

# Focus on the future

## Grosse Pointe Academy Action Auction is May 8

By Jody McVeigh  
Editor

For more than 50 years, The Grosse Pointe Academy has hosted its annual Action Auction, which not only serves as a fundraiser for the school, but is a treasured community event.

The tradition continues this year as The Academy hosts its Action Auction beginning at 6 p.m. Saturday, May 8, at the Tracy Fieldhouse.

This year's auction chairs are Andrea and Christopher F. Provenzano, and Alicia and Martin Krall. The honorary chairman is Anthony L. Soave.

Following the theme, "Let the Good Times Roll," the event promises to provide a sense of normalcy during a somewhat abnormal time.

"Now more than ever, schools need TLC and special attention," Andrea Provenzano said, noting the importance of The Academy's annual fundraiser. "There's a misconception of private schools that we have excess money. The reality is these fundraisers are critical to sustaining all of the important things we want for our stu-

dents."

Provenzano said she and Krall worked hard through a difficult year to organize an extraordinary event, meeting every challenge and hitting every milestone "with smiles on our faces."

Their hard work is evident in the selection of unique and high-quality

auction items procured for the event. Among them are the services of in-home personal chef Anthony Lombardo of SheWolf; an in-home wine-tasting event; domestic trips to Jackson Hole, Wyo., and Telluride, Colo.; fine jewelry from

Edmund T. Ahee Jewelers and LaLonde Jewelers & Gemologists; and an exclusive trip to New York City to meet with fashion designer Christian Siriano, who will custom design a clothing item of choice for the highest bidder.

The celebration, which will follow social distancing guidelines, includes cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, followed by a seated dinner and the live auction.

"We've been lucky over the years to have such great support from the community and we look forward to that again," Krall said.

Not only will the evening raise funds for the school, but also serves as a celebration of Head of School Tommy Adams, as well as the faculty and administration at The Academy, "for their dedication, hard work and determination to lead us through this tough time," Provenzano said.

The Academy is one of few schools in Grosse Pointe that have offered in-person learning since the fall, Krall noted.

"The value of that in-person education is priceless for our children," Provenzano added.

Proceeds from the Action Auction support The Academy at large, Provenzano said, noting funds will be used to supplement programming, arts and athletics, as well

as professional development.

"Funds raised directly support the vision of The Grosse Pointe Academy," she added. "Through this year's paddle raise, we wanted to support everyone at the school, from the early school through eighth grade."

Tickets are available online at [gpacecademy.org/alumni-giving/giving/action-auction/](https://gpacecademy.org/alumni-giving/giving/action-auction/).

"It's an in-person event, but we also have livestream tickets if you prefer to stay home and watch the auction from there," Krall said.

Patrons are welcome to purchase individual tickets or buy a table. Donations to the paddle raise also are accepted.

"We are excited and honored to chair this event for the second year now," Krall said. "We're excited to see everybody."

Added Provenzano, "We're looking forward to this. We really want to do this for the children. Our No. 1 focus for us through all of this is the children. We couldn't be happier to be part of such a longstanding tradition of five decades."



COURTESY PHOTO

From left, auction chairs Martin and Alicia Krall, honorary chair Anthony L. Soave, and auction chairs Andrea and Christopher F. Provenzano.



## On top of the world

Grosse Pointe Woods resident Mark Rossman recently captured this unique view of the Grosse Pointe Yacht Club. "I captured this spheroid image from 352 feet altitude with the clouds building up ominously around the dawn sun," he wrote.

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Grosse Pointe News

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY WEEKLY BUGLE, LLC  
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OUR VIEW

Pointers rally for one of theirs

This is not who Grosse Pointers are. A single despicable act in Grosse Pointe Park — displaying a KKK flag in a window so that it was visible only to a Black neighbor — has tainted the whole community. Once the incident came to light, the pushback was strong. A rally with a march was quickly organized under the theme, “Hate Has No Home Here.” Hundreds turned out, according to at least one media account, and the event featured multiple speakers, including two Grosse Pointe Park council members. The flag drew attention from media throughout the state. Many of them also covered the rally, so hopefully some of the renewed damage to the image of the Grosse Pointes has been undone. Residents also have commented articulately about their commitment to protest such overt racist acts. Vestiges of the KKK are particularly toxic, making this episode among the worst experienced here. The support shown to resident JeDonna Dinges matters a great deal, now that she has revealed the discovery of the flag and an earlier event that she perceived to endanger her household. That outpouring has included at least one offer to sit in front of her house if she felt unsafe. The flag came down once police officers visited the neighbor’s house, in the wake of media inquiries. The neighbor has made no comment. Information about the incident has been forwarded from Grosse Pointe Park to the Wayne County Prosecutor’s Office, according to the city attorney. Grosse Pointe Park issued a statement noting that “intolerance, hate and ignorance have no home in the Park. Threats, either real or perceived, will not be tolerated.” It’s a sentiment that echoes throughout the community.

Old business

**FILING DEADLINES:** Last week in this space we reported that the filing deadlines in all cities was April 20, as determined by the Secretary of State. That was incorrect. We were given that date from one of the Pointe clerks, who got it from the Secretary of State. We asked the clerk if that date was for all the cities and he/she said it was. It turns out that was incorrect. Grosse Pointe Woods City Clerk Lisa Hathaway pointed out that since her city does not hold a primary in August, no matter how many candidates are running, her filing deadline date is set by state statute. This year the filing deadline for cities without primary provisions is July 20 at 4 p.m. Along with the Woods, the July 20 date applies to City and Shores as well. The 4 p.m. April 20, deadlines apply to the Farms, Park and Harper Woods. A chart with all candidates up for re-election in November, along with filing deadlines, can be found each week on page 2A of the Grosse Pointe News. We apologize for our confusion. **POSTAL WOES:** Last week, subscribers in 48236 received two copies of the Grosse Pointe News — Feb. 11 and Feb. 18 editions. As for the Feb. 11 issue, one of our employees was told by her carrier that the Grosse Pointe News shipment did not make it to the Grosse Pointe Farms (48236) post office because the Detroit SCF (sectional center facility) did not have a driver available. We have not been able to confirm this with the SCF. Of course, the following Monday was Presidents’ Day, so many subscribers did not receive the Feb. 11 paper until Tuesday or Wednesday or both Feb. 11 and 18 on Thursday! To correct this, our printer, after getting the shipment certified at the Detroit SCF, is driving them back to the Grosse Pointe Farms, Fox Creek and Park Grove (Harper Woods) post offices. We hope this corrects some of our delivery problems and apologize to our subscribers for the inconvenience.



Pure Grosse Pointe

Grosse Pointe resident Mark C. Rossman shot this drone photo of Lakeshore Drive, “winding up against the freezing lake, with The War Memorial in the foreground,” he wrote.

OUR VIEW

GPPL closes book on phase 1

Largely behind closed doors, the Grosse Pointe Public Library has finished up the first phase of its two-phase plan for renovations — yet another reason to hope COVID-19 restrictions pass soon so everyone can appreciate this user-friendly round of enhancements. The final setting for the current phase has been the interior of the Ewald branch in Grosse Pointe Park. New carpeting, paint and other finishes have updated the entire environment, while a rearrangement of the library’s desks for circulation and reference staff have changed the sight lines and opened up new areas for seating. Furniture has been refinished and new pieces added. An acoustic fix was included because the barreled ceiling “acted as a microphone,” according to Library Director Jessica Keyser. And along with increased seating, amenities will include a coffee bar and additional outlets for library patrons to charge their devices. Outlets for charging various electronics is a common theme. They’re even available outside on the new community plaza built for the Central Library, at the corner of Fisher and Kercheval in Grosse Pointe Farms. An Oct. 2 ribbon-cutting marked the completion of the plaza and the first-phase work that had been done at the Woods branch, as well. The plaza has a ramp built to current standards for wheelchair users, greatly improving its accessibility, and a larger seating area — with free Wi-Fi and those much-needed charging outlets. There’s new landscaping, new brickwork, even a new flagpole. It may be winter now, but the plaza definitely has all the hallmarks of an attractive place to meet or simply rest with a book.

The Woods branch got improved entrance lighting and floating stairway safety features. Perhaps most of note for patrons, a new public entrance with a canopy was added on the Mack Avenue side of the library, vastly improving access from the parking area there. At the ribbon cutting, Ms. Keyser noted it marked “more than three years of hard work and planning. None of this would have been possible without the support of our entire community.” The \$2 million spent during the first phase came from the library’s capital reserves and donations. The second phase, which is still in the very early planning phases, will include interior work, as has been done at the Ewald branch, for the other two locations. Also on the list, according to Marketing Coordinator Mary Ann Short: an improved courtyard at the Woods branch and a small addition to the Central Library for its youth collection and activities. Fundraising is handled through the Grosse Pointe Library Foundation, at gplf.org. (Disclosure: Grosse Pointe News Publisher John Minnis is a foundation board member.) Major contributors noted at the time of the ribbon-cutting include the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Legacy Funds and the Grosse Pointe Farms Foundation. The library currently runs a curbside service for library patrons, along with ample digital offerings — use of which grew by more than two-thirds during 2020 as the pandemic kept people home, according to library data. Also of note: 137 virtual programs were offered, with 5,031 patrons participating. But for most people, little can replace the experience of actually walking into the library. May that day come very soon!

LETTERS

The Grosse Pointe News welcomes your letters to the editor. All letters should be typed, double-spaced and signed. Letters longer than 250 words may be edited for length. All letters may be edited for content. We reserve the right to refuse any letter. Include daytime phone number for verification or questions. The deadline for letters is 3 p.m. Monday. Letters to the editor may be emailed to editor@grossepointenews.com.

Loves new GP News

**To the Editor:** Just a quick note to say how much I enjoy all the additions to the Grosse Pointe News. Loved the Valentine edition and long-lasting love stories. Comics are great also. Always enjoy the sports stories. COVID-19 has disrupted so much of our

lives that we can only hope the vaccine will work and we can all get back to some semblance of a normal life. Thanks for the Grosse Pointe News and thanks to all the frontline workers. I had COVID-19 for four weeks in Grosse Pointe Beaumont; two in rehab and three in quarantine, so I was a most grateful recipient of their care.

ANN HONTA  
Harper Woods

COVID relief needed

**To the Editor:** Nearly a year into the coronavirus pandemic shutting down the United States, it’s time for our leaders in Washington to put aside partisan bickering and do something to help. President Biden’s American Rescue Plan to stop coronavirus and deal with the pandemic’s impact on our nation does just that. And the American people agree. Real American unity is more than about politicians agreeing on a piece of legislation — it’s about getting vaccines in arms, safely reopening schools for in-person instruction, giving every American a chance to survive the cri-

ses facing our nation and preserve critical jobs and services in our states, cities and town. And President Biden’s American Rescue Plan meets this moment. According to major polls, there is more bipartisan support for the American Rescue Plan than virtually anything in the last few years. Even West Virginia’s Republican Gov. Jim Justice said, “We need to go big and if we waste some money now, well, we waste some money. But absolutely, we’ve got too many people hurting and the economy is going to sputter and we’ve got to get ourselves out of this mess.” We need unity to get out of the coronavirus crisis. We need the American Rescue Plan. BERTHA MARSH  
Harper Woods

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Grosse Pointe News

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY WEEKLY BUGLE, LLC  
16980 KERCHEVAL AVE., GROSSE POINTE, MI 48230  
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OUR VIEW

Holidays over, schools reopen

The New Year starts with the hope that all public school students here in the Grosse Pointes can get back into their classrooms by month's end.

A lot of that hope rides on how well residents have kept COVID-19 from spreading during their various winter celebrations. Pre-holiday case counts had dwindled locally since reaching a peak in mid-November, contrary to runaway numbers statewide. The autumn increase eventually led Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to reimpose several restrictions, including shutting down in-person classes for high schoolers and their sports programs.

Many of those restrictions have since been lifted (the ban on indoor restaurant and bar service continues). But high schoolers in the Grosse Pointe Public School System hadn't even had any face-to-face classes when the ban took effect — and the rest of the district had already gone back to virtual classes, too, because of the difficulty in finding substitute teachers.

By next week, students through eighth grade are again scheduled to be back in their classrooms on a hybrid schedule (half of each class basically alternates). High schoolers' hybrid schedule is finally to begin Jan. 28-29 as the second semester gets underway.

There is little indication that this novel coronavirus spreads rapidly in classrooms, especially with the current safety protocols in place. The bigger snag, locally at least, seems to be when community spread forces teachers and other staff members to stay home. School Superintendent Gary Niehaus already has pledged that, rather than shut the whole system down again, decisions to revert to virtual learning will be made on a school-by-school basis.

For now, students and teachers can only hope that the holidays have not set off another spike in cases, especially since gatherings of friends and families often are cited as the biggest danger for disease spread. Given that holiday reporting of cases may have been erratic, that answer probably won't come for several days.

That means high schoolers may have to fret about whether they will see the inside of their classrooms until the day they finally walk into school.

And students of all ages clearly need to be there. It didn't take long last spring for most of them to realize how much they missed the actual in-building experience — their classmates, their teachers and all the other daily, face-to-face encounters and group collaborations that make up a school week. Some students have done fine with online schooling, but it has been troublesome — and lonely — for many, many others.

Even a minimal amount of face-to-face contact can make a difference, too. Last spring, for example, students at least had the advantage of finishing out the school year with teachers who had nurtured their classroom relationships for months. Now high schoolers are finishing an entire semester with teachers they've never met in person.

But having high schools open presumably carries more risks, too, given that Gov. Whitmer targeted them in her fall order. Clearly the potential is there, as students sit at multiple desks throughout the day and move through hallways as they change classes, and so on.

High schoolers will now have to prove themselves as adept at mask-wearing as their younger counterparts, and good at hand hygiene and social distancing, too. Presumably, their motivation will be strong in order to maintain their newly restored ability to gather at school.

The community's motivation should be strong, too, to contain this disease so face-to-face teaching can continue. School-age children and their families have suffered enough disruptions. Then the real pay-off, hopefully by the start of school next fall, will be a successful vaccination program that puts a permanent end to all these months and months of disjointed education.

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Pure Grosse Pointe

"The light play of the dawn," in this photo by City of Grosse Pointe resident Mark Rossman, "creates a sharp dichotomy between the light of the sunrise on the dawn-facing side of the church tower and the darkness on the north-facing side. With the themes of darkness versus light so prevalent in how the world is being interpreted in media, in politics and, of course, within the institution of religion, I thought that this was quite analogous."

OUR VIEW

Shores retires deserve better

It's frustrating to watch a well-off city like Grosse Pointe Shores run a budget surplus even as it breaks its promises to fully fund retirees' health care.

The surplus is not huge: \$64,567 on June 30, the end of the last fiscal year. Moreover, it was achieved mostly through events that hopefully will not be repeated, particularly the fact that several city positions were vacant at various times during the year.

The city also has retained its AAA bond rating, according to the audited financial statement for last year. And its overall fund balance, at 29 percent of annual expenditures, exceeds recommended minimums.

In other words, the city has managed to maintain a strong financial position even as its staff has been in turmoil and its retirees have launched protests against the abrupt demand last May that they pay 20 percent of their health care premiums.

Most recently, on Dec. 15, the Shores council voted to put the retirees' payments into the city's retirement reimbursement account, rather than the general fund. Council members see it as a sign of good faith; the retirees not so much. "You're taking it away from the retirees to give it back to them?" said former public works director Brett Smith.

The city's strong financial position adds insult to injury for the retirees. Yes, legacy costs that cover retirements are a problem in both the public and private sectors. But the worst aspect remains the ease

and suddenness with which the Shores council broke its promise of full funding for retiree health care — a promise made repeatedly to employees, who say they often took lower pay or fewer benefits during their working years in order to preserve their security in retirement.

The Michigan Supreme Court has ruled on the issue, allowing such broken promises in at least one circumstance. But the Shores has handled the issue particularly poorly.

Topping it off was the council's Nov. 17 meeting, held over Zoom. As described in a Letter to the Editor by resident Raymond Rahi, M.D., one councilman set up a backdrop that said, "Supreme Court voted it's fair for retirees to share in health care costs." Dr. Rahi described this as a slap in the face to the retirees and repeated his position that promises should be honored.

By all accounts, Grosse Pointe Shores was well served by the retirees who now face unexpected health insurance copays. Surely current employees have reason to raise an eyebrow at the way retirees have been treated; they must wonder how much security they have as they work for blatant promise-breakers.

At this point, it's not even clear who's talking to whom or how most residents feel about the way the retirees have been treated. But last year's surplus and the city's sizable fund balance suggest that retirees have a reasonable case and residents should pay heed.

LETTERS

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Shores mayor ushers in 2021

To the Editor:

Greetings from the Village of Grosse Pointe Shores.

Wow! What a year 2020 turned out to be. Early in the year, we kept reading about a new virus originating across the world. Little

did we realize the havoc it would bring to our country and community.

The March shutdown greatly affected our business community and our shopping became an online experience. Our city experienced hundreds of confirmed cases and many residents were afraid just to leave their

homes.

Since fitness centers were closed, the residents in our community, young and old, took to the streets for their exercise. I never saw so many walkers, bikers, etc., enjoying the beautiful vistas of our community. I hope this trend continues in the new year.

Looking ahead to 2021, we are welcoming our new manager, Stephen Poloni, to lead our city as we navigate these difficult times. All cities are experiencing budgetary pressures with both the general revenue accounts as well as fixed expenses, but if we work together we can solve these problems. We have significant infrastructure issues to deal with, such as our deteriorating sea-

wall and water and sewer improvements, and these issues must be dealt with for the betterment of our community.

We are excited to see the first home being built in the new Deeplands subdivision.

The light at the end of the tunnel for this year will be the vaccines necessary to protect our residents and allow us to begin socializing again. It is these social connections that make our community so special and unique and along with great schools and parks, makes the Grosse Pointe and surrounding community the premier place to reside and raise a family.

Happy New Year!  
MAYOR TED KEDZIERSKI  
Village of Grosse Pointe Shores, a Michigan City



Grosse Pointe News

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY WEEKLY BUGLE, LLC  
16980 KERCHEVAL AVE., GROSSE POINTE, MI 48230  
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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Securing the future

Who plans for a pandemic? Certainly we didn’t and neither did thousands of businesses throughout the Pointes, the state and the world.

Early on we knew the loss of revenue due to our advertisers being forced to close was unsustainable. Like other businesses, we were forced to lay off employees early on. Thanks to a PPP Loan, we were able to call the employees back from furlough.

The PPP Loan got us through June and July. At that point, we would have had to cease publishing had not Sean and Nancy Cotton agreed to purchase the newspaper. We will be forever grateful for them preventing the paper to close under “our watch.”

Terry and I will be staying on in our roles as publisher and vice president for at least a year. We will continue to produce a newspaper to the best of our abilities and, with the Cottons’ support, we hope to make it better than ever once COVID is in the rearview mirror.

OUR VIEW

Downsizing in the City

The City of Grosse Pointe, in downsizing the square footage needed for apartment-style units, has taken a noteworthy step into the future.

Despite the fact that good-sized houses seem to be selling at a fast clip right now, there’s a pretty clear need for smaller units as well. The smaller sizes cater to opposite ends of the age spectrum — young singles or couples who are just starting out, and retirees ready to give up maintaining houses and searching for single-floor living.

There’s virtually no supply of condos with single-floor options, according to Jimmy Saros, vice president of Jim Saros Real Estate Services. “They’d love to stay in Grosse Pointe,” he said of older residents looking to downsize, “but where are they going to move?”

The minimum for any type of unit had been set at 1,000 square feet. The new minimums allow a studio-style unit as small as 500 square feet; minimums for one-, two- and three-bedroom units are set at 600, 700 and 900 square feet, respectively.

Not all of the Pointes have the potential for additional multi-family units, be they rental or condo developments. But those that do will want to keep an eye on what happens in the City of Grosse Pointe. It seems like a particularly hopeful sign for older residents who often feel they have to choose between staying in what has become a too-big house or leave the community.

Those opposed to lowering the minimum said they feared such small sizes would result in more rentals, which in turn might drive down property values.

That is a concern and worth keeping an eye on. But the new flexibility has merit; these are minimums, not marching orders, as Mayor Sheila Tomkowiak reminded everyone. They offer new possibilities for upper-floor development and vertical expansion in both the Village commercial district and along Mack Avenue, which is the subject of an improvement plan with multiple municipalities participating.

The Grosse Pointes are clearly aging, yet steps to help residents transition into more appropriate residences have been few and far between — steps that in turn might free up more houses for families, and boost school enrollment. The City of Grosse Pointe deserves credit for tackling the issue.

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Pure Grosse Pointe

Grosse Pointe Woods resident Mark C. Rossman recently took this picture over the Grosse Pointe Yacht Club at dawn. “I thought this one captured the beauty we can’t see over the arc of the horizon without rising above the noise and the tree line, reminding us, by analogy, that there is beauty at the tail end of darkness,” he wrote.

LETTERS

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BLM rebut rebut K-9s, retirees in the Shores

To the Editor:

I’d like to thank you for publishing my letter to the editor in your Nov. 19 edition.

It was interesting reading the three BLM articles published in this week’s (Dec. 3) edition. However, Nancy Solak is wrong in her “Black Lives Matter rebut” opinion.

I most certainly did reference blacklivesmatter.com and not the blog she mentioned. (I have never even read anything published by Acton Institute).

The BLM website has been updated recently and took down the “disrupt the nuclear family” goal (which had been there for months), but everything else I referenced is still there.

My question is, why did you publish Nancy’s letter when it is not correct?

JODY BRUCE  
Grosse Pointe Park  
Nancy Solak’s response: “Jody Bruce is right. I should not have presumed she was referencing any site other than BLM. When searching for what she was referring to, though, I found that the Acton site seemed more aligned with her statements than the actual BLM site.”

To the Editor:

In 2015, I made a commitment to my hometown of Grosse Pointe Shores to donate their portion of the expense to have law enforcement K-9 services available through K-9 Safety Partners.

All five Grosse Pointes and Harper Woods are part of this K-9 service, with Grosse Pointe Farms and Harper Woods having the actual K-9s in their employment. Both K-9 Duke and K-9 Kaiser are available for our use, whenever needed, at no charge with this donation.

Though Grosse Pointe Shores does not use their services on the same frequency as the other communities, they are available nonetheless.

This is a commitment that I made to my hometown. A commitment that I have not wavered from over the years, even with our ever-changing economy.

I am perplexed as to why Grosse Pointe Shores does not share that same level of integrity for commitments made over the years when it comes to our retirees. Even with signed documentation from previous leadership, for some reason it

now seems OK by our current leadership to rescind their negotiated benefits for one that now requires retirees to help fund out of their pockets.

Wouldn’t our current leadership find it prudent to find a way to honor these negotiated signed contracts, or why even have contracts? Wouldn’t our current leadership find it prudent to present any shortcomings needed to honor previous commitments by asking the Grosse Pointe Shores citizens for their input? Would a short-term increase in our taxes help to save the integrity and character of Grosse Pointe Shores?

With all the irregularities of the year 2020, I ask our mayor and council to please not let the status of our great city fall victim to become just another unsettling and agitated community. We can do much better than that.

As for the security from the law enforcement K-9s, I will not sway from my commitment to my city. Can Grosse Pointe Shores say the same thing to its retirees?

SHARON M. PETERS  
Grosse Pointe Shores

A Family Center ‘thank you’

To the Editor:

On behalf of The Family Center of Grosse Pointe and Harper Woods, I would like to publicly thank the many sponsors who honored us for our Hollyfest and 20th anniversary celebration event: Henry Ford Medical Center—Cottage; Antonelli Financial Advisors; Ascension St. John Hospital; Wolverine Packing Co.; Grosse

Pointe News; Beth and Joe Moran; Ed Lazar Insurance Agency; Ed Rinke Chevrolet Buick GMC; Gary and Paige Niehaus; Grosse Pointe War Memorial Association; Joe Ricci Automotive; Marquita Bedway, PhD., P.C.; Shane and Sara Reeside; William and Martha Ford Fund; Aiello Law Group; Diane and Ron Strickler; Donald K. Pierce & Co.; Fisher Pointe Dental; Flame Heating Cooling Plumbing and Electric; George R. McMullen Jr., Higbie Maxon Agney Realtors; Joan Ferguson and James Grenda; John R. Leverenz DDS, PC; Michael and Andrea Mattei; Northeast Integrated Health; Pitts-Aldrich Associates; Ray Laethem Motor Village; Supportive Counseling Services; and Mary Petersen, LMSW, ACSW.

Their generous support of our mission made Hollyfest 2020 both possible and a wonderful success.

Our gratitude does not end there. I also extend a warm thank-you to those who contributed by donating auction items, participated in the virtual event, placed bids, donated to the cash appeal and raised a glass to toast our success for the past 20 years.

The Family Center could not prosper and provide vital services without the bountiful gifts of a caring community. Thank you for your trust in our ability to deliver resources that lead to happier, healthier and more resilient families.

With sincere gratitude,  
SUZANNE M. ANTONELLI  
President,  
The Family Center