



Southern Madison Heritage Trust

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Serving the six towns of Brookfield, Eaton,
Georgetown, Hamilton Lebanon, and Madison

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Greetings from
the Board of
Southern Madison
Heritage Trust



Good news continues in every area of our work -- that is our message to you this year. We want to report on the progress of the Gateway Reserve property acquired in 2015, on the Conservation Easement on Brackett Woods, and on our growing partnerships locally and beyond.

EVEN BETTER NEWS: We expect to close this year on a donation to SMHT of 39 acres of open space just 1 mile from the center of the Village of Hamilton on Randallville Road. This property has great potential for public access trails to special historic features, namely: the West Branch Feeder of the Chenango Canal and the abandoned bed of the Ontario and Western Railroad. Although we have applied for grants from two sources, we will need additional funding to develop a trail, add signage and provide safe access to the property for the public. We hope you can be generous in this year-end appeal.

Updates:

Leland Reserve: SMHT purchased and installed a permanent plaque honoring donor Anne Leland for her donation of the land in time for a memorial service held by daughter Meredith Leland for family earlier in the year.



Because we have a **strong educational component** in our mission, we offer an outdoor field trip program to the 5th graders at Hamilton Central School, shown exploring the stream at the Leland Reserve. This program completed its ninth year in the spring. The teachers at Hamilton Central School are enthusiastic about continuing the program. **We expanded the program to the Madison Central School with a visit this October.**

SMHT bought two benches and two wood duck nesting boxes from Heritage Farm to help jump start their woodworking program. We work closely with our neighbor to the south, the Chenango Land Trust and we are recognized as an active and pioneering all-volunteer land trust by the New York Office of the Land Trust Alliance.

SMHT has been successful in getting grants in the past from the Mid-York Foundation and the New York Office of the national Land Trust Alliance to provide improvements for public access to SMHT's properties. SMHT will again be applying for grants to cover expenses related to the acquisition of a new property. Some grants, especially from the land Trust Alliance, require matching funds, typically 25%. For this reason, we need to continue fund raising to support our activities.

Grant funds we have received are dedicated to property stewardship and improvements and may not be applied to operations. We require assistance from generous donors to cover our operating costs, such as liability insurance for properties open to the public, our 5th grade program with the Hamilton and Madison Central Schools, outreach to the community, printing and similar office costs. As an all-volunteer organization, 100% of donations are used to run the organization. We cover travel and regional Land Trust Alliance meetings at our personal expense.

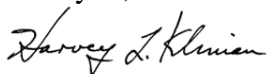
A second property in Madison, 25.6 acres, now has a Conservation Easement on it because of the forethought and generous efforts of Tom and Liz Brackett. This property has additional educational potential, borders the Madison Feeder and has a wonderful waterfall, "Scott's Falls" so named for the Scott family who farmed the area for many decades. We envision this property to be a destination reached via the Madison Feeder Trail from the Gateway Reserve. There are significant challenges in achieving this goal. The feeder trail is on the side of the feeder opposite the property, and will require a bridge or boardwalk from the trail to the conserved property. We will need to work with the NY State Canal Authority to get permission for this construction. In our initial contacts, the Canal Authority has already expressed interest in improving public access to the trail and nearby properties and we will be pursuing this goal.

SMHT board members partner with a variety of non-profits and landowners in New York, in the course of our work to preserve open space and natural resources. We work regularly with the Chenango Canal Association, the Chenango Land Trust, the national Land Trust Alliance (LTA) through the New York State Office of the LTA, The Nature Conservancy, and New York State Parks and Trails. This year and next, SMHT is working with the Partnership for Community Development in a project to improve the quality and accessibility of trails in and near Hamilton Village.

No newsletter is complete without a request for support. Please consider a tax-deductible donation to SMHT. Your donation will help enable SMHT to continue its valuable work of conserving open space in our six-town area. A card and envelope are enclosed for your convenience.

Check out www.SMHT.org for more information about us, protected properties and our activities.

Thank you,



Harvey L. Kliman, President