

## THIS WEEKEND

# Family lives and learns on the farm

## Woman writes book about starting a dairy from scratch

BY JEN LYNDIS  
BDN STAFF

As educators working in the Bangor area in 2004, Lee Rae Jordan-Oliver and her husband, Matthew, always knew they wanted to move back home to Aroostook County and start a family.

While they accomplished that goal, they did not foresee that their family would eventually also entail 130 animals — including cows, heifers, calves and bulls — and that they would be the ones becoming educated on a dairy farm in Hodgdon.

It's a story that Lee Rae Jordan-Oliver, a mother of three who formerly taught fourth-grade students at the Fairmount School in Bangor for more than 10 years, details in her new book, "Chainsaw Mama."

The book depicts the Olivers' decision in 2006 to leave education to operate their dairy farm, located on 125 acres of land on Westford Hill. Matthew Oliver was the former superintendent in the Old Town School Department.

While Matthew Oliver grew up on his parent's vegetable farm, neither he nor his wife had any dairy farming experience.

"It was just something we decided to do and I just held on for the ride," Jordan-Oliver said. "We started with just 10 bred organic dairy cows and kind of learned on the job. It was a real eye-opening experience, to say the least."

In "Chainsaw Mama," Jordan-Oliver relates how the farm grew in the early years with the addition of more cows, pigs and horses, and how the family dealt with setbacks such as ailing animals, financial changes in the dairy market and the breakdown of equipment.

In one instance, when the couple was trying to escape the farm one night for dinner and a movie, they were quickly sidelined by a sick child and the breakdown of a

motor on their milk-pumping machine.

When Matthew Oliver did not have a spare motor handy or a part to fix it immediately, two different area dairy farmers immediately helped him milk his cows until he could get a replacement part.

Jordan-Oliver said that such camaraderie is common among County farmers.

"I don't believe that there is any competition among dairy farmers up here, at least that I have seen," she said. "We have had so many local dairy farmers up here who have helped us and provided valuable insight. I don't think we would have made it without them."

The Olivers' three children, Walker, 10, Anna, 8, and Wyatt, 6, are active participants in life on the farm, according to their mother.

"They have chores that they do, and they do them because they like to do them," she said. "They love taking care of the animals and bottle feeding the

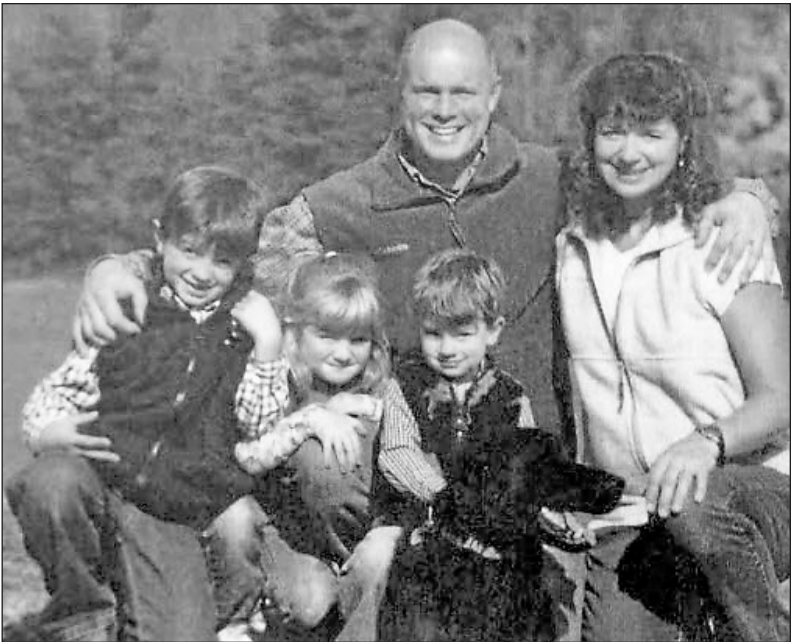
**"The toughest part is finding time to relax and play... Everywhere you look on a farm, there is always a chore that needs to get done."**

LEE RAE JORDAN-OLIVER

calves. They are developing a strong work ethic."

At the same time, she acknowledged, not everything about farm life is easy.

For instance, the title of the book comes from Jordan-Oliver's work on the farm sawing about 25 cords of wood each season to keep the fires burning in the family's



COURTESY OF LEE RAE JORDAN-OLIVER

Lee Rae Jordan-Oliver poses with her husband, Matthew Oliver, and their three children (from left) Walker, Anna and Wyatt of Hodgdon. Jordan-Oliver is the author of "Chainsaw Mama," a book that depicts the Olivers' decision in 2006 to leave education and operate a dairy farm on 125 acres on Westford Hill in Hodgdon.

outdoor wood stove.

"The toughest part is finding time to relax and play," she said. "We can't just get away, because there is always something to do. There is only a small window of time to go swimming, because everywhere you look on a farm, there is always a chore that needs to get done."

She also said that like any farmer, making a living is always a challenge.

As was the case with other dairy farmers across Maine, the Olivers were hit hard by the closure of the Garelick Farms production facility in Bangor in January 2013 due to competitive pressures. Since dairy farmers must pay to have their milk transported to the processing plant, Oliver wrote in her book, the farther away the milk is hauled, the higher the cost to the farmer.

The Olivers had shipped their milk in the first three years of operation from their farm to Garelick Farms, which is approximately 100 miles away, she noted, paying an average of \$1,000

a month in shipping costs.

After the closure, the family began selling their milk to Dairy Farmers of America, a national farmer-owned cooperative based in Kansas City, Missouri, that acquired Portland-based Oakhurst Dairy last year.

She noted that transportation costs from their farm to DFA's Portland processing plant then jumped to \$1,800 a month, an \$800-a-month increase.

"It isn't always an easy life, but it is the life that is working for us," she said. "We work as a team here. The children love taking care of the animals and just soak up the affection they get in return, and they learn about the circle of life and where our food comes from. Our neighbors and friends pitch in when needed. It works for us."

Copies of "Chainsaw Mama" can be purchased online at maineauthorspublishing.com or on Amazon.com. In Houlton, books also may be found at local businesses such as Aroostook Milling, County Yankee, Visions, Hairworks Studio or Andy's IGA.

## George Marshall Store Gallery: 'From the Mountain to the Sea'



William Irvine "The Lobsterman's Table." Oil on canvas.

The George Marshall Store Gallery in York presents a trio of exhibitions for the month of September. Thirteen artists pay homage to the local highest peak, Mount Agamenticus, with paintings and drawings. Portland-based furniture craftsman Jamie Johnston also presents recent wall sculptures and painter William Irvine returns to the gallery with his second one-man show.

Mount Agamenticus, at 692 feet high, may not seem like a formidable peak, but it is one of the first points of land visible from the sea and has served as a beacon to sailors for centuries. Besides being an inspiration for artists, the Mount Agamenticus region has a long history of land conservation. Today more than 10,000 acres have been conserved by state agencies, nonprofit conservation groups, towns and water districts. These efforts provide wildlife habitat protection, water quality and recreation for the public. Local land trust organizations have made this area a focus for protection and this exhibition celebrates the value of the mountain, surrounding forests, ponds and outlet to the sea through the eyes of area artists.

Grant Drumheller vividly showcases people enjoying the summit of the

mountain, walking their dogs and flying kites. George Burk's small landscapes are views toward the mountain from distant vantage points. The smallest of the small paintings are domino-size wood panels by K. Min upon which she paints insects that one might find in the area. Artists including Sam Cady, Bill Paarlberg and Arthur DiMambro show remnants of the former ski operation in their paintings.

Other artists include Arthur Balderacchi, Todd Bezold, Christopher Cook, Tom Glover, Brown Lethem, Mark Soderling and Michael Walek.

Paintings by Irvine, a native of Scotland and longtime resident of Maine's Blue Hill Peninsula, are featured as well. Irvine's surroundings are his inspiration and he has aptly titled his show "The Reach of the Sea." Small boats surf down rollicking waves that have sculptural troughs and peaks. He arranges fishermen's tools and catches on tilted tabletops. His figures stand sentry in the doorways of cape houses and his signature clouds hover over islands in the bay.

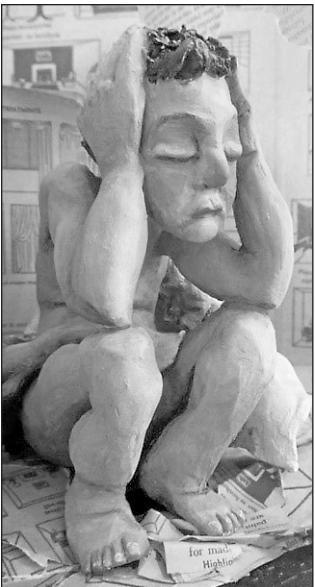
The exhibitions continue through Oct. 4. Hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday; 1-5 p.m. Sunday. George Marshall Store Gallery is located at

140 Lindsay Road, York. Call 351-1083 or visit [www.georgemarshallstoregallery.com](http://www.georgemarshallstoregallery.com).

### Marblehead High School art teacher's exhibit open

Philippe Guillerm Gallery in Waldoboro has announced its last opening of the season with an exhibition of works on paper and mixed media by Pascale Queval. An opening artist reception is planned for 5-7 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 12. Queval was born and raised in Paris, France, where she started building simple cardboard wind-up people in elementary school and went on transforming her bedroom into a city with its inhabitants, history and legends by the time she was in high school. She has been teaching studio art at Marblehead High School for the past 20 years. Her teaching experience has broadened her expression to a wide range of media, from classic pencil drawing and oil painting to the use of unconventional natural elements and found objects. The exhibition will include as-yet-unseen paintings and sculptures from the 2015 collection.

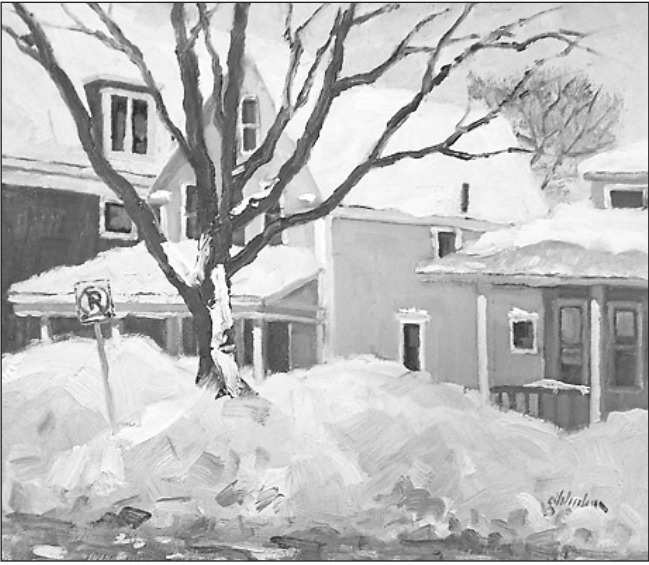
### Artist gathering planned for Belfast



Homeless Series by Pascale Queval

## Cafe des Artistes

a roundup of Maine art news, openings + shows



"Winter" by Geoff Bladon at Tidemark Gallery.

The Gothic Restaurant and the Belfast Creative Coalition invite all to an artist gathering at 7 p.m. Monday, Sept. 21. Artists, cultural leaders and creative entrepreneurs will gather for an evening of networking and fine food and wine sampling. Tickets are \$25 per person and include a glass of wine and two canapes. The Belfast Creative Coalition is a nonprofit organization dedicated to cultivating arts and culture for the Belfast area through coordination and promotion. Limited seating, full bar and limited menu available. The Gothic is located at 108 Main St., Belfast. For reservations, call 338-4684, by Sept. 18.

### Plein air painting exhibit in Waldoboro

Tidemark Gallery in Waldoboro will host opening night for a collection of new work by Geoff Bladon, a longtime member of Plein Air Painters of Maine, from 5 to 7 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 12. Bladon's classic line drawing of upper Main Street is the familiar logo for Paint the Town, Waldoboro's plein-air painting festival which recently celebrated its 10th year.

This show is part of the new ArtWalk Waldoboro collaborative with both Philippe Guillerm and Anne Heywood galleries.

### Last days for 2 exhibits in Northeast Harbor

"Fabulous Jewelers: Form" and "All Mount Desert Island, All Summer Long: Abstraction" are on display at Shaw Jewelry in Northeast Harbor through Sept. 13. "Fabulous Jewelers" explores the many great things about metal, including its ability to define form. Featured will be the work of Michael Banzhof, Pat Flynn, So Young Park, Julia Turner, Polly Wales, Rebecca Myers, Dell Foxx and more. "All Mount Desert Island, All Summer Long" explores the idea that the reason why artists are artists is because they see differently. Through a lens of abstraction, hidden aspects and details are revealed in the creations of Miklos Pogany, Katlyn Duggan, Beth Lambert, Joel Babb, Kate Chaplin, Susan Williams, Carol Shutt and others. For full exhibition deals, visit [www.shawjewelry.com](http://www.shawjewelry.com).

Cafe des Artistes is a roundup of Maine art news, openings and shows and is featured the First Friday of each month in the BDN. Cafe is edited and compiled by Anthony Anderson, publisher of Maine Gallery + Studio Guide, in its 15th year of promoting Maine art to the world. Visit the Cafe des Artistes blog, sign up for the Cafe newsletter and submit your cafe news at [mainegalleryguide.com](http://mainegalleryguide.com).

## 'Jessica Jones' to open on Netflix

REUTERS

Netflix's newest Marvel series, "Jessica Jones," starring Krysten Ritter, has gotten a release date.

The streaming service announced Thursday that their latest original series will premiere at 12:01 a.m. PT Nov. 20. The first season has 13 one-hour episodes.

"It's time the world knew her name. #JessicaJones," the show's official Twitter page wrote.

"Jessica Jones" is the second of Netflix's four superhero series, which began with "Daredevil." "Luke Cage" and "Iron Fist" will premiere next, leading up to "The Defenders," in which all the main characters will team up.

Ritter stars as the titular superhero-turned-detective who's trying to rebuild her life in New York City.

The show also features David Tennant as villain Kilgrave, Mike Colter as Luke Cage, Rachael Taylor as Jessica's best friend Trish Walker and Carrie-Anne Moss as a no-nonsense ally.

"Jessica Jones" is executive produced by series showrunner Melissa Rosenberg and Liz Friedman, along with Jeph Loeb, Marvel's head of television.

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