



THE NEIL AND LOUISE TILLOTSON FUND 2021 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

The people of the North Country's nonprofit sector are facing the combined challenges of our times with tenacity, ingenuity and strength.

They are filling backpacks with nutritious food for children from struggling families to take home for the weekend — so those children can return to school on Monday ready to learn. They are creating outdoor event space, where people can gather safely. They are helping elders learn to use tablet computers to stay connected with loved ones and essential services; providing local farmers with needed equipment; making it possible for more children to spend time on snowshoes and skis; developing and nurturing an informed and civil citizenry by supporting civics education in our schools; installing solar panels to achieve greater energy-efficiency in our communities — and so much more.

In 2021, the Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund made more than \$3.7 million in grants to support such efforts in the North Country and surrounding communities in Québec and Vermont. Another \$60,100 was awarded in scholarships to North Country students.

As we continue to respond to our region's needs, the Tillotson Fund is engaged in strategic planning to create an even more community-driven approach to grantmaking and to serve as resource for the people of the region to dream, innovate, and achieve their ideals for thriving communities. A group of 20 people who live, work and play in the North Country region are helping guide this process.

We have also welcomed Kassie Eafrazi of Berlin and

Jeremy Knowlton of Littleton to the Tillotson Fund's advisory committee. Kassie is the regional mental health administrator for Northern Human Services. She is deeply invested in the well-being and early education of our youngest residents, and volunteers with nonprofits and initiatives working to make our region an even better place for children. Jeremy is the associate director of White Mountain Science, Inc. which operates a mobile STEM lab that brings science, technology, engineering and mathematics education to North Country schools, runs a STEM summer camp program and offers professional development for teachers.

Community input led to the establishment of a new grantmaking program for 2022: DASH grants are micro-grants (from \$250-\$2,000) focused on community revitalization. Need some lumber for raised beds for a community garden? Supplies for a summer program for kids? Now, there is a single-question application for such projects with a turnaround time of three weeks for eligible nonprofits.

The compounded crises of the past two years have tested our communities — and our communities have responded with the strength and resilience they are known for. The Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund will be here to continue to support the North Country region through our shared challenges — and as we revitalize and nurture this place we all love so well.

Tom Deans

Chair, Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund Advisory Committee

Photo: Kassie Eafrazi of Berlin joins the Tillotson Fund's advisory committee. To learn more about the #SmallActs campaign to promote neighbors helping neighbors, please visit: smallactsnorth.com

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 supported by the Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund in 2021.



2021 BY THE NUMBERS

95 GRANTS TO NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS TOTALING \$3,747,664

14 SCHOLARSHIPS TO NH AND VT STUDENTS TOTALING \$60,100

Courtesy Photo



Courtesy Photo

EQUIPMENT GIVES LOCAL FARMS A BOOST

New Hampshire's soil is famous for growing a fresh batch of rocks every year, and yet generations of intrepid farmers have managed to produce everything from corn and rye to tomatoes and eggplants. **Now, farmers in Coös County and Essex County, VT have access to a 10' Great Plains no-till drill thanks to a grant from the Tillotson Fund.** The drill helps farmers to seed fields where conventional tilling is impossible due to the rocky landscape or poor soil quality. The equipment, which is too expensive for many single farmers to buy, is now part of the inventory of the Coös County Conservation District's Equipment Rental Program that multiple farmers can use.

AN INNOVATIVE IDEA FOR HOUSING

Outdoor recreation is a huge driver of the North Country's economy. But the people who work in that industry — along with other service-sector workers — have a nearly impossible time finding housing. New Hampshire's state vacancy rate as of July 2021 was less than 1 percent for market-rate units. In Coös County, that rate was 0.6 percent. And rents have been steadily climbing while wages have not kept pace. A new consortium, coordinated by The Conservation Fund, has come together to try an innovative solution: Employer-assisted housing. The consortium — of nonprofits, businesses, philanthropy and lenders — aims to build new units of affordable housing, with some support from businesses, for people who work in the outdoor recreation industry. **The coordination work (and the housing needs assessment which informed the project) are supported by the Tillotson Fund.** The Conservation Fund is working on site selection and funding for the first project, planned for the Gorham/Berlin area.

Photo by Cheryl Senter



MOUNTAIN CLUB GOES SOLAR

The Randolph Mountain Club maintains more than 100 miles of hiking trails in the White Mountains for public use, plus cabins, shelters and platforms for hikers. Its high-altitude cabins also house year-round caretakers who participate in search-and-rescue missions in the mountains. **A grant is helping the group install solar power and a heat pump in its lodge that houses trail crews and caretakers.** The installation is estimated to save the club more than \$2,000 a year in propane and electricity costs and reduce its carbon footprint by three tons of carbon emissions per year.

Courtesy Photo

A NEW SPACE TO GATHER

The Great North Woods Center for the Arts in Columbia provides an eight-acre arts, cultural and civic space in the refurbished Shrine of Our Lady of Grace in Columbia. The center features outdoor performance and community spaces, as well as indoor stages and facilities. **An unrestricted operating grant is helping to build out this regional space for community gatherings.**



Courtesy Photo

LET THE KIDS PLAY OUTSIDE

Children from Canaan, VT and surrounding communities are out on snowshoes and cross-country skis, and are building snow forts and sculptures at recess and in after-school programs. **A grant is helping to fund equipment (and a storage shed), which encourages kids to play together safely outdoors during the winter, increase physical activity and spend more time in nature.**



Courtesy Photo



Courtesy Photo

NO CHILD HUNGRY

Children whose families struggle with food insecurity are being provided with backpacks full of nutritious food on Fridays to see them through weekends and holidays. **Grants to the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire have supported the Backpack Program in Coös County elementary schools since 2017.** The volunteer-run program continued to supply weekend food throughout pandemic-related school closures. Before the program began, teachers reported children returning to school on Monday hungry and unable to concentrate on their studies. About 225 children now receive food regularly through the program.



Courtesy Photo

YOUNG PEOPLE TAKE THE LEAD ON SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

Students from White Mountains Regional High School have spearheaded a project to convert their school to LED and motion-sensor lighting — reducing their school's carbon footprint while saving the district money. The students secured a \$107,400 USDA grant plus incentives from Eversource to support the work, which is projected to save the district nearly \$13,000 annually. A Gorham High School student, meanwhile, has worked with a surveyor on an elevation study and map for the site at the Edward Fenn Elementary School where the district plans to install solar panels. The installation is projected to offset 80 percent of the electricity costs of the school. **The students and schools have had organizational and technical support from Melissa Elander, the “energy circuit rider” for the North Country, whose work with Clean Energy NH is supported by the Tillotson Fund.**



Courtesy Photo

TECH KEEPS ELDERS CONNECTED

For many, the internet is the way to stay connected and stave off isolation during a pandemic. This has been particularly true for elders. **A grant is helping the Centre d'action benevole de la MRC de Coaticook in Coaticook, Québec to provide internet tutoring designed specifically for elders and underserved populations and to maintain a program to loan tablet computers to people who need them.** The instruction and tablets allow people to communicate and to participate in a variety of virtual programming offered by the Centre.



Courtesy Photo

PRESERVING DEMOCRACY THROUGH EDUCATION

Democracy is not guaranteed — to survive, it has to be participated in, nurtured and valued. But current trends are concerning: In a 2017 Harvard study, one-quarter of millennials agreed that “choosing leaders through free elections is not important.” And a recent study by the RAND Corporation found that 81 percent of U.S. social studies teachers do not feel well-prepared to support students' civic development. NH Civics works to develop, nurture, and maintain an informed, engaged and civil citizenry by promoting civic learning as an essential part of K-12 schooling. **A two-year grant is supporting civics education in middle schools in Coös and northern Grafton counties, part of the NH Civics' drive to reach communities with the fewest resources.** Two Groveton sixth-graders, Brooke Gagnon and Delainey Park, who made speeches about important issues in their communities as part of the program's “Mikva Challenge” were selected to have their work showcased on a national stage. Teachers are receiving professional training to help them inspire and educate young people to be active participants in a healthy democracy.



Teaching trades — and life lessons

Eugene Reid's phone rang. The former student calling had been part of Reid's Building Trades Program at Canaan Memorial High School, then went on to an apprenticeship program in sheet metal fabrication. He had come from a family that struggled with poverty. Now he is working a union job with a fabricators' union — and likely out-earning his former teacher.

"I just want to thank you," the young man said. "I love my job, I am doing well — and I have you to thank."

Eugene Reid is a self-described "shop teacher" who has shaped the lives of generations of students. He is the recipient of the 2021 Louise Tillotson Teaching Fellowship, a \$10,000 stipend to support excellent public school teachers and reward their commitment to public schools in the North Country.

In Reid's "Home Repair and Maintenance" class, students learn to wire switches, install toilets, maintain hot water heaters — and much more. In his Building Construction and Restoration Carpentry program, students restore entire historic homes. Every student who walks into his room is met with the life lessons on Reid's chalkboard: "Be kind. Be responsible. Be respectful. Be safe. Never watch someone struggle. If you are on time, you are already 10 minutes late."

Reid said that he is seeing increased interest in the trades among his students.

"I know I make a difference," he said, "I have students who are doing very well and living well-adjusted lives — and it's because they went into a trade."

Photo by Cheryl Senter

Early childhood care is critical infrastructure

Devon and Morgan Phillips ran toward the emergency.

At the height of the pandemic in 2020, Devon, a school nurse, reenlisted to work 12-hour shifts in the emergency department at the hospital in Colebrook. Morgan, a paramedic, was working 24-hour ambulance shifts in Berlin.

Devon and Morgan were able to care for their community when they were needed most because the child care center that their kids attend stayed open to care for their children.

Colebrook Country Day School is a member of the Coös Director Network, which provides operations and business counseling to all 13 licensed childcare centers the county. All 13 Coös centers remain open, despite pandemic-related challenges that have led to closures of early-childhood centers around the state. The Tillotson Fund is a long-term supporter of the Network.

Devon would drop the kids at the center at 6:30 a.m.

"There is no way we could have continued to do our jobs without child care," she said.

The centers provided families of essential workers with constancy, comfort and familiarity during a time of unprecedented challenges.

Quality child care is part of the critical infrastructure that makes our communities run. Just ask Devon and Morgan Phillips — and every sick person they have cared for.



Photo by Cheryl Senter



NEW HAMPSHIRE CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

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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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