

# Committee Reports

For the period July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020

## **Community Outreach**

Co-Chairmen Karin James and Ginny Gingras

Our newsletter is normally published twice a year, but due to Covid-19, we did not publish the spring 2020 edition. About 600 people received the mailed copy. All previous issues are available on our website under "Archives". We have a facebook page, and an e-news letter that is published about four times a year. The Annual Report for FY 2018-2019 was mailed to members after the 2019 Annual Meeting. We again welcomed visitors to the Farm Open House tours during July-August 2019, but had fewer attendees. The CT Open House Day, scheduled to be held June 2020, was cancelled due to Covid-19.

We are members of the Vernon Volunteers Collaborative, a group of 12 local volunteer organizations that meet quarterly to exchange information and share resources.

## **Business Development**

Co-chairmen Ann Letendre and Joe King

Membership: As of June 30, 2020, we have 155 members (individuals or families). Another 10 individuals or families contributed to the Friends. In addition, 7 contributions were made by runners in the Hoppin' Hodges Road Race. The total number of members and contributors was 172, two less than the previous year. These generous supporters are listed on pages 6 and 7 in this Report.

Fundraising: This year we received a total of \$8,232 in dues and contributions, and \$1,020 in contributions to the endowment fund, for a total of \$9,252, a decrease from the previous fiscal year of \$643. The annual "Hoppin' Hodges" Easter 5K road race, held in memory of Jim Hodges, was held virtually due to Covid-19. We thank the runners who participated and contributed \$240, a decrease of \$1496 from the previous year. Again, we are grateful to Janit Romayko Hodges, who persevered and organized the virtual race.

Grant Applications: No new grant applications have been submitted this fiscal year, but we plan to submit a grant to the State Historic Preservation Organization for the security system and lightning rod on the stable in August, 2020.

### **Report of the Audit Committee**

Due to Covid 19, the Audit Committee members reviewed the detailed financial reports for the fiscal year July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. The reports were compiled and distributed to the Committee by the Treasurer. Committee members have found them in accord and in reconciliation with all bank records and income and expense reports, and have confirmed that finding with written signature.

Respectfully submitted,  
Maryann Levesque, Tom Kaminski, and Ginny Gingras

### **Buildings and Grounds**

Co-chairmen Bob Letendre, Maryann Levesque, Ginny Gingras

Maintenance of the grounds continues to be a major effort and expense. Adams Lawn Care takes care of mowing. The cold frame gardens are cared for by the Vernon Garden Club, and Betty Wardrop. Ron Levesque provided help with yard trimming and removal of invasives and dead trees. Beekeepers, Allen Valli, Tom Kaminski and Marci LaVoie now have a total of 6 hives, and cited good honey production year and no hive losses. Between September 2019 and August 2020 they reported a harvest of about 300 lbs of honey from all six hives.

We continue work on the upkeep and restoration of the buildings, and the necessary upgrades for the Heritage Center.

### **Special Projects – Heritage Center**

Co-Chairmen Ann Letendre and Maryann Levesque

Work continued on development of the Heritage Center, for which we have a \$150,000 grant from the State of Connecticut. As of June 30, 2019 we have expended \$103,146 of the grant funds. The major expenditures this fiscal year were for plumbing and carpentry to meet code requirements, and installation of the track lighting to highlight exhibits.

We've been researching vintage items found in the barns that tell the story of Valley Falls Farm. We are very pleased that virtually ALL of the exhibited items were found in the Farm buildings, making it a truly relevant local narrative about Valley Falls Farm. Much of this work is taking longer than anticipated, as well as the clearing and cleaning of the outbuildings, and cleaning and repairing some of the vintage equipment that will be on display. Student help will be sought during the summer 2020. The opening has been moved to spring/summer 2021, and is dependent on the pandemic situation.

# Our Strategic Plan – Some Progress

In 2011 the Friends hired organizational consultants “Musevue 360” to provide direction and guidance for our future. Here’s a summary of their key recommendations, actions we’ve taken to date, and the work we have ahead.

- **Create a strong visual brand that the community readily identifies. Review the FVF’s logo, graphics, etc. and investigate options for improvement.**  
We rolled out a new logo in 2014 using the iconic stable as an identifiable visual brand. A large banner with the new logo was made to display at local events.
- **Communicate better with target audiences and inspire support. Investigate options for improving the FVF’s web site and internet presence.**  
We continued to improve the website, and to publish e-news, and maintain a Facebook page. Much more needs to be done with improving internet presence, however, as well as setting up the ability to join and pay for memberships online through a paypal account.
- **Deepen connections with the local community and build the pool of volunteers and potential board members. Establish a committee structure around key areas of activity and set a list of tasks to be completed in the next year.**  
We set up a committee structure in 2014 with appointed chairmen from the Board. The role and responsibility of each Committee was defined. Defining specific tasks and projects, and populating the committees with volunteers still need to be done.
- **Build local support among key stakeholders for FVF’s mission. Establish open, regular communication. Keep an ear to the ground for “hot button” issues in the local community.**  
As members of the Vernon Volunteers Collaborative, we continue to meet quarterly with twelve other local volunteer organizations to share information and resources.
- **Establish a community advisory committee composed of representatives of key partners organizations.**  
No action has been taken to establish the advisory committee, other than to create a tentative list of people who might serve.
- **Deepen the volunteer pool and build awareness of the value of FVF to the local community. Focus public communication on volunteer recruitment.**  
We continued summer tours of the Farm in 2019, and expect that the Heritage Center will add significant awareness of the Friends in the community. We have not yet put a pro-active focus on volunteer recruitment.