Promise Zone scholars granted the opportunity to achieve their college dreams.

PAGE 6
The start of a new year provides plenty of time for reflection and anticipation. 2017 brought a lot of learnings as well as accomplishments and now we look forward to new opportunities in 2018.

First, you may notice that this newsletter looks a little different. We revamped our design and upped our page count, all to provide better information to you! We’re excited to share our new look and enhanced features while continuing to tell the stories of our amazing grantees and donors.

At the end of last year, we awarded $3.2 million in the fall community grant round, bringing our total community grant support in 2017 to $5.7 million. These grants were awarded to a wide variety of organizations and projects addressing critical local needs and supported more than 100 programs at nonprofits across the county.

We were thrilled to host more than 125 representatives from local organizations at our Grantee Workshop on January 17. Our staff, trustees, and presenters from The Right Place and Johnson Center for Philanthropy shared information on new measurement tools and policies and gave updates on our grantmaking process and online application system.

We have several exciting campaigns and initiatives kicking off in the new year and can’t wait to provide more information in the upcoming months. For now, we’re gearing up to process and review new batches of community grant applications, YAC grants, and scholarship applications. It’s a busy time of year and we’re grateful for YOU and the support that makes it all possible!
MEASURING PROGRESS

The Community Foundation recently introduced the Newaygo County Area Dashboard—an exciting new measurement tool—to our grantees. Based on the West Michigan Regional Dashboard, this tool will track specific indicators measuring the county’s progress and growth. Indicators include items such as labor force participation rate, third-grade reading level, and high school graduation rate. The indicators match up with measures we use in our grantmaking and will help give us a better sense of how we are progressing towards the community’s goals for Newaygo County! Check out the dashboard for yourself at ncdashboard.org.

SHERIFF ROBERT HART

Robert Hart was born on a farm in Pennsylvania in 1895. After graduating from eighth grade, Robert’s father told him he was old enough to leave home and get a job. Over the next several years, Robert found work in New York, Detroit, and Chicago.

Robert met his wife Marie at a dance in Chicago and they were married in 1915. In 1917 they bought a farm near White Cloud. When the land proved too sandy to grow the cherry orchard they had planned, Robert worked in construction and for Rosenberg Hardware before being hired as a deputy sheriff. In 1937, he was elected sheriff and served Newaygo County for 20 years.

Robert’s daughter Leona was given the chance her father wasn’t: she continued her education well beyond the eighth grade and had a long career as a nurse. To honor her hard-working father, Leona created a scholarship in his memory at the Community Foundation for White Cloud students. Although Robert was denied the opportunity to get a formal education of his own, he continues to play a role in making sure students reach a bright future.
recent grants

Our Board of Trustees approved $3.2 million in grant requests in our fall grant round. Here are a few of our favorites!

**County of Newaygo**

**PURPOSE:** To ensure continued access to recycling services for Newaygo County residents

The county currently maintains household recycling sites in Newaygo, Grant, White Cloud, Garfield Township, and Croton. Newaygo County also has cardboard, glass, and polystyrene drop-off locations.

**WHY IT MATTERS:**

Last year, 699 tons of materials were recycled in Newaygo County. Efforts like these help reduce waste in landfills, prevent pollution, and conserve and protect our natural resources. This grant ensures that recycling continues to be available to residents while the county explores responsible, sustainable solutions for the future.

**Croton Township Library**

**PURPOSE:** To support the library’s 2018 summer reading program

The program will run for seven weeks and include crafts, movies, special events, performances, and rewards for meeting reading goals.

**WHY IT MATTERS:**

Summer reading programs help kids avoid the “summer slide” and keep up their reading momentum. The library works with Newaygo Public Schools—where most of their participants attend—to collect data measuring student reading levels before and after their participation.
### West Michigan Symphony

**PURPOSE:** To support Link Up, a music education program for Newaygo County elementary students  
Classrooms receive visits from orchestra musicians and learn to read music and play the recorder. Students also attend a concert at the Frauenthal Center where they perform with the orchestra.  

**WHY IT MATTERS:**  
While tight budgets have forced many schools to cut back on classes like art and music, Link Up provides a free music curriculum developed by Carnegie Hall and aligned with national standards. Students learn about composers, instruments, and the orchestra and build a relationship with a professional musician—a unique component to West Michigan Symphony’s program. More than 700 Newaygo County students are expected to participate.

### Newaygo County Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (PCA)

**PURPOSE:** To support PCA’s summer programs  
PCA provides eight weeks of programming for youth ages 5-18. The day camp-style programs are held at three waterfront locations in Newaygo County and include free lunch and snacks. Last summer, more than 400 youth participated.  

**WHY IT MATTERS:**  
PCA summer programs offer a safe, engaging environment for local youth. In addition to games and swimming, there are presentations on topics like safe touch, bullying, nutrition, exercise, substance abuse, and positive relationships. The program provides a vital service and removes barriers such as childcare for working parents during the summer months.

### The Right Place Foundation

**PURPOSE:** To support regional recreation trail connectivity  
The grant allows partners from Lake, Mason, Newaygo, and Oceana counties to leverage a matching grant through the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to create a network of interconnected trails within the four counties.  

**WHY IT MATTERS:**  
Tourism is a multi-billion-dollar industry in Michigan and trails are increasingly seen as a resource to help tourism economies grow and thrive. While existing trails are already a significant asset to their respective communities, connecting them will create a multi-county trail network and increase the number of visitors to our area. The project will further establish West Michigan as a nationally-recognized tourism and outdoor recreation destination.
Last year, as Dr. Lori Tubbergen Clark talked about the Promise Zone at a parent meeting, she noticed a woman in the front row who seemed concerned. Lori paused for questions and the woman raised her hand.

“It sounds too good to be true,” she said, struggling to believe someone was simply going to pay for her child’s college education. Assured there was no catch, the mother in the front row began to cry.

“Just the relief for that parent,” said Lori, NC RESA superintendent and chair of the Promise Zone Authority Board, describing the moment. “This really is a game-changer. It’s a huge shift in thinking. It used to be ‘If I go to college.’ Now it’s ‘When I go.’”

Promise Zones are a nationwide effort to create a tuition-free path to an associate degree for students living and graduating within their geographic boundaries. Zones can capture half the growth in state education property taxes to help fund the scholarships, but they must first prove they can pay for the initial years on their own.

While still working toward their goal, the Newaygo County Area Promise Zone has already raised $1.3 million and was able to award the first scholarships to the class of 2017.

“This is a generous community,” said Lori. “We were able to fund 104 kids in less than one year. People are looking to us as an example.”

The Community Foundation joined the push by awarding more than $650,000 in grants to the Promise Zone. Staff have also provided fundraising and marketing assistance.

“None of this would be possible without that support,” said Lori.

Moving forward, Lori is excited to see the impact continue to spread. She has heard from employers who now see a path to finding qualified local employees and hopes it will encourage more young people to stay in the area. And of the long list of exciting moments to come, one rises to the top.

“I just want to see that first group of graduates,” said Lori. “I want to see them be completers and I’m excited to see some of those completers stay here. I’m looking forward to seeing their dreams come true.”
giving back

a lifetime of dedication and service

Ben and Linda Landheer have both “been involved in an awful lot of things,” Ben said with a smile. Giving back was something he learned by watching his parents’ example as he grew up on a dairy and vegetable farm in Grant.

“I was raised that way,” he said. “The motivation comes from my parents. I learned we need to share with others.”

During busy careers and now in retirement, both Ben and Linda have found ways to serve the community and give back.

Linda worked for the county for more than 40 years and spent 16 years as the county’s Register of Deeds. She is now a member of The Fremont Area Elderly Needs Fund board at the Community Foundation. Linda and her fellow trustees oversee the fund’s work to support the well-being of seniors in Newaygo County.

Ben created a fund at the Community Foundation as another way to give back. The fund supports Fremont Christian School and Western Michigan Christian, organizations with a special place in Ben’s heart because his own children attended there.

“I was thankful for how they educated my kids,” Ben said. “They got a quality Christian education and have gone on to be successful.”

Ben served on both schools’ boards and got to know the needs of the schools and families firsthand.

“I wanted to find a way to contribute back,” he said. “We need to get help for schools in some way.”

“If you’ve been blessed, you need to share,” Ben continued, noting his gratitude for living in a supportive community where people get to know their neighbors. “The community has been good to me and hopefully I’ve been good to the community.”
We believe that our relationships with professional advisors in our community are vital. These partnerships have helped community members fulfill their charitable goals for decades! That’s why the Community Foundation created our Professional Advisory Board in 2014. The Professional Advisory Board is a steering committee that provides strategic planning, guidance, and serves as a liaison to our entire network of advisors across our four-county service area. The board is currently comprised of 16 professional advisors who are active partners with the Community Foundation, are skilled in personal estate matters, and are recognized as trusted leaders in the community. We have a diverse group of advisors, from estate planning attorneys to CPAs to financial planners.

**PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS**

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**SETH WENGER**  
Owner and Insurance Agent,  
The Wenger Agency
A GOAL WITHOUT A PLAN IS JUST A WISH

We all have goals in life. We want to travel. We want to spend more time with our families. We want to be healthier. But having a goal is like standing at the starting line of a race. Making a plan helps you get to the finish line.

Do you have a plan for retirement? Planning for a financially secure retirement involves investing your funds, minimizing your taxes, and safeguarding your assets. Make a plan and start now. Start small if you must. Even small savings can grow large with the passage of time.

Do you have a financial plan for when you pass away? Will your family be financially secure or left with a mess? Do they know about your plans, your insurance policies, or your cemetery plot? A little preparation now can make all the difference for your loved ones.

What about planning your gifts to charity? Do you want to start making annual donations now to the projects that are near and dear to your heart or would it be better to wait until after your lifetime?

I encourage you to take some time and think about these questions. Your professional advisory team—your accountant, your attorney, your financial advisor—can help you develop and implement plans to meet your specific goals. Call them and let them help you run the race.
MINI-GRANTS

Calling all Newaygo County teachers! The Community Foundation is offering education mini-grants to support innovative classroom projects. Mini-grants are available for public and private schools and state-licensed early childhood learning centers and daycare providers. Applications are due April 16. Learn more at facommunityfoundation.org/mini.

PROMISE ZONE GRANT

On February 13, Carla Roberts, Todd Jacobs, and Lindsay Hager, chair of our Board of Trustees, presented a $400,000 grant to the Newaygo County Promise Zone Authority Board. We’re proud to support this amazing opportunity for local students! Read more about the Promise Zone on page 6.

ONLINE DONOR PORTAL

Have you signed up for DonorCentral yet? For donors and organizations with funds at the Community Foundation, it’s an easy way to view fund balances, grant histories, and more at any time online. We’re happy to help you get started and answer questions. Visit facommunityfoundation.org/giving or call Robin Cowles or Sarah Dixon at 231.924.5350.
Lately a lot of the work at the Community Foundation has centered around community and economic development. Though the unemployment rate looks good—Newaygo County is only at 3.5 percent—there are troubling trends underneath this positive indicator.

While our employment growth is trending upwards, the average annual wage in our county stands at $37,500\(^1\), trailing both West Michigan ($44,200) and the U.S. ($53,600). This leaves 41 percent of Newaygo County families falling behind. Known as the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained) population, these working families cannot make ends meet, even with income from more than one job.

We also have approximately 1,700 individuals\(^2\) in our community who could be working but are not. This phantom workforce is kept on the sidelines due to a number of factors, from the cost of childcare to the loss of family resources such as food stamps. Rather than gradually reducing supports for basic needs, our current system simply eliminates benefits when employees reach specific income levels. The phenomenon known as the “Cliff Effect” holds workers back from accepting employment or career advancement for fear of not being able to support their families. These troubling issues add up to a Newaygo County poverty rate of 18.2 percent in 2016, higher than that of Michigan or the U.S.

What is to be done? At the Community Foundation, we believe that the solution requires a comprehensive set of strategies to get individuals into the workforce and help them be successful. Education and workforce development are key components to enhance the talent of local workers and ultimately improve the economic development of our region. One such example of this work is the Newaygo County Area Promise Zone (read more on page 6). While not a Community Foundation initiative, the Promise Zone represents a key strategy to ensure that our graduating high school seniors have a clear path to a post-secondary credential and can fulfill local job requirements.

We are also deeply engaged in partnerships to focus on workforce development, tourism, and small business development. Many of our donors will recall conversations around community and economic development at our Fall Donors Luncheon last October. We were heartened to see a high level of engagement and interest in this vital priority for our community. I look forward to continued efforts in this area and reporting back to you on progress we are making together.

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1. Data from the Newaygo County Area Dashboard. More information about this dashboard on page 3.

2. Data from a Talent 2025 report commissioned by the Newaygo County Workforce Development Taskforce in 2017.
IMPACT
The biannual newsletter of Fremont Area Community Foundation

GIFTS OF GRAIN
Calling all farmers! Did you know the Community Foundation now accepts gifts of grain? Gifts of grain are a simple way to make a lasting difference and help grow the future of our community. The value of the donated grain can be used to create a fund in the name of a family or business, to benefit a specific organization, or to award scholarships. Gifts of grain can also go to our Agriculture Fund, which supports youth involvement in agriculture and other local agricultural causes. Contact a member of our philanthropic services team at 231.924.5350 for more information.