

# Friends of Valley Falls, Inc.



*Preserving nature and  
history at Valley Falls.*

## ANNUAL REPORT 2023

**JULY 1, 2022 - JUNE 30, 2023**





*Preserving nature and  
history at Valley Falls.*

PO Box 2008  
Vernon, CT 06066  
[www.friendsofvalleyfalls.org](http://www.friendsofvalleyfalls.org)

- ★ The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc. is a private non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Organized in 1972, the purpose of the Friends is to take responsible ownership of Valley Falls Farm, and to promote the betterment of Valley Falls Park. We carry out this mission through careful stewardship of their historical and natural resources, and through outreach to the community. ★

### ***About the Covers***

*“Build it and they will come.” And they did! The cover photos are a homage to YOU, the people who visited the new Valley Falls Heritage Center and made it the great success that it’s become. We are ever-grateful for your interest, support and offers of future help.*

*Our long-awaited Heritage Center finally opened its doors in June of this year. About 135 people attended the grand opening and ribbon cutting reception. Mayor Dan Champagne presented a proclamation to the Friends of Valley Falls recognizing the contributions of our organization to the community. We are very excited about the future of the Center and the potential it has to become a key Vernon destination point.*

***Photos*** by Nancy Steffens and Ann Letendre

# **The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc. Annual Meeting**

**September 24, 2023**

## **AGENDA**

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <b>1:00 pm - 1:30 pm</b> | <b>Annual Business Meeting for Members</b><br><br>Introduction of Board of Directors<br>President's Report<br>Approval of Minutes – 2022 Annual Meeting<br>Treasurer's Reports<br>Committee Reports<br><i>Communications and Outreach</i><br><i>Business Development</i><br><i>Building and Grounds</i><br><i>Special Projects – Heritage Center</i><br><i>Audit Committee</i><br><br>Beekeeper's Report - Allen Valli<br>Nominating Committee Report &<br>Election of Officers and Directors |
| <b>1:30 pm</b>           | <b>Adjournment, Annual Business Meeting</b>   |
| <b>1:30 pm – 2:30 pm</b> | <b>Guest Speaker – Bev York</b><br><br><i>Bev presents programs on local, CT and national history. She uses interactive materials to discuss Carson's impact on the modern environmental movement and the human chemical impact on nature even to this day.</i><br><br><i>Bev York's topic today is:</i><br><br>"Rachel Carson, Pioneer of the Environmental Movement"  |

# President's Report

**For the period July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023**

An amazing adventure started on January 17, 1964 with the first purchase of land on Valley Falls Road! Over the years the Town of Vernon and City of Rockville consolidated, and in 1972 there would be a total of 193 acres on Valley Falls Road that would become Valley Falls Park in Vernon.

Over the next few years, in 1972 The Friends of Valley Falls group would start to organize; in 1979, the Friends of Valley Falls decided to incorporate, followed by the creation of a constitution and by-laws. In 1994, a project to save the red barn started and would continue to this day. Members, contributors and grants funded the improvements over the years.

In 2000, the farm was up for sale, and another FVF project--to preserve the farm--was started. The funding was raised through residents' donations, Town of Vernon funds and grant money. The farm was purchased by The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc. on June 4, 2001. Over the next 22 years, the farm was painstakingly developed into the Heritage Center. There were thousands of volunteer hours given over those years, by many wonderful volunteers.

We were fortunate and thankful to sign an agreement with the Town of Vernon in 2023 to use the town-owned red barn. It was the last piece the Friends needed to allow our Heritage Center to function as well it does!

As your incoming president of this dedicated group, I proudly welcome you to the Heritage Center! We have had a very exciting year hosting a bird walk, wildflower walk, tree walk and the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Heritage Center on June 3, 2023. The official opening day was June 10<sup>th</sup> and since then we have welcomed many members and guests.

We continue to support the enhancement of the Valley Falls Park and Farm through responsible stewardship of the lands and buildings, while we preserve the historic qualities and educate the public about the natural resources found right here and the value of open space. Our members and volunteers are the most wonderful and amazing people. Thank you for your dedication to this project. I know we all put a lot of time and effort into it, and what a tribute to Vernon we now have.

Respectfully submitted,  
Maryann Levesque, Acting President/Vice President



# Secretary's Report

## Minutes of the Annual Meeting of September 25, 2022

Vice President Maryann Levesque opened the 2022 Annual Meeting at 1:10 pm in the basement of the Barn. She welcomed a large group of attendees and thanked them for coming and helping to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Friends. To celebrate, historical documents, news articles, annual reports, meeting minutes and photos were on display.

Because of possible severe thunderstorms later in the day, Ann Letendre made the motion, seconded by Jean Merz, to waive reading the minutes of the 2021 Annual meeting, the President's report and Committee reports. The motion was unanimously approved and Bob Letendre was asked to give the Treasurer's report.

Treasurer, Bob Letendre reported that pages 9-12 of the 2022 Annual Report contain a summary of the major financial highlights of FY 2021-2022 (p. 9), as well as listings of our assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022 (pp, 10-12). He reported that most of our cash assets are now invested in Vanguard Index Funds, and our organization continues to be debt free. He thanked the audit committee for their review, and thanked members for their continued support.

Bob reported on the grant expenditure, and noted that the \$150,000 grant from DEEP is close to being spent, and the Heritage Center would open in the spring. Display panels have been printed and several were showcased at the meeting. Photos on the Annual Report covers show various displays that will be in the Heritage Center when it opens in the spring.

Maryann introduced the Board members of the Friends of Valley Falls, including our newest member, Jane Darico. Jane's family has a long history at the farm and her historical knowledge of the property is a valuable asset, especially as we continue to develop the Heritage Center.

Maryann introduced Jen Smith, recently hired as part-time communications/marketing specialist. Jen provided her professional background and noted why she was excited to help the Friends of Valley Falls grow membership and programs. She asked attendees to complete a survey that can be accessed online.

Ann Letendre and Jean Merz jointly thanked Ginny Gingras for her many years of service. As one of the original seven women who started the Friends group, and a vital member for developing programs and purchasing Valley Falls Farm, it was a fitting tribute on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Ginny thanked everyone for their years of support and said how wonderful it was to see so many new people at the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy Steffens, Secretary

# Committee Reports

**For the period July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023**

## **Community Outreach** Co-Chairmen Nancy Steffens, Jean Merz and Ann Letendre Publications

The hard copy newsletter is published twice a year. However, in this fiscal year only one issue was published, in April 2023. About 200 people received the mailed copy. Previous issues are available on our website under "Archives". We published two electronic newsletters during the fiscal year, fall of 2022 and spring of 2023. They were sent to those members who provided email addresses. The Annual Report was published for the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 annual meeting, and mailed to members who did not attend the meeting. For the Heritage Center, handouts for the self-guided tours were produced, as well as a short slide presentation summarizing exhibit content.

## Social Media

As planned, we have expanded our presence on social media with frequent postings on the Friends facebook page. In addition to events, efforts to advertise the opening of the Heritage Center were especially effective. The website continues to be regularly updated for current events and activities, and we are working with local newspapers and Patch to post events and photos.

Membership: As of June 30, 2023, we have 145 members (individuals or families) and 13 contributors for a total of 158 supporting donors, an increase of 1 from the previous year. Our generous donors are listed on pages 6 and 7.

## **Business Development** Co-Chairmen Ann Letendre and Maryann Levesque

Fundraising: This year we received a total of \$14,085 in dues and contributions, an increase from the previous fiscal year of \$3,115. The increase was due to two memorial donations from Betsy & Jessica Glenn, remembering their mother, Mary Glenn; and from Jane Darico, remembering deceased members of her family.

Grant Applications: In this fiscal year, the Friends received a \$6200 grant from Connecticut Humanities (CTH), an independent, non-profit affiliate of the National Endowment for Humanities. We also received two small grants, \$650 for a collections assessment, also from CTH, and a \$1,000 grant from Connecticut Water Company.

Capacity Building: Recognizing the need to do succession planning, support staff member Laurie Bajorek worked with Treasurer Bob Letendre to migrate the books to QuickBooks. Communication specialist, Jen Smith, was hired for a 6-month period to assist with enhancing our use of social media and growing our organization and presence in the community.

## **Report of the Audit Committee**

The Audit Committee reviewed the financial report detail for the fiscal year of July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023. The reports were compiled and distributed to the Committee by the Treasurer. Committee members have found them to reconcile with all receipts, bank records and income and expense reports.

Respectfully submitted, Lisa Ouellette and Lynn Lusardi

## **Buildings and Grounds Committee**

Co-chairmen: Bob Letendre, Maryann Levesque, and Bruce Dinnie

### Building maintenance:

- Repairs were made to the chimney in the west wing of the farm house
- Exterior portions of the farm house, piggery, and stable were painted
- The water treatment system in farm house was serviced
- Boilers in the farm house were serviced for winter duty
- A new dryer was installed in Apt. A
- Repairs were made to parts of the structure and exterior siding of the piggery and stable
- An ADA pad was installed in the driveway in front of the stable

### Grounds maintenance:

- Lawns and fields were mowed by Adam's Lawn Service
- Weed whacking and tree maintenance were provided by Ron Levesque
- Cold frame gardens were cared for by the Vernon Garden Club and Betty Wardrop
- Bee hives were maintained and serviced by Allen Valli and Dr. Mark Bell
- Spring Cleanup Day at the Farm by FVF volunteers included raking, pruning, picking up sticks and debris.

## **Special Projects**

Co-Chairmen Ann Letendre and Maryann Levesque

### *Heritage Center*

During this fiscal year we had the final push to open the Heritage Center. The year was spent finalizing the interpretive panels, installation of the displays, and drafting the text explaining the exhibits. Again this year we are grateful for the help of Barry Ford of Ford Folios with exhibit preparation and installation. The seven interpretive panels for the outbuildings were completed by graphic artist, Austin Bach. The ribbon cutting and grand opening were held June 3rd and June 10<sup>th</sup>, and attended by 135 invited guests and members of the public. We scheduled the Center to be open every Sunday afternoon, 1 to 4 pm through August, and for special events in September.

A project to install a handicapped-accessible sitting area at the northeast side of the stable, overlooking the gardens and fields, is in the planning stages. A cost estimate has been received, and we are seeking possible grant funding support for the project. The project would also extend handicapped accessibility to the root cellar. The cost is expected to be in the \$30,000 - \$40,000 range.



## Donors to the Friends of Valley Falls – July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023

### BENEFACTORS

Jane Darico

Betsy Glenn

Jon & Jan Roe

### PATRONS

Carol Burke

Julie Clay

Scott & Deborah Livingston

Jack Summers

### SUPPORTERS

Fred & Cheryl Arzt

Malcolm & Susan Barlow

Don Bellingham

Michael Brennan

Robert & Donna Caplin

Jeff & Mary Carlson

Joe & Audrey Courtney

Linda Cromwell

Gary D. Cyr

Bruce Dinnie

Milton & Judith Doremus

Virginia Gingras & Rosemarie Gallichio

John & Tracy Gorecki

Eric & Daryl Gottier

Tom & Kim Griswold

David & Susan Herrmann

Ray & Wendy Hollworth

Richard & Karin James

George & Marge Kelly

Robert & Ann Letendre

Maryann & Ron Levesque

Donald Lewie

David McQuade

Andrew & Joanne Myer

Nancy Orlowski

Tom & Lisa Ouellette

Paula Passaretti

Gordon & Amy Paterson

Ken & Jane Peacock

Bill & Naomi Pomper

Glen E. & Jean A Potter

Stephen Repetto

Michael & Marcelle Ringbloom

Nancy Steffens & Bob Felber

Nancy Strong

Dennis & Sally Sullivan

Nancy B. Swanton

Kathleen Sweeney

Wendy Wanchak

Scott & Mandy Wieting

### FRIENDS

Sharon Allard

Denise Anamani

Michael & Judy Annati

George Arthur

William V. Ashe, Jr.

Sue Atkins

Lanni Bajorek

Ellen Ballos

Susan Beirn

Chip & Madeline Bellows

Steven & Irene Benedict

Roger & Rachel Blais

Ann Bonney

Bill & Susan Breslau

Jane Burr

Ronald Burr

Hubert S. Bush, Jr

Brett Capshaw

Bob & Linda Carlson

Carol Chappel

Michael & Mary Cross

Stan & Judie Culy

William & Joan Curtis

Cathy Dacey

Tom Didio

Patrick & Margaret Dubel

Suzanne Dunlap

Matt & Gail Faherty

Marcia & Jack Felber

Corrine Fisher

Tim Gallup

Marilyn G. Ganley

Garden Barn Nursery & Landscaping

Norman & Donna Gessay

Viviane Guerette

Jim & Susan Gusy

Richard & Carole Guttman

Ken & Lisa Hageman

David & Carol Hatch

Robert & Betty Hathaway

Dennis Himes & Maure Briggs

David Hiskes

George Hogan

Jean Hopkins

John & Marcia Horan

Shirley Howe

Lisa & Jim Irish

Claire Janowski

## FRIENDS

Dorothy Kaminski  
 David Kemp  
 Sally Knisel & Sarah Myers  
 John & Sara Koziol  
 Daniel J. LeBlanc  
 Carolyn Manson  
 Barbara W. McCarthy  
 James & Karen McWalter  
 Sylvia Morgan  
 David Murphy  
 Joan M. Noel  
 Doris & Robert Osolin  
 Karen Prewo  
 Andrew & Diane Rhoades  
 Blanche Ross  
 Paul Shimer  
 Joel & Gail Sokolov  
 Tom & Lynn Sweet  
 Michael & Madeline Turk  
 Raymond & Karen Whinnem  
 Dan & Margaret Wright

George & Christine Keenan  
 Joseph King  
 Ted Koch  
 Suzanne Langone  
 Lisa Letendre  
 Ellen Marmer, MD  
 Garry & Deb McConville  
 Joyce Melia  
 Brian & Penny Motola  
 (Charles) Ron & Sandi Musick  
 William & Mildred Oliphant  
 Kathleen Perlitz  
 Laura Raccagni  
 Jacque Roraback  
 Marjorie Sanborn  
 Cheryl Siedor  
 Joe & Ann Staninius  
 Sharon & Frank Tarala  
 Allen A. Valli, Jr  
 Deborah Wilson  
 Lynne M. Yampanis

Sharon Kehmna  
 Vanessa & John Klopfer  
 Fred & Lisa Kopper  
 Robert & Paula Lathrop  
 Kathleen Lynch  
 Julie Martens  
 Sheryl & Tim McMullen  
 Jean Merz  
 Barbara Muldoon  
 Ann Noel  
 Gene & Bobbie Orne  
 Diane Peskurich  
 Matt & Dee Reiser  
 Joanne A. Rose  
 Tom & Pegi Shea  
 Edward & Carole Slattery  
 Marilyn Steele  
 Ann Tremont  
 Bill & Betty Wardrop  
 Michael & Phyllis Winkler  
 Ed Yergeau

<b>Benefactors</b>	<b>\$500 - \$1000 +</b>
<b>Patrons</b>	<b>\$250 - \$ 499</b>
<b>Supporters</b>	<b>\$100 - \$ 249</b>
<b>Friends</b>	<b>\$ 5 - \$ 99</b>

# Our Strategic Plan

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 for display at local events. Multiple weekly posts on our facebook page showing scenes of Valley Falls were initiated this year. To enhance our brand, we added a tagline to the logo, "Preserving History and Nature at Valley Falls".

- **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, increased e-news publications, and Facebook page postings this year. Improving internet presence continues. We have yet to set up the ability to join and pay for memberships online.

- **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 and will be a focus in the next fiscal year.

- **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.

- **Deepen the volunteer pool and build awareness of the value of FVF to the local community. Focus public communication on volunteer recruitment.**

The Heritage Center has added significant awareness of the Friends within the community. A pro-active focus on volunteer recruitment is planned in the next fiscal year, as well as the appointment of a Board position to organize and lead the volunteer pool. Discussion of "branding" of the organization that recognizes the scenic value of the farm site and attracts artists, photographers and musicians has been initiated.



# Friends of Valley Falls, Inc.

## Treasurer's Report

**For the period July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023**

**The major financial highlights for the fiscal year are as follows:**

- **The available cash at the end of the fiscal year is \$348,166.**
- **Overall gross revenues increased this year [\$98,516 vs. \$49,310], relative to the previous year. The primary reasons are that the endowment fund and the grant monies increased substantially during the year.**
- **Rental income from the farm house apartments increased slightly by 3% [\$21,368 vs. \$20,830], due to both apartments being fully rented during the year and a small increase in rental rates.**
- **The Friends were awarded a CT Humanities Grant of \$6,200. An advance on that grant of \$4,650 was received during the year.**
- **The Valley Falls Farm Fund, our designated fund established at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, provided an annual return of \$637.**
- **The endowment fund, invested with The Vanguard Group, Inc. , increased by \$36,730 during the year, reflecting the general upward trend in market conditions.**
- **Our goal in coming years is to continue the level of contributions to the endowment fund in order to generate a stream of income that will assist in carrying the organization forward financially in future years.**
- **A State of CT DEEP Grant has been the main source of funds for establishing the Heritage Center. The total grant of \$150,000 has been expended by the end of this fiscal year, June 30, 2023.**
- **The above DEEP grant has allowed the Friends to open the Heritage Center for operation on June 10, 2023.**
- **The organization remains debt free.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Robert P. Letendre, Treasurer**

**FRIENDS OF VALLEY FALLS, INC.**  
**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION**  
**As of June 30, 2023**

**ASSETS**

Operating Funds - Checking Acc't – M&T Bank	\$ 10,721
CT Grant Funds - Checking Acc't – M&T Bank	\$ 3,213
Security Deposit - Savings Acc't – M&T Bank	\$ 850
Vanguard Group – Endowment Fund	\$ <u>333,382</u>
<b>Total Cash</b>	<b>\$ 348,166</b>
Land, buildings, and equipment, plus net accumulated depreciation	<b>\$ <u>350,566</u></b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ 698,732</b>

**LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS**

Liabilities:

Security Deposit - Rental Unit (Restricted Funds)	\$ <u>851</u>
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<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 851</b>
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Net Assets:

Net Assets, beginning of period (July 1, 2022 value)	\$ 679,349
Increase in net assets	\$ <u>18,532</u>
<b>Net Assets, end of period</b>	<b>\$ <u>697,881</u></b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 698,732</b>

**FRIENDS OF VALLEY FALLS, INC.**  
**STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES**  
**For the 12 Months Ending June 30, 2023**

**REVENUE, GRANTS, and OTHER INCOME**

Memberships and Contributions from Individual Donors	\$ 14,085
Rental Income	\$ 21,368
Earnings from Valley Falls Farm Designated Fund at HFPG	\$ 638
Grant Income - CT DEEP Grant	\$ 17,177
Grant Income - CT Humanities Grants	\$ 6,650
Grant Income - CT Water Co. Grant	\$ 1,000
Increase in Vanguard Endowment Fund	\$ 36,730
Miscellaneous Income	<u>\$ 218</u>

**Total Revenue and Other Income** **\$ 98,516**

**EXPENSES**

Valley Falls Farm Maintenance & Operations	
Grounds Keeping	\$ 6,283
Farm House Operating and Maintenance Expenses	\$ 3,540
Out-Building Operating and Maintenance Expenses	\$ 7,648
Insurance	\$ 6,437
Depreciation Expense	<u>\$ 11,734</u>
	\$ 35,642
Program Services	
Newsletters, Annual Meeting, Walks in Park Fees	\$ 757
Heritage Center Development Expenses – Grants & Reserves	\$ 27,927
Communications & Marketing Expenses	\$ 7,875
Membership & Fundraising Expenses	\$ 1,102
Transfer of Funds to Vanguard Endowment Fund	\$ 2,450
Annual Report - Printing & Mailing	\$ 1,015
Transcription of Historical Records, QuickBooks Set-up	\$ 1,402
Administrative Expenses	\$ 1,324
Various Fees	<u>\$ 490</u>
	\$ 15,658

**Total Expenses** **\$ 79,984**

**Increase in net assets (Income less Expenses)** **\$ 18,532**

**Net assets, beginning of period (July 1, 2022 value)** **\$ 679,349**

**Net assets, end of period** **\$ 697,881**



**FRIENDS OF VALLEY FALLS, INC.**  
**STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS**  
**For the 12 Months Ending June 30, 2023**

**Cash Flows from Operating Activities**

Increase in net assets (income minus expenses)	\$ 18,532
Adjustment - Depreciation allowance	\$ <u>11,734</u>
Net cash provided by operating activities	\$ <b>30,266</b>

**Cash Flows from Investing Activities**

Chimney Rebuild & Liner – Farm House	\$ (7,700)
New Dryer Installation in Farm House	\$ (563)
New Laptop Computer for FVF Organization	\$ <u>(520)</u>
Net cash used in investing activities	\$ <b>(8,783)</b>

**Cash Flows from Financing Activities**

Return of Security Deposits	\$ <u>(876)</u>
Net cash provided by financing activities	\$ <b>(876)</b>

**Net Increase/Decrease in Cash** **\$ 20,607**

**Cash at Beginning of Period (July 1, 2022 Value)** **\$ 327,559**

**Cash at End of Period** **\$ 348,166**









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JULY 1, 2022- JUNE 30, 2023