



celebrating

75  
years

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## Being Fearlessly Maddy

**A**

s a child, did you ever want to stay up just a little bit later but were told to go to bed? Were you disappointed when you had to go directly home after school instead of hanging out with friends? Were you upset after your team lost a game or perhaps you received a lower grade on a test?

For some children, coping with limitations or disappointments can seem unbearable. A simple reminder of bedtime from a parent can ignite catastrophizing, a situation in which feelings of rejection, sadness, anger, or hopelessness are intensified. What may be perceived as dramatized behaviors or rule refusal is actually an acute reactivation of previous experiences involving invalidation, inadequacy, or anger. In these cases, the child perseverates on an issue, becoming focused solely on worst-case scenarios. The child may simply want to flee the situation; some may even grapple with suicidal ideation.

Catastrophizing is often a symptom of an underlying mental health illness such as

depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder. For youth unable to self-soothe or regulate their emotions, it means they have difficulty managing subsequent behaviors, too.

For Maddy, life as a pre-teen had become unmanageable. The oldest of two children, Maddy is admired by her parents for her humor, intelligence, and kindness. Despite her loving family life, Maddy began to struggle at the age of twelve. School had become a chore and Maddy's parents sought medical interventions and mental health support, but her emotional dysregulation became frequent. At home, even with the support of family, Maddy was in crisis and began verbalizing suicidal thoughts with regularity. After her last hospitalization, Maddy's parents and therapist discussed comprehensive therapeutic support, including the benefits of a residential treatment center.

**Left: Our wish is for you to help celebrate! See center spread**

# 75 Years and Counting

From Executive Director  
Dr. Edward Placke



**A**s we conclude the year-long celebration of our first 75 years and the remarkable work of our founders, Dr. Samuel and Myra Ross, we look forward with enthusiasm to the next 75 years.

This past year has featured a number of events celebrating the courage and vision of Dr. and Mrs. Ross, and the thousands of staff, students, families and, of course, the animals that followed.

Green Chimneys has made a difference in the lives of generations of families, and will continue to do so deep into the future. The Ross legacy is embedded in every aspect of Green Chimneys and is reflected daily in our Guiding Principles, the foundation for all we do for our children, their families, and each other. We look to this legacy as

we plan for the future of this wonderful agency that we are so proud to be a part of.

Our future will forever focus on educating and caring for the most complex and vulnerable students, providing them with the resources to live a thoughtful, productive life. A life that includes an appropriate education, meaningful employment, a circle of friends, and respect for nature. For this to be accomplished, it requires the efforts of not only Green Chimneys leadership and staff but also the entire Green Chimneys community. We take this responsibility seriously.

On behalf of the staff, students and families of Green Chimneys, thank you for your support, and for sharing this incredible milestone year with us.

## Honoring Our Founders

**T**he entire Green Chimneys community gathered to officially celebrate our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and honor our late founders, Sam and Myra Ross.

Staff and children enjoyed an animal parade, food and games, and buried a time capsule to be opened on Green Chimneys' 150<sup>th</sup> Founders Day on October 27, 2027.

A special highlight was an original skit commemorating the founding of Green Chimneys. Recreation Director Zac Staszak and Associate Executive Director of Human Resources Donna Kessler played the roles of Sam and Myra with great humor and admiration.

"It's so important for us to remember the people who worked tirelessly to create this amazing organization," said Executive Director Edward Placke. "We are proud to carry on their legacy and help so many more children and families over the next 75 years!"



Enjoy photo highlights by scanning the QR code or visit [greenchimneys.org/founders-day](https://greenchimneys.org/founders-day)



**T**he decision to enroll your child in a residential program is a difficult one, to say the least. It comes with anticipations, worries, stress, and even some potential regrets. My son, Luis, was not attending school and was withdrawing from other aspects of life. As a mom, I felt sorry for him; the pain he was going through was palpable. And I know the pain and anguish that this situation was causing our family—it was almost impossible to function, go to work, and support the household—but the pain I was feeling was only a fraction of what my son was experiencing. We needed solutions.

Through our journey at Green Chimneys, we have experienced hope. Our journey is paved with twists and turns, dos and don'ts, and fallbacks and gains. I'm willing to guess it's a journey taken by most every parent of a special needs child.

The proverb says, "It takes a village to raise a child." I'm going to go even further in saying that it takes a village to support a parent. I have found support and help through the parent training and support groups that are run by Green Chimneys each month. The more time I spend attending these training sessions and group meetings, the more I understand how important it is for me to spend time with other parents who are experiencing the same challenges. I get to share issues,



frustrations, and even wins in a respectful forum where I feel heard. The sessions provide insight into reasons why my son may act or behave a certain way and how I can respond appropriately to minimize escalation or potential problems.

Professionalism, courtesy, empathy, and validation are words that come to mind when I think of my experience participating in these forums. I appreciate the staff for their time and dedication in helping parents to be more informed and better equipped in attending to their children.

Something else that I've learned along the way: during a support group meeting, one of the more experienced parents spoke of the importance of change. It wasn't the type of change I had been praying for or hoping to accomplish; it was the type of change I would have to adopt for myself.

It made me think that if I expected my son to grow and change then I would have to be willing to do the same. I would have to make the time to be consistent in attending the parent training and support groups. Trusting relationships with Luis' team would be paramount in helping him to succeed. Relationships and boundaries on campus and at home would require planning and follow through.

I keep trying to be a better parent so I can help my child experience success. I thank that parent for her words of wisdom; they fell on hearing ears. Thank you Green Chimneys for the continued support and opportunities to practice better parenting. It does take a village.

*Submitted by Green Chimneys Parent  
Cathy P.*

## Teaching Youth to Repair & Restore

**T**he single most important aspect of mental health is feeling safe. *Restorative Justice* supports a way of thinking that focuses on creating safe spaces for real conversations that deepen relationships and build stronger, more connected communities. In a school setting, restorative justice allows teachers the opportunity to build a good rapport with, and among, their students; establish a comfortable and safe environment; and provide a positive educational experience for all. When conflict arises, it supports mending relationships between students to help them heal that wound.

Green Chimneys embraces the principles of restorative justice throughout the organization, integrating many of its tools into the school and residential programs to strengthen students' skills in communication, making healthy choices, and in being supportive and productive members of the campus community. Dialogue circles, and related techniques, work hand-in-hand with the therapeutic support we are providing students in all aspects of their programming.



Youth and staff are engaging in consistent dialogue that enables them to equally share in the responsibility of maintaining a safe, productive environment. Learn how Teacher Zac Craybas incorporates the practice into his classroom at [greenchimneys.org/restorative](http://greenchimneys.org/restorative)

## Being Fearlessly Maddy

*continued from page 1*

By March of 2022, Maddy was enrolled at Green Chimneys. It was a big step for the entire family as Maddy moved into her dorm.

“It was intimidating at first,” explains Maddy. “I was excited to meet the animals, but I was far from home. I wondered if the other kids would like me. Would I like them? Then I started getting to know other kids and built relationships with staff.”

A few weeks later, Maddy turned 13. She was settling into school and residential life at Green Chimneys. She formed connections with several horses but especially Albus, a Spotted Draft cross gelding that joined the herd around the time of Maddy’s enrollment. In class, Maddy began to excel. Teacher Gui Martins recognized her abilities and designated Maddy the class note-taker. She quickly began to participate in lessons, completing all assignments, and willingly helping her peers with their work.

Over the next several months, Maddy invested in her treatment. She formed a great rapport with her social worker and took therapy sessions seriously; she committed to doing the work and responded well to talk therapy. Using Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), social worker Lee Ann Genussa and Maddy reframed her experiences from the past and gained new insights into the sequence of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Maddy has learned that it’s okay to hold space for conflicting feelings, and can articulate independently that a situation is both sad and good at the same time.

“I can still have the same feelings,” Maddy explains in reference to life before Green Chimneys. “But now I try to pause and tap into my rational side and think through why I am feeling this way, and how I might choose to deal with it.”



For Laura and Nick Osofsky, Maddy’s parents, being involved in Maddy’s treatment has been critical. They remain in constant contact with the treatment team and participate in trainings provided by staff. They even seek input on strategies applied at home and provide great perspectives and communication. And they are mindful to involve their youngest in family therapy sessions to foster understanding while also supporting Maddy and brother Alex’s great sibling connection.

At the start of the school year, Maddy entered 8th grade on the heels of an active summer full of classes, therapy, outings,

and fun with friends and family. Along with her parents and treatment team, Maddy has set new goals for the school year. She is excited at the prospect of returning to her home district, but she also understands there is more work to do at Green Chimneys. With the help of residential life staff, clinicians, and her teachers, Maddy will continue working on interpersonal effectiveness, building and maintaining healthy relationships, and strengthening self-esteem.

All along, Maddy has continued to explore her passions including horses, writing, and music (especially Cold Play—the old stuff). She enjoys spending her free time with animals, being with family and friends, helping people, and most importantly, practicing skincare. Maddy’s dorm décor is an ongoing colorful expression of self. Photos of animals and loved ones are posted throughout her room, and sensory-rich Squishmallow toys, jars of purple slime, and a fuzzy cow-print pillow accent her desk and bed. And a wall displays a series of powerful affirmations: *The world needs more of you. Will it be easy? Nope. Will it be worth it? Absolutely. Be fearlessly you.*

Staff celebrate all of the progress Maddy has already achieved and reinforce the strengths she shares with the Green Chimneys community, including her honesty, altruism, and intelligence. The world, indeed, needs more of Maddy, and we are so glad that she is a part of Green Chimneys.

## Learning & Growing

“When I started as a social work intern in 2014, my supervisor matched my enthusiasm for learning, which was not an easy task,” recalls Erin Rider, LCSW. “She encouraged me with opportunities for professional development and consistent clinical supervision, and inspired me with her own commitment to personal growth as a clinician. She encouraged my interest to learn everything and anything I could about the field. This made me want to stay on as an employee and eventually become a supervisor, myself.”

Currently serving as Assistant Director of Social Services, Erin is contributing to the continuum of growth for staff at Green Chimneys. Erin invests time in the social work interns she supervises, understanding their individual strengths and helping to map paths to their career goals. We are grateful for the leadership of Erin and many others who are ensuring that staff culture is not only collaborative, but provides ample support and guidance, too. Explore the benefits and rewards of working at Green Chimneys; visit [greenchimneys.org/careers](https://greenchimneys.org/careers)



## Students Prepare for Their Futures

**A** key element in helping youth to prepare for their future is employment-focused education that facilitates career awareness, skills development, and the ability to pursue opportunities. As part of the standards designated by New York State, Green Chimneys' curriculum includes Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS). Both encompass learning standards and work-readiness skills introduced as early as 9th grade.

Over the past year, an expanded collaboration with Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) and The Arc Mid-Hudson has benefited Green Chimneys vocational education programming. Students traditionally participated in work readiness and job exploration courses, also known as pre-employment training, either off-site or online. Working closely with provider The Arc Mid-Hudson, Green Chimneys' Transition Planning Team was able to bring the courses to the school campus, greatly improving student access and participation.

For students who often require an individualized approach to learning, or may be balancing a schedule that includes additional therapeutic activities or sessions, traveling off-campus for programming can be challenging. This facilitation of on-site programming has brought several significant benefits:

- An increased number of students who can easily access.
- Accommodation of students who prefer to learn in person but are unable to participate off-site.
- Ability for instructors to cover more in-depth content with students.
- Improved opportunities for practice, such as in person mock job interviews.

And the results speak for themselves: Students are gaining genuine work experience in local supermarkets and restaurants, and some have been offered positions with partner-provider The Arc. The Arc is also able to support students' existing Learn & Earn jobs on campus; if a student already has a Green Chimneys campus job, they can be added to The Arc agency payroll, qualifying the student for minimum wage at \$13.20 an hour.

High School student Colin participated in work readiness courses with the goal of a summer internship through The Arc. He already had campus jobs at the dining hall and Boni-Bel Farm—earning Green Chimneys' standard Learn & Earn rate—and had secured a position at a local ice cream store. The Arc assumed payment for all three of Colin's jobs; he kept track of his schedules and submitted his hours each week, reinforcing his great sense of responsibility and pride in his work.

On-site pre-employment training on our campus gives our students the knowledge, practical experience, and confidence that they need to achieve their employment aspirations. From job-seeking skills and interview prep to important post-hire abilities, such as punctuality, workplace communication, and appropriate demeanor, this work builds an important foundation that sets up students for success, both now and into their future.

**Left to right** Multiple times a week, **Kolby** works at ACME Supermarket in Brewster. **Stevin** is building landscaping skills through a placement in partnership with The Arc Mid-Hudson. **Colin** has benefitted from a range of experiences, including a job in food services at Green Chimneys.

## Navigating the Holidays

Support for Local Youth & Families

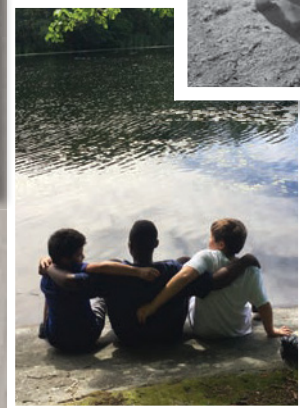
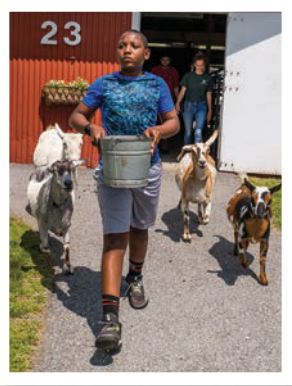
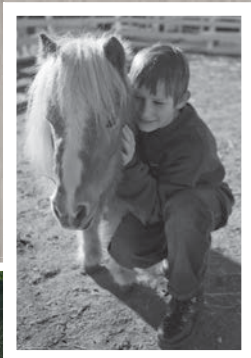
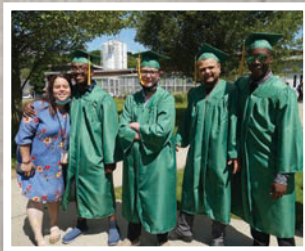


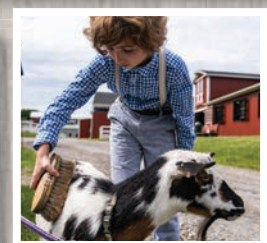
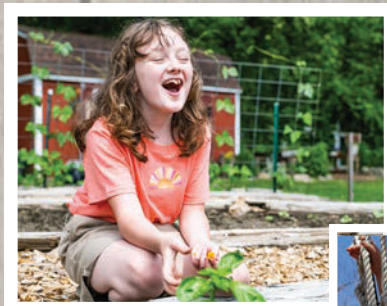
**T**he holiday season brings both excitement and increased stress levels for students and parents, alike. With time off from school, routines are disrupted. Managing expectations or complex feelings that may arise over the holidays, as well as an absence of structured activities or even ample sleep, can lead to emotional dysregulation in youth or heightened tension within the home.

As a therapeutic and recreational resource to families in the greater Putnam County area, Green Chimneys Community-Based Services (CBS) offers a wide array of services that support positive youth development, skill building, and mental health counseling. Our experienced staff understand the particular strain the season can have on youth and families, and they are ready to help. Learn more at [greenchimneys.org/cbs](https://greenchimneys.org/cbs)



'Tis the Season to Celebrate 75 Years of  
*Tradition & Innovation*





As a young man, Samuel B. "Rollo" Ross dreamed of opening a school on a farm. Rollo knew the significant role animals played in his own childhood, and he wanted to help students foster the same connection with the natural world.

In 1947, with the help of his family, Rollo purchased a dairy farm in Brewster, New York, named "Green Chimneys." For the next seven decades, Rollo and his wife, Myra, led an agency built on the foundation of organizational excellence in education, mental health services, and human-animal interaction. With the expertise and dedication of staff, along with much-needed support from funders and friends, Green Chimneys continues to grow and innovate.

### Fulfill our one winter wish and...

- Ensure that children with special needs continue to receive the services needed to develop life skills and realize futures for themselves.
- Sustain innovative therapeutic education and nature-based programs.
- Support the care of the animals that create meaningful opportunities for students to discover, connect, and build confidence.

### Give to Green Chimneys today:

- Take advantage of the self-addressed envelope inserted in this publication
- Or go online to [greenchimneys.org/support](https://greenchimneys.org/support)

### Thank you for believing in the importance of special education and animal-assisted services.

Green Chimneys could not have reached its 75-year milestone without **you**. We look forward to serving thousands more children and families for decades to come, thanks to your support.



## Students Shine

**G**reen Chimneys students' animal knowledge and handling skills were on full display for a day of presentations in front of staff and volunteers serving as judges. In addition to studying and presenting a variety of farm animals, such as goats, sheep and llamas, students shared their expertise in wildlife, including birds of prey, waterfowl, reptiles and insects. Garden presentations featured students' horticulture projects and staff and judges enjoyed iced tea made from tea leaves the students helped to grow themselves.

At the horse barn, students on the Green Chimneys Drill Team carefully guided their horses through choreographed routines that required them to not only remember a full routine, but to coordinate with fellow riders while being constantly aware of their horse. Other students in the horse barn presented mounted dressage, trail and hand trail classes.

"For students, walking in front of a judge and speaking about what they've studied, all while handling an animal, takes a lot of courage," states Teaching Barn Program Assistant Danielle Zalewski. "Many of the students thrived in the spotlight and were very proud to present their animal; some students were more nervous and had stage fright. What was amazing is that every student—no matter how nervous they felt—still went out, leaned on the support of their animal, and really shined."

With the success of this first Showmanship Day, we look forward to making it an annual tradition to help our students not only develop knowledge and skills, but give them the feeling of success that propels them to experiment and try new things in the future.



## Hitting the Rapids

**T**his summer, a group of five Green Chimneys students and two teachers gained much more from their Extended School Year experience than they expected. Through a joint program with another special education school located in Dobbs Ferry, NY, these students and staff participated in an incredible week of whitewater kayaking with an elite group of instructors led by Dr. Jessie Stone, a six-time member of the U.S. women's freestyle kayak team.

This was the second year providing this program for Green Chimneys students and Dr. Stone's 20th year bringing whitewater kayaking to youth via her own nonprofit. Program instructors included several world champion kayakers who shared their enthusiasm and expertise in this action-packed sport.

The week started in the swimming pool at Brewster campus where everyone was able to get comfortable in the boats, and practice some skills. Participants got a crash course in how to exit the boat quickly and safely in case they flipped over, and progressed to learning how to flip the

kayak upside down and right side up again while remaining in the kayak. The adventure level turned up a notch the next day out on the lake at Clearpool campus, where students honed in on the skills needed to paddle and control their boat. Finally, it was time for the real thing: two full days hitting the rapids of the Delaware River along the New York/Pennsylvania border and then the Housatonic River in Connecticut!

Without a doubt, it was a fun and exciting week for the students that also pushed everyone to their physical and emotional limits. It takes a strong mindset to stay calm, remember your training, and take care of yourself when you are upside down in a kayak floating down a river. The students and everyone involved learned to master this mindset, trust in the group, and ultimately believe in themselves.

A nervous bunch of teenagers in a pool had grown into a strong, confident group of young adults when they pulled their boats out of the river on that last day. And after four days, they were pretty tired, too.



Summer was also a success for hundreds of families served by Green Chimneys Summer Camps. Led on the Brewster and Clearpool campuses, a summer of outdoor adventure and friendship created memories to last a lifetime. Get ready for the 2023 camp season! Register at [greenchimneys.org/camps](https://greenchimneys.org/camps)



**T**he prospect of attending a new school is challenging for any child but for a child with special needs, whether visiting for the first time or transferring from another program, it can induce deep anxiety, apprehension, and even refusal. It's not an easy process for a family, either.

When a family is first introduced to Green Chimneys, the path to necessary clinical and academic support has likely been an arduous journey. From first diagnosis to navigating resources to identifying the right place for their child, parents are asking themselves: *What will my child think? How will they feel? Who will be there for them?*

Green Chimneys opens the door to a new beginning that starts with a first meeting and campus tour. Kim D'Agnesse shares that their initial visit to Green Chimneys was notably different from other programs they had experienced with their daughter, Bella. "The tour was fantastic; we were there for three hours! Bella was very nervous, we all were, but our nerves were quickly calmed," shares Kim. "We walked all over campus and we met everybody—the woodworking teacher, the woman who works with the animals, even the chef in the dining hall. We weren't just sitting in a room being told about what would be provided for our child."

The D'Agnesse family was seeking a new school program where 15-year-old Bella could find a peer group, make more friends, and gain the coping skills she needs to manage her anxiety. Bella is a friendly yet shy student who wants an environment where she can feel at ease and make strong connections with teens who are similar to her. Finding a school that would be the right fit was a top priority for the whole family and Green Chimneys quickly emerged as the right one for Bella.

Following the family's diligent application and enrollment process, the day of admission had finally come. "A student's admission day can be overwhelming for the child and family, in so many ways," states Admissions Director Lara Signorini. "Our focus remains on how we can best support students and families by facilitating a

## Family-Centered from the Start

smooth transition from the moment they step onto campus."

A student's day of admission typically entails meeting the nursing and psychiatric team; lunch at the dining hall; orientation with residential and clinical staff at the student's assigned dorm; and the opportunity to unpack and decorate the student's new room. "Bella and her family arrived early, providing them some time to walk around the farm, which always has a nice, calming effect." Lara recalls. "It also happened that Bella's dorm supervisor was able to join the family at lunch so it was a wonderful, informal way to ease everyone into the day."

The weeks that followed confirmed that Bella and her family had made the right choice. During the first week, Kim joined Bella for dinner on campus and she exclaimed "Mom, guess what? I love this school, I rate it a ten out of ten!" Hearing this was music to Kim's ears. "It was the first I had seen her smile in about three years," says Kim. "She's got that spark back in her eyes."

And the D'Agnesse family appreciates the experience they're having, as well. "Her teacher and her social worker, they're awesome," says Bella's dad, Anthony. "They listen, they're involved...there's so much communication."

Kim says of the comfort level that Bella has easily found, "I think it's a combination of the people she's met, staff who are so caring and down-to-earth; all the animals; and the very laid back, calm, casual setting. I love this school but more importantly, SHE loves it!"



**How our nature-based program can help to welcome prospective families to Green Chimneys:**

It starts at Admissions, but then extends each time the family meets a staff member and becomes more familiar with the team and our philosophy of care. The farm and animals are part of that, because intuitively families recognize that a school that also nurtures vulnerable animals is deeply committed to caring for all.

Animals and nature help to put people at ease, allowing personalities or preferences to emerge, and lead to meaningful conversations that help determine if Green Chimneys is the right next step.

"We can tell so much by how a new family and child approach animals," says Farm & Wildlife Director Michael Kaufmann. "Some are reluctant to get close to a horse; others have no hesitation in petting a goat. We can observe if a child listens to their parents while walking in the barn, if they follow instructions from the tour guide, if they are unwilling to communicate at all."

These first subtle observations lay the foundation for an individualized approach to each placement at Green Chimneys. Such customization informs the treatment and education plans that will guide the student, family, and treatment team.

Our Admissions Team (above) is here to help. Get to know Green Chimneys and take the first steps in exploring our therapeutic school and residential treatment center by visiting [greenchimneys.org/admissions](https://www.greenchimneys.org/admissions)



## Donor Corner: To Cricket, With Love

**I**n November 2021, 8-year-old Naomi Abrams sent a Christmas card to our staff, all the way from Snohomish, WA:

*Dear Green Chimneys, How's Cricket doing? I have sponsored Cricket before and I want to again. Please can I get some more pictures?*

Of course, we obliged. Such a special handwritten request certainly deserved an in-kind response! Naomi received a Green Chimneys Sponsorship Card printed with Cricket's photo and details about the important role this special mini horse plays at our Farm & Wildlife Center.

In July, Naomi's family contacted us, this time, requesting to visit. Naomi and her brother, parents, cousins, and aunts and uncles all wanted to tour our campus in Brewster, NY. The Abrams family are long-time supporters of Green Chimneys, and while some had visited in the past, it had been many years and their children, including Naomi, had never been here.

On the day of their tour, Naomi arrived in a shirt printed with horses; an intentional

choice that she made sure we knew. She eagerly reminded us that she wanted to see Cricket, and we eventually made our way to the horse barn, where Cricket was relaxing with mom Maya. Farm & Wildlife Center Director Michael Kaufmann let Cricket out of her stall, and Naomi lit up with joy as she finally got to meet her sponsored animal friend.

Moments like these are at the heart of what we do at Green Chimneys. Our students benefit greatly from the educational and therapeutic animal-assisted activities, but anyone can derive a moment of wonder in the presence of an animal. The human-animal connection can be so many things: comforting, inspiring, grounding, or just plain fun.

When you sponsor an animal at the Sam and Myra Ross Farm & Wildlife Center, you become a partner in caring for the more than 300 animals, birds of prey, and injured wildlife that call our campus home. Their daily care and maintenance are a critical part of the farm's annual budget. Your support helps with these expenses. Sponsor an animal as a gift—see below.

## Share the Spirit

Cricket is one of several Green Chimneys animals available for sponsorship. Each sponsorship includes a card with the animal's photo and short bio. Sponsorships start at \$25. And they make great holiday gifts, too. You decide whether you'd like the card sent to you or directly to the gift recipient.

Impress the animal lover in your life this holiday season with a gift of animal sponsorship. Your gift will support the care of animals that are helping children grow: [greenchimneys.org/sponsor](https://greenchimneys.org/sponsor)



## Conquer the Forest

The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Conquer the Forest Trail Run is a challenging and fun 5k that raises funds for Green Chimneys' therapeutic education and nature-based programs. The clock is ticking but there is still time to meet us at the starting line:

**Sun, Nov 20 at 9am** • Clearpool Campus • Carmel, NY  
[greenchimneys.org/trailrun](https://greenchimneys.org/trailrun)

**B**elieve it or not, not every child is drawn to a fluffy bunny or a prancing pony; some children are excited by the unusual, such as a giant, goofy-looking camel. This is what I enjoy most about having camels here at Green Chimneys.

With their curvy humps, knobby knees and floppy lips, camels are quite the sight. Adults and children, alike are immediately curious and always find something to ask about: “Why do they make that noise?” “Is there water in their humps?” “Why do they move their lips like that?” These are questions I answer on a regular basis and during a session with a student, clinical staff and I not only answer those questions, we utilize these conversations to make connections to the student’s therapeutic goals. While this can happen when working with other species, I’ve never had it happen as easily or frequently as when I work with the camels. Even when a student is a little intimidated by the camels’ size or strange movements, opportunities to learn and discuss things always come about.

I recall a student who said to his social worker, “The camels are just awesome. I thought they were so weird and scary at first, but when I realized that they are just trying their best to be friendly, it reminded me of me. Awkward but trying to be friendly, and usually misunderstood.” Once the student expressed those thoughts, he began making connections to social situations where his behavior was misinterpreted, and that it was okay because he was trying to do the right thing and just needed others to understand.

Over the years, I have seen our camels assist youth with their confidence and growth in so many ways. Phoenix, our big white camel, often gives the impression



## Decade of Partnership & Growth

By Samantha Arevalo, Equine Program Manager

of being “smug” when students first meet him. A student may perceive Phoenix doesn’t like them because he’s not super cuddly or engaged. Yet after working together, the student can recognize that Phoenix needs to be approached softly and ends up becoming his cheerleader, encouraging Phoenix to interact on a level all are comfortable with. To see such a large animal respond to a child as they guide him along and encourage him is quite inspiring.

The longer our camels are at Green Chimneys, the more they understand their role and what each student needs from them. The camels may be challenging for one student in their session, and then a perfectly behaved partner for the next, teaching each student the very specific lesson that they need. In turn, staff are better able to interpret and analyze each camel’s behaviors, enabling us to dive deeper into a session and achieve those therapeutic goals.



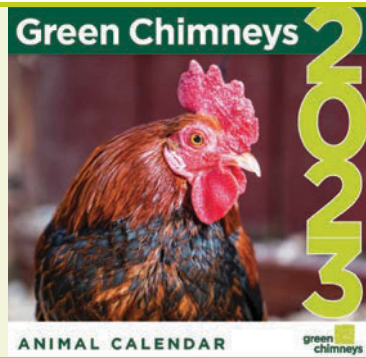
In August, The Sam and Myra Ross Institute hosted its first-ever camel workshop, bringing over 50 people and 13 camels together (above). This spring, professionals from across the globe will attend the next Human-Animal Interaction Conference, ***Animal-Assisted Services: Focus on the Animal***. Hosted in partnership with the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work and the Institute for Human-Animal Connection, hai2023 will take place on April 28-29. Space is limited; register today at [greenchimneys.org/hai2023](https://greenchimneys.org/hai2023)

Green Chimneys  
400 Doansburg Road, Box 719  
Brewster, NY 10509-0719

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## Making Spirits Bright



You're invited  
to celebrate  
the season with  
Green Chimneys!

Each option helps  
our children and  
animals, too.

For details, visit  
[greenchimneys.org/holidays](http://greenchimneys.org/holidays)  
or scan:



1. Every year **Boni-Bel Farm & Country Store** sparks the season with *Holidays on the Farm*, a wintry wonderland of handmade decorations, prepared gift baskets, and warm customer service provided by our students. Pick up your sustainably grown holiday greens—tree sales start Sat, Nov 26.

2. Enjoy 365 days of Green Chimneys! Featuring award-winning photography by Jason Houston, our **Animal Calendar** provides 12 months of our animals and their real-life stories. A great gift for yourself or a loved one. \$30 per, shipping included.

3. Support our therapeutic programs for children and animals every time you shop on Amazon. Before you shop, login using **Amazon Smile** and .5% of your purchase will be donated to Green Chimneys.

Stay connected online for holiday highlights, student news, and animal updates:

