

Niskayuna Community CONNECTIONS



A newsletter of the Niskayuna Community Foundation

Spring 2020

Celebrating 20 Years of Caring for Our Community

Grant Supports Early Literacy

**NCF
Impact**
2000-2020



\$350k
244 GRANTS
88 Organizations



\$79k
SCHOLARSHIPS
83 Students



\$80k
AWARDS
32 Teachers

The Niskayuna Community Foundation is an affiliate of the Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region.
c/o Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region
2 Tower Place, Albany, NY 12203 • 518-446-9638

Craig School reading specialist, Kim Prettyman and librarian, Suzy Sogoian were awarded a \$2,200 grant from NCF to create the Craig School Alpha-Bags to support Craig's early literacy needs in kindergarten. Mastery of early literacy skills is essential for success in reading and at school.



Erin Perry and daughter Hannah with an Alpha-Bag

These "grab and go" bags help meet the needs of students who require additional work with vocabulary and language structure through storybook reading, rhyming, and letter/sound knowledge. Parents have a clear set of directions that guide them through various activities utilizing different learning modalities. Each bag contains a variety of culturally diverse and language-rich books that focus on each letter of the alphabet. Evidence suggests that the number of books at home is related to a child's reading ability.

According to parent Sarah Atodolka, "The Alpha-bags are invaluable in helping our kindergartner, Matthias and his first-grade brother get more exposure and practice with the letters and their sounds. The Alpha-bags are multisensory and utilize a variety of mediums to help the boys actively engage and enjoy their learning experience."

She continued, "Alpha-bags bring our boys fun and interactive ways to review letters and their sounds. I've seen great improvement in knowledge and confidence in Matthias since using the Alpha-bags. He seems to really like them and even asks for them when he gets home from school".

Six year-old kindergartner Lina Maynard is enjoying the bags as much as Matthias, "They're awesome. They're cool. I love them!" ❖



... enhancing the quality of life in Niskayuna through organized philanthropy.

President's Message

As I write this President's message, we are all dealing with an unprecedented series of events affecting our everyday lives. In times of extraordinary adversity, it is truly important to remember what matters most in our lives – family and community.

The Niskayuna Community Foundation was founded twenty years ago and has served our community in many positive ways over time. Now as never before, we need to come together as a community for the benefit of our neighbors and families. With all of us looking out for each other, and supporting each other, we will come through this pandemic better and stronger than ever. The Niskayuna Community Foundation stands ready to support in every way and endeavor. We remain steadfast in our commitment to help meet the needs of our community as we have since 2000.

Reflecting on our twenty years of service, we are grateful to all of our donors who have supported our efforts to assist worthy organizations and programs. As even greater needs arise, both immediate and unforeseen, the continued generosity of our community is even more crucial. Please consider a gift to **NiskyCares** this year, our dedicated anniversary year campaign. Together we will face these challenges and emerge a stronger Niskayuna community. Stay safe and my best to all of you and your families.

Michael R. Breault

President, Niskayuna Community Foundation



of food for the weekend. Data shows that 15% of Niskayuna students qualify for free or reduced school breakfast and lunch. As the impact of the COVID-19 crisis unfolded in early spring, Nisky NOW added eight more families to

the program and expects the need will continue to grow.

"I get the bag for the kids," explained Cassandra. They just weren't getting enough, especially my high-schooler, it's like he's got a hollow leg." A typical Nisky NOW bag includes a pasta meal, soup, cereal, PB&J, bread, fruit, and snacks – plus, a gift card for milk and eggs. One family is especially excited about the bag because it means that, "Mommy will make us French toast this weekend!"

Nisky NOW was launched in 2014 by school social worker Jessica Brennan who witnessed the need when she served the district's five elementary

schools. The Niskayuna Community Foundation helped kick off the non-profit with a \$1,000 grant. Six families were the first recipients.

Today, Nisky NOW coordinates a network of volunteers who pickup food from the Regional Food Bank, stock the pantry, and pack and deliver bags for 68 families every weekend. Nisky NOW's support not only nourishes the body, it can also empower the spirit. "A woman told me that she found the courage to go back to work and school because knowing her neighbors supported her made her stronger," said Jessica. The nonprofit also responds to emergencies. "When we say Nisky NOW, we really mean now!" said Jessica. "When we got a call about a mom in the hospital with teenagers at home, we rushed a bag over, right away."

"Don't feel ashamed to ask for food, especially now", said Cassandra. "Everyone needs help every once in a while. Nisky NOW has been amazing!" ❖

Two young sisters race off the school bus and into the house. They're excited to discover the treats inside the large brown bag that's waiting for them every Friday.

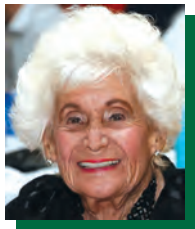
Their mother, Cassandra, is grateful that the free food delivery from Nisky NOW (Nutrition on Weekends) helps stretch the food budget for her family of six.

"The extra bag of food is a lifesaver. It gives me peace of mind. I don't feel like such a bad parent that I can't feed my kids enough."

Cassandra's family is among the 44 families of Niskayuna students and 24 St. Kateri school families struggling with food insecurity who receive a bag

IN MEMORIAM

The Niskayuna Community Foundation is honored to pay tribute to the memories of two NCF Honorary Board members lost to our community over the past year.



Jane Golub

Our lovely Jane Golub passed away on April 16, 2019. This iconic business and philanthropic leader supported NCF since its inception and served on the Honorary Board for 19 years. In her typical gracious style, Jane helped NCF celebrate our 15th

anniversary on our day of service by visiting community volunteers at most of the 15 not for profit sites. Tireless in her support, Jane spent the entire day encouraging the volunteers and learning more about the organizations in need. She was charming, as always, showing a sincere interest in everyone. She used humor and praise to make everyone feel valued for their work. That was Jane, always caring about others.

Jane was a beloved teacher at Hillside for 23 years until with her husband Neil, she brought the Anti-Defamation League's prejudice awareness and reduction program, "A World of Difference," to schools in the Capital Region. As a second career, she managed Price Chopper's in-house sampling program and in-store marketing programs. Despite her busy schedule, Jane served on innumerable boards, committees and capital campaigns for scores of organizations and helped to move them forward. She made an especially huge impact on the Schenectady Day Nursery, the Jewish National Fund, Ellis Medicine, and MiSci.

NCF is grateful to Jane for her countless contributions to our community. We miss her greatly, and to us, she is irreplaceable.

Community Service Scholarship

The Niskayuna Community Foundation awarded the 2019 Community Service Scholarship to Joanna Guo.

Joanna is a freshman at Northwestern University, majoring in Biology on the pre-med track. She achieved a 4.0 GPA for the first quarter. Her goal is to attend med school at Northwestern.

In high school, Joanna volunteered for Ingersoll Place as well as local hospitals.

She continues to volunteer and currently serves as the Community Service & Global Health Chair of the Northwestern Chapter of a health-oriented volunteer organization in the Chicago area. ❖



Joanna Guo, 2019 Community Service Scholarship Recipient



Walter Robb

Walt Robb was one of NCF's first dedicated advocates. Right after the foundation was established in 2000, Walt was quick to offer his help. He made a generous financial contribution, and co-hosted a dinner for 100 Niskayuna residents to introduce them to

NCF and personally encourage friends and neighbors to help their hometown. Walt served on the Honorary Board for 20 years. When NCF leadership reached out to him for sage advice, Walt always made time.

Walt was a highly-respected leader in business and philanthropy. He worked at GE for 42 years, leading their Medical Systems Division and then Global Research. He was known for his improvements to advanced imaging equipment, in particular his work on the computed tomography (CT) scanner and the magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machine. He was the owner of the Albany River Rats for 12 years and unless he was traveling, he attended every game. After retirement he started a consulting firm and helped new businesses get started. He was vibrant, sharp, and went to work every day until he died. A highlight of his life was climbing Kilimanjaro with his sons when he was 70.

Walt will be missed by the business community and the many organizations that he supported including Proctor's, Ellis Medicine and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Schenectady. And of course, NCF. He was a mentor to many!

NiskyCares Campaign

Show your community how much you care. Especially now, when the need is great.

Give to NCF's 20th anniversary campaign, **NiskyCares**.

In honor of NCF's 20th anniversary, consider a gift of \$20, \$200, \$2,000 or other multiple of 20.

Is "20" a magic number for you, your family, or friends this year? Give to celebrate a 20th birthday, wedding or work anniversary, reunion or 20 years living in Niskayuna. Or to honor a retirement, family milestone, or the passing of a beloved friend or relative.

We're grateful for the support we've received over the past 20 years and understand that things are difficult for all of us this year. If you have supported NCF in the past, please consider giving more. If you are a new donor, welcome to our family of generous NCF supporters. We appreciate gifts of all sizes.

Please help us to plan for a healthy and secure future for our community. Together, let's show our community that **NiskyCares**.



ANNUAL FUND – “The Power of Many”

Thank you to the donors who contributed to funds of the Niskayuna Community Foundation between October 1, 2018 and March 11, 2020. Funds included in this listing: NCF General Fund, NCF Scholarship Endowment Fund, NCF General Endowment Fund, NCF Alumni Fund, the Ball Family Fund, the Neil and Jane Golub Donor Advised Fund, Neil and Jane Golub Unrestricted Fund, the McAndrews Family Fund, the Sally S. and Edwards B. Murray Designated Fund, the Phillippe Family Fund.

Please accept our apologies if we have erred by misspelling or omitting your name in reproducing our donor list. Please contact us at 518-446-9638.

Pillars of the Community –

(Gifts of \$10,000+)

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Hershey Family Fund of CFGCR
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Please Send a Tax-Deductible Gift to NCF!

It's easy! We appreciate gifts of all sizes.

- Write a check to the Niskayuna Community Foundation, c/o Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region, 2 Tower Place, Albany, NY 12203.
- Give online at our website, www.niskayunacf.org
- Give a gift of appreciated stock.
- Establish a fund in your name with an initial gift of \$10,000.
- Set up a bequest in your will or arrange another type of planned gift.

Call 518-446-9638 for further details.

Our community answered the call to action when more than 1000 residents donated to NCF as Founding Members.

Gifts in Memory

The donations below represent gifts made to the Niskayuna Community Foundation in memory of special people by those who were touched by their lives.

- » **In Memory of Benjamin F. Bennett, former President of the Niskayuna Community Association, circa 1960**
Mr. Douglas M. Bennett
- » **In Memory of Tina Bianchi**
Vincent Bianchi
- » **In Memory of Anne Brown**
Dr. and Mrs. J. Briggs McAndrews
- » **In Memory of Michael Cascio**
Carol M. Cascio
- » **In Memory of Glen Davis U.S.M.A 1947, Felix Blanchard U.S.M.A. 1947**
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- » **In Memory of Robert Salamone**
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Mr. Lawrence A. Zinn
- » **In Memory of Lorraine Schultz**
Ms. Allison J. Schultz and
Mr. Clifford Rohde
- » **In Memory of Tina Shea**
Mr. Brian E. Shea
- » **In Memory of Eugene W. Zeltmann**
Susan Craig Zeltmann

Gifts in Honor

The donations below represent gifts made to funds of the Niskayuna Community Foundation in honor of special occasions in the lives of these people:

- » **In Honor of Josphe Baciewicz**
Thomas and Laura Favata
- » **In Honor of Niskayuna Scholars: Michael Dean, Evan Schnell, Luca Polsinelli and Leo Polsinelli**
Ms. Lynn Schnell
Mr. and Mrs. Vincent J. Polsinelli
- » **In Honor of the teachers, administrators and staff of the Niskayuna Central School District on behalf of Michael Dean and Even Schnell, NHS Class of 2019**
Ms. Lynn Schnell
Mr. and Mrs. Vincent J. Polsinelli

Apply for a Grant!

Would your 501c3 organization like to apply for a grant from NCF? We offer two grant programs – a rolling mini-grant program for requests up to \$2,000 and an annual grant-making program for requests up to \$10,000. Applications for the annual program are due April 14, 2021. Applications for mini-grants are accepted anytime.

For more information or to apply, please contact NCF at grants@niskayunacf.org.

Congratulations!

2019 NCF Scholarship Recipients

- **Veronica U. Forth**
School District 60th Anniversary Scholarship
- **Gina A. Voris**
School District 60th Anniversary Scholarship
- **Nafesah Ali**
Niskayuna High School Class of 1965 Scholarship
- **Brendan P. Codd**
College Promise Scholarship
- **Alexander G. Cherry**
Huether/Gillan Scholarship
- **Victor A. Schingo III**
Harriet Wall Memorial Scholarship
- **Joanna T. Guo**
Community Service Scholarship
- **James Potter**
Scott McAndrews Outward Bound

2019 Annual Grant Program Awards

Schenectady Inner City Ministry (SICM) \$999
To provide support for SICM's Emergency Food Program – Health Food Initiative for individuals who reside in the Town of Niskayuna.

National Interscholastic Cycling Assoc. \$1,000
To provide support for the Niskayuna School Mountain Biking Club to get more students involved and better equipped and to offer additional training.

Niskayuna High School PTO \$1,000
To provide funds for rental of facility for Junior After Prom Party, keeping students in a safe environment.

Niskayuna Soccer Club \$1,000
To fund the purchase of new corner flags for all soccer fields for its annual Soccer Tournament hosted in June.

Nisky NOW, Inc. \$1,000
To provide funding for the weekend nutrition program for Niskayuna families.

American Red Cross of NENY \$1,100
To support the Home Fire Preparedness Program which will partner with the Niskayuna Fire Department to install new smoke alarms in Niskayuna homes with a focus on seniors, lower income, and disabled residents.

Concerned for the Hungry \$1,800
To fund the cost of Thanksgiving food baskets for Niskayuna families.

Bus Stop Club, Inc. \$2,000
To provide funding toward a new Bus Stop Club site in Niskayuna which will offer a support program for children who have a sibling with either special needs or a chronic illness.

Glenclyff Elementary School \$2,000
To provide funds to create a Maker Space – an area where students can gather to create, invent, explore and discover by using and working with tools and materials.

Double H Hole in the Woods Ranch, Inc. \$2,100
To sponsor Niskayuna children with serious illness for a week at summer camp in the Adirondacks.

Schenectady JCC \$2,100
To be used toward funding the purchase and installation of sound proofing panels to reduce noise levels and create a better environment for the “Sensible Swimming” program for children with autism.

Family and Child Services of Schenectady \$2,500
To provide services for new low-income Niskayuna residents in the Homemaker Program.

Girls, Inc. \$2,500
To provide support for approximately 80 to 100 Niskayuna Middle School girls to attend a summit for STEM studies and careers in 2019 at the HVCC campus.

Special Olympics New York \$2,500
To provide funds to support expansion of local training programs for child and adult athletes with intellectual disabilities who live in the Niskayuna community.

Schenectady Curling Club \$3,000
To provide support toward upgrading the refrigeration system which will help continue its programs serving local residents and youth and also drawing many out-of-town visitors each year.

YWCA of Schenectady \$3,000
To fund programs and services provided to victims of domestic violence who are residents of the Town of Niskayuna.

Niskayuna Rowing Inc, dba Friends of Niskayuna Rowing \$7,500
To provide emergency funds to assist in purchasing and replacing rowing boats destroyed in a violent storm in July, 2019.

NCF IMPACT: Olympic Spirit

Courtney Chadwick lives by 15 words that he “takes to heart” – in or out of the pool.

The words comprise the Special Olympics athlete oath, “Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.”

The Niskayuna resident has been participating in Special Olympics New York for 18 years and is now a three-sport athlete year ‘round. Simply put, Special Olympics changed his life. “A lot of things I have in my life, I have because of Special Olympics NY,” Courtney explained. Like an associate’s degree as a Phi Theta Kappa from SCCC and a job he loves at the Niskayuna Town Library. “Special Olympics boosted my confidence tremendously. I never could have done it without them.”

Diagnosed with autism at the age of 16, Courtney struggled to interact and communicate with others. He was overwhelmed by noise and crowds. He often found refuge in his room. That began to change the day he jumped into the pool with Special Olympics NY.

“Special Olympics NY opened up a world of new possibilities and acceptance. I met people like me. I discovered individuals doing things I never thought of doing. I learned that I wasn’t the only one – that everyone has their quiriness, so we should all be accepting of each other.”

Courtney credits his Special Olympics NY training and competitions with helping him improve his social skills and manage his sensitivity to stimuli. With 15 state Summer Games under his



Courtney Chadwick races the breaststroke

belt, Courtney took his breaststroke to the national Special Olympics games in Seattle in 2018. First time on a plane, it was “a dream trip” – one of many growth experiences that affirmed how trying new things can be rewarding.

Courtney is grateful to NCF for supporting his training and competitions through several grants to Special Olympics NY since 2008. And, NCF couldn’t be prouder of this outstanding Niskayuna resident. ❖



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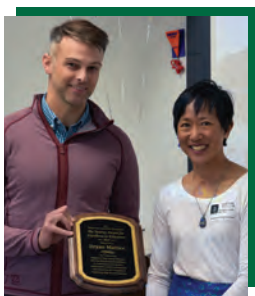
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Murray Award for Excellence in Education

In June 2019 Bryan Mattice, a Social Studies teacher and librarian Donna McAndrews, were awarded the 16th annual Murray Award. They were surprised in classrooms by a crowd of students, parents, teachers, NCF board members, and administrators with plaques and balloons. The educators will each receive \$2,500 toward their professional development.



Bryan Mattice with NCF board member Tina Lee

Bryan Mattice welcomes 9th graders to the high school by making his Global History class a memorable experience. Mr. Mattice fosters interest in world history with his enthusiasm and sense of humor. He encourages creativity with video projects and challenges students

to respect varying perspectives. Beyond the classroom, Mr. Mattice inspires confidence in leaders of Student Congress, and NED Talks (Niskayuna Education Discovery) to take on projects beyond their comfort zones.

Donna McAndrews, is an invaluable resource to all students and staff. Besides making the library a welcoming place for students, Ms. McAndrews leads a reading club, actively supports students in NED Talks, and launched the Academic Resource Center (ARC).

ARC provides peer-to-peer tutoring to benefit both students seeking help and the tutors who grow as instructors and mentors. Ms. McAndrews also



Donna McAndrews with NCF board member Tina Lee

teaches students how to conduct effective research and brainstorms with teachers on developing ideas for class projects.

A committee of students, parents and peers chose the recipients and NCF facilitated the selection process and award presentation. Criteria included outstanding classroom practices, growth potential, and a school presence that positively impacts students, colleagues and the community.

This annual award began in 2004 by Kathy Murray Crowe and Jeanne Murray Veasey, the daughters of Edwards and Sally Murray, to honor their parents' involvement in the formation of Niskayuna High School and their belief that high school educators would be the foundation of "uncompromising excellence" in education throughout the district. The award is also given in memory of Ms. Veasey, who has since passed away. ❖

NCF IMPACT: Senior iPads

Connected and confident. That's how senior citizens feel about using iPads at the Town of Niskayuna Senior Center.

"iPads are a great tool to access family and broaden their world. But seniors can feel excluded from the technology and afraid to try it because it's complicated and pricey," explained town Recreation Leader Lisa Stevens. To address those barriers, the Senior Center purchased 7 iPads and accessories with a 2018 \$2500 NCF grant. Lisa offers seniors free iPad classes each month.

Seniors also enjoy the Wii bowling video game at the Senior Center, supported by an NCF grant. "When we have an idea for our seniors, we think of Niskayuna Community Foundation," said Lisa.