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## Military and donors gather to open the new dining facility at Camp William Hinds in Raymond By Michelle Libby



Using the scissors from a special Pine Tree Council camp's pocket knife, invited guests, donors and members of the military cut a red, white and blue ribbon to officially open the new Camp William Hinds dining facility.

"We have the most beautiful outdoor learning center in the country," said Scout Executive Eric Tarbox.

Four years into the Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) project, developments at all four of the Pine Tree Council Boy Scout camps (Raymond, Belgrade,

Sabattus and Acton) have been completed or are almost complete. There are still projects on the schedule however the dining facility in Raymond is by far the largest. The over 21,000 square foot building provides room for 500 people at a time, and the walk out basement has classrooms used by the RSU14 Katahdin School during the school year and houses the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) program during the summer.

"We look forward to staying here until it no longer makes sense," said Katahdin School principal Rich Meserve.

IRT started back during the Clinton "Rebuild America" days. The military was tasked with "finding innovative ways to help the US by giving them real world opportunities servicing the communities we serve," said Chief Master Sergeant Todd Jones. Having the IRT program in communities gives people, who don't have exposure to the military or the IRT, a chance to experience military life, he said.

Mid-April the military began the buildup in Raymond, putting up a tent city to be ready when the troops were deployed on April 22. This year over 250 military members from the Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard and United States Marine Corps have worked on projects at the camps. This year alone the military is completing work on the dining facility, made road improvements, did ditch grading, upgraded a staff cabin with plumbing and electrical, did camp maintenance and will complete a fire pond that will benefit Camp Hinds, Kingsley Pines and all homes on Plains Road.

"We'll be hitting it hard moving some dirt," said Jones, discussing the fire pond work. The pond, which was breached in 2005 during the Patriot's Day Storm, will be six to eight feet deep when completed and will have a fire hydrant on Plains Road.

"This is a win/win for the community and the military members," said Jones.

On the camp property, the Scout Community has stepped in to help fill in any gaps not provided by the military.

“This is truly a civilian/military experience,” said Tarbox. The work has all been done by service members who serve on a “brand new crew every two weeks. The crew has never met or worked together and all of this happened over a period of years,” he added. The troops have come from Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Royal Marines from England and Maine for their two weeks a year training in their field of service.

“Over \$5 million of construction value was added to our camps,” said Tarbox.

The new dining hall has a new kitchen thanks to the “scrappiness and pluck of the Messers”, who saved ovens, serving lines and refrigerators from UNUM, when that company remodeled years ago.

President of Pine Tree Council, Jeff Messer, stored the items in trailers until they were needed, on the thought that someday there would be a new dining hall, Tarbox told the group.



“I’m very impressed with what they’ve done here with the resources they’ve been given,” said Air Force Chief Master Sergeant, Cathy Dugas, the highest ranking Air Force member in attendance. It was her first time at Camp Hinds.

The driving force behind the IRT project has been past Pine Tree Council President and Eagle Scout, Horace Horton.

“When we started the IRT there was nothing on this site. We’re just so proud,” Horton told the guests. “What a transformation this has made.”

Each family and business that was a major contributor to the project was recognized during the ceremony; from the design work and construction material donations, to the old dining hall and the naming of the health lodge, to the Ellen K. Stinston Health Lodge.

“I was a little taken a back,” said former school nurse Ellen Stinston, who the health lodge was named for. “It was totally unexpected. I suggested helping the health lodge. It didn’t know it would be named after me. I probably would never have done it if I’d known.”

The ceremonies renaming other properties at Camp Hinds will take place on June 24 starting at noon. Pine Tree Council Vice President of Properties, Walt Stinson has his signature on many projects in the council. Bill and Jackie Thornton gave money for the STEAM center and so many more contributed to the projects. From Internet hardware to electrical design and window donations, to monetary donations, the project will serve a large number of scouts for many, many years.

The one person holding everything together for the council is camp ranger Scott Martin, who has worked with the IRT, collaborated with other property owners and has done much of the finish work on the various projects at camp.

With a strategic vision the key players in the projects, especially the dining facility have upgraded Camp Hinds to a destination summer camp, where scouts from all over the region and even the world come to experience Maine. This year 40 scouts from Egypt will attend Camp Hinds, adding to the 10.6 percent increase in Boy Scouts and Venture Scouts attending camp this summer.

“It’s amazing all of the contributions and coordination,” said former scout and retired Navy man Tim Gallant, Maine Staff Assistant to Rep. Bruce Poliquin. “This shows that Scouting is alive and well. All these Scoutmasters are unbelievably amazing,” he added.