



Front row, left to right: Cheryl Patterson-Zaic\*, Sara Champion\*, Leslie Lindenauer\* Rhonda Hill\*, Maggie McIntire\*. Back row, left to right: Mike Twomey, Paul Schmidt\*, David Yaun\*, Tom Casey, Eric Johnson\*, Mark Seavy. Missing from photo: Vincent Convers\*, Paula Curry\*, Jenn Hansen\*, Patty Linnon\*, Kathy Love \* FY24 BOD member

#### 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.

#### Board

Sara Champion Maggie McIntire Patty Linnon Paul Schmidt Rhonda Hill

Vincent Convers Paula Curry Jenn Hansen Leslie Lindenauer Chervl Patterson-Zaic David Yaun Eric Johnson

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Hildegard Grob Catherine Prescott

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**Executive Director** Chief Curator & Assistant Museum Director Director of Private Events & Rentals Director of Education Curator of Collections Director of Strategic Storytelling **Operations Associate** Interpretation Coordinator Visitor Services Associate Caretaker



Left to right: Ish Gupta, Katie Burton, Hildi Grob, Mary Ann Connors, Catherine Prescott, Melissa Houston, Erika Askin, John Bradley, Charlotte Larsen.

President First Vice President Secretary Treasurer Past President/Trustee Chair

# LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

n FY24, our dedicated group of staff and volunteers successfully put in place the building blocks for a strong and resilient organization poised for mission-aligned growth and audience engagement. We successfully concluded our site reintegration for vastly improved accessibility and traffic flow for pedestrians and drivers. "When I see all four acres of the campus today," said one longtime KTM&HC volunteer, "I have flashbacks of what it was like just a few years ago. The newly integrated campus now flows with well-designed, well-lit pathways and expanded parking for visitors to enjoy."

We have focused on implementing our new mission and vision through a new five-year strategic plan. We have continued developing new tours in line with our interpretive plan, thanks to funding by CT Humanities. The

I have been particularly involved in the development of our museum's and town's preparations for America250 – the upcoming 250th anniversary of the 1776 signing of the Declaration of Independence. As a member of Ridgefield's town commission tasked with marking this date, I am excited to help our community plan this commemoration and celebration. As always, I am extremely proud of the contributions of our Board. In June, we took time to recognize Patty Linnon and Jenn Hansen as they rotated off the Board – their

KTM&HC was awarded a generous grant from Ridgefield Thrift Shop to support a major restoration project for our historic tavern. From left to right: RTS volunteer and former KTM&HC board member Margo McEachern, KTM&HC Board President Sara Champion, and RTS volunteer Shirley Van Dam.



newest tour, "Creating Community," focuses on our site's fascinating early 20th-century history. On the fundraising front, our Cannonball Gala was once again a great success, honoring Don and Tina Sturges for their many contributions to KTM&HC and to Ridgefield.

impressive records of service have helped our organization thrive. We also welcomed new members: David Yaun and Eric Johnson, who have hit the ground running with much appreciated willingness to donate time, energy, and thoughtfulness to KTM&HC. Interested in volunteering at the museum? We have excellent opportunities for involvement – from Board service to school program docents to special events contributors – so please reach out to me.

Sara Champion

Sara Champion, Board President

Judi Pankenier sits on the new bench dedicated to her late husband, longtime KTM&HC volunteer Charlie Pankenier.



# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

'm excited to mark another fantastic year of progress for our organization, driven by the completion of our site reintegration project and the ongoing success of our interpretive plan and new tours. Our site has been transformed, with vastly improved parking, walkways, lighting, and clear sightlines - and the wonderful addition of a bench in memory of beloved volunteer Charlie Pankenier (see above).

Our new mission and vision have provided strong guidance for our ongoing commitment to preservation and education. Preservation efforts in FY24 have focused on repairs to the exterior of our c. 1713 tavern building. Wood siding, shingles, and windows have been carefully restored and re-painted, protecting one of our museum's most valuable assets.



On the education front, in FY24, school programs continued to be one of our strengths, with teachers and hundreds of students throughout the region taking advantage of our fun learning experiences. Our museum offerings have also been robust and wellattended. From our new 20th-century tour "Creating Community" and summer evening gatherings with Poetry in the Garden, to Keeler Kids trying to solve the mystery of the missing cannonball, to the interactive exhibit #HandsOnHistory and Heritage in Motion concerts with Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra, to our sold-out ghost tours that attract visitors from afar, we continue to prioritize community collaborations and humanities partners to engage our audiences. This includes our leadership in the planning and development of America250 programming, most of which will be implemented between July 4, 2025 and July 4, 2026. We're committed to helping audiences more deeply understand the Declaration of Independence – its words, its contemporary impact, and its legacies today -

At the May annual meeting – shifted from October to better align with our fiscal year – KTM&HC Director of Strategic Storytelling Katie Burton shared updates about the museum's new 20th-century tour, "Creating Community."

through a combination of programs and events that leverage our site-specific history and connect to larger national themes. Significantly, we'll be doing double-duty in 2026, as KTM&HC will also be marking our museum's very own anniversary: 60 years of serving the public through preservation and education! If you're interested in volunteering in any capacity, as we commemorate and celebrate these historic milestones, please reach out.

Operationally we continue to meet our metrics of success. With the addition of a new staff member - welcome Charlotte! we were able to increase our open hours for the busy summer season. Our Garden House remains a solid foundation for our museum operations, acting as a gathering space for our many programs and bringing in a reliable source of revenue as a private events venue.

To close, I want to express my appreciation for our multi-talented staff: a group of thoughtful, creative, and dedicated professionals who help our small museum have a huge impact for audiences young and old. Thank you!

Hibegod h. Cm.

Hildegard Grob. Executive Director



# **FINANCES**

We are fortunate to have a variety of revenue sources and wish to express our continued thanks for the support of our many members, donors and grantors, both public and private.

One of the most significant KTM&HC activities during FY24 was the completion of the transformation and integration of our four-acre campus. This has been a multi-year initiative and includes additional parking, improved lighting, landscaping, and walkways. As part of Connecticut's first Cultural District, our campus is a highlight for all visitors to Ridgefield – local, regional, and beyond – and as such represents a key economic driver for the town.

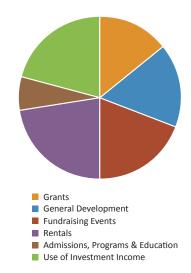
Our operational support for FY24 decreased versus FY23 largely due to lower levels of government grants and fewer private events in the wake of the pandemic years, a trend generally noticeable across our sector. Operational expenses increased somewhat, which reflects the increased complexity of our pro-

#### SOURCES OF OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

Grants and Restricted Donations	\$119,085
General Development	136,513
Fundraising Events	157,950
Rentals	185,985
Admissions, Programs & Education	55,475
Use of Investment Income	169,927

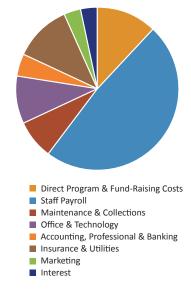
Total

\$824.935



#### **OPERATIONAL EXPENSES**

Direct Program & Fund-Raising Costs Staff Payroll & Benefits Maintenance & Collections Office & Technology Accounting & Other Professional Service Insurance & Utilities Marketing	\$100,128 399,479 64,147 76,642 es 37,073 92,765 27,902
Interest	26,799
Total	\$824,935



grams and operations. We used significantly more investment income compared to FY23, mainly for the site integration project as well as some unforeseen tree work.

As we look forward to FY25 and beyond, our attention will be focused on how best to observe and celebrate America250 in 2026

#### and the Battle of Ridgefield in 2027.

Financial results charted above are for operations only and exclude major repairs, depreciation, and investment activity (including investment fees). Note that all Capital Campaign activity is now complete.

























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1. School docents participate in a school program refresher workshop in preparation for the start of a busy spring. Volunteer docents help create fun, educational experiences for hundreds of students every year.

2. Volunteer Tamia Sullivan, a member of KTM&HC's dedicated Gardening Committee, carefully maintains the herb garden in front of the historic tavern.

3. Free crafts and activities at First Sunday programs in early 2024 brought dozens of families with young children to the site - including many who had never visited KTM&HC before.

4. Carpenter Jan Desiato restores wooden siding, shingles, and window sills on the historic tavern. Preservation efforts continued throughout FY24, thanks to grants from Ridgefield Thrift Shop and the Society of the Cincinnati.

5. Staff from CT Humanities and state legislators joined KTM&HC interpreter John Bradley as part of a tour and conversation about how museums like KTM&HC can commemorate and celebrate the upcoming 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence: America250.

6. In recognition of her many contributions to KTM&HC, high schooler Cora Meres (pictured with Joel Third) received the Bettie Jane Third Scholarship this year.

7. Central Connecticut State University professor Dr. Anthony Martin shares insights about archeological finds at the Revolutionary War-era encampment in Redding, as part of KTM&HC's Revolutionary Perspectives speaker series.

8. Coordinated by a hardworking and creative group of volunteers, the thoughtfully curated Holiday Boutique was a highly successful fundraiser and new member recruitment effort.

9. An enthusiastic Keeler Kids participant races to the finish line. KTM&HC's week-long youth programs focus on engaging young people in having fun while learning about our site and local history.

10. The October moon helps set the atmosphere for KTM&HC's annual Ghosts of Ridgefield specialty tours - once again, a completely sold-out event.

11. Elementary school students pay close attention as KTM&HC educator Ish Gupta explains the rules for skittles, a colonial-era game.

12. And . . . action! KTM&HC Chief Curator Catherine Prescott (right) films an introduction to the 2023 #HandsOnHistory exhibit, From Field to Fabric. Shot by Doug DeMarco (left), the video orients visitors to the wealth of content and interactive stations in the exhibit.

13. In late July, poet Marie Howe drew a huge crowd to the walled garden as part of the Poetry in the Garden series, a collaboration between KTM&HC and Ridgefield Poet Laureate Emerita Barb Jennes.

14. Thanks to Cannon Ridge, the Ridgefield chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, in April KTM&HC hosted American Revolution Experience, an exhibit focused on the varied experiences of people living during the late 1700s, as Americans fought for their independence from Britain. Photo by Paula Curry.

15. KTM&HC Board President Sara Champion (second from right) and Executive Director Hildegard Grob (far right) present 2024 Gala honorees Tina and Don Sturges with the Cannonball Award. Photo by Deborah O'Brien Photography.

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, 2023 and June 30, 2024. If your employer matched your donation, and/or you paid for membership, your name appears in the category that captures the combined total. Please direct corrections to the Museum office.

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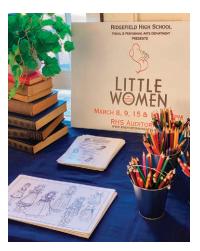
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# Keeler Legacy Circle

The Keeler Legacy Circle supports donors who would like to contribute to KTM&HC's long-term financial security through a bequest. Legacy membership represents an investment in, and a stewardship of, our museum.

Philip and Christine Lodewick Joel Third

# Friends Lost

We note with sadness the passing of the following friends:

Aldo Biagiotti **Clancy Fauntleroy** John Fenton Cordell Gehling **Thomas Longmire** Lee McMaster Missy Partridge Bart Pattie Earl Sloan Sylvia Sturges Joseph Trench Julius Tulipani Carl Ullman

Keeler Tavern was a FANAMANAL experience. Just the vibe and how every one was smiling all the time.... EXTRODANARY I don't have anything bad to say about this place."

- Lyle, 5th grader, Ridgefield



