



COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

GRAND RAPIDS AREA

WINTER 2024

TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Grand Rapids Area Community
Foundation News



A NOTE FROM MINDY NUHRING, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

This year, 2024, the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation (GRACF) celebrates its 30th anniversary!! There has been much growth and change since 1994 and we will take time this year to celebrate the work that has been done in the past as well as plan for the next stage of the Foundation.

As we step into this new year, it is only fitting to take a moment to reflect upon 2023. As the Executive Director of GRACF, I am honored to share with you a glimpse into the achievements, challenges, and the collective impact that we, as a community, have made over the past year. From generous donations and impactful grants to empowering scholarships, 2023 has been a testament to the unwavering spirit of giving that defines our community.

In 2022 and 2023 the investment market was a challenge, but there were positive changes at the end of 2023 and GRACF ended the year with over \$31 million in assets, which is a peak for the Community Foundation in its 30 years of operation.

One of the cornerstones of our success in 2023 was the remarkable generosity of our donors. We saw an increase in donations demonstrating a shared belief in the power of philanthropy to drive positive change. There were 1,974 donations totaling \$2.35 million. Amazing!

A major part of our mission is supporting impactful projects and programs that address community needs. In 2023, our annual grant cycle continued to provide support for local nonprofit organizations striving to make a difference in our area. These grants empowered local organizations to help many area citizens, creating a ripple effect of positive change throughout our community. In 2023, GRACF awarded over \$154,000 in 44 grants to local nonprofit organizations that serve the Greater Itasca Area.

Education has always been a key focus for the Community Foundation, and once again, the amount and number of scholarships increased in 2023, due to our generous donors. Those scholarships are investments in future leaders. The many students receiving scholarships are a testament to the transformative power of education, and we are proud to have played a part in shaping the future leaders of our community. In 2023, over \$273,000 in scholarships were awarded through 185 scholarships.

Our vision for 2024 includes strategic planning that will look at expanding our impact, fostering stronger community collaborations, and exploring new avenues for philanthropic innovation. With your continued support, we aim to make an even greater difference in the lives of those we serve this year and into the future.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation, local area nonprofit organizations and students in 2023. Together, we have proven that when a community comes together with a shared purpose, incredible things happen. Thank you for being an integral part of the journey.

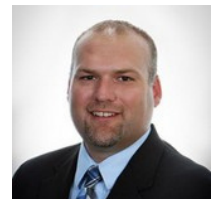
We are busy planning some fun events to celebrate our 30th Anniversary, so stay tuned for exciting announcements coming soon!

Warmly,
Mindy Nuhring
Executive Director



A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR OUTGOING BOARD MEMBERS!

We had three members of our Board of Trustees conclude their terms this year. We are grateful to Kyle Erickson, Kristian Myers and Josh Skelton for their years of service on the Board and its committees. Kristian Myers also served as Board Chair and provided exceptional leadership during times of change. Heartfelt thanks to all for your dedicated service and invaluable contributions to the Community Foundation. Your commitment has made a lasting impact, and we're truly grateful for your time, passion, and expertise.



Kyle Erickson Kristian Myers Josh Skelton

SINCE YOU GET MORE JOY OUT OF GIVING JOY TO OTHERS, YOU SHOULD PUT A GOOD DEAL OF THOUGHT INTO THE HAPPINESS THAT YOU ARE ABLE TO GIVE.

~ ELEANOR ROOSEVELT



Planned giving pointers for donors

As you've chatted over the years with the professionals working at your favorite nonprofits, you've likely heard the term "planned giving." You may have even wondered what the term means—even if you have already structured so-called "planned gifts" to support your favorite charities!

Here are a few pointers to help break down the concept of planned giving, along with ways the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation (GRACF) can help you achieve your charitable goals.

It may help to think of "planned giving" in contrast to what's sometimes called "current" or "annual" giving. For example, when you write a check (or, ideally, give highly-appreciated stock) to a charitable organization or your fund at the Community Foundation, you're transferring those funds right away in a relatively straightforward manner. You also may be making annual gifts to several charities, and from time to time you may also make gifts to a favorite charity's endowment or non-endowed fund at the Community Foundation.

By contrast, a "planned gift" is more complex and forward-looking than current or annual support of your favorite charitable causes. Making structured future transfers to charity is often referred to as "planned giving" because, well, these gifts require planning. Here are examples of common "planned gifts":

- A bequest in your will or trust allows you to name a charity, such as your fund at the Community Foundation, to receive a certain dollar amount, or a percentage of your estate, following your death. The staff at GRACF can work with you and your financial advisors to include a bequest in your estate plan using the proper bequest language.
- Beneficiary designations on life insurance policies, and especially on retirement plans, can be effective tools for making bequests. The staff at GRACF can work with you and your financial advisors to complete the paperwork required to properly designate your fund at the Community Foundation as the beneficiary of life insurance or IRA assets, including reviewing with you the many tax benefits of using retirement plans to fund your bequests.
- Setting up a charitable trust, such a charitable remainder trust, is often an effective way for you to ensure that money will flow from your estate to a charity or your fund at GRACF, in a way that meets both your philanthropic intentions and your financial goals (including retaining an income stream and triggering an up-front charitable income tax deduction). A charitable gift annuity is another type of "split interest" arrangement, whereby you can retain an income stream and designate a charitable beneficiary to receive a future gift. Charitable trusts are complex, but your financial advisor can walk you through the process.

We'd love to work with you to set up planned gifts to support your favorite causes, as well as work together to ensure that you'll meet your charitable goals for current giving in 2024.

First Call 211 to Manage Itasca County Area Crisis Grants Effective January 1, 2024

The Itasca County Sharing Fund, a fund that was managed by the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation for many years, has been instrumental in assisting individuals in our community with crisis funding during challenging times. Crisis grants are issued for items such as housing, transportation, and utilities.

On January 1, 2024, the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation (GRACF) transitioned the responsibility of overseeing the Itasca County Sharing Fund to First Call 211. The change aims to enhance efficiency, transparency, and impact of the fund, ensuring that it continues to serve the needs of our community in the best possible way. First Call 211 brings a wealth of experience and expertise in community support and crisis management and they have a vast knowledge of the crisis funding available in the area. Therefore, when someone contacts First Call 211 during a crisis, they can handle their needs effectively and efficiently.

Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation still manages other crisis funds such as the Grand Rapids Public Utilities Community Caring Fund, the Restore A Smile Fund, Herreid Deer River Fund, and the Veterans Support Emergency Fund, as well as two cancer crisis funds: Blandin Employees for Life and Itasca Area Cancer Crisis Fund.

If you know anyone experiencing crisis, they can contact First Call 211 for any of the crisis funding. If you know of someone undergoing cancer treatments who needs help paying for expenses, they can apply on the GRACF website www.gracf.org.



A Financial Literacy Strategy: Healthy Financial Futures

Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation (GRACF) has a fund under its umbrella called Healthy Financial Futures (HFF), a new pilot project underway with funding received by the RBC Foundation – USA. Healthy Financial Futures was conceived by Bill Block, a 1985 graduate of Grand Rapids High School, who wants to help young people in their teens and twenties establish healthy lifetime financial habits. “Money is hard for most people,” said Block, “a fact I know all too well from watching my parents struggle financially when I was growing up. In my early twenties I committed to learning a better way. I’m now in my fifties and I founded HFF to share with young people the skills and habits leading to a prosperous future.”

Healthy Financial Futures addresses an urgent need in the wider Greater Itasca area. A recent study by The United Way of 1000 Lakes identified “financial education, including budgeting and money management skills training, financial counseling and support services” as one of the greatest needs for individuals and families in the region. And a recent Community Needs Assessment by KOOTASCA Community Action found that eight of the top ten most prevalent challenges facing clients were financial in nature. And unfortunately, our area is not unique--nationally, the American Psychological Association has reported that financial stress is the #1 stressor in the country.

“It is important to me that people understand what HFF is not about, as much as what it is,” Block emphasized. “HFF is not intended to replace the many excellent financial literacy courses available locally, such as at the high school and through Community Ed. Such programs are great, but in my opinion, they will only change the long-term financial behavior of a select few motivated individuals who seek those courses out.” Instead, according to Block, Healthy Financial Futures was founded to help everyone else—especially young people in their teens and twenties whose financial trajectories are not yet “set.” Block will teach each participant the “how” part of achieving a bright financial future and then walk that path alongside each participant until good financial habits are formed. Training will be customized to the unique circumstances of each individual, and ongoing support and encouragement will be provided as needed. According to Block, “As I acknowledged earlier, money is hard, and I established Healthy Financial Futures to do the hardest thing possible—change people’s relationship with money. If you are a young person with any money concerns at all, I’d be glad to help you learn the small and regular financial steps that will payoff big time down the road.”

The early results of the Healthy Financial Futures pilot program are encouraging. Following an initial call for nominations emailed to teachers and staff of ISD 318, Block has already engaged one-on-one with a group of young people ranging from age 16 to their mid twenties. Every single nominee—and some of their parents--have responded enthusiastically to their first HFF interaction. But Block is the first to acknowledge that the true value of this new program will only become clear down the road. “My goal is to help young people develop good lifetime financial habits. So, check in with me in a few months and we’ll see how many of these early pilot participants are still engaged, learning how to incorporate healthy money practices into their everyday lives.”

Healthy Financial Futures is currently in a pilot phase with limited funding, and GRACF is serving as the fiscal sponsor. Block hopes to build on his early success with future and larger grant proposals and fundraising. He would also welcome opportunities to spread the word about HFF to young people in the community. For more information about Healthy Financial Futures or to nominate someone you think would benefit, send an email to healthyfinancialfutures@gmail.com.

If you are interested in helping the Healthy Financial Futures program reach more people, you can donate to Healthy Financial Futures at the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation.



Bill Block

Sponsorship Opportunity: Senior Day at the Itasca County Fair



The Overtones

At the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation, we have a fund called the Itasca County Agricultural Association aka Itasca County Fair Board Fund. This fund is to support the projects and programs of the Itasca County Agricultural Association with emphasis placed on the Itasca County Fair.

Every year the Itasca County Fair has “Senior Day at the Fair.” This year Senior Day will be held on Friday August 16 starting at 11 a.m. and running until 2 pm. Seniors are served lunch and get to socialize, as well as hear music, at no cost. Volunteers cook and serve the seniors and extras such as chips, cookies, and utensils are donated by other organizations. In 2023, 350 seniors were served. Many of the seniors are from local nursing homes or assisted living facilities.

This year the Itasca County Agricultural Association will bring in The Overtones quartet from Roseau to perform for the seniors. The Overtones perform Gaithers, Gatlin Brothers, and Statler Brothers music along with some gospel.

The Itasca County Agricultural Association is looking for a sponsor or two to help with the cost of the band, which is \$1750. If anyone is interested in sponsoring or helping to sponsor the Overtones at Senior Day at the Fair, please contact the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation at 218-999-9100 or Brian Carlson, Itasca County Fair Board Vice President, at 218-256-1522.

NEW FUNDS:

- **Adam Johnson Memorial Fund**
- **Kiwanis Daybreakers Fund**
- **Kurt L. (Buzz) & Jean A. Samuelson Scholarship**
- **Essentia Healthcare - Future in Healthcare Scholarship**
- **Jesse Davis Legacy Scholarship Fund**

In Honor and Memory of Jesse Davis and Gary Oja

It is with heavy hearts and deep appreciation that we pay tribute to two remarkable individuals whose legacy of generosity, volunteerism, and community spirit will forever resonate within our organization and the hearts of those they touched.

Jesse and Gary were not merely donors; they were the embodiment of compassion and selflessness. They were dedicated volunteers who generously shared their time, expertise, and passion for causes they cared about. Their hands-on involvement was a beacon of inspiration, motivating others to join in the collective effort to make a difference.

Their unwavering commitment to our shared community created a lasting impact, leaving an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of those fortunate enough to know them.

Their legacy will live on in the positive changes they brought to our community, and their spirit of giving will continue to inspire us all. They will be deeply missed.



Jesse Davis



Gary Oja

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Sarah Anderson
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For more information or to donate, call
218-999-9100, email info@gracf.org or
visit our website at www.gracf.org



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