

2003  
—  
2023



saratoga  
**PLAN**  
Preserving Land and Nature

**ANNUAL REPORT:**

# **PRESERVING** a legacy

**PHOTO:** Ryan Campbell of Saratoga Drone











## LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# DEAR SUPPORTERS AND FRIENDS,

As we reflect on PLAN's 20th year, I am thrilled to celebrate the remarkable progress we have achieved as a community in pursuing our shared mission to conserve and protect our cherished natural spaces. Your unwavering support has been critical in driving this success.

Through your support, we have achieved significant milestones—from acquiring key land parcels like Snake Hill and protecting crucial agricultural land like Ropitzky Family Farms to working with partners like the Winter Family and Open Space Institute to make Graphite Range Community Forest become a reality. Our expanding network of partnerships and collaborations increases the collective impact we can achieve.

Together, we have strived to keep pace with development while safeguarding environmental resources. Your understanding of the direct impact that land protection has on the air we breathe and the water we drink fuels the urgency of our efforts.

Our conservation initiatives not only act as public health measures but also secure local, sustainable food production and contribute to natural climate solutions. By preserving

land, we collectively fortify our communities against the escalating impacts of extreme weather-related events. Trees, wetlands, and open spaces play a crucial role in mitigating the effects of climate change, offering resilience and adaptation to the challenges people and wildlife alike face now and in the future.

As impressive as our successes have been, we must acknowledge the continued and growing challenges of a climate crisis and uncontrolled development and sprawl. It is my firm belief that strategic land protection is the single most effective tool we have to directly and immediately combat these challenges. I also believe the focus for the next generation of land conservation is at the local and community level, where Saratoga PLAN is uniquely positioned to act. And the time to act is now!

Looking ahead, the challenges continue to mount, but your continued support remains the bedrock of PLAN's action and ultimate success.

Thank you for being an integral part of land protection efforts in Saratoga County.



**ROBERT K. DAVIES**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



## SARATOGA PLAN LEADERSHIP

# MISSION STATEMENT

**Saratoga PLAN** preserves the rural character, natural habitats, and scenic beauty of Saratoga County, ancestral homelands of the Mohican, Mohawk and Abenaki people, so that these irreplaceable assets are accessible to all and survive for future generations.



# BOARD + STAFF

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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**Maria Trabka**  
*Special Projects Manager*





## MEMBERS

# NEW BOARD MEMBERS



### JENNIFER KOVAL

Jennifer grew up in the area and has a background in Sustainable Systems. Jen is a part time Agricultural Educator at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County and Office Manager of her family's dairy farm. Through the years she has maintained a strong interest in gardening, ecological design and Whole Farm Planning.



### DAVE ROECKER

Being outdoors, enjoying nature, and protecting the environment have been important to Dave for as long as he can remember. "As a thirty-plus year resident of Saratoga County, I have experienced firsthand the valuable work that Saratoga PLAN does. My career as an Environmental Engineer at CT Male Associates has given me the background and tools to make a difference."



### RICK WISSLER

Rick is an attorney and has been engaged in public service in various capacities throughout his career. For more than twenty years he was an Administrative Law Judge with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, as well as the Department's Director of Mediation. "I know firsthand how critical and essential the responsible stewardship of the natural resources of this State is to the public health and welfare."

# INTERNS



### GRACE NEURIN

*Summer Communications Intern*

**Skidmore College:**

Major – Political Science, Minor – Environmental Studies

Grace desired to help further educate people in Saratoga County about the outdoor opportunities and protected lands that exist right in their backyard.



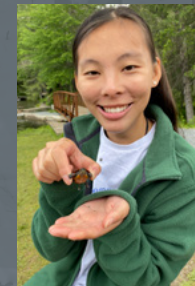
### OLIVIA HUNT

*Education and Conservation Interns in partnership with Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park*

**Skidmore College:**

Major – Environmental Science, Minor – Geoscience

Olivia is deeply passionate about land conservation and is excited to contribute to the protection of local areas. Olivia's has been eager to dive into GIS mapping work with Saratoga PLAN.



### MAGNOLIA ROOSA

*Education and Conservation Interns in partnership with Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park*

**University of Albany:**

Major – Human Biology, Minor – Sustainability

Magnolia became interested in doing stewardship because of a desire to create a deeper connection with the land, along with being a part of protecting something for the greater good.





NEWS

# SNAKE HILL

## 30+ ACRES OF SARATOGA LAKE SHORELINE PERMANENTLY PROTECTED

A significant milestone was reached at the end of 2023 with the acquisition of Snake Hill, Saratoga Lake’s largest unprotected shoreline property, from Stewart’s Shops. This unique geological formation traces its roots back 450 million years and is home to trees over two centuries old, while also holding cultural significance in indigenous stories.

This accomplishment was only made possible through a large collaborative, community effort. Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner’s advocacy in securing \$1 million in the NYS budget, alongside the invaluable support of the Dake Family and Stewart’s Shops Corporation, was vital in protecting this local treasure.

PLAN extends its deepest gratitude to partners, including the Open Space Institute and Saratoga Lake Association, as well as each individual whose support—whether through letters to local representatives or donations to PLAN—that contributed significantly to this success.

Snake Hill remains closed to the public for the time being. Stay tuned for a public comment period later this year. Additionally, PLAN will be launching a campaign to raise funds for ongoing stewardship costs essential for managing this community asset.



PHOTO: Ryan Campbell of Saratoga Drone

**30+**  
**ACRES OF SARATOGA LAKE SHORELINE PERMANENTLY PROTECTED**

 **SCAN TO LEARN MORE**





NEWS

# RAISING FUN(DS) FOR CONSERVATION

**2ND ANNUAL PLAN FOR THE FUTURE FUNDRAISER AT CAMP STOMPING GROUND**



**SCAN TO VIEW VIDEO**

**150+** SUPPORTERS IN ATTENDANCE

**NEXT GENERATION COMMITTEE'S 1ST ANNUAL CORNHOLE TOURNAMENT AT ARTISANAL BREW WORKS**

**16** TEAMS PARTICIPATED



From left: Paul Zachos, Cindy Wian, Mike Munter and Barbara Glaser

PHOTO: Iron Glass Productions



PHOTO: Iron Glass Productions



PHOTO: Artisanal Brew Works





2003-2023

# LOOK AT ALL WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED TOGETHER!

For the past 20 years, PLAN has worked alongside community partners to protect the vital natural resources found in Saratoga County and to reconnect people with the land. Here's to another 20 years of preserving the air you breathe, water you drink, food you eat, places you recreate, and the wildlife that inhabits them.

**7,183**

Number of acres protected & stewarded by PLAN across 21 different municipalities

**14,393**

Total acres protected with PLAN's assistance



**SCAN TO VIEW TIMELINE**



**13**  
PUBLIC PRESERVES



**25**  
PLAN OWNED PROPERTIES



**57**  
TOTAL CONSERVATION EASEMENTS



**30**  
PROTECTED FARMS





## STEWARDSHIP

# IN THE FIELD

### THE MONDAY STEWARDS

The Monday Stewards, an incredibly passionate group of volunteers that originated over a decade ago, assists with trail maintenance on PLAN properties. Started by the late Barbara Hennig at the Hennig Preserve, they have grown into a county-wide force. These dedicated volunteers contribute over 500 hours each quarter, ensuring that trails are safe for year-round public access.

### VOLUNTEER TRAINING DAY

On August 28th, PLAN organized an all-day volunteer training event with Charlotte, the Trails Manager of the Adirondack Mountain Club. The event, attended by 17 volunteer stewards from PLAN and local land trusts, focused on installing drainage areas and rock turnpiking at Barkersville Trails in Galway.

Participants learned essential techniques such as excavating soil, removing roots, handling rocks, and creating crushed stone to address wet spots on the trail. These techniques are crucial for sustainable trails, especially as our communities face more frequent and intense extreme weather events due to a changing climate. Erosion not only destroys trails by creating ruts, bumps, and washouts, but it can also have a detrimental effect on water quality, fish, and other organisms through sedimentation of surrounding lakes, wetlands, streams, and rivers.

**2,062** TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS IN 2023  
BY THE MONDAY STEWARDS

I wanted to send a big THANK YOU to all the volunteers who spent time cleaning up the Orra Phelps Preserve. The last few storms left a significant amount of damage within the preserve. My dog Daisy and I use the preserve every single day—rain (snow) or shine—and we were amazed at the amount of work involved in cleaning it up. It looks great! So thank you again, there are a lot of us who appreciate the hard work and enjoy the trails.

— PAUL LANIEWSKI



Barbara Hennig Memorial



The Monday Stewards



Volunteer Training Day








## LAND PROTECTION

# SAFEGUARDING FARMLAND

## ROPITZKY FAMILY FARMS

PLAN was thrilled to assist the Ropitzky family with the permanent protection of their historic 221-acre family farms in Stillwater. This land has a rich agricultural history dating back to pre-Revolutionary times and had faced intense development pressure. The family’s decision to conserve it will give future farmers an opportunity to work the land and has preserved a cherished legacy.

*Well-managed agricultural land benefits the whole community by:*

-  Keeping property taxes lower for all residents through generating more in taxes than it utilizes in services
-  Ensuring a local supply of fresh and secure food
-  Providing various environmental benefits, from carbon sequestration to wildlife habitats

Staff have secured funds and continue to work with four landowners on the permanent protection of an additional **387 acres** of farmland.



Steve Ropitzky



### Farmers Dinner

Thanks to an anonymous donor, PLAN had the opportunity to present information on the permanent protection of farmland through conservation easements to local farmers in the Town of Galway.





## LAND PROTECTION

# WOODS + WATERS

## PALMERTOWN

Located in the southernmost corner of the Adirondack Foothills, the Palmertown Range is PLAN's top landscape-scale (40,000 acres)—priority for wildlife habitat and environmental services.

Staff are currently working with four conservation-minded landowners on their options for permanently protecting critical woodlands and wetlands. While each land conservation project has its own timeline, staff closely communicate with each landowner so that every project advances forward.

## FUNDING SECURED TO PROTECT 435-ACRE RARE FOREST TRACT

Saratoga PLAN was awarded a \$301,497 grant from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Forest Conservation Easement for Land Trust (FCELT) grant program, administered by the Land Trust Alliance, to support local forest preservation efforts. This grant provides the last piece of funding needed to enable PLAN staff to work with landowners, Joanne and Tom Klepetar, in putting a conservation easement on their 435-acre forested property in Wilton and Greenfield, located within the Palmertown Range.

This property is a crucial component of the initiative to protect the foothills of the Adirondacks, an area essential for wildlife, climate resilience, and community recreation. Support from both public and private partners has made this project possible, ensuring the permanent conservation of this unique, large, forested landscape in the face of growing development pressures in Saratoga County.







## LAND PROTECTION

### GRAPHITE RANGE COMMUNITY FOREST OPENS

With your help, this new community forest in Wilton now serves as a recreational hub while playing a crucial role in permanently protecting the ecological value and resilience of the southern foothills of the Adirondacks.

This project was a collaborative effort between the Winter Family, Saratoga County, Open Space Institute, Saratoga PLAN, and the U.S. Forest Service's Community Forest Program. GRCF wouldn't have been possible without the support of over 200 individuals and local businesses, whose generosity helped raise over \$200,000!

Saratoga PLAN is happy to lead the ongoing stewardship of GRCF for new property owner Saratoga County with the help of a dedicated crew of volunteers and community groups including the GRCF Advisory Committee.

**200+** ACRES CONSERVED

### NORTHERN GATEWAY

The proposed 20-acre "Northern Gateway" section of the GRCF will eventually offer a second trailhead located on Wilton-Greenfield Road and contain a trail network extending into the western part of the 205-acre community forest. The Northern Gateway will feature more accessible walking paths with gentler gradients. PLAN is currently working with the Winter family and Saratoga County.



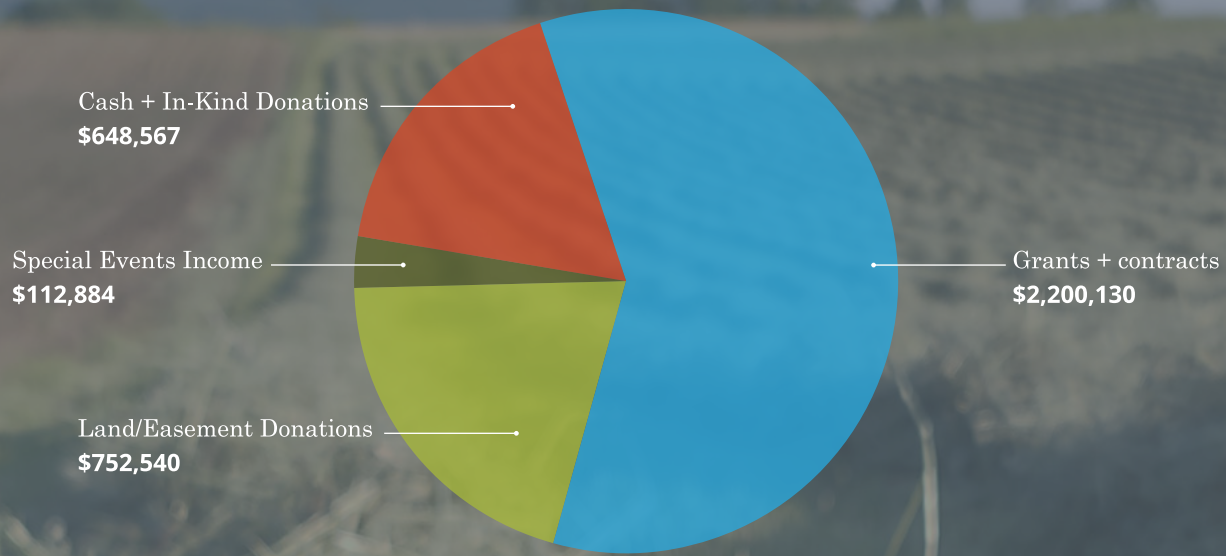
OVER  
**\$200K**  
RAISED



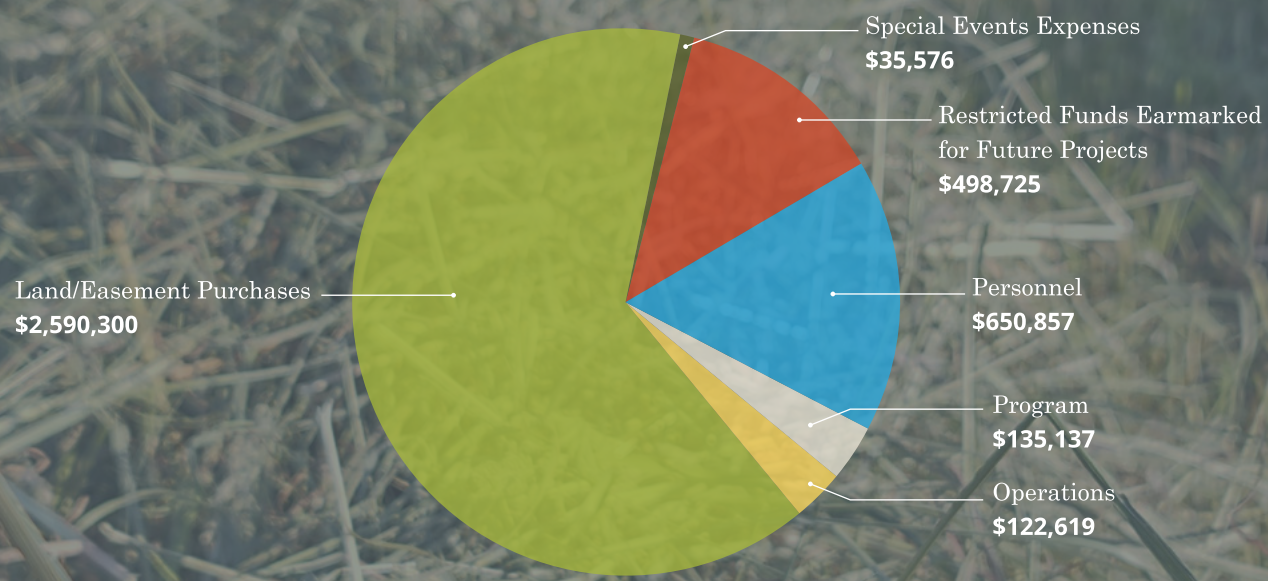




### TOTAL REVENUE \$3,714,335



### TOTAL EXPENSES \$4,033,215



**Notes**  
These preliminary unaudited numbers are accurate reflections of the basic financial picture for Saratoga PLAN over 2023. Investment earnings are not reflected in these results. Audited financial statements for fiscal year 2023 will be completed by mid-summer 2024. Completed audited statements for prior years are available from the NYS Department of Law, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271.



**PHOTO:**  
Dawn Szurek





## THANK YOU FOR ALL OF YOUR SUPPORT!

# DONORS

\* = In-Kind Donation + = Business Partner

### LEGACY CIRCLE

We appreciate the long-term commitment of donors who have made planned gifts through their wills and life insurance policies to Saratoga PLAN. These supporters ensure that funds will always be available to conserve farms, woods, waters, and trails for the benefit of current and future generations.

Tim Barnett  
Allen David  
Barbara Faraone  
Karen Flewelling  
Barbara L. Glaser  
Sally Hart  
Barbara Hennig  
Richard Higgins  
Field Horne  
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Libby Smith-Holmes  
Julia Stokes  
Martha Strohl  
Shane Williams-Ness  
Meg Woolbright  
Larry Woolbright

### LAND AND CONSERVATION EASEMENT DONATIONS

Diane Kerr  
Carol Miller  
Stephen Ropitzky  
Stewart's Shops

#### \$25,000+

American Farmland Trust  
Barbara Henning Estate  
Dockstader Charitable Trust  
Richard Higgins  
Land Trust Alliance  
NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets  
Steven Ropitzky  
Stewart's Shops

#### \$10,000+

Scott and Amy Agan\*  
Brookfield Renewable Power +  
Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region  
Charlie and Brigid Dake  
Gavia Charitable Fund  
James Gold  
Higgins Family Foundation  
Jane N. Mooty Foundation Trust  
Diane Kerr  
Lorna Kircher  
Carol Miller  
Newkirk Foundation, Inc.  
Nordlys Foundation

NYS Conservation Partnership Program  
Julia and Robert Stokes  
The Makowski Trust  
The Nature Conservancy

#### \$5,000+

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Cambiamento LLC +  
Susanne D'Isabel and Stephen Verral  
Barbara L. Glaser and Paul Zachos \*  
Kelly Family Cuidiu Foundation  
Amy Knoeller and James North  
Light Rain Foundation  
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Miller Family Charitable Trust  
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Will and Tabitha Orthwein  
Bradford Oswald  
River Farm America Foundation  
Jessica and Yli Schwartzman  
James and Robin Sevinsky  
Lorraine Skibo and Dan Chernoff \*  
Gwynneth Smith  
Kurt and Julie Swartz  
The Towne Law Firm, P. C. +  
James and Sue Towne

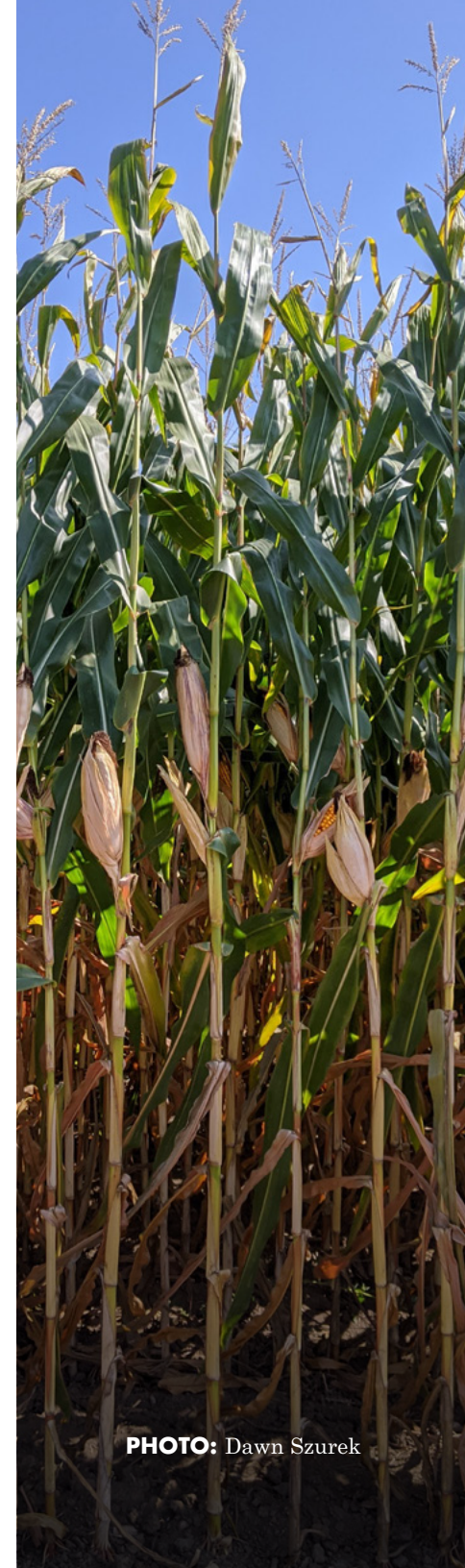


PHOTO: Dawn Szurek





## THANK YOU FOR ALL OF YOUR SUPPORT!

### \$2,500+

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 Richard Wissler  
 Ping Xu \*

### \$500+

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 Anderson Financial Group +  
 Anonymous (3)  
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 Ballston Spa National Bank +  
 Battenkill River Ventures LLC +  
 Behan Planning and Design  
 Brookside Nursery \*  
 Caffè Lena  
 Valerie Caputo  
 CLA Site Landscape Architecture, Engineering & Planning, P.C. +  
 David Clark and Mary C. Lynn  
 Erin and David Conklin  
 Cornell Cooperative Ext. of Saratoga County  
 Cudney's Launderers & Dry Cleaners

Robert and Suzanne Daly  
 Dancing Grain Brewery  
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 Brian McMahan  
 Mengel, Metzger, Barr & Co. LLP  
 Wendy and Scott Miller  
 Alexander Monticello



## THANK YOU FOR ALL OF YOUR SUPPORT!

Steven Nissen and Betsy Sandberg  
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 Penny Steffen  
 The LA Group  
 The Law Office of Steven D Greenblatt, PLLC +  
 Eugene and Nancy Vermilyea  
 Kristoffer Walker  
 Mary Beth and James Walsh  
 Florence and A. Wayne Wheeler  
 John Witt  
 Larry and Meg Woolbright  
 Zobel & Co Kitchens

### **\$250+**

Adirondack A's Model A Ford Club \*  
 Alpine Sport Shop \*  
 Joseph and Jessica Anderson  
 Anonymous (1)

Dolores Arste and David Hickey  
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 Allen David  
 Robert Davies, Jr





## THANK YOU FOR ALL OF YOUR SUPPORT!

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 Revolution Rail Co. \*  
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 Elizabeth Ruger  
 Daniel and Jean Russell  
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 Mark and Cindy Rybaltowski  
 Robert and Gail Sack  
 Danica Salamun  
 Gene Salerni  
 Paul Salerni  
 Julia Sanzen  
 Saratoga Corinth and Hudson Railway \*  
 Saratoga Farmstead and Northeastern Massage \*  
 Saratoga Performing Arts Center \*  
 Saratoga Rowing Center \*  
 Neils and Susan Schmitt  
 Judy Sharples  
 Noah Shaw and Karen Barone  
 Smith Orchards Pies and Bakeshop  
 Spa City Farmers' Market \*  
 Cheryl Springer  
 Judith Staubo  
 Patrick Stephan  
 Mark and Elizabeth Straus



## THANK YOU FOR ALL OF YOUR SUPPORT!

### \$100+ CONT'D

Lois Streit  
Matthew Stringer  
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Thank you to all who gave their time and talents to Saratoga PLAN's mission! Your efforts and enthusiasm are appreciated.

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# IN MEMORY

## DON CARPENTER

Don was a spirited farmer with a keen sense of humor, whose commitment to land conservation left an indelible mark on Galway. Through a conservation easement on his 59-acre farm, he generously shared the beauty of his land through Glowegee Creek Preserve - North.

## MARTHA STROHL

Martha, a dedicated advocate for land conservation in the Saratoga Springs region, left behind a lasting legacy. She was instrumental in the formation of Saratoga PLAN and led the "3 Bags Full [Fundraising] Campaign", showcasing her unwavering commitment to protecting working farms.



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