

Helping Our Community Weather Covid-19

May 2020

Fifty years ago, a group of concerned citizens came together with a common goal, to preserve and improve quality of life in our community. They formed a non-profit organization, raised funds to purchase a large plot of land and donated it to the County to create the D&H Canal Park. Since then, the Orange County Citizens Foundation continues its sole mission to improve the quality of life for all who live and work in our region. We have seeded places and organizations vital to our community like the Heritage Trail, the Orange County Arboretum, Hudson Valley Honor Flight, the Community Foundation of Orange and Sullivan Counties, the Orange County Land Trust, Leadership Orange and the Orange County Arts Council.



**Citizens Foundation Founders:
Ruth & James Ottaway**

It's unlikely that our founders imagined we'd be facing a crisis of this magnitude, and frankly, neither did we. **Now, more than ever, our commitment to community remains strong.**

Right now, our local businesses are in great jeopardy and we're focusing our efforts on helping them. Our President, Nancy Proyect, is part of a team organized by the Orange County Industrial Development Agency to provide a comprehensive approach to Covid-19 for small businesses located in Orange County. The team has been walking companies through the process of applying for Cares Act funding; administering an Orange County Funding Corporation local lending program; and hosting webinars to provide information to small businesses on policies, regulations, and new ideas for doing business during the crisis and in a new normal. To date, the team has helped over 140 companies and that number continues to grow. It's sometimes difficult to hear the difficulties our fellow community members are going through, but it's very rewarding to help our local small businesses – the backbone of Orange County's economy. **We stand with them, and will continue to advocate and support.**



The Citizens Foundation continues its placemaking efforts in local communities. We've always felt strongly that health and wellbeing are impacted by where and how you live. **To help our community navigate this crisis, it's important that we remain focused on helping to create resilient spaces that promote people's health, happiness and wellbeing.** Our Placemaking Committee is committed to figuring out ways to develop places that can accommodate strong downtowns, walkability, and safe public spaces. To that end, we're thrilled that our Montgomery Placemaking group (encompassing Walden, Montgomery, and Maybrook) has been conducting walk audits (with appropriate safety precautions, of course) during the past few weeks to figure out where walkability is strong in their communities and how and where it can be improved. We're happy to help our communities make strides and stay focused on improving quality of life, especially during these trying times.



The 17 Forward 86 Coalition, co-founded by the Citizens Foundation, continues to advocate for strong investment in infrastructure with safety upgrades and improvements to NYS Route 17/Interstate 86. Our goal is to ensure the safe and expedient movement of people along the roadway in Orange and Sullivan counties to improve quality of life in the region by maximizing access to a recognized business growth corridor and tourism destinations. **We expect that the federal government will soon announce a recovery infrastructure program and we're working hard to make sure the 17 Forward 86 work plan is one of the top priorities for our region and NYS.**

Just as our founders came together all those years ago to improve life in our community, **we are coming together today in the face of this crisis to make sure our community remains vibrant and strong.** We hope you'll stand with us. Please visit occitizensfoundation.org to donate and subscribe to our Almost Daily emails highlighting inspiring grassroots groups doing great things in our community and tools and resources to help weather this crisis.