

ANNUAL REVIEW



DECEMBER 2023



The Sopko Family, Bennington

Drawn to the area for its beauty and close knit feel, Amelia and her husband moved to Bennington in 2018. By 2020, they were first-time expectant parents of twins. Tragically, one of their identical twin sons, Ethan, was stillborn. Their living son Conor was premature and spent two months in the hospital NICU. Amelia describes it as a scary time especially with COVID, since Conor was vulnerable and could not get sick. "We had to fully isolate to protect Conor. Not being able to go out and see people made it really hard, especially since we were grieving the loss of our other son." It took about a year before it felt safe enough for the Sopkos to take Conor out and form connections with other parents and children.

But for Amelia, it wasn't always easy to find a place and group to join where it felt like she fit. She sought out grief groups for herself and places where she could openly share her loss experience but found that people weren't always receptive to her story. Fortunately, another parent told her about the Better Beginnings program at the Grapevine. "The Grapevine has become my village - there is nothing else like this type of support. I have a place where I can entrust my child to other adults while I can stay and talk with other parents." Amelia reflects that this was the first time she and Conor separated and what a successful transition it was for him. "It was gentle, the right amount of time away and he was able to socialize and learn how to be around his peers and listen to other adults." Amelia also found the support and non judgemental atmosphere she was seeking in her Grapevine parent group and she says, "I also appreciate what a difference it makes having a group facilitator like Carol. It would not feel the same if it was just moms together. Carol helps build conversation and facilitates an environment for sharing." What would Amelia say to other parents and caregivers who are looking for connection for themselves and their children? "I'd say, I understand joining a new group can feel intimidating and there are reasons that all of us hold back. Parenting communities can be full of labels and sometimes feel divisive. But the Grapevine is truly a place that feels really safe and full of acceptance."

The Woodin Family, Antrim

RJ Woodin, age 19 first came to our Avenue A Teen Center in 2019. You may recognize him because he is one of Avenue A's biggest cheerleaders! RJ has been a big advocate for Avenue A and loves sharing his experience with others. He was also featured in the Avenue A film released in 2022, "Community. Belonging. Place". He has attended many programs including Pizza Talk, Open Hours on Fridays Campfire Time, Summer Theatre and the group trip with Friends Forever International each summer. Says RJ, "If Avenue A didn't exist, I wouldn't have a good time, I'd just be stuck at home, chilling out!" His mom Lisa says Avenue A has provided RJ with a lot of new experiences, which is big because RJ is Autistic: "Change and being adventurous are not his thing," says Lisa. "Avenue A brought out his confidence. He says 'yes' more now and will jump into things more easily." When Lisa reflects on the impact the Teen Center has had on their family she says, "I know RJ is in a safe and welcoming place. Our family experienced some loss in recent years and his friends at the Teen Center really supported him. I've also had lots of talks with Jacqueline over the years! It feels good to know that my son is spending his time in a good place with good kids." RJ and his family also volunteer to help with events in support of the Teen Center. "I consider myself a leader," says RJ. "I make sure I help people if they need it, I'm willing to do it." We are grateful that RJ and his family are part of what makes Avenue A so amazing!

RJ with Ave A volunteer Rick Wood.



PROGRAMS AT AVENUE A

SUMMER AVENUE A TEENS T.A.C.O. CLUB



This past year, we have dedicated increased funding and staffing to support programming at our Avenue A Teen Center. Teen mental wellness continues to be a focus with prevention-based strategies that help young people thrive. We believe this starts with a whole-family approach to support. Like, helping a family fix their water heater so their teen can take hot showers, arranging for a Mom to get wood from our wood bank so she can heat her home, or inviting a Dad to our Dads Campfire so he can build relationships with other parents. This kind of support reduces household stressors that weigh heavily on teens. In fact, our unique model of multi-generational youth support was recently recognized by the NH Psychological Association. We received their Distinguished Contribution in Mental Health Award for lay people who make outstanding contributions on behalf of the psychological welfare of people.

Connecting youth with supportive adults is another way that we build resilience. Over 60 volunteers help lead our afterschool and evening programs. These caring community members are active listeners, cheerleaders, and role models for our teens. Teens value these relationships and some even ask for more time with our volunteers! In response, we launched a mentorship program this year; teens sign up to meet with a volunteer over a weekly meal. One of our teens explains that she enjoys meeting with her mentor because “she just listens to me, and not a lot of people just listen like that”.

Our programs also support healthy peer connections. A high school senior who started coming to Avenue A in 5th grade explains that she was shy when she first started coming to our programs: “Then I started doing art workshops at Avenue A and I just kind of broke out of my shell.... If it wasn’t for Avenue A, I wouldn’t have met my best friend and wouldn’t have gotten to know my community a lot better, not just teens, but the adult volunteers in the area.” Avenue A is a melting pot of teens from 18 different towns in our region and a variety of school/homeschool settings. We welcome youth of all abilities, including those with chronic illnesses, physical disabilities, and neurodivergence.

We run a diverse array of programs based on teen requests—from cooking to outdoor adventures, manga art, creative writing, woodworking & carpentry, and more. Last year we partnered with Connected Families NH to pilot “Pizza Talk”, a discussion-based program where teens talk about life over weekly meals together. Their weekly meetings are facilitated by students from Antioch University’s Psychology Doctorate program. The program was so successful that we’re running it again this year, with expanded sessions. We are proud of the work we do at Avenue A in support of teens and their families and are grateful for the support our community to keep it going!



AVENUE A CLUB FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLERS



ACT 2023



WOODWORKING CLUB
PUMPKIN CATAPULT CONTEST

For the past two years, the Grapevine has embarked upon a journey to understand how we can enrich our organization and continue to reach new people and build relationships within our community. Board and staff leaders have enrolled in training to learn and in turn, identify new opportunities for the organization.

This inspired us to create a statement reflecting these values:

The Grapevine is a place where everyone feels welcome, invited and included. The Grapevine staff and board reflect a diversity of perspectives and experiences, making us a stronger organization. We are a mindful, respectful, reflective staff and board who are consistently working toward that. The Grapevine staff and board are enriched by the perspectives of others.

FROM JULY 1, 2022 TO JUNE 30, 2023:

The Grapevine served nearly 1,500 children, youth and adults across our region!
Some highlights:

- 247** Teens served at our Avenue A Teen & Community Center
- 21** Families received free emergency wood from our Community Wood Bank
- 122** Families received Free Tax Preparation and Budget Assistance
- 45** Kinship Caregivers and relative children in our Kinship Support Program; a total of **\$6,050.49** distributed in assistance funds
- 66** Parents & Children supported in our Home Visiting Program
- 122** Parents & Children enrolled in our Better Beginnings and Hillsborough Playgroup Programs
- 41** Individuals received intensive case management support
- 45** Families received emergency relief funds; **\$13,609.00** distributed
- 31** Seniors enrolled in our SAIL exercise program in partnership with Antrim Recreation
- 0** People turned away from services

IN FISCAL YEAR 2022-23 OUR MAJOR FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDED:

The Agnes M. Lindsay Trust
Alliance for Green Heat, Inc.
Antrim-Bennington Lions Club
Bantam Grill & THD Restaurant Group
Bellow-Nichols Insurance, Inc.
The Bitty Foundation
Bridgebuilder Foundation
Cogswell Benevolent Grant
Concord Hospital Trust
Connected Families NH
The David Day Memorial Foundation
Epic Promise Employee Foundation
First Presbyterian Church of Antrim
Gilbert Verney Foundation
Grand Monadnock Rotary

Hancock Woman's Club
The Keith Sullivan Foundation
The Masiello Group, Ltd.
Monadnock Paper Mills
Monadnock United Way
MoonRivers Technology Group, LLC
NH Charitable Foundation
NH Children's Trust
NH State Council of the Arts
Robin Colson Memorial Foundation
Town of Antrim
Town of Bennington
Town of Francess town
Town of Hancock
Town of Hillsborough

A SPECIAL DONATION FROM
CROTCHED MOUNTAIN AND VAIL'S
EPIC PROMISE FOUNDATION!



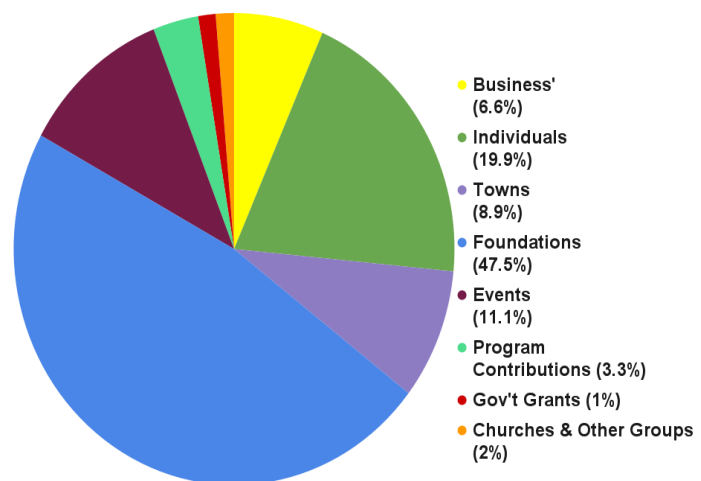
WHAT SUPPORT LOOKS LIKE

The Grapevine continues to rely on local support and benefits from fundraising events throughout the year to support our programs.

Highlights include:

- 2022 Annual Online Auction - raised \$7,704.00
- 2022 Annual Appeal - raised \$43,817.00
- 2022 Annual Beast Master Classic - A private dinner event raised \$8,451
- 2023 Spring Walk - \$21,329.01
- 2023 NH Gives Campaign for Avenue A - \$15,438.21
- 2023 Other Events (Break the Silence 5K; Boat Race, Yard Sale) \$7,426.33

FISCAL YEAR 2022-2023 FUNDING



We would also like to thank student and staff leaders at Conval High School, who designated funds from the 2022 Claws for a Cause and 2023 Break the Silence 5K events to the Grapevine and our Avenue A Teen Center!

FAREWELLS & WELCOME!

A fond farewell and thanks to Grapevine Board Member, Tom Badgley of Bennington. Tom has been serving on our board for 6+ years with a smile, hug and immense kindness. Tom has been especially helpful

to us with facility and outdoor needs at the Grapevine. He helped construct our Community Tool Shed, planted a garlic garden bed, tended to many building fix-its and has always been willing to lend a hand with any ask. We will miss Tom as a Board Member but he will always be a friend to the Grapevine!



Arlene Soule, in her role as Avenue A Club Co-leader. Arlene joined the Grapevine in this role in 2016, and helped grow it into a popular after school program for middle school youth. Arlene is passionate about working with young people and will continue to help out in other Grapevine programs throughout the year.

There are many ways to give to your community and the Grapevine!

Consider donations of time, goods, and services like these incredible local businesses and groups:
Antrim Bennington Lions Club - Antrim Recreation Department - James A. Tuttle Library - Edmunds Ace Hardware
Eversource - Larry Schwartz with PHC Financial - John Brown & Sons - Monadnock Paper Mill
MoonRivers Technology Group, LLC - Robblee Tree Service, LLC - AND THE MANY VOLUNTEERS involved with
our Community Wood Bank, Community Tool Shed and Avenue A Teen + Community Center!



EDMUNDS ACE HARDWARE DONATION FROM
LADIES NIGHT EVENT



2023 WOOD STACKING PARTY

A warm welcome to Grapevine Staff Members:

Mikayla Essex, Home Visitor; Maureen Troy and Leigh Frosch, Out & About Co-Leader and Children Programs, and Karen Pellicano who has recently transitioned to our Community Health Case Coordinator position. The Grapevine is incredibly fortunate to have such kind, committed staff leading our programs!

Thank you to our Board of Directors:

Rosemary Novotny, Rick Edmunds, Kim Fletcher, Diane Yeo, Tom Badgely, Dottie Bauer, Dana Brien and Jenine Rubin

Thank you to our incredible staff:

Sarah Beaumont, Kim Bylancik, Paula Coombs, Amy Doyle, Mikayla Essex, Leigh Frosch, Melissa Gallagher, Michelle Heath, Andrea Jurewich, Carol Lunan, Rosemary Nugent, Karen Pellicano, Jacqueline Roland, Lisa Swarbrick, and Maureen Troy

FOR A FULL LISTING OF GRAPEVINE SUPPORTS AND SERVICES, PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT GRAPEVINENH.ORG

4 Aiken Street | PO Box 637 | Antrim, NH | 603-588-2620 | Grapevinenh.org

