



THE NEIL AND LOUISE TILLOTSON FUND 2020 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

When books are written about 2020 (and they will be), we hope they include the small acts of profound generosity and the towering examples of community resilience like those we have seen in the North Country and surrounding communities during this most challenging time.

We hope it will be recorded for posterity how child-care centers stayed open to care for the children of essential workers so that nurses and doctors and first responders and pharmacists and delivery people and grocery workers could care for the rest of us.

We hope it will be recorded how staff at the Family Resource Center in Gorham figured out overnight how to continue supporting struggling families in the North Country — delivering groceries and phone and gas cards and moving a whole array of programming online to support parents and children. We hope it will be recorded how people who look out for systems from schools to health care to municipal services started meeting every week in spring of 2020 to aid each other in facing down the shocking complexity of problems the pandemic visited on our communities.

We hope it will be recorded how nonprofits found ways to get food from local farms into the refrigerators of local food pantries — and onto the supper tables of people in need. How teachers adapted to continue to instruct and support our children. And how people took to social media to share everything from winter coats to firewood —

reaching out across isolation and fear and polarization to extend kindness and generosity.

The Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation made \$3 million in grants to support 68 nonprofits in the region in 2020. We are proud to be in partnership with people and organizations who are meeting this moment in our communities with such ingenuity and courage. Funding has helped nonprofit community health centers shift to delivering care and services via telehealth; has assisted in building new systems for increased food security in the region; connected local businesses with outdoor recreation enthusiasts; helped local kids build a new mountain-bike skills park; helped early childhood education centers keep the doors open; helped guidance counselors stay connected with kids who needed them during the summer; helped keep New Hampshire Legal Assistance operating from offices in Berlin — and much, much more. This crisis and its effects are ongoing, and the Tillotson Fund will be here to support our communities as we get through this and as we rebuild from it.

The people, communities and nonprofits of the North Country have responded to this time of great challenge with great resilience. No one would have expected anything different.

Ben Gayman
Chair, Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund Advisory Committee

Photo: A teacher and student at the Country Day School in Colebrook, NH.

The Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation was established in 2006 with a bold vision:
To serve as a catalyst for the region to move toward sustainable community and economic development in Coös County and surrounding communities in the United States and Canada.

To learn more about the Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund or to apply for a grant or scholarship, visit www.nhcf.org/tillotson.

HIGHLIGHTS

A small sampling of work made possible by the Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund in 2020.



2020 BY THE NUMBERS

68 GRANTS TO NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS TOTALING \$3 MILLION

9 SCHOLARSHIPS TO NH AND VT STUDENTS TOTALING \$42,000

Courtesy Photo



Courtesy Photo

FRESH PRODUCE FOR THOSE IN NEED

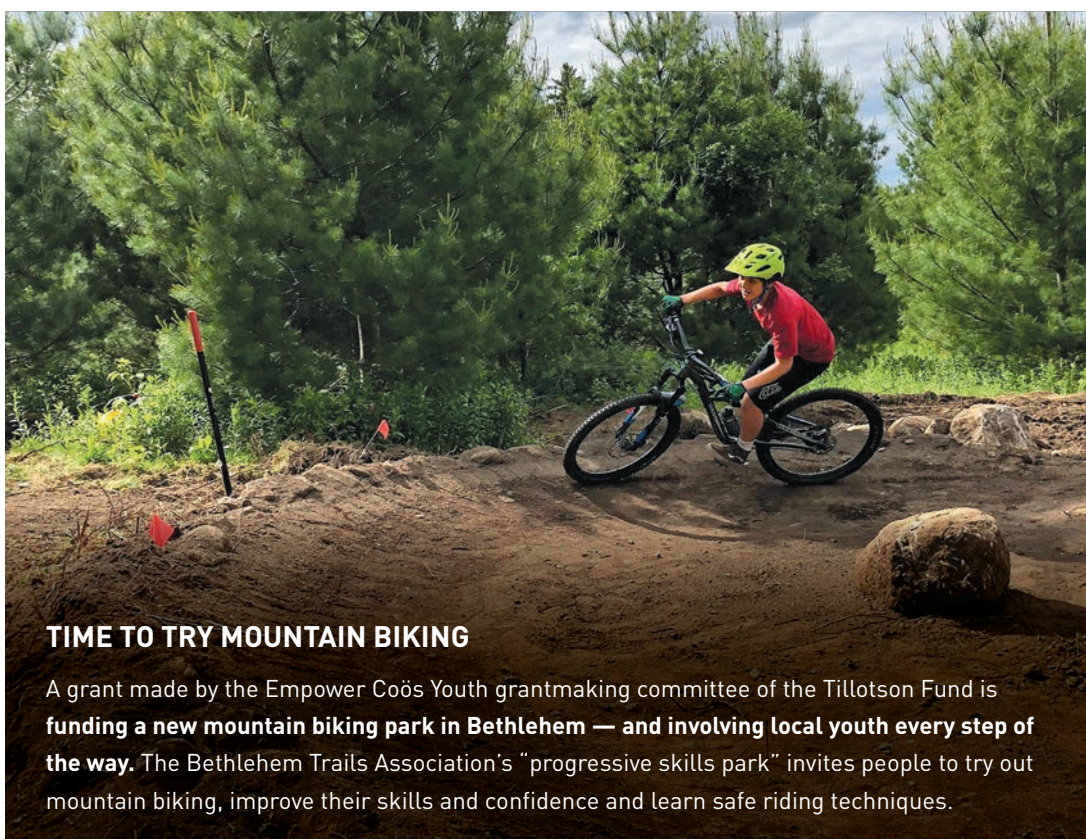
When the pandemic hit and demand for food assistance surged, people got creative about how to meet the need. Farmers whose crops ordinarily supplied restaurants were faced with a sudden surplus of fresh produce, but were facing a devastating loss in a business that already posts extremely modest profit. Green Mountain Farm-to-School used Tillotson grant funding to **purchase and deliver food from those farms to area food pantries: helping create a market for local farmers while getting fresh food to people in need.**



Photo by Cheryl Senter

KEEPING EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS OPEN

Early-childhood education centers provide a backbone service for our communities and economy: educating and caring for children while allowing parents to work. The critical importance of the sector was never more apparent than when designated centers stayed open during the early months of the pandemic to care for the children of emergency workers. The Coös Director Network, which includes directors of all licensed childcare centers in the region, has supported improvements — including financial management coaching — for more than a decade with backing from the Tillotson Fund. During the pandemic, centers faced increased costs for renovations and PPE, while also facing decreased revenues. The Director Network **helped centers secure federal, state and philanthropic funds to recoup those losses and purchase needed equipment so that all licensed childcare centers in Coös County could remain open.**



Courtesy Photo

TIME TO TRY MOUNTAIN BIKING

A grant made by the Empower Coös Youth grantmaking committee of the Tillotson Fund is **funding a new mountain biking park in Bethlehem — and involving local youth every step of the way.** The Bethlehem Trails Association's "progressive skills park" invites people to try out mountain biking, improve their skills and confidence and learn safe riding techniques.

HELPING CHILDREN TAKE ROOT

A grant is supporting the Taking Roots Project of the Maison de la famille center in Coaticook, Quebec. That project **supports families with young children who are struggling with isolation, language barriers, generational poverty and more — helping to connect them with needed assistance and resources.**



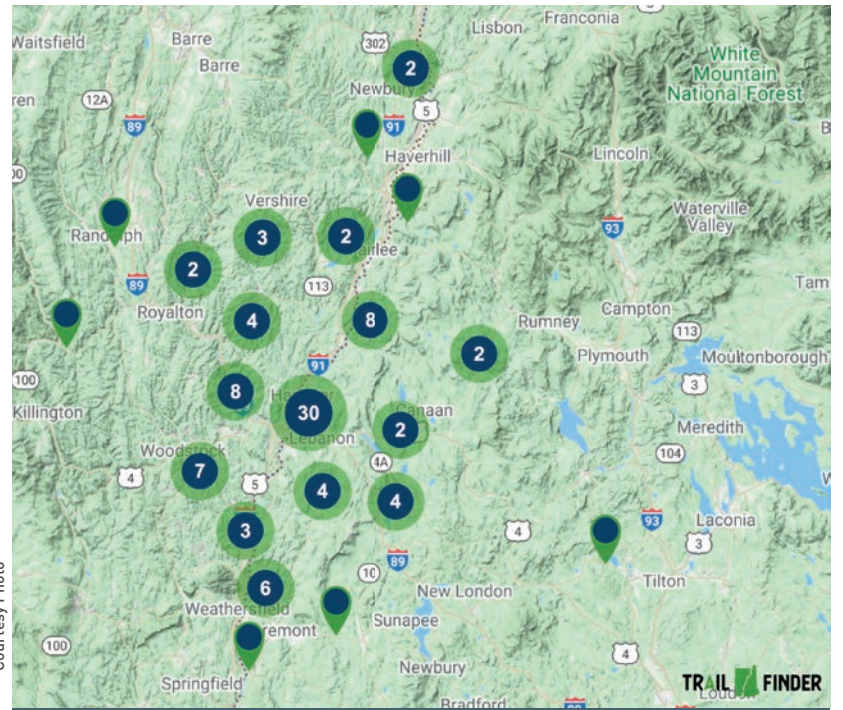
Courtesy Photo

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS MEET THE MOMENT

Family resource centers support people who are struggling, often against significant odds, to build stable and successful lives for themselves and their children. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, it hit those families' lives with an overwhelming tangle of complication and peril. A single mom with small children and no car suddenly had no safe way of getting groceries. Stressed children were suddenly isolated from friends, teachers and school-based services. People who were already just scraping by were out of work entirely. In Gorham, the Family Resource Center adapted everything from after-school programming to parenting support and family visitation to be able to continue to provide services remotely. Staff mobilized to help meet basic needs: **converting a tiny food pantry into a mini-warehouse, and making deliveries of food and supplies along with phone, gas and grocery cards. Tillotson grant funding supported those efforts.**



Photo by Cheryl Senter



Courtesy Photo

CONNECTING OUTDOOR REC, LOCAL BUSINESS

In 2020, many people took to the trails close to home — some of them for the first time. In Coös County, some outdoor recreationalists found their way onto those trails thanks to the expanded network on Trail Finder. The Upper Valley Trails Alliance has been working for the last two years to map Coös County trails on its Trail Finder website, which includes information as varied as directions to trailheads, elevation gain and average grade, and whether pets are allowed. Users can search by activity type, and find trails that are accessible to people who use wheelchairs. And the Trailside Services section connects trail users with local businesses, helping people discover where to hop off the trail for lunch, or where to base their adventures, where to buy gear or get a bike repaired. Grants from the Tillotson Fund are supporting the work as part of an economic-development strategy that **promotes non-motorized outdoor recreation and energy-efficiency, industries with potential for positive growth throughout Coös County.**



Courtesy Photo

RECOGNIZING EXCELLENT TEACHERS

Patti Dugan-Henriksen was one of three teachers awarded Louise Tillotson Teaching Fellowships in 2020. The fellowship recognizes excellence in teaching and aims to help retain good teachers in North Country public schools. Dugan-Henriksen, who teaches middle school science in Groveton, provides her students with opportunities to learn both through in-school projects and citizen-science endeavors in partnership with groups like New Hampshire Fish and Game and the Appalachian Mountain Club's A Mountain Classroom. She also serves as the on-site coordinator at Groveton Elementary School for the White Mountain Science STEM-Works Lab. "I love to see the look on a student's face when they suddenly 'get it,' or when a student talks about science and is passionate about it," Dugan-Henriksen said. "I want to help students realize that they have the chance to be whatever they want to be."



Courtesy Photo

LEGAL AID MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

From its office in Berlin, two New Hampshire Legal Assistance attorneys and one paralegal advocate provide professional legal aid to people in need. Attorneys help people solve an intricate array of civil legal problems that ultimately aid in their self-sufficiency and financial independence: From helping people keep their homes and stave off eviction to securing restraining orders to working out custody arrangements and securing child support. A three-year grant from the Tillotson Fund is **helping to keep that Berlin office open and operational, with attorneys serving people from Plymouth to the Canadian border.**

WORKING TOWARD GREATER FOOD SECURITY

The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated food insecurity everywhere, including in the North Country — where the spread-out terrain and relative scarcity of food pantries are perennial challenges. To help address food insecurity, **the Tillotson Fund awarded a three-year grant to the New Hampshire Food Bank to hire a North Country-based food systems coordinator.** 2020 was the second year of that three-year grant. Christy Langlois, who grew up in Berlin, has taken on that role. She is coordinating with 50 agencies, reaching out to elderly populations, supporting summer meals programs through schools, working to increase awareness of SNAP for eligible residents, working with farmers to increase food pantries' access to local produce and working to establish a local Food Bank warehouse.

Courtesy Photo



Welcome, Sonya Salanti

Sonya Salanti of Bethlehem joined the Neil and Louise Tillotson Funds in 2020. Salanti is the third director of the Tillotson Funds since they were established at the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation in 2006.

The Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund is the largest of the Tillotson family of funds, and is one of the largest rural philanthropies in the country.

Salanti has spent much of her career supporting practitioners in economic development in rural communities around the world. She comes to the Foundation from the SEEP Network, which supports nonprofits to create opportunities for vulnerable populations worldwide, especially women, to participate in markets and improve their quality of life. She has worked extensively in economic development, energy efficiency, and educational initiatives.

“The North Country has such rich resources and amazing people,” Salanti said. “I feel so grateful to be able to take what I have learned and use it right here where I live, in a place that has such a foundation of resilience and community-oriented know-how.”



Photo by Cheryl Senter

Weaving community

The scope and complexity of need brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic are immense.

But the impulse to give, and share what we can, is also immense.

Now, a group of community members in the North Country is testing ways to encourage and celebrate person-to-person community generosity. Ways that, they hope, will help isolated elders get their snow shoveled and help kids get mentors, help a mom get some new tires to get to work — and then maybe drop off a meal for a nurse on her way home.

The Community Weavers are working to unite people in shared purpose during a time of shared hardship, to bring new voices to the table and get everyone involved in promoting community well-being.

The Weavers have been talking to everyone from librarians to parents to auto mechanics. Building from those conversations, they are launching a #SmallActs campaign to test approaches for building generosity and caregiving in community.

The campaign, which has support from a Tillotson grant, involves a “pay-it-forward” model encouraging people who benefit from a #smallact (like help getting tires) to undertake a #smallact for someone else (like that snow-shoveling); campaign signs and a social media presence.

“We want to encourage everybody to find that they can be the giver and everyone to find that they can be the receiver,” said Kassie Eafrazi of Berlin (pictured, left). “People need to feel connected in order to want to build community.”

Anyone can start with a small act. For more, check Small Acts North on Facebook.



Photo by Cheryl Senter



NEW HAMPSHIRE CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

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www.nhcf.org

The New Hampshire Charitable Foundation was created in 1962 by and for the people of New Hampshire, and is dedicated to strengthening communities across the Granite State. The Foundation manages a growing collection of 2,000 philanthropic funds created by generous families, individuals and businesses, and awards more than \$50 million in grants and scholarships every year. For more information, please visit www.nhcf.org or call 800-464-6641.

THE NEIL AND LOUISE TILLOTSON FUND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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