You might not think anything that happened in 2020 was worth celebrating. Most people are glad to see that year come to an end! We like to find the bright spots, even in our darkest hours, and 2020 actually had a bright spot that you can celebrate and take pride in.

Thanks to all of you, the Community Foundation’s total donor-advised funding awards last year set a record, directing more than $6 million into communities hard hit by the impacts of COVID-19. Up 50% from 2019, this remarkable total demonstrates that when needs continued to rise, you—our donors, our fundholders—continued to respond. Together, we helped communities in crisis deal with unprecedented challenges. And many more lie ahead.

As 2021 continues to unfold, we look forward to continuing efforts that were put into place last year. In myriad ways, your generous support and commitment provide meaningful, targeted assistance to nonprofits needing relief through this time of crisis. As last year’s total shows, the collective impact is tremendous, and your generosity has helped many of our nonprofit partners look toward a brighter future.

Will this year be an improvement over last? Will we be able to meet community needs as they rise? I know that we are all wrestling with those questions, and that is why we view conversations with you—individually and collectively—as vital to our work. At the March 4 donor-advised fundholder virtual town hall, we will explore the road ahead and the demands of the ongoing recovery; and we will celebrate the resiliency of our community. You should have already received an invitation for that event, and Ally Campbell, acampbell@foundationghoc.org, can help if you would like to confirm your attendance plans.

Until then, we hope that this newsletter helps maintain our continued connection with you. As you’ll see, the stories it tells illustrate the difference that you’ve already made—and how we can continue to work toward our vision, “a vibrant region with opportunity for all.”

Sincerely,

Alicia Dicks
President/CEO
The Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties
Our NEWEST funds

BAMBERGER FAMILY FUND
A donor-advised fund established by Rabbi Henry and Sheila Bamberger for general charitable purposes.

BURRSTONE BASSETT FUND
A donor-advised fund established by Judith Scatko for general charitable purposes.

HERKIMER 9 FOUNDATION FUND
A designated fund to benefit the Herkimer 9 Foundation, a newly formed nonprofit organization working to develop a vision and implement a plan to redevelop and revitalize sections of the Village of Herkimer.

HOPE BRADBURY FUND
A donor-advised fund established by Jane Bradbury in memory of her mother, Hope Bradbury, for general charitable purposes.

OLD FORGE VOLUNTEER AMBULANCE CORPS – NEW AMBULANCE FUND
An agency fund established by the Old Forge Volunteer Ambulance Corps to raise funds for a new ambulance.
“When life hands you challenges, it also gives you opportunities to persevere.”

For more than 30 years, our community’s generosity has empowered the local nonprofit organization now known as Rebuilding Central New York (CNY) to rebuild futures for local families by providing services that improve the health and safety of homes and revitalize community spaces to better serve and support local residents. Individuals, faith and civic groups, corporate donors and more than 5,000 dedicated volunteers have helped make this possible.

From 1990 to 2020 (as a Habitat for Humanity affiliate), the organization has revitalized two neighborhood blocks, built nine houses, repaired many homes and ensured the safety of eight aging-in-place homeowners over the years.

After extensive research and planning, the nonprofit reorganized in 2020 as Rebuilding CNY to continue and expand programs for low-income families and other vulnerable populations such as the elderly, disabled and veterans. And as Rebuilding CNY, President and CEO Louis LaBella promises the organization will not be resting on its laurels.

“We do not want to drive forward looking in the rearview mirror,” Labella says. “We want to drive forward with a positive outlook on transforming our organization to meet our community’s needs.”

“Rebuilding Central New York is committed to rebuilding our future through home preservation and community projects,” he says. “We have developed a cohesive vision in these past few years to focus on a greater need in the community, while maintaining our other services. That need is crucial home repairs and home preservation, and the home repair program supports and complements our longtime home ownership model.”

Rebuilding CNY does even more than build and repair safe and healthy homes for low-income residents. For example, its Youth Leadership Program brings high school students together to play active roles in transforming their communities through teamwork. The youth program’s “Watch Us Grow” project promotes a seed-to-table concept, helping vulnerable residents create healthy, economical, sustainable gardens. Originally an Oneida County effort, Watch Us Grow will be expanded into neighboring communities this year.

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Dedicated to the preservation of affordable housing, with funding from the Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties, the organization opened ReUse Store on French Road in Utica in 2014, providing affordable furniture and home improvement materials to families in need. With materials donated by local businesses, building contractors, suppliers, and individuals, the center is able to discount items 50 to 90%.

In addition to helping vulnerable constituents get affordable furniture, the ReUse Store puts all the money it takes in toward materials needed to build and repair homes—the heart of Rebuilding CNY’s commitment to preserving and improving affordable housing. The store also partners with local social service agencies and developmental programs, such as Upstate Cerebral Palsy, to provide employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

In January 2021, Rebuilding Central New York introduced a Handy Helper Program for low-income, aging-in-place senior, disabled, and veteran homeowners. Since home repair, accessibility, and safety are ongoing concerns for many older adults, the program organizes volunteers to complete health and safety projects. The result: older adults can continue to live independently in the comfort and safety of their own homes! Rebuilding CNY plans to implement these services in neighboring communities with insufficient aging-in-place services.

Similarly, Rebuilding CNY recently became a part of the Trusted Pro Network, a program that partners with professional, experienced contractors to provide essential repairs and critical home modifications at affordable prices. In addition to helping low-income homeowners afford repairs, the program protects against predatory home repair contractors that may take advantage of poor, distressed, and underprivileged homeowners.

In any organization, change is inevitable. Given the global pandemic’s impact on the community, unmet needs are more diverse and more evident than ever before. For Rebuilding CNY, rebranding after 30 years of helping our community to build a brighter future has been challenging, but it also has provided opportunities. And throughout, the organization has never wavered from its mission—even as it recommits to providing safe and healthy homes for all.
A Renaissance man, Joe had many passions, including singing, acting, and theatrical directing. He served the Players of Utica as a board member, volunteer and in many other capacities and was also a founding member of the Mohawk Valley Chamber of Commerce Incubator advisory board.

Hage has a wealth of memories he treasures.

“It would be hard to overstate his intellectual horsepower,” he recalls. “He was a child prodigy. He could do anything, just a remarkable guy who knew a lot about everything. And he always had a smile on his face and was such great fun to be around.”

After Joe’s passing, family members and long-time friends created a donor-advised fund at the Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties to continue his philanthropic efforts and positive vision for his community. Since 2012 the Gabriel, Joseph and Lila Mandour Karam Fund has awarded nearly $60,000 to Players of Utica, Stanley Center for the Arts, Mohawk Valley Health System, House of the Good Shepherd, the Neighborhood Center and other area nonprofits. The fund’s advisers are all members of Joe’s extended family.

“Joe was passionate about the dramatic arts and the advancement of technology. Above all, he had a passion for Utica,” Hage says. “Utica was in his bloodstream. He worked all over the world, but something always drew him back. This was his place. Therefore, he wanted to set up a fund that would benefit the advancement of the arts and technology here in our community.”

And what would Joe think of his philanthropic legacy? Hage says he would be “tickled pink.”

“He would be thrilled with this,” says Hage. “One of the events sponsored by the Gabriel, Joseph and Lila Mandour Karam Fund is the Central New York Regional FIRST Robotics Competition at SUNY Poly, where thousands of high school students come to compete. We thought that was an ideal activity for Joe’s fund to support. I’m sure Joe would’ve been there at the competition every day. That’s the sort of event he would have loved.”

Whether in politics, literature, philosophy, or theater; Joe Karam made a meaningful and lasting impact on his family and in his community, exuding his passion for giving back to worthwhile causes that shaped all of his endeavors. Larger than life, his vision persists and his passions are fostered through the investments made by the Gabriel, Joseph and Lila Mandour Karam Fund.

“In many ways, Joe is still with us and his legacy continues because of the Community Foundation,” Hage says. “His vision lives on through this fund. It’s a form of immortality that carries on his high ideals and wonderful hopes for our community.”
“I can just imagine him in Proctor Park flying a drone. That’s the kind of thing Joe would have loved to do. He was an early adopter; he liked to be one of the first people to get some new little piece of technology. He just loved it.”

MANDOUR KARAM FUND GRANT RECIPIENTS
The following organizations across Herkimer and Oneida counties have received funding from the Mandour Karam Fund.

- HOUSE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD
- MOHAWK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOUNDATION
- MOHAWK VALLEY HEALTH SYSTEM FOUNDATION
- NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER, INC.
- PLAYERS OF UTICA, INC.
- STANLEY CENTER FOR THE ARTS
- SUNY POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE FOUNDATION, INC.
- THE KEYS PROGRAM
- UNITED WAY OF THE MOHAWK VALLEY
- UPSTATE FAMILY HEALTH CENTER, INC.
- UPTOWN THEATRE FOR CREATIVE ARTS, INC.
- UTICA COLLEGE
- WOMEN’S FUND OF HERKIMER & ONEIDA COUNTIES
MAKE A GIFT THAT WILL FIT YOUR PHILANTHROPIC GOALS AND BENEFIT THE COMMUNITY FOR YEARS TO COME.

INVEST IN YOUR Community

HOW TO GIVE

ONLINE
foundationhoc.org

MAIL
2608 Genesee Street
Utica, NY 13502

PHONE
315.735.8212

WAYS TO GIVE

MAKE A GIFT
Cash
Real Estate
Stocks & Securities

CREATE A FUND
Donor-Advised
Scholarship
Field-of-Interest

PLAN YOUR LEGACY
Bequests
Future Fund
Life Insurance

GENERATE AN INCOME
Retirement Plans
Charitable Gift Annuity
Charitable Remainder Trust

TRANSFER INSTRUCTIONS FOR GIFTS OF STOCK

Please provide your bank or broker with the following instructions for transfer of stock to our account at Robert W. Baird & Co. Inc.:

DTC #: 0547
Account #: 1854-6383
Account Name: The Community Foundation

Notify Nick Grimmer, director of giving strategies, 315.525.6584, ngrimmer@foundationhoc.org, that a gift is being transferred. Provide the donor name, number of shares, and the name of the stock or the stock code, as well as the designation.

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?
CONTACT OUR TEAM >

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315.525.6584

LINDSEY COSTELLO
Director of Donor & Community Engagement
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315.868.8616

ALLY CAMPBELL
Donor Relations Coordinator
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315.731.3738

A copy of our most recently filed financial report is available from the Charities Registry on the New York State Attorney General’s website (www.charitiesnys.com) or, upon request, by contacting the New York State Attorney General, Charities Bureau, 28 Liberty Street, New York, NY 10005, or The Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties, 2608 Genesee Street, Utica, NY 13502. You also may obtain information on charitable organizations from the New York State Office of the Attorney General at www.charitiesnys.com or 212.416.8401.