

Machias Valley News Observer



COUNTY SEAT WEEKLY

ALL THE HOME NEWS

SERVING WASHINGTON COUNTY CITIZENS & BUSINESSES FOR MORE THAN 155 YEARS

Since 1852 • Vol. 157 • No. 16

MACHIAS, MAINE • WEDNESDAY • DECEMBER 9, 2009

\$1.00



David Whitney being interviewed by Molly Line of The Fox News Channel Boston Bureau.

Lynda Caron photo

Fox Features a Wreathing Success Story

by Ruth Leubecker

Whitney Originals, a stand-out success in Washington County, last week was featured by *Fox News* as a sterling example of a small business growing despite a tough economy.

When *Fox* called Whitney 10 days ago it was to say their "brain room" had found him after a web search to research seasonal companies that were flourishing in a dismal business climate. "They asked if they could come do a segment on seasonal employment," says

Whitney. "They spent two days filming in the Tool Shed, Rite-Aid and the old Nissan building. We were on live three or four times."

Whitney's Tool Shed, the old Rite-Aid and the Nissan building in the Machias Industrial Park are the only three shipping facilities for Whitney's wreaths and centerpieces. His other sites are maintained for making and decorating product.

Following the scheduled work segment, *Fox* broadcast live at Whitney's Christmas par-

ty. "Every year on a weekly basis we sit down and have dinner together. Pizza, spaghetti, whatever the employees want," says Whitney. "But this year was a difficult year. So much planning, expansion, the lawsuit going on. So we cut out those meals. And I thought, why not take that money that went to those lunches and use it for a dinner?"

All employees were invited to the Pellon Center for a steak and lobster dinner on December 4. Each year employees also re-

See *Success Story*, page 4.

A Surprise Dedication Takes Place at Light A Life



DECH CEO Doug Jones presents plaque to Leona MacBride and Wilma Ingalls and tells them that the Auxiliary Gift Shop is dedicated in their honor (from left, Doug Jones, CEO, Wilma Ingalls, Leona MacBride).

DECH photo

Down East Community Hospital's annual "Light A Life" celebration took place on Thursday, December 3 with an estimated 200 community members in attendance.

This year, Down East Community Hospital honored the

years of dedicated service of Leona MacBride and Wilma Ingalls to the DECH Auxiliary and to the hospital. Leona (Noni) and Wilma (Billie) delivered classy renditions of their years connected with our hospital. The audience was riveted

as they spoke. Noni and Billie were deeply touched to be honored at Light A Life and by the standing ovations that followed each of their speeches.

Doug Jones had one more gift to bestow on the honorees. He presented them with a plaque that read "In honor of Leona MacBride and Wilma Ingalls," and he went on to explain that

See *Surprise*, page 29.

Index

Arts & Ent	8 - 9
Church Services	25
Classifieds	30
Community	20-23
Coming Events	24, 25
Help Wanted	30, 31
Holiday Guide	15-18
Legals	28
Letters to Editor	6
Obituaries	28
Op Ed	7
Real Estate	29, 30
Sports	26, 27
Town Notices	29

DECH Passes Deadline Early

by Ruth Leubecker

Following months of ongoing investigation and an official extension, Down East Community Hospital has satisfied a lengthy list of government-mandated operating deficiencies.

"We're back. The community deserves a great hospital and that's what they're going to get," said a jubilant Doug Jones on Friday. "It's like an early Christmas present."

Jones, interim CEO since July, has continually faced a myriad of problems and a troubled community demanding accountability. Inheriting a management crisis, dwindling admissions numbers, quality-care issues and faltering finances, Jones' main goal for five

months has remained striving to satisfy the latest Statement of Deficiencies as outlined by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

The 46-page document focused on four conditions of participation: organizational structure, medical records, emergency services and quality of care issues. Nursing restraint education, physician assessments, rhythm strip documentation, and cardiac monitoring were among the explicit enumerations lacking at DECH, presumably now corrected. But because the hospital remains without a functioning board, many have questioned how the facility can pass in the area of

See *DECH*, page 29.

Sheriff Announces Bid for Second Term

by Ruth Leubecker

Challenged by diminishing dollars and mounting crimes related to drugs, Washington County Sheriff Donnie Smith has nonetheless declared his intentions to run again in 2010.

"I'm proud of what we've done and continue to do in this department," said Smith last week. "In 2008 this office had the highest clearance rate of crimes of any sheriff's department in the state, and we don't even have a detective. And Troop J (Maine State Police, covering Washington and Hancock Counties), minus a troop detective, had the third highest in the state. And we've saved over \$40,000 in overtime covering each other's shifts."

Smith who became Washington County's top law enforcement officer following a hotly contested race in the last election, easily defeated Republican Rodney Merritt and Democrat George Bunker. A former Marine who served in Vietnam and earned two Purple Hearts, Smith has over 15 years in law enforcement. But the past three,

beginning with a hard-fought and often down-and-dirty campaign, have been challenging.

Since winning office as an independent, the issues have been daunting, many inherited, and many remaining unresolved. Missing guns, stolen jewelry, and a growing drug problem that regularly spurs other related crime, plague his office. "The lost and unaccounted-for guns are still in the hands of the attorney general," says Smith. "The issue is three years old. We'd like to return some of these firearms, but the AG's office is still investigating."

Doing well financially – as he has by any yardstick – does not have its own just reward, especially in these times. "A mistake in calculations" has cost him his part-time money, resulting in the county paring his budget by \$28,000. "It doesn't matter except that it cuts services," he explains. Smith has \$5,000 in his part-time budget, compared to the previous sheriff's \$68,000.

"We've added two full-time

See *Sheriff*, page 30.

Memorial for Lost Fishermen

by Christine Laurel

"It's been happening for hundreds of years," notes Wanda Corey of the many fishermen whose lives have been lost in the coastal waters of Washington County. "I think it's time for us to erect some sort of memorial."

The Town of Lubec agrees and a memorial committee has been formed to undertake the project. Corey sits on the committee, along with her sister Shelly Tinker, Jonathan McClure, David Phinney, David Cline and others.

In fact it was Cline and his family who first approached the town with the idea of the memorial honoring lost fishermen. Cline lost his son, Dar-

rel, in the recent tragedy of the *Bottom Basher*, a Lubec Sea Urchin dragger that went down in October, also taking the lives of two others still missing – Norman Johnson and Joseph Jones. In response, the Town of Lubec has been accepting donations toward the memorial in the name of Darrel Cline.

But the idea has now expanded to incorporate all those whose lives have been lost in the waters, not just off Lubec's coastline, but in the coastal waters of all of Washington County and the neighboring Canadian county of Charlotte as well, in an international effort to recognize the sacrifice these fishing communities have made to sus-

See *Memorial*, page 11.