

An idea to keep more young people in Maine

BY TOM KELLER
SPECIAL TO THE BDN

There is a way to ensure more young, educated people stay in Maine. It will require greater collaboration between researchers and entrepreneurs.

Maine is widely known as a small pond, which is true when compared with places such as Massachusetts, New York City and Washington, D.C. But Maine actually is a series of small ponds, with no or weak bridges connecting them.

For instance, Maine has a number of research institutions that compete for research grant funding, and work with undergraduate and graduate students, post-docs, and junior and senior faculty. These people tend to be young, smart, well-educated, innovative and capable — just what Maine needs to thrive.

But our research ponds are separate. Take marine resources. Maine has:

— The Bigelow Laboratory, a world-class oceanography facility that focuses on key ocean processes.

— The University of Maine System, with a marine center that focuses on aquaculture and food production.

— The Gulf of Maine Research Institute, which has community, education and research as its bases.

— The Downeast Institute for Applied Marine Research and Education.

Another example is in the medical field. We have a whole set of outstanding medical-related research institutions:

— The Jackson Laboratory, which pursues biomedical research.

— The Maine Medical Center Research Institute, which supports and encourages a broad spectrum of research.

— Eastern Maine Healthcare Systems, which pursues clinical and cancer research.

Many of these and others are part of the Maine IDEa Network of Biomedical Re-



BDN FILE
The Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor asked bear hunters last year to take a small sample of the bear's kidney and send it to the lab for research.

search Excellence led by the Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory.

Then there is the pond system of entrepreneurialism and economic development. Again Maine has tremendous resources, with groups such as:

— Coastal Enterprises Inc.

— The Maine Technology Institute.

— The University of Maine System's Professional and Graduate Center Initiative.

— Envision Maine.

— The Maine State Workforce Investment Board, providing planning and policy work.

The Maine STEM Council proposes that Maine build stronger and more durable connections among these pond systems by creating a Maine Academy of Science and Innovation. Bring science, technology, engineering and mathematics-related education and research together with economic development and innovation. Academies of sciences exist in 48 other states and large cities across the country.



BDN FILE
A torpedo-like underwater research tool, which scientists at the Bigelow Laboratory call "Henry," makes periodic trips hundreds of miles through the Gulf of Maine taking a range of measurements. It's one of many methods used by Bigelow to study and track life in the oceans.

Maine is a notable exception.

The mission of the Maine Academy of Sciences and Innovation would be to keep highly trained and educated young people in Maine and, with them, create more economic opportunity for all Mainers.

The goals would be to grow undergraduate and graduate research programs at public and private institutions and organizations in Maine through communication, networking and support, and to broaden the base of scientific research to include entrepreneurialism.

One new feature would be to ensure business education overlaps with scientific research. Currently, graduate students and post-docs labor under senior researchers to learn techniques and scientific habits of mind. Combining research skills with basic

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As a result, clinics have fewer staffers who are handling more patients, Cousins said. The patient-to-counselor ratio before the rate cut was 50 to one; today, it is 150 to one. The reimbursement reduction, coupled with higher patient-to-counselor ratios, has led to a greater turnover at clinics, reducing their ability to provide the counseling needed.

Last August, a methadone clinic in Sanford that served about 100 patients closed its doors, citing low reimbursement from MaineCare.

A bill, LD 1473, sponsored by Sen. David Woodsome, R-North Waterboro, would raise the MaineCare reimbursement rate for methadone-assisted treatment from \$60 to \$80 per week per patient. The Health and Human Services Committee on Wednesday unanimously approved a modified version of the bill — raising the rate to \$72. The legislation now awaits action in the House and Senate.

“We can make a difference in our addiction crisis and in people's lives by funding effective treatment and ensuring that people have access to that treatment,” Woodsome told the committee in January.

Take advantage of naloxone to save lives.

In the first nine months of 2015, 174 Mainers died from drug overdoses, and the Maine attorney general's office estimates the final death toll for 2015 to number between 230 and 250.

As the death toll from overdoses rises, lawmakers in Maine and across the country have pushed to put the overdose antidote naloxone into the

hands of police officers and other first responders.

Paramedics across the state last year administered more than 1,500 doses of naloxone, up from 659 in 2012, according to Maine Emergency Medical Services, a unit of the Maine Department of Public Safety.

Last year, lawmakers pushed successfully to allow the family and friends of people at risk of an overdose to get a naloxone prescription so they can administer the antidote.

Now, lawmakers want to let pharmacists furnish naloxone over-the-counter. A bill, LD 1547, sponsored by Rep. Sara Gideon, D-Freeport, would grant the Maine boards of pharmacy and medicine the authority to establish procedures and protocols governing the furnishing of naloxone. Under Maine law, naloxone cannot be acquired without a prescription.

Gideon proposed the bill after representatives from CVS Health reached out to her about the need for legislation to allow pharmacists to dispense the life-saving medication without a doctor's prescription. On Feb. 3, U.S. Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, sent a letter to CVS, responding to its announcement that naloxone would be available over the counter in Ohio pharmacies, asking the company to consider expanding this program to its 22 stores in Maine.

CVS already allows pharmacists in more than a dozen states, including Rhode Island and Massachusetts, to dispense naloxone without a prescription.

Let police 'LEAD' the way to recovery.

With drug-related deaths and arrests on the rise, police, mayors and health care professionals urged lawmakers last week to fund a program to divert

drug offenders from jails and courts into treatment and recovery programs to break the cycle of addiction.

The proposal lawmakers are considering would create eight pilot projects across the state based on the law enforcement assisted diversion, or LEAD, program model in which people arrested on low-level drug offenses are given the chance to enter treatment for addiction rather than a jail cell.

A bill, LD 1488, sponsored by Rep. Mark Dion, D-Portland, would give \$2 million in funding to these pilots. It also would require the communities in which they are located to track participants' progress and report their findings to the Legislature.

“We are not advocating for ignoring criminal behaviors, however, we are advocating for removing the stigma associated with addiction and recognizing that people in active recovery are healthy productive citizens who have much to offer,” Brewer Police Chief Perry Antone told the Judiciary Committee on Feb. 18.

Already, the LEAD program in Seattle, which started in 2011, has shown promise for reducing the likelihood that someone with an addiction will get trapped within the criminal-justice system. A University of Washington study released last year found that participants in Seattle's LEAD program were 58 percent less likely to be arrested on a new offense and were 39 percent less likely to be charged with a felony compared with offenders not in the program.

In addition to diverting them into treatment and counseling, the Seattle LEAD program helps people with addictions locate housing, get job training and find health care.

Another approach Maine po-

lice departments are taking follows the lead of the Angel initiative in Gloucester, Massachusetts. Under this model, people who turn themselves in at a local police station and surrender their drugs and paraphernalia need not fear arrest, and police will work to place them in treatment.

The Scarborough Police Department in October launched Operation HOPE, modeled after the Angel initiative, which placed 120 Mainers in treatment programs in nine states between Oct. 1, 2015, and Feb. 18 — from here in Maine to as far away as California and Florida.

Nearly three-quarters of all participants receive treatment out of state because of a limited treatment capacity in Maine, Officer John Gill said.

Farmington Police Department launched a similar program last month, and another is in the works in the Seacoast communities of Eliot, Kittery and York.

It's not clear yet whether the HOPE model used in Maine and other states, most of which are in their first year, have been effective at breaking the cycle of addiction. But Gill and other law enforcement officials recognize that a new approach is needed to address the drug addiction epidemic.

“While we in law enforcement witness the toll heroin and opiate use takes on our communities, Operation HOPE has served to put the problem into the public eye and help foster a public dialogue about the situation,” Gill said. “Operation HOPE has helped demonstrate the full extent of Maine's heroin and opiate epidemic, the desperation of people suffering from addiction and the lack of an effective response or strategy to deal with this crisis by government and political leaders.”

address them to the best of their ability.

And Americans trying to solve problems, even if their solutions are different, is what will really make America great again.

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they're happy just to tear it down. To them, Trump is the personification of doing exactly this.

If you happen to be a Trump supporter, I humbly ask that you do me one favor before you write me off as being another out-of-touch media elitist. I am giving you the benefit of the doubt — perhaps at the risk of being too generous — and acknowledging that maybe you don't support him because of the hateful things he has said, but because you like that he is sticking it to a system you believe to be out of touch and stacked against hard working people.

I ask you to consider: is the best way to burn it all down to throw support behind a billionaire media darling? Is this not a case of “meet the new boss, same as the old boss”? Or a case of the guerilla uprising against the dictator paving the way for yet another dictator? After all, the entire operational narrative of consumer corporatism is that you have a problem, and we can sell you a solution.

The sick joke on which this never-ending model is constructed is that the person selling the solution was probably also complicit in creating the problem in the first place. Trump is the very face of this trend.

Don't allow Trump to make a sucker of you. If you're angry at the party system and the media, and everything that has gotten you to this point — mad as hell and unwilling to take it anymore — there are plenty of options for you that don't involve allowing a rich media personality to use your support to boost his brand. Taking action doesn't necessitate doubling down on what you purportedly hate.

Trump is a billionaire who, for having been handed a fortune, has done little but merely sustain his wealth. He manipulates the media, profits from the worst parts of capitalism, resonates with hate groups, and on and on and on.

That can't possibly be your anti-establishment messiah, can it? I'm sorry, but that guy is the personification of the system at its very worst. If you're angry at the media, turn off your TV and support alternatives. If you're angry at the GOP, don't vote for its candidates. Write yourself in. Don't let someone take advantage of your righteous anger as a means of filling his own coffers. That's the wolf in sheep's clothing closing in and readying itself for yet another kill.

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In short, most Republicans believe the best way to fight this perceived corruption is to decentralize power. For graft to take hold nationwide, it would require a concerted effort in 50 state capitals, with thousands and thousands of legislators. The smaller an electorate and

more locally issues are addressed, the less power money provides. After all, if dollars spent were all that mattered, Ben Chin would've beaten Bob Macdonald in the Lewiston mayoral race by 15-to-1.

The vast majority of Americans, regardless of political party, want the same things. A strong military, fair tax code, equality before the law, reasonable criminal penalties and a safety net that does not disincen-

tivize work. We can disagree over the best ways to achieve them. But we need to be able to separate disagreements from the individuals espousing different ideas.

Charles Koch isn't evil, nor is Bernie Sanders. In fact, they agree on a lot of things. That agreement isn't based upon Bernie seeking donations or Koch trying to purchase policy positions. It is based on two people seeing problems and trying to