

Connector

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Celebrating 50 Years!

On June 22 we honored our 50th Anniversary by hosting a community celebration at our Educare Central Maine location. And what a party it was! More than 500 community members enjoyed a barbecue and birthday cake, a climbing wall, a petting zoo, a bounce house, and lots of other activities for children and families. We even had special visits from Batman, Spiderman, Princess Elsa and other favorite children's characters.

And as children enjoyed the activities, parents learned about the many opportunities offered through our agency. We heard many versions of the same theme: that attendees were unaware of all different services KVCAP had to offer. We anticipate an increased utilization of our programs as a result of the event.

KVCAP is proud to be the Community Action Agency serving Kennebec and Somerset counties for 50 years. The Promise of Community Action *embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.*

We are grateful to our sponsors for making all facets of this event free of charge and available to the entire community. Their support was vital and is a great vote of confidence in our mission. We look forward to a future where every person has the resources needed to find social and financial stability and success!



Thank you event sponsors!

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Public transit continues to grow in Maine and so does the demand

By Jim Wood

A new and improved public transit system called Kennebec Explorer launched in the Augusta-Waterville corridor in 2011. The KVCAP system featured new buses, improved accessibility, a redesigned time schedule, commuter routes between Waterville and Augusta and other improvements.

The system, which has expanded into the Skowhegan-Madison area with the launch of the Somerset Explorer, has improved community access for many people. During the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2011, the KV Transit/Kennebec Explorer public transit system provided what was then an encouraging 44,273 rides. Last year, the improved Explorer program provided 82,813 rides and is well on the way to exceeding 100,000 rides this year.

Other public transit systems in Maine and around the country also are experiencing increased ridership. While ridership has grown at unprecedented levels, the demand for additional services also has grown.

Maine is recognized as having the eldest per-capita population in the United States. Many families now recognize that senior members of their families are placing themselves and other road users at risk by operating vehicles while their physical and/or visual capacity deteriorates. As the baby boomer generation approaches retirement age, those numbers will grow. People are looking for safe and reliable options in order to maintain their independence.

Affordable access to preventive health care is an essential element in avoiding long-term and costly health issues. For people without motor vehicles, this access can be challenging and require people to use costly alternatives, assuming those alternative are available. Affordable public transit can provide that general access to these vital services and help to control escalating health care costs.

A college education is an important element in developing a person's opportunity for a successful career. Central Maine has several excellent colleges and universities that offer good educational options. Many students facing the expense of their education cannot afford to purchase a car. Without a vehicle, however, access to educational opportunities is limited. Improved public transit can help.

The United States has developed laws and opportunities designed to enhance public involvement in our communities for people with disabilities. This initiative has created tremendous opportunities for people with disabilities to work, shop, travel, and engage in normal activities as valuable and integrated members of our society. Community access is vital to their independence and well-being. Outside public transit systems, few affordable transportation options exist for people who require accessible transportation. Many people with disabilities cannot afford the cost of owning and operating an adapted vehicle for personal use. Enhanced accessible public transit can help.

Communities put great energy and effort into creating strategic plans to attract businesses to their areas to enhance their tax bases and stimulate the local economy. The availability of an adequate workforce is a key consideration for any business looking to locate in a community. Many low-wage workers cannot afford to travel long distances to work because of transportation costs. Many U.S. cities have addressed the problem of getting workers to the business by supporting commuter transit routes to and from the city during key commuter hours. Affordable transit options for commuters benefit both local businesses and commuters by offering a low-cost alternative to operating a private vehicle. It reduces traffic congestion during key commuter hours and limits the need for extensive parking areas. Enhanced commuter transit can help.

In virtually every major city in the United States, and countless numbers of smaller communities, public transit systems are an integral component of local government, providing the lifeblood of these cities and communities. Without this vital service, communities are challenged to be competitive in the current economic environment and residents can become isolated, economically challenged and unhealthy.

Good transit is good economic development. Good transit helps people become and stay educated, employed and independent. Good transit is good health care access. Good transit helps everyone in our communities. Good transit is good business.

We encourage our communities to assess their vision of public transit and recognize that our towns have the potential for significant economic benefits by offering enhanced support to public transit on behalf of current and future residents and businesses. We ask our partners to help us build the public transit programs our neighbors deserve.

Jim Wood is transportation director for KVCAP and leader of the Sustain Mid Maine Transportation Team and Active Community Environment Team. jimw@kvcap.org.

Golf Tournament & Silent Auction

KVCAP will be hosting a golf tournament and silent auction in honor of our 50th Anniversary.

Where: Lakewood in Madison.

When: Saturday, August 22

Registration begins at noon - Shotgun start at 1pm

Fee: \$75 per Player - \$300 Team of 4

Fee is \$40 if you are a Lakewood member

(Includes green fees & cart, barbecue dinner, gift bags, prizes, and more!)

Silent Auction will be held from noon-5pm at Lakewood.

For sponsorship information or to register, contact Andrea Pasco at 207-859-1630 or andrap@kvcap.org.

Kennebec Valley Community Action Program

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