

# THE Common Good

FALL 2025

GRACF Quarterly Newsletter

*Helping to make our community stronger by bringing people together to give and support local needs.*



## HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF WENDY ROY

It is with heartfelt gratitude that we honor the life and legacy of Wendy Roy, the first Executive Director of the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation (GRACF). Wendy played a pivotal role in shaping the Foundation we know today, bringing vision, leadership, and unwavering commitment to strengthening our community through philanthropy.

After high school, Wendy worked a variety of jobs to support her husband while he completed his college education. Wendy later served as Program Director of Campfire Minnesota in

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## BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

*\$25,000 Matching Opportunity for Our Community*

This spring, the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation joined a select group of rural community foundations in a multi-year capacity-building initiative, made possible through a partnership between CommunityGiving and the Blandin Foundation. This program is designed to strengthen organizations like ours, ensuring that we can continue to serve our community for generations to come.



Through the initiative, we're participating in intensive year-long training sessions and receiving individualized coaching and technical assistance from an experienced community foundation leader.

[Read more →](#)

Grand Rapids, reflecting her passion for supporting young people and her growing commitment to community service.

In 1993 and 1994, Wendy was on the original committee that was formed to create the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation. In 1997, Wendy stepped into what became the most significant role of her career: becoming the first Executive Director of GRACF. With vision, tenacity, and heart, she helped guide what began as a small community dream into a thriving, trusted foundation. Under her leadership, the Foundation grew from its first seven funds and \$250,000 in assets to a respected philanthropic resource serving the region. She expanded its reach, built lasting partnerships, hired its first full-time staff, and laid the groundwork for sustainable community impact.

*Wendy had an extraordinary gift for connecting with people and inspiring trust.*

**MINDY NUHRING**  
Executive Director  
GRACF

By the time she retired in 2012, Wendy had helped to grow GRACF into a strong and trusted institution. She brought assets from \$250,000 in 1994 to \$13.7 million by the end of 2012.

Today, the Foundation manages almost 300 funds and has provided more than \$31 million in grants and scholarships—a testament to the Foundation she helped build. “Wendy had an extraordinary gift for connecting with people and inspiring

trust,” said Mindy Nuhring, current GRACF Executive Director. “Her vision and persistence ensured the Foundation would thrive for generations to come.”

Wendy’s expertise and leadership were recognized beyond Grand Rapids. Following her retirement, she served as a philanthropic consultant for other community foundations, one being the Brainerd Lakes Area Community Foundation, bringing with her more than 15 years of experience in community foundation growth and stewardship.

Ever dedicated to learning and growth, Wendy returned to college in her 50s while still leading GRACF. She proudly completed her bachelor’s degree in Business at St. Scholastica, with her husband, children, and grandchildren cheering her on at graduation—a moment that reflected both her determination and her love of family.



Wendy’s life reflected a deep belief in the power of community and the responsibility to leave it stronger for future generations. Her legacy of thoughtful leadership, generosity, and connection lives on through the Foundation she helped build, the people she inspired, and the countless lives touched by her work.

We extend our deepest condolences to Wendy’s family and friends and express our profound gratitude for the incredible impact she made. Her vision continues to guide and inspire everything we do.

These resources are equipping us with new tools to deepen our impact and expand the ways we serve our donors and community.

**“This initiative is a tremendous investment in our ability to make a difference. It strengthens our Foundation today and builds a stronger future for our community tomorrow.”**

**MINDY NUHRING**  
Executive Director  
GRACF

Even better—completing the program means the Foundation will receive \$25,000 in flexible matching funds, which we’ll use to support local grants right here in the Greater Itasca Area.

## How You Can Help

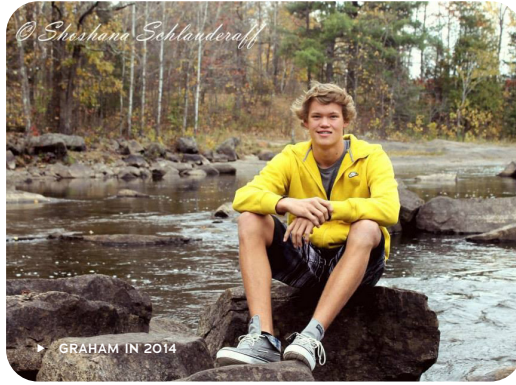
Community members who believe in a thriving Greater Itasca Area will play a vital role in unlocking this \$25,000 match. Every gift will double in impact, providing even more resources to support local nonprofits and community projects.

We’re excited to share that we are planning a special fundraising event in mid-November, Evening of Impact, to support this matching grant opportunity. Stay tuned for details about the event and how to donate—together, we can build a stronger future for our community.

If you would like more information, please contact Mindy Nuhring at [mindy.nuhring@gracf.org](mailto:mindy.nuhring@gracf.org) or 218-999-9100.

## GRACF SCHOLARSHIP HELPED BUILD A CAREER

In 2014, Graham Gallop received the Opportunity for the North Scholarship from the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation, helping set the stage for a future in engineering. A graduate of the University of North Dakota, he earned a degree in Electrical Engineering in 2019. "This scholarship was a massive incentive to continue working hard at school," Graham shared. Today, he is a Senior Electrical Engineer with Mortenson Construction and is thriving in a career he loves, while also celebrating the milestone of being debt-free after paying off student loans.



Reflecting on the support that made this journey possible, Graham expressed heartfelt thanks to the donors: "Thank you for opting to continue sponsoring me even though my GPA fell below (and generally stayed below) the minimum requirement for the scholarship. Jesse Davis (of GRACF) let me know in 2017 that you noted the difficult nature of the degree and that other recipients are not always as lucky. I'm not sure if I wrote a thank you note, and admittedly I only remember because I just found those old emails. That period of school was hard. I hope whoever the donors are who made the 2014 Opportunity for the North scholarship possible learn

that I made it out with an EE degree and have built a sweet career with an amazing company. Thanks for believing in me."



When asked what advice he would share with today's students, Graham was quick to encourage persistence:

**"Just keep applying. It's free money, and if you have loans to pay off you will be thankful for the reduction!"**

This story is a reminder of the lasting impact scholarships have on students—helping them reach their goals, overcome challenges, and create successful futures. Thank you donors – you're making a difference.

## NEW FUNDS

- + DEER RIVER DOG PARK FUND
- + GREAT TAILS ANIMAL RESCUE ENDOWED FUND
- + NEW BEGINNINGS PREGNANCY + FAMILY SUPPORT FUND
- + ROBERTA AND RON SMITH FUND

### FIRST GATHERING

Please join us for light hors d'oeuvres, refreshments, and the chance to reconnect with other past and present board members:

**Wednesday, October 15**  
**3:30–5:30 PM**  
**Aspen Room**  
at the Timberlake Lodge  
*Space is limited*

## Introducing GRACF EMERITUS COUNCIL

We're excited to launch the Emeritus Council—a new way for past GRACF board members to stay connected and engaged. This council honors past board member leadership and provides opportunities to share their insight, attend special gatherings, and continue as ambassadors for the Foundation.

### COMMITMENT

1-2 gatherings per year, with no fiduciary responsibility, voting rights, or required financial contribution

### BENEFITS

- ✓ Recognition as an Emeritus Board Member
- ✓ Invitations to Foundation events
- ✓ Updates on GRACF's impact
- ✓ Opportunities to mentor or share your expertise with current leadership

### INTERESTED?

Please contact:  
mindy.nuhring@gracf.org  
(218) 999-9100



*Your leadership helped build the Foundation's legacy. With the Emeritus Council, your voice and insight can continue guiding our future.*

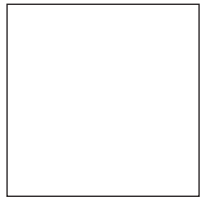
▶ PREVIOUS GRACF BOARD MEMBERS



COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION

GRAND RAPIDS AREA

350 NW 1st Avenue, Suite E  
Grand Rapids, MN 55744



### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Jerry Ophoven  
Roy Smith  
Jared Whight

### STAFF

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



[gracf.org](http://gracf.org)

## ESTATE PLANNING SEMINAR

**Tuesday, October 7 | 5:30-7:30 PM**  
**Aspen Room at Timberlake Lodge**

Learn the essentials of estate planning, including:

- ✓ Wills, trusts, and powers of attorney
- ✓ Financial planning tips
- ✓ How charitable giving can shape your legacy

For more information visit our Facebook event page.

Email [info@gracf.org](mailto:info@gracf.org) to register. *Space is limited.*



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