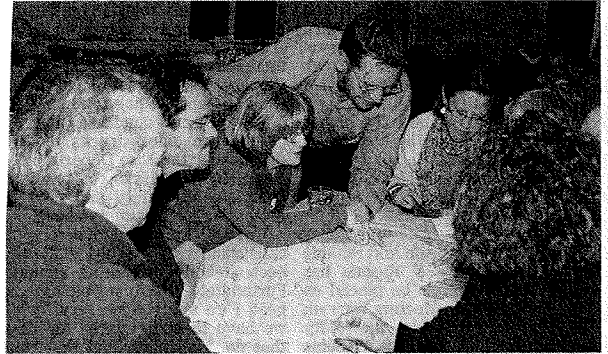


# Damariscotta's Heart and Soul



Participants at the recent potluck dinner and community conversation point out specific locations that hold special meaning to them on a map of Damariscotta.

What does one get when 30 or so strangers show up with food and a story to tell?

That was found out on March 5, when the Damariscotta Planning Advisory Committee (DPAC) hosted the second "Community Conversation - Special People, Special Places."

After a delicious dinner, participants broke into small groups to share stories about what brought them to Damariscotta, why they stay, and the people and places that exemplify the heart and soul of the community.

From the youngest participant—a seventh grader at Great Salt Bay School, to the oldest—a gentleman in his 80's, from native Damariscottans to the newest person from away, many heartwarming stories were heard.

As an added treat, several members of the Orton Family Foundation board of trustees—partners in the Heart and Soul program—came to share stories, and a special presentation by Lyman Orton, president of the Foundation, provided participants with a brief overview of the program.

By the end of the evening, everyone had listened to a wonderful story about a little boy wanting to milk cows at his neighbor's two-cow farm, only to find the farmer in his union suit on the appointed morning.

We heard about the Egypt Road Santas for a Cause, who brought joy to the neighborhood and gifts for children; and the importance of events such as the Memorial Day Parade.

At the close of the program, themes participants generated through their stories were projected for all to see, and the groups were strangers no more. Recurrent

community; helpful, welcoming people; a great place to raise kids; a beautiful landscape; a variety of activities, and entertainment year round.

Mr. Orton pointed out that the challenge for DPAC will be to take the themes from the stories and the values they express, and use the information to develop a draft vision for the town's future.

Once completed, DPAC will present the draft vision for discussion at a future public meeting. Once finalized, the vision will help inform the select board throughout future town planning to ensure that the quality of life and community, so cherished by Damariscotta's citizens and people who do business here, will be retained in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

If interested in hearing stories about Damariscotta's Heart and Soul, logon to [www.communityalmanac.org](http://www.communityalmanac.org).

To add one's own story, DPAC volunteers will be at Skidompha library on Tuesdays from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. through the remainder of March to chat about what makes Damariscotta special.

DPAC is a committee of the Town of Damariscotta appointed by the select board to lead a community-driven visioning process to make the Damariscotta region a better place to live, work and play, do business and visit.

Its work includes establishing and maintaining an on-going, long-range planning process and incorporating public dialogue in planning efforts. The Orton Family Foundation ([www.orton.org](http://www.orton.org)) funds Damariscotta's Heart and Soul Community Planning process in collaboration with the Town of Damariscotta and the Friends of Midcoast Maine.