from the
ground up

ANNUAL
REPORT
2016

FREMONT AREA
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
We all have a story to tell. These stories, like our identities, are built from the ground up.
We all have a story. A narrative that tells us who we are and how we live our lives. These stories reveal our history, what matters to us, how we view the world.

Stories are born from grassroots organizations, bold entrepreneurs, first-generation college students, small businesses, and dedicated givers. To understand our community, we must first understand the stories behind it.

Over the last year at the Community Foundation, we worked hard to listen to our community. We know that lasting change, like these stories, is built from the ground up. Because in order to understand one another, sometimes we need to shift our perspective to theirs.

2015 was a great year of listening, growing, and evolving together with our donors and grantees.

- We continued to support our thriving nonprofit sector through grants of $8.3 million.
- We hosted the 2015 Leadership Series to develop current and emerging leaders, including a “Discover Your Community Day” bus tour designed to teach attendees more about Newaygo County.
- We received over $2 million in gifts from generous donors.
- We conducted a donor perception report and were thrilled with the honest and candid feedback to help us serve our community even better.

We thank you all for the role you played in our story this past year! Our Community Foundation would not exist without your support and generosity.

Best regards,

Carla A. Roberts,  
President and CEO

Lindsay Hager,  
Board Chair
A strategic framework guides our work and allows us to most effectively match contributions with critical community needs. Activities in five key areas continue to make a difference in Newaygo County.

**Nonprofit Sustainability**

Creating a vibrant nonprofit sector that contributes to the local economy

- **75 hours** of customized technical assistance/consulting was provided to 10 area nonprofits through the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy.

**Natural Resources**

Protecting our unique natural resources for residents and visitors

- **41.5 acres reforested**  
  Thanks to hard work by the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly, 41.5 acres along the Muskegon River were reforested.

**Education**

Improving post-secondary achievement

- **$93,750** in adult student scholarships  
  45 individuals received an adult student scholarship, for a total of $93,750.

**Community and Economic Development**

Building a strong local economy and maintaining low unemployment

- **17 entrepreneurs enriched**  
  17 entrepreneurs attended GVSU’s Sprout Lab program to explore the commercialization of their ideas and find resources to start a business.

**Poverty to Prosperity**

Empowering families and reducing poverty

- **12 women empowered**  
  12 women participated in “Finding Our Way Home” at Vera’s House, a support group for women in transition due to finances, homelessness, family disruptions, mental illness, or emotional crisis.
legacies
julie chamberlain
from the ground up 7
The Muskegon River watershed covers over 2,700 square miles, stretching from Houghton and Higgins lakes to Muskegon Lake. The sheer size of the area presents a unique challenge for the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly (MRWA), a group that has been working to preserve and protect the watershed since 1998.

“People are used to thinking in terms of cities and counties,” said Julie Chamberlain, MRWA executive director. “People in Houghton Lake don’t think of Muskegon Lake as having anything to do with them. But the river is the thread—we’re all connected by that river. It’s the place we all meet.”

Supported in part by a $40,000 grant from the Community Foundation, MRWA is ramping up efforts to tell the story of that connection and our shared responsibility for this important natural resource.

“A lot of the things we have done are because of grant support,” said Julie. “Support from the Community Foundation is the beginning point of telling our story and the story of what the river needs.”

MRWA is putting more emphasis on educating riverfront property owners about the importance of natural shorelines and buffer plantings. These elements act as a filter before water runs off into the river carrying sediment, lawn fertilizers, and anything else in its path. MRWA is also holding local planning meetings to bring together Newaygo County residents interested in caring for the river.

“We’re engaged property owners and really everyone,” said Julie. “We’re all responsible. All individual actions work together to make a huge difference.”
When Randi Koogler’s job was downsized, instead of focusing on the problem, she recognized a chance for a new start.

“It was the perfect opportunity to go back to school,” said Randi. “So often you think that it’s just not the right time, but this was it.”

Randi applied for and received an adult student scholarship from the Community Foundation, which helped her take the next step. Now she is completing her associate degree at Davenport University and plans to obtain a bachelor’s in finance. She has discovered a passion for training and development and is active in Business Professionals of America. In 2015, Randi was part of the first-place financial analyst team at their national conference.

“When you’re excited and passionate about what you’re doing at work it carries over to your home life,” said Randi, who has also seen her journey positively impact the way her family views education.

“No one else in my family has a degree,” she said. “This helps them see the value in education. I’ve seen the impact on my oldest daughter and my second daughter is already talking about where she wants to go to college.”

“People are afraid to go for their dreams because it doesn’t seem practical,” Randi continued. “But if you have the passion, the rest will follow. Keep taking the next step.”
Tom Williams was drawn to construction early in life, knowing he wanted a career that allowed him to work with his hands. He trained at the Newaygo County Career-Tech Center but went into the field just as the economy slumped in the 1980s. After being laid off, he began working on his own. Undaunted by his youth, neighbors and other community members started hiring him.

“Whether it was trust in me or just being generous, people hired me at 19 to do their building,” said Tom.

Those early opportunities allowed Tom to begin establishing his business. He and his wife Mary also felt the community’s support as they raised their family and as Mary built a teaching career in Grant. Their desire to give back has been an expression of both their faith and their gratitude.

“The community reached out to us, so we give back,” explained Tom.

In addition to giving through their church, he and Mary give annually through the Community Foundation, where Tom currently serves as a trustee. According to Tom, it’s an effective way to support the organizations and issues important to them.

“It’s not always easy to give,” said Tom, who knows first-hand the financial demands of raising a family and running a business. “But it’s a good discipline to develop. It’s important because whatever we do—good or bad—is going to affect everybody, it affects society. We’re all connected.”
Don Heaven has been a fixture at the Dogwood Center for Performing Arts since it opened in 2002. He has built swinging staircases, rigged trapdoors, set lights, and navigated nearly every inch of the facility—and at least half of the countless hours he has spent working there have been as a volunteer.

“I enjoy the challenge and the fun,” said Don. “I like seeing all the different cultural things that you normally get in a big city but that we have here.”

Don and his wife Mary Kay have always been very involved in the community. They give through the Community Foundation, particularly to support the arts, and also give their time to support activities and organizations important to them. Don gravitated toward the technical side of community theater. He was recruited to help at the Dogwood and never left.

“It’s enjoyable,” Don said of volunteering. “It’s work too, but it’s really an outlet for whatever talents you have. A lot of people are surprised at what they can do once they start.”

While his retirement has also included pursuing interests like sailing and tennis, Don has happily devoted much of his time and talent to making sure an organization he loves is able to carry out its mission.

“Volunteers make it all run smoothly,” said Don. “Volunteering really enhances the whole area. You don’t always see it, but it affects a lot of people.”
In 1990, Steve Burt was a Fremont native returning to join an accounting practice with his friend Scott Oosting. At the same time, Michelle—who a few years later would become Steve’s wife—moved to Fremont to take over a restaurant now called Spanky’s Pizza.

“I was coming home,” said Steve.

“Someone told me if I stayed for a year, I wouldn’t want to leave,” said Michelle. “When you say the word ‘hometown,’ this is it.”

For 26 years, the Burts have run businesses committed to caring for customers, employees, and their community. Steve enjoys providing peace of mind and guidance to his clients, while Michelle and her managers invest a great deal of time and energy training young employees. Over the years it has been rewarding for them to see how that investment can help give young people tools they need to be successful.

“You see kids who start out with no direction and are just lost,” said Steve, regarding Spanky’s. “Then later they come back and they’re successful. That’s great to see.”

Giving back to the community is also important to the Burts. They donate through the Community Foundation and enjoy the unique ways they can give through their businesses, from hosting fundraisers to sponsoring little league teams.

“Business owners can make a difference,” said Michelle. “Even when things were tough, I could donate a pizza. It’s not always money. There’s some way every day that you can bless someone.”
In Newaygo County there are more than 2,000 people to every dentist. Accessing dental care is even more difficult for residents who lack resources.

“A lot of patients don’t have transportation or the financial means to go somewhere else to find a dentist, so they miss out on critical care,” said Dr. Janet Fronheiser, a dentist with Family Health Care in White Cloud.

Family Health Care is dedicated to providing quality dental care to those at risk, but increased demand for services and tight space in their White Cloud dental clinic meant a growing waiting list. So in 2015, storage space was repurposed to expand the clinic, adding three new exam rooms and allowing the clinic to hire additional staff. One of the new rooms was furnished through a $62,070 grant from the Community Foundation.

“The new rooms are really helpful for allowing us to see more patients,” said Janet. “The extra space has also been huge in giving us more one-on-one time with patients to educate them about dental health.”

Along with initiatives like outreach programs and extended clinic hours, the expansion provides more local residents an opportunity to improve their health.

“This is a high-need area for access to dental care,” said Annie Schneider, dental clinical operations director. “The quality of care patients receive here is outstanding and by adding these new rooms, we improve access.”
The Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) of Fremont Area Community Foundation is comprised of more than 20 high school students representing Fremont, Grant, Hesperia, Newaygo, and White Cloud public high schools as well as the homeschooling community. YAC members advise the Community Foundation’s Board of Trustees on issues relating to area youth and recommend grants.

$72,782 total grants awarded in 2015
geographic affiliates

For over 20 years, Fremont Area Community Foundation has hosted three affiliates: Lake County Community Foundation, Mecosta County Community Foundation, and Osceola County Community Foundation. The Community Foundation manages the assets while advisory boards from each respective community review grant proposals and recommend funding.

Lake County Community Foundation

$194,342
total grants awarded in 2015

$4,064,139
total assets

Mecosta County Community Foundation

$122,256
total grants awarded in 2015

$4,590,952
total assets

Osceola County Community Foundation

$232,562
total grants awarded in 2015

$7,273,603
total assets

supporting organizations

Amazing X Charitable Trust
Established as a fund in 1978, Amazing X Charitable Trust began with a gift from Daniel Gerber Jr. The Amazing X board recommends grants to the Community Foundation board to benefit people with disabilities in Newaygo County.

$186,832
total grants awarded in 2015

$5,295,670
total assets

The Fremont Area Elderly Needs Fund
The Fremont Area Elderly Needs Fund was created in 1992. The board awards grants to support health and enrich life for the elderly of Newaygo County.

$417,787
total grants awarded in 2015

$9,919,639
total assets
**Grants by Focus Area**

*Community grant round awards*

- **Education**: 33%
- **Nonprofit sustainability**: 19%
- **Poverty to prosperity**: 28%
- **Community and economic development** (includes natural resources): 11%
- **Other**: 9%

**Total Community Grants 2015**: $5.6 M

**Total Gifts**: $2,043,516

- **Fremont Area Community Foundation**: $1,569,469
- **Affiliates**: $474,047

**Total Scholarships**: $811,775

- **Fremont Area Community Foundation**: $722,450
- **Affiliates**: $89,325
- **Students awarded scholarships**: 527

**Total Grants**: $8,308,578

- **Fremont Area Community Foundation**: $7,759,418
- **Affiliates**: $549,160

**Total Assets 2015**: $215.6 M

- **Fremont Area Community Foundation**: $7,759,418
- **Affiliates**: $549,160

**Total Community Grants 2015**: $5.6 M

**Investments**

- **Investment Returns by Year**
  - 2015: $215.6 M
  - 2014: $229.5 M
  - 2013: $226.9 M
  - 2012: $203.1 M
  - 2011: $185.2 M
  - 2010: $193.5 M
  - 2009: $176.3 M
  - 2008: $148.0 M
  - 2007: $223.9 M

**Investment Returns Versus Benchmark**

- **1 Year**: -2.9%
- **5 Year**: 5.3%
- **10 Year**: 4.9%
our board

Lindsay Hager
Chair

William Johnson
Vice Chair

Cathy Kissinger
Treasurer

Dr. Robert Clouse
Secretary

Lola Harmon-Ramsey
Distribution Chair

William Alsover

Dr. Lori Tubbergen Clark

Kent Karnemaat

Carolyn Hummel

Dale Twing

Mary Rangel

Joseph Roberson

Denise Suttles

Michael Anderson

Thomas Williams
our staff

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT - FRONT ROW
Alyssa Curran, Mary Crisman, Patti Wheater, Renee Hanshue, Jessica Folkema, Tara Takken, Amy Moore, Kathy Pope, Ashley Folkema

BACK ROW:
Todd Jacobs, Wes Miller, Maria Gonzalez, Mark Petz, Vonda Carr, Bob Jordan, Mary Huisjen, Robin Cowles, Carla Roberts

Staff and board photos taken at Karnemaat Farms
Positive change starts from the ground up, with one voice, one story, one gift. Join with the Community Foundation to connect your passions and dreams for Newaygo County with lasting change.

Thank you!
from the ground up