

Invest in Maine

Nine
stories
of giving

Maine 
Community Foundation



Carry it forward.

Thinking about passing your values to your children or grandchildren through a family fund or supporting a long-time personal passion? You can designate children or other family members to help make decisions or you can identify a specific issue area for your grantmaking. We can also help direct funds after your lifetime to organizations working in your area(s) of interest.

Go local, regional, statewide.

You can provide resources to help address issues in Maine as they emerge over time. We can't always foresee what those issues will be, but we can always be ready to respond. You can also strengthen communities by supporting MaineCF's statewide grantmaking or one of our county and regional funds. For greater impact, your gift is pooled with others to support a wide range of nonprofits across Maine. Volunteer community leaders help us make the most of these grant dollars.

Give forever.

You can honor a loved one, a mentor, or a school and create a legacy of learning by establishing a scholarship fund that provides educational opportunities for present and future generations of Maine students, of all ages. Or you can support a specific nonprofit by providing permanent funding for its core mission and activities.

Invest in Maine.

Maine has a strong history of nurturing people who are independent, yet care for others in their communities and the larger world. Either during our lifetime or after, we can all contribute to improving the quality of life for fellow Mainers.

The nine stories offered here demonstrate that the inspiration to give comes from different sources – from a loved one, a special place, or a particular passion. These stories also highlight the foresight and vision of individuals who care about the future.

If your passion to give is here in Maine, we hope these stories will inspire you.



Kristen Lindquist and Paul Doiron

A County Bequest

Up a steep bank from the Megunticook River in Camden stands the modest home of writers Kristen Lindquist and Paul Doiron. A poet and naturalist, Kristen is the author of *Tourists in the Known World: New & Selected Poems*. Paul, former editor at *Down East*, writes the Mike Bowditch series of crime novels.

The two were born and raised in Maine. Having worked for nonprofits – Kristen as development director for Coastal Mountains Land Trust, Paul as head of Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance – they understand the role philanthropy can play in community-building.

Kristen's appreciation of that role grew through her involvement with MaineCF's Knox County Committee. "The volunteer advisors take their responsibility as grantmakers seriously," she notes, "and are aware of needs across the county." The committee's dedication influenced her and Paul's decision to set up a bequest that will go to the Knox County Fund.

Lindquist and Doiron, who love the place they call home, feel their bequest will help sustain and improve the quality of life in Knox County. "It's important that we make a bequest now, even though our estate is small," says Paul. "We hope it will be a lot larger years from now," adds Kristen, "but the point is: you don't have to be wealthy to be thinking about a legacy."



Kathryn Olmstead

Naming Her Passions

Much of Kathryn Olmstead's passion for Aroostook County lies in place, be it cross-country ski trails at the Nordic Heritage Ski Center in Presque Isle or the "magical" spot on I-95 near Oakfield where, when driving south, Mount Katahdin appears "dead ahead, then gradually sinks out of sight."

When Olmstead came across an invitation in MaineCF's annual report to "Name your passion, create a fund," she had just learned that major funding had ended for the Maine Winter Sports Center in Caribou, which had revitalized skiing as the sport of generations in Aroostook County.

Could she create a fund to help sustain momentum for those programs, activities, and events that have inspired countless kids (one of whom became an Olympian) to get out on the trails? Olmstead discussed the idea with a member of the MaineCF staff and "it was like lighting a fire." The idea became "a small fund with great potential." The Aroostook County Committee, on which she once served, will administer it.

Olmstead's fondest hope? That her Aroostook Winter Sports Fund will help continue work the Maine Winter Sports Center began: supporting public access to trails and facilities across northern Maine. Her philanthropy is focused on the future—and the great outdoors of Aroostook County.



Ben Fuller

Investing in the Future

A legacy gift often reflects an individual's circumstance and passion. For Benjamin A. G. Fuller of Cushing, Maine, a family inheritance led him to establish a charitable gift annuity at the Maine Community Foundation – and support his passion for maritime history.

The annuity will provide income to Ben and his wife, Leslie, during their lifetime, and then become a charitable endowment for cultural programs in Maine. He considers this endowment a way of giving back to his family's home state.

Ben is an avid sailor, kayaker, and aficionado of wooden boats, holds a Coast Guard license, and has taught seamanship courses at the WoodenBoat School. He has also been involved in the Traditional Small Craft Association.

As the Richard Saltonstall, Jr. Curator at the Penobscot Marine Museum in Searsport, he knows how difficult it can be to find permanent support for a cultural institution. "It's supporting something that does not necessarily have immediate measurable payback like human services," he notes.

Setting up a bequest, Ben explains, represents a decision "to do something the results of which you won't see." You might say it takes special faith to invest in the future.



Nancy Brain

The Value of Giving Back

Nancy Brain came from a “basic, working, middle-class family.” That all changed in 1993 when her father, the first person in his family to finish college, sold his managed-dental care company for much more than her family ever anticipated.

David Brain wanted to give back – and he had an idea that would help shape his family and their communities for generations to come. He placed half the profits into the Frances Hollis Brain Foundation, named for his wife and her family. Nancy and her sister, Diane, would help him manage it.

“My father wanted us to be philanthropic and find the value of giving back,” Nancy explains. “He also wanted us to be engaged in the work so we could have family conversations about something that was important.”

Recently the family converted its private foundation into donor-advised family funds at MaineCF and community foundations in Georgia and Kentucky. In Maine, Nancy has worked with other funders to support and advocate for early childhood issues, education, oral health, and refugees and immigrants.

“Now I feel like what I’m doing can make a difference,” says Nancy. “There’s a lot of satisfaction in that: it has colored the way I look at the world and at my community and has made me really love this community and care for it.”



The Holt Family

Keeping the Connections

Patricia Holt and her husband Nicholas (1927-2006) moved from New York City to Ellsworth in the early 1960s. Nick was born in Cape Elizabeth and came to Ellsworth in 1958 to design the Knowlton Elementary School. The couple decided to settle and raise their three daughters there.

Patty volunteered at Maine Coast Memorial Hospital and Ellsworth High School, which her daughters attended. Nick helped found Action Opportunities, a social services agency that is now a part of Downeast Community Partners. The Holts were especially passionate about American Field Service, now called AFS International, the global youth exchange program. They helped establish a chapter at the high school and encouraged their daughters to spend time abroad.

In 1998, Patty set up a donor-advised fund at the Maine Community Foundation; “I had a lot and I wanted to give more away,” she recalls. She also wished to be anonymous at the time. The community foundation helped identify new programs for her to support – and the daughters became active advisors of the fund.

Tina, Becky, and Tori are grateful for their downeast roots and the opportunity to know what’s happening locally, regionally, and statewide. Patty, who now lives in Portland in the winter, looks forward to summer days at her home in Hancock where she reconnects with her girls and continues a legacy of giving back.



Betty Robinson

Backing a Vision

A sociologist by education and training, Betty Robinson first came to Maine to attend Colby College. She learned about MaineCF when she served as academic partner on a social capital study the foundation conducted with political scientist Robert Putnam in Lewiston. She joined the MaineCF board in 2004.

“Working with MaineCF provides the opportunity to learn more about having a real impact versus simply feeling that a donation is the right thing to do,” Betty explains. Her experience on the board helped her better understand the broader philanthropic picture in Maine.

Betty also met diverse people whose perspectives enhanced her giving choices. One of those individuals is Julia Sleeper, executive director and co-founder of Tree Street Youth in Lewiston. Sleeper was her graduate student at USM’s Lewiston-Auburn College and made Betty aware of the challenges that refugee families face. “Julia’s vision of a place to support youth and their families was just what the Lewiston-Auburn community needed,” she recalls thinking. She became chair of the Tree Street Youth board and chaired its first capital campaign.

Betty set up a donor-advised fund at MaineCF. In 2016, she decided to give the fund balance to Tree Street Youth. “The diversity that immigrant youth bring to our communities enriches the social and economic fabric of our lives,” she says. “I personally get great pleasure from seeing youth move forward.”



Kenneth and Roberta Axelson

Generosity across Generations

Kenneth and Roberta were committed to community. That commitment stretched back to their days in New York City. Roberta was involved with the Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center. Ken, who was president and CFO of J.C. Penney, shared his financial acumen with organizations ranging from the New York Public Library to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The Axelsons and their four sons, Kenneth, Jr., Jerrold, Stephen, and John Christian, first came to Maine in the 1960s when two of the boys attended summer camp. Avid sailors, the couple eventually moved to the midcoast, first to a saltwater farm in Waldoboro and then to Samoset Point in Rockport. They were active with the Rockland Public Library and the Farnsworth Museum and supported many local organizations.

In 1997, the Axelsons set up a donor-advised fund at the Maine Community Foundation with their sons as successor advisors. Only after their parents' passing did the four sons realize the extent of their philanthropy—and benefits of the fund. “The fund provides a disciplined structure for us to help fulfill our parents’ philanthropic passions,” Steve notes. “In many ways,” son Chris explains, “our donor-advised fund became a part of our lives, something we knew about, paid attention to, and learned from.”

Built on generosity and a passion for community, the Axelsons’ legacy of giving lives on across the generations.



Mary Bayer and Leon Bresloff

Lives of Caring

Mary Bayer and Leon Bresloff are registered nurses who found their separate ways from Chicago to western Maine in 1971. They lived in Temple for more than 40 years before retiring to Fayette. They met while Leon was taking care of his first wife, who was dying from Hodgkin's lymphoma, and connected through a shared belief in the importance of a respectful death in a home environment. They explored ideas of patient-centered health care, ultimately building several long-term care facilities in Maine.

When the couple decided to sell their share of the nursing facilities, their advisor suggested they contact the Maine Community Foundation. They established a donor-advised fund, through which they support their interests, including local theater, public broadcasting, human rights, health, education, and the environment.

Mary and Leon believe in entrepreneurial giving. "We look at projects that need a little help to get started, and then can get on by themselves," says Leon. They have always understood that organizations require money to get their work done.

"The Maine Community Foundation tracks what we're doing and gives us feedback," Mary notes. Trust in MaineCF led to their decision to leave any balance in their donor-advised fund to the foundation's discretionary fund after their deaths. It's a partnership they appreciate.

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Assistance
from the

for Maine's Future



Preserving Land
Current
Generations



Cathy Sweetser and Jock Moore

Expanding Access to Education

Cathy Sweetser and Jock Moore met in Greenville in the mid-1970s. Jock knew the region through family; Cathy was drawn to the outdoors. When they moved there for good, each pursued a variety of jobs – carpentry, plowing snow, setting up a sewing business, teaching skiing, making maple syrup – to stay in the place they loved.

“Greenville is a wonderful community,” Cathy notes, “neighbor helping neighbor, both young and old.” She and Jock felt welcomed and accepted. Over time they felt a growing desire to return the favor.

The couple became active with area nonprofits, including the Moosehead Historical Society, Red Eagle Foundation, Moosehead Marine Museum, and the Nature Resource Education Center. Cathy served on MaineCF’s Piscataquis County Committee. Working with this group of local leaders opened her eyes to the many different organizations that serve the needs of Piscataquis communities.

In 2015 they established the SweetMoore Scholarship Fund at MaineCF. “We want to help people of all ages be able to expand their knowledge of the trades,” says Jock, “from auto mechanics to welding.” Adds Cathy, “We have worked hard to learn new things and we want to help others get a jumpstart in their trade of choice with educated instructors.” The scholarship will help expand access to education for students of all ages – and help fulfill the couple’s vision of a prosperous community, county, and world.



Your decision.

There are many ways to invest in Maine, and finding one that fits with who you are and what you care about is part of the process. Here are some questions for you to consider:

- What inspires you about the future of Maine?
- Do you have a favorite gift you have given?
If so, what made it special?
- What values do you want to pass along to the next generation?
- Do you have a desire to honor a family member or close friend?
- Would you like to become more deeply engaged in an issue or organization that you support?

PHOTO CREDITS

Nancy Brain, Holt family, Betty Robinson: Thalassa Raasch/MaineCF

Kristen Lindquist and Paul Doiron: Jim Dugan

Kenneth and Roberta Axelson: courtesy Axelson family

Benjamin Fuller: Kevin Anderson

Kathryn Olmstead: Paul Cyr

Cathy Sweetser and Jock Moore: John Morrell

Mary Bayer and Leon Bresloff: Jane Davis

WRITERS

Donna Gold, Carl Little, Andrea Nemitz

Talk with others.

After thinking about what's important to you, talk with others. Whenever possible, involve your family, friends, and professional advisors in the discussion to ensure that you find the best fit for your personal and financial goals. If investing in Maine is your passion, we also hope you'll talk with us about how we can support your charitable giving.

Please contact us at:

Maine Community Foundation

245 Main Street

Ellsworth, ME 04605

50 Monument Square, 6th Floor

Portland, ME 04101

1-877-700-6800

info@mainecf.org

mainecf.org



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