

# COMMUNITY *News*

## Young Professionals Lend Insights, Form New Fund

**L**ike the boards of many organizations in our region, the Community Foundation's Board of Directors lacks members under the age of 35. And in the Foundation's 2019 Community Assessment, we learned that few local nonprofits have a pipeline for replacing older executive staff as they retire.

The future of our communities depends on a continual supply of fresh talent. So how do we foster programs to attract young professionals, give the ones who live here good reason to stay, and harness their energy to benefit the community?

The logical answer is to ask young people themselves. Thus was born the Young Professionals Advisory Committee, which will provide information to our Board and also open a fund to help foster a new generation of community leaders.

Several other organizations in Greater Binghamton serve young professionals — the Emerging Leaders Society at the United Way of Broome County, the Southern Tier Young Professionals and the Broome County Young Professionals Group at the Urban League. Many members of the new committee belong to one or more of those groups, which focus largely on networking and volunteering.

“What was really missing was the philanthropic funding arm of this young professionals landscape,” says committee member Nick Cortese, associate attorney at Coughlin and Gerhart. “We have chosen to become that philanthropic funding component.”

Part of the committee's role will be to establish a new fund within the Foundation, to support programs that encourage young professionals. The group plans to raise money for that fund and create a structure for grantmaking. “We're also going to work with Tina Barber and others at the Community Foundation to get good at writing grants ourselves, so we can help other organizations further their causes as well,” says William Hoffman, relationship manager on the commercial banking team at M&T Bank.

To launch the new fund, the committee is preparing to take proposals for a \$1,000 mini-grant. “We're starting to work through the guidelines,” says Desiree Ford, digital communications manager, enrollment markets, at Binghamton University. This initial grant will serve as a pilot, she says, giving committee members information they need to start building the fund and planning for the future.

Members haven't yet defined



**Members of the advisory committee discuss ideas about what it would take to enhance life for young professionals in the region.**

the kinds of projects they will fund, but they have ideas about what it would take to enhance life for young professionals in the region. Part of the solution boils down to marketing, says Aisha Jasper, community development liaison at Visions Federal Credit Union. “There are a lot of great initiatives going on, but not a lot of people know about them. It's up to us as young professionals to make it known that these things exist, and to show ourselves being a part of those initiatives.”

The group has also discussed stretching the concept of “young professional” beyond the stereotype of a person who

wears a suit to work, Jasper says. “We represent so many different demographics, industries and backgrounds that we would like to see that definition expand.”

Another goal is to identify older allies who can help young professionals find opportunities with local nonprofits. “In order to make an impact, you have to be on these boards,” says McLain Smith, vice president of Wayfair Facility Management, an Endwell-based business founded by his brother, Spencer. “We're looking to create more opportunities and get people who are hungry to make this area better into a position where they *can* make it better.”

# Arts Groups Unite for Beethoven's Birthday

**M**usic lovers in Greater Binghamton are planning an unforgettable 250th birthday party for composer Ludwig von Beethoven. The festivities will take the form of the Beethoven Project, billed as "A Two-Year Celebration of Beethoven and Beyond." Led by the Binghamton Symphony, the series will also include concerts and presentations by many other local arts organizations.

The Beethoven Project got its start when the Philharmonic decided to perform all of Beethoven's symphonies as a cycle, in chronological order over six evenings. The series will culminate on the composer's 250th birthday, December 16, 2020, with Beethoven's Ninth. The performance will feature a "super choir," made up of members of the Binghamton Downtown Singers, the Madrigal Choir of Binghamton, the Southern Tier Singers' Collective and several student choirs from Binghamton University.

The Philharmonic's concert schedule was only the beginning. "We started asking other arts organizations if they'd like to participate," said Brittany Hall, interviewed in July, shortly before she left her post as the Philharmonic's executive director to take a new position.

The arts community responded with plans to feature Beethoven in a broad range of performances and presentations. For example, the Tri-Cities Opera will include work by Beethoven in a concert called "We Shall Find Peace" on November 10, 2019. The dance troupe Galumph will perform to "Wellington's Victory Opus 91" at the Goodwill Theatre's Schor Family Firehouse Stage on September 28 and 29, 2019.



The Binghamton Community Orchestra will feature a different Beethoven overture at each of its concerts in the 2019-20 season.

And that's not all. "We have both the Roberson Museum and the Discovery Center doing special programming for children," said Hall. "The Summer Savoyards are doing a 'Who Killed Beethoven?' mystery dinner at the Bundy Museum."

The Philharmonic's conductor, Daniel Hege, will lead a Beethoven book club; the Philharmonic will screen several movies about Beethoven; and those so inclined can take a yoga class at the Broome County Forum while a cellist plays some of Beethoven's more contemplative pieces.

At several of the Philharmonic's performances, audiologist Rebecca Jacob will join Hege in a lecture on hearing loss and the effect of Beethoven's deafness on his symphonies. Also, the Southern Tier Independence Center will provide an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter to work onstage during all of the Philharmonic's Beethoven concerts.

A \$15,000 grant from the Community Foundation to the Philharmonic will support marketing efforts for the series. These will involve a great deal of community collaboration, as arts organizations share databases and advertise the whole series at each performance.

"Binghamton is very lucky with the number of arts organizations we have," Hall said. And, she added, cooperation and information sharing are crucial to the success of the arts in Binghamton.

## COMPETITIVE GRANTS: SPRING 2019

### *from the Community Fund and Special Funds*

**Binghamton Philharmonic** \$15,000 support for the "Beethoven Project" (*Broome*)

**Binghamton University Black Student Union** \$2,000 support for transportation of at-risk youth to campus visiting/mentoring program (*Broome*)

**Broome County Public Library** \$1,250 support to enhance adult programming at the library (*Broome*)

**Broome-Tioga BOCES** \$15,000 for support of a summer feeding program for students and families in need (*Broome/Tioga*)

**Center for Gender, Art, and Culture** \$8,000 for support of the "Northside Mural Arts Project" (*Broome*)

**Chenango River Theatre** \$15,000 for general operating support for their 2019 season (*Chenango*)

**Chenango United Way** \$15,000 support for the Greater Chenango Innovative Readiness Training Program, which brings 250 military service personnel

to Norwich to provide no-cost medical dental, vision and veterinary care to approximately 2,000 uninsured or underinsured residents (*Chenango*)

**Chenango Valley CSD** \$2,500 for support of early literacy/numeracy programs (*Broome*)

**Community Arts Organization of Oneonta** \$12,000 for support of HVAC improvements in their historic building (*Otsego*)

**Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome** \$5,000 support for STEMfest (*Broome*)

**Cornell Cooperative Extension-Delaware** \$4,050 to support scholarships to 27 Delaware County youth to attend 4-H summer camp (*Delaware*)

**Deposit Lumberjack Festival** \$1,500 for support of a "Gateway to the Catskills" tent at the festival (*Broome*)

**Edmeston CSD** \$5,000 to support moving their community garden outdoor classroom (*Chenango*)

**Empire State Special Needs Experience** \$2,900 partial award to support renovations to handicapped accessible showers (*multiple counties*)

**George F. Johnson Memorial Library** \$5,000 for support of a mobile hot spot loaning program (*Broome*)

**George P. and Susan Platt Cady Library** \$600 to support programming and purchase new materials for their collection (*Tioga*)

**Hancock Community Education Foundation** \$12,950 to support STEM education workshops/camps at the Robert W. Nichol Nature Preserve Center in Hancock (*Delaware*)

**Helping Celebrate Abilities** \$4,000 for support of a portable dual-ramp wheelchair scale (*Broome*)

**JC First Presbyterian Church** \$5,000 for support of their community outreach coordinator (*Broome*)

# Sing, Sang, Sung and Willie: What Libraries Can Do

by Roberta Scheer

For several years when I was a very young child, every three weeks my father would take my brother and me on a two-mile walk to the public library. I would grab the book *Sing, Sang, Sung and Willie*, by Peggy Gulick, off the children's shelf each time I spotted it. I believe this book helped to shape my life.

The book tells the story of three white pandas in the snowy woods who come upon a shy, young black bear. After teasing, questioning, and friendly play together, the pandas, convinced that the baby black bear is the same as they are but just covered with dirt, bring him home to be cleaned by their mother. Eventually, the bear's giant father finds his son and explains to the pandas that he is just a different type of bear, and they all become friends.

Books and libraries have been crucial to me ever since. From age ten through my early teens, we lived in a newly developed region of the city. I would walk four miles to the nearest library and spend summer afternoons reading modern plays in the adult fiction area. I had summer jobs in public libraries in my mid-teens

and studied ancient and foreign literatures in college and graduate school. As an adult, along with jobs that included occasional teaching, writing, and public relations, I worked in magazine publishing and book editing.

Libraries filled gaps and showed me different horizons, places that would otherwise have been foreign or unknown to me. They provided new ideas and varied concepts about how to live, how to stay healthy, how to be independent, how to relate to people and places. They helped me discover new interests. In sum, libraries were critical additions to both my education and my life.

In making site visits on behalf of the Community Foundation, I was surprised to learn that libraries in outlying communities are finding it difficult to survive. Rural communities seem to be ignoring the needs of small libraries and forgetting what libraries can do for residents and their children. Yet, rural communities in New York State today often lack affordable internet connections and access to computers in the home.

Modern libraries are not just places to store books. They still play an important role in educating children and adults, opening their eyes to aspects of life that they may not be conscious of or exposed to. And they are, or should be, equipped with modern electronics for both students and adults to be able to explore, seek out information, and expand their horizons.

Libraries are a vital source of both entertainment and education. They can adapt, becoming a flexible resource for their individual communities as well, and can help to explain and clarify changes in contemporary life and politics. They need only to find financial resources to update their facilities, enabling them to expand their connections with other libraries and the people they serve.

*Roberta Scheer Melville is a member of the Leadership Committee of the Community Foundation's Women's Fund. This article was inspired by some of her recent site visits on behalf of the Foundation. (Pictured below: George P. and Susan Platt Cady Library and Harris Memorial Library)*



**Kopernik Observatory and Science Education Center** \$15,000 to support roof repairs (*Broome*)

**Mary Wilcox Memorial Library** \$608 to support the digitalization of the historic *Whitney Point Register* newspaper (*Broome*)

**New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health** \$15,000 to support mini-grant programs for farmers needing financial assistance to improve safety on their farms (*Delaware/Otsego*)

**New York Council of Non-Profits** \$15,000 for support of the Southern Tier Capacity Building program (*multiple counties*)

**Southern Tier Zoological Society** \$15,000 support for enhancements to the red panda, arctic fox, and two-toed sloth exhibits (*Broome*)

**The Place-Norwich** \$5,000 for support of the Chenango Youth Philanthropy Council (*Chenango*)

**Tioga Center CSD** \$5,000 in support of their summer program (*Tioga*)

**Tioga County Rural Ministry** \$3,000 support for personal care items for the food pantry (*Tioga*)

**Town of Richford** \$500 support for community concerts (*Tioga*)

**Town of Vestal Museum** \$900 support for the annual Haudenosaunee Festival (*Broome*)

**Unatego CSD** \$9,150 support for the Backpack Feeding Program to reduce food insecurity for needy students/families (*Delaware/Otsego*)

**United Way of Delaware/Otsego** \$5,000 for support of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library early literacy program in Walton (*Delaware*)

**Valleyview Elementary School** \$2,000 for support of a sensory wall and seating (*Otsego*)

**Wilson Children's Center** \$12,800 support for operating expenses anticipating their move to Deposit Central School (*Broome*)

**Total: \$235,708**



*The Community Foundation for South Central New York serves Broome, Chenango, Delaware, Otsego and Tioga counties.*

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## Grants Support Broader Internet Access

It's unfortunate, but the digital divide is not dead. Even people who own computers, smart phones or similar devices don't always have access to reliable internet connections. That means they miss out on opportunities the web provide — for education, job opportunities, social engagement, entertainment and more.

They might also miss the chance to be counted in the next U.S. Census. For 2020, the Census Bureau is encouraging (although not requiring) people to complete census forms on line. The areas where it's been hardest to count people in the past also tend to be areas that lack broadband. An undercount in New York State could mean that our communities receive less federal aid in the future, and that we could lose some of our representation in Congress.

The Community Foundation can't solve the census challenge, but we do our part to close the digital divide, often through grants to libraries. Especially in smaller communities, many residents rely on libraries for internet access, using the public computers there, or using the building's wi-fi with their own devices. Local libraries often use our grants to upgrade their computers or buy more systems.

One recent grant of \$5,000 to Endicott's George F. Johnson Memorial Library takes the commitment to digital equity a step further. The library is using the money to buy 15 to 20 mobile hot spots, devices that patrons can borrow for a week at a time. The library subscribes to a wireless service plan that links the hot spots to the internet.

With a mobile hot spot, a library patron can apply for jobs on line, do business with government agencies or perform any number of other activities, anytime and anywhere, says Kenneth Roman, the library's young adult and reference librarian and technology center manager.

The day the library introduced the hot spots, the first in line to check one out was a woman who is starting a home-based business. "She comes to the library every day and uses the computer to access information on ways to start her business," Roman says. "She was very happy that she could work from home." Another patron, currently looking for a job, is trying to bolster her computer skills. "She took one home so she could learn some internet basics by taking free classes on line."

Libraries are trying to meet the ever-changing demands of the digital age, Roman says. "We hope that these mobile hot spots will help shrink the digital gap, and people will be able to use them to better their lives."