

FORWARD



INSIDE:

After people in Lake County invested in him, Brandon Childress decided to repay that investment. PAGE 4

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recently

HERB EARLY
Board Chair

Thanks to the generosity of our donors who entrust Lake County Community Foundation with their charitable giving, we had another great year supporting our community partners and providing scholarships to students continuing their education and career training.

This year, we welcomed two new trustees. Jamie Martin resides in Luther and serves as the vice president of Lake-Osceola State Bank. Paula Vollmer dedicated her career to the healthcare industry as a certified surgical technologist/certified surgical first assistant in Grand Haven. After retiring, she and her husband decided to move to Idlewild for a quiet place to enjoy all that nature has to offer. Both trustees are excited about the opportunity to serve on our board and support organizations and programs that impact Lake County.

I appreciate our trustees and committee members for sharing their time, talents, and treasures to carry out the work that enhances our community. This year, the grantmaking committee reviewed 39 grant applications, and the scholarship committee had the privilege of awarding scholarships to 8 students.

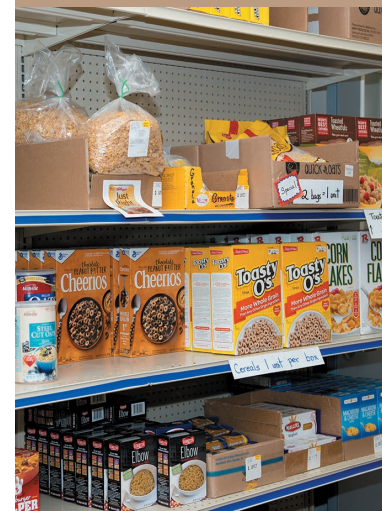
I would also like to recognize and express gratitude to Fremont Area Community Foundation for providing the staff, structure, and support for us to enhance quality of life and build community spirit in Lake County.

recent grants

We awarded more than \$78,000 to organizations across Lake County in our spring grant round. Here are two highlights!

Edgetts Wesleyan Church

\$7,500



PURPOSE:

To build an addition onto the all-purpose room, so that food pantry items can be securely stored together, organized, and available directly adjacent to the area where they are needed for distribution.

WHY IT MATTERS:

According to Feeding America West Michigan, nearly 18% of Lake County residents and 23% of children face food insecurity. Organizations like Edgetts Wesleyan Church seek to help these neighbors by distributing food. Additional storage will enable a more efficient and secure operation to support the continued growth of the food pantry program.

Lake County Economic Development Alliance

\$10,000

PURPOSE:

To draft and implement a five-year housing plan with support programming.

WHY IT MATTERS:

As in many rural areas, housing quality, affordability, and availability are persistent concerns in Lake County. This housing plan will allow the Lake County Housing Coalition to work with a housing expert to develop a plan with the goal of attracting community-driven housing development to our area.



the community who invested in me

Brandon Childress

Most young people who achieve the level of success that Brandon Childress has would be focused on making a name for themselves outside of their hometown. Brandon, however, recognized the value of his community from a young age.

“Community members treated me like one of their children,” said Brandon. “Teachers came to my sporting events. The owners of the local golf course gave me a job when I was in high school. I felt like I belonged.”

After graduation, Brandon attended and played football for Central Michigan University and Ferris State

University. While coaching middle school basketball during his last semester of college, Brandon’s team played against his alma mater. Former Baldwin Athletic Director and coach Abe Williams approached Brandon and encouraged him to return to his hometown after college.

Recognizing how great an investment the Baldwin community had made in him, Brandon felt it was important to repay that investment by guiding and inspiring the next generation. “I was them at one point,” said Brandon. “Why not invest in the community who invested in me?”

Brandon has served as Baldwin High School College Access/Promise Zone Coordinator since 2023. “When a student follows through on something I’ve advised them to do, that I know they’re capable of doing, seeing them reach the potential I knew they had is so rewarding!” said Brandon. “Lake County Community Foundation and Fremont Area Community Foundation have been instrumental in my role in bringing awareness of the opportunities out there. These community foundations want to help and support students.”



passion for community

Mike and Kathy Oostmeyer

“There’s nothing like gazing out our window and watching the wildlife over a cup of coffee in the morning,” said Lake County resident Kathy Oostmeyer. “We love to take walks in the woods with our dog, Samantha, and listen to the quiet.”

Mike and Kathy Oostmeyer, who have lived in Lake County for over 20 years, love their home and the surrounding area. They also share a deep love of reading. Kathy and Mike grew up in homes that valued books and encouraged reading. Kathy said, “We have such a love relationship with books and want others to enjoy them as well.”

Their love of books inspired them to create a designated fund at the Community Foundation, which has served to expand the local library’s outdoor section. “My hope is to build a collection that becomes known in the community as a place to visit,” said Mike.

Kathy has also served as a trustee on the Community Foundation board and is passionate about giving back to the community. “It’s important to reach out to see where you can be of use,” she said. Kathy serves on both the grant committee and the scholarship committee. The grant committee seeks out and addresses the community’s most pressing needs while the scholarship

committee encourages students to pursue continuing their education at a college or trade school. “Both committees are made up of members who have the community’s best interests at heart,” she said. “They are genuinely concerned about improving the quality of life for the community members.”

“Having a vibrant community is essential in order to have a good quality of life,” Kathy continued. “One individual is going to have a hard time making a difference. If we all do our part to make the community better, we can make a difference.”



noteworthy

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION OPENS JANUARY 1

The Community Foundation scholarship application will open on January 1. Multiple scholarships are available each year for high school seniors pursuing post-secondary education and career training. The online scholarship application is open January 1 to March 1. To learn more, visit facommunityfoundation.org/scholarships.



BAKED POTATO SUPPER AND RAFFLE

In April, the Community Foundation hosted the Baked Potato Supper and Raffle to connect with friends and neighbors, enjoy a delicious meal, and contribute to the Baldwin Community Schools Alumni Fund. This year, more than 160 baked potato dinners were sold, and raffle ticket sales generated a record amount. Thank you to all of our volunteers for their hard work and community members who joined us for dinner.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE

Vedra Gant and Ruth Cornett-Fox joined our board in 2016. These trustees were very engaged and involved in everything from coordinating the Baked Potato Supper and Raffle, to serving as leaders on asset development, grantmaking, and scholarship committees. We would also like to recognize our

friend Judy White, (top right) who passed away in September. Judy was a dedicated trustee who served as treasurer and grants committee chair for many years and was an incredible champion for the needs of all in Lake County. She will be dearly missed and fondly remembered.



financials



TOTAL GIFTS \$77,389

TOTAL SCHOLARSHIPS \$16,725

TOTAL GRANTS \$96,481

Community grants \$76,481

Donor advised/agency endowment/designated grants \$20,000

TOTAL ASSETS \$7,391,720

All data as of September 30, 2025



An affiliate of Fremont Area Community Foundation

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FORWARD

The annual newsletter of Lake County Community Foundation



YEAR-END GIVING

This year has been full of partnership, generosity, and impact. Everything we do is possible thanks to people like you.

There's still time to get involved in 2025. Consider making a year-end gift to support the ongoing work of your Community Foundation. If you're age 70 ½ or older, making a qualified charitable distribution from your IRA is a simple way to do just that. The gift can qualify for all or part of your required minimum distribution. It can also be used to set up a charitable fund in your name or make a gift to the Lake County Community Foundation General Fund.

Interested in learning more about giving through your IRA? Contact Katie Boven at 231.924.5350.

