Continued from Page C1

employers who partner with the program. There are dozens of them in the state, all non-profit agencies, public entities or governmental of-

"We are always looking for more host agencies," said Dan Muth, state director of the National Able Network. "The ones that work best have the flexibility to provide a setting where the participant can grow and develop job skills that will help them transition to greater self-sufficiency.'

While host agencies benefit from the free extra help, he noted, an element of compassion is also necessary in accommodating Senior Community Service Employment Program participants, many of whom have limited work

dealing with disabilities of one sort or another.

"For a lot of these folks, learning a new job is really a series of baby steps," Muth

The Washington-Hancock Community Agency has participated for about 10 years, according to Lee Hardison, director of energy services at the Ellsworth office. "I don't know what I'd do

without [the program]," she said. "It gets very intense around here between September and April. There's a lot to be done. We always need someone to answer the phone, file papers and do fuel oil calculations."

The workers from the National Able Network vary in their ability to manage the workload in the busy office environment, and the agency makes every effort to accommodate their needs, she said.

"But the whole point is to

an office setting," she said. 'If this really isn't the right environment, they'll find another placement that's got less going on and is less con-

For the most part, Hardison said, the Able workers fit in well and leave at the end of the busy fuel assistance season with valuable new skills and an enhanced resume. Some have even stayed on as regular employees

"I have actually hired people who came to us from the Able program," Hardison said. "Right now, I have four people on staff who are former Able participants."

"People often don't realize they have marketable skills,' said Arline Wood, area program specialist at the National Able Network. "We help them identify their skills and interests and help them set goals.'

Wood, 67, lives in Corn-

experience and may also be help people get acclimated to ville and is a former Senior nity Service Employment Community Service Employment Program participant herself. For many years, she and her husband were both long-distance truckers, hauling building supplies and camper trailers on their own flatbed rigs. But after the 2008 economic collapse, work dried up, and she realized she didn't have many op-

"I just couldn't find a job," she said.

Her local career center referred her to the National Able Network; soon, she found herself interning at the Mercer town office. After that, she spent 18 months at the state career center in Skowhegan, where she picked up computer skills, and then at the Skowhegan town office, where she processed tax payments and car registrations. All these positions were funded through Able and the Senior Commu-

Program.

The office and organizational skills she acquired at these entry-level placements have served her well; she's been working part-time at the National Able Network for going on two years, overseeing client services and cultivating relationships with host agencies in Kennebec, Franklin and northern Oxford counties. She clocks hundreds of miles each week

covering her territory. "Since my husband and I were self-employed all those years, we don't have much social security coming," Wood said. "So this job is really important to me.

The Senior Community Service Employment Program is 50 years old this year, established in 1965 under the Older Americans and administered through the Department of Labor. It is active in all 50 states and the District of Columbia as well as in Puerto Rico. In Maine, it is administered in 13 counties by the National Able Network, with Cumberland, Sagadahoc and Lincoln counties served through Goodwill Industries. The National Able Network receives about \$2 million each year; 75 percent goes directly to pay participant wages, and the rest supports training and administrative services.

About 325 Mainers each year take advantage of the program, Muth said.

'There is constant turnover, and we are always welcoming new applicants," he

For more information, call the National Able Network in Bangor at 385-2500 or in Biddeford at 385-2480. The toll-free number for all National Able Network offices is 855-994-8300.

Church

Continued from Page C1

Rossel said, especially the section near the bell tower, which had rotted badly.

But a coat of paint was not the solution.

"The church needed real help or it was going to fall over on the ground," she said, stressing each word. Someone had to take charge.

"I've always been an involved kind of person," she said. "I'm political. I join things. I'm a leader. I really like being active and meeting new people and learning new

So she kicked off the Troy Union Church Restoration Project and ran with it.

Baby boomer volunteers a key resource

Rossel is one of thousands of Mainers who each year donate their time, interest and expertise to projects that enhance life for others.

According to statistics from the federal Corporation for National and Community Service, 32.5 percent of all Maine residents volunteered in one way or another between 2011 and 2013, ranking the state higher than the national average of about 25 percent and 13th among the 50 states and Washington, D.C.

The organization tracks both organized volunteer rates and informal, self-reported service such as helping neighbors or co-workers during times of distress. It is particularly focused on the volunteer potential of the burgeoning "baby boom' generation, born between 1946 and 1964.

For Mainers in the boomer generation, the rates are higher. In this group, 33.9 percent volunteered between 2011 and 2013, compared with the national average of 28.1 percent.

"Boomers today are entering their later years with a broad range of skills, talents and experience — as well as with a set of attitudes, expectations and needs that is decidedly different from previous generations," reads a 2007 report on the organization's website. "Harnessing those skills, and accommodating those expectations, will be critical to solving a wide range of social problems in the years ahead.

The report finds that baby boomers volunteer at higher rates than past generations. Religion remains a top focus for volunteering, but after that, boomers are more likely to sign on with educational or social service concerns than with the civic, professional or international projects that engaged earlier generations.

Next

Continued from Page C1

stories that reflect and further your own lives. I want to establish a dialogue about the issues we're grappling with, explore opportunities for growth and profile individuals whose experiences and insights can lead us for-

ward. You'll find this section each Saturday in the Bangor Daily News print edition and online under the "Next" tab on bangordailynews. com daily. You can also follow me on Twitter @Megat-BDN and "Like" the BDN Maine Next page on Facebook. Please check in often and tell me what's on your mind. We have a lot to learn from each other.

They also are more likely to volunteer in a variety of settings, less likely to stay on in situations where they don't feel challenged or appreciated, and more likely to also donate money to the organizations and causes where

they volunteer. Fundraising is the most popular organized boomer volunteer activity in Maine, according to the organization's data, followed by general labor and then professional and managerial ser-

Managing the Troy church project

Rossel got started by researching other restoration projects in Maine, including the Mill at Freedom Falls in Freedom and the restoration needs to be done," she said. of the steeple at the Stockton Springs Community Church. She learned about the Maine Steeples Project, a collaborative project of Maine Preservation and the Maine Community Foundation. She researched and documented the church's history and got it listed in the National Register of Historic Places — a critical qualification for seeking funding. She applied for and received foundation grants and, through a church capital campaign, helped raise

matching local dollars for the first phase of the project - a total of almost \$40,000 for assessment and stabili-

Now she's working on funding for Phase Two, which, for about \$96,000 includes replacing the rotten tower and support structures, along with making essential repairs to the roof.

Only after the structural integrity has been restored will Rossel turn to the more visible task of restoring the sanctuary. She hopes the work will be largely completed sometime in 2018, almost 10 years after she took the project on.

It's a lot of work and longterm, big-picture thinking. Rossel takes it in stride.

"I like getting done what

ENCore Leadership Corps: Supporting older volunteers

Volunteers such as Rossel, who take on a project and guide it through to completion, reflect a growing trend in volunteerism, according to Jennifer Crittenden, assistant director of the University of Maine Center on Aging.

Crittenden also manages the ENCore Leadership Corps, a program through the Center on Aging that pro-

vides training and support to Mainers 50 and over who want to give back to their communities, satisfying goals of their own in the process.

Rossel connected early on with ENCore and made good use of its services, Crittenden said.

"People like Norma are not connected with any specific organization, they're out there on their own making their communities a better place," Crittenden said. Baby boomers, in particular, often prefer to solve a problem and be given the autonomy to come up with solutions, she said, rather than be assigned a set of tasks on a schedule.

"Often, they are still working or have other commitments, so being able to shape how they engage is really important," she said.

In addition, boomers typically are interested in learning new skills and networking with a new group of people, often with an eye toward stepping into a new career.

The ENCore program equips them for success, with workshops on writing grants, working with a nonprofit board and other relevant skills. The program serves more than 250 volunteers across the state and provides guidance to nonprofit agencies looking to recruit skilled and committed volunteers.

Rossel is quick to acknowledge the help she has received through ENCore, as well as from foundations, preservation experts, builders and other groups she has worked with. Her work has brought her closer to her community as well.

"Volunteering is all about building relationships," she said. "You really can't do this work by yourself; you need people to help you.

She looks forward to the day when the Troy Union Church, whose Sunday services have been moved to another location during the project, once again opens its doors as a place of worship and a center of village life.

Its future is uncertain though, she admits.

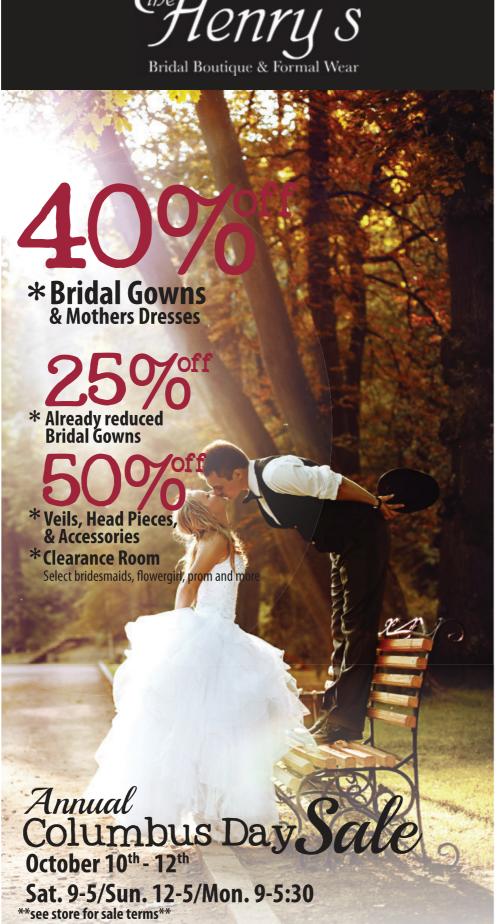
"Maine is the least churched state in the coun-

try," she said, citing a 2012 Pew Research Center study of self-reported rates of prayer and religious affiliation, "and we're in the least churched county in Maine. But we really like being in the building, and by golly we're going to keep having church there as long as we can."

The foundations supporting the restoration require regular public access, she said, and the finished space will be ideal for art exhibits, concerts, quilt shows, lectures and other cultural events.

"There is a spirit in this place," Rossel said, looking around the construction zone that is the church now. "You can make a community out of that. It brings people together. And at the very least, when this is over, we'll have an interesting historic building."





www.bangorbridal.com



