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Community News

Milbridge Theatre project gets added support from Wyman's of Maine

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Johanna S. Billings

MILBRIDGE — Wyman's of Maine has stepped up its support of Gateway Milbridge and the group's efforts to rebuild and reopen the local theatre as a full service theatre and community arts center. Last year, Wyman's donated \$2,000 to the nonprofit group. This year, the company has offered a \$10,000 fundraising match.

“We are excited to have the support and participation again from Wyman's with this generous fundraising match,” said Gateway Milbridge Chair Richard

Bondurant, who described Wyman's as "an extremely vital part of our community and our region." Gateway Milbridge will run its match challenge from March 1 to May 31 in an effort to raise \$10,000 for Wyman's to match, said Bondurant.

The community theatre closed in December 2014, following the death of owner Dave Parsons. Since that time, Gateway Milbridge raised more than \$200,000 through donations, fundraising events, and grants to purchase the existing theatre, pay for insurance, taxes and legal work and complete a professional long-term business plan. Last fall, the nonprofit organization was able to remove the structurally unsound sections of the building, while saving and renovating the front portion as a small museum. Artifacts and memorabilia salvaged from inside the theatre make up displays that will change periodically. A covered, outdoor stage was built on the lot and used for live entertainment during Milbridge Days and throughout the fall. More live shows, films, and events are planned on the stage throughout the summer and fall of 2018, Bondurant noted.

"We are hearing about the theatre project all across the state now. They're really gaining some momentum statewide." said April Norton, Wyman's director of human resources. "We are getting a lot of comments and positive feedback from our employees out in the fields, in the factory, and in the offices. We really feel some excitement from our employees and many of them have offered to help volunteer where Gateway can use them this summer."

Bondurant said continued support from Wyman's "makes a real, lasting impact" on the lives of everyone in the area and the work they are doing.

"We deeply appreciate their commitment to expanding this support to us in the future," he said.

According to Bondurant, the final phases of the project include a capital campaign for the planning and construction of a new facility that can be enhanced and expanded over time. This includes rebuilding and equipping the new structure for use as a movie theatre and community arts center for live performances.

For more information or to make a donation, contact Richard Bondurant or Cathy Chipman at info@MilbridgeTheatre.org or visit www.MilbridgeTheatre.org.