

Harold Alfond Foundation makes \$450,000 challenge grant to inspire broad, grassroots support for Docks to Doorways

Embargoed for release: July 4, 2010 Contact: Loren Wright Loren Wright @ 207-504-2185

BELGRADE LAKES – Docks to Doorways, a \$2.5 million conservation initiative, announced at its July 4th kick-off that it was on track to meet its fundraising goals, thanks to the generosity of its lead donors and a \$450,000 challenge grant from the Harold Alfond Foundation.

Co-chair of the Fundraising Committee Gail Rizzo told the crowd, “We are very pleased to announce today that we have exceeded our June fundraising goal of \$1.5 million and are well on our way to raising the remaining million by Columbus Day 2010, but we will need everybody’s help to succeed. The Alfond Foundation grant, which aims to inspire broad, grassroots support, will match your donation dollar for dollar,” Rizzo explained, noting that the group had only until October to raise the balance of \$540,000.

Docks to Doorways, which is designed to revitalize the village of Belgrade Lakes and to improve water quality in the region, also announced plans for a new community park and a 3,500 square foot lakes resource center. Both the community space and the Maine Lakes Resource Center are located in the village of Belgrade Lakes and are scheduled to open in 2011. The initiative is led by the Belgrade Lakes Association (BLA), Belgrade Regional Conservation Alliance (BRCA) and Colby College.

Also on hand to make the announcements were dozens of members of the Steering Committee, including summer residents Barbara Alfond and Scott Finlay, Colby College President Bro Adams and Chemistry Professor Whitney King, local business owner Diane Oliver of Day’s Store and Kennebec Savings Bank President Mark Johnston.

King explained that Great Pond was placed recently on the list of water bodies deemed “impaired” by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. “To restore this lake and others,” he noted, “It is necessary for property owners to adopt best conservation practices. A team of more than 20 Colby faculty and students in collaboration with Docks to Doorways, the BRCA, the Maine Congress of Lake Associations (COLA) and the University of Maine Farmington is working to help property owners do just that,” King said. “The Docks to Doorways resource center will provide a physical hub for watershed research and community action”

In addition to building the new conservation resource center, Docks to Doorways will restore public docks and a boat house for the historic mail boat

made famous by the movie *On Golden Pond*; create new community green space; provide a permanent home for the BLA, BRCA and Farmers' Market; and offer music, lectures, entertainment and year-round education programs.

The July 4th Kick-off celebration included the opening of the first new dock on Mill Stream. There were conservation displays, boat rides on the *Colby Compass* and the Maine COLA/MLCI's *Melinda Ann*, the Farmers' Market, music and family activities. "Starting today, we are modeling how the property will be used to raise awareness of conservation," Oliver explained. "This project is a terrific way to teach conservation best practices and restore the lakes and village to healthier economic and ecological levels."

"Downtown revitalization projects have gotten a lot of attention in Maine recently, but what made this project especially exciting for Kennebec Savings Bank is that the economic health of our communities is tied so closely to our lakes and natural resources." Johnston said. "What better way to improve the economy of the village and region than by restoring two tired properties, creating community spaces for all to enjoy and advancing conservation values."

To donate, go to www.dockstodoorways.com or send contributions to Docks to Doorways, PO Box 551, Belgrade Lakes, ME 04918. For more information, please call Gail Rizzo at 207-242-8119 or Loren Wright at 207-512-5150.

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