



Sarah Johnson's Dedication Grows with Community Foundation

"I WANTED TO DO WHAT I COULD NOW TO MAKE SURE THAT OUR COMMUNITY FOUNDATION HAS WHAT IT NEEDS IN THE FUTURE."

When the Community Foundation of Tompkins County was created in 2000, **Sarah Johnson** was so impressed with the organization that she became one of its early donors.

"I thought it was a really exciting idea," says Johnson, who had moved to Ithaca to earn a graduate degree in human development at Cornell. **"It is a way, if you're attached to a community, for like-minded people to band together. They are more powerful if they're together than if they're apart."**

After working as a lab manager at the College of Human Ecology at Cornell, Johnson was hired as director of operations for the former Women's Community Building, where she became more aware of the role the Community Foundation plays in Tompkins County. During the eight years she held that position, she interacted with many local nonprofit organizations that rented space in the Women's Community Building.

"So many of the nonprofits held events at the building," Johnson says. "I became immersed in that world and I learned a lot about it."

A few years after Johnson bought a house downtown, her sister, Gwyn Lymberis, joined her, moving to Ithaca from Buffalo. The two sisters grew to love Ithaca and decided to name the Community Foundation in their estate plans.

"It is a secure way to deal with the distribution of assets in our estates," Johnson says. "There are so many worthwhile organizations that we have given money and time to over many years that we weren't sure how to allocate the funds. Nonprofits may come and go, but we have complete confidence that Community Foundation will use our bequest well because they are so **in touch with community needs.**"

They also created the Johnson Sisters Fund, now part of Community Foundation's Today and Tomorrow Fund, which has supported more than 30 organizations since its inception in 2003. A portion of the fund also defrays the operational expenses of Community Foundation.

"Somebody has to pay for salaries and overhead," Johnson says. "I'm perfectly happy to have money I've donated used to help ensure Community Foundation's continued operation."



Other issues Johnson is concerned about include equity for women and girls and rural poverty. **“There are families who have lived here a long time and a lot of them are struggling, especially those in rural areas,”** she says.

In 2018, Johnson made a new investment to the Community Foundation Pooled Income Fund. Her donation, which provides her with quarterly income, will revert to Community Foundation upon the death of both Johnson and her sister.

“We live in very uncertain times,” she says. **“I wanted to do what I could now to make sure that our Community Foundation has what it needs in the future.”**

A former president of the Ithaca branch of the American Association of University Women, Johnson has enjoyed living in Ithaca and believes that donating to the Community Foundation is one way to give back. **“It’s been a joy and a privilege to live here, and I’ve been fortunate enough that I haven’t suffered economically,”** she says. **“I’ve almost always had more than enough to get by and would like that to be true for everyone in our small corner of the world.”**

Community Foundation of Tompkins County Ithaca, NY

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