

# Project Launch recognizes local educator Rhonda Turner

A look at how one teacher made a difference from generation to generation

SUBMITTED BY PROJECT LAUNCH

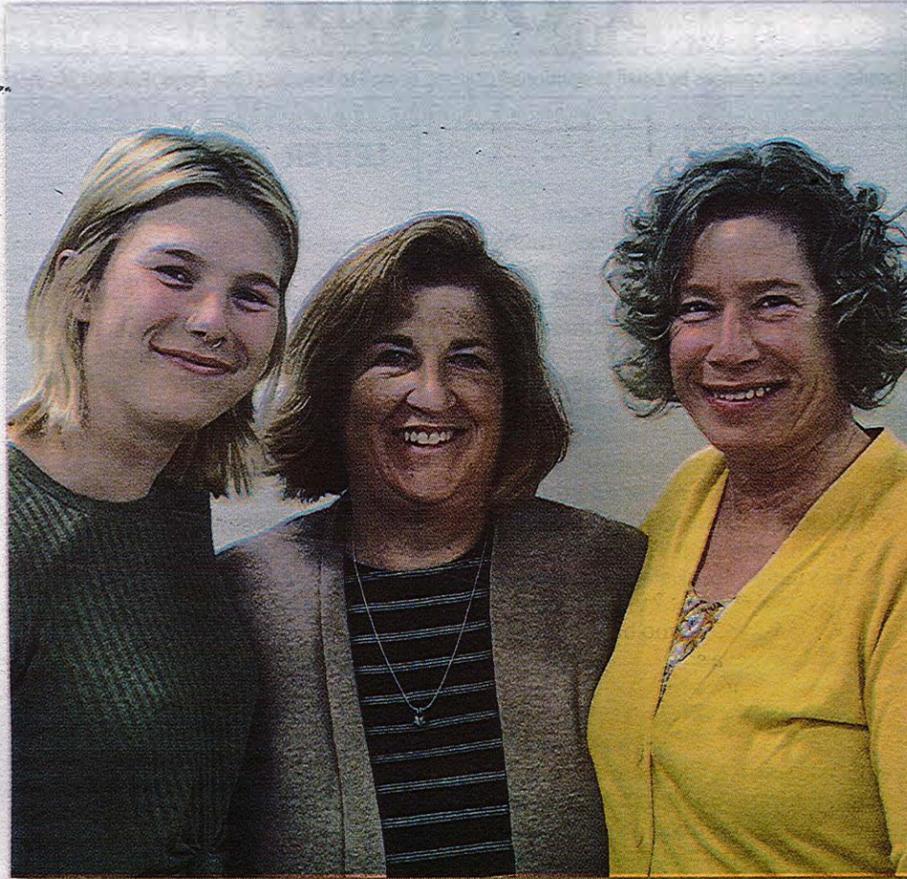
In 1981, Rhonda Turner, a Maine native, graduated from Bates College with a degree in mathematics and had just arrived on the island to begin her teaching career at Deer Isle-Stonington High School. Little did she know this would be the start to a long career, which would influence generations to come.

Project Launch Executive Director Kimberly Hutchinson, then a seventh grader, was part of her first group of students. Hutchinson fondly remembers Turner and shares, "She was interesting, because she was someone new and younger than many of the other teachers, and scary, because she had high expectations and I wasn't very good at math."

Turner remained Hutchinson's teacher throughout high school, and Hutchinson credits her, many years later, with being an important part of shaping her own career path. "She encouraged me to apply to Bates, took me and a group of students to visit for interviews, and wrote college recommendations for me," explains Hutchinson.

Hutchinson went on to earn both undergraduate and graduate degrees (not in math!), and has spent the majority of her career as a social worker in the nonprofit world. Her current role is that of the founding director of Project Launch, a local nonprofit that supports postsecondary college and career planning with local students and families throughout Deer Isle and the Blue Hill Peninsula.

It is especially meaningful that Turner was the inspiration for a recent \$50,000 gift to Project Launch from DISHS alumni Tim Mauro. Mauro made the donation to recognize the dedication and work of Turner, whom he credits with being an inspirational figure during his high school years and a teacher who "was tough and kept us in line" and "expected good work." Turner expressed that she was honored by the



From left, Grace McGuire, Rhonda Turner, Kim Hutchinson.

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donation and pleased that it was going to an organization that has been so helpful to local students.

This exemplifies qualities that Turner is known for, including her self-effacing and humble manner. As shared by Turner's peer, Susan Siebert, Guidance Office Administrative Assistant at DISHS, "Rhonda is so conscientious, hardworking and responsible. She is incredibly loyal to our school, community and students."

Forty-one years later, Turner is stepping away from the classroom and embracing retirement. In her last group of students, there is a face that closes the circle to her first group of students, that of Hutchinson's daughter, Grace McGuire. McGuire, a junior who is currently enrolled in Turner's pre-calculus class shares, "Mrs. Turner is one of the most dependable teachers the school has ever had! She is always there when her students need her, whether that is after school for extra help or organizing the junior/senior prom. Our school won't be the same without her."

This sentiment is echoed by Turner's son, Andy, who says, "My mom is one of the hardest working teachers I've ever encountered. She spent many of her afternoons at school assisting kids

that needed extra help. Not because she had to, but because she wanted every student she encountered to succeed. She has dedicated a lot of her time to attending conferences and learning new material to further enhance the student learning experience. Beyond that, she has been involved in the community, including coaching the math team and helping the chess team."

Turner will be greatly missed in the classroom at Deer Isle-Stonington High School. Project Launch appreciates her dedication to local education and the positive impact she has had on hundreds of local students throughout the years. Thank you, Rhonda!

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## NEWS BRIEF

### Independent film tells story of restored fish passage in Bagaduce watershed

The first successful full restoration of a Maine river for fish passage is now receiving national attention—and a 40-minute movie created by Tate Yoder, Media Specialist at Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries, is helping to get the word out, according to a press release.

*A Watershed Moment: A Story about People, Fish, and the Water that Connects Them*, first premiered on May 21, World Fish Migration Day, at the Penobscot Community School. Now it's making its way to other venues across the state, including the Stonington Opera House on Thursday, June 23, at 7 p.m. and the Blue Hill Library on Thursday, July 28, at 6 p.m. The events are free and open to the public, and Q&As featuring people involved in the project will follow the screenings. The film will also appear in film festivals throughout the remainder of the year, including the Maine Outdoor Film Festival.

In addition to MCCF, the Penobscot Alewife Committee, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and The Nature Conservancy in Maine worked on numerous projects resulting in the installation of five nature-like fishways in the Bagaduce River Watershed, making it possible for thousands more alewives to complete their life cycle.



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