

COMMUNITY

News for the Greater Good of Linn County



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DIVING IN:

A Message from our President & CEO

Over the last few months, I have truly enjoyed the opportunity to meet some of you for the first time and get to know others in a new way. I've always known that our community is filled with caring and generous people, but it has been



enlightening and inspiring to hear the many stories of why you give to and support our community.

Our logo is a ripple, and as I "dive in" to my new role at the Community Foundation, there is a lot to be excited about:

- Joe Heitz joined us in November as Vice President of Community Impact, and we're excited about the skills and experiences he brings to our organization.
- In 2024, we will engage in strategic planning conversations, and I look forward to hearing from community stakeholders about how we can best serve our community in the years ahead.
- It's year-end giving season! Whether you partner with the Community Foundation as a donor or nonprofit organization, remember we are here to help. The Nonprofit Giving Center is a great resource for all, so if you haven't already, check it out at gcrf.org.

Thank you for partnering with the Community Foundation to strengthen Linn County, and have a safe and happy New Year!

Karla Twedt-Ball

Karla Twedt-Ball
President & CEO

FINDING JOY IN PHILANTHROPY

Chris and Suzy DeWolf Build Legacy on Prioritizing Others

If you asked those around Chris and Suzy DeWolf to give one word that describes the couple, there's a good chance they might land on 'committed.' Over the years, Chris and Suzy have become known for their commitment to their family, community, and business. Their commitment to each other is of particular note—the two met in preschool and began dating in the sixth grade.

When talking about how they met, Chris and Suzy say that "the rest is history," but there's a bit more to their story. In 2000, they moved back to Cedar Rapids, where they grew up. In 2005, Chris and Suzy purchased Lil' Drug Store Products from Suzy's parents, Dennis and Donna Oldorf. Since then, they've expanded the business significantly, raised three children, and partnered with a number of local organizations on major projects that have transformed the community.

Like all their commitments, this desire to support the community has a long history. Both learned the importance of giving back from their parents and have always been eager to build on those lessons.

"When we moved back to Cedar Rapids, we were in the position to give our time and talents," Chris and Suzy explained. "What struck us was how easy it was to get involved with local nonprofits." They both joined boards of directors to give what support they could—Chris at Junior Achievement of Eastern Iowa and Suzy at the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art.

In the years that followed, the family business grew and expanded, providing the DeWolfs with the opportunity to also support local organizations financially. But for Chris and Suzy, philanthropy remains about much more than writing a check.

"One of our goals with philanthropy is the opportunity to make truly transformational change, or in other words, to significantly change the trajectory of an issue in our community," they reflected. "We seek opportunities to provide influence and thought leadership in addition to financial support – getting behind a project and seeing it to fruition has been one of the great joys in our philanthropic journey."



Chris and Suzy DeWolf

Some of those projects have indeed been transformational for Linn County. Chris and Suzy co-chaired Four Oaks' TotalChild effort, which introduced a whole new approach to serving youth and addressing housing needs in core Cedar Rapids neighborhoods. The DeWolfs, along with Suzy's mother, also worked with Mercy Medical Center to establish the Dennis & Donna Oldorf Hospice House in honor of Suzy's father, who died of cancer. The recently opened Chris & Suzy DeWolf Family Innovation Center for Aging & Dementia at Mercy aims to be a national leader in research, training, and education.

While the DeWolfs enjoy the process of innovative philanthropy, they also recognize the importance of supporting the day-to-day operations of nonprofits. Through the Community Foundation, they have provided support for programs, projects, and general operations at dozens of Linn County organizations.

And like their parents before them, Chris and Suzy have passed their thoughtful approach to philanthropy on to the next generation.

"We believe that philanthropy will be a meaningful tool to unite our family as it grows and evolves," Chris and Suzy said. "We have been deliberate about engaging our adult-aged children by making sure that their voices are

heard and ensuring that they have roles in the family's foundation and in our partnership with the Community Foundation."

Through that partnership, the DeWolf family has built a giving strategy that works for them and the community.

"When we first began our philanthropic journey, it was overwhelming. There was so much need, and we didn't know how to focus and prioritize," they commented. "For nearly 20 years, the Community Foundation has

assisted our family in identifying opportunities that match our goals, vision, and passions."

After years of intentional and engaged giving, the DeWolfs have established a clear legacy in Linn County. That legacy, of course, is built on commitment.

"We have made a concerted effort to turn our focus away from ourselves, and in return we've gained so much more than financial success," they shared. "Our commitment to others—our family, employees, customers, consumers, and community—is the fuel that has propelled our success. When you prioritize others, anything is possible."

When you prioritize others, anything is possible..

- Chris and Suzy DeWolf

Nonprofits Supported by the DeWolf Family

Through their funds at the Community Foundation, Chris and Suzy DeWolf have made grants to more than fifty local nonprofit organizations. These gifts have supported transformational projects and daily operations for organizations working across all nonprofit sectors. Here are a few of their grants that are making an impact on our community.

TREES FOREVER

After immediate needs had been met following the 2020 derecho, a few long-term concerns remained, including the devastated tree canopy. Through their donor-advised fund at the Community Foundation, Chris and Suzy made a grant in 2021 to help Trees Forever replace thousands of trees throughout Linn County.

Community leaders such as Chris and Suzy have been instrumental in our ability to begin the reforestation of our Emerald City. With their support and so many others, we have achieved 62% of our overall financial goal for ReLeaf. Families like the DeWolfs are incredibly important to ensuring our ability to bring tree justice and equity to all of Cedar Rapids.

- Deb Powers, Interim CEO



FOUR OAKS FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

A decade ago, Chris and Suzy provided lead gifts and served as co-chairs in the effort to launch TotalChild—a holistic approach to addressing children's needs. To date, more than 2,000 children have been served through the program.

Chris and Suzy DeWolf are tremendous champions of the children and families served by Four Oaks. Their charitable contributions and commitment have been instrumental in the successful outcomes for those touched by our holistic TotalChild approach. It is leaders like Chris and Suzy who push the bar higher in our community to assure every one of our neighbors succeeds.

- Mary Beth O'Neill, President and CEO



MOUNT MERCY UNIVERSITY

Through two designated funds at the Community Foundation, Chris and Suzy have supported a wide range of student programs. Because they are endowed, these funds will provide support for the University forever.

The DeWolf family has had a long-standing relationship with Mount Mercy University including Suzy's late father Dennis serving as a leader on the MMU Board of Trustees. Chris and Suzy's genuine concern for first generation college students has extended from annual and endowed scholarships for undergraduate students on our main campus to support for MMU's CRST Graduate Center programs. Chris and Suzy's philanthropic focus aligns beautifully with Cedar Rapids' only Catholic University that was built on a foundation of philanthropy for this community.

- Brenda Haefner, Vice President Development & Alumni Relations



MERCY MEDICAL CENTER FOUNDATION

The Chris & Suzy DeWolf Family Innovation Center for Aging & Dementia opened in summer of 2023 and offers tools and resources for those living with dementia and their caregivers. Connected to the HallMar Village, the Center provides unique opportunities for developing new practices.

Chris and Suzy's lead gift establishing a new and unique center focused on applicable aging and dementia strategies has already impacted thousands. The Innovation Center for Aging & Dementia has captured interest in the Midwest and our nation, positively influencing the way we will all age and live with purpose well into our older adult years. Mercy is proud to partner with the DeWolf family in this meaningful work and grateful for their investment in innovation.

- Lorrie Erusha, President





LAP-AID Inclusion Cohort Meeting
October 2023

LEARNING FOR THE GREATER GOOD

Understanding Local Issues and Each Other Enhances Our Impact

In 2019, the Community Foundation created a strategic plan to carry it through 2024. One of the key goals was to foster a culture of learning to better understand how we can serve Linn County. While the years that followed brought unpredictable challenges, the organization remained committed to reflecting and helping others learn.

As the Community Foundation prepares to launch a new strategic plan in 2025, there is an increased effort to become a learning organization.

“Becoming a learning organization is exactly what it sounds like—prioritizing learning and making it a key component of all internal and external operations,” said Carrie Walker, Director of Learning. Carrie was promoted to this role in January to connect nonprofit and community partners to information and resources and lead efforts to enhance learning within the Community Foundation. This is an expansion of Carrie’s existing work through the Nonprofit Network.

“We’re interested in learning on several fronts,” Carrie said. “What challenges are organizations facing? What are other funders and donor partners doing to respond to new challenges? What parts of our community have been left behind? How can we better serve those outside the Cedar Rapids metro area?”

The Community Foundation—in partnership with nonprofits, donors, other funders, and community organizations—works to strengthen our community over time, but the environment in which that work is done is highly dynamic. As technology, policy, and economic conditions change at an increasingly fast pace, it becomes even more important to keep tabs on new challenges, opportunities, and approaches.

One of the Community Foundation’s priorities is learning how we can help create a more equitable and inclusive Linn County.

“We know that certain groups within our community face more barriers to success, but the learning can’t stop there,” Carrie said. “By building connections with these groups, we can better understand their experiences and ensure we are a community foundation for everyone in Linn County.”

Some of those barriers were highlighted during long-term recovery from the 2020 derecho, when it became clear that some historically marginalized communities were not connected to or aware of the resources and assistance that were available.

In 2022, the Community Foundation received a grant from The Funders Network to form better connections with

members of these communities. The LAP-AID (Linn Area Partners Active in Disaster) Inclusion Cohort kicked off in July 2023.

Focusing on older adults, immigrants, cultural groups, the medically vulnerable, and grassroots organizations, the LAP-AID Inclusion Cohort set out to strengthen connections to each other, the broader community, and existing networks of care and resources. Building these connections now can help make sure future disaster response and recovery is equitable.

“Like many marginalized groups, LGBTQIA+ folks are often overlooked and unheard during times of disaster,” said Corey Jacobson. Corey is Board President at CR Pride and represented the organization in the Inclusion Cohort. “Our community trusts us and reaches out when in need. If a disaster occurs and information needs to be shared, we can be one of those outlets to reach community members who might otherwise not see that information.”

“To strengthen our whole community, we need to understand its people.”

- Carrie Walker
Director of Learning

Organizations that participated in the LAP-AID Inclusion Cohort learned about disaster preparedness and response, and existing resources. In turn, Community Foundation staff and LAP-AID volunteers learned about existing barriers and new ways to connect with various parts of the community.

“Philanthropy is not just about distributing funds or resources,” Carrie said. “To strengthen our whole community, we need to understand its people. By bringing a learning mindset to our work, we can achieve the changes we want to see.”

LAP-AID Inclusion Cohort Participants:

Paly Afridi, *Islamic Center*; Lori Ampey, *Tanager LGBTQ+ Youth Center/Boys & Girls Club (South Unit)*; Minouche Bandubaila, *Hoover Community School*; Robin Switzer Brunner, *Ecumenical Community Center Foundation*; Stephanie Carter, *Wellington Heights Community Church*; Kathy Franzenburg, *retired clergy*; Mugisha Gloire, *United We March Forward*; Corey Jacobson, *CR Pride*; Nafissatou Lamidi, *RIVA Iowa*; Melissa Perkins, *Never Dream Less Foundations*; and Monica Vallejo, *Latinos Unidos for Community Inclusion (LUCI)*.

RECENT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES:

Nonprofit Know-How: Equity in Action - On August 30, 2023, a panel of local nonprofit leaders shared information about their organizations’ equity goals and practices. This learning event supported equity-building efforts in the nonprofit sector.

Learning Cohorts: Cohorts provide an opportunity to build connections and explore new ideas together. Recently, three cohorts have concluded:

- *LAP-AID Inclusion Cohort* - Eleven community organizers serving historically marginalized groups gathered monthly from July – October to strengthen connections for disaster preparation.
- *Thrive Cohort* - Eighteen BIPOC nonprofit professionals participated in learning and connecting from March – November. This initiative aims to make connections, and help nonprofits diversify staff and close the racial leadership gap.
- *Learning Cohort: Engaging in the DEI Journey* - Facilitated by Top RANK, this cohort offers tools to help nonprofit leaders implement equitable practices. It was offered in the fall of 2023 and will be offered again in the spring of 2024.

Philanthropy Roundtables: These small gatherings focus on connecting local philanthropists to learn from and be inspired by others who are making a difference in Linn County. The most recent event was held on November 9, 2023.

Nonprofit Network: This network of nonprofit professionals has access to monthly peer groups, resources, and professional development opportunities. The Nonprofit Network strengthens connections and learning throughout the sector.



Thrive Cohort



FOOD INSECURITY ON THE RISE

Nonprofits Face New Challenges to Meet Needs

Over the last year or two, Program Officers at the Community Foundation have noted a significant increase in the number of grant applications aimed at reducing food insecurity in Linn County. As families struggle to afford basic necessities, the nonprofit organizations that serve them face new challenges—but are responding with innovation and collaboration.

The reasons behind the increase in food insecurity are complex. Food, housing, and other goods and services are more expensive than ever, and pandemic-era programs and tax credits have expired, creating a sort of financial cliff for many families.

“Food pantries across the state saw a marked increase in need in 2022 after the extended child tax credit ended in December 2021,” said Nicole McAlexander, Executive Director of the Southeast Linn Community Center (SELCC), which operates a food pantry in Lisbon. “Another significant increase happened in the spring of 2022 after Iowa ended the emergency declaration and SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits reverted to pre-pandemic levels.”

At the same time, Nicole explained, less food has been available through USDA programs and inventory at food banks has been low. Hawkeye Area Community Action Program (HACAP) is a food bank that provides food for pantries in seven counties in Eastern Iowa.

“Unfortunately, the rising cost of food and transportation is hurting local agencies including our food bank,” said Kim Guardado, Food Reservoir Director at HACAP. “Though we’ve seen an increase in donated food from local retail and manufacturers, we’ve been purchasing 14 times the amount of food we purchased just four years ago.”

Pantries are seeing similar impacts from the higher costs and increased need. Since 2020, SELCC’s yearly food pantry expenses have increased 520%.

“Unfortunately, the rising cost of food and transportation is hurting local agencies including our food bank.”

- Kim Guardado
Food Reservoir Director, HACAP

Certain groups have been disproportionately impacted by these issues. In rural areas, access to reduced-price grocery stores is limited, transportation costs are higher, and wages for local jobs are often less competitive. Nicole noted that more than 10% of people in Mount Vernon and Lisbon utilize the SELCC pantry.

Immigrants and refugees also face unique challenges, as even pantries do not always have culturally relevant food. Feed Iowa First works to help newer Americans access farmable land and foods they are accustomed to preparing and eating.

“Feed Iowa First has observed a clear uptick in the immigrant community using our services,” said Emmaly Renshaw, Executive Director. “In some cases, we are the sole distributor of culturally significant vegetables in the community.”

Emmaly also noted that Feed Iowa First is serving an increasing number of families that are considered middle-class. Many families who earn too much to qualify for food assistance are still not earning enough to get by.

Those working and volunteering at food pantries and programs note the importance of collaboration in responding to this complex issue. Kim pointed out that feeding people isn’t enough.

“We need things like access to affordable health care, quality education, reliable transportation, safe neighborhoods where they can live work and play, and strong social supports,” Kim said. “Together, these things will ensure our neighbors have what they need to promote economic stability and healthy, thriving households.”

As one example of collaboration, Feed Iowa First partners with local businesses and organizations to grow food on otherwise unused land. The program is called Grow Don’t Mow and provided some 19,000 pounds of produce in 2022.

“We are excited to see more partnerships between organizations and health partners to address the growing issue of food insecurity in our community,” Emmaly said. “This work will only move forward if we look beyond our own capacities and work together.”

Nonprofit Professionals Recognized for Going Above and Beyond

On September 14th, twelve nonprofit professionals were recognized as the 2023 Spirit of Minnie Rubek honorees at the annual Nonprofit Party held at NewBo City Market. This recognition is presented to those who consistently go above and beyond in their service to their organizations and our community.



Pictured in front row (left to right): Rozana Garrison, *Women’s Services Recovery Specialist, Catherine McAuley Center*; Katie Goedken-Fennell, *Site Assistant, The Arc of East Central Iowa*; Yer Vang, *Director of Immigration Legal Services, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Dubuque*; Rhonda Martin, *Assistant to the Athletic Director, Mount Mercy University – Athletic Department*.

Back row (left to right): Alice Silver, *Food Service Manager, Tanager*; Amy Brunner, *Director of Community Engagement, Girl Scouts of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois*; Polly Draker, *Clinic Supervisor, His Hands Free Clinic*; Sandy Osborn, *Nutrition Services Manager, Horizons*; Jessica Peel-Austin, *Curator of Museum Collections, Brucemore*; Alicia Faust, *Executive Director, Willis Dady Homeless Services*; Jeff Hazzard, *Helping Hands Ministry Program Coordinator, Ecumenical Community Center Foundation*. Missing from photo: Leland Freie, *Nutrition Specialist, Foundation 2 Crisis Services*.

WHY DONORS PARTNER WITH US

Q & A with Michelle Beisker, Senior Vice President of Development



While establishing a charitable fund is an easy process, many who give through the Community Foundation do so with care and planning. Our Development Team works with donors and their advisors to outline philanthropic goals, establish a legacy of giving, and create a personalized plan that works for them. Michelle Beisker, Senior Vice President of Development, answered

a few questions on why donors and professional advisors partner with the Community Foundation.

Q: Charitable giving is sometimes surprisingly complex; how do you help donors and their advisors navigate the process?

A: We can help donors figure out how to turn their passions into a charitable giving plan, and we're also trained in facilitating conversations with their families and advisors. We can accept complex gifts, and our range of fund options can simplify tax and estate planning. Without the Community Foundation, such giving strategies would need to be done through a private foundation, which can be much more complicated.

Q: Donor-advised funds are also available through financial service companies; why do donors choose the Community Foundation?

A: The Community Foundation is a great fit for those interested in local, personalized giving. We live here, and we care about serving this community. We can help donors understand and stay up to date on Linn County's needs and opportunities, and our policies ensure that your intentions as a donor will always be honored, even after you pass.

Q: We talk a lot about philanthropic legacy; how do you define that?

A: Philanthropic legacy combines gift planning and grantmaking to support a donor's goals following their lifetime. By thinking ahead about estate plans, donors can optimize tax planning and make a lasting impact. The result is a philanthropic plan that works for you, your family, and your community. Many donors find it rewarding to know that their gifts will benefit the community forever.

Q: Why do donors use the Community Foundation for establishing their legacy?

A: Through a letter of intent—which donors can amend during their lifetime—donors can be sure that we understand and will honor their philanthropic priorities. We're an endowed foundation, which means you can be sure we will be here to serve Linn County forever. Perhaps the most well-known legacy at the Community Foundation is that of William Quarton, who gave through the Community Foundation because he understood the importance of equipping Linn County with the resources to respond to future challenges and opportunities.

Q: What do donors tell you they appreciate about the Community Foundation?

A: Donors appreciate staff knowledge of local needs and opportunities and our ability to connect them to nonprofit organizations that align with their passions. Donors often come to us looking to optimize their tax planning, and we help them do so in a way that serves the community and is rewarding for them.

Endow Iowa Update

The Endow Iowa tax credit program remains in a blackout period until the end of 2023; no new applications are being accepted. On January 1, the 2024 credits will be available and the Community Foundation will begin sending applications to donors who have made eligible gifts during the blackout period.

2024 Grant Deadlines Announced

The grant deadlines for 2024 will be:

- Friday, March 1
- Friday, June 28
- Friday, September 13

The grant portal opens approximately 30 days prior to each deadline and closes at 4:30 p.m. on each deadline day.

Find more information at gcrf.org.

Supporting Local Educators

This year, the Community Foundation once again provided \$25,000 in matching funds to gifts made to Linn County educators through DonorsChoose.org. Thank you to the many donors who helped us support 118 projects at 29 public schools throughout Linn County.

Register for Learning Cohort: Engaging in the DEI Journey

This cohort offers tools and concepts to help nonprofit leaders implement equitable practices, with a focus on racial equity. It is a three-part cohort and will be offered on April 10, May 8, and June 12, 2024 from 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. Register at www.gcrf.org/nonprofits/learning-events/.

STAFF NEWS

Joe Heitz Joins Community Foundation as Vice President of Community Impact

On November 7, Joe Heitz joined the Community Foundation as Vice President of Community Impact. Joe is originally from Farley, Iowa, and studied at the University of Iowa, Northwestern University, and Cambridge University. With a background in nonprofit leadership, music, and journalism, Joe brings a wide range of talents to the role. Joe will provide leadership for the Community Foundation teams that implement grantmaking, nonprofit capacity building, learning, and community leadership priorities. Welcome, Joe!



Arthur Kim Named Chartered Advisor in Philanthropy

After nearly a year of coursework through The American College of Financial Services, Development Officer Arthur Kim achieved the Chartered Advisor in Philanthropy designation earlier this year. Coursework focused on family philanthropy, charitable giving strategies, and how philanthropists can work with nonprofits to enhance impact, and the experience has equipped Arthur with a range of new skills and tools to support philanthropy in Linn County. Congratulations, Arthur!

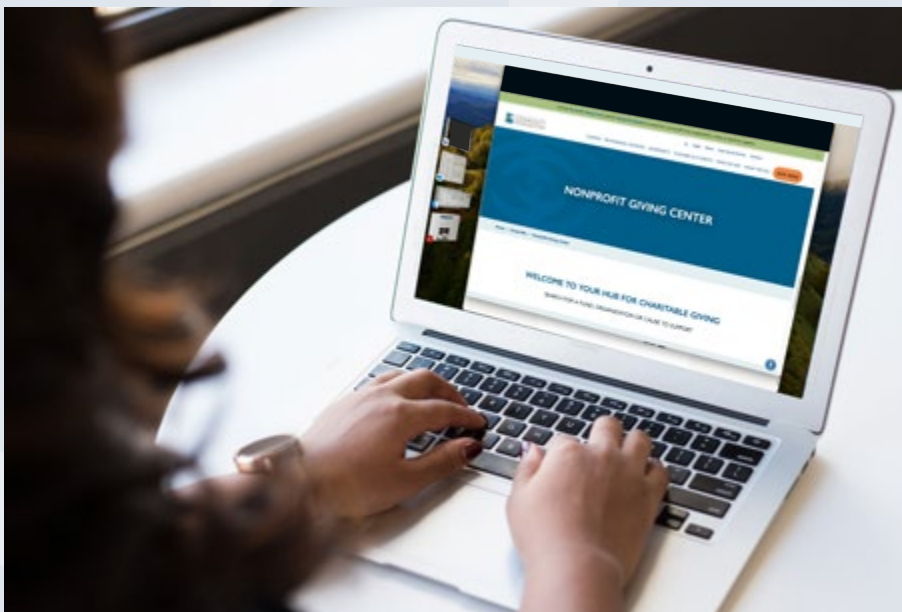




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LOOKING FOR A CAUSE OR NONPROFIT TO SUPPORT?



The Community Foundation's website hosts a new giving hub, called the Nonprofit Giving Center, designed to help connect the needs of nonprofits to donors who want to make a difference.

In addition, if you're looking for something to do this holiday season, the Nonprofit Calendar provides upcoming nonprofit events and activities to support.

Visit gcrf.org today!

STAY CONNECTED! Follow us for news, updates and stories about the impact of philanthropy in Linn County.

