COMMUNITY FOUNDATION NIGHT AT LEVITT CONCERT SERIES

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION COMMITS $1M TO ICAN’S FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER AND CHILDREN’S MUSEUM

MV EQUITY PLEDGE T-SHIRT GIVEAWAY

SECOND CHANCE TOOLS STORE RIBBON CUTTING

YMCA OF THE GREATER TRI-VALLEY
If you’ve read this magazine before, it will come as no surprise that I believe—that all of us at the Community Foundation believe—two things that we return to again and again:

1. This is a great community.
2. Its potential has not yet been fulfilled.

Some may disagree that Utica and all of our two counties can be considered “a wonderful place,” but history and recent media accounts show that this part of the Mohawk Valley has both a rich past and an inspiring present. And everyone can agree that this community, like any in the world, has challenges.

Our continuing commitment, to donors, fundholders, nonprofit partners and to every resident, is to take on those challenges. To help find, facilitate and fund solutions to address them, with partners and residents, collaboratively. And to share and celebrate what this organization and the nonprofit community have achieved together, thanks especially to generations of generous donors and all those who believe, now, just how remarkable we will become.

Our vision statement, “a vibrant region with opportunity for all,” reflects that path toward future prosperity, and so do the stories and data in this issue of Endless Possibilities. I could give you example after example, but don’t linger on this page when you can see for yourself! So, spend some time in the following pages to see what you and your neighbors in Herkimer and Oneida counties have already accomplished to meet community needs.

And please continue to help all of us work together toward that even brighter future!

Alicia Fernandez Dicks
President/CEO
The Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties
The power of music is what Colleen Bennett founded the KEYS Program on.

Bennett and her husband started the program in 1993 in honor of Colleen’s dad. A teacher by trade, she didn’t know how to help her father when he was diagnosed with cancer. But then an idea popped into her head—and she turned to music.

“He loved to hear me play piano, so I recorded some piano music one night,” said Bennett. “I went to visit him the next morning and he was in a stage where he was near the end of his life, and he couldn’t get away from the pain. He did not want to be there with all those beeping monitors, and just that setting, it was difficult for him. He hadn’t slept in a couple of days and was really agitated. Within an hour of putting the headphones on his ears, my dad finally calmed down, relaxed, and he fell asleep. It still gives me goosebumps to this day.”

The nurses were so impressed and astounded at the effect music had on her father, even just for a short period of time. To keep his memory alive, she created the KEYS Program to raise awareness of how music can help people, especially kids.

When Colleen’s husband, David, was a NASCAR official (he’s now retired), the two traveled up and down the Eastern Seaboard for his job. Along the way, Colleen would stop at children’s hospitals, talking to staff about her experience with music therapy and its benefits for cancer patients.

With encouraging input from healthcare professionals, the program began with recording music for pediatric cancer patients and quickly expanded from there.

“We started advocating for music therapy, and then we began hiring music therapists on our staff about five years ago,” explained Bennett. “We were doing respite days, children’s concerts and fun days for families using music, but we really focused on music therapy because it’s so very powerful and there’s no other music therapy organization in Herkimer or Oneida counties.”

The global pandemic hasn’t slowed down Bennett and her team. Music therapy delivered remotely has been seamless and, in some cases, more convenient.

Remote music therapy has opened the door to finding services for kids across the country. A girl named Amelia, who lives in Oneida County, has to go to Boston for treatments and scans for her rare tumor condition. She thoroughly enjoyed and looked forward to her music therapy sessions from home. When a session was scheduled for the same day that she had to travel to Boston, her mom suggested trying it enroute.

With the laptop propped up, she completed her session, playing ukulele and singing along all the way to Boston.

“She was not looking forward to that car ride,” said Bennett. “It’s a lot of time to sit there and think. So, it was both meaningful therapy and a helpful distraction.”

“Amelia singing along to her session while we drove to Boston for her next surgery really made the trip go by so much faster,” said Chantelle Nobis, Amelia’s mom. “It helped her focus on something other than her fears and anxiety leading up to surgery, and we are so thankful to have the KEYS Program along with us on our journey.”

Bennett and her staff are in awe of the inspiring families they meet, and their strength in the face of adversity. And community support for those families helps connect them to the KEYS Program.
“It’s usually someone in the community that will let us know that there’s a family who’s had a child diagnosed or a child with a disability,” says Bennett. “When there’s a family in need, the community truly rallies around that family. The Mohawk Valley is just one of those places where everyone cares about everyone.”

The KEYS Program offers a variety of services, including music therapy, music classes, songwriting projects, family respite days and a virtual concert series that celebrates and honors a child battling cancer and their family each week. But regardless of the program, the main goal is the same: bringing smiles to kids’ faces. The Smile Concert Series enables kids and families to tune in live every Monday night to enjoy featured artists, both local and from across the country. Bennett says the concerts lifted spirits, especially during the pandemic when many people were feeling isolated. And, more important, the weekly performances left kids feeling a sense of normalcy that’s rare when dealing with serious illness.

In addition to serving children, the KEYS Program also serves those in need of healing, such as nursing home patients who suffer from Alzheimer’s disease or dementia.

The Community Foundation and several of its donor-advised funds, including the M&T Bank/Partners Trust Bank Charitable Fund and Gabriel, Joseph and Lila Mandour Karam Fund, have supported the KEYS Program’s projects.

“The support from the Community Foundation and its fundholders enables us to offer programs for so many kids in the community for free,” said Bennett. “We serve about 450 kids in Oneida and Herkimer counties, thanks in part to the Community Foundation, because we simply can’t create smiles without their support.”

The KEYS Program can’t take away a child’s illness or disability, but it sure provides valuable support and creates a lot of smiles—all through the power of music.
The Community Foundation is pleased to present its 2022 series of educational webinars for the local nonprofit community. For nearly a decade, this annual schedule of events has provided nonprofit professionals with resources to develop and grow within the sector.

These events are made possible by our generous sponsor Bank of America and our partners at the Association for Fundraising Professionals (AFP). We hope that you will join us!

UPCOMING 2022 WEBINARS
Nonprofit staff and board members are invited to attend these hour-long webinars. All events will be held online via Zoom and registration is required. These events are free to attend unless otherwise noted.

WHAT SPONSORS ARE LOOKING FOR IN PARTNERS
THURSDAY, JUNE 30, NOON
FREE for AFP members, $10 for non-members
Join this session to learn how to do your research, approach and follow-up to secure long-lasting mutually beneficial partnerships with potential sponsors.

KEY WAYS TO BOOST MIDLEVEL GIVING
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, NOON
During this session, attendees will learn from savvy fundraisers how to attract and engage middle donors, make them feel special and inspire them to give more.

BOARD BLOOM: REAL-LIFE STRATEGIES IN EMPOWERING BOARD MEMBERS TO GET INVOLVED, IMPACT AND INFLUENCE OTHERS
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6, NOON
FREE for AFP members, $10 for non-members
This session will explore how board members learn to become impactful leaders in nonprofit organizations while developing fruitful relationships with peers and staff.

NONPROFIT MEDIA TRAINING
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, NOON
The session will explore best practices in media relations, successful press release creation and distribution, and how to follow through with media efforts on various platforms.

HOW TO CLOSE EVERY END-OF-YEAR GIFT AND SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS IN 2023
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, NOON
FREE for AFP members, $10 for non-members
Attend this webinar to explore a structure for you to master your calendar and optimize the ideal times when you can reach your supporters and close year-end gifts.

CRYPTO PHILANTHROPY 101
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, NOON
Learn how to reach young, tech-savvy crypto donors that are poised to give and accept Bitcoin donations.

Visit foundationhoc.org/webinars to register and be sure to check the page regularly for future webinars and presentations!
Brian Donovan has always had a passion for cooking and healthy eating. He made his dream a reality by opening a business called The Balanced Chef. It all began in 2015, with a concept of a simple way to eat well with ready-to-eat foods. Since then, the business has grown exponentially, including opening its first storefront, in downtown Rome.

Donovan came up with the idea of healthy fast food that’s quick and convenient. Unlike many restaurants where special accommodations often have to be requested for you to make a good nutritional choice, The Balanced Chef tries to make everything it offers all-around healthier.

“I truly believe everybody wants to be healthier,” explains Donovan. “The definition of health is all over the place, whether it’s more sleep, more water, more exercise, or eating better. We all want to get healthier because the healthier you are, the better you feel every day. We have created a simple way to eat well.”

In 2017, The Balanced Chef was crowned the winner of the Community Foundation’s Downtown Startup Challenge, a competition for entrepreneurs with innovative business ideas for downtown Utica or Rome. As a result, they received $30,000 in start-up funding for the new venture. After overcoming the challenges of a global pandemic, Donovan and his team are welcoming customers to its 242 West Dominick Street location in Rome.

“We were so fortunate to come in first place. That award money allowed us to pay for our packing machine, which has enhanced the shelf life of our meals tremendously.”

The concept is simple: there’s no prepping, planning, or grocery shopping involved, you just need the meal, a microwave and about two minutes. Before you know it, you have a chef-crafted, dietitian-approved meal ready to eat.

The company started serving packaged lunch and dinner entrées but have since expanded to desserts, breakfast items and snacks as well. Everything in the store is served in portion-controlled containers, with all the macronutrient information on the front with a description of the meal. At the Rome location, customers can order freshly made salads, wraps, smoothies and shakes, and buy vitamins and supplements as well. An app can make it convenient for customers to simply order from home or work and pick it up in minutes.

Donovan has faced challenges—both personally and professionally—as he’s worked to grow the business in recent years.

Soon after winning the Downtown Startup Challenge, Donovan became a “solopreneur” after his partner stepped away from the business. And right before the start of the pandemic, he faced a devastating diagnosis of brain cancer after suffering a medical emergency.

“I was checking a sales report and the next thing I knew I woke up in the emergency room. A week later, in New York City, I had the cancer removed, and I am currently in remission and feeling great. I was fortunate enough to have the greatest surgeons in the world.”

After that health scare, the pandemic shutdown added to the delay.

“I literally signed the contract for the construction to start for the storefront. Then, I had the brain tumor. Then, the pandemic started. Then I lost my chef. Then I had to find a temporary location last minute as the building I rented for our kitchen, suddenly closed and our new kitchen wasn’t ready yet. So, it has been curveball after curveball and now I’ve recently been diagnosed with Cervical Spinal Stenosis. It’s part of the growing pains and it will just make me stronger,” he says.

With his cancer in remission and a great support system, Donovan can refocus on The Balanced Chef and what’s next. He says the next step is to open another location, this one in the downtown Utica area.

“There’s always been a long-term goal which has shifted over time. My health and then the pandemic has really changed my perspective of what I truly want in life. And that’s just to be happy.”
Libraries play an important role in our community, but don’t just take our word for it. Here at the Community Foundation, we have a number of funds set up by local residents, families and organizations to benefit libraries throughout our two counties. This tells the story of just how vital these community resources are.

One fund in particular, the Kathleen A. Perreault Fund, is a field-of-interest fund that was created through a bequest from Perrault’s estate in 2020 to provide support for area libraries. Perreault was a longtime schoolteacher in the Whitesboro Central School District who passed away in 2018 at the age of 105.

Being that the fund’s interest area was inclusive of all local libraries, the Community Foundation wanted to honor her wishes by offering a library specific grant round. This ensured equitable consideration was given to all libraries in both counties.

“Thanks to the Foundation’s support, the money going to our community libraries will fund programming such as ‘Music on Main Street’ at the Frank J. Basloe Library in Herkimer; children’s room upgrades at the Frankfort Library; a smart TV at the Westernville Library; and community programming at Jervis Library in Rome in collaboration with the NAACP,” said Wanda Bruchis, executive director of the Mid-York Library System. “The best gift of all is the Foundation’s recognition of libraries’ roles in educating, engaging and enhancing the lives of all, from ‘twinkle’ to ‘wrinkle’ and this funding is deeply appreciated.”

“$35,000 AWARDED TO 15 LIBRARIES ALL ACROSS HERKIMER AND ONEIDA COUNTIES
Meet OUR TEAM

Get to know Olivia Paul, director of community engagement

Describe your role and what projects and work you are involved in.
I’m responsible for directing and sustaining community engagement activities and non-profit community investments, especially the Community Foundation’s equity initiative and strategic investments, and grantmaking.

Tell us about your professional history and how you came to work at the Community Foundation:
I had a long career in the insurance industry, specializing in commercial underwriting and quality assurance. Then, after serving on the Community Equity Advisory Group, I joined the Community Foundation as the advisory group’s engagement specialist, and have since assumed the position of director of community engagement for the Community Foundation.

What inspires you about working for this community?
My passion for helping others and working to create positive change for all, and serving as a voice for the voiceless.

What is your favorite part of your role at the Community Foundation?
Being able to bring a different perspective internally and externally based on my experiences.

What changes to the Community Foundation’s model of investment are you most excited about?
Greater collaboration and initiatives that move the community forward toward the Community Foundation’s vision of “opportunity for all.”

What do you enjoy doing outside of the office?
Besides mentoring youth and hanging out with family and friends, I love traveling, eating and having a blast with friends—doing things like karaoke.

What is a fact about you that people would be surprised to know?
As a child, I had the opportunity to participate in the inauguration of President Jimmy Carter by reciting Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s “I Have a Dream” speech on the steps of the Capitol as part of the Black Seeds Drama and Dance Group.

Bonus fact: I make a surprisingly good cheesecake!

What do you think is the greatest thing about this area?
The incredible diversity of its people, culture, and food.
In celebration of its 70th anniversary, the Community Foundation will host its first ever 24-hour community giving day, “Mohawk Valley Gives,” as the start of a multiyear effort to bring nonprofit need and donor support together through our 75th anniversary year and beyond.

We’ll engage with nonprofits, businesses, community residents and fundholders to make sure Mohawk Valley Gives harnesses the community’s collective energy for the greatest possible impact. Whatever part you play, YOU will help us make a difference!
WHAT IS A GIVING DAY?

Over the last decade, the concept of hosting an online day (or longer period) of giving has gained popularity across the country for many types of organizations. Most people are familiar with Giving Tuesday, a global generosity movement that encourages people to give in whatever way they can on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving.

Giving days are common at colleges, universities, hospitals, cause-based organizations and, more recently, at community foundations. As a philanthropic partner and leader, the Community Foundation can make the annual event a valuable tool to help donors, nonprofits and the general community increase their collective impact.

The simple fact is, coming together enables all of us to do more for our community.

MOHAWK VALLEY GIVES WILL:

• Establish an annual giving event to inspire the community to give
• Educate the community on the importance of philanthropy and collective giving
• Create an environment for nonprofits to showcase their impact
• Enable nonprofits to engage current donors in a modern way while also attracting new donors
• Provide access to technology, training and resources for even the smallest of nonprofits to experience the power of online fundraising
• Build awareness of the entire nonprofit landscape in the Mohawk Valley
• Foster new relationships with community businesses through sponsorships
REGISTRATION
By participating, nonprofits can use Mohawk Valley Gives to energize their donor base (and attract new ones) for FREE. Nonprofit registration will be open from Monday, May 23 to Monday, August 1. Simply head to givemv.org and complete our registration survey. Upon completion, you will be notified when your organization is approved so you can begin building a custom profile where donors will make gifts on the giving day.

PROFILE COMPLETION
Each nonprofit that registers will be able to create a custom online profile where they can update or add information, logos, photos, donation levels, thank-you messages, and more. Profiles are to be complete by Friday, August 12.

PRIZES
Our team is busy working with donors and sponsors to put together a pool of amazing cash prize incentives that your organization will have a chance at winning come September 20. Winners will be announced at different times throughout the day!

FINAL STEPS TO SUCCESS EVENT
On Tuesday, August 16, participating nonprofit representatives will be invited to our Final Steps to Success event to get ready for the big day! We'll go over last-minute tips and best practices to engage with your supporters and increase your giving day success. The Mohawk Valley Gives team will also be available to answer any questions.

SECURE MATCH AND CHALLENGE FUNDS
You are signed on to participate, now what? It is NEVER too early to begin informing your staff, board members, donors and the general community that you are taking part in Mohawk Valley Gives! Use your time wisely and spend the months leading up to September 20 talking with your supporters who may be interested in setting up a matching gift or challenge goal that helps to double (or even triple!) the impact of every dollar you raise. (More about these on the next page.)

MARKETING SUPPORT
We’ve prepared an all-inclusive planning-and-marketing toolkit for participating nonprofits to use before, during and after Mohawk Valley Gives. This toolkit includes a communications guide, sample email content, social media graphics, printable flyers, board engagement materials, stewardship tips, and more. The Mohawk Valley Gives team will be with you each and every step of the way to make your campaign as strong as it can be! Your main point of contact for marketing will be Kayla Ellis, kellis@foundationhoc.org.
PEER-TO-PEER (P2P) FUNDRAISERS
As a board member, you can create a personal fundraising page for your organization and share it with your network before and during Mohawk Valley Gives in September. This is a great way to inspire additional donors by letting them know why this cause is so important to you.

MATCHES AND CHALLENGES
A match is a pool of funds that is donated from an organization’s board that is intended to be used to double the amount raised. Similarly, a challenge is a gift that can be unlocked by meeting a certain goal. A board-sponsored match or challenge shows your commitment to the work your organization does. Use this opportunity to get 100% of the board involved! Another way you can get involved is to help acquire sponsors for matching gifts and challenge incentives.

SPREAD THE WORD!
One of the simplest ways you can support an organization taking part in Mohawk Valley Gives is to follow them on social media and help spread the word to your networks leading up to the big day.

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES
Sponsorships show that your organization supports all our nonprofits and tells the two-county community what your brand stands for—making the Mohawk Valley an even better place to live, work and play. Opportunities come in all shapes and sizes, and higher-level sponsorships will reach thousands of residents thousands of times through the US Mail, email, social media and other online engagement. Visit foundationhoc.org/sponsorship to view available opportunities and submit a sponsorship form. For more information or specific questions, contact Nick Grimmer, ngrimmer@foundationhoc.org, 315-525-6584.

SPONSOR PRIZES
Your company can choose to sponsor various cash prizes that incentivize nonprofit efforts, encouraging them to increase their giving day fundraising come September 20. Sponsor prizes will be created with criteria you and the Community Foundation will customize together. The nonprofit that meets those criteria during the giving day will be awarded that prize. Our team will be happy to walk through examples with you!

BUSINESS FUNDRAISERS
Want to encourage community support among your employees and board members? Setting up a business fundraiser is the perfect option! To establish this type of fundraiser for the giving day, please reach out to us at hello@givemv.org.
DONATE
Mohawk Valley Gives invites everyone in our community to join us on September 20 to give to causes they care about. Even the smallest gifts, when pooled together, make a huge impact on the nonprofit organizations in our two counties.

PEER-TO-PEER (P2P) FUNDRAISERS
Is there a special nonprofit near and dear to your heart? A P2P Fundraiser is the perfect way to support them during Mohawk Valley Gives. At givemv.org, you can easily create an account and launch a fundraising page for a specific organization that you can then share within your network to expand the reach of your cause and help that organization bring in new donors.

MATCHES AND CHALLENGES
A match is a pool of funds that is donated from a person or company that is intended to be used to double the amount raised by a specific nonprofit organization.

For example, ABC Corp. committed a $5,000 dollar for dollar match to XYZ Nonprofit. XYZ Nonprofit will receive $1 from ABC Corp. for each $1 that is donated by supporters. XYZ Nonprofit can now promote this match as a chance for donors to double their impact: a $25 gift becomes a $50 gift, a $50 gift becomes $100, and so on.

A challenge is a gift that can be unlocked by meeting a goal. This goal can be measured by total dollars given or total donors engaged.

For example, the XYZ Nonprofit sets a $3,000 fundraising goal for their campaign. ABC Corp. agrees to donate $1,000 dollars once the XYZ Nonprofit reaches their $3,000 goal.

SPREAD THE WORD!
One of the simplest ways to get involved in Mohawk Valley Gives is to follow us on social media and help spread the word to your friends, family and colleagues leading up to the big day.

In addition to everything listed on the left, Community Foundation fundholders have some unique opportunities to get involved.

SPONSOR PRIZES
Your fund can sponsor various cash prizes that incentivize nonprofit efforts, encouraging them to increase their giving day fundraising come September 20. Sponsor prizes will be created with criteria you and the Community Foundation will customize together. The nonprofit that meets those criteria during the giving day will be awarded that prize. Our team will be happy to walk through examples with you!

DONOR-ADVISED FUNDS
Donor-advised funds will play a big role in Mohawk Valley Gives! We’ll be offering a VIP giving period for our DAF’s to take part in! Alternatively, you may also choose to coordinate your donor-advised fund grants to align with our September 20 giving day. This can simply be in the form of grants directly from your fund, or through matches and challenges. If you are interested in any of these options, please reach out to a member of our development team to discuss.
FAQs

What organizations can participate?
Organizations that are verified 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofits that are headquartered or provide services in Herkimer and/or Oneida counties. If you require a fiscal sponsor, please reach out to Nick Grimmer,ngrimmer@foundationhoc.org.

Who can donate?
Anyone may donate. Donations through the Mohawk Valley Gives online portal to charitable nonprofit organizations are tax-deductible and cannot be refunded. Contributions may be made via credit and debit card only. Donations will be received and receipted by GiveGab.

Can I donate early to my charities of choice?
Yes! Donors will be able to give in advance of Mohawk Valley Gives, starting at 12 AM on September 1. By donating early, you won’t have to worry about missing the big day. All early gifts will count toward nonprofit totals for MVGives, but they will not apply to hourly prizes on the day of giving.

What is GiveGab?
GiveGab is a nonprofit giving platform that helps nonprofits to raise money, engage donors and manage volunteers quickly and efficiently. GiveGab offers a full portfolio of simple and easy to use products that allows organizations to function in a more streamlined manner.

What are the minimum and maximum donation amounts?
The minimum donation amount is $10. There is no maximum donation amount.

How will donations be distributed?
Each donation made to a participating nonprofit will be disbursed directly from GiveGab via direct deposit within 5-7 business days.

Does the Community Foundation receive any portion of the donation given to my selected nonprofit?
No. The Community Foundation administers the event and website but does not receive an additional fee on donations or keep a percentage of what is donated to nonprofits. The Community Foundation views Mohawk Valley Gives as a community service to help the nonprofits we know and love. The Community Foundation will be registered as a nonprofit with a profile on Mohawk Valley Gives should you wish to support its initiatives.

How can I create a fundraising campaign for my favorite organization?
To create a fundraising campaign, you’ll first need to create a fundraiser account at givemv.org. Next, search for the nonprofit you’d like to create a campaign for and fill out the requested information. Your campaign will be automatically published on the giving day website and is ready to share away!

What if my preferred organization is not listed as participating?
Please send an email to hello@givemv.org to request that we contact your organization of choice.

Who can I contact if I have questions or want more information about Mohawk Valley Gives?
General inquiries can be sent to the Mohawk Valley Gives team at hello@givemv.org. For questions related to gifts, matches, challenges, prizes or sponsorship opportunities, please contact Nick Grimmer,ngrimmer@foundationhoc.org, 315-525-6584.

Stay up to date on the latest #MohawkValleyGives updates by following our social media pages and help us spread the word by liking and sharing our posts!
When you think of your educational experiences from elementary school on up, fun and hard work probably loom large. But what about those whose life challenges keep them from getting the most out of school?

Sadly, many school districts locally and nationally see such students, struggling at home and in school, distracted and disconnected from learning. That’s where Connected Community Schools (CCS) comes in. Spearheaded by Rome Alliance for Education and CNY Health Home Network, CCS works to ensure that every student is prepared to engage in their education.

“In a nutshell, a community school acts as a hub for families and students to make the best possible use of community resources and services,” said Melissa Roys, CCS executive director.

“Everything from tangible items, such as food and hygiene products, to mental health, dental, healthcare, and care coordination services.”


“Our Connected Community Schools have systems and infrastructure in place that are really working to ensure that every student and their families have basic needs met so that they can fully engage in their education,” said Roys.

CCS’s four main components are: family engagement, classroom programming, LINK (Leaders in Networking and Knowledge), and connected school HUBS. Recognized nationally, LINK is essentially a single point of access system that identifies struggling students and refers them to helpful resources. Connected HUBS are school spaces filled with colorful furniture and stocked with food, snacks, hygiene products, coats, mittens, or any type of basic necessities—all for students and their families.

“We’re trying to eliminate the stigma that needing support and resources is a bad thing,” said Roys. “What we have learned in a very short amount of time is that it’s okay to say, ‘I need deodorant,’ or ‘I need a snack.’ Nobody thinks a thing about it or asks any questions. If we can inspire a new generation to help others and accept help, then we will all come out better in the long run.”

CCS was able to apply for a Community Foundation award from the Mohawk Valley COVID-19 Response Fund to support its most pressing need, which was helping students and families during the pandemic.

“When the crisis started in 2020, we quickly assessed the needs in our community, taking everything that we were doing in the schools and applying it to the larger landscape of the entire community. The funds received from the Community Foundation allowed us to distribute 1.5 million pounds of food to more than 56,000 unduplicated persons.”

Through the organization’s expanded community work, CCS staff realized that their services are no
longer needed only inside schools. That realization coupled with CCS’s previous impact resulted in a new endeavor, the creation of an impact center on the first floor of Rome’s old courthouse building to serve the entire community, ensuring that any and all residents will be able to get the help they need. The one-stop center will bring together organizations, programs and services under one roof.

“We work so collaboratively, not competitively, with everyone,” Roys said. “We are not competing with any partners, in fact we are supporting these organizations so that, with everyone helping, then we achieve even greater impact.”

In keeping with neighborhood revitalization commitments, the Community Foundation has committed $25,000 to get CCS’s impact center project off the ground.

“We talk a lot about friends. That is our collaborative work, so we always say I’m going to introduce you to my friends who works at SNAP or my friend in counseling services. That is really what I hope the environment will be like in our impact center; a lot of friends that are helping as a team.”

CCS is aiming for its impact center to open in summer 2022, and as you may have guessed, the longer-term goal is to have one of these impact centers in each of the school districts that the organization serves across the eight counties.

Producing outstanding positive outcomes for our entire community, Connected Community Schools is a shining example of how successful strategies can be taken to the next level for even greater impact.
ANITA’S STEVENS SWAN HUMANE SOCIETY COMMUNITY FUND
A designated fund to administer community contributions for Anita’s Stevens Swan Humane Society.

B SHARP MUSICAL CLUB FUND
An agency fund established by B Sharp Musical Club, an organization that advances the performing arts among its members and the community at large through concerts, outreach programs and youth mentorships and scholarships.

BROADWAY UTICA - RISE FOR A PURPOSE FUND
An agency fund established by Broadway Theatre League of Utica to support its Rise for a Purpose annual campaign which benefits the community and area initiatives.

BROADWAY UTICA - STUDENTS ON BROADWAY FUND
An agency fund established by Broadway Theatre League of Utica to support and sustain Broadway Utica’s efforts to encourage area K-12 students to engage with theatre and the arts, enabling them to attend shows at little or cost.

BROADWAY UTICA - YOUTH AMBASSADOR PROGRAM FUND
An agency fund established by Broadway Theatre League of Utica to support the Bernadette A. Eichler Youth Ambassador Program to engage about 50 high school students annually in Broadway Utica productions.

CAPRARO TECHNOLOGIES FUND FOR JOHNSON PARK CENTER FOOD DISTRIBUTION
A project fund established to provide support for Johnson Park Center’s food bank.

COGAR FOUNDATION FUND
A donor-advised fund established by the Cogar Foundation for general charitable purposes.

CONNOR ARTHUR LYNSKY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND
A scholarship fund established in memory of Connor Arthur Lynskey.

JOHN AND DEANNA SAMMON FUND FOR YOUNG SCHOLARS LIBERTY PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM
A project fund established by John and Deanna Sammon to further the mission of the Young Scholars Liberty Partnerships Program.

JOHN AND DEANNA SAMMON YOUNG SCHOLARS SCHOLARSHIP FUND
A scholarship fund established by John and Deanna Sammon to provide scholarships to graduates of the Young Scholars Liberty Partnerships Program.

KIRKLAND ART CENTER CAMPAIGN FUND
An agency fund established by Kirkland Art Center, an active multi-arts center in Clinton offering classes, exhibitions, films, concerts and lectures.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS ROME COUNCIL #391 CHARITABLE FUND
A donor-advised fund established by the Knights of Columbus Rome Council #391 for general charitable purposes.

LINDA AND SARAH COHEN FUND FOR MOHAWK VALLEY HEALTH SYSTEM
A designated fund established by Linda and Sarah Cohen to benefit Mohawk Valley Health System, an integrated healthcare delivery system serving Oneida, Herkimer and Madison counties.

LIVINGADK FUND
An agency fund established by LivingADK, an organization dedicated to promoting vibrant and sustainable communities along the Route 28 corridor within the towns of Forestport, Webb, Inlet, Long Lake and adjacent communities.

LOTIS B. HOWLAND FUND TO BENEFIT THE NEW HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY
A designated fund established by the estate of Lotis B. Howland to provide support for the New Hartford Public Library.

MARTIN J. MEEHAN MEMORIAL FUND
A donor-advised fund established by friends and family in memory of Martin “Marty” Meehan to support the educational endeavors of graduating athletes at Oswego High School.

OPERATION SUNSHINE FUND
A field-of-interest fund created by Operation Sunshine to provide camperships to local children.

PARTNERSHIP FOR EQUITY IN THE PERFORMING ARTS FUNDS
Endowed and expendable donor-advised funds established by the Mohawk Valley Junior Frontiers Club that focus on promoting racial equity in the arts.

SAYER FAMILY FUND
A donor-advised fund established by Steve and Nancy Sayer for general charitable purposes.

SIEGEL-PHILIPSON FUND
A donor-advised fund established by the Philipson Family for general charitable purposes.

THE FAHY FAMILY CHARITABLE REMAINDER UNITRUST
A charitable remainder unitrust established by the Fahy Family.

UKRAINE CRISIS RELIEF FUND
A fund established in response to the Ukrainian crisis to support refugee resettlement efforts.

UTICA CHILDREN’S MUSEUM CHARITABLE FUND
An agency fund established by Utica Children’s Museum, an organization dedicated to supporting every child’s natural curiosity to learn through hands-on, play-based exploration.

WALLACE S. AND JANIS J. SWEET/ WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND
A scholarship fund established through the generosity of many friends of the Sweet Family to help deserving students pay for expenses of an education beyond the high school level.
UKRAINE CRISIS RELIEF FUND

Communities that welcome refugees in peace and war are getting ready for an unknown number of Ukrainians who’ve left their homes because of the military conflict in the Eastern European nation. And the Community Foundation has joined with The Center, long known for giving new arrivals opportunities for success, to prepare for a significant number of Ukrainian refugees.

To support The Center’s efforts, the Community Foundation has established the Ukraine Crisis Relief Fund with a $50,000 gift from the Ronald and Sheila Cuccaro Family Fund. Every dollar donated to the Ukraine fund by individuals, businesses and organizations will go to The Center so that it can help arriving Ukrainians get ready for life in the Mohawk Valley and elsewhere in the U.S.

“Utica and surrounding towns and villages are what they are today because of the thousands who came here over many years from troubled places around the world, and we urge the entire community to help meet this coming need,” said Alicia Fernandez Dicks, president/CEO of the Community Foundation. “Ron and Sheila Cuccaro have set an example for us all, and now anyone can give to the Ukraine fund, support The Center and help those who will soon be a part of our community.”

Individuals, businesses, organizations and other funders can donate to the Ukraine Crisis Relief Fund online at foundationhoc.org/Ukraine, and additional information about The Center’s overall efforts in the greater Utica area is available at thecenterutica.org.

“The Center is currently building capacity in anticipation of increased Ukrainian arrivals, working closely with the local Ukrainian community to support family reunification and assisting to ensure that Ukrainian refugees are able to arrive here as quickly as possible,” said Shelly Callahan, executive director of The Center. “Donations secured through the fund will support the work of our organization, including housing costs, household goods, food, clothing, employment supports, case management, cultural orientation, and other essential services necessary to rebuild their lives here in the city and region.”

While contributions to the Ukraine Crisis Relief Fund will aid The Center’s work in our community, a list of resources for those who also want to support international relief efforts in Ukraine is available at foundationhoc.org/Ukraine.

To support this effort, visit foundationhoc.org/Ukraine.
Utica, Rome and the Mohawk Valley have been home to an “innovation economy” in one form or another since the 1800s, and the years ahead will see the continuing development of technology industries and employment in our two counties.

Established in 2016 in Albany, CanCode Communities helps employers find software and IT workers and provides residents with the tech training necessary to land those jobs.

“Something that I find really interesting and opportune for the moment we’re in is that the pandemic really exposed that this is a need,” said Annmarie Lanesey, CEO and founder of CanCode Communities. “It was always a need prior to the pandemic, but now there is more recognition that having digital skills is a human right. When we started our work back in 2016, people in the tech world knew what we were doing, but the broader community didn’t understand why it was so critical to teach people the basics of computers. I’m thrilled that now there is more of a dialogue statewide and nationally.”

CanCode Communities focuses on adult training, K-12 education, and digital literacy. The emphasis for adults is on software training and coding to develop and enhance core skills; in K-12 education, CanCode works to integrate coding into the existing school district curriculum; and digital literacy efforts create a bridge for underserved populations to take their first steps toward careers in technology.

“Not enough people are going into college programs or computer science, and the K-12 school systems are not teaching computer science,” said Lanesey.

“Most people can get through K-12 without having any exposure to learning this stuff. Programs like ours exist to train people for these types of jobs starting very early on.”

As a nonprofit organization, CanCode Communities partners with schools to deliver educational programming. HerkimerCanCode, through a partnership with Herkimer College, Working Solutions, and the Community Foundation, has already presented digital literacy and software training programs for two cohorts of participants, each receiving a certificate of completion from CanCode Communities and Herkimer College.

Employer engagement is important to ensuring success.

“Roundtable discussions are always the very first step. We like to hear firsthand from employers who tell us what technologies they are hiring for,” Lanesey says. “From them we learn what technology is best for a specific community.”

With HerkimerCanCode programs continuing into the summer months, CanCode Communities has partnered with Midtown Utica Community Center (MUCC), an organization providing
educational and cultural programs to the refugee community, to integrate digital literacy into MUCC’s afterschool offerings—very much in keeping with CanCode’s mission to diversify the tech sector.

For CanCode Communities, the pandemic was both a challenge and an opportunity.

“When people started working from home and places began to shut down in 2020, we got really aggressive with our digital literacy programming because we knew that people who didn’t know how to operate a computer simply could not work. We basically decided we were going to start showing people how to use the computer, through the computer.”

Besides teaching students how to use computers, CanCode’s online sessions during the height of the pandemic also focused on skills such as résumé building in Microsoft Word, LinkedIn profile creation, and conducting a fruitful job search via Google or other job search platforms. The hope is that once these students have the basics down that they will then move into the software training classes.

To fulfill its inclusive, talent-fueled tech sector vision, CanCode Communities is helping to prepare Herkimer and Oneida county residents for jobs now—and for future careers. And its partnership with educational and nonprofit organizations, including the Community Foundation, will continue to enhance workforce development efforts that are so vital to building and sustaining vibrancy in our two-county community.
Contact Nick Grimmer, CFRE, director of giving strategies, 315-525-6584, ngrimmer@foundationhoc.org.

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?

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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.

Thank you for your service!

LAURA CASAMENTO
RON CUCCARO
EVE VAN DE WAL

The dedicated leaders that serve on the Community Foundation’s Board of Trustees share a commitment to the organization’s mission. After several years of hard work, thoughtful conversations, and helping to lead innovative initiatives that build a vibrant community for all, three members will complete their service in 2022.

We thank Laura Casamento, president of Utica University; Ron Cuccaro, executive chairman and CEO at Rising Phoenix Holdings Corporation; and Eve Van de Wal, regional president at Excellus BlueCross BlueShield; for their leadership and engagement with our work in the community.
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION NIGHT AT LEVITT CONCERT SERIES

THE KEYS PROGRAM

UTICA PUBLIC LIBRARY

THE BALANCED CHEF IN ROME

CONNECTED COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

THE BALANCED CHEF