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WHAT'S YOUR WHY?

A newsletter from Four County Community Foundation

SPRING 2024



4CCF office relocates to Romeo

In mid-March, Four County Community Foundation transitioned to a new office location in downtown Romeo. Our staff is now utilizing donated space in the second level of People Driven Credit Union, 141 S. Main Street, that includes five offices, a common meeting space and conference room. A portion of the facilities will be shared with the Romeo Downtown Development Authority.

The Currier House, which has been 4CCF's home since 2002, has been sold. "While we are very grateful for the use of the Currier House for the past 22 years, it was built for a family. We are happy to see it returned to a family residence," said 4CCF Executive Director Kathy Dickens.

Frederick and Mary Currier built the octagon-shaped Currier House in 1854. It served as a private residence for the Currier family and other families for many decades before being purchased by the foundation in 2000. The foundation paid \$200,000 toward the acquisition and the Currier family donated \$100,000 towards the home's upkeep and maintenance.

Recently a local architectural firm identified common restoration needs and in 2023, the foundation invested \$150,000 in repairs to the home's cupola and porch along with interior plaster repair.

Our phone number remains (810) 798-0909 and our new mailing address is 141 S. Main Street, Suite A, Romeo MI 48065.

Return to Earn helps students, businesses



**Ana Philips of Armada was a
Return to Earn intern for the village
of Capac where she helped launch
a new farmer's market and
completed public art projects.**

Four County Community Foundation's Return to Earn internship program helped connect seven area college students with local businesses and government agencies in the summer of 2023.

Return to Earn is a talent retention initiative, launched in 2022, that facilitates quality, paid summer internships for college students in or near their hometowns. It gives college students the chance to both build their resume and earn a paycheck while also creating potential avenues for them to return to those communities after completing their college or university studies and find a job in their field.

The foundation also supports both interns and participating businesses by helping cover up to 50 percent of the interns' salary. Interested in participating in 2024? Reach out to Kathy Dickens at (810) 798-0909 or kdickens@4ccf.org.

Service of trustees, retired program officer recognized

In January, Four County Community Foundation (4CCF) celebrated the service of three departing trustees and one staff member.

Dr. Clif Clendenan, Bret Schapman and Jason Verlinde marked the completion of their nine years on the board along with **Micaela Boomer**, the foundation's program officer, who retired in November after nine years in that role.

"I grew up in a family where helping others was a priority. I learned that a good cause and a passion to help others are key ingredients in the success of a nonprofit organization," Clif said. When Randy Jorgensen, a fellow Imlay City business owner and 4CCF trustee at that time, asked him to join the board, Clif said he was happy to get involved.



Ken Hummel, Dr. Clif Clendenan, Micaela Boomer, Kathy Dickens, Bret Schapman and Jason Verlinde at January's Night of Thanks event.

Clif said he came to appreciate how dynamic the Foundation was beyond just a place to hold memorial or legacy gifts. "Today, I see the foundation as an agent for solving or reducing local social problems, and a place where individuals, families, small companies, and large corporations, as well as other nonprofit organizations can come together, recognize problems, find solutions, and coordinate financing to help our community continue to be a place we are proud to live in," Clif said.

Armada's Jason Verlinde is the second generation of his family to serve on the board. He followed in the footsteps of his dad, Al Verlinde. Both spent part of their terms as the board's chairperson too. He was in that role in 2019 when 4CCF hired their current executive director, Kathy Dickens, a feat he considers his "greatest accomplishment" as chairperson.

Jason said he's also proud of what the foundation did in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. "We did a ton of great work that year with things like food distributions and really focused on collaborating with other groups," he said. Additionally, Jason appreciates what 4CCF has done to uncover community needs and meet them in a practical manner. In 2021, a devastating tornado struck Armada, bringing down trees and damaging homes. Within 24 hours after the storm, the foundation issued gas cards to help residents fuel up their generators and chainsaws.

Almont's Bret Schapman counts the Mural on the Medaugh building in Romeo as one of the more meaningful initiatives he was honored to be involved in. The project saw 4CCF, the Detroit Institute of Arts, Romeo Downtown Development Authority and the Starkweather Arts Center collaborate to create a colorful, peach-themed mural in downtown Romeo.

"It always makes me smile as I drive by. Somehow, it reminds me of the Foundation's impact on our communities. Maybe it's the joyful faces or the simple offering of a peach, which also lends itself to another favorite fund of mine, Feeding Families Forever. My background in agriculture gives me a basis for this endeavor, but supporting reliable access to nutritious food while trying to improve the health of our surrounding communities is vital," he said.

During his time on the board, Bret was heartened to see the community's generosity in gifts both big and small. As the board's chairperson, he enjoyed time spent working with staff planning for the foundation's future. "My hope for the future of the Foundation is to be more proactive in the physical and mental well-being of our communities," Bret said.

At a Night of Thanks event in January, 4CCF Chairperson Ken Hummel thanked the retiring trustees for all they did to share their time, talent and treasure and recognized their efforts to help the foundation grow during their tenures. In the nine years since all three started their terms, 4CCF's assets have grown from \$13 million to more than \$22 million.



Jordan Ackerman and Melissa Hamann

Ken also recognized Micaela Boomer's service to the foundation as program officer since April 2015. "She didn't see this as a job. She was a donor too because she truly believed in the work she was doing," he said.

As program officer, Micaela has overseen 4CCF's grant and scholarship programs, including the management of applications and reviews. She also managed the foundation's webpage, assembled publications including the annual report, gathered grant metrics and much more.

The 4CCF board welcomed two new trustees in 2024—**Jordan Ackerman of Richmond Twp.** and **Melissa Hamann of Shelby Township**, pictured at left. Assuming program officer duties is 4CCF's communications specialist Maria Brown.



Hispanic Heritage Fiesta returns in 2024!

In October 2023, 4CCF hosted its first Hispanic Heritage Fiesta at the Eastern Michigan State Fairgrounds in Imlay City! Attendees braved blustery weather to hear some great music, eat some fabulous food, support area vendors and take part in many fun activities including soccer matches, taco eating contests and more.

Four County Community Foundation is exceptionally grateful to all of the volunteers who lent their time and expertise to make the Fiesta come together! Plans are underway to host the second annual event on September 21, 2024. Please plan to join us!

Local agencies benefit from new Spark Grant

In addition to our other activities, the Foundation has been busy granting funds to organizations within our service area. Schools, food pantries, libraries, community service agencies, art associations and many others were awarded grant dollars for a variety of projects. Our most recent awards, approved by the board of trustees in April, totaled more than \$97,000.

Among our fourth quarter 2023 grant recipients were participants in 4CCF's new Spark Grant program. Geared toward innovative projects that seek to meet a community need, applicants were invited to give in-person presentations about their programs to 4CCF's Proactive Committee members as part of a special 'Pitch Night' event in September. Fund dollars were awarded to Camp Oakland for their support of adjudicated youth; Orion Area Youth Assistance for their SPLAT summer camp program; Dutton Farm Inc. for an inclusive community garden space for individuals with developmental disabilities; and the Hispanic Service Center that allowed them to partner with Union Food Group to offer food safety training in Spanish.

Foundation welcomes new funds

Four County Community Foundation is honored to have welcome several new funds in 2023 and 2024.

- The **Rachel Ulinksi Memorial Music Fund** will support music education programming for all grades, kindergarten through 12th, at Armada Area Schools. Rachel had been a vocal music teacher within the Armada district since 2012.
- The **Koerner Family Foundation Scholarship Fund** was established by Bernd and Jennifer Koerner. It will award scholarships to high school seniors and post-graduates of Almont and Romeo high schools who are pursuing degrees in information technology, engineering, business, or science.
- **For the Love of Nature Fund...The Forever Justin Shilling Foundation** was created by Justin's mom, Jill Soave, to honor his memory and support conservation efforts. Justin was one of four students killed in a November 2021 shooting at Oxford High School.
- The **Green Space on Prospect Street Fund** was established by a group of Romeo residents, seeking to preserve the site of the former Romeo Middle School as green space. Currently they are seeking donations and pledges to purchase the property from Romeo Community Schools.

Exciting updates from Imagination Library

Our Imagination Library program continues to grow! In 2023, 4CCF's affiliate program began registering children in two additional Shelby Township zip codes—48315 and 48317. That now means all youngsters from birth to age 5 in Four County Community Foundation's service area can receive free, high-quality books every month in the mail in partnership with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

Recently, the affiliate also began accepting online registrations, making the program accessible to even more families. To register your young reader, visit <https://bit.ly/readwith4CCF>.

Tee up for Oxford!



Please join us for our June 14 Golf Outing at Boulder Pointe Golf Club in Oxford. Proceeds from the day will benefit three funds—Hana St. Juliana Memorial Fund, For the Love of Nature... Forever Justin Shilling Foundation and the Oxford Permanent Memorial Fund.

Please consider supporting this annual event either as a golfer or event sponsor. To learn more about the event, please visit <https://bit.ly/4CCFOxford> Golf or request a sponsorship form by calling us at (810) 798-0909.



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Pink line will not print

Leave a legacy with help from 4CCF

Four County Community Foundation (4CCF) is pleased to offer a new resource that helps local residents leave a legacy for their families and community.

Visit <https://4ccf.mygiftlegacy.org/> and check out the new services 4CCF is now providing in partnership with FreeWill. There you can learn about the various ways to create a gift that benefits the people and places you hold dear and that includes starting from square one by creating a will.

Look for the button that says just that—"Start Your Will"—and our partners at FreeWill will guide you through the process of documenting all the necessary information needed for a last will and testament. After you've answered the prompts, FreeWill will give you the option to download or email your completed document and list out the next steps you'll need to take to sign and finalize it. The entire process can take as little as 20 minutes.

Creating a will allows you to designate a charitable gift to an organization like Four County Community Foundation. Options include giving a portion of your residuary estate (4 percent for Four County has a catchy ring to it!) or a fixed cash amount or naming 4CCF as a beneficiary of your retirement plan, life income gift or trust. Those who include Four County Community Foundation in their long-term charitable planning will be welcomed as members of their Legacy Society and join an esteemed group of visionary philanthropists including our Emeritus Executive Director Janet Bauer and current board trustee Mitch Blonde.

I was inspired by the people who became Legacy Members before me. I want to leave my gift in memory of my parents – Howard & Rosalys Bauer," Janet said.

Mitch Blonde reflected on he and his wife, Dawn's decision to make a planned gift, saying, "This gift allows us to supplement our lasting legacy through further funding the Blonde Scholarship. In doing so, we continue to give thanks for all that's been given to us and provide the resources for others to earn their college degree."


To learn more about planned giving or 4CCF's Legacy Society, reach out to Executive Director Kathy Dickens at (810) 798-0909 or kdickens@4ccf.org.




Janet Bauer



Mitch Blonde

Planned GivingGifts for the future



Name Four County Community Foundation as a beneficiary and avoid unwanted taxes

Assets like 401(k)s, IRAs, and other accounts, can make great planned gifts and may help your heirs avoid unwanted taxes.

[START YOUR GIFT](#)[LEARN MORE](#)