An ambitious partnership with OSHA helped Yellowstone National Park usher in sweeping safety and health improvements.

Putting Safety First at YELLOWSTONE

By Donna Miles

It’s the world’s oldest national park: 2.2 million acres of steaming geysers, thundering waterfalls, crystalline lakes, and panoramic vistas that straddle the states of Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana. Each year, Yellowstone National Park attracts thousands of visitors from around the world, drawn by its natural beauty. But through the eyes of the park’s 300 full-time and 500 part-time employees, Yellowstone was not always such a pristine environment. Five years ago, the park had a workplace injury and illness rate four times the average for all industries. Between January 1994 and August 1997, five park employees died on the job. A park ranger was killed when his snowmobile tumbled off a road during a blizzard. Another park ranger drowned when his kayak capsized. A park geologist and volunteer assistant were killed in an avalanche. Then, in August 1997, a heavy-equipment mechanic died when he lost control of a jury-rigged snowmobile he was testing and crashed into a maintenance building.

OSHA cited Yellowstone for safety violations in four of the five deaths. But it was the latest fatality that triggered a comprehensive, five-month OSHA investigation into Yellowstone’s workplace safety conditions. The result was a record 130 citations for 600 serious violations and 150 minor infractions. "Clearly, this was the most extensive investigation with the largest number of violations we’ve ever issued from our office," said David DiTommaso, OSHA’s Billings Area Office Director.

The violations included 180 electrical violations, 97 fire extinguisher violations, 95 exit violations, 84 machine guarding violations, 61 guardrail and handrail violations, 41 emergency light violations, and 26 flammable liquid storage violations.

The OSHA investigators concluded that although Yellowstone had a written employee safety and health plan, it hadn’t been put into practice and most employees didn’t even know about it. Even before OSHA completed its investigation, Yellowstone management, stunned by the string of fatalities and injuries, had committed to correcting the problems. The Park Service set aside $220,000, about 1 percent of Yellowstone’s annual budget, and vowed to make safety and health improvements.

OSHA’s Billings Area Office proposed going a step further, initiating the first partnership between OSHA and a national park. DiTommaso explained that the partnership, launched in May 1998, went beyond simply correcting problems. Its goals were to reduce the park’s injury and illness rate by 10 percent per year and to correct all hazards for the long term. "It involved remaking the culture of the park so employees think about safety first," he said.

The park promised to create a written health and safety policy, educate employees about its safety record, provide safety training, and commit funds to safety and health concerns. OSHA agreed to provide technical assistance, program development assistance, and training resources.

"The Park Service is committed to an aggressive program to substantially reduce the hazards identified by the OSHA review," said then Park Superintendent Mike Finley, in announcing the partnership. "Our goal is for every employee to develop an attitude of ‘zero tolerance-no excuse’ when it comes to safety."

In a memo to all Yellowstone employees, Finley emphasized the need for the staff to work together to install a new safety culture at the park. "Our safety system is not created to solely comply with laws, guidelines, or standards," he said, "but is developed by our employees and for our employees who we do not want to see either hurt, sick, or killed by job-associated circumstances."

Finley acknowledged that the change would not happen overnight. "Safety is not a system which, once installed like a diskette inserted into a computer, magically results in safe performance or zero accidents," he said. "Safety is a behavior, embraced by each employee, that becomes a routine part of every task we do which keeps us in good health and productive on the job and enables us to enjoy our personal lives."

Just one year into the partnership, DiTommaso said the park was already making significant progress toward reaching its goals. Of 600 serious violations identified in OSHA’s comprehensive inspection, all were corrected "and corrected aggressively," he said. The park management hired a full-time safety and health professional, produced a comprehensive written safety policy, and distributed it to all employees. After four days of intensive safety and health training, top-level (continued)
management formed an executive safety council that met monthly to address safety and health issues. Each section within the park put together a "quality circle team" to deal with safety and health concerns within that area. Monthly safety advisory council meetings were held with employee representatives from throughout the park who served as safety advisors to help increase communication about safety issues among park employees.

Yellowstone continued making steady progress. Over the course of the partnership, the park committed $500,000 to safety and health improvements, ranging from installing better snowmobile garage ventilation to purchasing fall protection equipment to providing employee training.

"It became obvious that the managers as well as the employees were committed to making genuine changes at Yellowstone," said DiTommaso. "By this point, they had basically done what they needed to do to fix the problems identified in OSHA's investigation. They then worked to instill a workplace culture that really valued worker protection. It was exciting to be a part of the transformation."

When OSHA Compliance Safety and Health Officer Gary Wild and Compliance Assistance Specialist Brandon Gauthier conducted their final evaluation under the partnership in August 2002, they found that Yellowstone's safety and health environment had changed dramatically. Park employees agreed that conditions had improved considerably. All park areas and divisions had initiated safety meetings and training and encouraged employees to take part in the safety and health program.

The Yellowstone management was beginning to address ergonomic hazards, the most frequent cause of injury in the park. OSHA had tapped into the expertise of ergonomists from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to evaluate snowmobile use among park workers and recommend changes to reduce musculoskeletal disorders caused by vibration, repetitive motion, and lifting. Managers were putting NIOSH's suggestions into practice, trying to reduce the time employees had to ride snowmobiles and increasing trail grooming to take out some of the bumps or moguls that routinely develop from heavy snowmobile use. During the final evaluation, Wild identified nine serious hazards, but the park staff corrected them immediately. "This was a far cry from the 600 serious violations found before the partnership," DiTommaso said, "and considering the enormous area and multitude of facilities in the park, was a testament to the changes brought about by a park committed to improvement and an agency committed to helping them do so."

As a result of changes implemented during the partnership, Yellowstone's lost-time rate dropped 10 percent to its lowest level in five years, and the incident rate declined 40 percent. Most importantly, no workers died on the job during the term of the partnership, compared to five deaths within a three-and-a-half-year period immediately before the partnership.

Although the partnership ended December 31, 2002, both OSHA and the National Park Service are committed to continuing their relationship at Yellowstone. In April 2003, they entered into a new partnership that focuses on reducing musculoskeletal disorders among park employees.

Gauthier, now the park's safety and health manager, said he looks forward to continuing Yellowstone's relationship with OSHA. "The return on the investment for OSHA and the Park Service was excellent after five years and we want to keep building on that," he said. "The proof will be in the pudding when we have zero injuries, but we've seen definite improvements."

"OSHA's partnership with the National Park Service at Yellowstone is a real success story because it demonstrates the benefits of working together, hand in hand, toward a common goal," summarized DiTommaso. "Today, workers at Yellowstone are far safer than they were before we launched the partnership. And the best part is that both OSHA and the Park Service are committed to keeping it that way.

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**Citation Saves a Life**

Nobody likes receiving an OSHA citation. But at Yellowstone National Park, a citation during a 1997 investigation is attributed with saving a worker's life. Inspectors found a bent and damaged safety cage in a heavy-equipment maintenance shop. The cage, which separates employees from direct contact with oversized tires during tire changes, was also too small for all tires needing repair. OSHA advised the park to purchase a new, larger cage. Under the park's enhanced safety program, initiated under the partnership with OSHA, Yellowstone employees began using the cage whenever they inflated a tire.

Just over a year later, a park employee was inflating a heavy truck tire when it exploded. Although the safety cage restrained the tire, the explosive force was so strong that it bent many of the cage's steel bars, and the concussion knocked snow from the roof.

Although he was directly next to the tire when it exploded, the worker was unhurt, protected by the cage. OSHA officials agree that without the cage, it is unlikely that he would have survived the blast.

**Credit:** Occupational Safety & Health Organization (OSHA), Reprinted from JSHQ (Job Safety & Health Quarterly), Volume 14, Number 4, Summer/Fall 2003.
BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

Brandon and Michelle Gauthier are the proud parents of Jacob Charles born on November 13. Jacob weighed 7 pounds, 6 ounces and was 19 inches long. Jacob joins brother Rylan at home. Congratulations to the Gauthier family.

Congratulations to Anna, Peter and Sam Galindo on the birth of Katherine Carlson. Katherine was born at 3:30 a.m. on October 15, weighed 7 pounds and was 19-1/2 inches long.

Miya Carolinn Ross was born at 5:45 a.m. on October 5. She weighed 7 pounds, 5-1/2 ounces and was 21-1/2 inches long. Congratulations to Freya Mike, and Katie Ross on their new addition.

FAREWELL GATHERINGS

After 20 years and 9 months in Yellowstone National Park, Hank Coleman is retiring from Telecommunications. Please come say, "good by" and "good luck," in the Superintendent's Conference Room on Tuesday, December 2 at 3:00 p.m. Cake, punch and assorted goodies will be provided.

Edith Peterson is retiring from her position in the Safety Office after serving 23 years in Yellowstone National Park. Stop by and wish Edith a happy, healthy retirement on Thursday, December 4 at 3:00 p.m. in Canteen Room A. Cake and punch will be provided.

Marsha Karle, Chief of Public Affairs, is leaving the National Park Service after 22 years of service. A celebration of Marsha's new life will be held on Monday, December 10 at 3:00 p.m. in the Mammoth Hotel Dining Room. Please come enjoy hors d'oeuvres and wish Marsha well.
ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE YELLOWSTONE FEDERAL EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATION (YFEA) will host their annual employee Christmas party on Thursday, December 11, 2003. YFEA is having a centerpiece contest in conjunction with the party. Bring your centerpiece to the party and everyone will have the chance to vote on their favorite one. A $50.00 cash prize will be awarded to the person or group that makes the best centerpiece. After the party, you can either take your centerpiece home to use on your own table, or sell it at the party. If you're interested in showing off your creative talents, call Kris Peters (307) 344-2039.

WINTER PARKING ISSUES: To make snow removal in the Mammoth area easier, the North District Maintenance staff would like to ask you to refrain from parking your vehicles close to or over the sidewalks, as it makes clearing them much more difficult. Also, if you need to park a vehicle in the Canteen parking lot overnight or long term, please park on either side of the lot (near the buildings), not in the middle or on either end. If you have Government vehicles that will not be used this winter, please notify the Superintendent's Office at (307) 344-2002 or 344-2003 for permission to move them to Stephens Creek for storage. Please do not move any vehicles to Stephens Creek before receiving authorization from the Superintendent's Office. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

THE YELLOWSTONE FEDERAL EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATION (YFEA) MEDIA LIBRARY now has 12 new selections:

Agent Cody Banks
All or Nothing
Antwone Fisher
Catch Me If You Can

Chicago
Die Another Day (DVD)
Far From Heaven
Gangs of New York

Kissing Jessica Stein
Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (DVD)
The Pianist
The Ring (DVD)

A complete inventory can be found on the Yellowstone Intranet at http://www.yell.nps.gov/yfea/videos.asp.

CHANGE IN LONG DISTANCE CALLING: Calls anywhere within Yellowstone National Park are now considered local. This includes calls from areas with 344, 242, and 545 prefixes. Calls placed to Bozeman, Livingston, West Yellowstone, Emigrant, Wilsall and Belgrade are also considered local. However, Big Sky is NOT included in this phone change. You are required to dial the area code. There is a mandatory charge for this extended area service of $2.02 per line per month.

VETERINARIAN VISIT: Dr. James Murray, DVM of Livingston, will not be at the Gardiner Exxon on Friday, November 28, 2003. His schedule will be December 5th and 19th, and January 9th and 30th. He will continue on his regular biweekly schedule thereafter. Call (406) 222-3700 if you would like to schedule an appointment for a home visit.

YELLOWSTONE GENERAL STORES at Mammoth will be closed until mid-December 2003. The closure will enable interior remodeling of the store that was a commitment in the Concessions Contract. If you have any questions, call the Business Management Office at (307) 344-2271.

CONGRATULATIONS to Kathy Cronin from Seabrook, New Hampshire, the winner of the Entre Nous Yellowstone quilt. A big THANK YOU to everyone for supporting Gardiner's Scout House.

Condolences

Our thoughts and sympathy go out to Mark and Bobbi Foster. Mark's mother passed away recently after a long battle with cancer. ♡
ANNOUNCEMENTS CONT'D...

THE GARDINER COMMUNITY CENTER'S YOUTH SATELLITE PROJECT needs your help. We are looking for interested adults who are willing to spend at least one evening a month with local area junior high or high school students during our scheduled events. We also need dedicated adults and teens to serve on a planning committee. If you have a talent to share or just enjoy spending time with teens, you could be a great asset for our program. The teens have shown this is something they are interested in, and now we need adult support. Our next event is a coffeehouse on Saturday, December 13, 2003. Adults are welcome. Come and see what your teens are talking about. For more information regarding the Youth Satellite Project, call Heather Britton at (406) 848-9470, Bennett Rees at (406) 848-7566, Janet Lewis at (307) 344-7712, or Mary Heller at (406) 848-7192.

The Youth Satellite Project is also in need of the following items: board games, video games, a 19" or larger color television, an espresso machine in good working order, young adult books, and videos. We are in the process of raising funds to purchase some gaming tables, such as a ping-pong, soccer, or air hockey. If you would like to make a cash donation, we now have our non-profit status. For more information, contact any of the individuals listed above.

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK IN WINTER

Yellowstone National Park's winter season begins at 7:00 a.m. on December 17, at which time the park opens (conditions permitting) to oversnow vehicles (snowmobiles and snowcoaches) from Mammoth to Norris to Madison; from Madison to Old Faithful to the West Entrance; from Old Faithful to West Thumb; from the South Entrance to Lake to the East Entrance; and from Canyon to Norris.

Anyone entering Yellowstone by snowmobile during the 2003-2004 winter season must have an entrance reservation. Only 950 entrance reservations will be available for each day. When this number has been issued, no additional snowmobiles will be allowed to enter the park. To insure you can enter on the days you prefer, make your snowmobile reservations well in advance of your arrival. If you wish to travel without a commercial guide, make your reservations by calling Xanterra Parks and Resorts, Inc. at (307) 344-7311. The cost of a reservation is $10 per snowmobile for one day; $3 per snowmobile for each additional day. You must make one reservation per snowmobile, per day, and you must travel with a minimum of two snowmobiles in your group, and no more than eleven.

If you have booked snowmobiles with a commercial guide, be sure the company has made the correct number of reservations for your group. A list of commercial snowmobile guides can be found at http://www.nps.gov/yell/planvisit/services/wintbusn.htm.

If you wish to travel by snowcoach, you will need to reserve seats for your group by calling Xanterra Parks and Resort, Inc. at (307) 344-7311 or another commercial guide authorized to provide winter services in the park. A list of these businesses can be found on the above web site.

Hours of operation for snowcoach and snowmobile travel in the park are from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. daily.

MAIL BAG

Dear Friend in Yellowstone,

"Thanks to all of you who have made my (long) tenure in Yellowstone such a wonderful, professional and personal experience, and for the nice send-off. While trying not to 'haunt' you all, we really will be 'just down the road' at P.O. Box 424, Moose, Wyoming 83012. I wish you all, individually and collectively, as members of the Yellowstone National Park staff, good journeys ahead, as I hope to have at Grand Teton National Park."

-Sue Consolo Murphy
Reassignments:
Dick Divine, Special Agent
to U.S. Forest Service-Bend, Oregon
EOD 01/06/04
Last day 11/19/03

Retirements:
Edith Peterson, Administrative Support Assistant
Safety Office
Will continue to reside in Gardiner, Montana
Last day 12/31/03

Hank Coleman, Telecommunications Specialist
Will reside in Helena, Montana
Last day 01/02/04

Permanent Appointments:
Barbara Cline, Secretary
Yellowstone Center for Resources
EOD 11/30/03

Terry Saucedo, Administrative Support Assistant
Safety Office
EOD 11/30/03

Promotions:
Tina Holland, Accounting Technician
Supply Center
EOD 11/30/03

Stephen Swanke, Supervisory Park Ranger
Lake Ranger Station
EOD 11/16/03

Thrift Savings Plan Open Season is October 15 through December 31, 2003. This open season, employees covered by the Federal Employees’ Retirement System (FERS) may elect to contribute up to 14% of their basic pay each pay period and employees covered by the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) may elect to contribute up to 9%. Changes to the Thrift Savings Plan can be made by filling out a new TSP-1 Election Form, available in the Human Resources Office, or on the Employee Express web site www.employeexpress.gov.

Flexible Spending Account (FSA) Open Season is November 10 through December 8, 2003. This program allows employees to set aside pre-tax money from their paychecks to pay for a variety of eligible expenses such as health care and/or dependent care expenses. A memorandum regarding the Flexible Spending Account was sent to all employees. Further information and enrollment forms are available at https://www.fsafedes.com.

Health Insurance Open Season is November 10 through December 8, 2003. All changes to health insurance will be effective January 11, 2004. Booklets are available in the Human Resources Office. Changes to health insurance coverage can be made by filling out Health Benefits Election Form SF-2809 and returning it to Rosanne Riley by close of business December 8, 2003. Changes can also be made through the Employee Express web site at www.employeexpress.gov.

The Summer 2003 MEDCOR Yellowstone National Park Seasonal Employee Health Care Plan ended on October 17, 2003. Please keep in mind that there is a two-month break in health care coverage, and seasonal employees must initiate their health care plans again for the winter season. The 2003-2004 winter season should begin on December 17, 2003, and end on approximately March 14, 2004. The Human Resources Office will provide an update when the winter dates are finalized.

Annual Leave, Use or Lose must be used before January 10, 2004. Please keep in mind that if you do not use what you’ve earned you can donate it to someone in the Leave Share Program. You may give to any National Park Service employee. To donate use or lose, please complete donation form OF-630-A, available from the Human Resources Office or call (307) 344-2051 to request a copy. The following information is needed: name, social security number and annual leave hours you wish to donate. A recipient can also be selected by Yellowstone Human Resources or by the Denver Payroll Office.

Peer Awards:
Congratulations to the following recipients of recent peer awards:
- Bette Cates, Human Resources Specialist
- April Carr, Engineering Equipment Operator
- Paul Anderson, Carpenter Worker
- Linda Dawes, Laborer
- Jane Cunningham, Materials Handler
- Hank Quintana, Supply Technician
- Patty Oestreicher, Contract Specialist
FOUND: Purplish/silver longhaired wig. Probably lost on Halloween night on the porch of Quarters #14 in upper Mammoth. Call (307) 344-2173 or 344-7414 to claim.

FOR SALE: 4 Steel belted radial studded snow tires, size 197/75 R14. Almost new, $100. This is a steal of a deal!! Call Steve at (307) 344-2148 or Tammy at (307) 344-2115.

FOR SALE: 4 studded snow tires, size P215/70 R15. Used only one winter; good for at least one more, $25/tire or 4 for $80. Call (307) 344-9259.

FOR SALE: Sears 60mm refraction telescope with wooden tripod. In original box, excellent condition, $30. Call Mary at (307) 344-7342 or 344-2176.

FOR SALE: 1989 Polaris trail touring snowmobile, 488cc, two-up with electric start and reverse. New chain, clutch and recent tune-up. Good dependable machine. Used only for commuting in and out of the South Entrance, $700. Will throw a tow sled in excellent condition for another $50. Contact Justin at the South Entrance at (307) 543-2559 or 543-9168, or Rick at (605) 745-1151 or 745-4463.

FOR SALE: Snowmobile fold-down tow sled. Reflectors, heavy-duty plywood on frame and safety chain on hitch. Good condition, $100. Contact Justin at the South Entrance (307) 543-2559 or 543-9168 or Rick at (605) 745-1151 or 745-4463.

FOR SALE: 1995 Polaris Indy Sport snowmobile. 440 engine, pull start, 2-passenger, 5700 miles. Cover included. Very dependable. Good condition, $1000.00. 1997 Ski Doo touring LE snowmobile. 437 engine, electric start, 2-passenger, 12,000 miles, $500.00 OBO. Snowmobile tow sled, $50.00. Utility trailer, 6'x7' bed with plywood sides and metal rack that can carry canoe or kayak. Spare tires included, $500.00. Call (307) 344-6543 or 344-2801.

FOR SALE: Leki trekking pole, travel series Sierra AS model. New with tags, never used, $50. Girls' or small women's Trek Model 800 mountain bike. 13 inch/33 cm frame, 21 speeds, 3 years old, very good condition, $90. Call (307) 344-7788.


FOR SALE: Small antique table, $75; Kawai console piano and bench, oak cabinet, in perfect condition, $2,000; iron and wood queen bed frame, $450; two wood porch rocking chairs with pads, $50 each; one large wood rocking chair with natural finish, $75; small antique sewing rockin chair, $75; antique sewing machine base with marble top, $75; free-standing chopping block, $75. Call Marsha at (307) 344-2015 or (307) 344-7920 for an appointment. If not sold, these items and more will be included in an INDOOR MOVING SALE on Saturday, December 6 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Quarters 6A in upper Mammoth. Lots of Christmas present potential! Sale also includes tons of videos, boom boxes, pots and pans, dishes, silverware, old cameras, distinctive knick-knacks, small appliances, mugs/thermoses, lamps, area rugs, art, clothing, microwave, clocks, baskets, luggage, skis, Christmas decorations, fly rods, books by Paul Schullery (he'll sign them), linens, curtains, cheap shelving and miscellaneous other neat stuff. Enjoy free cookies and coffee while you shop. Any questions, contact Marsha Karle or Paul Schullery at (307) 344-7920.
COMMUNITY EVENTS

THE ELECTRIC PEAK ARTS COUNCIL will be sponsoring Shakespeare-in-the-Schools, a Montana State University-Bozeman based organization on November 20, 2003. Four professional actors will present a 75-minute performance of Twelfth Night at the Gardiner School. Geared toward middle and high school students, the performance will be followed by a question-and-answer session. Students will also have the opportunity to participate in three or four workshops on a variety of Shakespeare and drama-related themes. The workshops include Stage Combat, Improvisation and Theatre Games, Decoding Shakespeare (taking the fear out of reading Shakespeare), and Reawakening the Imagination. This program is partially funded by the Bruins Booster Club and other local individuals and businesses in the Gardiner area.

YELLOWSTONE ASSOCIATION INSTITUTE WINTER EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS: Discover Yellowstone in winter with one of four Institute educational programs. These programs include: Field Seminars, Lodging and Learning Programs, Wildlife Education Ventures and Field Courses. For more information on any of these winter programs, please visit www.YellowstoneAssociation.org, or call at (307)344-2294.

THE SHAGGY BEAR
HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

will be held on November 29, 2003, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The event will be at the Scout House in Gardiner (Corner of Fourth & Stone)

Hope to see you there!
Please join National Park staff in celebrating the season with

**THE ANNUAL CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING & COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE**

Wednesday, December 10, 2003
5:00 p.m.
Mammoth Recreation Hall

Entertainment will be provided by Little People's Learning Center.

Santa and one of his elves will be visiting and available after the ceremony for photos with the kids.

Light refreshments, cake and punch will be provided.

Please bring hors d'oeuvres to share.

For more information please call the Public Affairs Office at (307) 344-2013.
Have your child's photo taken with Santa at the Annual Christmas Tree Lighting & Community Open House

The ceremony will begin at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 10, 2003. Photos will be taken after the ceremony.

Please allow 5 days for delivery.

2 photos for $12.00 or 4 for $20.00! Includes greeting card frame and envelope.

Sponsored by Little People's Learning Center.
Yellowstone Park and Gardiner Community

Holiday Cookie Exchange
and Craft activity for children

Sunday December 14th
6:30 PM to 8:00 PM
at the Yellowstone Park School Gymnasium in Mammoth

- Come and share cider and holiday treats
- Bring homemade goodies for exchange (at least two dozen suggested), plus a plate of treats to share for the evening
- Exchange will be one for one
- Children can decorate graham cracker houses (candy provided)
- Remember a container for your new treats.

Sponsored by the Yellowstone Park PTO
If you have questions please call 344-6311.

Everyone Welcome!
Yellowstone Gallery
Holiday Open House

Friday Evening Dec. 5 &
Sat., Dec. 6 All Day
Come One Come All!
Mingle With Friends!
Meet Our Area Artists
Enjoy the Festivities!

Refreshments Will Be Served
Hot Cider * Baked Goodies From
Our Tulikivi Soapstone Oven!
* Register for Door Prizes *

Fri. Dec. 5th Live Music by
"The Gardiner Trio" from 6-9PM