



## As [She] Sees It: The Future of Logging Depends on our Youth



By Chrissy Kimball, Kimball & Sons Logging

*Editor's Note: This month's As We See It column was written by Chrissy Kimball of [Kimball & Sons Logging](#) of Poland, Maine. In light of the recent introduction of the Future Logging Career Act and the release of the report commissioned by PLC of Maine, we thought Chrissy's [original blog post](#) offers an inspiring message on the future of logging. Kimball & Sons Logging has graciously given us permission to share this column.*

Hey there! It's Chrissy, the supporting actress of Kimball & Sons Logging and Trucking. I tend to be busy raising the "sons" part of the operation but I wanted to take the opportunity to write a little bit about the articles I have been reading lately regarding the [recent study conducted by the PLC of Maine](#) citing low pay as a barrier to our industry and also the bill that Angus King and Jared Golden are introducing, Future Loggers Career Act.

I have actually never been more excited and optimistic about the forest products industry in our state. Perhaps that's because I am a glass half full kind of person. There is amazing technology on the brink of revolutionizing how forest products can be used. Researchers in our very own state are working on technology to convert biomass into jet fuel. There is nanocellulose from wood products which are fibers that can be used in textiles and medical products, pulp and paper mills are moving away from print media and into packaging products, and wood products can even give us cellulosic sugars which can be used as a preservative in foods!

With all of this technology coming down the pipes, we can't forget that if there are no loggers and no truckers, these products can never go into production. As evidenced by the study conducted by the PLC of Maine, it is no secret that the logging contractors in Maine struggle to keep up with paying competitive wages. Trust me, it is not because we are keeping it all for ourselves. In order to keep great employees, we might even pay them MORE than we make as the owners. I'm just being honest here.

However, I do know that there is a ton of work being done on our behalf and I see a future for our industry that includes competitive wages and benefits for our employees coupled with the enjoyment that comes from working with a family owned business. While we may not currently be the highest paying gig in the area, there are other amazing benefits to working in the woods for a small company. The camaraderie in the woods is superior to any other type of work, the views from your "office" are always amazing, and there is nothing more invigorating than a beautiful sunrise from the woods! We are the kind of employer that cares if your children are sick, we would attend your wedding, and we truly care if you are happy in your job because we will do anything within our power to keep you. In a small business, a good employee is certainly not "replaceable".

We frequently brainstorm about the best ways to grow our company and are often paralyzed by the fear of being unable to find quality help. The problem being, margins are tight, and it's expensive to train someone from the ground up but I believe it is an investment we must make. Everybody wants someone who already knows how to do the job. Well, it's not going to happen. I know there are young people who would be interested in this profession if we could give them a chance and actually teach them. Since the beginning of time we have all heard "kids these days....." followed by some rude comment about how they don't do this and they don't do that. I get it. Technology, education, and policy have changed everything, but I still hold the optimism that our youth are teachable if given the appropriate mentor. The future of the forest products industry is in our youth and if we continue to sweep them under the rug as some useless gamers sitting in their parent's basements then they will BE exactly what we expect them to be. When I did my mindless

scroll through Facebook this morning, I came across something not so useless that made me excited enough to sit down and write this.

Angus King and Jared Golden are introducing a bill to allow 16 and 17 year olds to be allowed to work in the heavy equipment in the woods. Forget virtual reality, that IS reality! Part of the problem as I see it, is that we shelter our youth from all danger. It is much safer to play a game cutting down trees that it is to actually go learn how to cut the tree! We have 2 young boys and a third on the way. They are naturally obsessed with logging. Randy tells me stories of when he was very young and his dad would have to bring him and his brothers to the woods and they would ride in the skidder all day with him, play in the woods, and occupy their own time... often times unsupervised. Can you imagine "Nowadays"? What kind of parents would we be if we put our children in that kind of harm's way?! They must be better off at daycare where they color pictures and make arts and crafts. I think most of us want our children to grow up and be able to actually DO something. Not fear failure. Not fear risk, be it physical, emotional, financial, or otherwise. We are fortunate to be able to teach our kids to respect the equipment and its dangers. They understand how to stay safe in the woods. My 6 year old recently purchased an old hack saw at the local flea market with his earned \$2 so we can do some logging at home!

My long winded point here, is that not all hope is lost. I think our society is recognizing that faulty policy and over protecting our youth is driving them to uber safe careers, sitting behind a desk and leaves no one behind to do the work. I am inspired by this introduction of the bill by Angus King and Jared Golden because I am hopeful it reflects a paradigm shift in our society to treat children as capable of learning and maintaining their own safety without the need for constant protection from danger. It is time we, as adults, mentor our children again. Let them participate, learn, scrape their knees a bit and then and only then will we improve our work force for the future.

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