Dear Friends,

In September of last year, I was elected as the new chair of your land trust. I have been on the board for 16 years, heading up the Outreach Committee and, most recently, serving as vice-chair to our longtime chair Chris Davis. As I said to the board at my election, I could only think of following Chris because I knew that I could count on the support and guidance of our entire board and staff. And because I believed that we all—board, staff and you, our supporters—share a strong commitment and connection to the landscape we are fortunate to live in. I am deeply grateful to Chris for choosing to stay on the board and remain as involved and passionate about our work as ever.

As you all know by now, Andy is retiring in July and thus his name is appearing in this annual report as executive director for the last time. He and his wife, Gayle, will be relocating to his native North Carolina, a longtime plan that will bring them closer to family and some pretty good golf as well. Their ties here are deep and we know that they will always be part of our extended community. Andy’s announcement of his retirement was not a surprise—he had been preparing the organization for this transition for the last couple of years. In his 12 years as our executive director, we have benefited from his extraordinary leadership and we feel exceptionally privileged to have had him at our helm for as long as we did, with his combination of experience and wisdom, his steadiness and vision, his welcoming openness and his great good spirits. Our Hudson Highlands communities are the better for his time here.

After an extensive candidate search for Andy’s successor we unanimously and enthusiastically chose our own board member, Cold Spring resident Michelle Smith, whom you will read about later in this annual report. We are thrilled to have her. After a busy transition period this spring, Michelle will officially begin on June 11th. Andy’s plan has always been clear: “I will get up from my seat and my successor will sit down in it and our work will continue.” With greatest thanks to Andy, and to our new leader and her talented and extremely capable staff, we feel confident that this is exactly how things will go forward at Winter Hill during this period of new opportunity and growth.

With great appreciation to all of you for your continuing support and encouragement,

Nancy Berner
Chair

Dear Friends:

It is with a great sense of nostalgia that I write my last message in a Hudson Highlands Land Trust annual report.

When I joined HHLT as Executive Director early in 2004, I was the only full-time professional staff member. I knew little about the intricacies of conservation law, stewardship practices and natural resources protection, but I did know that the beauty, history and character of this area were precious and well-worth fighting for. With the guidance of a passionate board of directors and support of knowledgeable colleagues from other area conservation organizations, I learned early on that this small community-based land trust could be a crucial player in the conservation of the region on so many levels. And, over the past 12 years, it has evolved into exactly that.

If I’ve learned one thing in my multiple careers, it is that adaptation is crucial to success. Now with six full-time staff members, a board of directors consisting of residents who are as diverse in outlook as they are enthusiastic about HHLT’s mission, and municipal and community partners too numerous to count, the Land Trust – your land trust – is on solid ground. During 2015 and into 2016, we’ve prepared well for the leadership changes ahead, and I am confident that with Nancy Berner as Chair and Michelle Smith as Executive Director, this organization is poised to make an even greater impact on conservation in the Highlands in the next several years.

These are exciting times at the Land Trust. I could not be more proud of this organization and the impact it has made, but am certain that the best is yet to come. I hope you will remain involved in HHLT’s growing conservation mission and continue to generously support the Land Trust’s work – I know I will.

With best wishes to you in 2016,

Andy Chmar
Executive Director
Mission Statement

The Hudson Highlands Land Trust is a community-based, accredited land conservation organization devoted to protecting the natural resources, rural character and scenic beauty of the Hudson Highlands.

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A land trust’s chief purpose is to preserve land. But what does a land trust preserve land for? In the case of the Hudson Highlands Land Trust, the answer is multifaceted. HHLT has learned to adapt its approach based on particular parcels and the needs of the region, while consistently protecting natural and scenic resources for public benefit.

Some properties, like the 33 acres in Philipstown HHLT conserved in partnership with its owners in December of 2015, ensure that significant viewsheds are protected forever, safeguarding the region’s scenic quality and rural character. The property, highly visible from the Hudson River and public parks, is characterized by a mix of forested land, fields, a restored wetland, and a stream, making the donation of a conservation agreement on it a valuable gift to future generations. Other parcels provide advantageous buffers to preserves and sanctuaries conserving wildlife habitat, and still others are crucial to protecting the natural resources of the region. Since the Hudson Highlands Land Trust was founded 26 years ago, a chief aim of its board has been, wherever possible, to enhance the public’s access to the land that has been protected. Further, since the terms of all conservation agreements the Land Trust holds provide for protection in perpetuity the commitment to public enjoyment is permanent, ensuring that our children and their children will enjoy the outdoors—hike, canoe, watch nature in the wild, and gain both strength and spirituality from the hills, streams, forests and meadows among which we live.

Winter Hill permanently conserved
In 2015, HHLT scored high in gaining public access on properties it protected. With some 100 acres preserved, 70 are open to enjoyment by the public.
with Chris Buck, owner of “Winter Hill” in Garrison. Buck had donated nine acres of the property to New York State Parks the previous year, allowing for construction of a parking area and spur trail, giving hikers safer, more convenient access to the Revolutionary War North Redoubt. The January 2015 agreement protects the remainder of the property from further development—including a popular sledding hill and sprawling lawn that the public uses for picnicking, touch football and cross-country skiing. Says Buck: “Conservation of open space should allow for public access wherever practical. When people get outside and enjoy the land, they value it more and are more likely to support the organizations that did the hard work to make it available for recreation.”

**O’Connell Boulder Preserve in Putnam Valley**

In February, HHLT partnered with the Westchester Land Trust (WLT) to protect two critical parcels in Putnam Valley, located within the Peekskill Hollow Brook watershed from which both Peekskill and Cortlandt draw their drinking water. The 31-acre property, mostly wooded upland covered with oaks, maples, birch and hickory, also includes a wetland covering 14 acres. It was donated to WLT by the family of William O. O’Connell and has been named the O’Connell Boulder Field Preserve. HHLT holds a conservation agreement on the property. “Our father loved this property and cared for it for many years. [HHLT and WLT] have given our family a great legacy,” said Mary O’Connell, William O’Connell’s daughter, and a co-executrix of his estate.

**Watergrass Sanctuary—19-acre addition**

Through a complex multi-partner compact with HHLT, Putnam Highlands Audubon Society (PHAS), Scenic Hudson, Open Space Institute and a private landowner, over 19 acres were added to the Putnam Highlands Audubon Society’s Watergrass Sanctuary off Route 9 in Philipstown. This is the last undeveloped parcel in a 400-acre assemblage of conserved properties between Route 9 and Old Albany Post Road. HHLT holds the conservation agreement and will collaborate with Putnam Highlands Audubon Society on its perpetual stewardship.

As public awareness of the enhanced access to newly protected property has grown, so has the challenge of ensuring that fragile ecosystems aren’t damaged, and that new trails and pathways aren’t eroded by overuse. Says PHAS President Connie Mayer-Bakall, “You have to strike a balance. Most people would hate to damage the beauty they are enjoying, but they don’t know that they are. You have to educate the public, and it doesn’t happen overnight. That’s our responsibility as land stewards.” HHLT Conservation Stewardship Manager Nicole Wooten will

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**Michelle Smith: HHLT is proud to welcome our next Executive Director**

A few years ago, we introduced Michelle D. Smith to our members as a new member of our Board of Directors; we now have the pleasure of welcoming her as the next Executive Director of the Hudson Highlands Land Trust, succeeding Andy Chmar, who will complete his tenure with the organization at the end of June.

Michelle comes to HHLT after a successful career in financial services, most recently as a Managing Director in the Investment Banking Division at Goldman Sachs & Co. She is a qualified actuary, applying her risk-management skills to both financial and environmental issues.

She hails from Australia, and has made her home in the United States since 1994. Michelle has held leadership roles with the Sierra Club and Georgia ForestWatch. A resident of Philipstown, she has been active in the Highlands since moving to the Village of Cold Spring in 2010. She currently serves on the Advisory Board of the Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries, and is a founding member of Renewable Highlands, a grassroots group that is working to bring renewable energy alternatives to the residents of the Hudson Highlands.

“I am equally excited by the opportunities and challenges that face me in my new role at the Land Trust,” said Michelle. “I look forward to working with this exceptional staff and board, our public officials, other regional and national conservation organizations, and, most importantly, the residents of the Hudson Highlands. This is a critical time for us to work together to preserve the character and vitality of this region.”
partner with Putnam Highlands Audubon Society and the Student Conservation Association to build a trail through the added acres. Perry Pitt, PHAS Vice-President, who worked with HHLT on trail-building in 2015 adds: “You can’t preserve land and not let people enjoy what you preserve. You have to hope that giving access to a beautiful place will make the public aware of their responsibility. The key is planning and monitoring.”

Legacy Landscapes Project sets the strategy for what’s ahead
Besides opening newly protected acreage to public enjoyment, in 2015 the Land Trust updated its strategic land protection plan, the Legacy Landscapes Project (LLP). This is a tool for identifying and prioritizing acreage with specific desirable conservation characteristics—e.g. adjacency to preserved land, wetlands, threatened species. The LLP was developed in-house by HHLT’s land conservation staff; it ranks 15,225 acres of land in the region on the specific conservation values they possess. “This is a dynamic analysis, and the attributes change,” says Katrina Shindledecker, HHLT’s Director of Conservation. For instance, since 2011, the effects of climate change have become more evident; accordingly, parcels particularly susceptible to—or, alternatively, resistant to—the effects of climate change are rated differently. Matt Decker, who worked with Shindledecker on the update, says of the project: “It gives HHLT a real head start when a piece of property becomes available. The Land Trust knows immediately where it stands in terms of conservation values, and therefore knows how urgently they need to move to protect it.”

The revised and enhanced Legacy Landscapes Project plan is just one way in which the Land Trust is taking actionable steps to protect more of the important landscapes, viewsheds and natural resources that embody the dynamic character of the Hudson Highlands. The board and staff of HHLT hope that everyone will visit these outdoor treasures, enjoy them and understand what is at stake.

Legacy Landscapes Project
Preserving our iconic views, cherished lands and vital natural resources
The Legacy Landscapes Project, established in 2011 by Hudson Highlands Land Trust and updated in 2015, sets forth a plan to identify parcels throughout the Land Trust’s mission area that are important land protection priorities. Based on a comprehensive analysis of resource functions on all parcels within the HHLT mission area, this initiative focuses our land conservation efforts on implementing appropriate solutions for those landscapes deemed too important to risk. The Land Trust works in partnership with private landowners, regional conservation organizations and government agencies, including the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and Department of Environmental Conservation, to achieve these goals.

Legacy Landscapes Project Scorecard
Priority parcels that have been directly conserved or acquired by HHLT, or that HHLT has facilitated in the permanent preservation by another conservation entity:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Acres</th>
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ENGAGED RESIDENTS = THRIVING COMMUNITIES

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.”
— Margaret Mead

At HHLT, we not only embrace the truth of Margaret Mead’s words, we have witnessed the positive impacts that concerned residents have on their communities time and time again.

HHLT is one of the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail project partners, along with the Towns of Philipstown and Fishkill, the Village of Cold Spring, City of Beacon, Scenic Hudson, NYS Parks and many other local and state groups. The project’s goal is to improve access to the trails and public spaces along the Route 9D corridor, while maintaining local quality of life and protecting important natural resources. The Preliminary Draft Master Plan was completed in early 2015. Currently a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) is being conducted on the planned route. This will address important matters like parking, garbage, shuttle service, and environmental impacts. We encourage local residents to stay involved and we will continue to keep our membership abreast of developments.

Last year, we had the pleasure of highlighting the work of one of the many volunteer trail-maintenance groups that ensure the safety and enjoyment of the residents and visitors who hike throughout the Hudson Highlands. Members of the Jolly Rovers, a trail crew that specializes in stone work, led a hike for HHLT and gave attendees an idea of the effort that went into the creation of the steps along the Appalachian Trail in Bear Mountain State Park. Jolly Rovers co-founder Chris Ingui led the hike, stating, “We hope that people got inspiration from the hike, not just about what people can build in stone, but build with each other through community and volunteerism.”

Two other local volunteer groups, Renewable Philipstown and Renewable Highlands, have joined forces to improve quality of life in the Hudson Valley by seeking energy alternatives and promoting consumer choices for the region. The groups understand that some of the threats to our natural resources are driven by energy demands. They hope to use the group-buying power of the Hudson Highlands to launch a community choice aggregation (CCA), which can solicit bids from energy companies to supply electricity for residents and small business owners. With this leverage, the CCA can set its own criteria for how the electricity is generated, and choose a supplier that meets its pricing and sourcing conditions.

In addition to these groups, HHLT is grateful to the scores of volunteers who keep the local parks and green spaces throughout the Hudson Highlands enjoyable for residents and visitors. We encourage all our members to monitor the HHLT Facebook page and local papers to discover opportunities to pitch in and help maintain the beauty of our communities.

Enhanced Tax Incentive for Land Conservation Becomes Permanent

With strong bipartisan action, the House and Senate voted to make permanent a tax incentive supporting land conservation last year. HHLT was among 1,100 land trusts to support the incentive through a collaborative, multi-year campaign, and we thank Senators Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, and Representatives Chris Gibson and Sean Patrick Maloney for their strong support of land conservation.

Private land conservation, through voluntary conservation agreements, is the least expensive way to retain our communities’ character by preserving legacy landscapes and protecting working farms forever, ensuring they are not inappropriately developed nor their natural resources exploited. This method allows private landowners to exchange or diminish their development rights for a Federal tax deduction and a limited New York State income tax credit. They continue to pay property and school taxes on the conserved land at the same rate they did before the easement donation.

Here in the Hudson Valley, we all benefit from private land conservation. The scenic landscapes we enjoy bring economic benefit to our communities through outdoor recreation and tourism, supporting job growth. Open space also sustains our quality of life by protecting local natural resources.
2015 FINANCIAL REPORT

Financial Overview

Results for the Hudson Highlands Land Trust in the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015 show total operating expenses were $1,156,276, up slightly from $1,121,833 spent in FY14. As in the previous year, HHLT had significant capital expenses of over $200,000 resulting from two important land acquisition projects, which created 50 acres of newly protected land in Philipstown and Putnam Valley. Total revenues, including contributions, grants, and investment income, increased from $1,099,763 to $1,865,036, with strong growth reflected in all revenue categories, but particularly in investment income and foundations grants to underwrite sub-projects of the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail.

Financial Structure

Hudson Highlands Land Trust maintains a board-designated investment fund: the Highlands Steward Fund, which is reserved for land conservation, stewardship, defense and acquisition. The Finance Committee of HHLT’s board, working with an outside investment management firm, oversees the assets, which are pooled in a diversified portfolio. Total investment return for 2015 was 8.7%, following a return of 10.4% in 2014. The board engaged Pattison, Koskey, Howe & Bucci, CPAs, PC to perform an independent audit.

Nicole Wooten: A New Addition to our Conservation Team

Nicole Wooten has joined the Hudson Highlands Land Trust as its Conservation Stewardship Manager. Nicole holds Bachelor of Arts degrees in Environmental Studies and English from the University of North Carolina, and recently graduated from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies with a Master of Environmental Management. Her studies at Yale focused on protected areas management and ecosystem conservation.

After receiving her undergraduate degrees, Nicole spent two years as an environmental educator for the Peace Corps in El Salvador. Those years of service, and a long walk along the Pacific Crest Trail, inspired an interest in the intersection of land management, conservation and long-distance hiking trails. Her professional experience includes tenures at the Continental Divide Trail Coalition in Golden, CO and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy in Boiling Springs, PA.

As the Conservation Stewardship Manager, Nicole will be overseeing HHLT’s stewardship program, serving as the primary contact for landowners with property conserved through the Land Trust and as the point person for all our natural resource protection programs. She will also manage a wide range of GIS mapping projects, and assist local municipalities with conservation planning. Says Nicole, “I’m looking forward to getting to know the whole community. I’m especially excited about getting out on the land with those who know it best, and contributing to the ongoing success of HHLT’s stewardship program.”
Yard owners unite!
We yard-owners could all be saving effort and cash, contributing to the health of our community, enhancing our personal eco-space, and achieving more, all by doing less. But first we must change how we think about and care for our yards.

More chemicals do not a better lawn make.
The first thing to change is our concept of the value of emerald-green, homogenous turf lawns. These artificially over-fed and chemically-altered pseudo-carpets just aren’t real. Most homeowners use 10 times more chemicals per acre than farmers, chemicals the lawns simply don’t need. Natural sources of nutrients, such as gentle clovers and alfalfa, which add nitrogen and attract bees and other pollinators, have no negative side-effects and greatly reduce runoff pollutants to our drinking water. If necessary, a stressed lawn can benefit from organic fertilizers in moderation.

What about our other yard features?
Bedding plants and ornamentals can be so entertaining, particularly when buzzing with visitors such as honey bees, hummingbirds, butterflies, moths, and other pollinators who are greatly attracted to native plants. The fact that these natives thrive in their natural environment, require less care and fail less often, propagate themselves, and need no added nutrients are all a huge plus. Avoid purchasing registered invasive species, still for sale at many local nurseries! Although initially appealing, these bad boys will take over your yard, your neighbor’s yard, nearby open space, and so on. The alternatives to unnatural outdoor spaces are almost endless, easy to find, and so beneficial to our communities and our pocketbooks. Begin by exploring the resources suggested below, and take the pledge to stop adding more pollutants to our vulnerable world.

Helpful links:
Autumn Cocktail Benefit

On September 16th, friends and supporters gathered to toast the Highlands with HHLT at 620 Loft and Garden in iconic Rockefeller Center...

Winter Carnival

In February, HHLT once again partnered with the Philipstown Recreation Department and Friends of Philipstown Recreation to host Winter Carnival, a free, dual-sited community event that encourages residents and visitors to enjoy the outdoors no matter the temperature...
Take-a-Hike! Season

During the 2015 HHLT Take-a-Hike! season, more than 120 residents and visitors of all ages enjoyed a series of eight unique hikes that highlighted the natural, scenic, cultural and historic resources of the Hudson Highlands…

Winter Hill Holiday Tree Lighting

This festive, family-friendly event has become a new holiday tradition in the Highlands. HHLT and fellow tenants, The Garden Conservancy and Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, celebrated along with friends, supporters and the Walter Hoving Home Choir. Our host, Chris Buck, did the honors by flipping the switch to light the white pine tree in holiday style…
Cocktails at Ananouri

In May, the Land Trust honored our conservation donors and partners with a gathering of more than 100 guests. HHLT Board member Anne Sidamon-Eristoff and Anne P. Sidamon-Eristoff co-hosted on the grounds of their adjoining conserved properties overlooking the Hudson River in Highland Falls…

3rd Annual Young Friends Hike and Picnic

In 2015, the Young Friends of HHLT supporter group switched things up and held a cider-tasting and hike at Winter Hill in October. The event mixed a trek to the North and South Redoubts with music, an apple-pressing demonstration, and hard cider-tasting featuring cideries from around the region…
4th Annual ROW Poetry Trail Season

Last summer and fall, HHLT collaborated with partners Constitution Marsh Audubon Center and Sanctuary in Garrison and the Hudson Highlands Nature Museum in Cornwall to present outdoor installations featuring poetry created by local students during River of Words educational workshops throughout the prior school year. Each exhibit was kicked off with an opening reception...

Food for Thought Sustainability Forum

In April, HHLT hosted Food for Thought, a community forum on shopping, cooking and eating sustainably, at the Highlands Country Club. The free event featured one moderated panel discussion, a series of interactive breakout sessions, and the opportunity to browse information tables...
### June
- **5**  | Community Picnic Farewell to Andy Chmar
- **12** | Take-A-Hike! Event: Fortress West Point Historic Walk

### July
- **23** | Take-A-Hike! Event: River Imps and Fairy Tales of the Hudson
- **31 (thru Aug. 28)** | HHLT’s River of Words Poetry Trail at Constitution Marsh Audubon Center and Sanctuary

### September
- **10** | Take-A-Hike! Event: Take Two: Storm King and Crows Nest Challenge
- **15** | HHLT Autumn Cocktail Benefit
- **17** | Take-A-Hike! Event: Foraging for Fungi
- **25 (thru Nov. 13)** | HHLT’s River of Words Poetry Trail at Hudson Highlands Nature Museum

### October
- **8** | Take-A-Hike! Program Fundraiser: Castle to River

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**Thom Johnson: New addition to ROW education team brings visual arts element through the lens of nature**

Thom Johnson, the newest member of our River of Words team, brings a fine arts component to our environmental education program, enabling us to offer workshops that include the close study of native flora through sketching, the art of drawing historic landscapes, and the creation of Picasso-inspired nature drawings.

Thom is an educator with experience in both the visual and performing arts. He started working with children at a summer camp for city kids in Harriman State Park. An art teacher for more than 30 years at Irvington High School, he has a strong interest in architectural ruins and their relationship to the environment, creating works based on Northgate (the old Cornish Estate) and Bannerman’s Island Arsenal on Pollepel Island. He co-authored the book *Bannerman’s Castle*. “There are many reasons that I am proud to be part of the ROW team, with the main one being that we bring our experience as educators into local classrooms and support what the teachers are doing. When I walk into the schools that we serve and see what is being done, I am pleased to add to the experience to make the learning richer.”

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**Notes on Environmental Education: ROW Program reaches more local students than ever before**

Launched in 2008, HHLT’s River of Words Environmental Education Program (ROW) strives to inspire our region’s youngest residents to become environmental stewards. ROW instructors run free in-school workshops in all five mission-area public schools that engage students through science, history, art and writing, and encourage them to create works inspired by the Hudson River watershed. In 2015, HHLT worked with over 2,000 students, more than ever before.

During the summer and fall, public Poetry Trails featuring examples of the students’ nature-inspired poetry are installed at Constitution Marsh Audubon Center and Sanctuary, and the Hudson Highlands Nature Museum’s Outdoor Discovery Center.

Every October, ROW educators, HHLT staff and volunteers collaborate with local schools so that their students can participate in A Day in the Life of the Hudson River, a study coordinated by NYS DEC’s Hudson River Estuary Program and Columbia University’s Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, which gives students the opportunity to collect scientific information, like data on aquatic life and water chemistry, to create snapshots of the health of the river at dozens of locations.

HHLT also offers teacher training to all mission-area public schools to help educators use the outdoors as a learning laboratory and meet curriculum goals.

For information on HHLT’s Hudson Highlands Regional River of Words program, please visit www.hhltrow.org or email row@hhlt.org.
GET TO KNOW US!

Thank you, Land Trust Supporters! Our board of directors, staff and volunteers wish to thank all of our financial contributors, whose generosity helps to protect the natural beauty of the Hudson Highlands and rural character of our communities. In the next several pages, you’ll see the faces of some of HHLT’s dedicated supporters and friends who joined us for an event or program in 2015. Become a supporter and join this terrific group of people!

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Mr. and Mrs. Cary Downey
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Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. Doyle

Bente Strong: HHLT welcomes our newest Director

Over the last 17 years, Bente has been a Senior Vice President and Investment Counselor at Capital Group Private Client Services. As well as working with individuals and families, Bente helps nonprofit foundations and endowments realize their long-term financial objectives through effective planning, investment management and governance troubleshooting.

Bente is a long-time supporter of HHLT’s work. In fact, her Garrison home was a stop on HHLT’s 2008 Sustainability Expo House Tour, providing participants with an up-close view of the structure’s uniquely efficient sod roof, passive solar structure, and use of sustainably forested building materials. “Land conservation has always been a part of my life, growing up with a love of nature and a father who fought to preserve thousands of acres in southern Vermont. Garrison, with its stunning, natural beauty, was love at first sight; a piece of heaven that I am lucky to call my home. It is an honor to join the HHLT board and to do my part in helping to preserve this special place,” said Bente.

Beyond conservation, Bente has a passion for choral music and opera. She is a soprano with the New York Choral Society and performs regularly in venues throughout New York City. Several years ago, Bente founded an advocacy program for emerging opera singers to provide them with the training and opportunities necessary to pursue a career path in this specialized field. She is also an avid outdoor enthusiast who enjoys skiing, hiking and sailing.

Bente is a trustee of the American–Scandinavian Foundation, and the Hattie M. Strong Foundation in DC.

We are delighted that Bente has agreed to share her expertise and her enthusiasm for the region as a member of the HHLT Board of Directors.
Supporters, continued

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Ms. Marie Samples and Dr. Patrick Driscoll
Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Drogin

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**Local Business Owner Spotlight: Old Souls**

Tara and James Caroll moved to Cold Spring in 2012 to open their outdoor gear and home goods store, Old Souls, after being weekend visitors while living and working in New York City. “James is from Buffalo originally, and I am from a tiny town in the Catskills. Getting out of NYC was inevitable for us, and we had our hearts set on Cold Spring since we first visited as weekend hikers,” Tara said.

Old Souls reflects the Carolls’ enthusiasm for the outdoors and commitment to responsible and sustainable manufacturing. Whenever possible, featured products are made in the USA, and under all circumstances sourced from companies with strong commitments to environmental responsibility. Both Tara and James are avid outdoors people with a love of hiking, camping, and fly fishing—James even works as a fly fishing guide in the Catskills and hosts his clients on fly fishing trips around the world.

Though the Carolls have only been residents of the Hudson Highlands for four years, they have become fixtures in the local community. Tara serves as Treasurer for the Cold Spring Area Chamber of Commerce. They have also been masterful at finding ways to give back to the community through Old Souls. Three years ago, Tara and James joined 1% for the Planet, an environmental initiative created by Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard and Craig Matthews. Members of 1% for the Planet donate 1% of their gross sales to preservation and restoration of the natural environment, to qualified organizations all over the world. When James and Tara learned they were able to choose a local organization to receive the funds, they chose Hudson Highlands Land Trust.

“What drew us to the Hudson Valley, and Cold Spring more directly, is the natural beauty of the environment that we enjoy here. It’s no small miracle to be able to live as rurally as we do, only 50 miles from one of the biggest cities in the world. HHLT works to preserve that, and we are proud to support that effort,” said James.

Tara and James are great examples of local businesspeople that truly understand the connection between land conservation, sustainability, quality of life, and vibrant, thriving businesses in the region. If your business, or the company you work for, is interested in building, supporting, and activating an alliance between businesses and non-profits committed to creating a healthy planet, you can join 1% for the Planet, too. For more information, please visit: onepercentfortheplanet.org.
Volunteers: We couldn’t do it without you!

We cannot overstate how grateful we are to all our wonderful volunteers who, hour by hour, help us in all aspects of our work: stewarding land, lending a hand at events, leading hikes, helping with office work and more. Thank you for joining our team and helping to make 2015 such a successful year for HHLT.

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Hope Rogers: HHLT gets a new and enthusiastic regular volunteer

Last fall we received an email from Hope Rogers, who wrote that she was willing to help out in whatever manner might be useful to HHLT. Since then, she has helped set up critter cams on conserved property, sell refreshments at the 2016 Winter Carnival and assist with office tasks, as well as prepping the location of Winter Hill’s soon-to-be River of Words Poetry Garden alongside other dedicated volunteers.

Hope’s childhood on a relative’s dairy farm outside Philadelphia instilled an appreciation for the outdoors, but she didn’t develop a love of hiking until later in life. She raised her children in New York City, taking advantage of Central Park’s proximity. Once they had grown, she realized she craved open space and was drawn to the Hudson Highlands. She now lives part-time in Garrison, renting an apartment over an old barn. “I can smell the woods and hear the birds. Out back is the Osborn Loop Trail. It is the perfect antidote to Manhattan’s east side.”

Hope explains the motivation for donating her time simply, “When you stop working and start volunteering, you look for something that interests you.” We are very grateful that she sent that email to us.

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