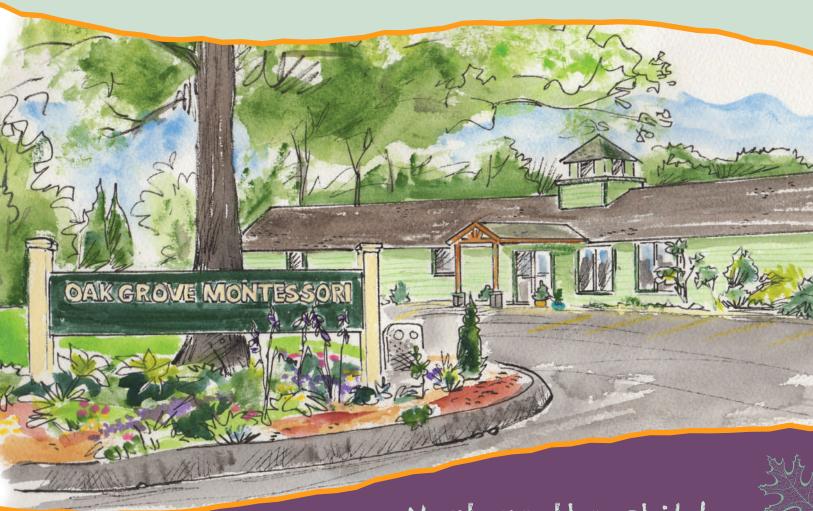


FALL 2018

## The Oak Grove Owl

A Newsletter and Annual Report for the Oak Grove Community



Nurture the child. Empower the student. Unleash the potential.

### Thoughts from the Head of School



### Creating and Sustaining Culture in Fast Changing Times

I have been thinking a lot about *culture* lately—the word itself, the meaning, the importance, the relevance. According to many scholars, the word culture is one of the most complicated words in the English language.

The word culture is derived from the Middle French culture, which in turn is derived from Latin. From the Latin, culture comes from the word *cultura*, meaning to care, to cherish or to honor. From the French, culture

comes from the word *colere*, meaning to till, to prepare or to maintain. What makes the word culture such a complicated term? Culture is not stagnating or fixed. Culture is essentially fluid and constantly in motion. A culture is rooted in its past, and constantly evolving to meet the needs of the current changes, evolutions and innovations.

This summer Oak Grove completed its ten-year accreditation process with Connecticut Association of Independent Schools. This is an extremely important accreditation for the school and the process involves deeply examining all aspects of the school. It is a time to recognize all of the hard work that has been accomplished over the past ten years and also to identify areas that still need attending to. After the accreditation was completed (and we did pass—with flying colors!—and are now accredited again for ten more years), I spent a lot of time this summer re-reading our self-study and reflecting on the entire process. My take away, in a nut shell, is that Oak Grove is a successful school *because* of its culture.

In my opinion, there are two components that are necessary to create and to sustain a successful culture.

- 1. Shared Purpose *Nurture the child. Empower the student. Unleash the potential.* Guided by the work of Dr. Maria Montessori and the standards of the American Montessori Society, Oak Grove's shared purpose is to create a learning experience that prepares the whole child—academically, socially, and emotionally. This preparation instills in our children a love of learning, critical thinking, collaborative thinking, hard work, independence, and respect and kindness. The culture of Oak Grove is built on the strength and the importance of this shared purpose.
- 2. Safety A culture succeeds over time, not because it is smart, but because it is safe. A safe culture is a culture that values the individual uniqueness that each member of the community brings. A safe culture is constantly reminding all of its members that each of us is a critical part of this group, and that this group is special and has very high standards. A safe culture gives room for all of us to make mistakes and to fail. It is this safety that allows deep and respectful relationships to form and grow, inviting everyone to be a part of the shared purpose, the future and the long term vision.

The culture of Oak Grove is built on the commitment to the health and development of children. The community is bonded together by its drive to see a better world and a better tomorrow through respect, acceptance and empathy. Oak Grove is a community of children, parents, teachers, educators, board members and friends working together to strengthen and to move forward this shared purpose.

It is the strength of this shared purpose that enables us to meet the uncertainty of the future confidently, without pause or hesitation. Change is a part of life. We must greet it with open arms. Change offers us opportunity and excitement. Change also tests the strength of a culture. A strong culture invites change and knows that without change and growth, the culture will become stale and extraneous. External change is constant. We face economic changes, political changes and other global changes that will impact our culture. We will also face internal changes. Internal changes are harder. They are more personal. Students graduating, board members finishing their terms, teachers or staff or heads of schools leaving or retiring, these are the internal changes that test the strength of a culture.

Over the past eight years as Head of School of Oak Grove, my role has been to be the number one cheerleader and fan of the school. It is my job to make sure that every person—every child, every parent, every teacher, every staff member, every board member, every alumni and every friend of Oak Grove—has a voice and understands each of their very important roles in our shared purpose. Our culture is our strength. This I know. This was reaffirmed through our accreditation process over and over. The culture of Oak Grove is built from the past and continues to grow and flourish through this community's dedication to maintaining safety for all of us with a shared purpose and vision for the future. We will greet our future and the inevitable changes with anticipation and with strength. And ten years from now, after the next accreditation, Oak Grove's culture will still be based on a community committed to safety and to a shared purpose.



and truly interested in the well being of our children. Thank you!"

Magdalene Skretta, current parent

### ... Where are They Now?

For over 37 years, Oak Grove has educated hundreds of students. These alumni leave here and join a talented group of men and women who are leaders in so many different fields. Time and time again we hear from our alumni how their Montessori education and Oak Grove prepared them with the skills they needed to greet the next chapters of their lives. Most notably, they comment about the communication skills, time management skills and collaborative work abilities that they learned at Oak Grove.

The research continues to show unequivocally that an educational setting based on student centered learning, high levels of engagement, peer teaching, collaboration and problem solving, yield the most positive long term results for students. The multi-aged Montessori classroom and three year cycle offers a curriculum that prepares our children with the skills they need to greet their futures with excitement and anticipation, and not with uncertainty and anxiety.

The most meaningful way to know about the outcomes of an Oak Grove education and experience is to hear directly from our graduates themselves. We asked three more graduates to share some thoughts about their time at Oak Grove. They were asked about their lives after Oak Grove, their hobbies and interests, their real-world vision, and about how their time at Oak Grove has influenced their journey.

Former students and families are vital to the Oak Grove community. You serve as an integral support system for the school and help us paint a vivid picture of success for our current and future families. We are committed to continuing and building alumni relationships and want to hear from you and know what you are doing now! Please email, call or stop by. We would love to swap stories and keep you connected.

**PROFILE** What are our graduates doing now?

REAL-WORLD VISION What is important to our graduates?

IMPACT What habits, skills, character qualities do our graduates trace directly back to their time at Oak Grove?



### Emma Drewry



### Profile

Emma graduated from
Oak Grove in 2010 and is
set to graduate from the
University of Southern
California's School of
Cinematic Arts this coming
spring. Because of her
college level work during
high school, both through
Eastern Connecticut State
University and Summers at

Stanford, as well as her AP course load, Emma will graduate a year early with a major in Cinema and Media Studies. Emma currently works at start-up digital media company, 96 Next, directly under Bernie Su, the highly awarded and renowned writer, producer, and forward thinker. Emma is working on their new show, Artificial, as the transmedia editor, handling online presence, the characters' online personas, and the show's live community management. As well, Emma has spent the last year writing, producing and shooting her first web series, Recon, which recently wrapped up and is now in post production. The post production includes the transmedia elements, a full scale alternate reality game, as well as the preparation of Season 2.

After she graduates, Emma plans to work full time in digital entertainment at 96 Next, as well as continuing to produce independently.

"The independence Oak Grove encouraged is a large part of the drive to pursue my passions I have today. I pride myself on dedicating myself whole-heartedly to the projects I commit to. The priority Oak Grove places on a harmonious community and considering the well-being of others alongside your own, is something that I aim to achieve on my sets, and something I strive to bring to the workplaces I belong to."

### Real-World Vision

"If you could change anything in the world, what would you change?" While there are obviously many troubling aspects of the current climate we live in, the lack of respect for basic facts concerns me. If we cannot agree to acknowledge basics truths for what they are, we will not be able to progress and resolve the divisiveness our country faces.

### Impact

My involvement with film comes directly from my years at Oak Grove. In 5th grade I began using the classroom's camera. In 6th grade my senior project was a 20 minute short film. This sparked a love for film and television, and compelled me to pursue a degree and career in entertainment.

"The creativity and freedom to explore our interests at Oak Grove, is what allowed me to find my passion. I am grateful for the fact that the curiosity and creativity Oak Grove encourages has remained with me ever since."

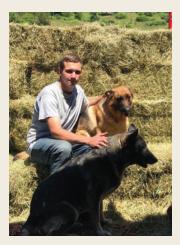
### Things I remember from Oak Grove...

"Oak Grove's strong sense of community and the support of curiosity have stuck with me the most. Being allowed to read endlessly on the subjects that fascinated me and to channel those interests into productive projects taught me to pursue what I loved and gave me the skills needed to turn my interests into something more. Additionally, the emphasis on charity and giving back has anchored me in a philosophy of the greater good."

"We are very thankful for the amazing education and the heartfelt support that our family has gotten in the 12 years we have been at Oak Grove. We will miss you greatly."

Lidia Howard, parent of two alumni, and former Board Member

### Olin Green



### Profile

After graduating Oak
Grove in 2011, Olin
went on to St. Mary-St.
Joseph School and EO
Smith High School. Olin's
academic record showcases
his passion for learning
and his desire to soak up
all that his experiences
have to offer him. Olin
graduated number one
from his class at St. Mary-

St. Joseph School. In 7th grade he was nominated and attended the Junior National Young Leaders Conference in Washington DC. During his four years at EO Smith, Olin achieved High Honors every semester. He graduated high school with 46 UConn college credits. He was awarded heavily at the end of his senior year with eight awards and scholarships, including The President's Award for Overall Outstanding Academic Excellence in Every Subject. At EO Smith Olin also played soccer all four years, was a member of DECA, and a member of the Engineering Club.

Currently, Olin is on the Dean's List at UConn majoring in both Civil and Environmental Engineering and minoring in Math. When Olin is not entrenched in his studies, he works on his family's farm and spends as much time as possible fishing, swimming and enjoying the outdoors.

#### Real-World Vision

"If I could change anything in the world it would be the global obsession with technology. I definitely use it and it is part of my daily life. But what people have to remind themselves is that you don't need to post a selfie on social media to make a memory."

### Impact

"Oak Grove has left an indelible mark on my life, and I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to attend. Through the patience and understanding of the staff, particularly David and Willa, I was able to become selfconfident, independent and organized. As a result, I navigated my subsequent academic years with sureness and success."

"The mission and philosophy of Oak Grove honestly guides me every day of my life. At Oak Grove I learned to be respectful because I was treated with respect, and from that I was able to develop and discover myself. Because of the creative atmosphere and unique approach to learning that is part of the Oak Grove classrooms, I developed an appreciation for learning that involves most any topic."

"Because of my Oak Grove experience, I am self-directed, and extremely organized, and I have the ability to tackle life's challenges with confidence. Oak Grove taught me how to develop my own interests and to be respectful and appreciate my peers and their individuality. And one thing that always stands out is the overall friendliness of everyone at the school. It was fun to be there, which made learning enjoyable."

"I can't imagine what the outcome would have been for me if I had not had the opportunity to be part of Oak Grove."

The year after Olin graduated from Oak Grove – his 7th grade year at St. Mary – St. Joseph School, he was invited to speak at the Oak Grove Annual Auction and Gala. Here is an excerpt from his speech:

"Hi, my name is Olin Green. I graduated from Oak
Grove last year and wanted to share with you a little bit
about myself and my experiences while I was a student
at Oak Grove. The first thing I want to share with you
is that if you met me a few years ago, you would have
NEVER guessed that I would be up here talking to you!
I was extremely shy. As a matter of fact, I really do not
think I spoke one time my first year at Oak Grove. (and
I only spoke a couple of words the following few years!)
I had no idea what school was all about, but I knew that
being in that building with all these nice people seemed
okay with me!"

Olin then eloquently walks us through his time in the 3-6, 6-9 and 9-12 classrooms. He shares specific stories about each room and about each teacher.

"I want to express my sincere gratitude to Oak Grove for preparing me so well. And not just the academic preparedness; I want to thank everyone at Oak Grove for preparing me so well to embrace life and all that it has to offer! Thank you!"

### Angel Martin



### Profile

After Oak Grove, Angel went on to Brooklyn Middle School and Woodstock Academy. She is currently a senior at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut. Angel has a double academic major – African American Studies and

American Studies. After graduating this coming spring, Angel plans on traveling, learning Spanish and applying to law school. She spent this past summer as an intern for a criminal defense attorney in Boston. When Angel is not pursuing her academics or involved in student/political organizing, she enjoys singing, tennis, weight-lifting, cooking and writing.

#### Real-World Vision

"If you could change one thing in the world, what would you change?"

I would make lying impossible. I believe that integrity is the most important quality someone can have. All we really have in this world is our own truth and our own word. Aside from honesty being an important individual quality, I also think it is important on a larger scale. I feel that so many issues would not exist today if people were unable to lie.

"Willa, Nancy and David prepared me so well for my academics in public school. I remember being nervous about this and expressing my anxiety to Nancy. She looked me right in the eyes and very calmly yet firmly said, "Angel, you are ready." That was enough to give me the confidence I needed."

"The attention each staff member pays to every student's development is incredible. I feel like any academic need my child has will be addressed consistently, throughout the year, in a manner that honors my child's personality and harnesses his strengths."

Emily Schutte, current parent

#### Impact

"Oak Grove taught me to love learning. After Oak Grove, I saw many of my fellow classmates—who did not have the opportunity to attend a Montessori school—hating or dreading school and schoolwork. Yes, homework and exams and essays are tough and stressful, and yes, there are so many flaws with the education system, but I believe Oak Grove single-handedly gave me the tools to find joy and purpose and fulfillment in learning, even when it was hard work. Oak Grove also taught me, from a very young age, to accept people who were different from me. Oak Grove allowed me to live authentically and show love and compassion for those who were different from me and through that allowance, Oak Grove taught me the importance of acceptance."

"Independence guides me in the way that I can feel self-empowered, and I think Oak Grove did a great job at teaching collective independence. We all could be our own unique person, but still have a support system and a community behind us."

### What Defines the Oak Grove Experience...

Oak Grove gives youth agency over their lives. Many schooling systems strip that autonomy from youth at such a young age. The fact that after we left school each day, we did not have homework and we could just be kids is a part of that. Oak Grove allowed us to structure our learning time, and we got to explore our creative brain just as much as we got to explore our academic brain. Oak Grove supports and enhances the magic of childhood.

"Children have an inherent love for learning, because of Oak Grove, I have been able to hold onto this love of learning my whole life."





From the entire Board of Trustees, we are extremely grateful to each of the parents, grandparents, family members, and friends who come together in support of Oak Grove each year. Thank you!!!!



Micheal Gnazzo, Chairman Thomas Army, Vice Chairman Ricardo Trindade, Treasurer Sherry D'Alessandro, Secretary Kelly Mabry, at large Executive Committee Member Sue Angelides, ex-officio Jon Landry Amy Lambeck



"Oak Grove is a place where each of my kids can grow and develop in their own way, at their own pace. I am a board member because I believe in this school and in this community."

Ricardo Trindade



"Oak Grove has given our kids the opportunity for individualized learning. This cultivation of independence and creative thinking has helped them develop their own path."

Michael Gnazzo



"Oak Grove is our home away from home. Our three kids are thriving, happy and safe. The time and resources that I give to the Board of Trustees is our family's way of saying thank you."

Bill Piotroski



Raymond Noeker

Bill Piotroski

Robert Powell

"Oak Grove is more than a school. While the phenomenal staff provide an excellent Montessori education to our children, they do so much more. Oak Grove allows our children to feel comfortable in their own skin and feel accepted, and models to them how to help others feel the same way. Oak Grove fosters the growth of the whole child in a way that will make our future so much brighter."

Amy Lambeck



"Oak Grove has provided an environment where our children have grown to be strong independent learners and gained self-advocacy skills. Our whole family has become part of the fabric of a community unlike any other. As a board member, I have loved being able to give back to Oak Grove for the countless ways it has enriched my family."

Ion Landry



"An authentic Montessori school will naturally draw out the uniqueness of every person connected to it: Students, staff, parents and trustees, we are all participants in the ebb and flow that creates the caring community at Oak Grove."

### Thank You All for Enriching Our School with Your Generosity

THANK YOU, parents, grandparents, alumni, staff, board members and friends, for your tremendous support over the 2017-2018 school year. With your help and generosity, we had our most successful fundraising year in the history of the school - a true reflection of the strength and commitment of our community. Like all independent schools, Oak Grove relies on philanthropic support to help provide for the projects and programs that assist us in nurturing the children you have entrusted to us. We received 100% participation in the Annual Fund by both board members and staff. We also received a record 70% participation from our current parents and guardians. We strive for 100% participation from current families, staff and board members. 100% participation demonstrates the dedication and vitality of the school community and inspired larger donors and foundations to invest in Oak Grove. #powerofparticipation

THE OAK GROVE ANNUAL FUND ensures that our educational programs and thoughtful investments in faculty and facilities are maintained and strengthened for years to come. Your generosity inspires in us a commitment to uniquely nurture our children's love of learning as well as their sense of personal and social responsibility. THANK YOU!

### 2017-2018 Annual Fund Donors

### Champion (\$5,000 \$ above)

Anonymous Tiffany and Glenn Blumenstein Shannon and Frank Demarest

### Guardian (\$2,500 -\$4, 999)

Lucretia Philanthropic Foundation United Technologies Emily and Todd Schutte

### Sustainer (\$1,000 - \$2, 499)

Deidre Delaney and James Turner Lauren and Mick DiGrazia Pat and Ray Noeker

#### Ambassador (\$500 -\$999)

Susan and Michael Angelides Sherry D'Alessandro and Geri Langlois Linda and Robert Ewing Cindy and Joe Henry Betsy and Bill Horn Amy and Scott Lambeck Kathy Koljian Magdalene Skretta and Robert Ventor-Santiago

### Supporter (\$250 -\$499)

Virginia and Thomas Army Willa Biewald Roberta and Charles Duevel Julie and Mike Giannelli Priscilla Grav Roxana Mocanu and Ricardo Trindade Leo J. and Rose Pageau Trust

apologies and notify Susan Angelides at susan@ogms.org.

Charlotte Pyle & David Silsbee Janina and Bill Piotroski Leslie Poulos & Bill Stover Liz and Robert Powell Pam and Joseph Smey Janet Welch & James Wohl Chenwei Zhao & Ben Lai

#### Friend (Up to \$249) Accounting Resources, Inc.

Karina Adler & Jarrod Thompson

JoAnn and Don Aitken Hannah Angelides Rikki Angelides Hannah Army Linda Baah Lindsev Baah Guv Bailev Teresa Bielecki Audrey Blake Kara Boylan & Taso Balis Laurie and Tim Boulay Paul Brazeau Megan Burnett & Josh Milotte Raechel and James Chabot-Weingart Bishop Clark Ashley and Bill Covey Lisa and Mason Delafield Jean and Tom DeSalle Craig Deutchmann Denise Deutchmann Jeannette and Jonathan Ferris Missy and Jim Garner Elizabeth and Michael Gnazzo Karen Green Nadina and Jason Henry Lindsey Hepple & Kyle Dunnack Mary Holer & Jacob Isleib Lidia and Greg Howard Lisa Jordon Pat and Bill Jordan

Sheila Kaytis

Pam Knapp

This report gratefully acknowledges gifts received between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2018. Donations

to the "Raise Your Bid Card" auction item are included in the Annual Fund as well. Great care was

taken to ensure accuracy of this report. If there are any errors or omissions, please accept our deepest

Nan and Matthew Kyer LaFlamme Plumbing Linda Lambeck Sarah and Jon Landry Peter Leeds Kelly Mabry Helen and Andrew Martin Heather Meehan Eileen Metzgar Jennifer and Gerald Nelson Nicole and Steven Nollet Laurene and Iim Palmer Shannon and Dan Polhemus Maria Pope Merle Potchinsky and Jeremy Schwartz Nancy and Ken Rawn Deborah Richards Rose Rivera Tirza Roda & Chris McNaboe Emily Shull & Marten van Dijk Rebecca Slevin Natasha Sheer

Helen and Larry Tangari

Pam & William Thompson

Robyn VanLandingham

Bobbi and David Teva

Alene and Mac Toedt

John Toedt

Tia Whalen

Deborah Wilson

### This year's Annual Fund helped directly support:

- OGMS Music Program and Concerts
- Professional Development for Staff
- Building Safety and Security Enhancements
- Elementary Classroom Field Trip and Experiential Learning Days



Sherri D'Alessandro

### 2018 Gala & Auction

On Saturday May 12, 2018 the Oak Grove extended community came together for our Annual Gala and Auction. We put on our bell bottoms, tie dyes, and platform shoes, listened to some groovy LPs, and were So Happy Together! What a fun night of peace, love and commitment to Oak Grove. Over \$50,000 was raised for Oak Grove through the silent and live auctions, the raffles and the sponsorships.

Thank you to entire Auction Committee for the tireless hard work throughout the year. Thank you to everyone who helped to make this evening so much fun and such a huge success!

### 2018 So Happy Together Auction Committee

Beth Acly Gnazzo Sherry D'Alessandro Cindy Henry Emily Schutte Magdalene Skretta Sue Angelides A special thanks to Auctioneer Jim Turner & Photographer Teresa Bielecki

### Thank You to Our Sponsors

Potter Funeral Home Manchester Funeral Home Holmes Watkins Funeral Home Reservoir Financial Cirrus Structural Engineering Savings Institute Bank and Trust The Vinci Group Wireless Zone Hebron Veterinary Hospital Laizhao Family MPL Construction and Property Maintenance Japanese Acupuncture Clinic Brennan Electric LaFlamme Plumbing and Heating Gulemo Printers

### Thank You to Our Donors

Cassandra and Ed Acly
Jeanne Adler
The Adventure Park at Storrs
JoAnn Aitken
Sue Angelides
Hannah Army
Thomas Army
Virginia Army
Lindsey Baah
The Baah Spa
Jennifer Baer, DMD
Sharon Beebe, Milton C. Beebe

Sharon Beebe, Milton C. Beebe Construction Teresa Bielecki Willa Biewald Blackfish Restaurant Tiffany and Glenn Blumenstein Boston Red Sox

The Burnett/Milotte Family
Patricia Calvo

Children's Museum of West Hartford Cloverleigh Farm

Connecticut National Golf Club Connecticut Science Center Connecticut Tigers Baseball Vicky and Peter Crouse

Sherry D'Alessandro

The D'Alessandro/Langlois Family

Day's Jewelers
The Delaney/Turner Family
ECSU Soccer Camp, Greg DeVito
The Dinda Family
Dog Lane Cafe
Foxwoods Resort and Casino
Julie Giannelli
Beth Acly Gnazzo
Michael Gnazzo
Karen Green and Bruce McCann
Michael Jordan Restaurant
Cindy Henry

Joe Henry
Sara Heumann
Holiday Hill Day Camp
The Hoot
Horizons Staff
Janina Howard, Lucky Paws
The Howard Family
Infinity Music Hall and Bistro
The Johnson Family
Lisa Jordan

Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts

Ashley and Virginia Kellenberger Kerri Art Gallery Kid City Museum Geno's Grille Graham Kolar
Kramer Portraits
Green Beauty
Ladd's Garden Center
Amy Lambeck
Jon Landry
Sarah Landry
The Landry Family
Chéri Langlois
The Lutz Children's Muse

The Landry Family
Chéri Langlois
The Lutz Children's Museum
Logee's Plants for Home & Garden
Kelly Mabry
Heidi Martin
G.E. Masana
Roxana Mocanu
Mohegan Sun Casino
Muddy Feet Flower Farm
Pat and Ray Noeker
Old Sturbridge Village
Organic Valley
Paradigm Chiropractic
Bill Piotroski

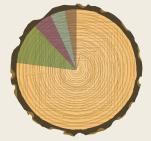
Janina Piotroski
Robert Powell
Purring Pottery
Kristen Roberts and Eric Jansen
Emily Schutte
The Schutte Family

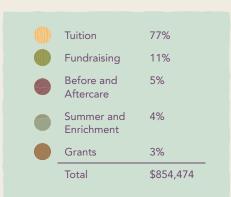
David Silsbee Magdalene Skretta Solo Bella Hair Studio Stone Age Rock Gym Amy Sluyter Thread City Dance Truro Vineyards Ricardo Trindade UConn Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry Robyn Vanlandingham Laurie Vega-Boulay The Venator-Skretta Family Kelly Verret Vinevard Vines Wadsworth Atheneum Waldron's Studio 88 Walt Disney World The Welch/Wohl Family Aaron Wentraub WilliBrew Willimantic Food Co-op Willimantic Waste Paper Co. Inc. Wireless Zone, North Windham Yale Peabody Museum of Natural

# OGMS Statement of Activities and Expenses

for the fiscal year July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018

Income Expenses



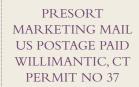




1









Front cover artwork by Bill Dougal





Cabassa, Julia Trindade, Hannah Army