

IMPACT



INSIDE:

Safe Swim Academy provides personalized swimming and water safety instruction for local people with autism.
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FREMONT AREA
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

FALL 2024

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Summer sped by and now fall is moving forward just as quickly. This is always a full season at the Community Foundation as we begin to wrap up one year and prepare for the next.

We enjoyed two great events as September turned into October: our Fall Donors Luncheon on September 24 and College and Career Night Out on October 3. Staff and committees have also been busy reviewing community and Bridging Generations Fund grant applications and preparing their recommendations and reports.

Our Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) has gotten off to a great start in their new school year. We recently welcomed new YAC members and held an orientation retreat. In addition to their annual grant review, YAC is working on developing a needs assessment to better inform their efforts.

Behind the scenes, our finance team has been working hard on annual filings and 2025 budgets. We are regularly meeting with donors, professional advisors, and nonprofit organizations. Staff have also been connecting with colleagues and developing their skills at events like the Council of Michigan Foundations annual conference, peer learning groups, and more.

Thank you for your continued support of the Community Foundation. It's an honor to serve Newaygo County with you!



UPDATES AND INSPIRATION

We had two great donors luncheons in 2024. In June, we welcomed more than 100 people to a luncheon featuring special guest speaker Alex Gorsky, former chairman and CEO of Johnson & Johnson. Alex is a Fremont and West Point graduate and talked about his experiences growing up here, serving in the Army, and leading one of the biggest companies in the world.

Then at the end of September, we held our Fall Donors Luncheon at the Heritage Museum of Newaygo County. We shared updates on our strategic goals and some of our recent community partnerships in areas like transportation and housing.

J. ANDREW AND MATTIE GERBER

J. Andrew Gerber was born in 1856 in Indiana. His family moved to Michigan, settling in Douglas and operating a tannery. When they opened a new tannery in Fremont, Andrew moved north with the business. He eventually changed careers and went into banking, later serving as president of Old State Bank. Andrew championed innovations in fruit growing, loved gardening and photography, and reportedly owned the first automobile in Fremont.

Mattie Gerber was born in Paw Paw and moved to Whitehall as a teenager. She and Andrew were married in 1888 and together were active community members and philanthropists. They were instrumental in the establishment of what is now Corewell Health Gerber Hospital.

When Andrew passed away in 1933, he left behind a charitable fund to support his community. In 1944 when Mattie passed away, she left her home on West Maple Street to the hospital and added to the fund her husband had created. The Gerbers' fund joined with others to form the Community Foundation in the 1950s. Just this year it has supported the Dogwood Center, after-school programs, and more.



Andrew created an annual exhibit of local fruit outside Old State Bank.

recent grants

Our Board of Trustees approved \$2.7 million in our spring community grant round. Here are a few highlights!

Hesperia Community Library

\$3,000

PURPOSE:

To support the library's summer reading program. This award includes a \$500 grant from a donor advised fund.

WHY IT MATTERS:

Summer reading programs can help prevent summer learning loss, promote a love of reading, and provide fun, free activities for young people and families. Even reluctant readers can be drawn in by the library's schedule of activities and presentations.



The Right Place Foundation

\$31,000



PURPOSE:

To fund the creation and installation of signage highlighting the unique history of the Woodland Park area in northern Newaygo County. This award includes \$7,500 from donor advised funds.

WHY IT MATTERS:

Woodland Park and nearby Idlewild are historic communities where African Americans could come for rest and relaxation in the era of Jim Crow segregation. This grant supports a partnership that is seeking to highlight the beauty, history, and significance of Woodland Park.

Newaygo County Council for the Arts, Inc.

\$20,000



PURPOSE:

To bring the Grand Rapids Symphony to Newaygo County for several days of music education and entertainment. This award includes a \$1,000 grant from a donor advised fund.

WHY IT MATTERS:

Exposure to music can boost academic performance, critical thinking skills, and mood. It can also help create connections and community. This partnership will provide educational performances and special concerts for local students and an evening of music at a public concert.

Hope 101 Ministry

\$14,713

PURPOSE:

To support Hope 101's new collaborative program, The Cookery, which will provide job training as well as baked goods and meals for families who need them.

WHY IT MATTERS:

The Cookery will produce baked goods and free grab-and-go meals for local families facing food insecurity. Meanwhile, the program will also provide income, flexible schedules, and culinary skills training for employees.



Newaygo County Regional Educational Service Agency

\$127,626



PURPOSE:

To support the expansion of skilled trades courses at the Newaygo County Career-Tech Center (NCCTC). This award includes a \$500 grant from a donor advised fund.

WHY IT MATTERS:

Many of the fastest growing careers in Michigan are skilled trades careers in fields like construction, machining, automotive service, welding, and HVAC. NCCTC is updating its construction lab and adding a new HVAC program to its course offerings.

safer in the water

Newaygo County Autism Community

Drowning is a leading cause of accidental death for children, and children with autism are at an even greater risk—160 times greater, according to a 2017 Columbia University study. This sobering reality was top of mind when the Newaygo County Autism Community developed their Safe Swim Academy.

“When we started the Newaygo County Autism Community group, we thought about what was important,” said Kathe Scott, a founder of the group. “With so many bodies of water in Newaygo County, we believed it would be irresponsible not to offer a program like this.”

The program—funded by a grant from our Amazing X Charitable

Trust—provided swimming and water safety instruction for local people living with autism. Beginning with an individual assessment, instructor Dana Simon developed a course for each student based on factors like their experience, abilities, and overall comfort in the water.

With Dana, “we struck gold,” said Kathe. Dana has taught swimming since she was a teenager and holds multiple swimming and water safety certifications. She is also a certified special education teacher. “Where else can you find a special education teacher with these qualifications?” added Kathe.

“Having that experience has been very helpful,” said Dana. “You have to meet them where they are and take small steps.”

Lessons also included sharing tips and skills with parents and guardians. Dana is passionate about teaching layers of protection, from proper supervision and installing self-latching gates around pools to choosing brightly colored swimsuits that are easy to spot in the water.

While all students began and ended classes this summer at their own unique levels, their growth was something to celebrate for Dana and Kathe.

“It has been exciting to see the growth from day one to now,” said Dana. “It’s rewarding to see that progress and how the small steps add up.”

Kathe Scott and Dana Simon





keeping his memory alive

The Beattie Family

Cameron Beattie was social, athletic, and loved to sing in the car. He relished time spent with his older brother and cousins. “He wasn’t a kid who had a small circle,” Cameron’s mom, Kirsten Beattie, shared with a smile.

When Cameron passed away in 2015, so many people attended the Fremont sophomore’s memorial that the service had to be held in the high school gym. In the years since, his legacy has continued through the efforts and generosity of family and friends. Each year, the Beatties host a cornhole tournament with proceeds going to projects or organizations that Cameron was involved in or would have loved.

The family also created a scholarship at the Community Foundation in Cameron’s memory. “It’s for students who may have a little lower GPA, like Cameron, and it includes his sports background,” said Kirsten. “We want those students to know they can be successful.”

It is a fitting tribute to a teenager who once gave away his new tennis shoes because he felt someone else needed them more.

“He told me his old shoes still fit,” remembered Kirsten. “My son was a giver. He knew a single mom down the street worked third shift, so he would play outside with her kids so she could sleep.”

Though Cameron’s life was tragically cut short, reminders of this generous, fun-loving young man are everywhere. The nephew he never got to meet “is so like him,” said Kirsten. His name is prominently displayed at Fremont’s baseball field and, each year, another student continues their education with help from Cameron’s scholarship.

“It was the best way we could think of to keep his memory alive,” said Kirsten. “People tell me, ‘I didn’t know him, but I see his name everywhere.’ It’s very rewarding.”



OUR NEXT 75

Harry and Laura Johnson

Harry and Laura Johnson have made their home in northern Newaygo County since the early 1970s. In addition to their involvement in service organizations like the Lions Club, the Johnsons are passionate about Big Jackson Public Schools. Their three sons attended there, and now their grandson does. They are regular volunteers and Laura has served on the school board for more than 20 years.

“The school community is a little family, not just a school,” said Laura. “There’s a support network here.”

The small size of the school means everyone knows each other and people pitch in to help. “We support each other in times of need,” said Laura. “That’s the kind of community we have.”

Harry and Laura have also supported the school by giving to the Big Jackson Public Schools Fund at the Community Foundation. It’s a way to help now and in the future, and it speaks to their love of the school and what it means to the area.

Why is giving important to you?

Laura: We don’t have an abundance, but our bills are paid and I think it’s important to share what you have.

Why give through the Community Foundation?

Laura: Big Jackson has an endowment fund, and we wanted to give to it to support the school. It’s not a lot, but it’s just our little way to support it.

To join Our Next 75, we ask three simple things:

1. Give today

Establish a named fund or make an annual gift of \$250 or more to an endowed fund at the Community Foundation.

2. Give tomorrow

Include the Community Foundation in your estate plan.

3. Share your story

Share with us why you chose to give back to the community.

To find out more about Our Next 75, contact a member of our philanthropic services team at 231.924.5350.



pro - advice

DAVID MALSON (Pictured) AND TREVOR MASON
Attorneys

DIGITAL ASSETS AND ESTATE PLANNING IN A DIGITAL WORLD

We live in a digital age where so many aspects of our lives are accessible through the touch of a screen or the click of a mouse. Yet, it is not commonplace for a person's digital assets to be considered when creating an estate plan. Luckily, there are steps that can be taken to ensure your digital assets are accounted for during life and after death.

What is a digital asset? In a broad sense, anything you keep a digital record of is considered a digital asset. A digital asset can be email and social media accounts, photos and videos, online subscriptions and bank accounts, cryptocurrency wallets, and more.

More things than you probably realize are digital assets, many of which have value or possess vital records. Additionally, some of these digital assets provide access to underlying funds held in financial institutions. Without such information, a family member/fiduciary would not be able to access the underlying funds in a bank account or the cryptocurrency held in a wallet.

The most important first step that anyone can take is to make a list or inventory of your digital assets. This will create a catalog of assets that will inform your estate plan fiduciaries. For

example, you can create a password manager that stores your account and password information in one place and provides an encrypted key for added protection. It will be very important to store this digital list/inventory in a safe and secure location such as with your attorney.

The next step is appointing a fiduciary of your digital assets. Providing express authority in your estate plan documents will provide your selected fiduciary the access and power to handle these assets. Providing express authority in your estate plan documents will also qualify as "lawful consent" to service providers under the Stored Communications Act.

As our world becomes ever more digitized, do not miss out on the opportunity to address your digital assets in your estate plan. Taking these extra steps could mean a world of difference for your family and friends as they navigate handling your affairs and carrying out your wishes.

Trevor Mason and David Malson are attorneys with Barnes & Thornburg, LLP, of Grand Rapids. David also serves on the Community Foundation's Professional Advisors Board.

noteworthy

YAC IN LANSING

Three of our Youth Advisory Committee members spent a day of their summer break in Lansing for the Keep MI Kids Tobacco Free Alliance Day at the Capitol. They had the opportunity to meet with legislators and share their perspectives on the impact of tobacco and vaping on young adults. They also toured the Capitol building and got to sit in the gallery as the House of Representatives voted on a bill.



GRANTEE WORKSHOP

In August, we brought together nonprofit organizations from across our service area for a day of learning. Representatives from the Johnson Center at Grand Valley State University presented on grantwriting basics in the morning. After the presentation, attendees could meet one-on-one with members of our staff to ask questions.



NEW TRUSTEES JOIN BOARD

We were excited to welcome two new trustees to our board in June. Julie Burrell is a Hesperia graduate and the senior economic development director for Newaygo County with The Right Place. Dorothy Paris is a retired CPA and partner at H&S Companies with experience in nonprofit accounting. Both bring exceptional leadership skills and valuable expertise and experience to our board.



recently

SHELLY KASPRZYCKI
President and CEO



Fremont Area Community Foundation, like other nonprofit organizations, welcomes year-end giving. It is estimated that 30 percent of charitable giving is done between November 1 and December 31. Gifts to the Community Foundation benefit so many; your donation becomes part of a larger invested pool of funds that grows significantly over time.

Each year, the Community Foundation gives more than \$9 million in grants and scholarships. Agencies depend on our support to carry out their work in poverty reduction, to help libraries purchase books, to fund new homes through our housing partnership, to support the sustainability of local arts and culture institutions, and to ensure our young people are able to attend training or higher education.

Most importantly, the Community Foundation belongs to the community. Your gift means that we can adapt to the needs of the community as they change.

What makes giving to the Community Foundation so popular is the flexibility and the ability to give to the causes you care most about. Our Community Foundation remains one of the largest per capita in the country, and that is thanks to you. My husband and I are proud to be monthly donors to the Community Foundation, and I hope you'll consider the Community Foundation one of your best options for giving too. Contact us today to find out how to give, whether through cash, securities, IRA, life insurance, donor advised funds, or even real estate.



FREMONT AREA
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FLEXIBLE COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Community is important to Don and Marsha Van Singel. They both grew up in the Grant area and still call it home. For the Van Singels, giving back is a natural response to the gift of living in a community you love. The donor advised fund they created at the Community Foundation is one way they can give.

Donor advised funds are convenient, flexible, and allow you to take an active role in philanthropy. With a donor advised fund, you can make annual grant recommendations to support the causes, organizations, and programs that are important to you.

Interested in learning more about donor advised funds? Contact our philanthropic services team at 231.924.5350.