This year is the 15 year birthday celebration of your community foundation. And we have so much to celebrate. In preparing these comments I went to the dictionary and looked up the formal definition of foundation and then looked in the thesaurus for further insight about other words and adjectives that align with foundation.

Two definitions stood out:

The basis on which a thing stands, is founded, or is supported.

The establishment of an institution with provision for future maintenance

And the accompanying words were basis, heart, mainstay, support, key, fundamental, premise, starting point

Apply this definition and these words to our community foundation and I think you will understand why, speaking on behalf of the Board, we are so excited and enthusiastic about our mission to improve the quality of life in Tompkins Country by inspiring enduring philanthropy.

A Birthday is a time to reflect back on where we were and also to absolutely enjoy today. The annual report, which you will receive later is a wonderful summary of our path to today and I hope that when you read it you will realize how far we have come together to achieve our vision of a thriving Tompkins county. There is still so much to be done but a quick set of numbers highlights the basis of why we can take some time to enjoy our collective impact.

In 2012 we initiated 3 grant cycles; In 2014 this became 7 grant cycles

In 2012 there were 89 Donor Advised or Field of Interest Fund grants administered: In 2014 this became 212

In 2012 there were 170 community members attending our open house/annual meeting events; in 2014 this became 375

In 2013 there were 227 grants totally around $960,000; in 2014 there were 305 grants totally 1.6 million dollars

This is exceptional and is only possible because of the generosity of the people in this room. And by generous I mean both those who have directed their philanthropy to the Foundation to enable us and to those that do the hard and sometimes unheralded work of supporting the community – the amazing and wonderful array of non-profits that serve us all.

Now when I attend Community Foundation meetings I very much enjoy the walk down the Gorge Trail from Cornell down the hill. The return trip up the trail–not so much. But is an especially meaningful walk as I am able to be with nature, and reflect on things both large and small in scope. This year was particularly interesting as I was celebrating the 150th birthday of cornell, our sesquicentennial up on the hill, and the 15th birthday of the Foundation – I guess the word would be sesquidecadial. I went back to the trusted dictionary and no - there is no such word.

But back to the nature walk .I would think: What will our Community Foundation look like at its sesquicentennial? And it was my surroundings that provided me the answer. The defining geographical foundation of Tompkins County is the set of gorges and the lake formed by such. We even have t-shirts declaring that. And the landscape provides such joy to so many and has so for a long time and will do so in the future. Go back or forward 150 years and the geography will not appear all that different. It will be deeper and further carved by experience but will still be the defining feature of the county. Yet how we enjoy the gorge and interact with the lakes differ over time and who knows what type of water vehicles or hiking gadgets will be there in the future.

And is so many ways – the rock that forms the basis of the community foundation – our endowment is similar. It will be there 150 years from now providing support for the community. But how it supports the community and which organizations it supports will change over time. But it will be there –engraved deeper in our souls – joined with the gorges and the lakes in defining Tompkins county.

Happy Birthday!!!