

STEPS and BRHG

The STEPS Program stepped up to assist the Backbone Ridge History Group on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. STEPS is an acronym for Seneca Towns Engaging People for Solutions, led by Theresa Lahr.

The Backbone Ridge is the name given to the hilltop ridge running between Cayuga and Seneca Lakes. It is about 30 square miles in size and includes former farmsteads and many small communities with businesses that supported and were supported by the family farms that were removed or relocated by the Resettlement Administration during the Great Depression in the 1930s. Included in the area are portions of the Towns of Covert, Hector, Lodi and Ulysses. The Backbone Ridge History Group is focused on that history and has acquired a small vacant building in the Village of Lodi which will house historical documents, photos and other archives and serve as a Research Center as soon as the building has been given an interior face-lift.

STEPS Project Director Theresa Lahr describes the Community Service Day that was a huge benefit to the Backbone Ridge History Group:

“One of the goals of the STEPS Neighborhood Health Improvement Initiative is community organizing to motivate action, bringing residents together to work collectively to improve neighborhoods.

On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, local residents, coordinated by STEPS, worked together on various tasks at five sites throughout the community. One site was the Backbone Ridge History Group (BRHG) research building in Lodi. A former law office, this building stood vacant in the village of Lodi which has the highest vacancy rate in Seneca County. STEPS is extremely excited that BRHG is investing in the preservation of cultural and historic assets in the STEPS neighborhood. STEPS partnered with BRHG to help paint the interior of the building.

Caring and taking pride in your community: its' past, present, and future, is the hallmark of a healthy neighborhood and aligns with the mission of both grass roots organizations. We want to preserve and promote the rich history in the STEPS neighborhood. Helping to paint the BRHG building will do much to further this effort, particularly in terms of enhancing public spaces where the BRHG will provide a pre-Great Depression collection display, storage and visibility in the community. What a great use for this building which once stood empty! This is a perfect example of the STEPS mission and desire to revitalize the neighborhood.

Upon completion of the day's work, we celebrated our sense of pride at the Ovid Fire Department with delicious soups prepared by Covert resident, Meg Jastran, donations from Marks Pizza, fruits and vegetables, all increasing our social and community connectedness. A big **thank you** to the seven volunteer painters who were from all four towns in the STEPS neighborhood including Dave and Judy Dresser, Ovid, Mary & Natalie Josyln, Romulus and John Arena, Romulus. (See photos below)

If you live, work, learn and/or play in the towns of Covert, Ovid, Lodi or Romulus you are already a part of STEPS! To learn more and get involved in various projects ranging from improvement of public spaces and health promoting activities and events contact the STEPS office [\(607\) 403-0069](tel:6074030069) or email stepscommunity@gmail.com You can find STEPS on Facebook: www.facebook.com-NYStepsProject and on the web: www.senecasteps.org.”

