Partnering together
Community response to COVID-19

The Community Foundation recognizes that we have an important role to play in our community and region.

In partnership with Fremont Area Community Foundation and two affiliate foundations in Lake and Osceola counties, we established the Community Response Fund to award immediate grants to nonprofit organizations whose operations support children, older adults, and other vulnerable populations affected by COVID-19.

Chair’s note

This year has not been what any of us expected when we thought about 2020. There were plans for travel, the chance to have large get-togethers, and the expectation that our lives would look fairly normal. However, this year is more like business as unusual. We all have had to adjust our plans and learn to live in a different way than before. That does not mean that all our plans and opportunities are gone—they are just different. It is an opportunity for us to reflect and practice gratitude for our blessings.

We at the Community Foundation are proud to be a part of Mecosta County and help provide support to those who need it. We are grateful for the generous support of our donors that allows us to give back to the community in many different ways in the midst of these challenging times. We look forward to the rest of 2020.

Respectfully,
Kim von Kronenberger
Board Chair
Continued from page 1

In the last few months, we have been able to support many different organizations, including Michigan Works! West Central. A grant was provided for them to support those who were unemployed or experiencing difficulty in going back to work. A local Success Coach can work with employees to provide important resources and guidance.

“A Success Coach is able to assist employees with things like vehicle repairs and other needs. Bridge loans are made available to employees that have encountered an expense that they want to pay off with a short-term loan and has a built-in savings feature,” said Shelly Keene, executive director of West Michigan Works! West Central. “The overall goal of the program is to help companies retain their current workforce.”

More than $300,000 in COVID response grants have been awarded from the four foundations in our partnership, but there is still a great deal of need in our communities. Community members can donate online to the Community Response Fund at facommunityfoundation.org/covid. Donors may designate their gift for a specific county.

Giving opportunities in 2020

This year has been unique, but it has included some new benefits to charitable giving through the CARES Act.

Taxpayers who no longer itemize their charitable giving will be able to deduct donations of up to $300 on their 2020 federal tax return, even if they take the standard deduction. If you are a married-filing-jointly taxpayer, you will get an above-the-line deduction of up to $600. The universal deduction is not available for gifts to a donor advised fund.

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

Make sure to consult with your financial advisor on how to best utilize these tools. We look forward to helping you meet your philanthropic goals in 2020.
Project Starburst

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic and record-breaking unemployment numbers, Project Starburst was serving Mecosta and Osceola residents in need of temporary assistance with food and other related services.

According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, Mecosta County unemployment jumped from 4.2 percent in March 2020 to an astronomical 25.8 percent in April. Prior to April, Project Starburst’s food pantry was serving an average of 13 families a day. In the span of just one week, the pantry saw an increase to 24 families a day.

With an expressed need in the community for food and more resources required to meet that need, Project Starburst was awarded a grant from the Community Response Fund in April.

“These funds helped us to meet a crucial need during a unique time,” said Diane Long, director. “We are grateful for the partnership and support of the Community Foundation and other generous donors so that we may continue to meet the needs of our community.”

The Community Foundation established the Community Response Fund in March to rapidly deploy resources to nonprofit organizations that aid vulnerable populations impacted by COVID-19. You can learn more about the fund and how to give at facommunityfoundation.org/covid.

Community Foundation scholarships

The Community Foundation’s mission to enhance the quality of life for Mecosta County residents includes removing barriers in the realms of education, poverty, and community and economic development. As the cost of higher education rises, the Community Foundation understands the importance of connecting students with scholarships that can help them in their pursuit of college education or career training.

We hold a variety of scholarship funds for both high school and college-age students that are made possible by the generosity of individuals, families, and organizations. This year, in partnership with our generous donors, we awarded 20 scholarships to 19 high school and college-age students from Mecosta County.

Chloe Mathewson is a 2020 scholarship recipient who will be attending Davenport University in Midland this year to pursue an education in nursing.

“I was elated to have received a scholarship from the Community Foundation,” said Chloe. “It will greatly help me achieve my future goals and further my education.”

Find more information about our scholarships and how you can be involved at facommunityfoundation.org/affiliatescholarships.
A legacy of giving

Arnold and Isabel Kempton

Giving comes in many different forms. For Arnold and Isabel Kempton, giving is how they show appreciation for the community they live in.

Arnold was born and raised in Mecosta County, served in the Air Force as a medic, and continued the family farm with his son. Isabel was born in New Jersey and grew up in Pennsylvania. She moved around with her career in higher education until accepting a position at Ferris State University in 1985.

Both Arnold and Isabel have been active in the community by giving of their time. Arnold served in many township positions and on the hospital board. Isabel later joined the hospital board as well and met and became friends with Arnold there. After both had been widowed for some time, Arnold decided to ask Isabel to dinner. “It took a few times, but she eventually said yes and that was that,” said Arnold. The two were married in 2000 and live in the farmhouse that Arnold grew up in.

When they retired, the Kemptons continued to serve nonprofits and local governments by offering their time and talent. “We really feel there are two kinds of giving: your time and your money,” said Isabel. “Giving is not just about money. Time is equally important and, in many ways, more rewarding to you as a person.”

The Community Foundation is one of the organizations to which they give their time and money. “Back when the Community Foundation was beginning, I was approached about purchasing a brick to support the Community Needs Fund. I was the first Ferris faculty to support the Community Foundation,” stated Isabel. “It felt it was important for us to get involved in a community project like this and support our local nonprofits.”

Isabel has served on the Community Foundation board and continues to serve on our grant committee. She provides valuable insight on the nonprofit community in Mecosta County. The Kemptons also continue to give to the Community Needs Fund, which supports local nonprofits through annual grant rounds. The diversity of this fund allows Arnold and Isabel’s support to be utilized across many different areas. They have also chosen to include the Community Foundation in their estate plan to provide for future needs in the community.
The Pine River Area Historical Society (pictured on front page) is just one organization that has benefited from Dave B. We will gather again.

It was unclear in March what impact the COVID-19 pandemic would truly have on our lives. As we discovered, it has affected almost everything we do. This includes the opportunity to gather with another. With the best interest of our community in mind, the Community Foundation will not be holding any in-person events in 2020, including our second-annual Community BBQ and Community Luncheon. While we are sad that we cannot gather, we know that our community continues to grow strong through this season. We look forward to gathering in 2021. In the meantime, we would love for you to stay connected with us on social media at facebook.com/mecostagives.

Ways to give

Giving together in 2020

This year certainly has had its ups and downs, but it has also provided some time to reflect on what is important in our lives. For some of us, our priorities may have changed. For others, the goals are still the same but we may have a different way of achieving them.

At the Community Foundation, our goal is to enhance the quality of life in Mecosta County. To do that, we need generous donors like you. We are here to help you connect your philanthropic goals to the community. There are many different ways to do this, including with your time and dollars.

“Communities thrive when we all work together for the common good,” said Kim von Kronenberger, board chair. “The needs in our community vary, so there is opportunity for everyone to be a part of the solution.”

One of the many ways you can give is online. We provide the opportunity for you to give specifically to the Community Needs Fund or to the Community Response Fund for COVID-19 response. There is also the option for you to give to a specific fund of your choice. To give online, visit our website at facommunityfoundation.org/mccf.

Advisory Board of Trustees

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We will gather again

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The future in philanthropy

The Community Foundation is home to the Youth Advisory Council for Mecosta County (MCYAC). These student leaders help to address youth needs in the county by participating in community service projects and recommending grants from the Youth Endowment Fund.

“My experience serving in MCYAC made me feel like I could make a difference in others’ lives,” said MCYAC senior Taylor Lintemuth. “I have served four years on the Mecosta County MCYAC team and each year I believe MCYAC helped me as an individual grow in values and in personality. Being part of MCYAC included regular meetings, long discussions, getting to know and meet others, fundraising, some fun, and getting to make a difference for the youth in such a great community!”

We wish our 2020 MCYAC seniors well as they continue to make a positive impact and go into the world to do great things!

2020 MCYAC seniors:
Emily Gandy, Chippewa Hills High School
Taylor Gibson, Chippewa Hills High School
Taylor Lintemuth, Morley Stanwood High School
Chloe Mathewson, Big Rapids High School
Aiden McLaughlin, Morley Stanwood High School
Jada Meeuwes, Crossroads High School
Colin Morrissey, Big Rapids High School
Joe Wendlowsky, Crossroads High School

If you are passionate about youth and would like to give to the Youth Endowment Fund, you may do so at facommunityfoundation.org/giving.
# 2019 Financials

*Impact by the numbers*

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<th>Category</th>
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*All data as of December 31, 2019*
New to the area

Mobile food pantries

Food is a basic need, but for some in our community it can be difficult to provide enough food for their families. There are many different organizations in Mecosta County that help to provide resources for these families. This became even more important as 2020 began to unravel and many people were no longer able to work and provide as they had before.

Angels of Action and Manna Pantry are two organizations providing food resources for the Big Rapids area. In the past, both have focused more on a fixed food pantry model. This year—with a grant from the Community Foundation—the two organizations partnered together with Feeding America West Michigan to provide mobile food pantries in Mecosta County.

“Families who received food were overwhelmingly appreciative and both organizations were grateful to be able to provide this new service,” said Joni Thompson, CEO and executive director of Angels of Action.

Together with the resources of Angels of Action and Manna Pantry, the Community Foundation grant helped provide food for hundreds of families. Without partnerships like this, we would not be able to enhance the quality of life for our residents.