

# Welcome to the Area



In our town information booths, local folks serve as travel guides to visitors from across the globe.

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
*Laura Jean Whitcomb*

**Info booth:** Newbury

**Name:** Jane Johnsen

**Hometown:** Bradford

**Years in the booth:** 6 years

**What is the most frequently asked question?**

Where's the beach? Because usually they drive right by it. One lady asked where the beach was, and she pointed this way (across the street) and that way (behind the booth). You can see lake behind the booth!

**How many visitors do you get a day?**

With the League of N.H. Craftsmen Fair going on, every day is a busy day. We usually get 25 to 30 visitors a day, depending on the weather, with Saturday being the busiest day.

**What is your favorite part about the job?**

Meeting people. I love it. They are from all over the world and they want information about the town. It's good for the town, too, stopping at the information booth leaves a good taste in their mouths.

**What do you like about Newbury?**

It is just beautiful, clean, people are nice, the town is nice. I haven't met anyone I didn't like.



**Jane Johnsen  
Newbury**

**M**artha von Redlich meets a lot of people, but one couple stands out in her memory — a young Japanese couple touring the Kearsarge area. “They were bright eyed and fresh faced and excited to be here — and they didn’t speak a word of English,” she recalls. “We did a lot of show and tell. Fortunately they read maps really well. They’d show me a brochure and I’d show them the directions on the map. Then they went on their way.”

von Redlich is one of the friendly faces at the Newbury Information Booth on Route 103. Four towns — Newport, New London, Sunapee and Newbury — and two chambers of commerce financially support the seasonal operations of these little buildings in high traffic areas. And why not? The local folks who staff the information booths can provide an insider’s view of what to do in the area and, in many cases, are the first welcome for visitors all over the world.

“We’re the only contact a great many people have with Newbury,” says von Redlich, who has been the deputy town clerk for the past 13 years and manning Newbury’s information booth for 12 or so years. “And meeting people one on one makes a difference.”

Newbury has an old-fashioned information booth — well, you could almost call it an antique. It was built in the 1930s, and sat at the corner of Route 103 and Route 103A until the 1950s. Then it was moved down the road to where it stands today. Newbury has the only town beach open to the public and “the info booth is a way for us to tell visitors about the town beach,” says Dennis Pavlicek,

► WELCOME TO THE AREA *continued on page 32*

**Info booth:** Newbury

**Name:** Martha von Redlich

**Hometown:** Newbury

**Years in the booth:** 12 years

**What is the most frequently asked question(s)?**

Where can you launch a boat?

Where can you rent a boat? Where’s the beach?

We also hand out a lot of information on the inns and bed & breakfasts of the area, and where to eat. We ask all the businesses in the spring to get us their brochures. The Lake Sunapee Area Chamber of Commerce is good about getting us information, too.

**What’s the busiest month for visitors?**

**Busiest day?**

It’s busy from Memorial Day until school lets out in June. Then we stay busy until Labor Day. It’s very busy during the week of the fair.

**What is the funniest question you’ve been asked?**

Where is Mount Sunapee? My son was helping out that day and he gave my favorite answer: “Turn around and look up.”

**What is your favorite part about the job?**

What’s not to like? Sitting here in a beautiful place on the lake, enjoying the summer weather, and you get to visit with interesting people.

**What do you like about Newbury?**

Newbury is one of the nicest places to live in New Hampshire. There’s a low tax rate, unless you’re right on the lake. There’s nice people. And the whole history of the town is sitting right there in front of you. A town employee just retired at the age of 91; you don’t get that these days. Newbury is a super place to live.



**WELCOME TO THE AREA** *continued from page 31*  
town administrator for Newbury.

“We’re aiming to give people information about Newbury and the Lake Sunapee area, and we’re proud of our booth and the people that work there.”

You might think that the folks in the booth are volunteers, but they are not — they are paid town employees.

## When and Where

Looking for information about the area? Even locals will learn something new at one of our Kearsarge area information booths.

### Newbury Information Booth

Route 103

Wednesday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.,  
Memorial Day to Columbus Day (weekends  
only between Labor Day and Columbus Day)

### New London Information Booth

328 Main Street

Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.;  
most Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

### Newport Information Booth

Newport Common

Monday to Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.,  
Fourth of July to Labor Day  
(Saturdays only Memorial Day to Fourth of  
July and Labor Day to mid-October)

### Sunapee Welcome Center

Route 11 (between Main Street and  
Route 103B)

9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, Memorial Day to  
Columbus Day  
(weekends only between Labor Day and  
Columbus Day)

The Newport Information Booth had one person manning the desk for 25 years — Don Bennett. “He was a wealth of information,” says Ella Casey, executive director of the Newport Area Chamber of Commerce. “I could have cried when he said he couldn’t do it anymore.” Bennett loves his hometown so much that he even

worked in the booth for several years for no pay.

Newport’s information booth is the only booth supported by the chamber, although the town does help with upkeep like painting and repairs. New London has the only booth supported by both the town and the chamber.

The Lake Sunapee Region Chamber of

**Info booth:** Sunapee

**Name:** Rem Mastin

**Hometown:** Sunapee

**Years in the booth:** 4 years

**What is the most frequently asked question?**

What is there to do here in the area? The answer is different for a day vacationer versus a week vacationer. It’s also different for families with kids. This summer, we got asked, “What do you do on a rainy day?” or “When is it going to stop raining?”

**What’s the busiest day for visitors?**

Fridays. And weekends are usually busier than weekdays.

**What is the funniest question you’ve been asked?**

Where do we get tickets for the Aerosmith show?

**What is your favorite part about the job?**

I just like talking to people. Since I’ve lived here for 35 years, and I worked in real estate. I know just about every street and nook and cranny. You hang around in one spot long enough, you get to know it pretty good.

**What do you like about Sunapee?**

One of the best aspects of Sunapee and the Sunapee area is that we are probably one of the nicest uncommercialized areas in the state for tourists and year round living. People are always surprised when they ask for a motel or camp site on the lake — we don’t have any. It’s hard for people to believe.



Commerce owns the building and leases the land from the town of New London, and the town contributes funds each year to help cover the cost of staffing the information booth in the summer months.

“While I have no objection to foot traffic in the town office building, the information booth alleviates tourist traffic and questions that would most likely be handled by town employees,” says Jessie Levine, town administrator. “Plus, the information booth gives regional information, and we think that this region benefits by sharing resources and information across town boundaries.”

New London’s booth, which was rebuilt and reopened last July, is the largest in the area. It has a handicap accessible bathroom, basement storage, space for mailing preparation, a small meeting space, and walls of display space for chamber member materials. It is also heated, and the only one open year round. Rob Bryant, executive director of the Lake Sunapee Region Chamber of Commerce, staffs the booth most days, and he is actively looking for folks who’d like to chat with visitors a few hours a week.

The Sunapee Welcome Center was formerly a display post-and-beam home that Northcape Design brought to trade shows. They donated it to the town in 2005, and it sits on the corner of Route 11 and Route 103B. “If you look on the front two beams that make up the frame, there are inlaid carvings of a squirrel and deer,” says Donna Nashawaty, Sunapee’s town manager.



## Marilyn Morse Sunapee

**Info booth:** Sunapee

**Name:** Marilyn Morse

**Hometown:** Sunapee

**Years in the booth:** 11 or 12 years (“I know it’s more than 10,” she says.)

**What is the most frequently asked question?**

A lot of people are looking for the state beach, but the most frequently asked question is if we have any hiking trail maps.

**What’s the busiest month for visitors? Busiest day?**

Usually July is the busiest month, but in 2009, because of the weather, August. Thursday and Fridays are the busiest days.

**What is the funniest question you’ve been asked?**

Last year a lady asked me if I knew a gentleman who made shoes for people with problem feet. She thought he lived in Sunapee, but I didn’t have an answer for her. That was an unusual question.

**What is your favorite part about the job?**

I love meeting people. Every summer I meet several people who have lived in the same area I lived in, or we know the same people. It’s a small world.

**What do you like about Sunapee?**

The beautiful harbor. I tell people to take a wonderful afternoon or evening cruise on our beautiful lake.

► WELCOME TO THE AREA *continued on page 35*



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## Rob Bryant New London

**Info booth:** New London

**Name:** Rob Bryant

**Hometown:** Sutton

**Years in the booth:** 4 years

**What is the most frequently asked question?**

Recreation in general — where do I hike, swim or ski? Directions (and maps) are the second most frequently asked question.

**What's the busiest month for visitors?**

**Busiest day?**

July and August. Wednesdays are the busiest; people are planning for the upcoming weekend. Saturday morning is also busy. On the average, we see 25 people a day, but we have had as many as 75.

**What is the funniest question you've been asked?**

What time do the moose cross the road? What day are the leaves the prettiest? What do you expect me to do with my kids?

**What is your favorite part about the job?**

Promoting the area.

**What do you like about New London?**

There are a lot of recreational lodging and dining options that people don't know about. They are undiscovered treasures. And it is a wonderful place to live.

"It's a wonderful little booth. We get a lot of support in the community for it." **K**

*Laura Jean Whitcomb is terrible with directions, but does have quite a bit of information booth information in her head. She is the editor of Kearsarge Magazine, Upper Valley Life and Kid Stuff.*

## So, where are you from?

Info booths are busy places. For a few towns, "visitor" totals include in-person visits as well as phone calls. Sunapee, for example, has a phone for questions or emergencies, but the number isn't available to the public. New London, on the other hand, has a published phone number.

**Newbury Visitors**

2007: 1,813

2008: 1,915

2009: 1,926

**New London Visitors**

2007: 3,600

2008: 3,800

2009: 2,750

**Sunapee Visitors**

2007: 3,400

2008: 5,326

2009: 3,000

**Newport Visitors**

2007: 8,106

2008: 7,336

2009: 3,500

➤ WELCOME TO THE AREA *continued on page 36*

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## Ella Casey Newport

**Info booth:** Newport

**Name:** Ella Casey

**Hometown:** Newport

**Years in the booth:** 2 years

**What is the most frequently asked question?**

People like to know what there is to do. We get a lot of questions on the covered bridges and walking trails. More people are interested in walking and biking.

**What's the busiest month for visitors?**

The shades go up on the Fourth of July; they go down on Labor Day. Except for leaf peepers, that is when tourism is busy.

**What is the funniest question you've been asked?**

The leading question many years ago was "Where's Dr. Green?" At one time, all the liquor stores were painted green.

**What do you like about Newport?**

I came to Newport in 1966 to stay a year. It's the greatest town in the state. It's called the Sunshine Town and that's not for nothing, you know — we have great people here. I picked it over 40 years ago.

**Info booth:** Newport

**Name:** Brad Sears

**Hometown:** Newport

**Years in the booth:** 2 years

**What is the most frequently asked question?**

Directions. I watch them go around the rotary three or four times, then they'll stop. Questions have ranged from the Concert on the Common schedule, where to have a fancy dinner, a good place for lunch, directions to Vermont. A fellow from Kentucky was touring New Hampshire on his bike, and we got to talking about camping.

**How many visitors do you get a day?**

Depends on the weather. A good day is six visitors. Yesterday I had four, the day before, eight.

**What is your favorite part about the job?**

We spend half of the year RVing. We stop at information booths — some are state, some local, some Chatty Cathys, some manned by Silent Sams. All are helpful, and it's what we try to do here in Newport.



## Brad Sears Newport

**What do you like about Newport?**

It's a delightful little town, one of the undiscovered treasures of Sullivan County. It's done a lot to put on a new face over the past few years, new sidewalks, the opera house.