

# the great connector

## WALKWAY OVER THE HUDSON

Summer Newsletter 2021



## Our Electric Tram Is On The Move!

Not everyone is capable or comfortable venturing out onto the Walkway – a 212-foot-high structure that is 1.28 miles in length – to enjoy the sweeping, panoramic Hudson Valley views available from the World's Longest Elevated Pedestrian Bridge.

To help assist seniors, veterans, people with mobility challenges, and those with a fear of heights, the Friends of the Walkway have secured an all-electric 12-passenger, wheelchair accessible electric tram that is now in service during select hours.

Operated by specially-trained volunteer Ambassadors, guests can make use of the tram at no cost on Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. during peak season (weather permitting). The vehicle will also be used to support special events and can be reserved for private or group use upon request. Passengers will embark and disembark at four locations – the Dutchess Welcome Center in Poughkeepsie, the Elevator Overlook, Center Overlook (by the flagpole), and the Ulster Welcome Center in Highland. The tram drives on a continuous loop, with a one-way trip taking approximately 25 minutes.

## Hudson Valley Products To Be Featured On Walkway

New York State Senator Michelle Hinchey has secured \$120,000 to support the Friends of the Walkway non-profit organization's Farm-to-Market Initiative. The initiative strengthens the connection between the more than 600,000 annual Walkway users and the bounty of the the Hudson Valley.

Funding will be used to renovate the Walkway's Friends Pavilion in Highland to provide exposure and space for locally grown food, drink, produce, spirits, and other New York-made products. The Friends of the Walkway are working in partnership with Taste NY and local producers and vendors to increase their presence on the Walkway and enhance popular events like Mayfest and Walktoberfest.



SENATOR HINCHEY AND ELIZABETH WALDSTEIN

"My office has a shared mission with the Walkway Over the Hudson, and that is to bolster our local economies, raise small business profiles, and make people from across our region familiar with the incredible selection of local products the Hudson Valley has to offer," said Senator Michelle Hinchey. "I'm proud to have delivered on behalf of this important cultural institution and to have secured state budget funding to grow the organization's Farm-to-Market Initiative. The Walkway is an economic engine for our region and the Farm-to-Market expansion a prime opportunity to bring tourism dollars into our communities while fostering the success of our Hudson Valley agribusinesses."



## From the Executive Director

### A RETURN TO NORMAL

As we settle into a hopefully more typical year on the Walkway, I want to give thanks to everyone that ensured our park remained open, vibrant and accessible during a most challenging 2020.

First, I am proud to report that the Walkway never closed for a single day during the COVID-19 pandemic. That's because of the hard work, dedication, and flexibility of New York State Parks Commissioner Erik Kulleseid, Taconic Regional Director Linda Cooper, Assistant Regional Director Tom Watt (congratulations on your retirement, Tom!), Park Manager Eric Hoppe, Assistant Park Manager Jef Litwinowicz, and all staff members. The Walkway remained a place of peace and respite amid uncertain times because of this team, and the Friends of the Walkway and the Hudson Valley community are truly grateful.

Thanks to our volunteer board of directors and hundreds of Walkway Ambassadors for their positivity and creativity during a year unlike any other. With their help, we shared the Walkway experience virtually for those unable to enjoy it in person. We also kept transformative projects like the construction of the East Gate Plaza and the debut of our all-electric tram on track.

Lastly, thanks to our members, partners, and donors we moved forward in uncertain times, and it's because of your support we're ready to accomplish great things and continue to make lifelong memories high above the Hudson River in 2021.

See you on the Walkway!



Elizabeth Waldstein, Friends of the Walkway



## Welcome New Board Members

The Friends of the Walkway nonprofit organization proudly welcomes Maureen Keegan, Dorcas Roehrs, and Michele Dalbo to their board of directors.

A Kingston-based attorney for the past 30 years, Keegan has successfully represented thousands of clients throughout the Hudson Valley and Capital region. "Moe" is avid user of the Hudson Valley's rail trail system, and a sculler and member of the Rondout Row Club. She is an active leader in a number of organizations and local government initiatives in Ulster County.



Roehrs brings extensive business, construction, and interior design experience to the Walkway, having worked on hundreds of projects including hotels, offices, private homes, and special event setups across America. Since 2012, she has led 1857 Spirits Barber's Farm Distillery, a Hudson Valley family business for six generations specializing in craft estate potato vodkas.



As one of the first Walkway Ambassadors, Dalbo has been a vital part of the Friends of the Walkway for more than a decade, serving as a dedicated volunteer coordinator. Now retired from IBM, Dalbo is mentoring the next generation of Walkway supporters including her granddaughters Sarah and Anna who are serving as Junior Ambassadors.



### CURRENT PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS



Partners and supporters have a transformative impact on the Walkway and Hudson Valley. To learn more, visit [walkway.org](http://walkway.org).

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## Ambassador Spotlight

### Don Vinchkoski

Wanting to make new friends and give back to his community in retirement, an article in the Poughkeepsie Journal first interested Don Vinchkoski in becoming a Walkway Ambassador. "I love living in the Hudson Valley," he said. "I read that article and thought being an Ambassador would be the perfect way to help others enjoy the area as much as I do."

#### Tell us about a memorable moment you experienced on the Walkway.

I have two wonderful daughters, Carol and Pam, and they both love to run. They trained really hard to run their first half marathon and decided to do it on the Walkway. I was assigned to the finish line and I was there when they crossed, virtually neck and neck, and I got to hand them their finish medallions. Sharing in their joy at completing their first half marathon is a memory I'll treasure forever.

#### How did you become involved on the crew supporting the new electric tram?

I volunteered to care for the tram because it's a significant investment to bring an amenity like that to the park, and I want to help extend the life of the equipment. To operate it successfully, we need maintenance schedules, operator information books, driver training and certification, education about on-board equipment, and more, and I knew I could help with those things.

#### How do you think the tram will improve the Walkway experience?

For several reasons, there are many individuals that have difficulty walking long distances. The tram will help those people experience the Walkway and enjoy all that it has to offer. It will also improve special events and provide us with a new way to offer educational tours of the bridge.



## Meet Sojourner Truth

In late 2020, a seven-foot bronze statue of eminent abolitionist and suffragist Sojourner Truth was unveiled just outside the park's Ulster County gate in commemoration the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage.

Created by Yonkers sculptor Vinnie Bagwell, the statue includes text, braille and symbols to encourage viewers to walk around it and study its surface. Signage with additional information about the life of Truth accompanies the striking statue.



Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation



## Enjoy The New East Gate Plaza

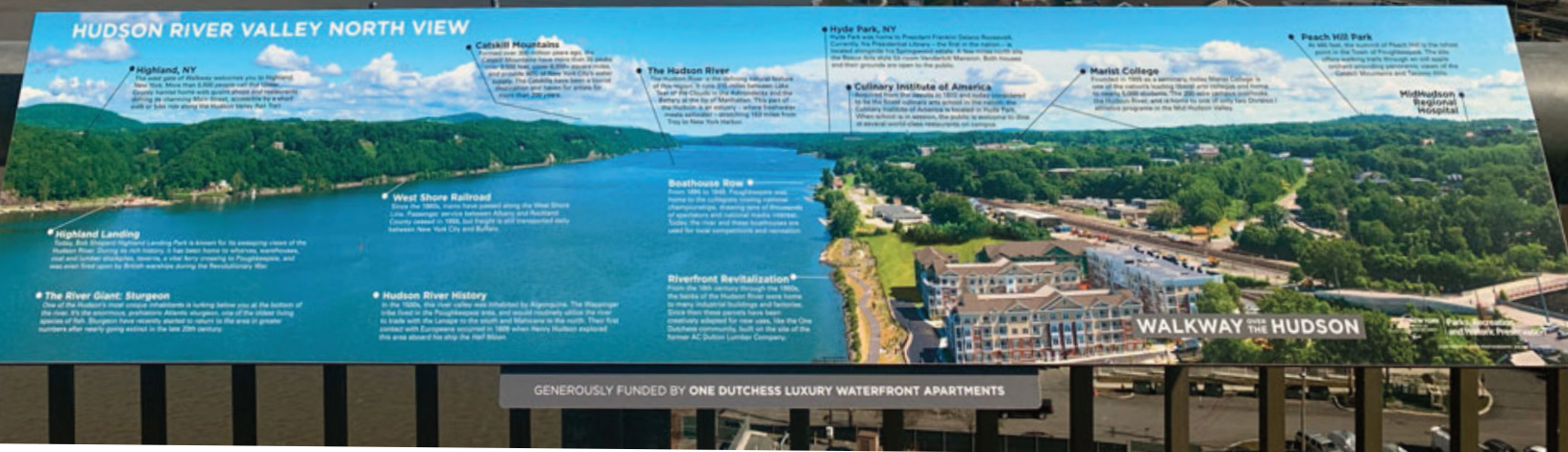
Additional seating, more space to relax, an expanded pathway, and a space to lock your bike are just some of the features of the new East Gate Plaza that enhance the Walkway experience.

Soon, the Walkway Friends Pavilion will open for guests to purchase snacks, souvenirs, and sundries and audio/visual equipment will be installed to improve tours and events. Thanks to Seigrist Construction, Marshall & Sterling Insurance, and New York State Senator Sue Serino for supporting this project.



# See What You See

New signage installed in the park shows you exactly what you see when you take in the panoramic views from the world's longest elevated pedestrian bridge. Thanks to M&T Bank and One Dutchess Luxury Apartments for making this project possible, Julian Diamond for photography, and Drake Creative for design.



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## BECOME A STEWARD OR JOIN THE WALKWAY 1000

Thank you to our new Stewards: Mike & Clare Graham, Steven & Bebe Sachs, Ron & Cathy Lane, Ron & Ellie Carleton, and Jim & Kristin Fandl.

Stewards help the Friends of the Walkway nonprofit organization provide the events, programs and services on the Walkway that make our park truly special. Their support also allows us to undertake new construction projects and add valuable amenities to the park, while keeping the Walkway open and accessible to all of the 600,000 people that experience the bridge every year.

Become a Steward and join our vital inner circle that helps shape the strategic direction of the Walkway long into the future. Donors contributing \$5,000 will receive a custom bench plaque and contributions of \$10,000 and above will be commemorated with a personalized bronze medallion permanently displayed on the Walkway. Join the Walkway 1000 – an exclusive group of donors contributing \$1,000 each year – and receive a custom Walkway jacket as a thank you.



Congratulations to new Stewards  
Mike & Clare Graham, at their medallion dedication  
with John Storyk, Elizabeth Waldstein and Ann Weiser

To learn more about these opportunities, Call Diane Haight  
at 845-454-9649 x 101 or visit [walkway.org/donate](http://walkway.org/donate).