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Cover: Carol Slocum volunteers at a New Hampshire Food Bank mobile food pantry in Keene, NH

THE NEW HAMPSHIRE CHARITABLE FOUNDATION is dedicated to making New Hampshire a more just, sustainable and vibrant community where everyone can thrive. As New Hampshire's statewide community foundation, we are the place where generosity meets the dedication and ingenuity of nonprofits and the potential of New Hampshire students. Since 1962, thousands of people have entrusted their charitable resources to the Foundation, creating a perpetual source of philanthropic capital. That generosity makes it possible for the Foundation to award more than \$70 million in grants and scholarships every year and collaborate and lead on high-impact initiatives.

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NONPROFITS ARE THE BACKBONE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

By Richard Ober, president and CEO



“The New Hampshire Charitable Foundation will be here, a committed partner to nonprofits and the public sector and a philanthropic resource for the state’s most generous people.”

A former journalist I know who has spent decades observing, researching and writing about New Hampshire said recently: “This whole state would fall apart if it were not for nonprofits.”

Nonprofit organizations are the backbone of New Hampshire.

From delivering meals on wheels to providing home visiting services for families with new babies to providing health care, childcare and a lifeline to people fleeing domestic violence, nonprofits do critical work every single day that makes life better for every single person in New Hampshire.

But, as we report in this issue (p. 6), the same nonprofits that have steadily provided services for decades, the ones that saw us all through the perils of a global pandemic, are faced now with a mind-boggling set of new challenges: “federal funding freezes, shifting requirements for federal grants, cuts to federal departments that do everything from data collection

to civil rights enforcement, a lingering government shutdown, rising costs from tariffs, political polarization and attempts to undermine trust in the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors.”

“In the last nine months, nonprofit organizations have faced challenges unlike any before,” National Council of Nonprofits President and CEO Diane Yentel told a national audience recently. “Challenges that, if we weren’t living through them, we wouldn’t believe.”

Nonprofits, of course, keep showing up and getting the job done to the very best of their ability.

New Hampshire has a long history of nonprofits acting in partnership with government to provide services that advance the common good. But the scale of current disruption cannot be overstated — to organizations doing everything from feeding the hungry (p. 16) to building belonging, community and joy through the arts (p. 12). Those serving the most vulnerable face even more complex challenges (p. 6). And nonprofits are bracing for increased future need as federal cuts to nutrition and health care programs roll out.

As always, New Hampshire’s most generous people carry on in the proud

tradition of making our community better by supporting nonprofits (p. 14) and professional advisors play key roles in helping them do so (p. 9).

That generosity — from everyone who can offer it, at every level — will be absolutely critical in helping nonprofits see our communities through this era of challenge.

And, as always, the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation will be here, a committed partner to nonprofits and the public sector and a philanthropic resource for the state’s most generous people.

I started working in New Hampshire nonprofits more than 40 years ago and have had the honor of leading this Foundation for the past 15. As I transition toward my planned retirement next year (p. 4) I have never had greater confidence in our Foundation’s ability to fulfill its promise to the people of New Hampshire, especially in times like these. The search for my successor is underway, and I know that our board will find the right leader for the future, one who will be unwavering in making New Hampshire a community where everyone can thrive. Onward. ■



Left to right: Emmett Soldati, Jamie Burnett and Tom Burack

FOUNDATION WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The Charitable Foundation has welcomed three new members to its board of directors. Tom Burack, of Contoocook, is an attorney and consultant with Sheehan Phinney, where he has focused for more than 25 years on environmental, energy, real estate and nonprofit governance matters. Jamie Burnett, of Concord, is president of Sight

Line, a public affairs and government relations company based in Concord. And Emmett Soldati, of Somersworth, is an activist and community leader and the owner of Totally Tea + Coffee (formerly Teatotaller). Emmett returns to the board after a planned leave of absence. ■

RICHARD OBER TO RETIRE IN 2026

Richard Ober, president and CEO of the Charitable Foundation, has announced plans to retire by June of 2026. Ober has led the Foundation since 2010, guiding it through a period of significant growth and impact. Under his leadership, assets grew from \$465 million to \$1.2 billion, and more than \$660 million in grants and scholarships were awarded to nonprofits and students across New Hampshire.

Ober championed long-term initiatives including New Hampshire Tomorrow and the Foundation's current Together We Thrive strategy, which is focused on equity, racial justice and economic security. He also led the Foundation's pandemic response, including raising and

distributing more than \$11 million in support to nonprofits and working in partnership to administer the state's Nonprofit Emergency Relief Fund — helping to direct an additional \$40 million in federal aid to nonprofits.

The Foundation's board has appointed a search committee, led by Chair Joe Morone, and engaged national firm Kittleman & Associates to assist in selecting the next president and CEO. Ober will remain in his role until a successor is in place.

"Serving this remarkable Foundation and New Hampshire communities has been the most rewarding experience of my professional life," Ober said. ■



Courtesy photo

A WATERSHED IMPROVED

Established in 1997 through a settlement agreement involving a hydroelectric dam owner, environmental organizations, and government agencies, the Upper Connecticut River Mitigation and Enhancement Fund at the Charitable Foundation has awarded nearly \$25 million to 47 organizations working to protect and enhance the Connecticut River watershed. With final grants awarded this year, partners recently gathered to reflect on the fund's legacy and celebrate the collaborative efforts that made this work possible. The Foundation is proud to have stewarded this fund and supported lasting impact across the region. ■

HONORING JENNIFER PERKINS



Jennifer Mitchell Perkins, a longtime Charitable Foundation staff member and beloved friend, passed away in August.

Jen loved her work and colleagues at the Charitable Foundation — and the entire

Foundation family. Jen retired from the Foundation in April after being on medical leave for about a year. In her final days, she wrote to Foundation staff to "keep up the good fight and keep taking care of those who need it most."

"Jen brought incredible wisdom, humility, passion, kindness and a keen sense of fairness to everything she did," said Foundation President and CEO Richard Ober. "She shaped policies, practices and culture here that will be her legacy for years to come."

In her memory, family and friends established the 408J Fund at the Foundation to help those most in need in New Hampshire. Memorial donations can be made at <https://give.nhcf.org/408JFund>. ■

KUDOS



Courtesy photo

Friends Forever International presented former Foundation board member **Mary Johanna Brown** with its Eileen D. Foley Award, which is given annually to a New Hampshire citizen who helps make the world a better place.



Courtesy photo

At its Annual Awards Celebration, **New Futures** honored several health champions, including **New Hampshire's Regional Public Health Networks**, longtime strategic partners of the Foundation, and **Katie Lyon-Pingree** (center), a community advocate and Foundation fundholder.



Courtesy photo

Melanie Plenda (right), executive director of the **Granite State News Collaborative**, received the Quill & Ink Award from the **Nackey S. Loeb School of Communications** at its annual First Amendment Awards event. The award recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to educating the public about the First Amendment.

NONPROFITS WORK TO MEET A DEEPLY CHALLENGING MOMENT

There are many ways to help. 'Whatever you can do, do it.'

Volunteers load food for families at a New Hampshire Food Bank mobile food pantry in Keene, NH

The New Hampshire Coalition against Domestic and Sexual Violence works hard to create stability.

People — mostly women and children — arrive at shelters and crisis centers across the state in moments of grave instability and danger.

"Our core mission is to put in place resources that will help provide stability for a very vulnerable population," said Coalition Executive Director Lyn Schollett.

The Coalition and the network of shelters and crisis centers that it supports provide critical, 24/7 services to thousands of people. And two-thirds of the funding for those services has traditionally come from federal government sources.

"Our state funders [agencies that administer federal dollars] are doing everything they can to keep the doors open and the money flowing," Lyn said. "But the instability in Washington, DC is creating instability for New Hampshire nonprofits — which, in turn, creates instability for our most vulnerable populations. And it is changing all the time. It is a full-time job keeping up with the changes right now."

An unprecedented moment

The Coalition is not alone — either in helping people in times of serious need or in finding the work to be more difficult than ever. Nonprofits are struggling with funding freezes, shifting requirements for federal grants, cuts to federal departments that do everything from data collection

to civil rights enforcement, lingering effects of a government shutdown, rising costs from tariffs, political polarization and attempts to undermine trust in the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors.

"There is a general feeling that nonprofits are under attack," said Kathleen Reardon, CEO of the New Hampshire Center for Nonprofits. "One of the bedrock assumptions of the nonprofit sector is that we partner effectively with government to deliver services in a cost-effective way to help communities — and that bedrock assumption is being disrupted."

The effects are being felt in every area of nonprofit work — from the arts to the environment, health care and more. And the effects are perhaps felt most acutely by the most vulnerable people in our communities.

New Hampshire Hunger Solutions works to make sure everyone has enough to eat. Tens of thousands of Granite Staters rely on federal programs that help families and children get nutritious foods. One of those programs, SNAP, was cut by \$186 billion over 10 years in the recent federal budget reconciliation bill. And that food assistance was abruptly interrupted for families during the government shutdown.

"These programs are a safety net for all of us," said Hunger Solutions Executive Director Laura Milliken. "So many of us are one illness, one parent in need of care or one job loss away from needing help."

News of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids coupled

"The coming storm on the horizon for low-income people is really bad."

— Laura Milliken, executive director of NH Hunger Solutions

with anti-immigrant rhetoric has many Latino Granite Staters on edge. The majority of Latino people in New Hampshire are here legally, and the largest percentage are U.S. citizens originally from Puerto Rico.

"It's so, so sad and terrifying," said Karina Bonilla of the Centro Latino de New Hampshire. "People don't want to drive cars or go to school events or soccer games or the grocery store or even speak Spanish in public."

Rev. Heidi Carrington Heath, who leads New Hampshire Outright, also acknowledged this "terrifying moment" for LGBTQ+ youth and their families, who are threatened by legislation, negative rhetoric and a rise in hate crimes across the country. This is a time to remain steadfast on their behalf, she said — and to engage in the "sacred imagination" to envision a better future.

"I refuse, stubbornly, to give up on us as a state," Heidi said. "One of my most deeply held beliefs is that there is no such thing as 'other people's children.' We are at our best when we understand we are one community. We all have a responsibility to make this a place where all of our kids and everyone in our community can thrive. It's both that hard and that simple."

Readying for the future

Nonprofits and people they serve are bracing for what comes next.

Cuts to long-standing federal programs that help people get nutritious food and health care are expected to result in a cascade of increased need. The rollbacks come at a time when the median household

income in New Hampshire is already insufficient to cover the basic costs of living, according to the New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute, and family resource centers are reporting increased need for emergency funds — as families struggle to afford basics like heat and transportation.

"The coming storm on the horizon for low-income people is really bad," said Laura, of Hunger Solutions.

Proposed cuts to health care programs threaten to push thousands of Granite Staters off Medicaid insurance. At the same time, premiums through the Affordable Care Act are rising as tax credits expire that had helped people afford health care. Rural hospitals and community health centers that rely on Medicaid funds will be hit hard by these changes — imperiling care to all of their patients.

The Good Neighbor Health Clinic provides free care to about 3,000 people in the Upper Valley region every year. Executive Director Elizabeth Franson said that need had already increased — and the clinic is bracing for demand for services to double in January because of changes to Medicaid.

Factors that exacerbate financial stress have dangerous ripple effects.

"Economic instability is the biggest barrier to victims leaving a violent relationship," Lyn said. "It all connects."

Responding to the moment, looking to the future

Many people are stepping in to help. As nonprofits continue to deliver on

[Continued, p. 8]



“Individual donors continuing their support is really important. That donation makes a huge, meaningful statement and will help organizations get through this. Whatever you can do, do it.”

– Kathleen Reardon, CEO of the New Hampshire Center for Nonprofits

their critical missions under extreme stress and in the face of immense need, they need help more than ever.

“Individual donors continuing their support is really important,” said Kathleen, of the Center for Nonprofits.

“That donation makes a huge, meaningful statement and will help organizations get through this. Whatever you can do, do it.”

How the Foundation is helping

- Charitable Foundation staff are in daily contact both with nonprofit partners to understand emerging need, and with generous donors eager to help with current challenges.
- The Foundation allocated an additional \$3 million for grants to nonprofits in 2025 above and beyond usual grantmaking. Using operating reserves, the Foundation granted \$2 million in emergency support to nonprofits whose work advances health, wellness, safety and belonging for vulnerable people and families, and put an additional \$1 million raised from donors into our Community Grants program.
- By supporting emergency efforts to get food to New Hampshire families affected by the government shutdown.

- In partnership with the Center for Nonprofits, the Foundation has established a free, top-quality employee assistance program for small nonprofits. Nonprofit leaders have reported that staff mental health and burnout are among their greatest concerns. The EAP program provides free, 24/7 support.
 - By remaining focused on making grants for general operating support, for two or more years when possible, and streamlining reporting requirements to help nonprofits remain focused on their core work.
 - By working with donors who are stepping in to help. Foundation staff members are closely following issues as they evolve and helping generous people to meet community need — both responding to donor inquiries and reaching out to donors with giving opportunities. We are encouraging holders of donor-advised funds to recommend generous grants. Donors have responded enthusiastically, combining grants from donor-advised funds to help people in need of hunger relief, reproductive rights, safety from domestic violence, housing and much more.
- “Nonprofits are doing everything

from meeting the most basic needs to working for policy and program changes that help thousands of people. They remain fiercely dedicated to their missions, even in the face of very serious challenges,” said Simon Delekta, vice president for community impact at the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation.

“We will continue to do what we can to help the most vulnerable among us.”

Nonprofits rely on generosity to meet their critical missions.

“We are working with so many generous Granite Staters who understand that nonprofits do great work and who are committed to making a difference,” said Melinda Mosier, vice president for donor engagement and philanthropy services at the Foundation.

While nonprofit leaders acknowledge the overwhelming nature of the moment, they also reiterate that every bit of support matters.

“There is power in our communities to be able to think forward,” said Elizabeth, of the Good Neighbor Health Clinic. “It is so powerful to know that you have the authority to make a difference.” ■

Foundation fundholders can contact our donor services department at 1-800-464-6641, ext. 3, for information about how to help nonprofits meet critical needs.

GENEROSITY IN PRACTICE

Christine Anderson is an estate planning attorney at Ansell & Anderson in Bedford. She spoke with the Foundation's Lois Shea about how she helps generous people incorporate philanthropy into their estate plans — and their lives.

How do you incorporate talking about philanthropy into your practice?

Before the first meeting with a client, we send a confidential client data form that is intended to elicit a lot of the information that we need to draft documents for them. Included is a question about whether they have intentions to benefit charitable organizations. Most of the time, it will come up that way. But we also have philanthropic families where we represent the second, third and fourth generations, so we have been working with the family for decades.

You worked with a client who created the donor-advised Dragonfly Fund at the Foundation to address mental health, basic needs, the environment, health care access and civic engagement. How did that come together?

When the client expressed interest in having a portion of their trust pass to a charitable organization, I suggested that they might want to research and consider the Charitable Foundation as a resource. I connected the client

with a Foundation philanthropy advisor. After a series of meetings with the philanthropy advisor, the client was able to refine their charitable giving intentions into the Dragonfly Fund. One of the benefits of working with the Foundation is that the advisors are knowledgeable and patient. They help a donor to fine-tune their giving intentions and connect them with nonprofits in the state with missions that resonate with the donor.

You often work with folks who have run businesses and are interested in giving back.

Sometimes people who have substantial wealth and want to give to charity need assistance. They have spent their whole lives building their business and being successful and then they think, ‘Huh, what am I going to do with this money?’ I have had more than a few of these folks who are not sure what the options are, and the Charitable Foundation is the perfect place for them. Foundation philanthropy advisors sit with them and help. Maybe their interest is cancer

research or helping New Americans — and you draw out from them enough detail and help connect them with organizations that need funding. The Charitable Foundation is just like the biggest library of information about nonprofit organizations in New Hampshire.

Do you have many clients interested in setting up private foundations?

Thirty years ago, it was much more common. For many years we have not done much of that because most people can create a donor-advised fund or a scholarship fund though the Foundation and achieve most of their goals without the various compliance requirements of a private foundation.

What would you suggest to fellow advisors about discussing philanthropy with clients?

First, it has to come from the clients. And then it is really listening, like all the work we do — understanding why the clients want to do what they want to do. And there is no better conduit than the Charitable Foundation for a client who is interested in charitable giving. ■

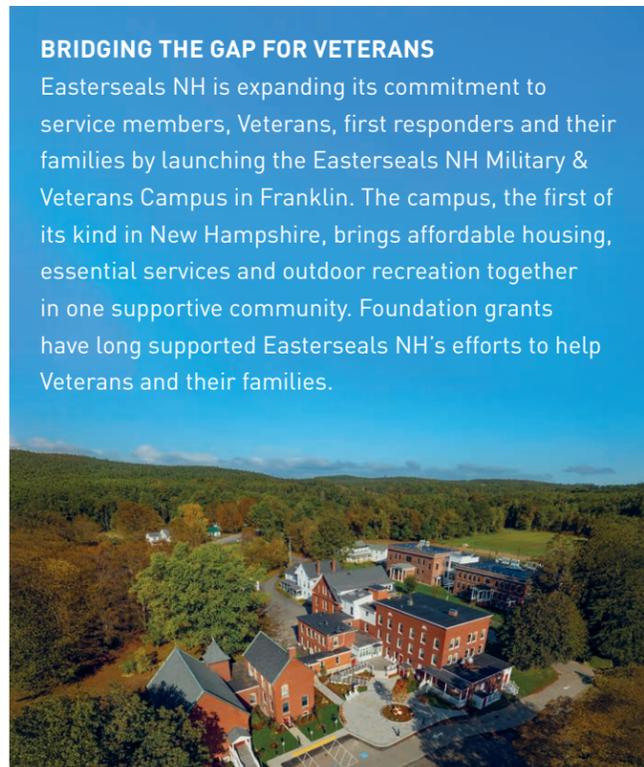
IN COMMUNITY

People working together to make New Hampshire a community where everyone can thrive.



INVESTING IN LOCAL ARTISTS

Exeter-based artist, sculptor and art educator Jihye Han was awarded the 2025 Piscataqua Region Artist Advancement Grant. The \$25,000 award helps to cultivate the region's arts community, boost artists' careers and keep them living and working in the area. It is one of the largest unrestricted grants awarded to a single artist in the country.



BRIDGING THE GAP FOR VETERANS

Easterseals NH is expanding its commitment to service members, Veterans, first responders and their families by launching the Easterseals NH Military & Veterans Campus in Franklin. The campus, the first of its kind in New Hampshire, brings affordable housing, essential services and outdoor recreation together in one supportive community. Foundation grants have long supported Easterseals NH's efforts to help Veterans and their families.



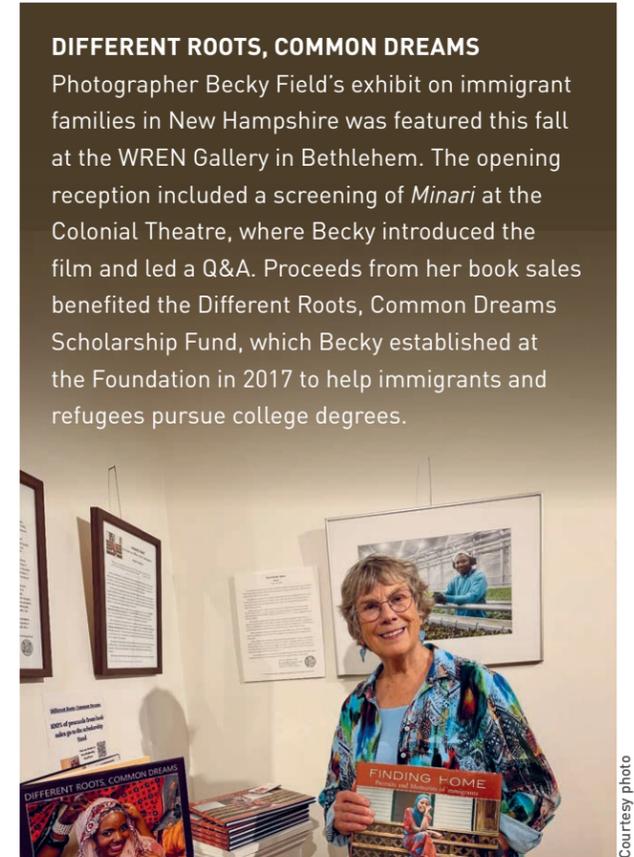
TRAILS FOR EVERYONE

The Upper Valley Trails Alliance believes that access to nature is essential to the well-being of our communities and is working to make the outdoors accessible to all, no matter the season or a person's physical ability. Grants from donor-advised funds are supporting education, outreach and stewardship that help to preserve the natural beauty of the region and connect people to nature and each other.



HELPING FAMILIES REBUILD AND THRIVE

Foundation grants are supporting Margurite's Place in Nashua, which helps families achieve safety, stability and independence. For more than three decades, the organization has provided safe housing, quality childcare, and an array of supports to more than 1,000 families. After a fivefold increase in applications for transitional housing, Marguerite's Place is preparing to expand its capacity to help families experiencing or at risk of homelessness.



DIFFERENT ROOTS, COMMON DREAMS

Photographer Becky Field's exhibit on immigrant families in New Hampshire was featured this fall at the WREN Gallery in Bethlehem. The opening reception included a screening of *Minari* at the Colonial Theatre, where Becky introduced the film and led a Q&A. Proceeds from her book sales benefited the Different Roots, Common Dreams Scholarship Fund, which Becky established at the Foundation in 2017 to help immigrants and refugees pursue college degrees.



CULTIVATING CONNECTIONS

Monadnock Worksource empowers people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to become more connected to their communities through a range of supports and services, including community-based social, recreational, educational, employment and volunteer opportunities. Foundation donor-advised fund grants have supported Monadnock Worksource in building environments where every person is accepted, respected and valued.



COLLABORATING WITH NORTH COUNTRY EDUCATORS

Public school educators (beginning second from left) Laura Read, Kaden Bailey, April Wallace and Tabitha Paquette were named 2025 Louise Tillotson Teaching Fellows and are now helping to redesign the Fellowship for greater impact in the future (Phoebe Backler and Bill Church also pictured). The Fellowship was established in 2006 by Louise Tillotson to celebrate excellence in public school teaching and retain great teachers in the North Country.



A THEATRE THAT IS THE HEART OF A COMMUNITY

The Colonial Theatre brings the 'story of America' to the North Country

Local teens film in downtown Bethlehem as part of the White Mountain Cinema Camp, a two-week filmmaking intensive hosted by the historic Colonial Theatre

A heavy, wet snow fell overnight on Bethlehem, NH. As the weight of the storm built, the antique marquee of the Colonial Theatre strained against the chains securing it to the building's facade. Sometime in the night, the marquee finally gave way — collapsing onto the steps and sidewalk. The 2001 marquee collapse would represent a turning point for this community, and its jewel of an historic theatre. "That got the whole community to really rally around," said Bethlehem resident Andrea Knowles, a longtime Colonial Theatre volunteer. People realized what the community

would lose if the theatre — one of the oldest continuously operating movie theatres in the country, having never gone dark for a single season since 1915 — was allowed to crumble into history. A "Friends of the Colonial" group was formed to save the local icon, and operations were turned over to the nonprofit Bethlehem Redevelopment Association. Stephen Dignazio came on as director of the nonprofit (and its sole full-time employee). He did everything from setting up projection equipment to selling popcorn from a cart on the sidewalk to writing grants to save the theatre. Still, the roof needed major repair.

The lights flickered in a high wind. The Colonial had opened in an era when Bethlehem was a posh summertime destination for city-dwellers in search of a mountain respite. The Colonial was featured on colorized picture postcards in the 1920s. Almost a century later, people in town worked tirelessly to keep the theatre alive. Volunteers did everything from graphic design for promotion to lighting and sound to concessions and cleanup. "People were very, very happy to see something happening in Bethlehem," Stephen said. Something, indeed. The Colonial, in its new iteration as a nonprofit, became a performing arts venue in addition to a

movie theatre — hosting world-class acts, from the Carolina Chocolate Drops to Ani DiFranco to Paula Poundstone. "The idea was to bring the story of America to the North Country," Stephen said. As the Colonial gained momentum, new businesses started to blink to life on Main Street: A brewery, an ice cream shop that is a two-time semi-finalist for James Beard awards. On nights when the theatre has a show, Bethlehem's restaurants are packed. "Main Street really blossomed around the Colonial," said Andrea. On a recent summer Wednesday, Bethlehem and its theatre were in full bloom.

"The arts are older than politics. The arts will always be here, and they will always be essential."

-Brenna Nicely, executive director of The Colonial Theatre

In the morning, young children clambered up the front steps with families and in summer camp groups for a weekly theatre performance with the Weathervane Theatre's Patchwork Players — a troupe of college theatre students from all over the country. As the little kids laughed along to live theatre, a group of teens worked together finishing a screenplay outside on the patio, to be followed by an acting workshop in the theatre. The White Mountain Cinema Camp is a program of the Colonial, run by film instructors and professionals. The young people produce a short film — from the idea stage through filming and production — followed by a public screening. Tuition is just \$75, with financial aid available.

"There is nothing else like this around here," said 17-year-old Camdyn Richey of Lisbon, an aspiring actor who has attended Cinema Camp for three summers. "And it is such a safe space. All people feel like they can be welcomed." Just before suppertime, the house opens for the third time of the day, welcoming a crowd of adults for a screening of the film "The Phoenician Scheme." Moviegoers arrive under a rebuilt marquee, buy popcorn and drinks in a refurbished concession area and enjoy a facility that has been entirely overhauled in the past quarter-century. A patchwork of funding supported the Colonial's revitalization, including federal funds, the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts and Land and Community Heritage Investment

Program, the Charitable Foundation, local donors and members. The Colonial — which is listed on New Hampshire Register of Historic Places and was named "Best Vintage Movie Theatre" by Yankee Magazine — continued to gain momentum through its audience-peak year of 2019, and the global pandemic. Brenna Nicely became the organization's executive director two years ago. The Colonial has rebounded again since Covid, and is back on track to set a new attendance record this year. At a time when public arts funding has been drastically reduced, Brenna emphasized the critical importance of philanthropy — and, especially, unrestricted operating support. The organization's funding from the National Endowment from the Arts has evaporated, the defunding of the State Council on the Arts dealt another blow, and a tax credit they had planned on for the installation of solar panels is no longer coming. Ticket sales only account for 18% of revenues. "The funding climate is not favorable to arts organizations right now," Brenna said. But this nonprofit theatre has cemented its place as a heart of community connection and a driving force for economic development. "The arts are older than politics," Brenna said. "The arts will always be here, and they will always be essential." ■

LEARN MORE @[BETHLEHEMCOLONIAL.ORG](https://www.bethlehemcolonial.org)



FINDING HER NETWORK FOR GOOD

Katie Lyon-Pingree gives — and speaks up — to help families navigating mental-health crises

Katie Lyon-Pingree at the Statehouse in Concord, NH

Matthew Pingree loved space. His mom, Katie Lyon-Pingree, thought he might become an astronaut. One preschool teacher predicted he would have a career in national intelligence. Matthew was sometimes talkative, other times reflective. As a teenager, he loved competitive wrestling. He discovered chess, and coached younger kids who wanted to learn. He got so that he could play a game of chess with his mom online, without even looking at the screen — and still win.

“The kid was crazy intelligent,” Katie said.

Matthew also suffered from depression, and his family lost him

to that illness in 2021. He was just 18 years old.

When Matthew was struggling, Katie said, their family found the mental-health system extremely difficult to navigate — even though they had ample resources. Matthew spent days in a locked emergency-room ward, had extensive testing, was prescribed numerous medications, and experienced a labyrinthine series of referrals, clinical specialists, hospitals and residential programs over a period of years.

“We tried everything that we knew how to do at the time,” Katie said.

Now, Katie is devoting resources, intellect and energy to helping other

families who are navigating mental health challenges. She and her family created a donor-advised fund at the Foundation in 2023.

Working with the Foundation, she said, helped her learn about community need and opened new opportunities for action and connection.

Katie’s Foundation philanthropy advisor, William Abbott, introduced her to Traci Fowler. Traci has worked in the behavioral-health field for decades, leads the Foundation’s work in behavioral health and substance use disorders and is a member of the New Hampshire Children’s System of Care Advisory Council. Traci told Katie about

Katie credits her partnership with Foundation staff with giving her the support and guidance she needed to act. “I feel able to do this work because William [Abbott] and Traci [Fowler] came into my life.”

– Katie Lyon-Pingree

work training people to push for policy change to improve behavioral health-care systems. Katie met New Futures staff and trained as a citizen advocate, learning about the legislative process and becoming part of a network of people working for change. Just a few months later, she sat before the microphone with a framed photo of Matthew in front of her, imploring the New Hampshire Senate Health and Human Services Committee to recommend full funding for the state’s 988 crisis line — a service which did not exist during Matthew’s lifetime.

Katie credits her partnership with Foundation staff with giving her the support and guidance she needed to act. “I feel able to do this work because William and Traci came into my life,” she said.

And Katie is determined that even the most painful of her family’s experiences inform improvements for others. Some of the most difficult days of Matthew’s illness were

when he was in a secure psychiatric hospital emergency unit. Recognizing that families need support, NAMI NH started a peer-support network for families whose children are being boarded in emergency departments. Katie and her family were major donors to the effort to get that peer-support network launched. And she hopes to train to be a peer volunteer to help other families.

“It is bittersweet, because it is yet another example of a program that I wish we had that we didn’t,” Katie said. “But let’s create as much support for people in that horrific experience as possible.”

Too many families in New Hampshire share a common experience of loss and heartbreak. As Katie has said, her work is now all done “in the hopes of saving other New Hampshire families the gut-wrenching devastation that comes with losing a loved one to issues of mental health.” ■

Let’s work together

The Charitable Foundation works closely with generous people to help turn their passion for community into action. Our staff has deep expertise in nonprofit and community work and philanthropic advising, and can help make the connections between generous people and great work being done for the New Hampshire community.

Please reach out to Director of Philanthropy Lorianne Saniuk at 603-225-6641 ext. 274 or Lorianne.Saniuk@nhcf.org to get started.



NEW HAMPSHIRE
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

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A LIFE'S WORK IN FIGHTING POVERTY

Elsy Cipriani is an economist who has made fighting poverty her life's work.

She took the helm as executive director of the New Hampshire Food Bank in March of 2025. The Food Bank, a program of New Hampshire Catholic Charities, distributes about 17 million pounds of food to more than 400 food pantries and soup kitchens with the help of about 3,000 volunteers.

In New Hampshire, a state with one of the highest median incomes in the country, one in nine people (and one in seven children) experience food insecurity — meaning they do not know where their next meal is coming from.

Elsy's family left Colombia for Ecuador to get away from violence. She met her husband, a Mainer, when he was studying in Ecuador. Elsy earned a Master's in Public Administration with a concentration in nonprofit management so she could "better serve communities."

Elsy has worked in nonprofits from coast to coast — eventually running emergency shelters in Boston. Along the way she "fell in love with New Hampshire," and ran a program that helps moms and children experiencing homelessness.

During Elsy's first week at the Food Bank, the organization was notified that federal cuts would gut its budget by almost \$1 million through 2028. Additional shifts — like tariffs, changes to SNAP eligibility and to Medicaid — have nonprofits bracing for increased demand. And the government shutdown brought with it confusion and an interruption in SNAP benefits.

Elsy is quick to praise the Food Bank team, whose work ethic and dedication are unwavering.

"We have to be extremely strategic," Elsy said.

"We don't know what else might happen." ■

