

SPIRIT



INSIDE:

Partnerships and passion
are leading to exciting
developments in Evert.
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OSCEOLA COUNTY
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

An affiliate of Fremont Area Community Foundation

FALL 2025

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recently

KEN BOLLMAN
Board Chair

Thanks to the generosity of our donors who entrust Osceola 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 three new trustees. Deb Gingrich is an animal care coordinator with Michigan Milk Producers Association. She facilitates the national Farmers Assuring Responsible Management program across the co-op. Pepper Lockhart serves as the city manager of Ewart, works closely with the housing director to develop new housing, and collaborates with the downtown development director on economic projects. Danyel Prielipp has dedicated her career to education, serving Marion Public Schools for over two decades and as the superintendent for the last four years.

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 27 grant applications, and the scholarship committee had the privilege of awarding scholarships to 42 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 Osceola County.

recent grants

We awarded more than \$138,000 to organizations across Osceola County in our spring grant round. Here are two highlights!

Feeding America West Michigan

\$25,000

PURPOSE:

To provide food to Osceola County residents through mobile food pantries, fixed pantries, and other food-assistance programs.

WHY IT MATTERS:

Food insecurity is a high-priority health need in Osceola County, and Feeding America West Michigan works to ensure people have access to the food and resources they need to thrive. The program partners with food companies, farmers, and retailers to rescue food that would otherwise go to waste and distribute it to their network of food banks and pantries.



Meceola Children's Council

\$4,500

PURPOSE:

To provide local children the opportunity to shop for Christmas gifts with a first responder.

WHY IT MATTERS:

Shop with a Hero is an annual project supported by the Children's Council in conjunction with Osceola County schools, first responders, emergency management, and local volunteers. Participating students are selected with the specific intention of creating positive interactions with law enforcement. Students purchase Christmas gifts for their family, and the family receives a cart of groceries and activities.



setting students up for success

Jacob Stieg

It would be hard to find a person more passionate about helping students obtain scholarships for their post-secondary education than Jacob Stieg. Having served on the Community Foundation's scholarship committee for over 10 years, he has perfected the process, making it as easy as possible for students.

Jacob's favorite part of serving on the scholarship committee is promoting scholarships. "Reaching students where they live can be challenging," Jacob said. "I begin by asking them if they work, and if so, how much they make per hour. I then tell them that one hour of work on a scholarship application could potentially result in a

\$500-\$2,000 scholarship." This method consistently gets the students' attention.

Many students struggle to understand financial aid. They don't know there are scholarships available. They give up before the process even begins, convinced they can't afford college. Jacob explained, "They don't know that we're here to help them prepare for any path they want to go into." Jacob believes that if he can get the students started on their application, other applications won't seem so overwhelming. "These scholarships provide the opportunity for kids to set themselves up as a success," said Jacob. "They are potentially future community members. This is

potentially the next step in their careers."

Jacob not only does in-school presentations, but he helps students one-on-one with online applications. He offers his phone number to them in case they have more questions after he leaves. He also returns to the schools at a later date for a second in-class visit to follow up.

"There's nothing more rewarding than seeing the scholarship recipients' faces when we present their scholarships to them on award night," Jacob said. "We were together when they took the first step; it's so rewarding to be together when they take their last step."



moving in the right direction

Pepper Lockhart

Pepper Lockhart came to work for the City of Ewart about five years ago after 25 years at Ferris State University. When she was later named Ewart's city manager, she brought a forward-thinking energy and willingness to look outside the box to her new role.

"I'm very passionate about this," said Pepper. "I go 100 directions a day, and it's fun."

Pepper's work in Ewart emphasizes the power of partnerships. She works closely with the Ewart Housing Commission and Downtown Development Authority as well as with statewide and regional groups like the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission. These connections and more are helping

Ewart leverage funding from public and private grants to rehab downtown buildings, resurface roads, improve infrastructure, and more. Next year will be another exciting year, with a number of projects happening alongside planned construction on US-10. They anticipate more façade improvements, new streetlights, and updates to water and sewer mains.

"We have been doing the background work for a while, but 2026 will be the year people really see it all happening," said Pepper. "We're doing all the partnering we can to make the best use of the city's money. We're all working for what is in the best interest of our small community."

This spring, Pepper received the James McBryde Community Champion Award from the Middle Michigan Development Corporation for her work on behalf of Ewart and Osceola County. "I was very honored," she said. "People are seeing that we're moving in the right direction. Word is getting out."

Pepper is now bringing the same enthusiasm and desire to partner to her role as a trustee of the Community Foundation and to her volunteer work with organizations like 4-H. "I love to give back to the community," she said. "It's not always about dollars, it's about giving back and working together."



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. We also have scholarships for current college students. The online application is open January 1 to March 1. To learn more, visit facommunityfoundation.org/scholarships.

THANK YOU, AMY AND KIM

Dr. Amy Keller and Judge Kim Booher Hammer joined our board in 2017. During their years of service, both have been very engaged and involved in all aspects of our work. Most notably, we appreciate Amy for the years of leadership and guidance as chair of the grantmaking committee. Kim, we appreciate your commitment and dedication as a member of the scholarship committee and the years you attended high school awards ceremonies to present scholarships to students. Thank you, Amy and Kim, for your commitment and dedication to enhance the quality of life and build community spirit in Osceola County!



CHIEF OSCEOLA LEGACY SOCIETY

Did you know that the Community Foundation has a legacy society? Giving a planned gift and joining the Chief Osceola Legacy Society is a meaningful way to impact Osceola County for generations to come. Your planned gift will support local nonprofits, scholarships, and community initiatives that create lasting impact. Contact Katie Boven at 231.924.5350 to learn more!



financials



TOTAL GIFTS	\$177,861
TOTAL SCHOLARSHIPS	\$151,935
TOTAL GRANTS	\$166,032
Community grants	\$152,531
Donor advised/agency endowment/designated grants	\$13,501
TOTAL ASSETS	\$14,974,996

All data as of September 30, 2025



OSCEOLA COUNTY
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

An affiliate of Fremont Area Community Foundation

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SPIRIT

The annual newsletter of Osceola County Community Foundation

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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 Osceola County Community Foundation General Fund.

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

