

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

FRIENDS ^{OF} THE RIVER VALLEY



Dear Supporters and Friends,

I am pleased to share with you what we did *together* in 2023.

It was a year of remarkable growth for Friends of the River Valley, a testament to the collective effort of our 55 contributors – individuals, foundations, and businesses, who generously gave \$85,119 to support our mission. Your contributions have been instrumental in our success.

Donor funds totaling \$64,740 allowed us to help our neighbors in the surrounding communities. We are profoundly grateful for the funds these donors contributed, which we shared with 14 community programs. In this report, we report on the impacts of six of the 2023 programs: ArtVan, Team Long Run, Falcon Food Stop/Hawk's Nest, Western Foothills Regional Program—Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy, the Larry Labonte Recovery Program, and Black Mountain.

You can learn more about the other eight programs on our website. Visit www.FriendsOfRiverValley.org.

Our mission is for every child, adult, and family in the River Valley to have access to meals and nutrition, books, and various school, community, and wellness programs. The nine members of our dedicated volunteer board are committed to continuing our mission, initiating economic development, and expanding our funding of community programs in 2024 with your continued financial support. Your support is crucial in helping us make a difference.

Thank you.

With sincere gratitude,



Darby Beliveau
President of the Board of Directors

Acknowledgments

Photos by Stewart
Smith Photography

Design Courtesy of
Preti Flaherty

Friends of the River Valley Board of Directors

Matthew Kaubris, Chairman
Darby Beliveau, President
Cheryl A. G. Dickson, Secretary
John S. Beliveau, Treasurer
Severin M. Beliveau
Lisa Poulin Marr
Nghia Ha
Edward H. "Eddie" Paterson
John Pepin

Contact Us:

Friends of the River Valley
PO Box 175
Rumford, ME 04276-0175

Info@friendsofrivervalley.org

Mission

The Friends of the River Valley mission is for every child, adult, and family in Western Maine’s Androscoggin River Valley to access food, essential needs, educational enrichment, and physical and mental wellness opportunities. Friends of the River Valley is a centralized resource for funding, support, and partnership with existing programs and organizations to provide these needs and promote economic development opportunities.



In 2023 Donors Gave **\$85,119** to Friends of the River Valley

Thanks to our generous contributors, we made an impact in the River Valley by awarding grants totaling \$64,740 to the following in 2023:

ArtVan	\$20,600
Team Long Run	\$10,000
Western Foothills Regional Program Equine Therapy	\$5,500
Mountain Valley High School – Falcon Food Stop Middle School Food Pantry – The Hawk’s Next	\$5,000
Larry LaBonte Recovery Center	\$5,000
Dirigo Elementary School After School Programs	\$5,000
Black Mountain of Maine	\$3,000
RSU 56 – Basketball court	\$2,500
Mountain Recovery Network	\$2,140
MVHS Outing Club	\$2,000
Dirigo Elementary School Summer Camp	\$2,000
Town of Mexico Library	\$1,000
Town of Mexico Recreation Park (July 4th celebration)	\$500
Envision Rumford	\$500

Thank you to all who contributed in 2023 – you made an impact!

For a list of our donors, sponsors, and more information on all of the nonprofit organizations we support, please visit <https://friendsofrivervalley.org/>

IMPACT 2023

BY THE NUMBERS

\$85,119

CONTRIBUTIONS

55

NUMBER OF DONORS

\$64,740

GRANTS TO
COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

14

NONPROFITS SUPPORTED

\$17,979*

ANNUAL OPERATING EXPENSES

**These expenses are covered by board member
contributions not donor funds.*

4,059 YOUTH

TOTAL IMPACT

Impact Highlight: ArtVan

Jamie Silvestri

Program Director and
Founder of ArtVan

GRANT AMOUNT

\$20,600

IMPACT

**133 CHILDREN/
CAREGIVERS**

Friends of the River Valley (FRV) funding was used for ArtVan's staff salaries to support our time planning projects, organizing materials, fuel for the van to transport staff and materials from our studio storage unit to the Rumford/Mexico community, snacks, and art materials. An additional 10% operations fee supports bookkeeping, fundraising efforts, and grant writing to sustain our organization's capacity.



ArtVan's unique approach to the creative process uncovers new meanings and relationships and paves a practical path to the unseen. This is then brought to life through Art Therapy. As we enter our second year of service in the Rumford community, we have fostered strong relationships with the youth, parents, teachers, and the school mental health team. Our youth are encouraged to express themselves freely, visually, and verbally, and are comfortable seeking assistance with their art. We are an integral part of the team, working collaboratively to serve the students. The warm reception we received when some of the school program youth joined us during our summer programs is a testament to our positive impact.

Impact Highlight: Team Long Run

Hilary Harper-Wilcoxon

Team Long Run
Executive Director

GRANT AMOUNT

\$10,000

IMPACT

944 CHILDREN

Chisholm Head Start 40 students and a total of 904 students at: Rumford Elementary, Meroby Elementary and Dirigo Elementary.

Team Long Run is a Bridgton-based non-profit organization that helps school-age children improve their literacy by combining it with exercise and fun activities.

Principal Jodi Ellis at Meroby/Rumford elementary schools says: "In a PK-4 school [Meroby] where 91% of your students come from economically disadvantaged homes, where it is a struggle for families to keep food on the table or heat their homes in the winter, you can imagine that books in the home are a luxury...one that is often unattainable. However, with the support of Team Long Run, we were able to put not one, but



TWO brand-new books in the hands of every Meroby student this year. When books are delivered, it's just like Christmas to some of our students. You see nothing but smiling faces, and sometimes students jumping with joy when they find out they get to take the book home with them... it's THEIRS!! If it were not for Team Long Run and their generous donors, the majority of my students would never get to know what it's like to have books to read at home with their families. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for making this otherwise unattainable luxury a reality for our students!"

Impact Highlight: Falcon Food Stop and Hawk's Nest

Kasey Flagg

Mountain Valley High School
Mental Wellness Coordinator

Serena Flagg

School Nurse

GRANT AMOUNT

\$5,000

IMPACT

**100 STUDENTS
PER MONTH**

Kasey Flagg, Mountain Valley High School Mental Wellness Coordinator, and Serena Flagg, School Nurse, recognized the profound needs of homeless and food insecure students during their time away from school. To address this, they established a food and essential pantry at Mountain Valley High School, providing much-needed food and personal hygiene products to these students free of charge.



Kasey Flagg says the funding for the Falcon Food Stop (Mountain Valley High School) and the Hawk's Nest (Mountain Valley Middle School) "was instrumental in purchasing a freezer and expanding the options available to our students and families. We also distributed Thanksgiving and winter break bags, supplementing the contents with funds. The support from our community has been invaluable, and we are making a significant impact on food insecurity for our families. We have also procured shopping bags for the two locations."

The Falcon Food Stop continues to have high volumes of students coming in on the two days they are open. Flagg reports that they have families that reach out for food deliveries, and in fact, they were squeezing in a delivery the day we spoke with them. Although they wish they could reach more families, students use the food pantry and are thankful for that. They plan to fill bags before the summer break and try to get as many bags to students as possible. As they are not open in the summer, they give what they have to families and start again in the fall.

The Falcon Food Stop is a beacon of hope for many students who utilize the pantry when needed. Flagg shares, "This has been a positive for us as it not only highlights the need but also shows that students are willing to reach out when they are in need. We have made the space more accessible by changing the lock on the door to a code, allowing more staff to assist students. We fill 100 bags each month, and have even more students who come in and grab a juice or snack."



Impact Highlight:

The Western Foothills Regional Program - Equine Assisted Psychotherapy Program at Boondocks Farm

Crystal Duguay

Western Foothills Regional Program Director

GRANT AMOUNT

\$2,500

IMPACT

7 YOUTH

Equine therapy at Boondocks Farm is a unique program that imparts invaluable life skills to students. It goes beyond traditional therapy by teaching them how to build trust and confidence and foster positive relationships with their peers and animals. The Western Foothills Regional Program (WFRP), under the leadership of Crystal Duguay, provides services to students and families in a therapeutic environment focusing on individualized instruction and trauma-sensitive practices. Students attend these innovative Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy programs at Boondocks Farm.



Thanks to the successful grant of \$ 2,500 secured in 2023 under the leadership of Crystal Duguay, WFRP director, students could participate in the Equine Assisted Psychotherapy program at Boondocks Farm. This program, backed by extensive research, has consistently demonstrated a profound positive impact on students with trauma-related conditions. It significantly reduces symptoms such as intrusive memories, nightmares, and flashbacks while fostering

trust, confidence, and focus. This success story paves the way for future grants, ensuring continued emotional healing and advancement for these children.

Duguay says, "Our students struggle with emotional/behavioral issues, and seeing them let their guard down with the horses has been beautiful. This program has allowed the students in our class to build the skills to feel confident about themselves and develop trusting relationships with not only their peers but animals too. The impact this service has on our children is genuinely the most beautiful thing to witness. One of the most beautiful things I witnessed was one of our students working to build the trust of one horse. As he was in the field working with this horse to our surprise the other three horses joined in. He was leading four horses independently! This was a huge moment for this young man as all the horses noticed his calm energy and were drawn to him. To see the genuine happiness and confidence of this young man brought tears to my eyes."



Impact Highlight: Larry Labonte Recovery Center

Kathie Williams

Co-Founder and Director

GRANT AMOUNT

\$5,000

IMPACT

2,015 STUDENTS



FRV funding has played a crucial role in supporting the Larry Labonte Recovery Center (LLRC) Recovery Coaches in extending our reach beyond LLRC's location. These funds were instrumental in covering

payroll expenses, enabling our dedicated Recovery Coaches to connect with students at local schools. Currently, LLRC is partnering with Mountain Valley High School, Dirigo High School, Dirigo Middle School, and Telstar High School. Thanks to the generous support from FRV, LLRC has successfully expanded its Student Recovery Coaching program, recently including Telstar schools in our coverage area. This funding has been instrumental in broadening our impact and providing crucial support to students in schools further away from our center.

The Larry Labonte Recovery Center provides referrals for detox centers and recovery housing and information regarding AA, AL-ANON, and SMART recovery programs. The center works closely with Oxford County Mental Health Services in recovery coach training, treatment, recovery housing, and after-hours meeting space.

With a grant of \$5,000 from Friends of the River Valley, we implemented the Recovery Coaching program

and a peer meeting within the local schools to help high-risk students in the community. The Recovery Coaching program meets with students one-on-one to discuss their addictive behaviors and the risks of using drugs, alcohol, and smoking. Students are identified for recovery coaching due to either reported at-risk behaviors or home life. The program lasts for approximately six weeks. The center works at Dirigo Middle School and meets weekly with three to eight students, depending on the identified students. A peer meeting is also held at Mountain Valley High School once a week. A coach is available between 11am and 1pm for students to come in and speak with someone in a group setting or one-on-one.



LLRC participated in Substance Use Disorder Prevention Days at four schools last school year and thus far this year, impacting 2,000+

students who learn about recognizing warning signs of addiction, naloxone training, understanding the risks associated with marijuana use and its increasing potency, exploring the effects and dangers of various drugs, uncovering the truth about vaping, sharing inspiring stories of recovery, delving into the science behind trauma and addiction, and much more.

Impact Highlight:

Black Mountain - Need to Ski Program

Todd Reutlinger

Office and Sales Manager

GRANT AMOUNT

\$3,000

IMPACT

45 STUDENTS

Black Mountain of Maine has developed many programs to ensure every youth is given an opportunity to experience the physical, mental, & social benefits that skiing, snowboarding, & tubing provide.

In addition to ski & snowboard lessons, race programs & giving free season passes to all students in Kindergarten through second grade, Black Mountain developed the Need To Ski Program.

The aim of this program is to grant free season passes, free equipment rentals & free lessons to RSU#10 students who would otherwise not have the opportunity.

In a conversation with Todd Reutlinger of Black Mountain of Maine, he shared this with us:

“The Need to Ski program at Black Mountain has grown so much this past year, and we appreciate the support for this program. We had 61 applicants and could offer 45 students free season passes, equipment rentals, and lessons. A handful of them have joined our Snowsports Apprentice Program and our Junior Ski Patrol Apprentice Program. Many of these kids are up here every weekend having fun, building their confidence, and developing lifelong skills.”

