



**New Thacher Park Visitor Center Halfway toward \$1 Million Fundraising Goal
Thanks to New Contribution from M&T Bank**

***Campaign unveils new opportunities to commemorate
friends and family through engraved patio pavers, park benches and more***

For Immediate Release

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VOORHEESVILLE, NY (May 25, 2016)—A year after its launch, the private fundraising campaign for Thacher Park Center is now more than halfway toward its \$1 million goal thanks to support from enthusiastic local residents, community leaders and a recent \$25,000 gift from M&T Bank. Turning to the campaign’s end game, leaders of the Thacher Park Center Campaign are unveiling additional opportunities to support the project that also give donors unique ways of honoring and memorializing friends and family members.

By sponsoring a new bench, patio paver or tree—all of which will be displayed prominently within the park center’s exhibitory or immediately outside—park supporters can honor loved ones while supporting the new Thacher Park Center. All opportunities are available through the park center campaign’s newly redesigned website, www.thacherparkcenter.org.

For years, despite the popularity of Thacher, which welcomes more than 380,000 people every year, the park has operated without a central welcome center. Gov. Andrew Cuomo and the Open Space Institute (OSI) announced plans for the new Thacher Park Center in June 2015. The center, a signature project in the Governor’s NY Parks 2020 Plan to revitalize and transform the state park system, is being funded through a combination of OSI’s private fundraising campaign and public funds.

“Thacher is deeply rooted in generations of families, researchers and preservationists,” said Erik Kulleseid, OSI Senior Vice President and Executive Director of its Alliance for New York State Parks program. “OSI is proud to continue its longstanding commitment to Thacher Park and the Helderberg escarpment, and thanks Governor Cuomo for his lead support for this regional community gem.”

“I am grateful to all of the partners who are building on the legacy of the Thacher family, who established this park for the public more than a century ago,” said Rose Harvey, Commissioner of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. “Their generosity will help new generations to better enjoy this wonderful place for many years to come.”

“Thacher Park has been a beloved escape for generations throughout the Capital Region,” said Heather Mabee, chair of both the Thacher Park Center Campaign and the Saratoga-Capital Region State Parks Commission. “These improvements will help Thacher better support its legion of devoted fans. We are grateful to the community for their support and partnership in reinvigorating this amazing place.”

“As a company with 160 years of history in Upstate New York, we understand the value of preserving our state parks to allow residents and visitors to enjoy the tremendous natural beauty of this region. Thatcher State Park is one of Albany County’s gems, with its miles of trails and panoramic views for all to enjoy. We hope M&T Bank’s contribution helps the Open Space Institute complete these planned improvements while also giving the park a more secure and stable future,” said M&T Bank Albany Market President Sarah Halliday.

“Thacher Park is one of the busiest tourist destinations in Albany County,” said Michele Vennard, President and CEO of Albany County Convention & Visitors Bureau. “We are so pleased to see this investment in this great natural resource, and we are happy to be part of the efforts to enhance this important visitor destination.”

To date, OSI has secured a \$220,000 matching grant through the Capital Region Economic Development Council and raised \$313,950 in private dollars including donations from TrustCo Bank, Stewart’s Shops, Times Union, M&T Bank, Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region, Hoffman Car Wash and Jiffy Lube.

The center, currently under construction near the trailhead and picnic area for the popular Indian Ladder Trail, will introduce visitors to new park features, including an expanded trail network, as well as new opportunities for biking, rock climbing, caving, environmental education and an adventure course. The activities are part of the plan announced by the Governor to reinvigorate the park.

The 8,240-square-foot Thacher Park Visitor Center will include:

- a welcome information desk to help visitors explore the park’s expansive trail network and other features;
- exhibit areas to highlight the landscape’s fossil-rich geological history, as well the park’s development and usage;
- a 1,340-square-foot multipurpose gathering space that can be reserved for special events;
- public restrooms and park offices; and
- an outdoor patio overlooking the escarpment where visitors can take in the park’s dramatic views.

Thacher Park sits at the top of the Helderberg escarpment, one of the richest fossil-bearing formations in the world, and features miles of hiking and biking trails, guided walks and interpretive programs, playgrounds, picnic areas, and swimming and camping at Thompson’s Lake.