

IMPACT

INSIDE:

FISH and the Great Start Baby Pantry connect local families to support, resources, and trusted advisors.



FREMONT AREA
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

SPRING 2025

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There are many big, visible aspects of our work at the Community Foundation—grants awarded, scholarship presentations, news articles—but there are also many quiet, behind-the-scenes pieces that don't make it into newsletter photographs. Reading grant applications, setting up for lunchtime committee meetings, processing checks, and maintaining our database are just a few examples of work that may go unnoticed publicly but is vital to our organization. The end of winter and beginning of spring is prime season for this type of work.

As you read this, our community investment team is reading grant applications and preparing for their committee meetings. Our phones are busy with calls about scholarships, our annual audit is wrapping up, and materials are being prepared for the next Board of Trustees meeting. We're in the midst of planning for our Spring Donors Luncheon and developing our annual report too. We're grateful for our smart, thorough, and talented staff who keep all of these projects moving forward, now and throughout the year.

We're grateful for you too, and for your continued partnership. Our mission to improve quality of life for everyone in Newaygo County is only possible with your help!



BRIDGES OUT OF POVERTY

In February, we hosted a Bridges Out of Poverty training at the Dogwood Center. Representatives from our staff, board, and other local organizations participated in the interactive half-day session. Seniors and student leaders from our Youth Advisory Committee attended as well.

Bridges Out of Poverty is designed to help people understand the dynamics that cause and maintain poverty. It also provides tools and strategies that communities can use to prevent, reduce, and alleviate poverty. We were excited to offer this learning opportunity locally and are grateful to everyone who took the time to attend.

VIVIAN ANDERSON



Vivian Brydges Anderson was born in Ashland Township in 1915. Along with her husband, Robert Anderson, Vivian was a fruit farmer. The Andersons grew cherries, plums, and pears before focusing on apples. They also raised two daughters, Dawn and Lynne.

Despite her already busy life, Vivian took time to look out for her neighbors and help the community. Her philanthropy included supporting the hospital, Grant's library, and the Newaygo Medical Care Facility. She also became a committed partner of the Community Foundation. Vivian created two scholarships—including

one in memory of her sister Leatrice Brydges—as well as two other funds.

Community involvement and generosity were values Vivian learned from her parents and then passed on to her own children. Lynne Robinson was a teacher and has been an active volunteer, supporter, and board member for several local organizations. So was her sister, the late Dawn Anderson. Through multiple generations, the Anderson family has made our community a better place to live and grow.

recent grants

Our Board of Trustees approved \$3.2 million in our fall community grant round. Here are a few highlights!

Muskegon River Watershed Assembly

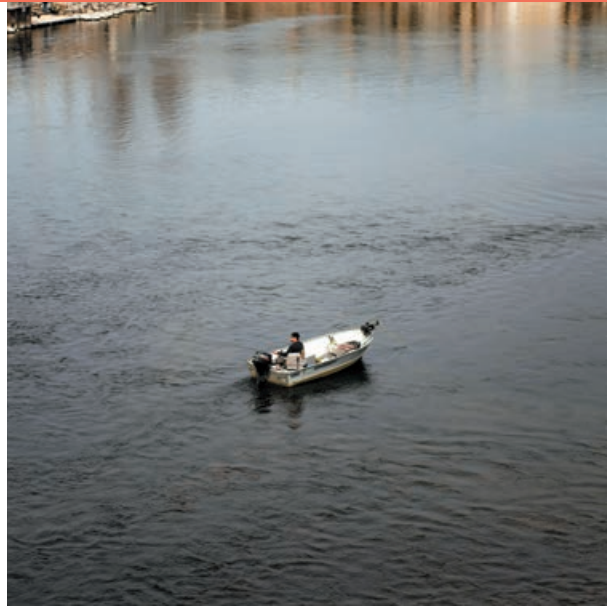
\$25,000

PURPOSE:

To support MRWA's restoration efforts along the Muskegon River watershed. This award includes \$500 from a donor advised fund.

WHY IT MATTERS:

The Muskegon River watershed covers nine counties and feeds over 1,200 lakes and ponds. It is also an economic driver in the region, popular for kayaking, fishing, and other recreation. Through research, cleanups, assessments, and other projects, MRWA works to preserve and restore the river for future generations.



Arts Center for Newaygo County

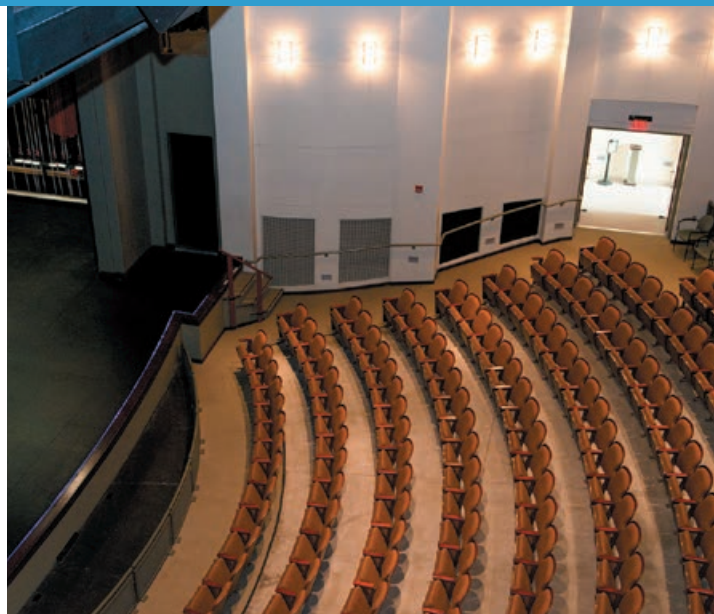
\$15,000

PURPOSE:

To bring the Grand Rapids Ballet to Newaygo County.

WHY IT MATTERS:

This longstanding partnership between the Dogwood Center, Grand Rapids Ballet, and local schools makes the historic art of ballet more accessible. Special performances just for local sixth graders expose more young people to the drama, beauty, athleticism, and production of a professional ballet performance.



Community Closet Charities

\$3,000

PURPOSE:

To support improvements to Community Closet's check out process.

WHY IT MATTERS:

Community Closet is a shared closet where community members donate their time, clothing, household items, and other resources to help each other. The store operates without price tags, making all of its items available for free to anyone who needs them.



Hand2Hand

Up to \$15,000



PURPOSE:

To provide food for students facing hunger during weekends and school breaks. This award includes a \$10,000 outright grant, a \$3,500 matching grant, and \$1,500 from donor advised funds.

WHY IT MATTERS:

It's estimated that more than 2,000 children in our county face food insecurity. While school is a reliable source of weekday meals, weekends can mean 68 hours without enough food at home for too many children. Hand2Hand partners with local churches and schools to give students in need a backpack filled with food to fill that gap.

Love INC of Newaygo County

\$75,000

PURPOSE:

To support the new Rooms of Refuge program. This award includes \$500 from a donor advised fund.

WHY IT MATTERS:

There is no shelter in Newaygo County for people without housing. Rooms of Refuge helps fill this gap by partnering with local churches who provide an evening meal and safe place to sleep. In the morning, there is transportation to a Day Center where guests can shower, safely store belongings, use a computer, and do laundry.





building trust and connections

FISH and Great Start Baby Pantry

“It started with a wish,” said Christina Yuhasz, standing in the office space of the Family Information Service Hub (FISH) and Great Start Baby Pantry. “Who would have thought that it would become this?”

FISH grew out of a concern for families whose children weren’t arriving at school kindergarten ready. The truth is it can be hard to prepare kids for kindergarten when you have to focus your energy on how you’ll find housing or tomorrow’s meals.

“Families didn’t know what services existed or how to find help meeting basic needs,” said Christina, a Great Start parent liaison through NC RESA. “There’s such a stigma around needing assistance, and there

shouldn’t be. So many families are just one paycheck away from disaster.”

Now FISH sets up in different locations throughout the county to meet with families and help them find resources and apply for assistance. Christina and her colleagues Victoria and Sarah know who to call and how to fill out applications. “We’ve gotten to know local organizations and what they offer,” said Christina. “We can make those connections.”

FISH’s Fremont location, housed in the Fremont Rec Center, is also home to the Baby Pantry. Parents can visit by appointment to pick up diapers, formula, clothes, and other items. They also offer Spanish-speaking service, safe sleep education,

medication lock boxes, and more.

The Baby Pantry and FISH serve more than 1,000 Newaygo County families annually. Their work is supported by an array of partners providing grants—like one last fall from the Community Foundation—along with in-kind support and donations. Donation bins at the Baby Pantry are regularly filled with new and gently used items. Some of the items come from past clients, eager to give back.

“Families are so excited to donate back clothes and help someone else,” said Christina. “It’s so rewarding to see. Watching the whole community come around this makes you really grateful.”

because this is home

Buzz and Shelly Kasprzycki

Shelly Kasprzycki was introduced to community foundations early in life. She received a scholarship from a community foundation and wrote her first grant at age 22. She spent time in the nonprofit sector and became president and CEO of Jackson Community Foundation in 2002. In 2021, Shelly was selected as the next president and CEO of Fremont Area Community Foundation.

However, coming here from the Jackson area was more than just the next step in a successful career for Shelly and her husband Buzz. “I feel like we’re home,” said Shelly. “It’s such a wonderful community. This has been the best experience of my life professionally, and it has been

very good for us personally. We’re trying to get all our kids to move here.”

Shelly began her career in public health and went on to lead several nonprofit organizations. She and Buzz met when they were both working for the Red Cross. Buzz also worked in manufacturing for many years and retired from an aerospace company. When the opportunity here at the Community Foundation appeared, the Kasprzyckis were drawn to the rural community with modern amenities like beautiful libraries and a good hospital system.

“I love it here,” said Buzz. “I can’t say enough about this area. Everyone

waves and says hi. Living here has taught me to be kinder and more generous.”

In appreciation for the warm welcome they received, Buzz and Shelly created an unrestricted fund at the Community Foundation.

“I like the idea of leaving something for those who come after us,” said Buzz.

“We give through the Community Foundation because of its knowledge, because of the wonderful staff who knows the community, and because of the excellent reputation,” added Shelly. “We give here because we want to be part of this community for generations to come.”





OUR NEXT 75

Carole and Alex Mintzer

Carole Mintzer’s parents, Dorsey and Sally Leckrone, were both teachers in Fremont. They also had eight children to support, “so there were a lot of side hustles,” remembered Carole’s husband, Alex. Dorsey raised cows, kept bees, and sold encyclopedias. “We didn’t have much growing up,” said Carole. “But we had just enough.”

The Leckrone legacy of education and hard work passed to their children. Among the eight siblings are college graduates, educators, business owners, consultants, and more.

“My parents believed in public education and they lived their commitment,” said Carole. To honor that commitment, the family created a scholarship named for Dorsey and Sally.

Carole and Alex have also included the Community Foundation in their estate plan, making them two of the newest members of Our Next 75.

Why is giving important to you?

Carole: “We have the resources now, and we’re at a point in life where we’re thinking about what we’re going to do with them. It feels good to support things and give to a good cause.”

Why give through the Community Foundation?

Carole: “We have a connection to our local foundation in California, and that’s one of the reasons we felt comfortable giving here. We know the Community Foundation has been around forever.”

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

CASIE EITNIEWAR
Financial advisor

DON'T WAIT TO BE SAVVY TO SAVE

As a financial advisor, I find many people can be afraid of the topic of their finances and so they just ignore it. However, very rarely, if at all, is putting your head in the sand the best way to proceed. Sometimes there is a perception that you need to be savvy about your finances before you start to invest. I hear how people are so afraid of sounding dumb, they won't ask questions and don't want to make a mistake, so they do nothing.

One of the biggest mistakes to make is to not start saving soon enough. You don't need to know everything to start saving. What you do need to know is time is your friend. Compounding interest is your friend.

The more time your money has to grow, the higher the potential it will be bigger in the future. For example: A 22-year-old who starts saving \$5,000 a year and earns 6% annually on their investments would have accumulated over \$1 million by the time they are 65. That's nearly double what one would earn if they

started saving at age 32. Look at what just a difference of waiting 10 years of compound interest can do!

It can be very easy to say, "I don't have enough money to invest." At some point, you will find you won't have enough time to invest and be able to participate in the potential growth had you begun years ago. You can start small. Even if it is only \$25 per week, you are putting something away and building healthy habits of savings. Then increase your contributions with raises or paying off debt. Just keep adding to it.

I have had many clients come to me later in life and say, "I wish someone would have told me to start when I was younger." Not one has said, "I wish I did not start saving early."

Casie Eitniewar is a financial advisor at Raymond James Financial Services, Inc. and Karsten Financial Group.

noteworthy

MAKE NEWAYGO COUNTY HOME SCHOLARSHIP

We have a brand new scholarship for adults: the Make Newaygo County Home Scholarship. This scholarship is for those who have recently finished their post-secondary education and plan to live and work in Newaygo County. The scholarship award—a maximum of \$15,000 paid out quarterly—can be used for student loan repayment, down payment on a home, or other expenses related to making this area home.



FOUNDATIONS ON THE HILL

Lola Harmon-Ramsey, our director of impact and engagement, and Trustee Julie Burrell spent a few days in Washington, DC recently for Foundations on the Hill. This annual event brings together leaders from across the philanthropic sector to network, engage with policymakers, and advocate for our sector and communities. Lola and Julie attended informational sessions and met with congressional staffers to share local successes and concerns. Foundations on the Hill is hosted by United Philanthropy Forum and the Council on Foundations.

NATIONAL STANDARDS REACCREDITATION

We started the year with news that we had been awarded reaccreditation by the Community Foundations National Standards program. While community foundations face regulation at the state and federal levels, the accreditation program provides an additional layer of rigorous accountability. We're proud to be recognized again for our commitment to integrity, best practices, and excellence.



recently

SHELLY KASPRZYCKI
President and CEO



This morning's sunrise filled me with gratitude and renewed my enthusiasm for our work at Fremont Area Community Foundation. Spring is busy with several grant rounds, partnerships, and scholarships underway.

We engage in positive disruption—part of our goal to expand philanthropy—by implementing innovative strategies with partners to solve community issues. One example is the Newaygo County Housing Partnership, which recently awarded its fourth round of grants. Another example is our pilot civility project in White Cloud. This new project provides civil discourse training to community members who want to grow their ability to have constructive conversations and work together with their neighbors.

We also address challenges by working with national and statewide philanthropy partners

to advocate for local nonprofits that rely on federal funding. Our Community Foundation offers grant awards and supports partners through problem solving, convening, leveraging outside funds, and providing technical assistance to help nonprofit leaders maximize their effectiveness.

In this newsletter, you'll see an outstanding grantee highlighted and a story about why my husband and I started our own fund. Creating a fund is easy and exciting—everyone can be a philanthropist with any donation size. Learn more by calling 231.924.5350 or visiting facommunityfoundation.org.

In the spirit of goodwill, trust, integrity, and the promise of spring, I quote the Russian proverb, "A kind word is like a spring day." Let's work together to spread goodwill in our communities.



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AN EASY WAY TO GIVE

Tim and Peggy Rossler are both retired educators and still just as passionate about learning and creating opportunities for kids. They used the build-a-fund program at the Community Foundation to start a fund that will promote early literacy. “Having the opportunity for a build-a-fund was important,” said Peggy. “It made it something we could still do as retirees.”

Creating a fund at the Community Foundation is a great way to provide permanent support for the causes and organizations that matter most to you. Our build-a-fund program makes it easier than ever by allowing you to establish your fund over five years.

To learn more about building a fund, contact our philanthropic services team at 231.924.5350.