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GRAND RAPIDS AREA

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Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation News

WORKFORCE READY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM: Retaining our local labor force

The last two years have tested businesses and organizations in our area in terms of labor and the pandemic added to an already shrinking workforce. Labor force growth has been decreasing for two decades (*Center for Rural Policy and Development*) in Minnesota and outstate Minnesota has had a hard time retaining its youth. Further, experts see this as a long-term issue, not a short-term problem, that must be addressed. The purpose behind the Workforce Ready Scholarship program at the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation is to provide education funding for students who want to stay and work in our local communities in high-demand fields, such as healthcare, trucking, manufacturing, food preparation and hospitality.

In 2021, the Workforce Ready Scholarship fund awarded almost \$50,000 in scholarships to 21 students who plan to live and work in the Greater Itasca Area.

Contributions to this fund have come from several private donors, with the majority from two very interested and generous donors, Jerry and Cathie (Saxhaug) Anderson, as well as area business donors, such as the Grand Itasca Foundation and Minnesota Diversified Industries (MDI). Past funders have included the Northern Minnesota Builders Association, Industrial Lubricant, and Northern Industrial Erectors.

Donor, Jerry Anderson, states, "The reasoning behind my suggestion for creating Workforce Ready was twofold. First and foremost was my business experience of hiring well-qualified individuals mostly with college degrees but I quickly found that additional specialized training was required in our construction field. We were a large enough company so we could hire our specialized needs, but it would be a burden for smaller employers to obtain these employees on their own. Our vision was to create programs to fill the needs. The second reason was the experience of Cathie and my many years of support of baccalaureate scholarships where emphasis was usually on GPA. There just had to be a need in the marketplace for a bridge. Staying in the Northland after employment was a plus factor. Working with GRACF was the natural means to carry out our vision. From the results to date from its start in 2016, the vision is being carried out as we expected."

Donations to this fund go directly to helping community members stay and work in this community. If you are interested in contributing to this fund or would like more information about the fund or the workforce taskforce that has been created by local citizens, please contact Mindy Nuhring at 218-999-9100 or mindy.nuhring@gracf.org.



Jerry and Cathie (Saxhaug) Anderson



New Funds

- **GRACE House Endowment Fund**
- **Jack Huhta Good Character Award - Scholarship**
- **Bena Local Indian Council Fund**

See www.gracf.org for more detailed fund descriptions.

FUNDRAISING SPOTLIGHT - GREAT TAILS ANIMAL RESCUE BUILDING FUND



Pictured at their site in Cohasset's Industrial Park is, from left to right, Roberta Yates, Susan Lynch (GRACF), Misty Newman, Meah Paulley holding Cyan, Lacey Paulley, Tammy Huju with Pepper, Peggy Miner, and Cohasset City Council Member Terry Bartz holding Cadet.

Great Tails Animal Rescue, a nonprofit organization in the Itasca County Area with the mission of providing temporary shelter and veterinary care for stray, abandoned, and surrendered animals of Itasca County, has received a second challenge grant for their building fund. An anonymous donor will match donations up to \$50,000 for Great Tail's Building Fund from Memorial Day, May 30, 2022, through Labor Day, September 5, 2022.

Last December this same donor offered their first challenge grant of \$50,000 and several donors did match that amount for a total of \$100,000 towards the Great Tails Building Fund. Last Fall, the City of Cohasset donated a 4-5 acre site for Great Tails to build a 5-6000 square-foot permanent shelter in Cohasset's Industrial Park. They are in the initial planning phase for building construction. With building costs on the rise, Great Tails continues to raise funds for their building. Please consider donating to Great Tails this summer so they can match the \$50,000 donation! You can donate online at the Foundation's website www.gracf.org, click on Donate and select Great Tails Animal Rescue Building Fund. 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.

NEW FUND SPOTLIGHT - GRACE HOUSE ENDOWMENT FUND

The GRACE House provides temporary shelter to the homeless. Temporary means up to a 30-day stay. During this time, qualified guests can receive help creating a plan for the next phase of their life, with most time spent on housing and employment. GRACE House recently opened an Endowed Fund with the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation.

When you create an endowed fund at the Foundation, you ensure lasting positive impact through a permanent charitable gift. Endowment funds are invested to grow over the long-term and the funds are pooled for maximum benefit. The principal remains intact and only the earnings on the fund are used to make charitable distributions each year. This endowed fund for Grace House will enable them to build long-term funding and create stability over the years. Please consider a donation to the GRACE House Fund to help them grow this fund into the future! You can donate online at www.gracf.org/donate and select GRACE House Fund.



SCHOLARSHIP SPOTLIGHT: FORREST WILLEY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND



Forrest L. Willey



Class of 1966

On October 5, 1966, a 15-year-old student, David Black, approached the Grand Rapids Middle School with a loaded .22 caliber pistol. He shot and seriously wounded one of his intended targets, 14-year-old Kevin Roth, a fellow student who Black felt had teased him. Forrest L. Willey, the Director of Secondary Education at the Grand Rapids Middle School, heard there was a student with a gun on campus and did not hesitate to go directly to the scene. He approached David and asked him for the gun. David shot at Mr. Willey and missed with the first bullet, but continued to shoot at him causing Willey to collapse. Black then fired a couple shots at the police before fleeing the property. Mr. Willey died eight days later. He risked his own life to prevent serious injury and possible death to the young people in his district.

Willey was given a posthumous award by the Carnegie Hero Fund, based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and is listed on the Memorial to Fallen Educators on the campus of Emporia State University in Emporia, Kansas. In October 2013, a memorial bench was installed outside of the Robert J. Elkington Middle School in Mr. Willey's honor. The money for the bench was raised by local Itasca area resident, Rachel Bledsoe, who is dedicated to raising awareness of the ongoing problem of bullying.

In the fall of 2016, on the 50th anniversary of this incident, the Grand Rapids High School Class of 1966 established a scholarship in Mr. Willey's honor, the Forrest Willey Memorial Scholarship, with the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation. Forrest Willey's son, Bob, was a 1966 classmate, and they wanted to do something to honor Forrest Willey.

Each year, the Forrest Willey Memorial Scholarship fund provides two scholarships; one for a Grand Rapids High School graduate and one for a Northern Lights Community School graduate. They are hoping to build up this fund to create an endowment so that these scholarships can be given out every year for the foreseeable future.

"It is hard to know how much suffering Forrest Willey prevented by leaving the safety of his office that day. Had he not intervened we don't know how many students might have lost their lives. One thing we do know, Mr. Willey intentionally placed himself between the shooter and the intended target. That should make him a hero in anyone's estimation. By funding this scholarship we all have a hand in accomplishing Mr. Willey's goal of helping students, something he gave his life for," says Rick Blake, Class of 1966.

If you are interested in donating to the Forrest Willey Memorial Scholarship, you can donate online at the Foundation's website www.gracf.org, click on Donate and select Forrest Willey Memorial Scholarship Fund. 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.

THANK YOU FROM THE STREUFERT PEACE AND SAFETY FUND



"Last summer when we asked people to remember our daughter, Carin, 30 years after her death, we never expected the overwhelming response we received. We thank everyone who gave so generously to the Streufert Peace and Safety Fund. Now we are faced with the wonderful task of deciding how to allocate these funds back into the community. Watch this spot for more information about those plans."

With grateful hearts,
Mary, Don and Emily Streufert

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