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Chocolate Sale Offers Treats at Centre Street

Starting early and spanning two days, the Valentine's Day chocolate sale at Centre Street offered a wide and ingenious array of chocolate confections last Saturday afternoon and after church on Sunday. Ellen Farnsworth (above) poses beside two typical trays of homemade cupcakes and candies. Sharon Dean (right) lights the first of several ice sculptures she designed for the event. This first annual chocolate fest for the church's general fund provided a welcome respite during this winter season.

Ruth Leubecker photos

Local Church Sends Mission Team and Supplies to Haiti

by Gail Denbow

A mission team of six from First Baptist Church of Harrington, recently departed from Maine to perform a short-term mission in the Dominican Republic. On January 22 Tim and Joanna DeSchiffart, two of their daughters, Carolyn and Abi, and Dave and Gail Denbow, all of Cherryfield, joined Team Leaders, C. David and Judy Kennedy of Buffalo, New York at the SCORE International complex in Juan Dolio, Dominican Republic.

"SCORE International is a ministry to expose people to short term missions. The purpose of SCORE International is to Evangelize, Encourage missionaries, and Equip participants to do the work of foreign missions. Our goal is to produce career missionaries and/or create greater partnerships between local churches in the USA and foreign missionaries." (Quoted statement from scoreinternational.org website)

The January mission trip for the eight had been planned during August of 2009 and included plans to work with a medical team from the state of Washington. While the doctors and nurses would go forth to treat the physical/medical needs of those living in sugarcane villages and inner cities, our team of eight joined them for the purpose of providing for the spiritual needs of the inhabitants. Additionally, our team would assist the medical teams in any way possible.

School supplies donated by the students of Cherryfield Elementary School, infant needs, eye glasses, toiletries, vitamins, medicines and clothing are some of the many items that filled the six suitcases that would be carried to Score. From there they were distributed at various mission locations by both full-time



Helene Hammond accepts the supplies from Julie Hixson, the Community Relations and Marketing person at DECH.

Photo courtesy of Gail Denbow

and short term missionaries. The school supplies would primarily benefit area orphanages and village schools. Packed and ready to go the Sunday before Friday's scheduled departure, little did the team know how quickly things were about to change!

Less than 48 hours prior to departure, an urgent telephone call was received from our Team Leaders in the Dominican. Due to the recent earthquake in Haiti, doctors had been required to perform unbelievable numbers of amputations. In so doing, the supply of gauze bandages, pads etc. had rapidly dwindled and had resulted in a critical need for replacements. The team was instructed to leave things of

lesser importance behind, and See Haiti, page 4.

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Levesque Labels State Spending Immoral

by Ruth Leubecker

Running hard in his bid to unseat incumbent Mike Michaud, Jason Levesque vows to put more money back in taxpayers' pockets and pare state regulations that discourage businesses from moving to Maine.

"Voters want leadership, and they don't have it. Real leadership starts from the top and trickles down," he says of state government. "The spending spree has to end. It's immoral. The governor says no more taxes, but the buck stops with the towns. And the towns can't borrow from China. Mike Michaud is talking a double-speak Mainer aren't going to stand for anymore."

Rep. Mike Michaud, the incumbent Democrat from Millinocket, has held the 2nd District Congressional seat for seven years. Levesque, an Auburn businessman, has charged that Michaud repeatedly offers "Band-aids and photo ops instead of solutions" to the state's worsening economic problems.

"We need true tax reform, and this means putting more money back in taxpayers' pockets," says Levesque, a fifth-generation Mainer whose



Jason Levesque cites jobs as the top item on his agenda if elected. Ruth Leubecker photo

grandmother grew up in Machias. "We need some tough love. There's a lack of focus. Why are Pelosi and Michaud just now focusing on jobs?"

Levesque constantly hammers home the fact that the entire system needs to be overhauled – a fact that escapes many in the running, he says. "We have to look at the entire system because it's broken," he explains. "When we do, we have to limit spending by taking less money out of the private sector. Limit government rules See Spending, page 4.

Rural Maine Gains Foothold in School Crisis

by Ruth Leubecker

After aggressive negotiating led to "tweaking the law," it appears Maine's rural schools have gained ground in their battle to maintain structure and a modicum of local control.

"We had quite a week in Augusta," said East Machias Selectman Bucket Davis on the weekend. "The governor and the commissioner have been hanging tough as far as doing anything with the law. But they've been pressured these last few days with the near certainty of us getting a two-thirds vote. So basically we were asked what we wanted."

The Education Committee recently voted to approve an AOS (alternative organizational structure) for East Machias and School Unions 102 and 134. This is seen as a major breakthrough for these municipalities, even though potential hold-ups remain ahead. While Comm. Susan Gendron has given her tacit approval to this move, it remains for each member town to affirm a referendum vote for this to happen.

Initially, an AOS had been nixed by many of these municipalities. However, the former conditions have been lifted through the past week's discussions in Augusta. Under the new terms, each town will vote on its own portion of the central office budget; there is a means of withdrawal from the agreement; and

each individual subsidy will be sent directly and separately to the individual municipality.

"This is the direction we're moving in, and it looks like we're going to change the law," said Supt. Scott Porter on Sunday. "In March there will be two informational meetings, one in East Machias and a second one in Machias, to explain why we're now in favor of supporting the AOS."

Porter remains tentative because the amendment has only been passed by the Education Committee. A formal vote is set for next week in the House and Senate. When the measure has been passed by all accordingly, Comm. Gendron will eventually assign the AOS a number. There are five AOSs and 22 RSUs in the State of Maine.

"This is a great, great thing for rural Maine," said Davis last week, reflecting on the culmination of the many weeks of lobbying in Augusta. "We hope this will come on the floor and under the hammer soon."

If the proposed AOS occurs before July 1, all penalties will be eliminated. According to Porter, the collective penalties of his 11 member towns were just over \$200,000. "But the reason this is such a big thing to us," he said, "is that these payments are tied to valuations, so they would've gotten bigger every year."

Interestingly, although talk See School Crisis, page 4.