

Maine Farmland Trust Recognized for Nonprofit Excellence at Annual Dirigo Awards

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WATERVILLE, April 17 – Maine Farmland Trust (MFT) was honored for their outstanding achievement by the Maine Association of Nonprofits (MANP) at their Annual Leadership Conference at Colby College on April 17, 2008.

The Dirigo Awards for Nonprofit Excellence are given to one small, medium and large nonprofit that has achieved significant results by utilizing ingenuity combined with sound management practices. Belfast-based Maine Farmland Trust won the small nonprofit division; Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center in Bangor received the first place honor in the medium nonprofit division and Goodwill Industries of Northern New England was the first place recipient in the large nonprofit division. Each winner received \$2,000 and a Maine-made handcrafted wooden award.

Maine Farmland Trust is dedicated to permanently preserving and protecting Maine's agricultural land. They have grown fairly quickly from a small organization to a complex organization. Although this growth has been swift, they have been very careful in how they move the organization forward.

The organization is committed to the goal of preserving 100,000 acres of farmland in Maine. One way they are doing this is by creating strategic alliances with other organizations. In 2007, MFT partnered with Maine Coast Heritage Trust to preserve 95 acres of Aldermere Farm, and the two organizations collaborated to raise \$1.1 million for this project. This type of cooperation is seldom done because it requires a level of trust and disclosure that is truly rare.

One particularly innovative way that MFT has reached out to the community is through their gallery. They have taken advantage of their downtown Belfast office location to create a gallery that celebrates agriculture in art. The gallery draws people into their office where they can ask questions about the organization's work and become more familiar with the organization. The gallery also allows them to showcase the vitality of Maine farms.

"The three award winners represent excellent examples of organizations that are adapting to the challenging funding environment currently facing nonprofits," says Scott Schnapp, Executive Director of MANP, "they utilize innovation and ingenuity to achieve a greater social mission impact."

The Dirigo Awards for Nonprofit Excellence program, launched in 2007, is built upon a series of assessment and capacity building tools, called the Guiding Principles and Practices of Nonprofit Excellence in Maine, that were developed by MANP. The awards program seeks to reward and encourage the nonprofit organizations that are continually innovating, experimenting and improving their operations to better accomplish their social missions.

ABOUT MANP: The Maine Association of Nonprofits (MANP) is statewide organization committed to strengthening the capacity of Maine's nonprofit sector, and currently has a membership of over 650 nonprofit organizations and more than 110 for profit supporters. Founded in 1994, MANP provides a broad range of management support programs, resources and services for the boards, staff and volunteers of Maine's nonprofits. These include management training programs, statewide conferences, capacity building programs for nonprofit leaders, assessment tools, legislative alerts, a job board, marketing opportunities, technical assistance and referrals, sector reports, access to affordable healthcare and benefits plans, and a compilation of management resources to assist nonprofit leaders in achieving mission related goals.

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