

**SYLVESTER MANOR**  
2024 - 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

# REFLECTING ON A YEAR OF **PROGRESS**





SYLVESTER  
MANOR  
EDUCATIONAL FARM

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OFFICE

# ABOUT SYLVESTER MANOR



The lands known today as Sylvester Manor were home to the indigenous Manhansett People for thousands of years, on the island they called Manhansack-aha-quash-awamock, the “Island Sheltered by Islands.” In the early 1650s Dutch-English colonists, Nathaniel Sylvester and three partners, established Shelter Island as a provisioning plantation for sugarcane operations in Barbados. Consisting today of 236 acres, Sylvester Manor is the most intact plantation remnant and former place of enslavement north of Virginia.

Sylvester Manor was owned continuously by one family, the Sylvesters and their descendants, from 1652 until 2010 when Eben Fiske Ostby, and his nephew Bennett Konesni, gifted the historic site to the nonprofit organization they established. Over the past 370 years, Sylvester Manor has been a provisioning plantation, an Enlightenment-era farm, a pioneering food industrialist’s summer estate, and home to generations of Sylvester descendants and Enslaved, Indentured, and free laborers who stewarded the historic structures, collections and cultural landscape.

## TODAY, SYLVESTER MANOR IS

- Shelter Island’s only site listed on the National Register of Historic Places at the national level of significance, consisting of 236 acres of farm fields, woodlands and wetlands, a 1737 Manor House, a restored 19th-century windmill, an Afro-Indigenous Burial Ground and family cemetery, a formal garden and layered cultural landscape
- A place that acknowledges and interprets inclusive history with a particular focus on those who built and sustained Sylvester Manor
- An educational resource for learners of all ages, from the youngest children to adults and eminent scholars
- A working farm that sustainably grows food for the whole community
- Open to the public with 5 miles of walking trails, offering extensive educational and cultural arts programming
- Committed to working closely with diverse partners – conservationists, educators, neighbors, public agencies, descendant community members – to interpret the past and build a resilient future
- Working to preserve and protect the landscape and ecosystems, and to rehabilitate and adaptively reuse historic structures

**OUR MISSION IS TO  
Preserve, Cultivate and Share  
Historic Sylvester Manor.**





## DEAR SYLVESTER MANOR COMMUNITY,

I remain inspired by the dedication of our staff and supporters, and by the joy this historic place continues to foster within our community. As you review this Annual Report, I offer my sincere thanks to you, our donors, volunteers, partners, and friends. Your continued commitment, through both time and financial support, has been central to the strength and impact of Sylvester Manor today.

**This report reflects a year of progress and honors the individuals and partners whose support sustains Sylvester Manor's mission and vision.** The numbers speak for themselves, reflecting year-over-year growth across all facets of this special organization, thanks to your contributions and support.

Together, we helped create **77** jobs, providing meaningful local employment opportunities. Through programs and partnerships with local businesses, we generated nearly \$650,000 in revenue **(25%↑)**, strengthening our impact on the local economy. We welcomed more than 20,000 visitors **(11%↑)**, including 700 school-age children **(75%↑)**, who immersed themselves in our rich history, educational programs, farm, and grounds.

We hosted our second sculpture exhibition, showcasing local artists and bringing together diverse audiences to our historic landscape. We are proud to have donated nearly \$50,000 worth of food **(19%↑)** to local families, helping address food insecurity year-round. Additionally, we composted 25,000 pounds of food waste **(47%↑)**, demonstrating our commitment to environmental sustainability. We maintain 5 miles of public walking trails for the enjoyment of our community and actively manage the deer population, striving for ecosystem balance.

With the support of our donors, our Capital Campaign is gaining momentum, having raised over \$8 million toward our \$13 million goal. This generosity is enabling the preservation and rehabilitation of the 1737 Manor House, a project that honors our past while creating a future where all can immerse themselves in our place-based learning programs. Since launching the campaign publicly in late 2025, we are thrilled to begin work later this year, bringing this vision to life for our community.

We are deeply grateful for your generosity, enthusiasm, and energy this past year. Your contributions have fueled our work to Preserve, Cultivate, and Share historic Sylvester Manor. As we move forward, we remain committed to our mission, building on the foundation of those who came before us and **ensuring Sylvester Manor thrives for generations to come.**

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the entire Sylvester Manor community, thank you again for your ongoing support. Your belief in our mission and our people is what propels us forward.

With much appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marc Robert". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Marc Robert**  
*Board President, Sylvester Manor*

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Marc Robert, *President*  
Elly Karp Wong, *Vice President*  
Kathleen DeRose, *Secretary*  
James Preston, *Treasurer*  
Eben Fiske Ostby, *Founding Trustee*  
Ingrid Bateman  
Paul Carberry  
Steven Eisenstadt  
Sarah Fairbairn  
Cynthia Flynt  
Kathleen Gerard  
Rhonda Greene  
Galen Guengerich  
Steven Houston  
Roberta O. Hunter  
Elizabeth Jeffe  
Kareen Mozes Laton  
Thomas Misson  
Karolann Rubin

## STAFF

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Jennifer Ames, *Farmstand Manager*  
Donnamarie Barnes, *Director of History & Heritage*  
Julia Brennan, *Capital Projects Manager*  
Alice Clark, *History & Heritage Associate  
and Events Planner*  
Alyse Clark, *Development Manager*  
Tom Cugliani, *Sculpture @ Sylvester Manor Curator*  
Arielle Gardner, *Farm Manager*  
Virginia Gerardi, *Office and Facilities Support*  
Sara Gordon, *Senior Planner*  
Hannah Gray, *Summer Youth Program Director*  
Doug Kadlec, *Carpenter*  
Deborah Lajda, *Bookkeeper*  
Zoe Lindstrom-Ives, *Office Manager*  
Stewart Mackie, *Assistant Groundskeeper*  
Tracy McCarthy, *Director of Operations*  
Stephen A.W. Searl, *Executive Director*  
Eden Sherrod, *Programs Assistant*  
Susan Strauss, *Manor Made Chef*  
Gunnar Wissemann, *House and Grounds Manager*

## FARM

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April Adkison  
Caitlin Binder  
Elias Currier  
Juliet Fang  
Jenna Hoogervorst  
Isabella Kelley  
Hannah Kleiman  
Romy Newman  
Grace Petraglia  
Sophia Revaz  
Raquel Saenz  
Bella Springer  
Philip Stephens  
Jason Tepfer  
Romi Thomas  
Christine Tylee  
Jacob Yankee

## FARMSTAND

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Phoebe Allen  
Kat Austin  
William Brennan  
Harper Congdon  
Leslie Fleming  
Lisa Kaasik  
Isabelle Laton  
Morgan McCarthy  
Peter Murray  
Grace Olinkiewicz

## SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAM

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Elsie Armstrong  
Zadie Collins  
Alastair Corrie  
Celia Corrie  
Sam Cruise  
Caleb Cuti  
Maeve Egan  
India Eisenstadt  
Lola Ginsburg  
Natasha Gozlan  
Alexis Grace Griffin  
Kaitlyn Gulluscio  
Charlotte Hardwick  
Adele Himmelberg  
Lucy Himmelberg  
Harryo Hugh-Jones  
Lettice Hugh-Jones  
Naiyah Jarrett  
Jack Johnson  
Sona Lamoreaux  
Lila Laton  
Ophelia Lawless  
Lucia Levine  
Eliza McCarthy  
George McDonald  
Sally Michael  
Rosalie Ozcan  
Ellie Pedone  
Isabel Quimbrot  
Christopher Rodier  
Alexander  
Schoenwaelder  
Beatrix Shaw  
Ella Watts-Gorman  
Hannah Wermuth  
Stella Werther  
Mia Wong





# THE MANOR HOUSE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN



Sylvester Manor’s Capital Campaign represents a transformative investment in the preservation and future of this extraordinary historic site. Through this ambitious effort, we are safeguarding the 1737 Manor House and rehabilitating its 1908 addition to create a dynamic Center for History & Heritage.

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**Grounded in the guiding vision-  
Preserving the Past, Inspiring  
the Future-we are establishing a  
lasting legacy on Shelter Island.**

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The completed project will position Sylvester Manor as a global center, providing scholars and visitors unparalleled access to hundreds of years of American history. The Manor House will offer a setting for the study of rich and complex historical resources, illuminating the lives of Sylvester descendant families and the workforce that supported them over nine generations while deepening exploration of the Indigenous, African, and European histories intertwined on this land. By preserving and activating this historic structure, we are creating new opportunities for research, interpretation, and public engagement.

In 2025, building on prior grant success, we secured extraordinary public and private support: a \$1.8 million award from the New York State Council on the Arts, a \$100,000 grant from the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and \$675,000 from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund, following a \$500,000 EPF grant in 2023. In addition, private donors have pledged and contributed nearly \$1.5M to the Capital Campaign, underscoring widespread confidence in the importance of this work as we aim to raise nearly \$13M to complete this project.

This year, we advanced Manor House preservation research into detailed construction documents and are awaiting feedback from state and federal historic preservation regulators. In October, the Zoning Board of Appeals granted our Special Permit, a milestone made possible by strong community advocacy and support. Public meetings and a summer lawn celebration launching the campaign’s public phase further broadened awareness of our mission to Preserve, Cultivate, and Share historic Sylvester Manor.

As construction approaches, we look forward to sharing new discoveries and eventually welcoming audiences to a fully rehabilitated Manor House. We are grateful to all who have joined us in this monumental project, and to those continuing to support this important work.



# COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT: FROM VAULT TO CATALOG

In 2025, Collections Management at Sylvester Manor grew immensely. We continued to develop the catalog of artifacts, engaged in learning opportunities to refine techniques used in this work, and hosted the community for an educational talk on the process. We also formally adopted a Collections Management policy and appointed a board-level Collections Committee to ensure that our archival materials, photographs, objects and books continue to receive the attention they deserve.

To date, our cataloging software hosts 19,000 records including detailed entries, photographs from multiple angles, biographical information of the people who lived and worked at Sylvester Manor, and more. Our files to date cover all the objects from the basement through the second floor. They range from furniture and decorative objects to garments and personal care items from the time of the Sylvesters' arrival here in the 17th Century to the last family residency in the early 21st Century.

We spent much of 2025 addressing the Manor House collection of around 4,000 books, which required different protocols for cataloging and packing. For part of this work we had the assistance of retired Sylvester Manor employee Virginia Gerardi and high school volunteer Nyla Martin, who aided in tackling the last of three very large bookcases. Before packing the books, we checked them for mementos, revealing wildflowers, locks of hair, ticket stubs and more pressed between their pages. Having gained sufficient expertise and confidence since cataloging began in 2024, we turned our attention to high value items stored in the vault, including silver, fine china and crystal, as well as

family heirlooms. These items tend to be more delicate and require special handling and deeper research. Some have highly specific needs, such as silver items prone to tarnish. We invested in anti-tarnish fabric and made custom pouches to protect silver during storage.

We also engaged in various learning opportunities to broaden our expertise and refine our techniques. We joined professional associations to gain access to training for best collections management practices, investing in memberships to the American Association of State and Local Historians, the American Institute for Conservation, and the American Alliance of Museums. Their online resources have been invaluable. Additionally, we attended a workshop on proper handling of hazardous materials sometimes found in museum collections hosted by the Greater Hudson Heritage Network.

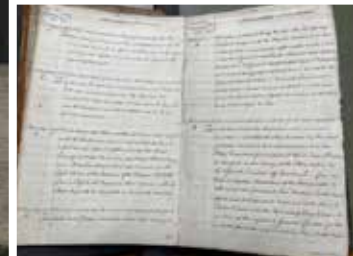
Expanding our community outreach was another important 2025 goal, inspiring a July evening porch talk. In partnership with the Shelter Island Public Library's Friday Night Dialogues we gave a presentation on our efforts to catalog and care for the Manor House collections. We described our process and research methods, and shared some of our favorite finds, including a small abalone case containing a tiny gold violin charm won by a Horsford family member during a birthday celebration for Norwegian violinist Ole Bull. At the Capital Campaign kickoff in August, we led guided tours highlighting our collections management and previewing the new Center for History & Heritage, which will occupy the rear portion of the Manor House.

Lastly, we worked with the Shelter Island History Museum to secure storage space in their state-of-the-art vault to protect our most highly-prized artifacts during construction. We look forward to working with SIHM and other partners to develop new public programming around our collections. We will also continue working with our higher learning partners to deepen our understanding of Sylvester Manor's collections through academic research.



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- **19,000 entries in our collections management system**
  - **4,000 books assessed, documented, and carefully packed**
  - **350+ years of history represented, from the 17th to the 21st century**
  - **3 professional museum associations joined to strengthen best practices**
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# HISTORY & HERITAGE

## SCHOLARSHIP WITHOUT BORDERS

Sylvester Manor's History & Heritage Department strengthened its position as a center of international scholarship through the second year of a transformative initiative funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Through the Higher Learning and Humanities in Place programs, Sylvester Manor continues to evolve from a preserved historic site into an active laboratory for research, interpretation, and global collaboration.

### University Partnerships

Central to this work are sustained collaborations with the University of Massachusetts Boston, New York University, and the Bard Graduate Center. Together, these institutions integrate Sylvester Manor into advanced academic study while expanding public access to its collections and archives.

At the Fiske Center for Archaeological Research at UMass Boston, students continue the careful digitization and cataloging of the Manor's

extensive artifact collections, preserving decades of excavation work. At NYU, Sylvester Manor anchors a graduate-level Public History course, complemented by post-graduate fellowships supporting transcription of rare primary documents housed at the Fales Library. The Bard Graduate Center offers a course devoted to the Manor's material culture and decorative arts, situating its collections within broader global design and trade histories.

This year also marked the beginning of a new partnership with the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, in Barbados, which is undertaking a three-year Mellon Foundation-funded project to examine seventeenth-century sugarcane plantations, using the Sylvester family's Constant and Carmichael plantations as its focus.

### Research & Activities

Director of History & Heritage Donnamarie Barnes and Research Associate Alice Clark traveled to various archives in the United States and abroad

to research the scope of the Sylvester family's far reaching business activities, tracing networks that extended from the Netherlands to the Caribbean, the Northeast, and Shelter Island. This research has deepened understanding of how the family both shaped and participated in the economic development of the Atlantic World during the seventeenth century and beyond.

Working in leading repositories including Oxford University, the National Archives at Kew, the City Archives of Amsterdam, the National Archives of Barbados, and closer to home at the New York Public Library and the East Hampton Library, among others, they uncovered documents and primary source records that illuminate the lives of the Sylvester family, as well as the enslaved and free people who lived, worked, and died on their properties.

Ongoing research continues to uncover the names and lives of those individuals buried at the Manor's Afro-Indigenous Burial Ground. This year archaeologists determined with advanced GPR readings that the total number of people buried there is close to 100. To date, we can identify and provide a window into the lives of 70 of these people. Every June, Sylvester Manor honors these individuals through a public Juneteenth commemoration that includes the calling of their names and remembrance of their lives.

Research conducted this year has also yielded new information and records concerning the Revolutionary War period and the invasion of Shelter Island and the Manor by British troops. These findings will be central to tour and presentation narratives during the 2026 summer season.

These and other research findings have been incorporated into both tour narratives, which last summer focused on the history of the Sylvester family in The Netherlands, and an updated reissue of the 2019 catalogue for the All That Has Been exhibit of archaeological artifacts discovered on the grounds by students and professors from the Fiske Center at UMass Boston. In addition, our ongoing Porch Talk series featured professors, authors and scholars on the lawn of the Manor

House and new and expanded stories have been written for our website and social media.

As staff research and student-led scholarship continue in tandem, the story of the Sylvester family and Sylvester Manor continues to expand beyond a one of local interest to one of national and international significance. We are deeply grateful for the support that has made this work possible and look ahead with enthusiasm to the discoveries, collaborations, and shared learning that will continue to shape this work in the years to come.

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- **4 university partnerships advancing scholarship and interpretation**
  - **3-year International plantation research initiative with UWI**
  - **100 grave sites identified through GPR at the Afro-Indigenous Burial Ground**
  - **70 lives identified and documented of those buried**
  - **6+ major international archives consulted**
  - **1 global story connecting the Netherlands, the Caribbean, New England, and Shelter Island**
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# THE FARM & FARMSTAND ROOTED



This year our Farm and Farmstand saw remarkable growth in harvest, impact, and connection.



Across 10 acres of farmland, our team cared for thriving fields and pastures while producing a bountiful harvest of fruits and vegetables. Our livestock program continues to model a rare commitment to humane agriculture. Our pigs and chickens are 100% pasture raised, living outdoors with space to roam, forage, and root as nature intended. This approach yields healthier, more flavorful pork and eggs while restoring soil health and supporting biodiversity.



Thanks to Giving Tuesday supporters in November of 2024, we installed a new wash station to improve food safety and efficiency during peak harvest. Support from the Concordia Foundation helped expand our Food Access Program, allowing us to donate nearly \$50,000 worth of fresh food to local families through our food pantry partners, the Center for Advocacy, Support and Transformation (CAST) and the Shelter Island Food Pantry. In total, \$47,500 in grants strengthened food access and soil health initiatives, and 250,000 pounds of waste were diverted from the recycling center through composting and sustainable practices.

Community engagement is central to the Farm and our CSA program. In 2025 we had 133 CSA shares, connecting farmers with families, and the Farm Apprenticeship Program offered numerous hands-on learning opportunities for the next generation of agricultural leaders.

At the Farmstand, we celebrated some exciting milestones. We introduced Manor Made, a new line of handcrafted goods born from a long-held dream to share more of Sylvester Manor's bounty. Many of these products are made with



## Volunteer Spotlight

Larry Lieberman was a familiar face on the Farm this season where he spent countless hours volunteering. From his dedicated work in the fields to supporting beloved community gatherings like Garlic at the Goat, Larry's contributions helped make the Farm a happy, thriving place.

Larry is drawn to Sylvester Manor because of how deeply the Farm connects the Island's past, present, and future. "The Farm is a place where my phone gets turned off and the unexpected joys of cultivation, good conversation, and open spaces take over," Larry shared. "It's a community where everyone is welcome, and there is always something new to learn."

Drawing on his own experience as a gardener, Larry reflects on farming as something deeper than work alone: "My own gardening has taught me that farming is a balance of science, magic, and love. Volunteering at Sylvester Manor has helped me understand all three a little better. Whether you were born on this Island, in NYC, or much farther away, this Farm is a place where we can all find connection, great people, and always something to look forward to."

fresh produce grown right on the farm and prepared in our on-site commercial kitchen by Chef Susan Strauss. Favorites included tomato jam, pocket pies, carrot ginger soup and tomato tarts. This new product line contributed to the Farmstand and Farm sales of nearly \$550K.

Community events at the Farm continue to be popular. Our partnership with the Shelter Island Public Library brings families together for Saturday Story Thyme, turning the Farmstand into a gathering place for learning and community connection. The Annual Veggie Derby is turning into a well-loved event where entrants enter their prize-winning vegetable race car and enjoy family fun on the farm!





# YOUTH EDUCATION

## GROWING CURIOUS MINDS



Rooted in the belief that we are all made of stardust and intrinsically connected to the natural world, Sylvester Manor's educational programming invites children to honor nature and recognize their place within it. Through music, art, theatre, food, and farming, participants experience the Manor as both classroom and inspiration. This immersive, interdisciplinary approach nurtures curiosity, empathy, and environmental stewardship while fostering a sense of wonder that extends well beyond the summer months.

Under the leadership of Director Hannah Gray, the Summer Youth Program continues to grow. In 2025, we expanded capacity and welcomed the highest number of participants in the program's history. As offerings evolve to meet community needs, program revenue has increased by nearly 70% over the past three years. A generous \$5,000 scholarship gift

ensured that local families could participate regardless of financial barriers. One of the year's most notable successes was the launch of Meadowlarks, designed for children ages 2-3½. This program gently introduces young learners to the natural world, cultivating curiosity, self-awareness, and an early connection to the earth.

Children were also introduced to filmmaking through Overstory, a program that immerses participants in visual storytelling. Spending their days in the Manor's old-growth forest, students documented local flora and fauna through both nonfiction and imaginative narratives. Using storyboards, exploration, and collaboration, they created a short film that transformed their observations and ideas into moving stories.

The arts remain deeply integrated throughout our educational offerings. Young Forest Theatre participants performed Shakespeare, while Bach Breaks: An Opera in the Forest wove the music of Bach into school-break programs. Artists from Sculpture @ Sylvester Manor, an outdoor exhibition of sculpture and installations, led hands-on workshops for Summer Youth Program participants, including clay bird sculpting with Marta Baumiller, kaleidoscope-making, and cyanotype “Forest Person” prints with Andrea Cote and transformative masks with Ariel Adkins.

This year also marked completion of our second curriculum, *The Sweet Conquest: The Rise of Sugar*. Developed for ninth grade and aligned with New York State standards, the curriculum follows the lives of merchant brothers Nathaniel and Giles Sylvester, whose story links Amsterdam, Barbados, and early New York. Their legacy reveals the complex web of the colonial sugar trade and the ways their Anglo-Dutch heritage and business ventures shaped the economic landscape of early America. Through case studies and an archaeology project, students explore how material evidence informs historical understanding and consider how studying the past can help communities interpret, preserve, and share their own histories.

Beyond the summer season, we welcomed students from Shelter Island School, Springs School, and Shelter Island Early Childhood Learning Center for enriching field trips that extended our reach throughout the academic year. These visits provided experiential learning grounded in history, agriculture, ecology, and the arts.

Together, these programs nurture the next generation of environmental stewards, artists, and creative thinkers, ensuring that Sylvester Manor continues to inspire young minds for years to come.



I was especially impressed by your thoughtful approach and the warm, open environment you’ve cultivated [at your Summer Youth Programs]. It’s clear how much intention and heart you bring to your work, and it made the experience all the more meaningful.

*-Ariel Adkins, Sculpture Artist*



Visiting Sylvester Manor Summer Youth Program was an amazing experience. The setting is stunning, safe, and instantly relaxing, so the children felt at ease right away. Hannah and the counselors were fantastic—engaged, energetic, and deeply connected with the campers. There was just

enough structure to keep everyone grounded, yet plenty of room for exploration and play. I left feeling grateful to be part of this engaging program and energized by the kids’ playful spirit and imagination.

*-Marta Baumiller, Sculpture Artist*



These groups of little ones were so attentive and focused on the process [of cyanotype printing], noting subtle changes in the colors of the

fabric as it shifted colors and the moisture captured by the humidity of the day. True scientists! They took so much pleasure in seeing their artworks through all stages of the process of creation.

*-Andrea Cote, Sculpture Artist*



# 12<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL FARM TO TABLE BENEFIT



*Our annual Farm to Table Benefit has become a special celebration for our community members, staff, and local businesses. It is an opportunity to support this special nonprofit that truly has a place for everyone, and meet others who share similar values of generosity, togetherness, and care for our community.*

*We were deeply grateful to witness the greatest generosity in Farm to Table history at our 12th annual event. Thank you to everyone who joined us. Your belief in our mission to Preserve, Cultivate, and Share historic Sylvester Manor is the reason we continue to thrive and grow.*

## A huge thank you to our Farm to Table leaders of 2025

- Victoria and Craig Bergstrom
- Christine and Cromwell Coulson
- Marie and John Evans
- Jenna Fagnan
- Kathleen DeRose and Nigel Francombe
- Willette and George Hoffmann
- Lawrence and Kristin Kast
- Iqbal and Shelby Mamdani
- Matthew Arendt and Thomas Misson
- Karolann and Alex Rubin
- Patrick Loftus-Hills and Konnin Tam
- Jennifer Kroman and David Wermuth
- Elly and Tony Wong



The Farm to Table event always feels like a homecoming—welcoming summer while honoring the spirit and history that defines Shelter Island.  
- **Susan Petrie-Badertscher**



The reason I love the Farm to Table Dinner is the same reason I support Sylvester Manor – it brings the entire Shelter Island community together to share in the natural abundance of a place that’s very special to

each one of us. It’s an event that’s centered around good food, good neighbors and celebrating the harvest of another summer season, together. - **Paul Carberry**



I love the Farm To Table event because it is about connection - to the land, to local food and to a community gathered together for dinner under the stars. - **Amy Cococcia**



Sylvester Manor’s Farm-to-Table Gala is a true celebration of Shelter Island’s community spirit. Islanders and friends of the Farm come together to share delicious food, great company, and a joyful night

of music and dancing. It is the Island’s event of the year. - **Patrick Loftus-Hills**



## CELEBRATING 7 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP



For seven years, **Karolann “Kaz” Rubin** has been at the heart of our Farm to Table Benefit, guiding its growth and success with dedication and care. Her leadership brought friends and families together on Manor House grounds and helped create

meaningful opportunities for community members to experience and join the full impact of our mission. As she steps down from her role, we extend our deepest thanks for her commitment and vision.

“For me, Sylvester Manor represents legacy and responsibility. It is a privilege to be part of its ongoing story, with a commitment to ensure that it remains vibrant, financially sustainable, and deeply rooted in the community for generations to come. Walking the fields, standing beneath its trees, or gathering in community at the CSA is to feel the layered stories of those who came before us and the responsibility we carry forward. I’m grateful to be part of the journey and for all who forward our mission.” - Kaz Rubin

## 2025 Farm to Table Committee

**Karolann “Kaz” Rubin, Co-Chair**

**Matthew Arendt, Co-Chair**

**Alyse Clark, Development Manager**

**Alice Clark, Event Planner**

Susan Petrie-Badertscher  
Ingrid Bateman  
Paul Carberry  
Amy Cococcia  
Sarah (Griff) Fairbairn  
Chuck Fleckenstein  
Kathleen Gerard  
Edie Langner

Patrick Loftus-Hills  
Mara Manus  
Krista Miniutti  
Russell Piccione  
Caroline Ritter  
Karen Robert  
Cristina Roig  
Konnin Tam



# A LOOK BACK AT OUR COMMUNITY EVENTS

JUNE



Juneteenth Remembrance

Sculpture Opening Reception



JULY

Shakespeare at the Manor



History & Heritage Walking Tours



Porch Talk on Collections Management with the Shelter Island Library



Porch Talk with Dr. Steve

Porch Talk with Martha S. Jones and Dr. Jennifer L. Morgan

Sylvester Sunday - Union Chapel in the Grove

# AUGUST



History & Heritage Walking Tours

Veggie Derby

Creekside Concert - Los Hacheros

# OCTOBER

# NOVEMBER

# DECEMBER



Garlic at the Goat



Creekside Concert in Partnership with the Shelter Island Fire Department - Gene Casey and the Lone Sharks



Giving Tuesday

Windmill Lighting

# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

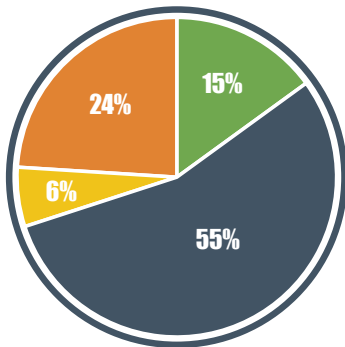
Sylvester Manor’s Fiscal Year 2025 started November 1, 2024 and ended October 31, 2025. Operations for FY25 are consistent with years past, with steady growth in Education, History & Heritage and Fundraising. Sylvester Manor has continued to invest in Farm and Facilities related infrastructure as well as the preservation of the Manor House.

Not reflected in these numbers are grant awards and multi-year pledges made towards our ongoing capital campaign. Since 2023 we have raised over \$8M specifically for the capital campaign (see page 6) in addition to another \$2M in operating support from the Mellon Foundation. Much of this money will be received over the year and thus is not reflected in this financial summary.

*NOTE: This financial overview draws from the organization’s unaudited financials. The audited financial statements and Form 990 for FY25 will be available by Spring 2026. Please contact our office for more information or to request copies of audited financials and filed Form 990.*

## CAPITAL EXPENDITURES AND RESTRICTED PROJECTS:

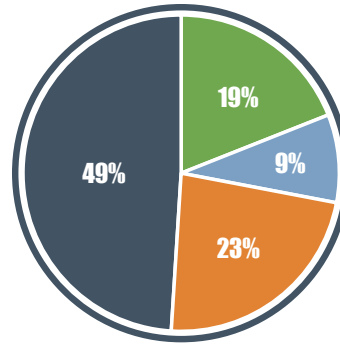
**FY25 Total Expended: \$990,934**



- 15%** Farm Expansion & Facilities Improvements
- 55%** Manors House Preservation & Capital Campaign
- 6%** Farm Apprentice Housing
- 24%** Mellon Programming

## OPERATING REVENUE

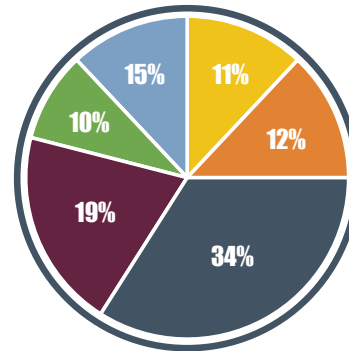
**FY25 Total Revenue: \$2,297,817**



- 19%** Education & Arts
- 9%** History & Heritage
- 23%** Farm & Farmstand
- 49%** Fundraising

## OPERATING EXPENDITURES

**FY25 Total Expended: \$2,294,885**



- 11%** Education
- 12%** History & Heritage
- 34%** Farm & Farmstand
- 19%** Fundraising / Arts & Cultural Events
- 10%** Buildings & Grounds
- 15%** Administration & Organizational Support

# EMPLOYEE MILESTONES



## CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF STEWARDSHIP: GUNNAR WISSEMAN

For five decades, Gunnar Wissemann has been the backbone of Sylvester Manor, caring for its 236 acres with extraordinary dedication and pride. Since first beginning his work in 1975, Gunnar has played an essential role in preserving the beauty, integrity, and sustainability of this historic landscape.

“I have been fortunate enough to have been Caretaker and live on the grounds of Sylvester Manor for 36 years,” he shared. “What some might not know is that I actually started working on December 14, 1975, making 2025 my 50th year associated with the Manor.”

Over the years, visitors have experienced firsthand the results of Gunnar’s expansive skill set and deep-rooted knowledge of the land. During this time, Gunnar has witnessed growth, change, and preservation. “The Manor has been a great place to live with my wife and raise my children,” he reflected. “Over the years, I have seen many people and changes. It is nice to know that so much of the Manor has been preserved and will continue to thrive and move in the right direction.”

Gunnar expressed gratitude to those who supported him along the way, including Andrew and Alice Fiske for first bringing him on, and Eben and Susan Otsby during the transition of the farm. Looking ahead, he expressed confidence in the current team: “The 2026 season has the best farm and office staff we’ve had to date. I look forward to seeing great things from Matt Celona and the farm crew.”

Sylvester Manor is profoundly fortunate to have benefited from Gunnar’s steady leadership and enduring care for this land. As Gunnar said, “I hope you all continue to support, respect and love the Manor as much as I do.” We extend a huge congratulations and deepest thanks for 50 remarkable years of stewardship!



## WISHING A HAPPY RETIREMENT TO SARA GORDON



On December 5, 2025, on the eve of our annual Windmill Lighting, Sylvester Manor honored the retirement of beloved leader Sara Gordon. Since 2007, Sara was instrumental in transforming the Manor from a private estate into a thriving, public-facing nonprofit. Her work helped found the organization, launch the Educational Farm, and preserve vital acreage for generations to come.

Reflecting on the Manor’s transition to nonprofit ownership, Sara called it “nothing short of miraculous.” She believed deeply in the founders’ vision that the plantation remnant

would “acknowledge and leave behind the worst of the past, and honor the best,” and that the Sylvester Manor would be “a place where art and inventiveness were part of the every day, and where work could be fair and joyful.” As she shared upon her retirement, “We know, now, that great swaths of the lands of Sylvester Manor... are protected for you and for me and for those to come, for all time. I am immeasurably grateful to have been here to know and love this place.”

# Honor Roll of Donors

We are grateful to Sylvester Manor's friends and donors who share our confidence in the mission and values, and who continue to invest in the critical work we do. This support and the careful stewardship of our resources are an essential partnership - and help us become the innovative, evolving farm and historic center with boundary-breaking programming we aspire to be.

*Listing includes ALL GIFTS received from November 1, 2024 - October 31, 2025.*

## \$100,000+

Anonymous

## \$50,000-\$99,999

The Bartley Foundation  
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and Nigel Francombe  
Jim Basker and Angela Vallot  
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and Derek Webster  
Melina and Marc Wein  
Alicin Williamson  
Jillian Steadman and Troy Young  
Dr. Ronnie Salzman Zisfein  
and Dr. Jerry Zisfein  
Lion R Zust

### **\$500-\$999**

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Blazejewski  
Blair and John Borthwick  
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Julia and Ed Brennan  
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Kathleen DeFouw  
Samantha Gilbert  
and Edward Dolman  
Carrie and Hiram Emery  
The Siegel Family  
Thomas and Miriam Farmakis  
John and Sandi Fifield  
James Goldman  
Network for Good  
Catherine and Carlo Grigioni  
Carrie Grin  
Ricki Stern and Evan Guillemin  
Brenda Harms  
Richard Hogan  
Anton Metlitsky  
and Rebecca Ingber  
Jonathan Kilb  
Alfred Ling  
Parnel Wickham  
and Donald McCouch  
Elise McVeigh  
Jill Moser  
Christine Miller Martin  
and Christian Murrele  
Christopher Norwood  
Wenla and Gregg Petry  
Penny Pilkington  
Eloise Robert  
Deborah and Mike Rouzee  
Chris Royer  
Shelter Island Run  
Deborah and Michael Shepherd  
Brenda Simmons  
Landey Strongin  
Sedgwick Ward  
Todd Waterbury  
Charlotte Triefus  
and Lloyd Zuckerberg

### **\$250 - \$499**

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Holly and Bruce Aronow  
CNY Arts, Inc.

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Glenn Brown  
and Dorothee Bergin  
Catherine Corry  
Christine DeFouw  
Caitlin Read and Daniel Fabé  
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and Jeffrey Feingold  
Kathy and Gordon Gooding  
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Naomi and James Pascale  
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Maggie and Todd Prager  
Anonymous  
Harriet Reilly  
Alison and Richard Relyea  
Sonalí Rodrigo  
Shawuan Johnson  
Victoria and John Shorr  
Julia Stambules  
Mary and Mike Ward  
Lyn and ET Williams Jr.

### **Up to \$249**

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Paul Aferiat  
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Lois Draegin  
Vaughn and Gail Buffalo  
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Sara Fitzmaurice  
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Alyse Clark  
Michelle Filion  
Cristina Constantino  
Jill Moser  
Tom Cugliani  
Kathleen Gerard  
Kathleen Derose  
Petra Schmidt  
Rob and Griff Fairbairn  
Charles Dunne  
Ilana Levine  
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Matthew Arendt  
Shelter Island Environmental  
Union Chapel in the Grove  
Edie Langner  
Karolann Rubin

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

## Barbara Marshall



Barbara Marshall generously volunteered her time at several Sylvester Manor events this season. From welcoming guests at check-in during Farm to Table to scanning tickets at our Shakespeare and Creekside Concert performances, Barbara greeted visitors with a bright smile, helping create a positive and memorable experience for all.

Reflecting on her time at the Manor, Barbara

shared, “Volunteering at Sylvester Manor has given me the opportunity to be part of something truly special. It is not just a historic site, but a place deeply rooted in the rich history of Shelter Island and the many generations who have lived, worked, and gathered on this land. Being surrounded by such a powerful sense of history made every moment feel purposeful and meaningful.”

Barbara especially valued the connections she formed along the way. “I enjoyed engaging with visitors, staff, and fellow volunteers, and sharing in conversations about the history of the land and its importance to the community. It felt meaningful to know I was helping preserve not only a physical place, but also the stories, traditions, and connections that make Shelter Island so unique.”

She concluded, “This experience reminded me how powerful it is to give back and to be part of a community that values education, preservation, and connection. Volunteering at Sylvester Manor has left a lasting impression on me, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity to have contributed to such an important and historic place.”

We are deeply grateful to Barbara for sharing her time and kindness in support of Sylvester Manor’s programs and community events.







SYLVESTER  
MANOR

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
2024-2025

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