OPENING THE PIPELINE!

The Somerset County PIPELINE... keeping the flow of communication, information, fresh and timely. The latest development on hot button issues and much needed services - these are just some of the focused goals of Somerset County's new PIPELINE newsletter!

This is the first volume of what we hope will become a real communication tool between county and municipal governments. A newsletter that will inform and communicate what Somerset County Government is doing on behalf of municipalities and sharing news of what municipalities are accomplishing as well.

This first issue will focus on "What County Government is?"; "What County Government is in Maine" and finally "What Somerset County is!... We are excited about sharing and communicating with you. We welcome your feedback and input as we continue future volumes of the Somerset County PIPELINE.

From the Desk of the County Administrator...

I would like to extend a warm greeting from County Government to all municipalities. It has been a very difficult and challenging year for County Government, as I'm sure it has been in your own Communities. I am very pleased to announce that during the past year, County Government has expressed a deep desire to communicate more with the communities we serve and want to extend an open line of communication with you through this new newsletter "What's in the Somerset County Pipeline". I hope that your community will find the information we share beneficial and should your community want us to address specific topics, please let us know by contacting me directly or sending your requests or suggestions to: somerset@somersetcounty-me.org. County Officials meet the first Tuesday of every month and these requests will be addressed and responded to accordingly. Some of the planned topics for future newsletters include: budget/finance, technology upgrades and service, Jail updates to include inmate population trends, law enforcement activities, crime statistics, etc. These are just a few of the ideas that have been discussed among us, let us know what you'd like to hear about from your County...

Sincerely, Robin Weeks

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

| Opening the Pipeline | 1 |
| County Administrator's Introduction | 1 |
| County Government in Somerset | 1 |
| K9 Services for Somerset | 3 |
| SCJ Community Service Program | 4 |
| Departmental Directory | 4 |

County government is Maine's oldest form of government, pre-dating statehood and the Declaration of Independence. Maine's 16 counties is the only form of regional government whose officials are directly elected by the voters. There has always been a role for county government, providing democratic institutions which operate at the regional level between municipalities and the state.

**County Commissioners**- The voters in each of Maine's 16 counties (with the exception of York -5) elect three commissioners to four year terms to oversee the operation of county government. Each commissioner serves a separate district within the county. Commissioners, as the counties' chief elected officials, are ultimately responsible for the fiscal operations and policy decisions affecting county government. Additional duties include municipal tax abatement appeals and hearings on maintenance of town roads. They also serve, in effect, as the municipal officials in Maine's many unorganized territories.

**County Treasurer** - Each county has an elected Treasurer who maintains the county's complete financial system and records. The Treasurer is also responsible for the investment of tax revenues.
The Sheriff's Department consists of four divisions of Law Enforcement.

**Detectives Services:** Maine's 16 elected County Sheriffs are responsible for the majority of criminal investigations in the state. In recent years Sheriffs' Departments investigated approximately 70% of all non-homicide criminal cases in Maine.

**Patrol Services:** Sheriffs' Departments also handle a large share of rural highway patrol and approximately 18% of highway accidents on Maine highways. Amazingly, counties' share of rural patrolling has stayed the same, even while public funding has declined.

**Civil Process and Court Security** - County Sheriffs' Departments are also responsible for serving all civil lawsuit complaints and related documents throughout the state as well as providing security for District & Superior Courts.

**Correctional Facilities** - Maine's 15 county jails are responsible for persons arrested by municipal, county and state law enforcement officials, and who require detention prior to trial. In addition, most adults sentenced to nine months or less serve their time in a county jail. County jails account for approximately 38% of all prisoner days. The average daily inmate population at county jails is 994 compared with 1,591 in the state's correctional facilities.

---

**Registry of Deeds:** (Registrar, Diane Godin) All real estate deeds and related documents are filed in the Registry of Deeds in each county. In addition to collecting filing fees, the elected Registers of Deeds collects the Real Estate Transfer Tax which amounts to millions of dollars each year. Currently, state law allows counties keep only 10% of these funds.

**Registry of Probate:** (Registrar, Victoria Hatch) The Probate Court system is under the jurisdiction of the Maine Supreme Court and funded by Maine's counties. The Probate Court handles all estates, as well as guardianship, conservatorship, changes of name, adoptions and other legal matters. Both the Probate Judge and the Register of Probate are elected positions in each county.

**Economic Development:** (Executive Director, Jim Batey) Several county governments assist regional economic development efforts through funding of programs. Franklin County employs its own Economic Development Director who promotes the county to prospective employers. Waldo and Washington counties help fund and oversee Job Opportunity Zones.

---

**SOMERSET COUNTY CELEBRATES IT'S 200th BIRTHDAY!**

On March 1, 2009 Somerset County will be 200 years old! On this date in 1809 Somerset County was officially incorporated and set apart from Kennebec County. Norridgewock was originally the shire town and in 1820, the original court house was built in that town. In 1871 the County seat was moved to Skowhegan when a brand new Court House was donated by the Hon. Abner Coburn. The Birthday Committee is planning to work with local historians to put together a complete history and display as part of the County's celebration.

County Officials are planning an Open House with tours in March to kick off the Birthday celebration. More information will follow.

The Committee is looking for involvement from towns, businesses and citizens of Somerset County who wish to participate in this bicentennial event. Please contact County Administrator, Robin Weeks at 474-9861 robin.weeks@somersetcounty-me.org or Register of Deeds, Diane Godin at 474-3421 diane.godin@somersetcounty-me.org if you are interested or have ideas surrounding this special event.

Happy Holidays!
Deputy David Cole caught the “brass ring” when 2 year old Ruger arrived to be his crime fighting partner! Ruger is a Belgian Malinois that was trained (720 hours) in Michigan in all paramilitary aspects of law enforcement. In spite of his military training Deputy Cole reports that Ruger is very good natured at home—loves people, especially children but, as with many good law enforcement officers, prefers being on duty.

Deputy Cole and Officer Ruger primarily patrol for Somerset County Sheriff’s Department, however, if the need arises for a K-9 specialist they will also respond to the State Police requests and all area police departments. Since Ruger has been trained for a dual purpose—drug enforcement and tracking — we expect this dynamic duo will be very busy in Somerset County.

Chief Deputy John Carroll reports that it is the Sheriff’s Department intention to have Deputy Cole and Officer Ruger visit every school in Somerset County. Town officials can make arrangements for a K9 visit to a school in their community by calling the Sheriff’s Department at 474-9591 and asking for Deputy Cole.

---

**EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**  
(Director, Robert Higgins)

Title 37-B MSRS requires counties to maintain an emergency management agency responsible for coordination of activities to safeguard, as much as possible, the lives and property of the citizens of Somerset County in the event of natural or man made disasters. Further, the statute requires financial support from the municipalities within the County. Due to the well prepared processes within Somerset County’s EMA “The May Day Flood of 2008” garnered Somerset more than $200,000 of federal disaster relief money for damages in 12 municipalities.

---

**COMMUNICATIONS**  
(Deputy Director, Mike Smith) Somerset Regional County Communications Center (SCRCC) is the sole Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for all landline 911 callers in Somerset County. In 2007, we answered over 12,000 911 calls and processed 47,000 calls for service and currently are contracted to 8 municipalities in Kennebec County for 911 service. We have 14 full time dispatchers, 2 Supervisors, and a Director. We are the sole dispatch agency for all emergency responders based in Somerset County, including 5 Law Enforcement Agencies, 25 Fire Departments and 6 transporting ambulance services.

---

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY**  
(Evret Fowle) The DA is responsible for holding criminals responsible for their crimes. The current DA, Evret Fowle, serves both Somerset and Kennebec Counties. The DA’s Office processes all adults and juvenile offenses with a staff of 2 Assistant DA’s, a Domestic Violence Investigator, a Victim Witness Advocate, an Office Administrator and 5 secretaries. The DA’s Office is committed to seeking restitution for all victims of crime and monitors defendants to make sure the victims receive the full restitution due them.
Building Healthy Relationships Through Effective Governing

Somerset County Courthouse
41 Court Street
Skowhegan, ME 04976
Phone: 474-9861—Fax: 474-7405
Email: somerset@somersetcounty-me.org

TECHNICAL SERVICES: (Director, Peter Smith) IT provides all technical support to the vast computerized systems needed to support the Communications Center and the new state-of-the-art correctional facility just opened. In addition this department supports the computer, fax and email systems for the various departments located in the Court House—Probate, Deeds, Finance and the Administrator's Office. This department currently is staffed with 2 full-time and 1 part-time employee.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU:

Somerset County Jail’s COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

Submitted by: Programs Sgt. Louis Audet

The new Somerset County Correctional facility is now complete. No longer will Somerset be decades behind in both the treatment of inmates or in the development of service programs that have proven to be so beneficial to host communities and the surrounding area. Directed by Sheriff Barry Delong, Jail Administrator, Major David Allen and Programs Director, Stephen Giggy, the jail staff will soon be able to offer inmate training and community service programs that can accomplish two things for Somerset—better prepare the inmates for reintroduction to the public by providing them with improved skill sets; and, to provide useful and cost effective community services directly to the public and municipalities.

Programs to better educate inmates, include basic reading, math, basic computer skills, GED services, life skills, child parenting skills, job search and resume writing services, religious services, culinary and laundry skills and mental health services. All these programs are designed to slow the recidivism that currently clogs the courts nation wide.

The public will benefit from already in place work programs at the Skowhegan landfill, Skowhegan Highway Department and work details at the Superior Court House and Communications Center. New program services provided directly for taxpayers will include yard work and light repair and home maintenance, winterizing homes, wood stacking for the elderly and disabled veterans. Municipalities may request Community Service of road clean-up, cleaning and restoring order to neglected cemeteries, painting town owned buildings, etc. - the possibilities are endless.

One very exciting program will be vegetable gardening. Beginning in the spring of 2009 the inmates will plant, care for and harvest much of the vegetables for the jail population. Any excess will be distributed to families of the inmates in need or to the local food pantries. The Somerset County Jail plans on giving back to the communities in every way possible and this new and improved Community Service Program will certainly be a benefit to the County.

Watch future editions of PIPELINE for specific information as to when these valuable community services will be available for scheduling.

Check Somerset County’s web site for more detailed information—www.somersetcountycommissioners.com