



Mohonk Consultations

“Let’s talk it over at Mohonk.”
A TRADITION OF CONNECTING
PEOPLE THROUGH DIALOGUE

2020



Volunteers at Phillie's Bridge Farm
Photo by Jim Longbotham

From Talk to Walk for 40 Years

For four decades, Mohonk Consultations has created gatherings to give people a chance to come together and tackle problems, generate ideas, and create practical solutions that serve Hudson Valley communities. To mark our 40th anniversary year, we checked in with some of the initiatives that have taken root and grown after Mohonk Consultations events. We asked about a range of topics, from memories of the programs that sparked the work to favorite achievements to ways of confronting the coronavirus crisis this year. Below are a few highlights. Check the [News](#) area of our website to read the complete remarks.

Sally Vasse, president emerita, **Phillie's Bridge Farm Project**, co-founded by Mohonk Consultations in 1994: “It is a joy this year to be celebrating 25 years as the first not-for-profit CSA farm in the New Paltz area: with a sold-out CSA membership that includes many subsidized shares and generous donations in our Food Justice mission that serves people in need with fresh vegetables to support good health, and our very popular STEAM 8-week Summer Camp for children, ages 4 to 12.”

Beth McLendon Albright, co-founder & director of UlsterCorps and program director of Volunteer Services and Food Security, Family of Woodstock: “In 2009, UlsterCorps, FAMILY of Woodstock and Rondout Valley Growers Association all participated in the Mohonk Consultations Forum, **Hunger in the Hudson Valley: How Can We Help?** This gathering in many ways was the inception of our **Farm to Food Pantry Collaborative**, which, in 2019, distributed over 135,000 pounds of produce from 36 donors ... to 52 food pantries, shelters, and community meal programs in the Hudson Valley. ... Without question this collaborative is one of the achievements UlsterCorps’ co-founders are most proud of.” — *continued on page 2*

From Talk to Walk for 40 Years, continued from page 1

Emily Vail, executive director, **Hudson River Watershed Alliance**, which grew out of a series of MC events, including the 2004 Conference, **Forming a Hudson River Watershed Alliance**: “During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hudson River Watershed Alliance has shifted all of our education and capacity-building programs online. Clean water is critical during a pandemic, and we’re still working to meet the needs of our local watershed partners. Our online programs have included our monthly lecture series as a webinar, an online roundtable for watershed group leaders to share questions and strategies, and a watershed conversation series to provide additional technical assistance on specific topics.”



A pre-pandemic HRWA Newburgh
Clean Water Project conference
Photo by Emily Vail

Cornelia Waltham, co-founder, **The Holistic Health Community**. Cornelia met co-founders Nancy Eos and Fay Loomis at our 2011 Conference, **Communities in Transition**: “We are now in the second year of a generous two-year grant from an anonymous donor through the Community Funds of the Hudson Valley. The purpose of the grant is to take first steps toward realizing our Future Vision. ... Beginning the last week in March, we replaced our monthly Healthcare Days with monthly Healthcare Weeks. During our most recent Healthcare Week, 23 practitioners offered over 100 sessions by phone or Zoom.”

Laurie Seeman, founder of the art and science discovery programs known as **Strawtown Studio**: “The first [Mohonk Consultations water] conference I attended, I was struck by the gathering of so many people that had water caretaking in common. And I learned in a day, the range of professionals and citizens who were in this together. I left thinking, *now I understand, I can see the way. I can do this.*”

“...I learned in a day, the range of professionals and citizens who were in this together.”

—Laurie Seeman

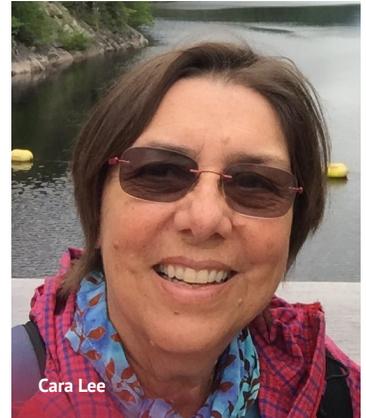
It is our honor to have played a role in the founding of these initiatives by gathering people to talk over the issues that affect us all. Mohonk Consultations offers the intention and thoughtful speakers, Mohonk Mountain House provides the space, and our community members bring the minds, hearts and commitment to action. Please support these and our other partnering organizations, which you can find listed on our [website](#).

Honoring Our Anniversary in a Transformational Year

By Board President Marty Irwin

Our 40th Anniversary year has been marked by profound and swift global change. As we navigate the global coronavirus pandemic, calls for social justice unprecedented in their scope, escalating climate disruption, and devastating economic upheaval, Mohonk Consultations has postponed our 2020 events. This year marks a moment for us, as for so many of you, of taking stock of our past and reimagining future possibilities, given rapidly shifting circumstances and information.

Cara Lee and Louisa Finn joined our board of directors this year. Cara brings 40 years of professional experience in conservation as an advocate, land manager, policy developer, educator and longtime volunteer in her community. She was environmental director for Scenic Hudson before joining The Nature Conservancy in 2001. She lives in New Paltz with her husband and has two adult daughters.

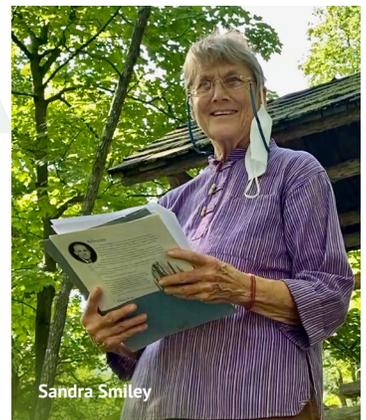


As a fourth-generation Smiley family member, Louisa continues our tradition of involving Smiley family members in the leadership of Mohonk Consultations. She grew up in the Hudson Valley, frequently visiting Mohonk, where her grandmother lived. A speech and language pathologist, reading tutor, and published poet, she is committed to preserving the land, philosophy, and ideals of her Smiley ancestors.



We thank Laraine Mai for her years of service on our board. Her most recent contribution was as a member of the organizing committee for our Fall 2019 Conference, **Creating and Sustaining Peace**. As president of RiverTides, she has facilitated numerous co-sponsorships between our organizations. Happily for us, Laraine remains connected to us as a board consultant and a friend.

In the first few months of the coronavirus pandemic, we decided to volunteer in our communities and regroup. By the time July arrived, we were able to meet in person at Mohonk Mountain House for our annual board of directors retreat. There we marked our fortieth anniversary with a contemplative visit to the Peace Pole planted in the woods ten years ago. Sandra Smiley reread her dedication of the pole "in honor of the hundredth anniversary of our founder Keith Smiley's birth and the thirtieth anniversary of Mohonk Consultations." May the vision of peace among people and living in harmony with our natural world that gave rise to Mohonk Consultations continue to guide us.



We look forward to gathering with you again at Mohonk Mountain House as soon as it is safe to do so, and virtually in the near future. Watch for more on that soon.

Our 2020 Award: Hand in Hand for Human Rights



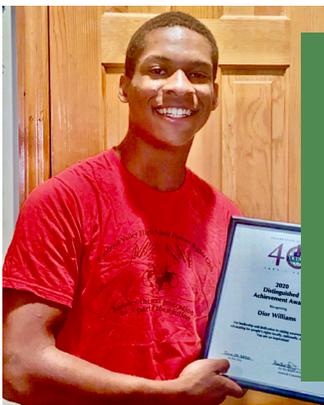
Our 2020 Distinguished Achievement Award celebrated the thoughtful, enthusiastic members of the **Rondout Valley High School Human Rights Club** and their mentor, Diana Zuckerman, teacher of Spanish. Diana and club members have participated in many of our events and we find them inspiring! We missed holding an in-person celebration, but each awardee received a framed certificate and Board President Marty Irwin sent a letter of commendation to district Superintendent Dr. Joseph Morgan. Here are some thoughts from the honorees, which you can read in their entirety on our [website](#)—where you can also read about the other awardees since our awards program’s inception in 1984.

“The youth in our Human Rights Club... impress me with their powerful and passionate voices. I feel proud and honored to work with them.”

—Diana Zuckerman

“Peace is knowledge, and if we don’t teach our youth about diversity and societal issues, how can we expect to create and maintain a peaceful environment for themselves and those they coexist with?”

—Kasey Arnold, speaking at **Creating and Sustaining Peace**



“We do more than connect. We speak to, listen to, speak for, as well as present for our community.”

—Dior Williams

“...we are so lucky to work with Mohonk Consultations because they work hard to empower our local youth and spread awareness about social justice issues.”

—Kasey Arnold



“Now I am an activist, creating my own statements, attending weekly meetings and I have connections with people from all over the country.”

—Lena Pileggi

“It is important for people to discuss what’s going on in the world so we can make changes, overcome wrongs and shed light on the current problems in our society.”

—Menena Baron





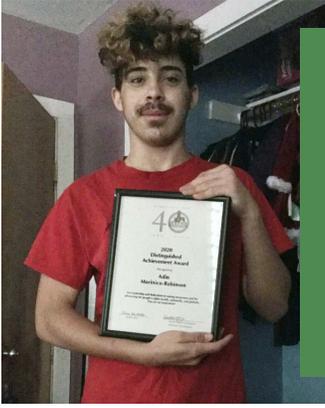
“...there are so many problems in the world and so many people without a voice and the club works to help those people with those problems.”
—Aria Sickler Avery

“We work hand in hand with our peers and community to create a better and more inclusive world for not only ourselves but for future generations.”
—Emily Bartolone



“Receiving the Mohonk Consultations Award inspires us to continue in the work we do.”
—Jennifer Callan

“...with all that’s going on in the world we need to take a stand. This club gives people hope...”
—Brooke Bogart



Adin Morinico-Robinson

“...we are part of the solution in creating a world in which everyone can live in peace... After attending various conferences at Mohonk for two years, it is quite clear that we share the same goals.”
—Victoria Nazario



On the Mohonk Mountain House Porch at our Fall 2019 Conference, *Creating and Sustaining Peace* (l to r): Bryce Hopper, Anya Slater, Dior Williams, Diana Zuckerman, Kasey Arnold, Victoria Nazario.



Our 2021 Conference: Confronting the Waste Crisis

By Laura Heady

Thirty years ago, I wrote an editorial for my high school newspaper, imploring that my peers rethink the many disposable cups used each day. I was anguished by the overflowing waste bins and the daily choice of convenience over the environment. Although the phrase “single-use” was not yet in my vocabulary, the disregard for our planet resonated deeply.

My visceral response to our throwaway society hasn’t changed. But today, my frustration is overshadowed by a growing understanding of the waste crisis we face. In particular, the prevalence of single-use plastics has skyrocketed in the last half-century, fueled by the oil and gas industry. Now that China is refusing plastic waste from wealthy countries like the United States, much of our low-quality “recycling” is being exported to poor Southeast Asian countries that lack the infrastructure to handle the enormous volume. Increasing amounts of plastic are being landfilled or incinerated in the US. A recent study published in *Nature Communications* claims there is more plastic in the ocean than earlier estimates (Pabortsaya and Lampitt 2020). Marginalized communities, taxpayers, and the ecosystem pay the price — not the manufacturers.

Mohonk Consultations plans to gather experts, problem-solvers, and the Hudson Valley community to dig into this issue at our 2021 conference, **Drowning in Trash, Reaching for Solutions**. We can’t recycle our way out of this challenge, but together we can raise awareness and learn how to take meaningful action for a better future.

Mohonk Consultations

Our purpose is to help to bring about a clearer understanding of the interrelationship of all life on earth, including the human community, emphasizing the need for sustainable use of all the earth’s resources, and to support the development of practical means to do so.



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THANK YOU to our recent donors! JAN 2019 – Sep 2020

These donations are deeply valued for the ways they support our collective work on behalf of the land, water, and people of the Hudson Valley and beyond.



Lee Amigh, a frequent guest of the Mohonk Mountain House, led bird walks and other programs.

Jim & Lee Amigh, *in memory of Ruth & Keith Smiley*

Jim Amigh, *in memory of Lee Amigh*

Barbara Berg, *in honor of Brad Berg*

Brad Berg

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www.mohonk-consultations.org/donation

Please note that we process online donations via Stripe.

Or mail your check made payable to:

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WATCH YOUR EMAIL

for announcements of virtual events coming in late fall and early next year!

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2021 Fall Conference: November 2021 Drowning in Trash, Reaching for Solutions

Exact date TBD. Subscribe to our e-updates via the [MC NOTIFICATIONS](#) button at the bottom of any page of our website.

2020 UN International Year of Plant Health

This year the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is raising global awareness about how plant health affects our economic health, food security, and environmental well-being. The FAO says, "up to 40% of food crops are lost due to plant pests and diseases each year. This leaves millions of people without enough food to eat and seriously damages agriculture — the primary source of income for rural poor communities." For more, visit the websites of the FAO, the NY Dept. of Environmental Conservation, or the NYS Department of Agriculture.



Right: *Lycorma delicatula*, or the spotted lanternfly, is an invasive plant hopper from Asia. Though it is not yet established in New York, it is found in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. This insect poses a serious threat to agriculture and forestry industries. Photo: Lawrence Barringer, Penn. Department of Agriculture, Bugwood.org