

The Roundtable

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Building Bridges And Blowing Them Up

Former Maine legislator Brian Langley built bridges of knowledge and information at today's meeting. As Executive Director of Bridge Academy Maine, he led us through the application process, training, matriculation and jobs for graduates. Many are essentially rudderless prior to entering the Academy. Mr. Langley is a former Maine State Senator from the 2nd District.

The Bridge Academy, working locally with United Technology Center (there are six other participating technical centers in Maine), is designed to prepare students for the rigors of college and while holding down a job. A major goal is to retain students in Maine after they graduate.

At UTC, they undertake College for Technical Education that helps overcome the stress and angst that occurs when a teenager is thrown into the pressure-treated zones of large reading assignments and other academic demands in college.

"You have kids who are going to go on to Harvard, Yale and so on, and you have kids who are just barely getting by academically. Then you have the kids in the middle. Those are the ones we target," Mr. Langley said. "We are looking for diamonds in the rough."

Like many small businesses, Mr. Langley, who owns the Union River Lobster Pot Restaurant in Ellsworth, relies on Bridge students who have the ability to think on the job, solve problems and, among other attributes, exhibit a level of maturity that is rare in teenagers. By the time they graduate from Bridge Academy, they already have one foot in college's first semester.

Mr. Langley cited the Maine State Chamber of Commerce board that asked, "what can we do to keep graduates in Maine?" Good-paying jobs are a good start. The statistics are promising: 92-96 percent of Bridge students stay in Maine.

There are problems and challenges in smaller towns. Bangor, Portland and Ellsworth have a stable supply of young people ready for training. The smaller communities, which Mr. Langley visited last week, are hurting for young persons to train and take over positions and trades that are experiencing the aging workforce. He found some Chambers of Commerce in these towns closed during the business day. He is watching for an

individual or two to take over his restaurant when he retires. “It has to be the right person,” he said.

Mr. Langley told of a girl who entered the Bridge Academy at UTC with a goal of becoming a nurse. She graduated, then entered the nursing program at Eastern Maine Community College, earned her CNA and she continues her path to becoming a nurse. She was working part-time, and paid per diem as a CNA. At 19 years old, she was earning about \$35/hour in her dream job and she was tuition debt-free.

A Gray, Wet, Sloppy Morning

Gray. Wet. Sloppy. Sounds like the dog that just came in.

“Designated survivor” **Caroline King** led the meeting. The board did not meet this month, hence no report. **Ned Jennings** said the Club donated \$1,000 to the Coats for Kids project for the Winterport School System, and Emersons in Brewer provided 42 coats and gave a bunch of hats.

Caroline promoted the Red Cross Blood Drive on March 29, on the day after the All That Jazz concert. **Kendra Speed** and **Kristy Kimball** said they need volunteers for the Brewer Kiwanis Wishing Under the Stars Gala on Saturday, January 26. They need a couple of people to help with check-ins from 4:30-9:30 pm. at Spectacular Event Center. Your dinner is free as is all the candy you can eat.

David Zelz and family traveled to Westbrook over the weekend to view the ice disc. On their way home, they stopped in Deering Oaks Park in Portland to see if they could view the rare great black hawk. They looked for a while, and started home when movement in a tree caught David’s eye. There was the hawk. “The next day, the hawk was on the ground,” he said. Avian Haven in Freedom is treating the bird. Today’s Bangor Daily News has a story and a fine photograph of the bird.

Les Myers drew his own ticket’s number for the weekly drawing. The winnings (\$6) will be long remembered but quickly spent.

As for blowing up things, **Ken Huhn** took us around the world in his Rotary Moment, during which he highlighted unusual or unique fundraising activities. One of them was a radio auction to blow up a bridge. Kentucky resident Mary Beth Baker made the high bid of \$16,500 during the Cadiz (Kentucky) Rotary Radio Auction to be the person who pushed the button to blow up the old Lawrence Memorial Bridge. It was a power trip.

Les Myers, January 24, 2019

Good Laughs

