QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR FUNDHOLDERS

SPRING 2021

Inside

OUR NEWEST FUNDS

ADIRONDACK FOOTHILLS TRAILS ALLIANCE

TWO SISTERS WITH A SINGLE FOCUS
As we work our way through 2021, we are optimistic that better times are ahead and that life as we know it is slowly returning back to normal—a new and better normal for our organization, our partners and the entire community.

In the middle of a global pandemic, it has been challenging to see a clear path to a brighter future, but the Community Foundation remains committed to its vision of a vibrant region with opportunity for ALL. The current environment and the increasing level of community need has encouraged us to explore new possibilities and to get creative in fulfilling our mission. And we know there are opportunities around every corner for us to engage, invest, and lead in our community.

We are committed to engaging and partnering to make impactful investments that make a difference. After being a traditional grantmaker for most of our history, this year we’re rolling out a new way of thinking about how to more efficiently (and hopefully more easily) get funding to nonprofit organizations that need it. We call the process “inquiry to investment,” and we think it will facilitate more meaningful investments in the community that have greater impact than ever before.

We are positioning the Community Foundation so that we can respond to and meet the growing needs of nonprofit partners and sustain our own operations so we can always meet those needs. That strategy and philosophy includes a commitment to continuous improvement and operational excellence for the Community Foundation’s financial and investment strategies, donor and community engagement, giving, systems, and operations.

As we explore new possibilities and opportunities, we are excited to introduce new fund products and strategies in the coming months that will allow even more individuals, families, corporations, nonprofits, and foundations to participate in giving to the community in partnership with the Community Foundation. With our expanded list of investment pool options, including the option for fundholders to retain their own personal investment manager, we can help our donors and fundholders achieve their investment goals and increase their impact, even in times of uncertainty.

I am excited to be part of an incredible team led by an innovative president/CEO and a dedicated volunteer Board of Trustees. Together, with our generous donors, we can make a difference and create a brighter future for our community for years to come.

Sincerely,
Erika Mumford, CPA, MBA
Director of Finance
Our NEWEST funds

4 ELEMENTS STUDIO FUND
An agency fund established by 4 Elements Studio, a community arts center dedicated to engaging and educating the community through a range of artistic experiences and programming.

ANITA A. VITULLO FUND FOR MOHAWK VALLEY HEALTH SYSTEM
A designated fund established by Mohawk Valley Health System, an integrated healthcare delivery system serving Oneida, Herkimer and Madison counties, to administer a new gift from Anita A. Vitullo.

ANITA A. VITULLO FUND FOR SUSQUEHANNA SPCA
A designated fund established by Susquehanna SPCA, a nonprofit organization dedicated to alleviating the suffering of animals throughout Otsego County, to administer a new gift from Anita A. Vitullo.

ANITA’S STEVENS-SWAN HUMANE SOCIETY FUND
A designated fund established by Stevens-Swan Humane Society, a nonprofit organization committed to finding homes for abandoned and abused companion animals from Oneida County and to reduce that animal population through spay and neuter programs, to administer a new gift from Anita A. Vitullo.

COVID-19 COMMUNITY NAVIGATOR PROGRAM FUND
A field-of-interest fund established through a lead gift from the Ronald and Sheila Cuccaro Family Fund to support the COVID-19 Community Navigator Program, an outreach program that promotes awareness and access to COVID-19 vaccinations.

EMPOWERED PATHWAYS WERC/RISE FUND
An agency fund to benefit Empowered Pathways, a nonprofit organization with a focus on providing employment, mediation and advocacy services to women, youth and families in the area.

PET WELLNESS FUND
A donor-advised fund established for general charitable purposes.

REVEREND JOHN L. GALLAGHER MEMORIAL FUND
A discretionary fund established in memory of Reverend John L. Gallagher for general charitable purposes.

STANLEY THEATRE CHARITABLE FUND
An agency fund established by the Stanley Theatre to support fundraising activities.
With a rake in hand, Chuck Schweitzer has been carving out mountain bike trails around the McCauley Mountain area for nearly 10 years.

However, what once could be accomplished with simple manpower became a larger undertaking, as Schweitzer and other Central New York riders realized that the flow of biking trails in the region was largely incohesive and inaccessible.

In 2018, along with Kelly Ann Nugent and Matt Van Slyke, executive director of Utica Bike Rescue, Schweitzer established the Adirondack Foothills Trails Alliance (AFTA) to build sustainable flow trails in the Adirondacks and create a biking trail network in the area.

AFTA is an all-volunteer group of mountain bikers devoted to trail development in the greater Utica area and beyond.

“We have 400 members that are part of AFTA,” says Schweitzer. “Some that ride the trails, some that volunteer with the organization, and many that do both.”

To date, AFTA has built miles of sustainable trails in the region, with more planned for the future, putting Old Forge on the map as a popular mountain biking destination. The organization’s goal is to accentuate the region’s assets in a cost-effective way. Further developing local mountain biking infrastructure has combined the picturesque landscape of the Adirondacks with fun activities for all ages at no cost.

The organization has many exciting projects planned for 2021 to develop and build trails in the community. Many of these projects are already in the works, including a new skill park and perimeter trail being built in Old Forge near McCauley Mountain, various trails being developed for public use in Hinckley, and the trail system in Waterville will be completed and improved for larger bike use.

The organization’s biggest project will take place in the town of Caroga, says Schweitzer. Most of the volunteer efforts will go toward creating a brand-new trail network just an hour northeast of Utica and even closer to Herkimer and the valley. In August, volunteers will work on trimming, bridge building and other hand work to bring the project to completion.

“We have anywhere between 10 to 30 people volunteer on a given day. We work hard and finish the day with a cook-out and refreshments to thank our volunteers,” says Schweitzer. “Anyone is welcome to volunteer. We post volunteer opportunities on our Facebook page for the public to participate in, with these events open to the entire community.”

In addition, AFTA hosts various volunteer days throughout the year, giving community members the opportunity to maintain public trails wherever there is a need. Throughout the year, the organization will be hosting volunteering events in Herkimer and Oneida counties, including at the New Hartford Town Park and Janis Road in Waterville.

“We want to build and maintain these areas for family use of trail systems, so we are always looking for new opportunities to accomplish projects in the communities we’re working in. Typically, we have between 500 to 1,000 volunteer hours a year. We decide where we want to do work, what we want to accomplish for those days, and we get right to work.”
Due to COVID-19, many of the organization’s volunteer days and fundraising events were canceled. However, the pandemic has not hindered AFTA’s work and commitment to outdoor recreation.

“Thankfully, most of our work is done outdoors, so implementing social distancing has been easy,” says Schweitzer. “And this year, we are able to host more volunteer opportunities and projects that we couldn’t in 2020.”

The organization will also be reviving its McCauley Bike Festival in October 2021. Due to the pandemic, AFTA was unable to hold the event in 2020 but is excited to offer the autumn event for experienced riders, novices, and those curious about the sport to enjoy the outdoors and be immersed in Old Forge’s scenic landscape.

The Adirondack Foothills Trails Alliance also partners with organizations such as the Central Adirondack Association, Utica Bike Rescue, and Cycle Adirondack to improve mountain biking in the region.

“These partners have helped us out considerably with various services and building our repertoire of contacts in the area,” says Schweitzer. “We’ve also partnered with the Town of Webb and Herkimer County with projects over the past three years. They’ve been extremely supportive in our endeavors.”

Since 2019, the Adirondack Foothills Trails Alliance has received $13,500 in funding from the following donor-advised funds at the Community Foundation: the A. Richard Cohen Family Fund, Adirondack League Club Community Fund, Alexandra G. Kogut Memorial Fund, and Janice Luck O’Connor Friends Fund.

“We are so thankful for the continuous help and support from these donor-advised funds. We look forward to continuing our work at the Adirondack Foothills Trails Alliance with the help of the Community Foundation.”

Each and every nonprofit organization has its niche—its part of the community that it nurtures with great care and consideration. With a promise to enhance, improve and beautify the trails that run throughout the heart of our community, Adirondack Foothills Trails Alliance is ensuring an all-around brighter and thriving experience that we can all enjoy by taking the road less traveled, the trails.
The family’s generosity can be traced back one generation further than Sarah and Linda’s parents, A. Richard and Judith (Lowenstein) Cohen. Richard’s father, Moses Cohen, an enterprising emigrant from Lithuania who arrived in Old Forge around 1900, started the Old Forge Hardware Store—which remains a regional institution. And Linda especially credits the sisters’ other grandfather, Solomon Lowenstein, with the “fundraising and giving in our DNA” that helped power her wide-ranging nonprofit development career and the Cohens’ continuing community philanthropy in retirement.

“Our grandfather Solomon Lowenstein was a major figure in the New York Jewish philanthropic community as a fundraiser and distributor,” she says. “So it really was what we came to naturally.”

Judith and A. Richard helped build the Old Forge community in ways that still resonate today. Family enterprises over the years, apart from the hardware store, included a grocery store, motel, liquor store, clothing shop and radio station. The ski center on McCauley Mountain was also A. Richard’s doing. And then there’s that local attraction that’s still familiar to many throughout the region.

“Dad started the Enchanted Forest, like a lot of the businesses that he started, because he wanted a way to get more people to come to Old Forge,” Sarah says.

Many nonprofits have been strengthened by their interest and support, including Old Forge Library, the former Moses Cohen residence which the family donated in the 1970s to give what used to be a very small library a bigger, better home and room to grow.

The Cohen sisters have turned family generosity into cultural impact.

Linda and Sarah, the best-known siblings in Old Forge, have contributed substantially to organizations in the village, the Town of Webb and elsewhere for decades. Much of their philanthropy has been directed through the A. Richard Cohen Family Fund, named for their father, at the Community Foundation.

In 2001, the Cohen sisters established the family fund after A. Richard’s death at 92. Over the past two decades, they have supported a variety of organizations, with special attention paid to the arts, culture, women’s health, and public broadcasting—especially the arts with View, the Art Center in Old Forge, having been a particular focus for them.
“The library was in a tiny little building and really only had one function: it was a library,” Sarah recalls. “Moving into a bigger building has really turned it into a community center. They do wonderful things—classes on bicycle repair, babysitting, and other subjects—for kids. There are community meeting rooms, an art gallery, computers, Wi-Fi for visitors; it’s a busy place.”

Because of their interest in the history of the Adirondacks—“Our family is very much a part of it”—the sisters proudly say—they made sure that the library designated space for the Town of Webb Historical Association, another nonprofit that the Cohens have supported substantially over the years. The association later moved to its own home so it could expand to meet the ever-growing number of inquiries. “There is a great deal of interest in the history of this town, from the locals and the visitors,” Sarah says.

The sisters’ shared passion for local and regional history resulted in their authoring two books, Old Forge: Gateway to the Adirondacks and Old Forge and the Fulton Chain of Lakes. Proceeds from their sales continue to benefit the association.

Sarah and Linda say their combined love of history and art history have inspired their support for Adirondack Experience: The Museum on Blue Mountain Lake, where Sarah worked for five years. “It’s just a really impressive place and deserves to be supported,” she says.

“It’s a wonderful place, and a great place to introduce kids to history—because it’s fun,” Linda adds. “We’re really excited about the next project there, to expand existing exhibit space so that more of the museum’s impressive art collection can be displayed. Sarah not only worked there, but she was also on their board for many years. I’m currently on one of the management committees.”

In fact, their commitment to the North Country and their keen interest in preserving and enhancing community quality of life has kept both sisters busy for decades, serving on practically every noteworthy nonprofit board or committee in the region. They’ve combined that volunteerism and professional expertise in myriad ways, such as North Country Public Radio (NCPR)—which has received substantial support from the A. Richard Cohen Family Fund, and plenty of personal attention from Linda who has been involved in an advisory capacity with NCPR for the past 15 years. “Public radio is important to both of us,” says Linda. “I spent 20 years working in public broadcasting on the West Coast.”

The Cohens’ regional philanthropy also has included many Utica organizations, such as the Midtown Utica Community Center (MUCC). MUCC serves a central Utica neighborhood and focuses on a diverse, primarily newly arrived, population from many countries of origin.

“I went down for career day at MUCC, and it was an interesting experience because the place was a three-ring circus of activity; it’s incredible what they do,” Linda says. “And it was really fascinating. Seeing the variety of ethnicities that go through there was just amazing to me.”

Like many, the Cohen sisters have come through the pandemic grateful for communities like Old Forge and many others where, perhaps, optimism and a shared sense of concern for others will outlast the events of the past year.

“In cities and small towns and suburban areas, I think people are looking out for people a little bit more than they did in the past,” Linda says. “People around here have been pretty conscious of that kind of thing for a long time, but I think that’s one of the nice things that may have come out of this horrible year. People are a little kinder.”

And while they’re nowhere near the end of their personal commitment to community, they’ve already fulfilled A. Richard Cohen’s legacy.

“I think he’d be very pleased with what we’ve done.”
INVEST IN YOUR Community

HOW TO GIVE

ONLINE
foundationhoc.org

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Utica, NY 13502

PHONE
315.735.8212

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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.