

Brainstorming session in Groveton garnered some ideas to work with

By Lyndall Demers

GROVETON — A brainstorming session set up by GREAT (Groveton Regional Economic Action Team) at the St. Francis Xavier Hall drew politicians, teachers, millworkers, residents, former residents and others to share their frustrations, ideas and hopes for the future of the area. Starting out on a rather somber note, one speaker said he felt like he was at a funeral. But by the end of the day, people were more optimistic and it was felt by most attending that it was a good ses-

sion and some good ideas came from it.

Brenda Dowst, Director of Sustainable Communities Program at Mountain Spirit Institute in Sunapee, facilitated the meeting. She is the daughter of Dick Sheltry, who was a mill worker. She grew up here and said the town means "a lot to me."

The meeting was to gather information and ideas and a general feeling from the public on what they would like to see the area become and where they would like to go. Ideas were sought as to how to best overcome the barriers and challenges that have and continue to face Groveton and surrounding communities, especially now

with the upcoming closure of the Wausau mill.

Ms. Dowst spoke of time she'd spent here in the past, and the challenges of nature we have faced, such as floods. She remembered some good things too, such as when Groveton's band was asked to play at the Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, D.C.

She mentioned two choices her father would say you had in times of trouble. One was that you could lie down and let everyone walk all over you, and the second was, you could pull yourself up and do what needs to be done. She called this time a "critical turning point", saying that she had spent time in the far east and all over the world, she added that we have tremendous resources here that are found nowhere else in the world. She suggested that through this brainstorming event we would be able to find ways to utilize what we have. She asked that we all remember who we are and where we came from. She described New Hampshire people as some of the most independent people, although sometimes stubborn, but strong.

She noted the signs around the room where people who chose not to speak could write their ideas and feelings about what's happening. Triggers like "I feel" and "I want" were over the tables that gave ideas as to what they could think about.

The first to get up to the microphone was John Roberge.

Brainstorming -----

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of the trails, to be courteous

Brainstorming -----

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His feeling was that the trade policies of this country have hurt mills such as Wausau. He suggested that we buy only products made in the United States and not those produced outside the country.

Next came Brian Bresnahan, who is treasurer of Local Union #61. He said the workers have sought help from Sen. Sununu, Congressman Hodes and others with regard to a better severance package than was offered. He went on to say that we need to think about what we have to offer the outside world. He said he'd reached a point of anger and apologized publicly for directing that anger toward a couple of people.

Norman Charest, Economic Director of city of Berlin and member of Tri-County CAP and Coös Economic Development, lives in West Dummer. He's lived there since 1972. He was born in Berlin but moved to West Dummer. He said he knew the pain Groveton was feeling at this time.

He described Berlin as having a head start on dealing with loss of mills, and said that rumor has it that Cascade mill, which employs about 400, may be out within a year.

He mentioned that 300 to 500 jobs will be available at the new

Meeting -----

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Sandy Gagnon spoke of removing the "granite curtain" that separates the North Country from the rest of the state.

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