Giving Thanks, Holding Many Truths

A Message from our Executive Director

As we approach the end of the year, many of us are taking stock of all that has happened (and not happened) in 2020. The headlines this year have been about COVID 19 pandemic, police brutality and uprisings against structural racism, the presidential election and natural disasters. The headlines often obscure the stories about the lives affected by these monumental events. Through our work, we have glimpses at communities across Maine. From grantees and partners, we have heard about the challenges they're facing and how they've responded to the demands these headlines have placed on them. In the midst of so much that feels overwhelming, these stories give us reason to be grateful.

We are grateful for organizations that live into their missions and serve their communities, even as reality changes in real time. We are grateful for the deep sense of community and solidarity at the root of so many efforts in Maine, and for the creativity and boldness of organizations and groups, small and large. We have witnessed new groups and efforts formed in response to needs and opportunities, and organizations adapt and improvise to meet the moment. The Sewall Foundation has the honor of supporting and partnering with these community organizations as we adapt and learn as well. Read More...

Healthy People Healthy Places Update for 2021

We will be in touch with current Healthy People Healthy Places (HPHP) grantees by the end of January 2021 with information about the 2021 grantmaking process. For organizations who are not current HPHP grantees but whose work aligns with one of our focus areas, we are developing an application process and expect details and guidelines to be available towards the end of March 2021.

Since 2015, HPHP grants have supported work throughout Maine to improve the well-being of people and the environment. For the past two years, EBSF has been developing a clearer and narrower focus for HPHP, identifying the following Focus Areas where our board has approved a longer-term commitment. Community-based work in the Katahdin Region, Lewiston-Auburn, Wabanaki communities and tribal governments, and Washington County, will be complemented by statewide efforts in Food Systems and Nature-Based Education,
Sewall's Equity Journey

Through surveys, interviews and conversations over the past year, our partners have asked us to share what we have learned as we've been working to deepen equity and further align our values internally and externally. In response to this request, we are launching a series to share Sewall's Equity Journey. On our [website](#), we have created an Equity section where we will provide background and history of this work, and post installments about ongoing lessons to share.

[Continue reading](#) to learn about some of the top lessons we are grappling with and will be exploring through this series.

Up, Up, and Away!

Healthy People Healthy Places L-A Co-Design is Here!

We are pleased to share the final report of the Lewiston-Auburn Co-Design Team with recommendations for how to shape Sewall's Healthy People Healthy Places program in L-A over the next five years. This summer, a group of eleven L-A community members, two Sewall staff and three consultants participated virtually in a five-week process to identify priorities and develop recommendations to be implemented starting in 2021. [Read more](#).

Lewiston Auburn Co-Ops & the Co-op Economy
The Cooperative Development Institute (CDI) received 3 USDA grants!

The Cooperative Development Institute (CDI) received 3 USDA grants totaling $624,892 that will help support cooperative development in Lewiston-Auburn, Maine and the Northeast. There was a celebration on October 23rd at New Roots Cooperative Farm with Raise Op Housing Co-op, St. Mary's Nutrition Center, Center for Ecology-Based Economy, MOFGA, Isuken Co-op, CDI and the USDA. Elected officials joined in to congratulate CDI and these co-ops on these federal grants.

Learn more through this Maine Biz article

Nonprofits Benefitting from Volunteer Expertise

Since launching a new partnership with Catchafire in March, Sewall Foundation nonprofit partners have directly benefitted from thousands of hours of skilled volunteer services with an estimated value of over $550,000 – and these numbers only count a fraction of the benefits of Catchafire.

Organizations with membership in Catchafire have access to a host of tools including webinars (e.g. Tech Tools we Recommend to Nonprofits, Building a Case for Support) in addition to project support. Catchafire has also created project bundles to help guide organizations through more complex streams of work. A few bundles that have been of particular interest are:

- Get Help With Your DEI Efforts which includes topics around assessing your organization, adjusting policies and processes, and auditing communications. This package is intended as a starting point and compliment to more comprehensive work with an experienced consultant.
- Pivoting to Online Programming
- Hosting Virtual Events

Check out how the Maine Association of Nonprofits used Catchafire
We look forward to engaging with nonprofit partners over the winter to hear more about how this program can best serve your organization and will be in touch. In the meantime, if you have any questions or feedback please contact Megan Shore. Technical support and guidance for using the program can best be addressed by contacting help@catchafire.org.

Supporting Black Owned Businesses in Maine

The Sewall Foundation learned about the new organization, Black-owned Maine, and its work during the summer of 2020. The organization was created “to fill a void within the commerce industry of Maine. Before BOM there was not a single, concise directory of Black-owned businesses in Maine. National directories listed one or two businesses, but most left Maine out completely. We sought to challenge this truth and create an immediate solution.” BOM has developed programs to provide micro-grants to families and businesses, hosts a podcast and more recently launched the initiative Maine Black Business Pledge, which seeks to gather commitments from businesses and consumers to devote 10% of their shelf-space/spending power on independent, black-owned Maine businesses. The directory on the site provides a great starting place for putting this pledge into action.

Working Communities Challenge, Maine

Grant Opportunity!

The Sewall Foundation is proud to be a funding partner and steering committee member of this 3-year grant program supported by the Federal Reserve of Boston, the State of Maine, national and local philanthropy, and private sector employers. The purpose of the initiative is to support multiple local collaboratives working to address economic growth and reduce inequities in Maine's towns, cities, and rural communities. For details on this grant opportunity, including eligibility criteria and a list of priority communities in Maine, Click Here for More Information.

Staff Picks!
• **Anti-racism Daily** (newsletter/podcast): This is an excellent, well-researched and full of recommendations on daily actions to combat racism. The website also has links to a podcast, and an archive of past dailies with links to resources.

• **Decolonizing Thanksgiving** by Gaelle Marcel: This incredible resource takes a "decolonizing approach to teaching about Thanksgiving, teachers and families reject the myths of Thanksgiving and harmful stereotypes about Native peoples"

• **Indigenous Voices Charting a Course Beyond the Bicentennial**; by Gail Dana-Sacco: Sewall Board member Gail Dana-Sacco just recently published this article with the Maine Policy Review exploring the history of Maine's Indigenous peoples and their interactions with the state of Maine over its 200-year history.

• **Letters from an American** a daily newsletter about the history behind today's politics by Heather Cox Richardson. Letters from an American is a well-researched, fascinating source of information and context for our current times. A daily must-read.

• **Murder on the Red River** by Marcie Rendon. This is the first book in the Cash Blackbear Mystery series. Set in the 1970s where the Red River divides Minnesota and North Dakota, on the surface it is a mystery, but really it is more of a coming of age story exploring themes of racism and poverty.

• **Race to Lead** (website): This website, an initiative of the Building Movement Project, addresses the racial leadership gap in nonprofit organizations in the U.S. Links to 2016 and 2019 surveys, reports and other data and resources on the state of nonprofit leadership and recommendations on closing the racial leadership gap. Another report from the Building Movement Project worth reading is **On the Frontlines: Nonprofits Led by People of Color Confront COVID-19 and Structural Racism**

• **Rethinking 'Thanksgiving' Toolkit**: This online toolkit takes a look at the many different experiences we will have over Thanksgiving -- "This day also gives us a chance to look at and change stories we have about our families and ourselves. Thanksgiving is based on myths that hide and erase the genocide that the United States is founded upon. What would it mean to tell a different story, an honest story?"