



COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION

GRAND RAPIDS AREA

SPRING 2024

**TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE.**

**Grand Rapids Area Community  
Foundation News**



## **A NOTE FROM WENDY ROY, GRACF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR 1997-2013:**

Grand Rapids Area Community: The Early Years

In 1991, the Blandin Foundation sent community leader, Todd Driscoll, on a mission to investigate the possibilities of establishing a community foundation in the Grand Rapids Area. He first brought together three other community leaders to discuss the concept. This small group determined it was feasible and they asked 17 other citizens to be on the first Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation Board of Directors.

The larger group met for some time, determining the name of the organization, writing bylaws, applying for nonprofit status, developing investment policies, establishing a budget, along with many other business decisions.

In 1994 the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation received their 501c3 status. It was the beginning of a fabulous resource for our area.

The first funds were \$250,000 in scholarships transferred from Grand Rapids High School and a generous donation from Todd Driscoll to establish five community funds, such as the Fund for the Environment and the Fund for Women. The rest is history.

I was asked to be on this first board of directors, which was an honor. The Foundation had part time staff and in 1997 I interviewed for the position of executive director and was even more honored when I was offered the position. I knew it would be the best job in town, and it was.

I believe the most satisfying thing was working with dedicated board members who put their time and talents into making the Foundation a great success. The fun part was working with donors who came to us and truly wanted to give to a great variety of needs in our community.

In 2013 retirement called. The Community Foundation has continued in its tradition of having dedicated staff and volunteers. I would like to thank every board and staff member I worked with on this journey. And, the Foundation would never have succeeded without the support of every donor who recognized the satisfaction of giving back to the community. They almost always said thank you when they gave their donations.

Chris Fulton and Sue Lynch provided their amazing leadership as executive directors while Mindy Nuhring continues with the tradition in advancing the goals of the Foundation.

Congratulations to the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation in going from \$250,000 to \$31,000,000 in 30 years.

Warmly,  
Wendy Roy  
Executive Director 1997 - 2013



## **SEEDS OF CHANGE CAMPAIGN TO CELEBRATE OUR 30TH ANNIVERSARY!**

As we celebrate our 30th anniversary here at the Foundation, we have started a Fundraising Campaign called the "Seeds of Change."

Through this campaign, we'll be raising funds - and awareness - for our Foundation as well as our local area nonprofit partners. Our goal is to highlight the impact we've made over the last 30 years and show you how a little seed today can make a great impact tomorrow. We want the campaign to highlight the outstanding work of local nonprofits and what they would like to do or could do in the future. This showcase will provide a unique opportunity to learn more about the nonprofits that are making a difference in our community. The community will have an opportunity after June 7th to vote for one of these nonprofits and give them the chance to receive extra funding through the Seeds of Change campaign.

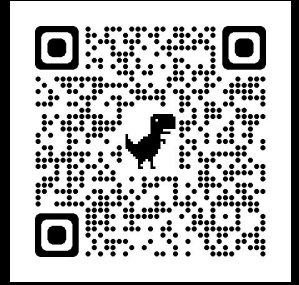
As envisioned by community leaders 30 years ago, the Community Foundation has supported our community and the surrounding area by giving back and fostering growth. Through countless projects and initiatives, we have supported local schools, provided scholarships to aspiring students, provided crisis funding to individuals and funding for numerous nonprofit initiatives, with the goal of a better quality of life for all residents. This sustained impact is made possible by the generosity of our donors, whose contributions—regardless of size—play a vital role in driving positive change. Every donation, whether large or small, enables us to continue our mission of enhancing the community, proving that together, we can make a lasting difference. By joining hands with us, donors become integral to the ongoing story of progress and benevolence that defines our foundation's legacy.

Please join us in our journey over the next few months to celebrate our 30th Anniversary. We will have information on events and stories in the local newspapers and radio stations as well as on our website and social media. The next page gives more details about the campaign. Be a seed of change!

~Mindy Nuhring, GRACF Executive Director

# Seeds of Change

## ANNUAL ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN



Donate Now!

### WHY JOIN THIS CAMPAIGN

The Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation (GRACF) is celebrating 30 years of service to the community in 2024 and is excited to continue to have an impact through the Seeds of Change Campaign supporting local nonprofits. Everyone can help plant a seed, no matter the size of the donation, and make a tangible impact on our area and the sustainability of GRACF and its long-term investment to the community.

### HOW TO DONATE

You can participate as a business or individual and donate with a recurring donation or a one-time donation. Surprise donation incentives will pop up during the next few months.

### HOW TO PARTICIPATE AS A NONPROFIT

SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION BY 5/15/24

VISIT [gracf.org](http://gracf.org) Seeds of Change page to see the application. Print and fill out the application and then submit via email, mail or in person. Please include photos of what you do - these will be displayed June 7th at GRACF First Friday Artwalk Event. The public will vote throughout the summer. Donations will benefit one or more local nonprofits and will be awarded at the October Fun(d) Fest.

#### SET UP A RECURRING DONATION:

SEED SUPPORTER	\$ 360 / year (\$ 30 / month)
SAPLING STARTER	\$1,200 / year (\$100 / month)
BLOOM BUDDY	\$3,000 / year (\$250 / month)
HARVEST HERO	\$6,000 / year (\$500 / month)

### EVENT 1 A FIRST FRIDAY EVENT

## SEEDS KICKOFF PARTY

APRIL 5 | 4-7 PM | GRACF

- Seeds of Change Donation Fund Opens
- Non-Profit Partner Applications Open

*Your Questions, Answered!*

### EVENT 2 A FIRST FRIDAY EVENT

## SAPLING CELEBRATION

JUNE 7 | 4-7 PM | GRACF

- Seeds of Change Donation Campaign Continues
- Non-Profit Partner Applicant Showcase

*Voting begins!*

### EVENT 3 A FIRST FRIDAY EVENT

## BLOOM OPEN HOUSE

AUGUST 2 | 4-7 PM | GRACF

- Seeds of Change Donation Campaign Continues
- Marketing funds awarded to the top 3 applicants

*Top 3 Finalists Revealed*

### EVENT 4 THE BIG CELEBRATION EVENT

*TICKETS - COMING SOON!*

## HARVEST FUN(D) FEST

OCTOBER 11 | 5PM | BARN IN THE WOODS

- Non-Profit Project Video Presentations
- Cocktail Reception, Dinner & Live Music!

*Attendee Voting + Winner Announced Tonight!*

*From tiny acorns, mighty oaks do grow.*

**DONATE NOW**

218-999.9100

[gracf.org](http://gracf.org) then Donate to Seeds of Change Fund

# Jesse Davis Memorial Scholarship

In a tribute to a cherished community member who dedicated his life to making this area a better place to live, the Itasca Orchestra and Strings Program Board has established a scholarship in Jesse Davis's honor at the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation.

One of Jesse's many passions was his love for music, specifically orchestral music. Jesse served as the Board Chair of the Itasca Orchestra and Strings Program and was an avid viola player in the orchestra. As such, the newly established Jesse Davis Legacy Scholarship Fund will provide scholarships for Itasca Orchestra and Strings Program students.

"The Jesse Davis Legacy Scholarship Fund embodies the spirit of compassion, advocacy and inspiration that Jesse Davis demonstrated in his life," says Mindy Nuhring, Executive Director of the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation. "Through this fund, the aim is to carry forward Jesse Davis's legacy by empowering the next generation of musicians to reach their goals and to foster a deep appreciation for orchestral music within our community. In 2016 and 2017 Jesse was also a dedicated employee of the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation and we are honored to support his legacy through this fund."

Contributions to the Jesse Davis Legacy Scholarship Fund are warmly welcomed. For those who wish to honor Jesse's legacy and support the development of young musicians, you can donate to The Jesse Davis Legacy Scholarship through the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation (GRACF) by donating online at [www.gracf.org](http://www.gracf.org), click on Donate and search for The Jesse Davis Legacy Scholarship fund. You can also drop off or send donations to GRACF.



**Jesse Davis**

## Eric Northard Memorial Travel Scholarship Fund

In the halls of Grand Rapids High School (GRHS) and in the community, esteemed social studies teacher, Mr. Eric Northard, won't soon be forgotten. For many years, Mr. Northard orchestrated transformative international trips for District 318 students that were unforgettable and life changing. Eric and his wife, Nancy, were also active Rotarians and hosted numerous foreign exchange students over the years.

Brielle Carlson, Eric's fellow social studies teacher at GRHS, traveled extensively with Eric. Brielle states, "Eric led trips with different groups of students from Northome and Bigfork before coming to GRHS full time. He (and I on most except 3!) led student trips to Morocco, India, Nepal, Costa Rica, Peru, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Spain, France, Italy, Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, England, Ireland, and Egypt. Eric was an exceptional navigator of the world and was able to make friends everywhere he traveled. He always saw the good in people and was a positive influence on so many inside and outside of the classroom. Eric paved the way to exposing Grand Rapids area students to the world; international travel has become an important part of the culture at GRHS."

Andy Anderson, GRHS 2016 graduate, says this about Mr. Northard and the international trips, "I first met Eric Northard (whom I have called "Northard" ever since) when I was 15 years old and we pushed carts together in a grocery store parking lot while we were working to raise funds for our upcoming trip to Europe in 2013. I didn't have any idea that that first trip to Ireland, Wales, England and France would be the first of many that we would take together over the next several years.

Northard was one of my favorite people to sit across from, usually during a meal, which was after some lengthy adventure. He could seamlessly flow from one conversation to another with anyone at the table, each conversation as lively as the last. He was always full of knowledge, wisdom, and good humor.

My last trip with Northard was to Morocco in the summer of 2019. By this time, I had traveled to around 16 or 17 different countries, and I considered myself fairly well-traveled, so when I heard "Africa in June," I didn't see any reason to pack anything other than shorts, and I left all of my pants at home. Little did I know I would become good friends with my host family and would be invited to go to a nightclub with them. A nightclub which required you wear...you guessed it...pants. I found myself knocking on Northard's door explaining my pants-less dilemma. The generous man he was, he didn't hesitate to loan me a pair of his and they were his favorite pair to boot! At lunch a few days later, he broke out laughing and said, "after all these years, I never thought I'd have to give a student my own pants!" Let me tell you, they were the most comfortable pants I've ever worn.

It's hard to put into words how much I learned from Northard and how I was influenced by him. I am confident I will reflect on and find new meaning in the good times and lessons for the rest of my life. Although his legacy (for me) isn't set in stone yet, there's one thing I know for sure: I am a better person for knowing him. His impact on me is profound and I will do my very best to conduct myself in the kindest, most inclusive, and compassionate way I can, so through me, the world will know what a great man he was, even if I'm wearing my own pants."

To honor Eric and his passion for travel, the Eric Northard Memorial Travel Scholarship has been established at the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation (GRACF). The fund will support District 318 students with scholarships to the international travel program.

For those who wish to honor Eric and help an area high school student have a wonderful, educational, and life changing experience like Andy Anderson's, you can donate to The Eric Northard Memorial Travel Scholarship Fund through the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation online at [www.gracf.org](http://www.gracf.org), click on Donate and search for The Eric Northard Memorial Travel Scholarship fund. You can also send or drop off a check to GRACF.



**Eric Northard and Andy Anderson  
Casablanca, Morocco 2019**



**Eric Northard, Morocco 2019**



**GRHS students with Eric, Brielle and chaperones, India 2018 (featuring the Taj Mahal)**

## NEW FUNDS:

- **Ann Kiehne and Lyman Loveland Fund**
- **Eric Northard Memorial Travel Scholarship**
- **Free Range Food Co-Op Fund**
- **GRAHA Fund**
- **Mobility Mania Voucher Program**
- **Seeds of Change Fund**
- **The Great Itasca Giveback**

## Shout outs

Sometimes we receive requests for the funding of projects that are outside of our annual grant cycle and we try to get the word out to potential donors about these projects through our newsletters or news articles. In our last newsletter we had an article about the Itasca County Fair (aka Itasca County Agricultural Association) needing a sponsor for music at their annual Senior Day at the Fair. Within one day of receipt of our newsletter, the Itasca County Fair had their sponsor: 4U Home Health Care! If you know or see anyone from 4U Home Health Care, please thank them for sponsoring this event!

A second shoutout goes to Ann Kiehne and Lyman Loveland who recently opened a fund here at the Foundation and went on to donate to the Grand Rapids High School Band for a new keyboard and sheet music! Thanks to Ann and Lyman!!



GRHS Band with new keyboard

## In Honor and Memory of Denny Roy

We would like to pay solemn tribute to Denny Roy, husband of the first full-time GRACF Executive Director, Wendy Roy, and a pillar of the community. Denny served on many local boards and projects and was always willing to give of his time and energy. But most of all, he was an upstanding, wonderful person. His giving spirit will continue to guide us, reminding us to strive for excellence, to care for one another, and to be there for others...with a smile. In his memory, we pledge to carry forward his legacy, ensuring that his practice of service and community remains an example and an ideal for others to follow.



Denny Roy

### GRACF BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

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Diane Larson, Vice Chair  
Jamie Brown, Treasurer  
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Sarah Anderson  
Elena Cowan  
Peter McDermott  
Jerry Ophoven  
Roy Smith



For more information or to donate, call  
218-999-9100, email [info@gracf.org](mailto:info@gracf.org) or  
visit our website at [www.gracf.org](http://www.gracf.org)



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Mindy Nuhring, Executive Director  
Lori Laliberte-Ross, Program Administrator  
Lara Mlinar, Office Manager

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