

The Sophie Fund

Newsletter 1/2026



“Supporting mental health initiatives aiding young people in the greater Ithaca, New York community”

Cayuga Swim for Mental Health



Claire de Boer and Bridgette Hobart

The Cayuga Swim for Mental Health raised \$25,000 for The Sophie Fund. Claire de Boer and Bridgette Hobart completed the epic marathon relay the 38-mile length of Cayuga Lake on August 8-9. Both women dedicated the swim to young nephews who died by suicide, Rowan de Boer and Corey Hobart.

Fighting swells, winds, and cold air temperatures between Ithaca and Cayuga, the intrepid swimmers achieved a time of 19 hours and 32 minutes. That bested the 20-hour solo swims that de Boer and Hobart accomplished on Cayuga Lake in 1984 and 2015, respectively.

Scott MacLeod and Susan Hack, co-founders of The Sophie Fund, were among the well-wishers to send off Hobart and de Boer in Ithaca and welcome them ashore at their destination.

“Besides being incredible athletes, Claire and Bridgette are humanitarians in their everyday lives who work to make the world a better place,” said MacLeod and Hack. “Their Cayuga Swim for Mental Health will have a tangible impact on the work to improve mental health supports in the greater Ithaca community.”

Donate to The Sophie Fund

Go to: www.thesophiefund.org

Email: thesophiefund2016@gmail.com



Pumpkin Spice & Everything Nice

Hailey Ayres won 1st Place and the Grand Prize with her “Pumpkin Spice & Everything Nice Cupcakes” in the 10th Annual Ithaca Cupcake Baking Contest organized by The Sophie Fund on October 18.



Hailey Ayres and her prize-winning cupcakes

Her pumpkin cakes were filled with fluffy pumpkin mousse topped by a cream cheese frosting, caramel drizzle, and cinnamon flakes for a “baker’s touch.” Ayres said her goal was to create a “refreshing and nostalgic Fall treat.”

Kyra O’Toole took 2nd Place with her “Fall Forest Cupcakes,” an entremets-style dessert with a pumpkin-spice financier base, filled with layers of milk chocolate feuilletine, dark chocolate maple/bourbon ganache, pumpkin/ginger gelee, praline mousse, topped with maple Chantilly cream.

The judges awarded Kate Bagnell 3rd Place for her “Cinnamon Roll Cupcakes,” vanilla cake with a cinnamon swirl, a brown sugar cinnamon buttercream center, and a tangy cream cheese frosting topped with a miniature cinnamon roll “as an added bonus.”

Josie Bower received the Youth Award for their “Pumpkin Spice Ghost Cupcakes,” a moist pumpkin spice cake with sweet cream cheese frosting fashioned into ghosts. Just in time for Halloween!

Twenty-five amateur bakers entered the contest with a range of themes including: grandmothers; Taughannock Falls; Hispanic heritage; Harry Potter; volcanic Mount Merapi; U.S. Marines; Champagne bubbly; Dubai Chocolate; and Halloween.

10 Years of Ithaca Cupcakes

The Sophie Fund celebrated a decade of its Ithaca cupcake contests on October 18 with the support of contestants, local businesses, performers, student volunteers, professional bakers, and mental health partners.



Student volunteers from Cornell University

The History Center in Tompkins County hosted “10 Years of Ithaca Cupcakes!”, a photo exhibition depicting highlights of the contests. More than 300 amateur bakers entered the contests between 2016 and 2025.

Another fan favorite was a Cupcake Decorating Workshop conducted by pastry chefs from Wegmans. The 10th annual contest’s awards ceremony was hosted by Ella Carr and Ben Sandberg, and the event featured live musical performances by Joe Gibson and Rachel Beverly.

The Sophie Fund presented Aušra Milano with a “Lifetime Achievement Award” in recognition of the outstanding confections she entered every year since the contests began in 2016.

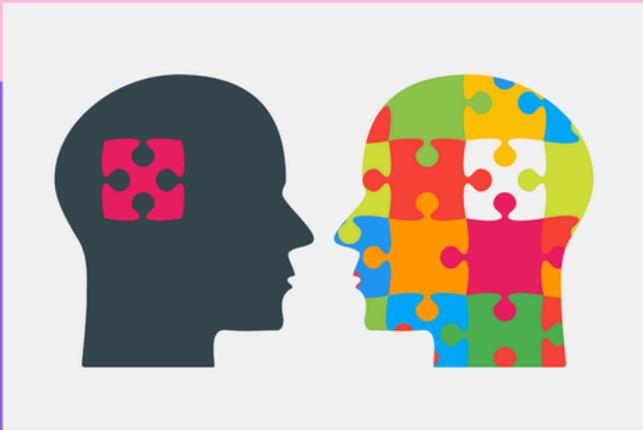
Judging the 2025 contest finalists were Via Carpenter, of Via’s Cookies; Yuko Jingu, of Akemi Food; Melissa Kenny, of Sweet Melissa’s Ice Cream Shop; Ashley Case, of Case Sera Sera; and Ania Grodzinski, of Ania’s Confections.

Volunteers from student organizations at Cornell University supported the contest: Alpha Phi Omega, Cornell Circle K, PATCH (Pre-Professional Association Toward Careers in Health), RISEUP Cornell, and Hotel Graduate Student Organization. The contest featured a sideline Wellness Fair with the participation of 10 local mental health organizations.



2025-2026

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO COLLEGE STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH ITHACA EDITION



The Sophie Fund

www.thesophiefund.org



The Sophie Fund published a 2025-26 edition of “A Parent’s Guide to College Student Mental Health” to help parents—especially those whose children are attending college in Ithaca—better understand the challenges and how to deal with them. **DOWNLOAD**

UPDATED!

Mental Health Support & Suicide Prevention

For Schools in Tompkins County



Prepared by:
Suicide Prevention & Crisis Service of Tompkins County
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention—Greater Central New York
National Alliance on Mental Illness—Finger Lakes
Mental Health Association in Tompkins County
The Sophie Fund

2025–2026



Five Ithaca-based mental health organizations including The Sophie Fund released the 2025-26 edition of their resource guide, “Mental Health Support & Suicide Prevention for Schools in Tompkins County.” **DOWNLOAD**

2025-2026

Bullying Prevention Resources for Schools and Families

Tompkins County, NY



STOP BULLYING

Tompkins County
Bullying Prevention Task Force



The Tompkins County Bullying Prevention Task Force, which we serve as coordinator, published “Bullying Prevention Resources for Schools and Families.” The guide contains information about how bullying affects individuals and communities and what we can do to prevent it. **DOWNLOAD**

Be Safe at College



Compiled by: The Sophie Fund and The Advocacy Center of Tompkins County

The Sophie Fund
Website



A dark and often unspoken side of student life is the prevalence of sexual violence. These resources can help us support survivors, hold perpetrators accountable, and cultivate safer campuses.

Support

Advocacy Center of Tompkins County

Free and confidential local support, education, and advocacy for survivors, friends, and families around sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and child abuse.

24/7 Hotline: 607-277-5000
Office: 607-277-3203
Instagram: @advocacytc



Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network

RAINN operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline and provides programs to prevent sexual violence, help survivors, and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.

24/7 Hotline: 800-656-4673
Instagram: @rainn



Participate

Advocacy Center Support Groups



Scan above for group offerings and interest form!

Awareness Events

Keep an eye out for numerous opportunities to support survivors during these months (and year-round)!

October: Domestic Violence Awareness
January: Trafficking & Stalking Awareness
February: Teen Dating Violence Awareness
April: Sexual Assault Awareness

Campus-Specific

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: 988
Police Assistance: 911

*Note: Each campus also has an anonymous reporting method.

Cornell University

Campus Police: 607-255-1111
SHARE (Victim Advocacy): 607-255-4782
Cornell Health/CAPS: 607-255-5155
Title IX: 607-255-2242
Student Conduct: 607-255-4680

Ithaca College

Campus Police: 607-274-3333
CAPS: 607-274-3136
Title IX: 607-274-7761
Student Conduct: 607-274-3375

Tompkins Cortland Community College

Campus Police: 607-844-6511
Counseling: 607-844-6577
Title IX: 607-844-8222, Ext. 4283
Student Conduct: 607-844-8222,
Ext. 4316

The Sophie Fund partnered with the Advocacy Center of Tompkins County to create “Be Safe at College,” a flyer and social media campaign highlighting key resources to cultivate safer campuses, support sexual assault survivors, and hold perpetrators accountable. **DOWNLOAD**

The Sophie Fund in the news...

The Sophie Fund received the 2025 Friend of Children Award from the New York Association of School Psychologists at NYASP's annual conference held in Ithaca on November 13. NYASP donated the \$1,258.10 in proceeds from its conference raffle to our organization. "The Sophie Fund has demonstrated unwavering commitment to transforming the lives of young people facing mental health challenges," said Conference Co-Chair Taylor Ayres.

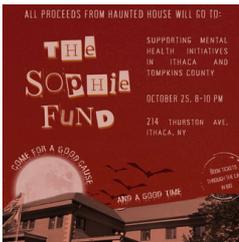


We wrote a letter to Cornell University President Michael Kotlikoff asking his office to provide a report to the Cornell and Ithaca communities on the status of the 130 recommendations made in the 34-page Mental Health Review Final Report submitted to the Cornell administration in 2020. Cornell has failed to present a full account of how it handled those recommendations as it had pledged to do. Kotlikoff declined The Sophie Fund's request.

The Sophie Fund provided a \$2,079 grant to the Mental Health Association in Tompkins County to conduct training in Mental Health First Aid. Staff at organizations benefitting from the training included Catholic Charities, Tompkins Community Action, Tompkins County Office for the Aging, Advocacy Center of Tompkins County, Cornell University, and The Learning Web.

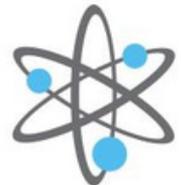


**Mental Health Association
in Tompkins County**
providing advocacy, education, & support since 1953



The Senior Class of 2026 at Cornell University threw a Halloween Haunted House party to raise mental health awareness, give first-year students a chance to de-stress, and collect \$1,231 in donations to support The Sophie Fund. The Order of Omega Sorority & Fraternity Honor Society at Cornell held an end of semester fundraiser collecting \$834.56 to benefit The Sophie Fund. The "candy-gram fundraiser" involves students sending small care packages to each other ahead of finals period.

The Philanthropic Leadership course at Cornell's SC Johnson College of Business awarded The Sophie Fund a \$1,000 grant funded by The Philanthropy Lab. The course enables students to research the workings of local nonprofits and prepares them to systematically plan for volunteer leadership through board service and financial giving across the course of their careers.



www.thesophiefund.org