

Southern Maine teachers get firsthand look at forest industry

Staff photo/Kathy McCarty



KAREN NEARY, a history teacher at H.B. Emery Jr. School, Buxton, is pictured holding a sample of pellets from Northeast Pellets, LLC, in Ashland.

Neary said she planned to use what she learned during the recent tour of forest industry facilities in Maine, hosted by the Maine TREE Foundation, when putting together future lesson plans.

By Kathy McCarty

Staff Writer

ASHLAND — Forests of Maine Teachers' Tour 2, hosted by the Maine TREE Foundation, made a stop Thursday at Northeast Pellets, LLC — one of several visits the group made to a variety of wood-related establishments over a three-day period. Northeast Pellets has been online and operational for about six weeks but was idle during the tour.

“A lot of teachers don’t know how wood gets from the tree to the finished product. The tour serves to educate and promote good forest practices, so teachers can teach the next

generation of students,” said Matt Bell, mill owner.

Bell credits early education experiences as a youth for inspiring his future business goals.

“I remember as a student learning about the forests — found it very interesting,” said Bell, who was unable to be present for this year’s tour.

In his stead, Bell had his father, Steve Bell, and cousin, Jason Forbes — both full-time employees at the mill — serve as tour guides.

Joining the group of educators on the tour was Sherry Huber, director, Maine TREE Foundation.

“The participants had a very positive overall impression of forest and mills in the County. They really enjoyed the chance to ‘see for themselves’ and to talk and ask questions with so many resource professionals like Jason and Steve,” said Huber.



Staff photo/Kathy McCarty

THE MAINE TREE FOUNDATION hosted a number of tours of Maine forest industry facilities the last week of July. Pictured during a tour of Northeast Pellets, LLC, in Ashland are, from left: Anita Lyons, Biddeford Middle School; three unidentified participants; Jeffry Chase, Goodwill-Hinckley High School, Hinckley; Angela Ferrelli,

Americorps intern with Maine DEP; Steve Bell and Jason Forbes, both of Northeast Pellets; Barbara Higgins, Buxton Center Elementary School, Gorham; Christos Gianopoulos, University of Southern Maine; Sherry Huber, director, Maine TREE Foundation; Jeff Lovejoy, Troy Howard Middle School, Belfasts.

Participants in this year's tour represented a variety of southern Maine schools and organizations, including: Huber; Anita Lyons, Biddeford Middle School; Jeffry Chase, Good Will-Hinckley High School, Hinckley; Maureen Cousins, Buxton Center Elementary School, Limington; Angela Ferrelli, Americorps intern with Maine DEP; Barbara Higgins, Buxton Center Elementary School, Gorham; Christos Gianopoulos, University of Southern Maine; Jeff Lovejoy, Troy Howard Middle School, Belfast; Patricia Maloney, Maine Project Learning Tree coordinator; Barry Burgason, wildlife biologist, Huber Resources; and Karen Neary, H.B. Emery Jr. School, Steep Falls.

Huber said such tours provide an opportunity for educators to go beyond the textbook, learning firsthand what's involved in transforming wood into a number of usable products. That learning experience is then taken back to the classroom, enabling the teacher to better explain to students the process involved.

"They left with a far better understanding of the forest products businesses they visited and their importance to the state's economic future," she said.

"They were also impressed with the hospitality shown them by all their hosts, but perhaps especially by Tammy (Curran, officer manager at Northeast Pellets), Steve and Jason at Northeast Pellets who provided trays of wonderful vegetable snacks and dips and water on a hot day," continued Huber.

