UMaine Patent Will Improve Manufacturing Process for Fencing, Decking Materials

ORONO—A new technology developed at the University of Maine’s Advanced Structures and Composites Center (ASCC) will help fences and decks of the future to be stronger and longer lasting than those currently built with wood or synthetic wood materials.

The U.S. Patent Office issued in July U.S. Patent No. 8,221,663, which introduces a method of manufacturing a synthetic wood product. The innovative process combines wood and plastic in a manner that strengthens and stiffens the final product by polymer cross-linking, and at the same time reduces weight by the formation of bubbles in the synthetic wood mixture.

This process creates a material for fencing and decking that is stronger and lighter than materials currently on the market.

ASCC researchers have, for a decade, been developing improved composite materials for plastic fence and decking based on the mixing of wood flour (sawdust) and plastic — especially recyclable plastics.

USM Chemistry Club Makes Science Fun at Deering Oaks Park

PORTLAND—Children of all ages were entertained when the University of Southern Maine Chemistry Club blew up Portland’s Deering Oaks Park as part of the Crusher’s Kids Concert in the Park series.

All the event’s demonstrations performed by USM students — dissolving a metal spoon, igniting dollar bills that will not burn, and all those explosions — were designed to make science fun and accessible to kids during the free, family event.

USM’s Chemistry Club frequently puts on performances to educate and entertain K-12 students about the principles of chemistry through engaging demonstrations.

The club also appeared at Mahoney Middle School in South Portland where they delighted students by smashing racket balls frozen by liquid nitrogen and launching an ethanol rocket.

Regional artist shows at UMFK Blake Library

FORT KENT—A fine art exhibit titled “Specifically Saint John: views across the upper river watershed” by William Lloyd Duncan will be shown in the gallery at the Blake Library on the University of Maine at Fort Kent campus from August 27 through September 28, 2012. The works shown are paintings of photographs and prints.

Duncan is originally from Caribou, and currently lives and works at his home-studio on Madawaska Lake. Duncan graduated in 2002 from Vermont College with a Master of Fine Arts in Visual Art. He also is a graphic designer and photographer.

The public is invited to view the exhibit during library hours. There will be a public art talk by the artist on Wednesday, September 12 at 10 a.m.

UMF President Joins in Campus Clean-Up

FARMINGTON

UMF’s new president Kathryn Foster joined dozens of UMF staff as they weeded, planted and mulched their way around campus in the annual Campus Clean-Up Day. The event was coordinated by the UMF Wellness group, UMF Fitness Center, facilities management and Aramark food service. Foster sees the activity as a wonderful way to make a difference on campus and in the community and to promote personal wellness, community spirit and pride of place. According to the Daily Bulldog, she arrived on campus on June 29 and has been staying in one of the residence halls before moving into the president’s house.
UMFK Studying White-Tailed Deer Population to Assess its Movement Patterns, Wintering Habitats, and Mortality Rates

FORT KENT—The hunting blogosphere is buzzing with talk of Mainers who have spotted white-tailed deer with “radio collars” around their necks. The collars are part of a study being conducted by research biologists at UMFK.

The research is being conducted in cooperation with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. To date, summer deer sightings offer hope for greater herd abundance than in recent years, but it is the collar sightings that are providing much of the online chatter.

Hunting is a major contributor to Maine’s economy. With over 200,000 people hunting in Maine each year, hunters generate nearly half-a-billion dollars in economic activity. Hunting also supports 6,440 jobs statewide. Hunters financially support motels, sporting camps, restaurants, guide services and other businesses. However, during the last two decades there has been a steep decline in the deer population in northern, eastern, and western Maine (NEWME). Correspondingly, fall deer harvests have dropped in recent years to some of the lowest levels ever recorded by the state.

The primary objective of the study is to assess the critical wintering habitat of white-tailed deer, while incorporating the other contributing factors suppressing deer numbers in UMFK.

USM Study: One in Four Maine Schools Surveyed Are Higher Performing

PORTLAND—Although a recent Harvard study found that Maine ranked next to last in improving student performance over the last two decades, some of Maine’s schools have defied these odds and have consistently produced higher student performance while wisely investing taxpayers’ dollars.

This is just one of the major findings from a recent University of Southern Maine study. Researchers at the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) found that approximately one in four could be classified as academically “higher performing” with student achievement test results above state averages and above comparable schools. Of those schools identified as higher performing, 90 were classified as “more efficient,” a designation that indicates a higher academic performance and a higher return on spending. A copy of the study can be found at MEPRI’s website.

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USM Franco-American Collection Creates New Online Exhibit

PORTLAND—French Canadians who emigrated to the Lewiston-Auburn area in the late 19th and early 20th centuries faced discrimination as children and adults—such as living in “Little Canada” tenements and being ridiculed for speaking French—but also adapted to their new lives and sustained many cultural traditions.

The Franco-American Collection has created a new online exhibit from French Canadians to Franco-Americans, funded by a grant from the Maine Historical Society. The exhibit explores what life was like for Francos living in Maine, particularly children. Living conditions, mill work and child labor, education, religion, musical traditions, and sports are just some of the aspects of life touched upon in the exhibit.

The exhibit can be viewed at the Maine Memory Network website.

UMM Program Provides Training for Service Dogs and Their Owners

MACHIAS—This summer, the University of Maine at Machias ran a unique program to help disabled individuals train their pet dogs to be service animals. The program, made possible through a grant from the Maine Charity Fund, provided training in obedience, public access, and specific tasks for nine dogs and their owners.

With dogs ranging in size from a tiny toy Lhasa-poo to an Irish wolfhound, the trainings prepared the canines to assist their owners with a variety of disabilities and in navigating everyday life. Participants in the program are grateful for the training opportunity and the renewed relationships with their freshly trained companions.

Service dogs can be trained by an agency, a private individual, or the disabled handler themselves. However, because of the increasing demand for service dogs and the high cost and the lengthy waiting period that is associated with many agency-trained dogs, providing owner training programs has become an essential need, especially in a rural and economically challenged state like Maine.

The Maine Charity Fund grant has provided extensive training, specialized equipment, and specific veterinary services for the program’s first participants, all of whom attended an information session last spring and whose dogs were assessed as having the temperament and ability to be trained for working in public.
UMaine Advanced Manufacturing Center Helps Develop ‘Surface Sampler’ Device

ORONO—Soldiers in war zones, and law enforcement and first responders on the scene will soon have the ability to collect and immediately analyze trace amounts of potentially dangerous chemical, explosive or biological agents with the help of a surface swabbing device developed and prototyped by a Maine-based technology company with the help of the University of Maine Advanced Manufacturing Center (AMC).

The device, roughly the size of a penny, snaps on the end of a wand to swab a potentially contaminated surface. Residue on the swab then can be immediately scanned and identified using a portable instrument developed by Smiths Detection, a prominent U.S. defense contractor, according to the project manager and senior research scientist at Orono Spectral Solutions (OSS) in Bangor, where the “surface sampler” was designed. The swabs have been tested with chemical warfare agents, biological warfare agents, explosives and other threat materials.

OSS, an 8-year-old University of Maine spin-off company comprising UMaine faculty and graduates, has a patent pending on the new absorptive material.

UMPI Announces Innovative Online Learning Project

PRESQUE ISLE—The University of Maine at Presque Isle has taken a bold, new step into the world of online learning with its UMPI OpenU project, an innovative effort to allow learners of all ages to participate in online college courses for free, as long as they aren’t seeking college credit.

Everyone – community members and people throughout the state, nation, and the world – will be able to take part in UMPI OpenU courses. Each participant will have full access to the designated online courses and all of the materials related to them, including direct interaction with the instructors responsible for designing and delivering the courses.

One of the key components of UMPI OpenU is the fact that participants will be able to take part in specific UMPI online courses at no cost for either the class or the books. UMPI officials were able to provide this unique opportunity by doing two things—selecting the courses that would be offered and requiring instructors to use public domain materials only.

To learn more about UMPI OpenU, please visit www.umpi.edu/openU or call 207-768-9416. The first UMPI OpenU classes will be offered starting Fall 2012. There are limited slots, so individuals interested in this opportunity are encouraged to register early.

Benefit Concert Held at UMA

AUGUSTA—The “Concerts at Jewett” Series, sponsored by the University of Maine at Augusta College of Arts and Sciences and UMA Senior College, featured pianist Lan Lam and violinist Geoffrey Day in a benefit concert.

The concert benefitted the “Concerts at Jewett” trust fund which makes low cost concerts/lectures available to the community. The pair played sonatas by Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms as well as short works by Jules Massenet and Joseph Achron.

Lan Lam began piano lessons in Weymouth, Nova Scotia shortly after immigrating to Canada from Vietnam in 1980. After moving to Naples Florida, she became adjunct professor of music at Ave Maria University and Director of Music at Saint Paul's Church, conducting their choir and members of the Naples Philharmonic Orchestra. Violinist Geoffrey Day joined the Naples Philharmonic Orchestra in 1994. He has performed frequently as a member of the Neapolitan Quartet and as a recitalist with his wife. He is a founding member of the Botticelli Quartet, the Aurore Piano Trio, and most recently Neapolitan Baroque, an ensemble dedicated to historically informed performance with period instruments.

Emery Community Arts Center at UMF Recognized with Architecture Award

FARMINGTON—The Emery Community Arts Center at the University of Maine at Farmington campus has recently been awarded a National Merit Award for Excellence in Architecture for a New Building by the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP). This innovative arts center was designed by designLAB architects of Boston and was conceived as a venue to engage both the campus and local community in the exploration of the visual and performing arts.

This SCUP award recognizes the strong partnerships and collaborative planning that contributed to the design of this facility, which supports creative talents in the community and on campus.

Designed to complement the historic performance venues of Nordica Auditorium and Alumni Theater, the 15,000-square-foot Emery Community Arts Center is the keystone for the arts complex on the UMF campus.
PORTLAND—USM’s Southworth Planetarium will premiere an updated version of its popular “Eight Planets and Counting” show this October.

Humanity’s knowledge of the solar system has changed dramatically within the last few years. The International Astronomical Union has demoted Pluto, and astronomers have also found an array of other bodies, called “Trans-Neptunian Objects.”

The revamped "Eight Planets and Counting" program will guide viewers through the solar system: from the Sun out to the realm beyond Neptune. Along the way, the exhibit visits each of the eight planets in turn, explores the moon, and flies through the asteroid belt.

For more information, visit the Southworth Planetarium’s website at: http://www.usm.maine.edu/planet .

Maine’s First Ed.Tech. Coordinator Program Available at Online.Maine

AUGUSTA—Courses in the University of Maine’s first-in-state Educational Technology Coordinator graduate certificate program will be available online this fall. People can participate in the new program through University College Centers, which offer high-speed internet access and a range of support services designed to help students succeed.

Created to meet the professional development needs of educators who seek to incorporate new technologies into their classrooms, the 15-credit certificate program includes knowledge of methods and strategies for applying technology to student learning as well as research on implementation of technology.

Registration for the fall 2012 semester is open and ongoing. For more information about UMaine’s Education Technology Coordinator program, please contact 1-868-7000 or visit Online.Maine’s website.

Schoodic International Sculpture Symposium Open for Visitors

ORONO—Thousands of visitors are expected to attend Schoodic International Sculpture Symposium (SISS), which opened July 22 in the University of Maine’s Steam Plant parking lot on College Avenue in Orono.

The event is free and open to the public from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., seven days a week, until the symposium closes on Aug. 30. SISS is being held this summer in partnership with the University of Maine. This is the fourth symposium since 2007 and the first time it has been held outside the Schoodic region of the Maine coast.

The symposium brings eight internationally known sculptors to Maine for the six-week event. Each sculptor has been paired with one of the participating community partners — the University of Maine, the University of Maine Foundation, Husson University, Acadia Hospital and the city of Bangor and the towns of Orono and Old Town — to create a sculpture for a site chosen by each partner’s committee.

UMS Students Return to Campus

Students in the University of Maine System are returning to their classrooms next month. The first day of classes for each university is listed below:

September 4

University of Maine
University of Maine at Augusta
University of Maine at Fort Kent
University of Maine at Presque Isle
University of Southern Maine

September 5

University of Maine at Farmington
University of Maine at Machias

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