

COMMUNITY

Spring 2023 Newsletter





Mount Vernon Mayor Tom Wieseler, Les and Katrina Garner, and Mount Vernon City Administrator Chris Nosbisch look forward to the impact of these funds which will support the Mount Vernon community, today and tomorrow.

Community Betterment Funds Established to Support Mount Vernon Nonprofits

Recently, two new funds were established at the Community Foundation to provide immediate and lasting support for nonprofits serving Mount Vernon. The Mount Vernon Community Betterment Today Fund and Mount Vernon Community Betterment Tomorrow Fund are now accepting gifts, and funds will be administered through a grant application process overseen by a committee in Mount Vernon.

The two funds were established through an initial gift from retiring Community Foundation President & CEO Les Garner and his wife Katrina, but anyone is welcome to contribute to the funds.

“The Mount Vernon community was very welcoming when we arrived in 1994, and we are pleased to call it home today,” the

“We’re hopeful that these funds act as a catalyst for community-based philanthropy that serves Mount Vernon for many years to come.”

— Les and Katrina Garner

Garner said. “We’re hopeful that these funds act as a catalyst for community-based philanthropy that serves Mount Vernon for many years to come.”

As an endowed fund, the Tomorrow Fund will be invested for long-term growth to create a permanent source of annual support. The Today Fund is non-endowed, so gifts to this fund will be immediately available for granting to nonprofit organizations. Details about grant eligibility, timeline, and award limits will be announced later this year.

“It’s sobering and inspiring to know that these funds will live on in perpetuity for the benefit of our community,” said Mount Vernon Mayor Tom Wieseler. “This generous gift will be appreciated by our many community groups for generations to come.”

Community Betterment Funds are a way for donors to support a specific community with flexible funding that can help meet the community’s changing needs.

These are the first Community Betterment Funds established at the Community Foundation.

“This is a milestone—not just for Mount Vernon, but for all communities in Linn County,” said Michelle Beisker, Senior Vice President of Development. “Rural communities don’t always have access to significant philanthropic resources. Community Betterment Funds empower the residents of these communities to attract new investments and work toward a shared vision.”

For Mount Vernon, these funds may provide support for efforts often taken on by nonprofit organizations, like childcare, arts, literacy, youth development, and education.

“There are 947 towns in Iowa, and two thirds of those towns lost population in the last census,” Mayor Tom Wieseler said. “These funds will bolster our nonprofits and help attract new citizens to our community.”



Contributions to the new Mount Vernon Community Betterment Today Fund and Mount Vernon Community Betterment Tomorrow Fund can be made at www.gcrf.org or by mail to Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation, 324 3rd St SE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52401.



Doctors Philip and DeEtta Andersen

Andersens Use Donor-Advised Fund to Honor their Past and Impact the Future

For Doctors Philip and DeEtta Andersen, giving back to the communities that made them is a deeply personal experience. Over the years the Andersens have supported a number of projects and organizations in the Center Point-Urbana area and at the University of Iowa, each directly connected to their values and their past.

For 40 years, Philip practiced dentistry in Center Point. While growing up there, Philip saw how his parents gave back and how important that was to the community.

“They established a scholarship and gave a lot to the local library, fire department, and parks,” Philip said. “I want to try to continue that legacy. Center Point has been good to me, and I want to be good to them.”

Through the Andersens’ donor-advised fund at the Community Foundation, they will be able to make grants to projects and organizations that emerge within their community and resonate with them.

“In working with Philip and DeEtta, we identified the need to provide a donor-advised fund to give them flexibility to make grants to various organizations now and in the future,” said Michelle Beisker, Senior Vice President of Development. “This will allow the Andersens to connect with organizations that align with their interests.”

That flexibility was key last year when they recommended their first grant from the fund, surprising even themselves. “When I heard that the University of Iowa’s Museum of Natural History was renovating their cyclorama, I knew I wanted to support that because it’s so important to me,” DeEtta said. “I saw it when I was four years old, and it made me who I am today. I’ve never forgotten it.”

The renowned cyclorama was originally built in 1914 and offers a 360-degree view of an important Pacific bird habitat. The vibrantly colored and bizarre-looking frigates struck a chord with DeEtta, inspiring her to pursue a life in science. To this day she teaches science at Center Point-Urbana High School.

While the Andersens’ gift to the museum is their first through their fund the Community Foundation, it is the next step in a long history of supporting what aligns with their values—the institutions, programs, and cultural events that build community and inspire young learners.

“We have the same values, but not always the same focuses,” DeEtta said, pointing out that they’re interested in education, fine arts, the environment, and other initiatives that strengthen the community. “With the Community Foundation, we’re able to put our money somewhere it will do some good.”

Second Thrive Cohort Facilitates Connection for Nonprofit Leaders

Earlier this month, the second Thrive Cohort kicked off with 20 new participants. The program offers support for emerging Black, Brown, and Biracial nonprofit leaders through relationship-building, networking, and learning to foster career development within the sector.

The 2023 cohort participants serve in a variety of roles as nonprofit employees in Linn County. The group will meet regularly throughout the year, and each participant’s organization will receive a \$2,500 grant to support their professional development. Thrive is supported in part by a grant from the Alliant Energy Foundation.

Thrive was launched in 2021 as part of the Community Foundation’s efforts to advance racial equity. The 2023 Thrive Cohort aims to help nonprofit organizations close the racial leadership gap and diversify nonprofit staff and managerial teams. Five people participated in the inaugural cohort.

“The first Thrive Cohort proved to be a valuable experience for everyone involved and developed strong partnerships in our community,” said Carrie Walker, Director of Learning. “We’re excited to expand the Cohort with more members in 2023 and to provide professional development funding to further participants’ nonprofit careers.”



2023 Thrive Cohort Participants

- Lisa Ambrose, Amani Community Services
- Lori Ampey, Tanager/Boys and Girls Club of the Corridor
- Megan Brown, Jane Boyd Community House/Four Oaks
- LaNisha Cassell, African American Museum of Iowa
- Benedicte Chubaka, Catherine McAuley Center
- Erica Ernzen, The District
- Gerivene’a Green, Manna Outreach and Resources
- Cymone Green, The Academy for Scholastic & Personal Success/Washington High School
- Ontariez Henderson, NewBo City Market
- Ayoub Idriss, Catherine McAuley Center
- Sherita Jenkins, Alzheimer’s Association
- Lisa Jordan, Foundation 2
- Rama Muzo, Intercultural Center of Iowa
- Cierra Roquette, Area Substance Abuse Council
- Denine Rushing, Willis Dady Homeless Services
- Frankline Tshombe, The Power of Women and Children
- Angelica Vannatta, United Way of East Central Iowa
- Monique Washington, Waypoint Services
- Lauren White, Willis Dady Homeless Services
- Tonya Marie, Matthew 25



Organization Support Grants Help Nonprofits Pursue Their Missions



Organization Support Grants provide vital funding to help nonprofits develop the strategies, systems, and structures needed to pursue their missions.

— Casey Baustian, Program Officer

When we think of nonprofits, most of us picture the great work they do in our community—providing food and shelter, promoting the arts, protecting the environment, and ensuring everyone has access to healthcare and education. What we sometimes forget is the effort that goes into helping organizations build their capacity to do this important work and sustain their operations.

Nonprofits have many of the same organizational needs as for-profit businesses—they must develop the policies and practices that guide their work, and they need the marketing, legal resources, professional development, and information technology that make the work possible.

“Our hope is to support nonprofit organizations serving Linn County in the broadest sense possible,” said Casey Baustian, the Program Officer who oversees Organization Support Grants. “Our Nonprofit Network provides learning opportunities and resources in this space, but capacity-building or operating costs aren’t always the first thing that comes to mind for donors. Organization Support Grants



Three Cedar Rapids middle school students hone their technical and leadership skills by teaching each other in multi-level practice cohorts at Harmony School’s summer program.

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Nonprofits can apply to the Organization Support Grant for specific capacity-building efforts or for general operating costs. The grants allow organizations to make investments where they feel it could have the most impact. The funding offers greater flexibility for organizations to respond to the ever-changing needs of their nonprofit and the people they serve.

General operating costs were added as an eligible expense for Organization Support Grants in 2021 as the Community Foundation looked to make grantmaking policies more equitable. “We want to have funding options available for nonprofit organizations to be able to create programs and solutions based on their experiences and expertise,” Casey said.

Organization Support Grants are funded by the Greater Good Fund—an unrestricted, endowed fund that supports the Community Foundation’s competitive grant programs. The Community Foundation offers four competitive grant programs that are funded by the Greater Good Fund including Organization Support Grants for capacity-building and operational costs; Program Support Grants for new or ongoing programs; Endowment Challenge Grants for endowment building; and Rapid Response Grants for emerging or emergency needs.

Gifts to the Greater Good Fund allow the Community Foundation to support the nonprofits meeting our community’s most pressing needs.

Organization Support Grants Strengthen Nonprofits

Harmony School of Music

Harmony School of Music supports youth development through high-quality music education for under-served students.

Grant Award:
\$10,000 for General Operating Support

“These funds provide a cushion for our small organization as we make the transition out of the pandemic and into a new social landscape with changing facilities, programming, and operational needs. The Organization Support Grant program in particular is incredibly valuable because so few opportunities exist for general operating support, which no organization can survive without.”

- Jessica Altfillisch, Executive Director

Eastern Iowa Health Center

Eastern Iowa Health Center provides accessible patient-centered healthcare for all, regardless of ability to pay.

Grant Award:
\$25,000 for Diversity, Equity & Inclusivity Approach

“Eastern Iowa Health Center is pursuing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) training and certifications that will help build principle-based and practical approaches to DEI. This learning will facilitate skills to recognize bias and counter its harmful effects. Increasing EIHc’s knowledge of DEI will strengthen understanding, which will result in better relationships with both staff and patients. When we actively elevate the needs of diverse groups, all are better served.”

- Joe Lock, President & CEO

Heritage Area Agency on Aging

Heritage Area Agency on Aging provides services that improve the lives of older Iowans, individuals with disabilities, and family caregivers.

Grant Award:
\$16,000 for General Operating Support

“Heritage programs are designed to help seniors age with dignity and independence in the home they choose. As the number of older Iowans increases and with growing concerns about food insecurity and social isolation, support from the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation’s Organization Support Grant empowers Heritage to expand services and meet the needs of seniors in our community.”

- Barbara Werning, Executive Director

Willis Dady Homeless Services

Willis Dady Homeless Services empowers those experiencing homelessness to build futures through advocacy, housing, and employment.

Grant Award:
\$16,000 for General Operating Support

“General operating support provides all of our agency’s services a boost, alleviating facility expenses to remain open as we serve record high numbers of clients experiencing literal homelessness throughout our community. Through support from the Community Foundation, businesses, and individuals, Willis Dady is able to provide emergency shelter, permanent supportive housing, veterans services, and rapid rehousing programs in response to urgent community needs.”

- Aaron Amundson, Development Director





New Nonprofit Network Learning Opportunities Deepen Connections and Knowledge

Learning Cohort Offers Support and Learning About DEI for Nonprofit Executives

From December 2022 through February 2023, the Nonprofit Network offered a new Learning Cohort for nearly 30 nonprofit executive directors and CEOs in partnership with Top RANK, a Cedar Rapids-based diversity facilitation, consulting, and talent acquisition firm. The three-part series, facilitated by Gina Weekley of Weekley Connection Consulting, offered nonprofit leaders tools and concepts to help guide the implementation of equitable practices and policies in Linn County nonprofits, with a focus on racial equity.

“Learning with my peers and stepping out of our comfort zone brought a sense of community to our DEI journey,” said Paula Land, Executive Director of Catherine McAuley Center. The Cohort was partly funded through support from the Iowa Council of Foundations.

Nonprofit Know-How Highlights New Equitable Grantmaking Efforts

On January 31, more than 60 local nonprofit professionals and volunteers attended the Nonprofit Know-How: Tips for 2023 Grant Applicants to learn about upcoming grant opportunities. The event focused on two changes to the Community Foundation grant programs for 2023. First, grants will be administered through two competitive cycles instead of three to better align with common fiscal year dates. Second, new application questions and a new required Organization Demographics Form was shared. The additions will help grant committees prioritize funding for nonprofits actively working to build equity in their organizations and community.

New Volunteer Engagement Peer Group Begins

In February, the Nonprofit Network introduced a new Volunteer Engagement Peer Group. Nonprofit professionals who support their organizations’ volunteer engagement efforts are invited to attend on the third Wednesday of each month, from noon to 1 p.m. at the Community Foundation. There is no cost to attend, but participants must register in advance to receive a lunch.

“Volunteer engagement is a critical part of nonprofit capacity building, and we’re excited to be able support those working in this space going forward,” said Carrie Walker, Director of Learning. The new peer group coincides with the pause of the local volunteer-led group Leaders In Volunteerism to provide continued support for professional volunteer managers.

Welcome New Board Members and Officers

On January 1, the Community Foundation welcomed five new community members to its Board of Directors and appointed its 2023 Board Officers. The Board of Directors is a diverse and talented group that helps position the Community Foundation to identify and meet new challenges in Linn County. View a complete list of members of the Board of Directors at gcrf.org.

New Board Members



Nancy Hill-Davis
Mercy Medical Center



Brandi Mueller
The Overture Group



Tracy Myers
Community Volunteer



Dave Parmley
First Interstate Bank



Haywood Stowe
Collins Aerospace

2023 Board Officers



CHAIR
Diana Ledford
Foretold Ventures



CHAIR-ELECT
Jim Haddad
Community Volunteer



TREASURER
Mike Sheeley
UFG Insurance



SECRETARY
Jon Landon
Shuttleworth &
Ingersoll, PLC



PAST-CHAIR
Okpara Rice
Tanager Place

Staff News

Christi Smeed Promoted to Development Services Manager



Congratulations to Christi Smeed, who was promoted to Development Services Manager on January 1. This promotion recognizes Christi’s ongoing commitment to donors and our community, as well as the increased responsibility she has assumed in administering the Endow Iowa tax credit program.

Welcome Claire English, Donor Relations Associate



On January 9, Claire English joined the Community Foundation as Donor Relations Associate. Claire recently graduated from the University of Iowa with a bachelor’s in political science, a minor in public policy, and certificates in event management and nonprofit leadership and philanthropy.



324 3rd St. SE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52401-1841
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*Where philanthropy multiplies
for the greater good of Linn County.*

UPCOMING EVENTS



Nonprofit Know-How:
Authentic Leadership to Improve Employee
Wellbeing

Tuesday, May 10, 2023, 8:30 to 10 a.m.
Held at the Greater Cedar Rapids Community
Foundation
RSVP at www.gcrf.org



June Grant Deadline
Friday, June 30, 2023, 4:30 p.m. CST
Visit gcrf.org for information on available
grants and how to apply.

VISION

A vibrant and inclusive Linn
County where all people thrive.

MISSION

To strengthen our community
through our philanthropy.

VALUES

Equity & Inclusion
Collaboration
Learning
Integrity
Innovation



STAY CONNECTED! We encourage you to join our Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn pages for regular news, updates and stories about the impact of giving and grantmaking in our community.