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DECH Fields Questions, Explains Goals

by Ruth Leubecker

Promoting increased public involvement Thursday's forum, hosted by Down East Community Hospital's administrators, explained the facility's immediate operating future. About 100 interested area residents attended the meeting.

Michelle Hood, Eastern Maine Healthcare Systems president and CEO, as the receiver of the Machias hospital, addressed the community, explaining her preliminary objectives. "I live and breathe collaboration," she said, emphasizing the many diverse issues on her plate with seven member hospitals, plus affiliates, in the Eastern Maine system. "Things that are important as we move forward with DECH are, first of all, the commitment of the EMHS to this hospital, strong board leadership, the structure and nurturing of that board, and the advisory councils."

On June 30, 2009, due to "the emergency that existed" at the Machias hospital, Kennebec County Superior Court appointed EMHS "emergency receiver immediately and without hearing." In the closing remarks of the

document, Jones was proposed as interim CEO at the Machias facility. Over the past six months he has trimmed costs, instituted training programs, improved emergency room operations, and brought the expertise of Eastern Maine Medical Center to the Machias hospital. Under his leadership the hospital passed its final CMS deadline with zero deficiencies, meaning its federal reimbursements are no longer in jeopardy.

Although DECH still operates under a conditional license and its future relationship to EMHS is uncertain, last week's meeting resembled a cautious step toward building new governance.

"We need some history. So two non-controversial board members will remain with the new board for one year," said Jones on the weekend. "I cannot tell you who they are because I have not approached them yet. But to those who are concerned, I can say these (members) only have power to the extent the rest of the board agrees with them."

The proposed advisory councils represent another facet of governance structure new to

DECH. There will be four councils and, according to Jones, the numbers will be flexible, largely determined by the talents such members will bring to the group(s).

The councils will have a primary focus in 1) senior services and long-term care 2) services to younger families 3) emergency services and access to care 4) governance, personnel, bylaws.

Annie Dickinson, a member of the Committee to Save Our Hospital, asked if the incorporators had to reject or accept a blanket slate of nominated hospital board members.

"That's up to the incorporators," said Jones, who said he'd never seen members voted on singly, but only as an entire slate. "The incorporators though, can vote on that. If they want to do that, it would be their decision."

When asked about the hospital's annual meeting, perhaps understandably not to happen under receivership, Jones said there would be one. He said, however, this would not happen until about three and one-half months following the year-end See DECH, page 4.



Friends and family gather at UMM to observe Silent Witnesses which represent victims of domestic violence.

Photo courtesy of The Next Step

Candlelight Vigil Held for Katie Cabana and Aaron Settiani

Approximately 75 people showed up to attend Saturday evening's candlelight vigil to honor domestic violence victims Katie Cabana and Aaron Settiani, both murdered two years ago in Marshfield. Most of the attendees gathered at the Centre Street Congregational Church and carried candles in a procession through town to the University of Maine at Machias Performing Arts Center.

The Next Step Domestic Violence (DV) Project led a poignant presentation to honor Katie and Aaron, as well as all DV victims and their families. Carrie Callahan introduced Washington County Sheriff Donnie Smith, who spoke candidly of that night two years ago and how the experience changed his life.

Laurie Fogelman, executive director of The Next Step and chair of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence (MCEDV), spoke to the audience to describe that each and

every person can, indeed, do something to address DV – whether to pass along a phone number, offer a trusting ear, or volunteer in any one of a number of needed ways.

Ray Ann Wilder, Katie's mother, spoke about her own life changes and missing her first-born child every minute of every day, but also her persistent need to tell Katie's story so that other persons in abusive relationships might hear and learn that there is help and support available to them.

Gabriel, Katie's son, now eleven, expressed his heartache at missing his younger siblings, Autumn and Ethan, who were taken away from him by DHHS and sent to live with the man who had left them many years before. His only wish is that they be reunited and be able to grow up together.

Callahan described the genesis of the Silent Witness Program and explained how the Continued on Page 28

MMHS Music Students Fundraising for NYC Trip



Band and chorus members at MMHS express their wish to visit Broadway.

Photo courtesy of Bonnie Atkinson

Twenty-six MMHS band and chorus students will soon be embarking on a fantastic cultural and musical adventure! The students along with chaperones will be traveling via Cyr Bus Coach & Tours to New York City in May to watch the Broadway show "Wicked," take a ferry boat ride out to the Statue of Liberty and the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, visit Times Square and take in all of the sights! The students are halfway through their fundraising time and efforts and are doing a final push in the next few months to raise the rest of the money needed!

How to help:

1) Purchase an ORANGE BULLDOG PAW PRINT for \$1 (or more!) at many local businesses including the Bluebird Restaurant and the Fat Cat Deli and Pizzeria!

2) A DAY AT THE SPA RAFFLE – One lucky person will win a fantastic day of their choice at the Bella Vita Spa with massage, manicure, pedicure, hair color, cut and style and an additional six tanning sessions for later! Raffle tickets are \$2 each or five for \$5. The drawing will be Friday, February See MMHS, page 12.

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MOOMilk Arrives in Maine Dairy Cases This Weekend

Maine's Own Organic Milk – MOOMilk – will be available in grocery store dairy cases this weekend throughout Maine, and in selected stores in New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

Produced by 10 Maine family organic dairy farms in Washington, Aroostook, Penobscot and Kennebec Counties, the milk will be trucked by Schoppee Milk Transport of Holden to Smiling Hill Dairy in Westbrook for processing, then distributed by Oakhurst Dairy of Portland and Crown O' Maine Organic Co-op of Gardiner. That makes it the only organic milk available in Maine that is produced, trucked, processed and distributed exclusively by Maine family businesses.

"This truly is local milk," said Bill Eldridge of Bar Harbor, MOOMilk's general manager, "customers who buy MOOMilk will know they are supporting the Maine economy by supporting Maine family businesses."

In addition, Eldridge said, customers should know that 90 percent of the profits from MOOMilk will be returned to the farmers.

"We aren't a co-op," he said, "we're a special kind of low-profit business, with a mission to make just enough to keep running and return most of our profits to the farms. Under our charter, we exist to help farm families stay in business by making enough to keep their operations viable."

The farmers own part of the company and have three seats on the seven-member board of directors, he said.

Maine's Own Organic Milk Company was formed through the cooperative efforts of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA), Maine Farm Bureau and the Maine Department of Agriculture after the H.P. Hood Co. of Boston notified a number of Maine farmers that it would no Continued on Page 31