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## THE KIOSK IN FRONT OF THE STATE HOUSE – A WINDOW TO THE WORLD

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*The following article was published in the Concord Monitor on August 25, 2012.*

*With the summer months approaching, and the Kiosk scheduled to open over Memorial Day Weekend, we thought it would be fun to share. Dwight reported that in one 3-hour shift from 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at the Kiosk in front of the State House he remembers clearly having visitors from Lisbon, Portugal, Ukraine, and Burundi, Africa!*

### **BLOG: The Kiosk in Front of the State House – A Window to the World**

*By: (Rev.) Dwight S. Haynes, GSA - Discover Wild NH Class of 2008*



The little kiosk in front of the State House is not only a place with maps and brochures provided by the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce, but a window to the world, providing volunteers like me a wonderful opportunity to meet local people plus tourists from across the country and around the world.

Some requests are easy like for maps & brochures, bus schedules, nearest grocery store, nearest campground, literature on Concord for someone moving here, a list of places to dine, a list of things to see and do in this area, directions for City Hall, Library, Police station, the D.M.V., Hospital, nearest Food Pantry, NH Audubon, St. Paul's School, NH Museum, Planetarium & Discovery Center, Dem. & Rep. Headquarters, Sweepstakes Headquarters, hiking & biking trails, antique shops, a candy shop, and "Where is the State House?" I kid you not!

People registering a business have to come to the office of the Secretary of State. Some assume it will look like an office building! Actually, to register a business they have to go across the street to the Corporate Div. at 25 Capitol St. One person asked if the big building behind me was a Town Hall. No, Concord is the State Capital. She said, "I thought Montpelier was the Capital." Time to get out a New England map!

Someone from Maine asked where the bridge is between Concord & Lexington, and Walden Pond? Someone from Germany asked; "Where is the Minute Man?" She, too, thought she was in Concord, MA. Oh dear! Time again for a New England map.

Someone from Ossipee had locked the key in her car and was looking for a locksmith. Someone else had run out of gas and needed a gas can. Some requests are challenging like: the nearest pay phone (not many left, one in Eagle Sq.), a wi-fi station nearby for checking e-mail (library, some coffee shops), Korean food, the difference between Capital & Capitol, What's the Chamber of Commerce?

Also, "Where does the Merrimack River begin?" (Franklin, actually Lafayette & Cannon Mtn. via the Pemigewasset River), "Has anybody really important come from your State House?" (Yes, Daniel Webster, Franklin Pierce, John Hale, etc), and "How come NH is the only state with neither a broad-based sales or income tax?"

A woman from CT wanted to see the John Stark statue (on the lawn). She is one of his descendants, a few generations removed. The Delaware Sec. of State was looking for NH's Bill Gardner! A student from Russia said, "Clothes, Walmart?" A woman from Paraguay was looking for children's clothing. Someone else wanted NH T-shirts & souvenirs.

Many are visiting all 50 State Capitols. For two this was # 49! Many are surprised that our State House is open inside to visitors. One young couple was "glad to get out of the mountains." Why? "It was scary; we feel safer here." Another young couple from Springfield, MA come to NH as often as they can, saying, "We'd love to live here."

NH is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most forested state in the nation. A man from Iowa said that on some of the highways the trees block the view! I suggested that this is to entice people to climb our mountains and get a magnificent, panoramic view, especially compared to the molehills in Iowa. I get questions about places to stay and things to see and do in the Lakes Region, the Mountains, and the coast.

While serving churches I had to be a little discreet in telling people where to go. Here, they thank me!

One day, 25 Jr. High students from China arrived to visit the State House. Another day, a large group of well-dressed men from Korea came to do business at the State House. An attractive, young Japanese woman, who is a fashion executive in Montreal, is impressed with Concord's Pay-as-You-Throw recycling program. She has traveled the world – 75 nations so far – and feels travel is the best investment in life. She took my picture and said: "We are all one."

Every Monday a.m. during foliage season 1 or 2 buses with people from around the world stop here for 20 minutes to let them walk around, get coffee, take pictures. Starting in NYC, Boston, & the Cape, they're heading to Loon Mtn., Montpelier & Stow VT, Montreal & Toronto, & back to NYC. One woman from Denmark said: "Oh, just like the book says: "Your leaves go from green to red!" I said, "Wait til you see a swamp maple next to a white birch". Like a teen-ager seeing snow for the first time, she said, "What's a swamp maple?"

The number of people who come to the kiosk varies. In my 3-hour shift last Monday I had 24. The few who take turns at the kiosk here, like people at the Airport and other Visitor Centers, are called Granite State Ambassadors! I see this as an opportunity to exercise the spiritual discipline of hospitality, which is rooted in the Old Testament Book of Ruth with its emphasis on hospitality to the foreigner and in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with its command to welcome the stranger.

This is my 5<sup>th</sup> year at this. My wife, Maryellen, is in her 3<sup>rd</sup> year. Her experiences are somewhat similar. One day, she was talking with a woman and discovered that she now lives in West Concord in the same house that we lived in back in the 80's! The Chamber could use several more volunteers. I found the 2 days of training led by people from all over the state to be fascinating and very helpful.

Occasionally, I get stumped by someone's question. I just call the Chamber Office and the encyclopedic Carolyn O'Brien rescues me! The newly-located Chamber of Commerce Office is at 49 So. Main St. in the new Smile building. This Office is a good source of lots of helpful information.

Often, my parting comment to people leaving the Kiosk is: "Travel while you can. Remember St. Augustine said: 'The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page'."

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