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### greenchimneys.org

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## Respect, Trust and Other Lessons from Wildlife

**A**ccording to Tome, “Wildlife doesn’t get enough love. Everyone likes the cute, cuddly animals because most people don’t understand birds or snakes,” says the 15-year-old Green Chimneys student. “I’m more curious about things I don’t fully understand.”

Hearing a student express a sentiment like this is a joy to Wildlife Teacher John Boyle, who focuses his lessons on awareness, empathy and respect for wildlife and the natural world they inhabit. He takes a pragmatic approach by guiding students through their existing knowledge or preconceptions about animals that they may not have had experience with before, and contrasts that with facts about each species and their instinctive need not to just live, but to survive.

**Left: Learning new skills can uncover a passion. See page 5.**

“Snakes are an excellent species to study; it’s an animal that’s gained a reputation for being scary or dangerous but in fact, they are highly sensitive creatures that carefully explore their surroundings to ensure they are safe,” says John. “I teach that not all animals are meant to be handled, some are just to observe but when we can respect an animal’s need to feel safe, regulate our behavior and our movement, the animal can respect – and trust – us, as well.”

For students who decide to engage, handling a snake can provide a calming sensory experience, and a great awareness of self. The stillness, relaxed muscles, and even-paced breath required for these interactions help students to practice self-awareness, emotional regulation, and trust. This ability to slow down and stay mindful are at the core of the coping skills that Green Chimneys students are building for themselves.

As part of Green Chimneys School’s nature-based curriculum, Wildlife Education is

## A Message From

Executive Kristin Dionne

**L**ike all seasonal transitions, the change of summer into autumn is always bittersweet. I miss the warm, lingering days as they become noticeably shorter but the changing colors of fall and cooler weather bring renewed energy and anticipation as the school year gets into full swing and the holidays approach.

This year the summer to fall transition has been particularly poignant. We said farewell to Executive Director Edward Placke as he began his retirement. Although goodbyes are tough, I have the honor of being named Interim Executive Director and look forward with excitement to the possibilities ahead.

Transitions are something we think about often here at Green Chimneys. For many of our children, daily transitions such as



getting to school or changing activities can be a source of anxiety and distress. Providing guidance, consistency and support, our staff help these children successfully navigate their day-to-day lives and personal goals to learn how to support themselves in the future.

This transition in leadership is a rare occurrence at Green Chimneys. Now in our

76th year, I am only the fourth executive director in the agency's history and I am proud to contribute to its success in this capacity. I am thankful to have the same level of support that all of our children receive with their transitions.

I have guidance from my years working directly with all three of my predecessors: Founder Samuel "Rollo" Ross, along with his wife and co-founder Myra Ross; Joseph Whalen; and most recently Dr. Placke. I have the continuity of a solid foundation that comes from more than seven decades of strong, forward-thinking leadership. I have the support of our Board of Directors and, most importantly, the support of an incredible team of caring, professional staff. I know that together, along with our animal partners, we will continue to enhance our educational and therapeutic services to meet the growing needs of our children and families. Every day.

## Whole Family Support

**H**ow a family spends time together, interacts with each other, and manages problems that arise is an important part of functioning, both individually and collectively. Family dynamics can be challenging in any household and many families benefit from professional therapeutic support, which is often quite transformative.

Since the return to in-person services, our Community-Based Services Team has seen an uptick in interest in family therapy across Putnam County. While not the only reason, the stressful effects of the pandemic have certainly contributed to this. "Concentrated time together and limited interaction outside of immediate family magnified issues within these relationships," says Community-Based Services Director Clare Rigano. "Among the families served, supportive group work has been effective in helping to address a wide variety of issues, such as family conflict, parenting difficulties, collective trauma and tragedies, and family separation or loss."

There are significant differences between individual and family therapy. Individual therapy concentrates on a person's self and their identified struggles. Family therapy looks beyond each individual and involves all members affected by the same struggle. Although both can be instrumental in supporting change, in many cases, family work can be even more effective than individual therapy due to reduction of stigma for an individual, and the solidarity and bonding that families experience in the presence of each other.

Skilled therapists in our Community-Based Services group work with families to improve communication, foster understanding, and facilitate positive changes. It starts with collaborative work to identify patterns of maladaptive behavior, ineffective communication styles, and other factors contributing to the identified problems. Evidence-based therapies, such as Structural Strategic Family Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy include communication exercises, role-playing, and homework



assignments that help family members achieve better understanding and reframe thinking. The focus on resolving problems and overall functioning as a family promotes learning and skill-building together, at a shared pace. Over time, the ability for members to improve functioning within their family can also transfer to personal interactions outside of the home, and change the trajectory for future relationships and life paths.

**Could your family benefit from collaborative work? Contact Green Chimneys' Community-Based Services at 845.279.2378.**

## Barn Cuisine

**G**reen Chimneys' Farm & Wildlife Center is home to over 300 domesticated farm animals and wildlife, ranging in size from the tiniest sparrow to a 2,000-pound Bactrian camel! Proper nutrition is key to keeping our animals in optimal health and happily engaged as therapy partners for our students, and our dedicated staff works hard every day to meet their diverse dietary needs. Here's what's on the menu:

- Hay is the dietary staple of our herd of 20 horses, and smaller farm animals, such as sheep and goats. Approximately 80 bales of fresh-cut hay, each weighing 60 pounds, are consumed weekly, totaling close to 10,000 bales over the course of a year! Senior equines also receive a special grain mixture, flax seed, and mineral supplements to keep their joints healthy.
- Camels are herbivores so our hump-backed trio dines primarily on trees and grass and, as they would in the wild, large

quantities of loose-ground Himalayan salt for hydration and mineral content. The salt also helps to keep their muscles from cramping, for the same reason that humans need liquids containing electrolytes.

- In our farm classroom, the guinea pigs receive a daily diet of hay, fruits and vegetables, supplemented with one orange a week to prevent Vitamin C deficiency.
- The Wildlife Center cares for over 100 birds with a wide variety of diets. Carnivorous birds of prey – falcons, hawks, and owls – enjoy a daily meal of rodents, fish, large insects, small birds, and poultry. Ducks and geese dine on plants, insects and worms, and our 24 songbirds are fed seeds and grains.
- An herbivore diet of bark, twigs, sweet potato, and corn keeps the porcupine healthy and content.
- Opossums are omnivores, and our most recent wildlife addition is served protein, small animals and insects included, fruit, and vegetables at each meal.



The health and well being of our animals is critical to the success of our farm and wildlife programming to educate and support children with special needs. You can help to sustain therapeutic animal-assisted activities by contributing to the care of these important and beloved animal partners.

Learn how you can help at [greenchimneys.org/give](https://greenchimneys.org/give)

## New Faces at the Farm



Arabian camels Phil and RJ may not be the first camels to join Green Chimneys but they might be the most animated. The pair first visited Green Chimneys in 2022 for a three-day training program for camel owners to strengthen their skills in handling and caring for camels. Phil and RJ returned as residents this year, joining Bactrian camel Phoenix to create a unique trio of campus favorites. Their curious nature and goofy personalities bring smiles to everyone who interacts with them, and their playful antics – especially with the more pensive Phoenix – can be quite entertaining.



These Saanen goats came from a local farm as eight-week-old kids and instantly became a top attraction at the farm. Green Chimneys students helped to bottle feed and acclimate them to their new home, at their own pace. A case of frostbite caused Ghost to lose the tips of his ears soon after birth, and Winter was born partially deaf. Despite these traits, both goats confidently make themselves known to all who pass. Ghost demands to be petted and insists that anything you may be holding belongs to him, while Winter has a more docile style, sneaking up on you to chew on your jacket or keys.

These are just some of the faces featured in the latest Green Chimneys Animal Calendar, an annual celebration of our partners in education and therapy for children with special needs. Get to know our furry and feathered friends and their real-life stories while supporting our programs for children, and the care of our animals.



Purchase your 2024 Animal Calendar and enjoy 365 days of Green Chimneys Farm & Wildlife. Details at: [greenchimneys.org/calendar](https://greenchimneys.org/calendar)

## Lessons from Wildlife

continued from page 1



scheduled into the students' regular academic program. Classes feature the study of birds of prey, reptiles, and other wildlife; awareness of environmental conservation; and opportunities to interact directly with the variety of animals in the wildlife classroom. Interested students can increase their participation with opportunities to assist in animal care, such as preparing diets, cleaning bowls and some aspects of medical treatments.

For the past two years, Tome has held various Learn & Earn jobs in wildlife, learning to care for the birds of prey and other animals at the Wildlife Center. Tome recently earned a role as a wildlife apprentice, which will expand their

responsibilities in the day-to-day tasks and allow for more hands-on experience with the animals, and direct handling of some. While Tome has developed a high level of comfort with wildlife – including the ability to feed the enormous Andean Condor – a deep respect for the well being of the animal is what's always top of mind.

"Animals are very good at understanding their surroundings and with humans, they are a tiny animal at the mercy of a larger animal so you need to be aware of their body language and how they are feeling," says Tome. "I know how I feel when I'm nervous so it's important to have a calm demeanor, know the animal's limits, and your own."

## Small Groups, Big Support

**A**n integral part of education and youth development models is social-emotional learning (SEL).

It is the process that helps students, from the earliest grade levels, learn to develop mindfulness, self-control, and interpersonal skills that are important for school, home, and life. Green Chimneys' therapeutic programming incorporates small group work into student support to cover an array of topics and skill-building activities, such as play therapy, mindfulness, and active discussions around maintaining healthy relationships.

For several years, Green Chimneys has employed Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) for behavioral and social skills development. The DBT group has become the primary social-emotional learning group held during the school day, where clinicians focus on emotion regulation, distress tolerance, and interpersonal effectiveness. To promote student practice of these skills, support teams supplement DBT groups with more specialized, topical groups to focus on individual skills and restorative practices through activities that encourage



participants to utilize the skills in the moment with direct coaching, and repetition.

Students are identified for particular groups based on behavioral data to assess individual needs. Groups consist of four to six participants; curriculum is determined by participant ages to ensure activities and discussions are age-appropriate and relevant to their level of development.

Groups underway in the new school year:

**New Student Orientation** welcomes new students and introduces them to Green Chimneys' Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and restorative practices.

**Guiding Peers** helps older students build skills to support younger peers and become peer mentors in the school and the residential program.

Structured student groups are a component of Green Chimneys' ongoing therapeutic intervention and behavioral support for students. A multi-tiered approach comprised of push-in services, crisis prevention, and guided group programs helps students to maintain their regular routines, feeling more resilient and able to make positive choices.

## Chef in the Making

**T**he gardens of Green Chimneys are a source of great learning and discovery for students, especially when it comes to summer's bounty. High school student Isaiah enjoys working on his culinary skills as he utilizes the Children's Garden for fresh produce to create his "5-Star Foods." In July, a delicious batch of zucchini bread turned Isaiah into a celebrity chef as news of his talent for baking spread across campus. Isaiah is very proud of himself and the skills he is developing, and hopes to attend the Culinary Institute of Arts and become a professional chef.

This student's sense of accomplishment, and inspiration, represents the very best of Green Chimneys. From produce provided by the gardening staff to the guidance of the culinary teacher to the celebration and support from teachers and peers, Isaiah is getting the opportunity to grow his interest in the kitchen into a life-long passion and career.

We look forward to Isaiah's continued culinary journey!



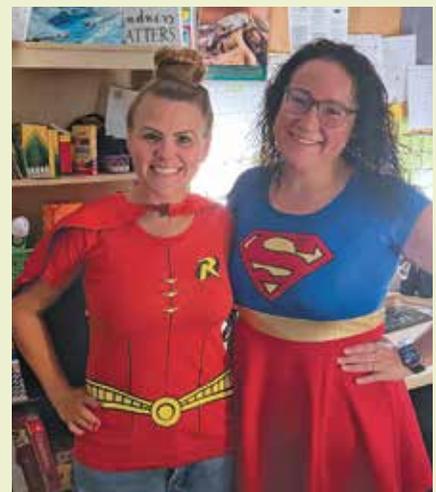
## Not all superheroes wear capes... we witness our staff's superpowers every day.

At a year-round school, it's important to effectively incorporate breaks from academics, especially during the summer months. Green Chimneys staff work hard to plan specialized programming to include non-academic activities that still promote learning, and offer plenty of fun for students, as well as staff.

Each week this summer had a theme that inspired creative classroom instruction and accompanying recreation. Superhero Week and Color War were among the most popular themes and were filled with activities to encourage teamwork and healthy competition, with students and staff working - and playing - side by side. "It's an opportunity for kids to see and



interact with staff in a more relaxed environment," says School Principal Paul Tobin. "Everyone is having more fun."



Become part of a very special team. Look into Career Opportunities at Green Chimneys: [greenchimneys.org/careers](https://greenchimneys.org/careers)



The Green Chimneys Farm & Wildlife Center supports therapeutic education and treatment for day and residential students, serving as an adjunct to classroom academics, vocational activities, and clinical support.



# Give a Gift. Change a Life.

Some of our best teachers bleat.  
Some of our best therapists neigh.  
Some of our best friends chirp.

For children who struggle with social, emotional and behavioral issues, interacting with animals provide great opportunities to learn, heal and grow.

With your support, Green Chimneys can continue to help children with special needs as well as care for the animals who enrich their lives.

## Giving is easy!

- Take advantage of the self-addressed envelope inserted in this publication
- Call the Fund Development Office at 845.279.2995 x211
- Or go online to [greenchimneys.org/give](http://greenchimneys.org/give)

Thank you for making a difference  
in the lives of children and animals.



# Restorative Practice: Supporting the Community

**T**he safe and supportive environment established for all who attend, and work at, Green Chimneys is the product of a philosophy and practices that promote effective conflict management and open communication, the foundation for maintaining a psychologically safe environment.

“When individuals feel an innate sense of safety with their words, feelings and thoughts they are more apt to thrive, progress and strive individually, to create and maintain healthy communities around them,” says Green Chimneys Social Services Director Jenna Eckna. “These communities can exist among co-workers/departments, between supervisors/supervisees, in classrooms and in Green Chimneys’ case, in dorms. Ensuring this sense of safety and connectedness for staff, students and families has led the agency to immerse itself in the Restorative Practice framework as a general form of functioning.”

As a recognized social model, Restorative Practice serves to improve and repair relationships within a system that connects the entire community in a way that each member is able to resolve conflict, and actively work towards the betterment of the group.

Misty Sinistore has worked directly with Green Chimneys students for 28 years and is currently a teaching assistant for 6th and 7th graders at Clearpool Campus. “The students we serve are not always accustomed to being empowered as a part of the resolution process, and the steps that go



beyond an apology for an incident,” Misty explains. “When dealing with situations that involved unsafe situations, bullying or potential danger, we typically responded to the challenging behaviors, had the student make amends and strategize coping skills to use in the future, then return to their activities. While this method is helpful, I feel it puts out fires in the moment and there’s not enough learning and concern for the larger community.”

An extensive training program for Clinical, Support and Education staff has broadened the approach to interventions by incorporating the perspective of those impacted. Productive discussions among peers probe the feelings of each individual, both during an incident and after, to create a better understanding of how a situation may have escalated, how it affected each person, and how to repair the relationships. The student who has initiated an incident is asked: ‘What were you thinking at the time?’ ‘What have you thought about since

the event?’ ‘Who has been affected by what you did and how might they have been feeling?’

In turn, students who experienced the incident are prompted to share: ‘What impact has this incident/situation had on you and others?’ ‘What has been the hardest thing to deal with concerning this issue?’ ‘What do you think needs to happen to make things right?’ “I feel that this method really makes the student with the challenging behavior think about how their behaviors affected the group, helping them to feel remorseful and empathetic,” says Misty. “It brings the community together as a whole and sends a strong message to the students that they can be heard, feel safe, and express their feelings without fear of retaliation.” Teaching youth to solve problems together and move ahead in a positive manner paves the way for healthy interactions throughout their school careers, and far into the future.

## Animal Blessing

Earlier this month, Hamlet the pig, Zipper the horse, and the other animals at Green Chimneys were treated to an extra visit by volunteer Rev. Dr. Carole Johannsen. Inspired by the feast day of Saint Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals and the environment, she gave a heartfelt blessing to the sheep, horses, goats, pigs, and others at the Teaching Barn. Learn what Carole loves about volunteering at the farm: [greenchimneys.org/volunteer-carole](http://greenchimneys.org/volunteer-carole)



# Nature as Classroom

 outdoor education and exploration play a key role in Green Chimneys' mission to connect youth with the natural world, and our Clearpool Campus has launched a new season of programming for school students across the New York region.

Working closely with educators, school districts and public program partners, Clearpool offers hands-on learning and skill-building opportunities for students of all ages, and serves as a dynamic extension to traditional classroom instruction.

Nature-based and Adventure field trip options for the 2023-24 school year incorporate a state-of-the-art high ropes course, miles of trails and wetlands, and structured team-building activities to challenge and engage students, and teachers, as well. Our 264-acre Model Forest is the classroom for lessons in forest ecology, wetland study, outdoor survival, and watershed connections with skilled outdoor education specialists.

“Experiential education is so important for young minds,” says Clearpool Public Programs Director AJ Johnson. “The ability to translate lessons from the classroom into something tangible creates a stronger connection to the material and encourages students to build on that knowledge.”

Learn more at [greenchimneys.org/clearpool-school-trips](https://greenchimneys.org/clearpool-school-trips)



## Clearpool for the Community

In addition to field trips for school groups, our Clearpool Campus will offer April vacation camps and new weekend programming this spring. Watch our website for upcoming community events!



## Summer Camp 2024 registration is open

November 1 for Returning Families  
December 1 for New Families

[greenchimneys.org/camps](https://greenchimneys.org/camps)

Day camp for ages 4-15  
Clearpool in Carmel  
Hillside in Brewster



## Donor Corner: Longtime Ties

In 1996, New York Times photographer Alan Zale was sent on assignment to Green Chimneys, where he met Founder Samuel B. Ross, Jr. “As we introduced ourselves, I mentioned that my wife, Joan, was a special education teacher in the Bronx,” recalls Alan. “Without hesitation Dr. Ross replied, ‘We have a program called Farm on the Move. Where does she teach? The Bronx is out of the area we normally go to but I’m going to arrange to send it there for her students.’”

True to his word, Dr. Ross assisted Joan in organizing a Farm on the Move visit at her school, PS 24. This former program involved Green Chimneys students in educating the community about animals, giving Joan’s city students a rare opportunity to interact with pigs, rabbits, and goats while Green Chimneys students gained experience in providing – not just receiving – a service, which is a core tenet of Green Chimneys’ approach to education and development.

From this simple start, The Zales’ involvement with Green Chimneys has grown exponentially over 2-1/2 decades. They visit the Farm & Wildlife Center once a year, chatting with volunteers and taking photos to show their friends. They support special events, such as the annual Gala and Golf Classic, sharing their enthusiasm with staff and fellow attendees.



The Zales have also included Green Chimneys in their planned giving. When asked what inspired this decision, Alan says, “First, knowing that our contribution will go directly to assist children who need special help. We don’t see the bureaucratic overhead that exists in so many other organizations; our donation goes directly where it is needed. Secondly, it’s to honor Dr. Ross’s commitment to caring for children and to honor my wife, Joan, who always impressed me with her love and concern for her students. To me, Green Chimneys always symbolized what she did in the classroom, making a difference in someone’s life.”

Planned Giving is one of the most effective ways to support the Green Chimneys mission. When you consider Green Chimneys in your long-term financial plans, you are helping to ensure that our innovative programs for children with special needs continue well into the future. Donors who prefer to plan via scheduled donations can join our Sustaining Givers Program to make monthly gifts of any amount.

We are grateful for the generosity of the individuals and families who choose to support our work. Learn about planned giving at [greenchimneys.org/give/bequests-planned-giving](https://greenchimneys.org/give/bequests-planned-giving)

## Holidays on the Farm

Fresh-Cut, Sustainably Grown Trees • Seasonal Crafts • Holiday Greens • Custom Gift Baskets  
Sweet Treats • Unique, Affordable Gifts and More!

**Tree sales begin Sat, November 25**  
**Open daily 9am-5pm**

Store details: [greenchimneys.org/countrystore](https://greenchimneys.org/countrystore)

All proceeds benefit Green Chimneys programs for children and animals.



Boni-Bel Farm & Country Store  
301 Doansburg Road • Brewster, NY



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2

Green Chimneys 2024



3

## *Sharing Holiday Spirit*

is as simple as 1\*2\*3

### 1. Holidays on the Farm

Green Chimneys students help to make our season bright! Every year Boni-Bel Farm & Country Store comes to life as a wintry wonderland with handmade decorations, prepared gift baskets and warm customer service provided by our students. Plan to pick up your sustainably grown holiday greens; tree sales start Sat, Nov 25.

### 2. 365 Days of Green Chimneys

Featuring award-winning photography by Jason Houston, our annual calendar provides 12 months of our animals and their real life stories. A great gift for yourself or a loved one \$30.

### 3. A Gift that Gives Back

Contribute to the care of Green Chimneys animals on behalf of the animal-lover in your life. Sponsor an Animal this holiday season with opportunities starting at \$25.

For more on celebrating the season with Green Chimneys, please visit: [greenchimneys.org/holidays](http://greenchimneys.org/holidays)

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

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# Keep In Touch.

As autumn leaves paint our campuses in brilliant color, we are reminded of the warm and vibrant community that helps our students thrive.

Thank you for supporting educational and therapeutic programs for our children and the animals and nature experiences that contribute to their growth.

Keep up with the latest Green Chimneys news and stories to inspire on all of our channels.

 Green Chimneys

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 Green Chimneys

 Green Chimneys News

