

IMPACT

INSIDE:

Camp Sunshine gives people with intellectual and developmental disabilities a traditional summer camp experience full of joy, friendship, and fun.
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FREMONT AREA
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

75
YEARS

SPRING 2026

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The first few months of a new year are always busy ones at your Community Foundation. The scholarship and grant applications due at the beginning of March are now being carefully reviewed by our staff and committees. We're working on our latest annual report, planning meetings and events, and wrapping up our annual audit.

In addition to these projects we work on at the start of every year, we are also planning some new opportunities to celebrate our 75th anniversary this year! We're enjoying featuring photos, stories, and trivia from our archives on social media. We also unveiled the first of our Gifts to the Community: free tickets to the Grand Rapids Symphony concert at the Dogwood Center on April 2. It was a beautiful evening of music. We're excited to share more Gifts to the Community over the next few months.

That we are celebrating 75 years is a testament to the support, tenacity, and generosity of this community. Everything we have accomplished is thanks to you and generations of people just like you who love Newaygo County and want to see it thrive. Thank you for your partnership and trust as we work together to serve our community!



LISTENING ACROSS DIFFERENCES

In January, our staff participated in a training from the Padnos/Sarosik Center for Civil Discourse at GVSU. We started by learning what civil discourse actually is: constructive dialogue that seeks to advance the public interest. We also talked about what it isn't. For example, it isn't about getting someone to agree with you or giving up your own perspective to appease someone else. With these tools, we then learned how to create the conditions for productive dialogue, the differences between debate and dialogue, and tips for having difficult conversations. It was a valuable session as we continually seek to better understand and connect with our partners and neighbors.

MARION DEKUIPER



Marion DeKuiper was born in Fremont in a house her father built. She went on to Hope College, where she graduated magna cum laude in 1931. Marion worked for Fremont Mutual Insurance for more than 40 years and enjoyed traveling all over the world. She was known for being very community-minded and befriending her neighbors.

Marion was also known for being frugal. She preferred to repair items rather than replace them, from an old rose lattice to her kitchen sink. It was common for her to drive a car for a decade. When she was in her 80s, a neighbor encouraged her to have a garage door opener installed, but Marion resisted.

However, while she was often reluctant to spend much money on herself, Marion had a generous heart for organizations she cared about, like Fremont Area District Library. For several years, Marion made donations to the library on her birthday, and it remained a special place to her. After she could no longer leave home, librarians delivered books to her. When Marion passed away in 2004 at age 94, she left an estate gift to establish the Marion A. DeKuiper Library Fund.

recent grants

Our Board of Trustees approved nearly \$3.1 million in our fall community grant round. Here are a few highlights!

County of Newaygo

\$75,000

PURPOSE

To support recycling services in Newaygo County. This award also includes \$1,000 from a donor advised fund.

WHY IT MATTERS

Municipal recycling programs help protect the environment and natural resources by diverting waste from landfills, reducing pollution, and conserving energy. Recycling programs can even benefit public health and foster civic pride. In Newaygo County, there are currently recycling drop-off sites in Croton, Garfield Township, Grant, Newaygo, and White Cloud.



Trout Unlimited

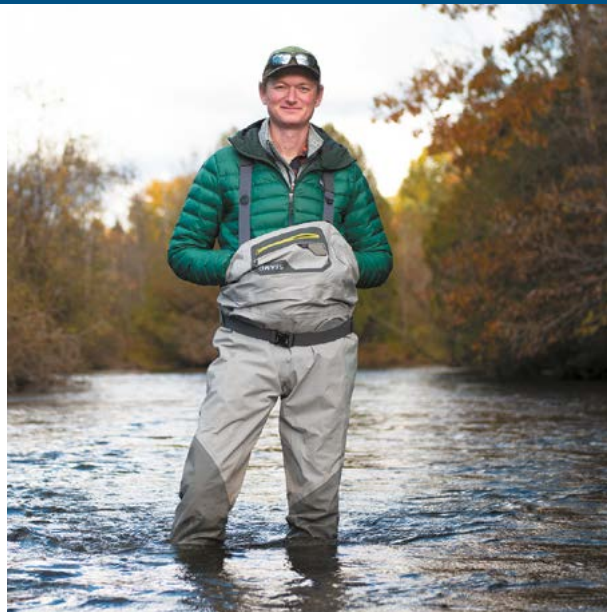
\$73,500

PURPOSE

Trout Unlimited will implement data-driven strategies to protect and restore streams and rivers in Newaygo County. This award also includes \$1,000 from a donor advised fund.

WHY IT MATTERS

Newaygo County has 234 lakes and nearly 356 miles of rivers. Protecting and restoring our waterways is critical for local quality of life, recreation, and our economy. Trout Unlimited works with an extensive network of partners to plan culvert replacements, address erosion, enhance habitats, and much more.



Newaygo Area District Library

\$7,300

PURPOSE

To support the library's summer reading program in 2026. This award also includes \$1,000 from a donor advised fund.

WHY IT MATTERS

Summer reading programs can help build vocabulary, prevent learning loss during a long break from school, and even raise test scores. They can also help reinforce the value of reading for fun. In addition to exposure to books and reading, these programs include a variety of fun, free activities for children, teens, and families.



Newaygo County Regional Educational Service Agency

\$40,000

PURPOSE

To support the 2026 Summer Internship Program, which provides career training and job experience for local high school and college students.

WHY IT MATTERS

Paid internships are critical for students. They provide hands-on job experience, financial support, and professional networking opportunities. Internships also help build resumes and durable skills—like critical thinking, communication, and collaboration—that will serve students well no matter what career path they choose.



TrueNorth Community Services

\$25,000

PURPOSE

To fund a variety of services that help keep local children safe and successful. This award also includes \$500 from a donor advised fund.

WHY IT MATTERS

According to 2024 Kids Count in Michigan data, 18% of children in Newaygo County live below the federal poverty level and nearly 67% are considered economically disadvantaged. For many families, buying school supplies, winter coats, and Christmas presents can be difficult or impossible. TrueNorth provides programming to meet these needs and more.





joy without judgment

Camp Sunshine

Since 1983, Camp Sunshine has given people with intellectual and developmental disabilities a traditional summer camp experience. But the true magic of Camp Sunshine goes beyond archery, crafts, and capture the flag.

“We try to meet campers’ recreational, relational, physical, and spiritual needs,” said Executive Director Kathy Rohlman. “Our population is often socially isolated. We want to do all we can to ensure opportunities for them.”

At two locations each summer, campers are matched with a volunteer counselor who is there not only to help address a camper’s needs but to be a friend. The

experience is deeply impactful for both groups.

“For our counselors, some of them will tell you this is the one place they can come and truly be themselves,” said Kathy. “For our campers, they can come here and experience joy and delight without judgment.”

A typical day at camp is “just a whole lot of fun,” noted Kathy. There are songs, water activities, dance parties, and more. Sessions hosted locally at Camp Henry are funded in part by a grant from our Amazing X Charitable Fund.

Largely staffed by volunteers, Camp Sunshine also has relationships with schools like Davenport University.

The camp serves as a Level I field placement for their master’s level occupational therapy students.

Kathy herself began as a volunteer. When the organization expanded to Camp Henry in 2014, she was invited to join the leadership team. “I feel like I’m the luckiest person in the world,” she said. “This has shaped me in a way I never thought possible.”

For 2026, Kathy is excited about the camp theme, “we belong.” She would also love to see more local people get involved. “We would love to have people from Newaygo County volunteer,” she said. “There are lots of ways to help. It can be hard to find the goodness in the world sometimes, but you can find it here.”

people at the heart

John and Colleen Buckley

For John and Colleen Buckley, the draw of Newaygo County always comes back to one thing: the people.

“It’s all about the people,” said John, who is president and CEO of Gerber Federal Credit Union. “There’s an energy here from people wanting to make things a little better than they were yesterday. There are things going on here. Local people get it.”

John grew up in the Washington, D.C. area and Colleen is from Holton where both of her parents were teachers. “I never imagined I would be back,” she shared with a smile. However, she and John were living in Cadillac when the career opportunity at the Credit Union

came along. They have been here ever since.

“For me, it’s home,” said Colleen. “It’s a great place to be from.”

The Buckleys love their peaceful community, its caring people, and the beauty of nature all around them. They also like that it has been easy to pursue their interests and get involved here.

“It’s easy to plug in and get involved in what we like to do,” said John, who is a longtime Rotarian. Both he and Colleen also serve on local boards.

Being involved and giving back comes naturally. “It’s how we were raised,” said John. “Our parents

showed us that this is how you act in community.”

“It’s not a question of if we give, but how we give,” added Colleen. “And when we looked for a way to give locally, there was no question we would partner with the Community Foundation. They make it easy.”

The Buckleys have included the Community Foundation in their estate plan as one more way to do their part in supporting the community they love.

“Everybody has the opportunity to make a difference,” said John. “And it doesn’t have to be a big thing. Every little bit moves us one step farther.”





OUR NEXT 75

Chris and Elizabeth Wren

Chris and Elizabeth Wren moved to Newaygo County from the east side of the state nearly a decade ago. While their move was prompted by Chris's job as county administrator, they have embraced the sense of community, slower pace, and outdoor opportunities they found here. "We're very fortunate to be in Newaygo County," said Chris. "It was a big change for us, but the more we're here, the more we appreciate what it has to offer."

As part of their commitment to this community, Chris—who serves on our board—and Elizabeth joined Our Next 75. "We know that through the Community Foundation a little can go a long way," said Elizabeth.

Why is giving important to you?

Chris: "It's all about being part of a community. We're invested in this community. We chose to raise our son here. We want to see this community grow and thrive."

Elizabeth: "We want to set an example for our son so he can learn the importance of giving too."

Why give through the Community Foundation?

Chris: "The Community Foundation represents one of the brightest stars in our community and in our region. It brings people and initiatives together to work for the good of the whole community."

WE REACHED OUR GOAL!

In 2018, we created Our Next 75 as we looked forward to our 75th anniversary. Our goal was simple but ambitious: bring together 75 emerging local philanthropists who want to make an impact today and in the future. To join Our Next 75, we asked partners to give today by establishing a fund or making an annual gift, give tomorrow by including us in their estate plan, and to share their story.

We're pleased to announce that, thanks to our generous partners, we reached our goal! We look forward to celebrating all those who joined Our Next 75 throughout our anniversary year.



pro - advice

CASIE EITNREAR
Financial advisor

ARE YOU MISSING YOUR MONEY?

Would you leave a purse full of cash on the street and walk away? Of course not. Yet according to Capitalize, Americans have effectively done just that. An estimated \$2.1 trillion is sitting in 31.9 million forgotten 401(k) accounts.

So why do so many people leave their 401(k)s behind? One of the biggest reasons is confusion. Deciding what to do can feel overwhelming. Over time, accounts are simply forgotten. If that sounds familiar, it's time to go looking.

Step 1: List every employer you've ever had
Even short-term or early-career jobs matter. If you're unsure where all your accounts are, move on to Step 2.

Step 2: Check old records
Look through paper files and old emails—especially welcome packets or benefits notifications. Try searching your email for keywords like *401(k)*, *retirement*, or *benefits*.

Step 3: Contact former employers
Ask which 401(k) provider was used when you worked there and whether your account is still in the plan or has been moved elsewhere.

Step 4: Contact major 401(k) providers directly
Reach out to large custodians—many can locate accounts using your Social Security number.

Step 5: Check unclaimed property databases

If an account was cashed out or transferred incorrectly, the funds may have ended up with a state agency. Search *MissingMoney.com* and check states where you've lived or worked.

Found missing money? Congratulations! Once you've tracked it down, you generally have four options:

1. Leave it where it is—at least now you know what you have and where it's located
2. Roll it into your current employer's 401(k)
3. Roll it into an IRA
4. Cash it out—usually not recommended due to taxes and penalties

If you're unsure which option is best, talk with your financial advisor. Your goals and objectives will help determine the right move—but the most important step is making sure all your hard-earned money is accounted for.

Casie Eitnrear is a financial advisor at Raymond James Financial Services, Inc. and Karsten Financial Group. Casie is also a member of the Community Foundation's Professional Advisors network.

noteworthy

STAFF PROMOTIONS

Three staff members began 2026 with brand new titles. Ronda Brandt was promoted to accounting manager, Renee Hanshue is now senior director of finance, and Wes Miller is now senior director of development. Congratulations to Ronda, Renee, and Wes on their well-deserved promotions!



YAC FIELD TRIPS

Instead of their usual December meeting, our Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) members spent time learning more about three local organizations on special field trips. Several students went to Ensley Center to enjoy snacks and card games with the One Township at a Time group there. Two groups enjoyed games and conversation with guests at Wellspring Adult Day Services, and others learned how to crochet at TrueNorth's Community Connections program.



MARIA GONZALEZ JOINS NATIONAL BOARD

Maria Gonzalez, our senior director, was recently elected to the Board of Directors of Grantmakers in Aging (GIA). GIA is a national organization and community of funders whose mission is to mobilize money and ideas to strengthen policies, programs, and resources for people as they age. Among her responsibilities at the Community Foundation, Maria manages the Bridging Generations Fund, which supports programs for local older adults as well as intergenerational programming.



recently

SHELLY KASPRZYCKI
President and CEO



As the first blooms of spring brighten our days, we're reminded of the power of growth—both in nature and in our community. This season, we celebrate the seeds of generosity you've planted through your support, which are now blossoming into real change for our neighbors. From new initiatives taking root to inspiring stories of resilience, we're excited to share how your kindness is making a lasting impact.

Let's step into this season together full of hope, fresh possibilities, and the joy of building a stronger, more connected community.

We are starting spring by celebrating our 75th anniversary. We'll be making a series of gifts to the community. Our first gift was the Grand Rapids Symphony concert at the Dogwood Center for Performing Arts on April 2. The response was overwhelming—the free tickets were gone within a week. The Community Foundation began with a commitment to arts and culture, and that tradition continues. Further announcements on our next gifts will be coming soon. Follow us on social media for those announcements and to see the rich

history of our donors and stories of impact over the last 75 years. Thank you for celebrating with us!

In this newsletter, you'll learn more about how our work with donors makes so many things possible. John and Colleen Buckley are shining examples of philanthropy at work in your hometowns. We continue to build on our efforts to help people learn more about civility. How we speak to one another and building relationships is a top priority for the Community Foundation, and we are so pleased with the response to our efforts. We are also excited to share a story about grantee Camp Sunshine. Enjoying nature and celebrating those with intellectual and developmental disabilities are two great transformative experiences of Camp Sunshine. See page six for more.

Thank you for being a friend to the Community Foundation. Call me if we can assist you in finding your passion for philanthropy. We hope you enjoy the spring season!



FREMONT AREA
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75
YEARS

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ACTIVE PHILANTHROPY

Jeanne Leaver and her late husband Bill Leaver created a donor advised fund at the Community Foundation because they wanted a sustainable way to support the area they were born in and returned to as adults. “Bill and I both had times when we needed help and people were there for us,” said Jeanne. “Others in the community set the example and you don’t forget that.”

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?
Contact our philanthropic
services team at 231.924.5350.