According to Chautauqua’s new Director of Literary Arts, Atom Atkinson, Week One in the upcoming season might well be named for former Vice President and Emily and Richard Smucker Chair for Education Sherra Babcock. Under the theme “The Life of the Written Word,” 2018 kicks off with a celebration of the multiple avenues of Chautauqua’s literary programming, many of which Babcock helped to strengthen during her tenure in the Department of Education. Notably, the literary Chautauqua Prize, launched six years ago, has been a significant innovation, and this coming year, two recipients of the prize will be on the grounds at the same time.

The first-ever winner, Andrew Krivák, who was honored for his debut novel, The Sojourn, in 2012,
INNOVATIONS from p. 1

will return to discuss his new novel, The Signal Flame, about a young soldier returning home from Vietnam. The 2018 winner of the Chautauqua Prize (not yet selected) will also make a presentation at Chautauqua and receive the award at a special dinner.

The Chautauqua Prize is distinctive in its mission to identify and honor books that not only lift up new voices, provide important content for discussion, and make a stylistic contribution to contemporary literature, but the prize also “recognizes books that, in particular, provide a richly rewarding reading experience,” Babcock says. “These are books you don’t want to put down once you start reading.”

Now, with Babcock’s retirement and the creation of a new, full-time position in the literary arts at Chautauqua, the time has come to amplify the prize and consider future literary innovations. The question facing Atkinson, who began work in September, is how to build upon and better integrate the many components of the Institution’s literary programming—the Chautauqua Prize, Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC), CLSC Young Readers Program, the Writers’ Festival (traditionally held just before the regular season begins), the literary journal Chautauqua, and all of the varied craft workshops, readings, and book-review sessions produced by the Writers’ Center.

Renewing the Movement

Chautauqua has an unparalleled history in the national literary community as the home of the oldest continuously running book club in the country. The CLSC at its founding “was a radical educational program for people who didn’t have access to education,” says Babcock. “It was a program that was very directive, defining education in its broadest sense as lifelong learning, which, in turn, led to the ‘Chautauqua Movement.’” Or, as Chautauqua’s co-founder John Heyl Vincent described the mission: “Education, once the peculiar privilege of the few, must in our best earthly estate become the valued possession of the many.”

Today, more than 140 years later, Chautauqua’s new president, Michael E. Hill, seeks to renew that movement through year-round vehicles appropriate to the times—new online media platforms and face-to-face programming in selected cities around the country and outside the summer months at Chautauqua. How Chautauqua’s broad menu of literary programming for all ages can support and enhance this larger initiative and model what Atkinson calls “the intellectual and creative habits of mind that are cultivated by the act of writing” are among the new director’s concerns. Further, Atkinson sees Chautauqua’s literary arts and education programs as a key component in the practice of improving civil dialogue and critical thinking skills among us, also priorities of President Hill.

“Our is a dynamic writing and reading community,” Atkinson says. “If you think about it, every single player in the country is one of the best literary conferences going on in the country. It is multi-modal and interdisciplinary. Where else can you find the kinds of lectures, craft talks, book discussions, and Special Studies classes by our writers in residence? Our program is less expensive and far more diverse than many summer writing conferences in the country right now.”

Expanding the Menu

As an accomplished poet who is currently completing a Ph.D. dissertation in creative writing through the University of Utah, Atkinson is interested in expanding the menu of literary works considered for the Chautauqua Prize, which is currently restricted to fiction and non-fiction. On the idea of a poetry prize, Atkinson laughs and says, “Just give me some time!” Nevertheless, the first order of business must be taking a broad look at overall literary programming and building a collaborative framework to fully integrate the delivery of additional enhancements to the literary arts. In this review of literary programming Atkinson is working closely with Babcock’s successor, David Griffith—also a former creative writing professor at Sweet Briar College and the author of a Good War is Hard to Find: The Art of Violence in America. Griffith and Atkinson have also set the goal of finding additional endowment funding for the Chautauqua Prize, now that the anonymous foundation that helped to establish the prize has elected to go in a new direction with their grantmaking.

Atkinson will also be looking at the current judging system for the prize, which involves a first tier of readers—some 80 Chautauquans who read six nominated books each per year. These first readers are teachers of creative writing, librarians, bookstore owners, and other involved in the field. “Chautauquans are such generous readers,” Babcock explains, “and this system is both unique and a bit cumbersome.” Once the full roster of entries is called, an anonymous jury chooses the historic role and winner of the prize.

From the beginning, Babcock eschewed the idea of a celebrity judge to pick the top book, because of the expense involved in compensating a literary luminary and the much higher priority of offering the most generous honorarium possible to the winning writer. David Remnick, editor of The New Yorker, advised Babcock early on that what writers need most is the means to live on their own for a year to write. While that goal was out of reach, the $7,500 prize and the all-expenses-paid week at Chautauqua have been highly valued by the winning authors.

National Community

The Chautauqua Prize has already raised the recognition of Chautauqua Institution for its historic role in the nation’s literary life. Publishers have come to see the honor as a significant affirmation of talent for both seasoned and emerging writers. “The prize positions Chautauqua within the literary ecosystem in an important way,” says Griffith. “The Institution is still in touch with all of the winners, their publishers, and in some cases, their agents. We know from authors who come to Chautauqua that the national community is paying attention to our shortlist and to those whom we are inviting to teach and present here.”

Babcock agrees that “Chautauqua now has a reputation as a place where authors are honored by people who read seriously and deeply.”

“Innovations” by Sherra Babcock

“Chautauqua now has a reputation as a place where authors are honored by people who read seriously and deeply.”

—Sherra Babcock

Sherra Babcock honors author Peter Ho Davies at the 2017 Chautauqua Prize award dinner at Alumni Hall.
Holding the Sacred Trust of Generations

In this issue of PILLARS, we introduce you to a new group of leaders at Chautauqua. As you read about them here, I hope you share my own enthusiasm for the intelligence and passion that this group is demonstrating in their work. Senior staffers David Griffith, Gene Robinson, Emily Morris and Atom Atkinson have joined our new president in this effort with a commitment that goes well beyond enhancing the Institution’s reputation and impact. They are focused on assuring that Chautauqua can provide a program that is as rich and deep as it can possibly be for all ages. They have also expressed, time and again, their admiration for what has been done by their predecessors. They are determined and thrilled to build upon the solid foundation already established. New senior staff members have come into their roles finding that they don’t need to “fix” things or solve problems. Instead, their immediate task is to attract new audiences and expand the Chautauqua family.

Since our last edition of PILLARS, Sherra Babcock and Robert Franklin have stepped down as the leaders of Education and Religion, respectively. Both moved the work of their departments ahead dramatically. In particular, Sherra’s efforts in laying the groundwork for a more dynamic literary arts program has already begun to bear fruit. Meanwhile, Robert, in his pastoral role, created a new awareness and commitment to making Chautauqua a place that respects and welcomes multiple voices to our worship and discussions, and he has done so in a most reverent and modest manner.

In our initial meetings this fall, we have all experienced a renewed energy as we think about the future. Only now, on the other side of the Promise Campaign, have I personally realized how the scope and scale of the Amphitheater project consumed so much of our efforts. Yes, we still need to secure resources for the ongoing maintenance and care for the Amphitheater and I ask that you participate in that effort with a gift, but we are also happily thinking about what new programs and possibilities that this magnificent structure provides to us. Specifically, we have been tasked to help realize Michael Hill’s vision, which includes turning our gates into gateways for the region; expanding interfaith dialogue; positioning Chautauqua as a thought leader for the country; providing year-round programming; and building a Chautauqua community that better reflects the world we live in.

We face the daily task of realizing their wishes, of ensuring that this institution can thrive, even in very different times from what they may have known. Holding firm to Chautauqua’s core values while understanding the ways in which our work must evolve is our fundamental charge.

My own family has very deep roots at Chautauqua, but it will always be true that anyone working at the Foundation—board and staff—must inevitably feel this profound obligation, the sacred trust involved in distributing resources from all those funds named for Chautauquans of the past. I haven’t been on the road yet this fall, and I’ve missed the energy that comes from talking with Chautauquans from all over the country about where we are going and what our future might look like. I look forward to seeing many of you soon, and welcome your questions and ideas as we move forward.
LEADERSHIP from p. 1
and crossing into each other’s zones with new ideas and great energy.” The overarching idea is to develop year-round programming that bridges the nine-week seasons, to better connect one season to the next thematically, and to integrate the considerable talents of senior staff for maximum impact.

Executing the Vision
“Normalizing collaboration,” is how Ewalt characterizes it. “We are creating an environment where we can challenge each other, and pull in voices to tap critical knowledge and ideas,” he says. “My primary responsibility as chief of staff is thinking about how we execute the vision.”

Ewalt, who has been at Chautauqua for a decade—first as editor of The Chautauquan Daily, then as director of communications, and then associate director of education and youth programs—is excited by the challenge. “There are incredible minds in every part of this Institution who are eager to embark on the journey,” he says. “Every voice is important. The intensity of the nine-week season teaches you how much you depend on every single person.”

Education and Youth Programs
Ewalt “hovers,” as he says, at the strategic level and is engaged in multi-year planning. Meanwhile, Hill is also shifting the development of the 10:45 a.m. lecture platform from the Department of Education into the President’s Office. This will be one of Ewalt’s primary responsibilities in this new role, along with oversight of theme planning and partnership development with organizations.

David Griffith, the new Vice President and Emily and Richard Smucker Chair for Education, will, in turn, focus his efforts on enhancing Chautauqua’s distinctive approach to lifelong learning for all age groups.

Griffith, a former professor of English and creative writing and scholar of pedagogy, was already scouting possibilities as he visited in classrooms around the grounds this past season, observing youth programs, Special Studies classes, and Writers’ Center sessions. He is eager to empower teachers in these programs to enhance their skills and establish a set of community standards in teaching.

“My job,” Griffith says, “is to help people as much as possible to connect the dots.” For him, that means a full integration of the lived values of civil dialogue, the inclusion of multiple viewpoints, and respectful disagreement in Chautauqua’s classrooms. It also means ensuring that the intellectual “dots” within a theme week and across seasons are well integrated and additive to the Chautauqua experience for all ages.

Griffith is excited by the multi-generational nature of Chautauqua and the challenge of “building a container,” as he puts it, to help students across generations find common ground in the classroom and also take what they learn at the Institution and apply those skills and knowledge in their home communities.

“One of the fundamental principles of lifelong learning is that we are all teachers and learners,” Griffith says. “And there is a certain humility in seeing foot on these historic grounds. By doing so we are acknowledging that there is so much more for all of us to learn. We want to be active learners who are constantly evolving, not ‘the learned’ who often get stuck under the weight of some specialized knowledge or academic canon.”

—David Griffith

Long-Term Guests

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2017 FACTOIDS AND KEY INVESTMENTS

Overall One-Week Gate Passes

3% increase since 2016.

Athenaeum Hotel stays

28% increase since 2012.
new partnership Robinson says, “I already knew and admired Maureen and her work. We are looking forward to serving this community together as a team!”

Already at home in Chautauqua, Robinson has spoken in the Hall of Philosophy several times as a 2 p.m. lecturer, and has previously served as the chaplain of the week. His vision involves building on the work of Joan Brown Campbell, Robert Franklin and Rovegno to broaden and deepen interfaith conversations at Chautauqua.

Robinson and Rovegno have already secured the nine clergy who will serve as chaplains in residence and preachers for the worship services during the 2018 season. “Most of the nine are new to Chautauqua in this role,” says Robinson, “and I hope they will showcase the kind of balance in viewpoints and orientation that Michael Hill has promised.” Three of the clergy, he says, come from conservative evangelical traditions, three are from the mainstream, and three are on the progressive end of the spectrum among U.S. clergy. “A couple of the preachers are considerably younger,” Robinson added. One of these younger clergy, an evangelical, operates online with a blog—a new way to minister and preach the gospel,” Robinson explains.

“Maybe our preoccupations with difference will morph into fascination and a yearning to truly understand. I aim for Chautauqua to be a laboratory where these transformations can be tested, experienced, and affirmed. If we are successful, only then can we truly claim to have ushered in a new era.”

—Michael E. Hill

Another younger preacher coming next season brings a progressive African-American voice to the pulpit and has her own show on public radio in Boston, in which she goes head-to-head with a conservative minister. “The show is called ‘All Revved Up,’” Robinson laughs. Her radio program is scheduled to go national on NPR this fall. “She didn’t know a thing about Chautauqua when I issued the invitation, which means we are introducing Chautauqua to a dynamic new minister!” he says. Robinson will also be offering a special format for the 2 p.m. lectures in the Hall of Philosophy every Friday during the nine-weeks in 2018. “We are calling them ‘Interfaith Fridays,’” says Robinson. This plan will be to interview a special guest to end the week, each representing a different world faith tradition. Robinson’s questions will be designed to encourage greater understanding of the sacred texts and traditions of each faith represented, how followers of the religion deal with extremists in their traditions, and how they manage to engage in interfaith work even if the tenets of their belief system suggest that there is only one true path to God through their faith. Chautauqua will be recording these Friday sessions to create a DVD that can be used by congregations across the country. “Any church, synagogue, or mosque can use these recorded talks to launch their own interfaith discussion,” Robinson says, adding with delight, “and it won’t hurt that Chautauqua’s name will be attached.” Robinson says his ultimate hope is that when people speak of interfaith dialogue, they will immediately think of Chautauqua as the place where it is conducted with deep respect. Of his new team of colleagues Robinson was effusive. “Part of my discernment about taking the position at Chautauqua involved coming to the grounds for three days right after Easter,” he explains. Robinson spent his time with executive staff.

“Who you work with is so important, and those three days pushed me over the top,” Robinson says. “I found my potential colleagues to be warm and welcoming and very committed to Chautauqua. Our recent staff retreat in September further confirmed it. This is a group of people who are good at what they do, and no one was squashing a new idea as we brainstormed together. I couldn’t be more excited to come to Chautauqua.”

Navigating the Future

Chautauqua’s new senior staff members in education, marketing and religion, along with their energetic peers in the arts and recreation departments have set sail together, all hands on deck, in choppy waters. Amid the currents of a rancorous national discourse and profound divides along the fault lines of race, class, and politics, Hill offered these final visionary words to his audience in Erie last spring:

“Maybe our preoccupations with difference will morph into fascination and a yearning to truly understand. I aim for Chautauqua to be a laboratory where these transformations can be tested, experienced, and affirmed. If we are successful, only then can we truly claim to have ushered in a new era.”
We were very supportive of the Amp project from the very beginning,” says Marc Fultz, who has been coming to Chautauqua since he was a teenager. “When we walked into the new space for the first time this season, it felt like home.”

“It seemed miraculous that they could get that done in a single off-season,” Marc’s wife, Ellen, adds.

The Fultzes, who met at Chautauqua 40 summers ago, live in Athens, Ohio. For the last several summers they have been renting an apartment very near the back of the Amphitheater. Stationed there, the couple took a special interest in the new rain gardens that were still being installed around the Amphitheater this season.

After participating in one of the weekly Monday morning tours of the new facility led by Foundation CEO Geof Follansbee, the Fultzes expressed their desire to endow the creation and upkeep of the large sloping area immediately behind the Amp that is being landscaped with stones and perennial plantings. This critical feature at the back-of-house is designed to slow and absorb rainwater from the Amphitheater’s roof and other impervious surfaces before it reaches the lake. By endowing the J. Marcus and Ellen B. Fultz Rain Garden (highlighted in the Amphitheater site plan illustration), the couple hopes to inspire their children to continue the family’s participation in Chautauqua’s environmental initiatives. Both daughter Danielle, who is 26 years old and lives in Louisville, Kentucky, still come to the Institution to join their parents during part of the season and are enthusiastic Chautauquans.

In 2016, the Fultzes also endowed the Arline and Ralph Bernstein Memorial Rain Garden in Miller Park, along South Lake Drive. Named for Ellen’s parents, the garden, Ellen says, would have pleased her father, an engineer whose specialty was water resource management. “He would have approved of investing in the ecosystem here.”

Ellen’s mother also played a key role at Chautauqua for her daughter. Arline Bernstein was a music teacher who encouraged Ellen to study flute and piano. Marc explains, and now their own yards might consider these native plants!

Ellen and Marc Fultz received official Monarch Waystation certification for the Bernstein Garden, which is full of the milkweed that attracts these butterflies. Sponsored by the University of Kansas, the Monarch Waystation Network focuses on the annual North American migration of the Monarch butterfly, which is endangered by the widespread use of herbicides in croplands, pastures, and roadides. The butterfly population is also challenged across the nation by the commercial development of open land. According to the project, “The U.S. is consuming habitats for monarchs and other wildlife at a rate of 6,000 acres per day.”

“One person can make such a difference,” says Burgesson. “As a policy we don’t pull the milkweed on the grounds, but let every single one come up where we can. In fact, this year the CLSC Class of 2017 made ‘Monarch and Milkweed’ their class project, and purchased seeds and plants for the south end of the playground near the tennis courts so that kids can search for caterpillars and learn more about this phenomenon.”

The Fultzes are thrilled to contribute to the ongoing development of rain gardens, of which a number are still in need of endowment support and available to become named gardens on the plaza side of the Amphitheater. “The goal,” says Burgesson, “is to use all native perennials in these beds and supplement with annuals in the pots and large urns around the Amp.”

Ellen, who works as a development officer at Ohio University, appreciates the task at hand. “I understand the importance of these gifts and of getting our children involved in Chautauqua,” she says.

“It’s a great feeling,” adds Marc, who runs an e-commerce business out of their home, “to see how these gardens really do work and to know that they make a difference in the water quality of the lake, which we have seen change over the years. This is not a fad but something to last for the long runs.”
Bellinger Hall: A NEW REVENUE STREAM, A BROADER PURPOSE

I t is a testament to the excellence of Chautauqua’s schools of music, visual arts, theater, voices, and dance that many students often return for several years in a row to study here. They certainly don’t come for the food, prepared in a very dated kitchen in Bellinger Hall. Nor do they relish living in the only dorm without air conditioning or working attic fans and where extra pains must be taken to protect fragile instruments from heat and humidity.

“The obsolets and bassoonists make their own reeds for their instruments,” says one Music School Festival Orchestra (MSFO) student. “The room we are given for this purpose in the basement of Lenna Hall where we go to rehearse. Often, the reeds we make are unable to adapt to the humidity and temperature change between the two buildings. The reeds don’t work. It makes us crazy.”

Other students noted that their clothes never really dry in the dryers provided in the same humid and moldy basement. WiFi is limited throughout Bellinger, and the Ethernet ports, tantalizingly placed across the building, do not work at all. For students who often must access sheet music and recordings through the Internet, this means finding WiFi hot spots elsewhere on the grounds, even if it means going to Bestor Plaza in the dead of night. “If we had a better situation here,” says a dancer, “then we could focus more on our work.”

“The practice cabins are great,” says a member of the MSFO. “And the kitchen started putting extra food out for us at night,” said another. “I love this feature and always recommend it to my friends, but you have to warn them about the food,” said a young violinist.

Clearly these dedicated students wanted to balance their negative assessments of Bellinger Hall with something positive. Their devotion to the Chautauqua experience was palpable, but these concerns came from the most recent class of students in residence this past season. Those who have come here and do not return, or those who have heard about the dorm conditions in Bellinger and chose to go elsewhere provide comment only by their absence.

Competitive Disadvantage

Chautauqua’s competitive disadvantage from Bellinger’s age and outdated furnishings is no secret, and the nearly $6 million line item in the Promise Campaign for its renovation was one of very few goals that went unmet in the last capital campaign.

“Our state-of-the-art buildings for rehearsal and teaching send a message to prospective students and faculty that we are very serious about the development of young musicians,” says Music Director and Principal Conductor of the MSFO Timothy Muffitt. “Every time I see Bob and Ann Fletcher, I try to be sure and thank them for Fletcher Hall. They’ve opened up new possibilities for us. The new facilities have been game-changers, and have had an enormous impact on what we do and allowing us to do it even better.”

Climate control alone has a dramatic effect on artistic output. Air conditioning helps you stay mentally focused and maintain your endurance as a musician or a dancer. Bellinger Hall has served us well over the years, but it is now profoundly lagging behind the standards we have set elsewhere at Chautauqua. For us to remain one of the top professional programs in the country, this has to change,” Muffitt says firmly.

Bruce Stanton, manager of the Athenaeum Hotel, oversee all of the Institution’s foodservice outlets, including Bellinger. It pains him to confront the current reality. “In the present kitchen we are severely limited. We do not have adequate space, equipment, or aesthetics. We have tried to do a few things to improve the situation within our budget, but we need to deliver more local and fresh ingredients. Renovation of the kitchen would allow us to improve the presentation and quality of the food we serve our young artists in Bellinger.”

As Stanton points out, Bellinger was once used frequently in the off-season, but in its four decades of use, it has never received a major renovation. Opened in 1974 and constructed in stages until 1989, Bellinger provides some 60,000 square feet of residential space for the Institution. The original dining tables are still in use.

A Vision for the Future

Chautauqua’s new president, Michael E. Hill, is eager to imagine a new Bellinger Hall on line and in service to his vision of the Institution hosting guests 12 months a year. “It is critical not only to our nine-week season, but Bellinger is absolutely at the center of the center of our ability to do year-round programming on the grounds. An improved Bellinger would provide a big footprint for the off-season, permitting deep dives into the content we want Chautauqua to be known for. Having year-round programming, serving more people from across the country, and serving the county with this facility will be a linchpin in how Chautauqua shows up in the world,” says Hill.

But Bellinger will require a massive overhaul, not just air conditioning. The heating system is inefficient and the dorm room design of twin beds in each room is not conducive to more contemporary purposes that may include family suites that might handle “parents, three kids, and a dog,” says Hill. “We may also need apartment-style accommodations and one-person studio rooms with a refrigerator and microwave,” he said.

Year-round programming possibilities include everything from cross-country ski groups to weddings and social groups. The NOW Generation, for instance, could book a retreat in the off-season for a special program that may include children. A reconfigured Bellinger could also be programmed for interfaith dialogues, a leadership program, writers’ workshops, and culinary weekends. Making the space more available and welcoming to Chautauqua County nonprofits for retreats and other programming would also be a renewed priority.

The renovation of Bellinger that Hill wants is not merely cosmetic but would create a new earned revenue stream while fundamentally expanding the impact of the Institution.

“We are at the process of pulling together a working group of trustees and staff to look at how we move forward with all of the Institution’s accommodations—the Athenaeum Hotel, Bellinger and the possibility of additional residential space,” says Foundation CEO Geof Follansbee.

“Our desire to move forward with the renovation and upgrade of Bellinger Hall is as strong as it has ever been. The fundamental question is: How will Bellinger best serve our community in 2020? What will that look like?”
Renovations of Music School Campus and Arts Quad 10th Anniversaries: THE LONG-TERM POWER OF PHILANTHROPY

Though much has recently been made of the powerful impact on Chautauqua by Promise Campaign donors, the year 2017 also marks the 10th anniversary of the completion of the Idea Campaign, in which the School of Music campus renovations to the Arts Quad, and the creation of the Lincoln Ceramics Studios launched a new era of excellence in the Institution’s arts facilities. PILLARS invited some of the donors and beneficiaries of these projects to reflect on the difference these investments have made.

Sweeping Improvements

Bob and Ann Fletcher love to tell the story of a face-to-face fundraising visit made by Idea Campaign volunteer Bill Clinger and then-Institution President Tom Becker more than 10 years ago. “I said to Ann after the guys left here that we couldn’t afford to make a $1,000,000 gift for a new music building,” Bob Fletcher says today, sitting on the front porch of the couple’s Scott Avenue cottage, laughing.

“Bob, honey, he didn’t say six figures,” Ann told her husband back then and now again in this moment. “He was asking for seven figures. A million dollars!”

“If I’d heard him correctly that day,” Bob continues, “I’m sure I would have fallen over and grabbed my heart. I would have died on the spot.”

In the end, however, Bob and Ann Fletcher not only invested a seven-figure sum in the music building that now bears their family name, but they joined with 42 other donors in renovating Chautauqua’s legendary music practice shacks. The Fletchers funded improvements to the famous shack occupied by George Gershwin where he composed “Rhapsody in Blue.” They made that gift to honor their favorite him, the piano tuner, on her 105th birthday. Renovations to the practice shacks, including climate control and improved acoustics, were also a key component in the Idea Campaign.

More recently, the Fletchers’ gift to the Amphitheater was recognized through the naming of the new sound booth. Bob, whose grandfather was a piano tuner, made a career in the music products industry. For her part, Ann studied with Franz Liszt among other important European pianists, who was born in Lyons, New York, in 1834 and studied with Franz Liszt among many other important European pianists, was the founder of the Chicago Piano School and toured the country giving concerts at the

A World of Difference

Before the music campus renovations, Marlena Malas, chair of Chautauqua’s Voice Program, remembers being stung by a bee under her dress while teaching in the unimproved practice shacks. To cool herself on hot days, she would blot herself with wet paper towels. The conditions were hardly conducive to proper master classes.

“They laved us invited us over for dinner and John and Emily Corry were there,” Malas explains. “Though they never asked me what I wanted or needed, somehow plans were put together for a full menu of improvements. Kay Logan and Jane Gross supported the studio that I have now in Corry Hall, and it has made a world of difference,” she says, adding that students who now come back to visit her have been amazed at “how beautiful and functional” the music buildings are—including the renovated McKnight Hall, Office Depot Hall, and Corry Hall.

“John and Emily McKnight Corry were great lovers of music and opera,” says Chautauqua Foundation CEO Geoff Follansbee. “They had always been generous to Chautauqua, and for many years they gave the largest, single annual gift to the Chautauqua Fund. They also created an endowed fund for opera and another for the performing arts.” Though Emily grew up in Jamestown, N.Y., and had a lifelong love affair with Chautauqua, the couple made their home outside New York City where John was a prominent tax attorney. When John retired they became deeply invested in Chautauqua and made the million-dollar gift that made possible Corry Hall.

Possibilities for Collaboration

Music Director and Principal Conductor of the Music School Festival Orchestra Timothy Muffitt says he especially appreciates the versatility provided by the combination of Lenna, McKnight, and Fletcher halls—how it is possible to present voice and instrumental works in any of the three. “Having these facilities has really brought a new atmosphere of professionalism to our program,” Muffitt adds. “Along with great places to work, we also now have more appropriate facilities for the storage and movement of the larger (and very expensive) instruments... avoiding wear and tear. Our students are understandably very protective of their instruments, and this tells them we share in their concern. Great places to rehearse, teach and practice greatly enhances our recruitment potential.”

Muffitt notes that music faculty and students also appreciate the possibilities for collaboration that have come with such close proximity across a now compact campus. “Before, we were tucked away in various, isolated rooms all over the grounds. A central ‘campus’ allows for a much freer flow of ideas and inspiration,” Muffitt says.

Piano Lovers

The Sherwood-Marsh Studios sit at the top of the hill past McKnight and Lenna, where a new brick rotary leads to the tennis courts to the left and the School of Dance campus is straight ahead. The building is named for two historically significant pianists. William Sherwood, who was born in Lyons, New York, in 1834 and studied with Franz Liszt among many other important European pianists, was the founder of the Chicago Piano School and toured the country giving concerts at the

“He was asking for seven figures. A million dollars!”

—Ann Fletcher

“Bob, honey, he didn’t say six figures,” Ann told her husband back then and now again in this moment.

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Along with great places to work, we also now have more appropriate facilities for the storage and movement of the larger (and very expensive) instruments. ... Great places to rehearse, teach and practice greatly enhances our recruitment potential.”

—Timothy Muffitt

turn of the 20th century. Ozan Marsh, a disciple of Rachmaninoff, was a concert pianist and in the 1970s served as director of the piano program at the University of Arizona, the same post held today by John Milbauer, who co-directs the Chautauqua Piano Program with Nikki Melville, chair of the music faculty at Carlson College.

“When Sherwood-Marsh was renovated,” says Milbauer, “the outside appearance did not change much, but the inside of the building was completely reconfigured.” In addition to a large light-filled space used for master classes, there are now five studios, an office, and an equipment room. “The acoustic retrofitting of the building was amazing, and the new French doors in our large, public studio bring in light from the east, which is extraordinary,” Milbauer adds. One significant addition in the renovation that has been put to extensive use for receptions and student parties is the Piano Lovers Patio—an outdoor extension of the building created adjacent to the sun-filled room where master classes are held. “The piano was a gift from Linda and Saul Ludwig,” says Milbauer, “and it is perfect for our purposes.”

Safety & Sustainability
For the Visual Arts at Chautauqua Institution (VACI), Artistic Director Don Kimes and Managing Director Lois Jubeck are still marveling at the impact of the renovations to the Arts Quad, particularly in the Joan Lincoln Ceramics Center.

“Back in the day,” says Kimes, “we had kilns running inside 100-year-old stick-built buildings. Occasionally, the roof would catch fire.” Kimes shudders and shakes his head. Today, the kiln shed with its steel doors protects students and the adjacent buildings. The energy-efficient Blaauw Kiln with its programmable motherboard was purchased with a gift from Blossom McHerr and Kirby Rodriguez in the Idea Campaign. This piece of equipment makes it possible for Chautauquans to fire wet clay pieces immediately and thus take home finished pots within the confines of a weeklong class. “That kiln is like owning a race horse,” says Lois Jubeck.

Just as significantly, new lighting and the replacement of the foundation of the Arts Quad substantially increased the overall safety and sustainability of the facilities. The now decade-old studios for faculty along with the renovated, climate-controlled gallery space in Fowler-Kellogg Art Center and Strohl Art Center have made it possible to bring museum quality work to the grounds and expand the program’s connections with artists and faculty working in a variety of media.

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Today’s visual arts program emphasizes diversity in the student pool and is quickly expanding its digital capacity thanks to a recent gift from Chip and Gail Gamble.

Five iMac computers loaded with applications such as Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign, along with two digital drawing pads, comprise the beginnings of a Digital Media Studio housed this summer in a pod near the Arts Quad at Chautauqua. The equipment and furniture for the lab were gifts from Chip and Gail Gamble, Chautauquans who have an interest in photography and printmaking, respectively.

Master printmaker Tom Raneses, who teaches at American University, offered classes this season in the digital lab, helping fine art students master the software, which is useful in the creative process whether the artist is a painter, printmaker, ceramicist, or sculptor.

Meanwhile, VACI Artistic Director Don Kimes had already landed another piece of equipment which he finally brought out of storage—a donated silkscreen exposure unit with the capacity to create prints that are as large as 2½ by 4 feet. “We didn’t know if the equipment, which was a donation from a printing company, was going to work until we turned it on this year,” Kimes said. The Gambles then added to their initial gift by making it possible for Kimes to furnish a darkroom, five iMacs and related equipment for printmaking.

The lab and printer were so popular that Kimes is planning to add another five computer stations for next season and is exploring the possibility of Special Studies classes in the Adobe Creative Cloud suite of programs for Chautauquans who are interested in learning the software. Already Gail Gamble, with Tom Raneses’ instruction, created her own adaptation of the famous photograph of Eleanor Roosevelt that lives in the Chautauqua Women’s Club, combining it with a favorite of Roosevelt’s sayings. Among her many Chautauqua activities, Gail has served as the chair of the Chautauqua Women’s Club board for the past two years.
When Larry Thompson was first invited to speak on the lecture platform at Chautauqua in 2004, he figured there might be about 200 people who’d be interested in what he had to say about corporate scandals and white-collar crime. “I hadn’t seen the venue ahead of time,” he admits. Thompson, who succeeded Robert Mueller and preceded James Comey as Deputy Attorney General of the United States, was appointed to the position by President George W. Bush in 2001. In that role, he led the President’s Corporate Fraud Task Force and oversaw the prosecution of corporate officials at Enron. Like many speakers before him, Thompson was in for a shock. When he came out on stage, the Amphitheater was full.

“I’d been speaking all over the country that year,” Thompson says, “and by far the questions I got at Chautauqua were the most sophisticated and discerning.”

Today, Thompson is a trustee of the Institution and spends much of the season at Chautauqua with his wife, Brenda.

“I was impressed with the questions,” says Brenda, “but it took me a little longer to appreciate Chautauqua in the way Larry did. He got it immediately.”

These days, the Thompsons divide their time between their Chautauqua home and a home in Sea Island, Georgia. From there, Larry commutes to teach in the Department of Religion at Emory University in Atlanta. Brenda retired from her career as a school psychologist in 2005 and was involved in community development work when the couple still lived in Atlanta. Larry served as vice president and chief corporate counsel for Pepsi Co. when they also lived in Greenwich, Connecticut.

At Chautauqua, Brenda appreciates the walkability of the grounds, the ability to chat about anything with neighbors and total strangers, and the chance to sample all kinds of music. “I have to be careful,” Brenda says, “not to exhaust myself from all the possibilities.”

In being such beautiful natural surroundings has also awakened her love of gardening, she says. Having twice retired from corporate law, Larry Thompson was called into service once more by the U.S. government this April to serve as the independent corporate monitor overseeing compliance reforms at Volkswagen AG. It’s a three-year appointment.

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“I am now taking German lessons,” he says cheerfully.

Given such a busy schedule, Larry especially relishes the down time on his porch at Chautauqua, having the freedom, “to go out and read a book and enjoy the happy noise that comes from the music school campus. There’s a lot of serenity here. My goal as I get older is to do nothing.”

More seriously, Thompson confirms that his spirit is always buoyed by the worship services at Chautauqua. The Rev. M. Craig Barnes was especially inspiring to him this past season.

The Department of Religion was also key to Brenda’s appreciation of the unusual combination of assets at Chautauqua. “We had gone to Aspen,” she says, “but here, religion is the one pillar of programming you don’t find anywhere else.” The other factor that inspires her, she says, is seeing so many people in their 80s and 90s racing off on their scooters “to get every last drop of learning they can get out of the day—people who have been coming here for years and are that motivated to learn more! When I get to that stage in life, I want to be like that.”

Both of the Thompsons say that they’d like to experience a greater diversity of ideas on the grounds. “We know we need as a society to hear each other,” says Brenda. “I need to work on listening,” Brenda says. Larry, too, believes Chautauqua has an important role to play in the life of the nation.

“This is a delicate time in our country, from a political perspective,” he says. “Promoting civil dialogue among people who have different perspectives is critical. I saw [Ret.] General Petraeus after his Chautauqua lecture and he raved about the experience. Of course, we are not perfect here. Everyone will benefit from greater diversity in terms of age, color, ethnicity—all of it.”

While Thompson sees the merit of developing a greater online presence for Chautauqua as part of President Michael E. Hill’s new vision for the Institution, he still finds the immediacy of the human connections to be a major aspect of the Chautauqua experience. “The charm is to come here and meet your neighbors, visit the restaurants, and serve the Institution. I am glad I was smart enough to join the board.”

The Thompsons love the Chautauqua Theater Company and see every play they can. They are intentional about supporting living artists who are no longer with us, their scooters “to get every last drop of learning they can get out of the day—people who have been coming here for years and are that motivated to learn more! When I get to that stage in life, I want to be like that.”

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The Thompsons love the Chautauqua Theater Company and see every play they can. They are also passionate about VACI and the visual arts. Since her retirement, Brenda has been instrumental in enlarging the couple’s collection of art by persons of color, which has been described by experts as one of the nation’s major private collections of African-American art.

“We collect works by important artists who are no longer with us, works dating back to as early as 1890,” Brenda explains. “We also are intentional about supporting living artists and are bolstered by bringing their energy into the collection.”

The Thompsons endowed a curatorial position at the University of Georgia Art Museum and donated a large collection of paintings, prints, and sculpture to commemorate the university’s 50th anniversary celebration of desegregation in 2012. Brenda is especially motivated to ensure that schoolchildren across the state have exposure to the visual arts represented in the collection.

They have also been generous donors to Chautauqua, recently increasing their annual gift to the Chautauqua Fund as part of the Leadership Challenge—a matching gift opportunity issued this past summer. Members of the Institution and Foundation boards agreed to personally provide a pool of funds in support of the 2017 Chautauqua Fund to leverage new or increased giving to the Bostor Society.

“The Thompsons indicated they had been thinking about what they might do for Chautauqua, now that Larry is the board,” explains Tina Downey, director of the Chautauqua Fund. “They decided this gift would have a strong impact, and I’d have to agree. I am grateful for the Thompsons’ generous commitment to Chautauqua and for helping ensure that critical program and operational expenses are met with their gift to the Chautauqua Fund.”
Teaching the Components of Ethical, Civil Dialogue

Dr. David Carter of California’s Claremont Lincoln University lectures in Elizabeth S. Lenna Hall during Week Seven on Aug. 11, 2017.

“Rather than one week devoted to ethics in business, journalism, medicine, or another professional arena, we have now made ethics a theme that runs through each and every week.”

— Geof Follansbee

R. Lincoln, who was a nationally recognized ceramicist, teacher, and mentor to young artists at Chautauqua and, like her husband, David, was an indefatigable advocate for interfaith dialogue, Claremont Lincoln University offers online master’s degrees and certificate programs in Ethical Leadership, Social Impact, and Interfaith Action. In his interactive session, David Carter went on to suggest that meaningful civil dialogue calls on all parties to be fully present, shut down the urge to judge, and be mindful of the other person’s or group’s needs and fears. From this position, Carter suggested, it is possible to engage in meaningful conversation that requires asking open-ended questions and active listening. Only then, he said, can the parties move toward change, seeking to reframe a problem or conflict collectively. “Collaboration gives birth to innovation,” emphasizes Carter.

The session, which evoked an energetic question-and-answer period among the Chautauquans in attendance, was a first step toward creating the possibility of off-season opportunities for Chautauquans to practice civil dialogue, perhaps through Claremont-Lincoln’s online technology.

“We have already expanded the Lincoln Applied Ethics Series in our programming during the season,” says Foundation CEO Geof Follansbee. “Rather than one week devoted to ethics in business, journalism, medicine, or another professional arena, we have now made ethics a theme that runs through each and every week. David Lincoln’s generosity has also allowed us to offer Special Studies master classes in ethics beyond the general sessions held in the Hall of Philosophy.”

“Rigor in this work is only possible if you have a process that everyone can engage upon,” notes David Griffith, vice president and Emily and Richard Smucker Chair for Education. “We are exploring how the Claremont Lincoln framework might work for us in practicing civil dialogue as a community, both during and beyond the regular season. I have been struck by how we have this rare opportunity at Chautauqua to try to find common ground, for example, across all the generations represented here. Where else do you find members of the Greatest Generation, Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials in one place? How can we better understand each other with such vastly different cultural experiences?”

President Hill agrees. “Next season, we want to give people ways to model this work. It is not okay to only talk about dialogue; we have to practice,” he says. Or as Emily Morris, vice president of marketing and communications and chief brand officer, put it in her opening remarks at the session in Lenna: “We must learn to lean in to the other. We have been struggling to figure out how to talk to each other when we disagree.”

Morris envisions a course starting out with the basics and moving toward conflict negotiation as a leadership skill that Chautauquans can carry back to their home communities. “This is what we were founded to do,” she said, “and I see an earnest yearning among Chautauquans to sharpen their skills. This kind of capacity building should be a part of our brand as an institution.”

President Hill has embraced the Lincoln Ethics Series as a central piece of his overall vision for Chautauqua moving forward. Of David Lincoln’s enduring hand in this work, Follansbee says, “David’s commitment to infuse questions about ethical behavior in all the worlds in which he circulates is a marvel. At 92, he is still vigorously committed to this work. We are most grateful for his same commitment to Chautauqua.”
Jim Fallows talks with PILLARS

With the leadership of recently retired Vice President and Emily and Richard Smucker Chair for Education Sherra Babcock and the gracious facilitation of Rachel Borzilleri, host at the Hagen-Wensley House, Chautauqua redoubled its efforts in the last decade to invite and encourage our guest speakers to adopt Chautauqua as a regular summer destination. Two distinguished journalists—The Atlantic’s national correspondent James Fallows and longtime PBS commentator and documentary filmmaker Bill Moyers—are both proud Chautauquans. In this issue, Fallows explains how his family continues to connect with the Institution.

Q: Of all the places you could choose to spend precious vacation time, why Chautauqua?

A: In the early 1990s when our kids were young and we had been living in Japan, we were invited to Chautauqua and spent a week here. We all thought it was great. The kids could run around the grounds unfettered. My wife, Deb, grew up on Lake Erie, not far from here, so when we moved to inland California, so this was very different for me. But from the porches to the paths and quaint fixtures, I found the place, in its non-oestentatious way, to be uplifting.

Q: Chautauqua is now in transition with new leadership and a keen desire to play a bigger role in the national dialogue. From your perspective, how can the Institution take that next step?

A: I would not presume to give advice, but clearly there is an opportunity. This is a time of great distress in our national politics. Will other institutions in society rise up to encounter the difficult questions that face us? A place like this may actually do best when things seem worst in the country as a whole, and there is a perceived need for what Chautauqua offers. The Institution operates outside of the chaos and nervousness of social media and Facebook. It provides an opportunity to explore ideas and relationships that transcend the bitter battles in the media and politicized parts of our culture. That is its strength.

It’s almost always been the case that institutions like Chautauqua, and other cultural and educational institutions from orchestras to museums, have a fear of “aging out,” of losing their attraction to people at all stages of life. But Chautauqua has an advantage in its attractiveness to families and potential for creating loyalty and habits-of-mind from early years.

At The Atlantic we’ve found that our new formula for success is based in our online magazine and in hosting events that draw all kinds of readers together for engaging programs—face-to-face encounters in real time. That is precisely what Chautauqua offers, and such programming is on the ascending arc. You all have strong tailwinds right now, as we say, rather than headwinds.

Q: What would you say to donors, foundations, and other philanthropists who might be looking to invest in the work of Chautauqua right now?

A: I have made the argument that, in historic terms, we are now in this country’s second Gilded Age. Our issues and concerns are similar to the 1890s: enormous wealth being amassed by a few families; challenges from economic dislocation and immigration; corruption in our politics; and the great disruption of new technologies. These factors are around us today as they were in that era.

People remember the names of Carnegie, Mellon, Frick, and others for their philanthropy in that time, their patrony of symphonies, museums, and universities. We are seeing similar signs today. Jeff Bezos of Amazon bought The Washington Post. My publication, The Atlantic, was sold to Laurene Powell Jobs, whose husband was Apple’s Steve Jobs. These could be indications of tech era wealth being used to reinforce the infrastructure of culture and ideas. In the same way, I believe Tom and Susie Hagen have been recognized and will be remembered for their transformative philanthropy in Erie and at Chautauqua. There are more opportunities for donors to be influential today in the arts and in fostering a healthy national dialogue.

Q: What feeds you personally at Chautauqua and what are you working on now?

A: Washington, D.C., is so toxic, that it’s a relief to get away. We’ve had a great week of discussions on the media and ethics [during Week Eight of the 2017 season]. Actually, Deb and I were scheduled to move to England a month ago, but I had made a weeklong commitment to host the 2 p.m. lecture series in the Hall of Philosophy for the Department of Religion, and I wasn’t going to let them down. This is our fifth or sixth time at Chautauqua over the last 25 years and we will be back, but we are moving straightaway to London where I will be supervising a start-up. We’ll be creating an online edition of The Atlantic tailored to European audiences with stringers working all across Europe, and we’ll be doing events there, too. Deb [who is also an Atlantic contributor] and I have a book that’s coming out next year based on our “American Futures” project. It will be called something like Hometowns: A 100,000-Mile journey into the Heart of America, and it will surely bring us back to Erie.

Coming next: In the spring issue of PILLARS, Bill Moyers describes Chautauqua as a “banquet for the mind.”