

COMMUNITY

News for the Greater Good of Linn County



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CELEBRATING OUR PAST AND FUTURE: A Message from our President & CEO

This year, we mark 75 years of serving Linn County! I may be biased, but I'm very excited about what we have in store to celebrate in 2024.



Those who established our organization in 1949 understood that it would take significant time and effort to create the community resource they envisioned. Over the years, thousands of donors contributed to the Community Foundation, and thousands of community members relied on nonprofits to meet their needs and improve their quality of life.

Throughout this year, we will reflect on these stories and those whose legacies still support our community today.

The Community Foundation is not just celebrating the past in 2024. As a future-focused organization, we will continue to look for ways to support the long-term health and wellbeing of Linn County.

Throughout 2024, there will be many opportunities to celebrate and engage with the Community Foundation. The work our community puts in today enhances our ability to support a vibrant and inclusive community tomorrow. I invite you all to join us on this journey.

Karla Twedt-Ball

Karla Twedt-Ball
President & CEO



Since 1949, we've partnered with donors and nonprofits to build a more vibrant and equitable Linn County where all people can thrive.

FROM THE START Celebrating 75 Years of Impact

In the late 1940's, as communities across the country began looking toward a post-war future, a group of forward-thinking citizens came together to establish the Community Welfare Foundation of Cedar Rapids. The organization, which would go on to become the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation, was created to help philanthropists support the varied and ever-changing needs of the community.

Research for the endeavor began in 1945, shortly after the end of World War II. Some thirty years earlier, philanthropists in Cleveland, Ohio had noticed a trend where charitable funds were controlled by outdated wills, rendering them unable to effectively support the communities to which they had been gifted. The Cleveland Foundation was established in 1914 to offer a way for philanthropists to leave gifts that could be used in response to the community's changing needs and opportunities.

By the 1940's, philanthropists in Linn County had several examples of these "community foundations" to learn from. On February 5, 1949, the Community Welfare Foundation of Cedar Rapids was incorporated to "provide a way to

benefit the community without leaving money to a body which for one reason or other may go out of business someday," said President Van Vechten Shaffer.

From the start, the Foundation aimed to make it easier to support local nonprofits—it was not to be seen as a competitor of existing organizations, the founders pointed out.

In its first few years, the all-volunteer organization took in few gifts as the processes for receiving, growing, and distributing funds were ironed out. In 1954, the first grants were awarded—\$350 each to the Children's Home of Cedar Rapids and the Home for Aged Women.

The Foundation continued granting a few hundred dollars annually until 1972, when the estate of Minnie Rubek bolstered the organization's assets. A retired member of the cleaning staff at the local utility company, Minnie was the last surviving member of her family and led a quiet life. But her estate, totaling more than \$300,000—some \$2.2 million in 2024 dollars—made a significant impact on the Foundation and the wider community.

1949

The Community Welfare Foundation of Cedar Rapids was established on February 5, 1949, and was the first organization of its kind in Iowa. Just a few days later, the Foundation received its first gift: \$500 from Anthony T. Pleune in memory of his wife.

1972

On March 12, 1971, Minnie M. Rubek passed away and left her estate to the Community Welfare Foundation. The bequest, received the following year, totaled more than \$300,000 (some \$2.2 million in 2024 dollars) and increased the Foundation's annual grants from a few hundred dollars to more than \$20,000. Minnie was a life-long resident of Cedar Rapids and a retired member of the cleaning staff at Iowa Electric Light and Power Company.

1954

The Community Welfare Foundation distributed its first grants in May of 1954 – \$350 each to the Children's Home of Cedar Rapids and the Home for Aged Women. The grants provided general operating support for the organizations, which were identified as serving the community's greatest needs at the time.

1987

Radio and television pioneer William B. Quarton made a gift of \$450,000 and issued a challenge: if the Foundation's board would change its IRS status from private to public, update the organization's name to reflect its commitment to all of Linn County, and raise an additional \$450,000 from the community, he would establish a \$900,000 charitable lead trust to benefit the Foundation for the next ten years.

Minnie's gift greatly increased the Foundation's ability to make impactful grants, which jumped from \$800 in 1971, to \$20,000 in 1972.

By 1987, radio and television executive William B. Quarton recognized that while the Foundation was awarding significant grants, it could have a much larger impact if more of the community got behind the organization. To inspire such support, Bill made a gift of \$450,000, pushing Foundation assets over the \$1 million mark, which had long been a goal.

But Bill was not a passive philanthropist, and along with his gift he issued a challenge: if the Foundation's board would change its IRS status from private to public, update the organization's name to the Greater Cedar Rapids

Foundation to reflect its commitment to all of Linn County, and raise an additional \$450,000 from the community, he would establish a \$900,000 charitable lead trust to benefit the Foundation for the next ten years.

While the challenge was issued to the Foundation, it was intended for the entire community—William was keen to see if Linn County was interested in building this resource for its future. "If in the next few years it is proven they are, I would like to make another substantial contribution," he said.

As has become habit, Linn County responded to the challenge with enthusiasm and generosity. Within the first year of Bill's three-year challenge, the Foundation took in more than \$570,000, easily surpassing the goal.

"The ability to match Bill Quarton's generous gift in less than a year shows there are many area donors desirous of giving something back to the community that has been good to them. It also reflects the motivation that his philanthropy has generated," said Foundation Vice President Russell Hess.

Thanks to the foresight of Bill, the Foundation's Board of Directors, and the many philanthropists in our community, the Greater Cedar Rapids Foundation received its IRS approval as a public foundation in 1992 (it would become the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation in 2000). By then, assets had grown to more than \$3.5 million, cementing the Foundation's role as a permanent source of support for local nonprofit organizations.

In the decades since, the Community Foundation has continued to grow partnerships with donors and nonprofits to strengthen Linn County. By the end of 2023, assets reached \$212 million, and more than \$194 million has been granted since the organization was established. Such growth is made possible by the generosity of donors and a focus on the future.

"In 2024, we celebrate 75 years of serving Linn County," said President & CEO Karla Twedt-Ball. "But by no means are we dwelling in the past. The Community Foundation remains committed to the long-term health and wellbeing of our community, and I am excited by the thought of what we might accomplish in the next 75 years."



1989

In June of 1989, Dr. Malcolm Peel became the Foundation's first full-time Executive Director. Through the recent increase in assets and Dr. Peel's leadership, the Foundation was able to create a more systematic approach to awarding grants through an application process.

1996

By this time, it was clear that William Quarton's goal to inspire sustained philanthropy in Linn County was a resounding success. In 1996, the Foundation awarded more than \$1.1 million in grants, and assets topped \$13.6 million.

2005

The Linn County Nonprofit Resource Center launched in 2005 and would become the Nonprofit Network in 2012.

2007

On August 19, 2007, William Barlow Quarton III passed away at the age of 104. A \$35 million bequest to the Community Foundation built upon this legacy of giving back. William's bequest created endowments for several organizations he loved, and the remainder—more than \$21 million—went to the Community Foundation's



unrestricted funds. William often reminded those around him that we cannot predict what our community will need in the future, but we can help prepare it to meet those needs.

2018

The Secretary's Award for Public-Philanthropic Partnerships, presented by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Council on Foundations, recognized the Community Foundation's role in the collaborative MICRO loan program, which offers Cedar Rapids entrepreneurs and small businesses low-interest loans to start or grow their business.

2020

The Community Foundation and community partners established the COVID-19 Disaster Response Fund to minimize the impact of the coronavirus and address human service needs for vulnerable populations. Between 2020 and 2023, the fund granted more than \$437,000 into the community.

On August 13, the Community Foundation established the Disaster Recovery Fund to support organizations responding to the August 10 derecho disaster. The Community

Foundation also convened local funders and nonprofit organizations to support the launch of the Providing Assistance to Community Homeowners (PATCH) program. Through PATCH, nonprofits provided home repairs and legal assistance to homeowners throughout Linn County.



1992

After the mandatory five-year transition period, the Greater Cedar Rapids Foundation received its final IRS approval as a public foundation. Assets at the time were over \$3.6 million.

2000

The organization's name was changed to Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation.

2008

Floodwaters from the Cedar River impacted more than 5,300 homes and displaced more than 18,000 residents. Damages in Cedar Rapids alone were estimated at \$5.4 billion. The Community Foundation established the Flood Fund to help meet immediate needs and support long-term recovery efforts, ultimately providing \$15.8 million in grants to 81 local nonprofits.

2012

The Community Foundation was named Outstanding Foundation of 2012 by the Association of Fundraising Professionals for efforts to strategically distribute funds in the wake of the 2008 flood.

2023

In 2019, a coalition of nonprofits, community members, and law enforcement began implementing evidence-based strategies for reducing gun violence. The Community Foundation led the project through initial development. In 2023, Foundation 2 assumed oversight of the collaborative effort, working directly with those at highest risk of perpetrating and being victims of violent crime.





Michael and Marla Valliere

WATCHING IT GROW

Michael and Marla Valliere Plant Seeds of Impact

Once a year, Michael and Marla Valliere thumb through a list of organizations that have applied for Community Foundation grants, looking for programs, projects and organizations that speak to them. Their task is to recommend grants from their donor-advised fund—an annual process they enjoy and find rewarding.

But while philanthropy may seem second-nature to them now, the grants they make today are made possible by investments the Vallieres made decades ago.

In the early 1980's, as they raised their three daughters in Cedar Rapids, Michael and Marla invested in themselves. Marla taught special education and Mike was one of the first employees of Teleconnect, a local telephone company. As the business grew, the couple lived on Mike's salary while using Marla's to purchase stock.

Teleconnect would eventually merge with another company and become Telecom USA, which was purchased by MCI in 1990. With the sale of the company, the Vallieres'

investment in themselves paid off and allowed them to invest in their community.

"We decided we would put away a lump sum to put our children through college and for some special things," Marla said. "We also decided to donate an equal sum through the Community Foundation."

The Vallieres worked with their accountant and the Community Foundation to develop a giving strategy that worked for them and the community. With an initial gift, they established the Michael and Marla Valliere Donor-Advised Fund in 1990, making it one of the earliest such funds at the Community Foundation. The flexibility and longevity of an endowed donor-advised fund was appealing to the budding philanthropists.

“One of the reasons we did this was so the money would stay there and continue to grow.”

- Marla Valliere

"I liked how the Foundation worked and was managed," Mike said. "It was the best vehicle for us to invest in because we had choices; we could put thought into where the money was going and see its impact."

Like many experienced philanthropists, the Vallieres prefer this terminology—they aim to make investments, not gifts. In keeping with this perspective, they also established a charitable remainder unitrust in 1990. Through this option, a trust was established and invested to provide annual distributions to the Vallieres. At the end of the trust's term—20 years, in this case—the remainder was distributed to the Vallieres' donor-advised fund at the Community Foundation.

This approach provided Mike and Marla with a source of income while also allowing them to make grants to nonprofits they admire.

"Because I was in education, a lot of our grants have gone there," Marla said. "We fell in love with St. Ambrose University during our daughter's time there, so we provided some scholarships for students who couldn't otherwise afford private college."

Marla also served on Mercy Hospital's auxiliary board after her retirement, leading a committee to award scholarships to Mount Mercy students in healthcare. The Vallieres would later make grants to support these scholarships, as well as religious, environmental and arts organizations.



The Vallieres moved to Florida in 2019, but philanthropy has helped them maintain a connection to Eastern Iowa. As the seeds they planted continue to flourish, Mike and Marla enjoy thinking about the possibilities ahead.

"We like being able to support a broad range of organizations, and we like being able to provide long-term support," Mike said. "This fund will be there in the future to support multiple organizations—if the Board manages it correctly," he joked. "So far, in these last 34 years, they've done a very good job of that."

And while Mike and Marla's daughters live in Florida, Texas and Davenport, the couple hope the donor-advised fund can serve as a connection to Cedar Rapids for the next generation.

"One of the reasons we did this was so the money would stay there and continue to grow," Marla said. "It is rewarding that we could do this, and I hope that when Mike and I are gone, the children can continue making grants from this fund."



FIRST GRANTS AWARDED

Two Organizations Received the Foundation's First Grants in 1954

By the time the Community Welfare Foundation was ready to award its first grants, the Children's Home of Cedar Rapids and the Home for Aged Women had been serving the community for decades. Both organizations grew out of the Industrial School, established in 1879, and evolved to meet Linn County's needs as they developed.

In the mid-1860's, one Eleanor J. Lund moved from Benton County to Cedar Rapids in search of opportunity. At just 26, Eleanor had recently been widowed for the second time, and the family's property was sold to cover a debt.

Eleanor took a job teaching downtown, and although she had a child of her own, she lamented not being able to do more for the city's youth. Many fathers and husbands had been killed or disabled in the Civil War, and many of the community's Czechoslovakian immigrants faced economic and cultural challenges.

In 1879, Eleanor took matters into her own hands. Into her own home, Eleanor invited several children who were orphaned or whose parents could not afford to care for them. She would feed and shelter the children and, along with volunteers in the community, teach them useful skills, like carpentry and sewing. The following year, the Industrial School was officially formed with 27 students.

By 1887, Eleanor recognized that it was not just the city's youth who were being forgotten. There were few opportunities for her as a young widow, but there were even fewer for older women without wealthy families, so the Industrial School began taking in elderly women.

In 1888, the Industrial School became the Home for the Friendless—a common name for orphanages of the time. Around this time, public schools became more common and available to all children, so the organization focused on serving as a home.



Eleanor J. Lund

Also around this time, Eleanor's efforts to care for elderly women outgrew the home's space, and a separate organization was formed. The Home for Aged Women, as it would come to be known, struggled to find a permanent location until, in 1899, a donor funded the construction of a property on 12th Street NW. The striking Victorian home provided rooms for 35 women over 65 and was known as Kingston Hill. The organization itself would adopt this name in 1976.

The Home for the Friendless would move several times in the following decades and eventually become the Children's Home of Cedar Rapids in 1940. By the 1960's, orphanages were becoming obsolete, and in 1962 the Home shifted focus again, becoming the area's first residential treatment facility for adolescents.

Just two years later, the Public Health Nursing Association asked the Children's Home to take over Camp Good Health, which had been established in 1926 for disadvantaged youth. In the decades that followed, the Home would add new services, programs, and facilities to respond to the mental health needs of local youth with up-to-date practices. In 1990, the Children's Home became Tanager Place, and Camp Good Health became Camp Tanager.

Today, Tanager provides essential prevention, treatment and outreach services to thousands of youth and their families each year.

Kingston Hill would eventually join AbbeHealth in 2007, which became an affiliate of UnityPoint Health in 2017. The Victorian home—now with an attached wing—is still serving as a residential care facility nestled among residential properties in northwest Cedar Rapids.

These two organizations are the legacy of Eleanor Lund and the countless educators, counselors, caretakers and advocates that believed in the mission, as well as the many donors who offered support. Since 1954, the Community Foundation has made grants to organizations like these who are constantly evolving in response to Linn County's changing needs and opportunities.

"Nonprofit organizations provide the programs and services that make Linn County a healthy and vibrant community," says Karla Twedt-Ball, President & CEO at the Community Foundation. "Our history of connecting the generosity of donors with the needs of nonprofits has deep roots, and we're proud that our grantmaking has helped support the missions of many nonprofits through the years."



In 1954, the Children's Home of Cedar Rapids (currently known as Tanager Place) and the Home for Aged Women (currently known as UnityPoint Health's AbbeHealth Services, Kingston Hill Residential Care Facility) received the first two grants made by the Foundation. They each received \$350.

2024 Thrive Cohort Launches

On March 7, the 2024 Thrive Cohort gathered for the first time to build connections and look at the year ahead. This group of 12 Black, Brown and Bi-racial nonprofit professionals will meet regularly for relationship building, networking and intentional learning with local leaders. Each Cohort member's organization will receive a \$2,000 grant to support general operations. Thrive is part of the Community Foundation's efforts to advance racial equity by helping nonprofit organizations close the racial leadership gap and diversify nonprofit staff and managerial teams. This is the third Thrive Cohort.



2024 Thrive Cohort

Pictured in front row (left to right): Dominique Brooks, *Junior Achievement of Eastern Iowa*; Yer Vang, *Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Dubuque*; Quamii Hardwick, *Zach Johnson Foundation*; Carla Walker, *Four Oaks*; Markees Drayton, *Four Oaks*. **Back row (left to right):** L.D. Kidd, *Wellington Heights Community Church*; Brittley Dixon, *Junior League of Cedar Rapids*; Maxine Prime, *Willis Dady*; Cecilia Bwanakweri, *Catherine McAuley Center*; Derrick Perkins, *Never Dream Less Foundations*. **Not Pictured:** Monica Vallejo, *Latinos Unidos for Community Inclusion*; Dannielle Williams, *ASAC*.

EVOLVING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

Q & A with Jon Landon, Chair, Board of Directors



Q: Why do you think the Community Foundation is important in Linn County?

A: It is hard to pick one thing here, because the Community Foundation plays such unique and multifaceted roles. The one defining feature that I like to call out that folks may not realize is the permanent yet flexible nature of the Greater Good Fund. This unrestricted endowment is significant because it provides annual funding that can be used to best meet the current needs of the community. This allows charitable gifts from years gone by to adapt with the community as it grows, and our grantmaking process provides nonprofits with equitable access to philanthropic resources.

Q: The Community Foundation is creating a new strategic plan this year; what do you look forward to as that plan is developed and implemented?

A: I am looking forward to getting feedback from the community, staff and fellow board members about where we are as an organization and how we can continue to grow and impact the community in a positive way. Personally, I am excited about working to expand the base of donors to the next generation and to folks who may not be familiar with the Community Foundation.

Q: We know the Community Foundation is an organization that looks at the long view of our community. As we celebrate 75 years of serving Linn County this year, what do you think people can expect from the organization over the next 75 years?

A: That is a great question. I have no idea what the organization will look like over the next 75 years, but I am confident of two things: the Community Foundation will be present in 75 years and it will be able to provide funding for the current needs of the community as it exists in 75 years—which is pretty cool. This organization was built by and belongs to the people of this community, so we have the opportunity to ensure it remains the resource we need it to be. To anyone who likes the sound of that, I encourage you to reach out and find ways to get involved—we would love to hear from you!

Jon Landon is an attorney with Shuttleworth & Ingersoll, P.L.C. and is serving as the Chair of the Board of Directors in 2024. He answered a few questions about his service on the Board, the unique role of the Community Foundation, and its importance to Linn County.

Q: Tell us about how you began your service at the Community Foundation.

A: As an attorney, I work a lot with both local nonprofit organizations as well as individuals and businesses that are interested in charitable tax planning, so I was familiar with the Community Foundation and held it in high regard as an important intersection point for our community's nonprofits and donors. Needless to say, I was very honored when some clients and colleagues nominated me to join the board.

Q: You've been on the Board of Directors for five years now; what has that experience been like for you?

A: My experience has been great. I have learned so much not only about the Community Foundation, which is blessed with a tremendous staff and a small army of committed and respected volunteer board and committee members, but also about our community and the nonprofit organizations that make our community so special. It has been privilege for me to learn from and work alongside so many thoughtful, talented, and passionate staff and board members.

Endowment Challenge Grants Awarded

In the final grant cycle of 2023, Endowment Challenge Grants were awarded to the Cedar Rapids Freedom Festival, Indian Creek Nature Center, and Orchestra Iowa. The award provides a 1:3 matching grant of up to \$25,000 to establish and build endowed funds at the Community Foundation. The organizations have five years to meet the match.

support, stability during cyclical income variances, and income for areas of high importance to the organization.

Other active Endowment Challenge Grants include Red Cedar Chamber Music, African American Museum of Iowa, Area Substance Abuse Council, Iowa Human Alliance, and NewBo City Market.

Nonprofit endowment funds invest in the mission and the future of nonprofits by providing general operating

Gifts can be made to any of these organizations by visiting the Nonprofit Giving Center at gcrf.org.



Cedar Rapids Freedom Festival



Orchestra Iowa



Indian Creek Nature Center

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We're getting ready to
celebrate!
We hope you'll join us!

SAVE THE DATES!

Block Party Celebration

*Wednesday, August 7, 2024
11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Program at noon.*

Where: Parking lot behind Community Foundation at the corner of 3rd Street and 5th Avenue, downtown Cedar Rapids

What: Join us as we celebrate 75 years of strengthening our community through philanthropy! Enjoy a free lunch, short program, and the unveiling of a new mural on the east side of our building!

Free Admission Day to Local Cultural Institutions

Saturday, August 10, 2024

Where: Visit gcrf.org to view participating sites and hours.

What: Enjoy a day exploring a variety of arts and cultural sites in Linn County and let the Community Foundation pay for your admission!

Both events are open to anyone who cares about the past and future of Linn County, Iowa!

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

