April 30, 2023

Dear friends of Island Commons,

As the Island Commons prepares to celebrate a quarter-century of service to Chebeague, we want to share news of an extraordinary gift that will help sustain us into the coming decades. We are among the beneficiaries of the estate of Linda White, a long-time supporter of the Commons whose deep ties to the island manifested themselves in many ways. Linda’s bequest to the Island Commons, in the amount of $2.3 million, has been invested to strengthen the financial safety net we have long worked to achieve.

When Linda invited me to her home last summer, she asked many questions about the Commons, our current services as well as our long-term objectives. At the heart of her interest was how we, as an integral part of life on this island, could continue to best serve the community. After her death in October, we were humbled to learn that Linda made a significant bequest to us, an affirmation of what the Commons has done and continues to do.

What does this generous gift mean for the Commons—and for Chebeague? In simple terms, it gives us the capacity to plan. We will be able to explore ways to broaden and adapt our services to meet the changing needs of the island. For example, expanding our popular in-home care program. It will enable us to invest in our facility to reduce soaring operating costs. But equally important (and this was a special goal of Linda’s), it will ensure that we can remain an integral part of this community­­­­­­­­—as an employer, a resource for residents and visitors, a multi-generational gathering place, and a shining example of Chebeaguers caring for Chebeaguers.

Linda’s gift is already at work at the Maine Community Fund, joining assets in the Commons’ Sustainability Fund, our five-year campaign to build a reserve that can generate meaningful income. That income will help offset the daunting deficits we face each year.

Does it mean that we are out of the woods financially? No. We will still need the support of the community through our annual appeal and special events such as our summer auction. These fundraising efforts cover only about 70 percent of our operating deficit, with “extraordinary” income (such as COVID relief, or a $50,000 gift) supplying the remainder. Eventually, income from our robust Sustainability Fund will reduce our dependence on “extraordinary” income. But we will still need ongoing support from the island community.

Why? The Commons remains reliant on MaineCare, which covers only about 60 percent of the actual cost of care. Unlike a growing number of assisted living facilities around the country, we

do not cap the number, or turn away residents or clients dependent on MaineCare. That has been the policy since we opened in 1999.

For those who knew Linda White, and her quiet engagement with the Chebeague community, this gift was given to the Commons with an expectation: Make this island a better place. We pledge to do just that.

Sincerely,

Susan Q. Stranahan

President, Board of Directors

Commons Board members: Sharon Rent, Vicki Emery, Jim Lunt, Jim Cox-Chapman, Carla Clarke, Kip Webb