

Code of Ethics

Adopted May 20, 2014

Although the operating environment of The Orange County Farmers Museum grows more complex each year, the root value for the museum, the tie that connects all of us together despite our diversity, is the commitment to serving and educating the community, both present and future generations. This value has guided the creation of and remains the most fundamental principle in the following Code of Ethics for The Orange County Farmers Museum.

The Orange County Farmers Museum

Code of Ethics

The Orange County Farmers Museum makes a unique contribution to the public by collecting, preserving and interpreting farming implements, tools and farm family history related to Orange County, New York. Historically, we have owned and used these objects, to advance the knowledge of today by educating on the past. Today, the range of our special interest reflects the scope of sustainability. Our mission includes collecting and preserving, as well as exhibiting and educating with materials not only owned by the museum but also borrowed. The Orange County Farmers Museum in Montgomery, NY is a collection institution. Although diverse in our mission, we have a nonprofit form of organization and a commitment to educate and serve the community we serve. Our collections and/or the objects we borrow are the basis for research, exhibits, and programs that invite public participation.

Taken as a whole, The Orange County Farmers Museum collections and exhibition materials represent Orange County, New York farming heritage and history. As stewards of that heritage and history, The Orange County Farmers Museum is compelled to advance an understanding of such history as well as educate, inspire and transform individuals of all ages. It is incumbent on The Orange County Farmers Museum to be a resource for the community we serve and in all our activities to foster an informed appreciation of the rich heritage we have inherited. It is also incumbent upon the museum to preserve that inheritance for posterity.

The Orange County Farmers Museum is grounded in the tradition of public education and service. We are organized as a public trust, holding our collections and information as a benefit for those we were established to serve. Members of our board of trustees, staff and volunteers are committed to the interests of these beneficiaries. The law provides the basic framework for our museum operations. As a nonprofit organization, The Orange County Farmers Museum must comply with applicable local, state, and federal laws, as well as with the specific legal standards

governing trust responsibilities. This Code of Ethics for The Orange County Farmers Museum takes that compliance as given. But legal standards are a minimum. The Orange County Farmers Museum and those responsible for it must do more than avoid legal liability, they must take affirmative steps to maintain its integrity so as to warrant public confidence. We must act not only legally but also ethically. This Code of Ethics for The Orange County Farmers Museum, therefore, outlines ethical standards that frequently exceed legal minimums.

Loyalty to the mission of the museum and educating the community it serves is the essence of our work, whether volunteer or paid. Where conflicts of interest arise—actual, potential or perceived—the duty of loyalty must never be compromised. No individual may use his or her position in the museum for personal gain or to benefit another at the expense of the museum, its mission, its reputation or the community it serves.

For The Orange County Farmers Museum, educating and serving the community is paramount. To affirm that ethic and to elaborate its application to its governance, collections and programs, The Orange County Farmers Museum promulgates this Code of Ethics. In subscribing to this code, The Orange County Farmers Museum assumes responsibility for the actions of members of their governing authority, staff and volunteers in the performance of museum-related duties. The Orange County Farmers Museum, thereby, affirms their chartered purpose, ensure the prudent application of their resources, enhance their effectiveness and maintain public confidence. This collective endeavor strengthens the museums work and the contributions of the museum to the community—present and future.

Governance

Museum governance in its various forms is a public trust responsible for the organizations service to the community. The board of trustees protects and enhances the museum's collections and programs and its physical, human and financial resources. It ensures that all these resources support the museum's mission, respond to the community and respect the diversity of the history and heritage.

Thus, the board of trustees ensures that:

- all those who work for or on behalf of the museum understand and support its mission and public trust responsibilities
- its members understand and fulfill their trusteeship and act corporately, not as individuals
- the museum's collections and programs and its physical, human and financial resources are protected, maintained and developed in support of the museum's mission
- it is responsive to and represents the interests of its community
- it maintains a relationship with staff in which shared roles are recognized and separate responsibilities respected
- working relationships among trustees, staff and volunteers are based on equality and mutual respect
- professional standards and practices inform and guide museum operations
- policies are articulated and prudent oversight is practiced
- governance promotes the public good rather than individual financial gain.

Collections

The distinctive character of museum ethics derives from the ownership, care of and use of its collection representing farming history and farm families in Orange County, NY. This stewardship of collections entails the highest public trust and carries with it the presumption of rightful ownership, permanence, care, documentation, accessibility and responsible disposal.

Thus, the museum ensures that:

- collections in its custody support its mission and public trust responsibilities
- collections in its custody are lawfully held, protected, secure, unencumbered, cared for and preserved
- collections in its custody are accounted for and documented
- access to the collections and related information is permitted and regulated
- acquisition, disposal, and loan activities are conducted in a manner that respects the protection and preservation of natural and cultural resources and discourages illicit trade in such materials
- acquisition, disposal, and loan activities conform to its mission and public trust responsibilities
- disposal of collections through sale, trade or research activities is solely for the advancement of the museum's mission. Proceeds from the sale of nonliving collections are to be used consistent with the established standards of the museum's collection management policy, but in no event shall they be used for anything other than acquisition or direct care of collections.
- the history and heritage of farming and farm families in Orange County, NY is recognized as the basis of all decisions concerning such collections
- collections-related activities promote the public good rather than individual financial gain
- competing claims of ownership that may be asserted in connection with objects in its custody should be handled openly, seriously, responsively and with respect for the dignity of all parties involved.

Programs

The Museum serves its community by advancing an understanding and appreciation of farming history and Orange County Farm Families through exhibitions, research, publications and educational activities. These programs further the museum's mission and are responsive to the concerns, interests and needs of the community we serve.

Thus, the museum ensures that:

- programs support its mission and public trust responsibilities
- programs are founded on historical significance and presented with intellectual integrity
- programs are accessible and encourage participation of the widest possible audience consistent with its mission and resources
- programs respect pluralistic values, traditions and concerns

- revenue-producing activities and activities that involve relationships with external entities are compatible with the museum's mission and support its public trust responsibilities
- programs promote the public good rather than individual financial gain.

Promulgation

This Code of Ethics for the Orange County Farmers Museums was adopted by the Board of Trustees on _____.

A Committee on Ethics, nominated by the president of the Orange County Farmers Museum and confirmed by the Board of Trustees, will be charged with two responsibilities:

- establishing programs of information, education and assistance to guide the museums further development of this codes of ethics
- reviewing the Code of Ethics for The Orange County Farmers Museum on an annual basis and recommend refinements and revisions to the Board of Trustees.

Afterword

The Code of Ethics for Museums serves the interest of The Orange County Farmers Museum, our constituents, and the community we serve. The primary goal of this code of ethics is to encourage our organization to regulate the ethical behavior of its members of their governing authority, staff and volunteers.