

Silver TRACKS

University of Maine Retirees Newsletter

Spring 2024

Message from the Chair, President's Council of Retired Employees:

Greetings to University of Maine Retirees,

I am looking forward to seeing you at Homecoming on Friday, June 14. Mix, mingle, renew old friendships and make new friends during the Registration/Meet the Organizations hour, during lunch, and after the Homecoming has ended. There will be a broad slate of organizations hosting tables to provide information and in some cases offer opportunities for service. The President's Hikel Award highlights the benefits to all of service. Considering Bangor just set a new all-time record for least snowfall in February, you will not want to miss our 2024 Homecoming speaker on climate change.

This year two 136-year-old UMaine retirees—well, retired buildings—are still contributing as Coburn and Holmes Halls (now Hotel Ursa) have rooms reserved for retirees at Homecoming. Among the four tours conducted after lunch will be a tour of the new hotel. Also consider the puffin watch retiree outing from Bar Harbor on July 12; last year's schooner retiree outing was popular and well received. See elsewhere in this newsletter or the retiree's website (<https://umaine.edu/retirees/>) for further details on the Homecoming and the puffin cruise.

Thomas Sandford, Associate Professor Emeritus of Civil Engineering

Retiree Homecoming 2024!

Mark your calendar! Please join us on Friday June 14 for the annual Retiree Homecoming.

- Location: Wells Conference Center on the Orono campus. 131 Munson Rd.
- Welcome by President Ferrini-Mundy. Keynote by Dr. Jacquelyn Gill, Associate Professor of Paleocology and Plant Ecology, on aspects of climate change.
- Four optional after-lunch tours—Littlefield Garden, Versant Power Astronomy Center (including a show in the planetarium), Rogers Farm Master Gardener Demonstration Garden, and the new on-campus Hotel Ursa (including historic campus buildings Coburn and Holmes Halls). More details inside this issue of Silver Tracks.

There are tour size limitations and you must indicate your preference when registering (see back page). It will be first-come first-served.

There will be very limited shuttle service for those with walking limitations. We encourage you to provide your own transportation if desired. Hotel Ursa is not far down Munson Road. There is ample parking near the Versant Power Astronomy Center and Littlefield Garden. You must transport yourself to Rogers Farm, which is 3.2 miles away (about 8 minutes by car) from Wells.

- Registration begins at 9 AM with coffee, tea, and juice available. The tours end about 3 PM.



- 9 AM and on: Over 20 organizations available to meet you, including the University of Maine Foundation, Aetna, Alight (formally AON), UM Benefits, the Collins Center, Versant Astronomy Center, Hudson Museum, Zillman Art Museum, Eastern Area Agency on Aging, Fogler Library, Franco American Center, Literacy Volunteers of Bangor, Senior College, and UM Extension.
 - Introduction of the Hikel Awardee for 2024. Announcement of the Brown Scholarship awardee.
 - Free lunch and door prizes.
 - A parking lot will be reserved for attendees (the “Wells Lot” across from Wells on Munson—look for the signs).
- Information on registering for the Retiree Homecoming is on the back page of this newsletter.**

Roger Merchant Discusses an Active Retirement

Roger Merchant retired from Cooperative Extension in 2010. He is a licensed forester and professional photographer, and is certified by the National Association for Interpretation. Roger earned a degree in Forest and Land Management from UMaine, but had left the state for work. He returned to Maine in 1980 after seeing an ad in the *Maine Times* for a person to do Forestry Education and community-based work for Extension in Piscataquis County. His broad-based education and experiences made him an ideal candidate for the position. Besides his degree, Roger had a background in social work and community development. In the 1970s Roger worked in West Virginia, primarily in the field of social work.



Over his 30-year UMaine career, Roger created programs in Forestry and Environmental Education for kids at risk using the Outbound Experiential Model. In addition, his leadership/ community development work led to successful heritage and culture-based tourism programs.

Roger began his photography journey when his father gave him a camera for graduation. Immediately he began photographing his footprints from environments and locations over the span of a lifetime. In Maine, he began photographing forests, rivers, and landscapes and noticed significant changes in forest landscapes over time. His journey has continued and expanded in retirement. He has two websites featuring his work—his original site at rogermerchant.com and, more recently, his site natureartplace.com that features his high-quality artistic work.

Thoughts on Retirement

“It can’t be said enough, [it is important] to stay active physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. Fitness is important.” Roger believes that “in our culture, when you step out the door

into retirement, this is the end of your social value. In indigenous societies elders have a role to play to their last breath.”

Asked about his experience with retirement, Roger doesn’t feel that classic retirement fits his style or desire. He misses the collegial relationships he had which have not been replaced with anything to the same extent and engagement. He said that he had to learn to let that go. Roger cautions that the last thing a retiree wants to do is to retire and start setting up to do things like they did before in their working life. “I went through a period where I was getting connected with this and that and my wife asked me if I was trying to recreate my work. I think in a way I was but when you retire you need to let go of that.”

But Roger feels it’s important for retirees to “stay connected, remain active, pursue a passion, and remain linked to what you did.” For Roger that link is through photography. Recently, Roger presented a 1.5-hour webinar on Forest Photography for the National Forest Guild. “What I went through in creating and presenting my webinar was very different from my work. It was related but very different because I was working in a realm where I had not done any program development presentation work, but it clearly built on my forestry, social work, and extension background. But the photography dimension was really putting myself on the line in a way I had never done before. It featured my work, my interpretation and being able to turn that into a learning experience for an audience that I care about.”

He offers words of caution about avoiding isolation. “I treasure solitude; I love being alone in the woods; that’s what got me through COVID. Solitude is different from isolation . . . It’s really important in retirement to not isolate yourself and become cut off from relationships and people.”

Roger would welcome a reconnection with retirees. He feels that the “University or Cooperative Extension could play an important role to help create, strengthen, and nurture relationship among retirees.” Perhaps the President’s Council of Retired Employees might play a role in helping retirees reconnect, perhaps by a pre-Homecoming event and/or outings and events spread throughout the year.

2024 Retiree Homecoming Tours (see full registration information on page 6)

This year we are offering 4 different tours after lunch. You must indicate your preference when registering. Assignments are first-come first-served. We can offer only limited shuttle service for those needing special accommodations. However, there is convenient parking near Littlefield Garden, Versant Astronomy Center, and Rogers Farm. Hotel Ursa is just a few blocks from Wells Conference Center.

- Brad Libby, Superintendent of Horticultural Facilities, will lead a **tour of the Ornamentials Trial Garden**. The Ornamentials Trial Garden has nearly 2,500 plantings, with an extensive collection of cold-hardy landscape plants.
- The **tour of Versant Power Astronomy Center** includes a look at the facilities and telescopes, plus a 1-hour show in the planetarium “Forward to the Moon.” This show engages audiences in NASA’s efforts to send humans and robots to the moon and Mars. The next step is the Artemis Program which plans to land the first woman on the moon’s surface. Jessica Meir from Caribou Maine is an astronaut in the program and might be the first Mainer on the moon.
- We are offering a **tour of the new on-campus Hotel Ursa**, located a few blocks down the road from the Wells Conference Center. It includes two historic buildings, Holmes and Coburn, which have been extensively refurbished, as well as a new building Polaris Hall. See the separate article in this issue.
- Cooperative Extension’s Horticulturist Kate Garland will lead a **tour of the Maine Master Gardener Demonstration Garden** at Rogers Farm. This beautiful garden teaches and inspires. You will have to provide your own transportation to Rogers Farm, which is 3.2 miles away from Wells Conference Center. Rogers Farm is part of the Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station at the state’s R1 public research university.

The President's Council of Retired Employees

Thomas Sandford, Chair
Rick Borgman, Vice Chair
Richard Judd, Secretary
David Bagley
Louis Bassano
Brenda Collamore
Cindy Eves-Thomas
Rich Kent
Claire Strickland
Althea Tibbetts
Gail Werrbach
Isabella LoRusso
Sarah McPartland-Good
Jeffery Mills
Tom Peaco

Mission Statement

The Council will enhance communication between the University of Maine and the community of retired employees.

The Council will encourage active involvement of retirees in the life of the University. The Council will provide advice to the University's President on matters of importance to retirees and the University community in general.

umaine.edu/retirees



A Note from UMaine President Ferrini-Mundy

What a beautiful spring we are beginning to experience! I am pleased to see students and members of our community enjoying the weather and all that our Orono campus has to offer. Spring is a great time of year to write to you all about the exciting projects and opportunities happening at our university.

UMaine has seen numerous construction projects and renovations on campus. This spring, Hotel Ursa, UMaine's new independent boutique hotel and first public-private partnership (P3), will be opening its doors, offering high-quality hospitality services and supporting local community events and partnerships. Ursa incorporates Coburn and Holmes Hall, two of the oldest historic buildings on campus, into its unique foundation and construction, offering 95 hotel rooms and suites, and a bistro cafe. I welcome you all

to visit the hotel this spring and enjoy its beautiful architecture.

Through research, learning, and public engagement, UMaine continues to strengthen our state's academic and economic opportunities while maintaining an inclusive and safe learning environment for our students. Through our Finish Strong program, UMaine and UMaine at Machias are partnering with UMaine Fort Kent to offer a new adult degree completion initiative launching this spring. I am eager to see the success of this program and how it advances adult accessibility to higher education and bolsters workforce development throughout the state.

Our university continues to flourish with new opportunities and offerings. I would like to thank you all for your ongoing support of UMaine. I truly believe that we can continue to enhance the academic success and excellence offered at UMaine. You all play a significant role in strengthening our community engagement and sharing our Black Bear pride!

Joan Ferrini-Mundy
President, University of Maine and
University of Maine at Machias
Vice Chancellor for
Research and Innovation
University of Maine System

Barbara Hikel Award Recipient 2023

The Barbara Hikel Award is given annually by the University President to a University of Maine retiree who, after retirement, provides extraordinary voluntary service to the University of Maine. Last spring the President announced Michael Eckardt as the 2023 recipient of the Hikel Award.

Mike Eckardt was the Vice President for Research from 2003 to 2013. Since his retirement he has assisted Special Collections in Fogler Library as well as serving as a board member for the Collins Center for the Arts. As a member of the Collins Center for the Arts Advisory Board, Mike developed a familiarity with the Hudson Museum and its extraordinary collections. For more than 5 years, he worked diligently, spending thousands of hours editing the Museum's collection database, reviewing nearly 10,000



records. During COVID, Mike did not stop work on the project. He continued to work remotely each week on this project to facilitate migration to an enhanced database system that supports multiple synchronous users, greatly increasing the capacity to track and research the collection.

Mike's dedication, attention to detail, and willingness to do additional research greatly contributed to a public access database that allows researchers from around the world to be able to see the entire collection virtually.

Mike Eckardt is an excellent choice for the 2023 Barbara Hikel Retiree Award.

Announcements

Retiree Field Trip

Plan to join UM Retirees on a 2.5-3 hour **Puffin and Lighthouse cruise** on Friday, July 12. The Bar Harbor Whale Watching Company's cruise leaves from Bar Harbor at 9:30 (arrive at the dock 45 minutes earlier).

After the voyage you'll have time to have lunch and wander the shops of Bar Harbor if desired. Cost is \$73.58 per person. Reserve places at sandford@maine.edu or 207-942-0598. Hold your place(s) by sending your fee(s) (address upon reservation).



Last fall's retiree field trip aboard the Schooner Olaf was a great success. Don't miss this year's summer cruise.

Oral Histories

Once again this year All Maine Women, led by sociology major and pre-law student Paige Allen, interviewed retirees about their experiences at UMaine. The interviewees this year were Maxine Harrow (education field experience, College of Education and Human Development) and Bill Dalton (catering services). Maxine worked at UMaine for 25 years and retired in 2005. Bill worked at the university for 40 years and retired in 2022.

The interview will be posted to the PCRE website, joining interviews from prior years already there: <https://umaine.edu/retirees/oral-history-project/>

AARP Maine Fraud Watch

AARP offers an online program the second Thursday of each month at 10 a.m. "Fraud Watch with Phil and Pam" presents an insightful discussion on fighting scams and fraud in Maine. They talk with other Mainers, colleagues, and community leaders.

Scammers are using innocent older Mainers as inadvertent accessories to their crimes to both steal money and to insulate themselves from being discovered by the authorities.

These discussions are free and open to all. You do not need to be an AARP member to join the conversation. For more information and to register search "AARP Maine Fraud Watch" and you will find the site.

If you are a victim or a target of fraud, call the local police and the AARP Fraudwatch Help Line at 877-908-3360.

UMS Resource for Retirement Inquiries

Ann Remick is the UMS Retiree Benefits Liaison and is available to answer general retirement questions and advocate for retirees if they have issues. She can be reached at 207-973-3373 and at ann.remick@maine.edu.



Deanna and Pamela Oakes

UMaine Retirees Harold "Brownie" Brown Scholarship 2024

Scholarship Awarded to Deanna Oakes

My name is Deanna Oakes and I am a senior here at the University of Maine majoring in Elementary Education with a focus in Childhood Development. The last three years on campus have been absolutely incredible; it feels like a tightly connected community. As for my grandmother Pamela Oakes, she retired from the University of Maine after 45 years of service in the department of Civil and Environmental Engineering as an Administrative Assistant. She is now enjoying retirement by spending the summers in northern Maine and the winters in Florida. Receiving the Harold "Brownie" Brown Scholarship is such an honor. I am proud to come from a family with such extensive work ethic. When I reach graduation I hope to pursue a career with as much commitment and success as my grandmother did at the University of Maine.

The endowed scholarship fund has grown over the years, thanks to the generosity of many retirees. Your gifts can be sent to the University of Maine Foundation or made online: our.umaine.edu/retirees.

New Campus Hotel Ursa

Opened on March 5th, the Hotel Ursa at 1 Moosehead Road features 95 rooms and suites in three buildings. The name of the hotel, of course, refers to the Ursa Major and Ursa Minor constellations, meaning “Greater Bear and Lesser Bear,” appropriate for a UMaine Black Bear hotel.

For those who might enjoy a taste of days gone by, the stylishly restored Coburn and Holmes halls, gems from the 1880s, offer classic amenities. The newly built Polaris Hall complements the 19th-century, repurposed buildings offering 58 contemporary rooms. Coburn Hall features 30 rooms of varying sizes and Holmes Hall has 7 rooms plus a presidential suite that faces Munson Road. The hotel has a fitness area, a study room, and MajorMinor, a cafe and bar open during daytime and evening hours. In addition, hotel guests may access the New Balance Student Recreation Center.



The parking area between Holmes Hall and the Fogler Library was redesigned and is reserved for hotel guests.

Hotel Ursa has set aside a block of rooms for the Retiree Homecoming for June 13, 14, and/or 15. For the special group rate book at HotelUrsa.com by May 16 using special group code PCRE. The rooms set aside for this event are first-come, first-served. A tour of the hotel is being offered the afternoon of Homecoming. Select the tour during registration, also first-come, first-served.

Both Holmes Hall and Coburn Hall date from the late 1880s, and both were designed by Boston architect Frank Kidder (an 1879 civil engineering graduate of Maine State College, as the University of Maine was then known). Both are in the University’s Historic District.

Holmes Hall, before later additions, was originally a five-bay, two-story building. It was known as the “Experiment Station Building” until it was renamed as Holmes in 1904. It was the first dedicated home of the chemistry department. When built, views to the east, south, southwest were expansive, overlooking wide open agricultural land. To the west the view included Coburn Hall, the President’s House, and the river beyond.

Coburn Hall was built in 1887-88 for the Departments of Agriculture and Natural History. In addition to administrative offices and classrooms, Coburn also contained the college library and a natural history museum. Views took in the President’s House and the river. Coburn Hall was considered a very important addition to the campus when it was built because it was the second classroom building erected on the Maine State College campus and because it was the third building constructed of brick. It also represented the importance of agriculture to the college and state. It was in Coburn in 1897 that the national honor society Phi Kappa Phi was created.



Holmes Hall



Coburn Hall



President's Council of Retired Employees
c/o University of Maine Foundation
Two Alumni Place
Orono, ME 04469-5792
umaine.edu/retirees

Join us for Retiree Homecoming June 14

Stay in Touch and Homecoming Registration

Please register for Homecoming and/or update your contact information online:

our.umaine.edu/retireehomecoming

If you are unable to complete your registration online, please call the UMaine Foundation at 207.581.5100. The staff will gather your registration information.

Remember to let us know whether you are bringing a guest and whether either require any special accommodations.

Also, if you plan on joining a tour after lunch, be sure to make your choice during registration. Once a tour is full it will no longer be available to choose.

1. Tour of Littlefield Garden. (Maximum 60 retirees)
2. Tour of Versant Power Astronomy Center (including a show in the planetarium).
(Maximum 50 retirees)
3. Tour of the new on-campus Hotel Ursa (including historic campus buildings Coburn and Holmes Halls).
(Maximum 20 retirees)
4. Tour of Rogers Farm Master Gardener Demonstration Garden. (Maximum 30 retirees)

Note that Rogers Farm is about an 8-minute car ride from Wells Conference Center. Please provide your own transportation.

(See tour descriptions on page 2)

Register by June 3, 2024.