A Note From Our New Executive Director

If there was to be a theme to the time from my start on August 1 to today, it would be “so much is happening.” For those of you who’ve followed the work of the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation (EBSF) over the years, this is no surprise. EBSF is committed to ongoing learning and the hard work that this requires. It is an honor to lead an organization so rooted in values and a unifying vision for improving the wellbeing of people, animals and the environment in Maine.

Amid all the multiple changes, transformations and shifts that Sewall is undergoing, our small and mighty staff has been strong and steady, holding space for ongoing commitments and new ways of being with grace and generosity. I want to thank my team for all the ways that they’ve made this transition positive and productive, personally and professionally.

Alongside EBSF’s staff team, our Board continues to exemplify leadership in the service of our mission to improve the wellbeing of people, animals and the environment in Maine, while fostering equity and centering community voices. Our work would simply not be possible without the generous and thoughtful leadership of each and every one of our Board members.

As I familiarize myself with the many organizations and efforts around the state, I am impressed and inspired by the work that our nonprofit partners are leading across Maine and excited at the opportunities for collaboration and partnership across sectors.
The path forward builds upon years of work, seeing to fruition the nurture and care of the past years. As a mother, I know times of growth and transformation require resources, flexibility, humility and a sense of humor. As we continue to grow and evolve as an organization, we take very seriously honoring and practicing the values upon which the Sewall Foundation is founded, and we are excited to further align our operations with our strategic philosophy. This means we will be looking at our internal and external policies and practices to make sure they reflect our mission and values. (Speaking of being a mother, my family—human and canine-- is loving exploring our new home, getting to know Maine’s beautiful spaces and welcoming people!)

Continue reading Gabriela’s message

---

**2020 Healthy People Healthy Places Grant Round**

The [2020 Healthy People Healthy Places grant round](#) will follow a noncompetitive, invitation-only process. Emails were sent November 1 to eligible organizations. This application process will allow us to continue making grants while providing our staff the time needed to further develop the program refinements we have been working on over the past two years.

We invite you to read our updated [Frequently Asked Questions](#) to learn more about our refinements process and direction, and how we are centering equity and community voices in our work.

We know that for some this is disappointing news. We wish we had the resources to fund all the projects and organizations working to improve the lives of Maine’s people and the special places we call home.

---

**Staff Spotlight**
We are pleased to announce that Megan Shore, Senior Program Officer, has been selected to participate in the Change Leaders in Philanthropy Fellowship, a program of Grantmakers for Effective Organizations. The fellowship is a 10-month cohort program for senior executives who are responsible for developing and guiding key change efforts in their organizations. The fellowship explores what it takes to lead transformational change through an individual, organizational and ecosystem lens. Given the many changes afoot at the Sewall Foundation the timing couldn’t be better!

2018-2019 Grants

In the 2018-2019 grant cycle, we awarded 176 grants totaling $7,440,945 to organizations working to improve the well-being of people, animals and the environment.

The 2018-2019 grant awards list is now available on our website. Click on the organization name to visit grantee websites and learn more about their important work.

We are grateful to all of our nonprofit partners, and are honored to support their efforts.

Maine Harvest Federal Credit Union

Ribbon Cutting

On October 8, a ribbon cutting event marked the initial opening of Maine Harvest Federal Credit Union. Governor Mills cut the ribbon, and Senator King and Representatives Pingree and Golden attended. Anne Roosevelt made the first deposit. Her grandfather, FDR, signed the Federal Credit Union Act on June 26, 1934.

Maine Harvest Federal Credit Union is the only fully-regulated financial institution focused on growing a healthy, local food system for Maine through government-guaranteed deposits. Their mission is to provide financing for Maine’s small farms and food producers with deposits from people and institutions that share their values. They plan to be open for business in December.
On September 26, 2019 some members of the EBSF staff had the pleasure of attending the Maine Philanthropy Center’s Fall Forum. After lunch funders gathered to think about how to respond to questions of equity in tactical, strategic ways and how the philanthropic sector can assist in supporting a complete count of the 2020 Census. Becky Hayes Booher, Partnership Specialist with the U.S. Census Bureau and David Moy, Interim Executive Director of the Hyams Foundation facilitated the group discussions on the implications of Census 2020 for Maine and local communities and how funders are working to ensure that historically under-counted communities are accurately represented. Session participants then discussed options and action toward equity and justice here in Maine.

As background on the economic impact of the Census in Maine, in FY 2016 Maine received $4,114,357,289.00 (Yes, over 4 Billion Dollars!) through 55 federal spending programs that were guided by data derived from the 2010 Census. It is vitally important that we do everything we can in ensure an accurate count, so communities receive the federal funds they need and the data tells the true story of who we are in Maine. EBSF believes it is crucial that the data that informs policies and programs for our communities are accurate and fair, and as such supports an accurate Census 2020 count.

EBSF joined with other Maine funders to support The Bingham Program’s Maine Census Outreach Fund 2020. EBSF staff will continue to explore ways to support the Census 2020, including the possibility of becoming a Complete Count Committee through The Bingham Program, attending and perhaps hosting Census Solutions Workshops that generate innovative ideas and develop plans of action for promoting the Census 2020. While there is much work to do here, we are looking forward to being involved and assisting in this important endeavor.

Opportunities for the Next Generation of Leaders
Future Leaders Climate Summit 2020

The Future Leaders’ Climate Summit will take place March 26-29, 2020, on the campus of the University of Chicago. The Summit is open to any individual between the ages of 18 and 30 with a demonstrated interest in climate change and sustainability issues. The inaugural Future Leaders’ Climate Summit will gather ~100 young and diverse leaders from around the US for three days to discuss climate policy, communications, advocacy, and individual action with climate and energy experts. Applications are due November 22.

#GenIndigenous Response Fund

Native Americans in Philanthropy, in partnership with the Minneapolis Fund, created the #GenIndigenous Response Fund in 2016. It is a pooled fund that was developed to provide grants up to $5,000 to youth organizing groups responding to the current moment in ways that build long-term power for Native youth. Native non-profit organizations that are actively engaging Native young people in organizing collective action for social, economic, or racial justice and seeking to improve the lives of Native youth by mobilizing and cultivating the next generation of Native leaders should apply. The deadline to apply is November 8.

Upcoming Events

Farmland Access & Transfer Conference
Augusta Civic Center, Maine
November 18, 2019

Registration is now open for the largest conference in the region focused solely on land access and transfer for farm seekers, retiring farmers, landowners & service providers. Join us for a day of practical workshops to better understand the options, resources, and steps to accessing or transferring your farm or farmland.

Learn strategies for tackling succession planning, participate in conversations about equity and affordability, gain the skills to find and secure farmland of your own, negotiate a good lease agreement, and more. The issues, strategies, and skills shared at this conference have relevance far beyond Maine.
Staff Picks

EBSF Staff and the EBSF Board have started book clubs! Our first read will be Edgar Villanueva’s book *Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous wisdom to heal divides and restore balance*, a provocative analysis of the oppressive dynamics at play in philanthropy and finance. The author draws on Native traditions to prescribe the medicine for embracing a new paradigm rooted in connecting, relating, and belonging.

Now that fall is in full swing and the days are getting shorter, it’s a great time to snuggle up next to your favorite heat source and enjoy a good book. Here’s what we’ve been reading . . .

*The Hidden Life of Trees*, by Peter Wohlleben. Are trees social beings? Forester and author Peter Wohlleben convincingly makes the case that, yes, the forest is a social network. He draws on groundbreaking scientific discoveries to describe how trees are like human families: tree parents live together with their children, communicate with them, support them as they grow, share nutrients with those who are sick or struggling, and even warn each other of impending dangers.
The Secret Wisdom of Nature, by Peter Wohlleben (volume 3 of his “The Mysteries of Nature Trilogy”). Secret Wisdom weaves together insights about The Hidden Life of Trees and The Inner Life of Animals (volumes 1 and 2 of the Trilogy) to describe intricate interconnections within and among ecosystems that span both distance and time. Rooted in sound scientific research and expressed in language that is both entertaining and accessible, The Secret Wisdom of Nature invites the reader to see worlds with fresh eyes and to consider dimensions of creaturely coexistence in new and meaningful ways.

The Nightengale, by Kristin Hannah. The story of two sisters in France during World War II, and their struggle to survive and resist the German occupation.

White Supremacy Culture, by Tema Okun. Culture is powerful precisely because it is so present and at the same time so very difficult to name or identify. The characteristics listed in this article are damaging because they are used as norms and standards without being pro-actively named or chosen by the group and because they promote white supremacy thinking and behavior. We all live in a white supremacy culture, so these characteristics show up in the attitudes and behaviors of all of us – white people and People of Color.

The Museum of Modern Love, by Heather Rose. A mesmerizing literary novel about a lost man in search of connection - a meditation on love, art and commitment, set against the backdrop of one of the greatest art events in modern history, Marina Abramovic's The Artist is Present.