



# COMMUNITY AT HEART

Fremont Area  
Community Foundation  
ANNUAL REPORT 2019

What does love  
have to do with  
philanthropy?

The simplest answer  
comes in the definition  
of the word itself.

*Philanthropy is the love  
of humanity.*

It is driven by a deep  
attachment to the world  
and our duty to the  
people in it.

At Fremont Area Community  
Foundation, we've been thinking  
a lot about what it means to love  
this community. While it's certainly  
important for philanthropy to be  
measurable and strategic, it is of  
equal importance to acknowledge the  
emotional component of our work.

Because true change  
starts in the heart.

We don't want to limit what we can achieve together by failing to recognize that we are inherently driven by our hearts.

We want to invest in people, the hearts behind the work, because that is where real change can be made.



Margaret Cain Branstrom wore dungarees, dug her own worm pile, and regularly took a red rowboat out fishing even though she couldn't swim.

"She was loving and kind, but you didn't get in her way," said James Magee, Margaret's grandson. "She always had a sparkle in her eye."

"Total acceptance is what I think of," said granddaughter Barbara Kemble. "She made everyone—regardless of where they came from—feel welcomed and warm."

Margaret's husband, William Branstrom, was well-known in Newaygo County for his philanthropy, civic engagement, and role in founding the Community Foundation. Margaret was not as public a figure, but she was very much his partner in philanthropy and equally passionate about service, education, and nature.

James created the Margaret C. Branstrom Arboretum Memorial Fund at the Community Foundation in memory of his grandmother. Through the fund, he supported a stone patio, bench, and plaque in Margaret's honor at Arboretum Park in Fremont. James and his siblings remember playing there as children and how pleased their grandparents were to donate and endow the park.

"She was a presence," said James of his grandmother. "Not nearly as public as my grandfather, but she was there. I wanted her name to be here too."

## a heart for family legacy



*Siblings Susan Wentz, James Magee, and Barbara Kemble stand on the patio created to honor their grandmother: Margaret Branstrom.*

The loss of his son Tyler four years ago was awful, said Mike Slaughter, “but then it becomes about what you choose to do with that grief. You have to find a way to redeem it.”

Mike, along with family and friends, created a scholarship at the Community Foundation for adults studying social work. Tyler had gone back to school for his master’s degree as an adult and was working at Newaygo County Mental Health when he passed away in 2015.

The Tyler Patrick Slaughter Memorial Scholarship was awarded for the first time this year to Nicole Klomp, a local social worker.

“I had been thinking about going back to school for a while. I thought it would give me even more opportunities to help my community,” said Nicole. “The scholarship relieves a lot of financial stress, but it’s also a huge motivation. You know there are people who care and desire to see others prosper.”

Mike and Nicole had a chance to meet recently to talk about Tyler and their shared mission to be advocates for people in crisis.

“Knowing I’m able to make a difference in somebody’s life is very rewarding. I hope I represent Tyler well and carry on his passion for helping people,” Nicole told Mike.

“Every time I see your name, it will be like a dream taking visual form. Like the abstract becoming real. This is as much a gift to us as it is to you,” said Mike. “We need more people like you.”

## a heart for compassion



*Nicole Klomp was the first recipient of a scholarship created by Mike Slaughter in memory of his son.*

# a heart for connection



*Dave and Lynne Robinson worked to cultivate a spirit of giving in their children.*



For Dave and Lynne Robinson, connection is at the heart of philanthropy. Both grew up in Grant farming families and watched their parents and neighbors serve the community in any way they could.

“My parents didn’t have much but they were always involved,” said Dave. “Philanthropy isn’t just money.”

“It has to be hands-on,” said Lynne. “You have to experience it and participate in it. Then you can pass it on.”

Dave and Lynne have translated their own deep connection to the community into volunteerism, board service, giving through the Community Foundation, and teaching the next generation.

As their children grew up, Dave and Lynne taught them about philanthropy by allowing them to get involved in donation decisions. Each child was encouraged to pick things in the community they were passionate about for the family to support. Later, when Dave and Lynne were leading the Grant library’s capital campaign, they made a point to include lots of small projects that even local students could join in on.

“We did things everyone could be a part of,” said Lynne. “If you expect the people with the most [money] to do all the giving, then you never invest yourself. People need connection. Maybe it’s a kind word, a smile, keeping in touch with someone. Wherever you can be of some help, get involved. Give however you can.”

It would be unimaginable to use the same cell phone you bought in 2002. Yet, because of reductions in 911 telephone surcharges over the years, that was the scenario for Newaygo County Central Dispatch. Dispatchers were using a 17-year-old system to handle an ever-growing emergency call volume: 111,000 calls in 2018 alone.

“You can’t even get spare parts anymore,” said Jason Wolford, Central Dispatch director. “We’ve been fortunate we haven’t had a catastrophic failure.”

This year, Central Dispatch will make much-needed upgrades to the system. The improvements are possible thanks to local voters’ approval of the 911 surcharge reinstatement in November and a program-related investment of \$650,000 from the Community Foundation.

“Our antiquated radio system is being replaced by the best technology to serve our community and emergency responders,” said Jason. “We can’t express our thanks enough.”

In addition to being more reliable and secure, a new radio console system will bring Newaygo County in line with the rest of the state, allow for regular upgrades, and ensure that emergency calls are prioritized no matter how busy local networks and towers get.

“We’re improving the experience for callers and dispatchers,” said Jason. “As cliché as it sounds, it’s really about helping people. The people we’re dealing with are having the worst day of their lives. They may never see you, but they will always remember the first person they talked to.”

a heart for  
people in crisis



*Jason Wolford and his Central Dispatch colleagues are excited to update Newaygo County’s 911 system.*



a heart for  
empowerment

*Local Circles Leader Krista Sellers is working hard to improve her life.*

Krista Sellers knows that life can veer in unexpected directions. For her, Circles Newaygo County represented the opportunity to get back on track and do something different for her family.

“I didn’t grow up in poverty,” said Krista. “Sometimes I think if just one or two things had gone differently, I wouldn’t be in this position. For a lot of us in Circles, we’re just wanting to be out of the position we’re in.”

Circles—a TrueNorth Community Services program—uses an intensive and personal approach to ending poverty one family at a time. At weekly meetings, Krista and other Circles Leaders learn about budgeting, credit, setting goals, self-care, and more. They are also matched with volunteers called Allies who provide encouragement. In addition to other support, the Community Foundation awarded a \$155,000 grant to the program in 2018.

“In the beginning, I didn’t comprehend how Circles would help in all areas of my life,” said Krista. “Opportunities just open up. It’s connections beyond connections.”

Those connections have helped Krista and her husband navigate unexpected challenges while still progressing toward their goals. Krista is working to quit smoking and looks forward to finishing her associate degree. Ultimately, she wants to become an Ally herself.

“Circles makes me feel like I matter in the world,” said Krista. “It reminds me that I can do this—then I can help other people. I can’t wait.”

# a heart for generosity



*Bob and Susanne Jordan have a heart for giving back.*

Susanne Jordan's family traveled every summer when she was growing up. On Sundays—no matter where they were—they found a church to attend. In one small town, the church they chose was holding a clothing drive. When Susanne's family left, her father got back in the car in his undershirt, having quietly donated the shirt he was wearing.

"I remember thinking, 'Wow, he literally just gave the shirt off his back,'" said Susanne. "That impulsive act of generosity really made an impact on me."

Early experiences watching their parents give deeply influenced both Susanne and Bob Jordan. They continued that mission in their lives together. "We've always had a heart for people who needed a helping hand," said Susanne.

This was even reflected in the career paths they chose: social work for Susanne and philanthropy for Bob. Bob was on staff at the Community Foundation for over 17 years and came back after retirement to serve on the Investment Committee.

"Working with donors is humbling," said Bob. "There are so many people who live modest lives but give so much. There are a lot of generous people in Newaygo County."

Though the Jordans moved to Holland after retiring, they are still committed to the community where they lived, worked, and raised their children. They have supported a variety of local causes through their donor advised fund and are the newest members of Our Next 75\*.

"We have a family history in this community," said Susanne. "Even though we don't live here anymore, we want it to be vibrant and successful for years to come."

*\*Read more about this donor group on page 18*

# OUR NEXT 75

In 2026, Fremont Area Community Foundation will celebrate 75 years of generosity and impact in Newaygo County. As part of this milestone anniversary, we are looking for 75 new people who want to support the community they love both today and into the future.

These people are emerging philanthropists—passionate, driven, and committed to making lasting change in our community. As we draw closer to our 75th anniversary, this group will play a vital role in building the future of Newaygo County.

*To join Our Next 75, we only ask three simple things:*

- 1 Give today**  
Establish a named fund or make an annual gift of \$250 or more to an endowed fund at the Community Foundation
- 2 Give tomorrow**  
Include the Community Foundation in your estate plan
- 3 Share your story**  
Share with us why you chose to give back to the community

## PHILANTHROPY IS THE LOVE OF HUMANITY.

It is driven by a deep attachment to the world and our duty to the people in it.

At Fremont Area Community Foundation, we've been thinking a lot about what it means to love this community. While it's important for philanthropy to have impact, to be measurable and strategic, it is of equal importance to acknowledge the emotional component of our work.

Because true change starts in the heart.

Certainly, we are guided by research, logic, and strategies. But there's also something less tangible at play. As humans, we have an innate desire to leave a legacy, make a difference. At the Community Foundation, we see this on a daily basis—from donors seeking to make lasting contributions to community leaders pushing for social change. All are fueled by passionate hearts and a love of their community.

The work of our heart was expressed in many ways in 2018.

- We received gifts of \$6 million from donors who love their community
- We awarded \$8.9 million in grants to local organizations
- We gave \$662,136 in scholarships to 434 students

In a world that too often feels detached and divisive, we want to lead with our heart. We believe our highest potential will come when we work together to find solutions that marry a love of humanity with seismic change. We're grateful for your partnership and look forward to continuing this important work together.



Carla A. Roberts  
President and CEO



Lindsay Hager  
Board Chair



## THE HEART OF OUR WORK

We want to be a Community Foundation that is driven by both heart and head—two elements that don't have to be in conflict. Because ultimately, our work requires we tap into the space between the two.

We're proud to connect the needs of our unique community with generous donors who want to make a difference.

In order to make the greatest impact, we focus our grantmaking and leadership efforts in three main areas. Each focus area has its own decade goal to ensure forward movement. With specific efforts in mind, the bigger picture begins to take shape.



### COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We are committed to addressing unemployment and underemployment in our community—all to fuel a growing and sustainable local economy.



### EDUCATION

We believe that education is one of the most important tools for success. That's why we are seeking to increase post-secondary educational attainment to 60 percent by 2025.



### POVERTY TO PROSPERITY

We strive to revitalize our community and shift poverty to prosperity by supporting individuals and families on their journey to empowerment.

## YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE



Front row (L-R):

Brennan Schuler, Katie Gebhart, Jacob Sekach, Emma Kartes,  
Madelyn Harvey, Zakary Grabill, Ella Bowman, Alexis Strait, Jemi Perrin,  
Willow Hager, Samantha Wolff, Christopher Clouse, advisor Patti Wheeler

Back row (L-R):

Elli McAree, Zeb Oatis, Noah Graff, Wyatt Phillips, Kurtis Stitt,  
Chance Stebelton, Braden Nielsen, Spencer Karnemaat, Haleigh Schmitt,  
Romeo Johnson, Logan Balkema, Jonathan Mellema

Not pictured: advisor Liz Mansfield

# \$73,285

total grants awarded in 2018

Our Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) is made up of 24 students from local high schools and the homeschooling community. They meet monthly during the school year to learn about leadership, service, nonprofit organizations, and grantmaking. Each spring, they award grants to organizations and programs that impact local young people.

In 2018, YAC awarded grants to support arts classes, mentoring programs, mental health awareness and education, and more. Since making their first grants in 1995, YAC has awarded more than \$1 million to local organizations.

## OUR AFFILIATES

Fremont Area Community Foundation is proud to provide financial and operational support to three affiliate foundations in Lake, Mecosta, and Osceola counties. These local, volunteer-led foundations respond to the unique needs of their communities through grant funding and outreach efforts. They each have their own board, provide community leadership, award scholarships, and recommend grant funding.

Over the last year, these committed organizations have provided funding to meet a wide variety of community needs including summer reading programs, food pantry support, historic property restoration, college tours, public art, and more.

### Lake County Community Foundation

**\$184,502**  
total grants awarded in 2018

**\$4,487,553**  
total assets

### Osceola County Community Foundation

**\$280,335**  
total grants awarded in 2018

**\$8,404,599**  
total assets



### Mecosta County Community Foundation

**\$150,366**  
total grants awarded in 2018

**\$5,110,892**  
total assets

## SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

The Community Foundation is home to two supporting organizations, both with missions to make life better for specific groups in our county. They each qualify as a public charity through their relationship with the Community Foundation, have their own boards, and recommend or award grants based on their specific missions.

### The Amazing X Charitable Trust

Established in 1978 with a gift from Daniel Gerber Jr., The Amazing X Charitable Trust recommends grants to benefit people with disabilities in Newaygo County. Past grants have supported increased accessibility, rehabilitation services, and a variety of respite and support programs.

**\$217,183**

total grants awarded in 2018

**\$5,286,731**

total assets

### Elderly Needs Fund

The Elderly Needs Fund was created in 1992 to support the health and well-being of local seniors. In 2018, the board awarded grants to support health transportation, meal programs, and other efforts to promote social enrichment and the physical, mental, and emotional health of seniors in Newaygo County.

**\$291,349**

total grants awarded in 2018

**\$10,038,518**

total assets

## PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

Our Professional Advisory Board is a steering committee comprised of local advisors. These vital partners provide strategic planning and guidance and serve as liaisons to our entire network of advisors across Lake, Mecosta, Newaygo, and Osceola counties. We are grateful to collaborate with such trusted leaders in our community.

### Board members represent the following advisory areas:

Estate planning attorneys  
Accountants  
Trust officers  
Investment advisors  
Financial planners  
Life insurance agents

### Professional Advisory Board members

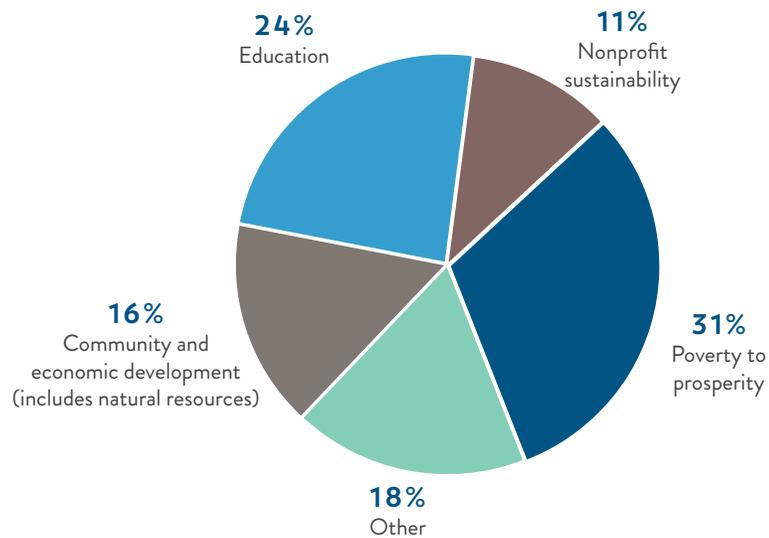
Jason DeKuiper, Chair	Richard LeBaron
Erin Barnhart	Mark Miller
David M. Byrne	John Mousel
Juli Dykman	Jennifer Proctor
Don Farmer	Rolly Reed
Brad Fath	Scott Swinehart
Cathy Kissinger	Seth Wenger
David Landheer	

# FINANCIALS

## GRANTS BY FOCUS AREA \*

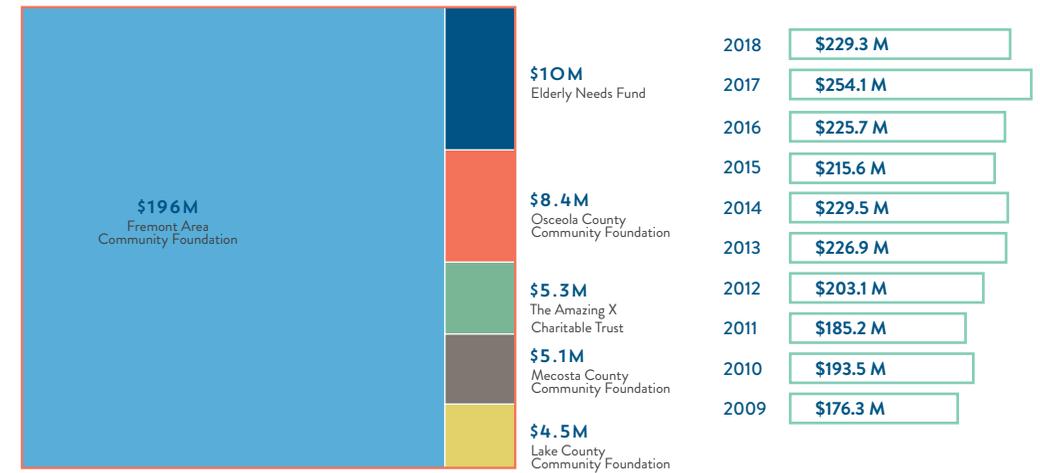
\*community grant awards

**\$5.3M** total community grants 2018



**\$229.3M**

total assets 2018



**\$8,897,472**

total grants

**\$8,282,269**

Fremont Area Community Foundation (includes supporting organizations)

**\$615,203**

Affiliates

**\$5,975,711**

total gifts

**\$5,511,906**

Fremont Area Community Foundation

**\$463,805**

Affiliates

**\$662,136**

total scholarships

**\$564,536**

Fremont Area Community Foundation

**\$97,600**

Affiliates

**434**

Students awarded scholarships

## INVESTMENTS

investment returns by year



investment returns versus benchmark



## OUR BOARD



LINDSAY HAGER  
*Chair*  
President, Hager Consulting, LLC



CATHY KISSINGER  
*Vice Chair*  
Financial Advisor,  
Edward Jones Investment



WILLIAM LEAVER  
Retired healthcare executive



MARY RANGEL  
WIC Program Clerk  
Technician, District Health  
Department 10



JOSEPH ROBERSON  
Head of Accounting Operations,  
Nestlé Business Services  
North America



WILLIAM ALSOVER  
*Treasurer*  
Business consultant



LOLA HARMON-RAMSEY  
*Secretary*  
Owner, Cart-Right Recycling, LLC



PEGGY ROSSLER  
Retired educator



DENISE SUTTLES  
Pastor, First Baptist Church  
of Woodland Park



MICHEAL  
ANDERSON  
Facility Manager, North  
Lake Correctional Facility



CAROLYN HUMMEL  
Retired educator



KENT KARNEMAAT  
Owner, Karnemaat Farms



DR. LORI  
TUBBERGEN CLARK  
Superintendent, Newaygo  
County Regional Educational  
Service Agency (NC RESA)



DALE TWING  
Newaygo County  
Drain Commissioner



THOMAS WILLIAMS  
Owner, Tom Williams Builders, LLC

## OUR STAFF



(L-R)  
Jessica Folkema, Liz Mansfield, Jackie Hite, Jenna Smalligan, Mark Petz, Maria Gonzalez,  
Katie Boven, Sarah Dixon, Lindsey Slater, Amy Moore, Wes Miller

(L-R)  
Robin Cowles, Kathy Pope, Trisha Somers, Tara Kartes, Vonda Carr, Carla Roberts,  
Patti Wheeler, Dan Wheat, Casey Houston, Ashley Folkema, Renee Hanshue

## 2018 HIGHLIGHTS

A small sample of accomplishments made possible by this community



### KICKSTART TO CAREER LAUNCHES

Kickstart to Career Newaygo County—our children’s savings account program with ChoiceOne Bank—officially launched in 2018. More than 550 kindergartners received savings accounts and an initial deposit of \$50 from the Community Foundation. After they graduate, students can use their savings to help pay for career and educational expenses. Find out more at [kickstarttocareer.org](http://kickstarttocareer.org).

### SUPPORTING KIDS IN FOSTER CARE

The Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative helps current and former foster care youth transition to adulthood, but funding restrictions meant that older participants were losing access to important resources. June Britt, a former case worker, decided to use the fund she created at the Community Foundation to fill the gap and ensure young adults have access to the support, training, and resources they need.



### LOCAL SENIORS GET CREATIVE

A grant from the Elderly Needs Fund supported the Golden Arts program, a partnership between Newaygo County Council for the Arts and Commission on Aging. The program offers monthly art classes at three locations, coordinating with COA transportation and senior meal site schedules. Classes help local seniors learn new skills and find a creative outlet as well as address the growing problem of social isolation.



### EDUCATION FOR OUR TEACHERS

Hesperia and Fremont schools partnered with the Community Foundation to offer a three-day Kagan Cooperative Learning training for their teachers. More than 100 educators learned new tools to help improve student engagement, social skills, and classroom culture.



### AWARD-WINNING PRAIRIE

Our prairie restoration project was recognized with the President’s Award from Keep Michigan Beautiful. Most of our eight-acre property is home to a variety of native wildflowers, natural grasses, and wildlife. The prairie also features a walking path.





Philanthropy  
lies at the  
heart of human  
greatness.

- Patrick J. Ryan

We know you love  
this community  
as much as we do.  
However that love is  
expressed, we thank  
you for the countless  
ways you give back  
each and every day.

THANK YOU!



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FREMONT AREA  
**COMMUNITY**  
FOUNDATION