Shaw-Camden Gift: HELPS PROTECT AND REBUILD TREE CANOPY

The oldest Chautauquans among us are the trees. Some of our most beautiful specimen trees have presided over these grounds since the Institution’s founding. Several have been recently estimated at 250 years old, much older than Chautauqua—where humans, their homes, and specimen trees have co-existed for so long—are increasingly rare. At Chautauqua in particular the canopy they provide is as defining as the density of homes and the design of a community dedicated to walking and biking. Chautauqua’s trees create a spirit of reverence and containment under their dappled canopy.

Like many Chautauquans, Andrew and Gayle Shaw Camden are passionate about the Institution’s trees. Gayle, a Pittsburgh native, grew up spending her summers on the north end of the grounds, often observing her father plant and trim the trees on their property. “As a child you take in things you don’t realize you’re absorbing,” Gayle says. “Going to Club every day as a child, I developed a strong feeling for these trees and a love of nature. Today I take a walk on the grounds and I can feel the trees help balance and center me.”

When Gayle’s father, Walter C. Shaw Jr., died in 1989, Richard Miller, then chairman of the Chautauqua Foundation, and Tom Becker, who was serving as the Institution’s Vice President of Development, asked the Camdens to consider a memorial gift to honor Walter, a former Institution president and Foundation board member. The Camdens wanted to do something to help defray an operating expense and chose the Tree Fund. They agreed to fund this memorial gift over a period of years, and the fund has now grown to a significant sum with the help of other family members and friends. The Camdens also plan to build the fund further through their own estates. They are joining with a number of Chautauquans, including Gayle’s cousin, Caroline Van Kirk Bisell, to demonstrate their family’s commitment to the stewardship of Chautauqua’s tree canopy.

J ohn Streeter was a lifetime Chautauquan who spent every summer of his 67 years on the grounds. His family owned the Tally Ho where John worked in the evenings after being at Boys’ and Girls’ Club all day. “I met him at the Tally Ho when I worked there,” says Meryl Streeter, his widow. “His mother was my boss!” Meryl remembers working very hard under the watchful eye of her eventual mother-in-law, Eleanor Boyd Streeter. John and Meryl raised their family in Hollywood, Florida, where they helped establish Streeter’s Bakery and Catering. After retiring to South Carolina, John enjoyed a second career as a realtor. They have three daughters, Susie, Melissa, and Megan. John’s brother, Richard, now runs the Tally Ho and the family—including John and Meryl’s five grandchildren—still gather in Chautauqua each summer. When John died after a bout with cancer in May of 2015, a group of friends got together to pool the funds needed to permanently endow a tree on the Chautauqua grounds to honor him. The group actually raised more than enough money for one tree, so the Streeters added to the funds to plant a second tree to honor close friends, also Chautauquans, who had lost a young child.

“They gave us a list of trees to chose from,” Meryl explains, and the family selected a katsura tree to honor John. Katsura is a deciduous ornamental that is native to Japan and China. The tree will grow quickly to a medium height relative to the overall Chautauqua canopy. The leaves are heart-shaped and turn an apricot color in fall. “As they change color, they smell like cotton candy,” Streeter says. “There are a couple other katsura trees on the Chautauqua grounds that have done well. There’s one behind the shuffle board area near the Sports Club.”

The Streeters asked if their tree could be planted near the newly-installed Timothy’s Playground (see story, Page 7), since daughter Susie Streeter Davis and her husband are close to the Ritacco family (Timothy’s parents) and were also involved in the playground project. “Betsy Burgesson approved and planted the katsura near the playground this spring,” Meryl says. “Betsy really goes above and beyond. There’s still a real need for new trees on the Chautauqua grounds, and we hope others will consider this idea.”

If you are interested in contributing a minimum of $1,000 to Chautauqua’s tree endowment to have a tree planted, please contact foundation@ciweb.org / 716.357.6404.
Betsy Burgeson leads a discussion in July on the landscape design for the new Amphitheater and on Chautauqua’s Tree Canopy.

**TREE CANOPY from p. 1**

The gift helped to set in motion a comprehensive study of approximately 4,000 Institution-owned trees conducted by Forecon, Inc., a multi-disciplinary forestry and natural resources company that was launched in Jamestown in 1954 and now serves clients across New York, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. Their report to Chautauqua documents every tree’s height, trunk diameter, and location on grounds. The trees were then classified into groups—those that are presently healthy, trees that can be saved if treated for disease or pruned, those that could become a hazard and must be monitored, and those which need to be removed immediately as a matter of public safety.

**Canopy Maintenance**

“The report was thorough and very well done,” says Betsy Burgeson, Chautauqua’s supervisor of gardens and landscapes. “It has helped us prioritize our work. We have taken down any unhealthy tree that would threaten a residence and we have done extensive pruning.” The tree fund has allowed Burgeson to begin replacing trees that were removed with new specimens, many of which have a large diameter and therefore need a head start in restoring the tree canopy.

“We are replacing with multiple varieties of mostly native species,” Burgeson says of the efforts to reinvigorate and diversify the Institution’s canopy. “For example, we are not replacing maples with maples because Chautauqua has too many maples. The squirrels love them, but they cause so much damage. We are putting in tulip poplars, pin oaks, and some male ginkgo trees—which are not native—along with a number of other native species.”

As of July, the grounds crew had put in 103 new trees this season, but were scrambling to keep them sufficiently watered in the face of an unexpected drought. The tree fund has allowed Burgeson to begin replacing trees that were removed with new specimens, many of which have a large diameter and therefore need a head start in restoring the tree canopy.

**Porch Shade**

For their part, the Camdens have also planted trees around their property. Magnificent tulip poplars now wave in the breeze outside the windows that surround their third-floor home in what was once a rooming house built in two stages in 1901 and 1910, on lots along the brick walk that originally served as a tent site in the early 1890s. The Camdens’ renovation of the house, begun in 1987, was extensive. It took four years alone to rebuild the porches. The Camdens worked closely with architect David McKee and added a number of design details to the building that Gayle had discovered and emulated from pictures in the Chautauqua archives. They also planted river birch, two London planetrees, English oak, and native Marshall seedless ash, which provides shade for their porch. The Camdens’ two short-haired cats, Holland and Lincoln, also enjoy the view from windowills that Gayle specified in the renovation. The sills are extra wide so the cats can comfortably perch there and listen to music from the Amp as it wafts through the windows and open doors.

Andrew serves on the Foundation board, and is a managing director with Wells Fargo Advisors. Gayle is an interior designer/residential practice. They live in Detroit when they’re not in their Chautauqua “tree house.” When they first started dating, Gayle brought Andrew to the grounds. “We came up for a weekend and I said to him, ‘Do you get it?’ He said ‘Yes.’ It was essential to our relationship that he love Chautauqua as I do,” Gayle says, smiling. The Camdens are eager for more Chautauquans to consider investing in trees on the grounds, a program of giving established by the Foundation in 1995 and recently getting more attention as the Amphitheater project is underway. Many trees have already been donated in honor or in memory of Chautauqua’s loved ones, and are recorded in a book with handsome wooden covers that is currently kept for easy public access in Smitt Memorial Library. With one page for each tree, the large-format book gives information about the species of tree and its particular characteristics, its location on the grounds, and a short personalized message from the individual or family by whom it was given. The Camdens hope that docent-led walking tours of the grounds that focus on the trees or perhaps a self-guided digital tour for hand-held devices might be the next step in helping Chautauquans and their children learn more about the importance, variety, and age of the trees that continue to contribute shade and a strong sense of place and history on Chautauqua’s storied grounds.

**PREMISE CAMPAIGN SLATED FOR SUCCESS**

With three months remaining until its conclusion, the Promise Campaign has surpassed its $98.2 million goal. Members of the Chautauqua community—local foundations and New York State (in the form of a grant for stormwater management improvements)—have committed more than $99 million to this largest campaign in Chautauqua’s history. The campaign, which commenced January 1, 2011, will conclude December 31st of this year and to date has received the support of more than 6,600 donors. Campaign co-chairs George Snyder and Steve Percy told PILLARS that there remain a number of priorities in need of additional funding. Tom Hogen’s challenge to raise an endowment to preserve Miller Cottage has not been fulfilled nor has the campaign secured an endowment of the size necessary to ensure the proper maintenance of the new Amphitheater. They pointed out that there is never sufficient scholarships to support all of the talented young artists who wish to train at Chautauqua, or currently the funds to upgrade Bellinger Hall for their same students. This year’s Chautauqua Fund goal also has yet to be attained. During these last three months, the campaign will continue to reach out to Chautauquans who want to invest in improvements to the Chautauqua experience in ways small and large.

Chautauqua’s Promise

Gifts during the campaign have allowed for the construction of the Hagen-Wensley House and the Amphitheater as well as improvements to numerous facilities including the Jane A. Gross Opera Center. Three leadership positions—including the directors of Boys’ and Girls’ Club, the Department of Education and the VACI galleries—have been endowed. The Campaign has added significantly to the endowment for lectures and the performing arts, as well as providing over $20 million in crucial support for the annual operations of the Institution. Thank you to all who have supported the Promise Campaign! In this final year of the campaign and of Tom Becker’s presidency please consider making a gift before December 31st in Tom and Jane’s honor, as the annual Chautauqua Fund is dedicated to their 32 years of devoted service. For information about how you can participate in the Promise Campaign before year-end, please contact Dusty Nelson, Director of Gift Planning, at dnelson@ciweb.org or Tessa Downey, Director of the Chautauqua Fund at tdowney@ciweb.org. Either may be reached by calling 716.357.6404.
The True Character of Tom Becker

B y 10 a.m. on the Monday morning after Tom Becker’s very last “Three Taps” speech, there were more than 5,700 views of the video of the ceremonies recorded on Chautauqua’s Facebook page. Of the 357 comments posted about the video, only one person was negative about the Institution’s retiring president. That ratio seems about right to me. While Tom has been president of Chautauqua for the last 13 years, he has actually had an extraordinary 32-year tenure on senior staff. President Dan Bratton hired him as a vice president of development and was often willing to step into the background to let Tom’s strengths as a speaker and visionary for the future of the Institution bubble forth. Dan was pragmatic, secure in his identity, and he wanted to advance the Institution. Tom Becker was his organizational architect and chief of resource development. Therefore, when we talk about Tom’s legacy, we must remember that it is so much more than the last 13 years. In the 1970s, Chautauqua’s leadership had tilled the soil so that Bratton and Becker were able to start planning and planting for the future.

Of course, there was financial stress. Nonprofit in the world ever has the resources sufficient to fulfill its mission. Nonprofits, by definition, dream big. They are created to solve problems and fill societal needs that the invisible hand of the marketplace won’t tackle. That is the nature of our work.

In the 1980s, Bratton and Becker brought a new fiscal discipline to Chautauqua. They sought to balance the budget, increase revenues, trim expenses, and determine the kinds of investments most sorely needed to improve the grounds.

Stability and Vision

Tom urged patience. He knew that Chautauqua’s conversion from a somewhat sleepy, insular summer haven to a national presence in the fields of arts, culture, and civil dialogue would have to be accomplished piece by piece. As he told Chautauquans time and again, “If your favorite project or idea isn’t getting done in this round, be patient. We must have priorities. We can’t take on everything at once. If we do, we’ll only be able to fund everything halfway and accomplish next to nothing.”

From “Challenge” to “Renewal” to “Idea” to the current “Promise Campaign” and all the smaller projects in between, Chautauqua has now arrived at a place that it has never been before. The old has been rejuvenated and much that is brand new has been created. Sometimes it is easy to be overwhelmed by the landscape, the sheer number of buildings that have been renovated and or built from scratch. But focusing on the physical plant misses the point. What goes on inside these facilities is what has allowed us to attract and keep the very best artistic leaders and thinkers and to draw top students in their fields. The people of Chautauqua are the Institution’s promise, and they drive the mission forward.

Artists and Ideas

Chautauqua is currently financially stable and the arts are more prominent than ever because Tom Becker is a soulful man who understands the ability of the arts to touch the human spirit. He has talked over and over about how we are not in the entertainment business. Our community of artists is far more than a commodity to be accessed with a gate ticket. Today, our schools of art and conservatory programs are far and away better than they were 30 years ago. Our students and faculty are deserving of the national attention they are receiving. We can put our performances up against any work being done by other summer festivals and schools in the nation.

Consider, too, our examination of ideas and exploration of faith traditions. We tackle significant global topics every season with both depth and a breadth of perspectives. Under Tom’s leadership, we have taken on topics we never would have touched in the past.

As a lifetime Chautauquan, I can remember when a single scholar would be brought in to lecture for five days on a single theme. If the Monday lecture was not so good, the Amp might be nearly empty by Friday. Today, our theme weeks are not only robust and challenging from day to day, but they are woven through the week’s programming across departments. They are also connected to an overarching question for us to ponder as a community each season. The senior leadership professionals that Tom has hired have had a new institutional example of civil dialogue, environmental sustainability, innovative arts, and to be an inclusive platform that engages and elevates voices from across many fields and faiths.

Tom Becker laid the groundwork by building relationships with individual speakers who now know and relish the opportunity to come to Chautauqua. He has cultivated partnerships with the likes of Ken Burns, Roger Rosenblatt, Oris Moss III, National Geographic, Colonial Williamsburg, Jazz at Lincoln Center, and for the 2017 season, the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the National Comedy Center.

Looking Forward

Tom and the program staff have spent years getting Chautauqua ready to talk to a larger audience outside the gates. (The first such effort arguably came when Bratton and Becker created the exchange program with the Soviet Union in the 1980s.) The choice of the word “Promise” for this six-year campaign concluding at the end of 2016 was quite intentional, namely, to encourage us all to look forward and anticipate the point in time when we find ourselves truly fulfilling the promise of Chautauqua’s greater reach. That time has come.

Yes, we are yet imperfect as a community, but we are striving as never before to serve as an institutional example of civil dialogue, environmental sustainability, innovative arts, and to be an inclusive platform that engages and elevates voices from across many fields and faiths.

see BECKER p. 4
BECKER from p. 3

It is easy to forget how much track had to be laid before these trains would and could arrive at Chautauqua. Just because we were a national force in 1900 was not enough to carry us into this new century. We have had to focus inwardly and improve our systems and staffing. And as controversial as the Amphitheater project has been, I believe the renewal of that facility will prove the wisdom and strength of Tom Becker’s vision for Chautauqua for the rest of this century.

People know when you’ve moved up a notch or two. And we have. We saw it in the grandest way throughout the summer of 2016 and especially during Week Nine with the blending of dialogue—about the country’s lingering legacy of slavery and the transcendence of jazz—with America’s homegrown music, performed with accuracy and vitality.

Deepest Thanks

We must remember, too, that Tom Becker could have left Chautauqua long ago when he was passed over for the presidency after Dan Bratton stepped down. But he did not run. He stayed on, and as it turned out, he was soon asked to assume the helm. He has not steered us wrong. I know I speak for the Foundation and the Institution. Jane’s grace, warmth and wisdom have served Chautauqua’s interests in ways unknown by many.

Those of us who have worked most closely with Tom know that the measure of his character has often come in what he did not say, not just in the eloquence of his poetic words at the lectern.

And now, the Promise is ours to keep.

MONUMENTAL THANKS

The renewal of the Chautauqua Amphitheater is the single largest project ever undertaken by the Institution. Scores of Chautauquans have made gifts to secure and provide endowment to maintain a new edifice—one that will be appropriate to the 21st century while preserving the atmosphere of Chautauqua’s longtime locus of sacred assembly. To recognize and remember these project supporters, the Institution has retained acclaimed graphic designer, Alexander Isley.

The son of a North Carolina architect, Isley fell into graphic design at North Carolina State College of Design and then went on to study at Cooper Union in New York City. In the mid-1980s he became the art director of the witty and irreverent Spy magazine and soon started his own Manhattan studio. Now he works out of a barn in Connecticut with fewer than a dozen staff members, his wife, Veronica, among them.

Isley’s graphic style has been a staple of Chautauqua’s Promise Campaign. He designed the hand-wrought typography that has appeared on banners and stanchions around the grounds, featuring photos of Chautauquans past and present, with stylized renditions of the key words of the campaign: Civil, Engaged, Sustainable, Innovative and Inclusive. That work was Isley’s introduction to the Institution. Now he is overseeing the development of multiple plaques for the amphitheater.

Isley’s projects at Chautauqua are in good company. His design work is represented in the Museum of Modern Art, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Library of Congress. Isley also created the signage for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, the American Museum of the Moving Image in New York, and New Jersey’s 9/11 Memorial in Liberty State Park. He is one of only 300 designers in the world to be named to the Alliance Graphique Internationale and, in 2014, he also received the Gold Medal from AIGA, the professional association for design, established in 1914. Isley served as president of the New York chapter of AIGA from 2004 to 2006.
A Gift to Chautauqua’s Future: KEN AND ZOE BARLEY

Growing up in Buffalo, N.Y., Ken Barley had the impression that Chautauqua was a place full of old people. “My parents probably would have liked this place and, at that rebellious time in my life, I knew I wouldn’t like it if they did,” he says, grinning. When he met Zoe Burgoon—a confirmed Chautauquan who had come with her family each summer and spent a season on the grounds with her grandmother—Ken was told by Zoe that if they were to get married, Chautauqua was non-negotiable.

As a mother widowed too young, Zoe’s grandmother had brought her three children to Chautauqua in 1921. She bought the Vermont cottage in 1924 and ran it as a boarding house before losing the house to unpaid taxes in 1940. From 1948 to 1959, she was hostess of the Mayflower Hotel, retiring when she was 73. As a young girl, Zoe’s mother, Mary Jo Lafferty, met Thomas Edison here. Mary Jo also worked for The Chautauquan Daily.

Zoe’s grandmother had brought her three children to Chautauqua in 1921. She bought the Vermont cottage in 1924 and ran it as a boarding house before losing the house to unpaid taxes in 1940. From 1948 to 1959, she was hostess of the Mayflower Hotel, retiring when she was 73. As a young girl, Zoe’s mother, Mary Jo Lafferty, met Thomas Edison here. Mary Jo also worked for The Chautauquan Daily.

Zoe earned a Ph.D. in educational biology at Harvard, taught at the university’s Lab School. Later Ken returned to the parish serving churches in Lake Forest, Illinois, and then Phoenix. With two daughters now, they spent the late ’60s and early ’70s in church and community renewal on Chicago’s west side, Malaysia and Cleveland. Needing a more settled life for the girls, Ken accepted a pastorate at Montview Boulevard Presbyterian Church in Denver and served for 17 years. Zoe earned a Ph.D. in educational research through the University of Colorado while on the faculty of the CU School of Nursing.

“Then we struggled through 10 years in Michigan,” Zoe says, with her characteristically dry sense of humor, “leaving the girls behind in Colorado, while Ken pastored a large church.” There she served as director of SAMPI (Science and Mathematics Program Improvement), a consulting team at Western Michigan University. Eventually, the couple moved to Denver, where they live today.

Conversion Experience

Still, it wasn’t until one evening in the Amp that Ken had his Chautauqua conversion experience. “It was the late ’60s,” he explains. “Van Cliburn was performing, our daughters were young kids. When they got bored at the concert I suddenly realized they could get up and go home without us. That was when I understood the opportunities Chautauqua offered.”

Now that they’re mostly retired, Ken and Zoe share Chautauqua with family and friends. Zoe’s granddaughter and namesake, who is 16, has come every summer since she was 1. They all visit for a couple weeks each summer. Young Zoe was in Children’s School and Club, and now takes Special Studies classes. Many days, Ken will head to the golf course before sun-up and his wife tags along to walk the course with him. They never use a cart.

Amphitheater Endowment

The Barleys have been members of the Bostor Society for years but recently they made a significant, early donation to the endowment that will be used to maintain the new Amphitheater.

“I have been to Chautauqua most of my 77 summers,” Zoe says, “and I know that the Amp has not always been like it is. It has been tinkered with and remodeled time and again over the years. The Amp is a serious hazard and inadequate for Chautauqua’s needs. The aisles are so steep I have feared falling many times.”

The Barleys know firsthand about historic architecture. The house Zoe’s mother bought in the late 1970s is one of the most unusual on the Chautauqua grounds. Dating from 1950 and named “Steel Away” by the Barleys, it is a Lustron house, a prefabricated kit made entirely of enameled steel panels that arrived on one truck and were assembled on a concrete slab in a week. The design came in answer to the housing shortage for returning soldiers after World War II.

Manufactured in Ohio, even the ceilings, built-in drawers, and bookcases are metal. The Barleys have hung their collection of Old First Night and other Chautauqua posters on the metal walls with magnets.

Bit of Americana

“The kids love it. We used to have a magnetic alphabet and they could arrange the letters on the wall,” says Zoe. The rooms are spacious. “It’s low maintenance as long as you avoid rust,” Ken says wistfully. “And the casement windows are a bit leaky when we get a cold wind,” says Zoe. The house is closed up in the off-season. Chautauqua’s winter temperatures tend to make the steel shrink, though the paint does not and in cold winters peels off in sheets. Still, the Barleys live in a treasured bit of Americana. In 2008, The Museum of Modern Art created an exhibition of prefabricated housing, erecting a Lustron house inside the gallery, which the Barleys went to see with their granddaughter, who now represents the fifth generation of Zoe’s family at Chautauqua.

While they are both big fans of the lectures, music, and dance at Chautauqua, the Barleys also don’t mind when there are programs they can pass on. Zoe says, “I am actually happy when some of the events are not of interest. The first week this year with Roger Rosenblatt, Bishop Spong, CLSC authors and evening events was a bit exhausting.” She tilts her head.

“And this Week Nine with Jazz at Lincoln Center has been exceptional,” says Ken. The Barleys looked forward to finally relaxing at season’s end.
The Future is Now:  
KATIE COOKE AND AMY SCHILLER

Q uestion: What is the verb meaning behind “The Future is Now:” everywhere you go?
Answer: Chautauqua-lyitize. That’s what NOW Generation member Amy Schiller does with great enthusiasm. “I’ve been coming since I was 2 years old and have made so many lifelong friends here,” she says. Schiller is also a writer. Her commentaries on politics, philanthropy, pop culture, and feminism have appeared in The Atlantic, The Nation, Salon, and The Daily Beast. She credits the Institution’s lecture platform for helping her aspire to this career after hearing so many distinguished Chautauqua speakers on engaging topics of the times.

Schiller is the new vice chair of the Advisory Council for the NOW Gen, Chautauqua’s organization for young adults between the ages of 21 and 40. She recently assumed the leadership role alongside her good friend Katie Prechtl Cooke, who is chair of NOW Gen. Cooke, who earned her master’s degree in education from Johns Hopkins, also volunteers for the Chautauqua Fund.

“We’re kind of like Obama and Biden,” Schiller jokes. “Katie is always calm and thoughtful and I am, like, ‘Let’s go!’”

Gatherings
As a relatively new organization, NOW Gen has established several regular events during the nine-week season, including SummerFest, held annually for families after the Old First Night Run; an annual evening reception with the Institution’s president; an arts-related gathering (this year with Chautauqua Opera’s Steven Osgood and Song From the Uproar performers) and various play dates for parents with toddlers and young children on the grounds.

In the off-season, the NOW Gen Advisory Council will be looking toward creating more opportunities to attract members to gather for more year-round, regional events, including topical discussions, special excursions, and social gatherings.

Cooke, who lives with her husband Kevin and their three children in Annapolis, Maryland, is considering hosting a boating excursion for NOW Gen members on the Chesapeake Bay. For her part, Schiller hosted a salon with conversation about this year’s Week Six theme, “The Future of Cities,” followed by jazz and cocktails last spring in New York City. Another NOW Gen leader, Mhoire Murphy—a recent Harvard Venture in Seattle, hosted successful events while living in Washington, D.C., for NOW Gen peers, and other regional groups have taken root in cities like Pittsburgh, Pa.

Cooke and Schiller are both mindful of the contributions of their fellow Advisory Council members, especially their predecessors—Dr. Ben Sorensen, who served as vice chair, and John Haskell, who recently stepped down as chair. “John has been so consistently thoughtful and dynamic. He and his wife have offered tremendous service to Chautauqua.”

The NOW Gen Advisory Council will sponsor a retreat this November with the goal of stepping up the planning process and exploring the possibility of hosting an event on the Chautauqua grounds in the off-season. They want new members to learn more about the Institution and all it has to offer, young people as well as families.

“When the leaves are off the trees, you can see straight across the ravine to the other side of the grounds, and you can really appreciate how precious the water and watershed are as a resource,” says Cooke. “It is also a quieter time to reflect on what Chautauqua means to all of us.”

Support and Guidance
The group is eager to broaden their menu of activities for members, but they also recognize some limitations. “We have learned to have managed expectations about our volunteer capacity,” says Schiller. “People in this phase of life are building their careers, starting families, moving for new jobs. The more support and guidance the Council can provide, the better, in terms of making use of our volunteers’ passion and talents even amidst their busy schedules.”

Identifying potential new NOW Gen members is also a bit tricky in that young adults may not always buy their own gate tickets; they often come as the guests of parents or grandparents. Members also age out on the other end, so keeping a current roster of members is an ongoing effort. But making the connections and building this network has been personally invaluable, says Cooke.

Young Families
“As a young mother it was hard to have toddlers on the grounds. I was inspired by other parents who had set up afternoon play dates for young children at the Children’s School playground,” says Cooke. “With a growing group of volunteer leaders, we were able this summer to host both morning gatherings for toddlers in Miller Park as well as afternoon play dates at Children’s School each week, helping connect new and returning young families.”

Cooke adds, “My brother lives in Colorado and for him, getting to Chautauqua is rare. When he is able to come back, he walks through the gate and remembers what this place and the people here mean to him and our family. When he’s here, he is able to take part in the programming and see that the Institution can have a role in his future as well as his past.”

Lewis Miller Circle
Through Facebook and social media, and events that are growing in popularity, the momentum continues to build for NOW Gen. The organization has also begun to have an impact on philanthropy through the Lewis Miller Circle, which asks for an annual gift of $250 to join. The Advisory Council has encouraged the participation of their peers, at any level, to begin giving back to Chautauqua. Within the first year of their outreach, the number of NOW Gen members who were donating nearly doubled, and contributions tripled in dollars raised.

NOW Gen leaders were invited to offer input on the current search for a new Institution president, and they participated in the search for a new opera director last year. Most recently, the Advisory Council met over the summer with a group of Chautauqua Trustees at the home of Board Chairman Jim Pardo.

“We walked out of that meeting feeling valued and respected to a degree that surpasses many nonprofit boards when it comes to validating their young volunteers,” says Schiller. “I know we will be key actors in the pursuit of sustainability for Chautauqua, and we want to align our work going forward with the strategic goals of the Institution and to continue building relationships for the future.”
One family’s loss of a very young child has set in motion a magnificent swell of philanthropy and community building, and it has continued for more than a decade on the Chautauqua grounds and beyond. Timothy Ritacco, the first son of Ann Ayers and Mark Ritacco, was diagnosed with Sandhoff’s disease, a rare, neurodegenerative disorder. Despite the best efforts of a compassionate physician at Duke University, 1-year-old Timothy succumbed to the illness in 2004.

Love and Support

On this morning, the Ritaccos have gathered with a few friends on the front porch of their Chautauqua cottage. “When we lost Timothy,” Ann says, her eyes welling, “I told myself I would not be changed by something so sad, so hard. But, our friends’ love and support allowed me to feel again, and be changed. Hopefully we are better people, friends and parents for understanding loss and love in this deep way.”

Friends Susie and Rich Davis, Katie and Dave Stecker, Melissa and Joe Tannery, Katie and Kevin Cooke, Melissa and Andy Viehe, Steve Higgins and Nic Malas were among the Chautauquans, then in their 20’s and 30’s, who organized a variety of events to raise more than $100,000 in Timothy Ritacco’s memory. Many in the group have been friends since their Boys’ and Girls’ Club days. But it’s not just friends who show up at these events—it’s parents, kids, former “groupers,” softball buddies, and every year there are a few passersby who join in the games.

Celebration

In addition to building financial support to drive research on the potential cure for Sandhoff’s disease, as well as support for families who have Sandhoff’s children, the group has now developed the first-ever playground specifically designed for toddlers on the Chautauqua grounds.

“Timothy’s Playground” was dedicated this past season on the second of July. Located near the Miller Bell Tower, the whimsical assembly of benches, a carved car, a log tunnel, uneven steppers and a tea party table were created by Chautauqua Institution grounds crew members from repurposed ash, locust and sassafras harvested from aging trees that were taken down in Miller Park, University Beach, and the Amphitheater. The Institution also special ordered a redwood tree house from California to be assembled on site.

“We took great pleasure in this project,” says gardens supervisor Betsy Burgeson, who spoke at the dedication. The Ritaccos’ four sons—Ryan, Tate, Nicholas and Patrick—born after their older brother, were gleeful at the dedication.

Inspiring Hope

“Nobody knew what to do for Mark and Ann at first,” explains Susie Davis, “but [friends] hosted a basketball tournament called Hoops for Hope in 2005. It gave us a purpose.” Friends Dave O’Shaughnessy and Steve Higgins made T-shirts for the event and the group also auctioned a variety of donated and autographed sports items.

“As our kids got older,” says Davis, “we shifted our focus to kickball.” Now, each year the group hosts a tournament with entry fees for brackets of six to 12 teams, each competing in three-inning games played on the weekend of July 4th. Children run a lemonade stand that usually nets $300 or $400. Tournament winners receive a gift card to the Chautauqua Bookstore. The losers win a giant tub of Cheeseballs. “Whether it was hoops or kickball,” says Davis, “Jack Voelker and Greg and Linda Prechtl [of Boys’ and Girls’ Club] have made it possible for us to use the athletic facilities for all our events.”

“We also have people continuing to write checks to a donor-advised fund outside the Institution for research and family support,” says Katie Cooke. Chautauquans can also give directly to the playground’s endowment through the Chautauqua Foundation, to ensure the playground is cared for and kept in good repair for generations to come.

“There is always so much debate about projects that Chautauqua is undertaking,” says Mark Ritacco. “This playground is one effort that is the embodiment of the community at its best. It has been such a harmonious thing.”

Somewhere far, yet close enough to hear your laugh, we are suspended. In a memory we remain, feet on the ground, while you sail with our hearts on the sky.

Now, you call us here to laugh, play and live once more.

—Ann Ayers

Timothy’s Playground: THE CHAUTAUQUA COMMUNITY AT ITS BEST

Photos: Sarah Holm

—Ann Ayers
I t’s the middle of the 2016 season, and Chautauqua Theater Company’s Vivienne Benesch has nearly completed her directorial duties with a new play commission, The Proflage by Zayd Dohrn. In the same week she will give an energetic performance with an ensemble of women in a staged reading of Nora and Delia Ephron’s Love, Loss and What I Wore at Bratton Theater—a fundraiser for the Chautauqua Women’s Club. At the end of the week, the Women’s Club producers are planning a surprise. They will present Benesch with a lifetime membership and their own version of an “Oscar” for her extraordinary performance as artistic director of the CTC for the last 12 years and for her many other contributions to the community for the last 27 years.

By the end of the week, Benesch will be in her car driving to North Carolina to resume her new role as producing artistic director of PlayMakers Repertory Company, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s professional theater in residence. But before all this, Benesch and her successor, Andrew Borba, sit down in the office they have shared this season as co-artistic directors, to talk about the transition to new leadership at CTC.

Firing on All Cylinders
Borba, who makes his home in Los Angeles and regularly appears in roles for film and television, has been associate artistic director of CTC for the last eight years. He says the changeover will be “very natural. It’s not as if we’ve exhausted the vision. We want to continue to raise the bar. Maybe it would be easier if this place was broken, but Viv has made this theater into something that’s totally unique. We are firing on all cylinders. My challenge is not to maintain but to take CTC to the next level.”

Benesch and Borba have known each other for 30 years. They met as undergraduates at Brown University and have stayed connected over great distances at times. “The hardest part for me,” Benesch says, “is that we don’t get to keep doing this together. We were in our final rehearsal of Proflage a few nights ago, and Andrew came in from his Shakespeare rehearsal to give me the most incredible notes. We push each other.”

“I think of it as more than an artistic camaraderie,” Borba adds. “We are really close in our vision but just different enough to spur each other on.”

Innovation and Experimentation
Under Benesch’s watch, the CTC has evolved into a distinctive platform for new play development and experimentation. “We are not a roadhouse where new shows are mounted on the way to Broadway,” says Benesch, “but we are an incubator for artists—actors and playwrights and directors—cultivating and cross-pollinating with our other colleagues in the arts at Chautauqua.”

Benesch notes that with a brand-new play such as The Proflage, Chautauqua is now offering playwrights a chance to focus on their work rather than worrying about critical reviews, budgets, and the competitive atmosphere of New York City. “Not to mention they have the benefit of our amazing Chautauqua audiences,” she adds. Borba admits there are some challenges ahead. “We are still living in a hardware store,” he says, referring to Brawdy, the company’s check-a-block headquarters where set building and storage, rehearsals, office work, and business meetings all take place. “We are bursting at the seams. We have growing pains. And Deborah Sunya Moore, [Chautauqua’s vice president and director of programming] is asking us to program further out for the season,” says Borba. “Actually, we are looking at something like a five-year plan in order to connect our work with Chautauqua’s weekly themes and to take leadership in hosting some of the conversations around those themes. We are also looking at how we might program Bravon so that Chautauquans who are here for shorter stays don’t necessarily have to miss a production,” he continues.

In 2017, Borba will tackle his first full year as CTC artistic director without the help of an associate director. “I don’t need one,” he says smiling. “Next year will be diagnostic. On an artistic level, I will miss having a second voice, though.”

In addition to his Chautauqua duties, Borba has also accepted a tenure-track position at the University of California-Irvine, which he says will actually reduce his workload in Chautauqua’s off-season. In addition to acting, Borba was teaching as an adjunct at three different institutions last year.

“Andrew has deep connections in the business, along with a hand in teaching at the highest level. His spirit, wit, and intellectual savvy mean that Chautauqua can expect consistency and any number of exciting new possibilities ahead.”
—Vivienne Benesch

“Andrew is much more efficient than I am,” Benesch says, smiling. “I have to be,” he says. “I have twins, and I’m married to a producer!” They both laugh.

Benesch hopes to come back to the grounds to direct, act, and connect with Chautauqua’s now-signature inter-arts projects. She was the artistic director for The Romeo and Juliet Project three years ago.

“I’m already thinking about what plays we can bring Viv up to act in,” Borba says. Meanwhile, Benesch is also offering her North Carolina audiences a chance to enjoy works that were recently popular at Chautauqua, including The May Queen and Intimate Apparel. Sharing Ideas and Talent
CTC’s managing director, Sarah Clare Corporandy, the recent co-founder of the Detroit Public Theatre, will also be connecting with Borba and Benesch, each in their respective locations, to share ideas and identify new talent. In terms of material, they are also in sync. During Week Six next season, Chautauquans will have a chance to see a CTC production of Detroit 67, a comedy by Dominque Morisseau that closed the inaugural season of Corporandy’s theater last year, and which Benesch’s PlayMakers are mounting in Chapel Hill this fall. For the kickoff of his first season as sole artistic director of CTC, Borba is tackling Michael Frayn’s Noises Off, a popular farce from the 1980s that operates as a ‘play within a play.’ It’s a technologically complicated show that requires a revolving set. Borba will also continue CTC’s longstanding commitment to exploring Shakespeare’s canon in fresh ways.

New playwrights will also hone their work here, and Borba says he aims to reach Chautauquans who are not already regulars at CTC so that they might experience very high quality theater at a ticket price that is exceptionally reasonable in the current market.

“Andrew has deep connections in the business,” Benesch says, “along with a hand in teaching at the highest level. His spirit, wit, and intellectual savvy mean that Chautauqua can expect consistency and any number of exciting new possibilities ahead.”
Humor has the ability to push the boundaries of our cultural views of what is funny and what’s ‘too offensive’ have changed over time."

—Matt Ewalt

Matt Ewalt, who serves as Associate Director of Education and Youth Services at the Institution, has been working closely with Gunderson to plan the comedy week. He’s particularly excited about tackling questions about comedy from global and historical perspectives. “We’ll look at what we find funny and how it differs, if there is such a thing as ‘universally funny,’ and consider how our cultural views of ‘what is funny’ and what’s ‘too offensive’ have changed over time,” he says.

Ewalt, a year-round Chautauqua County resident, is also thrilled with the opportunity to strengthen the Institution’s bond with Jamestown. The National Comedy Center is aiming to become a major driver of tourism and economic development for the region. “It’s not a coincidence that Jamestown just received a $10 million grant from the state of New York for economic development,” says Ewalt, citing the excitement from the general public, government and businesses surrounding the Comedy Center’s opening. As part of Jamestown’s economic development strategy, the National Comedy Center, along with Chautauqua Institution, is seen as linchpins for a regional brand as “The World’s Learning Center.”

“All of Chautauqua County, and the region more broadly, benefits from this project, and the remarkable work by Journey and others to make the Comedy Center a reality,” says Ewalt.

In addition to collaborating on the week’s Amphitheater lectures and master classes, Ewalt and Gunderson are hoping to arrange shuttle services into Jamestown during Week Six to encourage Chautauquans to visit the comedy festival and have dinner in town. They also aim to bring an exhibition from the Comedy Center to Chautauqua’s grounds. The Comedy Center itself will feature high-tech, interactive exhibits that present past and present comedians; venues with year-round programming; and a strong education program for aspiring comics.

Natural Partners

“Our work,” says Gunderson, “is focused on how comedy is more than entertainment or leisure. As opposed to a Hall of Fame, this is about an art form and programming that enriches lives and addresses the issues of our time, which makes our partnership with Chautauqua very natural.”

The connection with Chautauqua Institution is very personal for Gunderson. After spending time with her grandmother on the grounds while growing up in Bemus Point, she graduated from Maple Grove High School, attended Ithaca College, and then worked for six years at the Women’s Sports Foundation in Manhattan. She started consulting for the board of the Lucy-Desi Museum in Jamestown in 2010 and has been instrumental in developing and advancing the idea of the National Comedy Center, now under construction in Jamestown’s former train station. She fondly remembers meeting Mister Rogers, Jane Goodall, and Bill Clinton, among others, at the Wensley House.

“I thought everyone’s grandmother had a guest house like that,” she says, laughing.
Chautauqua by the Numbers:

MATCHING THEMES TO AUDIENCES

For those who attended Week Nine in the 2016 season, there should be no question that the decision to partner with Jazz at Lincoln Center was a home run for the Institution in terms of programming and new audience development. Gate pass sales for Week Nine were up by 37% over the previous year. More importantly, new guests on the grounds made up 43% of all attendees. That is 12% higher than the 31% average.

The final week of the Chautauqua season, while still providing quality programming, posed some challenges. Many of the in-house arts programs are no longer performing, and many children are already back in school. Thus, programming for the week needs to be comprehensive and attractive to new audiences.

Wynton Marsalis and his musical colleagues packed the Amp for performances and lectures throughout the week, tapping both Chautauqua’s core audience and drawing to partner interesting groups and individuals with the theme of “America’s Music,” while the Interfaith Lecture Series, “America’s Spiritual Songbook,” was also well received.

“As this experience demonstrated, there’s a lot of flexibility on what we can do going forward in Week Nine,” says Associate Director of Education and Youth Services Matt Ewalt, “Since we don’t have most of our regular arts programs in place for the closing week, we can use it to reach new audiences and be more creative in our approach. For example, the theme ‘America’s Music’ was very appealing to new audiences and offered a great call-to-action for those who have been considering Chautauqua but had yet to attend.”

Planning for Growth

Setting a target of three percent overall growth in attendance this year, the Board of Trustees’ Working Group on Re-imagination of Programming, chaired by Tim Renjilian, and the Strategic Investment Subcommittee, chaired by Jaime Klingensmith, set out to test and evaluate three other new initiatives in addition to the development of robust arts-based programming for Week Nine.

Chautauqua staff revamped the roster for popular entertainment on Friday nights, hoping to attract more individual ticket sales and younger audiences. They identified a discrete audience group—military personnel and veterans—by offering a high-profile speaker for Week Eight, General (Ret.) David Petraeus. They also scheduled CLSC author David McCullough in the Amphitheater at 5 p.m. on Wednesday of Week Four, and encouraged day ticket holders and local visitors to stay on the grounds that evening to hear the popular pianist Alexander Gavrylyuk performing with the CSO. The two latter events were also promoted with an attractive rate at the Athenaeum Hotel for overnight visitors.

The results of these experiments were impressive. Among the popular entertainment offerings, The Temptations & The Four Tops, The Avett Brothers, and Huey Lewis and The News sold out. The Athenaeum Hotel was booked at capacity for Week Nine far ahead of the end of the season. Author David McCullough drew a full house to the Amp. Ticket sales for the entire season were up 2.3% over last year with most of the growth occurring in visits that were shorter than one week.

Understanding Audiences

“Understanding our present and potential audiences is an area we are constantly working on,” says Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer George Murphy, “and we have identified segments that we believe comprise our core audience. We continue to create plans to market Chautauqua as a whole but also to those who would be interested in a very specific program. We have to communicate the value of Chautauqua to these segments and dig deeper into their interests.”

Klingensmith, a seventh generation Chautauquan and former chief operations officer of Highmark/Blue Cross Blue Shield in Pittsburgh, serves as chair of the Marketing and Communications Committee, the newest of the trustees’ seven standing committees.

“Seven or eight years ago, there was very little surveying done here to inform our programming decisions,” Klingensmith says, “The way we made decisions was instinctive and not highly analytical. For the 2017 season, however, our committee has worked with the Institution and encouraged staff to think through these themes and get feedback from potential audiences. The dialogue across departments has been fantastic.”

In developing the themes for the 2017 season, Ewalt and a small interdepartmental working group used “building blocks” identified from ongoing analysis of what draws new and existing audiences to a particular week at Chautauqua. The group considered more than 200 theme ideas from Chautauquans in picking their week descriptions, clarifying the Institution’s mission, including potential partnerships, philanthropy and nationally known speakers, along with leveraging existing relationships or building upon work that is most often influenced by a core audience and drawing other audiences and be more creative in our approach. For example, next season’s Week Nine focuses on food with “At the Table: Our Changing Relationship with Food,” and the Institution will target potential audiences based on food interests and also help cross promote Chautauqua County as a food and wine destination.

The theme of “Invention,” which ranked high in the survey, naturally lends itself to an association with Thomas Edison and Chautauqua’s co-founder Lewis Miller. The theme week on “Comedy and the Human Condition” was regarded as an especially strong topic, given the possibility of partnering with the National Comedy Center and Festival in Jamestown (see article on Page 9). The theme of “The Nature of Fear” scored high in the market testing, and fortunately Chautauqua had a ready candidate in popular lecturer Dan Ariely to help demonstrate the broad variety of disciplines to be represented in the week. In addition to the formal testing, Ewalt and Sherri Babcock expanded efforts to engage former speakers who are familiar with the Institution in further refining the themes and considering specific topics and potential speakers.

Testing Hypotheses

Meanwhile, Klingensmith’s Marketing and Communications Committee will submit a formal report to the Board of Trustees in November with further analysis of national trends in the arts, education, religion, and recreation that may influence Chautauqua’s programming decisions for the future. The report will also help identify effective ways to promote the Institution to its natural constituents and new audiences.

As Klingensmith put it: “Increasingly, Chautauqua has been making decisions based on solid market research; creating and testing hypotheses using limited market demonstrations; and incorporating in-depth programmatic evaluations. Strengthening our position as a learning organization—both in what we present and how we connect with our audiences—is critical to our sustainability.”
Bob Jeffrey: REMAINING FAITHFUL TO CHAUTAUQUA’S HISTORY

My feeling has always been that how we take care of buildings around here is a sign of the health of the Institution. I look back to when I was a kid here. This place was rough and hadn’t been invested in—in fact, there had been so much disinvestment during and after the Depression. It was a huge challenge. Of course, if we don’t invest in keeping things up, people won’t come. At the same time, we can’t depend on gate tickets to cover all the things that are important. If we did, most people couldn’t afford the gate ticket, yet having a broad array of people is also part of Chautauqua’s attraction.

I love my block on Miller. We have so many teachers and musicians who come back year after year to rent in this neighborhood and they could not afford to be here if the gate ticket [prices] really reflected what it costs to run the Institution. Philanthropy is always going to be important at Chautauqua.

Now, near the end of the Promise Campaign, I must say I have been astonished at how committed people have been to this effort. I thought it was going to be an uphill battle, but the success of the campaign shows how much Chautauquans love this place. It is a sport to complain at this place, but people have been to this effort. I feel that we were moving away from my perspective.

On another front, it’s sad that we are losing some trees, but they needed to come down for safety reasons. Now we are looking ahead and can be smarter about that aspect of this environment. We are putting in new trees where we see the oldest ones declining. Betty Burgeson communicates clearly and has the expertise to manage this project. I predict that 20 years from now, this place will be a model for the world in terms of environmental stewardship.

Heart of Chautauqua

Because of the controversy around the Amp project, some people felt that we were moving away from our history, but look at the improvements to the hotel, Fowler-Kellogg, and now the acquisition of Miller Cottage. We can remain faithful to Chautauqua’s history and still keep our structures safe. The Amp is the heart of Chautauqua, but it has to function with the latest technology. At the end of the day, that modern technology should not be visible, but we have to integrate it and achieve a balance with our history. People have been commenting for years about the steepness of the aisles and the discomfort of the benches, and now these issues are finally being addressed! It is an exciting time.

I believe our biggest challenge going forward is taking Chautauqua to the outside world.

Bob Jeffrey

“Now, near the end of the Promise Campaign, I must say I have been astonished at how committed people have been to this effort.”

—Bob Jeffrey

Bob Jeffrey

Bob Jeffrey is a lifetime Chautauquan. He grew up in Oil City, Pennsylvania, spent his summers at his family’s cottage in Mayville, and worked on the grounds of the Institution as a teenager. In 2011 he bought his current cottage, “Faithful Remnant,” on Miller Avenue where he lives for three or four months a year. Jeffrey also owns a real estate holding company in St. Petersburg, Florida, specializing in historic properties.

He completed a bachelor’s degree in environmental design at Miami University of Ohio, earned a master’s of architecture from Kent State University, and did additional graduate studies in urban design at Washington University in St. Louis.

As a preservationist, Jeffrey has restored a number of early 20th century buildings in St. Pete for adaptive reuse, including a group of cottages from the 1920s that are now restored to residential apartments. He also transformed a grocery store into mixed-use retail and residential lofts, and converted the 1913 Women’s Town Improvement Hall from a hotel to a mixed-use restaurant and office building.

Jeffrey has served as a Chautauqua trustee and chair of the Architectural Review Board. Most recently he has served as co-captain with Karen Goodell and Jesse Marion of a Promise Campaign solicitation team. PILLARS joined Bob and his lively dog, Annie, on the front porch of his cottage this past season.
Like so many Chautauquans, John and Cathy Rathmell began their love affair with Chautauqua during a one-week visit. That was 12 years ago, and one week quickly expanded to two the following year. Their third season on the grounds extended to eight weeks. “And we were still not tired of it,” says Cathy.

Originally residents of Wellsboro, Pennsylvania, the Rathmells have been married for 45 years and have two children. Son Joshua is an analyst in cancer research in Frederick, Maryland, and daughter Margaret is a manager of training and development for Zappos Shoes in Las Vegas. Their first grandson, Halsey, is 3 years old.

During her career, Cathy was a practicing psychologist in community mental health and later worked in private practice. John served as the director of process engineering for Corning Incorporated. On the eve of their retirement some years ago, the Rathmells went into separate rooms with a tablet, and each wrote a list of what they most wanted to do in the future. “Chautauqua was at the top of both our lists,” says John.

The Rathmells now own a two-bedroom condo in Westfield, NY, where they live for five months of the year. Their daily routine during the Chautauqua season starts with morning worship in the Amp, coffee at the Presbyterian House, and then the 10:45 lecture. They bring their lunch from home and after their daily picnic go to the Hall of Philosophy for the two o’clock talk. Sometimes they’ll stay for an author presentation or other afternoon event. Then they go home to walk the dog and have supper. The Rathmells don’t usually come back to the grounds for the evening, though if the entertainment includes Tchaikovsky, the Capitol Steps, or organist Jared Jacobsen, they will return for the performance.

Both are proud Centurion graduates of the CLSC. John is also a member of the Tuesday Morning Brass (trombone player) and both are avid singers. They grow a large vegetable garden each summer in Westfield, for which they give the Chautauqua Bird, Tree & Garden Club much credit for all they’ve learned about horticulture.

During seven months in the off-season, the Rathmells travel southeast of Tampa to look after Cathy’s 98-year-old mother who lives in Sun City Center, Florida. They participate in three different choral groups and are active in farm worker advocacy. They also support the Ripley Food Pantry in Chautauqua County.

“Chautauqua is like food,” says Cathy. “We get so much energy from this place—enough to propel us forward into all our volunteer activities during the rest of the year. We get the recordings of the ministers who speak on the grounds, and we listen to them throughout the year. We feel that Chautauqua is the most life-giving place we’ve ever found.”

The Rathmells have recently joined the new Bell Tower Society. “Giving a little every month works for us,” says John. “It is like tithing, and it helps the Institution plan, knowing the support is coming in regularly for operations.”

“We were so glad about the renewal of the Amphitheater to improve the safety of the place, and we also decided to give a direct donation to the Amp endowment,” Cathy says.

“We live simply and we are able to donate. I also believe it is important to help people in need directly,” John says.

“We think this place is run wonderfully and we believe strongly in keeping it going,” Cathy adds.

“We are excited by the efforts to diversify the Chautauqua audience and programming. We love the emphasis on civil discourse. It fits with our belief system.”

The Rathmells have a bumper sticker on their car that reads: We’re All In This Together.