



New Shades of Blue, Juliane Gardner and Chris Poulin's Castine-based band, will perform at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, July 19, on the Milbridge Theatre outdoor stage. The band plays an eclectic mix of old-time jazz favorites as well as blues and some reggae. NEW SHADES OF BLUE PHOTO

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## Center stage in Milbridge

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**MILBRIDGE** — The fruits of a grassroots initiative can be seen — and heard — on Friday nights this summer.

The volunteers are the members of Gateway Milbridge, a group dedicated to the revitalization of the town they see as the gateway to Washington County and the Downeast region.

On Friday nights this summer, bands from all over the local area will perform on an outdoor stage constructed on the site of the former Milbridge Theatre. Admission is free.

“All the performances are free to the public and we want them all to be very family friendly,” said Richard Bondurant, Gateway Milbridge chairman.



On July 12, The Dogs will perform rock and country rock. The Bangor-based band includes lead guitarist Curt Bruton, drummer Buddy Adams, bassist Walter Stanley, vocalist Cheryl Oliver and guitarist and vocalist Rich Stacey.

The band's Facebook page says the group is "a culture of great dance music and fun entertainment that's stayed fresh and inclusive for so long, sometimes we don't believe it!"

New Shades of Blue will travel to Milbridge from its home base in Castine July 19. The band is "a versatile jazz and blues group with influences including reggae, funk, and folk rock," says its Facebook page. Core Members Juliane Gardner and Chris Poulin have played all along the coast of Maine and New England. "You can often hear the duo expand to a band with their super talented friends who join them on many performances and recordings," says their website, [www.newshadesofblue.com](http://www.newshadesofblue.com).

The Allison Ames band, based in Bangor, will play a variety of rock and country favorites July 26.

"Allison Ames is well known in central Maine for her powerful country, country-rock and classic rock performances," says the band's Facebook page. "She's backed up by a high-energy, professional band that includes Tom Morelli on guitar, Decran Gulesian on drums, Jeff Budge on bass and Jay Lundstrom on keyboards."

The Aug. 2 performer is Rockin' Ron & New Society, described on the Gateway Milbridge Facebook page as "one of the best vocal dance bands in New England." The band features full three-part harmony vocals and a wide variety of song material. With surf, doo-wop, and rockabilly at the heart of their repertoire, the group sprinkles in some classic country favorites as well as a few of the current top 10 country dance tunes.

On Aug. 8, the lively steel drum band Flash in the Pans takes the stage. Its approximately 35 members range in age from teens to seniors in their 70s. "Band members donate their time, energy, and talents for the sheer fun of spreading the joy of pan," says the group's Facebook page. "Their repertoire includes an eclectic mix of traditional calypso, pop, swing, blues and classical pieces."

The final concert of the season, on Aug. 16, is the Woodshed Boys, an old-time string band from Greenwich, N.Y. Members include Peter Maine on drums, guitar and banjo; Brent Haviland on guitar and banjo; and Bryan Mull on guitar and bass. All members also contribute vocals.

"The Woodshed Boys are three guys who used to all get hired for all the same sessions out at Edie Road Recording Studios a buncha times until they decided to become the Woodshed Boys," says their Facebook page.

Bondurant said Gateway Milbridge has sought bands with local followings who play a wide variety of music. "We want to keep a good mix so we're trying not to use the same groups every year," he said.

During the concerts, volunteers serve hot dishes and snacks, which are sold by donation. T-shirts are also available for sale. All proceeds benefit the eventual reconstruction of the

theatre, a project begun several years ago.

People in town had been talking about putting together some kind of town revitalization in December 2014, when theater owner Dave Parsons died. His death left another vacant building “smack dab in the center of town,” said Bondurant. “The theater had been such a huge part of the community and it was just one more thing that was going away.”

Gateway Milbridge initially hoped to refurbish the building but it had to be demolished by the time the group was able to purchase the property in 2017. The long-term plan is to reconstruct the theater but, in the meantime, the group found a way to utilize the space with the outdoor stage. After its completion in July 2017, the stage hosted four free outdoor concerts and a full season of weekly concerts in 2018.

This season will be short one, however.

“We basically have achieved the goal we set for funding to build the exterior shell of the building,” Bondurant said. Last year, the season ran from mid June to late September. This season began a week earlier — with the first performance on June 10 — but it will end in August to allow construction to begin.

Plans are currently being finalized and then will be sent to the state for approval.

“We have a very aggressive goal of trying to start construction in September,” he said. “It’s going to be tricky, but that’s our goal.”



Bio



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