

# CELEBRATING COLLABORATION IN MUSKEGON COUNTY

2022  
2023



**Youth Advisory Council**  
Full Story on Page 6





Black Violin  
Frauenthal Theater

LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

Dear Friends,

The purpose of this report is to highlight the who, what, and where of the year; and to account, to you, our accomplishments. Join us in celebrating the importance of **generosity, philanthropy, and the collaborative spirit** that thrives in Muskegon County.

Growing up in Muskegon, the value of hard work was not lost on me. The past couple of years have shined a light on the importance of being patient and tenacious of working together and persevering; particularly when it comes to the success of our community. I have learned that success has little to do with speed and more to do with **partnerships, collaboration, and direction.**

We want to express our heartfelt appreciation to you, our donors, community members, and grant partners. Together we have been tackling big issues.

The pages in this report tell stories from addressing literacy and affordable housing to partnerships with our faith-leaders and many donors. This report celebrates intentional, strategic investments of time and money to minimize obstacles and pave pathways to success.

Thank you; together we are **“Building a vibrant community with great opportunities for all.”**

Sincerely,

  
 **Todd Jacobs**  
President/CEO

  
 **Brad Hilleary**  
Chairperson,  
Board of Trustees

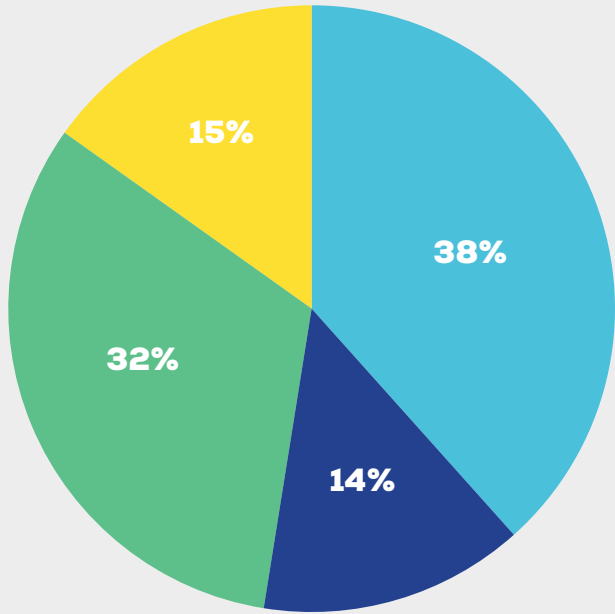
# HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2022

(including our Mason County affiliate)

**Gifts Received:**  
\$12,556,918

**Grants and Scholarships Awarded:**  
\$13,534,49.08

**Total Assets:**  
\$232,933,631



**Strategic and Discretionary Funding:**

- Advancing Educational Attainment
- Enhancing Community Trust
- Fostering a Dynamic, Local Economy
- Frauenthal Center



# CELEBRATING COLLABORATION

## NONPROFIT NETWORKING DAY

In a 2022 county-wide poll of nonprofit partners, the top capacity-support request was to **“see each other in person.”** Inspired, our Community Investment Team went to work organizing a half day, conference-style event at the Frauenthal Center. In August, more than **150 nonprofit partners** came together for **Nonprofit Networking Day**, an event intended to help rebuild and refresh important relationships in a post-pandemic world.

Keynote speaker **Kelley Kuhn**, president and CEO of the Michigan Nonprofit Association, highlighted the importance of nonprofits in strengthening our community.

The day included multiple breakout sessions centered around the three focus areas of the Community Foundation’s strategic plan: Advancing Education, Fostering a Dynamic Local Economy, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).

Participants enjoyed panel discussions with local NPO leaders, DEI sessions with Muskegon Community College Chief Diversity Officer Ken James, and Advocacy 101 insights from Michigan League for Public Policy Community Engagement Specialist, Jayme Vosovic.

After more than two years of physical distance, this event culminated in an opportunity to come together on the Frauenthal stage for **conversation, collaboration, and renewed focus** on building and strengthening our vibrant community.



**150**  
NONPROFIT  
PARTNERS



**CONVERSATION.  
COLLABORATION.  
RENEWED FOCUS.**





EMPOWER

### MUSKEGON HEIGHTS COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT CLEAN-UP EVENTS

The City of Muskegon Heights and United Way of the Lakeshore partnered with the Community Foundation, along with several other community organizations, to host four community-empowerment clean-up events. Supporting the **Muskegon Heights Fight the Blight** campaign helped bring pride and ownership to the beautification of the city.

These efforts not only **inspired collaboration** among county-wide organizations, the sharing of resources, support for economic development, and sparked engagement among residents and local businesses; but more dates have been scheduled for future clean-up efforts.

### YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Community Foundation for Muskegon County Youth Advisory Council (YAC) has been in existence since 1989 and has awarded close to **\$1.7 million in grants**. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Council of Michigan Foundations helped fund YACs across the country and encouraged foundations to focus more on youth philanthropists and funding youth serving projects and programs. Our current YAC welcomes representatives from each public and private high school. Every three years, YAC conducts a Youth Needs Assessment to determine areas of focus.

The current focus areas are **mental health, race discrimination, and substance abuse prevention**. We also award teacher mini-grants and support to teenagers during the holiday season.



GROW

# CELEBRATING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### FAITH PARTNERS & LITERACY

When local organizations combine resources for a common cause, there is power in partnership. The Faith Partner Initiative, launched in the summer of 2021, was designed to advance literacy with the help of local churches/houses of worship. In Muskegon County, many churches work together with the same vision as the Community Foundation – **to build vibrant communities for all**. It made sense to partner and connect with area nonprofits, churches, and educational systems to advance literacy. The Community Foundation for Muskegon County awards grant dollars to our Faith Partners to support county-wide literacy advancement efforts.



OVER  
**18%**

of **Muskegon County** residents (age 16+) struggle to succeed personally and professionally due to low literacy.

"The Faith Partners program has truly been **a blessing** to us! We were able to put books in kids' hands that they liked and would read. This program has helped us **promote literacy in the community.**"

- Ardena Duren, Local Educator & Representative of Kingdom Embassy Covenant Church



# CELEBRATING EDUCATION

## MIDDLE VISION & KICKSTART TO CAREER

Engaging young students with early connections to real-world experiences is the focus of **Middle Vision**, a pilot project in two Muskegon school districts.

Funded, in part, by a **Strategic Leadership Grant**; middle school students from Muskegon and Orchard View are benefiting from early exposure to career exploration opportunities, an introduction to the concept of design thinking, and the importance of teamwork.

Middle Vision builds on the Community Foundation’s **KickStart to Career** program, which was started in 2018 to help build career aspirations in our younger learners. Students county-wide in grades K-4 now have a KickStart savings account to help them save for their future education and develop hopes for a bright future.

"Every student has a career **IN** them, it's our job to find it **WITH** them. Our county has discovered the importance of career development in middle school. We need to help students **find their stories**. Middle Vision has two non-negotiable priorities: **design thinking** and **career development**."

- Kyle Fiebig, Muskegon Career Tech Center  
Director of Career & Technical Education



LEARN **MORE!**

For students of all ages, education paves the way for ongoing **community improvement** and **growth**.



BILL & BARBARA BUSKER

## SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships for our youth are an investment in the future of our community. In 2022, we awarded over **\$1.2 million** in new and renewing scholarships to **500 students**. Of those scholarship awards, 27% went to first-generation students, a population that traditionally faces barriers to accessing higher education.

Our **Adult Student Scholarship program** was launched to support those living in our community who are returning to complete degrees later in life.

Recognizing that the needs of adult students may not fall within a traditional school-year schedule, this program features a rolling deadline.

Bill and Barbara Busker are happy to provide adult scholarships through the **Busker Family Scholarship Fund**. "We believe that by completing your education, you will be able to improve your own economic well-being and the well-being of your community. Education should never end."



# CELEBRATING COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## HOUSING STUDY

**Affordable housing** for individuals and families of all income levels often rises to the top of community development concerns. Rising housing costs, aging housing stock, and slow new construction housing during the recession have led to a perfect storm of limited housing options in communities across the country, and Muskegon is no different. We're collaborating with local municipalities, economic development agencies, and human service nonprofits to address the issue.

Collectively, we've commissioned a study on housing conditions to gain shared understanding of current needs. The study will provide context for next steps in a **coordinated housing strategy** that will benefit communities, developers, and ultimately residents looking for housing solutions.



## HOMELESSNESS CONTINUUM OF CARE COORDINATOR

A strategic grant supported the United Way of the Lakeshore in establishing the **Homelessness Continuum of Care Coordinator** position – which will lend capacity and coordinate collaboration among agencies serving those experiencing homelessness.



## REACHING NEW MUSKEGON HEIGHTS

Greater Muskegon Economic Development (GMED) is the economic development agency serving Muskegon County. They are supporting Muskegon Heights in their visioning plan, **Reaching New Muskegon Heights**, which will set the course for development priorities for years to come.

We celebrate one of the first steps towards implementation of this vision with the sculpture, **"Band Together with Tiger Pride."**

**VISION:** Build a vibrant community with **great opportunities** for all.

## PROGRAM RELATED INVESTMENTS

Grants are often what is mentioned first when considering the impact of Community Foundation investments, but **loans** can also be a highly effective tool to support collaborative community projects!



## EXIT PROGRAM

The **EXIT (Ex-Offenders in Transition) Program** provides an opportunity for those in the judicial system to receive training towards future careers in manufacturing, supporting participants both during their time served as well as during their transition back to society. The building housing the program was set to be sold – which would put the continuation of this critical effort in jeopardy, and Fresh Coast Alliance was determined to save the building and the program. The Community Foundation was able to make a loan to Fresh Coast to support purchase of the building, securing the future of the EXIT program.



## JACKSON HILL HOUSING PROJECT

Loans also helped to advance local housing efforts, through a second investment in the Jackson Hill Neighborhood in-fill housing project. After a successful first phase of the project, where bridge financing from the Community Foundation helped with construction costs of **three new homes**, a second investment will support construction of up to six new construction homes, increasing the number of owner-occupied residences in Jackson Hill and providing much needed market rate housing.



## BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF THE MUSKEGON LAKESHORE CLUBHOUSE RENOVATIONS

The renovation of the **new Clubhouse** for the Boys & Girls Club of the Muskegon Lakeshore is well underway, and a bridge financing loan from the Community Foundation to cover current costs while pledges are received is keeping the construction on track. The Clubhouse, which also received a **Strategic Grant** to support a safe, fun, and supportive place for Muskegon's youth, is set to open in Fall 2023.



# CELEBRATING THE ARTS



## COLLABORATING THROUGH THE ARTS FOR COMMUNITY

Through collaboration of community, arts, and education, the Frauenthal Center was able to bring you a limited engagement of one of the most powerful American works of theater with Dominique Morisseau’s **DETROIT ‘67**, direct from Detroit Public Theatre. With themes of cultural divisions, police brutality, and struggles for civil rights in a time of changing policies, **DETROIT ‘67** is a play about the past as much as a play about the present. Thanks to support from **Consumers Energy**, we were able to present a performance for area high school students, complete with a talkback with the cast. The opening night engagement was also followed by a talkback with community leaders moderated by Detroit Public Theatre.

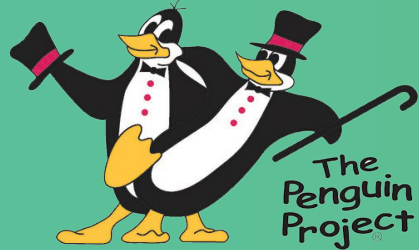
The Frauenthal Center collaborates with the community all year long by making space accessible through our discounted **community rental program** for first time individuals and organizations looking to hold an event at the Frauenthal. Applicants must host a community centric event that reflects the strategic goals of the Community Foundation. This year several area projects have qualified for this program, including Shades of Excellence, Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore and Jon Covington’s Black Man Documentary.



## UPCOMING SHOWS



With passion for the arts and enduring commitment to the Big Red community, the Poppen Programs nurture young artists of Muskegon Public Schools both now and into the future. The **Nancy K. Poppen Program** assists Big Red students with access to lessons in the arts. The fund supports an average of **50-75** Muskegon Public Schools students each year. The **Sherman R. Poppen Program** is a competitive college scholarship available to successful participants in the Nancy K. Poppen program who graduate from Muskegon Public Schools and major in their artform at an accredited college, university, or traditional arts school.



**Muskegon Civic Theatre**, awarded a small grant from the Community Foundation Employee Fund, welcomed the return of **The Penguin Project**. Conceived by a theater-loving, developmental pediatrician, The Penguin Project provides opportunities for individuals with disabilities to display their creative talents, enhance social interaction, and build self-esteem. It also demonstrates that these fully capable individuals are participating in community activities with the same dedication and enthusiasm as others, when given the opportunity and support. The Penguin Project has a special impact for parents, allowing them to experience the joy of watching their children perform and succeed.



# CELEBRATING LEGACY

## PROMISED GIFTS

- Jeffrey Lake Johnson
- Betty Kinney
- Marsha L. Stewart
- Susan Harrison Wolffis
- Jane Otrhalek & Tonya Rund
- Merle & Linda Hanson
- Dan & Sheryl Kuznar
- James Oslund
- Paula J. Martin
- Sheli Vanderlinde
- Virginia VanVleck
- Linda R. Andersen
- Orville Crain

Thank you to the following people who notified us of **planned gifts** through their estates or created new funds in 2022. These gifts will do great things in our Muskegon County community...**forever**.

The most powerful gifts are **unrestricted**, as they are flexible to meet the community's greatest needs and strategic opportunities now and in the future. We give special thanks to those who give to the **Greater Muskegon County Unrestricted Fund** and who have created Strategic Funds.

**Strategic Funds** can be unrestricted, designated to support the Frauenthal Center, or focused on one of our strategic areas of Education; Community and Economic Development; or Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. A **gift of \$5,000** or more creates the fund right away, or it can be built over time with a committed **annual gift of at least \$500**.

To start a fund of your own, please email [development@muskegonfoundation.org](mailto:development@muskegonfoundation.org)

## DONOR ADVISED FUNDS:

### Edgar De Jong & Diane Van Wesep Fund

Ed and Diane have long had plans to leave a gift to the community in their estate. When they met with us to update those plans, they decided start their fund right away. As a Donor Advised Fund, the Edgar De Jong & Diane Van Wesep Fund can support any of their favorite causes during their lifetimes, and it will support natural resources, post-secondary education, and performing arts education and productions thereafter.

### Rochelle Hanley & Shirish Shenolikar Fund

Rochelle grew up in the Muskegon area, moved away, and retired here with her husband, Shirish. Rochelle's mom, Ellen, was a Community Foundation trustee in the 70s and 80s and is also a current fundholder. Wanting to invest in their community, the Donor Advised Fund gives Rochelle and Shirish the ability to do just that.

### Packer Family Put Love First Fund

The Packer Family "Put Love First" Fund speaks to the values Kate Brickley learned from her late parents, Dr. Robert and June Packer. Kate used inherited assets to create this Donor Advised Fund that she and her daughters will use to show love to the community in the family's name.

### Verplank Trucking Fund

Verplank Dock and Trucking has been a part of the Muskegon business landscape for decades. They consciously wanted to invest more in Muskegon as their business continues to thrive here. They are active in giving through this Advised Fund in both Muskegon County and northern Ottawa County.



## JOAN MAJESKI FUND

Joan Majeski has been a tremendous friend of the Community Foundation. When she started the **Joan Majeski Fund** in 2004, she wanted to ensure her favorite causes received her support forever. Over the years she's added to it with tax-smart gifts like appreciated stock and Qualified Charitable Distributions from her IRA, and she's also planned a gift from her estate. When presented with a need for greater environmental resources, she stepped up to create the **Mildred Majeski Fund** in honor of her mother's environmental activism.

She also invested in the Frauenthal Center Preservation Campaign. Recently Joan created a **Charitable Gift Annuity** - her fifth! - with the Community Foundation. In exchange for her opening gift, she is receiving guaranteed payments at a competitive rate based on her age. After a lifetime of payments, the remainder goes into her fund to carry on the good work she's done all along for Muskegon County. We are grateful for Joan's partnership in building a vibrant community with great opportunities for all!



GIVE A  
GIFT  
LEAVE A LEGACY





# CELEBRATING LEGACY

## KENNETH & ELEANOR VEURINK FAMILY FUND

Muskegon holds a special place in Jim Veurink’s heart, even though he hasn’t lived here since high school. Retired special education teachers living in Lansing, Jim and his partner, Gordon Bieske, enjoy volunteering and traveling. They chose to invest in Muskegon by creating the **Kenneth & Eleanor Veurink Family Fund** in honor of Jim’s late parents. Eleanor worked in the Hackley Administration Building, and Jim remembers delivering milk with his dad in North Muskegon as a child.

Their first grants from the Donor Advised Fund supported **Read Muskegon** and **Coalition for Community Development** in Muskegon Heights. “My mom was an avid reader and journaler, and a distance walker; both she and my dad loved nature and had a heart for others. Supporting literacy and a city neighborhood through effective organizations would make them both proud.”



“This fund is such a **wonderful connection** –

I believe you have to **give back** to where you came from.”

– Jim Veurink  
(Kenneth & Eleanor Veurink Family Fund)



## ANGEL LUIS & CONNIE NAVARRO LEGACIA FUND

Angelita Valdez is a lifelong resident of Muskegon and has always wanted to give back to her community – something that her parents modeled for her. “Growing up, I watched my mother and father work tirelessly to make Muskegon a better place to live for the **Latino community** and to keep my heritage alive.”

Angelita made good on her commitment to give back in creating the **Angel Luis and Connie Navarro Legacia Fund** in her parents’ honor. Until her passing early this year, Connie was a tireless advocate for the Latino community, a trailblazer who believed that all voices needed to be heard and everyone’s experience was valued. It was her mission to connect people from all of Muskegon’s communities and to introduce us as neighbors. Angelita is creating a legacy of her own: she was an inaugural member of our LEAD giving circle and serves as a Community Foundation trustee. She is also expanding her local counseling organization, **Servicios de Esperanza (Services of Hope)**. We are proud to carry on this family’s legacy and so many others in our community.



## COALITION FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: DR. DORIS RUCKS LEGACY FUND

Coalition for Community Development was created by the late Dr. Doris Rucks, and her legacy lives on in this fund. CCD works in and for the community of **Muskegon Heights**, and this endowment fund will provide them with long-term support.



## LOIS EKSTRAND FUND

Retired Chicago teacher Lois Ekstrand was a smiling fixture in the White Lake community where she summered. She was always out on the town, making friends at festivals and events. After her passing, we learned Lois had planned an amazing gift to the community she loved: a bequest of **\$1.86 million** created the **Lois Ekstrand Fund**, which will double the annual grant-making power of the White Lake Community Fund.



## DOROTHY WILSON NORSE EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Following her career as a flight attendant, having traveled the world, Dorothy Wilson returned to North Muskegon. She believed her Norse education was equivalent to college at that time, and she happily used Qualified Charitable Distributions from her IRAs to build up the **Norse Education Foundation**. Working with attorney Adam Zuwerink, Dorothy planned a major gift.

Upon her passing, the majority of her estate now supports the school she loved. Zuwerink shared, “Dorothy honored the places that meant most to her.”



# CELEBRATING LEGACY

## FIELD OF INTEREST FUNDS:

### Rodger Kroes Fund

Tim and Susan Kroes created the Rodger Kroes Fund in memory of Tim's father. This Strategic Fund will provide ongoing support for the KickStart to Career program and other education initiatives in Rodger's name, forever.

### William R. Phinney Family Fund

Growing up as a self-described "poor kid from Lakeside," Bill flourished in his career. After leaving Muskegon, he trained for the FBI but then shifted gears to the private sector, working for IBM and Equifax. He has fond memories of Muskegon and set up a Strategic Fund focused on education in his family's name to honor his love and respect for his hometown.

### Paula Denslow Martin Fund

Paula has been active for many years around the Muskegon community with the Greater Muskegon Women's Club, volunteering as a Friend of the Frauenthal, and staying fit on the pickleball courts and area trails. Over the last few years, Paula has built up to the creation of this fund for the well-being of Muskegon and its residents. She has also planned a gift from her estate to add to the fund.



## JOYCE KIMBALL LEMIEUX EDUCATION FUND

Former teacher, Big Red, and U of M grad, Joyce Lemieux has a master's degree in library science. She places a high value on being educated, still avidly reading at age 95. While she doesn't see her story as special, grandson Josh Silvis disagrees, which is why he started the **Joyce Kimball Lemieux Education Fund**. With a thoughtful Christmas gift to honor his grandmother, Josh shared, "Other than my parents, I don't think there's anyone more formative of who I am."

## DESIGNATED FUNDS:

### Planned Parenthood Fund

Peggy Jensen was married with three daughters by the time she was 21. She has since been a strong supporter of reproductive education and rights, so that women can make informed choices for themselves. Now a proud great-grandmother, Peggy used a tax-free Qualified Charitable Distribution from her IRA to create the Planned Parenthood Fund to support reproductive health in Muskegon County.

### Marvin & Phyllis (Grieve) Rosenberg Fund

The Marvin & Phyllis (Grieve) Rosenberg Fund was created in memory of Phyllis by Marvin and their daughter, Laurie. Phyllis grew up in Montague and fed her love of reading at the library. She went on to get a master's degree in library science and became the librarian in Coldwater where their family settled. Marvin used tax-smart, Qualified Charitable Distributions from his IRA to create the fund that will support the Montague Branch Library where Phyllis got her start.

## SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS:

### Jack & Kathy Myers Scholarship Fund

Siblings Greg, Lisa, and Jeff Myers wanted to honor their parents with a gift of education that will keep giving to Muskegon area students in their parents' names. Western Michigan Christian graduates will be able to continue their studies at either Calvin University or the University of Michigan. All three education communities were dear to Jack and Kathy Myers in their lifetimes.

### Charles D. & Virginia Gay Van Vleck Scholarship Fund

Charlie and Gay Van Vleck planned smart estate gifts with their financial advisor: life insurance proceeds provided a tax-free inheritance for their son, and their IRA went to charity, also tax-free. A portion of their gift added to the St. Paul's Endowment Fund, and the balance created the Charles D. & Virginia Gay Van Vleck Scholarship Fund.



"I think everybody has a **responsibility** to

move things forward to make our community

the best place it can be, so that everyone

feels like they belong."

- Nancy McCarthy

## NANCY MCCARTHY IMPACT AWARD

To honor contributions toward creating a vibrant community with great opportunities for all, the Community Foundation created the **Impact Award**.

Our 2022 Impact Award honors a true local hero, **Nancy McCarthy**. Through a distinguished career and continuing into retirement, she goes above and beyond for Muskegon County residents. Having modestly spoken about the importance of community involvement and "... being part of something bigger than oneself..." she served as Executive Director of the Hackley Visiting Nurse Homecare Services, president of our local Rotary Club, and chair of the United Way of the Lakeshores' Campaign.

Personally moved after reading Heather McGhee's, "The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together," Nancy and fellow founding donors Mary Anne Gorman and Kim Suarez, "...just had the idea that we should do something."

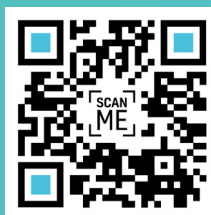
The **Business Equity Initiative Fund** was created to address inequities in local and national economic systems. "In doing so, we will create opportunities and close funding gaps for women entrepreneurs, supporting job creation, revenue growth, and an economy that works for **ALL**."





425 W. Western Ave., Suite 200  
Muskegon, MI 49440

NONPROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE PAID  
GRAND RAPIDS, MI  
PERMIT NO. 1



**Update your information  
so we can better serve you!**

**Scan the QR code** to update your contact information. To update an organization's records, please send updated info to [info@muskegonfoundation.org](mailto:info@muskegonfoundation.org) or call 231.722.4538.