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Community Creativity Spirituality Nature

ABOUT VOLUNTEERISM

by Eileen Curtis

Although the story of Cobblestone Springs is one of attending an auction, offering a bid and “winning” the almost 150-year-old cobblestone house sight unseen, it is also about volunteerism. Donations for materials were certainly involved but without the volunteer hours given by so many, Cobblestone Springs would not be the gift it is today!

Our most recent assembly of volunteers began accidentally when we opened Cobblestone Springs in April 2020 by inviting people to enjoy our hiking trails and grounds. But, what to do while we waited for people to come? “Eileen, make a job list!” and so I did. Few ever did come just to spend some time in the woods or under a tree but...

Each Friday beginning in late April a list was created and work began. Masked and distanced, working solo or in pairs, we cleaned out closets and cupboards, sorted linens, and attacked the attic. As the weather improved, we moved outdoors to till up the big garden, plant flower, herb, and vegetable seed, and reveal gardens long overgrown with weeds and grass. As we worked each Friday, our number grew from two to 6 or 7 depending on individual obligations. Make a list and they will come?

Not all was light work either. We placed benches around the trails in the spring, removed them in the fall, moved the small gazebo from the back yard to the side yard, added a larger gazebo in the backyard spot and built a small entry deck for it. Inside the *big* house, a new shower was moved upstairs and a radiator was relocated from the 2nd floor to Bob’s barn. Ingenuity and careful planning were our strengths.

It was not all work though. We gathered for lunch, sometimes a little structured (who brings what) but more often, a collection of soup, salads, and casseroles. Most came from our garden as plants began to bear vegetables or from local farm markets and other gleanings. For a few hours each Friday, we enjoyed laughter, conversation and a little (or a lot) of dessert. During a time of imposed isolation and distancing, our little group formed a community and got to know each other a little bit better.

Editor’s Note: Volunteers contributed at least 500 hours to Cobblestone Springs in 2020.



Full moon, January’s Wolf Moon, gives a glow to the historic Spence House, our headquarters. Photo by Jan Carr.

Build a Stepping Stone Inspiration Trail

with Jackie Shrader and Jan Carr

Dates to be determined

We're opening a new trail area in the woods at the southeast corner of the property. It will be a meditative corner for quiet reflection. Each special stone will share a word to encourage visitors to look more closely, within and without.

This Summer: Beginning Drawing and Watercolor Workshops with Kristin Malone

Two 2-day programs, June 11-12 and August 13-14, will feature four parts: To Draw is to See; Awareness of Space; Watercolor Basics; and Awareness of Depth. You may register for any days you wish; classes are \$70 per day. Details will be online and in the next newsletter.

Is Your Membership Current?

As we begin a new year of service here at Cobblestone, we encourage you to join or to renew your membership at this critical time.

Our programs focus on community, spirituality, creativity, and nature. To continue to offer them, we need everyone's support. If you care about Cobblestone's future and have means to do so, please consider joining or donating. It would be heartwarming if you can make a regular monthly donation! The Donate button on the website supports either option.

We have, thus far, resisted the option of charging for programs, but as everything continues to migrate toward Zoom, the donations we normally receive for in-person programs have disappeared.

Thank you so much!

Let us sing, let us dance, and let us pray...

“O Thou from whom the breath of life comes, who fills all realms of sound, lights and vibration, may your light be experienced in my inmost Being.

Create your reign of unity now through our fiery hearts and willing hands.

Let your will come true in the universe just as on Earth.



Give us wisdom for our daily need,
untangle the knots that bind us,

As we release others from the entanglement of
past mistakes.

Let us not be lost in superficial things
But let us be freed from that which keeps us
from true purpose.

From you comes the all-working will, the lively
strength to act,
the song that beautifies all and renews itself
from age to age.”

Amen

The Lords Prayer, translated from the Aramaic

LET'S PLANT A POLLINATOR GARDEN!

New 2021 work project
with Ginger Goyer

Saturdays, April through August,
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Since we built our home near Penn Yan in 2007, the number of butterflies, bees, and other pollinators we see has been diminishing. Let's learn more about how we can slow this process by learning about Native Species and Climate Change and by putting what we know and learn into action.

While the snow is on the ground we can begin asking plant experts and garden lovers for participation and suggestions.

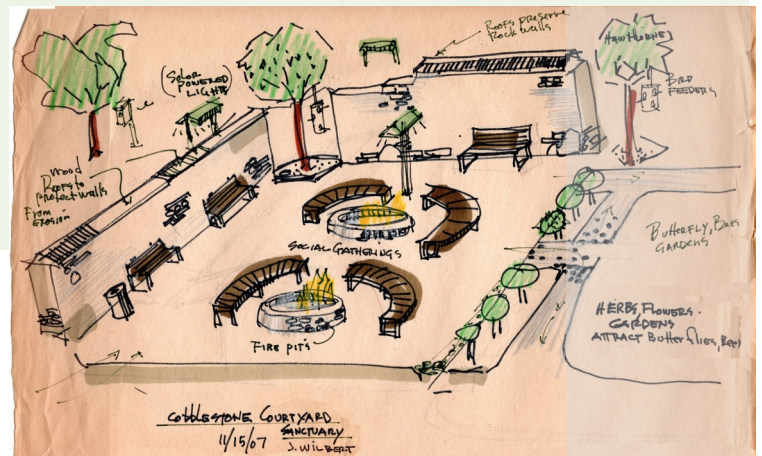
Pollinator plants have been ordered and should be delivered in April 2021. I am eager to start planting at Cobblestone and welcome volunteers.

~ Ginger Goyer

Ginger is a long-time gardener who is actively planting and maintaining a variety of flower and vegetable gardens at home. She is now focusing on natives as a means of creating and improving habitat for pollinators.



Natives like swamp milkweed are a hit with bumblebees and other pollinators, as well as important food for monarch butterflies.
Photo courtesy Hadi Soetrismo, ©QKA Light Photography.



Native Plant Program April 10th

Cobblestone Springs's Pollinator Garden project will launch with an introductory outdoor program, weather and pandemic permitting. Come and learn the basics of native plant gardening, especially the why and HOW! Which plants help, which don't? What matters besides pollination? Avoid pitfalls and learn to promote best practices you can use at home.

Details are still in progress, but we'll be guided by experts and gardeners experienced in this growing field. Come join us to get acquainted with the subject and with each other. This will be especially valuable for those who plan to volunteer with us this summer.

New Spaces for Cobblestone Guests

The Pollinator Garden project above has been a Cobblestone dream for a long time. We recently uncovered a 2007-era design for the area next to the barn, drawn by Jack Wilbert. Even then the plan included a butterfly garden.

The screened area to the right represents the "new" barn, built in 2009. The new Pollinator Garden will be built on the south side of the rock wall, to the left in this drawing. We can keep dreaming of a quiet courtyard for social gatherings. Maybe someday!

BLACK HISTORY MONTH— ANTIRACISM

A Celebration of Black History — and Futures

by Joann Kowalski

February is Black History Month, and the theme for 2021 is **The Black Family: Representation, Identity and Diversity** to showcase the importance black families have played in many areas of study throughout history—from slavery to our present time. We celebrate the contributions that African Americans have made to American history in their struggles for freedom and equality that deepens our understanding of our Nation's history.

Black History Month in the U.S. was initially created as Negro History Week in February 1926 by Carter G. Woodson at his organization, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (now known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History). This period of time was designed to encourage “people of all ethnic and social backgrounds to discuss the black experience.” Congress passed “National Black History Month” into law in 1986, proclaiming that “*the foremost purpose of Black History Month is to make all Americans aware of this struggle for freedom and equal opportunity*” (Library of Congress).



After the murder of George Floyd, Yates Co. residents came out in support of Black Lives Matter, as did citizens nationwide. If we want a just society, we must continue efforts to inform ourselves and do better. Street protests and (June 10) and June 20 rally.



But Black History Month is more than just a reflection on the past. Indeed, based on recent events—including the complex issues surrounding COVID-19, police brutality, and the signs and symbols of American slavery— it may be a good time to rethink the story of our country’s history and consider action to impact the future.

The Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) is placing a new spin on the celebration—**Black Futures Month**— a visionary approach looking ahead as well as back. The Movement for Black Lives is using this time to both consider and celebrate Black radical history and to dream and imagine a world in which black people are free and self-determined.

Black experience tells us the truth about what has been left out of textbooks and helps us achieve a better understanding of our fellow human beings. During this Black History Month, take some time to read, become educated, watch a film, listen to music, support a movement to learn the many ways that Black lives matter.

Focus on Systemic Equality

We appreciate continuing to work with Heather Cook on antiracism education. Look for details on these programs on our website:

Be Antiracist! Workbook by Ibram X. Kendi

This program will follow the journaling workbook developed to help us explore our relationship with racism and how to overcome racist policies/practices.

Conversations on Race

Continuing book discussion program led by Heather Cook for the last two years.

Heather M. Cook is a student of power dynamics and systems of subjugation and liberation.

Educating Ourselves in Antiracism

Though we take time to honor Black History Month each February, we recognize that we must never limit our appreciation of the Black experience, with all of its joys, challenges, and creative excellence. Cobblestone Springs has been consistently sharing programs and opportunities from around our community for more than two years, and we are pleased to share two more local efforts in antiracism below; we will continue to do so as we become aware of them, because this work is ongoing, and it's up to all of us to undertake it.

What will you do to help overcome the inequality in our society and the trauma it creates for all of us? Four hundred years after the first enslaved people were brought to America, we still have not learned to appreciate the incredible diversity of our society.

ANTIRACISM PROGRAMS FROM PENN YAN PUBLIC LIBRARY

Diverse Voices Matter

Thursdays, Feb 11 and 18, 8:00 pm on Zoom

One route to greater empathy is through an exploration of the arts in all their forms. Whether angry, heart-wrenching, righteous, or joyous, discovering the work of diverse creators is an invitation to understanding. Explore and celebrate the work of these artists with us in this ongoing program, in which we will read, view or listen to a few pieces per session, and reflect on what they awaken in us. Note that the themes and language in some pieces may be heavy, and while youth are welcome to join us, it would be best if they were accompanied by an adult to help provide context and support when needed. Join us for each session via this link: <http://bit.ly/PYPLvoices>.

Antiracism Resources from the Penn Yan Public Library (PYPL.org)

Adult Services Librarian Alex Andrasik has compiled an extensive, though never complete, list of resources available to help the work of antiracism. At the library's main page, scroll down to access the link.

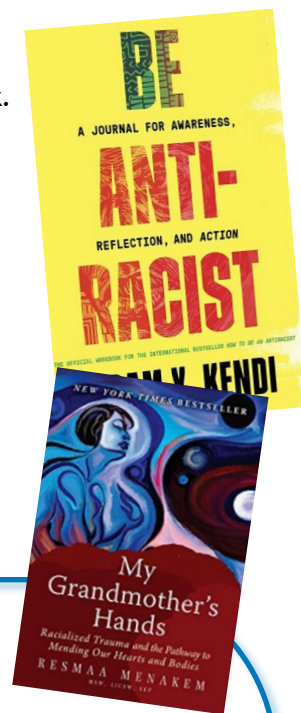
From our bookshelves:

Be Antiracist!, by Ibram X. Kendi

A guided workbook to help you journal your path to becoming antiracist.

My Grandmother's Hands, by Resmaa Menakem

Clarifying how racism has traumatized all our bodies and we can overcome that trauma.



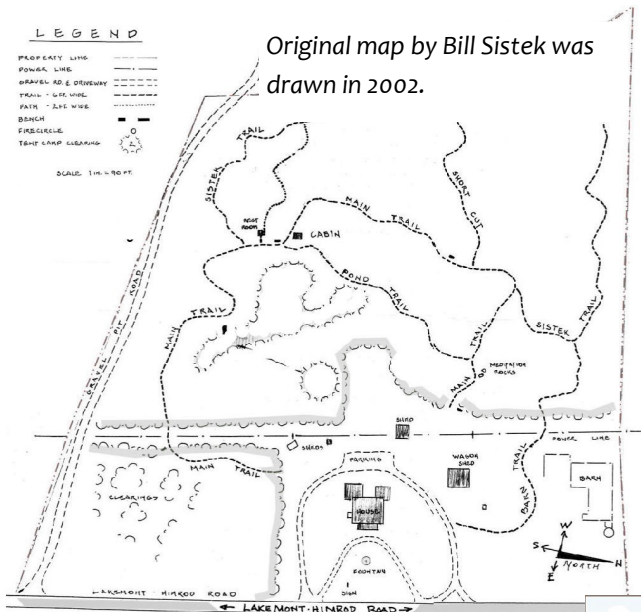
Grappling with Racism Inside and Out

**Thursdays, Feb 25, Mar 11 & 25,
and Apr 8, 22 & 29, 4:00 pm on Zoom**

Psychologist, educator, author, and former president of Spelman College Beverly Daniel Tatum talks about racism in the US as a smog that we all breathe in. It affects all of us, whether or not we are aware of it. Chances are that those who benefit from racism are unaware of the myriad ways those benefits flow, while those directly and negatively affected (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) are likely very tuned in to racism. This program series is designed to help people who identify as white to become more aware of racism by exploring it through four widening and concentric lenses: the personal, the relational, the organizational, and the cultural. Readings and videos will support and inform reflection and discussion. Registration is required for this cycle by February 19th; please call 315-536-6114 or email info@pypl.org. **Watch for future opportunities to participate if you miss this cycle.** *Presenter: Heather M. Cook is a student of power dynamics and systems of subjugation and liberation.*

A PANDEMIC MAP-MAKING PROJECT

When Jan Carr first purchased the Cobblestone Springs property in 1993, she dreamed of improving the property in many ways. Projects continue, but the interim years, along with untold hours of hard labor by dozens of volunteers, have already produced a beautiful restoration of the house and grounds.



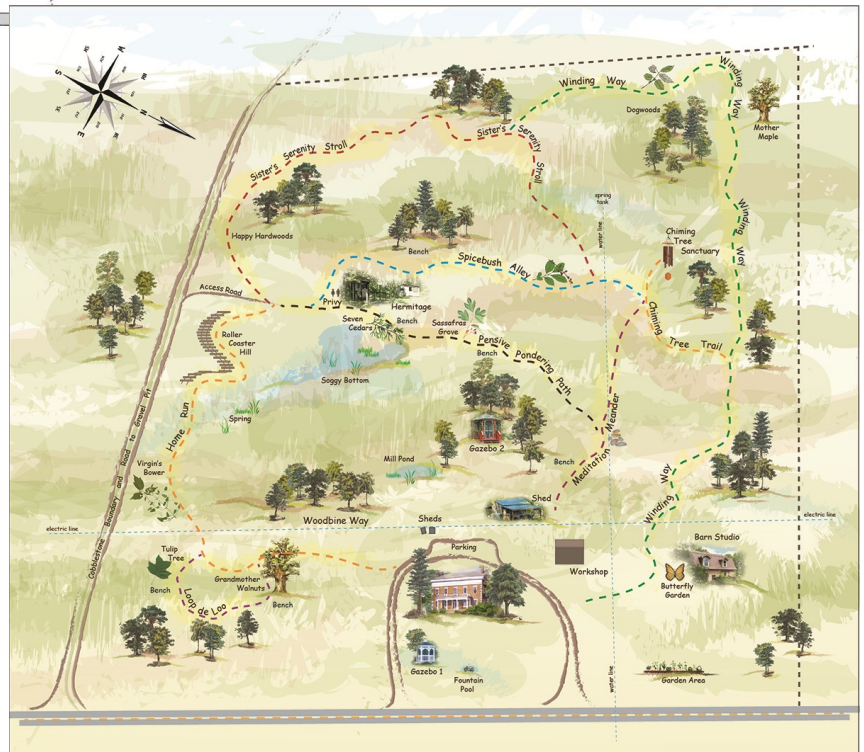
The team realized that a digital map would allow easier future changes and make the map interactive for those who navigate with their devices. We wanted to try to duplicate that hand-drawn appeal to the extent possible. We also found a few extra touches (such as photos of buildings) added another level of attractiveness and fun.

Beginning with a rough GPS route of existing trails by Sally and Jan, the new map nears completion. Once we complete “final for now” changes, we will develop a trail guide and an interpretive sign. The map includes information about the trails, trees, other vegetation, restoration of the woodlands, and points of interest and meditation.

The process has inspired new ideas for programs, as well as changes to the property itself. A “Butterfly Garden” and “Chiming Tree Sanctuary” are examples of new projects to bring to fruition in the spring. We look forward to more inspiration as time goes on. This will become a dynamic physical map for you, the traveler on the road to spiritual awareness.

These pandemic seasons have encouraged people to be out in natural surroundings more, hiking by ourselves or with our close pod ties. Cobblestone Springs staff looked for ways to complement this naturalist drive by highlighting our outdoor environment. New attractions and easier navigation of the grounds are an important step in the pursuit of Cobblestone’s mission: to reach out to folks seeking a path of rejuvenation in an environment of peace with nature.

Many years ago, early volunteer Bill Sitek produced a charming map of the trails. The hand-drawn quality lends a personal touch that cannot be achieved in any other way. With pandemic limitations providing time, we moved to update this out-of-date map.



Months in the making, the revised 2021 map tries out new trail names, adds features of interest, and encourages outdoor exploration. We hope visitors will use it often!

Donate at CobblestoneSprings.org!

We hope you'll take advantage of a new feature on the website. It enables you to support us with just a few clicks of your mouse!

As you know, businesses are being challenged by pandemic restrictions and nonprofits like Cobblestone also suffer. If you are able to donate, any amount you can give will help ensure that we're here to serve you in the future, and help us do whatever we can now, subject to New York state guidelines.

The PayPal "Donate" button is in the sidebar. You do NOT need a PayPal account to donate. Choose the amount you want to donate, and PayPal will ensure that it gets to us.

Thank you so much!



© QKA Light Photography

**“When purpose aligns with faith,
there can be no failure and all needs
will be met.” —from Rich Roll**

Birds, Bees, Butterflies, Pollinators!

We need ‘em! One in every three bites of food we eat depends on pollination, but insects are threatened by intensive agriculture and even by our lawns! Bees need pollen and nectar! A bumblebee like the one above is less than an hour away from starvation. Butterfly caterpillars need specific plants to survive. Native plants improve habitat for pollinators and other wildlife. **Grow native!**

2021 Board of Directors

- Anne Meyer-Wilber, co-president
- Eileen Curtis, SSJ, co-president and acting house manager
- Denise Jose
- Judy Wilbert
- Peggy Spence Parker
- Rev. Beverly Karr-Lyon
- Mary Beth Gamba
- Bob Andrews
- Sandi Perl
- Jan Carr, founder and property owner

Committees

Volunteers are always appreciated! Let us know if you'd like to serve on one of our ongoing committees.

- Hospitality
- Publicity
- Buildings & Grounds Maintenance
- Program Circle
- Membership
- Fundraising

Newsletter prepared by Sally White, Deb Stevens.
Printing by Proforma, Shrader, and Shrader.
Some photos provided by QKA Light Photography.

To keep up with what's going on with Cobblestone Springs, please visit our website—and consider subscribing—at

Please contact us anytime to get involved with volunteer projects, or suggest programs, or just to let us know how you're doing—or how we're doing!

- Membership Levels:**
- Friend: \$100-\$249
 - Couple: \$45
 - Individual: \$25
 - Supporter: \$250 - \$499
 - Benefactor: \$500 +
 - Contribution: \$ _____
 - Renewal New

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Vimeo.com/user125029033



Images from: FlatIcon.com

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MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION

Cobblestone Springs Retreat Center

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