

The 'Iceman' is a role model of the finest kind

Bert Languet has for years volunteered time and funds to develop recreational facilities for children and adults, with the latest being an ice skating rink next to City Hall in Waterville.

BY AMY CALDER, MORNING SENTINEL

Bert Languet is a proponent of getting outdoors in the winter and taking advantage of what the season has to offer.

Beyond that, he thinks exercise is important, particularly at a time when it is tempting to stay inside and cozy up to a television, phone or computer screen.

Languet, 53, recalled when his kids were little and the family would get up on a cold Saturday morning, don their skates and head to the frozen pond on their property in Belgrade to enjoy the ice. He knew they were fortunate.

"It's kind of important for other people to have that opportunity," Languet said Wednesday. To that end, Languet in December donated a 20-by-30-foot ice skating rink to the Children's Discovery Museum, which organizes Kringleville in Castonguay Square in downtown Waterville during the holiday season. Children often wait in line for more than an hour to see Santa and Mrs. Claus at Kringleville, and museum officials thought having a skating rink there would be perfect for the kids. While the museum wasn't prepared to operate the rink this year, it leased it to the city, according to the museum's executive director, Amarinda Keys.

"This year, we're kind of just testing it out a little bit and next year we will do more with it," she said. The museum was grateful for Languet's generous gift, she said. He and museum board member Rick Bryant took a day in December to set up the rink and the Waterville Fire Department flooded it.



Since then, children and adults have been seen skating on the rink, which is expandable, and Languet hopes to make it larger next season. He and the city's Recreation Department have been maintaining it.

City Manager Michael Roy, a hockey skater himself, said Languet has always been charitable in ways people may not realize. He does it under the radar, expecting nothing in return.

"He certainly has been one of the leaders in this community in promoting skating for kids, young people, and he's been as big a booster as you can find in the greater Waterville area," Roy said.

Indeed, one need look no further than Languet's profile online to see all that he has done.

The vice president of Golden Pond Wealth Management in Waterville, Languet, who holds a bachelor's degree from Colby College and a master's in business administration from Thomas College, is invested in the community. He and his wife have three children: Jose, Gabriela and Joshua.



Cutting some time on the ice on a frigid Friday afternoon are, from left, Eddie Goff, 11, of Norridgewock, John Robertson, 46, of Waterville, and Noah Robinson, 11, of Waterville. Bert Languet, "The Iceman" off the rink to the left, donated the rink to the Children's Discovery Museum and helped set it up. Morning Sentinel photo by Taylor Abbott



Bert Languet, "The Iceman," donated a rink to the Children's Discovery Museum and helped set it up. Morning Sentinel photo by Taylor Abbott

Several years ago, he built and maintained an outdoor ice rink at the Alford Youth Center on North Street and in 2013 was named REM Volunteer of the Year for the center. In 2012, the Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce recognized Languet with the Outstanding Business Professional award.

He and Patrick Guerette several years ago founded the Maine Pond Hockey Classic to benefit the Alford Center and Languet is known as the "Iceman" for building and maintaining the rinks on Messalonskee Lake and at the Snow Pond Center for the Arts in Sidney where the hockey classic is held.

Languet serves on the Belgrade Lakes Association Board of Directors, is past president of the Central Maine Youth Hockey Association and Augusta Kiwanis Club, and has served on the boards of the Maine Children's Home, Waterville Opera House, Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce and Maine Center for Public Interest Reporting. He counts as his favorite volunteer projects the development of playgrounds at Maine General Medical Center's Alford Center for Health in Augusta and at the Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter in Waterville. I met Languet and his son, Jose, in 2012 at the homeless shelter when Jose was 17 and a Messalonskee High School junior. Bert Languet was guiding him in the designing and planning of the playground, which the younger Languet started as a way to earn his Eagle Scout rank, the highest attainable rank in the Boy Scouts of America. Jose said he wanted to give back to the community. "Kids are going through a hard time in their life and a

playground will help them through,” he said at the time. Clearly, he was influenced by his father’s penchant for helping others, a quality he likely will pass down to his own children one day. A stone thrown in the water creates ripples that travel far.

The way I see it, the central Maine community is fortunate to have Bert Languet in its midst, doing good deeds that make both children’s and adults’ lives a bit happier and spreading generosity at every turn. He does it modestly and cheerfully, not expecting recognition. And that, to my thinking, is the essence of a real role model.