

Inspiring Mainers Recognized with Maine Downtown Center Awards and Gorham Named Maine's Newest Downtown Network Community

Maine has a well-deserved reputation as a place where people care about each other and support each other's endeavors. Then there are the individuals who are the pillars of local life – the volunteer, the selectwoman, the business owner who goes above and beyond to make your town “home”. MDF's Maine Downtown Center recently recognized the Gorham Village Alliance for their work toward qualifying Gorham as a Downtown Network Community and celebrated the efforts of five individuals in other communities who were given Achievement Awards:

- **Matt Dubois - 2017 Local Downtown Hero.**



Growing up in Millinocket, Matt Dubois saw what the economic collapse following the local paper mill closing did to his neighbors, his friends and their families. So, when he chose to return to Maine and live in another former mill town, Skowhegan, after going to college and working out of state ... he vowed things would be different. He studied the market and identified opportunities for economic and community development. He joined the Main Street Skowhegan board in 2012 and has been board president since 2014. He co-owns two downtown businesses with his husband, Michael Hunt, and his twin brother Mike DuBois: The Bankery, an artisan bakery in a former bank; and Skowhegan Fleuriste & Formalwear, a flower and gift shop that also rents out formal attire. In addition, Matt volunteers his time and energy to multiple community events and organizations.

- **Tony and Traci Austin – Downtown Project of the Year.**



Before



After

If Maine has moxie, no town personifies this more than Lisbon Falls, home of the Moxie Festival since 1982. Celebrating both Maine’s “can do” culture and the carbonated beverage named for it, the festival was the brainchild of Frank Annicetti, a local businessman and owner of the "Moxie Building", which housed the Moxie Store and has symbolized the spirit of Moxie and of Lisbon for years. So imagine the responsibility of buying that iconic property. Tony and Traci Austin are locals and when they took over the building in the Spring of 2017, they invested substantial financial resources and thousands of hours of hard work to completely renovate the building. Determined to keep it a Lisbon centerpiece, they turned it into a family-style restaurant dedicated to the celebration of Lisbon and Lisbon Falls. The history of the community is displayed on the walls and throughout the bartop which is covered by hundreds of community photos spanning decades. Named “Frank’s” after Annicetti, it harnesses the history and vitality of the community. The project is already spurring more investment and will be a catalyst for other downtown revitalization efforts.

- **Andra Burns and David Holt – Downtown Visionary Award.**



Andrea Burns, a long-time community volunteer in the town of Norway, is best described as “all heart.” She galvanizes volunteers around community causes and gives meaning to the terms “quality of place”. Equally committed to the economic and cultural success of Norway is David Holt, the retired Norway Town Manager. David is a no-nonsense steward of civic resources and

a master at securing buy-in from an understandably cautious board of selectmen. Due in large part to the combined efforts of these two committed citizens, Norway has transformed from a drive-by hamlet to a destination stop for people wanting a vibrant town to raise a family in and those traveling from all over New England to the ski and hiking resorts of Western Maine.

Finally, MDF's Maine Downtown Center would like to congratulate **Gorham for being named Maine's newest Downtown Network Community**. Participating in this program is one of the goals identified in the town's 2015 Main Street Plan. The supports offered through the program will help expedite progress toward the Plan's other goals for Gorham Village, which include improving the aesthetic appeal, improving livability, enhancing economic vitality, and protecting historic resources. This work will be facilitated by the Gorham Village Alliance (GVA), a diverse group of 17 stakeholders including business owners, municipal employees, a local developer, Gorham Economic Development Corporation and the University of Southern Maine. Gorham joins 15 other Network Communities across the State.