

# Couple creates Environmental Education Fund

**Matt Steecker**

Ithaca Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK

A new fund will award grants to organizations educating the public about ecological concerns pertaining to the Cayuga Lake Watershed.

Gerry and Caroline Cox, who live in Ithaca, have created the Environmental Education Fund, which will begin making grants in 2019 and is designed to encourage multiple donors to contribute, a news release stated. The fund was established through Community Foundation of Tompkins County.

"This topic is not covered well in our educational system, but it's important to us," said Gerry Cox, a former assistant dean at the Cornell University College of Arts and Sciences. "Our concern is with the long-term health of this region's ecosystem and its inhabitants."

Gerry became increasingly concerned about environmental education after he spent 10 years researching and writing a book about the ecology of hunting, the news release stated.

"While working on my book, I realized that our common definition of ecology is inadequate. We need to enlarge it from the scientific study of organisms in an ecosystem to a broader definition that includes our experiences within it," Gerry Cox said. "Just as no man is an island, we are part of an ecological whole. I've been thinking about how to try to make this inclusive change come about, and education seems to be one of the best ways."

Caroline Cox, who worked in development at Cornell and Ithaca College, turned to Community Foundation to create an environmental education fund because she and Gerry wanted to encourage other donors to contribute as



**Caroline and Gerry Cox**

well, the release stated.

Gerry Cox said he hopes the fund will help residents develop a new perspective on their role in the environment surrounding Cayuga Lake.

"Ultimately, we hope that this new fund will support the vital work of the regional organizations that educate the public about becoming stewards of our watershed," Gerry Cox said. "The fund can help influence what happens here if others learn more about the environment and realize their own stake in it."

Besides environment and sustainability, Community Foundation of Tompkins County's grant areas include education, health and human services, arts and culture, and community building.

"The interest in environmental grant-making to a wide variety of local nonprofits is very great," Community Foundation CEO George Ferrari, Jr. said. "We have a lot of grant seekers asking us about it. Yet we receive the fewest gifts with that designation."

Residents who want to contribute to the environmental education fund can make a donation at [cftompkins.org/giving/give-online/](http://cftompkins.org/giving/give-online/).

Follow @MSteecker on Twitter