

Celebrating 80 Years **OF GIVING BACK**



Community Foundation

of St. Clair County

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Community Foundation
of
St. Clair County

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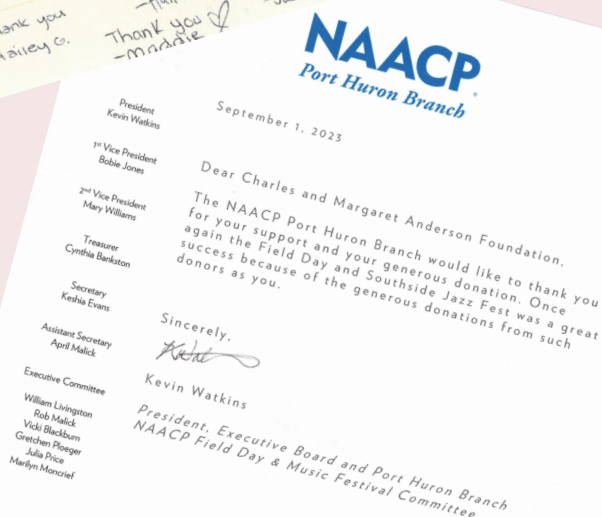
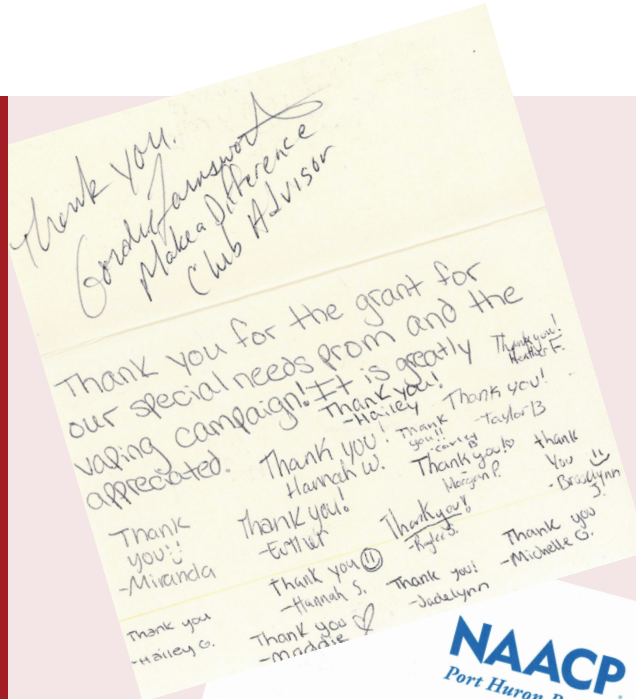
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Dear Dupont Family,
Thank you for your generous donation to help the Spanish Club enjoy some fun arts and crafts.
We made some Paper Flowers, Tie dyes items, and individual pinatas. See all the happy faces.



Muchas Gracias,
EL CLUB DE ESPAÑOL

Your generosity in 2023
hasn't gone unnoticed....

You gifted us

\$4.8 million

which

Allowed us to give

\$5 million

Three red wooden hearts are arranged in a row on a white, textured surface. The hearts are made of wood and have a natural, slightly grainy texture. They are positioned in the lower half of the image, with the text 'Sending a heartfelt, sincere thank you for your endless kindness!' overlaid on them.

Sending a heartfelt,
sincere thank you for
your endless kindness!

New scholarship established to honor Jim and Barb Bates

December 19, 2023

The Community Foundation of St. Clair County and Port Huron Northern are pleased to announce the creation of the James and Barbara Bates Scholarship. The new prestigious scholarship award will provide \$5,000 to an outstanding senior scholar-athlete from Port Huron Northern. The scholarship can then be renewed each year for students who stay in good academic standing.

Honoring the memory of long-time Blue Water Area residents and Port Huron Area School District educators through these awards is John Haas.

The James and Barbara Bates Scholarship will impact two decades of students. “John understood the importance of long-term college support and success when he created the Bates scholarship,” said Hale Walker, chair of the Community Foundation. “These awards will be renewable, so as the student’s expenses grow each year, the award will stay with them to help ease financial burdens.”

Going to college can be stressful and key to the Community Foundation’s scholarship program is providing students with a support network and connections to other resources as they navigate their collegiate journeys. This ties well into what Jim and Barb would have wanted for their students and how they supported their students during their lifetimes.

Jim was born in 1933 in Coldwater, Michigan, and Barb was born a year and a half later in Royal Oak, Michigan. They both graduated from Farmington High School, and that is where their relationship began. Jim went on to play football as a two-way starter at center and linebacker and basketball at The University of Michigan and received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Ann Arbor.



Barb received her teaching degree from Eastern Michigan University. The couple wed on June 22, 1957, and spent 61 years married to the love of their lives. They dedicated their careers to the Port Huron Area School District and contributed positively in many ways to the Port Huron community.

He is an inaugural member of the Michigan High School Football Coaches Association Hall of Fame, Farmington High School Hall of Fame, and Port Huron Sports Hall of Fame. Although he had many opportunities to coach at a higher level, he dedicated his life to working with high school-age students, where he felt he could provide positive leadership and influence as his students developed into men and women. As a teacher, coach, devoted family man, and role model, his integrity was second to none as a man of deep values, honesty, and keeping his word. He was admired and respected by all who knew him.

Jim was a lifelong Michigan Wolverine and Port Huron Northern husky. He was a well-rounded individual with many talents including a member of Phi Delta Theta Fraternity, The University of Michigan Druids Honor Society, Air Force ROTC, and the U of M Glee Club, performing all over the country. He loved teaching, coaching, and working with students. He was named Port Huron Northern's first head football coach when it opened in 1965 and was influential in establishing blue and gold as the school colors as well as many other innovative ideas aiding in the development of his students.

Jim believed strongly in the fundamentals and developing players and students into quality young men and women. It wasn't all about winning for him. Former student-athletes have said of him, "... He prepared me for the unknown. The discipline, the regimentation, and the love and honesty he shared with us gave me the tools I needed..." Jim would often say, "I feel I've been very lucky to have such great kids and coaches. I look around town, and I'm proud of the kids who have played."

Barb was also a lifelong Wolverine and Husky fan. Her many talents complemented Jim well. She was president of the Delta Zeta sorority as an undergraduate and majored in art while also earning her teaching degree. She was an avid supporter of Jim's coaching career as well as her children's, grandchildren's, and students' interests, activities, and athletic performances. Her daily presence in their love, growth, and development had a profound and lifelong impact on them.

Barb loved teaching and spent most of her career as a third-grade teacher at Indian Woods and Keewahdin Elementary Schools. She followed all of her students throughout their careers and when possible, would send graduation cards to tell them how proud she was of them. Barb also spent 16 years teaching the Earth Keepers Program part time after retirement and enjoyed facilitating knowledge of the environment, appreciation for nature, and taking care of the community.

She was well known for her cooking, delicious cookies, and pies, and was generous in distributing them to family, friends, and those less fortunate. She was a caring, genuine person who always put others'



needs before her own. She was a member of the Port Huron Chapter of P.E.O., a Philanthropic Educational Organization, where she was honored for her 50 years of service. Barb was a talented artist in various media and was also part of a close-knit quilting group that met weekly for decades to quilt and support one another. In addition, she grew up with deaf parents, and used her skills to help and interpret for deaf people in the community.

Jim and Barb were active Port Huron United Methodist Church members and attended the Church of the Straits at their cabin in Mackinaw City, Michigan. They were an incredible couple and modeled marriage, parenting, and living life to its fullest to anyone fortunate enough to know them. The scholarship that was created in their honor will be awarded to a deserving student beginning in the 2024-2025 school year. Applications will be available on the Community Foundation's website starting Jan. 8, 2024.

To explore options to support students or honor someone special, check out the Foundation's Giving Center or reach out to Jackie Hanton at jackie@stclairfoundation.org.

WE LOVE OUR DONORS...



DOING
THE MOST
GOOD

12/22/2023

Community Foundation
c/o John W & M Louise Shier Family Fund
500 Water St
Port Huron, MI 48060

Dear Friends,

This letter is to express our thanks for your thinking of The Salvation Army with your donation of \$775.46 help cover the cost of our Christmas meat for families in need that registered with us for assistance.

This generosity will help us serve over 600 families this holiday season.

Thank you again for this opportunity and for your donation.

In HIS Name,

Aaron

Aaron Ortman, Major
Corps Officer

PORT HURON CITADEL
CORPS COMMUNITY CENTER

Aaron & Jennifer Ortman, Majors
Corps Officers

2000 Court Street
Port Huron, Michigan 48060

P: (810) 985-2079
F: (810) 985-2085

www.porthuronsa.org

SALVATION ARMY FAMILY STORE

729 Howard Street
Port Huron, Michigan 48060

P: (810) 985-4385
F: (810) 985-5916

Lynette Buckingham, General
State Area Territorial Commander
Sharon Moore, District Commander



HARBOR IMPACT
— MINISTRIES —

1963 Allen Road
Kimball, MI 48074

810-662-3936

harborhelps@gmail.com

www.harborimpactministries.com

Barbara Hanneke, Director

Mike Weaver, Director

9/6/2023

Community Foundation
500 Water Street
Port Huron, MI 48060

Re: DTE Food Grant

Dear Grantor:

Thank you for the wonderful donation we received from you and DTE in the amount of \$2,500. Last month we fed 894 families representing 2,526 people. It is our intention to give each family meat for one week when they come to an Impact Day on the last Tuesday of the month.

The cost of meat has increased as have the number of struggling people who come to Harbor Impact Ministries for assistance each month. Thank you for helping us pay for the food they receive.

With sincere gratitude and appreciation

Barb Hanneke

Barbara Hanneke
Founder and Director

To Whom It May Concern,
..for your kindness.
It was appreciated so much.
We at Downriver Helping
Hands appreciate the grant
of \$5000.00. This will help
to feed many, many families
in our community.
Thank you for your generous
donation.
Sincerely,
Mary Jane



Mid City Nutrition Program
805 Chestnut Street
Port Huron, MI 48060
810-982-9535

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December 22nd 2023

Community Foundation of St Clair County
James C. Acheson Fund
500 Water Street
Port Huron, MI 48060

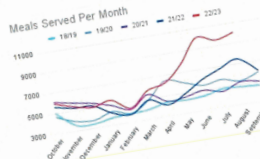
Dear James C. Acheson Fund,

Your donation is greatly appreciated! Thank you for your encouragement and thoughtfulness. I will continue my vision to meet the needs of those who are less fortunate within our community. Over the past few months, the need for our services has grown greatly. We now see 50% more guests every day. Your support is SO needed and SO appreciated as we work to alleviate the burdens of food insecurity.

With gratitude,

Sarah Jones

Sarah Jones
Executive Director



DONATION RECEIPT

Date: 12/22/23 Amount: \$2,500.00
Donation: Check Number 0058285

Authorized Signature: _____

THE SALVATION ARMY
DOING THE MOST GOOD

12/22/2023

Community Foundation
c/o Donna Niester
500 Water St
Port Huron, MI 48060

Dear Donna,

This letter is to express our thanks for your thinking of The Salvation Army with your donation of \$4000.00 to help cover the cost of our Christmas meat for families in need that registered with us for assistance.

This generosity will help us serve over 600 families this holiday season. Thank you again for this opportunity and for your donation.

In HIS Name,

Aaron
Aaron Ortman, Major
Corps Officer

PORT HURON CITADEL
CORPS COMMUNITY CENTER
Corps Officers
Aaron & Jennifer Ortman, Major
2000 Chest Street
Port Huron, Michigan 48060
P: (810) 982-2677
F: (810) 982-9535
www.porthurontsna.org

SALVATION ARMY FAMILY STORE
2201 Howard Street
Port Huron, Michigan 48060
P: (810) 982-4367
F: (810) 982-9535
Lynette Brockington, General
Store District Territorial Commander
Steven Norrell, District Commander

“THERE IS NO REWARD EQUAL TO THAT OF DOING GOOD”
— EVANGELINE BOSTON

Your generosity helped provide \$64,000 to help those in our community experiencing food insecurities.

Previous generations of role models have inspired the next generation of leaders

October 11, 2023

As we lead up to our 80th Anniversary celebration and proudly honor Donna Niester and Chuck Kelly with distinguished service awards, we also want to celebrate and share stories of other amazing role models and leaders. Donna and Chuck are exemplary examples of good stewards in our community, but they are not alone in the great work that is being done. So, to help honor Donna and Chuck over these next few months we're going to share again some stories of other community leaders.

Leaders from previous generations are investing in our region's youth. Tony Miller gives back to his community and its youth in the same way that his role models, his father Carl Miller Sr. and James Jones — affectionately known as Mr. Jones, did for him. They have helped to shape local leaders who are taking their experiences to enact change today as well as impact future generations.

In addition to sports and his time at the James R. Leonard Community Center, church, music and family played a significant role in Tony's childhood. He grew up in a tight-knit family with his father, his mother Deborah, and two older brothers Terry and Carl Jr.

"A lot of my friends, some of them who didn't have fathers, they would come and see us interacting as a family and want some of that, so that's what I want to give too," Tony said. "I want to give them that family atmosphere so that they begin to feel the love because that's what's going to make them flourish."

Carl Sr. worked for the City of Port Huron as a purchaser for 35 years and started Restoration Christian Community Church (RC3) two years before retirement. After he retired, he began working full-time at the church where he is now the pastor.

"All my friends were coming to our church, going into the choir and most of them, their parents didn't go to church," Tony said. "Some of them did, but they were coming because they saw something that was loving on the kids and my dad was doing that."

Now, Tony works as Senior Director at Wayne State University and has a family of his own with his wife Tiffany

and their daughter Evan. In his free time, he serves on the Community Foundation's Equity & Inclusion Committee and as the Director of Hope And A Future Blueprint (HAAFB) and Unity for Youth, programs under the Youth and Young Adult Ministry at RC3 where he is the Young Adult Pastor.

He attributes a large portion of his success to the support he received from his father as well as Mr. Jones, who worked in several leadership roles at the Leonard Center between 1982-2002.

"He's [Mr. Jones] just been that influence, helping us to grow as people," Tony said. "He's always there and now that I'm older to realize what he was really doing — wow. I knew that he was doing a lot then, but now that I'm doing it. Oh, my goodness ... He was always there; he was always pouring into us and the one to pick people up."

Carl Sr. said he is proud to see his son not only recognize that investment, but turn around to help others and make an impact on the community that he was raised in.

"Of course, I'm proud of Tony," Carl Sr. said. "I'm proud of him because he's my son, but when I look at his life now and I see the impact that his life is having, it makes me reflect on how my wife and myself tried to raise him ... I see all the time that my wife and I put in with him and we know that it was worth it. The fact that he was able to appreciate another man outside of his father makes me see that he knows the value in people."

Carl Sr. said he and Mr. Jones attended the same schools growing up in South Park and their experience led to consideration about what they could do to affect change in the lives of young Black men particularly.





“We saw the need for the Mr. Joneses because when I was growing up, there were guys that took time with us,” Carl Sr. said. “They took time with boys like Mr. Jones and myself, we played basketball, football and they talked to us about education, but these men had an impact on us and because of the impact that they had on us it really pushed me to it when I started having sons.”

Built in 1982, the Leonard Center (Cleveland Elementary School gym) served as a valuable community resource offering programs focused on education and recreation such as computers, basketball, job training, science and dance.

An avid basketball player in his youth, Tony gained more confidence in the sport during his time at the Leonard Center which eventually led him to earn a basketball scholarship and go on to study at Grand Valley State University.

“I would say 98% of my friends who went to college, they got there because of Mr. Jones,” Tony said. “He used to take us to Toronto, Montreal, Detroit, all these places that we’re going, we were playing [basketball] against them because he was taking us there.”

A skilled basketball player himself, Mr. Jones played throughout his time in high school and college and recognized the value of youth involvement in sports.

“We would practice and learn a lot of discipline as far as eating, getting the proper sleep,” Mr. Jones said. “Our coaches were interested in us, so we always had something positive for us to do. That was very important, it kept us out of trouble.”

Mr. Jones was invested in youth development and outside of the Leonard Center taught full-time from 1975-2008 in the Port Huron Area School District. During the summer, he dedicated much of his time as a youth leader for the Port Huron City Recreation Department.

“I was always interested in trying to help people,” Mr.

Jones said. “Getting them involved in sports and of course church activities — just trying to keep the kids out of trouble.”

The impact of his father and Mr. Jones’ mentorship and the Leonard Center imparted valuable life lessons to Tony, as well as many of his peers, that he is continuing the work of today.

“I reflected back on Mr. Jones, what he used to do with us and how I could mimic that and honor those that came before you,” Tony said. “How do you honor? You don’t just say thank you — of course you say thank you, that’s the bare minimum — but if you really want to appreciate it, build on it and take it further.”

Tony’s work with youth, his family, church and philanthropy is the result of the support he received growing up and his way to build upon it and make an impact on the next generation.

“How do you take further what they did to show them, ‘I appreciate what you did?’,” Tony said. “How do you get these kids and pour something into them? How do you take the love that Mr. Jones and my dad put into me and make that visible to the world? If you’re looking at any African American in this community that’s near my age, I’m 46, I guarantee Mr. Jones played a role in their life. It’s not just Mr. Jones, it’s my dad too.”

Tony’s efforts to invest in youth and reflect that love and support can be seen in DeShaun Edwards. Growing up in Port Huron, DeShaun was an active participant and musician at RC3 before he moved away to attend college. He said Tony and Carl Sr. remind him of his value and inspire him to work hard and not waver.

“The stuff that both of them have taught me, without me having a father figure, it sticks with me,” DeShaun said. “I think about these two every day. Whatever decision I make or whatever situation I’m in I always think, ‘What will these two tell me?’”

Tony, Carl Sr. and Mr. Jones are an example of compassionate leadership and those investing in our community to provide a brighter future for generations to come.



Helen David's legacy lives on

November 8, 2023



Today is a very significant day in our history; the Port Huron District Foundation was incorporated on November 8, 1944, which is now known as the Community Foundation of St. Clair County. For nearly 80 years we have been a monumental part of the community, with so many great leaders helping to make our community thrive.

As we lead up to our 80th Anniversary celebration where we will proudly honor Donna Niester and Chuck Kelly with Distinguished Service Awards, we also want to celebrate and share stories of other remarkable role models and leaders. So, over these next few months we're going to share past stories of other amazing community leaders.

Born and raised in Port Huron in the early 1900's to immigrants from Lebanon, Helen David was a trailblazer for her time. She left a charitable legacy long before studies began focusing on the giving trends of women and the rise of female philanthropists. Along with her keen sense of business she was an incredibly kind and generous woman. Helen learned the value of hard work but also the importance of giving back to the community.

"Helen truly was one of Port Huron's icons!" said Chuck Kelly.

"Her Brass Rail Bar was a must stop particularly during the holiday season, but the real draw was Helen. With her great and genuine personal warmth, she profoundly loved, supported and worked for our community her entire life."

Helen David was honored with the Foundation's lifetime achievement award at their annual dinner in 2003. Randy Maiers, who had just moved to the area the year before, has a vivid memory of Helen. "It didn't take me long to realize she was the 'queen' of Port Huron," he said. "And in fact, that's exactly how I introduced her when we gave her the lifetime achievement award."

Helen loved helping people and welcomed everyone to the Brass Rail. She was as famous for her support of local hockey as she was for her Tom and Jerrys that became a staple of holiday traditions in Port Huron. When she wasn't busy at the bar or serving as a leader in our community, she was fishing, golfing, bowling, or playing baseball. Helen was a free spirit who enjoyed life to the fullest.

Port Huron Mayor Pauline Repp knew Helen for many years. "She was an icon in downtown Port Huron," she recalled fondly. "I remember her always sitting at the end of the bar and greeting customers at the Brass Rail. She loved Port Huron and committed herself to seeing downtown prosper. I always thought of her as 'the grand lady' of the downtown."

While Helen left her mark on Port Huron with the popular holiday potion, her impact goes far beyond the four walls of the Brass Rail. Helen became an involved figure in the community known to many as "the heart and soul of Port Huron." The number of committees and organizations Helen provided leadership for was more than a few. She was president and a member of Downtown Port Huron, Inc. and later the Downtown Development Authority. She was on the Blue Water Economic Forum and on the committee for the Senior Citizens Center. She was also a past president of the Mercy Hospital Auxiliary Board.

In addition to these influential roles, Helen involved herself in various charitable projects for the United Way, Muscular Dystrophy, New Catholic Central High School, Chamber of Commerce and Tourist Bureau, Senior Citizens causes and the People's Clinic (just to name a few).

Her hard work and community involvement did not go unnoticed. Helen won the accolades of many organizations and individuals with awards including:

- 1974 Chamber of Commerce Outstanding Service Award
- 1975 Humanitarian of the Year award from the American-Lebanese-Syrian Club
- 1985 Woman of the Year Award
- 1986 Spirit of Port Huron Award
- 1987 Sports Hall of Fame Award
- 1999 Women of Distinction Award by the Blue Water Council of Girl Scouts

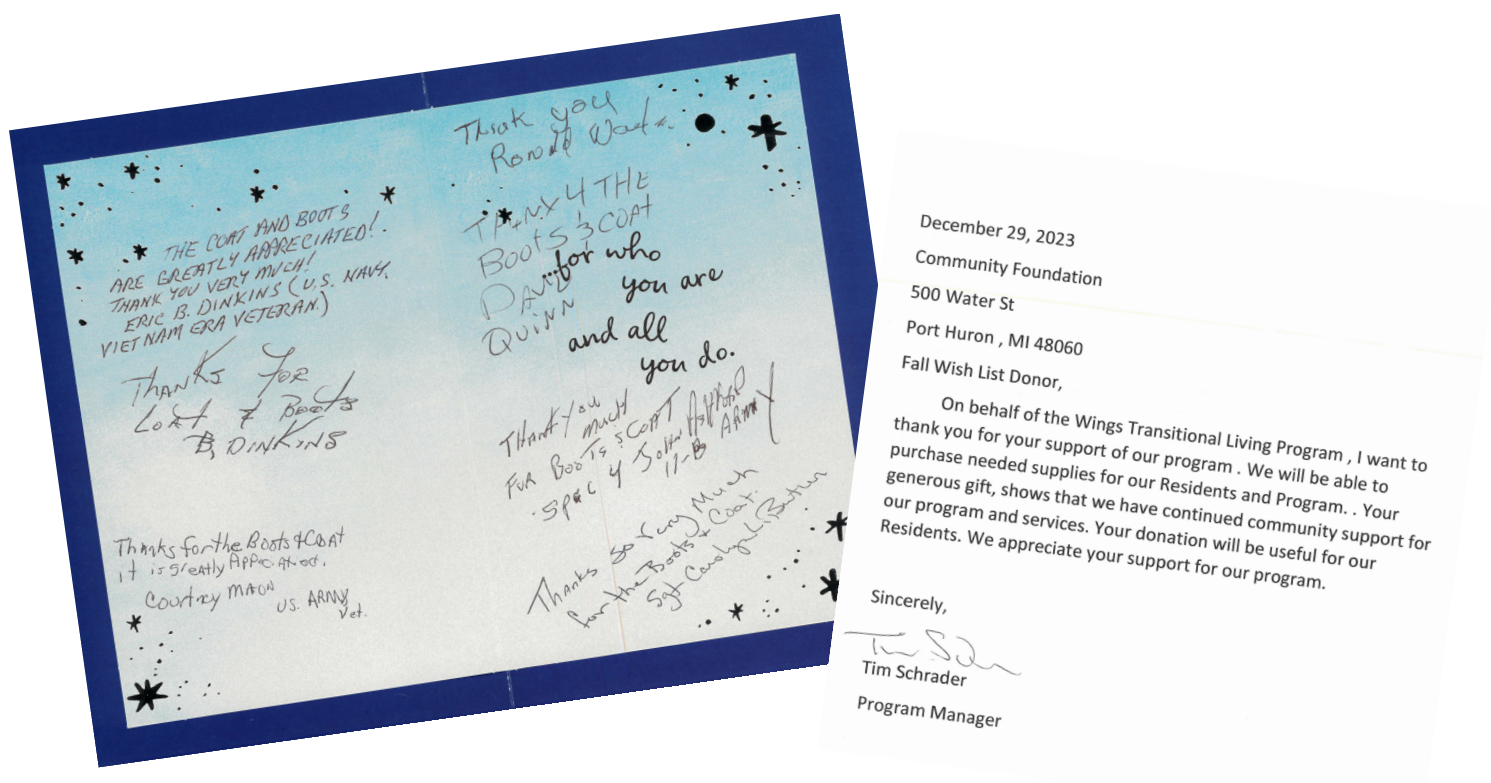
While Helen David passed away in July 2006, her legacy continues through the Helen David Fund for Council on Aging, the Helen David Fund for People's Clinic and the Quota International Helen David Fund. David used gifts from her estate to create these funds and benefit organizations that were near and dear to her heart.

Since her funds were created, they have provided over \$300,000 in total support to her favorite organizations.

"The beauty of Helen's endowment funds is that these organizations can depend on continued support for decades to come," added Maiers. "That is the essence of philanthropy; planning ahead for what comes next."

Helen forged her own path, leaving a legacy of generosity and leadership that will forever be remembered by the community.

Our 80th Anniversary will celebrate those in the community that have made a difference and provided momentum for future generations. Please plan to join us for our anniversary celebration that will take place May 16, 2024, at the Blue Water Convention Center. Tickets will be available the first part of 2024.



6266 Lapeer Road
Clyde, MI 48049
(810) 987-4357



Fax (810) 987-1307
www.bluewaterareahs.org
bluewaterareahs@comcast.net

December 18, 2023

Community Foundation
500 Water Street
Port Huron, MI 48060-5441

Dear Community Foundation,

We would like to acknowledge and give a heartfelt thank you for your **very generous** grant in the amount of \$500.00.

This donation will help us better the lives of homeless animals while they are with us waiting to be adopted. For many, this is the first time in their lives that they have had enough to eat, a clean place to sleep, and are treated with the love and respect that they deserve. It will also help low-income pet owners afford spay/neuter surgeries for their dogs and cats and spread the word about humane care and animal welfare education.

We are a 501(c)(3) organization, and our tax-exempt number is 381393854

Again, thank you for your generosity and support. Your caring and thoughtfulness continue to touch the hearts of our entire staff and the animals are very grateful.

Sincerely,

Katie Phelan
Katie Phelan, LVT
Director

Community Foundation of St. Clair County -
The Bob & Ann Tompert Endowment Fund:

Thank you for your donation.
Because of your generous donation The
Blue Water Traditional Pow Wow was
a big success.

Respectfully,
The Blue Water Traditional Pow
Wow Committee



ST. CLAIR COUNTY
CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT COUNCIL
IT SHOULDN'T HURT TO BE A CHILD

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County Child Advocate

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air
County RESA

ty Sheriff Dept.

Advocate

Advocate

August 7, 2023

Community Foundation of St. Clair County
500 Water St.
Port Huron, MI 48060

Dear Friends,

Please accept our sincere thanks for your support of ALL of our wishlist items. We are overwhelmed by your generosity. Please extend our thanks to the Mary Moore Fund of St. Clair. All of the items will be used directly with the children and families we serve in St. Clair County.

Once again thank you for your continued support of the Council and our mission in support of the belief that...

"It shouldn't hurt to be a child."

Sincerely,

Sherry L. Archibald
Sherry L. Archibald
Executive Director

\$3,500.00
Grant

Prosecuting Attorney
Korissa Kramer
Kramer Realty

Children's Trust Fund
Protect Your Child's Future

1107 MILITARY, PORT HURON, MI 48060 PHONE (810) 986-9611
WWW.SCCSTOPCHILDABUSE.ORG | INFO@SCCSTOPCHILDABUSE.ORG

7-7-23
The Blue Water Allies are extremely grateful for your generous grant. With this donation we were able to purchase all new furniture for the Ally Center. Providing a comfortable, efficient and safe space for our LGBTQ community is major part of the mission of the Blue Water Allies. Thankyou for making that possible!

In Allyship,
The Board of the Blue Water Allies

You are greatly appreciated!
Barbara

THANK YOU!
Jenny D

Thank You!
Eric Rivard

Thank You!
Nicole Biche

Thank you!
BT Attis

Thank you for your generous donation!

THANK YOU SO MUCH
Daw Cens

We wouldn't be able to do what we do without the support of people like you. Thank you,
Charles Elijah Bennett
BWRCC

Thank you Community Foundation for being a hero!
We are truly appreciative for the \$500 grant donation as selected by the 100+ Women Who Care event. Thank you for helping us to support victims of crime in St. Clair County. Best Ouel on behalf of the Board of BSY/MTT

Generations of mentors changing the game for local youth

December 6, 2023

The Community Foundation of St. Clair County has been a significant part of the community for nearly 80 years. As we lead up to our 80th Anniversary celebration on May 16, 2024, we will be sharing past stories of remarkable role models and leaders who have made a difference and provided momentum for future generations.

One of the role models previously featured, Cliff Thomason, is still going full tilt for the youth of our region. Cliff is unstoppable in his drive to provide positive direction for local kids. His inspiration came from his own childhood, where the James R. Leonard Community Center was his safe haven – a positive and structured place to go be with other kids.

Cliff was a constant presence at the Leonard Center during his youth since it was located at the Cleveland Elementary School gym near his childhood home. Established in 1982, it was named in honor of the late James R. Leonard who was a community-driven educator with a passion for recreation. The center thrived for many years and offered a range of programs focused on education and recreation.

After becoming a father himself, Cliff realized that helping kids was something he was put here to do, and he left the corporate world to do it full time. He and Marion Stewart created The Athletic Factory with the purpose of helping local student-athletes reach their potential and become successful with top-level athletic competition and training, while maintaining high academic achievement in the classroom.

“We want kids to know they’re students that happen to be athletes, not athletes that happen to be students,” he said.

Through The Athletic Factory, local youth have access to an after-school tutoring program for student athletes, information about the NCAA/NAIA Eligibility Center



information about the NCAA/NAIA Eligibility Center core class requirements, seven-week SAT and ACT prep courses, FAFSA and Tuition Incentive Program (TIP) workshops, basketball skills training, Vertimax training, a travel basketball program, developmental recreational basketball leagues for girls and boy in third through 12th grade, biddy ball basketball leagues for younger kids, developmental recreational volleyball leagues for girls and boys in 6th through 12th grade, and a golf simulator program.

The programs are expanding, too, said Cliff. They have added video gaming, expressive dance, and arts and crafts; launched an eight-week auto body internship program in partnership with Cawood Honda of Port Huron as well as a wood shop program; they’re creating coding and cybersecurity curricula; and they are working on an Esports component to facilitate creative thinking, problem solving, and more.

Esports, said Cliff, is something that more and more colleges are recognizing – some as a varsity sport, which means students can get scholarships. He’s in contact with Esports coaches at Michigan State University and Kettering University as The Athletic Factory begins their program.

“We want kids to understand that video gaming can be a segue to doing something professionally,” he said. “We’re hoping to launch that the first of next year.”

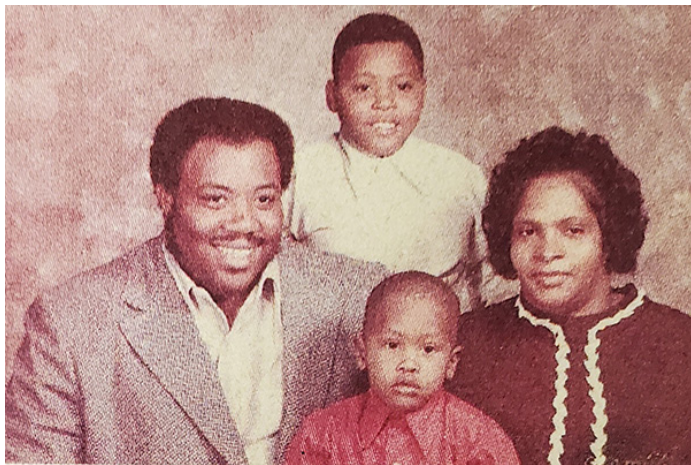
The Leonard Center closed for several years before it was reopened in 2021 with Cliff’s support, and now the focus has turned to Trinity Lutheran Church on 10th Street.

There was a school there that closed about a decade ago, and Cliff said The Athletic Factory has been there nearly four years – with their eyes on a long-term relationship.

“We love being here and we just recently signed our 10-year lease here because we want to make some improvements and some things that are going to help us have more sustainability and growth,” he said.

One big project has been taking out the old, tiled gym floor and replacing it with a rubberized floor using the latest technology to best serve the athletes as they train.

The number of youth served by The Athletic Factory has grown quickly, with 348 kids served in 2021, 727 in 2022, and more than 1,200 in 2023, and Cliff said he is looking forward to continuing that trend to reach the kids in the community and prepare them for successful futures.



“We see them. We hear them. We value them and we want to be there as a support system for them,” he said. “We have a heart for the community, and we want to be there for a long time.”

Cliff is following in the footsteps of several men who helped shape his future, just as he’s doing for local youth now.



One of his earliest role models was his father James “Jim” Thomason Sr. who was also affectionately known as Cowboy due to his love of westerns and predilection as a youth for roleplaying as a cowboy in the children’s game Cowboys and Indians. Cowboy was a pastor for over 20 years at Love Outreach Church and had a heart for the community always helping those in need. He also set a good example for his son, teaching him the importance of integrity, community, and giving back, from an early age.

Another impactful mentor for Cliff was James Jones — commonly referred to as Mr. Jones or Jonesy around the community — who taught full-time from 1975 to 2008 in the Port Huron Area School District and spent much of his summer as a youth leader for the Port Huron Recreation Department. Between 1982 and 2002, he worked in several leadership roles at the Leonard Center and was heavily involved with its extensive basketball program, of which Cliff was an avid participant.

As we approach our 80th anniversary at the Community Foundation, we want to remind the community of the impact individuals like Cliff, Cowboy, and Mr. Jones have, and how that impact reaches beyond the current generation to strengthen the community far into the future. These men of vision have done a great service to Port Huron’s youth, which has helped shape successful adults who thrive and give back – and that’s what we’re all about here.

Please plan to join us for our anniversary celebration in May at the Blue Water Convention Center. Tickets will be available in early 2024.

The many hats of Kevin Totty

January 18, 2024

As we lead up to our 80th Anniversary celebration where we will proudly honor Donna Niester and Chuck Kelly with Distinguished Service Awards, we also want to celebrate and share stories of other remarkable role models and leaders. This month's profile of amazing people who are making a difference every day, is our own Kevin Totty.



When Kevin Totty holds a high-quality hat in his hands – perhaps his beloved chocolate brown Cassini – he takes the time to notice the materials that are woven together with care, the stitches, the trim, and the brim. Each hat has its own character and speaks to him differently. A man of many hats, when Kevin is preparing to step out into the world to do his day's work, his choice of hat plays into his mission.

"A good hat puts me in a good mood to do good things with good people," he said. "It helps me to feel better. It protects you from the elements. It encourages you, and when you get close, you can really hear it."

You can hear outside of yourself, and it humbles you to help other people. A good hat puts you in that spot. It really does."

Like the care that went into creating that Cassini, Kevin has carefully crafted a meaningful life's mission of bringing people together, weaving individual threads into a strong community element. Whether he is encouraging youth, providing resources to remove barriers to college success, or setting into motion things that will affect the community long into the future, he is doing it by listening to what people are saying, learning from it, and then leaning on everyone's understanding to collaborate for a successful outcome.

Kevin grew up in Conant Gardens in Detroit, and that is where he learned the spirit of community, from his father and from those around him. His dad is also where he picked up his affinity for headwear. He even gets himself a new hat to commemorate milestones, such as the birth of his grandchildren.

"This all comes from my dad," he said. "He always wore stunning hats."



With larger brims come larger responsibilities, Kevin said, which means the brim of his proverbial hat extends far and wide. He wears many hats in the community, and yet, they are all interwoven under the umbrella of bringing people together, connecting them with resources, breaking through barriers, and strengthening the fabric of the community as a whole so that it can resist the challenges that come like a cold winter rain.

It was around eight years ago that Kevin first began volunteering for the Community Foundation, reading scholarship applications. Over the years, he had a number of opportunities to work alongside the Foundation before coming on board full-time three years ago.

“Out of all the jobs I’ve had, the Foundation really is the closest to the different assignments the Lord has put on my heart,” he said.

Randy Maiers, President of the Community Foundation, said “Kevin Totty is the embodiment of giving back. He’s more involved in the community, seven days a week, than anyone else on our team.”

Kevin also serves on the governance board and board of directors for the Blue Water Area Chamber of Commerce. It’s another opportunity to build relationships and connect people with others, particularly entrepreneurs.

He used to work at the St. Clair County Juvenile Center, taking kids to have different experiences and showing them that they can set the bar higher for themselves, therefore changing their lives for the better. He also works with SONS Outreach, and he and his wife Jessica are pastors with #c4yourselfchurch.

“I’ve known Kevin for many years and he is one of the most kind, caring and compassionate people I know,” said Joe Platzer, Port Huron Police Department Chief. “When he walks into a room you feel his presence.”

While his missions often intertwine, each endeavor can require Kevin to put on a different hat. It’s like speaking different languages, he said. Sometimes you have to get to know the dos and don’ts, listen and learn and communicate, before you are fully welcomed in enough to make a difference. Once that barrier is broken, though, the result can be quite beautiful.

Sometimes a good hat will get you into a room that you wouldn’t normally be able to get into,” he said. “At the end of it, we’re all one.”

Whether it’s helping a mom who is trying to care for her children while going back to school to better their situation, showing youth that they are capable of reaching for the stars, or gently reminding men that their health and well-being need attention too, Kevin is comfortable meeting people where they are, wearing whichever hat is necessary, and trying on new ones when it’s called for. For him, it’s all about building those connections and fostering collaboration.

“Pastor Kevin Totty is a pillar of strength in our community,” said Theo Kerhoulas, Superintendent of Port Huron Area Schools. “I’ll always remember the day I arrived early to lend support to our students and staff at a middle school, devastated by the tragic loss of a student the night before,” Kerhoulas added. “I found Kevin Totty already there in the parking lot. Alone in his truck he was connected to a group of pastors who were all praying together for our school community. I asked him to accompany me in the school, where his unwavering strength became infectious to our staff as they prepared to support the students who had just lost a classmate.”





“I believe folks are empowered already. They have the power they need. They need to be connected and have relationships to keep going,” he said. “I love it when people put all their opinions on the table. When we collaborate, we’re all one. We all wear different hats, and we all have different responsibilities.”

As a father of five, Kevin now has his children out in the world, passing on what they learned from him. He’s also passionate about mentorship and encouraging others to get involved in bringing the community together. The more those relationships can be facilitated, the stronger the fabric will be.

“You make an investment in a good hat and sometimes it goes out in the elements,” he said. “If you invested in quality, the resilience is there. My biggest dream is being able to mentor even more folks in doing these kinds of things. It truly is a way of passing the hat, no pun intended, because we all have something we can contribute.”

Working with the Community Foundation is where Kevin has found a strong connection, bringing like-minded people from all over St. Clair County together to truly make an impact.

“The impactful things are those which renew people’s sight and hope,” he said. “Even just making a simple connection to one helpful resource makes a difference. Impact comes from the trust that is built in the community.

The Foundation crosses over into everything I do. It really is the relationship piece.”

Kevin likes to be transparent about his own life, too, because he finds that sometimes vulnerable human connection can be helpful to building relationships. He is currently undergoing treatment for cancer, but said his prognosis is very good, and he’s choosing to see the silver lining in this challenge as well.

“God is using it to intensify how I’m mentoring more folks so it can continue to grow,” he said. “It brings you to your knees, but in God, everything is possible.”

And it just wouldn’t be Kevin if he didn’t already have a milestone hat picked out to commemorate the end of his treatment. This one, he said, is full of symbolic meaning: It has a double band signifying a second chance, and a teardrop crown.

“This world thinks that men don’t cry,” he said. “Things hurt us, but there are also tears of joy.”

Our 80th Anniversary will celebrate those in the community that have made a difference and provided momentum for future generations. Please plan to join us for our anniversary celebration that will take place May 16, 2024, at the Blue Water Convention Center. Registration is now open <https://stclairfoundation.org/80th-anniversary-evening/>

Thank You
From
Saint Vincent DePaul/Ecumenical Food Pantry

Because of your generosity we are able to help keep people from being evicted or having their heat and electric turned off.

We are able to help with prescriptions, eyeglasses, dental work and any medical deductibles.

We help with any emergency situation that may come up that would help someone in need get just the boost they need to be self-sufficient.

The pantry workers come from every church in town. At Thanksgiving we gave out 65 food baskets. We delivered over 8,000 pounds of food at Christmas and over 1,200 gifts.

People need help all year and not just at the holidays. We give food vouchers and distributed over 58,000 pounds of food to over 3,600 people from the Ecumenical Food Pantry in the last year.

All of this is done without any regard to race or religion and is kept in our local community. A special emphasis is taken to help the elderly. We actively seek out senior citizens that are not aware of or are too proud to ask for help. We deliver food monthly to 60 seniors.

Remember what Jesus said: "Whatever you do for the least of my people, you do unto Me"

To: St. Clair County Community Foundation Date 10-20-23

For receipt of: \$23,483.76

Sue E. Schweitzer
President,

St. Vincent DePaul,
St. Mary's of St. Clair Council

Thank you for your continued support. It is very much appreciated!

Dear Mrs. Walker,

Thank you to the Wyatt Walker Friendship Fund on behalf of the Community Foundation for supporting Packs for a Purpose. We would not be able to accomplish everything we do without your continued help. We are so thankful for your donation and are so excited to continue the project.

From,
Sydney Betts, Sophia March
Alexis Umbreit Arianna Hagen

Dear Community Foundation
Kids in Distress Services is extremely grateful to be the recipient of the 2023 Fall Wish Grant. Kids was thrilled to have received \$1000.00xx for the purchase of boots along with an additional \$500.00xx towards the purchase of socks and underwear. This generous donation impacts the children in our community. Kids has a lot of work to do, and your big-hearted donation helps us get that important work done. Your gift will keep many little feet warm and dry this winter. With the support from your donation, Kids will continue to exist "so no child will have to go without." Your donation played an integral role during tough economic times. Your generosity and support means the world to our organization. We cannot thank you enough for your commitment to our mission.

In Gratitude,
Kids in Distress Services

Community Foundation selects Donna Niester & Chuck Kelly for Lifetime Achievement Awards

September 13, 2023

The Community Foundation of St. Clair County will honor Donna Niester and Chuck Kelly with lifetime achievement awards at the Foundation's 80th Anniversary celebration in May of 2024. The Community Foundation's Distinguished Service Award is the highest honor the Foundation can bestow. It dates back to the 1960's and only 27 other people have received the award.

Both Niester and Kelly have a long and impressive history of community service, volunteerism, philanthropy and giving back to multiple organizations.

Donna Niester, one of the most prominent voices for philanthropy in our region, has a lengthy history of foundation and community service both in Michigan and in Florida. She began her direct involvement with the Community Foundation of St. Clair County in 2003 and prior to that had played a major role in helping the late philanthropist James C. Acheson, establish a private foundation that bears his name.



"My first memory was one of the Foundation's annual dinners back in the 1980's," Niester said. "I was a guest of my late friend and business partner, Doug Austin, who was also a long-time board member of the Community Foundation. We were expected to be involved." Niester says she believes in giving her "time, treasure or talents" whenever she can.

"Donna has more experience in the foundation world than most people in our region," said Hale Walker, current board chair of the Community Foundation. "She has played a significant role here at our foundation and has also worked closely with the Broward County Community Foundation down in Florida. She is a rare talent and role model."

"Philanthropy is a powerful tool for community growth," Niester said. "Both in my professional practice as a CPA and as a long-time board member and advocate, I've witnessed such powerful impact." During her tenure with the Community Foundation of St. Clair County she has served in numerous roles, including becoming the first woman in 70 years to be elected board chair in 2013. She has previously also served on the Michigan Community Service Commission and was honored with the Distinguished Woman of the Year award by Northwood University.

"You will always get more out of it than what you put in," she said of her lengthy history of community service. "Few things in life are more rewarding than helping others."

Donna and her family have a donor advised fund at the community foundation, and she is a founding member of the Women's Initiative. She currently serves on the Executive Committee and Governance Committee and is chair of the Foundation's committee for the Complete Your Degree program, which is a unique scholarship program focusing on long-term student success and overcoming life obstacles.

Donna says some of her past favorite projects have included the creation of Studio 1219 back in 2005, Youth Home also in 2005, the Blue Water River Walk in 2014 and the Back-to-School events which the Foundation organized and managed for several years.

According to Randy Maiers, Community Foundation President & CEO, "Most people don't have any idea of how significant Donna's impact has been," he said. "Because for everything she's done that made the news, she's been

a driving force for two other projects or initiatives that didn't make the news.”

Prior to being honored with the Foundation's lifetime achievement award, Niester was recognized by the Council of Michigan Foundations for the Community Foundation Philanthropy Award, and Crain's Detroit as one of the 100 most influential women in Michigan.

Chuck Kelly is the longest serving active Trustee of the Community Foundation, having joined the Foundation back in 1982. “My earliest memory of the Foundation was while growing up in Port Huron,” Kelly said. “I learned that the Foundation, then known as the Port Huron District Foundation, had raised the funds to build Memorial Stadium, its very first project. And like thousands of other people over the decades, I benefited from playing at those facilities.”

Chuck attributes his passion for giving back to the role models he saw growing up. He was a 1968 graduate of Port Huron Northern and the son of longtime St. Clair County District Judge James Kelly. His mother Janet was a professor at St. Clair County Community College and longtime college board member.



“They were my examples,” Chuck said. Over his many years of community service, “No matter what you put into it for the community, you get more out of it yourself,” he said in a Times Herald article from 2017.

Kelly has served multiple roles during his time with the Community Foundation, including board chair from 2007 – 2009. He has also served on the Governance Committee, Executive Compensation, Legal Advisory, and currently serves on the main Grants Committee. He is a charter member of the Legacy Society and Founding Member of C3. He and his wife Gail opened their own donor advised fund in 2001 and are active donors to multiple causes, including Blue Water Allies, SONS, Wyatt Walker Fund, Port Huron Schools, Crosstown Showdown, Athletic Factory and Women's Initiative.

His list of involvement with other organizations is equally impressive:

- Past president and longtime board member of the Blue Water YMCA
- Board member of the Blue Water YMCA Foundation & Co-Chair of the YMCA Major Gifts Committee for the new YMCA
- Board member of Sanborn Gratiot Memorial Home
- Business Law instructor at SC4
- State Bar of Michigan Representative Assembly
- Past chair for attorneys for the United Way campaigns
- Past president and board member of Visiting Nurses Association
- Past president and board member of the Port Huron Golf Club
- Former member of the Planned Gifts Committee at Port Huron Hospital Foundation
- Former Chair and Hearing Panel Member for Michigan Attorney Discipline Board

Chuck has received the honorary Life Member Award from the YMCA for efforts “warranting lasting recognition” and the Judge James T. Corden award from the St. Clair County Bar Association for “integrity, honesty, ethics and civility” in his work and daily conduct.

According to Maiers, “Chuck has been a role model for me since I first came to the Foundation back in 2002. He's a man of few words, but with an incredible ability to set aside individual ego and do what's best for the entire community. He is truly a voice of reason and is so deserving of this award.”

“Whatever my contributions have been,” Kelly said, “I'm so humbled to be linked to this great organization and to others receiving this award including its most recent recipients Jim Acheson, Frank Moore, Fred Moore, Marty Weiss and Don Fletcher, and those deserving in the future. And making this award even sweeter is being recognized together with my dear friend Donna Niester who has contributed a lifetime of time and energy to our community and is so deserving.”

Community Foundation of St. Clair County prepares to celebrate 80 years Lifetime Achievement awards to be presented



Chuck Kelly and Donna Niester will be honored with Lifetime Achievement awards at the Community Foundation of St. Clair County's 80th anniversary celebration. (Courtesy of Randy Maiers)

By NICOLE TUTTLE

January 23, 2024 at 9:24 a.m.

In the wake of the Great Depression and amidst World War II, local leaders in the Port Huron area saw an opportunity to recreate their community. In 1944 they formed what has become the Community Foundation of St. Clair County, an organization that is still making a difference 80 years after its founding.

This year the foundation will recognize its 80th anniversary milestone with a celebration on May 16 at the Blue Water Convention Center, located at 800 Harker St. in Port Huron. The doors will open at 5:30 p.m. Strolling diner and entertainment will begin at 6 p.m., and the celebration program is scheduled to begin at 7:45 p.m. Tickets are now on sale at stclairfoundation.org. Registration will close by May 3. The cost to attend is \$75 per person. Valet service will be available, and cocktail attire is requested.

"At the heart of philanthropy is people doing great things for their hometown. That is what the celebration is going to be," foundation President and CEO Randy Maiers said.

At the May 16 event, the foundation will recognize the contributions of Donna Niester and Chuck Kelly with Lifetime Achievement awards. Maiers said Niester and Kelly were selected via committee and their nominations confirmed by the foundation's board, as the pair had distinguished themselves for decades with the foundation.

This is awarded infrequently. Obviously in our business we deal with people who do great things all the time. It really takes someone with decades of work, a long, long-term commitment to the community," Maiers said.

Leading up to the 80th anniversary celebration, the foundation has been publishing stories online at facebook.com/CommunityFoundationSCC and stclairfoundation.org to illustrate the generations of leadership that have helped build and support the foundation. The Community Foundation of St. Clair County began as the Port Huron District Foundation back upon its incorporation on Nov. 8, 1944. It's founding board of directors included: Fred Riggin, E.W. Kiefer, Eugene Moak, Howard Acheson, Howard Crull, James MacTaggart, Louis Weil, Gerald Collins, Edward Moore, Francis Kiefer and Willam Walsh.

"People called them industry titans. Back in the day they ran some of the biggest companies in the region," Maiers said.

The group solicited funds from the public at large and through fundraising activities. It sought to promote, encourage and aid the work of various organization in the Port Huron area, whether they were benevolent, charitable, hospital, scientific, literary or educational organizations.

"It is an amazing story if you think about what the world was like in November 1944. Those were pretty tough years. The adults at the time back then lived through the Great Depression and World War II. In the Port Huron area nothing new had been built for decades," Maiers said.

The original foundation completed a poll to determine community needs, and thus began the initial projects of Girl Scout overnight camp cabins, land for a Boy Scout camp, and the development of Memorial Recreation Park, which Maiers said is now known as Memorial Stadium. This project was completed in 1946.

Maiers said from about the 1940s through the 1970s, brick and mortar projects were the foundation's focus, such as hospital expansion and a new YMCA building.

The organization was renamed the Community Foundation of St. Clair County in 1985, and its current board chair is Patti Manley. The foundation's current mission statement states the foundation will address the region's opportunities and challenges, and will help donors to achieve their goals by connecting them with like-minded donors and partners, striving to improve regional quality of life and increase area vibrancy and prosperity.

Maiers said that foundation now spends more time and resources on community economic development and placemaking efforts.

"That is the No. 1 goal. The No. 2 goal is college career and life success," Maiers said.

He also said the foundation is excited about having provided financing for regional trails, such as bike paths in St. Clair and Marysville.

Through the creation, management and administration of permanently endowed funds and project specific funds, the foundation works to support donor, volunteer and partner efforts for common goals of residents of the county.

“We pride ourselves on how we help our donors achieve their goals,” Maiers said.

The large grantmaking foundation in the Thumb region of the state manages multiple endowment funds that benefit St. Clair County. Maiers said in 2023, the foundation awarded about 900 grants to communities. He also said the foundation does not provide tax money, but that every grant is funded by people via private philanthropy.

The foundation has giving center opportunities, and offers grants and scholarships. Maiers said although grant applications are accepted year-round, now through the end of March is the best time to apply. The foundation’s total assets heading into 2024 exceed \$100 million, and include over 300 endowments as well as property and buildings.

The foundation’s family of assets includes:

- Blue Water River Walk
- Thumb Coast Kitchens
- Community Funds in Algonac/Clay, St. Clair, Marysville and Port Huron
- School District funds for Algonac, East China and Port Huron
- Knowlton Museum

“The Blue Water River Walk was really a keystone project for us,” Maiers said.

Some of the key programs of the foundation include:

- Blue Water River Walk
- Community Capital Club (C3)
- Equity and inclusion
- Regional trails
- Disaster response fund
- Women’s Initiative
- Talent attraction
- Youth Advisory Council

The Community Foundation of St. Clair County is located at 500 Water St. in Port Huron. For more information about the foundation and its programs and opportunities, visit stclairfoundation.org.

Nicole Tuttle is a freelance reporter for The Voice.

Let's Celebrate

Community Foundation

Est. 1944

80th
Anniversary
CELEBRATION

*Brought to you by
Eastern Michigan Bank*

Celebrating 80 years
OF GIVING BACK

Thursday, May 16, 2024

6:00 – 8:30pm

Blue Water Convention Center

*\$75 per person ~ Cocktail Attire
Valet Service Available*

**Register online by May 3:
StClairFoundation.org**

*You may also mail a check
to the Community Foundation*