
The Midcoast Inquirer

Newsletter of Midcoast Senior College
June 2017, Volume 12, No 3



Letter from the President

As I have reached the end of my term as President and retire from this office, I want to reflect on the momentous events that have characterized the preceding two years. To paraphrase our members: "we've come a long way, baby."

Think back to the spring and early summer of 2015. We secured an arrangement with SNHU and we relocated our base of operations from the former Bath Hospital into spaces in Brunswick. The tiny office space and cramped closet presented real and lasting problems, but the classrooms were ideal. Their central location, clustered around the administrative area and with easy access to parking, made our physical presence a major asset. Two years later, we are comfortably nestled into spaces at SNHU, with a manageable lease. Office space remains a challenge, particularly if expansion is contemplated, but for the present we are managing.

Another major advance was made with the addition of two part-time employees. Donna Marshall, our office administrator, and Sonia St. Pierre, our bookkeeper, contributed immensely to the smooth running of the college. When coupled with the massive increase in computer support that Clare Durst and her Technology Committee have overseen, we are able to process mailing lists, registrations, and solicitations with increasing facility and accuracy.

A major feature of the past two years has been our phenomenal growth. Student population and enrollment has skyrocketed by 20% per year, and faculty expansion has equaled this pace. We now offer between 25 and 35 courses per semester in contrast to the 16 to 20 previously offered; most classes are entirely filled. Continued growth remains a challenge for us, and your Board of Directors is considering additional classes and/or several new programs while assuring that the quality and academic rigor for which we are known is not sacrificed.

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Jack Thompson

Remembering Jack

Mark C. Smith

On March 6, 2017, Midcoast Senior College lost a founder, a professor, and its biggest booster. I lost a friend. Jack Thompson was a man of many facets, many skills and many achievements. He is a difficult man to capture in words. One of those words, however, would be "good." Jack was a good man.

In 1999, Jack Thompson and Nancy Wheeler were taking classes and teaching at Olli (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute) in Portland. Olli was the first senior college in Maine and was under the umbrella of the University of Southern Maine, an arrangement typical of senior colleges.

After discussions Jack and Nancy had with David Batty, Director of the Midcoast extension campus of the University of Maine Augusta, and Jack's colleague from Olli, Rabbi Harry Sky, a decision was made to host an Open House in October 1999 to introduce plans to begin senior classes in the Brunswick/Bath area the following March, and to gauge interest. The planning group expected about 25 people, but over 80 showed up. More donuts and cider were sent for, and the meeting was repeated in three rooms. This incident forecast the continuous growth we have experienced since our founding, a growth that has regularly exceeded expectations.

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Mission Statement of the Midcoast Inquirer:

The Midcoast Inquirer articulates the academic spirit and educational mission of Midcoast Senior College to offer lifelong learning for older adults. To this end, we provide a bulletin board that announces course offerings, lectures and special events, and a literary forum (or virtual classroom) of essays, reviews, interviews and commentaries written by faculty and students.

--Robert C. Williams, Editor

The Midcoast Inquirer

is the newsletter of
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Midcoast Senior College is one of seventeen Senior Colleges in the State of Maine. We serve the area from Freeport to Waldoboro and inland up to Augusta. Most of our classes are held at 10 Tibbetts Drive, Brunswick, Maine. This past Fall we offered 26 courses and enrolled 540 students. Class schedules and The Midcoast Inquirer are available on our web site for each semester. Students may also register on line at midcoastseniorcollege.org.

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I have enjoyed serving as your President, but I am confident that Jim Wilkes, my successor, will continue to oversee the College and manage its affairs in a capable fashion, preserving quality and managing growth while controlling expenses to the membership.

Tony Belmont
Midcoast Senior College

Continued from Page 1: Jack Thompson

The initial MSC semester began in March of 2000, with six courses. Jack, the first Chair of the Curriculum Committee, taught Maine Experiences, Highlights and Lowlights. The fact that this subject was outside Jack's academic field (Russian History) was an early indication of his wide ranging intellectual interests. Our most prolific professor, Jack would teach twenty-five classes in the first fifteen years of MSC. The following sample of



his courses reflects Jack's expansive interests and expertise: Tsars, Peasants, Rebels, Russia's Imperial Past; FDR and the Transformation of America 1933-45; From 9/11 to Iraq's Withdrawal: What Went Wrong; Espionage in Fact, Fiction and Film; Tudor Monarchs, Henry, Elizabeth and Other Rascals and Eight Women Who Changed the World.

Jack's imprint on MSC can also be seen in two pivotal moments of our history. The first was the initial Board retreat in 2004. Held in Jack's barn in Phippsburg, that retreat confirmed our mission and commitment to providing academic liberal arts courses.

David McKeith, long time Board member and participant in the retreat, speaks of Jack's true belief in and commitment to the liberal arts. Jack's vision was instrumental in the mission of Midcoast Senior College. The second pivotal moment was the decision to leave the umbrella of University of Maine-- Augusta and become an independent 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Jack was a member of the committee formed in 2010 to

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examine what administrative and fiscal structure would best serve MCS as we continued to grow. He and I spent an afternoon at Belfast's senior college to take a close look at how they were functioning as an independent 501(c)3. That visit convinced Jack that independence and non-profit status was the way to go. He became a strong and important advocate for that direction and eventual decision.

In discussing Jack, Howard Whitcomb notes his presence. Jack was a big man, with a big intellect and a big presence in every respect of that word. He was also someone who took a genuine interest in whomever he was talking with or interviewing. He had the knack of making you feel that you were the complete focus of his interest.

Another longtime friend, Manny Sargent, said when he recalls Jack, the word stoic comes to mind. Those of us who know Jack well or just saw him at the annual luncheon, can attest to how stoically Jack dealt with the infirmities he experienced in recent years.



L to R: Dorothy Bell, Nancy Wheeler, Mark Smith, and Jack Thompson inaugurating the Wheeler-Thompson Award

I said at the start of this piece, that when Jack died, I lost a friend. I know I speak for many others in this regard. I met Jack through senior college, but in recent years we became friendly on a personal level. Jack and I had a lot in common. We both graduated from small western Massachusetts liberal arts colleges (Amherst and Williams) whose athletic teams wear purple. We both grew up playing pond hockey. One little known fact from Jack's past is that he, along with Manny Sargent and others, formed Amherst College's first ice hockey team. In that first year, probably a similar level with my

intramural hockey games at Williams many years later. Jack and I shared an interest in all sports. We both grew up NY football Giants fans. Jack was a fellow Red Sox fan and, on occasion, we attended Sea Dog games together. One of his sales pitches to get others to go was to note that parking was easy with a handicapped ticket.

Jack and I also had an interest in Russia in common. It was, of course, his major field of study and he made many trips to Russia and lived for two years in Moscow. My visits were briefer, but in doing some consulting work in Chelyabinsk, and in a subsequent trip to Lomonosov, I grew to admire the Russian people and enjoyed conversations with Jack about our respective time in Russia.

A final connection for me with Jack was Public Education. I had a forty-year career as a teacher, principal and superintendent in public schools. Jack was a college professor, but also had a keen interest in and concern for public schools. Not well known is the work Jack did in Indiana to improve history curricula in the state's High Schools. Part of that effort included chairing a

Ford Foundation-funded statewide non-western studies program. In addition to his Russian History books, Jack co-authored a world history textbook for secondary school students. For many years here in Maine, Jack visited high schools to give talks on Russia to interested classes. Indeed, the day Jack and I went to Belfast, I met him in Camden where he had been a guest "teacher" at Camden Hills High School. Last fall, before he left for Florida, Jack was working on a course he would team-teach on American Public Education, Its History and Current Challenges.

Jack had a keen interest in methods of teaching and learning, as all of us who participated in his small groups can attest.

As had been noted elsewhere, Jack lived in the oldest brick house in Maine on the west bank of the Kennebec. He and Anne had five children and eleven grand-children. Jack was a caring and proud father and grandfather who could tell you what each was doing at the moment and enjoyed conversations that wandered in that direction.

Jack Thompson was a founder of MSC and his impact on our growth was substantial. In addition to his scholarship, he was a family man, a good man, and a good friend. He will be missed.

Mark Smith is a long-time contributor to MSC, a past president of the organization and a creator of the Wheeler-Thompson Founders Award.

News from the Board of Directors.

James Wilkes—new board president

Jim Wilkes has been Vice President of Midcoast Senior College for the past two years and chair of the Policy Committee since 2014 in addition to serving on the Finance Committee. In his 38-year career in education Wilkes served as an Ohio city Superintendent of Schools, assistant superintendent, principal and teacher. After retiring from public education Wilkes worked in the private sector as a school facility planner for an Ohio architect and engineering firm. He concluded his career as Assistant Dean for Teacher Professional Development at Ashland University, Ohio.

Tony Belmont—outgoing board president and immediate past president

Tony Belmont, a retired physician, graduated from Bowdoin College in 1960. After a career as a Navy Medical Officer and Corporate Medical Director, he and his wife, Linda, moved to Midcoast Maine in 2000. Tony served as a member and President of the local hospice, in various alumni activities at Bowdoin, and on the Board of Midcoast Senior College. During his Presidency from 2015-2017, MSC has seen its relocation to the SNHU campus, hired two part-time employees, and grown by 20% each year.

Ervin Snyder—new treasurer and member of the board.

Ervin Snyder is a retired attorney who has lived in Brunswick for more than forty years. He has served in numerous town positions, including the Brunswick School Board, Town Council and various building committees, including the Curtis Library committee. In addition, Ervin was the first president of the Merrymeeting Council of Governments, and has volunteered his services to a number of local non-profit organizations.

We also thank the following retiring board members:

Bill Mason—Board member. Bill, a former admissions director at Williams, Bowdoin and Holy Cross colleges, has served on the board since 2014. He has played an active role on the Development, Public Relations, Curriculum and Long-term Planning committees.

Ian MacKinnon—Secretary. Ian has been a most diligent, conscientious and precise recorder of our words and deeds for the past several years.

Sandra Neiman—Treasurer. Sandra joined the MSC board as treasurer in 2009. She helped the college assume total responsibility for our fiscal affairs as an inde-

pendent nonprofit, and to move from our Bath home to Brunswick. Sandra enjoyed her eight years on the board, especially the wonderful people with whom she worked. She looks forward to taking more classes at MSC.

Our new board secretary is **Lynn Lockwood**. Our new vice president is **Doug Bates**.

RETIREMENT, a word worth keeping...

Many of us at MSC are retired persons who are no longer employed but seem to have no problem filling up our hours and days with useful activity. But did you ever wonder where the word retirement came from?

Until around 1600 the French word *retirer* meant to withdraw, normally to bed or, in wartime, to withdraw from the battlefield. Retirement meant the act of withdrawing or retreating into seclusion.

In the late nineteenth century, retirement began to mean to cease employment, but with a pension. Private companies had financed their own pension plans since before the American Civil War. Then government got involved.

In 1881, Emperor William I of Germany asserted “those who are disabled from work by age and invalidity have a well-grounded claim to care from the state.” Chancellor Otto von Bismarck (age 74) agreed and in 1889 the Reichstag set the first retirement age at seventy and created old-age pensions. During World War I, Germany lowered its retirement age to sixty-five.

When FDR and his Committee on Economic Security (chaired by Frances Perkins, the first U. S. female cabinet secretary) got around to the issue in 1935, they also set age sixty-five as the retirement age under the new program of Social Security. Now there is no mandatory retirement age. People can retire much earlier if they can afford to. Or they can continue to work after they retire. Financially they now depend on both private pensions and government Social Security, along with savings and investment income. Medicare, Medicaid or the Affordable Care Act now reimburse most of our health care expenses in retirement.

Retirement is not mentioned in the Bible. It was not common until after 1900. Today retirement lies somewhere between the world of work and the world of play in old age. And retirement provides us with the leisure to learn. Not bad! Retirement is a word worth keeping.

RCW



Charlottetown's Burning Down

*Charlottetown's burning down, goodbye, goodbye,
Burning down to the ground, goodbye Liza Jane.
Ain't you mighty sorry? Goodbye, goodbye,
Ain't you mighty sorry? Goodbye Liza Jane.*

Stu Gillespie in our MSC choral singing class this spring introduced us to a wonderful song that has evolved over time in a manner typical of the folk tradition. Its origins lie in a Civil War song called Goodbye Liza Jane that runs:

*Scarlet Town is burning down,
Goodbye, bye, bye,
Scarlet Town is burning down,
Goodbye Liza Jane.*

So trying to identify "Charlottetown" and its various fires is an exercise in futility: Charlotte NC, Charleston SC, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island? Which fire and when? "Charlottetown" appeared in the song only around 1964 and only because it was a worthy fictional substitute for the place dreaded by radio censors, Scarlet Town.

Folksinger Judy Henske in a February 1964 radio interview said she thought that Scarlet Town originally referred to Baton Rouge LA ("red stick" in Choctaw). But others found it slightly off color and salacious in its implication of the Red Light District of a town. The radio censors said, in effect: "Change it to Charlotte Town and then nobody will ever know."

In fact, Scarlet Town has an old tradition going back to the Scots and the well-known "Barbara Allen" folk-song:

*In Scarlet Town, where I was born,
There was a fair maid dwelling,
And every Youth cried well away
For her name was Barbara Allan.*

Folksinger and poet Bob Dylan updated this in his own dark song called Scarlet Town in the 1960's:

*In Scarlet Town, where I was born,
There's ivy leaf and silver thorn.*

The color scarlet has its own history, going back to the Whore of Babylon in the Book of Revelations, 17, to Nathaniel Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter, and to the general association of scarlet women with prostitution. Certainly Scarlet Town was a fictional place of desire associated with scarlet women, hence the radio and TV censor's willingness to forbid it in public media. The boys in blue and gray during the Recent Unpleasantness naturally loved this reference.

So the salacious Scarlet Town has now become the more acceptable and benign Charlottetown. Forget those fires in the Carolinas and PEI.

What about Liza Jane? She was a well-known African-American stock character who appears in American slave songs well before the Civil War and in the minstrel shows that followed. Slaves sang Little Liza Jane in Louisiana prior to 1861 and Liza Jane appears frequently in the "negro folk song" tradition.

So there we are. Scarlet Town (a.k.a. Charlottetown) is burning down and Liza Jane is a red-hot mama, as they used to say. No wonder Scarlet Town was a place of burning desire. The song is lyrical and ironic. It sure beats: Holy Smoke, honey, the red light district is on fire. Gotta go now. Good luck! Ain't you mighty sorry? Nope.

--RCW



EXCURSION, 2017!! SAVE THE DATE!

We're heading for the coastal Maine botanical gardens in Boothbay on Tuesday, August 22nd for a guided tour, a great lunch, and a special talk on the history of this amazing place. Details to follow!

What is Next For Health-Care in The United States

Stephen F. Loeb, Ph.D.

Health-care in the U.S. is the #1 domestic issue. The focus of that issue is the Affordable Care Act (also known as ACA, or Obamacare). It has been described as the most significant overhaul of health care in the United States since the 1960s. For the last three months, and more if the recent campaigns are counted, there have been a blur of proposed changes to repeal and replace the ACA. A proposal by Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives which would have dismantled most all of the ACA did not have a sufficient number of votes to pass and it was defeated. Now, a key question is—What is Next? The truth is no one has the answer. Yet, it is most important to understand what is at stake. This column defines the boundaries of the issues.

There are sharp and bitter differences between the major political parties and throughout the nation on values and preferences on how health care in the United States should function. The differences center on the role of the federal government in health care and who should be responsible for financing health care, especially for the most vulnerable. This was decided for all those over 65 years with the enactment of Medicare in 1965 and partially decided with Medicaid for some low-income Americans below defined poverty levels. Those did not solve all the problems. There are still many Americans without health insurance who are coping with increasing costs. Uninsured Americans have been the focus of current controversies.

The election of President Obama and majority control of Congress by Democrats in 2008 led to the proposal and enactment of the ACA in 2010. Its main focus and objective is to reduce the number of uninsured, reduce the rate of increase in health care costs for all and improve the quality of outcomes. The architects and proponents of the ACA believe the federal government should be a catalyst to:

- promote access to preventive health services for all and
- help those who have limited means to purchase health insurance. This means the most vulnerable citizens with substantial financial difficulty.

The ACA does not change the pluralistic characteristic of financing arrangements, including Medicare, and it does not take over the ownership or management of health care organizations.

The basic intentions of the ACA to meet the objectives and implement changes use the power of the federal government to require such changes on the part of those most involved in financing health-care. Several of the most prominent features are:

- requirement that individuals purchase health insurance or pay a penalty,
- requirement that employers with over fifty (50) employees provide health insurance for their employees or pay a penalty,
- requirement that health insurance plans provide a comprehensive set of preventive-type services, such as mammograms, in their plans,
- non-discrimination for those with pre-existing conditions,
- provision that individuals under twenty-six (26) years of age can remain on their parents' insurance plan,
- subsidies for purchase of health insurance for individuals and families with income between 138% and 400% of the Federal poverty level and
- requirement that states expand their eligibility for Medicaid for all those with incomes at or below 138% of the Federal poverty level.

There have been constant initiatives by conservatives in Congress and others to repeal and replace the ACA, especially since the elections of 2012. Most Republicans were vehemently opposed from the start and they drew a line in the sand. They repeatedly tried to repeal ACA in Congress for six years but were rebuffed.

Opposition has been based in part on ideological differences and political considerations. There is a widespread belief that market-based forces and competition is much preferred over federal government intrusion. It follows that there is opposition to a role of federal government in producing change in health care, opposition to mandates such as those in the ACA, opposition to requirements on the states, opposition to requirements on health insurance plans, opposition to subsidies, and opposition to new taxes.

Opponents of the ACA have succeeded in one key part when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states should have the option of expanding Medicaid rather than requiring all states to expand Medicaid. Thirty-one states have decided to expand Medicaid to include more low-income individuals below 138% of the poverty level. Nineteen states have opted out of expansion. Maine is one of them and the only one in the New England states. Governor Le Page has vetoed legislative initiatives to

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expand Medicaid. As a result, Maine has one of the most restrictive and narrowly defined set of eligibility rules for Medicaid in the nation. There is a public referendum vote on the ballot in Maine in November to expand Medicaid and reverse the Governor's veto. There will be heavy media coverage on the supporters of the referendum and the opponents.

Given the different approaches to the future of the ACA and even different facts used by opposing sides, a score-card on the impact of the ACA should be useful for informed discussion. For the proponents,

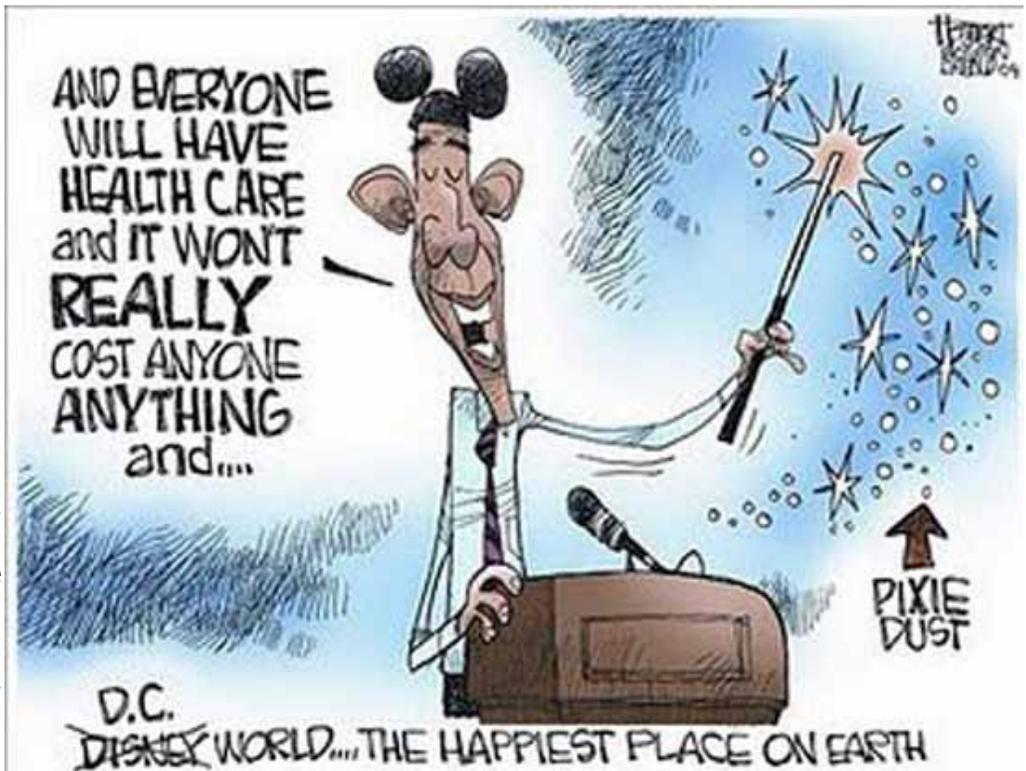
- The number of uninsured individuals has dropped from 16% of the population to 8.6% since the implementation of the ACA. The declining number is most prominent among children. The newly insured have gained access to health care that for many has been a new experience.
- Access to free preventive care for all is a plus.
- Individuals may not be denied coverage due to pre-existing conditions.
- Individuals under 26 years can stay on their parents' health insurance plans.
- Medicaid expansion appears to be very successful in states that have chosen expansion.
- Affordable choice among health plans has improved although that is increasingly problematic in some states.

For the opponents to the ACA, there is a belief that the ACA should and will fail. They refer to the instability in the availability of health plans for those eligible people under the ACA. Plans are withdrawing from offering their insurance options due to higher than expected premiums and loss of enrollees. Higher premiums are due to lack of enrollment of healthy people and higher rates of use than expected. Health insurance plans are also nervous about the potential for the federal government to withhold subsidy support for certain groups. There are still 19 states that have not expanded their Medicaid, leaving many low-income individuals and families without any coverage of their health care costs.

To summarize, the extent to which the ACA will ever be eliminated, replaced with something different, repaired with some changes or left standing appears to depend on several forces. The public may wish to retain the status quo, as demonstrated by the recent spread of town meetings. If the Republicans in Congress can persuade a sufficient number of their colleagues to agree on changes, including possible replacement, that could happen, but appears to be unlikely. A bipartisan generated solution to the problems of ACA could have potential. The Trump administration has already taken steps to tighten the vise on enrollment in the health insurance plans. Dismantling the most popular features of the ACA, such as comprehensive preventive services, is unlikely but possible. These are possibilities. In the short run, there will likely be continued efforts by the opponents of the ACA to replace most of it. Beyond that, no one knows what is next.

The famous American philosopher, Yogi Berra, once said, "it ain't over till it's over." This surely applies to the continuing controversies and conflicts over the future of health care in the United States. It will be a prominent topic on a state and national level for the foreseeable future. It may never be over.

Steve Loebs is Professor Emeritus of Health Policy and Management at The Ohio State University, and Research Associate at Bowdoin College.



Bravo Volunteers!*

Beth Aldenberg, Cynthia Arnold, John Beaven, Dorothy Bell, Joyce Bessen, Susan Billings, Nora Bishop, Kay Bournakel, Angela Bournakel, Catherine Buotte, Edgar Boyd, Ingrid Chalufour, Miriam Charette, Elizabeth Cole, Deborah Cravey, George Madison Cravey, Patricia Croy, Mary Cuthbertson, Richard DeVito, Lois Dole, Martha Dome, Pam Duff, Catherine Elliott, David Fluharty, Eunice Fraser, Patricia Galbreath, Bruce Giguere, Elwin Guthrie, Marnie Hackenberg, Bill Hammond, Maureen Hart, Nancy Hill, Prisca Kenison, Sue Kennedy, Linda Labaree, Ellen Lebauer, Esther Leck, Tobey Lee, Cynthia Little, Jessica Mahnke, Cynthia Marsden, Jose Mas, Priscilla McKeith, Jackie Melissas, Susan Mikesell, Susan Montgomery, Lynn Murray, Peter Nimkoff, Charles

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Mark Your Calendar!

Reminder: Summer Wisdom lectures: June 7; June 14; June 21; June 28
July 10 On-line registration for Fall courses begins
August 22 Summer Excursion to Boothbay Harbor



...because learning never ends.

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