Giving blood saves lives

American Red Cross

Giving blood is always very important for our communities, but it has become even more critical amidst a pandemic.

The goal of the American Red Cross is to meet patient demand. In 2020, not only has the demand gone up, but the ability to receive donations has become more complicated.

Chair’s note

It has been a different year for sure, but the Community Foundation is continuing to move forward in a positive direction. Our goal remains to enhance the quality of life in Lake County, regardless of what circumstances around us look like.

This year we have truly missed seeing your faces. However, we have worked hard to keep you up to date on what we are doing through newsletters and other communication. It is important to us to continue sharing these stories with you.

In this newsletter, you will find stories about our donors, some of our grants, and how we have responded to COVID-19 in Lake County. It is our pleasure to serve the community and enhance our quality of life here. This has certainly been a difficult year, but we are here with you and continue to move forward.

Respectfully,

Seth Wenger
Board Chair
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Blood drives are the main way the American Red Cross collects blood from the community. Partners who open their facilities to set up these blood drives and invite community members to give are vital to the success of blood drives. However, with this year’s restrictions on in-person gatherings and close contact, blood drives and donations became more scarce.

In 2019, Lake County held two blood drives. The Community Foundation saw the need for these local opportunities to continue and recognized the importance of biomedical services during a pandemic. A 2020 grant to American Red Cross assisted in upgrading equipment and meeting the increased demand.

“We are so fortunate to have the donors and blood drive coordinators who have supported us in Lake County,” said Tiffany Page, executive director of the West Michigan chapter of the American Red Cross. “We hear from people you might know and their stories about receiving lifesaving transfusions because of others’ selfless acts of blood donation. A huge thanks to everyone who has given their time and hosted a blood drive this year in Lake County.”

Giving opportunities in 2020

This year’s CARES Act created some new benefits to charitable giving.

Deductions of up to $300 in qualified charitable contributions are now allowed on 2020 federal tax returns for taxpayers who no longer itemize their charitable giving, even if they take the standard deduction. A couple who is married-filing-jointly receives an above-the-line deduction of up to $600 if they are not itemizing their charitable giving. The universal deduction is not available for gifts to a donor advised fund.

The CARES Act also lifts the deduction cap for charitable cash gifts, from 60 percent of adjusted gross income to 100 percent for all donors who are able to itemize their deductions. The deduction cap has been lifted from 10 percent of taxable income to 25 percent for corporations.

These changes provide added incentive to give generously this year if you are able. We look forward to helping you reach your philanthropic goals in 2020.
Alumni giving back

_Baldwin Community Schools Alumni Fund_

In 2017, the Baldwin Community Schools Alumni Fund was created at the Community Foundation as a way for alumni to easily give back to the community they love.

The fund provides a direct way for alumni to give back to the community where they lived. As an unrestricted fund, it will provide flexible support for organizations within Lake County, including Baldwin Community Schools.

The fund was created using the Community Foundation’s build-a-fund program, giving alumni the opportunity to be involved in the earliest stages of building this fund to benefit the Lake County community for generations to come.

If you are an alumnus of Baldwin Community Schools—or simply wish to get involved—contact the Community Foundation to learn more about the multiple ways you can give to support Lake County through this fund.

Online grantmaking

We are continuously looking for the best ways to be an asset to Lake County and our community partners. One of the most integral ways we serve the community is through distributing grants to local organizations. For many years, organizations submitted multiple physical copies of their grant requests. This required time and resources that were not always readily available.

In the best interest of our community partners and the populations they serve, we made the decision to switch to an online grantmaking system in 2020. The new online process eliminates the need to submit paper copies and allows easy access to grant applications and follow-up evaluations. Staff can also review applications in real time and assist potential grantees with any technical issues they have.

In February, we hosted grantmaking workshops to assist grantees with the transition to an online process. Thankfully, we were able to transition to the online system prior to the pandemic in March and our application deadline on April 1. We received 36 grant applications and awarded approximately $55,000 to organizations that serve Lake County.

Beginning in 2021, our annual grant deadline will be March 15. We anticipate this change will ensure consistency and the ability to plan amongst our community partners. We look forward to continuing to serve Lake County through partnership and grantmaking for years to come.
The desire to give back was deeply ingrained in Robert Smith from the time he was born. Community service is a family legacy that has helped make great strides in Lake County and the surrounding areas.

Robert was born and raised in Baldwin and later carried on the family business there. Growing up, his service to community was encouraged not only by his family, but through his activities as an Eagle Scout and, eventually, his military service near the end of WWII. Robert believed in self-sufficiency but also in asking for and giving help when it was needed.

Robert became the president of Lake-Osceola State Bank at a young age and continued to find ways to give back to his community, including serving as a Rotarian. He was also proud of the diversity in Lake County.

“I remember a conversation with him right before his passing,” recalled his daughter, Debbie Smith-Olson. “We were at the Idlewild Festival and he was looking around. ‘He said, This is what community is about, being there for one another.’”

As a part of his service to the community, Robert was a founding member of Lake County Community Foundation. He felt a community foundation meant long-term sustainability for the future of Lake County.

“Dad wasn’t just focused on the present. He wanted to leave Lake County a better place when he was gone as well. The Community Foundation was a way to secure that long-term sustainability,” said Debbie.

Robert helped to create our general fund, which is used for the annual grant round. He was also instrumental in creating agency funds that promote long-term sustainability for nonprofit organizations.

Upon his passing, his family created the Robert S. Smith Advised Fund in his memory to benefit all of Lake County and its residents. Robert’s family has made recommendations to support many different organizations such as the Baldwin Promise and the Lake County Historical Society.

“This fund was really created for community betterment,” said Debbie. “It’s what dad would have wanted and it really helps carry on his legacy of giving back.”
The Pine River Area Historical Society (pictured on front page) is just one organization that has benefited from Dave B.

It was unclear what impact the COVID-19 pandemic would have on our lives at the beginning of 2020, but by April it was evident that it would affect every area of our lives.

We were disappointed to cancel in-person events for 2020—like our Annual Baked Potato Supper in April and our Sampler Auction in June—but we did so with our community’s health and safety in mind. While we are sad we did not have the opportunity to gather this year, we know that our community continues to grow strong through this season. We look forward to hopefully gathering in 2021.

Ways to give

Giving together in 2020

This season has given us plenty of reasons to feel uncertain, but it has also given us plenty of reasons to be grateful. We have seen our community rise up to meet the ever-changing and growing needs that have presented themselves during this unique time.

In March, we moved the majority of our operations online. We also sought to meet the quickly changing needs of our community partners by establishing the Community Response Fund. These swift adjustments would not have happened without the generosity and support of our donors. “The giving spirit of our community helps us continue the work that we do,” said Seth Wenger, board chair. “We are stronger when we all work together.”

To enhance the quality of life in Lake County, we need generous donors and supporters like you. One of the many ways you can give is online. We provide many options for you to give to various funds, including community response for COVID-19 or another passion area you may have. No matter your personal goals, we are here to help you connect them to the needs of the community.

To give online, visit our webpage at facommunityfoundation.org/lccf.

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Community response

*Impacting Lake County*

At the beginning of 2020, we had big plans for larger grant opportunities to impact our community. We didn’t realize then that our opportunity to impact the community would take a much different form than anticipated.

In March, Fremont Area Community Foundation, in partnership with their geographic affiliates, opened community response grant rounds for COVID-19. These grants allowed us to quickly get funds to organizations experiencing increased demand for services. Grant funds helped provide food, lodging, and other basic needs to many in our community.

The Community Foundation also took initiative in two specific areas: small business assistance and food assistance. In partnership with the Lake County Economic Development Alliance, we provided a grant to The Right Place that assisted small businesses in Lake County when they needed to remain closed. The Community Foundation also provided more than $20,000 for local food pantries to continue providing for families in need and meet the increased demand.

In total, more than $50,000 in assistance has gone out to organizations in Lake County. There has been a wide range of needs during this time and it was our goal to help provide for as many as possible. We are grateful to our partners and community whose generosity helped meet short- and long-term needs. We know that we are not through this pandemic yet, but we are all in this together and the Community Foundation will continue to support Lake County and its residents.
2020 Financials
Impact by the numbers as of September 30, 2020

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Community grants: $79,526
Donor advised/agency endowment/designated grants: $93,409
Supporting continued education

Community Foundation scholarships

Continuing education opens many new career opportunities. However, high costs are a barrier for many students. Through the years, generous donors have recognized this barrier and partnered with the Community Foundation to provide scholarships for students who wish to pursue higher education, apprenticeships, or certification programs.

We receive scholarship applications annually from students who live or attend school in Lake County. In 2020, our scholarship committee reviewed applications from 11 students and awarded $15,500 in scholarships.

“Each year, the scholarship committee sees applications from Lake County students that have a wide range of abilities and interests,” said Kelsey Bennett, Scholarship Committee member. “We are proud to have a hand in assisting these students in their future endeavors. We know that the investment will continue to positively impact not only the students, but also our community, for years to come.”

The Community Foundation’s 2021 scholarship application is now open and will close March 1, 2021. Students who live in or attend school in Lake County are encouraged to apply at facommunityfoundation.org/scholarships.