



COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION

GRAND RAPIDS AREA

FALL 2024

# TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Grand Rapids Area Community  
Foundation News



## CELEBRATION OF 30 YEARS OF IMPACT AT OUR HARVEST FUN(D) FEST!

As the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation (GRACF) marked its 30th anniversary, we reflected on three decades of meaningful impact in the region. Established in 1994 by local community members, spearheaded by Todd Driscoll of the Blandin Foundation, the Community Foundation was born from a shared vision: to create a place where donors could invest in the community, ensuring a better quality of life for all. In its inaugural year, the Foundation launched with seven funds and assets totaling \$250,000—a humble but determined beginning.

At the end of 2023, GRACF's assets had grown to \$31 million—a testament to the trust the community places in the foundation's stewardship. More importantly, over its history, GRACF has distributed approximately \$30 million in grants and scholarships back to the community. This \$30 million consisted of \$28.1 million in grants to nonprofit organizations and projects (of which \$1.8 was crisis funding and \$250,000 for cancer crisis funding) and \$1.9 million in scholarships for area students.

One remarkable aspect of GRACF's legacy is the longevity of its impact. Four scholarship funds, opened in 1994, are still active, providing support to area students for 30 years and counting. The number of scholarships has grown from four to over 90 scholarships.

In celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2024, GRACF established the Seeds of Change campaign designed to raise awareness for GRACF's impact and to highlight local nonprofits and their work. The event, which was held on Friday, October 11th, culminated in the awarding of \$15,000 to three nonprofits selected by the community. New Beginnings Pregnancy + Family Support received \$2,000 as a semifinalist, the Boys and Girls Club of Grand Rapids/Greenway was awarded \$3,000 as the finalist and Great Tails Animal Rescue won the top prize of \$10,000.

As GRACF looks to the future, it remains deeply grateful to the donors, sponsors, past board members, and community members who have supported its work over the years. Thanks to those who have established funds at the Foundation, leaving a legacy of generosity that will continue for generations. The Foundation also extends its gratitude to its dedicated board and staff—100% of whom contributed to the Seeds of Change Campaign—as well as the GRACF Board's Event Taskforce, which helped bring Harvest Fun(d) Fest to life. And, special thanks to those who have contributed and continue to contribute to GRACF's Foundation Fund, which supports our operations. Supporting the Foundation Fund is essentially an investment in the Foundation's stability and capacity to serve, ensuring that it will be here for years to come to meet the community's evolving needs. The more unrestricted funds we have means the more impact we can make.

With \$31 million in assets and 30 years of service, the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation stands as a pillar of community strength, poised to meet the challenges of the future and continue its mission of improving the quality of life for all. Here's to the next 30!



Mindy Nuhring of GRACF with Great Tails Animal Rescue members, Peggy Miner, Lacey Paulley and Janet Pellersells.



Mindy Nuhring of GRACF with Britta Arendt and Katie Benes of the Boys and Girls Club of Grand Rapids/Greenway



Mindy Nuhring of GRACF with Amanda Jo Grovenberg, Trudy Hasbargen, Dr. Kion Hoffman and Melissa Wheelock of New Beginnings Pregnancy + Family Support



*Seeds of Change*  
HARVEST FUN(D) FEST



**THANK YOU TO ALL OF THE SEEDS OF CHANGE DONORS:**

- |                              |                                  |                           |                           |                                     |                        |
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**THANK YOU TO ALL OF THE SPONSORS OF THE SEEDS OF CHANGE CAMPAIGN:**

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# GRAHA FUND AND PAVILION PROJECT



Grand Rapids Youth Hockey Association (GRAHA) established a fund at the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation this year in preparation for a new, much-needed project. The new project is to create an outdoor hockey rink with arena ice at the Miners Pavilion next to Yanmar Arena. The Pavilion was built in 2016 and is used in the winter, but use is dependent on the weather being cold enough to keep the ice from melting. Warmer temperatures last winter prevented the Pavilion arena from being used for hockey practice and games. This project will use a system of pipes, which are embedded in a concrete slab, that will circulate a coolant to keep the ice cold. This new sheet of ice will allow it to be used from November through March, and with ice time in constant demand, this will be a great resource for the area. The project is estimated to cost \$1.1 million.

The project is on the home stretch. They boards are to be installed the first week in November and the ice should be ready for its first game on November 15th. Mitch Kellin, GRAHA Board, says, "With over 500 girls and boys players in GRAHA, it was a huge need to provide a third sheet with consistent ice. Last year we only got two weeks out of the Pavilion due to the warm weather. This system is able to have ice with outside temps up to 60 degrees, so from November to March we will have a lot more ice time. It also allows us to bring in larger tournaments, which is good for all the local hotels, restaurants, gas stations and retail stores. We have aspirations on doing some multi-use things on it in the offseason, also."

The community has been a huge help with this project. There has been over 500 man hours of volunteer work from GRAHA which helps with the final cost. Kellin also states that, "Rink Tec, the contractor, has been a great partner in this project, which is solely being funded by GRAHA and GRAHA supporters with no city or tax dollars being used. So any bit of help towards our capital campaign is crucial. Also thanks to GRSB and Park State Bank for their support!"

You can donate to the GRAHA Fund at the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation through our website [gracf.org](http://gracf.org) or you can mail in or drop off a check to our office at 350 NW 1st Avenue, Suite E, Grand Rapids. Donate today to help get this project completed!

The Free Range Food Co-op (FRFC), a community-owned grocery store initiative in Grand Rapids, MN, has announced its Season of Giving campaign. This critical phase of fundraising will run during November and December 2024, aiming to raise \$250,000 to support pre-development costs for the store's construction.

Free Range Food Co-op is a start-up, locally owned grocery store in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. Their 1,168 owners are committed to community well-being through access to local, wholesome, organic foods and goods. FRFC is being built by the community, for the community. A volunteer board of directors and organizing teams are completing the business tasks in addition to community outreach to raise awareness of the co-op and build ownership.

Brandon Otway, FRFC's board chair, explains, "This donation-only phase will fund the immediate need for our pre-development costs. We believe our goal of \$250,000 by December 31 will substantially cover this next step toward the development of our community-owned grocery store! By making use of year-end giving, donation days, and match challenges, we open the opportunity for our community, and those beyond it, to invest in their values and make a donation to our food Co-op."

The funds raised will support key steps in the Co-op's journey, including hiring an architectural firm and store designer to move forward with schematic designs and site preparations. These steps are essential as FRFC works toward its ultimate goal of opening the doors of its grocery store. This locally owned store will connect the community with local growers, ensuring that grocery dollars stay within the Grand Rapids area. The Co-op embodies a democratic, community-centered model that strengthens the local food economy and gives owners direct control.

In addition to expanding food options, FRFC is proud to be the only grocery store in the region that is owned and controlled by local people. "The Co-op connects local growers to local people who eat food, and it keeps our grocery dollars circulating here in the Grand Rapids area," notes a Co-op supporter.

FRFC Treasurer Tina White emphasizes, "All donations go through our fiscal sponsor, the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation (GRACF), and can be made by anyone—owner or not! They can be made directly through you, your business, or through your financial advisor as part of your year-end giving. Donations are accepted via card, check, or cash."

To donate online, visit [freerangefood.coop/invest](http://freerangefood.coop/invest) or the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation website [gracf.org/donate](http://gracf.org/donate). Donations can also be made by mail or in person at the GRACF office, 350 NW 1st Avenue, Suite E, Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

For more information or to become an owner, visit the FRFC website: [www.freerangefood.coop](http://www.freerangefood.coop) or send them an email at [freerangefoodcoop@gmail.com](mailto:freerangefoodcoop@gmail.com)

## FREE RANGE FOOD CO-OP FUND AND SEASON OF GIVING CAMPAIGN UPDATE



## NEW FUNDS:

- **Foster Hope Scholarship**
- **Grand Rapids Area Soccer Club Fund**
- **Mobility Mania goMARTI Expansion Fund**
- **Patricia Louise Sala Endowment**
- **Poppo River Fund Scholarship**

## Fund spotlight - Barb James Memorial Fund

*A person's most useful asset is not a head full of knowledge, but a heart full of love, an ear ready to listen and a hand willing to help others*—Author Michael Singer.

The Barb James Memorial Fund was established at the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation in 2014, by Bernie Dehn, to honor the passing of her life partner, Barb James. A resident of the Lawrence Lake area since 1991, Barb owned and operated Lawrence Lake Liquor (LLL) with Bernie for nearly 25 years.

In addition to their business, Barb and Bernie shared a deep-seated faith in God, humanity, and helping others in need. Through proceeds from LLL's charitable gambling (pull tabs), they contributed more than \$50,000 to a variety of local charities and nonprofits before Barb's untimely passing.

This fund was created to continue Barb's legacy of giving back to the community by helping individuals facing crisis situations caused by poverty, housing insecurity, limited educational opportunities, domestic or sexual abuse, medical crises, and mental illness. It also serves as a resource for members of the LGBTQ+ community whose lives have been touched by trauma, violence, and discrimination due to their sexual orientation or gender. By addressing urgent challenges with compassion, the fund offers a lifeline to those in need to help foster hope and resilience in the face of adversity.

If you, or someone you know, are experiencing these types of hardships, please contact the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation at 218-999-9100 or [info@gracf.org](mailto:info@gracf.org).



Barb James

### GRACF BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

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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)



### GRACF STAFF

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