ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES
A PUBLICATION OF THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

WINTER 2019
Images of Impact

Community Choice Awards Prize Patrol Day

Sauquoit Valley Central School District Disney Leadership Program Presentation

Thea Bowman House

GHIL Lithica-Oneida County Compact Signing
Leadership means different things to different people. At The Community Foundation, to “lead” is part of our three-word mission—Engage, Invest, Lead—and we take it seriously. Building thoughtful, diverse and positive leadership is the key to our community’s success.

While many are familiar with the ways we “invest” in the community—tens of millions of dollars over the last six decades—and our efforts to “engage,” to bring about positive change, one of the quiet ways in which we promote leadership centers on our nonprofit partners.

From our founding in 1952, The Community Foundation has invested in the community through nonprofit organizations, large and small, and we remain committed to their success. Through them, our donor’s dollars and the community’s resources can achieve tremendous impact. That’s why we provide an ongoing series of leadership and governance training sessions, attended annually by hundreds of nonprofit staff, volunteers, and board members.

Building on training in the fundamentals, we are expanding our leadership in this area—the strengthening of the nonprofit community—through a Center of Excellence model that will continue to add resources for nonprofits. In this way, our partner organizations can spend more of their resources on direct mission costs and have an even greater impact on the community we serve.

Encouraging community volunteerism and leadership through nonprofit board experience is an important component of this effort. Our engagement, through these trainings and other efforts such as our partnership with the Center for Leadership Excellence at Mohawk Valley Community College, helps nonprofit organizations recruit and retain board members committed to the community.

In this issue of Endless Possibilities, we highlight a number of leadership efforts that we are involved in, including addressing lead poisoning through our Lead-Free MV coalition. Read on to learn about the progress that has been made and please consider donating using the envelope in this publication to advance this initiative further. You’ll also learn more about our nonprofit partners and fundholders and the many ways in which they are collaborating with The Community Foundation to build a brighter future for our two counties and our region. We hope that you enjoy these stories of impact.

Alicia Dicks
President/CEO
The Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties
Last year, The Community Foundation took a chance on a new idea—its first-ever Community Choice Awards (CCA), a community-driven grantmaking contest to benefit local nonprofits. What began with a vision for a “prize patrol” style event led to communitywide participation with meaningful impact. CCA laid the groundwork to generate greater awareness of critical work performed by local nonprofits, to educate community members on the grantmaking process and its positive impact on the community, and to engage Community Foundation fundholders in new and meaningful ways.

Nearly 80 nonprofit organizations in Herkimer and Oneida counties submitted project proposals for consideration. Community Foundation staff in consultation with category sponsors selected three finalists in each of the 8 categories. Public voting took place online in August with community members casting thousands of votes.

“The entire process of applying for this grant and the social media campaign that followed was an exciting undertaking, bringing employees, board members and the community together in support of Sitrin’s new program,” said Rosemary Bonacci, vice president of Sitrin Health Care Foundation & Communications. “The publicity generated from the Community Choice Awards was truly amazing, generating good will throughout the region.”

In partnership with The Community Foundation’s donor-advised funds, its Board of Trustees and the Rome Community Foundation, a total of $85,000 was awarded through CCA.

“Our team was thrilled to be nominated,” said a representative of Project Fibonacci Foundation. “We had a great time participating in the contest and campaigning for votes! We want to congratulate all the nominees in the eight categories as well as the winners and all of the people that voted... and thank The Community Foundation for this amazing opportunity!”
ANIMAL WELFARE CATEGORY

The Herkimer County Humane Society is committed to providing a haven for unwanted and abused animals, treatment for injured strays and adoption for dogs and cats. Funding will be used for an air conditioner for the shelter, greatly improving the quality of life for shelter residents during the transition to their forever home.

The Animal Welfare category was sponsored by the Staffworks Fund, established by Anita A. Vitullo in 2006 to support programs and services related to domestic animal welfare.

ARTS & CULTURE CATEGORY

Uptown Theatre for Creative Arts (UTCA) is an arts and culture program committed to revitalizing Utica’s Uptown neighborhood through classes, shows and events in the community. Funding will support a relaunch of the classic Uptown Theater $2 Tuesdays promotion as a year-long movie series to provide low-cost entertainment to area residents.

The Arts & Culture category was sponsored by the Bull Family Fund, which has supported many programs and organizations that work to address a broad spectrum of community needs in education, healthcare, arts and human services.

COPPER CITY CATEGORY

The Project Fibonacci Foundation offers educational opportunities focused on promoting science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM) in New York state. Funding will support Project Fibonacci’s annual speakers series featuring keynote presentations from those involved in cutting-edge technologies to enhance education and career preparation for Mohawk Valley students.

The Copper City category was sponsored by the Rome Community Foundation. Celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2019, the organization provides financial resources that enrich the Rome community today and for generations to come.
EDUCATION CATEGORY

Mohawk Valley Junior Frontiers, a multinational and multicultural youth organization, emphasizes educational excellence, professional development, civic service and self-esteem among various racial and cultural groups in the Mohawk Valley. Funding will expand programming to empower historically disadvantaged students, encourage their educational excellence and professional development, and introduce them to STEAM careers, as well as provide SAT prep courses.

The Education category was sponsored by the M&T Bank/Partners Trust Bank Charitable Fund, which has awarded over $2.8 million to support a variety of programs and organizations throughout Herkimer and Oneida counties, with a focus on those that empower youth through education.

HEALTH & WELLNESS CATEGORY

Sitrin Health Care Center provides compassionate, professional healthcare to its residents and is committed to seeking innovative solutions to meet the needs of the population it serves through comprehensive medical rehabilitation and assisted living. Funding will be used to establish an aquatic cycling program for community residents whose health challenges need an innovative alternative to high-intensity traditional fitness programs.

The Health & Wellness Category was sponsored by the David & Janet Griffith Family Fund, established in 2008 to provide support to a variety of community programs and organizations.

HUMAN SERVICES CATEGORY

ICAN is a home- and community-based network that provides individualized and non-traditional care to high risk individuals and families with social, emotional, mental health and behavioral challenges. Funding will support the Heart of the Home project for homeless girls and children, ensuring that young women and children at Evelyn’s House have a safe, inviting and functional kitchen and dining environment, providing essential amenities including room renovation and new appliances.

The Human Services category was sponsored by the Ronald & Sheila Cuccaro Family Fund that focuses its grantmaking in support of human service organizations and programs that help individuals struggling to meet basic needs.
SENIORS CATEGORY

Abraham House provides a safe and loving home for terminally ill patients and their families with the support and care needed for a dignified end of life. Funding will be used to create a reflection and memorial garden to provide terminally ill guests and their families a space where they can be at peace during some of the most stressful and emotional days of their lives. The Abraham House reflection and memorial garden will also enable families to memorialize their loved one through a “tree of life” mural.

The Seniors category was sponsored by the Mele Family Fund, which has awarded nearly $2.7 million in grants to organizations across the region with a focus on education and the elderly.

SPORTS & RECREATION CATEGORY

The Root Farm is an innovative complex that features an equine-assisted therapy center, diverse agriculture center and accessible challenge course to provide educational, recreational, therapeutic and vocational experiences to a wide range of individuals. Funding will support the Camp Adventurers program, the area’s only all-abilities adventure center, providing free recreational, wellness-based educational and exercise opportunities to children in a day-camp setting.

The Sports & Recreation category was sponsored by the All In For Vin Memorial Fund, created by the Mauger family in memory of Vincent “Vinny” Mauger to support youth-based causes that were important to Vinny, allowing his spirit to live on.

BOARD RECOGNITION AWARD

The Rescue Mission of Utica serves individuals overcoming homelessness, abuse and addictions. The organization offers programs that provide safe lodging, food, clothing, case management, counseling, advocacy, education, referrals, spiritual and other supportive services. Enhancing its ability to salvage, process and distribute fresh, clean produce to thousands of families each year, the Rescue Mission project will fund the purchase and installation of a stainless steel, double-sink bowl and a mop sink, each with a spray faucet.

This award was sponsored by The Community Foundation’s Board of Trustees to honor a runner-up whose valuable project and hard work were deserving of recognition.
PRIZE PATROL DAY
Rich in history and natural beauty, Herkimer County is among New York’s larger counties in square miles and one of the least densely populated. Its 1,400 square miles are home to about 64,000 people.

In part because of its long, remarkable history and in spite of a lack of population growth over the last century, Herkimer County comprises a staggering number of municipal governments: One city, Little Falls; 19 towns; 10 villages and six hamlets/census-designated areas. And each of these local governments works to address challenges that cut across municipal lines, such as significant joblessness for 18- to 24-year-olds; rising addiction rates; high rates of rural poverty; and fragmented tourism, economic development and community assets.

“For more than a year, we’ve been working with a core group of Herkimer County municipal leaders, including County Administrator and Community Foundation Trustee Jim Wallace, to encourage a county-wide approach to these challenges,” said Community Foundation President/CEO Alicia Dicks. “These government leaders have embraced this effort and shared its importance with many of their stakeholders, and we’re well on our way to providing a county-wide community development plan.”

With funding from The Community Foundation, NYS Empire State Development, and municipal government partners, the initiative will provide a cohesive, data-driven strategy identifying opportunities to enrich and enhance economic growth and community prosperity in several ways:

- Build county-wide collaboration in partnership with all levels of government, stakeholders and nonprofits
- Seek innovative public-private solutions to long-standing challenges
- Bridge gaps between municipal boundaries, recognizing and building on the county’s strengths as a livable, workable, commutable region
- Create an ecosystem that develops the county’s canal corridor and north/south strengths, leveraging opportunities for growth, focused on the promotion of agribusiness and innovative regional working solutions
- Capitalize on historical and natural tourism assets to attract greater numbers of first-time and return visitors
- Identify, develop and promote logical linkages between and among tourist destinations

The community development plan seeks to overcome municipal and geographic fragmentation by building a shared vision and strategy, and pragmatic action plan that leverages and attracts resources, improving the overall quality of life. Through a request for proposals process, a firm is being selected to guide key aspects of the project and The Community Foundation will manage that firm’s contract on behalf of the project partners.

“The potential for charting and realizing Herkimer County’s future is enormous,” said Dicks. “More and more, this is the kind of work that The Community Foundation is doing to invest the community’s dollars for the greatest possible positive impact.”
Part of what makes the mix of urban and rural communities scattered throughout Herkimer and Oneida counties particularly interesting is the juxtaposition of tradition and technology, access and inclusion, and pockets of creativity in unusual places.

In Boonville, a rural community in northern Oneida County, the Dodge Pratt Northam Art and Community Center is providing residents with much needed opportunities for artistic, intellectual and social involvement.

As a rural community center, the organization offers a variety of workshops, events, art exhibits and performances to the public, creating and developing programs that help promote the needs of the community—especially the needs of its children.

The center, also known as the Pratt House, is a chartered museum and one of four buildings within the town that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Inside the charming, red brick 19th century historic building is a “makerspace.”

The building’s interior is virtually as it was a century ago, making it even more surprising to uncover an array of advanced technology—circuit systems, robotic gears and drones—on the inside.
Created to engage local youth through hands-on activities that build upon fundamental skills while also helping them understand basic technology processes, the MyTechSpace Fab Lab makerspace program provides opportunities to develop creative skills, build self-esteem and stimulate imagination through innovation.

Learning through innovation in an open-ended way is a concept not frequently taught in school or at home. Like many rural communities, there is a lack of opportunities for children to participate in activities that promote 21st century life skills outside the school setting.

Through the MyTechSpace Fab Lab, local children engage in activities that help stimulate curiosity while developing their knowledge of different STEAM and music processes as they work together to complete real life tasks through fun projects.

Qualified instructors with a passion for STEAM help fill the developmental gap for students who may have an interest in technology but lack the resources to participate and learn about it.

“Here at Dodge Pratt we have a MyTechSpace lab and makerspace program, which are designed to help young kids get a jumpstart on the technology they’ll be using in their career, such as drones,” says Alex Jackson, an intern at Dodge Pratt Northam Art and Community Center. “There’s a lot of variety and it’s based around what they’ll use in their education and career.”

Makerspace type labs encourage students to learn by creating and interacting with physical and virtual tools that challenge them to solve complex problems. This self-directed style of education prepares young people for real world challenges, stimulates curiosity by solving “what, when, why and how” questions, and is easily integrated into STEAM programs.

Recognizing the importance of programs that emphasize technical skills, especially in rural communities, Dodge Pratt Northam Art and Community Center’s MyTechSpace lab and makerspace programs received support from two donor-advised funds of The Community Foundation—the Keller Family Fund and the Mele Family Fund. In addition, The Community Foundation has awarded nearly $45,000 throughout the years to support youth programs, building upgrades and technology advancements at the community center.

Since the new programs were implemented, the center has hosted robotics challenges, community demonstration events, STEAM workshops and now offers after-school enrichment and summer learning programs.

Designed to intrigue young minds and instill solid core values, makerspace programming is helping advance the center’s mission to develop in others a lifelong desire to learn.
With a long-awaited upward trend in economic and urban revitalization underway, Downtown Utica is fast becoming a focus of investment and growth. And investments in the City of Utica—the area’s economic and population center—will help the regional economy thrive.

The list of recent and coming successes in the City’s urban core is long, and many of the items on it are familiar:

- Successful professional sports at the Adirondack Bank Center at the Utica Memorial Auditorium and development of the new Nexus Center
- Growing rehabilitation of long-vacant buildings for commercial purposes
- Residential opportunities unimaginable just a few years ago
- Groundbreaking for Mohawk Valley Health System’s new downtown medical center

Add to that list the continuing infrastructure improvements—millions invested in the North-South Arterial and Oriskany Street projects, for example—and a growing number of new restaurants and small commercial start-ups, and the evidence is clear: Downtown’s future is bright. And its resurgence will point the way for the broader community and the entire region.

Three years ago, when The Community Foundation became actively involved in advocacy for Mohawk Valley Health System’s regional healthcare center, it became apparent that the coming of the new hospital, along with other game-changing developments downtown, would require a new, comprehensive look at all of Downtown. In partnership with the City of Utica, Oneida County, the Greater Utica Chamber of Commerce, Mohawk Valley EDGE and the Genesis Group, The Community Foundation launched an initiative to craft a vision and action plan for Downtown Utica, to tie together current and future developments.

Internationally known architecture firm NBBJ was contracted to engage with the community and prepare
a vision plan, which embraces a broad definition of “Downtown Utica”: from Bagg’s Square and the Bleecker Street corridor on the east, to the Brewery District on the west; from Harbor Point on the north to Oneida Square Arts & Culture District on the south. The new downtown medical center, the Genesee Street corridor, the U District and Oriskany Street improvements are also critical elements. The result is an urban design framework that will help guide future development and other steps to make Downtown Utica greater than the sum of its parts.

“So much has happened in recent years, and, with much more on the way, we collectively agreed it was time to put the pieces together in a meaningful way to make sure that they work together,” said Alicia Dicks, president/CEO of The Community Foundation. “This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for the community to make the most of a rising tide of optimism and lay the groundwork for an increasingly vibrant, livable city.”

Working with The Community Foundation and its partners, NBBJ engaged elected officials, community leaders, key business owners and neighborhood groups over a period of several months. The firm also incorporated previous planning studies and documentation, so that Downtown Utica’s new vision complements existing and historical economic development and urban planning work.

To amplify this effort even more, in November 2019, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced the City of Utica as the winner of a $10 million grant from the state’s Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI). The application, which was a collaborative effort between The Community Foundation and the City, emphasized and built upon the planning efforts of NBBJ.

Dicks says among the next steps are the formation of a guiding stakeholder and leadership group to advocate for and manage Downtown’s continuing development, in partnership with the City and other community stakeholders. “We’re really at the beginning stages of what will transform this community over the years to come,” Dicks said. “What Utica has now is a strategic framework, a roadmap, a guide—and realizing each of the elements that the vision plan foresees will be done in partnership with community residents and stakeholders.”

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION STAFF WITH CITY OF UTICA MAYOR AND EMPLOYEES
Lead poisoning, the build-up of this toxic element in the body, results from breathing in or swallowing even microscopic amounts of the neurotoxin.

Children under age 6 are especially susceptible to these negative effects because these are critically formative years for neurologic development with potential consequences ranging from learning difficulties and irritability to growth delays and behavioral problems.

Lead hazards are common in deteriorated painted surfaces—interior and exterior—as well as associated dust residue and contaminated soil or water, all of which may be found in homes and buildings built before 1978, when the federal government banned the use of most lead-based paint.

The burden of lead poisoning hits particularly close to home in our area. Oneida County has one of the highest levels of childhood lead poisoning in New York state, and Herkimer County levels are double the state average.

The City of Utica’s incidence rate of elevated levels of lead in children’s blood is greater now than Flint, Michigan’s at the time of its well-known lead-related water crisis in 2015. Unlike in Flint, our region’s primary source for lead exposure in children stems from deteriorated paint in an aging housing stock.

Despite a state law requiring early childhood testing for lead exposure, approximately one-third of children in the two counties have not had the required blood tests. While testing rates are on the rise, greater collaboration is the key in getting to the roots of the societal problem.

In 2016, The Community Foundation partnered with more than two dozen organizations to launch the Lead-Free Mohawk Valley (LFMV) coalition with an initial $1 million investment. In 2018, The Community Foundation reaffirmed its commitment with an additional $5 million investment over the next decade to focus on the reduction of lead hazards and to expand testing and community awareness of the problem.

“The coalition model has proven to be successful because it allows us to bring together a wide variety of agencies, people and initiatives, helping to create more impactful partnerships,” said Alicia Dicks, president/CEO of The Community Foundation. “As a collective, we’ve been able to leverage the effectiveness of each partner’s current strategies and identify opportunities that will allow for even greater outcomes.”

Today, the coalition consists of more than 100 individuals from more than 40 organizations representing public health, government, law, insurance, healthcare, education, childcare, housing, construction and support services. With LFMV already securing an additional $7.5 million in funding from state and federal agencies and private foundations, the coalition’s efforts are truly just beginning.

In 2018, the City of Utica was awarded a $3.5 million U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) grant to help address lead and home health hazards in 180 housing units for low-income families.
To more effectively implement the HUD grant, LF MV partners signed a compact with the Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHII) to establish Utica-Oneida County as one of 28 designated GHII sites in the nation. GHII helps communities provide integrated home interventions to address health, safety, lead hazard, energy efficiency and weatherization concerns in eligible housing.

“The GHII platform is helping local communities across the country deliver integrated and coordinated health and housing services to low-income families that more efficiently and cost-effectively implements local and federally funded programs,” said Ruth Ann Norton, president and CEO of GHII. “Using the GHII model, children are healthier, families have safer and more energy efficient homes—and lower utility bills—and medical costs decline due to fewer housing-related health issues.”

Eliminating lead poisoning takes a strategic, collaborative and steadfast plan, a method that the LF MV coalition has embraced and taken to the next level. Although there is a great deal of work ahead, investments associated with this long-term effort will benefit future generations’ health, safety and quality of life.

“What we’re here to deliver are outcomes,” said Norton. “Outcomes for the child who will go to school and be healthy and ready to learn, the child who will compete in the classroom because they aren’t poisoned by lead and because they are sleeping through the night without asthma. Being able to change that statistic and make it an opportunity is incredible and it takes political will and leadership.”

With nearly 25,750 pre-1978 houses in Utica—91% of the city’s homes—remediating lead hazards in every home with potential contamination would cost at minimum $334 million based on early estimates. It’s clear that current funding is just the beginning to ensuring a lead-safe future for all community residents. Read on to learn about some of the projects the coalition works groups have been focused on to reduce childhood lead poisoning and how your support can leverage even greater outcomes.
**ENVIRONMENTAL**

**GHHI UTICA-ONEIDA COUNTY**

The Green & Healthy Homes Initiative addresses the health, energy efficiency and safety needs of a home through a comprehensive housing assessment. In 2019, LFMV coalition partners signed a compact with GHHI to establish the Utica-Oneida County site. This will leverage the City of Utica’s recent HUD lead hazard control grant to remediate 180 homes over the next three years. Funding will provide housing interventions to reduce lead hazards and household injuries while increasing household energy efficiency. These services are valued at $13,000 to $23,000 per household.

**WINDOW REPLACEMENT PILOT PROJECT**

Cornell Cooperative Extension Oneida County’s Window Replacement Pilot Project focuses on the removal and replacement of lead contaminated wood sash windows. To date, 344 windows in 35 housing units in the City of Utica have been removed and replaced. The project also includes an educational component to help property owners and tenants keep their property lead safe going forward. The average window replacement cost is $230 per window.

**MEDICAL**

**LEADCARE II TESTING**

Despite a legal requirement and steady increases in testing rates, approximately one-third of children in the two counties have not been tested for lead poisoning. To increase screening rates and eliminate barriers associated with invasive lab testing, a point-of-care approach implemented in 2017 has placed fingerstick testing units in multiple pediatric medical facilities and one elementary school-based clinic to encourage screening during routine office visits. Testing equipment and start-up supplies are valued at $3,050 per health provider office.

**PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS**

To advance public education about lead poisoning’s causes, effects and solutions, a 2018 campaign reached an estimated 228,000 area movie goers through a 30-second public service announcement (PSA). The video’s messaging focused on reaching parents and guardians, educators and other targeted constituents, emphasizing the importance of testing. The video was also distributed for use on medical waiting room TVs and electronic billboards. Funding allows the PSA to be distributed in more settings for increased reach to new audiences.
HUD & EPA TRAINING
A site visit by then-Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region II administrator Judith Enck in late 2016 spurred several trainings and technical assistance partnerships over the following year, including a HUD-EPA training for property managers and landlords to learn more about lead-safe housing’s regulatory requirements; additional training for city and county agencies; and critical information sharing among community organizations regarding technical assistance from HUD, EPA and the U.S. Attorney’s office. Funding defrays costs associated with meeting coordination and travel expenses.

POLICY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & COMMUNITY ORGANIZING
With technical assistance from the National Center for Healthy Housing and other providers, the LFMV Coalition is proposing a pre-rental inspection ordinance for the City of Utica. A similar ordinance in Rochester is credited with an 80% reduction in lead poisoning cases over the past decade. To ensure resident engagement in ordinance preparation, Legal Services of Central New York has hired a community organizer to raise awareness of the issue in Utica’s most affected neighborhoods. Funding for the community organizer and technical assistance providers was made possible through a partnership between The Community Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the New York Community Trust. Funding defrays costs associated with meeting coordination and travel expenses.
The Community Foundation’s vision of a vibrant region with opportunity for all is at the forefront of grantmaking and initiative work that changes lives and strengthens communities big and small in Herkimer and Oneida counties. And the Town of Webb is a great example of meaningful community investments making a difference.

Since 2015, The Community Foundation has awarded more than $1.4 million to 28 organizations in and around the Town of Webb, addressing priorities and programs related to children, seniors, arts and culture, and health—investments that are making the region more vibrant through a network of dedicated nonprofit organizations. Support comes in many forms ranging from donor-advised grants to agency fund administration for nonprofits such as View Center for Arts and Culture.

The following page highlights the diverse types of investments helping to transform the Town of Webb and its surroundings.
OLD FORGE

COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION SERVICES
A $6,940 competitive grant to purchase a new vehicle to continue providing free community transportation for individuals who are older and/or disabled within Herkimer and Oneida counties.

FRIENDS OF THE POLAR BEARS
A $500 donor-advised grant from the Adirondack League Club Community Fund for the purchase of ski equipment to help children learn to ski downhill and cross country.

OLD FORGE LIBRARY
An $8,000 grant to support the creation of an Adirondack Reading Garden, a public space to hold literary and environmental programs for people of all ages to advance their knowledge in a fun and interesting way.

TOWN OF WEBB UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT
A $275,000 grant and a $5,000 donor-advised grant from Adirondack League Club to support the implementation of all-day childcare services and an after-school program at Town of Webb School.

VIEW CENTER FOR ARTS AND CULTURE
A $500 donor-advised grant from the Joan B. & William F. O’Shea Family Fund for Branches, Brambles and Roots: An Exhibition Celebrating Trees, a gathering of artists showcasing trees in various art forms.

EAGLE BAY

BIG MOOSE FIRE COMPANY
A $1,000 donor-advised grant from the Adirondack League Club Community Fund to refurbish and upgrade an EMS rescue sled.

EAGLE BAY VOLUNTEER HOSE COMPANY
A set of donor-advised grants totaling $4,000 from the Adirondack League Club Community Fund to purchase new portable radios and for general support.

INLET

INLET PUBLIC LIBRARY
A set of donor-advised grants totaling $1,000 from the Damon Fund for Inlet for general support.

INLET VOLUNTEER EMERGENCY SERVICES
A set of donor-advised grants totaling $5,000 from the Adirondack League Club Community Fund for general support.

TOWN OF INLET
A set of donor-advised grants totaling $6,048 from the Alexandra G. Kogut Memorial Fund and the Scott Stuart Fund for Inlet to purchase equipment, replacement ropes and buoys for Arrowhead Beach, and to support the Inlet Area Business Association’s Winter Carnival.

RAQUETTE LAKE

SAGAMORE INSTITUTE
A $1,500 donor-advised grant from the Adirondack League Club Community Fund for general support for Great Camp Sagamore.
The Community Foundation is making an impact in all corners of our community.

**Innovative Partnerships & Investments**

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**Center for Family Life and Recovery**

- **$25,000**
- **Support from the M&T Bank/Partners Trust Bank Charitable Fund to launch the Museum Without Walls, an interactive, educational and mobile children’s museum with several exhibits.**

**City of Rome**

- **$100,000**
- **Funding to assist with the development of a downtown pedestrian art plaza as part of Rome’s downtown redevelopment and SMART Walk Project along West Dominick Street.**

**City of Utica**

- **$500**
- **Support from the Alexandra G. Kogut Memorial Fund for the 2019 Learn to Swim Program, providing lessons to help children learn fundamental swimming, water safety and interpersonal skills.**

**Herkimer County Office for the Aging**

- **$5,275**
- **An investment to continue a senior transportation program in the areas of Middleville, Newport and Poland.**

**ICAN**

- **$50,000**
- **Support from the M&T Bank/Partners Trust Bank Charitable Fund to launch the Museum Without Walls, an interactive, educational and mobile children’s museum with several exhibits.**

**Neighborhood Center of Utica**

- **$950**
- **Support from the Wadih & Juliette Zogby Family Fund for a five-week creative art program for up to seven students at 4Elements Studio in Utica.**

**Thea Bowman House**

- **$9,475**
- **A grant from the Margaret’s Gaffney & Van Waes Fund for kitchen upgrades including a steam table, refrigerator and range, as well as a security system for the building.**

**Utica Zoological Society**

- **$70,000**
- **Funding to support the addition of a new year-round red panda exhibit at the zoo.**

**Project Fibonacci Foundation**

- **$25,000**
- **Funding to support scholarships for students in Herkimer and Oneida counties.**

**Stanley Center for the Arts**

- **$46,000**
- **Funding for the purchase of additional backstage line sets, an enhancement that will strengthen the theater’s production capabilities.**

**Whiteboro Central School District**

- **$1,170**
- **Funding from the Kevin “Bing” Crossley Memorial Foundation Fund for the purchase of a Buddy Bench for Westmoreland Road Elementary School in memory of Kevin “Bing” Crossley.**
The diverse and distinctive culture of Utica is enriched by many traditions that possess their own legacy. The Boilermaker Road Race, a signature event for the Mohawk Valley and the international running community, is a perfect example. From the Boilermaker’s modest early days more than 40 years ago through decades of tremendous growth, the man behind it all was Earle C. Reed, community supporter and Boilermaker founding father. His passion to motivate others shines through when in his presence, and his love for the place that he calls home is undeniable.

Reed grew up in Dunkirk in Western New York and moved to New Hartford as a teenager so that his father could run the family business, Utica Radiator Corporation, which later became Utica Boilers and eventually ECR International. After high school, he attended Boston University and returned to Utica after graduating to help run the heating products manufacturing company where he later served as president until his 2003 retirement.

The idea to start a community race came about in 1978 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Utica Boilers and to express gratitude for the supportive community that helped the company thrive. Reed convinced his father, Bob Reed, then president of the company, to underwrite a 15K road race with a starting line at Utica Boilers and a finish line at F.X. Matt Brewing Company, the other original corporate supporter of the road race.

“I wanted people to run this race and say that they’re proud of themselves and that they’re going to come back and do it again next year. That’s the whole reason for the Boilermaker Road Race.”

“Anybody who has participated in the Boilermaker will tell you: it has a certain quality that makes it special—and runners from all over the world agree there is no 15K quite like it.”

For area residents, it might be the familiar faces along the course, or the sheer fun and excitement of the event. For many reasons, the Boilermaker has become more than just a race. Forty-plus races later, it’s an annual reunion, city-wide party and Utica showcase all in one weekend—overflowing with a love of community.

Since his retirement from ECR and from the Boilermaker directorship, Reed has had more time to spend with his grandchildren, and he frequents Florida in the winter, but he’s still involved in the Boilermaker’s operation. And, chances are, you’ll still see his face in the crowd cheering on the runners as he has for years.

“I’ve been to every race since it was started,” says Reed, who served as race director for more than 20 years. “Now, I stay more on the sidelines, but I’m still there at four o’clock in the morning on race day to watch things pull together.”

Reed’s love of community is bigger than the Boilermaker and the family business. Long committed to giving back, he has served on many local boards and committees, including The Community Foundation, where he established the Earle C. Reed Fund in 2006. The fund has awarded more than $30,000 to 17 community organizations, including the Stanley Center for the Arts and Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute. Utica Boilers also established a fund at The Community Foundation in 1986, which was later renamed the Robert and Grace Reed Memorial Scholarship Fund; Earle oversees both funds.

“My mother and father were always doing volunteer work,” said Reed. “I learned from my parents that you need to give back to your local community in whatever way you can.”

The scholarship fund has awarded almost $90,000, making higher education an attainable goal for many students in the community. Reed says he’s proud of both funds’ growth and impact, and he’s pleased that he’s been able to give back to the community in meaningful ways.

“It’s a fundamental responsibility—and a privilege.”
The Mele family is best-known for establishing Mele & Co.—the premier provider of jewelry boxes and accessory organizers in the nation. Founded in 1912 in New York, the company has been committed to offering innovative and timeless designs while also instilling the community with the familial heritage and values upon which it was founded.

A skilled craftsman at heart, Italian immigrant Emidio Mele built the jewelry box business out of a vision to create a better life for his family and others by providing secure jobs. Emidio’s sons Edward, who died in 2003, and Joseph, joined the family business in the 1940s, moving the company’s operations to Utica shortly thereafter. Many of its current employees have been with the company for more than 20 years, a direct result of its promise to treat employees with trust, respect and always maintain a “family” atmosphere in the workplace.

In the late 1950s, the Mele family, known for their stewardship and community involvement, established a foundation that they hoped would help grow their philanthropic impact. In 2009, they honored that commitment by transferring their foundation’s assets to The Community Foundation, creating a donor-advised fund. Since then, the Mele Family Fund has awarded more than $2.7 million in grants to community organizations across the region. With a focus on education and the elderly, the Mele family believes it is their corporate responsibility to help create a brighter future through the fund’s continuing community investments.

“With the help of The Community Foundation, we’ve been able to be better partners and stewards for the community,” said Raymond Mele, fund adviser and Mele & Co.’s current president. “We’re able to make proactive investments that make significant impact in the community where we live and work—a community that we are loyal to. Through these investments, we’ve been given the opportunity to enhance the quality of the community’s most crucial assets: the health and education of its residents.”

The Mele family’s investments in education cover the entire spectrum of lifelong learning from daycare and kindergarten readiness through higher education and career training—touching every corner of both Herkimer and Oneida counties—rural and urban areas alike.

The fund has made significant grants to organizations like Johnson Park Center and Thea Bowman House that serve our youngest community members in underserved neighborhoods and has also supported after-school programs at Dodge Pratt Northam Art and Community Center. Other grants have supported literacy programs like the Duffy Books in Homes program at Mt. Markham Elementary School as well as high school enrichment though programs like the Mohawk Valley Latino Association’s participation in the United Nations Youth Assembly.
Through Utica Dollars for Scholars, the fund has also awarded more than $725,000 to provide college scholarships to local students pursuing higher education.

The fund’s education investments also extend to careers in trades with grants to support the Rescue Mission of Utica’s Skills for Success building trades program.

“The Skills for Success program helps individuals move forward in their lives, gaining a skillset in trades and construction that allows them to be able to provide for themselves and their families,” said Ernie Talerico, director of operations at Rescue Mission of Utica. “The Mele Family Fund helped us get the program started up—we couldn’t do this without people like them. The support they’ve given is not only for us, but it extends to the community, because that’s what we do. We’re here to give back to the needs of the community.”

Healthcare is another investment area the Mele family chooses to focus its grantmaking efforts in. Over the years, the fund has made a variety of grants to support the health and well-being of individuals and families in the community, providing funding ranging from lifesaving medical equipment to cutting-edge programs based on new and on-going research to improve the lives of patients with chronic diseases like Parkinson’s. The Mele Family Fund awarded more than $100,000 to Presbyterian Homes Foundation to assist with the organization’s Parkinson’s Unit renovation project.

“We really appreciate what the Mele family has done for us in the past,” said Bridget Reilly, director of donor engagement at Presbyterian Homes Foundation. “They donated a substantial amount of money to renovate one of our skilled nursing units that is dedicated for Parkinson’s. This investment benefits the future of our Parkinson’s patients, making the facility more accessible for them as they age and progress in their symptoms. We are very grateful—the Mele family’s generosity has shown that they’ve had our mission and our vision at the heart of their benevolence. I think it’s amazing.”

This year, the Mele family continued their support with a $64,000 matching grant for the Pedaling for Parkinson’s program. The group stationary bicycling program is based on new patient research shown to reduce and improve the physical and psychological symptoms of Parkinson’s, as well as slow disease progression over time.

Gerrie LaPlant researched the program extensively on behalf of her husband, Dave, who is living with Parkinson’s, before proposing her findings to Presbyterian Homes Foundation in hopes that the program could benefit patients in our region, like it has in other communities throughout the nation.

“The Community Foundation found a donor; the Mele Family, who were willing to do a matching grant, and that brings tears to my eyes,” she said. “When you have a partner that has a chronic disease that you know will progress, you want to do everything you can. It’s just a joyful, exciting time because the program will benefit so many people.”

“The Mele Family Fund’s generosity and support means the world to us,” said Dave LaPlant. “Without community support, programs like this just wouldn’t happen.”

Another way in which the family’s generosity is helping to create a healthier community is through its support of The Community Foundation’s Community Choice Awards. In 2018, the fund sponsored the contest, providing the $10,000 prize for the winner of the Health & Wellness category. This year, the fund sponsored the Seniors category.

“Our family strives to make proactive investments that strengthen local nonprofit organizations so that they can continue working to create significant impact. The Community Choice Awards is another way for us to do just that,” said Mele. “In partnership with The Community Foundation, our fund is able to invest in programs we’re passionate about, and we’re excited to share that opportunity with the entire community.”
In August, the community got a chance to thank the Mele family for its charitable commitments. The Community Foundation honored its partners at its Celebration of Philanthropy event, with more than 150 area residents in attendance. In recognition of the Mele Family Fund’s investments in the community over the last decade, the family was presented The Community Foundation’s highest honor—the Rosamond Childs Award for Community Philanthropy.

“I've had the honor of working with the Mele family fund for many years,” said Lindsey Costello, donor relations manager at The Community Foundation. “The members of this family care deeply about this community, and it shows. We’re inspired by the stories of people whose lives have been changed for the better thanks to their generosity.”

Raymond Mele accepted the award for Community Philanthropy. During his acceptance speech, he told a story about his father, Joseph Mele: "He became a great businessman, was involved in the community in many ways, but his big “thing” was about improvement. If he was here today, he’d say to you, “Can you do what you’re doing any better?” My dad is down in Florida. I said, "Dad, they’re having this great award, what message do you want me to give the people?” And he said, "Well, you’ll come up with something for me.” That day, he barely walked. He’s mostly in a wheelchair. The physical therapist came in and said, "I want you to walk 10 steps." My dad got out of that chair with his walker and, grunting and groaning, he did 10 steps and fell back, exhausted. He didn’t do that for himself, he did that for me. His message was, “don’t quit.” I tell you all: Don’t quit doing good.

Sadly, just a few hours after that acceptance speech Joseph Mele died at age 98.

“Our community experienced a great loss with the passing of Joe Mele,” said Alicia Dicks, president/CEO of The Community Foundation. “Our entire community has benefited from his dedication and the Mele family’s commitments, both as a steadfast and valued employer and as a generous contributor to programs that support education and healthcare.”

Joseph Mele’s simple yet poignant message to never quit humbly reminds us that the separation between those in need and those striving to help isn’t so great a distance after all.

“We’re able to make proactive investments that make significant impact in the community where we live and work—a community that we are loyal to.”
OUR Newest FUNDS

IN RECENT MONTHS, 17 FUNDS WERE ESTABLISHED AT THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION THAT WILL BENEFIT RESIDENTS OF HERKIMER AND ONEIDA COUNTIES FOR YEARS TO COME.

BIANCA MICHELLE DEVINS MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND
A scholarship fund created by the Devins and Williams families in memory of 17-year-old Bianca Devins. The fund will support students pursuing a degree in psychology to continue Bianca’s dream of helping adolescents with mental illnesses.

KIRKLAND TRAILS FUND
A fiscal sponsorship of Kirkland Trails, a newly created nonprofit that is developing a network of multiuse trails, paths and bike lanes owned by the Town of Kirkland.

LARRY AND CORKY BULL FAMILY FUND
A donor-advised fund established by Lauren E. and Cora L. Bull for general charitable purposes.

MARTIN AND SUSAN BULL FAMILY FUND
A donor-advised fund established by Susan P. Bull for general charitable purposes.

NAZARETH COMMUNITY IMPACT FUND
A donor-advised fund established by Nazareth Nursery for charitable grantmaking to help make a lasting impact in communities where ministries of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities are currently or have been located.

NAZARETH FUND – SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF THE NEUMANN COMMUNITIES PROJECT FUND
A donor-advised fund established by Nazareth Nursery for general charitable purposes.

NAZARETH MINISTRY MISSION INTEGRATION FUND
A donor-advised fund established by Nazareth Nursery for charitable grantmaking to the ministries of the Partners in Franciscan Ministries for use in furthering its charitable activities.

OWEN R. FORTNAM MEMORIAL FUND
A donor-advised fund created by the Fortnam family in memory of 12-year-old Owen Fortnam who passed away in February 2019. The fund will support charitable causes in Owen’s memory for years to come.

REAL MEN GET TESTED FUND
A field-of-interest fund established for the charitable purpose of creating awareness, primarily among men in Herkimer and Oneida counties, of the importance of preventive testing for cancer.

STANLEY J. WIAINTER FUND FOR RESPONSIBLE HUNTING AND FORESTRY STEWARDSHIP
A field-of-interest fund established by Julie and Jeff Rubenstein for the charitable purpose of supporting organizations in Herkimer and Oneida counties that promote safe and responsible hunting practices or encourage sustainable forest stewardship through land management, productive timber harvesting and conservation of the natural environment.

STEVENS-SWAN HUMANE SOCIETY FUND
An agency fund established by Stevens-Swan Humane Society to administer and invest its charitable assets.

UTICA PUBLIC LIBRARY CHARITABLE FUND
An agency fund benefiting the Utica Public Library, a nonprofit organization with a mission to serve as a source of information for the community through various resources.
Music is a universal language. With music, you can communicate across cultural and linguistic boundaries. This universal feature of the human experience brings people together and can open the mind to appreciate new, diverse people and ideas.
areas comprised high school and college students as well as recent graduates from differing backgrounds and disciplines, all working together with industry professionals, immersing themselves in the city’s cultural and community life.

Even the community’s youngest residents had an outlet to express their creativity. At the Levitt Kids Art Circle, children joined local creators, working at desks colorfully painted by neighborhood artists and donated by the Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees, in making weekly art projects.

Capturing the community feeling was just as important. Several local photographers were selected to curate the incredible collection of moments—illustrating the spirit of the event, connections made through a love of music and a city on the rise.

“More than once, a sponsor or a concert-goer said to me ‘THIS is Utica’ while looking around the audience,” said Truett. “The bands that came from all over the country were so impressed by the different kinds of people that filled the park. That’s what melted my heart every week.”
Utica is known and celebrated for its rich diversity and cultural variety. It’s also home to dedicated organizations and groups that allow the city’s diverse population to thrive and live enriched lives.

Thea Bowman House is living proof of this; it’s an institution that has served Utica for more than three decades, providing a safe, nurturing environment for children and families that walk through its doors.

The organization was established in 1986 as the Agape House, which reflected a commitment to lead with “agape,” an ancient Greek term that means “the highest form of love, charity.” In its early history, the organization began as an after-school program for children in West Utica. Over time, it expanded programs and services, becoming Thea Bowman House in 1996. With the name change came new offerings, such as childcare, childcare assistance, a food and clothing pantry, and a reading program. On-site support services, counseling, education, and safety planning for people facing domestic and community violence are also offered through the organization’s DOVE—or “Domestic Violence Ended”—program.

The agency prides itself on a caring and compassionate environment that enables culturally diverse children and families to reach their full potential in hopes of breaking the cycle of poverty. Through its educational and social enrichment programs, Thea Bowman House is doing its part to achieve that goal. In 2018, nearly 350 children were served through its childcare programs, and more than 108,000 meals were provided to them. And, with the help of its food pantry, more than 46,000 meals were given to 5,000 individuals.

Since 1990, The Community Foundation and its donors have awarded Thea Bowman House more than 80 grants totaling over $485,000 to support a variety of needs, ranging from reading and childcare programs to operational expenses such as renovations and equipment.

One notable program receiving support year after year is “Reading Rockets,” a summer literacy effort. For children and young adults living in poverty, keeping up educationally with their peers during the summer months is a struggle. It’s not uncommon for them to drop several reading levels during this time, creating an uneven playing field when classes resume in the fall. The five-week summer reading program was started in an effort to combat this. Literacy classes are provided to school-age children under the direction of certified teachers. While working on crucial skills that improve reading and writing, the children are also able to engage in activities that help improve their grammar, comprehension, vocabulary, and mathematical literacy.

“The Reading Rockets program that Thea Bowman House has developed isn’t just about learning to read,” said Lindsey Costello, donor relations manager at The Community Foundation. “It’s about boosting these children’s self-esteem, preparing them for the next grade and ultimately setting them up for academic success that inspires lifelong learning.”

Thea Bowman herself once said, “If each one of us would light a candle, we’d have a tremendous light.” Through acts of kindness, promoting goodwill and embracing love, Thea Bowman House is giving each and every one of its patrons the ability to shine, lighting a path forward to a bright future filled with endless possibilities.
Meet Our Team

Get to know Jan Squadrito, senior community investment manager at The Community Foundation.

Describe your role at The Community Foundation, and what projects and work you’re involved in.

As the senior community investment manager, I’m the primary contact with organizations seeking assistance from The Community Foundation. Sometimes they are looking for funding, but other times they are seeking program or capacity building advice.

A friend of mine who used to work at another community foundation said we are “the community’s note passers,” and I think that’s often true. We talk with so many organizations that we often make connections that result in collaborations.

Describe your typical work day at The Community Foundation. What do you find most enjoyable?

There really is no typical day, which is what I find enjoyable about working here. The Community Foundation is doing so much in the community that no day is the same.

Is there a passion project or work accomplishment you’re most proud of?

I think our capacity building work has an impact not only with the organizations we are directly working with, but also for the improvement of services for local residents. We’ve helped organizations merge, create shared service agreements, and when all else fails, help them through a dissolution process to ensure essential services continue to be provided by other organizations.

What do you think is unique about The Community Foundation’s model of investing locally?

I’ve always believed in helping locally because you know the organizations and the needs, so working for The Community Foundation is a great fit for me. Investing locally where we can see the work happening gives donors the assurance that their dollars are well spent and making a difference where the need is the greatest.

What is your favorite season?

Fall is my favorite season. I’m not a fan of heat and humidity, so I love the cooler temperatures and the beauty of the leaves changing colors.

What are your top 3 local restaurants?

Delmonico’s
CoreLife Eatery
Georgio’s Village Cafe

What are your top 3 favorite books/podcasts?

“Clover Blue” by Eldonna Edwards
“Gift from the Sea” by Anne Morrow Lindbergh
“Educated” by Tara Westover

What is your favorite inspirational quote?

“Make the most of yourself, for that is all there is of you.” by Ralph Waldo Emerson
This past summer, The Community Foundation welcomed six fantastic interns to our team! From projects to events, these college students learned the ropes of working for a community-based organization. Interns were given the opportunity to work closely with staff members in several departments.

“I’ve really learned about how to make an impactful and meaningful investment in the community and how an organization works to change and to move forward, making it more prosperous,” said Stephen Ventura.

Thank you to our interns for a fun, productive summer and for being a part of the CF family!
Boonville Makerspace

Celebration of Philanthropy

Trick-or-Treating at the Community Foundation on Halloween

Thea Bowman House Strawberry Picking

Levitt AMP Kids Art Circle
WE ARE DEDICATED TO CREATING A VIBRANT REGION WITH OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL.