



*Ski Tuesday is one of the most popular programs for students at Windham-Ashland-Jewett (WAJ) Schools. Revitalized through a combined effort of Windham Mountain, WAJ, and the Windham Foundation, kids cultivate a love for the Mountain while learning to ski.
Photo courtesy of Windham Mountain*

Windham Foundation

Two Decades of Impact

Often referred to as the ‘doers of innumerable good deeds,’ the Windham Foundation has made a significant impact on our community. “They are about others,” noted a local resident when asked to describe the Foundation. “They do the right thing for Windham.”

The Windham Foundation was founded in 2004 by a group of second-homeowners who wanted to give back. All had a history with Windham. Each had been skiing at Windham Mountain with their families for years and loved the town. These folks were supporting causes in their communities downstate and saw the benefit. They wanted to do the same for Windham.

With little fanfare and an all-volunteer board of directors, the Windham Foundation began its work.

The Windham Foundation’s mission is to preserve and enhance the quality of life in Windham. They look for gaps, places where they can contribute and make a difference for everyone. They fund programs in education, recreation, and the arts plus support preservation and beautification efforts like the CD Lane Park initiative in 2021. The Main Street Tree Program was

launched to restore trees wiped out by Hurricane Irene. Since 2011, they have planted 75 trees on Main Street in Windham and throughout Hensonville and Maplecrest. Partnering with the Community of Windham Foundation, their current initiative, Stumped, is grinding away at unsightly tree stumps.

June is the kick-off for many programs sponsored by the Windham Foundation, beginning with the Windham Ashland Jewett Central School (WAJ) graduation. This year, four WAJ graduates joined the ranks of previous winners to receive college and trade school scholarships. To date, 43 students have received awards totaling \$311,250. Goldman Gives, an award funded by Goldman Sachs, was established to recognize a graduate with exemplary character, community involvement, and leadership. Recipient Grace Moran said, “I’m grateful for the Windham Foundation’s support and encouragement and all they do for Windham and my classmates.”

Programs sponsored by the Foundation during the summer months are spot on for local families. “My kids stay busy,” said one mom. There’s the reading program at the Windham



Left: Fire truck in Windham's Annual Fourth of July Parade. Right: Art Explorers at Sugar Maples



Public Library, Art Explorers at Sugar Maples, and swimming at Minekill State Park. They read books, make friends, and work on different art projects. It makes going back to school a lot easier. Candace Begley, director of the Windham Public Library, deeply appreciates the work of the Windham Foundation, saying, “they sponsor the summer reading program and help us meet the evolving needs of our community.”

Education is at the core of the Windham Foundation’s values. Soon after the Foundation was formed, WAJ kicked off a capital campaign to overhaul the school’s 100-year-old infrastructure and façade. The Windham Foundation raised \$1.2 million to help address needs not covered. “The contributions of the Windham Foundation took us to a new place as a school,” said John Wiktoro, WAJ Superintendent. Funds were used to build a new library, purchase classroom computers, set up a distance-learning center, and install basketball and tennis courts and an outdoor playground. The Foundation has continued their focus on education by funding after school enrichment, uniforms for the band, science and nature field trips and outings to the Thomas Cole and Olana Museums. Another notable effort was the Dental Van, a five-year program funded by the Windham Foundation in cooperation with Columbia Memorial Hospital, offering dental education and services to WAJ kids right here at home.

On weekends and throughout the year, families pack up and go to CD Lane Park. With endless activities—boating, kayaking, volleyball, sand building, and nature walks to name a few—most are not aware that as early as 2019, the Park was rarely used. In response to the shut down in 2020, Windham Foundation joined forces with the Town of Windham to restore and enhance CD Lane Park. The goal was to give families and individuals a place to go where they could be outdoors and with nature. The Foundation’s contribution of \$147,870 went a long way in restoring the grounds, beach, and volleyball and basketball courts. Funds were also used to purchase boats, kayaks, grills, life jackets, balls, bats, mitts, and a storage unit. The project was further augmented with in-kind services from the community. The Town of Windham did their part then and now in providing maintenance for the Park. Windham Foundation contributors Charlie McGuffog, Peter Shapiro, and Mike Troccoli lead and

orchestrated the project with town hall. They did a stellar job for everyone.

Gloves, masks, communication equipment, the jaws of life, a generator and a commercial washer to clean and maintain their gear top the list for the Foundation’s support for our First Responders. These folks put their lives on the line for everyone. A new kitchen and handicap accessible entranceway for VFW Post 1545, a new commercial refrigerator and construction of Windham Food Pantry, and the Windham Path were projects funded by or contributed to by the Windham Foundation. When the 500-year flood roared through Windham in 2011, so did help from the Windham Foundation. Going door to door, finding out what people needed, the Foundation raised nearly \$1 million to help people and businesses get back on their feet. People said Windham came back faster than any town on the mountaintop. It was a full community effort.

Ski Tuesday has again become an inspiring activity for WAJ kids. Revitalized through a combined effort of Windham Mountain, WAJ, and the Windham Foundation, kids cultivate a love for the Mountain while learning to ski. “Their favorite day is Tuesday,” said Mrs. Moore, math teacher and WAJ coordinator. “It’s more than skiing. Kids learn safety rules and how to be respectful on and off the mountain. Several parents come each week to help out.” Proof again that Windham is a very special place.

For over two decades, the Windham Foundation has channeled its resources and energy into making Windham a better place to live, work, and visit. With a focus on education and the arts, Main Street beautification and recreational opportunities, the Foundation has left an indelible mark on the town’s landscape and the hearts of its residents. With such an impressive track record of accomplishments, where to now? “The Foundation is funded through personal donations. Our work depends on how successful we are at fundraising,” said board member Phyllis Parrish. “It’s an interesting time for our town. As Windham continues to grow and evolve, therein lies the opportunity for the Windham Foundation to help shape the future of our town.”

**All donations are welcome at
www.windhamfoundation.com/donate.**