



# The Becket Athenaeum

Becket & Washington's Community Library

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May 2020

Dear Friend,

I am writing to you today because of your faithful support for our beloved library, and I don't want you to take out your checkbook! Instead, I am asking you to become a founding member of our new legacy society: the 1888 Legacy Society of the Becket Athenaeum.

We currently have two endowment funds at Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation (BTCF). The first was established 10 years ago by a Becket resident in her will. It is called the Becket Athenaeum Endowment Fund and its mission is to support the operational budget of the library – essentially to keep the lights on and the staff paid! The second endowment fund is named the Becket Athenaeum Children's Endowment Fund and its mission is to support the children of Becket and Washington through materials, programs, and services. The Board of Directors established this fund at the end of 2019, in order to grow a more permanent income base to help support our children. Currently, both these funds are small but we hope, with your help, to grow them over the next decade so that our total budget will not be so dependent on the whims of the economy or the availability of grants.

If this global pandemic has taught us anything, it has surely convinced us of the importance of building a cohesive community that supports one another (even while social distancing)! The Becket Athenaeum is committed to that goal; in fact, it is a key part of our mission. Let me give you an example. Approximately 12 years ago, I had just joined the Board and the Director and I were trying out some ideas to get more kids to come into the library. I volunteered to start a Saturday morning story hour and it seemed to be working well, since we were getting 6 to 10 kids each week. One day, one of my regular attendees, a little 2<sup>nd</sup> grader (we will call her Annie) stayed after the reading was finished and we started to chat. She told me she lived with her grandmother, because her Mommy had problems and couldn't take care of her. I asked her how she liked school and what was her favorite subject. Suddenly her eyes welled up with tears and she told me that school was really hard for her, and her grandmother and the teacher were talking about having her repeat 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and she had already been 'left back' once! At this point, she started to sob; her whole body shook. She said that she didn't want to get 'left back' again and she didn't know what to do! My heart just melted for this sweet little girl, so I asked her if she needed help with her schoolwork. She nodded and a slight smile showed through her

tears. That is how the Becket Athenaeum afterschool program was born. Since then, the Board, staff, and many volunteers have worked very hard to build a set of wonderful afterschool programs to meet the variety of needs of our students. But every year, we collectively hold our breath to see if we will get the grants necessary; so far, it has been successful, but we need more reliable income to ensure that we can keep these programs ongoing. By the way, Annie was never again 'left back' and last year she successfully graduated from high school.

Over the years, there are countless stories of ways the library programs and services have helped our children, our seniors, and our families come together and thrive as a community. By joining our 1888 Legacy Society, you can help secure our future to accomplish this important work. Currently, the towns of Becket and Washington only supply about 1/3 of our total budget (which is about half of our operating budget). The rest, including all children's programming, we have to cover through grants, investments, and fundraising. The enclosed brochure describes the Becket Athenaeum Planned Giving Program. Please choose one or both these endowments to ensure a bright future.

As founding members of the 1888 Legacy Society, you will be listed on our website (unless you prefer anonymity), and invited to special Legacy events. If you have already included us in your estate plan, please let us know by filling out the enclosed form. I am working closely with BTCF to ensure that you are aware of all your estate planning options.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with questions or to enroll. Thank you again for your years of loyal support!

Sincerely,

Purr McEwen  
Planned Giving Coordinator  
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