

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

FRIENDS ^{OF} THE RIVER VALLEY



Letter From the President

To Our Valued Friends and Partners,

2025 marked our 5th year as a vital resource for the River Valley. Our unwavering commitment has translated into tangible, life-changing results across critical sectors: housing, food security, youth development, mental health, and community infrastructure. Much of our early work has come to fruition.

The transformation of an empty and decaying parochial school building into a modern and vibrant, 58-bed Assisted Living facility stands as a testament to what focused community partnership can accomplish. By initially underwriting the **“Old School Pantry”** occupation of the building by paying its rent for two years (\$12,000), contributing \$10,000 toward the building’s new heating boiler, and \$3,000 toward signage and pantry setup, we laid the groundwork for a safe living community for our most vulnerable adults, complete with healthy and nutritious food plans. This project not only serves a vital social need but also strengthens the area’s economic base, as well as creating 40+ Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs.

Food security remains a high priority. We were proud to assist and contribute \$5,000 to the Good Samaritan, enabling them to purchase and renovate a building that will soon house the first permanent Food Kitchen location in the River Valley area. We are also committed to ensuring no child or family goes hungry, actively pursuing programs and partnerships to close this gap.

In terms of environmental and recreational assets, we continue to support and contribute to Inland Woods and Trails and the Town’s creation of Municipal Forests. This initiative is crucial for creating new all-use trails in western Maine, bolstering what the *Lewiston Sun-Journal* recently called “Rumford’s continuing emergence” (3-6-2026).

117 scholarships to YMCA-Rumford Day Camp and Dixfield Elementary School’s 4H Bryant Pond Day Camp are examples of our commitment to filling gaps for area youth. Both programs provide opportunities for growth and experiences otherwise unavailable to many. The revived YMCA camp provided 180 slots, a critical safe, constructive environment-the first camp opportunity offered in 15 years. FRV ensured no child, needing financial assistance to attend either camp, could be turned away.

Acknowledgments

Design Courtesy of
Preti Flaherty

A special thank you to
Bruce Ferrin for his
photographic contributions.

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Our many youth programs counter destructive aloneness and negative social media by supporting in-person socialization, building self-confidence, and fostering realistic future dreams. To get students out of “emotional cubbyholes,” we create and support outdoor activities and provide scholarships for golfing, softball/hardball, touch/tackle football, skiing, snowboarding, trail walking, and outdoor/overnight adventures.

Mountain Valley Community School opened its doors in January 2026 creating an environment where afterschool access will present wonderful opportunities for area residents. Looking ahead, Friends of the River Valley looks to partner to help expand opportunities at MVCS.

FRV has been essential to key community initiatives. Working with YMCA Executive Director and town officials, we focused on the now empty Rumford Elementary School building as a site for a child care center, to include an after-school program. Throughout the project’s initial phases, we ensured open communication with town officials about the location and financing. We leveraged connections with the Margaret Murphy Centers’ parent company, to help establish the Center and secure financial stability. It is estimated that these projects will create 150 openings for placement for care of infants, children and special needs students. Additionally, when the Senior Center (250-400 membership) had to move for the planned hotel/eatery at the Bag Mill, FRV directors used their relationships with the Bag Mill developer and town officials to stay informed and offer our input and assistance.

These achievements are a direct result of the dedication of our board, the hard work of our partners, and the community. ***None of this is possible without the generous support of our donors.*** Together we move forward and FRV remains focused on building a resilient, healthy, and prosperous future for the River Valley.

With gratitude,



Darby Beliveau, President

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Mission

Friends of the River Valley serves as a centralized resource for supporting and promoting a range of nutrition, education, health, social services and community and economic development across the River Valley.



Impact 2025: Creating Opportunities for Life-changing Experiences

The Friends of the River Valley is a proud catalyst for change, strategically funding and partnering with initiatives that directly invest in the education, health, and outdoor experiences of our community's youth. In 2025, our grants unleashed the potential of three outstanding programs, dramatically expanding their reach and deepening their impact.

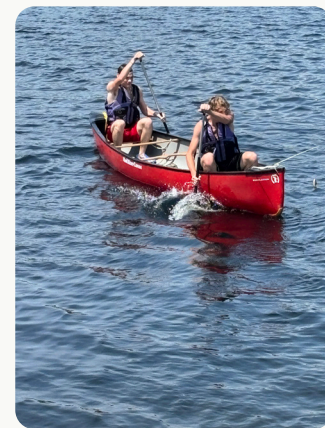
Mt Valley Falcon Camp and Outing Club: Supporting and Forging Future Stewards

This vital program is a gateway to the natural world, actively building self-reliance, fostering confidence, and cultivating a deep sense of environmental stewardship among young participants.

- **Lives Transformed:** 14 students completed three weeks of immersive outdoor programming, complemented by engaging fall Outing Club expeditions.
- **Skill Mastery:** Participants mastered essential outdoor skills—hiking, biking, paddling, camping, fishing, outdoor cooking, and campsite care—during transformative adventures at Acadia National Park and the St. Croix River.



- **Active Citizenship:** 5 students dedicated their time to a crucial trail-building project within the new Rumford Community Forest.
- **Groundbreaking Inclusion:** The program achieved its highest female participation rate ever, welcoming 6 girls to the camp and trips.
- **Unlocking New Potential:** 7 participants, who had never touched a golf club before, signed up for the High School golf team, a powerful demonstration of their newfound confidence in embracing extracurricular sports.



Need to Ski Scholarship Program: Eliminating Financial Barriers

We are actively dismantling financial barriers to ensure that every child in the River Valley area can access the profound health and social benefits of winter sports. We are partnering with Black Mountain to help them realize their mission:

- **Opportunity Granted:** 38 local students were awarded comprehensive scholarships, providing them with a free season pass, free lessons, and all necessary rentals.
- **Overwhelming Demand:** The program was met with remarkable demand, receiving a staggering **119 applicants**, a clear testament to the critical financial need for this opportunity in our community.
- **Parental Validation:** Parents and guardians consistently reported that without this scholarship, their children would have been entirely excluded from the financial opportunity to ski.



“Black Mountain of Maine is dedicated to inspiring people of all ages to choose healthy lifestyle options through skiing, winter and outdoor activities. We offer a fun, family oriented experience at the best possible value and are devoted to making a difference in people’s lives.”

The Rumford-YMCA Outdoor Youth Summer Day Camp: Collaborating for A New Era of Summer Programming

This high-impact initiative was a powerful collaboration between Friends of the River Valley, the Town of Rumford, the Auburn-Lewiston YMCA (ALYMCA), and Inland Woods + Trails (IWT). The camp successfully met a long-standing, significant need for summer programming in the underserved River Valley region, an option that had been unavailable for many years. Friends of the River Valley provided scholarships to ensure all interested participants could attend.

In its inaugural year, the YMCA Youth Summer Day Camp delivered exceptional results:



- **Children Empowered:** The camp successfully served over **30 children** per week.
- **Six Weeks of Growth:** Programming ran for six intensive weeks across July and August 2025, effectively combating summer learning loss and actively developing essential interpersonal skills.
- **Leveraging Community Assets:** The program maximized its impact by strategically utilizing community partnerships for facilities, meals, and transportation, and leveraging the adjacent, dynamic IWT trails for activities.
- **Direct Economic Boost:** The camp was an economic engine, creating **six vital jobs for young adults**, including five recent graduates from Mountain Valley High School (MVHS).

Impact 2025: Empowering Through Educational Enrichment and Therapeutic Programs

Friends of the River Valley (FRV) has continued its commitment to transformative change in the River Valley community. In 2025, our partnerships delivered unique programs, creating a powerful impact on literacy, mental health, and community engagement.

Team Long Run: Building the Bedrock of Success

Literacy is the bedrock of all academic achievement, yet we face a critical challenge: approximately 1 in 6 adults in the River Valley are functionally illiterate, and children start Kindergarten “well behind their peers.” Our partnership with Team Long Run directly tackles this crisis, focusing on the single biggest indicator of success: books in the home.

- **Massive Reach:** Programs like Brown Bag Books and Barclay’s Book Fun! reached **almost 1,000 Title 1 elementary students** in 2025 across Chisholm, Rumford, Meroby, and Dirigo elementary schools.
- **Tangible Results:** Over the last five years, **6,000 books have been placed directly into the hands of children**—building home libraries and a love for reading.



Life-Changing Anecdote

Our support fuels real breakthroughs and love for learning. An educator told TLR:

“A childwas well below her grade level in reading. I worked with her a few minutes every day reading a book her friend was reading, and she wanted to be able to read, too. After a few weeks, she asked if her friend could join us and they took turns reading the coveted book. The friend turned to her and said, ‘You got so much better!’ When we finished, I was able to give that book to the little girl. You would have thought I’d given her a diamond tiara.”



ArtVan: Healing the Inner World

For children struggling with trauma, consistency and trust are key to healing. Since 2021, our partnership with ArtVan has provided a reliable mobile art therapy vehicle, helping hundreds of individuals address difficult feelings and related impulses.



- **Direct Therapeutic Impact:** During the 2025 school year, ArtVan served a total of **107 children** across four community locations, offering a consistent presence for emotional processing.
- **Essential Outlet:** ArtVan acts as a safe, non-judgmental space, with one middle school artist noting that it is where she can **“talk about thoughts and feelings openly,”** a necessary resource in an often-challenging social landscape.

Rumford Public Library: Sparking Curiosity and a Community of Learners

Through a generous FRV grant, the Rumford Children’s Library enjoyed a banner year, funding **6 free, high-impact STEAM programs.**

- **Unprecedented Engagement: Over 1,000 community members** engaged in these educational programs, demonstrating a surging demand for enrichment.
- **Long-Term Community Building:** According to Librarian Sarah Contoir, these programs achieve three crucial results:
 - **CONTINUING CONNECTION:** Residents return for more events, developing community support.
 - **RISING ENGAGEMENT:** Community members return for future educational opportunities.
 - **COLLECTIVE ACTION:** Programs inspire and empower residents to become active collaborators in their communities.



“I’m a sophomore in high school, and the Constellation Show with the Northern Stars Planetarium changed how I see the night sky and myself. The dome felt like stepping into a living map. The storytelling made constellations into characters I could remember, and the way he linked myths to real star patterns helped me actually visualize where to find them. Before the show I thought astronomy was just facts to memorize, but the interactive show made me curious enough to look up at night instead of scrolling on my phone. I left more excited about astronomy and with a new habit of asking questions instead of assuming I’m not smart enough to understand something.”

– Faye, High School Student



Impact 2025: Partnering to Fight Food Insecurity in Difficult Times

In 2025, economic hardship severely impacted the disadvantaged in the River Valley, with persistent inflation causing widespread food anxiety. Friends of the River Valley responded to this critical need by providing essential support and fostering community. Through the unwavering efforts of the Old School Food Pantry (OSFP) and the expansion of the Good Samaritan Food Kitchen, our grants offered more than just meals. Our commitment to tackling food insecurity strengthens and builds a more resilient River Valley for all our neighbors.

A Year of Unprecedented Reach and Impact

Old School Food Pantry Metrics (November - December 2025):

KEY METRIC

IMPACT

Individuals Served

316 individuals and **182 families** received essential nutritional support over 7 weeks.

Community Growth

67 new individuals, primarily older adults, signed up, reflecting a critical need among our senior population.

Resources Distributed

Over **9,708 lbs.** of food were secured and distributed, ensuring our shelves remained stocked for families in need. This includes **4,716.34 lbs.** donated by Hannaford and Walmart and **4,992 lbs.** ordered from Good Shepherd Food Bank.



More Than Just Food: OSFP As a Life-Long Resource

The OSFP has evolved into a vital community hub, connecting patrons with additional services they desperately need.

“The pantry is no longer just a place to receive food; it’s also a resource center. Our patrons have learned that we are able to direct them to other resources or services in the area that can help meet their additional needs, like how to get help with heating assistance or information on the local soup kitchen. We have a lot of older adults that now attend our monthly senior gatherings.” - Allie Burke, OSFP



Good Samaritan Food Kitchen: Building for the Future



Michele Williams’ tireless dedication has transformed the Good Samaritan into an agile and creative force in the fight against hunger. This year marked a massive leap forward:

- **Secured 501(c)3 Status:** The organization is now a formally recognized non-profit, positioning it for long-term growth and stability.
- **Procured a Permanent Home for 2026:** A new space has been secured to house its soup kitchen and essential needs distribution, creating a stable, reliable resource for the community.

In 2025, Friends of the River Valley provided funding that enabled the Good Samaritan to serve hundreds of hungry people meals during the holidays of Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas, offering not just nourishment, but comfort, companionship, and a moment of celebration.

We are proud to be a supportive partner in the growth of this burgeoning and essential resource.

Impact 2025: Collective Efforts to Promote Access and a Thriving River Valley

The Friends of the River Valley partners with key community stakeholders who share a deep, collective commitment to improving wellness, equity, and access for all residents. Your support, combined with the vision of local leaders, is transforming community spaces into hubs of health, learning, and connection.

The MVCS Partnership: A Shared Vision for the Whole Child

Our grant initiatives with the Mountain Valley Community School (MVCS) support a PreK-8 facility that operates on a “whole child” model. This shared vision moves beyond the classroom walls to remove barriers to learning, providing integrated health, social, and academic wraparound services to students, families, and the wider community.

1. Creating Access to Wellness: The Community Fitness Center

- **Partnership in Action:** We partnered with school officials to ensure the fitness center was designed not just for students, but as a vital resource for the River Valley.
- **Access for All:** Following its successful opening to staff, the center will be available to the broader community Spring 2026 with extended community hours (4:00 AM–7:00 AM and 3:00 PM–9:00 PM).
- **Community Strengthening:** With outreach from the local hospital and physical therapists, the center is demonstrating its potential to be a collaborative hub for personal wellness.



2. Play and Equity: The New Playground

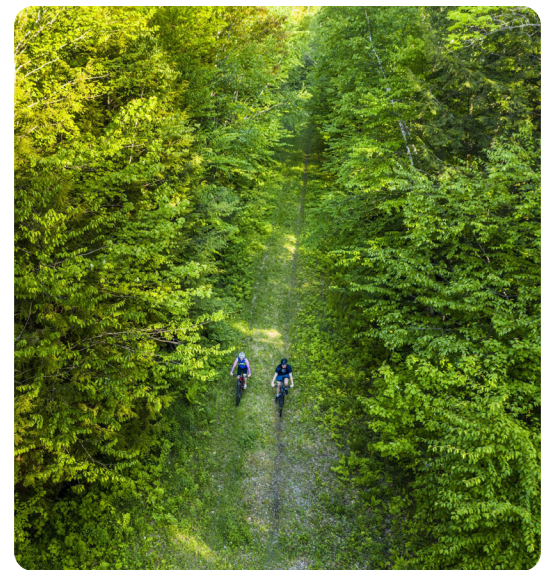
- **Shared Commitment:** Our support to purchase playground equipment for the new playground ensures that all **538 students in grades PK–5** will have consistent access to inclusive, developmentally appropriate play spaces that support motor skill development and social-emotional learning.
- **Building a Foundation:** The new equipment is secured and scheduled for installation in **Spring 2026** once ground conditions allow, fulfilling the community’s desire for a modern, safe, and engaging outdoor space for our youngest learners.

Friends of the River Valley looks forward to continuing granting and facilitating community enriching projects in this new space which enhances access for children and families.

Inland Woods + Trails (IWT): Expanding Access to Nature

The Friends of the River Valley invests in organizations like IWT to support their mission of creating accessible and engaging outdoor experiences for everyone.

- **Pivotal Achievement:** Our grant aided in the official opening of the **446-acre Rumford Community Forest** in **September 2025**.
- **Commitment to Access:** A centerpiece of this effort is the newly completed **500-foot All-Persons Trail**, an inclusive design that overcomes complex construction challenges to ensure nature is truly accessible to all community members.
- **Community Investment:** This achievement has spurred further growth, with IWT securing a substantial **\$248,000 Maine Trails Program grant** to complete the initial recreational plan of **9.51 miles** in the forest, reinforcing the impact of our initial investment.
- **Tangible Results:** This work is getting more people outdoors, evidenced by significant increases in usage at existing sites: a **20% increase** at Mystery Mountain and a **25% increase** at the Pennacook Area Community Trails (PACT) in 2025.
- **Joint Initiative:** MVHS Outing Club **provided 5 students to volunteer to help with the Rumford Community Forest trail building.**



These vital infrastructure projects offer a dual benefit: they directly improve the lives of local residents while also enhancing the surrounding area's amenities and accessibility. This transformation makes the locale a more attractive recreational destination, creating a lasting positive impact by boosting tourism, supporting local businesses, and improving the quality of life for all users.

"Friends of the River Valley played a critical part in supporting the redevelopment of the former parochial school in Rumford. Without their advocacy and help it is extremely unlikely that the new Pine River Crossing assisted living center could have been created. This project is among the most impactful developments in the community and will provide 58 beds of assisted living and create 40 new healthcare jobs. Pine River Crossing is a critical element of the Town's strategy to ensure the long term viability of our local hospital by ensuring adequate capacity for all needs locally along the full continuum of care. In that sense Friends of the River Valley's contribution has been essential to the sustainability of our community and economy in the most consequential and highest level of need." - George O'Keefe, Town Manager of Rumford

Nutrition & Essential Needs

\$9,000

- Good Samaritan Food Pantry
- Old School Food Pantry
- DDF Toy Drive

Educational Enrichment

\$18,000

- Team Long Run
- Friends of the Rumford Public Library STEAM Programs
- MVHS Video Club

Wellness: Physical & Mental

\$40,600

- ArtVan
- Dirigo Elementary Grade 5 Bryant Pond Trip
- Black Mountain Need to Ski Program
- Area Youth Football
- Greater Rumford Community Center
- MVHS Falcon Camp and Outing Club

Community Support & Development

\$21,750

- YMCA Outdoor Youth Summer Day Camp
- Inland Woods and Trails
- The Dixfield Family Carnival
- Mexico 4th Of July Celebration
- Mountain Valley Community School Fitness Facility
- Mountain Valley Community School Playground

IMPACT NUMBERS

4,600+

COMMUNITY MEMBERS SUPPORTED IN 2025

2,000+

LEARNERS REACHED THROUGH EDUCATION

1,044

RESIDENTS PROVIDED WITH NUTRITIONAL AID

6,000

BOOKS GIVEN TO RIVER VALLEY CHILDREN SINCE 2021

Impact 2025: Continuing Financial Growth and Expansion

John Beliveau, Friends of the River Valley Treasurer,

I am pleased to report that FRV experienced another strong year financially, posting our fifth consecutive operating surplus while also increasing the dollar amount paid out in grants by 25% over 2024. Our balance sheet is in a sound financial position, as we hold one year's worth of grant funding in safe, liquid reserves, ensuring continued program funding for 2026. We added over \$90,000 to our permanent endowment, putting us at one-third of our way to our \$2MM goal. We are also pleased to report that we expanded the number of programs supported from 17 to 19 to include the YMCA summer camp and the supplemental resources provided to the new community school (fitness center and playground).

The board continues to cover 100% of all overhead expenses so that all donations go directly to supporting the many worthy causes in the community.

We want to thank our donors for making this all possible. Our partnership will continue to improve the lives of children and families in the River Valley!

2025 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

\$94,606

ANNUAL FUND DONATIONS

\$91,000

ENDOWMENT DONATIONS

\$89,350

AMOUNT GRANTED

\$12,260

OPERATING EXPENSES

78

NUMBER OF DONORS

19

ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTED