Five new members have joined the Island Housing Trust Board of Directors this year. They are: John Boynton of Northeast Harbor and Concord, MA; Andrea Leonard of Southwest Harbor; Donald Graves of Northeast Harbor and Huntington Beach, CA; Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko of Hall Quarry; and Anica Miller Rushing of Somesville.

“We are pleased to have these five very talented individuals join the IHT Board,” said Joanne Harris, President of the Board of Directors. “Each of them brings to us a new perspective on what IHT’s work means to the Mount Desert Island community. This diversity of perspectives has been one of the strengths of IHT’s board over the years and we are very happy to see it continue with the addition of our new board members.”

The IHT Board of Directors is led by Ms. Harris of Bass Harbor; Sydney Roberts Rockefeller of Seal Harbor, Vice President; Carole Plenty of Somesville, Treasurer; and Ellen Kappes of Northeast Harbor and Somesville, Secretary. Philip Steel of Southwest Harbor and Michael Bucklin of Northeast Harbor are at-large members of the Board’s Executive Committee, which includes the four officers.

JOHN BOYNTON bought the old Apothecary and the Wingspread Gallery lot in NEH that was destroyed by fire. He owns Firehouse Capitol, Inc. which makes entrepreneurial investments. He was recently named business man of the year in Concord, MA.

CINNAMON CATLIN-LEGUTKO holds a BA in Anthropology and Art History and an MA in Museum Studies. She is the Abbe Museum’s President and CEO. She lives in Hall Quarry with her husband Larry, son Jacob and a dog named Chuck.

DONALD GRAVES was born in Northeast Harbor and has summered here with his wife Margot since the late 1960s. He was responsible for the sales, growth and marketing of two British owned companies and has been on the vestry of St. Mary’s since 2011.

ANDREA LEONARD is Vice President and Branch Manager of Camden National Bank in Town Hill. Andrea is new to the IHT Board, and brings with her years of valuable expertise and provides insight of the local banking community.

ANICA MILLER-RUSHING has her Masters of Education and is a science education consultant. She enjoys hiking and exploring Mount Desert Island with her husband, Abe, and two young sons. They live in the Ripples Hill Development. She looks forward to helping others achieve affordable home ownership and to deepen community connections on MDI.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Joanne Harris: President • Sydney Roberts Rockefeller: Vice President • Ellen Kappes: Secretary • Carole Plenty: Treasurer
John Boynton • Michael Bucklin • Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko • Nathaniel R. Fenton • Donald Graves • Linda Higgins • John T. Kelly
Andrea Leonard • Anica Miller-Rushing • Malcolm Peabody • Michael Siklos • Philip Steel • Hook Wheeler • Lee Worcester
Christopher Spruce: Executive Director
Christopher Spruce has returned to the position of Executive Director of Island Housing Trust effective November 18, 2013. Joanne Harris, president of the Board of Directors, made the announcement in an article appearing in the Mount Desert Islander on October 23rd.

“We are very excited to have Chris once again assume a leadership position at IHT,” Harris said on behalf of the IHT Board of Directors. “Under his direction from 2005 through mid-2012, IHT initiated or completed 14 homeownership opportunities for Mount Desert Island’s year-round working families,” Harris noted, “Chris took IHT from what was essentially a start-up non-profit identifying the need for affordable year-round housing on MDI to an action-oriented organization that created real housing opportunities for working individuals and families on MDI,” she said.

Spruce has been working as a legislative analyst for the non-partisan Office of Policy and Legal Analysis (OPLA) at the Maine State Legislature since early in 2012. He was lead staff in the 126th Legislature for the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry and for the Joint Select Committee on Maine’s Workforce and Economic Future. Prior to joining IHT in 2005 as its first full-time executive director, Spruce worked as the community development coordinator at Sunrise County Economic Council based in Machias. He also had previously worked for the Office of Policy and Legal Analysis as lead staff for the Joint Standing Committee on Business and Economic Development and the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government.

Spruce holds a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of Maine and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism from the same institution.

“I am very glad to be rejoining IHT at this important time in its organizational history,” Spruce said. “IHT is well-positioned to step-up its already strong efforts to create affordable housing options for year-round residents. Over the next several months, I anticipate that IHT will redouble its efforts not only to create more homeownership opportunities but also to initiate efforts to expand rental opportunities geared to young families trying to find affordable year-round housing on the Island.”

Spruce said the diversity and expertise represented by IHT’s Board of Directors led by Harris, the board’s president, and Sydney Roberts Rockefeller, the board’s vice president, heavily influenced his decision to rejoin IHT. “IHT’s board has always been one of its strengths as an organization. I have been fortunate to work under the leadership of some excellent board presidents: Marla O’Byrne, Ted Koffman, Hook Wheeler, Lee Worcester, Mike Sikloski and Meredith Randolph. I have every expectation that my working relationship with this board and this board president going forward will be as successful and as productive as it was in my first tour as executive director.”

Island Housing Trust’s mission promotes viable, year-round island communities by advancing permanent workforce housing on Mount Desert Island. IHT fulfills its mission by creating home ownership and rental opportunities affordable to MDI’s year-round workforce employing a variety of approaches that result from public and private partnerships.
When I first joined Island Housing Trust in 2005, I attended several meetings of a board subcommittee chaired by the late Farnham Butler. The so-called Ripples Pond subcommittee often met at Farnham’s house in his living room with the most marvelous view of Somes Sound. Farnham had set his and IHT’s sights on developing a small portion of a nearly 200-acre parcel off the Beech Hill Road, referred to as the Ripples Pond tract. Owned by the Town of Mount Desert, the property had been donated to the town by David and Peggy Rockefeller, reportedly with the understanding that at least a portion of the tract would be used to create housing for the year-round workforce. It was Farnham’s intent to make sure that understanding became reality.

At the conclusion of one lengthy subcommittee meeting at which various opinions, cautions, and challenges were shared, Farnham stood in the middle of his living room on his increasingly unsteady legs and commented to me, “These people all talk too much. We need to start doing something and stop talking so much. I hope we start doing something pretty soon.” I quickly responded to Farnham’s mild (for him) complaint by telling him as directly as I could that I joined IHT to build houses and to take other actions that would create housing opportunities for working folks, not talk. Of course, I didn’t need to tell him, a long time planning board member, that the talk was part of the process necessary to get to the action stage. Although Farnham did not live to see the first shovel of earth turned over at was has become to be known as Ripples Hill, he did know before he died in 2006 that the workforce housing project for which he had long advocated and supported with his time and money was well on its way to reality and he knew we were going to name the road Farnham’s Way.

I left IHT as full-time executive director in February 2012 to return after a 10-year hiatus to the Maine Legislature as a legislative analyst. I worked for my old office-mate, Director Marion Hylan Barr, and her very talented staff in the non-partisan Office of Policy and Legal Analysis. The work at OPLA always fascinated me as a public policy junkie. This time around I was fortunate to staff both the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry and the Joint Select Committee on Maine’s Workforce and Economic Future (MWEF).

My work with the MWEF Committee got me to thinking back to my years with IHT, which largely involved working with members of the Island’s workforce to help them obtain quality, year-round housing. I recalled the satisfaction I felt on each day that a family moved into a new permanent residence, an event that most often followed years of moving from one winter or seasonal rental to another in order to live all year round on MDI. Actions taken by IHT’s board and staff, supported by our many generous donors, had translated into real opportunities for year-round housing for all of these new homeowners.

I also thought of Farnham and his determination that talk lead to action. There is nothing like staffing a legislative committee, where there is often much more talk, than action, to remind one of the frustrations that attend “process.”

As I return to IHT, I realize the talk versus action debate will continue. The board and staff of every non-profit are faced with frequent decisions that pull members in one direction or the other (To do or not to do, to paraphrase Shakespeare.) At the end of the day, however, the talk most often leads to better, more reasoned decision-making and thus, actions that translate to mission success. Does such process guarantee success? Not always, but the right amount of talk, supported by due diligence, is more likely to lead to good decisions than the rush to action in the absence of discussion and knowing the facts.

As Farnham, the boat-builder well knew, it’s not just about doing, but about doing it right. It’s hard to get to “right” without all that talk.

- Chris Spruce
For the fourth time in five years, Island Housing Trust is a recipient of a grant from the Hattie A. and Fred C. Lynam Trust.

The $5,000 grant will be used in support of IHT’s Homeownership Assistance Program (HOAP) that assists qualified applicants to purchase a year-round home on Mount Desert Island. More information on this and other IHT programs may be found at www.islandhousingtrust.org.

The Lynam Trust was established to support the charitable, religious and educational organizations, which are particularly beneficial to and advantageous for the people of Mount Desert Island.

Christie and Steve Anastasia and their sons, Svante, 5, and Xavier, 8, are the newest family to join the Ripples Hill neighborhood. They recently moved in to 24 Farnhams Way at Ripples Hill after purchasing the house in late November.