

MAINE TIES

NEWS FROM THE MAINE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

SPRING 2021



RALLYING

Heroes among us
keep communities strong

A Time of Hardship and Heroes



Dear Friends,

To say the past 12 months have been challenging would be an understatement. The COVID-19 pandemic tested Maine people in ways we never imagined, and we saw just how fragile our safety nets could be. Yet communities rallied, neighbors cared for one another, and people everywhere exhibited kindness, compassion, and resilience. Stories in this newsletter honor some of those efforts.

The staff and volunteers of Maine's nonprofit organizations were heroes. Stretched thin by demands, they saw needs grow month after month. Food, safe shelter, and child care were immediate concerns, and health and social services became even more essential. Generous donors contributed over \$3.7 million to MaineCF's COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund and we proactively distributed grants to nonprofit organizations throughout Maine to be used for the most pressing needs. Another \$4 million in grants was distributed from MaineCF donor-advised funds directly to nonprofit organizations for critical COVID-19 services.

As social distancing became the watchword, the pandemic provided an immediate incentive to enhance broadband connections. MaineCF worked with partners, including Maine government, to provide resources to help distribute devices and technical assistance to people and to create new internet hot spots. The lack of affordable, dependable high-speed connections continues to pose a hardship for many of our state's most vulnerable residents. Children, families, and older people risk falling behind in education, suffering social isolation, or



not being able to register for COVID-19 vaccinations.

The pandemic also highlighted the disparate impact of the coronavirus on Black, Indigenous, and other people of color and all low-income individuals in Maine. Persistent disparities in access to health care, housing, and income made them far more susceptible to the virus. These disparities will not disappear when the pandemic does. Racial equity and economic justice demand continued attention and action.

Thank you for supporting the Maine Community Foundation’s efforts to help with these and other critical challenges to improve the quality of life for all Maine people. As I

announced early this year, I will retire from MaineCF this summer. Leading this organization has been a great honor and privilege. After I leave, I look forward to joining you as a supporting partner of the foundation and its important mission.

Thank you again and best wishes,

Steven Rowe, President and CEO
Maine Community Foundation

A free pick-your-own vegetable garden and walking trails are just two features of Milbridge Commons Wellness Park, a collaboration between Women for Healthy Rural Living and Maine Coast Heritage Trust. Photo Susan Jordan Bennett

On the cover: Seedlings at the Kittery Land Trust’s Nooney Farm. Photo Jill Brady

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The Maine Community Foundation works with donors and other partners to improve the quality of life for all Maine people. MaineCF is committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion, and ensuring Maine is a safe, welcoming, and accepting place for everyone. MaineCF’s investment expertise supports our donors’ effective and strategic giving. We offer a range of giving options tailored to fit each donor’s financial means and charitable objectives. Our staff provides personalized service, community leadership, and a deep understanding of local issues. [Learn more at mainecf.org.](https://mainecf.org)

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Many Hands and a Big Vision

Kittery Land Trust's Nooney Farm depends on volunteers and an ambitious community spirit.

A garden in Kittery is providing a place where people can do good during a dark time.

“When the pandemic struck last spring, it felt like we were missing out on connecting with our community,” recalls Lisa Linehan, executive director of the Kittery Land Trust. “Our events were canceled, we couldn’t work with students, so how could we lift our neighbors?”

One idea: start a garden where the trust could grow fresh produce to help address food insecurity. Jackie Nooney, who owns the 30-acre farm across from Shapleigh School, agreed to let KLT plant a “giving garden” on her property. Not only

did Nooney share the land, she tilled it, gave the trust access to the barn, and provided tools and equipment – all, says Linehan, “in the spirit of community.”

The idea took off, with an immediate outpouring of support from townsfolk. “They had seeds and seedlings, compost, tomato stakes, and fencing to donate,” Linehan says. Fifty volunteers, including many new ones, signed up to water, weed, tend, and harvest.

By season’s end, the garden produced more than 1,750 pounds of fresh produce, donated to local organizations that provide food for neighbors. That success piqued KLT’s

Conserving and Connecting

Maine Community Foundation launched the Conservation for All and Maine Land Protection grant programs last year to support organizations and projects that provide access to the outdoors. Conservation for All provides grants to organizations and projects that connect people in Maine to its land and water. Maine Land Protection awards grants for land acquisition or conservation easement projects. Both programs are designed to support people and communities that face more barriers to outdoor experiences or have traditionally had fewer opportunities to engage in conservation activities.

Here is a sampling of the funds' first grants:

- **Downeast Lakes Land Trust, Grand Lake Stream**, to acquire 2,025 acres in Lakeville to expand the Downeast Lakes Community Forest for outdoor recreation, sustainable forestry, wildlife habitat, and shoreline conservation
- **Hearty Roots, Bristol**, to connect children from low-income homes to nature through outdoor adventure programming
- **Maine Farmland Trust, Belfast**, to purchase an easement at Liberation Farms, the Somali Bantu Community Association's cooperative farm in Lewiston
- **Portland Parks Conservancy**, to develop a plan for more use of shoreline, trails, woods, and fields at Riverton Trolley Park
- **Somerset Woods Trustees, Skowhegan**, to increase public use of Somerset Woods Trustees conservation lands in partnership with Main Street Skowhegan
- **Waterville Community Land Trust**, to acquire Kennebec River shoreline, provide access for a loop trail, and protect historic Franco-American farms.



interest in purchasing the former dairy farm, already on the market. The trust closed on the property in December 2020. Nooney gave them owner financing with multiple years to pay it off. They're nearly halfway there, bolstered by a \$32,000 grant from MaineCF's Maine Land Protection fund.

The trust envisions a full complement of community benefits from the property: a public walking trail, working farmland, and school programming that will connect Kittery students to nature and farming.

This isn't the trust's only ambitious project since its founding in 1987. Spurred by citizens who sought to balance growth with protection of places that make Kittery beautiful and vibrant, KLT has conserved nearly 1,000 acres of the town's woodlands, wetlands, farmland, and coastline.

"In the middle of a pandemic, at a challenging time for many in our community, it was so clear that many hands and a big vision were already making great things happen here," says board member Melissa Paly. Nooney Farm expands the trust's work in a new direction rooted in its mission: to save land and build community.

Left: Annie Teegarden of Kittery tends seedlings at Nooney Farm, where she has leased a plot of land and greenhouse space to launch Four Patch Farm, a new business that will sell vegetables and cut flowers. Photo Jill Brady

Above: Last summer, volunteers at Nooney Farm in Kittery grew and donated more than 1,750 pounds of fresh produce for local organizations. Photo courtesy Kittery Land Trust

For more information about these grant programs, contact Senior Program Officer Maggie Drummond-Bahl at (877) 700-6800 or by e-mail at mbahl@mainecf.org.

'How do I get a shot?'

Careful listening, quick thinking keep Aroostook's older adults connected during the pandemic.

Imagine spending your older years in rural Maine, where good friends, independence, and unmatched landscapes define the way life should be. It's a vision that sustains many older adults who prize self-sufficiency and take pride in the place they call home.

This winter challenged even the most resourceful older Mainers as COVID-19 reached all corners of our state. At the same time, food prices rose and many who worked part time to make ends meet lost employment or left their jobs to stay safe. Social isolation became an additional health threat, especially in rural areas, when precautions curtailed casual trips to the grocery store or coffee with friends.

MaineCF realized early in the pandemic that support to organizations with older clients would be a key part of grantmaking from its COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund. As the months progressed, grantmaking first addressed food, then social isolation through technology, and finally access to vaccinations.

MaineCF relied on Area Agencies on Aging and their networks of staff and volunteers to deploy grants, along with local food pantries that already were addressing ongoing food insecurity among Maine's oldest residents. Many pandemic volunteers were older too, not uncommon in a state where more than 20 percent of residents are 65-plus.

In Aroostook County, Maine's largest with one-quarter of residents over 65, the pandemic brought both extraordinary challenges and solutions with potential to redefine everyday life when the health crisis subsides. The Aroostook Agency on Aging in Presque Isle, one of MaineCF's COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund grantees, relied on quick thinking, an imaginative staff, and many volunteers to safely deliver services to people who once were reluctant to step forward.

"Getting to isolated, rural people with limited resources is very challenging," says Director of Grantmaking Laura Lee, who has led the community foundation's strategic initiative on older adults since 2017. "A lot of people feel that there's somebody else who is more deserving or needs it more than they do."

mainecf.org

Food emerged as one of the largest needs as the Aroostook agency's home-delivered meals more than doubled from last winter to this year. When food distribution sites with congregate dining closed, it shifted daily hot meals to weekly delivery of frozen dinners. A large freezer, purchased with grant funding, allowed wider delivery to remote areas from a mini-distribution site.

Home delivery and Meals on Wheels also offered an opportunity to reach more older people. The Aroostook Agency on Aging included flyers about safe practices and resources during COVID-19: lists of grocery stores that could deliver and information about pharmacies and social isolation.

"A large proportion of the population is socially isolated, so we continued to get calls from young people from out of state or down in Portland whose parents live up here and they were isolated and lonely," said Judy Anderson, the agency's director of community and volunteer services. "Social isolation is very real up here. It was an issue before COVID, and it still remains an issue."

The Aroostook agency's Friendly Visitor program to keep loneliness at bay transitioned to friendly phone calls or some virtual chats. Face-to-face wellness programs went virtual as well, but some Zoom classes didn't draw students.

"When you build it they don't always come – they don't have a computer and even if they could, they might not have the internet services to make it a quality experience," says Anderson, who oversees classes via her satellite dish – she lives in Woodland, just houses away from the end of broadband service.

That gap in broadband and technology became even more apparent as Aroostook residents heard good news that vaccinations were approved. But even before vaccines arrived, older residents inundated the Aroostook agency with calls asking how they could register online.

"We had hundreds of hours donated unselfishly – volunteers were coming in and helping their friends and neighbors



Teresa Cyr of Fort Fairfield receives her first dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at Northern Maine Community College in Presque Isle. Photo courtesy Northern Light Health

navigate the schedule to get those vaccines,” says Anderson. Aroostook soon became one of the top counties for completed vaccinations. By the time spring arrived, the Aroostook Agency on Aging had taken more than 2,400 calls and helped 1,851 individuals set up appointments. A MaineCF grant helped the Aroostook Agency on Aging coordinate staff efforts.

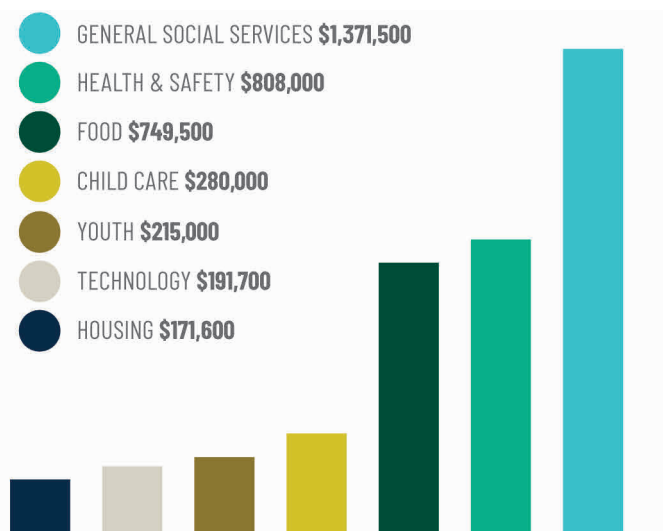
In March the agency received MaineCF funding for loaner tablets they loaded with all the apps older clients would need to connect remotely, supplemented with instructional handouts and phone assistance from tech-savvy volunteers. Anderson foresees a time when her tai chi classes will once again be filled – in person and also remotely for those who couldn’t attend pre-COVID because they lived too far away.

“It’s been a silver lining of the pandemic that has really put a spotlight on some critical needs but also some gaps in services,” says Anderson. “Post-COVID we will be in person, we’ll have virtual, and we’ll have hybrid.”

They’ll also have each other. “People in rural areas like to know their neighbors and hug their neighbors,” says Anderson. “They’re going to want to go back to that.”

COVID-19 Grant Funding

MaineCF has awarded \$3,787,300 from its COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund since March 2020. Funding to organizations that assist older adults is included in several categories. **View the full list of grants at mainecf.org.**





MaineTransNet banner designed by Suzanna Lasker and produced by ARRT!, the Artists' Rapid Response Team. Photo courtesy ARRT!

Creating Safe Spaces

In pandemic times, LGBTQ+ organizations in Maine adapt with help from MaineCF's Equity Fund.

A peer-based service for transgender Mainers has provided a lifeline during months of COVID-19 social isolation. The well-timed expansion of a digital support system meant MaineTransNet could adapt more quickly to ensure members weren't alone, says Executive Director Quinn Gormley.

One component that proved critical: a social organizing network that provides a safe gathering place for trans Mainers of all ages. MaineTransNet set up two digital platforms, one for membership and a second for the youth program. The latter network, active 24/7, provides a range of programs, many of them suggested by teen members. A Dungeons and Dragons Club, board games, and a weekly movie night are among the offerings, "to say nothing of being able to hop on to group voice chats so that youth members can support each other directly," says Gormley.

For a community that already felt the effects of isolation, the new and anonymous network provides a protected space for transitioned and transitioning youth. A number of members say access to the server has allowed them to feel less alone,

to get support when they're in crisis. Says one youth member, "I've made a few really awesome friends who support me and don't judge me for being uncertain with my journey through self-discovery and self-love." Gormley believes that the online network is one reason the rate of suicide has dropped in Maine's trans community this year.

SAGE Maine, an advocacy and service organization for older Maine LGBTQ+ adults, also adapted to the shutdown. After merging with EqualityMaine last year, the group switched to a completely virtual and phone-driven program. Highlights of pandemic offerings include an intergenerational online Thanksgiving; an "Empowerment Self-Defense" course to practice setting boundaries, learn physical self-defense skills, and build community; and "SAGE Maine Calling," where trained volunteers called hundreds of SAGE Maine community members across the state to check in to see if they needed any help accessing support and to offer weekly return calls to help combat social isolation.

Lin LaRoche, a SAGE Maine community member, recalls how few friends she had when she moved back to Bangor a



Photos of buttons courtesy OUT Maine

few years ago. “A local pastor suggested I stop by the SAGE booth at the Bangor Pride Festival and it totally changed my life.” Friendships and connections have made a huge difference, especially during the pandemic, says LaRoche.

MaineTransNet and **EqualityMaine** received support in 2020 from MaineCF’s Equity Fund, which is advised by a group of individuals committed to strengthening LGBTQ+ organizations and supporting initiatives that work toward inclusive, diverse, prejudice-free communities for all people in Maine. Among their goals: to reduce health and race-based disparities or barriers to opportunities, reduce violence and/or harassment, and promote respect and understanding.

“As long as there are LGBTQ+ folks in Maine doing work to uplift the LGBTQ+ community, at any scale, there is a place for the Equity Fund to provide support for that work,” says Equity Fund advisor Olivia Orr. She hopes the fund will continue to increase in the future: “It would be amazing to see the funding grow alongside the number of LGBTQ+ folks in Maine doing amazing work for their communities.”

To learn more about the Equity Fund and how you can contribute to its mission, contact Senior Program Officer Gloria Aponte C. at gaponteclarke@mainecf.org or (207) 761-2440.

An ‘LGBTQ Community Chest’

Brenda Buchanan, an early advisor to MaineCF’s Equity Fund, reflects on its history – and continued relevance – as it marks 25 years of grantmaking.

When I joined the Equity Fund Advisory Committee in the spring of 2003, I was drawn in by [MaineCF board member] David Becker’s vision to create and sustain what he termed an “LGBTQ community chest.” The Maine LGBTQ+ community had, of necessity, built effective political organizations to advocate for non-discrimination laws and sound AIDS policies. The Equity Fund, with its focus on building the capacity of community groups to help LGBTQ+ folks live rich, connected lives, was an essential counterbalance to that political work.

Through grants for a wide variety of initiatives – including support groups for LGBTQ+ youth and elders, innovative arts programming, and efforts to improve health care access – the Equity Fund aims to ease isolation in the most rural parts of the state and help make the lives of LGBTQ+ people across Maine better and safer. On the agenda for one of my first advisory committee meetings I jotted in the margin a note that still resonates: “We make gifts no other Maine funder would make.” That was true then, and remains largely true today, especially as small nonprofits struggle with pandemic-related challenges.

Over the years, through nearly 200 grants to nonprofit organizations in all 16 counties, the Equity Fund has invested more than \$1.2 million in our community. The need is still there, and so is David’s brilliant vision.

Attorney and crime novelist Brenda Buchanan lives in Portland.

Friends of Maine

Leonard and Renee Minsky's lifelong connections to music and theater inspire their philanthropy.

Thanks to a couple's passion for the arts, youngsters in Downeast Maine have opportunities to explore their creativity through paper marbling, puppet shows, music, and more – now and into the future.

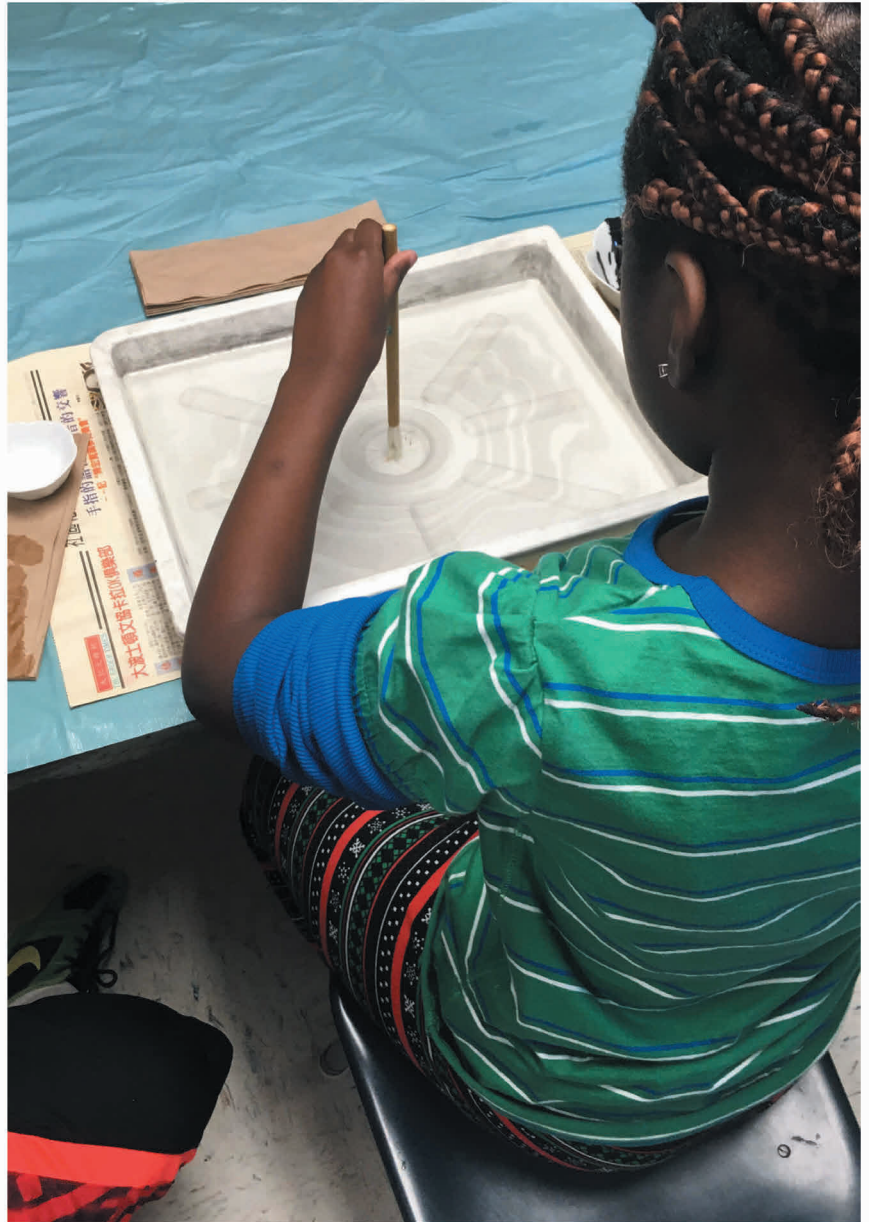
Renee Minsky and her husband, former MaineCF board member Leonard Minsky, established their Fund for Arts Education in 2006 with hopes it could fill in where public school funding fell short. Since then, the fund has awarded 76 grants totaling just over \$65,000. The grants support artists who work with third- through fifth-grade students and their teachers in public schools in Penobscot and Washington counties.

The Minskys' love for the arts began early in life. "Leonard grew up with music and played the trumpet from about age nine up until just about a year ago when everything shut down very suddenly and the band he was playing with stopped performing," says Renee.

Renee's parents were always "doing something" with theater. "In an era when people were designing lavish rec rooms in their basements," she recalls, "we had a full-scale theater, complete with footlights, velvet curtains, and a dressing room that on occasion served as a laundry room."

After moving to Bangor from Worcester, Massachusetts, Renee set up a children's theater program in the public schools, her focus for the next 30-plus years. "That experience gave me insight to what the arts were doing for children," she says.

"I've always believed that education should be something more than vocational training," says Leonard. He sees the arts as a vital way to help create a whole person.



One Minsky-funded program, "The Zen of Japanese Paper Marbling," brought Belfast-based artist-educator Bridget Matros to five Bangor schools where she taught 276 third-graders Suminagashi, the art of paper marbling.

"This no-fail technique gave students confidence in their abilities to create," says Fruit Street School art teacher Wendy Libby. She recalled one special needs student who

overcame his reluctance to try art and created a beautiful piece that made him proud.

“It’s beneficial for students to meet someone beside their art teacher who has pursued art as a profession,” says Libby. Adds Kelly Ellis, a music teacher at Mary Snow and Fairmount schools in Bangor, “This funding was critical to exposing students to live performances of music, from classical to rhythms of the African New World, that they might not hear at home.”

The Minskys’ daughter Marilyn Minsky Melton is the fund’s successor advisor. Like her parents she has been involved with the arts for much of her life, as a professional singer and a teacher. She taught at the East End Community School in Portland where she was recognized for developing the Glee Club.

Leonard and Renee have also established the Minsky Charitable Fund, which will be endowed through their will. MaineCF will continue to grow the fund and make grants to organizations the couple supported during their lifetimes. “You can’t legislate from the grave,” Leonard says. “You want to have confidence that your wishes are going to be followed.”



*Leonard and Renee Minsky.
Courtesy Northern Light Foundation*

Left: A student at the Fruit Street School in Bangor learns the art of paper marbling. Photo Wendy Libby

Planned Giving

*Thinking about the future?
We’re here to help.*

It’s hard to predict the most pressing needs of tomorrow – and where your charitable dollars could make the most impact. Years of respecting donors’ wishes by combining flexibility and permanence make the Maine Community Foundation an ideal place to leave a planned gift through your will.

Your planning can start with a spark of an idea you can craft through conversation with MaineCF staff.

Here are some ways you can partner with MaineCF to benefit Maine:

- provide unrestricted funds to address future needs in Maine
- create a permanent fund to provide annual grants to one or more nonprofits
- set up a donor-advised fund for your children so they can make grants
- establish a scholarship fund
- support a geographic region or specific interest area such as youth, the environment, or the arts.

The Maine Community Foundation is like a charitable savings account for Maine. We make grants based on your philanthropic wishes and our knowledge of Maine communities.

If you have already named the foundation in your will, please let us know. We’d be honored to have you become a Friend of Maine.

For a private consultation, please call (207) 761-2440 or email info@mainecf.org. To learn more about planned giving at the foundation, visit mainecf.org.

VOLUNTEER
PROFILE



*Chris Kuhni at Milbridge Commons Wellness Park,
where visitors will find gardens and a view of
Narraguagus Bay. Photo Ashley Conti*

Home For Good

Milbridge finds new ways to thrive with Chris Kuhni, a MaineCF advisor for Washington County.

Chris Kuhni can sum up her life in Washington County with just five words: “I am nothing but lucky.”

Her lucky streak started with a recruiter’s call in 1994. What, she asked, could tempt Kuhni to leave her job at a Pennsylvania women’s clinic? “Find me a job on the coast of Maine,” she replied on a lark.

“You can choose to vacation here for two weeks every year or you can choose to live here – the most beautiful place on earth,” Kuhni’s future boss told her. “That struck me. He was right,” Kuhni says. “I never looked back. This is where I belong.”

Kuhni, a women’s health nurse practitioner, moved to Milbridge and embraced community in the state she’d always viewed as Vacationland. In 2004 she founded the nonprofit Women’s Health Resource Library (WHRL), renamed Women for Healthy Rural Living in 2020.

She also has served several terms on MaineCF’s Washington County Committee, a volunteer team that reviews grant proposals, recommends grant awards, and helps build philanthropic resources. The Washington County Fund, launched with support from three local banks, celebrates its 35th anniversary this year.

WHRL focused its efforts on prevention, what Kuhni calls “prescriptions people need to thrive”: exercise classes, yoga, weight-loss support, parent-baby play groups, and wellness workshops. But over time, staff realized workshops on health topics often weren’t reaching their target audience in Washington County, which has Maine’s highest poverty rate.

“The most vulnerable women weren’t attending; they were working two jobs, or had no child care, no gas for the car. Or no car,” says Kuhni. “We couldn’t expect women struggling to put food on the table to come to a talk on heart health.”

The Milbridge center’s solution started from the ground up: volunteer-driven community gardens, with bilingual veggie identification signs, where folks could pick their organic vegetables for free, find fresh air, and connect with neighbors. Incredible Edible Milbridge, launched in 2013, also taught

home gardening – lessons that gave residents an edge in recent months as economic uncertainty led to food insecurity. “Having established gardens already geared up for expansion meant we were ready right out of the gate when COVID-19 arrived,” says Kuhni. “Our gardens were more important than ever.” Wyman’s of Maine, the Milbridge-based blueberry producer, reached out early in the pandemic with one more step toward sustainability: funds for a greenhouse that will go up this spring. A MaineCF donor pitched in for site work costs.

“We were thrilled,” says Kuhni. “With a greenhouse, we can grow our own seedlings, extend our growing season, and have a weatherproof space for community gardening classes. It seems like the natural progression of Incredible Edible Milbridge.”

Exercise, a second priority of WHRL’s healthy living focus, included visions of a community park with walking trails and wide-open spaces. In 2015, the small organization found just the right spot with views of Narraguagus Bay – and just the right partner in Maine Coast Heritage Trust, which purchased the 4.6-acre plot. Milbridge Commons Wellness Park, opened in 2018, continues to grow with more community gardens and plans for a playground.

Kuhni also sees firsthand, through her clinical work at Milbridge Medical Center, the many challenges her neighbors face. She believes meeting basic needs, providing education of all types, and creating equitable economic opportunities are key.

Over the past two decades, Kuhni has seen Washington County become a uniquely diverse place to live with an influx of Latinx families.

“There are tremendous opportunities when communities can embrace and celebrate their diversity,” says Kuhni. “Beyond just being invited, don’t most of us want to feel welcomed, valued, and feel we have a voice? We all want to belong. I want that for everyone.”

PROFESSIONAL
ADVISOR

Begin the Discussion Early

*Waterville financial advisor Brian Bernatchez
advocates for lifetime charitable giving.*

*Brian and Amy Bernatchez at their
home on McGrath Pond in Belgrade.*

mainecf.org

MaineCF: What sort of conversations do you have about charitable giving with your clients?

Brian Bernatchez: I've always tried to get folks who have an interest in charitable giving to think about giving either as a percentage of income during their lifetimes or as a percentage of net worth through their estate plan. I recently had a call with a couple in their mid-60s who saw a big financial change when a parent passed away. We created a plan with a certain percentage of their annual income for them, a percentage to give to extended family, and a percentage for charity. Sometimes when you just talk about a number or specific dollar value, it can seem overwhelming, so breaking it down to a percentage can be helpful.

Most of our clients are past the years of accumulation and have reached a point where they don't worry about running out of money. They want to focus more on their family legacy. I encourage them to accelerate their giving during retirement so they can realize some of the benefit and enjoyment of making a difference for others while they are alive. Giving can and should be fun!

MaineCF: What changes have you seen in clients' approaches to giving in the past year?

Bernatchez: Everybody has more time to think about these things and they're focusing on impact.

A lot of times clients will hesitate to give because they don't know which organization does what they want to support. This is where MaineCF's unique set of skills can help. You provide solid risk-adjusted, long-term investment returns from an extraordinary team of professionals who are passionate about living in Maine. You also have a great deal of knowledge about Maine communities and the nonprofit organizations that address their needs.

The other thing that's changed in the last year is the urgency for giving. Just as MaineCF made an immediate and impressive pivot to proactively focus on food insecurities, shelter, and other needs because of the shutdown, a lot of clients shifted their giving as well.

MaineCF: You are also involved in our new Kennebec County Fund – you and your company have been very generous. Can you tell us why?

Bernatchez: When I started getting involved with MaineCF, I was shocked that Kennebec County was the only county without a fund. Amy and I are Kennebec County products who benefited greatly from the generosity of others while growing up and raising a family here. Our entire family went to schools in Kennebec County. I went to college in Kennebec County. So, if we're going to focus on anything, at least initially, it's going to be on getting the Kennebec County Fund up to speed and building momentum right in our backyard.

MaineCF: Do you think the Kennebec County Fund will benefit professional advisors and if so, how?

Bernatchez: Mostly through awareness and education about what MaineCF has to offer advisors and their clients. Professional advisors who want to add value to their relationship with their clients can use the foundation as an important tool in their toolbox. Introduction to the Kennebec County Fund will help professional advisors be more aware of MaineCF and what it can do for the local community and also understand what a resource it is for them.

Giving has in some ways become more complex with tax law changes and people want to be more connected to charities and causes that matter most to them. Once everything opens up again, MaineCF will invite all Kennebec County professional advisors to an awareness event that was delayed due to COVID-19.

MaineCF: Under what circumstances have you found it helpful to turn to MaineCF as a resource?

Bernatchez: I reach out to MaineCF when a client knows there is a need in a community and they want to help, but they do not know how to best meet the need. MaineCF's knowledge can help guide them and me.

For myself as a professional advisor, I reach out to MaineCF when I have a question or need a refresher about charitable giving strategies and what might work for a particular client situation. Nobody needs to know everything anymore; we just need to know who to ask.

MaineCF: Are there any particular conversations you have with younger clients about charitable giving?

Bernatchez: If I could wave a magic wand and start my career over working with people in their 30s to 50s, I would put the importance of lifetime charitable giving more at the centerpiece. Our firm tries to include it in conversations we have with all clients whether they're 30 or 90. It is important to begin the discussion early because if clients get into the habit of being philanthropic in their 20s and 30s, they realize it really doesn't end up costing them anything. They get it all back with the happiness and fulfillment that comes from making a difference in their community.

Brian Bernatchez is the founder and managing director of Golden Pond Wealth Management in Waterville. A 1988 graduate of Thomas College, he received his Certified Financial Planner (CFP) designation in 1997. He currently serves on the boards of Thomas College, Maine Community Foundation, Alford Youth and Community Center Founders Club, and the Jobs for Maine Graduates investment advisory committee.

It's Time to Speak Up

Last June the Maine Community Foundation joined thousands of others in Maine and across the United States in condemning the murder of George Floyd. As this issue of *Maine Ties* goes to press, Maine people join others around the country to condemn increasing hate crimes against Asian Americans. These attacks further amplify how racism threatens the lives of people of color and the well-being of our communities.

Today more than 75,000 people across every county in Maine identify as other than white. These neighbors contribute to Maine's economy and enrich our communities. Yet they still confront race-based barriers every day: lower incomes, shorter lives, and other obstacles that stand in the way of a high quality of life.

We can't undo the past, but we can work together to dismantle policies and systems that perpetuate racism. In the months since George Floyd's tragic death and subsequent protests around the country, contributions from donors, foundations, and local businesses to MaineCF's Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Fund and Racial Equity Strategic Goal Fund increased dramatically.

Thanks in part to these contributions, MaineCF offers mentorship and development training for BIPOC leaders who are building racial equity through their BIPOC-led nonprofit



organizations. We also awarded economic opportunity grants to increase access to employment, education, and professional and business development. Additionally, more than 120 influential white leaders from across Maine have joined us for peer-to-peer programs where they learn about and reflect on the role of white privilege in their work, personal lives, and communities.

Please join us as we stand with many others to condemn racism and violence and support those who have been targeted. No one should live in fear of hate and violence. Everyone deserves the best quality of life that Maine can offer.

A mural in Portland by artists Ryan Adams, Jason McDonald, and Mike Rich memorializes George Floyd. Photo Gregory Rec/Portland Press Herald