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### What's Happening in L-A?

The most "happening" attribute that Lewiston and Auburn have to offer people today is their growing economy that is bringing in new jobs and opportunities. These cities were once mill towns whose economy depended on the products coming from such mills as the Bates, Libby, and the Continental Mill. Today those mills are no longer in service as they once were. The Bates Mill now calls itself home to other businesses that use its welcoming space for their company's distribution.

Without the help of these mills, Lewiston and Auburn had to find new ways to provide for their citizens. It no longer being the mainly textile town, it turned to health care to provide for its jobs. That is where we are at now as a community. Although textiles are still produced, just not in mass proportions like they once were. The over 6,800 jobs in the health care field that are provided make it the new largest industry. This is shown with the expansion of CMMC and its new Vascular Center and St. Mary's soon to be new Emergency Room.

Other new developed businesses in this area include the addition of many new restaurants such as Fishbones, Longhorn Steakhouse, Heidi's, Fuel, and Espo's. These caused L-A to be put on the map as the leader of Maine for economic development activity, and also as second in job creation. All of these businesses and job opportunities caused local programs to pop up all over the area to serve these businesses' needs. Technical assistance, commercial financing, and marketing are all things that our cities now provide.

Job training programs and educational programs are also large within L-A. Schools are offering more opportunities for students to learn, such as the high school early college program, whose success was due to the leadership of Joan Macri at LHS. The colleges involved also include the local colleges of Central Maine Community College and L-A College. Bates College has also made an expansion in our community by creating new dorms to house the incoming flock of students to the area. These opportunities also show why the Somalians chose L-A to call home after fleeing from Africa. The change to the old arena (now the Androscoggin Bank Colisee) also brings in many sports fans and concert lovers from all over. The Maineiacs, with their growing popularity, also help to bring in everyone to L-A.

So, for a couple of small mill towns, I believe that the direction the "Cities of the Androscoggin" are heading in have made their citizens proud. The new and improving opportunities that arise from these cities cause them to be among the most happening things in this state. While still keeping their mill heritage they have managed to become mainstream cities that are still economically growing. So, if I do choose to leave this area for college I would be proud to return here to raise a family in the ever-changing towns that I know and love.

Sincerely,

Grace A. Ouellette

Lewiston High School Class 2008