RELENTLESS OPTIMISM

ANNUAL REPORT 2017
What does it mean to be relentless?

You don’t stop.
You fight for what you believe in.
You stand up to adversity.
You believe in the good.
You focus on the future.

Here at Fremont Area Community Foundation, we are relentless in our certainty that life in Newaygo County can be even better.
There’s so much possibility here.

So much potential. By building on the good work that’s already underway, we know that our actions can have an impact for generations to come.

Because change is possible.

Dreams can be realized.

Right here in Newaygo County.
GIVING OTHERS AN OPPORTUNITY

Julee Tellkamp is anything but ordinary. While packing to move into a college dorm last fall, she was also preparing to create the Dan and Jackie Tellkamp Fund at the Community Foundation. The fund—named for Julee’s parents—will support youth who want to raise animals to show at the Newaygo County Agricultural Fair, something Julee has loved and been involved in for years.

“Raising an animal is a lot of work,” said Julee. “It teaches responsibility. It pushes you out of your comfort zone.”

Knowing that the expense of purchasing an animal kept some young people from being able to participate, Julee wanted to help. She decided to use the Community Foundation’s Build-A-Fund program to create a fund and grow it toward the minimum balance over five years. Her initial gift last summer came from the sale of her market steer.

“I saw it as an opportunity to impact the fair,” said Julee. “I would like to see more kids be able to be involved. I would like to give them the same opportunity I had.”
LiveWell Newaygo County has a lofty but critical goal. “Our big vision is for Newaygo County to be the healthiest county in Michigan,” said Josh Gustafson, LiveWell chair.

LiveWell is a community collaborative focused on improving health. Members include local health care organizations, schools, businesses, and community members. The group is an affiliate of the Newaygo County Community Collaborative (NC3), which receives grant support from the Community Foundation.

The past year has seen the group take an active role in teen pregnancy prevention, elementary school wellness programming, and the MI Way to Thrive project.

LiveWell also partners on tobacco cessation programming with the BreatheWell task force. One component was a series of #KickButtsDay events held in local schools to share information about the effects of tobacco and how to quit smoking.

“The level of collaboration we have is unbelievable,” said Josh. “Everybody understands we need to improve the health of our community—that’s what we’re all here to do. Together we have enough resources to leverage policy change.”
In 2014, the Muskegon River swelled to one of its highest levels on record, damaging hundreds of local homes. The remarkable speed at which the water rose revealed the vital importance of quick warnings.

Now, with support from federal, state, and local partners, Newaygo County is getting a new flood warning system. Using the United States Geological Survey (USGS) Flood Inundation Mapper System, it will help predict the location and severity of flood threats before they happen.

An important step in the complex project was to install USGS-operated river gauges to monitor the 35 miles of the Muskegon River in Newaygo County. Previously, local data and warning information came from just one gauge in Croton. A grant from the Community Foundation funded two more in Bridgeton and Newaygo.

“When complete, this will be a live warning and advanced planning tool,” said Abby Watkins, director of Newaygo County Emergency Services. “We can put more data in homeowners’ hands to understand risks and give faster, more accurate warnings.”
SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESS IN NEW WAYS

When Patrick Topij bought a pellet stove for his home several years ago, he got an idea. “The volume of people using pellets for heat is growing,” said Patrick. “We don’t have that many producers in Michigan.” Already an experienced business owner, he recognized an opportunity.

After starting North River Pellets, Patrick knew he would need a loan for new equipment to increase quality and production. That’s where Northern Initiatives came in.

Northern Initiatives is a nonprofit that provides services and loans to small businesses and entrepreneurs in rural areas, particularly those who have difficulty securing commercial bank loans. Northern Initiatives received a grant and program-related investment from the Community Foundation to provide support and a revolving loan fund in Newaygo County.

“A bank looks at what you are doing,” said Patrick. “Northern Initiatives looks at what a person can do. Their different way of looking at things made this possible. I wouldn’t be here without it.”

Patrick can now produce one ton of hardwood pellets in an hour at his Newaygo facility. He plans to soon hire another person and continue to increase production.
CONNECTING ART AND LITERACY

Last spring, third and fourth graders from Velma Matson Upper Elementary in Newaygo excitedly welcomed a crowd of parents and grandparents to their very own book release party.

The “Author Celebration” was the culmination of an innovative program to incorporate drawing, reading, writing, and history. It was funded by a grant from the Community Foundation.

From October to March, children’s book illustrator Lori Eslick visited two classrooms each week armed with art supplies and brimming with creativity. She helped students create sketches based on local history. Then, with help from Lori and their teachers, students wrote and illustrated their own books. The process gave students the opportunity to explore new skills and gain confidence in reading and writing.

“My favorite part is seeing kids who love to write,” said teacher Jill Young. “It’s given them a lot more confidence. I’m seeing more detail, complexity, and length in their writing now. Everything about it was positive.”
GIVING OUT OF GRATITUDE

After more than 40 years, Bob and Bonnie Erber are still full of enthusiasm for Fremont, the town that won them over with its safe neighborhoods and friendliness.

“Neighbors step in to help,” said Bob. “People are doing it because they care for you. There is a very special place in the world for people who go out of their way to give.”

Motivated by gratitude, Bob and Bonnie sought ways to give as well. They are longtime Rotary members, active in their churches, involved in city and school projects, and have volunteered with many other organizations.

Through the Erber Family Fund at the Community Foundation, the couple has given scholarships to local students for years. They recently decided to direct their fund toward Promise Zone scholarships to help even more Newaygo County graduates build brighter futures.

“We’ve been so blessed,” said Bonnie. “There has always been food on our table and a roof over our heads. We want to give somebody else a chance to have what we’ve had.”
A community foundation is inherently optimistic.

We believe in the good of people. We believe in mission-driven organizations. We believe in generosity, great ideas, and constant improvement. We believe that it’s our job to leave Newaygo County a little better than we found it. Everything we do relies on our sincere belief that the future is full of possibilities.

This optimism is relentless. It must be.

Because big problems in our community like unemployment, poverty, or lack of access to education aren’t easy to solve. It can take decades or generations to make a lasting change. That’s why we’re committed for the long haul.

Our 2011 strategic plan and the subsequent years of research and community feedback laid a foundation. We sharpened our focus and pursued strategic goals, all in the name of greater impact.

One big thing we’ve learned? There’s so much positivity in this community. Our Community Foundation exists because of the big dreams and relentless optimism of decades of families and individuals who believed in a bright future for Newaygo County.

The past year gave us a lot to be optimistic about:

- We received gifts of $2.3 million from generous individuals, families, and organizations
- We put $5.7 million in the hands of deserving nonprofits who do amazing work in our community
- We gave over $781,000 in scholarships to 495 students seeking a brighter future through education

We also created a new strategic framework to set our course over the next five years. Read more about our plan for generational change on the next page.

The stories in this report give us so many reasons to be optimistic. Because we can’t do it alone. We all have a part to play.

Thank you for working with us to make Newaygo County even better.

Carla A. Roberts    Lindsay Hager
President and CEO   Board Chair
In 2016, our board and staff created a new strategic framework to guide our efforts over the next five years.

This ambitious plan draws on our past work, outlines our vision, and defines the role of the Community Foundation. It was developed with significant research and input from community members, stakeholders, local organizations, and county leaders. This framework serves to lay out broad strategies as well as to refine our grantmaking investments and our own operations. Because in order to achieve our mission in Newaygo County, we must move in a clear direction.

To achieve our core purpose, we will focus on three key goals:

1. Increase educational attainment
2. Decrease the poverty rate
3. Fuel a growing and sustainable local economy

We know that real change won’t happen overnight. These goals are generational and will require a focused community effort over the next 10 years and beyond.

**OUR MISSION:**
To improve the quality of life in Newaygo County
Evidenced by a vibrant economy, effective public sector, and well-being across socioeconomic levels

**EDUCATION**
Increase proportion of residents with college degrees, credentials, or certifications to 60%

**POVERTY TO PROSPERITY**
Reduce poverty to at or below the national average

**COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
Maintain the unemployment rate at or below the national average

We invest in collaborations, programs, and organizations that focus on:

- Early childhood investments
- STEAM
- Literacy
- Remediation
- Creating a positive college and career-oriented culture
- Pathways to self-sufficiency
- Asset development
- Social capital and empowerment for individuals and families
- Small business development
- Entrepreneurship
- Workforce development
- Capacity of local partners
- Promotion and utilization of natural resources
The first person to lead Fremont Area Community Foundation was a tenacious teacher named Bessie Slutterback.

Intelligent and relentless, Bessie led the Community Foundation for over two decades. She championed arts and education and worked tirelessly to build community support. To honor Bessie’s legacy of giving, the Community Foundation created the Slutterback Legacy Society. This special group of people have said “count me in!” by including the Community Foundation in their will or estate plan. Contact a member of our philanthropic services staff if you’d like to consider this easy way to make a difference—now and for the future.
If everyone in our community gave just 5% (or more) of their estate to the Community Foundation, it could result in $33.2 million in charitable gifts. That’s a big number, but it doesn’t require a big commitment. We believe that if everyone in our community gives just a little bit of themselves, we can make generational change!
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.

$110,000 total grants awarded in 2016
The Amazing X Charitable Trust

Established as a fund in 1978, The 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.

$199,163 total grants awarded in 2016
$5,450,100 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.

$431,170 total grants awarded in 2016
$10,201,123 total assets

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 serve donors, review grant proposals, and recommend funding.

Lake County Community Foundation

$175,189 total grants awarded in 2016
$4,362,700 total assets

Mecosta County Community Foundation

$210,360 total grants awarded in 2016
$5,007,750 total assets

Osceola County Community Foundation

$271,131 total grants awarded in 2016
$8,288,180 total assets

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS
FINANCIALS

GRANTS BY FOCUS AREA*

*community grant round awards

$5.7 M
Total community grants 2016

39% Education

8% Other

10% Community and economic development (includes natural resources)

13% Nonprofit sustainability

30% Poverty to prosperity

TOTAL GRANTS $8,662,951
Fremont Area Community Foundation* $8,006,271
Affiliates $656,680
*including supporting organizations

TOTAL GIFTS $2,310,770
Fremont Area Community Foundation $1,096,617
Affiliates $1,214,153

TOTAL SCHOLARSHIPS $781,153
Fremont Area Community Foundation $697,225
Affiliates $83,928
Students awarded scholarships 495

TOTAL ASSETS $225.7 M
Total assets 2016

$5.4 M
The Amazing X Charitable Trust

$10.2 M
The Fremont Area Elderly Needs Fund

$5.0 M
Mecosta County Community Foundation

$4.4 M
Osceola County Community Foundation

$192.4 M
Fremont Area Community Foundation

$8.3 M
Lake County Community Foundation

INVESTMENTS

investment returns by year

6.6% 28.5% 15.1% -3.5% 14.7% 17.2% 2.9% -2.9% 9.2%

investment returns versus benchmark

1 YEAR 9.2% 8.0% 8.0% 8.0% 8.0% actual
5 YEAR 7.7% benchmark
10 YEAR 4.4%
OUR STAFF

Front row (L-R)
Nicole D’Arcy, Samantha Ruthven, Mary Huisjen, Tara Takken,
Sarah Dixon, Carla Roberts, Patti Wheater, Jessica Folkema, Amy Moore

Back row (L-R)
Kathy Pope, Mark Petz, Vonda Carr, Maria Gonzalez, Katie Boven,
Todd Jacobs, Renee Hanshue, Robin Cowles, Wes Miller, Ashley Folkema
2016 HIGHLIGHTS
A small sample of accomplishments made possible by this community

BUILD-A-FUND OPPORTUNITIES

The Coville Scholarship, created by sisters Sarah Coville and Emily Zoulek, will be awarded to a Newaygo High School graduate pursuing a career in mental or physical health. Both sisters received Community Foundation scholarships and went on to find careers in the medical field. They utilized the Build-A-Fund program to reach the fund minimum over five years.

BUILDING A FUTURE THROUGH EDUCATION

The Community Foundation made a grant of $185,000 and provided staff expertise to support the Newaygo County Area Promise Zone. Students in 2017 are the first to be eligible to receive the Promise Scholarship. The scholarship covers tuition and fees for a two-year award at Baker College or Muskegon Community College (MCC), up to the value of the prevailing annual tuition rate of MCC.

$9.4 MILLION

Total grants and scholarships awarded in 2016 to hundreds of deserving nonprofit organizations and students.

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF POVERTY

Circles USA set up shop in Newaygo County in 2016. The Circles model is intensive and personal—designed to move families out of poverty and into economic stability. Each week, local families meet with community volunteers to work on tangible goals towards self-reliance. Over time, earning potential increases, debt and public assistance decreases, and lasting relationships are built. The Community Foundation granted $130,250 to TrueNorth for the Circles program last year.

28 NEW WAYS TO DO GOOD

Generous individuals, families, and organizations created 28 new charitable funds at the Community Foundation in 2016. For a complete list of 2016 donors, visit fecomunityfoundation.org/2016donors.

GETTING BACK ON THE WATER

Thanks to community support and a grant from the Amazing X Charitable Trust, an accessible dock system was installed at the Maple Island and Bridgeton boat launches on the Muskegon River. These barrier-free entry points give all community members an opportunity to get off the shore and enjoy the river.
Giving through the Community

Foundation isn’t just a mark of generosity.

Your gifts, large and small, show a relentless optimism and passion for Newaygo County. Join us today to build a bright future.

THANK YOU!