



NANCY AND PAUL AMATO
Boys and Girls Club of Souhegan Valley

During the summer of 1978 between my junior and senior year of high school I volunteered as an usher at the American Stage Festival. It was a wonderfully magical place to be. The warm summer nights combined with the theatre building, amazingly talented actors, incredible moving sets and the excitement and appreciation of the audience members created a long lasting impression.

Several years later my husband Paul and I became board members of the Boys and Girls Club of Souhegan Valley. At that time they were located at the Granite Grange Building on Webster Street in Milford. Soon after the Club renovated and relocated to the Aubuchon Hardware Store. They were quickly outgrowing the space as more and more children joined the Boys and Girls Club.

Paul and I heard that the American Stage Festival property along the Souhegan River was up for sale and that it was being considered for condos units. It seemed a shame that the theatre would be torn down when it had been such a vibrant community gathering space. In addition, we heard that a pedestrian bridge was being proposed that would span the river and connect Keyes Field to the ASF property and its walking trails along the river.

One raw, cold rainy day in March I asked Paul to come with me to the ASF property. We parked in his truck and looked out the front windshield. There wasn't much to look at and he didn't seem overly impressed. I told him that we needed to actually get out of the truck and walk around the property. Once we did that and saw how beautiful a property it was along the river, we were both convinced that it would be the perfect new home for the Boys and Girls Club. In addition I secretly hoped the theatre would be used again. It was time to convince the board of the Boys and Girls Club of Souhegan Valley.

At one of our board retreats we were each asked to do a drawing of what we wanted in a new building. I took the back of a dark green paper placemat and drew the theatre with a Boys and Girls Club around it-showing the proximity to Keyes Field, the proposed bridge and the beautiful Souhegan River. One of the original board members, Steve Desmarais, had also thought that property was perfect. I have to give him lots of credit for quietly planting seeds along the way. He took the paper placemat to the architect and they got to work.

Paul and I are extremely happy to say that thousands of children and adults have had a chance to be on stage creating their own memories along with all of the other activities available to the children at the Club. We feel very fortunate to live in Milford in such a vibrant community.

Sincerely,
Nancy and Paul Amato