The Community Foundation is proud to serve the community and provide resources in 2020. We have worked with our partners at Fremont Area Community Foundation to provide opportunities that might not have been available otherwise.

Through our Community Response Fund, we supported those returning to work, food for our residents, assistance for students, and much more. We continued with our community grant rounds and are excited to review fall grant applications. We have not been able to gather in person, but we enjoy keeping up with the community through virtual connections and phone calls.

We are grateful for our community and appreciate the resiliency you have shown. We are here with you. Thank you for providing the time, talent, need, gifts, and connection for us to serve Osceola County.

Respectfully,

Roger Elkins
Board Chair
We looked forward to board meetings and to visiting grantees and learning more about their programs. While we have instead postponed events and addressed new challenges, we have also learned valuable lessons and have been reminded of an important truth: we are stronger together.

As we began our time in quarantine, the Community Foundation realized that the basic needs of our community were going to change and increase. To meet the demand, we needed to work together, not only with our grantees but with our partner geographic affiliates in Lake and Mecosta counties and our lead foundation, Fremont Area Community Foundation. These relationships allowed us to provide quick responses to funding needs in our community. We collaborated with our grantees to increase access to important programs and services. We also worked in partnership across county lines to determine how to best serve each area’s residents. Our regional collaboration helps ensure that local organizations and the people they serve have the resources to respond to and recover from the pandemic.

During this time, we are also reminded of the importance of people and relationships. We believe that connections between people and seeing each other as individuals is what creates great communities. As the conversation around diversity, equity, and inclusion continues in our country, we want to be known for recognizing each individual’s value, humanity, and uniqueness. Each of us has our own story, our own strengths, and our own gifts to share. We want to really see these things in the people we come in contact with each day.

A sign of opportunity

When Evart Public Library Director Lilas VanScoyoc noticed community members commenting on how they were unaware of a library event happening, she recognized a need to inform the public of upcoming events in a more visible way. Out of this realization came the idea for an LED sign outside the library. Thanks to a grant from the Community Foundation and the support of other funding partners, the LED sign was installed in fall 2019. Not only is the public made aware of library events, but advertising on the sign is free to community members as well.
By doing this, we can better understand how to meet the needs of our communities and how to bring people together to connect their talents and passions to those needs. Together, we can create positive change in our communities.

Throughout 2020, we have experienced many new things, but that is not all bad. Many of us have been given the opportunity to reflect on what is important. We have been given the opportunity to learn about new ways to connect in our world. We have been given the opportunity to question what we know and learn from our actions. Our circumstances in 2020 may not always look bright in the moment, but we are certain that our community will continue to do great things together.

Continued from page 2

Most of us have the ability to get in our cars and go to an appointment when the need arises. However, for some in our community, transportation is a barrier that hinders them from being able to attend important appointments.

As the Mecosta-Osceola Department for Health and Human Services (MODHHS) observed the needs in their community, they realized there were inadequate transportation resources available for their clients. The only significant public option was the Mecosta Osceola Transit Authority, but in many cases, this option didn’t provide the flexibility for individuals to find rides that coincided with their appointment times.

The Commission on Aging and the Retired Volunteer Senior Program also offered transportation services but only for a limited population.

To address the transportation barrier, MODHHS and Open Arms Child Advocacy Center partnered together to create the Volunteer Transportation Coordinator Program. The program offers transportation for non-emergency medical appointments, foster care visits, Michigan Youth Opportunity Initiative meetings, and various other requests. A volunteer transportation coordinator supports clients who, for various reasons, are unable to navigate the steps required to find reliable transportation.

“The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services greatly appreciates the spirit of partnership from the Osceola County Community Foundation,” said John Klever, community resource coordinator. “Thanks to their support, we can transport qualifying individuals to important appointments.”
As a community foundation, our goal is to enhance the quality of life in Osceola County and create a better place for residents to live, work, and play. We began this journey in 1990 with generous gifts from people who believed in the power of permanent endowment.

Over the last 30 years, we have awarded more than $1.7 million in grants to help the residents of Osceola County. Grants impact every aspect of our community, from education to animal rescue. We provide the opportunity for residents to experience new programs with local nonprofits. These grants would not be possible without our generous donors. These individuals and families are the backbone of our work to help our community.

In 2018, our trustees decided to look at where we had been and develop a plan for the future. With that goal in mind, the trustees began with an environmental assessment, looking through data, trends, and accomplishments in Osceola County over the last few years. Trustees then moved on to what we wanted to see in place because of our actions as a community foundation. Some of these items included increasing our asset size, creating a stronger economic development core for the county, increasing our brand awareness, and having more proactive strategic grantmaking and collaboration. It has been two years since we began implementing this plan to enhance our community.

There are three focuses to our strategic plan: board expertise, position in the community, and grantmaking focus. Overall, we wanted to be more strategic in how we did the work of the Community Foundation. The planning process in 2018 was just the beginning. With the assistance of our community partners and donors, we have continued to work toward our strategic goals and evaluate our progress. Trustees continue to engage the community to better understand local needs and how we can better serve the community.

In the last two years, we have made progress on each of our focus areas. To enhance board expertise, we began to work more intentionally to ensure that the history and goals of the organization become instilled in all new trustees. We provided an orientation and added information to our board meetings about our trustees and the organization. We also continue to build a candidate pool and utilize a board matrix to build a diverse group that represents Osceola County. Our candidate pool allows us to continually look at potential new trustees and how their expertise may enhance the Community Foundation.

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A kinder world

The Youth Advisory Council (YAC) for Osceola County is comprised of high school students who address youth needs and recommend grants from the Youth Endowment Fund. YAC has identified mental health among their peers as a priority need. This school year, YAC will implement the Mental Health Foundation of West Michigan’s “be nice.” program in local schools. The program increases mental health awareness and resources available in schools.
Isaac Frisbie is the wood technology teacher at Reed City High School and serves as the high school’s advisor for our Youth Advisory Council (YAC).

However, this is not Isaac’s first experience with YAC. He also served on Fremont Area Community Foundation’s YAC as a high school student. YAC students from both community foundations address youth needs in their community while also advising on their youth endowment funds. “The experience taught me the importance of lifelong donation of time and talent,” Isaac said. “In addition, my time in YAC gave me numerous opportunities to give back to my community.” Isaac now gets to continue his passion for philanthropy and help students find the importance of giving back.
We recognize that administration and programming go hand in hand and engage our nonprofits in seeking a healthy balance.

“The Community Foundation wants to make sure that our nonprofits are sustainable and able to continue providing services in our community,” said Roger Elkins, board chair. “We created our strategic plan to guide our work and make sure we can help our generous donors meet the needs of the community. Our intention is for the Community Foundation to serve Osceola County forever.”

Of course, none of this is possible without the generosity of our donors. The Community Foundation continues to connect people’s philanthropic goals with community needs. We thank you and appreciate all that you do to make Osceola County a great place to live.

Building their story

For Larry and Libby Emig, community is at the core of their philanthropy. Their lives have taken them through many different journeys but ultimately landed them in Reed City. Libby grew up in Australia and after meeting Larry while he was serving in the Navy, the couple moved to Michigan to start their family.

“We started out humbly and made do with what we had,” said Larry. “We were always trying to find ways to get involved and give back to the community in any way we could.”

Their love of their community is seen through their service with many different organizations and their willingness to help with many different events. Larry and Libby chose to raise their kids with that same love for giving back.

“The build-a-fund option with the Community Foundation was a great way for us to give back to the community forever and have our kids be involved with us,” said Larry. “Now that we have completed the fund, we are excited to see how it will impact the Reed City area long-term.”
## 2020 Financials

*Impact by the numbers as of June 30, 2020*

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<td>Donor advised, agency endowments, and designated grants</td>
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Ways to give

In March, the way we operate certainly changed. To keep our nonprofits and generous donors safe, we moved our operations to an entirely virtual platform. This includes our ways of giving.

To enhance the quality of life in Osceola County, we need generous donors like you. We are here to help you connect your philanthropic goals to community needs.

“We are stronger when we work together,” said Roger Elkins, board chair. “Everyone has a part to play in our community being successful.”

One of the many ways you can give is online. We provide options for you to give to various funds, including an opportunity to give to community response for COVID-19. To give online, visit our webpage at facommunityfoundation.org/occf.