

PURPOSE



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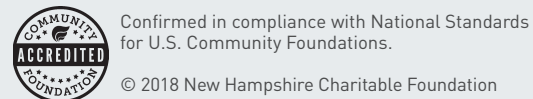
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Cover: Spaulding High School students at Great Bay Community College in Portsmouth.

THE NEW HAMPSHIRE CHARITABLE FOUNDATION is New Hampshire's statewide community foundation, founded in 1962 by and for the people of New Hampshire. We manage a growing collection of 2,000 funds created by generous individuals, families and businesses, and award more than \$40 million in grants and scholarships every year. We work with generous and visionary citizens to maximize the power of their giving, support great work happening in our communities, and lead and collaborate on high-impact initiatives. Learn more at www.nhcf.org or call 800-464-6641.

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SHOULDER-TO-SHOULDER TO SOLVE THE OPPORTUNITY GAP

By Richard Ober, president and CEO

New Hampshire is a state that does extraordinarily well by many measures — low unemployment, high median income, safe communities. But we also have some real challenges. Two among them: vastly unequal access to opportunities and prosperity, and a workforce shortage.

The two are directly related: if we can fix one, we can fix both.

That was the spirit recently around our table at the Foundation. Leaders from business, education and philanthropy were here to strategize about “65 by 25,” a shared state goal to make sure that 65 percent of working-age adults in New Hampshire have a high-value degree or credential by 2025 (Article, p. 6).

The current “opportunity gap” facing too many of our young people — opportunity for education, training, for learning the “soft skills” that help ensure workplace success — is not only just plain wrong, it is also an existential threat to the future of New Hampshire’s workforce. And the business community is responding, collaborating and digging into the causes and solutions.

In my 35 years of working in New Hampshire’s nonprofit sector, I have never seen the concerns and aspirations of business leaders align so perfectly with the concerns of those



Dick and Lorraine Lavalliere with Foundation President Richard Ober.

in education, philanthropy and social services.

Efforts are emerging and ongoing all over the state: Safran Aerospace Composites is partnering with Great Bay Community College and the Rochester schools to put kids on the road to a degree and a career. Hypertherm has a partnership with River Valley Community College for students to get credit for their job training. The Foundation and the Business and Industry Association are co-funding a “workforce accelerator” to increase work-based learning partnerships between schools and employers. Businesses like Eastern Bank and longtime business owners like Dick and Lorraine Lavalliere have created scholarship programs that are helping

put people on the fast track to stable careers with good earnings potential.

And so many more. In the past, we relied on thousands of people moving into New Hampshire, with college degrees or trade credentials in-hand, to drive our economic growth. We know now that was not sustainable, and we cannot rely on it happening again.

But even if we could, that would not look like success. We have to do a much better job of ensuring that the kids who grow up in the most challenged neighborhoods and communities of our state have the same shot at opportunity, the same shot at the American Dream, as the kids who grow up in the wealthiest ones. It is just the right thing to do. ■



Members of the Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund's Empower Coös Youth Grantmaking Committee.

YOUNG PEOPLE TAKING THE LEAD

Young people are stepping up to take on direct decision-making roles in their communities by participating in the Empower Coös Youth Grants Program. The program, an initiative of the Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, gives high school students the opportunity to design and award grants that support local programming important to youth. The program aims to increase opportunities for young people, deepen

their connection to place and help them build leadership skills by giving them a voice in local grantmaking. The committee is advised by Tillotson Fund staff and advisors. The 11 young people on the committee are from Coös County, New Hampshire and Essex County, Vermont, and represent a diversity of life experience, regional knowledge and personal interests. ■

INVESTING IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Twin Pines Housing is building energy-efficient affordable housing with help from an impact investment from the Foundation. The Tracy Street Housing complex in West Lebanon will provide housing to 29 families in one of the tightest housing markets in the state. It will be the first "net zero" multifamily building in New Hampshire. The building will be next door to the public library, accessible to public transportation and within easy walking distance of shopping and services. The \$500,000 line of credit extended to Twin Pines through the Foundation's impact investment pool helped kick-start the project, which is slated to be completed in the summer of 2019. The impact investing pool is a portion of the Foundation's assets that are invested in local organizations and companies that are improving people's lives. ■



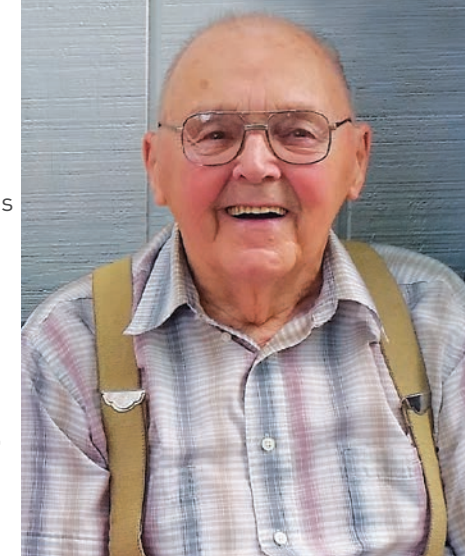
A FITTING LEGACY FOR CLAREMONT'S KIDS

Rene J. Lacasse immigrated with his parents to Claremont in the 1920s. He discovered a uniquely American sport — basketball — that he adored. He played for St. Mary's High School and helped his team win a state championship in 1939. He served in the Navy during World War II and returned to Claremont to work for four decades as a steel worker.

After his wife died from cancer, he raised their six children with support from extended family.

Lacasse was dedicated to his community, and understood the value of sports and other group activities in children's lives. He thought all kids should have the opportunity to participate, so he coached youth sports and — long before girls and young women were encouraged to be athletes — he helped start and run a girls' basketball league.

In 2018, his daughter Judith Lacasse Couture, a Claremont teacher, established a fund in his name with the support of her siblings. The fund is designated to give Claremont children the opportunity to participate in sports and other programming offered by the Claremont Savings Bank Community Center. The fund will support registration fees of children who otherwise would not be able to participate. ■



JOURNALISM FOCUSED ON SOLUTIONS

A year-long series in the New Hampshire Union Leader is applying a "Solutions Journalism" lens to reporting about the state's behavioral health and addiction crises.

The series, "Beyond the Stigma," is sponsored by the New Hampshire Solutions Journalism Lab at the Nackey S. Loeb School of Communications and funded by the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, the New Hampshire chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness and private individuals.

Led by reporter Shawne K. Wickham, the series is expanding coverage beyond the daily problems presented in the news. It explores the relationship between addiction and behavioral health — and explores promising solutions and effective models of treatment and prevention. ■

KUDOS



James Vara, chief of staff and associate attorney general at the New Hampshire Department of Justice, was named the 2018 recipient of the Caroline and Martin Gross Fellowship.



Katie Merrow, vice president of community impact at the Foundation, received a 2018 Above and Beyond Award from the Business and Industry Association of New Hampshire.



Joe Reilly, former Foundation director, received Neighborworks Southern New Hampshire's 2018 David P. Goodwin Outstanding Neighbor Award.

TODAY'S OPPORTUNITY, TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE

Giving hard-working New Hampshire kids a roadmap to success



Spaulding High School students preparing at Great Bay Community College for careers in advanced manufacturing.

Aleiah Douglas will graduate high school with her associate degree halfway finished and a certificate in advanced composites manufacturing. She will walk in her cap and gown on a Friday — and, on the following Monday, be able to step into a job making \$19 an hour, with advancement opportunities and benefits — including tuition reimbursement to finish college.

Aleiah is one of 13 students in a pilot program in Rochester that gives young people the opportunity to train for careers in a high-demand field in New Hampshire — without running up any college debt.

The program is a partnership between Spaulding High School, Great Bay Community College and Safran Aerospace Composites — which has equipped a lab at GBCC and guaranteed each student a job interview. The curriculum includes significant lab time spent operating the same equipment that employees use at Safran. Students split their time between high school and college for their senior year. The program is free for participants.

No one in Aleiah's family has ever been to college.

"It's nice to be given this chance,"

Aleiah said. She plans to start working right out of high school and eventually get her bachelor's degree. "I can advance into anything I would like to be."

The New Hampshire Charitable Foundation is supporting the program — including awarding scholarships to help cover tuition for each student — as part of broader efforts to increase opportunities for young people in need and to help build a strong future workforce to sustain New Hampshire's economy and communities. The efforts are part of the Foundation's "New Hampshire Tomorrow" initiative to increase opportunity for young people.

"This program is a great example of what can happen when schools, businesses and philanthropy collaborate," said Katie Merrow, the Foundation's vice president of community impact. "The fact that these students will have half their degree completed — with zero student debt — is huge, and will give them a great start in an industry that needs them, and where they can advance and build careers. We hope this will be a model for similar programs elsewhere."

Goal: 65 by 25

The Foundation is working with partners from education, business and

"This program is a great example of what can happen when schools, businesses and philanthropy collaborate."

— Katie Merrow, vice president of community impact, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation

state government to ensure that 65 percent of New Hampshire adults have a degree or high-value professional certificate by 2025. Those partners asked the Foundation to help lead and coordinate efforts toward that goal, including building resources to help achieve it. In this role, the Foundation will continue to focus on providing access to education and training to people who face significant barriers to opportunity. Right now, 54 percent of adults in New Hampshire have a degree or high-value credential — up from 49 percent in 2007.

Michael Turmelle, the Foundation's new director of education and career initiatives, is charged with advancing that work.

"The Foundation is excited to be working with so many dedicated partners to help New Hampshire reach 65 by 25, and to ensure that those who have not had access to opportunity are part of our workforce solutions," Turmelle said.

The Foundation has also:

- Helped build new "pathways to work" — including supporting a new computer programming track in Portsmouth and funding other pathways efforts in Milford, Keene, Langdon and Gorham.
- Joined forces with the Business and Industry Association to launch the "Workforce Accelerator 2025," an effort to support partnerships between New Hampshire's schools

and businesses to strengthen school-to-career pathways and advance 65 by 25.

- Tripled the amount of scholarship aid to students studying at New Hampshire's community colleges, and committed to awarding a half-million a year in scholarships for the next four years to community college students.
- Partnered with the Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation to provide an additional \$250,000 in scholarships to New Americans and other students in need for professional training, certificate and two-year degree programs. Those funds were matched with donations from other generous people and businesses.
- Created the Pathways 2025 Fund with an initial \$250,000 for grants to advance leadership, collaboration and innovation to achieve 65 by 25 with an emphasis on increased equity and social mobility for young people and families.

A perfect demographic storm

Current demographic trends underscore the importance of these efforts: New Hampshire's workforce is aging, with a large demographic bubble moving into retirement. New Hampshire is seeing a downward trend in the number of high school graduates — reflective of the overall downturn in population growth.

(Continued, p. 8)

Declining enrollment numbers mean that K-12 schools are already feeling the pinch — particularly those in economically strapped and rural communities. As class sizes go down, costs per pupil for education go up, adding economic stress to communities and forcing some schools to cut programs and staff. Forty-eight percent of graduating high school seniors go to college out-of-state — and many do not return (the number is even higher for students going to four-year colleges — 60 percent of those students leave New Hampshire). Unemployment in the state is low, with jobs going unfilled in the advanced manufacturing, health care and high-tech sectors. And workforce housing is scarce — particularly on the Seacoast and in the Upper Valley.

“These individual problems have to be understood as part of a bigger issue,” Turmelle said. “Our efforts will be geared toward bringing the right folks to the table to discuss the larger picture and address the problem collaboratively.”

Projects like the one in Rochester,

he said, are part of the solution — as is helping build infrastructure in schools so similar projects can be launched elsewhere.

A new sense of possibility

Dean Graziano, coordinator for Extended Learning Opportunities in Rochester schools, is a chief architect of the Rochester program. He worked with Safran, presented the idea to the school superintendent and board, beat the bushes for funding — and is a regular presence in his students’ school days.

“I wanted this more than life,” said the longtime educator who was named the state’s top ELO coordinator in 2017 (and who also holds a law degree). The students in this program have not had the same opportunities as many of their peers, and he sees this program as their chance. “Anyone can get the AP kids a job,” Graziano said, “What about these kids?”

The program is demanding: Students have to maintain passing marks in all of their college and high school courses, and cannot have more

than two absences.

The program is already being studied with an eye to replicating it in other parts of the state.

Michael Lovely is also enrolled in the Rochester program. He remembers being homeless and sleeping under a bridge as a 7-year-old. He now lives with a guardian and plays varsity football in addition to juggling his full course load. He is a diligent note-taker in class, and at night, re-writes all of his notes — twice — to help retain the information.

“Everyone thought I was going to fail,” Lovely said, since some assumed he would follow his parents’ turbulent path. “Once this program is finished, there are so many opportunities that we are going to have. We are all going to help each other until everyone succeeds.”

For many of these kids, this program has provided a new sense of the possible.

“No one ever believed in them,” Graziano said. “Now they believe in themselves. Just give them a taste of success, and they will fly.” ■

“It’s nice to be given this chance. I can advance into anything I would like to be.”

—Aleiah Douglas of Rochester, a student at Spaulding High School, will have half her associate degree finished when she graduates high school.



A WELCOMING STATE FOR ALL

By Allyson Ryder, associate director of Leadership New Hampshire and member of the Governor’s Advisory Council on Diversity and Inclusion

My path to working on diversity and inclusion started in a pretty unlikely place: a small community north of Concord.

Boscawen, where I was born and raised, is the definition of homogeneous. My neighbors, classmates and friends all shared similar identities: white, straight Christian. To be anything else was to be starkly “other.”

I stayed in-state for college at a small, private university, which exposed me to geographic diversity more than anything else. It wasn’t until nearly a decade later, when I began to engage more intentionally around LGBTQ and mass incarceration issues that I started to understand the complexities of peoples’ experience.

Now, I work in a capacity that highlights the importance of diversity. At Leadership New Hampshire, we are committed to developing leaders for New Hampshire who understand that we need everyone pulling together on behalf of our

communities, our children, our workforce and our economy.

Since 1992, Leadership New Hampshire has worked to build a community of informed and engaged leaders through its 10-month program. Each year, about 40 leaders from varying backgrounds participate, learning about our state’s major systems including education, healthcare, environment, the economy, criminal justice, the media, arts and civic discourse. Participants learn from each other, incorporating the perspectives of their fellow associates.

The model has been very successful, but we knew New Hampshire was not the state it was when the program was established in 1992. We recognized that the program needed to reflect those cultural changes. If we hoped to fulfill our mission of creating a community of informed and engaged leaders, we had to invite more people to the table and examine the systemic disparities that create obstacles for some of our neighbors.

In doing so, we join many organizations and people, including Governor Sununu, working to make New Hampshire a more welcoming state for all.

We all need to share responsibility for that work. I have to demonstrate my commitment by weathering missteps and continuously educating myself. This work cannot be done by one person or one identity — it’s a collective effort that requires a vested interest by many. We all need to be having these conversations — even though they are difficult.

My own French-Canadian family found a welcoming place in New Hampshire by meeting others who helped them find places of worship, stable jobs and spaces that celebrated their culture. I am proud to be a part of the efforts to ensure that New Hampshire continues to diversify and that we find ways to ensure that all feel valued in the communities of our great state. ■

THE POWER OF MANY

Giving and working together to make a difference for New Hampshire

PORTSMOUTH SCULPTOR AWARDED ARTIST ADVANCEMENT GRANT

Sculptor and printmaker Sachiko Akiyama of Portsmouth was awarded the 2018 Piscataqua Region Artist Advancement Grant. The \$25,000 grant, one of the largest unrestricted grants to an individual artist in the United States, was created by generous people in the region and has been investing in the work of Seacoast-area artists for 16 years.



A HAND UP

A \$4,000 grant from the Ira S. and Gertrude S. Hubbard Memorial Fund will help the **Fall Mountain Food Shelf** supply food and personal care items for those in need.

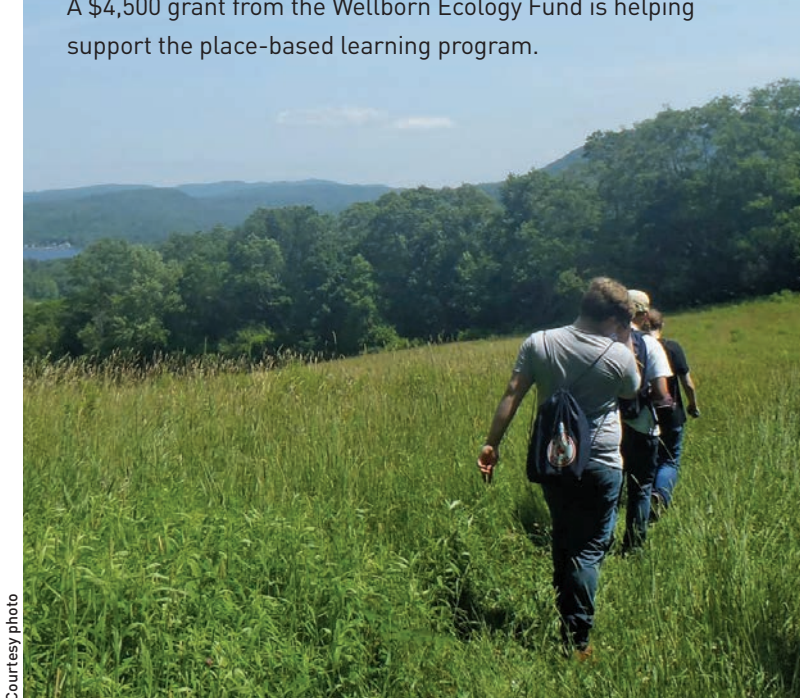


HELPING NH BOYS REACH THEIR POTENTIAL

Sixteen donor-advised fund holders recommended grants totaling \$43,550 in 2018 to help New Hampshire boys attend the **Mayhew Program**. The residential summer program helps at-risk boys believe in themselves, work well with others and strive to reach their potential. The summer program is paired with mentoring during the school year.

LEARNING IN THE FIELD

At the **Enfield Shaker Museum's** Field Ecology program, high school students are learning about local ecology, land use history and the connection between human activity and the environment. A \$4,500 grant from the Wellborn Ecology Fund is helping support the place-based learning program.



A ROOF OVERHEAD

Grants from the KMF Fund, the Stuart S. Draper Charitable Fund and an anonymous fund totaling \$16,500 are helping **Harbor Homes** in its mission to create and provide quality residential, health care and supportive services to individuals and families who are homeless and/or living with behavioral health disorders.



KEEPING KIDS HEALTHY

A \$20,000 grant from the Oliver J. and Dorothy Penniman Hubbard New Futures Fund is helping **Communities for Alcohol- and Drug-Free Youth** keep young people safe and healthy; and a \$5,000 grant from the Pomegranate Fund is helping that organization with energy-efficiency measures. CADY works with schools and communities to promote healthy environments and promising futures for New Hampshire's young people.



THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The **New Hampshire Women's Foundation** published its inaugural report on the Status of Women in New Hampshire with the help of a \$25,000 grant from the Elizabeth B. Carter Fund. The report is the only New Hampshire publication that brings together essential data about New Hampshire women in a single document.

ACLU-NH Policy Director Jeanne Hruska (center) confers with colleagues Gilles Bissonnette and Devon Chaffee at the State House.

TO PROTECT AND DEFEND CIVIL LIBERTIES

Jeanne Hruska, ACLU-NH's policy director, is a policy wonk with a tenacious streak

Jeanne Hruska was leaving the State House after a morning spent conferring urgently with legislators and sitting coiled at the edge of her seat through a series of roll-call votes on high-profile bills.

As she made her way through the State House lobby, she was stopped by one of the most influential Democrats in the New Hampshire Legislature, who thanked her for her work on a controversial piece of legislation. She took a few more steps, and an influential Republican stopped her and thanked her for her work on the same legislation.

Hruska is the policy director for the American Civil Liberties Union of New Hampshire. A grant from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation helped fund the first year of her position.

In an era of hyper-partisanship,

Hruska and her colleagues have proved expert at building alliances across the ideological spectrum. The ACLU of New Hampshire worked with the Catholic Church against the death penalty — and with Planned Parenthood for reproductive rights. They partnered with the Business and Industry Association on a transgender non-discrimination bill. They were allied with Americans for Prosperity on bail reform, and are working with the AFL-CIO on fair-chance hiring and with the American Friends Service Committee on rights for immigrants.

“The thing I am most proud of is that every one of our successes” — including bail reform, transgender non-discrimination, privacy and reproductive rights — “has come as the result of bipartisanship,” Hruska said.

Hruska is a New England-raised, George Washington Law School-educated policy wonk whose favorite three years of education were spent studying constitutional and international law.

She had been working as a senior advisor at the U.S. Department of State, promoting democracy and human rights in central Africa, and coordinating U.S. sanctions policy. Feeling a growing urgency to defend civil rights at home, she left the State Department and joined the ACLU.

Now, she said, “I am fighting for the same values at home that I was fighting for overseas.”

Since joining the ACLU's New Hampshire affiliate, she has presided over what Executive Director Devon Chaffee called “the most productive

legislative session in the ACLU of New Hampshire's history.”

“She has been a transformative addition to our team and has completely elevated the way we do advocacy work. Jeanne fights really hard. She is incredibly tenacious in the best of ways.”

In just a single New Hampshire legislative session, Hruska built coalitions and advocated on a dizzying array of issues.

She has been a quick study in New Hampshire politics: “The notion of ‘we’ll agree to disagree’ means more here than in other places,” she said, “People can work together on certain issues despite differences on others.”

The ACLU works on three fronts: in the courts, in the legislature and at the grassroots.

The organization exists in a pressure cooker of more-or-less constant controversy. A day hardly goes by when the ACLU is not in the news: suing the state over immigration checkpoints or to protect voting rights; helping secure passage of high-profile legislation; opining about privacy rights or free speech for public employees. And much more. (To clear her mind, Hruska boxes — she finds beating up on the heavy bag to be a stress-relieving exercise.)

There is a strong sense of urgency to the work. On issues like LGBTQ rights and voting rights, Chaffee said, “we are seeing an erosion” at the federal level. “We need to make sure we are building protections at the state level as much as we can.”

Chaffee is quick to remind people that both the national ACLU and its New Hampshire affiliate are non-partisan defenders of ideals, not parties or candidates. Allies on one issue may be opponents on another.

“The thing I am most proud of is that every one of our successes has come as the result of bipartisanship.”

— Jeanne Hruska, policy director for the American Civil Liberties Union of New Hampshire

Sometimes the organization's positions are popular, sometimes unpopular. But Hruska and her ACLU colleagues are laser-focused on mission: “preserving the individual rights and liberties guaranteed in the Bill of Rights and the Constitution.” “It is so important that there be an organization that is willing to play that role and to stand up and take the heat when necessary,” Chaffee said.

For 30 years, the ACLU's New Hampshire affiliate was run by Claire Ebel and focused primarily on the First Amendment. The organization now has nine staff members (up from three in 2013) including two full-time attorneys, and is in the process of hiring additional staff. Membership, now at 9,000, has tripled since 2012. (Nationally, ACLU membership has skyrocketed in the past couple years, from 400,000 to 1.84 million.)

Chaffee and the board recognized the need for a policy director who could build relationships and track civil rights and civil liberties issues year-round — not just chase bills when the Legislature was in session.

Hruska traded in her Washington, D.C. digs near the Lincoln Memorial for a dark, asymmetrical office in a converted warehouse in Concord. The smell of Sheetrock dust hangs in the air. Her office window is above eye-level, with a hallway view. On her north wall is a painting of a ballot box locked in a prison cell.

Hruska loves hanging out in the

hallways of the Legislative Office Building, talking to legislators. She does not bemoan the New Hampshire Legislature's unwieldiness (it is the fourth-largest legislative body in the English-speaking world) but relishes the grassroots nature of the work.

“The local level is more important than ever,” Hruska said.

She started a recent day in a meeting with a major trade association, hoping to garner support for “fair-chance hiring,” an ACLU push to get employers to ask prospective employees about criminal records in-person rather than on a check-box form. Hruska argued that prospective employees who are otherwise qualified and have fulfilled the terms of their sentences should not be automatically rejected without a chance to explain their records face-to-face — especially in a state with both a workforce shortage and an opioid crisis. She went on to strategize via phone with ACLU-national's privacy expert in New York. Then she, Chaffee and two staff attorneys sat down with a list of bill titles filed to-date for the next legislative session, to decipher language and triage priorities. The ACLU will ultimately track up to 200 of roughly 1,000 pieces of proposed legislation filed, and work actively on about 50.

Sometimes, Hruska said, “You feel like you're racing the clock — what is the next threat going to be? Are we ready?” ■

LEARN MORE @ WWW.ACLU-NH.ORG



REMEMBERING RYAN

The Bishop family created a fund to honor their youngest son and give life-changing opportunity to kids in need

Ryan's parents Chris and Jeannie; sister-in-law, Sara; and, brother, Christopher. Inset: Ryan Bishop.

Ryan Bishop was an adventurous kid who was happiest outdoors, immersed in the natural world he loved: exploring the woods, fishing, wakeboarding, rock climbing, biking and sitting with friends by campfires. He was a big kid, whose passion, caring and charisma were as large as his 6-foot-5-inch frame.

When Ryan went to college in Utah, he threw himself into the sport of rock climbing and organized countless outdoors trips — bringing friends together to share new experiences.

Ryan died in a canoeing accident in Utah in 2011. He had saved a friend's life during the tragedy, but lost his own. He was just 21. His family and friends did their best to navigate their overwhelming grief.

Ryan's family — his parents, Chris and Jeannie; brother, Christopher, and sister-in-law, Sara — wanted Ryan to be remembered. They decided, even as they mourned, to memorialize him by helping other kids have the types of outdoor adventures and opportunities that Ryan thrived on.

They created the Ryan E. Bishop Outdoor Leadership Fund at the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. Friends and family jumped in to support it. More than 100 people have contributed to the fund with multiyear gifts.

Foundation staff worked to identify organizations that would align with the Bishops' wishes for Ryan's fund.

Since 2011, Ryan's fund has been providing substantial support to

the Kismet Rock Foundation, a North Conway nonprofit that gives kids in need the chance to attend a comprehensive technical rock climbing program for a week each summer for four years.

Kismet, said Christopher, "is an incredible program which helps at-risk kids in a way that few other programs are able to, and it aligns with Ryan's whole persona and outlook."

Kids spend their days scaling rock faces — and learning their own strength. Groups of eight or nine come each week, and live together, family-style, in a home supervised by Kismet staff. For some of the 65 kids who participate each summer, Kismet provides the most consistent family environment they ever experience.

Kids are selected from seven schools in high-need districts — from Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, to Berlin and Manchester, New Hampshire, and Portland, Maine. The kids are recommended by guidance counselors, apply for the program and are interviewed by staff before being accepted. The number of applicants far outnumbers the available spaces.

Thanks to generous grants and donations, the program is completely free for all participants. (Kismet has also received support from the Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund and other funds at the Foundation.)

Chad Laflamme, who directs Kismet, is a youthful, soft-spoken Air Force veteran whose own childhood was much like those of the kids that the program serves.

"The kids who come to the program are good kids who are vulnerable to breaking their contract with society," Laflamme said. "Kids who are looking for opportunity, but don't have access to opportunity."

And those kids' lives are shaped — often profoundly — by the experience,

"Kismet is an incredible program which helps at-risk kids in a way that few other programs are able to, and it aligns with Ryan's whole persona and outlook."

— Christopher Bishop, Ryan's brother

connections and consistency of Kismet.

One day last summer, Kismet teens were geared up and climbing the 500-vertical-foot Cathedral Ledge. Onlookers gathered at the top, cheering as each climber topped onto the ledge.

Andy, 15, of Manchester came over the top wearing a huge smile.

Andy has lived through what he describes as "a lot of bumps in the road." His mother, a food-service worker originally from Honduras, was recently deported.

"They taught me, in rock climbing, to focus," Andy said. He practiced the art of moving his feet from one foothold to another quickly enough to keep from slipping. And then he applied that principle in school. He started

turning assignments in on time. His grades improved, and he even became president of the student council and earned a school trip to Washington, D.C.

His mentors at Kismet, he said, "mentally prepared me" for all of that. He has aspirations to be a chef, and is already enrolled in a culinary arts program.

Makaya, 16, of Berlin, has moved around a lot. Before Kismet, she said, she used to feel clumsy and lack confidence. She had to push herself way (way) outside her comfort zone to climb rock walls. But she did. Now she walks through the world with a new confidence and sure-footedness.

"I learned how strong I was," Mayaka said. "And now I push myself to do things. Now, when an opportunity comes up, even when I am not sure, I do it. I take harder classes. And I choose harder books to read." She has discovered that she loves Shakespeare, has earned high honors and is dreaming of going to the University of California.

Kismet Rock is the kind of program where Ryan Bishop would have loved to be a counselor.

The fund in his name gives life-changing opportunity to kids in need. It is hard to imagine a more appropriate memorial.

"I love the fact," said Chris Bishop, "that Ryan will always be remembered." ■

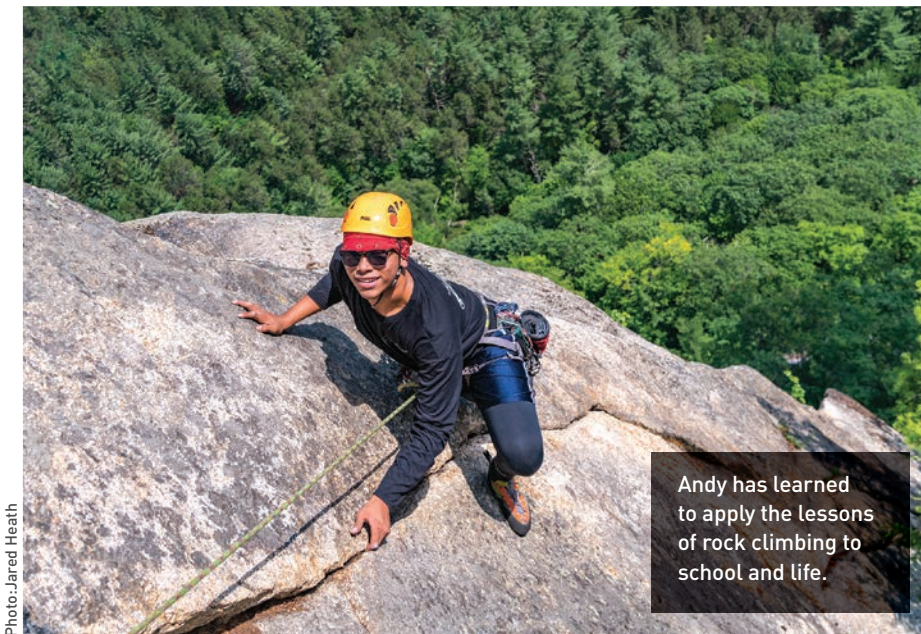


Photo: Jared Heath

Andy has learned to apply the lessons of rock climbing to school and life.

Inspiring the next generation.
It's what Gretchen Carlson is up to.

UP TO THE PROMISE

Gretchen Carlson was a river rat — tooling around the river from the time she could handle a boat, observing every critter that swam and dove and fished.

Now, as program manager at the Gundalow Company, she teaches children about the science and history of Seacoast waterways. And she inspires a whole new generation of river rats.

Onboard the Gundalow Piscataqua, a replica of the barges that moved goods and people around the Piscataqua River watershed starting in the 1600s, Gretchen is all questions to a crew of fourth-graders: “Is it high tide or low tide? Where do phytoplankton get their energy? Do you think seals eat lobster?”

Gretchen is a former elementary school teacher with a graduate degree in climatology; she and her crew of volunteer educators work with about 2,500 kids every year.

On board, youngsters are scientists, navigators, observers — and crew. The philosophy of the Gundalow's hands-on environmental and history education is simple: “If you experience it, you will care about it. If you care about it, you will protect it.” ■

