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Katelyn Robinson receives the first annual Visionary Scholar Award from BVA Director and award founder Carla Hall.



*The BVA is a 501(c)(3)
that serves the communities
within the watershed of the
Butternut Creek*

THE CURRENT { Spring 2020

Protecting and Conserving the Quality of Life in the Butternut Valley

BVA is Active in Spite of the Pandemic

I hope this newsletter finds our members and friends in good health of body and mind during this difficult time.

While the BVA has had to curtail our public programs, I am happy to report that we've been busy and productive. Behind the scenes or, more accurately, across computer screens and telephone lines, we've been organizing, budgeting, applying for grants, and getting committee work done.

As of our annual meeting, which took place by web-conference on April 25, we now have committees for the Summer Harvest Festival, fundraising, educational programs, the Visionary Scholar Award, membership/social media, the newsletter, and nature trails, among others. We always need new volunteers so if anyone has an interest in getting involved as a committee member or simply as someone who may be able to jump in and help from

time to time, we'd love to hear from you!

There is insufficient space to describe what all of these committees are up to but I will tell you a bit about one that I am particularly excited for: our Trails Committee. Already, this team has assisted the Town of New Lisbon in developing a hiking trail in the Texas Schoolhouse State Forest. The main trail is a three-mile loop, with a short (one-mile) alternative, that begins and ends on Jones Road. The trail borders a large beaver pond that features a Great Blue Heron rookery and an impressive tiered beaver dam. The next step is to install interpretive signage describing some of the flora and fauna that can be found. The signs are in hand, thanks to a grant from the Otsego County Soil & Water District and the hard work of BVA members and other New Lisbon residents, and the committee is recruiting volunteers to help with installation.

The Trails Committee is also planning hiking trails in the Jacob Morris, Wagner and Calhoun State Forests. These areas include numerous beautiful sites of interest including gorges, cascades, waterfalls, and ponds. Committee members are busy walking and mapping potential trails that will include some of these natural features and be easily accessed from nearby roadways.

I hope this brief report conveys that the BVA is weathering the pandemic and is working as hard as ever to protect and conserve the environmental qualities, farming, economic development and cultural heritage in our watershed. My door is always open so if folks want to get involved or learn more, please contact me at edlantz@mac.com or (607) 263-5425.

Ed Lentz, Board Chair

30 Miles {
Length of the watershed

4,400 People {
Approximate population

130 Sq. Miles
Watershed area

by Carla Hall

Student Artist Receives the First Visionary Scholar Award

The Butternut Valley Alliance is pleased to announce Katelyn Robinson, a senior at Morris Central School, as the first winner of its Visionary Scholar Award. Katie will receive \$500 toward her undergraduate studies at Hartwick College this autumn.

Katie's winning painting, *The Entirety of Society* (16" x 20", acrylic on canvas), is a landscape of our watershed with a subtle yet powerful 'call to action'. Litter is strewn along the walking and bicycle paths of the Butternut Creek, showing people's lack of awareness of their environment. A diverse group of young and old, African American and Caucasian is enjoying activities oblivious to the mess around them.

Katie expressed: "Winning this award shows me that I can accurately display environmental issues in today's society in my artwork and hopefully bring awareness to them."

Katie found her passion for art after a hospitalization in 10th grade. Painting was the only activity she could do in her recovery. In 2019, her work was exhibited and sold at the Butternut Valley Arts and Crafts Center. Over the last two years, she developed a substantial and sensitive portfolio, which she submitted with her college applications and for scholarship applications.



The Entirety of Society by Katelyn Robinson was the winning submission for the Visionary Scholar Award.

Her Environmental Science teacher, Heather Grant, commented: "I am thrilled Katie has won the Butternut Valley Alliance award. Katie has been actively involved in many of our extracurricular science activities and has always shown great concern and dedication to the environment. I am incredibly proud of the hard work she puts into all she does and this award is well deserved!"

Katie expressed eagerness to continue her environmental activism and volunteered to organize her peers and their families to participate in trash clean up for a BVA activity in the coming months.

By winning this award, she and her family become annual members of the Butternut Valley Alliance.

High-school seniors in our watershed were asked to envision and communicate their vision of a sustainable future for the Butternut Valley using a creative media of their choice.

BVA's goal for this annual competition is to spark community-wide engagement in the civic, cultural, economic, agricultural and environmental actions needed to bring their visions alive.

The fund was established by BVA Director Carla Hall in honor of her late husband Ben-Ami Friedman. "As an environmental visionary, Ben was deeply



Due to the COVID-19 virus, BVA has no public events scheduled at this time. We will present an alternative to our annual Summer Harvest Festival on-line. Check our website for details.

committed to the Butternut Valley. Inspiring the next generation to participate in its future would make him very happy.”

If you are interested in seeing more of her art, Katie can be reached at midnightmist.art@gmail.com. You can follow her on Instagram @[midnight.mist](https://www.instagram.com/midnight.mist).

For further information about the Visionary Scholar Award contact the the Butternut Valley Alliance.

Much of Katie's work features the local environment such as Hunts Pond (shown here) or Interest in Individuality, the leaf on page 2.



by Richard O'Keefe

A “GEM” of the Butternut Valley

Gilbertsville Expressive Movement Inc. (GEM), the brainchild of entrepreneur and art collector Barry L. Skolnick, is located on the 14-acre campus of the former Gilbertsville Central School in the middle of the National Register Historic Site village of Gilbertsville.

Audiences of all ages are welcome and encouraged to participate in all GEM activities and events in order to bring the vision of supporting artistic excellence to this region of upstate New York. The endeavor has been gaining momentum since the property was

renovated to accommodate emerging artists with residences, tools, and funds necessary to create contemporary public sculptures. Since its founding, GEM has transformed into a spacious sculpture park with 14 sculptures on display and open to the public. Four of these sculptures are on permanent display, the rest are on loan.

The mission of GEM is to support the education and promotion of local artistry in the Gilbertsville, New York, area by providing funds and direct assistance through residency and internship

programs for emerging artists in the area of art, music, literature and other programs or projects.

GEM was granted not-for-profit status in December 2016. Essential seed funds provided by The Skolnick Family Charitable Trust paved the course for engaging the community in memorable aesthetic experiences. One local artist was selected to establish a working metal fabrication shop and to produce a tall (23-foot) permanent steel sculpture. Outdoor working spaces, multiple mixed media labs, living areas, a gallery, and public workshop classrooms are being prepared. GEM will be accepting new artists to an expanded residency program in the future. If you are interested in presenting your ideas, please e-mail GvilleExpress@gmail.com.

GEM is located at 8 Commons Drive in Gilbertsville, New York. The sculpture park is currently open to the public in small groups or as individuals from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday and 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends.

To learn more about GEM, check out their website www.g-e-m.org or their Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/GvilleExpress/>



*Foreground sculpture by Jay Roth;
Background sculpture by Kelly Cave*

by Stacia Norman

Recycling Winners

Congratulations to our Butternut Valley Schools! Both Gilbertsville-Mount Upton Elementary and Morris Middle and High Schools were the top recyclers of film plastic for the 2019-2020 Otsego County Plastic Film Recycling Challenge. This is the second year the Otsego County Solid Waste Department (OCSWD) and Otsego County Conservation Association

(OCCA) sponsored this challenge with a total of eight schools in the county participating.

Students in Gilbertsville-Mount Upton Elementary School collected a total of 786.8 pounds of bags and film plastic, equal to 3.9 pounds per student. At Morris, students in the middle/high school gathered 246.8 pounds, or 1.6 pounds per student.

Not only did this challenge help to collect over 1,000 pounds of plastic film (keeping it out of our landfills!), it made many people in the Butternut Valley aware that all plastic films, not just bags, can be recycled. The BVA, OCSWD and OCCA hope people continue to turn in all their plastic films at local stores even though the school challenge has ended.

Please Join and Donate to the Butternut Valley Alliance


The BVA is doing good work in the Butternut Valley for us, for our children and for our children's children. Help us maintain the pace of our work by supporting us with your generous donation. Please also invite

your friends to become BVA members. Donations, small or large, to the BVA go a long way and can be made by check or online at the Butternut Valley Alliance website: butternutvalleyalliance.org

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This red eft is an example of the rich biodiversity found in the Butternut watershed. It was captured in photograph by one of BVA's Trail Committee members during a recent hike to begin mapping potential trails in local state forests.