

## Jim Begley

# Hitting the Right Note for Success

by Hilary Cline

*Jim explained that in the world of technology, there are always technical problems and that without a creative mind, technology can not be used to maximum potential. He joked, "Just because you can plug in a microphone doesn't mean it sounds good." He further explained that if you don't "understand what's under the hood," you can not make technology work for you. "A pile of gear doesn't mean you know how to connect it all, patch it into one another, or use it in a creative way."*

As a Sound Recording Engineer and Producer, Jim Begley is always thinking on his feet and



finding creative solutions at The Studio in Portland, Maine. Since his graduation from UMass-Lowell in Sound Recording Technology almost ten years ago, Jim has worked his way up from editing small radio projects to working with Portland's most popular bands, prominent advertising agencies, and Maine's largest companies. He has also worked on a number of national commercials and with vacationing celebrities.

Jim understands that the creative mind is developed through arts education. His professional success is the testimony of someone who knew how to mix his talents and passions for art and science into one career.

He does not miss a beat in crediting his early arts education experiences for his current professional success. Jim notes that he would not be where he is today if it were not for his music teacher, Steve Orlofsky at George Stevens Academy (GSA) in Blue Hill; his annual exposure to professional guest conductors at a two-week summer music camp at University of

Maine - Farmington during high school; an internship at Paul Stookey's Community Radio Station WERU; playing the drums and base guitar in multiple school bands; his involvement in drama and theater; and a good guidance counselor. Jim remembers that he and Steve Orlofsky shared a special camaraderie because they both started at GSA the same year. "Steve Orlofsky was not just a teacher, he was a friend." This mutual respect nurtured Jim in his youth and gave him the confidence to achieve his best.

Today, Jim attributes his self-discipline and interpersonal skills to his experience practicing music and working collaboratively with other musicians for four solid years in high school. He firmly believes that without the specific skills learned through arts education, one would be hard pressed to be able to work at any job. He sees creativity as being essential for human growth across all disciplines, not something that

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## Profiles: Arts Education and the Creative Economy

This profile of Jim Begley is the fifth in a series by MAAE that collects stories about the connections between arts education and Maine's Creative Economy. These profiles articulate the ways in which arts education brings people to communities as well as the connections between arts education and creative businesses and employment. We all use what we learn from the arts every day, often without even realizing it. In each issue of this journal, MAAE profiles a person who contributes to Maine's economy by using creativity or other skills developed through arts education. We have drawn from throughout Maine's diverse economy. While those profiled may not be working purely as artists, arts education has contributed in some way to their professional or personal success. If you would like to suggest someone to be profiled (including yourself), email [artseveryday@adelphia.net](mailto:artseveryday@adelphia.net).

## Jim Begley Hitting the Right Note for Success *continued*

needs to be cultivated only in the minds of people who know they want to be artists or musicians.

Furthermore, Jim has learned that these disciplines are not as separate as some may think. While in high school, Jim was “big into math, science and physics” and thought he would go on to study something like mechanical engineering in college. During his senior year he realized, with the help of a guidance counselor, that he could not give up his love for music and that there was, in fact, a way to combine music and technology at the college level.

While in college, everything began to make sense when Jim learned that “music is mathematical” and that there is a profound relationship between music, science, nature and the mind. His last semester of college included an internship at

The Studio where owner Tim Tierney offered him a job before Jim was even out of college. Presently, Jim is next in line to become the Chief Engineer and is happy to have returned to Maine for employment. He praises Portland as a city that has a plethora of great local music and cultural experiences.

As for higher education, Jim is an advocate for formal training as opposed to being a self-taught engineer. He says his training has given him the skills to travel anywhere in the world and be able to use a variety of types of recording equipment. In addition to his technical knowledge, Jim understands physics and the acoustics of the inner ear or fluid dynamics. Jim also says he just loves listening to the diversity of music he records on any given day; he explains that he could record anything from Latin-salsa, jazz, solo-acoustic, rock, the Portland

String Quartet, or klezmer. Jim attributes his appreciation for a variety of music to his internship at WERU during high school. He encourages others, especially youth, to listen to a wide range of music because “it tunes you into what other cultures are creating and thinking.”

As a musician, Jim finds that he shares a common language with other musicians and that this shared vocabulary builds relationships. He explains that “there is something different about the way people think who have been nurtured through creativity, whether you are an artist or not, musician or not.”

Jim Begley is grateful to have mastered the tools necessary for a successful career and to have built that career directly from his arts education background. ■

*Hilary Cline is MAAE's Americorps VISTA staff member this year.*