Vision
We strive to be a trusted and dynamic center of learning, committed to building the narrative about our site's and nation's history. We aim to promote engagement, curiosity, and critical thinking about the varied experiences that have shaped—and continue to shape—our communities.

Mission
Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center preserves and interprets our site's historic buildings, robust collections, and diverse stories, creating a space for ongoing learning and open dialogue about how the events of the past connect to the present and shape our future.

LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT
This has been a productive year for KTM&HC on many levels. As President, I am proud to have overseen several important initiatives over the course of the last fiscal year. For many years, KTM&HC has been run by dedicated, generous volunteers. However, over the past ten years, the Museum’s mission and operational approach have shifted to growing and sustaining increased capacity and reach: professionalizing to become a museum with talented staff, supported by enthusiastic volunteers, driving daily operations. Similarly, the role of the Board has evolved into a group that oversees the organization, focusing on governance, fiduciary responsibilities, and strategic approaches to achieve our mission and vision. We were fortunate to have received a substantial grant from Connecticut Humanities to fund board development training, so we now have a better idea of our respective roles. Additionally, together with our staff, we have been careful to consider principles of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion in everything we do. Importantly, Board and staff worked together to create new vision and mission statements (see them on page one!). Our reinterpretation resulted in a new tour, “War at Home.” We’re thrilled to be continuing the reinterpretation into FY24, thanks to a new Planning Grant from Connecticut Humanities. Consultant Shannon Burke will continue to help us research, develop, and share with the public the important stories of our hundreds of years of site history.

If you have driven to our campus recently, I hope you have been impressed by the ongoing efforts to make our site flow better and to improve accessibility for everyone. We are not quite finished, but the improvements are dramatic. I, for one, am very happy we can park on our own site for special occasions and don’t have to cross Main Street. I’d like to close by acknowledging the hard work of our Board, and in particular the contributions of our newest members, who we welcomed in FY23: Vincent Conyers, Leslie Lindenauer, Maggie McIntyre, Alice Schroeder, and Cheryl Patterson-Zaic. Are you interested in volunteering at KTM&HC? We have excellent opportunities for involvement—from Board Presidential leadership to school program docents to special events contributors—so please feel free to reach out to me.

Sara Champion, Board President
LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This past fiscal year, we solidified our approach to bring ambitious strategic and operational goals set forth in 2020, the year of global disruptions. We clearly formulated a new mission and vision centered on Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion. The overall goal is making our campus and our stories accessible to all and representative of everyone who lived here in the past. Our physical site integration and accessibility project is almost finished, with expanded parking and new brick walkways linking the Visitor Center to all points of interest in a pleasing and safe way. After successfully launching our “War at Home” tour—the first in a series of three new tours defined in our NEH-funded Interpretive Plan—we’ve started working on the second tour, “American Dream,” which centers on the Gilbert story. This tour will take visitors to the pantry in the Gilbert Wing where the gift shop was formerly located (now located in the Visitor Center). Reclaiming the original pantry as part of the “American Dream” tour is an exciting addition to the museum experience and will allow visitors to learn about the people who lived and worked here during the early 20th century.

We proudly shared KTM&HC’s reinterpretation of the Declaration of Independence in 2026 on the horizon, we’ve started a planning process with our town and state partners. It promises to be a big event! We want to take advantage of this opportunity to create exciting, impactful programming for all ages around the ideas and ideals set forth in that Declaration, with a special focus on the rights and responsibilities of the United States’ citizens. Anyone interested in becoming involved, please reach out to me for more information.

As a closing remark I’d like to acknowledge and thank my small yet brilliant staff—without them we could accomplish but a fraction of what we are accomplishing. Their professionalism, hard work and dedication to KTM&HC’s mission and vision are exemplary and much appreciated.

Hildegard Grob, Executive Director

We proudly shared KTM&HC’s reinterpretation journey with attendees at the Connecticut League of History Organizations’ June 2023 conference. From left to right: Executive Director Hildegard Grob, Operations Associate Ish Gupta, interpretation consultant Sharon Kurel, Director of Strategic Storytelling Kate Burton, and Justice & Equity consultant Sacheta Holben.

GROUP TOURS

Group tours are currently offered at the museum, and will allow visitors to learn about the people who lived and worked here during the early 20th century. Pride. Our education staff is doing a fantastic job building the program on the understanding of the importance of critical thinking—important skills that will equip young people to assess the world around them and make informed decisions that will ultimately shape our nation’s future.

O ur operational support for FY23 was significantly higher than FY22 due to a very successful Cannonball Gala, continued growth in obtaining grants, and increases in our rental rates and usage. We continue to be fortunate to have a variety of revenue sources and express our thanks for the support of our many donors, members, and grantors.

Consistent with our strategic plan to provide more diverse programs and a larger community and regional outreach, FY23 staff costs have increased. However, most other operating expenses were flat or decreased, meaning we used significantly less investment income to fund operations in FY23.

One of the most significant KTM&HC activities during FY23 was the implementation of our wayfinding and accessibility site project, which continues to transform and integrate our four-acre campus as part of our Master Plan. Work will be completed in FY24 and will result in an enhanced visitor experience: new parking, brick walkways, lighting, and landscaping.

All this has been made possible by generous donors who supported our Capital Campaign, as well as many recent grantors including the Anne S. Richardson Fund, the Ridgefield Thrift Shop, and the Ridgefield Rotary Club.

The most significant non-operating capital cost in FY23 was recording the cost to demolish the garage behind the Visitor Center and to expense its remaining undepreciated cost. Looking to FY24, we have adopted an operating budget similar to FY23. We’re also using a detailed maintenance system for all our facilities, which will enable us to budget for appropriate annual maintenance costs (operational expenses) as well as more significant periodic maintenance costs (which can have a variety of funding sources and are non-operating).

Financial results charted above are for operations only and exclude Capital Campaign contributions, investment activity (including investment fees), depreciation, and major repairs.
1. Taproom Tastings hosts Mary Tsaltas-Ottomanelli (left) and KT&MHC Chief Curator Catherine Prescott, the stars of one of KT&MHC’s most popular public programs, get ready for a holiday-themed episode livestreamed from the historic tavern museum.

2. Honorees Anita and Nick Donofrio accept the 29th Annual Cannonball Award at KT&MHC’s Gala in May—a record-breaking fundraiser for the museum.

3. The installation of new brick walkways—a key component of our site wayfinding and accessibility project—means that the historic walled garden is wheelchair accessible for the first time in our site’s history!

4. Visitors listen to Interpretation Coordinator John Bradley set the scene for our Battle of Ridgefield-focused tour, “War at Home.”

5. Longtime volunteers Terrie Rose and Karen Kops gather for KT&MHC’s annual volunteer appreciation event this past spring.

6. Two talented high schoolers received the Bettie Jane Third Scholarship this year: Ridgefield High School seniors Gretchen Baudendistel (left) and Skylar Kleinman (right), pictured here with Joel Third.

7. “Ghosts of Ridgefield”—otherwise known as Interpretation Coordinator John Bradley—previews for an evening of historic storytelling with a spooky twist at October’s Ghosts of Ridgefield.

8. Local artists proudly show off their paintings to be sold at KT&MHC’s 2022 Holiday Boutique. The annual Boutique was once again a great success, thanks to our volunteer’s efforts over several weekends.

9. Volunteer Cora Moers and Director of Education Melissa Houston help kids make woven hearts at February’s First Sunday program. The series, new for FY23, engages young visitors with free hands-on activities that connect to our site stories and collections.

10. In June, KT&MHC had a full house of fantastic musical acts—including Ridgefield-based band Distance—for Make Music Day, an international and local celebration of music and community marking the summer solstice.

11. A fourth grader from Danbury does a close reading of Timothy Keeler’s ledger during “Colonial Life,” KT&MHC’s most popular school program.

12. A curious young visitor takes in the beauty of our historic walled garden, at the July 4th Celebration.

13. Board President Sara Champion (left) proudly presents Board Member Jenn Hansen (center)—accompanied by husband Jeff Hansen (right)—with the Behind the Scenes Award for her extraordinary volunteered time at KT&MHC.
This list recognizes the many people whose contributions are the heartbeat of KTM&HC, and which might take the form of finances, in-kind donations, volunteer energy—or all three.

All gifts acknowledged here were received between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022. If your employer matched your donation, and/or you paid for membership, your name appears in the category that captures the combined total. Payments to the Capital Campaign made during the fiscal year are also reflected in these totals. Please direct corrections to the Museum office.

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“We were inspired by our museum tour and learning about the rich history going back hundreds of years, that touched so many lives... We recognize that the land has a special history that has led us here to this moment, cared for and valued by the generations of indigenous people before us.”

- From a couple who were married at KTM&HC in Spring 2023