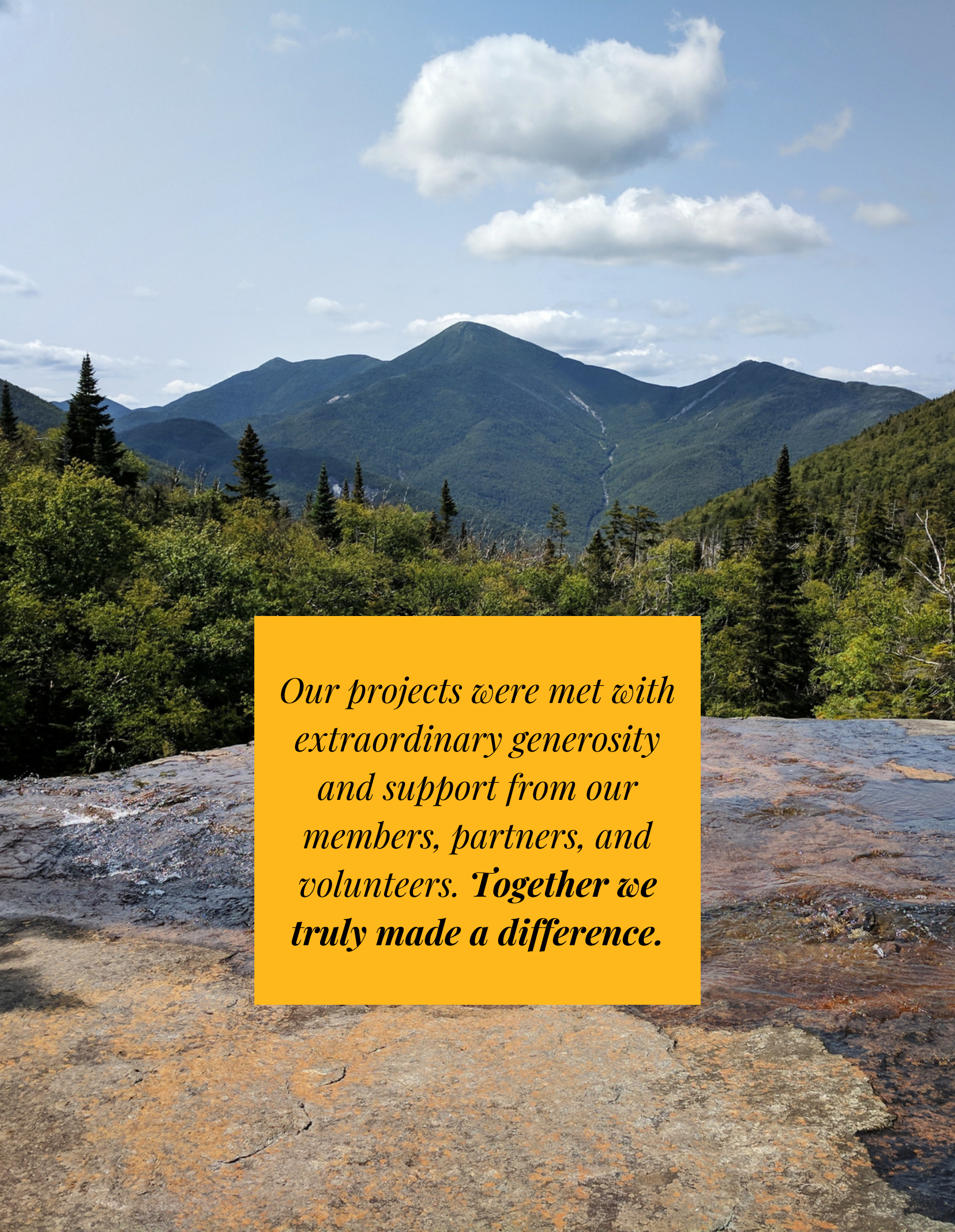


2020 Annual Report



Photo Credit: Ben Stechschulte





Our projects were met with extraordinary generosity and support from our members, partners, and volunteers. Together we truly made a difference.

A note FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Never has our work felt more imperative than in 2020. As the coronavirus pandemic swept across the globe we were collectively called to lock down, mask up, and support each other through a once-in-a-lifetime crisis. We sprung into action to serve Adirondack communities and our projects were met with extraordinary generosity and support from our members, partners, and volunteers. Together, we truly made a difference.

Our Emergency Food Packages project showcased what is possible when we join together to catalyze charity, resilience, and innovation. After a decade of leading the charge to reduce road salt, we celebrated the signing of the Randy Preston Road Salt Reduction Act by Gov. Andrew Cuomo on December 3, 2020. Our work on Universal Broadband Access took on a whole new level of importance, as the pandemic forced us all to work, learn, and seek medical care from home.

In spite of the obstacles, we were able to successfully advance key goals in all of our existing project areas and expand into uncharted territory. We scaled our work to meet the needs of our community, and as a result, our annual budget doubled in 2020. With the overwhelming support of a record 600 members and 500 first-time donors supporting our Emergency Food Packages, we achieved a new level of impact and visibility in the Adirondacks during a time riddled with challenges and scarcity.

If pandemic-related challenges were not enough, in October we tragically lost our good friend and Board Chair, Tom Boothe. Tom has left his mark in our communities and in our hearts, and he will be fondly remembered. We look forward to honoring his legacy in 2021 with the launch of the Tom Boothe Adirondack Internship.

Thank you to our generous members, incredible partners, and to the people we serve. Our accomplishments are your accomplishments, too. We invite you to journey through these pages for a look back on our most impactful year since AdkAction's founding in 2011.

Sincerely,



B. Christenson

Brittany Christenson
Executive Director



Steve Maikowski

Steve Maikowski
Board Chair

Our Team



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*Thomas Boothe served as
Chair of the board until his
passing in October 2020.*

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Brittany Christenson
Executive Director



Theresa Mitrowitz
Administrative Assistant



Kristina Hartzell
Communications Coordinator

Special thanks to Hannah Grall for her contributions to our organization as a staff member during the first half of 2020.



REMEMBERING Tom Boothe

A Legacy of Service, Adventure, and Friendship

On October 30, 2020, AdkAction's Board Chair, Tom Boothe, passed away while hiking with friends. Tom was 71 years old. In his professional life, Tom was a Captain in the U.S. Navy Civil Engineer Corps who served his country for over 30 years. He lived in Saranac Lake with his beloved wife of 48 years, Betty Boothe. He spent his summers on Osgood Pond, a spot he had been visiting with his family since he was only two years old. Tom had two brilliant sons and he adored his grandchildren.

Tom was a natural leader, a great friend, and a charismatic champion for his community. His passion for the work of AdkAction led him to continually identify and support new, ambitious projects to give back to the place about which he cared so much.

Tom most recently focused his efforts on the Emergency Food Packages project. He delivered food packages door-to-door every Thursday for several months during the pandemic to make sure his neighbors had enough to eat. Tom was also passionate about creating a new whitewater park feature near the Mayor Frank Ratigan Memorial Bridge in Saranac Lake. Tom served as the chair of the whitewater project, helping secure state funding to bring vitality and recreational opportunities to the river walk area. The project is expected to come to fruition within the next few years.

AdkAction will forever be a stronger organization thanks to Tom's work to advance vibrant and inclusive communities and enhance environmental quality in the Adirondacks. In an effort to recognize Tom's contributions and impact, we have established the Tom Boothe Adirondack Internship. This annual program will support the academic, professional, and personal development of one college student each year.

To learn more about the Tom Boothe Adirondack Internship Program, please visit: www.adkaction.org/internship.



Project Impacts

64,710 meals

Our Emergency Food Packages project delivered meals to our neighbors in need and supported farmers and furloughed food service workers.

\$125,000 to farms

We significantly contributed to the local economy while preventing food waste, supporting 28 farms and 146 farmworkers.

More broadband

We are working towards a goal of "100@100": 100% of households and businesses have affordable access to broadband speeds of at least 100 megabits per second.

Major legislation

The Randy Preston Road Salt Reduction Act passed in the NYS Assembly and Senate and was signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo in December.

One book

We created a coffee table book to celebrate three years of our Keeseville Plein Air Festival, an arts event that has played an important role in community revitalization.

206,558 lbs

Our new Compost for Good project diverted over 200,00 pounds of food waste away from landfills and converted it into valuable compost for our land, while keeping 27,600 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions out of the atmosphere.

1,193 native plants

Our annual pollinator-friendly native plant sale empowered gardeners across the Adirondacks to increase pollinator habitat in their own backyards.

Two pollinator habitats

We planted pollinator habitat at two locations in 2020, in partnership with Saranac Lake Community Solar and the Upper Saranac Foundation.





Featured Project Emergency Food Packages

By mid-March of 2020, communities across the Adirondack region were beginning to feel a seismic shift rippling out from the early COVID-19 epicenter in New York City, and AdkAction's team knew that it was time to pivot in response to the developing pandemic. We began thinking about how best to address three major overlapping pandemic-induced challenges: increased food insecurity and hunger, a sharp rise in unemployment due to lockdowns, and uncertainty faced by local farmers who had lost access to wholesale markets.

We determined that we could help address all three issues at once by purchasing food from local farms, paying furloughed workers to prepare it, and deliver the packages to the doorsteps of our neighbors in need. We partnered with The Hub on the Hill, a nonprofit food hub in Essex which had kitchen and storage facilities, staff capacity, and delivery vehicles to help send food packages out to doorsteps of families in need across the region. AdkAction staff created a prototype food package and coordinated with the Joint Council for Economic Opportunity, Adirondack Community Action Program, and Community Connections to identify people in need of emergency food assistance, and the Emergency Food Packages project was born.



We designed the Emergency Food Packages (EFPs) to contain 15 meals worth of food. To ensure that people with disabilities, the elderly, and those without kitchen tools or cooking skills could use the packages, they were designed to contain prepared meals and soup that could be thawed and warmed using only a microwave. Fresh organic eggs, yogurt, fresh-baked bread, granola, fresh greens, apples, and other snacks were also included to round out the offerings.

Adirondack Foundation provided seed funding and we launched a campaign with an ambitious goal of raising \$55,000 to provide EFPs to 100 families per week for ten consecutive weeks. The outpouring of support from the community was striking: more than 700 donors, with an average donation of \$128, contributed to the project. At least two individuals donated their entire \$1200 stimulus checks to the project. Our initial goal was shattered as we raised over \$150,000 to provide tens of thousands of meals to the community.

After opening her first EFP, one mother texted our staff to say, "I almost cried when I opened it. I've never been in a position where I've needed help like this so it's not easy but this is a huge relief."

Another EFP recipient highlighted the important role our project played in helping immunocompromised individuals stay home and stay safe, saying, "I have an autoimmune disease and have been limited in where I can go to procure food during the COVID-19 outbreak. I also appreciate that this box contains local products from farmers I know in the region." We also heard from one EFP recipient who contracted COVID-19. She thanked us for delivering food so that she could avoid endangering others by going to the grocery store.

"I almost cried when I opened it. I've never been in a position where I've needed help like this so it's not easy but this is a huge relief."

In July, after delivering over 2,300 EFPs representing 35,500 meals, we, along with our partners, were awarded \$225,000 in grant funding from Adirondack Foundation, Mother Cabrini Health Foundation, and New York State Health Foundation (NYSHealth) to extend the project for three more months and to design a longer-term program. By the end of September, 64,710 meals made with locally-sourced ingredients were delivered throughout the Adirondacks.

Food Security: Fair Food Pricing

In October, the Emergency Food Package project transitioned into two distinct new programs: AdkAction's Fair Food Pricing and The Hub on the Hill's Online Marketplace, designed to address both endemic and emerging food insecurity, while strengthening market access for local farms and food businesses.

These new programs helped to ensure that vulnerable families identified during the early stages of the pandemic would continue to have access to locally-grown food and nutritious meals delivered to their homes long into the future. Fair Food Pricing provides discounts of 30-90% off local food for eligible families. Eligibility for Fair Food Pricing is based on United Way's "ALICE" (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) income thresholds, allowing us to assist many Adirondack residents who hover just above the poverty line and don't qualify for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or who may inconsistently qualify due to seasonal employment.



Eligible families can sign up for Fair Food Pricing on AdkAction's website and receive a digital discount at The Hub on the Hill's Online Marketplace, making local food significantly more affordable for families while ensuring that farmers will still receive 100% of the market value for the products. Additional Fair Food Pricing vendors will be added in 2021.



Photo Courtesy Adirondack Foundation, (c) Erika Bailey.

AFFORDABLE FOR FAMILIES FAIR FOR FARMERS

Reducing Road Salt



AdkAction celebrated a major legislative milestone in our decade-long fight to reduce salt pollution when the Randy Preston Road Salt Reduction Act was signed into New York State law in December 2020. The law creates a Task Force that will submit recommendations to strategically reduce road salt application by September 2021.

A three-year Adirondack Park-wide pilot program is then set to begin implementing data-driven salt reduction tactics while maintaining safe roads for winter drivers. This much-needed pilot program will work towards halting the spread of salt pollution into our streams, lakes, and, most importantly, our drinking water. A 2019 study by the Paul Smith's College Adirondack Watershed Institute, funded in large part by AdkAction, tested 500 Adirondack wells downhill from state roads and found that 64% had sodium levels exceeding the federally recommended limit.

We continue to work with municipalities throughout the Adirondacks to sign a Pledge to Reduce Road Salt – a memorandum of understanding that identifies issues associated with road salt applications, as well as steps that may be taken to help reduce related impacts. To date, 27 Adirondack towns and villages have signed the pledge, committing to use best practices to reduce road salt on locally-maintained roadways.



Michelle Preston speaks at the Berkeley Green in Saranac Lake. Photo by Mike Lynch

THE RANDY PRESTON ROAD SALT REDUCTION ACT

Supporting Plein Air Festivals

Like so many events planned for 2020, the Keeseville Plein Air Festival was cancelled due to the pandemic. In past years, the weeklong festival has helped both visitors and community members see the sights of Keeseville and surrounding areas anew, as interpreted by talented artists. Keeseville's historic architecture, rolling hills and charming farms, waterfalls, chasms, and lake shores have all been painted during Keeseville Plein Air, now an indispensable summer arts event and point of pride in the hamlet.

In lieu of a live festival, AdkAction collected high-resolution photos of some of the stunning artwork created during the first three years of the event, and created a digital book that can be freely enjoyed by art lovers near and far.



We continued to sponsor the Adirondack Plein Air Festival, which took a modified form in the summer of 2020, with artists spreading out across the Adirondack Park, and all painting sales taking place in an online gallery. We also sponsored the second annual Tupper Lake Plein Air Festival in late September, another socially distant plein air event with two dozen artists participating.



VIBRANT COMMUNITIES EMBRACE THE ARTS



Adirondack Pollinator Project

Our 2020 annual pollinator plant sale was our most successful sale yet thanks to an uptick of interest in home gardens during the pandemic lockdown. Although volunteers could not assist due to COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time, over 1,000 plants were sold to eager gardeners across the Adirondacks, helping to create critical pollinator habitat.



Since 2017, we have given away over 50,000 free packets of native wildflower seeds to help individuals and groups create nectar and pollen-rich habitat for a wide variety of pollinator species. We continued to provide seed packets by request throughout 2020 on our website. Pollinator Week took place virtually in 2020, and included great programming from The Wild Center, online citizen science trainings with our partners at Lake Placid Land Conservancy, a daily tutorial on constructing bee boxes with our partners at Paul Smith's College, and a lecture on "The Pollinator Victory Garden: Winning the War on Pollinator Decline" which taught participants simple strategies to attract and support bees and other pollinators.

We partnered with Saranac Lake Community Solar to create pollinator habitat on the ten-acre solar array site. After assessing the site and conducting a soil analysis, AdkAction brought a team of volunteers to begin seed sowing in November. In the first planting phase, a steep embankment along the edge of the solar farm was seeded with a mix of native meadow flora that provide pollinator-friendly habitat and help to reduce erosion.

RESTORING NATIVE HABITAT





Broadband For All

The pandemic has thrown a spotlight on how critical broadband is to education, health, and jobs. The inability to ensure equal education because of gaps in broadband access became more obvious when our area schools switched to remote learning models. Residences with inadequate or lack of broadband access faced major obstacles to both learning and working from home. Tele-health appointments helped those with reliable internet to safely access healthcare, while those without risked exposure with in-person appointments.



AdkAction is working towards a goal of “100@100”: 100% of households and businesses having access to broadband speeds of at least 100 megabits per second. In 2020, we worked to make sure all households in the Adirondacks are included as broadband coverage in the state expands through the New New York Broadband Program and the Spectrum cable buildout. We are assisting communities in identifying rural households that will remain unserved and underserved when the two programs are completed by September 2021.

We are keeping Spectrum accountable through our work on an address-by-address review of their buildout to ensure that every claimed household or business is in fact an “Eligible Passing” under the terms of Spectrum’s agreement with NY State.

STAYING CONNECTED IN A SOCIALLY DISTANT WORLD



Beyond the Peaks Student Film Festival

AdkAction's second annual Beyond the Peaks Student Film Festival took place entirely online in June 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. Although finalists were unable to walk the red carpet and debut their films on the Wild Center's theater screen as in years past, their work was enjoyed and voted on by 224 viewers near and far.

In the year leading up to the Festival, students throughout the region had the opportunity to participate in two AdkAction sponsored filmmaking workshops to hone their skills in film production and editing. One of these workshops took place at The Wild Center's Youth Climate Summit and attracted young climate activists from around the state.



In December, AdkAction sponsored a student contest to create Public Service Announcement videos. The contest, which was open to all middle and high school students in New York, garnered 53 entries from every region of the state, sharing students' advice based on CDC guidelines for preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Submissions were judged based on a scoring rubric by a panel of educators, nonprofit leaders, and video production professionals. In addition to a cash prize, the winning entry is being showcased on television and at the 2021 Beyond the Peaks Student Film Festival.



EMPOWERING STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

Compost for Good

We believe that community composting is an important part of building a more resilient world. By keeping food waste local, we keep resources local, which allows us to more directly support our land and our neighbors. In Spring 2020, AdkAction brought the Compost for Good team under our wing as our newest project: Adirondack Compost for Good. Together with John Culpepper, Katie Culpepper, and Jennifer Perry, we're working to make organic waste recycling more commonplace throughout the region.



Compost for Good is working to divert organic resources so often landfilled and using them to build soils and fertilize gardens within our communities.

There is a growing need for effective, adaptable, and affordable community composting systems that can process unsorted food waste—including meat and dairy—and other organic materials. To meet that need, Compost for Good designed a community-scale composter and is sharing the free open-source design guide and operator manual, as well as educating the public about composting best practices at all scales.

Four of these community-scale composters are operating in the Adirondacks, processing a combined 6,000+ pounds of food waste each month. Together, these composters have kept an estimated 29,311 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions from entering the atmosphere. Adding to this achievement, the Compost for Good team is engaging in outreach to promote organic waste as a valuable resource, ultimately working to spark a composting revolution in the Adirondacks and beyond.

SPARKING A COMPOSTING REVOLUTION



Food Security: The Farmacy

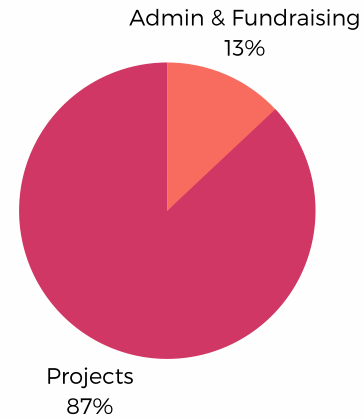
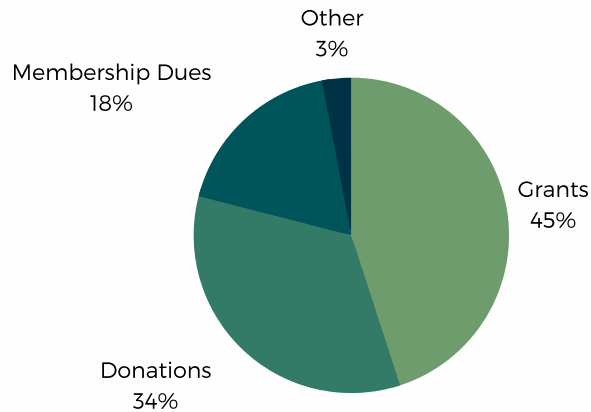
Despite pandemic lockdowns the Farmacy was able to continue to serve the greater Keeseville community by providing access to fresh, nutritious foods in an area that would otherwise be a food desert. Low-income members of the community were able to access nutritious food using their SNAP benefits and other pricing incentives aimed at making local food more affordable. In 2020, The Farmacy purchased \$19,515 worth of food from 16 different local farmers with sustainable growing practices. A small free food garden was also offered in planters in front of the storefront.

The Mountain Weavers Farm Store was only able to open sporadically in 2020 due to coronavirus safety concerns but has been working to launch an online store and local food delivery option to help Port Henry and surrounding communities access fresh, local food.



Financials

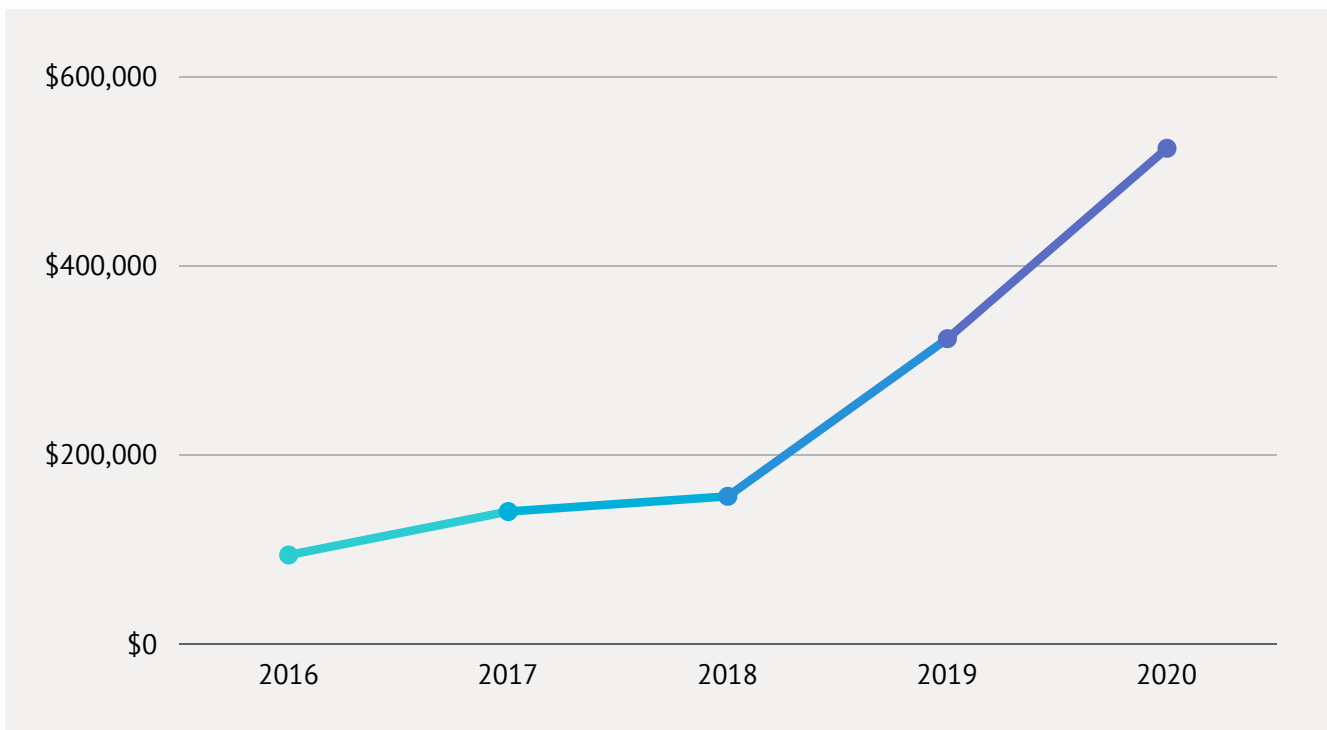
Total Revenue \$638,744



Total Expenses \$524,185

Five Year Budget Growth

Thanks to generous community support, AdkAction's annual budget has grown by 580% in the past five years based on total annual expenses.



With Gratitude to all who supported our work in 2020

Foundations

Adirondack Foundation
Avery Family Foundation
Cloudsplitter Foundation
David and Candace Weir Foundation
Haskins Family Foundation
Hope for Youth Fund
Kinney Drugs Foundation
Knox Family Foundation
Mother Cabrini Health Foundation
New York State Health Foundation
Raquette Lake Preservation Foundation
Rockwood Charitable Foundation
Saranac Lake Rotary Foundation Inc
Sound Adirondack Growth Alliance

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\$1000+, 3-year commitment

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Steve and Andrea Maikowski
Bruce McLanahan
Andy and Kathy Prescott
Anne and Jim Schoff
Marsha Stanley and Tom Curley
Tom and Susan Swayne
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Businesses & Organizations

Adirondack River Walking
Ausable Brewing Company
Ausable Chasm
Auger Lake Property Owners Association
Capital District Physicians Health Plan
CAP-21
Champlain National Bank
Edy's Of Course
Lake Placid Institute
for the Arts & Humanities
Long Run Wealth Advisors, LLC
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Northern Orchards - In-Kind
Saranac Lake Artworks

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Cornell Cooperative Extension of Essex County
Essex County Health Department · The FUND for
Lake George · The Hub on the Hill · Joint Council
for Economic Opportunity · Keeseville Pharmacy
Lake Placid Land Conservancy · Paul Smith's College
Paul Smith's College Adirondack Watershed Institute
Saranac Lake Community Solar · Skills 21 at
EdAdvance · United Way of the Adirondack Region
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"AdkAction is, in my opinion, the most 'hands-on-get-it-done' charitable organization in the area. They go beyond identifying issues and feasibility studies and strategic plans. Their name - AdkAction - says it all. They roll up their sleeves and they do it. And that, more than anything else, is why I am a member."
- Joe Steiniger

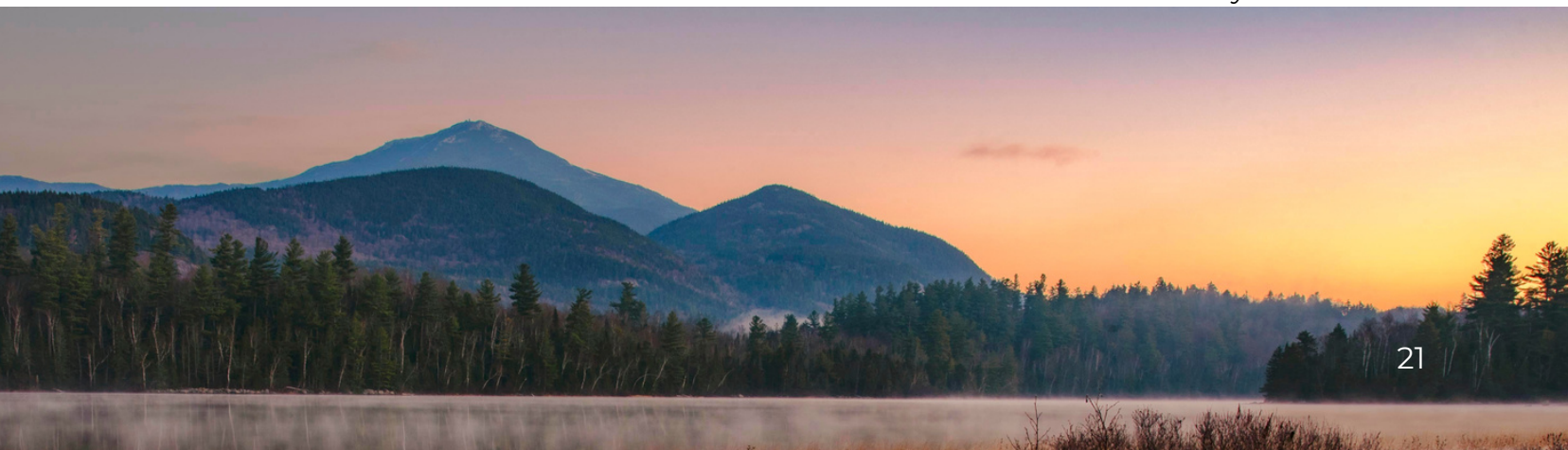
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"I support AdkAction because it is an organization that looks to the community for ideas / projects / programs that would never get funded elsewhere - even though they are critical to keeping the ADK an awesome place to live."

- Lynn Hidy



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"AdkAction's mission to meet unmet needs allows for them to pivot and focus on areas that may be outside other nonprofit's wheelhouse. They have demonstrated tremendous success and progress meeting these needs, from food services to recreational activities."
 - Tyler Merriam

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"I support AdkAction because they are an impact-driven organization that knows how to get things done. They focus on tangible projects that matter to me, and all residents of the Adirondacks, and their approach is nimble and efficient."
 -Kathleen Colson

Support our work

Members are the lifeblood of AdkAction, generating ideas, inspiration, passion, and financial support to make our projects possible. Members pay annual fees that keep our work going, and in return, receive the pride of taking action to improve the Adirondacks for future generations.

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