

Camp

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squirming piglet as its mother waddled off to eat a snack. In the distance, freshly shorn sheep grazed and gamboled in a grassy field, and a flock of curious chickens ranged around the farmyard. It was just another day on the farm — the kind of day the farmers here are hoping to share with many more children this summer. They hope the campers will learn where their food comes from, learn about sustainable practices and, of course, experience the sights, sounds and smells of a farm.

“It would make me happy if a child went to this camp and went home excited about anything they saw or did here,” farmer Greg Purinton-Brown said.

Hartkopf, the dairy farmer, said that every summer, the farm camp kids most enjoy doing the farm chores, working with the animals, playing on the hay bales and exploring the pond.

“But we weave in many different aspects,” she said. “I have told some parents I’d love to be a fly on the wall, to hear some dinner table conversations after farm camp. We handle a lot of topics. We talk about the circle of life. We talk about life and how interconnected we all are.”

And everything the kids do, from helping train animals to getting stuck in the mud in the pasture, helps them have a true farm experience.

“They have endless stories, and that’s what they’ll carry with them,” Hartkopf said. “That’s something that’s real and is a part of who they are.”

Goats

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hang gliding or completing the Appalachian Trail.

“It’s on their bucket list. Holding a small baby animal, a sheep, a goat a cow — something that’s different from your normal pet store animal,” Knight said. “It’s definitely soothing.”

Dori Diebold of Cape Elizabeth, who visited Smiling Hill’s petting area and ice cream stand when her daughter was young, checked it off her list. “The opportunity to snuggle goats came up on my Facebook feed last night, and I thought, ‘Who wouldn’t want to snuggle a goat?’”

Organic livestock management class

BOWDOINHAM — A Farm Training Project Workshop: Organic Livestock Management will take place at 5 p.m. Wednesday, June 8, at Apple Creek Farm, 440 Millay Road.

Abby Sadauckas and Jake Galle raise Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association certified organic grass-fed beef, goats and lambs, as well as pasture-raised poultry including broilers, layers, geese and turkeys, at Apple Creek Farm, exemplifying the diversity necessary to maintain sustainable small-scale farming.

The farmers use rotational grazing methods to increase soil fertility, maximize their land and to manage parasites. Participants are invited to come learn the benefits of their system and hear from Diane Schivera, the association’s livestock specialist. A potluck will follow.

Learn skills at Farm and Homestead Day

UNITY — A Farm and Homestead Day will take place 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Saturday, June 11, at the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association Common Ground Education Center. Learn skills for resilient living through face-to-face, hands-on activities. Nearly all workshops are participatory.

Admission is free. For information, visit farmandhomesteadday@myfairpoint.net.

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Funeral

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Once created, according to state statute, it remains an official cemetery forever, even if the land around it is sold by its developer.

Going green is another option, according to Lakin.

“There’s a real interest in the green funerals,” Lakin said. “People just need the biodegradable coffins, and those can be made of pine, wicker or even papier-mache or a shroud.”

“The keyword is biodegradable,” Joyce Foley, of Cedar Brook Burial Ground in Limington, said. “It’s really like any other cemetery, only there is no embalming and no cement vaults.”

Over time, the bodies naturally decompose in the ground, free of chemicals or other toxic materials associated with the embalming process.

In perhaps the ultimate back-to-the-land move, human remains may be placed in biodegradable containers made of natural components such as coconut shells, peat and cellulose, which over time become part of the soil.

A company in Italy has developed special organic, biodegradable “pods” that turn a body into nutrients for a tree that grows out of the container.

If someone decides

against burial, there are other options in Maine, including the most common, cremation, in which bodies are placed in a 2,000-degree oven for two hours.

“At the end of that, you are reduced to bone fragments — the minerals of the body,” Lakin said. “The state requires every crematorium to reduce those fragments down to a sand-like texture — what people often call the ashes.”

An alternative to “flame” cremation in Maine, according to Lakin, is alkaline hydrolysis, in which a strong solution of pH 12 heated to 350-degrees reduces human remains to a chemical slurry and easily powdered bones, often referred to as ash. The slurry is disposed in a state-approved location and the “ash” returned to family members. So far the only facility in Maine setup for alkaline hydrolysis is Maine Coast Crematory in Searsport.

Families or friends often want to scatter those ashes in significant locations. By and large, there are no legal restrictions in Maine as to where that can be done, but people are encouraged to be discrete and to check with landowners or officials. In Acadia National Park, for example, a permit is required to disperse human ashes, but there is no fee associated with it.

Of course, for those with a flare for the dramatic, there are other options offered from



BDN FILE

Chuck Lakin, a retired reference librarian, demonstrates how to build a simple “toe pincher” coffin in his basement workshop in Waterville in October 2015.

out-of-state businesses. Companies such as LifeGem or Cremation Solutions will compress the carbon components of human ashes into diamond-like gems. A company called And Vinyl in the United Kingdom will press an actual record album by mixing the ashes into the raw vinyl used to make the disc.

According to the company’s website, the album can be a recording of a favorite song, musical selection or even the reading of the deceased’s last will and testament.

A number of companies, including Heavens Above Fireworks, Ashes to Ashes and Angels Flight will incorporate human ashes into fireworks to create personalized

pyrotechnics’ displays.

Lakin said he’s not heard of anyone in Maine going quite that far, but did say there are people working to change some state laws to open the doors for more after death options closer to home.

“There has been a group in Colorado for years doing ‘open air’ cremations,” he said. “The body is laid in an open pit designed for cremations where it is placed on a grate with fir or cedar bows laid over it [and] there is a group in Maine starting the process to get it legalized to do here.”

There are others, Lakin said, who would like to see “human composting” in Maine, where it is already legal to compost large animals.

With traditional funerals and cemetery interments costing up to \$12,000 in Maine, Lakin said it’s understandable more and more people are looking for smaller and less-expensive alternatives.

At Cedar Brook, for example, Foley said the cost of a burial site starts at \$600 for a single plot and rises to \$1,600 for a double plot of ground, where she does her best to accommodate any and all requests.

“I have spoken to one man who wants to be buried in a mushroom suit he found in California. The idea is the spores are in the suit wrapped around the body and will grow over time,” she said. “You really do meet the most interesting people doing this.”

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