

# HUMAN SERVICES

## SENIOR SERVICES DIVISION / COUNCIL ON AGING

Eileen Bogle, Interim Director

The mission of the Concord Council on Aging (COA), is to improve the quality of life of Concord's residents 60 years of age and older by assisting them to maintain their health, independence, and dignity. This is accomplished by providing activities and services that enhance physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual well-being. The COA also engages family and friends and local resources to ensure that residents may remain full participants in the life of the Concord community.

The COA continues to strive to fulfill this mission by offering comprehensive programs and services, supported by the dedicated Council on Aging Board, staff and volunteers.

2023 census data indicates that there are 5527 Concord residents 60 years of age and older, reflecting an eight percent increase from the January 2022 Town Census. As in prior years, it is notable that residents aged 60 and older represent approximately 33.5% of the total population of Concord, more than double the statewide average of 16.2%.

With more than 2500 residents connecting with the Council on Aging in the past year, the following is a sample of the types of programs that engaged:

- 201 fitness classes were offered during the year both in person and hybrid.
- 354 people borrowed 858 pieces of durable loan equipment.
- 344 special events were hosted.
- 173 educational programs were delivered.
- 197 seniors began participating for the first time.
- 220 seniors used the van service and received 7566 rides.
- 604 seniors were assisted by Outreach/Social Services with nearly 9,000 service interactions.

### **Coronavirus Impact**

2023 was notable for COA program re-emergence with options for virtual, in person and hybrid programs evolving. The use of technology continued to be a focus for staff and participants with an increased awareness for the importance of the many ways a Senior Center connects with residents. COA van transportation resumed with much enthusiasm as ridership returned to pre-Covid levels.

### **Outreach and Social Services**

Our professional staff provides support, advice, assessment, consultation, and referrals to seniors and their support network of family, friends, and neighbors while adhering to strict standards of confidentiality. Calling on their extensive and specialized knowledge of resources, the staff assists with the navigation and management of the physical, emotional, cognitive and financial aspects of life. Strong working relationships with various town departments including, but not limited to, the police and fire departments and the Board of Health as well as local medical providers, aging service access points, housing authorities and agencies that distribute public benefits, are maintained to provide comprehensive services.

Our geriatric health nurse works in collaboration with the social services and outreach team to provide support and in partnership with the board of health, local pharmacies and local medical providers to coordinate programs and town wide vaccination clinics.

This outreach, social services and wellness team provides an extremely comprehensive array of services to address relevant needs of older residents. Support groups led by the COA Social Services Supervisor meet weekly and offer the opportunity to address issues of isolation, caregiving, and anxiety. During 2023, support groups were an ongoing and vital aspect of social services.

### **Wellness and Fitness**

COA wellness and fitness opportunities such as yoga, aerobics, tai chi, and strength & flexibility

classes continue as essential elements to the overall health of Concord seniors. In 2023, these programs were offered in person at the COA with options for virtual participation. Weekly health clinics and screenings, as well as educational programs resumed with a primary focus on in-person participation. Both hearing loss and vision loss support groups continued as virtual programming offering information and resources as needed

### **Social, Recreational, and Educational Opportunities**

The opportunity to interact with peers, stay intellectually active, and feel valued and needed by the community is recognized as key to emotional and physical health. A typical week provides the opportunity to sign up for informational programs, day trips, classes, movies, parties, computer and cell phone tutoring, discussion groups, art workshops, book groups, cooking classes, games, and music classes. Working with community partners, programs such as Ask a Lawyer, the SHINE program and AARP tax assistance are vital to the COA community. We continue to seek ideas from participants towards the goal of enhancing program options. A monthly newsletter is produced by staff that details the many choices of activities and services.

### **Transportation**

Our vans provide local transportation Monday through Friday for seniors who no longer drive or who have temporary limitations. In addition to providing transportation around town to medical appointments, banks, pharmacies, grocery stores, hospitals, etc. we continue to provide transportation to the Annual Town meeting and for voting on Election Day. We typically have two vans on the road daily to meet demand.

### **Volunteers**

Volunteers greatly enhance and support the Concord COA offering approximately 4500 hours of their time and dedication. This dedication allowed the COA to offer more programs and activities. The variety of volunteer offerings include Harvey's Treasure Chest Gift Shop whose proceeds are used to sponsor COA events; the volunteer seamstresses, blood pressure clinic volunteers, host desk volunteers, musical offerings, volunteers to drive to medical appointments; the

Art Space Committee volunteers who curated eight exhibitions in 2023 that delight all who enter. Additionally, with support of volunteers, the COA offers technology tutoring and 58 donated refurbished laptops. The weekly lunch is possible with the help of volunteers who support the staff to ensure that a hot and tasty meal is offered each Wednesday. The lockbox program with the Concord Police and Fire Departments is also supported by longtime COA volunteers. In the planning stages for the upcoming year is the development of a volunteer handyman program.

Community groups partner with the COA to enrich programs throughout the year including the Friends of the Aging, the Lions Club, the Rotary Club, Concord schools, and youth groups, the Garden Club, the National Charity league of Middlesex County, the Concord Service Squad are among a few of the organizations that are integral to the COA's vitality.

With much appreciation and gratitude, we thank our volunteers' efforts and talents, supporting our ability to offer a rich mixture of programming.

### **Publicity and social media**

Conscious of the many ways that seniors connect with technology, the COA uses interactive technologies like X, Facebook, and You Tube to build awareness of and serve as a reminder of the energy and offerings at the COA. As the population shifts from paper -first to digital first, the COA manages the task of USPS mailed monthly newsletters and electronically mailed ones.

### **Financial Support**

In addition to receiving funding from the Town's General Fund, the COA is grateful to the following funding sources for their commitment to Concord seniors.

Concord-Carlisle Community Chest: Grant allocations provide partial funding for the Social Service Supervisor, and Outreach Coordinator  
Executive Office of Elder Affairs: The Formula Grant, based on the number of seniors in our community, provides full or partial funding for the following positions: Geriatric Health Nurse, Outreach Coordinator, and Activity Coordinator.

Harvey Wheeler Treasure Chest Gift Shop: Thanks to the many residents who donate quality goods for re-sale, the patrons who shop there, and the many dedicated volunteers, proceeds are used to support many COA programs.

COA Gift Account: We are grateful to the many people who choose to donate to the COA gift account. With the assistance of donations, we can provide scholarships for the cost of an event or trip to seniors who could not otherwise afford to attend.

### **COA Staff and Board members**

The dedicated COA staff are remarkable individuals who share a common goal of providing excellent service to Concord residents. In 2023, Director Ginger Quarles retired, and Assistant Director Lauren Barretta also left her position. The strength of the staff is such that the quality of excellence stayed constant throughout these leadership changes.

The COA Board, which acts in an advisory capacity to the Director, consists of nine full members appointed for three-year terms and two associate members appointed for one-year terms by the Town Manager. Members of the COA Board serve as liaisons to the following committees: Disability Commission, Housing, Board of Health, Concord After Sixty, Public Works, PEG Access and Minuteman Senior Services. Board members for Fiscal Year 2023 were: Christina Kendrick (Chair), Gracia de la Cruz (Secretary), Harold Carmel, Julia Gallagher, Kathryn Hanley, Teresa Stokes, Paul Levine, Susanna Bedell and Tracey Zellmann. Linda Escobedo serves as the liaison from the Select Board and Bernice Fousek serves as the liaison from the Concord Housing Authority.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICES**

Bonny Wilbur,  
Community Services Coordinator

The Community Services Coordinator (CSC) provides information and referrals to residents seeking financial and social services support. She assists residents in accessing a broad range of local, state, and federal support related to parenting, food insecurity, finances and budgeting, housing, legal assistance, and physical and mental health. She also manages programs throughout the year in support of low-income families. Services are confidential and open to all Concord residents under the age of 60.

The CSC works collaboratively with many local, state, and federal agencies and organizations. Locally, she partners with Concord Recreation (financial aid for childcare and camp), the Concord-Carlisle Community Chest (supports residents in numerous ways, including through their When In Need fund, as well as a camp scholarship program), Concord's Hugh Cargill Trust (financial support), the Silent Fund (camp scholarships as well as holiday support), Open Table (combating food insecurity), Gaining Ground's Food For Families (fresh produce throughout the summer), the Freemasons of Corinthian Lodge (significant financial support during the holidays and year-round assistance to children through their Masonic Angel Fund), and Concord Cares (help with heating costs). She also works in close collaboration with Concord's houses of worship, as well as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Other nearby agencies working in collaboration with this office include First Connections, Household Goods, Minute Man Arc for Human Services, Domestic Violence Services Network, Eliot Community Services, Advocates, Inc., Beacon Santa, and the Salvation Army. At the state and federal level, the CSC collaborates with the South Middlesex Opportunity Council, MA Department of Transitional Assistance, the Statewide Head Injury Program, the Project for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness, MA Department of Developmental Services, National Alliance on Mental Illness, MA Women, Infants

and Children Program, MassHealth, MA Rehab Commission, and MassHire.

On March 1, 2023, the MA Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) opened an emergency homeless shelter at the former Best Western Hotel in town. The social services agency, Making Opportunities Count (MOC), was contracted to provide on-site case management, and coordinate direct care. The CSC, together with a number of other town departments, as well as the Concord-Carlisle Community Chest, worked together to help MOC facilitate a smooth transition from hotel to emergency shelter. DHCD plans to lease all rooms at the Best Western on an annual basis.

The CSC manages a Back-to-School Backpack Program which provides donated school supplies and backpacks to students in need. This year, students living at the Best Western shelter were included in the program. A total of 75 backpacks were donated. The McWalter Volunteer Insurance Agency provided the majority of new backpacks and school supplies for needy children for the start of their new school year.

The CSC also manages camp scholarship programs offered by Concord's Silent Fund and the Concord-Carlisle Community Chest. In 2023, a total of \$17,500 was awarded in camp scholarships, allowing 25 children from low-income families to attend camp.

During the holiday season, the CSC collaborates with the Concord-Carlisle Community Chest on the annual Holiday Gift Card Program. Gift cards amounting to \$990 were donated by town employees, local merchants, and Concord residents. As in past years, the Freemasons of the Corinthian Lodge provided the majority of the gift cards, this year donating \$6,000 in holiday support. In addition, the Silent Fund provided cash gifts totaling over \$10,000 to 99 low-income households.

The CSC attended many meetings and trainings throughout the year. She is a member of the Concord Public Schools' Mental Health Team, in addition to the Regional Outreach Coordinators' Group. She joined the Municipal Immigration

Support Network in 2023. She is a member of Concord's Behavioral Health Collaborative, as well as the Concord At Risk team, comprised of representatives from the Department of Public Health, the Council on Aging, and Concord's Police Department. In addition, she joined the Library Social Work Collaborative and attended a training titled The Housing Crisis and Migrants in MA: What Librarians Should Know.

She was invited to speak at the Society of St. Vincent de Paul's monthly meeting regarding her role in town, and how the St. Vincent de Paul volunteers can best coordinate their efforts to assist needy residents. The CSC also presented to library staff on her role, and how public libraries can best connect residents in need to town resources. She also contributed to the Concord Municipal Utilities Residential Assistance and Collections Round Table on how town departments can best coordinate efforts to assist residents in arrears on their electric bills.

The CSC also attended three Public Advocacy Trainings, sponsored by the MA Law Reform Institute. The first was on Helping Individuals with Disabilities Understand and Advocate for their Rights. The second focused on Assisting Families Experiencing Homelessness. And the third was titled The End to Extra COVID SNAP Funds: What to Do.

She also attended a meeting sponsored by the MA Municipal Association titled A Guide to Affordable Housing: Separating Fact from Fiction. She attended an Emerson Health Community Benefits Open Forum which provided updates on how Emerson Hospital is coordinating with DHCD to provide healthcare to the families at the Best Western shelter. In addition, she attended a webinar training on MassHealth Renewals for Children and Families. She attended an information session sponsored by the National Alliance on Mental Illness on The New Community Behavioral Health Centers for Those in Mental Health or Substance Use Crisis. And she attended a "Quarterly Tea" with the MA Office on Disability where Service Animals in Public Settings was discussed.

Finally, she attended the grand opening of Kiwi Recovery, an outpatient addiction and mental health

treatment center for adolescents and young adults, which opened in Concord this year. She also attended the opening of a newly renovated, state-funded, 3-bedroom handicap unit in town, managed by the Concord Housing Authority.

The Town of Concord Social Services Resource Guide, produced by this office, is available on the Town's website at <http://www.concordma.gov/community> and hard copies are available in various locations throughout the town.

The Community Services Coordinator's office is located at 55 Church Street. Residents are welcome to contact Bonny Wilbur, Community Services Coordinator, via email at [bwilbur@concordma.gov](mailto:bwilbur@concordma.gov) or by phone at 978-318-3034 for assistance.

## **CONCORD LOCAL CULTURAL COUNCIL**

Betsy Levinson, chair  
Anita Tekle, treasurer  
Tooey Rogers, clerk  
Ha Richmond  
Amy Beamer  
Robert Gross  
Hilary Taylor

The local Cultural Council had a very busy season in 2023 as the local arts community reemerged from the COVID pandemic. We received 47 applications for grants, a figure that was up significantly from the previous years. The Massachusetts Cultural Council awarded Concord \$7,000 which is the same amount as in previous years. The Town of Concord, through the Town Manager's office, added to the state grant by giving the LCC \$2,000. That figure is consistent with past years as well. The 47 applications sought \$29,705 in grant funds. Concord applicants, who have preference, requested \$16,605.

This year, due to the effects of the pandemic, some organizations were not able to have their programs and thereby did not apply for reimbursement, so we had \$14,329 to give out. Our goals remain

consistent: to support local arts organizations in all areas, from chorus performances, to theater, literature, dance, children's concerts and art exhibits and a wide range of adult programs. We delight in reading all applications because they all reveal the depth and vigor of the arts community in Concord and surrounding towns. New last year was a reception for grant recipients in May at the Concord Art Association, and we intend to continue this in the spring of 2024 as a way to increase our visibility. We feel a strong arts community adds to Concord's economic vitality.

In 2024, we hope to see a larger grant from the state and from the town. With an increase in the number of applications, we would like to increase our ability to support local arts. We meet in the fall, starting in September with a back-to-work gathering, then three or four meetings after the deadline for grant submissions. We make our final decisions in December, and send out letters of grant amounts to those applicants we approve, as well as rejections to those organizations that do not meet the guidelines established by the Mass Cultural Council. We are eager to support the arts community and look forward to the 2024 applications.

## CONCORD COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES ANNUAL REPORT 2023

During 2023 the Commission on Disabilities continued to follow our two main purposes of being a resource to the Town and businesses as well as helping resolve concerns of our citizens.

### Town of Concord

The Commission focused its concerns around safety in two areas, the Sudbury Street crossing next to the library and Junction Park's use as a thoroughfare for bikes using the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. We took part in the assessment of the Sudbury Street crossing held by the Town's Director of Transportation and supported several options to keep the crossing safer including a raised crosswalk and a crossing light. The Town is currently considering the next steps for this situation. In terms of Junction Park, the Commission has long standing concerns about the safety of all people using the park for recreation. There has not yet been a collision involving a bike, but one could mean serious injury for both the recreational user as well as the bike rider. There have been a number of design options offered, and in the fall the Town sponsored an outdoor meeting to review placement of planters and how they might calm traffic. This review included two members who use adaptive mobility devices or bikes, and they gave valuable perspectives on how the placement would or would not work. At this time, the Town has put the planters on hold until spring.

### Businesses

The Commission put together a questionnaire about which businesses offered the best accessibility and which were not very accessible. This was completed by members and provided some valuable information. We want to be a resource to businesses who may want advice about how to solve their accessibility difficulties. We also supported Mimi Graney and her Age Friendly Concord survey. Many needs and wants of older adults align closely with those of people with disabilities, so the Commission expects to continue to support Mimi's efforts.

### Citizens

The Commission responded to and worked to resolve a variety of issues brought to it by citizens.

The most concerning is still not resolved, that being safety of the railroad crossing, especially in West Concord where a gentleman using a wheelchair has gotten stuck in the gap in the tracks on two occasions. The MBTA has made improvements up to ADA specifications, however the gap is still wide enough to allow the front wheels of a wheelchair (or walker, stroller, high heel, etc.) to get caught. We continue to focus on this concern and work with the Town to seek a better resolution. The Commission also focused on concerns of people with hearing loss who need better access at public meetings. Equipment has been purchased and the Town is working to educate staff members in how to use the equipment. An issue we worked on along with the Acton Commission on Disabilities is transportation home for people with disabilities after they are transported to the Emergency Department at Emerson Hospital. The social work staff at Emerson can assist with this issue if people have no way to get back home. We were contacted by members of the public on two issues, a school bus drop-off for a visually impaired child and a concern about access at a Concord restaurant. We worked to understand and resolve these issues.

Finally we were contacted by the Acton adaptive bike program to provide information on the adaptive bikes they have available at Nara Park.

## HUGH CARGILL TRUST COMMITTEE

Robert Abraham, Co-Chair  
Elisabeth Brosens, Co-Chair  
Katharine Berger  
Lucy Rosborough  
Hester Schnipper

In 2023, the Hugh Cargill Trust Committee (HCTC) continued to implement the mission of the Trust, established over 212 years ago by Concordian Hugh Cargill. The Trust meets monthly and its purpose is to provide short-term emergency financial assistance to residents of the town. The Committee acts on behalf of the Select Board in receiving and reviewing requests for assistance and in distributing funds in accordance with the provisions of the Trust. Concord residents request aid by leaving a phone message at the Town House: 978-318-3100, ext. 2030 or by email at [hctc@concordma.gov](mailto:hctc@concordma.gov). All requests are confidential.

The HCTC is also responsible for distributing financial support from several other funds in addition to the Hugh Cargill Trust. These funds include the Concord Municipal Light Plant (CMLP), Concord Cares, the Property Tax Relief Fund and the Silent Fund. A total of \$139,388 in donations was received in 2023 for all funds and a total of \$127,552 was distributed. These generous contributions are crucial to the Committee's efforts to meet the ever-increasing needs of Concord residents. The breakdown for each fund follows below:

- **Hugh Cargill Trust:** Private donors gave \$59,692 to the Hugh Cargill Trust Fund in 2023. The Committee approved approximately 80 grants totaling \$30,866 from this fund, and \$5,000 was transferred to Concord Cares. Typically grants were made for the payment of rent, medical expenses, water, telephone, and car insurance.
- **CMLP Fund:** The Concord Municipal Light Plant donated \$10,000 to the CMLP Fund. Approximately 30 grants totaling \$9,104 were made in 2023.
- **Concord Cares:** A total of \$2,219 was granted to 6 Concord citizens in need of emergency fuel

assistance. Requests are granted by the Committee as well as by the Community Services Coordinator, the Police Department, the Fire Department, and the Council on Aging.

- **Property Tax Relief Fund:** In 2023, the Select Board designated the HCTC to incorporate the roles and responsibilities of the Tax Relief Committee, which was disbanded. The HCTC administers the fund from monies raised in response to the annual appeal. Donations to this fund totaled \$37,360 in 2023, approximately 60 residents received a reduction in their real estate tax bill, and the total tax relief given in 2023 was \$73,125.
- **Silent Fund:** In 2017 the Select Board designated the HCTC to administer the Silent Fund. This fund supports summer camp tuition for Concord children as well as gifts during the winter holiday season. \$23,900 was distributed by the Silent Fund to over 100 families in 2023.

The Committee continues to make known its existence and its mission through local communications such as the Concord Bridge and the Adult & Continuing Education publications, the Community Services Coordinator, the Concord Housing Authority, the Council on Aging, the Recreation Department, the Community Chest, Open Table, local clergy, and other local groups.

In light of the current economic conditions, the Committee anticipates 2024 to be another difficult year for many residents. We welcome private donations to continue the mission of providing short-term, emergency assistance to Concord residents. Donations may be sent to the Hugh Cargill Trust Committee at the Town House, P.O. Box 535, Concord, MA 01742. Checks may be written to the Town of Concord. If you would like to make a donation specifically to one of the funds mentioned above, please be sure to note the fund name on the Memo line of the check. All contributions are tax-deductible.

## CONCORD FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMITTEE

### *Members*

Laura Klein (Chair)  
Lindsay Howard  
Sara Pacelle  
Pamela Ressler  
Farhanah Sheets  
James Vahey  
Mary-Wren vanderWilden  
Dee Clarke (Associate Member)

The Library Committee is appointed by the Select Board. Committee members serve for staggered three-year terms and work with the Library Director to help maintain the Library's financial stability and well-being, provide short-term and long-range planning support, support policy development and update existing policies, as needed. The Library Committee also works to enhance patrons' experience using the Library, consider and implement new technologies to enhance services, and facilitate the work of the Library staff. The Committee promotes the Library's leadership in organizing active programming for all ages and supports community sustainability efforts through education and organizational practice.

### Director

In December 2021, we welcomed Emily Smith as the new Library Director. We appreciated Emily's enthusiasm and expertise throughout 2023, particularly as the Library expanded its services and programming and expanded into its new and renovated spaces including a new Makerspace.

### New Makerspace

The Innovation & Communications staff were excited to open the Workshop makerspace to the public beginning Saturday, June 10. This space was made possible by the generous support of the Concord Free Public Library Corporation. The Makerspace offered many different programs over the last 6 months and the Library Committee offered full support.

### 150 Celebration

The Library celebrated its 150th anniversary. The celebration kicked off with a joint exhibition

between the William Munroe Special Collections and the Concord Museum called "A Perpetual Invitation: 150 Years of Art at the Concord Free Public Library". Special Collections worked in deep collaboration with the Concord Museum to bring together this incredible exhibition. Congratulations to all. On October 1st, there was a celebration at the Town House, a parade and speakers at the Library. State and Town officials, as well as representatives from Library groups, and keynote speaker John Palfrey (President of the MacArthur Foundation) spoke. The event was very well attended. Congratulations to the Library staff and all who organized and supported this wonderful town event. Finally, a new Special Collections exhibition was opened in newly renovated Munroe Gallery about the history of the Library, specifically the renovations to the buildings and the staff over the past 150 years.

### Library Hours

In late 2022 and for all of 2023, the Library reopened on Sundays. This returns the Library fully to pre-Covid operating hours. The Library Committee congratulates all Library staff on the tremendous job everyone has done supporting the community during this difficult time.

### Library Policies

In our role as an advisory board to the Library Director, the Library Committee reviewed and approved revisions to several Library policies in 2023. Policies were updated in order to reflect current best practices and to ensure that policies evolve with the changing physical space of the Library, emerging technologies, and the needs of the Concord community.

In 2023, the Committee supported the opening of the Workshop makerspace as well as the new meeting rooms and community spaces. We also approved updates to policies related to the Workshop and meeting rooms usage as well as circulation, direct-to-your-home service, use of the teen lounge, and photography. We also collaborated with Library staff on the development of a new Collection Development policy. This serves as the basis for Library decisions related to selecting, curating, and weeding items from the Library's collection, including the Library of Things. The

Committee also worked with the Library Director to discontinue policies that were no longer needed or covered by other new policies.

All Library policies are published on the Library's website.

### Strategic Plan

The Library Committee worked on updating the Strategic Plan this year for the Library which runs until 2026. Starting in 2025, we will undertake a broader strategic planning process incorporating the use of new Library space and enhanced services, such as the Workshop makerspace. The Committee will start gathering input and feedback from the Library staff and the community on programming and services available in the new Library space that will help define the strategic plan for 2026 and beyond.

### Committee Members

In the summer of 2023, Krysten Morganti and Kathleen Reidy rolled off the Library Committee after many years of service. We extend our deepest

gratitude to Krysten and Kathleen for their work with the Committee and their dedication to the Library and the town of Concord. In September, we welcomed two new Committee Members, James Vahey and Pam Ressler, and Associate Member Dee Clarke.

We are grateful to the Library Corporation for continuing to participate in our monthly meetings through a Trustee representative. This collaboration between the Corporation and Committee ensures that the Library is best positioned to meet the needs of our community, which was especially important throughout the expansion project this year. They are welcome guests and valued partners.

We are also grateful to the community members, observers, and speakers who have attended our meetings this year to ensure that the Library continues to meet the needs of our patrons and our Town. Open meetings are held on the third Tuesday of the month at 6:30 in the Trustees Room at the Main Library or on Zoom. We welcome and encourage interested members of the community to attend.



*October 1, 2023 Concord Free Public Library's 150th Anniversary: Library Staff, Friends of the Library, and others*

*Left to Right – Back: Stephan Bader, Anne Irza-Leggat, Barbara Gugliuzza, Ricky Sirois, Erick Gordy, Emily Lobono, Anke Voss, Andi Graceson, Laura Mills*

*Left to Right – Middle: Lara Wilson, Michelle John, Emily Smith, Jan Turnquist, John Boynton, Sofia Ghannam, Madhavi Obbani, Christiana Urbano, Jessie Hopper, Rachel D'Amore-Bonish*

*Left to Right – Front: Karen Ahearn, Hector Arana-Ruano, Matt Boger, Richard Fahlander, Rebecca Lemaitre*

## CONCORD FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION

Emily Smith, Library Director

The Concord Free Public Library celebrated 150 years of serving the Concord community this year. On October 1, 2023 the Main Library was festooned with fall leaves, flowers, and greenery from Concord residents' gardens, artfully installed by Jeanne Hamilton and Stephanie Haims of the Concord Garden Club, recreating the decorations at the original dedication 150 years ago. This momentous occasion was commemorated by Concord Selectboard Chair Henry Dane reading a proclamation, as well as State Representative Simon Cataldo and State Senator Mike Barrett presenting a Joint Resolution declaring it Concord Free Public Library Day across the Commonwealth. Library Trustee John Boynton portrayed Ralph Waldo Emerson and Orchard House Executive Director Jan Turnquist portrayed Louisa May Alcott as they led a parade of Minute Men and citizens from the Town House through the center of town to the Main Library Lawn. Parade goers carried celebratory posters and flags made in the library's Workshop. Additional remarks were shared by Library Committee Chair Laura Klein, Friends of the Library Vice President Matt Boger, and Library Corporation President Sherry Litwack. John Palfrey, President of the MacArthur Foundation, provided an inspirational keynote address in support of democracy. The festivities continued with cake, music by the Concord Carlisle High School Pep Band, and activities including mailing commemoratively post-marked vintage postcards.

The Library also celebrated the anniversary year with a blockbuster after-hours party. Staff created book lists of best sellers from the past 150 years and Randall Warniers of the Friends led a lecture on 150 years of cinematic history. A humorous selfie station provided opportunities to take photos with William Munroe, Louisa May Alcott, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry David Thoreau sporting sunglasses and celebrating the irreverent theme of "Getting Lit Since 1873."

### Circulation

Library patrons checked out a combined total of 397,675 items in 2023. Staff created monthly themed displays highlighting collections and services, and added a new bulletin board to spotlight museum passes and Friends

programs. The puzzle swap, community puzzle table, magazine exchange, and summertime theme weeks saw high participation. A new Circulation Selectors group launched, allowing more staff to select adult fiction books. Staff also established the Library Staff Green Team, which contributes to the Sustainable Libraries Initiative Certification process, the new Library Climate Corner Newsletter, and helped migrate to new eco-friendly receipt paper.

### Reference Services

The Reference Department offered research assistance, programs, technology assistance, notary services, and inter-library loan services. Librarians answered 3,591 reference questions, booked 2,033 meeting room reservations, and assisted 1,337 patrons with technology questions. Over 3,000 patrons attended 120 in-person and virtual programs including the annual Concord Festival of Authors, weekly Thursday Morning Meditation, theater productions, lectures and storytelling events. Staff wished Deborah Yong well in her retirement, celebrated the promotion of Reni Cunningham to Circulation Supervisor, and welcomed librarians Michelle John and Bethany Doane-Sharma.

### Innovation and Communication

In June 2023, the Innovation and Communications department launched public access to the Workshop, a free, all-ages makerspace open to all Minuteman Library card holders. In its first 6 months of operations, the Workshop has loaned more than 700 tools to the community, from 3D printers to sewing machines to Cricut™ cutting machines. The Workshop also hosted more than 1,800 patrons at over 100 hands-on workshops and classes. The Library's board game collection was expanded, providing more than 700 games for Concord patrons of all ages to be borrow and take home.

### Youth Services

The Children's Library continued to expand on its offerings for families in 2023 and enjoyed an especially busy year. In October alone, 60 programs served almost 2,000 attendees. Staff welcomed new Head of Youth Services Sara Dempster and Danielle Arana as Library Assistant. Over 5,000 children (including weekly campers from Concord Recreation) participated in programs about sustainability, engineering, and improvisation as part of the 2023 Summer Reading program, entitled "Find Your Voice". The popular "Read

to Bead” incentive allowed 563 children to track their reading! The Teen Lounge welcomed 862 teens for programming in 2023. CFPL bid a fond farewell to Cary Stough and welcomed Erick Gordy as the new Teen Librarian. Under Erick’s guidance, the popular Dungeons and Dragons program has expanded, and a Teen Advisory Board was convened to provide opportunities for teens to advise on library programs, services and collections. Other weekly programming dedicated to teens featured opportunities for study and relaxation, board and video gaming, crafting, and volunteering. The Teen Lounge continues to be a popular hangout spot and averages 25 daily visitors.

#### Fowler Branch Library

In 2023, Fowler staff partnered with local businesses, organizations, and town departments to celebrate events including Spring into West Concord, Discover West Concord Day, and the West Concord Holiday Stroll. Working with the Visitor Center, staff promoted the Local Love campaign. Fowler engaged the community by inviting staff from Police, Public Health, and Council on Aging to story times and by starting new book clubs with Minute Man Arc and Art for All. Fowler also hosted three art shows curated by ArtScape featuring work by local artists of all ages and experiences. Additionally, Fowler staff took over management of the volunteer-powered home delivery program called Direct-to-You.

Fowler celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Seed Lending Library, honoring the library’s longstanding commitment to sustainability. Working with the Concord Pollinator Health Advisory Committee, the CCHS Green Team, the Concord Land Conservation Trust, Verrill Farm, and others, Fowler hosted two hugely popular Winter Seed Sows. Over the course of the year, staff and patrons added to, watched, and learned from the pollinator garden in Fowler’s backyard. As members of the Green Team, staff found other ways to promote sustainability, and collaborated with the Transportation Advisory Committee, Mothers Out Front, and Art for All on the first annual fall Bike Rodeo.

#### Special Collections

Special Collections staff served over 800 patrons on-site and answered over 650 reference questions. Staff presented at the Thoreau Society’s 81st

Annual Gathering, the Concord Town History & Guide Training course, a Northeastern University student group, the Library Corporation Next Chapter, the Concord Council on Aging, and more. Curator Anke Voss also presented at the American Literature Association Conference on a panel titled “Alcott in the Archives: Utilizing Collections.”

Special Collections curated three major exhibitions through the year, including “Daniel Chester French: Art & Enterprise in Concord,” “A Perpetual Invitation: 150 Years of Art at the Concord Free Public Library” (hosted at the Concord Museum in honor of the Concord Free Public Library’s 150th Anniversary), and “Connecting the Community: An Exhibition to Celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Concord Free Public Library” (a special exhibition highlighting the Library’s buildings, services, and staff history). Special Collections also hosted eleven lectures and presentations, including the film premiere: “Ralph Waldo Emerson: Give All to Love,” with a total attendance of over 1,000.

Special Collections added several noteworthy acquisitions to its holdings, including a page from Henry David Thoreau’s manuscript “Life without Principle,” a plaster plaque by Daniel Chester French, a letter from E.W. Bull to George Brooks regarding Franklin Sanborn and John Brown, several significant additions to the Munroe Family Collection, and manuscript and research materials relating to The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys, a 1987 book written by Doris Kearns Goodwin.

#### Conclusion

As we wrap up our anniversary year, I would like to extend my gratitude for the generous support of the Concord community, as well as our Library partner organizations and volunteers, including the Concord Free Public Library Corporation, the Friends of the Concord Free Public Library, and the Library Committee. The CFPL is known as the “cultural heart of the community” and the Library simply could not do what it does without the fantastic staff who are the “blood” pumping through the heart. It is my honor and my pleasure to work shoulder to shoulder with those staff to serve this community.

## CONCORD FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY CORPORATION

Sherry F. Litwack, President  
Richard D. Briggs, Jr., Treasurer  
Pamela Gannon, Clerk  
Jeffrey W. Adams  
Cristina Coletta Blau (through October 2023)  
John W. Boynton IV  
Diana W. Clymer (through June 2023)  
Theodore Hanselman  
Erika Prah (through June 2023)  
Yumi Yasutake (beginning September 2023)  
Elise Woodward (beginning September 2023)

The Concord Free Public Library Corporation is a Massachusetts charitable corporation created by the Massachusetts Legislature in 1873 for the purpose of forming and maintaining a public library in Concord, which it undertakes to do in collaboration with the Town and the Library Committee. For more information on how the Library works, go to the Library's website: <https://concordlibrary.org/about/how-we-work>

The primary responsibility of the Library Corporation is to preserve, maintain, protect, improve, and enhance the buildings and grounds of the Main Library in Concord Center and the Fowler Branch in West Concord as well as to preserve, protect, develop, interpret, and share its Special Collections. In FY 2022-2023 the

Corporation contributed nearly \$700,000 to the Library for buildings and grounds, books and materials, equipment, staff development, and Special Collections. The majority of these funds come from the Annual Fund and income from the Corporation's Endowment. Funding for large projects, such as a major expansion, are raised through a capital campaign.

Two Trustees retired this past year, Diana Clymer after twenty-three years and Cristina Blau after seven years of dedicated service. We are grateful that they have both agreed to remain active on committees. Erika Prah moved to Chicago, but we greatly appreciated her help with DEI initiatives when she was on the Board. We were also pleased to welcome two new Trustees, Yumi Yasutake and Elise Woodward.

This was a very special year as we celebrated the 150th Anniversary of the founding of the Library and the partnership between the Town and the Library Corporation. On October 1st, we gathered first at the Town House for proclamations from town and state officials and heard excerpts from Emerson's Library Dedication speech on October 1st, 1873. We then marched to the Library, led by the Minutemen, and heard remarks from the leaders of the three Library groups as well as a keynote speech from John Palfrey, the President of the MacArthur Foundation, followed by fun activities and cake.



*Trustees at the Dedication of the Munroe Gallery*

*Left to Right – Back: Rick Briggs,  
John Boynton, Jeff Adams*

*Left to Right – Front: Yumi Yasutake,  
Elise Woodward, Sherry Litwack,  
Ted Hanselman, Pam Gannon*

The William Munroe Special Collections sponsored a wide variety of Anniversary programs and exhibitions. Highlights included the film premiere of “Celebrating Ralph Waldo Emerson,” the Concord Museum exhibition “A Perpetual Invitation: 150 Years of Art at the Concord Free Public Library,” the Munroe Gallery exhibition “Connecting the Community: An Exhibition to Celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Concord Free Public Library,” and the publication of A History of the Concord Free Public Library 1873-2023 as well as programs on May Alcott, Daniel Chester French, and Henry David Thoreau. Notable acquisitions included materials from the Munroe Family Collection and manuscript and research materials relating to the book The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys written by Doris Kearns Goodwin in the Reference Room of the Library.

The Munroe Gallery was renovated this year to improve the lighting, display cases, and the hanging system. During the Anniversary, the Trustees realized that no space had ever been named in honor of the Library’s founder, William Munroe. We thought it would be fitting to name the Gallery after him since he was the one who is responsible for art being a part of the Library, and this has evolved into our world-renowned William Munroe Special Collections.

The Workshop opened on October 1st. This hands-on learning space has been enthusiastically embraced by the community. People of all ages can create their own projects or take classes to learn how to make a wide variety of things. Equipment includes 3-D printers, laser cutters, sewing machines, and much more. It is fun to note that the most innovative area of the Library is in the oldest section since it is in the historic house from the 1700s that was incorporated into the Library as part of the expansion. The demand has been high and the Corporation is working with the Library Director to increase its support.

Our Sustainability Implementation Committee has been making good progress on the initiatives in the Library’s Sustainability Plan. We are proud to be a member of the Sustainable Libraries Initiative and a model for other libraries. You can view the 10-year plan and our progress on the

Library website: <https://concordlibrary.org/news-events/library-news/the-library-corporations-sustainability-plan>

As Trustees of the Williams Scholarship Fund, made possible by a bequest from Charles H. S. Williams in the 1800s, we continue to award grants to several college students pursuing studies in the arts. This year’s recipients included scholarships for Sonia Vader (Visual Arts) and Sophie Richardson (Music); Honorable Mention to Sofia Travis (Music), Clara Lewis (Visual Arts), and Elisabeth Parker (Visual Arts); and continuing scholarships for Kincaid DeBell (Visual Arts), Ruby Massengale (Visual Arts), and Samara Reid (Visual Arts) We were able to once again host a salon to highlight and celebrate the talents of these arts scholars.

We were excited to welcome our first Writer-in-Residence, George Jreije. He conducted several workshops and programs with a variety of age groups as well as one-on-one coaching in writing. He also worked on an upcoming book to be published in 2024.

The annual Leslie Riedel Lecture for Young People featured popular author and illustrator, Chris Van Dusen.

It is gratifying to see so many people using and enjoying all of the new spaces as well as the beloved, traditional ones. We are happy to report that this community resource – free and open to all – is thriving.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry F. Litwack  
President, CFPL Corporation

## THE FRIENDS OF THE CONCORD FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Friends of the Concord Free Public Library is a nonprofit, charitable 501(c)(3) organization that is dedicated to supporting the Library and promoting its vital role in our community. We are grateful to those who visit us to check out books and other materials, attend our wide variety of programs, shop at our book sales or in the Friends book shops at the Main Library and at the Fowler Branch, and enjoy sitting on the shaded Main Library lawn for a concert or for a get-together with friends. We also greatly appreciate those who donate gently read books as well as audio/visual materials by bringing them to the Main Library, and we treasure our volunteers who put in countless hours year-round sorting donated books, helping to plan and staff Friends programs and events, and supporting our book sales in June and December, the proceeds of which go back to the library for its continued programming.

Some 749 Friends enjoy benefits including access to a Holiday Book Sale presale, news of library happenings, program announcements, and notices of member events. The members elect the Board of Directors at the Friends' annual meeting each May. The Board's twelve members are led by a president and vice president and take on various responsibilities such as publicity, book sales, membership, the poetry and music series, and other programs and events.

Our 2023 highlights include the following:

- In recognition of the library's 150th anniversary, the Friends and the Corporation hosted After-Hours at the Library in October to benefit the new makerspace there. The event drew more than 250 people who delighted in an evening of music, art, puppetry, theater, and storytelling while partaking of delicious food and drink.
- Our Virtual Films at Fowler program continues to be a success, running year round and providing access 24/7 to streamed movies from Kanopy, always free with your library card.
- Our Poetry at the Library Series featured ten award-winning poets from near and far who brought laughter and joy to their audiences. Among them was Jordan Escobar, who writes about the way the land has shaped us and how we continue to change with it.
- We marked another successful fall Concord Festival of Authors event, chaired by the Friends and co-hosted with partner organizations in Concord. The Friends presented this year's Ruth Ratner Miller Memorial Award for Excellence in American History to Professor Robert Gross, author of *The Transcendentalists and their World*.
- The Friends' music programs included a concert to kick off the summer reading program, a bluegrass music event on the lawn during Concord Ag Day, and three world-class concerts in the Rotunda of the Main Library.
- Families enjoyed a Sunday afternoon Friends program of games and snacks in February.
- The Friends' annual Summer and Holiday book sales set new records, raising more than \$60,000 and providing an enjoyable experience for browsers and buyers of all ages. We are always surprised and pleased by the distances some people cover to attend our events or visit the bookshop, with guests hailing last year from places including Upper New York State, Connecticut, and even the UK.
- The Friends book shops located near the Children's Library in the main library and in the entrance to the Fowler branch stock a variety of gently read books for readers of all ages, plus CD's and DVDs, and offer a self-check-out system.
- Besides selecting donated books for our sales and shops, we deliver a variety of books to the family shelter at the former Best Western and contribute books to Open Table Pantry and to other organizations such as More Than Words in Waltham, a youth-run bookstore supporting and empowering young adults who are in the foster care system.

- All Library Museum Passes for free or reduced admission, unless otherwise indicated, are funded by the Friends. Current passes are for the Boston Children’s Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts, and the New England Aquarium, and many other attractions.
- The Friends funds professional development opportunities for our dedicated Library staff members.
- As is often the case, when the library needs additional help during an event, such as its pumpkin decorating program last fall, it turns to the Friends for volunteers.

Funds for the Library’s programs come from generous Friends members, sales of donated books, and purchases of *Historic Concord & the Lexington Fight* by David French, originally published in 1942 and since updated several times and published by the Friends. The book is available at the Concord Visitor Center and the Minuteman National Historical Park Visitor Center.

The Friends always welcomes new members. To learn more or to join the Friends, please pick up a brochure at the Library or visit us online (<http://www.cfplfriends.org/>). You can follow us on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/concordlibrary-friend](http://www.facebook.com/concordlibrary-friend)) or e-mail us at [friends@concordlibrary.org](mailto:friends@concordlibrary.org)

## RECREATION DEPARTMENT

The Concord Recreation Department is a leader in providing activities that enhance personal development, promote healthy lifestyles, and encourage community involvement. The Department stood true to its mission this year, proudly supporting, and promoting community through wellness and play. As a dedicated group of professionals, we strive to promote lasting experiences, while creating fun, unique, inclusive opportunities in excellent facilities. Concord Recreation is a self-supporting operation that strives to keep pace with a growing community to deliver the highest quality customer-focused programs, events, and services. Concord Recreation is proud to offer the community a variety of services ranging from the Carousel Preschool, the Beede Swim and Fitness Center, school year childcare, summer camp, youth and adult sports, special events, permitting of Town playing field/courts, White Pond Beach operation, and the outdoor pool at Emerson Park.

### Employee Updates

2023 brought a lot of changes to Concord Recreation's staffing and promoted DJ Fimiani from Recreation Supervisor to Assistant Director of Recreation and Interim Director of Recreation in October in lieu of the departure of Adam Lapointe, Assistant Director of Recreation, along with the departure of Cathi Ellis, Beede GM, and Anna McKeown, Director of Recreation.

Concord Recreation's dedicated 200+ employees remain responsible for the continued growth and success of the Department. We are excited to share that we have three new members of our 16-person full-time team. Additionally, we will start 2024 with one full-time position being posted and looking for an Aquatics Program Specialist who will oversee swim lessons and swim team. We extended job offers to a new Recreation Supervisor looking to have him start in January, his name is Joe Durant, and he comes from Southborough Recreation. Concord Recreation is continuing its search for the Beede Center General Manager.

Connor Mullin joined the Concord Recreation team as a full-time Recreation Supervisor in March of 2023. In his prior roles, Connor came to Concord



*5th grade girls track champions!*

Recreation from an outdoor experiential education non-profit camp in Portola, California. In this position, He taught elementary students in various types of science and outdoor recreation. He was promoted to coordinator and in the new role, spent more time interfacing with teachers and administrators to tailor their programs to meet the needs of their students. He also coordinated retreats for teenagers and adults, with a focus on team building and community development. Connor obtained his Master's in Recreation, Parks, and Tourism from West Virginia University in December 2022. Welcome, Connor!

Will McClements joined the Beede team in September of 2023 with nearly a decade of experience in aquatics and swim lesson planning as well as sales, recruitment, and retention. Will worked for the YMCA of Greater Boston as one of their Senior Aquatics Directors. During his tenure with the Y he oversaw several different branches aquatics programs. He developed association wide training procedures and rebuilt three swim lesson programs post pandemic. Welcome, Will!

After a lengthy search for this new position, Robert (Bob) Beatty joined the Beede Center team as the Recreation Facilities Coordinator. Bob was tasked with promoting the highest efficiency and customer service level of all service functions throughout the assigned portfolio in an Area. Oversaw service responsibilities for multiple communities. Provided on the job training, coordinated maintenance systems, technical training and determined solutions



*Saturday Pickleball*

to service team and technical/mechanical issues. Worked with the VP-Property Operations, Area Director, Regional Managers/District Managers and Asset Quality to make recommendations and analyze plans, projects and budgets. Welcome, Bob!

#### Recreation Facilities Strategic Plan

Concord Recreation was awarded \$75,000 from the Community Preservation Committee at the 2022 Annual Town Meeting. These funds were used to pay for a consulting team to update the Town's 2014 Recreation Facilities Strategic Plan. The Department awarded the contract to Weston and Sampson who will oversee the project with a goal to be complete by fall of 2023. The consultant worked with recreation staff, Recreation Commission members, Town Departments, and other community stakeholders to plan and execute a robust assessment of needs while engaging in a hands on, collaborative public participation process. The result of the planning effort will be a document that is produced to provide the Town with a roadmap that prioritizes and guides annual capital planning through a lens of strategic and prioritized needs and actions. The Plan will be supported by a subcommittee inclusive of representatives from the Facilities Department, Public Works Department, Natural Resources Department, Finance Department and two volunteers from the Recreation Commission. The final draft of the plan was discussed at Recreation Commission meeting in December 2023 for approval.

#### Recreation Department Highlights 2023

- Concord Recreation rolled out a new group and aqua fitness membership called the Fitness Punch Pass. The membership provides access to the different aquatics and land based group fitness classes we offer. We currently offer packages of 4, 8, and 12 classes that can only be used during the session it was purchased for. This was rolled out Fall 2023 and by December 2023, we sold 73 passes for a total of \$6,126. (August 2023)
- Concord Recreation Youth Basketball League had over 283 participants and over 40 volunteers up from 181 and 25 in 2022. (February 2023)
- Recreation Ski and Snowboard program for Elementary (grades 2-5) and Middle School (grades 6-8), had a total of 200 students participate, up from 157 in 2022. (February 2023)
- Concord Recreation ran another successful Shamrock Ball welcoming over 450 children and parents for a formal night of dancing, raffles, and fun. (March 2023)
- The annual Egg Hunt welcomed over a thousand people who collected 20,000 candy-filled eggs over the course of the event. (April 2023)
- Concord Recreation provides learning, care, and fun for 150-175 children every day after school hours. Our childcare programs serve children ages 2.9 -10 years old who are supported by 35 educators for the length of the school year. (May 2023)
- Concord Recreation's Camp Three Rivers served 1525 campers in 2022 up from 1260 campers in 2021. In total, there were 40 camp staff hired who proved to be a diverse and committed team of counselors and specialists making the camp a huge success. (June-August of 2023)
- Concord Recreation also opened its doors to 22 children from the Elm Street Shelter at the Best Western Hotel. Over \$30,000 was given in financial assistance in kind from the Recreation department and not reimbursed by any

financial accounts, we also absorbed approximately \$10K in financial assistance and not pulling from scholarship funds.

- Concord Recreation was a proud recipient of a 2023 Concord-Carlisle Community Chest grant totaling \$17,543. The grants provided financial assistance to those who qualified in order to attend Concord Recreation summer camps, the school year childcare programs, free lifeguard/swim lesson trainings, and mobile fitness classes. The Department continues to be grateful for the financial support offered by the Chest. (June 2023)
- Concord Recreation had another successful summer at White Pond Beach. We had 476 memberships (down from 523 in 2022) and sold 1439 day passes to visitors ages 3+ (up from 1129 in 2022). The most popular check-in times were between 10A-11A and 4P-5P. We employed 31 staff to operate the beach. We also tiered memberships to Individual (resident/non-resident), Couple (resident/non-resident), and Family (resident/non-resident). We ran four 2-week swim lesson sessions for WP members. (July 2023).
- Concord Recreation facilitated the popular Summer Concert Series at West Concord's Rideout Park, bringing in 4 local bands who played free concerts for all to enjoy. (July and August 2023)
- Concord Recreation facilitated our second annual Family Night at White Pond Beach with about 50 people in attendance. Participants enjoyed a late afternoon swim, ice cream, games with DJ Mike Pride, and more. (August 2023)
- Concord Recreation values the diversity of the Concord population and embraces its reflection in our Carousel Preschool program. Currently, out of the 32 children enrolled in the preschool, we have 17 children whose primary language is not English. The languages spoken at Carousel by the students include Chinese or Mandarin, Japanese, French, Spanish, Russian, Romania, Tamil, Bulgarian and Pashto. (October 2023)

- The childcare program participated in the Family Trees project at the Concord Museum. Planning of these trees starts early and commences with a student field trip to the museum. For 2023, the Carousel Preschool chose the book *The Artist* and worked with the Council on Aging to design the tree. The Afterschool Program chose the book *Invisible Things* (November 2023)
- Concord Recreation ran a pivot for the annual Holiday Tree Lighting and Parade. Due to bad weather and cold temperatures, Concord Recreation cancelled the annual parade and held pictures with Santa, snow-globe bouncy house, WIQH (CCHS radio station), some vendors, and hot chocolate with cookies in the Hunt Gymnasium to give community members a chance to see Santa! (December 2023).

#### Financial Assistance

A large thank you to the Concord-Carlisle Community Chest and the Alcott School Turkey Trot who continue to support Concord Recreation with funds that provide financial assistance to residents in need. In 2023, the Department awarded \$40,927.85 to 18 families in need for various programs running during the 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 school year.



*Youth Basketball League Grades 4-5*

## BEEDE SWIM & FITNESS CENTER

The Beede Swim & Fitness Center, located on the campus of the Concord-Carlisle Regional High School, hosts an 8-lane lap pool, a warm water pool, a children's pool, a diving well, and plentiful poolside spectator seating. There are two 1,600-square-foot fitness rooms; one for weight training and one for cardiovascular exercise. In addition, the facility includes men's and women's locker/shower rooms, family changing rooms, and staff office space. The facility is open approximately 100 hours each week throughout the year welcoming an average of 250 members per day. The Beede Center strives to balance the recreational needs of the community with its obligation to be financially self-supporting.

### Membership

The Beede Center's varied membership plans offer unlimited access to state-of-the-art aquatic and fitness facilities. Annual, monthly, 3-month and 10-visit options let users create the perfect membership to fit their individual or family needs. Additionally, members receive up to a 40% discount on aquatics and fitness programs, year-round. As of December 31, 2023, the Beede Center has 915 monthly recurring memberships along with 1159 3-month sales, 129 10-punch pass sales, 828 member-guest passes and 2630 single, couple, and family guest pass sales.

### New Employees

As noted in the Concord Recreation Annual Report, the Beede Swim and Fitness Center welcomed two new full-time employees in 2023 and had the departure of two full time employees, Cathi Ellis and TJ Liakos.

Will McClements joined the Beede team in September of 2023 with nearly a decade of experience in aquatics and swim lesson planning as well as sales, recruitment, and retention. Will worked for the YMCA of Greater Boston as one of their Senior Aquatics Directors. During his tenure with the Y he oversaw several different branches aquatics programs. He developed association wide training procedures and rebuilt three swim lesson programs post pandemic. Welcome, Will!

After a lengthy search for this new position, Robert (Bob) Beatty joined the Beede Center team as the Recreation Facilities Coordinator. Bob was tasked with promoting the highest efficiency and customer service level of all service functions throughout the assigned portfolio in an Area. Oversaw service responsibilities for multiple communities. Provided on the job training, coordinated maintenance systems, technical training and determined solutions to service team and technical/mechanical issues. Worked with the VP-Property Operations, Area Director, Regional Managers/District Managers and Asset Quality to make recommendations and analyze plans, projects and budgets. Welcome, Bob!

New Beede Swim and Fitness Center General Manager will begin January 2024.

Beede Swim and Fitness Center Shutdown 2023, Beede Swim and Fitness Center faced an unexpected and difficult shutdown of all 4 pools, lap, dive, warm-water, and children's for a total of 72 days. In April 2023, the Beede Center was forced to close all pools for a multitude of reasons including but not limited to, combined chlorine levels too high, high levels of phosphates, a combination of the butterfly valve issues, and prominent not working properly. Beede management made the decision to close the pools while extensive air and water testing was conducted, prominent switched out, new accutabs for the pools installed, new VFDs for all pools installed. We were able to push out all



*Otters Swim team*

3-month memberships, month-to-month memberships, annual memberships, 10x pass memberships, all aqua fitness classes were canceled and participants given vouchers for future classes. This closure forced the cancelation of Otters Swim Team and Spring 2 swim lessons. Beede was able to reopen their doors on July 8. Swim classes, aqua classes, and rentals started back up and ready for the Fall session.

Beede Swim and Fitness Center Highlights 2023: Beede added the Fitness Punch Pass membership. This gives people the flexibility to choose which group/aqua fitness classes they want to attend all different group fitness classes. Beede offered 4, 8, or 12 time passes to be used during the session it was purchased for. ((August 2023).

- The Beede Swim and Fitness Center celebrated its 17th birthday by offering a month of promotions and raffles, including a reduced joining fee. (April 2023)
- Optima Synchro, a group that specializes in synchronized swimming for all ages, set up their group via rental agreements and set up private synchro classes. (October 2023)
- Successfully completed the annual maintenance shutdown week focusing on cardio and weight rooms. Weight room was revolutionized to max space availability. The pools remained open due to Spring closure. (August 2023).
- The Beede fitness team offered its first paddleboard yoga classes at White Pond. The classes were well attended and will return in 2024. (Summer 2023)
- Beede welcomed Lexington HS as a consistent renter due to their pool closures. They practice 2-3x/week in closing hours. (November 2023)
- Beede hosted it's first ever Mermaid Swim in which the event sold out with over 60 families (September 2023)
- Beede also hosted it's first ever Diwali Celebration with over 50 families registered. (November 2023)

- Emerson Pool hosted several birthday parties throughout the summer (Summer 2023).
- Beede hosted a popular Winter Break Vacation Program, offering a fun experience for 70 children over the school break. (December 2023)
- The Sleepy Hollow 5k attracted more than 100 runners for the 5k and fun run combined! (October 2023)

#### Facility Updates

Post 2023 shutdown, the Beede Center continued to focus on ways to be more sustainable and efficient in its practices. We added new CO2 monitoring systems in the maintenance room, boiler room, and pit. All 4 pools have new VFDs for continual maintenance and proper levels of chemicals, new motor for the warm water jets, new tubing for children's pool and dive well plus inspections on chlorinators, HVAC, and air quality. New policy and procedures are now in place for pool maintenance with chemicals and backwashing along with a much more robust testing schedule and communication among guards.



*Egg hunt*

## CONCORD PUBLIC CEREMONIES & CELEBRATIONS COMMITTEE

Susan McCrory - Chair  
Michael Benn - Vice Chair  
Alyssa Erhartic - Clerk  
Nancy Crowley  
Margaret Laneri  
Holly Legault  
Rob Norton  
Nick Purinton  
Tim Taylor (resigned July, 2023)

### SUMMARY

The CPCCC is a committee both laden with and beholden to tradition. It seeks to execute the Town's commemorative public events - several of them historic in nature - in such a way that the unique character, collective priorities, and proud history of Concord are well reflected and honored.

During the calendar year 2023, the Committee coordinated preparations for and directed six discrete events: the Honored Citizen ceremony (March 19); Meriam's Corner (April 8); the Patriots Day Parade (April 17); Dawn Salute (April 19); Memorial Day (May 29); and Veterans Day (Nov. 11). The Committee also contributed to preparatory efforts for the Town's first-ever formal celebration of Juneteenth. Although comparatively small, that gesture of collaboration and sharing of knowledge and resources is an important one for it highlights the need and willingness of the CPCCC to assess its practices and improve and/or expand upon them.

Highlights of the Committee's activities in 2023 included the naming of Ms. Phebe Ham as Honored Citizen, renewed and robust participation in the Patriots Day Parade, the return of a horse and rider to reenact Samuel Prescott's sending out the alarm on the morning of April 19 (Dawn Salute), and two smoothly-run events commemorating Concord's fallen soldiers and living veterans (Memorial Day, Veterans Day).

With the dual goal of streamlining past practices and anticipating the vast expansion of efforts required in 2025 for the 250th anniversary of the start of the American Revolution, the CPCCC voted

into practice 15 new "criteria for inclusion" for prospective units wishing to participate in the Patriots Day Parade. For some residents those criteria proved controversial and unwelcome. They served nevertheless to codify and clarify the process by which prospective marching units both apply and become approved for participation based on their appropriateness to the stated concept and purpose of the Patriots Day Parade. The criteria adopted in 2023 may evolve over time as they are considered for use in 2024 and 2025.

Looking ahead to both 2024 and 2025, the CPCCC Chair oversaw the development and recent inauguration of an online application for participation in the Patriots Day Parade. This digital information-capture system represents a major step forward in the efficient processing of data related to prospective marching units. It is already being used by the newly-formed Parade Committee tasked by the Concord250 Executive Committee with managing and executing the 2024 and 2025 Patriots Day Parades.

In addition, the Committee has begun to liaise with Concord's Interfaith Council to secure the participation of local faith leaders well in advance of scheduled events and, in doing so, allow that responsibility and privilege to be shared and represented by a variety of faith traditions.

Another important initiative voted on by the Committee for 2024 is a critical look at the content and formatting of long-standing scripts used at each public event with the goal of condensing, fact-checking, and streamlining text as needed.



*Dawn Salute*

## CONCORD-NANAE NETWORK JAPANESE SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP

John Cratsley  
Sue Curtin  
Junko Kargula  
Jim Terry  
Lee Flight  
Nancy McJennett  
Jack Nevison  
Holly Cratsley  
Court Booth  
Mike Lawson

After a pandemic-imposed hiatus of four years, the Concord Nanae Network (CNN) was delighted to welcome a delegation from our Sister City in Hokkaido, Japan, for four days in October of 2023. The group consisted of five middle school students, three high school students, and three adults, including Concordian Jack McCarthy, our representative in Nanae's Town Office, an English teacher, and a Nanae town official.

Our visitors were enthusiastically welcomed by generous host parents and their children, who served as school guides for our younger guests. The students shadowed their Concord counterparts to classes and some after-school programs and were able to give a presentation each about Japan at the high school and Thoreau Elementary School. When not in school, the Japanese enjoyed activities with their host families and a special tour of the North Bridge, led by Dr. Sue Curtin of CNN.

The highlight of the visit was the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Sister City relationship. The event began with a dinner at Concord Art, followed by a walk to the Town House, accompanied by the Concord Minute Men. Thanks to a Zoom link with Nanae, the chair of the Select Board and Nanae's mayor signed documents reaffirming the relationship, while a crowd of Concord Sister City supporters looked on and applauded. Underlining the importance of such relationships, the event was also attended by Vice Consul Minoya and Consul Honda from the Japanese Consulate in Boston.

All too soon, host families and visitors gathered at

the Fairyland parking lot to await a bus to Boston. Plans are in the works for a return visit in 2024, and for potential adult trips to Japan in the future. CNN thanks Dr. Laurie Hunter, Superintendent of Schools, Tracey Marano of the School Committee, and teachers and principals at CCHS, CMS, and the Thoreau School for their help with the visit. Last but not least, we thank the ten families who opened their homes – and hearts – to our Japanese guests.



*A celebratory toast with Select Chair Henry Dane, Nanae Town Official Masaki Niwata (far left) and Vice Consul Minoya at the Town House ceremony.*

## PEG ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Vince Carlson Chair  
Megan Carroll Clerk  
Cory Atkins  
Irwin Hipsman  
Cynthia Rainey, School Committee Representative  
Terri Ackerman, Concord Select Board Liaison  
Jason Bulger, MMN Liaison  
Julie Manoogian, MMN Production Manager  
Tim Goddard/Ryan McLane, Carlisle Ex-Officio Member  
Christina Kendrick, Concord Council on Aging Liaison



*Members of the 2023 PEG ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE*

This report by the PEG Access Advisory Committee (PAAC) covers the PAAC's efforts from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023. This committee's meetings were held virtually, in-person, and hybrid, and were recorded by Minuteman Media Network (MMN) as part of pandemic extensions and new legislation still pending to the Open Meeting Law. MMN is the Town-run local public access cable TV studio and service which brings public, education, and government (PEG) local programming to Concord and Carlisle. See the related annual town report for MMN for more details.

### Purpose of the PAAC

The charge of the PAAC is to:

1. Monitor the effectiveness of Concord's PEG access services, now provided by MMN;
2. Help the Select Board ensure that PEG access services conform to requirements of the Comcast / Concord franchise agreement;

3. Safeguard the public's interest in community television through policies promoting fairness, equal access, and non-discrimination;
4. Promote quality telecommunication services that reflect the interests and concerns of Concord residents; and
5. Assist the Select Board in adapting to new technologies – from traditional local cable TV to current telecommunication services.

### 2023 PAAC Updates

Town committees relied heavily on MMN to record and post Zoom-enabled committee meetings for their members' and the public's benefit. MMN maintained playlists for its YouTube channel organized by committee and topic, making the search for a video relatively simple. Concord citizens found engagement with Town government, and the arts and education communities easier because they could watch and participate from their living rooms. MMN's YouTube subscribership base rose above 1000 by the end of 2023.

MMN posted the meeting videos on the Internet quickly, making committee research easier than waiting 30+ days for minutes to be approved. The PAAC continued to test new methods for preparing committee minutes automatically. This included use of Zoom's AI Companion late in the year. This potentially makes the process easier for committee clerks and improve the quality. It may also make it possible for the MMN staff to spend more time on educational and other types of public service programming.

The PAAC reviewed the MMN 2023 budget and capital plan, supported the 2022 PEG Budget Warrant Article 44 at Town Meeting, and adopted new 2023 goals. PAAC members provided input to the Town on its new 5G small cell wireless installation policies, a new residential assistance program for municipal broadband services, and on the Town's efforts to promote assisted hearing services for Town meetings. The PAAC continued to analyze Comcast subscribership and complaint data. The PAAC continued its Comcast contract renewal activities in conjunction with the Buske Group consultants. This included sponsorship of 4 public

focus groups and a Town survey of cable TV and Comcast's quality of service. The contract is for a 10-year term beginning in April 2024.

#### 2023 PEG Access Program Awards

At its June 2, 2023 meeting the PAAC presented its 2023 PEG Access Program Awards, in the form of signed certificates, to the staff of Minuteman Media Network in recognition of their fine efforts to bring high-quality public, education, and government videos to Concord and Carlisle. Community-created public access TV videos are the heart and soul of local TV programming. Watching the meetings and programs on MMN's TV channels on Comcast and the MMN YouTube channel kept people entertained and informed on local matters in the comfort of their own homes and in public gathering places. Individual award recipients are noted in the IT/MMN section of this Report

For more information, visit the PAAC web page: <https://concordma.gov/2012/PEG-Access-Advisory-Committee> or the MMN web page: <https://concordma.gov/2335/Minuteman-Media-Network-MMN>

## VETERANS' SERVICES

Dick Krug, Veterans Services Officer

The Veterans' Services program is mandated according to Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 115 and is administered under State guidelines to provide information, advice and assistance regarding benefits to veterans and their families. Every city and town in the Commonwealth is required to have a benefits program for its resident veterans and their dependents, as well as a Veterans' Services Officer. The Veterans' Services Officer must be a war-era veteran and be available to provide assistance. The veterans agent is required to attend initial training on veterans benefits and annual training conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Veterans Services. The agent also must be certified every three years as a Veterans Service Officer (VSO) and within one year of hire. This certification must be maintained per Massachusetts General Laws. The Town is reimbursed by the State for 75% of benefits paid under this mandated program. With the support of the Commonwealth's House, Senate and Executive Office, Massachusetts is now recognized as having one of the most comprehensive veterans' programs in the nation.

The Office of Veterans' Services, located at 55 Church Street (second floor), advocates and provides critical services to those who have worn the uniform and their loved ones. At the start of the civil war in 1861, the state legislature formalized assistance provided to needy veterans by establishing M.G.L. Chapter 115 benefits and the Department of Veterans' Services to oversee Chapter 115 distribution in a constant effort to improve benefits and keep the up to date. Current benefits extend to "natural disasters" where benefits may apply to a loss resulting from a hurricane, blizzard, tornado or the current pandemic. The Veterans' Service Officer will help Veterans complete their application for Chapter 115 benefits which offers a need-based program of financial and medical assistance for Veterans and their dependents. The mission of the Veterans' Services Officer has grown to encompass the full range of VA federal benefits, rehabilitation,

employment and educational opportunities, military records, tax exemptions, housing and shelter assistance, annuities, funeral assistance and care and decoration of veterans' graves.

Financial assistance to qualified veterans and their dependents is provided, in accordance with State and federal regulations.

Our veteran population is dropping very rapidly but from 2001 to 2024 we have tens of thousands of new veterans in the Commonwealth. This increase is due to: Women Veterans, Latino Veterans and African American Veterans. This is a very small amount returning compared to veterans that returned from WWII.

#### Program Implementation

The Veterans' Services Officer (VSO) responds to daily calls requesting information, advice and assistance. With so many veterans and their families facing profound challenges related to their service and the current economy due to the covid pandemic, the VSO has become more important than ever.

The VSO often helps veterans obtain assistance from veterans' organizations as well as other local, State and federal organizations, such as Concord Community Services, Concord Council of Aging, Social Security, local food pantries and farmer markets. The VSO reviews legislation, regulations, and precedents, and studies veterans' medical records and service history to evaluate and determine validity of claims. The VSO provides assistance in the area of housing placement for veterans and their dependents, job rereferrals, medical and educational, as well as, referrals to alcohol/drug rehabilitation programs. The VSO does home visits for the purpose of filing of benefits. He assists veterans obtaining discharges and other military records. The VSO also works with funeral directors to ensure proper veterans' burials, ensures proper identification and maintenance of graves. Currently there are five individuals receiving financial assistance for qualifying Chapter 115 benefits. This number changes annually as the veteran may have moved, gained employment, change in assets or passed away.

The VSO has been networking with local civic groups, senior citizen groups and area veterans' organizations as well as families of service members currently deployed. In the past he has worked with students and presenters at Veterans' Day and Memorial Day exercises, served as a guest speaker in some high school and elementary school classes as well as for Rotary Club of Concord, the Lions Club of Concord, Concord Deaconess, and Concord Park Assisted Living.

The Town of Concord is proud of the Commonwealth for continuing its tradition of leading the nation in supporting our veterans, military members and their families. Chapter 115 benefits aids those who have supported America during some of the country's most difficult times by looking at a broad range of issues and providing resources to help them build a bright future. Chapter 115 addresses issues from job training and education to affordable housing and the uniform provision of veterans services.

For information or assistance on Veterans' Services please call 978-318-3038 or e-mail [dkrug@concordma.gov](mailto:dkrug@concordma.gov). For information about services, events, and other veterans' organizations please visit Concord's web page at [www.concordma.gov/clerk/veterans.htm](http://www.concordma.gov/clerk/veterans.htm).

## REGISTRAR OF VETERANS GRAVES

Harold Nichols, Registrar

There were 36 interments of United States Veterans in Concord cemeteries in 2023. The names of the Veterans, their respective wars, date of burials, and place of burial are as follows:

<u>VETERAN'S NAME</u>	<u>PERIOD OF DUTY</u>	<u>INTERMENT DATE</u>	<u>CEMETERY</u>
Raymond F. Sundstrom	World War II	January 9, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
Jonathan R. Fadiman	Peacetime	January 13, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
Matthew A. McGrath	Peacetime	January 19, 2023	St. Bernard's
John J. Ford Jr.	Peacetime	January 24, 2023	St. Bernard's
Rocco Senese	Korea	February 23, 2023	St. Bernard's
Edward G. Toomey	Vietnam	March 25, 2023	St. Bernard's
Chester F. Sadlow	World War II	April 1, 2023	St. Bernard's
Sidney H. Wanzer	Korea	April 2, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
Lloyd F. Grace	World War II	April 6, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
Kenneth W. Marriner Jr.	Korea	April 21, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
Joseph L. Andrews Jr.	Vietnam	April 28, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
John R. Mannheim	Korea	April 29, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
Franics X. Van Houten	Vietnam	May 17, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
James S. Craig	World War II	June 17, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
Richard B. Bulkeley	Peacetime	June 29, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
Richard F. Halloran	Peacetime	June 29, 2023	St. Bernard's
John J. Hutchinson	Vietnam	July 18, 2023	St. Bernard's
Joseph M. Rotondo	Vietnam	July 21, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
Keith D. Heefner	Peacetime	July 26, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
John Wesley Fiske	Korea	July 26, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
Leo A. Bennett Jr.	Vietnam	August 2, 2023	St. Bernard's
George Mitchell Eckel	Vietnam	August 4, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
Robert H. Wheeler	World War II	August 12, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
Nicholas L. Chandler	Vietnam	August 13, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
George K. Clark	Vietnam	August 23, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
Walter J. Miles Jr.	Peacetime	August 23, 2023	St. Bernard's
William E. Carroll	Peacetime	August 24, 2023	St. Bernard's
Alfred L. Murphy	World War II	September 1, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
Roger A. Fricke	Vietnam	September 9, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
Rodney P. Andrews	Korea	September 20, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
Roger C. Boyd	World War II	October 4, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
Christopher Raker	Vietnam	October 7, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
Paul R. Fitzgerald	Vietnam	October 14, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
Harry M. Fackert	Peacetime	October 20, 2023	Sleepy Hollow
Paul M. Richter Sr.	Vietnam	October 24, 2023	St. Bernard's
Peter P. Orlando	World War II	December 29, 2023	St. Bernard's

# DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION COMMISSION

Andrea Foncerrada, Co-Chair  
 Joe Palumbo, Co-Chair  
 Kristen Hagerty, Clerk  
 Nancy Brown  
 Rose Cratsley  
 Josh Lee  
 Roberto Munro  
 Ji Orloff  
 Jimi Two Feathers

## Purpose

The purpose of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission (DEI) is to increase cooperation, understanding, and dialog among residents of diverse cultural, religious, socio-economic, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and to promote inclusion throughout the town. The Commission shall also critically consider intersections among these groups to facilitate learning, understanding, and unity. The goal is for everyone who lives in Concord, works in Concord, attends school in Concord, participates in a Concord faith community, or visits Concord for whatever reason to be welcomed, valued, respected, and heard.

## Our Work This Year

Focus Statement from 2023 Action Plan  
 The Town of Concord's DEI Commission is dedicated to dismantling systemic bias, removing barriers, and showcasing the imperative need and transformative results of our work.

## Two FOCUS Areas

- The long-term charge is to increase cooperation, understanding, and dialog among residents of diverse cultural, religious, socio-economic, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and to promote inclusion throughout the town. The Commission will also critically consider intersections among these groups to facilitate learning, understanding, and unity.
- To realize these goals, over the course of the next twelve months, the Commission will focus its efforts on supporting the BIPOC (Black,

Indigenous, and People of Color) and LGBTQIA+ communities. During this time frame, the Commission aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. Engage with Chamber of Commerce to offer training & professional support
2. Facilitate the increase of cultural programming
3. Celebrate the LGBTQIA+ Community through Concord Pride
4. Engage with public safety on various ways to educate & support
5. Partner with the Town Manager to Review and Provide Input on the potential DEI Director hire
6. Research Town-wide Incident Reporting System

The long-term charge is to increase cooperation, understanding, and dialog among residents of diverse cultural, religious, socio-economic, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and to promote inclusion throughout the town. The Commission shall also critically consider intersections among these groups to facilitate learning, understanding, and unity. However, in the next twelve months, the Commission will focus on the BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities.

The graphic is a 2x3 grid of icons on a dark blue background with a gold border. At the top, it reads 'TOWN OF CONCORD' in gold, followed by 'DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION COMMISSION' in white. The grid contains the following icons and labels:

- Top-left: BIPOC LGBTQIA+ icon with label 'FOCUS'.
- Top-middle: Chamber of Commerce icon with label 'CHAMBER OF COMMERCE'.
- Top-right: Public Safety icon with label 'PUBLIC SAFETY'.
- Bottom-left: Town Government icon with label 'TOWN GOVERNMENT'.
- Bottom-middle: Concord Pride 2024 icon with label 'CONCORD PRIDE 2024'.
- Bottom-right: Climate and Culture icon with label 'CLIMATE and CULTURE'.

At the bottom, it features the '2023-2024 ACTION PLAN' in white, a QR code, the Town of Concord seal on the left, and a 'BUILDING A WELCOMING COMMUNITY' seal on the right.