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Fields of dreams



Daniel Mays of Scarborough feeds chickens at Frith Farm last Friday afternoon. Mays purchased the farm from the Maine Farmland Trust in November. (Dan Aceto photo)

Happy at home on the farm

By Dan Aceto
Staff Writer

When Daniel Mays finished graduate school in 2010 with a degree in environmental engineering, he wasn't interested in working 9 to 5 in a cubicle.

So what did he do?

He bought a farm.

"I knew I didn't want to spend my life in front of a computer screen, so I rethought things through and decided to go for it," Mays said.

In November, Mays, 27, became the proud owner of Frith Farm at 61 Ash Swamp Road in Scarborough. The farm,

named after his grandfather's farm in England, was formerly owned and operated by descendants of the Fancy family. The family owned the farm since the late 1700s, but it hasn't been operated for years.

Mays purchased the land in November for \$148,000 from Maine Farmland Trust after the trust acquired development rights through a conservation easement. The Scarborough Land Trust also owns a conservation easement to build a section of trails on property adjacent to the farm, which helped lower Mays' cost.

Although the soil may have been frozen when Mays purchased the land in the fall,

he found plenty of work besides planting crops – including repairing the 200-year-old house he now calls home.

"It needed a lot of attention," Mays said with a laugh. "It's pretty rustic."

In addition to his own personal living quarters, Mays also worked on shelter for his livestock and built a chicken coop, pig pen and greenhouse for vegetables during the winter.

Now that the weather has improved, Mays continues to keep busy. He's planted more than 40 different types of vegetables and is awaiting his first harvest in June.

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School budget passed

Citizens OK proposal by about 100 votes

By Dan Aceto
Staff Writer

Scarborough will eliminate 22 full- and part-time school district positions with approval of the 2011-2012 school budget.

About 1,600 of approximately 14,000 registered voters turned out Tuesday for the budget referendum vote, which passed 856-753 according to town clerk Tody Justice.

The \$35.5 million budget will mean the loss next fall of 11 full- and part-time teaching positions and 11 full- and part-time support staff positions.

The positions include the only foreign language teacher at Wentworth Intermediate School, five teaching positions at the kindergarten to eighth-grade level, an English teacher at the high school, part-time teaching position at the middle school, physical education teacher at the middle school, part-time art teacher at the kindergarten to second-grade level, part-time physical education teacher at Wentworth Intermediate School and the high school gifted and talented teacher.

Beginning in February, residents at several public hearings voiced concerns about the potential loss of teaching positions across the school district.

Some residents were not pleased Wednesday morning after they heard news of referendum results.

"Although the budget passed by only 100 votes, I am disappointed that there was not more of a public outcry against cutting school staffing and quality for yet another year," said Debra Fuchs-Ertman of Scarborough. "What disappoints me the most, however, is that looking at the voter

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Legion brings Blue Star back

Scarborough couple first to receive banner that signifies an active military family member

By Dan Aceto
Staff Writer

When the phone rang at Dianne and Steve Mills' home in Scarborough last Tuesday afternoon, Jake Carr couldn't believe who was on the other line – the Mills' son, Casey Doody, calling from Afghanistan.

"I got chills just thinking about it, I wanted to thank this guy for doing what he does," said Carr, chaplain of American Legion Libby Mitchell Post 76 in Scarborough.

Unbeknownst to Doody, Carr was at the Mills' home to deliver the Blue Star Banner, a longstanding tradition the Legion has recently reinstated to honor soldiers serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.

The banner, emblazoned with a red and white stripe and a star in the middle, is typically hung in the window or

doorframe of a home to symbolize a member of the family involved in active military duty.

Doody, a captain in the 101st Airborne Division in Afghanistan, was the first recipient of the banner since the Legion announced it would honor soldiers in March.

For Dianne Mills, the banner is not only a reminder of her son's continued efforts overseas, but also a display of pride for all in the armed services.

"I think it's a great recognition they're giving the military," Dianne Mills said.

Carr, Chaplain at the American Legion since 1976, said the banner is a reminder that "war touches every neighborhood," and he decided to enact the tradition in Scarborough after hearing of the Legion's decision to honor soldiers with the banner at the national level.

"I was thrilled," Carr said. "I thought it was a great idea."

Although the banner may be the first issued in Scarborough, the tradition dates to World War I, said

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Dianne Mills displays the Blue Star Banner on the front door of her home in Scarborough. The banner symbolizes a member of the family is serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. (Dan Aceto photo)



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Farm

Continued from page 1

"It's been complex, but it's really rewarding with the diversity of animals and crops," Mays said.

Mays studied green building – structures that are environmentally responsible – at Wesleyan University and Stanford University. In addition to participating in gardening programs at each school, Mays said he always was interested in farming but never had the opportunity to realize the dream of owning his own land.

That changed when Mays consulted Maine FarmLink, a program that connects people seeking land with retiring Maine farmers who want to see their land farmed. When Fancy Farm became available, Mays leapt at the opportunity.

"Maine has a real good support for agricultural land that is affordable," Mays said. "I've always been interested in building structures and when I thought about what I wanted to do with my life, I knew it had to be something that involved physical work with community involvement."

Mays has not been alone in his efforts. John Flaherty of Flaherty Family Farms and Stacy Brenner and John Bliss of Broadturn Farm in Scarborough also lent a helping hand.

"Stacy and John have been my mentors

since the start," Mays said. "They've been through everything and have been an invaluable resource."

John Bliss, who has worked with Stacy Brenner at Broadturn Farm for the past five years, said the two assist Mays as part of an apprenticeship program through the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, and that he is off to a good start.

"We have meetings with him throughout the season and year, and he can feel comfortable giving us a call any time about questions," Bliss said. "He's got a lot on his plate, trying to renovate the farm and a house, but he's got a good plan and seems really organized, which is a really important characteristic of maintaining a farm."

Bliss said he plans to continue to work with Mays and is glad to see more farms operating in Scarborough.

"It's something we've been advocating for since we got here," Bliss said. "Broadturn was one of the first new farms in decades and I hope to continue to see new farms come into town. Historically, Scarborough has been a farming town and there's really just bits of farmland still intact; so it's important to return status to working landscapes. More farmers in town means more consideration for things we think



Daniel Mays purchased the former Fancy Farm in November and plans to offer a Community Supported Agriculture program in June. The program is for those interested in receiving a weekly allotment of locally grown vegetables. (Dan Aceto photo)

are important, such as preservation of open space and a working landscape."

Before setting foot on the Fancy Farm, Mays spent the past two summers helping friends in Massachusetts establish a Community Supported Agriculture program that allows customers to pay a flat fee to receive a weekly allotment of locally grown vegetables harvested on the farm. Once Mays' harvest begins in June, he hopes to begin filling orders for his own community program as well.

From sweet corn to broccoli to kohlrabi, Mays said he hopes to grow a diverse amount of produce at the farm and expects different types of greens to be available for CSA members first, followed by tomatoes, squash and other vegetables later in the month.

Mays also will raise livestock and, in time, also hopes to process chicken, pork and lamb for sale.

Mays said Frith Farm is pesticide-free and certifiably organic. He said he hopes the CSA program will help reignite community interest in locally grown produce.

"I think more people don't trust where their food comes from and are scared of

what they hear," Mays said. "Now more people want to know their farmers and know the source of their food. There's such a difference between raising something with fresh air and grass and something raised on a dry lot (with cramped conditions.)"

Mays said one of his long-term goals for the farm is making the property accessible to people of all ages throughout Scarborough.

"I really want to become part of the community," Mays said. "I want to have people come out to the farm and be able to bring their kids and hopefully open a general store."

Although his crops are a few weeks away from reaching maturity, Mays is filled with hope for the coming harvest.

"This spring has been awesome to watch things come to life," Mays said. "It's been complex, but it's really rewarding to see life emerge."

If you would like to sign up for the CSA program at Frith Farm, call Mays at 730-9077, or visit www.frithfarm.net

Staff Writer Dan Aceto can be reached at 282-4337, ext. 237.

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