



Maine Foundations Donate \$75,000 to Address Urgent Community Needs Due to Maine Mill Closings

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Bangor, ME The Maine Community Foundation, John T. Gorman Foundation and Bangor Savings Bank Foundation announced today they are providing \$75,000 to address immediate needs of displaced workers and their families, as well as other community members, who have been affected by recent mill closures in northern and eastern Maine.

The three philanthropic organizations formed a collaborative funding effort to support hundreds of Maine people whose lives have been affected in rural communities where job opportunities are sparse and winter's heating costs are significant. The funds - which are available immediately - will go to four agencies: Good Shepherd Food Bank, Our Katahdin, Penquis Community Action Program (CAP) and Washington Hancock Community Agency (WHCA).

Yellow Light Breen, Executive Vice President of Bangor Savings Bank, spoke on behalf of the Bangor Savings Bank Foundation. "This emergency response effort is, for Bangor Savings Bank's 720 employees, an example of neighbors helping neighbors. We live and operate in the communities that have been hardest hit by mill closures, and we see firsthand the need to provide immediate support for those who are struggling to make ends meet." The Bank's Foundation helped convene other funders for the briefings that led to the collaboration.

Renae Muscatell, with Penquis CAP, commented. "We are very grateful to these foundations for the care and concern shown to our neighbors. Due to several mill closures in the past year, approximately 1,200 individuals in our communities faced the harsh reality of job loss. It's an unfortunate situation that has had an impact on an entire region." Penquis CAP has seen the ripple effect of the magnitude of the job loss and is working with Transition Teams, Peer Support workers and other CAP agencies to funnel funds to where the need is greatest. "It can be difficult for people to ask for help but once these basic needs are addressed, then people can focus on searching for a new job, or entering a training program that will lead to new opportunities."

Jamey House, a displaced mill worker from Lincoln and a designated Peer Support Worker, was on hand with a message about these emergency funds. "This has been a very tough experience for so many Maine citizens and their families, but the outpouring of support has been amazing. I came here today to make sure these organizations who are providing this money know how much their

generosity is appreciated.” House was employed at the mill in Lincoln for seven years and has returned to school to get a degree in business management. “Not only is the support for immediate needs like food and heating assistance appreciated, but I’m so grateful to be back in school preparing for a new career. I’m a single parent who is juggling a lot. The education is essential to my long-term stability so that I can raise my two children.”

Good Shepherd Food Bank will benefit from this collaborative effort as it works tirelessly to ensure that Maine families do not go hungry. Melissa Huston, Director of Philanthropy for Northern Maine, has seen the impact of the mill closings on her region of the state. “Hunger is a reality in every community in Maine. However, our mill towns have been dealt an extra blow. We are so grateful to these three Foundations for their generous and timely gift. This funding will allow the Food Bank to assess the immediate needs of each of these communities to ensure that everyone has access to the nutrition they need to maintain their health during this transition.”

Peter Taylor, Vice President of Program Development and Grant-making Services for Maine Community Foundation and board chair of the Maine Philanthropy Center, also participated in designing and implementing this collaborative effort among participating funders. His organization was approached by Our Katahdin, a new nonprofit that is bringing residents together to identify a new vision for the region, provide leadership development and mentoring support, and raise money for community projects through crowd funding. “Maine Community Foundation is excited to be supporting Our Katahdin as a new organization providing ways for local residents to form a common vision for the region that can be achieved by working together. Supporting local leadership that can mobilize people and resources toward that vision will be critical to the long-term success of these communities.”

Mike Seile, Vice President of Our Katahdin also commented. “These funds will allow Our Katahdin an opportunity to expand and support business growth and therefore job development through leadership training, mentoring and support services to individuals seeking new employment.”

Tony Cipollone, President and CEO of the John T. Gorman Foundation said it made sense to be part of a larger, collaborative effort, in order to achieve a greater impact. “Our Foundation is focused on helping those in need and specifically strengthening families and communities facing hardship.”

Joe Perkins, Washington Hancock Community Agency’s Director of Development and Community Services, pointed to how the funding will benefit his community. “We’ve seen significant hardship this year in our region. We’re extremely humbled by this generous donation and overwhelmed by this kind of support. On behalf of those we serve, who need heating assistance and help getting their feet back on the ground, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.”

The allocation of the funds includes \$35,000 for fuel assistance through Penquis CAP and WHCA; \$30,000 for food assistance through Good Shepherd; and \$10,000 for Our Katahdin to support leadership development, mentoring, and communication. Fuel assistance will meet emergency needs for those who are eligible in 100 gallon increments. Those in need should call 2-1-1 to inquire about the process. The food assistance, which supports local food pantries and school-based programs, is designed not only to provide necessary food, but also to assist with better distribution and storage in order to meet increasing demand.

Breen and his colleagues hope this type of support continues. “Following this initial effort, several interested Maine foundations, through the Maine Philanthropy Center, will continue to explore how funders can work collaboratively to help these communities rebuild their economies through education, training, and job creation initiatives.”

About the Foundations and Nonprofit Organizations

Maine Community Foundation works to strengthen Maine’s economy with special focus given to education, leadership and quality of place.

The John T. Gorman Foundation is dedicated to advancing ideas and opportunities that can improve the lives of disadvantaged people in Maine.

Bangor Savings Bank Foundation focuses its philanthropic efforts on worthy initiatives that will make Maine’s communities more prosperous, more livable, and more vibrant.

Penquis CAP’s mission is to assist individuals and families in preventing, reducing, or eliminating poverty in their lives and, through partnerships, to engage the community in addressing economic and social needs. Penquis primarily serves low- and moderate-income individuals in Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Knox Counties, though several programs extend well beyond these boundaries.

Washington Hancock Community Agency’s mission is to bring community resources together to help people in Washington and Hancock Counties achieve self-sufficiency and a better quality of life.

Good Shepherd Food Bank’s mission is to eliminate hunger in Maine by sourcing and distributing nutritious food to people in need, building strong community partnerships, and mobilizing the public in the fight to end hunger.

Our Katahdin is dedicated to promoting projects of local leaders, and connecting them with a broader Maine community who value this region of the state and want to support positive action.