

Working with communities along the Kennebec River since 1967.

Serving Kennebec, Somerset, and western Waldo counties.

Photo Credits: Front Cover: Skowhegan Farmers Market, taken with permission from their Social Media. Back Cover: Face Masks Arrive at KVCOG, by Laura Cyr. Inside Top Right: Skowhegan Farmers Market Online Orders, taken with permission from their Social Media.

## New Joint Purchase!

In response to the emerging need of the communities we serve, KVCOG recently entered into a Joint Purchase of Reusable Fabric Face Coverings.

KVCOG has been distributing these quality face coverings, made by Allen's Manufacturing, Inc. in Lewiston, Maine, since the second week of May. We will continue to do so as long as supply lasts and the needs of our region dictate.

Member Municipalities: \$5.00/mask

Non-Members: \$5.60/mask

Free Delivery

To order, contact Laura Cyr at [lcyr@kvcoq.org](mailto:lcyr@kvcoq.org) 📧



# Gearing Up!

The KVCOG Newsletter

June 2020

## Skowhegan Farmers Market Adapts to a New Reality

Interview with Amy Rowbottom, Market Manager & Owner of Crooked Face Creamery

By Kate Raymond, Membership Coordinator



### From the Executive Director

We'd like to thank you all!

The spring has been a time of uncertainty for all of us. Here at KVCOG we've changed our working environment to keep our staff and your families safe, we've created new programs and expanded existing ones in the hope that we can better serve our communities, and we have sought out funding that will allow us to remain attentive to the changing needs of our region, our communities and small businesses, and our partner organizations.

Through all of this, you've been there cheering us on. As a member led organization, KVCOG is focused on operations that benefit our municipalities. But ultimately, we do this service work because we care about each and every resident in every community. We're learning everyday what it looks like to serve our region through this time, and your outreach and support have helped to show us the way.

Our amazing staff have been working remotely since March. In addition to navigating this abrupt change, they have been able to prioritize projects that have helped our towns and residents conduct the routine businesses that we all depend on. The current health crisis has forced KVCOG to rethink how we provide services to our communities as priorities shift and social distancing has complicated our traditional approach. We have rapidly deployed technologies to help towns manage their public meetings, select board meetings, and engage in town planning services, to facilitate Joint Purchase programs, procure reusable personal protective equipment, and schedule annual household hazardous waste pick-up days. We have educated ourselves on the evolving legal and social issues affecting our communities, made countless calls to program participants, and have met each challenge with creative solutions.

In our 53 year history, we have met every challenge with a combination of creativity and determination. Although current events are unprecedented on many levels, KVCOG will continue to deliver the ideas and efforts of our talented staff to ensure every community is supported. 📧

*Laura*

Laura Cyr, Ph. D.  
Executive Director

## Member Communities Make it Happen!

Member municipalities, like yours, are the backbone of KVCOG. Membership dues provide matching funds for over \$200,000 in government grants; make our vital services, such as data collection, analysis, and communication, possible; and allow us the flexibility to create new programs, like the one above, in response to our regions needs. Thank you!

### We're Online!



[www.kvcoq.org](http://www.kvcoq.org)



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@kennebecvalleycouncilofgov

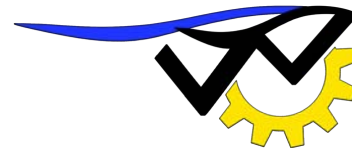


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Compost Equipment Available!

Contact us at (207) 453-4258 ext. 220 or [lgauvin@kvcoq.org](mailto:lgauvin@kvcoq.org) with your order today. Pricing is available online at [www.kvcoq.org](http://www.kvcoq.org).

KVCOG  
17 Main Street  
Fairfield, ME 04937



A bright spot in an uncertain world; the Skowhegan Farmers Market, a staple in Somerset County for two decades, recently responded quickly to the changing landscape of farming and commerce in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and Maine's social distancing and stay-at-home orders.

On a sunny afternoon in late April, Amy Rowbottom, Market Manager, and I connected via phone to talk about the Market's response to the coronavirus. Amy, owner of Crooked Face Creamery, is in her third year as the Skowhegan Farmers Market Manager, and has been involved with the Market for over a decade. In all that time, no one thought anything like the changes needed in the face of COVID-19 would come to pass. "That first week of hearing about the coronavirus is all a blur now," said Amy, "but once farmers markets were deemed essential businesses, which happened quickly, the farmers who are a part of the Market came together to plan our response."

Along with adding the health and safety precautions and best practices recommended by the Maine Federation of Farmers Markets; "We felt that we needed to offer an option for the immunocompromised and senior members of our community to safely shop," Amy continued. The Market's farmers discussed their options and swiftly created a platform for online orders, recruited volunteers to pack orders, and a volunteer from Maine Grains offered to aggregate the online order forms. "It all came together, and BAM! By that first weekend we were pushing the orders out from the preorder forms," exclaimed Amy happily. Over the weeks since, the Market has continued to refine their system of online orders and streamlined the process of aggregating, packing, and order pickup, to rapidly fill 50 orders each Saturday morning. This speed and turn around is a necessity for these orders, too, as they don't have cold storage.

The new online order process has been a hit with the community! "We have been seeing so many new faces at the market, and hearing wonderful feedback, too. It feels really good at the end of the day," said Amy. "We cap out at about 50 preorders, which is all our volunteers can handle currently," and those orders come in so fast the Market is forced to shut down its online order form within hours of it opening each week. A clear indication that this platform may continue to be successful for the Market even after stay-at-home orders are lifted.

(continued inside)





## Community Resources

### Absentee Ballot Requests

Maine citizens, registered to vote, can request an absentee ballot for the July 14 State Primary here: [maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/voter-info/absent.html](http://maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/voter-info/absent.html)

### New Maine Business Recovery Loans

Three nonprofits in Maine recently rolled out new borrowing programs to help Maine businesses recover and rebuild amidst the pandemic. Backed by the U.S. SBA, loans of up to \$50,000 are available through Coastal Enterprises Inc. (CEIMaine.org), Community Concepts Finance Corp (ccfmaine.org), and MaineStream Finance (mainestreamfinance.org). Loans are for working capital or to meet operating expenses, and are available until Sept. 27 or while funds last.

### Prevention Info, Check Lists, Financing, & Opportunity to Comment for Businesses

The Maine Department of Economic & Community Development (DECD) is currently working to ensure businesses and employees have the resources needed to operate safely during the pandemic. Check their website for the most up-to-date information ([maine.gov/decd/home](http://maine.gov/decd/home)). For questions, or for a chance to comment directly, email [business.answers@maine.gov](mailto:business.answers@maine.gov).

### Maine Unemployment Information

Due to the current pandemic, many aspects of unemployment have recently changed. Federally, unemployment assistance has been opened up to more people, and the benefit amount has also been increased. For information on how these changes may impact members of your community, visit [maine.gov/unemployment](http://maine.gov/unemployment).

### Support for Your Local Businesses & Non-Profits

Learn how to support your local businesses and non-profits by connecting with your Chamber. We have a list of regional chambers here: [kvcoq.org/resources-links](http://kvcoq.org/resources-links).

### The Maine Census Effort Continues

It's important now, more than ever, to encourage everyone in your community to be counted in the 2020 Census! Respond online: [2020census.gov](http://2020census.gov) or call 844-330-2020. Find your local Complete Count Committee to get involved: [maine.gov/cc/](http://maine.gov/cc/). 🌟

## Mental Health Resources

The shifting world around us and the many aspects of our everyday lives that are changing rapidly can intensify stressors and mental health concerns. So, it is important now more than ever to take care of our mental health.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maine Chapter (NAMI Maine) has resources to help you through the COVID-19 crisis. Resources include:

**Provider Match Program** – virtually connecting volunteer mental health providers to those in need of support for one-time check-ins; [helpline@namimaine.org](mailto:helpline@namimaine.org) or 800-464-5767.

**NAMI Maine Helpline** – Monday-Friday 8am-4pm. While not a crisis line, the helpline is a safe, confidential, service for peers, law enforcement, professionals, friends and family; [helpline@namimaine.org](mailto:helpline@namimaine.org) or 800-464-5767.

**NAMI Support Groups** – are free confidential opportunities for people to find support and information and are meeting remotely.

**Family-to-Family Classes** – free, evidence-based, educational courses for family and friends living with mental illness are operating remotely.

Learn more at [NAMIMaine.org](http://NAMIMaine.org) or follow them on social media for updates, tips, and connections.

If you, or someone you know, is in emergent need of help, contact the Maine Crisis Line: 1-888-568-1112. *You are not alone.*

As always, the staff at KVCOG are here for you. Please let us know how we can help. 🌟



## Skowhegan Continued

However, success can come with a downside. "We can't continue to rely solely on volunteers and the extra time our farmers and their families have put into this effort," Amy explained, "It is like running a completely separate Market." Where it has been the off-season for many of the farmers they have been able to offer extra time and energy to the project. Yet, as the busy season approaches, time becomes scarce. "Of course, we didn't plan for this. So we don't have a budget to upgrade the online platform or hire the staff needed to run the online Market on an ongoing basis," explained Amy.

The reach of the Skowhegan Farmers Market has grown as a result of the online order system, and the farmers would love the ability to upgrade the platform to track inventory and accept online payments, while supporting essential and important programs such as Maine Harvest Bucks and EBT. However, the future of the online market may only be possible with continued community support. "The response to our effort has been overwhelming positive," Amy expanded, "so much so that we're looking into community partnerships, grants, and new volunteer opportunities to allow us to grow this experiment into the future."

It is clear that the farmers who are a part of the Skowhegan Farmers Market truly love the community they both live in and serve. Their ability to come together as a group, invent on the fly, pivot their business model to serve the most vulnerable members of their community, and to do it all with few resources, is both impressive and inspirational! "This is why we do what we do; we want to help feed our community," Amy concluded. Our hope is they can continue this venture into the future. 🌟



## Business Financing Announcement!

### Relief Program Now Available

We know the pandemic has forced many businesses to close and/or reevaluate and adapt how they do business during this time. The uncertainty around how and when our economy will be able to open fully has taken a toll on many, and we want to help in any way we can.

In an effort to support businesses who currently have financing through KVCOG's Revolving Loan Fund, we have established a relief application process.

For more information on the process, or to obtain a relief application, please email KVCOG at [info@kvcoq.org](mailto:info@kvcoq.org).

### Business Financing Still Available

While some trades have struggled during the crisis due to the nature of their business, some are considered essential services and have remained open.

We want those businesses to know that KVCOG is still offering Business Financing through our Revolving Loan Fund on a case-by-case basis. Learn more by visiting [kvcoq.org/business-services](http://kvcoq.org/business-services). 🌟



## Waste Management Best Practices During COVID-19

By Gabe Gauvin, Environmental Planner

Solid Waste and Recycling materials management has been deemed an essential critical function, so as we continue to prepare for the impacts of the coronavirus, it is important to ensure these programs function safely.

### Operations Planning

- Continue practicing social distancing for both employees and residents.
- All employees and residents should use proper PPE, and language should be posted asking residents to use the proper PPE strategies.
- Control traffic patterns at the Transfer Station or Recycling Center by limiting parking and admitting only a few vehicles to the site at one time.
- While it is tempting to cut hours of public access, narrowing the access window may result in collecting more people together at the same time. When considering cuts to operational hours, do so with moderation.

### Materials Handling

- When handling waste, workers should continue typical operations at no heightened level of risk while using the proper PPE strategies.
- The CDC has released timelines for the length of time the virus can live on surfaces: Cardboard (24 hours) and Plastic and Metals (2-3 days). Co-mingled recycling programs can continue business as usual with recommended PPE and distancing practices. Facilities that sort and separate on-site should observe an adapted storage and processing schedule.

### General Federal Recommendations

In addition to these Solid Waste Specific recommendations, Employees and Managers are urged to review the U.S. Center for Disease Control's control and prevention guidance.

*For any questions or for assistance in creating an adapted operations schedule, traffic pattern or handling policy please contact [ggaubin@kvcoq.org](mailto:ggaubin@kvcoq.org). 🌟*

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