

Sun Journal

For a good cause: Lobster Bowl participants gather in Lewiston

By **Randy Whitehouse**, *Staff Writer*

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LEWISTON - It's going to be played on a new day and time this year, but as the 150 or so participants in the 20th Maine Shrine Lobster Bowl Classic and their families found out Sunday, the game still has the same profound meaning.

Each spring, the Kora Shrine hosts a gathering at the Kora Temple on Sabattus St. to tell the football players and cheerleaders who will take part in the game (4 p.m., Saturday, July 25 at Biddeford's Waterhouse Field) what they are playing and cheering for and what they need to do to help make the event a success. The Lobster Bowl has raised over \$300,000 for Shriners Hospitals in its two decades of existence, in part because everyone walks away from the Lewiston meeting motivated to raise money after seeing and hearing for themselves what those hospitals do for the children they treat.

This year, Carrie Holmstrom, a 19-year-old college student from Dartmouth, Mass. presented her amazing story. Holmstrom was a standout soccer goalie in high school who was being heavily recruited by colleges before a horrific April, 2006 car accident left her with serious burns over 70 percent of her body. Doctors had to amputate both of her legs and the fingers on her right hand, and she spent the first three months of her stay at the Shriners Burn Institute in Boston in an induced coma. She was given a 30 percent chance of survival.

Holmstrom spent more than seven months in Boston recovering and in therapy. She said not only was the treatment she received at the Shriners hospital vital to her, but so was the support her family received from the Shriners, particularly in providing housing so they could stay with her in Boston.

"At a time when I needed my family and closest friends to be there, I was lucky to be at a hospital that allowed all that to happen," she said.

Holmstrom received two prosthetic legs and to date has undergone a total of 36 surgeries. She also has received countless hours of physical and occupational therapy from Shriners hospitals. Her father, Mike, estimated she has received over \$6 million worth of care in three years, "and thanks to (the Shriners), we didn't have to pay a dime."

"It's not even just about the money, though," Carrie said. "They have such a good support system that it's just helped out so much."

Holmstrom, who was a junior at the time of her accident, was able to make her senior prom and graduation, and is currently a freshman at Salem State College, where she is studying communications.

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She and her family have recently become close with the family of Caitlin Bazinet, a Winthrop High School senior who is currently in the Shriners Burn Institute in Boston after suffering very serious burns in a car accident last December.

Another close friend of Bazinet, Kevin Hart, will be playing in the Lobster Bowl.

Hart, a standout defensive end on the Ramblers' 2008 Campbell Conference championship team, wears a pink bracelet with the inscription "Life's a dance" to support Bazinet "because she was a phenomenal dancer," he said.

Bazinet's sisters, Leslie and Courtney, thanked the Shriners and the Lobster Bowl participants.

"I can't even begin to express my gratitude to the Shriners," Leslie said. "They have saved my sister's life. They have saved my family's life, pretty much."

"She is so thankful for what everyone has done for her, and she is working really, really hard to be able to graduate this year," she added.

Proceeds from game tickets, program sales, ad sales for the program and other fundraising go to the 22 Shriners Hospitals in North America. Lobster Bowl participants, who spend the week before the game in training camps at Hebron Academy and Central Maine Community College, are required to raise \$300 each to help offset the cost of playing the game, which has an annual operating budget of over \$90,000.

Hart hopes his future Lobster Bowl teammates and opponents got the message Sunday, but he won't hesitate to remind them if needed.

"I would say it's probably one of the best causes that they could be a part of," he said. "Just go out and have as much fun as you can and try to get as much money as you can to raise for one of the best causes known."