



COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

GRAND RAPIDS AREA

FALL 2022

TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A
DIFFERENCE.

Grand Rapids Area
Community Foundation
News



Great Tails Animal
Rescue Gala:
10/21/22!! Proceeds
benefit their building
fund!



FISCAL SPONSORSHIP SPOTLIGHT TOM DRAZENOVICH FIELD SIGN PROJECT

For years, local former student athletes have wanted to find a way to honor Tom "Mr. D" Drazenovich, a beloved Grand Rapids High School (GRHS) Football Coach. That came to fruition in 2021 when a committee was formed with some former athletes, district employees and community members to discuss naming the GRHS practice field. Many fantastic local coaches were put on the list to consider, but the committee ultimately decided to name the practice field after Coach Tom Drazenovich. The school board approved the naming of the field and the committee then went about raising money for a sign for the field. The money was raised in no time, as people jumped in to donate to this project. The funds were held at the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation as a Fiscal Sponsorship Fund. Fiscal Sponsorships support organizations that are planning, coordinating, and executing special charitable projects within the Greater Itasca Area. These funds typically are limited in duration and support organizations that do not intend to become their own nonprofit.

In May of this year, the Tom "Mr. D" Drazenovich Field sign was erected at the GRHS practice field and there was an unveiling ceremony that included Mr. D, his family and his many supporters. Further, the committee also raised enough money for a plaque in his honor that will be placed in the Grand Rapids High School to explain what he meant to area youth. Local artist, Tom Page, created a beautiful bronze relief of Mr. D, which was placed on the plaque.

Greg Spahn, current Head GRHS Football Coach and GRHS Social Studies teacher says, "Honoring Coach D with his name on the field where he instilled life lessons for so many has become a reality. Coach D's legendary teaching and coaching career is rooted in his legacy of love; love of faith, family, and love for all those he served. This process will honor the impact and legacy that he and his family had, and continues to have, on our great Grand Rapids community. We are all lucky to continue to experience his light. I am honored to lead our young men on to Coach D field from this day forward."

"Coach D has impacted hundreds of students during his career as a teacher and a coach for GRHS. Many of his former student athletes are coaches today because of his positive and loving influence on them. Coach D is one of the greatest people that I have been fortunate to get to know in my time at GRHS. Naming the practice field after him is an honor not only for him and his family, but for the entire community and for all the student lives he has positively touched. Thank you, Coach D, for being such an amazing person to all of us!" said Anne Campbell, GRHS Activity Director.

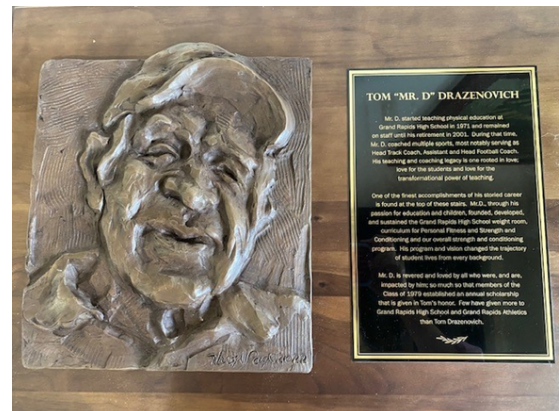
The Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation is proud to have been a part of the Tom "Mr. D" Drazenovich Field Sign project and it is an example of how the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation connects donors' charitable intentions to community needs.



Tom "Mr. D" Drazenovich



Above - Mr. D with his sign and his plaque below.



FUND SPOTLIGHT: CHILDREN'S DISCOVERY MUSEUM SCHOOL ENHANCEMENT FUND



Judy Garland Children's Museum is a space that provides hands-on educational exhibits for children that promote early education through play and exploration. Prior to the COVID 19 pandemic, they operated a successful, program-based field trip scholarship that granted access to thousands of students to the museum that they may not have otherwise been able to attend. Many arts and culture organizations were closed for business during the pandemic due to social distance restrictions. These facilities are now open, students and teachers are eager to get out of the classroom and explore alternative learning opportunities. Most school districts do not have additional funding in their budgets to provide these for students and the financial burden of admission and transportation is placed on the families.

Prior to the pandemic, Judy Garland Children's Museum utilized state grants to provide the field trip scholarships and transportation aid. Funding in recent years has shifted; they have not been able to provide these program-based field trips for free or aid with transportation since 2020. They are working to find new funding sources so they can continue this successful program. Field trip scholarships take down the monetary and transportation barrier to come to the museum. On top of access to the museum, the field trip can include valuable teacher-lead curriculum to students. Curriculum was developed by local teachers; the topics correlate with the inter-active exhibits that exist in the museum and relate to our Minnesota culture. A typical field trip breaks kids up into groups with stations where each student receives a 20-minute lesson, correlated art project, and free exploration. School teachers have filled out surveys with positive feedback and ratings on the curriculum content and validity as well as overall museum experience. Some of the most popular topics for programming include, Dino Dig, Keva Planks, Lake Life, Trees Leaves and Me, Wonderful Water and Wizard of Oz anti-bullying.

The museum serves up to 25,000 visitors each year with the busy tourist season happening from mid-May through September. During fall through late spring, they utilize this time to serve the surrounding area with school field trips. In their 20+ year history, their field trip program has served up to 4,000 students yearly, reaching a 10-county area (Aitkin, Beltrami, Carlton, Cass, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Itasca, St. Louis, and Koochiching) that includes 40 school districts. They have enrolled over 76,000 students, teachers, and chaperones. The primary ages they serve with this program are children pre-school to 2nd grade, but people of all ages are welcome.

"We are excited to get back to our program-based field trips, and we can, thanks to a small scholarship grant from the Minnesota Department of Education. However, additional funding is necessary to support transportation, curriculum supplies, and operations. We are looking for business field trip sponsors and donor support in the communities we serve to keep this program going. We want area kids to have access to this fun space we have to offer," states Janie Heitz, Judy Garland Museum Executive Director. If you would like to support Children's Discovery Museum School Enhancement Fund, you can donate online at www.gracf.org/donate and search for Children's Discovery Museum School Enhancement Fund. You can also send or drop off donations to the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation.



COMMUNITY FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBER SEARCH

Do you have a passion for the Greater Itasca Area and would like to help make this area a great place to live and work?

The Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation (GRACF) is seeking board members from the Greater Itasca Area for two open positions on its Board of Directors. Board members serve one term of three years, with the opportunity to be re-appointed for two more terms. These positions begin in January 2023.

You can apply on the GRACF website www.gracf.org, click on News & Media and scroll to the application link under Careers. The deadline to apply is Sunday, October 23, 2022. You can also call the Foundation for more information at 218-999-9100 or email info@gracf.org.



Class of 1966 classmates: Bill Lindberg, Nancy Arnhold, Rick Blake and Rick Gould

SCHOLARSHIP SPOTLIGHT UPDATE



Forrest Willey Memorial Scholarship A School Administrator's Courage Honored

In Spring 2022, we highlighted the Forrest Willey Memorial Scholarship Fund. At that time, the Forrest Willey Scholarship Fund had a balance of around \$7000. The fund awarded three \$500 scholarships in 2022: two to students at the Grand Rapids High School and one to a student at Northern Lights Community School.

Since that time, there has been over \$32,800 in donations to the Forrest Willey Scholarship Fund from a variety of donors including GRHS alumni classes, individuals and organizations. These donations were put into an endowment, which will allow the funds to continue to grow and will be available to offer scholarships far into the future. With this increase in donations, the fund advisors for this scholarship plan to help more young people next year by giving out three \$1000 scholarships!

October 5, 2022, marks the 56th anniversary of the school shooting that ended up taking Mr. Forrest Willey's life. This school shooting on October 5, 1966, was one of the first, if not *the* first school shooting in Minnesota. It was 33 years before the shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado.

The Grand Rapids High School Class of 1966 created this fund in 2016, on the 50th anniversary of the shooting, to honor the memory and bravery of Forrest Willey. Mr. Willey, a Grand Rapids High School Administrator, was shot and killed as he attempted to take a gun away from a student who had just shot a 14-year old classmate. News stories say that the shooter was bullied and teased by some of his classmates and came to the school that day to exact revenge.

The Herald Review, at the time, reported that there were hundreds of students and teachers in the parking area where the shooting occurred. Mr. Willey showed immense bravery and put his life at risk to try to stop the student before he harmed more people. Willey attempted to take the gun away from the shooter, but was hit by a bullet and collapsed. The shooter then ran off school property. Mr. Willey died in the hospital eight days later.

Forrest Willey is remembered by students of that time as an exemplary leader; one whom they felt really cared about them as people. Local resident and Class of 1966 student, Nancy Roy Arnhold, still has letters she received, and treasures, from Mr. Willey during her high school years. One such letter stated, "Dear Nancy: I was very pleased to learn that you were selected to receive the Senior Leadership Recognition Award. It is a well-deserved honor and you are to be commended for it as well as for your outstanding record in high school. Sincerely, Forrest L. Willey, Director, Secondary Education."

Thank you to all the generous donors to the Forrest Willey Memorial Scholarship Fund. Your donations lift up area youth! If you would also like to honor Forrest Willey and give to his legacy of helping students, you can donate to his fund at the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation. You can donate online at www.gracf.org/donate and search for Forrest Willey Memorial Scholarship. You can also send or drop off donations to the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation at 350 NW 1st Avenue, Suite E, Grand Rapids, MN 55744.

ENDOWMENT SPOTLIGHT: ADVOCATES FOR FAMILY PEACE



Advocates for Family Peace covers all of Itasca county and northern St Louis County. They have been serving victims and survivors of domestic violence in Itasca County for over 40 years. Each day they have victims and their children come to them seeking help from living situations that most of us could never imagine happening in the community that we live in. Their services are free and confidential. They work with the survivors and help with safety plans, safe emergency housing, long-term housing options, information and referrals, court accompaniment, and purchasing items that can help keep them safe such as security cameras, cell phones, motion lights, and many other unconventional items that keep people safe.

Advocates for Family Peace has an endowment fund with the Community Foundation, which allows them to use a portion of the interest to spend each year. Endowment funds are invested to grow over the long term and be a source of funding for Advocates into the future.

"Being a part of the Grand Rapids Community Foundation gives us an opportunity to reach more people. It shows community members that domestic violence does happen in our community and just because domestic violence mostly happens behind closed doors, it's still an issue that needs to be addressed. By having a relationship with Grand Rapids Community Foundation, we can reach more people and receive financial support for our Endowment fund," states Shanna Serven, Outreach and Human Resource Generalist for Advocates for Family Peace.

If you, or someone you know, would like more information about Advocates for Family Peace, please call them at 218-326-0388. If you would like to support Advocates for Family Peace Endowment Fund, you can donate online at www.gracf.org/donate and search for Advocates for Family Peace Endowment Fund. You can also send or drop off donations to the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation.

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