

PRESS RELEASE

Susie Ferris Hatch, advocate for women and families, named Laura Holmberg Awardee, will be recognized at Women's Fund Annual Luncheon

Contact: George Ferrari, Community Foundation of Tompkins County, [gferrari@cftompkins.org](mailto:gferrari@cftompkins.org)

*Event: Monday October 16, 11:45 AM – 1:30 PM at Emerson Suites. To register:*

<https://www.cftompkins.org/news-and-events/events/2023/08/womens-fund-annual-luncheon-celebration/>

TOMPKINS COUNTY, N.Y. — In recognition of a career of volunteer service to women and girls, Susie Ferris Hatch has earned the 2023 Laura Holmberg Award, presented by the Women's Fund of the Community Foundation of Tompkins County. She was nominated by a team of enthusiastic colleagues and friends she has inspired in the nonprofit community.

"Susie's history of supporting women, girls, families and mothers, and the way she inspired the four women who nominated her, really struck home with the committee" noted Advisory Committee member Stacey Murphy. The nominators put it, "Susie was raised to believe that girls and women can do anything. This has carried through her life, serving as an inspiration for other women and girls to be change agents for their lives, their communities, and our planet."

She was active in the Civil Rights movement in the mid-1960's, teaching adult African American high school students in Farmville, VA and then a touring season with the Free Southern Theatre. Susie and her husband, Marty, moved to Tompkins County in the 1970's. She volunteered as a Family Court monitor, specific to foster care and adoption, a role which led her to work with others to create Citizens Concerned for Children then the first NY State Law Guardian office in a rural area in 1984. She also championed a trail-blazing initiative, Parents Apart®: Helping Children Cope With Separation and Divorce, preceding NYS's certification system for court ordered and referred parent education. On the board of Mama's Comfort Camp Susie sought the voices of rural isolated young mothers to diversify from whom MCC was hearing on-line.

She is a listener, first. Susie's daughter, Leila, explains, "because my mother is deeply interested in learning more about what she doesn't know, she taught us to keep listening and taking chances outside our boxes to make sure we are advocating for more than ourselves." Susie explains that she is merely "paying it forward" as someone whose life has been secure. "I was often inspired by older women: my mother was the first of them allowing the questions and encouraging me to be active even when it was not 'conventional' for girls." In college there was the chance encounter with Marian Wright Edelman.... And being in Judge Betty Friedlander's chambers... the list goes on! "Sometimes life gives you these incredible treats," she exclaims!

Susie has aided women and girls through her service to Cornell Cooperative Extension-Tompkins with Even Start Family Literacy, Early Childhood Development Collaboration, Mama's Comfort Camp and Mother-Up, Brooktondale Community Center, Caroline Food Pantry, and the Office for the Aging. Additionally, she and her husband Marty supported start-up women-owned CSAs on their small farm in Dryden, sharing land, labor, barn space, and picnics during the harvest.

The Women's Fund honors its annual Laura Holmberg Awardee at its Annual Celebration, this year on October 16<sup>th</sup>. Established in 2006 by Anna Holmberg in remembrance of her mother, the Laura Holmberg Award recognizes the "unsung heroes" in our community, whose contribution affects the Women's Fund's core mission, focusing on women and girls, and who have done so in an unpaid capacity. The Community Foundation's Women's Fund, a field of interest fund, was created to improve, through purposeful philanthropy, the status and quality of life for all women.

In addition to the Laura Holmberg Award, the Annual Celebration will feature a shared keynote address by Assemblymember Anna Kelles and Senator Lea Webb.