

# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



photo credit: Matt McGeary, Colgate Upstate Institute



# Leadership

## Board of Directors

Owen Tallman  
*President*

Jessica Sarauer  
*Vice President*

Dianne Daugherty  
*Treasurer*

Constance Hasko  
*Secretary*

Daniel Auwarter  
Allison Boura  
Eric Diefenbacher  
Marsha Guzewich  
Christine Moskell  
Sharon Pelosi  
John Pumilio  
Chris Rossi  
Adam Schoonmaker  
Carol Smith  
Charlee Weidman  
Thurston Packer, Emeritus  
Fred VonMechow, Emeritus

## Staff

David Carson  
*Executive Director*

Ellen Rathbone  
*Senior Educator*

Jeremy Fetzko  
*Media & Marketing Coordinator*

Amy August-Ruiz  
*Bookkeeper & Administrative Specialist*

Jenni Larchar  
*Youth Program Coordinator*

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# Executive Summary



2023 was a renaissance year for the Friends of Rogers. Stewarded into this next generation by a uniquely talented and devoted board of directors, a sweeping change in staff ushered in a fresh energy and revitalized programming.

Together, we: served 15 school systems, delivered a new suite of adult education programming, developed a new community science initiative, piloted a new environmental arts program, and overhauled the friendsofrogers.org website.

By committing resources and personnel to marketing and communications, we reached a wider audience across print, online, and social media.

Behind the scenes, we onboarded a new Donor Management Software that will allow us to more effectively engage our support base and communicate directly with those who contribute their resources to help this organization thrive.

Growth and innovation is not without its growing pains, and we thank all those who continued to show up and support Rogers Center with their program attendance, volunteer contributions, and donations.

We look forward to the year to come and give thanks for the contributions of all those who have come before us.

*David W. Carson*

**Executive Director**  
Friends of Rogers



# Powered by Partnerships



## Granting Partners

Friends of Rogers operates Rogers Environmental Education Center with diverse and substantial support from New York State and local foundations. With their support, our impact is amplified and our staff are able to excel in their positions.

## Local Foundation Support (\$5,000+)

The Greater Norwich Foundation  
The Community Foundation of South Central New York  
The Follett Foundation  
The Brown Charitable Trust  
The RC Smith Foundation  
The Finch Foundation  
The Gilmour Foundation

## State Support

New York State ZBGA (Zoos, Botanical Gardens and Aquaria)  
NYS OPRHP (Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation)  
NYS DEC (Department of Environmental Conservation)  
NYS SCR (Statewide Community Regrant)

## Community & Non-Profit Partners

Chenango County Soil and Water Conservation District  
Oneida Indian Nation  
Colgate University  
Cornell Cooperative Extension & 4H  
Chenango County Historical Society  
Commerce Chenango  
DCMO BOCES  
Earlville Opera House  
The Place Youth Employment Program



# Financial Summary

## Revenue Make-Up

Events & Fundraisers	\$ 14,160
Donations & Memberships	\$ 37,000
Grants & Contracts	\$221,000
Program Income	\$ 32,000
Rogers Center Store	\$ 10,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$314,160</b>

## Operational Expenses

Education	\$121,680
Marketing & Communications	\$ 37,000
Operations & Administration	\$ 73,000
Facilities & Maintenance	\$ 17,500
Fundraising	\$ 36,000
Land Stewardship	\$ 19,000
Rogers Center Store	\$ 3,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$307,180</b>

Three notable NYS Grants comprised nearly 50% of our 2023 annual budget and helped us to maintain the facilities, manage the grounds, employ college interns, and support our education staff. Additional funding from local philanthropic partners allowed the Friends of Rogers to increase our marketing and communications, develop innovative programming to re-engage an adult audience, and coordinate a growing number of volunteers.

In 2024, our focus is on the expansion of programmatic income and the cultivation of a broader and more engaged donor base.

Behind the scenes, the Friends of Rogers hired and trained an in-house bookkeeper for the first time in the organization's 50-year history. We chose to invest in the evolution of our staff and financial operating systems, laying a new accounting foundation from which we can grow. We expect the ROI on operations and administration to be robust, as we target larger state and federal grants and grow our staff to serve a wider audience.

In 2024, our intent is to maintain a lean operating budget that prioritizes investments in staff and reductions in administrative expenses.

## Long Term Financial Sustainability

For nearly 50 years, the Friends of Rogers have supported Rogers Environmental Education Center. Since 2011, we have been its principal operator. With a modest investment account and the desire to establish a long term plan for financial sustainability, we moved our assets from Wells Fargo to Hearth Financial. In doing so, we moved from a passively

managed fund with an indifference to environmental sustainability, to an actively managed fund with a focus on climate and environmental resilience. Furthermore, we moved from a global to local manager, putting our long term financial health in the hands of those who have a personal relationship with Rogers Center.



# Notable Accomplishments

## School System Engagement

When we reopened our doors to regional schools, we offered 12 new on-site programs (Science Outings) and four new or revised in-school programs (Traveling Naturalist).

Fifteen different schools (elementary - high school) visited Rogers Center for staff-led programming, plus one college level class. Some schools made more than one visit, bringing students from different grades, resulting in 25 days of school programming. Overall, we had a total of 851 students and 140 adults/chaperons come out for our Science Outings. Additionally, we had one school request our Traveling Naturalist program, bringing our reach to 911 students and 190 adults.

A number of schools bring students out on their own for self-guided experiences, especially toward the end of the school year. Some schools call us in advance (four in the spring (two of which had to cancel due to smoke from Canada's wildfires), one in the summer) to let us know they are coming. We counted 144 students and 39 adults from these groups; but for most "on-their-own" visits we have no data, only the sounds and sights of children playing and learning in the outdoors.



## Stone House Artist Residency

With support of the New York State Council of the Arts Statewide Community Regrant, administered by the Earlville Opera House, the Friends of Rogers was able to pilot an Artist in Residence program at the historic Stone House on site, bringing new life to a treasured piece of New York State history.

The first residency, featuring artist Edmond Caputo, will culminate with a public show and Stone House open house on April 20, 2024.





## Website Overhaul

As our organization evolved in 2023, we recognized the importance of updating our web presence. Working internally, our team redeveloped our website to streamline communications and simplify the articulation of our full suite of offerings.

We hope you will find it easy to navigate and visit us often at [www.friendsofrogers.org](http://www.friendsofrogers.org).

## Community Science: The B-Team

In partnership with the Colgate Upstate Institute, Friends of Rogers launched The B-Team, a long-term community science project that collects data on our native wild bee communities and contributes to the larger agenda of pollinator habitat restoration.

This program brings the science of ecosystem restoration together with community engagement and public participation.



(photo credit: Mark DiOrio, Colgate University)



# Program Highlights

## Monday Morning Rambles

Starting in April, we added the Monday Morning Rambles to our offerings: a weekly program where we head out on the trails just to see what is happening out in nature.

We started this program walking the trails at Rogers Center, but by June we were adding some off-site destinations, such as Nelson Swamp and Jam Pond. Our longest trips took us to Ferd's Bog up in the Adirondacks to see the legendary white-fringed orchids, and to Montezuma NWR for the fall migration.

The Rambles have a steady following of about five participants, ranging in age from mid-50s to early-90s. New rambles join us from time to time, some as young as their early teens, but most are retirees.

The composition of our groups has resulted in a great deal of learning for everyone. Fungi enthusiasts, botanists, birders, and invertebrate-lovers, as well as those who know the history of the land, all contribute to the educational value of these outings.





## Three Things Thursdays

During the summer we offered a new evening lecture series called Three Things Thursday, which is based on the idea that if learning one new thing makes a day complete, how much greater is it if you learn three new things? The goal was to bring in speakers who would share some aspect of nature education that may not be common in today's popular culture, but nonetheless important and/or interesting.

We started with Dr. Thomas Horton of SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry who spoke about how fungal mycelia “communicate” with trees across the forest. Author and tracker Linda Spielman joined us next, sharing her insights on animal tracking.

We changed things up a bit in July with Bernie Freytag, an author and illustrator who discussed the intersection between nature and the imagination.

In August Connie Tedesco, the owner of The Fernery, a native plant nursery in Hartwick, shared the importance of planting native plants in our gardens - she even brought plants to give away!

The series wrapped up in September with Professor Catherine Cardelús from Colgate University talking about the impact of white-tailed deer on our forest ecosystems.



## Shako:wi Story Walks

At Rogers Center, we are very much aware that we are only the current occupants of this land known as the Chenango Valley. We have chosen to start building a relationship with the Oneida Indian Nation, whose ancestors stewarded this land up until the late 18th century.

Upon meeting with Jessica Farmer and Ron Patterson at the Shako:wi Cultural Center in Oneida, we began offering guided story walks with Jessica, who shared the Legends & Lore of the Haudenosaunee people while guiding participants along our trails. Four walks were offered: two in July and two in October.





## Internship Opportunity

Central to our mission is the cultivation and training of the next generation of environmental scientists and educators. Through our funding partnership with the New York State DEC, the Friends of Rogers hire and train 5-8 interns per year. These interns lead our summer camp, help deliver programs, learn to write grants and administer an environmental education center. Internship opportunities are posted annually on the Friends of Rogers website, at [friendsofrogers.org](http://friendsofrogers.org)

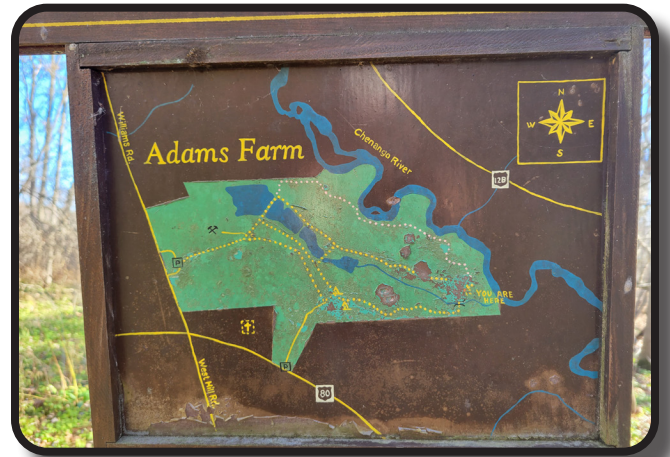




# Looking Ahead

## The Adams Farm Revival

Fueled by the Colgate Upstate Institute Field School Fellowship, and with project funding from the Chenango County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Gilmour Foundation, the storied 160 acre parcel is set to begin an exciting revival. This project will commence with a pollinator habitat restoration project by the northern trailhead, and the creation of updated interpretive materials and maps.



## The Selleck Sugaring Project

With support from the Community Foundation of South Central New York and The Finch Foundation, and in partnership with the Chenango County Historical Society and DCMO BOCES, we are reconstructing a 1909 replica sugar shack at Rogers Center! Fulfilling late board member, Bruce Selleck's, dream, we are tapping the magic and mystique of the Maple forest as a living laboratory and celebration of our cultural heritage. With this notable development, our Maple Magic programming will continue to grow.

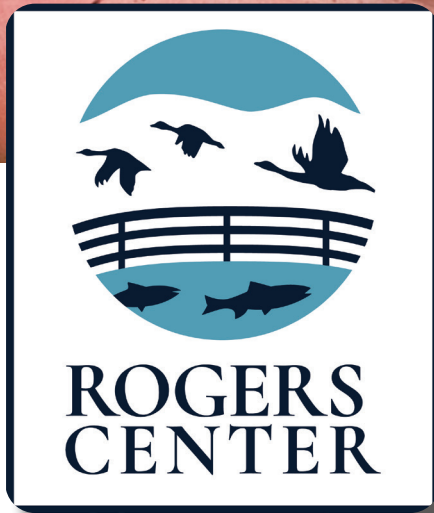


## Community Engagement and Cultural Diversity

Parks & Trails New York, the non-profit advocacy agency for the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, has chosen to invest in the Friends of Rogers again with a two-year Professional Development Grant. This funding will allow our organization to hire a part-time community engagement and volunteer coordinator, with the express interest of increasing the diversity, equity, and inclusion at Rogers Center.







## If you need to reach us...

Friends of Rogers is here for you. If you have any questions about programs, nature, or visiting Roger Center or our satellite properties, please reach out and contact us.

## Contact Us!

**Phone:** 607-674-4733

**Web:** [www.friendsofrogers.org](http://www.friendsofrogers.org)

**Email:** [info@friendsofrogers.org](mailto:info@friendsofrogers.org)

**Address:** 2721 State Hwy 80, PO  
Box 932, Sherburne, NY 13460

### The Visitor Center is Open

Wednesdays- Saturdays

10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Sundays Noon - 4:00 PM

Mondays & Tuesdays by appointment

Rogers Center, in compliance with the American with Disabilities Act, assists in providing for those individuals with special needs.

A standard wheelchair is available for use on our trails and paved paths. This provides our visitors with access to the trout ponds, Bird Cabin, dock, and the Environmental Education Center, which is also equipped with a ramp and elevator.

Visitors can notify us in advance if they have needs that require special assistance from staff.

