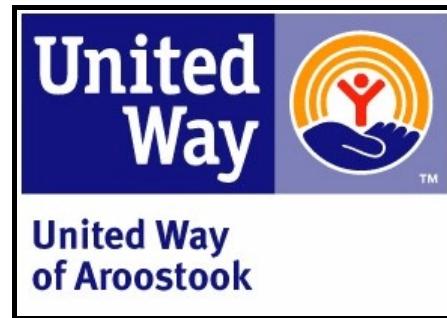
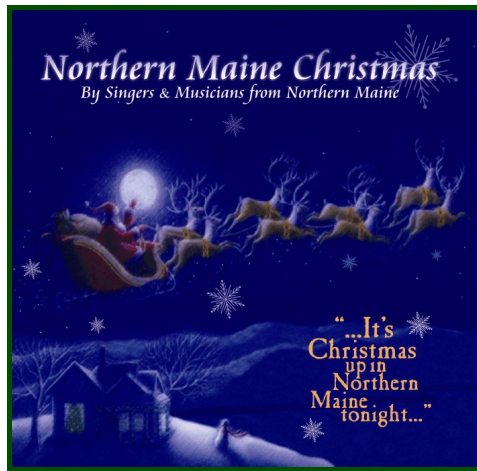


For Immediate Release

The Northern Maine Christmas Project



“Everybody knows, it’s Christmas up in Northern Maine tonight...”

Eight singers, four musicians, an artist and a writer, all from Aroostook County, came together recently to create a project that will benefit charities in Northern Maine. The result is “**Northern Maine Christmas**,” a holiday song that is 4 minutes and 20 seconds long, and which mentions a dozen local towns: Allagash, Caribou, Eagle Lake, Fort Kent, Frenchville, Madawaska, New Sweden, Presque Isle, Soldier Pond, St. Agatha, St. Francis and Van Buren.

A CD of the song will be available to the public and sell for \$10. All proceeds go to **United Way of Aroostook** to fund their **Toys for Tots** program in northern Maine, as well as to **Aroostook Home Supplies and Food Bank**, which has 18 local food pantries from Fort Kent to Houlton.

“United Way is very pleased that our organization has been chosen as one of the recipients of the funds raised with this worthwhile project,” says **Claudia Stevens**, Executive Director of the United Way of Aroostook. “We are extremely grateful that this talented group of people want to help with our toy project. It’s always heartwarming to see the support of United Way projects from county residents.”

Suzie Paradis agrees. “I think this song is a great way of bringing the towns and

cities of Northern Maine together at such an important time of year,” says Paradis, who is Madawaska Economic & Community Development Director, and 2006 Fort Kent Chamber of Commerce President. “It’s a fun and wonderful project for the St. John Valley, as well as all the towns in Aroostook County. Once you hear this song, you can’t stop singing it. I can’t think of a more enjoyable way to raise money for charity.”

Dixie Shaw, Program Director for Aroostook Home Supplies and Food Bank, concurs. “I am thrilled to be part of this generous project orchestrated by so many people who are giving their time and talents for others,” Shaw says. “And this is the season when our organization needs extra funds more than ever.”

Novelist **Cathie Pelletier** wrote the melody and the first two verses twenty years ago, but never bothered to put anything on paper. “I was on my way home to Allagash, having flown in to Logan Airport in Boston,” says Pelletier. “Any northern Mainer who comes home for Christmas knows that special feeling you have as you get closer to home. Over the years I’d think of the song, but I never even bothered to write the words down. Then, this past October, I was driving home to Maine, and I began thinking of it again.”

Pelletier then asked Suzie Paradis if she and others might help in rounding up musicians and singers. Paradis was so enthusiastic that Pelletier wrote a final verse before calling her old friend Diane Morneault, of the local band *High Fidelity*. Diane quickly signed on to do the project. “The hardest part was convincing Cathie to call my answering machine and sing the song so I could hear it, and then learn it myself,” Morneault says. “This project has been so much fun, and at such a special time of year. It’s wonderful to know we’re helping others at Christmas time.”

From there, Paradis contacted **Adam Ouellette** (*Aroostook Idol*) and Adam came aboard immediately. Meeting at Morneault’s house, Adam and Diane put down a rough copy of the song, with the help of Mike Morneault and using only Adam’s laptop computer. From this demo, copies were made and distributed to **Steve Bither** of Woodland (formerly of *Black Moon*); **Molly Bouchard** of Caribou (and *Star Search* fame); and **Jerry Thibeault** (*The Jerry T Duo*.)

“I feel very blessed and privileged to be part of such a worthy project,” says Adam Ouellette. “The funds raised from this song can help make a significant difference in people’s lives. I will always treasure the happy times we all spent together making and creating our very own Christmas carol. I can’t wait for everyone to hear it. I predict it will become a Christmas classic for those of us from northern Maine.”

Paradis then found a studio in Madawaska, called **The Cellar Door**, and owned by

brothers **Jamie and Jasen Thibeault**. “It made good sense that the song be done in this studio,” she says, “since Jamie and Jasen, along with Aaron Bernstein (members of the band *Frenchtoast*) had already agreed to lay down the musical tracks.”

“To give you an idea of the work that went into “Northern Maine Christmas,” says **Jamie Thibeault**, engineer and producer, as well as guitarist on the session, “I used about 75% of the hard drive space that was needed for a whole country album that I recorded a few weeks back. And that album had *ten* songs on it.”

Pelletier had already assigned lines to the singers, some of whom she’d not yet met. “We had to act fast and fly on faith. I knew I wanted the sound of a blowing wind, sleigh bells and a fiddle solo,” said Pelletier. “The rest I left up to Jamie and the musicians. And the singers all brought their own individual styles to the song.”

When Pelletier decided that a young girl would be a nice contrast to the other female voices, one of the singers suggested **Savannah Paradis**. “Cathie called and asked if I’d let my daughter hear the song,” says Suzie Paradis. Savannah was then brought in to sing two lines. “Most of these people committed without even hearing the song,” Pelletier adds. “I can tell you that I felt a bit of pressure. But having Jamie Thibeault as engineer and producer made all the difference in the world.”

Eleven year-old Savannah Paradis had never been in a studio before. Since Pelletier hoped to give the singers those lines which mention the towns they live in, Savannah got the lines about Fort Kent. “It was exciting,” Savannah says. “Even though it was my first time in a recording studio, I wasn’t even nervous.”

Jamie Thibeault, despite those long hours in the studio, saw only good results up ahead. “It was a great thrill to work with area musicians who donated their time for charity,” he says. “Many of them, like Steve Bither and Molly Bouchard, drove over two hours in order to be part of this Christmas project. And it’s such a great Christmas tune. I’ve always believed that there’s a bit of magic that happens when people come together for a good cause. When you hear this song, you can’t help but feel that magic.”

Steve Bither says he didn’t mind the long drive. As a matter of fact, it was Steve who picked up the demo copy of the song to deliver to Molly. “This was such an awesome and fun project it was an honor to be a part of it,” Bither states. “We have so much great talent in Aroostook and this CD proves it. I hope that we raise lots of money for those who can use the help, and that this song will become a Christmas tradition.”

Molly Bouchard already knew about performing under tension, given her amazing

success as a contestant on *Star Search*, as well as becoming *Miss Maine Junior National Teenager 2005*. Since the part she was given was uncomfortably low for her range, Molly went up an octave and sang in half voice. “I had so much fun going into the studio to add my part,” Bouchard says. “It’s a wonderful feeling to be able to give a bit of yourself, or your talent, in order to help those who need it. I hope we buy lots of Christmas presents for children.”

For the fiddle solo, Jerry Thibeault called a friend of his from Edmunston, NB and **Serge Thibodeau** showed up at the studio with his violin. “Musicians have often been known to rally for a good cause,” says Jerry T. “That we’re all from the same roots and backgrounds makes this project even more special to us.”

The two last singers to be added to the song were **Denise “Dee” Sirois** of Madawaska (*The Jerry T Duo*) and **Jasen Thibeault** (*Frenchtoast.*) Pelletier found Dee Sirois by accident, as she was accessing The Cellar Door’s website for photos. “I listened to a few of Denise’s sample tracks and then emailed Jamie immediately. I told him to call Denise and ask if she’d sing a part, if only two lines. Since this meant we weren’t done yet with recording, I decided to find a place to put Jasen.”

Denise Sirois came into the studio the very next night and sang two lines in the first verse. “I considered it a compliment to be asked to participate,” says Sirois. “I really like the way the song is structured, with all the different voices singing different lines. So it was a welcomed and fun opportunity to sing my part.”

“Most of us play in different bands,” says **Jasen Thibeault**, “and so we’re usually doing different gigs on the same night, in different towns. This was a perfect chance for us to all come together for one song, and for such a good cause.”

Artist **John Hafford**, who illustrated *Candles on Bay Street* for Pelletier (as K. C. McKinnon and now a Hallmark film which CBS aired on November 26th) did the graphic design and layout for the project. “The CD will have four-color art for the cover as well as on the disc itself,” Hafford notes, “along with two pages of photos, lyrics, full credits for the participants, and a page that tells how the song came about.”

The photo collage took Pelletier and **Allen Dunn** (of Memphis, TN) over 16 hours as they worked via email files and instant messaging. “This CD will be as professional as any out there,” Dunn writes in an email. “I’m not from Maine, but I’d like to think that I’m now an Honorary Northern Mainer. I’m pleased that I could help charities, no matter what part of the country they happen to be located. People are people, after all.”

Dunn also quickly built webpages on Pelletier's site so that orders could come in via emails, with ordering information. This is when **Robin Damboise**, of Northern Maine Medical Center, offered to help by setting up a bank account and credit card services. "We want to make it as easy as possible for everyone to place orders in time for Christmas," Damboise states.

The website lists places in Maine where the CD can be purchased. There is also a guest book where northern Mainers, former northern Mainers, and anyone around the country may leave their memories of Christmases past, or just say hello. There is also a map of the United States to show which states are ordering the CD, as well as where the CD has been shipped. The goal is to get all fifty states, and even other countries.

What started as an idea that might be done quickly soon turned into weeks of hard work. "It's important that the song and its packaging be so professional that buyers know it's worth their money," states Pelletier. "So it turned into a mission, and my friends know this is typical of me. I used to think writing a novel was an undertaking. Now, I'll view it as a good rest. But these people were all such pros and so positive and supportive that I can't wait to work with them again. This is what creativity should be all about."

"We believe this is the perfect stocking stuffer and gift for all those northern Mainers who live all over the state, the country, Canada, and even the world," Paradis notes. "The website is set up so that orders can be placed by email or phone. A copy of the CD will be shipped in time for Christmas, even shipped overnight."

Kathy Jackson and Helen McBreairty, of Allagash, are ready to do very nice gift wrapping, bound with ribbon, for those who want the CDs sent as gifts. A gift tag with appropriate *TO* and *FROM* names can be included. A small fee of \$2.00 for this service will also go to charity.

As the liner notes say, the song is dedicated to all Northern Mainers, no matter where they may now be living. The singers, musicians and the writer all hope that holiday shoppers will not just buy a copy of the CD for themselves, but for all their family members and friends who are living away from Northern Maine.

"For only ten dollars, we can all help others at Christmas, we can all do our share," Pelletier says. She adds that she already has another project planned for next year. "But we'll start in June next time," she laughs. "But nonetheless, I think Santa Claus will be proud of us for what we've accomplished."

To contact any of the singers or musicians for a taped or on-air interview, please call Suzie Paradis at 207-728-3612, or email:

suzie.paradis@townofmadawaska.com

For a **jpeg file** of the **CD cover art** (for newspaper or magazines only) or to request an interview with **Cathie Pelletier**, please email her at: cathpell@aol.com

WEBSITE: www.kcmckinnon.com **See Complete Song Lyrics Below:**

Northern Maine Christmas

Adam The pines are white with snow
And the old north wind blows hard tonight,
Diane It's twenty-five below,
Can you see the dancing glow of the northern lights?
Jerry T Santa's on his way
His reindeer and his sleigh bells in the sky,
Denise Everybody knows
It's Christmas up in northern Maine tonight.

Group ***Chorus:***

*Merry Christmas, Joyeux Noël,
À Votre Santé, Here's to your health
And here's to the season, that brings us good cheer
Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year.*

Jasen Across the border bridge
Canada is twinkling in lights,
Savannah On the streets of Fort Kent, Maine
Everybody's shopping late tonight.
Jerry T Madawaska, Eagle Lake,
Allagash, St. Francis, Soldier Pond,
Molly Better go to sleep,
Santa's on his way, it won't be long.

Group ***Repeat Chorus***

Molly At the airport in Presque Isle,
Eight reindeer and a sleigh went flying by,
Steve Caribou's next in line,
New Sweden, St. Agatha in just a while.
Diane You know he won't get lost,
Santa knows the way too well by now,
Adam Van Buren close your eyes,
Frenchville can you hear bells in the sky?

Group ***Repeat Chorus***