



For Immediate Release

MDF Recognizes Outstanding, Innovative Efforts to Drive Economic Growth and Improve Lives

2018 Champions of Economic Development and Distinguished Leadership Awards Announced

AUGUSTA, Maine — November 8, 2018 — The [Maine Development Foundation \(MDF\)](#), which is celebrating its landmark 40th Anniversary this year, is pleased to recognize outstanding, innovative work and steadfast dedication to driving economic growth and improving the lives of all Mainers through the annual, statewide awards to Champions of Economic Development and for Distinguished Leadership.

“These five awards honor individuals, organizations and businesses who are involved day in and day out in innovative and critical work that is strengthening communities, growing our economy and expanding opportunities for all Mainers.” says Yellow Light Breen, MDF’s President and CEO. “Their efforts represent actionable and scalable methods to ensure Maine continues to be a great place to live and work for decades to come.”

[Johnny’s Selected Seeds](#) was named the 2018 Champion of Education and Workforce Development for their commitment to supporting professional and educational attainment goals of their employees. Employee-owned since 2006, Johnny’s offers flexible work schedules, tuition-reimbursement and scholarship support for employees pursuing degrees; a variety of professional development classes and programs; and pays for training or courses that result in professional certifications. “We do it because it’s the right thing to do, but it is also absolutely a long-term business strategy,” says Sandra Turner, Director of Human Resources for Johnny’s. “It gives individual employees the confidence, financial and professional boost they are seeking to further their careers, it improves morale and is critical to employee retention – which is the biggest challenge to businesses today.”

Charlotte Mace, Executive Director of [Biobased Maine](#), was named 2018 Champion of Economic Development for Innovation. New forest products and applications from wood, such as high performance materials, renewable chemicals, and advanced biofuels, are rapidly being developed and provide Maine with opportunities to be a global leader in the emerging bioeconomy. Charlotte Mace is on the forefront of bringing that shift to Maine and to establishing a thriving, innovative and diverse industry here that provides good jobs in vibrant Maine communities. “Maine was built in large part on the first golden age of forestry and we are poised to rise again on the second golden age of forestry in Maine,” says Charlotte.

Two individuals and organizations received the 2018 William F. King, Jr., Downtown Champion Award: Brook Ewing Minner of [Main Street Bucksport](#) and Susan Lessard, Town Manager for the [Town of Bucksport](#). When the Verso Paper Mill went dark in 2014, it was a major shock for the town. But after a cycle of mourning, residents came together with an incredible spirit of resolve to rebuild their local economy and invest in community assets. These two leaders helped turn a vision of a vibrant, prosperous and socially connected historic downtown into a reality through the dedication and hard work that comes with economic revitalization.

MDF’s two annual awards for Distinguished Leadership went to Jane Morrison, who was named the 2018 ICL Distinguished Alumni Award. This honor is given to an alum of MDF’s ICL Leadership Intensive Program. Sawin Millet was

named the 2018 Kenneth M. Curtis Leadership Award winner, which is given to an alum of MDF's Leadership Maine Program. Both programs are celebrating their 25th Anniversary Year and these awards recognize leaders who exhibit an ongoing extraordinary commitment and engagement in leading community, workforce and policy efforts that improve the lives of all Mainers.

All five awards were bestowed before a crowd of 300 at Brick South in Portland on October 25th. Such committed and creative leaders and organizations enable Maine Development Foundation and its partners to drive economic growth across the state for a long time to come. To find out more about the broad range of programs, coalitions and initiatives MDF leads, go to mdf.org.

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About the Maine Development Foundation

Maine Development Foundation provides leadership development, trusted research, and creative partnerships to enable Maine business, community and policy leaders to drive Maine's long-term economic growth. To learn more about MDF, visit www.mdf.org.