

CONNECT CONSERVE CELEBRATE



2016
Annual Report
& Highlights



CONNECT...the hearts and souls of those that



stood here before us

Resilient people. Salt of the earth. Resourceful and community minded. Made something out of nothing. Our grandparents were like them.

Those are the words used to describe the everyday people who represent extraordinary lives, community and culture of Tug Hill. The recent traveling exhibit, “Venerable Folks of Tug Hill,” features portraits of 22 subjects by artist, Loretta Lepkowski.

The project—from concept to completion took over nearly three years, in partnership with Lepkowski, the Tug Hill Commission and Traditional Arts of Upstate New York (TAUNY).

History and connection at risk

Too often stories like these end with the generation who has lived them. But thanks to Lepkowski, who drove throughout Tug Hill from Boonville to Watertown to Pulaski to paint people’s portraits and record their stories, they are now accessible for all of us.

“The landscape of Tug Hill is intertwined with the lives and history of those who have been here for many years working in various volunteer and paid jobs,” remarks Lepkowski. She continues, “It’s a pleasure to honor these individuals in a way that captures their stories and preserves this rich heritage for future generations to enjoy.”

The touring exhibit features stories about epic snowstorms, long days in the fields, triumph and sorrow, and days spent hunting in the woods. As a result, the combination of recordings, paintings and video has become one of the first multi-media exhibits of its kind in Tug Hill.

“This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to capture some of those who have given Tug Hill its core identity” explains Katie Malinowski of the Tug Hill Commission, “many of these people are in their 80’s and 90’s, and their stories and heritage are something that our region treasures as part of who we are today. They are the heart and soul of our community.”

“People can forget how important the history and ongoing culture of everyday experience on the land is to our region and our shared identity,” remarked Camilla Ammirati of TAUNY. “We were honored to get to partner on this project to record and celebrate the experience of Tug Hill people and the distinctive land they live on.”

Part of Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust’s focus includes conserving and honoring the cultural heritage of our region. We wish to thank the project partners and those who shared their stories. A special thank you as well goes to Loretta Lepkowski who went above and beyond as she shared her talent, and her heart, in creating a beautiful and compelling legacy to highlight the special people and places of Tug Hill.

You can find out where the exhibit will be next at www.TugHillTomorrowLandTrust.org.

Thank you to those who made this project possible:

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust’s members and supporters, St. Lawrence County Arts Council, NYS Council on the Arts, Northern NY Community Foundation, NYS Tug Hill Commission, Iroquois Gas Community Grant Program, and The John Ben Snow Foundation, Inc. A portion of this work was made possible through two Public Arts Fellowship Grants which in turn was made possible in part by the St. Lawrence County Arts Council from the NYS Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

Thank you to those who shared their stories:

H. Douglas Barclay, attorney and NYS Senator and Ambassador to El Salvador (Pulaski)

George Bibbins, Sr., electrician and community official (Pinckney)

Irvine “Dutch” Buchal, farmer and logger (Copenhagen)

Jim Burke, construction, logger and musician (Taberg)

George William Capron, radio broadcaster (Boonville)

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George Cataldo, surveyor and map lover (Grieg)

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Ben Coe, Tug Hill Commission, volunteer (Watertown)

John Constable, Jr., business man and historic family (Watertown, Constableville)

Martha Deming, art teacher and artist (Remsen)

Angie Kimball, circuit rider and volunteer (Redfield)

Warren Mathis, logger and community volunteer (West Leyden)

Robert McNamara, wildlife artist and graphic designer (Cleveland)

Edwin “Doc” Russell, family doctor and hunt club member (Rome)

Robert Sauer, forester and community official (Camden)

Benjamin Szalach, paper mill employee (Lyons Falls)

Stanley Szalach, dairy farmer (Houseville)

Elaine Yerdon, town clerk and volunteer (Redfield)

Francis Yerdon, community official and construction (Redfield)

Arsa Weiman, post office employee (Constableville)

Howard Weiman, paper company worker (Lyons Falls)

CONSERVING...more than the land



Family, heritage, and a way of life

The Robbins family farm is full of surprises.

There's the sweeping expanse of fields, woodlands and meadows—all 4,000 acres of it—which in and of itself is quite remarkable. Then there's the fact that the farming operation is a combination of North Harbor Dairy, one of the region's largest dairy farms, the Robbins Family Grain Company as well as Old McDonald's Farm.

The farm is a significant employer for the area, providing 40 plus jobs and supplies milk to Great Lakes Cheese in Adams, NY.

But even more than that, what often makes the farm stand out is the family's commitment to inspire the next generation to appreciate what farming, and specifically dairy farming, is all about.

During the summer, hundreds of visitors a day come to Old McDonald's Farm. "We have been blessed with finding the right mix of real-life farming, interactive educational experiences, and the love of farming and the land to create a place that inspires people who otherwise might not experience a working farm," said Nancy Robbins.

"But," she continued, "we don't take that for granted."

Conserving the heart of the farm

The farm is owned and managed as a family operation. Ron Robbins, and his grown children, Julia and Brian, manage the farming side of the operation. And Nancy, Ron's wife, oversees what has become a renowned farm education and experiential learning program at the farm.

"Dairy and agriculture are an important part of our local and regional economy. Our family wants to make sure that the good land we have doesn't disappear under houses in the future, and selling the development rights is a good way to make sure that doesn't happen."

To achieve that goal, the Robbins family will be conserving 1,300 acres of their farm in partnership with Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust. To do so, the family will sell the majority of their non-farm development rights on this acreage using funding for the project from New York State's farmland protection program. It's the first state farmland protection grant awarded in the North Country.

A family farm and legacy

Ron, Nancy's husband, explained that when they decided to conserve a portion of the farm it was out of a desire to think about their kids and the community. The NYS Farmland Protection program is the way to make it happen.

New York State's farmland protection program has grown in recent years to \$15 million annually thanks to Governor Cuomo and statewide and local legislative support. Funds are divided by region, based upon a competitive grant application process.

Ron emphasizes that "It's important for folks to understand that we still own the land, we still pay taxes on the land, manage the land, and continue to invest in the farm. This is a good business decision for us as farmers—and it's a good family decision because we care about the land and want it to stay in farming. We want our kids and grandkids to be able to farm here and we want to do our part to conserve what makes our community special."



You help conserve farms throughout Tug Hill

Your support is what allows us to assist local farm-families like the Robbins to obtain state funding to protect their land, assist with the land planning, and work with them into the future to ensure their conservation agreement is upheld for generations to come.

Thanks to you, we also are able to work with farmers around Fort Drum through the national Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program as well as those landowners who wish to conserve their land in other parts of Tug Hill.

These projects take hundreds of hours to complete, often over several years. With your support we are currently working on two farmland protection projects, totaling 572 acres in communities near Fort Drum.

Thank you for investing in the conservation of Tug Hill's family farms. Together, we are conserving the farms that make our region so special.

Making conservation last

You're inspiring the next generation

Keeping it real

With the acceleration of climate change comes the challenge of increased noxious plants and invasive bugs and fungi that can destroy entire species of trees (like the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid or the Emerald Ash Borer). Extreme and erratic weather patterns are also increasing, impacting forests and wildlife, as well as agriculture.

This means that in addition to reducing the use of fossil fuel, which is a key driver of climate change, we need to provide responsive and cutting-edge conservation training for landowners and students alike: evaluating and responding to changing conditions in a rapidly changing world.

Over the past ten years, with growing community support, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust has expanded these types of partnerships and trainings as part of our commitment to long-term conservation.

Part of Tug Hill Tomorrow's commitment to lasting conservation work, therefore involves helping to provide places and experiences that connect people to nature, farms, and the out-of-doors. We know from research that regular, positive, experiences in nature—close to home—is critical for building a lasting land ethic.

And we also know that if education ignites a passion, whether you're in second grade or in college, it can change lives and last a lifetime.

An example of this is the partnership between Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust and SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry's Ranger School. Conservation is a profession that keeps you on your toes. Good judgement is key when you are managing land for wildlife or leading a sustainable timber harvest. This past year, more than 50 ESF students and their instructors came out to the Joseph A. Blake Wildlife Sanctuary to put their classroom training to the test, applying trail construction and wildlife management.

In addition to serving as a place of respite, a quiet place to take family and friends for an afternoon walk or early morning bird watch, the Joseph A. Blake Wildlife Sanctuary is a perfect place for understanding how to put academic learning into practice.

Thanks to you, conservation is no longer an abstract concept for these students and local families. You're bringing conservation to life, every day.



CONSERVATION...is only as strong as those who



Not a luxury, it's a necessity

"It feels good to slow down for a few hours with a group of folks who share the same love of the land. I find I make new friends and share a sense of joy and wonder that otherwise might not be in our lives," says Bob McNamara, one of the extraordinary volunteers who leads hikes, snowshoe treks, and trail workdays.

With the ever-increasing pace of information, and the incessant lure of technology, making time to get outside is no longer just a good idea—for many of us, it's a key part of our rejuvenation.

Research from the *Journal of Environmental Psychology* has shown that time outside actually increases our vitality, and reduces stress levels. That's also why doctors are now starting to prescribe walks and out-door experiences as part of a general wellness program. It's becoming a necessity, rather than a luxury.

But not everyone knows where to go. And many—just like Bob McNamara—realize that being with others on the land or water is a key part of their inspiration and connection to conservation. That's one of the key reasons why Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust hosts walks every year.

"Sometimes people think that because they live in a rural area, community hikes and experiences aren't needed," explained Christophe Marin. Chris brings his family out on snowshoe walks and canoe paddles. "For me, as a dad, outdoor trips like these are a great way to have my kids unplug from their phones and devices and connect with kindred spirits who appreciate the beauty of our Tug Hill land and water resources."



"I spend a lot of time editing wedding photos, with my face lit up by the glow of my computer screen. Bird walks bring so much joy, and when I'm outside, and with a group of passionate people, I can feel my stress being relieved every step of the way. It's how I connect with conservation, it's one of the key reasons I support local conservation efforts."

— Emmanuel Vaucher





COMMUNITY...a very special thank you

Thanks to the amazing, funny, talented, and dedicated volunteers we were able to offer a variety of hikes and experiences during 2016 for people as young as five and as old as 90. These enthusiastic and hard-working folks helped to clear new trails and improve existing trails and wildlife habitat—all in good humor.

We also want to thank our partners in the 31 classrooms from Watertown, Clinton, Beaver River, West Winfield, Carthage, Copenhagen, Sackets Harbor, Harrisville and Holland Patent school districts, as well as 13 homeschool families, who partnered with us to bring the joy of birds to kids through the Annual Tug Hill Bird Quest.

If you'd like to volunteer or lead a trip or outdoor experience let us know. We'd love to hear from you.

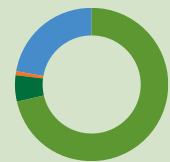
Giving the gift of inspiration

Conservation doesn't always go as planned. Some days seem great, others not so much. But one thing is for sure: monthly donations provide a shot in the arm and let us know that you care. Thank you to our monthly donors who give the gift of inspiration and hope all year long. Monthly giving is safe, easy, and flexible. While some folks provide substantial gifts, It's a great way for small donations to have a big impact too.

2016 Financials

Thanks to your support, we are building a lasting appreciation for the land—and for taking care of the land—reaching out to everyone in our communities.

For all that you have done to make Tug Hill a better place to live, work and play, we thank you.



2016 Revenue

Foundations & Grants ¹	\$2,024,763
Individual contributions	\$159,094
Special events	\$16,234
Other income ²	\$627,963
Total	\$2,669,120



2016 Expenses

Program Services	\$2,458,113
Administration	\$51,761
Fundraising	\$40,711
Total	\$2,550,585

¹ Foundations and Grants — In 2016 we received several grants to purchase conservation easements including NYS Ag & Markets and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA).

² Other Income — includes stewardship fund contributions, income from conservation projects and contract work and investment income.

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. These audited figures reflect the fiscal year January 1, 2016 – December 31, 2016. A copy of the full audited financial statement is available upon request by calling Linda Garrett at 315-779-8240 or emailing thtomorr@northnet.org.



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We sincerely apologize for any errors or omissions. Please give us a call at 315-779-8240 if you have a correction to make.

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CELEBRATE...

Honoring your love of the land

You can make a difference all year long with a gift in your will, dedicated to the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust. Your love of farmland, wildlife habitat, and connecting kids and families to nature and farms is something that will live on in the hearts of those who are touched by your kindness and generosity.

No amount is too small, and gifts of stocks and real estate can also be an effective way to ensure that your estate planning meets your goals as well. Feel free to call Linda Garrett if you'd like to discuss your goals and vision.

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