual and cognitive changes.

"It was so comforting to learn that this wasn't just happening to our loved one," she said.

O'Roak and Churchill learned to stave off "caregiver burnout" by caring for themselves. "I have to take care of my own medical problems," Churchill said. "I have to be No. 1, and he's No. 2, because if I don't take care of myself, we're both in trouble."

Dementia is caused by many conditions, some of which include Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and vascular changes associated with aging. Rates of dementia are not well reported, but an estimated 26,000 people in Maine are living with a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease alone. The incidence is expected to rise with the aging of the baby boomer generation, to about 35,000 by 2025, an increase of 35 percent.

Savvy Caregiver is appropriate for families and friends of people experiencing memory loss, loss of judgement, a diminishing ability to per-

form routine tasks of daily living and other symptoms of dementia. A specific diagnosis is not required.

It's important to note that Savvy Caregiver isn't a support group, Cirrinone stressed, but is instead a structured class that uses workbook exercises and a planned curriculum to guide discussion and understanding. However, participants are encouraged to share their personal experiences and insights, and many find the two-hour sessions a welcome source of social contact and support. Some class members will go out for coffee to continue a discussion begun in class, she said, and some have developed important personal friendships.

The biggest challenge for some participants, she acknowledged, is finding someone to stay with the person with dementia while the caregiver goes to class. If a trusted family member, friend or neighbor is not available, Cirrinone said, EAAA may be able to suggest other solutions, such as adult day services or respite care through a homecare agency. In some cases, she said, subsidies are available to pay for professional care.

In addition to the Savvy Caregiver program, EAAA hosts caregiver support

groups and provides other resources for people caring for a loved one with dementia. For more information or to regis-

ter for the upcoming Savvy Caregiver training, call Eastern Area Agency on Aging at 941-2865.

WHAT IS IT?

Send your answers for this week's What Is It (right) to: Robert Croul, 1095 North Road, Newburgh, Maine 04444. Readers may respond by email to recastate@myfairpoint.net. Be sure to write "What is it?" in the subject line.



ROBERT CROUL



The "What Is It" (left) in the April 16 edition of the Bangor Daily News was correctly identified as a Native American hide arrow quiver by Pete Lammert of Thomaston, Alfred Spencer of Glenburn, Jeff Orchard of Charlotte, Doug Tibbetts of Dexter, Erwin Flewelling of Northport, Rick Lauze of Machiasport, O.K. Blackstone of Caribou, Brenda Harrington of Spruce Head and Andrea Pelletier of Fort Fairfield.

Where in the Woods?

Trail Identification Contest!

BDN
Aislinn Sarnacki
Bangor Daily News reporter for Outdoors

Online, visit:
actoutwithaislinn.bangordailynews.com

Guess where Aislinn took her latest hike, submit your guess by 7am, Tuesday, for a chance to win an LLBean Gift Card!

Good luck!

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