

## Mohonk Preserve Nature Protection fund established to spark conservation support in local communities

BY CHRIS MILLER

In a major effort to invigorate financial support for philanthropic activities in local communities, the Mohonk Preserve has established the Mohonk Preserve Nature Protection Fund.

Through a \$100,000 investment in the Ulster County Community Foundation, the Mohonk Preserve, in its forty-third year, will obtain funding for its own programs, only after contributing a consequential boost to the Ulster County Community Foundation's endowment.

"We have a mission of protecting the Shawangunk Mountains and really inspiring people to care for, enjoy, and explore the natural world," said Glenn Hoagland, Executive Director of Mohonk Preserve.

The recently established Ulster County Community Foundation came about when the Dutchess County Area Fund, that was doing business as the Dutchess County Community Foundation, planned a sister organization in Ulster County and worked with the residents of the county to create a foundation.

"Mohonk Preserve had a desire to open up an agency endowment fund with the Community Foundation. When they made that determination, they contacted us and we drafted a fund agreement, which we use for all our different types of funds and our donors. They made a contribution, and we're in business," said Andrea Reynolds, President & CEO of the Ulster County Community Foundation.

The preserve looked to be one of the first five or six organizations, such as the Dyson Foundation who put up a \$500,000 starter grant in Ulster County, to give the Community Foundation its start.

"We really thought this was a great opportunity for the preserve to help this recently established community foundation – to boost their endowment and the funds they have pooled to work for the community," said Hoagland. "At the same time, give us a presence through this foundation that could deepen our connection to those in Ulster County who might prefer to direct their donations to the preserve."

Right now, the preserve has members and generous donors who are actively involved in the preserve. The idea behind the Mohonk Preserve Nature Protection Fund is that there might be others in Ulster County who want to protect nature and direct their philanthropy to the preserve through the Community Foundation root.

"We wanted to create another vehicle for people to support our protection work, and the work that we do with partners around the ridge and alike," Hoagland said. "Over time, we hope that by setting up this \$100,000 fund that it grows and will yield enough annually to do some good things along and around the ridge in the preserve."

Still in its initial phases, the goal of the Mohonk Preserve Nature Protection Fund is to help it grow financially as Mohonk Preserve continues its work to be a vital and successful steward of publicly accessible open space in the Hudson Valley region.

Annually, 5 percent will be taken from the Mohonk Preserve Nature Protection Fund, only to be reinvested into valuable programs and projects on the Shawangunk Ridge. Once the nature protection fund reaches a phase that allows it to use the money it yields, the Mohonk Preserve plans to institute a project fund that will help the community.

"Connecting more people with programs on the ridge, or having specific community trail projects around the ridge

and working with our towns is how we will use the money the fund yields," explained Hoagland. "We're at the phase where we want the investment in the Community Foundation to grow and we want to give people the opportunity to be able to contribute to it."

Although future programs are not defined or finalized at this point, the fund will support nature interpretation, trail maintenance, and other conservation activities at the Mohonk Preserve while deepening the charitable base throughout Ulster County.

At the signing ceremony August 29, Mohonk Preserve staff and the Ulster County Community Fund agreed on the terms by which the initial fund investment will be managed and reinvested to achieve optimal financial growth for all contributing individuals and organizations.

The Mohonk Preserve has approximately 150,000 annual visits to the 6,500 acres it protects and has 9,000 members in New York State and beyond.

There will be any number of projects that this fund will support. Whether it's restoring trails or helping with signage or helping with programs to bring school kids to the ridge.

"Helping with certain aspects of programs that will support connecting kids and adults to nature are all things we do now," said Hoagland. "This fund will be a



new angle to do that with. It will be like working capital.

A \$100,000 investment at 5 percent will yield \$5,000 per year to put into the preserve's special projects. If the fund grows to \$200,000 or more over time, invest-

ments in the preserve's core programming will be made, as well as, investments or partnerships with the community for small grants to support key activities that connect the ridge to the region.

## Pattern conference will focus on municipal collaboration

Pattern for Progress will join New York's Department of State, Pace University's Michaelian Institute for Public Policy and Management and SUNY New Paltz on Oct. 5 in presenting a far-reaching conference designed to help municipal officials and others access New York State's Shared Municipal Services Incentive (SMSI) grant program.

This conference, which will be held at the SUNY New Paltz Student Union Building, will encourage intermunicipal cooperation and advance new ideas that promote the sharing of municipal services and assist officials looking to access the nearly \$14 million in funding the state has allocated to support a new round of SMSI grants.

"This conference represents an important opportunity for elected officials and professional municipal employees to look at ways to restructure the delivery of services," said Jonathan Drapkin, president and CEO of Pattern for Progress, a non-profit regional policy, planning and advocacy organization. "And it will give officials already considering a shared service collaboration access to state officials who can help them seek supportive funding."

## STAR Rebate

September 10 and running through the end of September.

Staggering the notifications allows the Tax Department to manage homeowner telephone inquiries and applications while maintaining a high level of customer service and responsiveness. All letters will be sent out by the end of September to give ample time for homeowners to fill out the application prior to the November 30 deadline.

Rebate checks will be calculated on a sliding scale based on income, with the maximum benefit going to all upstate homeowners earning \$90,000 or less, and all NYC metropolitan region homeowners earning \$120,000 or less. The difference in threshold levels corresponds to the dif-

"Experience has shown that sharing services is an effective and efficient solution for local governments confronted with severe budget constraints and increasing constituent demands for services," said Lester Steinman, director of the Michaelian Institute's Municipal Law Resource Center. "In addition to documenting the fiscal and operational benefits of sharing services, the conference will educate government leaders on how to successfully apply for state funding for these initiatives."

Noted Columbia University Law School Associate Dean Richard Briffault will serve as keynote speaker at the conference. Briffault has written extensively on the adaptability of local government and he has held numerous posts exploring how best to reform and revise government bureaucracies.

Among his many positions, Briffault advised the New York City Charter Revision Commission, 1987-89; was a consultant to the New York State Commission on Constitutional Revision, 1993-94; served as a visiting scholar at the Taubman Center for State and Local Government, John F. Kennedy School of

Government, Harvard University, 1996-97; and was the executive director, Special Commission on Campaign Finance Reform of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, 1998-2000.

"Achieving local government reform is among the highest priorities for New York State," said Gerald Benjamin, Dean of SUNY New Paltz's College of Liberal Arts. "I am delighted that we will be hosting local leaders from across the region on our campus for this effort to advance the latest reform ideas and support their access to resources for collaborative efforts."

Sponsors for the conference include Provident Bank, Construction Contractors Association, Clough Harbor and Associates, Hudson Valley Federal Credit Union, The Chazen Companies, M&T Bank, AKRF Inc. and New York State Department of State.

The conference will be held from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Student Union Building at SUNY New Paltz. Registration for the event is \$35. For more information on registration contact Robin DeGroat at Pattern for Progress at 845-565-4900.

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ference in average regional incomes and cost of living. The benefit gradually diminishes as income exceeds these thresholds until a homeowner's income reaches \$250,000. Taxpayers earning over \$250,000 are not eligible for new relief, but will continue to receive their current STAR benefit.

Once a homeowner receives a notice, enrollment is easy with a simple application that can be submitted by mail or online. The rebate checks will be mailed to homeowners as their applications are processed. Online applications take less time to process, though generally people may expect their check several weeks after they submit their application. Enrolling online at [www.nystax.gov](http://www.nystax.gov) will

be the fastest way to receive a rebate check.

To receive a rebate check, homeowners only have to verify the property information provided on the application, enter the names, social security numbers, and all required information for all resident property owners and their spouses, verify the mailing address, and submit the application.

The Tax Department has updated information on its website, [www.nystax.gov](http://www.nystax.gov), and created a special hotline in the Department's Call Center at 1-877-6-STAR-NY (1-877-678-2769) for STAR calls. Spanish speakers will be able to receive assistance through the Call Center.