

The Midcoast Inquirer

FALL 2025

The Newsletter of Midcoast Senior College



25th Anniversary, by T. Magno

The Celebrating—and the Learning—Roll On!

Dear Midcoast Senior College Members and Friends,

As summer segues into fall, I'm personally moved by the energy and enthusiasm I've seen surrounding Midcoast Senior College's 25th anniversary. I hope you've had a chance to take part in the celebratory events offered earlier in the year, and you're looking toward the fall with renewed gusto.

In the coming months, we'll keep the party rolling. For example, we've planned a special event for our faculty, to show our appreciation for their commitment to enabling us to fulfill our mission. Many of our faculty have been actively teaching for MSC for many years, some offering multiple thought-provoking and inspiring courses

over time. And in January, we'll conclude the celebrating with a capstone panel discussion on the nature and benefits of lifelong learning (see page 2 to learn more).

If you're a Midcoast Senior College member, you've also been key to supporting our mission and vision, and we extend a heartfelt thank-you! If you haven't already done so this year, I encourage you to renew your membership. (We are a membersupported nonprofit, and like all nonprofits we're always facing budgeting challenges!) Also, a reminder: MSC prospers and grows primarily by word-of-mouth, and we especially rely on our members, faculty, and volunteers to serve as our ambassadors, spreading the word far and wide about MSC. As an ambassador, you can also help

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us recruit new instructors, volunteers, and committee members and chairs. How? By telling your friends, family, and neighbors about MSC, especially what the college has meant for you personally.

Our Fall Term I is well under way, and we have a great line-up of courses for Fall Term II. (See "Mark Your Calendar" or visit our website to learn more.) Also check our website for information about the additional lifelong learning opportunities we offer, including fantastic lectures,

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(MSC) is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization founded in 2000.

Website: www.midcoastseniorcollege.org Phone: (207) 725-4900 Email: mscoffice@midcoastseniorcollege.org Mail: 18 Middle St., Suite 2, Brunswick ME 04011 Follow us on Facebook for even more fun news!

The Celebrating—and the Learning—Roll On!

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exciting excursions, and other experiences. (Some of these opportunities are available to friends of the college, but participating in our courses requires membership in MSC.)

As I look ahead to 2026, I realize that we're working just as hard today as we have over the past 25 years to provide stimulating and enjoyable learning experiences for as many Midcoast seniors as possible. Our sponsors as well as the donors who

contribute to our Annual Fund are vital to our ability to achieve this objective. We are grateful for your support! Learn more about who our sponsors are—and how to become a sponsor—at the end of this newsletter as well as on our website. Equally important, whenever you visit a sponsoring organization or service provider, please thank them for supporting MSC. Finally, I hope you'll consider contributing—and

continuing to contribute—to our Annual Fund. You'll help us to consistently offer the highest-quality ongoing learning experiences for the growing population of seniors in Midcoast Maine!

Bruce Hauptli President



Concluding MSC's Silver Anniversary—and Glimpsing the Future

The year 2025 has been a special one for Midcoast Senior College, as we have reflected on and celebrated what MSC has accomplished in its first 25 years. The 25th Anniversary Committee, ably chaired by Freda Bernotavicz and Janet Kehl-along with MSC members Nora Bishop, Sue Goran, Bruce Hauptli, Donna Marshall, and Bonnie Studdifordplanned additional events to mark this special year. Starting in January 2025, we commemorated our beginnings with 150 members and guests, and our founding members reflected on the rewards and challenges of building MSC. Our special Silver Jubilee Summer Wisdom invited the community to a conversation with Don Carrigan about the past 25 years of Maine politics, and we toasted our lifelong learning community during our June membership social. Still to come, we'll honor our outstanding faculty during an invitational event this fall.

And finally, our year of celebration will conclude with a panel discussion on Saturday, January 10 (snow date January 11), 2026, at the St. John's Community Center in Brunswick, 1:30-3:30 p.m. The topic? Current trends in lifelong learning. The subject continues to be a hot one. Research consultancy HTF

Market Intelligence predicts that the global market for lifelong learning will increase by \$990 billion by 2030. Further research strongly suggests that lifelong learning, especially for older adults, can help preserve our cognitive functioning by stimulating the brain, thus creating new neural pathways that can support our mental acuity. These new pathways not only support further learning but also are linked to improved memory, attention, and processing speed—potentially reducing the risk of cognitive decline and dementia. Additionally, as many MSC members can attest, participating in courses, classes, excursions, and volunteering opportunities provides social interaction-thus combating the isolation, depression, and loneliness that afflict all too many seniors.

The good news is that more seniors are taking an interest in ongoing learning—thanks to trends like greater access to online learning, an emphasis on personal growth and enrichment, opportunities for community engagement and volunteerism, and the chance to participate in traditional academic courses at universities and colleges. And guess what: Midcoast Senior College checks all those boxes.

Want to know more about these trends? Join us at the January 10 event,

to hear our panel of experts share their perspectives. John Haile, Co-Chair of the MSC Curriculum Committee, will serve as our moderator. John had a 42-year career as a secondary-school English teacher and administrator, teaches for MSC, and continues his own learning by pursuing a passion for sea-kayaking.

Panel member Susan Wehry, MD, will present Social Prescribing and Lifelong Learning: Intersecting Pathways That Catalyze Healthy Living. Susan is a geriatric psychiatrist with almost 40 years of experience. During her multifaceted career, she has inspired professionals, older adults, and family caregivers throughout the United States. The former Chief of Geriatrics at the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine, she now directs AgingME, a geriatrics workforce enhancement project that she hopes will help create a more age-friendly health system. Social prescribing is ushering in a new era of healthcare and, along with lifelong learning, is helping to support growth and wellbeing for individuals and communities.

Joining Susan on the panel is Shannon Babcock, MOT/L, MFR, FINHP, CECP. She'll be presenting **Challenging Myths:**

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MSC Board of Directors

Officers

President: Bruce Hauptli Vice President: Susan Goran Treasurer: Kevin Hart Secretary: pending

Additional Board Members

Freda Bernotavicz
David Clark
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Community Outreach: Susan Goran

Curriculum: Leona Dufour

and John Haile

Development: Bruce Hauptli Events: Freda Bernotavicz Executive: Bruce Hauptli Finance: Kevin Hart Nominating: Bruce Hauptli

Subcommittees

Summer and Winter Wisdom: David Clark (chair), Craig Snapp, Reg Elwell, Stu Gillespie, Mort Achter

Newsletter: Lauren Keller Johnson (editor)

Ad-hoc Committees

Technology working group: Clare Durst, Judy Fiterman, Harry Hopcroft, Bob Jordan, Craig Snapp, David Vogt

Administrative: William VanderWolk, Janet Kehl, Laurie Spurr, Ellen Whiting

25th Anniversary: Freda Bernotavicz and Janet Kehl (chairs), Nora Bishop, Susan Goran, Bruce Hauptli, Donna Marshall, Bonnie Studdiford

Employees

Executive Director: Donna Marshall **Associate Director:** Sue Kingsland

Board News

This year, MSC will transition from having separate committees for our Summer and Winter Wisdom programs to having one committee to oversee these important programs. If you would like to join this newly unified committee, or any of our other committees, please contact Bruce Hauptli (hauptli@me.com). To learn more about our committees, select the Support button on our website and scroll down to Volunteer. Participating in a committee is a great way to meet other members of the MSC community, contribute your skills and energy, and make MSC the best it can be!

MSC Awarded Nathaniel Davis Fund Grant

Midcoast Senior College extends a heartfelt thank-you to the Town of Brunswick's Nathaniel Davis Fund for awarding MSC a grant of \$1,500 for the 2025-2026 period. Established in 1932 through a bequest in the will of Samuel Gross Davis in memory of his father, Nathaniel, the fund is intended to be used for the "pleasure of its inhabitants as the government of Brunswick that year shall decide." MSC's grant application emphasized how the funds help support two relatively costly publications: videos of various speakers that can be accessed for free on the college's website, and *The Midcoast Inquirer*, published three times each year. MSC's request thereby met the terms of the Davis fund by bringing pleasure, information, and education to the people of Brunswick—and beyond.

Concluding MSC's Silver Anniversary—and Glimpsing the Future

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How Individuals with Dementia Continue to Learn. Shannon is the Wellness Director for Islebrook Village at Wiscasset, and is an occupational therapist, integrated health practitioner, and prior business owner.

Our third panelist, Amy Amorso, MFA, will present Story as Medicine: Intergenerational Writing Projects Foster Learning, Reflection, and Connection. Amy teaches writing in the University of Southern Maine's Honors Program and English Department. Her courses include "Story as Medicine with Elders," "Island Ink Literary Journal Publishing," "Destiny and Disease: How Illness Shapes Science and Society," "Narrative Medicine: Stories of Health and Illness," "Thinking

in Honors," and "Honors Capstone." Her essays "Cut Wide Open" (2014) and "Your American Dream" (2020) were selected as Notable Essays in the Best American Essays collection. Her work has been published in *The Sun, Mount Hope, Upstreet, The Maine Review, HerStory,* and others. Amy's essay "Into the Light" is forthcoming in *Terrain* this fall.

We hope you'll join us to take advantage of this unique and timely learning opportunity and to enjoy some post-holiday catch-up with other MSC members and guests!

Susan F. Goran Vice President



Mark Your Calendar

MSC Fall Term II

Fall Term II starts the week of November 3, and registration for classes begins on October 13. Learn more about each course and find registration information at www.midcoastseniorcollege.org. You may also call our office at (207) 725-4900.

Class	Faculty
The Art of Storytelling	Phyllis Blackstone
The U.S. Supreme Court and the October 2024 Term (October 2024-June 2025)	Kevin Hart
The Acids of Modernity: History, Literature, and Culture of the 1920s	John Haile Scott Andrews
Humor: Not Just a Laughing Matter	Susan Goran
American Indian Renaissance	Steven Piker
Intelligent Universe	Barbara Snapp
William Hogarth: His Art and Time	George Young
The French Resistance (1940-1945)	Bill VanderWolk
The Lost Generation	Paul Kalkstein
Brain Repair	Donald Stein
Exploring the Universe Using Binoculars	Russell Pinizzotto
A Trio of Southern Women Writers	Michele Lettiere
All About Mars	Darby Dyar
American Religious History, WW1 to the Present	Ted Stainman

Winter Wisdom

Free and open to the public! Wednesday afternoons, 1:00-2:15 P.M. NOTE OUR NEW LOCATION: Formerly held at Curtis Memorial Library, Winter Wisdom sessions will now be held at Brunswick United Methodist Church, 320 Church Road, in Brunswick (unless otherwise noted). The new location offers important benefits—including more parking, more seating, and excellent acoustics. Sessions will also be recorded!

MSC thanks Brunswick United Methodist Church for welcoming us and the larger community to use this space. And we greatly appreciate The Highlands' support of Winter Wisdom.



Date	Presentation	Presenter
Jan. 7	Red Hot Peppers Band: Ragtime from Its Beginnings through the 1920s	Sean Fleming and his ensemble LOCATION: Unitarian Universalist Church 1 Middle Street, Brunswick ME
Jan. 14	Maine Railroads: When the Good Times Rolled	Geoffrey Doughty
Jan. 21	Humor: Not Just a Laughing Matter	Susan Flewelling Goran
Jan. 28	Ecology and Plant Life of Maine	Cheryl Swift
Feb. 4	Longfellow Days: A Poet's Dilemma	Three local poets LOCATION: Unitarian Universalist Church 1 Middle Street, Brunswick ME
Feb. 11	Loving the North Woods: 25 Years of Conservation in Maine	Karen Tilberg

Additional Events

To learn more, visit www.midcoastseniorcollege.org.

Date	Event	Location
Saturday, January 10,	Current Trends in Lifelong	St. John's Community Center
2026, 1:30-3:30 p.m.	Learning (see Susan Goran's	43 Pleasant Street
(Snow date: January 11)	description on p. 2)	Brunswick ME
Free; No registration required		



Senior Scribblers: Aspiring Writers Wanted

Do you enjoy inventing stories, playing with language, and trying out new writing techniques? If so, consider joining MSC's thriving Senior Scribblers writing group. Facilitator Harry Hopcroft suggests a prompt for each assignment, and group members draft fictional stories of up to 1,000 words. Prompts might range anywhere from "Write a story that consists only of dialogue" to quirky phrases (such as "garden party," "computer glitch," and "revenge"). Writers read their stories aloud during class. Each writer typically comes up with a unique response to the prompt, which adds to the fun and helps group members learn from each other. Aspiring writers may visit the group to see how it works, but ultimately must be members of a senior college, including MSC. To learn more about the Scribblers, contact Harry at harry.techmanage@gmail.com or (207) 841-8324.

Inquiry in Action

When it comes to curious minds, David McKeith is an exemplar. Below, he shares insights drawn from his past study of 19th-century women's diaries, which illuminated how a massive migration powerfully shaped American life.

Sadly, David passed away recently. He was not only the founder and editor of The Midcoast Inquirer but also a faculty member, board member, and long-time member of MSC. He'll be deeply missed.

When Duty to Family Came First

In the mid-19th century, more than half a million people crossed America by covered wagon, some traveling as far as 2,000 miles, in one of the greatest migrations in modern times. The Panic of 1837 was followed by prolonged economic depression, and news of cheap land in Oregon and supposedly easy-to-find California gold excited the imaginations of farm and village men. Many were in debt, and many had already moved their often-reluctant families at least once from points east.

Many women balked after hearing of their husbands' plans for what would become a bruising trek into the Trans-Mississippi West. In the winter of 1846, Mary Ann Jones's husband read a book about fertile land in Oregon and declared his intention to move the family west. "O let us not go," Mary Ann wrote in her diary—but they went anyway.

Westward-bound women often kept diaries. Examination of their content shows their substance as primarily qualification—personal records, unread by men, detailing emotions, impressions, fears, anxieties, dreams, challenges of caregiving, etc. By contrast, men's journals centered on quantification—how many spikes needed to make a hog pen, when the first corn was planted, who owed a man how much money.

Collections of women's primary sources reveal that mothers, especially, had little or no choice but to go along with their men's plans. What they did have, as indicated by many diary entries, was a deep sense of duty to the sacredness of family. Their willingness to journey west, despite their deep misgivings and outright fear, reflected a firm commitment to keeping their family together.

By the 1850s, news articles and books had cropped up describing the difficulties of living four or five months on the Overland Trail. Some women's writings tell of their anxieties and the great physical effort required to survive. One woman penciled in her diary, "There was a little child run over by a wagon. . . ." Another wrote, ". . . [A] woman died yesterday. She left six children, one of them only two days old. Poor little thing, it had better died with its mother." Yet another recorded, "We had a dreadful storm of rain and hail last night and very sharp lightning. It killed two oxen. . . ."

Yet despite the journey's difficulties, the women's courage and resolve come through.

One diary entry noted, "We must endure like good soldiers." Once families arrived in a newly forming settlement, many women served as civilizers—promoting schools, churches, and libraries. They called for a simple governing body to foster law and order, including quiet on Sundays and regulation of taverns. Despite the well-accepted Cult of Domesticity, which spelled out women's "proper" place in society, some women soon took on work that was considered the man's sphere, out of necessity, even as they displayed touches from their more civilized lives back east, such as lace curtains and flower gardens.

Access to women's diary entries from the mid-to-late 19th century has shed important light on the challenges that American families experienced during that period. The entries also illuminate gender dynamics of the time and ways in which women shaped events affecting them. Finally, perhaps they may inspire us to ask probing questions, such as: How have gender dynamics and American women's agency changed since that period? What function do diaries and journals serve in today's world? With handwritten diaries rare today, how are women expressing their voices and effecting change? What do you think?

David McKeith



Reader's Corner

Musing About Olga Tokarczuk

There are some writers whose books you purchase the instant you hear they're for sale. Thus, my immediate purchase of whatever Olga Tokarczuk pens. (She won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2018.)

My first Olga novel was Drive Your Plow over the Bones of the Dead. I thought the title absolutely arresting, later discovering it's a quote from one of William Blake's poems. The book's narrator, Janina, is a retired civil engineer, part-time English teacher, astrologer, and animal-rights activist. She and a friend translate Blake into Polish—some feat, as Polish relies on trochaic meters while English has various rhythms. I loved this batty old retiree: Janina always cleans her feet before going to bed—in case she has to go to the hospital. I laughed aloud at her musing as she and her buddy try to stop a serial killer—to the chagrin of the local incompetent police.

Other Olga reads followed as soon as I learned they'd been translated. In 2020, I finished Primeval and Other Times, in which realistic characters interact with mythical forest people. The writer subtly explores the moral choices made during the Nazi occupation of Poland, in addition to events in Poland's history from 1914 to the 1980s. Olga's not afraid of the big topics the attributes of God or the creation of a world where the battle is always between Good and Evil. Trying to understand this battle, a local squire plays a cabalistic board game given to him by a rabbi impressed by the squire's anguished questions about love and loss.

Primeval and Drive Your Plow are springboards for Olga's magnum opus, The Books of Jacob. Unlike the previously mentioned novels, this one is 900-plus pages, numbered backwards. I recommend reading Drive Your Plow and Primeval

before tackling *The Books of Jacob*. This novel is a monumental work on mysticism in 18th century Poland. All her earlier tropes and themes roil with each other as characters come, go, and reappear.

If you hesitate to tackle *Jacob*, then proceed to *The Empusium*. With a nod to Thomas Mann and *The Magic Mountain*, Olga brings together a group of male tubercular patients waiting at an inn, prior to being admitted to a sanatorium. It's 1913, and the men, somewhat like the characters in Plato's *Symposium*, meet to discuss the nature of women, while imbibing a psychedelic version of schnapps. (By the way, an empusa is a shape-shifting female monster who devours men's blood. You get the drift here.)

Of course, Death intrudes. Did the innkeeper's wife commit suicide, or was she killed? The characters hear about young men being murdered. They feel they're being watched, some encountering forest beings natural and supernatural, mythos and realism colliding and collapsing. In short, Olga at her best. The novel contains other nods and winks to Mann's work. If you've read *The Magic Mountain* or "A Death in Venice," you will enjoy what Olga is doing, much in the way you enjoy how Brahms' "First Symphony" complements Beethoven's "Ninth."

Some time ago, David Brooks penned a column about his inability to find in current novels those grand themes that dominate many 19th and early 20th century works. Some readers advised him to take up Olga. I agree. Start with one of her books, then move on to others. Olga deftly takes on all the great topics, mightily and entertainingly.

So, here's my question: Whose novels do you purchase and read the instant they're available? What keeps you coming back for more?

Leona Dufour





"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at 20 or 80. Anyone who keeps learning stays young."

—Henry Ford

"In the end, the secret to learning is so simple: Forget about it. Think only about whatever you love. Follow it, do it, dream about it. One day . . . it will hit you: learning was there all the time"

—Grace Llewellyn

"Intellectual growth should commence at birth and cease only at death."

—Albert Einstein

"That is what learning is. You suddenly understand something you have understood all your life, but in a new way."

—Doris Lessing

Our Mission

The Midcoast Inquirer
articulates the academic spirit
and educational mission of
Midcoast Senior College. To
that end, we announce course
offerings, lectures, and special
events, and provide a literary
forum of essays, reviews,

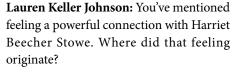
interviews, and commentaries written by faculty and students.

Faculty Focus

Meet Susan Beegel

The Midcoast Inquirer met with Susan Beegel, who taught a seminar on Harriet Beecher Stowe's groundbreaking novel Uncle Tom's Cabin for MSC's Spring Term I. I spoke with Susan to learn more about her teaching experiences. Below are excerpts from our conversation, edited for length and clarity.

Lauren Keller Johnson



Susan Beegel: When I was a little girl, women's history didn't exist as a subject, and women were never mentioned as drivers of social change. The Harriet Beecher Stowe House in Brunswick was a restaurant where my mother and her dear friend-both doctors who had attended women's colleges—would meet for lunch once each summer. They'd bring me along, and I was intrigued by how different their conversation was when no men were present. They talked about medicine and politics, for example. The Stowe House had an exhibit dedicated to, as Abraham Lincoln put it, "the little woman who wrote the book that started this big war." I was amazed that a woman could strike a major blow against slavery and do it by writing a novel.

LKJ: You've also said that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is especially timely today. How?

SB: There are strong parallels between the novel's concern with racial injustice and the "Black Lives Matter" movement, as well as between its concern for fugitive slaves and ours for migrants being hunted today. There's a similar clash of extreme, polarized views, and similar fear and uncertainty about the nation's future. Slavery cracked the foundation of the United States, and it's haunting us still.

Also, the intensity of the politics after *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published (1852) parallels what's going on now. The book was banned in the South, and booksellers

could be lynched for stocking it. People could be jailed for possessing a copy. Today, book banning is widespread and some universities have bowed to political pressure to cut courses on Black History and Women's History. I'm glad I could teach the book now.

LKJ: Tell me a bit more about your seminar.

SB: It was a combination of lecture and discussion, along with field trips to First Parish Church, the Harriet Beecher Stowe House in Brunswick, and Bowdoin College. At Bowdoin, students visited the Special Collections Lab at the Library to see items from a collection of Uncle Tom's Cabin paper ephemera that I recently donated to the College, including photos, prints, postcards, theater programs, and sheet music. We also toured an exhibit of



Susan Beegel at Special Collections Lab



contemporary protest art at Bowdoin's Art Museum, led by curator Sean Kramer.

LKJ: What inspired you to offer the seminar this year?

SB: I'd been doing lots of reading and research on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* while working on my collection, but hadn't yet had a chance to teach the novel. I wanted to challenge myself by creating a seminar. Midcoast Senior College gives faculty members the latitude to teach subjects that they want to learn more about and exposes us to mature students with sharp insights and challenging questions. I firmly believe that we can't teach without learning something in the process. And if we're not learning while we're teaching, we shouldn't be in the classroom.

LKJ: Thank you, Susan, for taking the time to speak with me!

SB: My pleasure! ■

MSC Thanks Our Volunteers

Volunteers play a vital role in enabling MSC to operate—and we're profoundly grateful for your help! If you haven't volunteered for MSC before and you think you might like to give it a try, contact us at info@midcoastseniorcollege.org or (207) 725-4900 for more information. There's a wealth of opportunities to make a difference through volunteering!

Volunteer Spotlight



Freda Bernotavicz knows first-hand how fulfilling volunteering for MSC can be. Chair of the Events Committee for four years now, as well as a board member, Freda was invited to step into these roles after taking several MSC courses. The Events Committee promotes social engagement among MSC members by designing gatherings where people can get to know one another outside of courses. Some events—such as the Annual Social for MSC members, and the Faculty Lunches—are regularly scheduled. Others are one-time informal excursions, such as visits to museums and theaters. Events Committee members also coordinate with other committees to assist at Summer and Winter Wisdom sessions and community events, including helping with preparation and registration, and sharing information about MSC.

In her role as a volunteer, Freda especially enjoys working with the other members of the Events Committee, developing relationships, and helping MSC to run more smoothly. As she puts it, "Volunteering on a committee is a great way to contribute to MSC in a deeper way. There's a lot we can do together!"

Freda believes, too, that all MSC committees could benefit from additional members. So . . . dear reader and MSC member, which MSC committees appeal to you most? Which would give you the best opportunities to contribute your knowledge, skills, and energy? Learn more about the options at https://midcoastseniorcollege.org/project/volunteer/. Consider joining a committee—you'll receive a warm welcome, and deep gratitude from MSC and your fellow volunteers!

MSC Thanks Our Continuing Sponsors...

As a non-profit organization, Midcoast Senior College relies on the support of its members, donors, and community sponsors to help fund its operating costs—so we can continue delivering the courses and learning opportunities so crucial to our community. Sponsorship represents a significant portion of our budget. We are grateful for the ongoing support from our sponsors listed at right.

Please contact us at <u>mscoffice@</u> <u>midcoastseniorcollege.org</u> to join us as a sponsor.





















...And We Welcome Three New Sponsors

Healthy living is a major focus for seniors who call Maine home, and Midcoast Senior College is delighted to welcome three new community sponsors dedicated to the wellbeing of Maine residents:

- Martin's Point Health Care. Martin's Point Health Care Centers offer compassionate care for individuals and families across Southern Maine and New Hampshire.
- MaineHealth/Mid Coast-Parkview Health. MaineHealth supports population health programs
 and services that improve the wellbeing of the communities they are honored to serve. A longterm commitment to health-care equity, education, and access lies at the heart of MaineHealth's
 integrated health system.
- Islebrook Village at Wiscasset. The newest community in New England-based Everbrook Senior Living's portfolio, Islebrook Village offers 105 units of independent and assisted living, as well as transitional and traditional memory care.





