HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE
FRANK KETCHAM

When Frank Ketcham's youngest daughter Debbie joined the family at camp in 1953, there were at that point seven Wawayanda Ketchams. Today we posthumously induct Frank into the Hall of Fame for his critical involvement in Wawayanda's move to Frost Valley in 1958, for his forging of the Westfield Y/Wawayanda connection, for his key role as an original trustee, and for his inspiring work as a volunteer leader of his community, but it might well be that the myriad accomplishments and enduring legacy of many members of his family at Frost Valley are themselves sufficient criteria for bestowing this honor.

Certainly he would have humbly believed so—he who believed in the power of family love above everything else. All five of his own children attended Wawayanda as campers, made the transition to Frost Valley, and grew up to become staff leaders of Wawayanda and Hird, counselors, lifeguards and directors—one of them later the camp's auditor, another its Associate Executive Director, and a daughter-in-law its Director of Development. Five of his grandchildren have been Frost Valley campers and four of them came of age here and became staff members. Three of his great-grandchildren have now been campers. Two of his sons met the loves of their lives at Frost Valley, and the same happy fate befell one of his grandsons too. One of his children was married here (at Straus), and the ashes of a beloved son and those of two beloved granddaughters rest at Memorial Island in Reflection Pond. Frank Ketcham donated thousands of hours to ensure the success of Wawayanda and Frost Valley, but his greatest impact may well be the continuous, generative love his family feels for the place to which he introduced them.

That first introduction was in 1948, when the young family spent a week at Wawayanda Family Camp at the old Wawayanda in New Jersey. They became regular members of the Westfield YMCA, and from the mid-1950s through the late 1960s Frank served on the Board of Directors at Westfield, while continuing to bring the children to Wawayanda in the summers—and, starting with son Mike (who typically attended three two-week sessions), sent them to resident camp as well. In 1956 and '57 Frank became very involved with the search for a successor location for Wawayanda, whose various recent moves in northwestern New Jersey were caused by encroaching suburban development. Frank Ketcham and Ed Tomb were leaders among those who planned the move, identified Frost Valley as a destination, collaborated with Walter Margetts to secure the purchase of 2,200 acres from the Forstmann family, and then handled the tricky finances as Wawayanda prepared for its first summer in the Catskills in 1958. Frank was on the leadership team of the Central Atlantic Area Association of the Y, an entity that helped form the first Wawayanda trusteeships, and Frank himself was tapped to serve as one of the original members of the Frost Valley Board. In 1957 he became the Board's very first treasurer. In Wawayanda's early years at Frost Valley, the camp's budget was precarious, and its survival (in some years, its bare survival) owes in part to Frank's integrity, honesty, and constant fiduciary attentions. Frank served as a Frost Valley trustee through 1965, just prior to the arrival of Halbe Brown and, with that, an era of stability and then expansion. As Frank's son Mike recalled recently, his father "worked hard all through those tough years." "He intuitively understood the value of camping," Mike adds, "and he believed very strongly in Frost Valley."

And, crucially, he did not keep that intuitive belief to himself. He wanted most of all to share such belief with his children—and theirs, and then theirs. "As a father," Mike reflected recently, "he was devoted, very supportive, loving, always encouraging. He was very oriented to the family, and by bringing us to Wawayanda he provided an amazing opportunity for us to develop an awareness and a set of values that would help us for the rest of our lives."

During Mike's time as Associate Executive Director, he and Halbe Brown discussed a plan to move the administration office (now the Welcome Center) and create a chapel out of the existing building. He consulted with his father about an idea: to dedicate this new chapel in memory of Frank's mother Laura. At the time of Frank's death in 1990 the vision of a new chapel was still unrealized, but the range and sheer number and deep emotional attachment to Frost Valley of the extended Ketcham family was strong, so they came together, with many friends, and raised funds to build the stately, placid, vaulted-ceilinged Ketcham Chapel in the quiet woods near Reflection Pond—dedicated to the memory of Frank and to his mother.

Sixty-six years after he first brought his family to Wawayanda, by unanimous affirmation of his successor members of the Frost Valley Board of Trustees, we honor Frank Ketcham with induction into the Hall of Fame for his generosity of spirit, his devotion to his own children but also to all children, his absolute integrity as a lay leader, his talent for helping to save and then preserve a camp at its critical moment, and his remarkable capacity for familial love.