

WINTER 2025

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

OF ST. CLAIR COUNTY



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GENEROSITY IN ACTION

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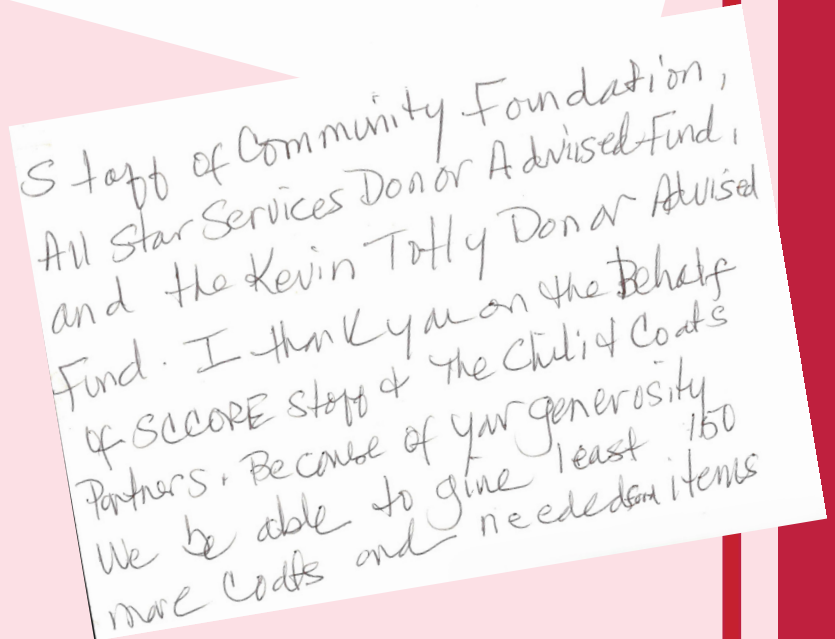
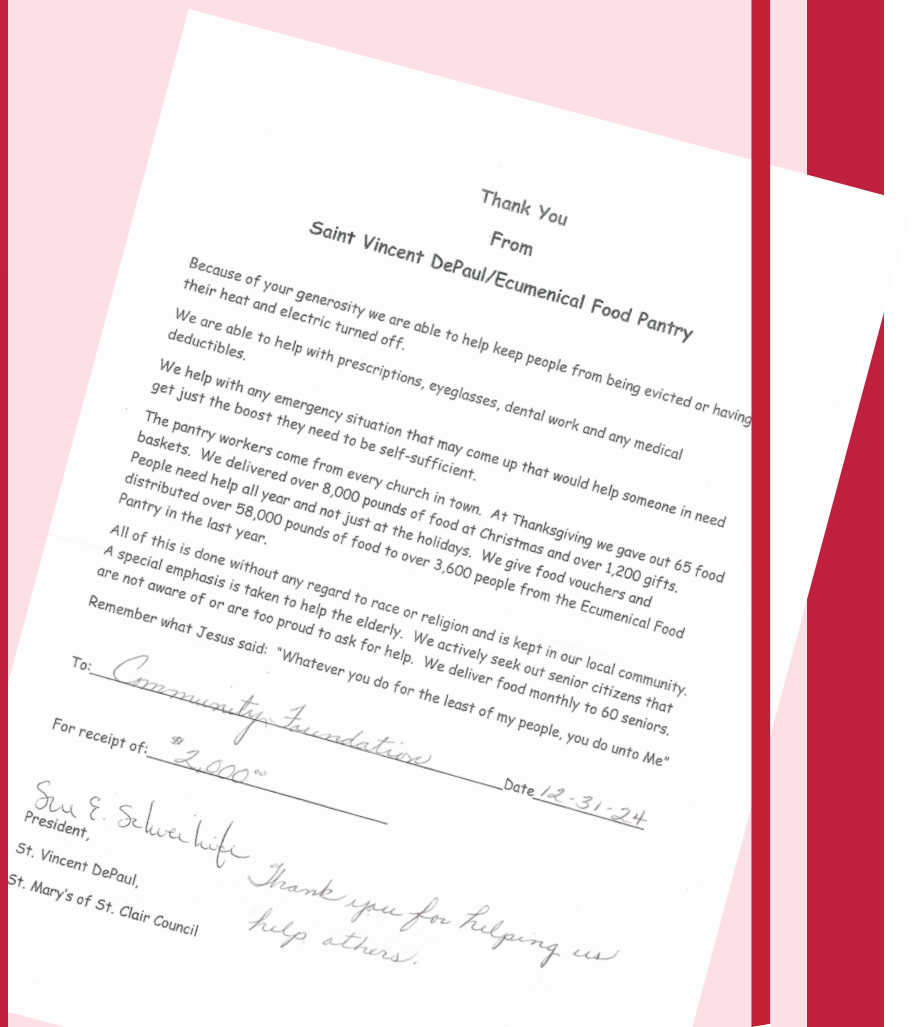
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We OUR DONORS

**YOUR GENEROSITY IN 2024 MADE A LASTING IMPACT—
HELPING US BUILD A STRONGER, BRIGHTER
COMMUNITY TOGETHER.**

- ♥ 99 Legacy Society Members who have made plans through their estate to give back to our community
- ♥ Over 320 charitable funds
- ♥ 881 grants that totaled over \$3.4M for more than 15 sectors of our community
- ♥ \$4.5 in gifts to start new funds, support grantmaking and the work of the Foundation



Community Foundation Grants \$3.6 Million in 2024

By Laura Fitzgerald

The Community Foundation and its many donors made a big impact on St. Clair County in 2024 with 983 grants and scholarship awarded totaling more than \$3.6 million.

The Community Foundation has hundreds of grantmaking funds and several grantmaking committees that provide a wide range of funding to St. Clair County organizations, programs, projects and nonprofits. These funds support a wide variety of projects, including youth, education, recreation, public safety, nonprofit capacity building, community and economic prosperity, basic needs and human services, arts and culture and animal welfare.

[Click here to view a full list of grants in 2024.](#)

A large portion of these funds are categorized as unrestricted giving, meaning organizations can use gifted dollars however they see fit.

“Unrestricted giving allows organizations to meet emerging community needs on their own timeline so they can better serve the people they support, rather than waiting on a donor who may be further removed from the needs of that community to approve a project or program,” said Program Officer Audrey Sochor.

Notable grants in this area include [\\$105,000 to SONS Outreach](#), which was used to support programming and operations at their new home in the Harrison School in Port Huron.

“We’re so thankful for our long-term relationship with the Acheson Foundation and the Community Foundation,” Tyrone Burrell, Executive Director of SONS, has said. “The Foundation and their donors have been supporting our work since we first created SONS 30 years ago.”

The Foundation’s many Donor Advised Funds (DAFs) were also busy last year. A DAF allows donors to remain directly involved with the Foundation and are set up to support the charitable interests and passions of the donor. Those DAF’s awarded \$663,000 last year, increasing from \$558,000 in 2023.



Sons Outreach

Foundation Supports Education Through Grantmaking to Students, Schools

The Foundation awarded 397 grants and scholarships totaling nearly \$865,000 last year to students, school districts and educational organizations. These funds help make higher education more accessible for students by providing dollars for tuition, books, class supplies, and life needs like rent, medical bills, transportation costs, groceries, and other unexpected expenses.

These funds have also supported programs for hands-on learning, career exposure and college readiness programs, such as robotics clubs, SAT/ACT test prep, a trades career fair, [college advisor support](#) and a Lego league.

This category of funding has grown over the years because grantmaking committees and several donors have prioritized these funds, Sochor said.

The Foundation awarded nearly \$285,000 directly to local school districts and St. Clair County Community College (SC4), which supported literacy programs, STEM programs and extracurriculars. Of note is the [Kent George DuPont Family Heritage Fund](#), which awarded \$40,000 to non-sports-related clubs like theater and robotics in Yale schools.

Basic Needs Funding Key Funding Area

Another key area of the Foundation in 2024 was basic needs funding, which contributed to programs that provide food, clothing and shelter. The Foundation supported 177 grants awarding nearly \$440,000.

“It’s been a focus of the Community Foundation in 2024 because organizations working in the basic needs space have seen a significant increase in demand,” Sochor said. “On top of the increase in demand, other resources these nonprofits have relied on for support in the past have not been as readily available due to their own funding constraints.”

Notable grants in this area include [DTE Energy Foundation grants](#) to seven local food pantries. A grant of \$18,500 to [Kind Human 4 Human Kind](#) was used to purchase storage bins and shelving, a trailer for transporting food and basic goods, and other transportation costs.

“Because of this funding, we were able to realize our mission and exceed our goals for 2024,” said nonprofit founder Jamie Gipson. “This year alone, we directly supported more than 6,000 St. Clair County residents through our various programs and outreach efforts. We also provided aid to over 400 homeless individuals. By stretching this money and using it as efficiently as possible, we were able to gift in excess of 60,000 essential items to those in need across all programs!”

Placemaking Projects Build Community

The Foundation also supported [placemaking projects](#) large and small. These public infrastructure projects that invest in parks, theaters and outdoor spaces are designed to enhance community, create a sense of place and boost economic prosperity. Some notable examples include:

- \$10,290 to [Belle River Fishing Pier](#) project in Marine City
- \$5,000 to [Klecha Park project](#) in St. Clair
- \$40,000 to [McMorran Place](#) in Port Huron for general support
- \$86,368 to [Friends of the St. Clair River](#) for trail management and general programmatic support



Kind Human 4 Human Kind

“The City of Marine City is very appreciative for the continued support of the Community Foundation of St. Clair County,” said Marine City Special Project Administrator Scott Adkins. “The fishing pier project will begin active construction in 2025 and together will be integral parts of our new ‘marina district’ which will feature transient boat docks, accessible canoe and kayak launch, the new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-accessible fishing pier and our marina park which itself will feature a pavilion, restrooms and day-use parking. If it were not for the funding and support from the Community Foundation, none of these projects would have been possible.”

Other Areas of Funding and How to Support the Community Foundation’s Mission

The Foundation also awarded grants in these following areas:

- Animal Welfare: \$11,979
- Arts and Culture: \$370,029
- Community and Economic Prosperity: \$934,423
- Environment: \$11,274
- Health: \$51,567
- Nonprofit Capacity Building: \$131,158
- Public Safety: \$24,743
- Recreation/Leisure/Sports: \$45,802
- Youth: \$195,814

If you are interested in learning more about how the Foundation can help advance your charitable goals, [click here](#).

For information about how to ask the Foundation for a grant in 2025 [click here](#).

Disaster Response Fund reaches \$100,000



Patti Manley

A new year-end gift from a donor advised fund has pushed the Disaster Response Fund for St. Clair County to the \$100,000 level. The Community Foundation of St. Clair County launched the Fund a year ago in response to growing natural and man-made disasters around the country.

“We are so very proud of this accomplishment and the continued generosity of our donors,” said Patti Manley, Board Chair of the Community Foundation. The latest gift of \$50,000 came from the Kusch Family Donor Advised Fund and matches the initial gift of \$50,000 which came from the Acheson Fund.

“Although we hope to never have to dip into this fund, knowing we have it ready to go is one of our most important accomplishments in recent years,” Manley added. “Geof and Jenifer Kusch continue to be so supportive of the Foundation’s projects and initiatives.”

To create and launch the Disaster Response Fund, the Foundation benchmarked and learned from other community foundations in Michigan and around the country who had faced disasters. The Foundation also worked closely with Justin Westmiller, Director of Homeland Security and Emergency Management for St. Clair County.

“I think I can speak for the County and all first-responding agencies when I say how much we appreciate our Community Foundation for their leadership in this new Disaster Response Fund,” said Westmiller.

“Knowing that we have immediate and flexible dollars available if and when a disaster strikes, will give us resources to help people on day #1.”

The Community Foundation’s Disaster Response Fund (SCCStrong.Org) provides a map for both short and long-term financial support and is structured closely from the Community Foundation in Maui and their response to the disasters they faced a few years ago.

Randy Maiers is the President & CEO of the Community Foundation. “Our model allows for immediate financial support on the very first day to any first responding agency,” he said. “Our support would only be triggered in consultation with Justin Westmiller, and the way we structure it we can support first responders, other local nonprofits and even the people directly impacted by the disaster.”



Justin Westmiller

Maiers added that the Foundation will continue to accept new gifts of any size into the Disaster Response Fund so that it continues to grow over time. Gifts may be made online at: sccstrong.org

Community Foundation
of St. Clair County,

Thank you for the grant
of \$5000 in September.

Thanks to you and DTE
we were able to serve boneless,
skinless chicken breast to
our families at both the November
and December Impact Day
events. Also thank you for

including us in the "wishlist"
\$1000 for the Food pantry and
\$500 for "Bear Necessities" is a huge
investment in our guests.

Thank You + Merry Christmas!
Mike Weaver

DuPont Family

Thank you for your generous
donation that paid for the
bus to take a group of
students to Art Dige this
year. Without your generosity,
there are many art club
students who would not have
been able to attend this
wonderful event.

Sincerely
Alexandra

place
stamp
here

"dragonfly over tulips" © sandra vargas ~ www.sandragrafik.etsy.com

Community Foundation and DTE Energy Provide Funding to Local Food Pantries to Help Meet Rising Need, Operating Costs



By Laura Fitzgerald

A steady stream of clients trickled into the small storefront at SOS Marysville Food Pantry on an overcast November morning. Volunteers in orange shirts hurriedly cleaned and replenished bare shelves with cans of vegetables, boxes of juice, bags of snacks, and other household goods.

Director Carmela Burns greeted repeat clients by name and made conversation with them. A few clients were new. One woman stood on the small store's threshold and said it was her first time there. Volunteers quickly greeted her with a smile as they gathered her information, handed her a wire shopping cart, and walked her through the process of selecting food according to her household size.

In recent months, bare shelves and new clients are a familiar site to the staff and volunteers who run food pantries in the Blue Water Area. Most have been facing rising food and operating costs, all while trying

to serve an ever-increasing number of clients.

That's why the DTE Energy Foundation and the Community Foundation of St Clair County continued their collaboration to provide another round of grants to help meet the need.

Pantries use Grant Funding to Purchase Food, Pay Building Expenses

In recent weeks grants were awarded to:

- C3 Connection, Capac: \$2,000
- Blue Water Community Food Depot, \$3,000
- Harbor Impact Ministries, Kimball: \$5,000
- Downriver Helping Hands, Marine City: \$5,000
- SOS Marysville Food Pantry: \$5,000
- Yale Community Food Fund: \$5,000
- Mid-City Nutrition: \$5,000

Pantries are generally funded through a mix of gifts, grants and food donations from residents, businesses, churches and local nonprofits. They can then purchase food directly from local grocery stores or the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan (FBEM), which offers discounted items in bulk.

“This is what DTE bought,” Burns said, gesturing to boxes piled high with lentils, peanut butter, tomato sauce, juice, beans, corn, soup, and other canned goods. “This will probably last a couple of weeks.”

Helping Hands Founder and Co-Director Mary Gave said they set aside part of the DTE grant to purchase order a food truck delivery for a pop-up pantry in the spring, which costs between \$700 and \$1,200. The remaining funds will be used to pay the pantry’s rent through the winter.

C3 Connection used two grants received through the Foundation this year for beef purchases and critical building repairs. “Finding money to purchase food is a lot easier than finding capital grants that help with the day-to-day business of the food pantry. A lot of people don’t think about that, but building maintenance is a big expense,” said Co-Director Bernie Long. “I am very thankful that the Community Foundation awarded these grants because we would be closed by now if that wasn’t the case.”

By the Numbers: Food Costs, Number of Clients Increase in 2024

Since January of this year, SOS has served nearly 4,500 people and serves an average of 500 families each month, with an increasing number of families served, according to their Facebook profile.

Harbor Impact is open five days a week to accommodate new clients, clients accompanied by a social worker, or to provide emergency food assistance. Impact serves most regular clients on monthly Impact Days.

“We haven’t seen a 600-family Impact Day since before COVID, and I’m kind of expecting this November and December to see that,” said Harbor Impact Director Mike Weaver. “October and September, we hit over 500 families for Impact Day, which was a new record since COVID.

We were running about 450 families prior to that, so it’s going up about 10% every month.”

Several pantry directors said they are seeing an anecdotal increase in working families and clients who have never sought assistance or who are returning after several years. Pantries also serve a steady clientele of seniors on fixed incomes, unhoused people, and people who are unemployed or underemployed.

“Things are rough. And if you have kids in school, it’s even rougher,” said Helping Hands Founder and Co-Director Mary Gave. “It’s a gradual change this year; our clients are increasing. The clients say, living expenses are so high, and if I come here, it saves money to live. Helping Hands can buy your food; we can’t pay your rent.”

To combat rising operating costs, pantries are getting creative to find deals on bulk food, or searching for grants to fill funding gaps. Long said C3’s year-to-date food costs from the FBEM have about doubled from 2023 to this year due increasing food costs and the volume of food ordered.

“For example, we buy a whole cow every two years that we give away. And two years ago, our cow price was \$2,500. This year, it’s \$4,000,” Long said. “That’s how much meat prices have gone up. Those prices do affect us.”





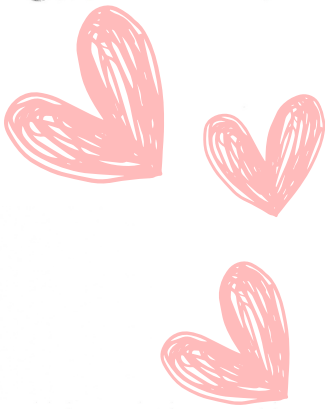
So far in 2024 the Community Foundation, with support from many donors and endowment funds, has provided almost \$80,000 in funding to local food pantries and programs. If you would like to help the Foundation, visit us online at StClairFoundation.Org or call us at 810-984-4761.

If you would like to donate to a specific pantry, or seek assistance, physical items can be dropped off during open hours or monetary donations can be mailed to the following:

- C3 Connection: 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. one Tuesday per month | 114 North Main St., Capac, MI 48014
- Blue Water Community Food Depot: 10 a.m. – 1:45 p.m., Monday, Wednesday and Friday | 2408 10th Street, Port Huron, MI 48060
- Harbor Impact Ministries: 9 a.m. – noon, Monday – Friday; Impact Days are typically the last Tuesday of each month, except when scheduling is impacted by holidays. Check harborimpactministries.com for Impact Day schedules | 1963 Allen Rd, Kimball, MI 48074
- Downriver Helping Hands: 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays | 310 South Parker, Marine City, MI 48039
- SOS Marysville Food Pantry: 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. Tuesdays, 1 – 4 p.m. Wednesdays and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursdays | 2929 Gratiot Blvd., Marysville, MI 48040
- Yale Community Food Fund: Scheduled giveaways
- Mid-City Nutrition: 805 Chestnut Street, Port Huron, MI 48060

Thank you so much for your generosity for the Algonac-Clay Blessing Boxes! This time of year especially the boxes are used a lot more so the extra funds are helpful to keep the boxes full! Merry Christmas!

Amy Ariels, Treasurer
Algonac/Clay Blessing Boxes



Women's Creative Group

THANKS
THANKS
THANKS
THANKS
THANKS

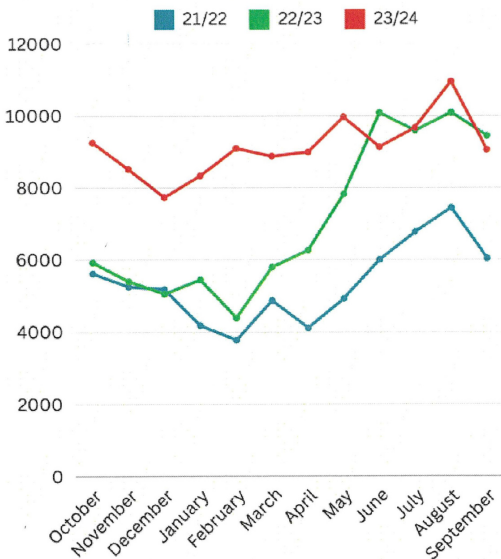
you all are the best:

Thank you so much for your support of our Write 2-Read Program. We can already see the impact. We will look forward to your visit

Bishop Kim Brown SCAPPE
Director of Staff



Meals Served



FROM THE BOARD, STAFF, VOLUNTEERS, AND GUESTS AT MID CITY NUTRITION PROGRAM, THANK YOU FOR THE SUPPORT WHICH HAS ALLOWED US TO SERVE A RECORD BREAKING **110,000 MEALS** TO OUR COMMUNITY IN FISCAL YEAR 23/24.

WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU.

SARAH JONES
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Recent efforts to celebrate local Indigenous Culture persist, despite funding challenges

By Laura Fitzgerald

Dressed in traditional indigenous clothing, Joan and Joe Jacobs, of the North American Indigenous Council (NACI), acknowledged their ancestors on the banks of the St. Clair River before a crowd gathered for the 10th anniversary of the Blue Water River Walk.

“We acknowledge the ancestors that stretch back generations,” Joan Jacobs said.

This was more than just a simple statement. The Jacobs honored the historic and present-day contributions of their people, who have inhabited the Blue Water Area for thousands of years.

The land acknowledgment statement was indicative of efforts in recent years from local indigenous people and institutions who have made strides in educating the general public about indigenous culture and history. However, challenges in securing funding for these programs persist.

The area around the Great Lakes is inhabited by the Three Fires Confederacy: Ojibway (Chippewa), Odawa (Ottawa) and Odawatomí (Potawatomi). Eastern Michigan was home to the Sawn Creek, Black River and Saginaw bands of Ojibway.

There are 12 federally-recognized tribes in Michigan today, which have special status that allow these nations to operate as sovereign governments with direct jurisdiction over their own citizens and territories.

Challenges in Securing Funding Persist

The absence of a federally-recognized tribe in the Blue Water Area makes securing funding more challenging.



“One of the main challenges Native-serving organizations face is that traditional funding streams often overlook communities not tied to federally recognized Tribes. This results in fewer resources for cultural, educational, and social services,” said Greg Masten, President of the NACI Foundation. “At the Foundation, we support these organizations through financial and structural assistance, acting as a load-bearing partner. Our goal is to empower these organizations to advocate for sovereignty and self-determination, ensuring that Native people, regardless of where they live, have the resources to thrive as citizens of their sovereign Nations.”

Becky Kennedy, a member of the First Nations Oneida of the Thames Tribe, chairs the committee that organizes the annual Blue Water Pow Wow and is a member of the local NACI chapter.

Kennedy echoed Masten’s comments, and added fundraising efforts are often limited by the time and manpower of the all-volunteer committees who lead indigenous organizations.

Kennedy said volunteers also have the challenge of ensuring that donors – including corporate donors – have practices and values that are culturally sensitive and respectful to indigenous peoples.

Despite these challenges, Becky and her father, John Kennedy, brought back the Pow Wow in 2019 through a grassroots campaign, grants and partnerships with the Community Foundation of St. Clair County and the Port Huron Museums. The Pow Wow was a big event in the 90s and early 2000s, Kennedy said, but was discontinued because of a lack of funding.

Today, the annual event costs about \$8,000 to produce.

The Blue Water Pow Wow features indigenous dance, food, art, music and vendors at the Fort Gratiot Lighthouse.

“The main goal of the Pow Wow is to gather with our friends and family, to celebrate each other, enjoy our company and to dance. Dancing is our form of prayers and healing. It’s also about just being together again and celebrating what, at one point, was taken away from us through colonization,” Kennedy said. “And then the other goal is to bring knowledge to the community of our traditions. It’s to say, we are still here as a people. We’re not people of the past. We are here now.”

Local educational institutions also face a lack of capacity when creating programs that educate the public about indigenous history and culture.

“We would love to create an in-depth, interactive, professional exhibit at the Carnegie Museum that tells the story of the indigenous people that live here and how they lived. We talked to our indigenous community members about that, and they would love to have something here,” said Port Huron Museums Director Veronica Campbell. “But, funding an exhibit like that is a lot, and that’s not necessarily in the museums’ scope at this time.”

Campbell said the cost of such an exhibit might run somewhere around the \$130,000 price tag of the museums’ most recent exhibit at the Fort Gratiot Hospital.

Celebrating Indigenous Culture

But despite these challenges, Kennedy said she has seen an awareness of and efforts to celebrate indigenous culture gain momentum in recent years.

The local NACI, which received its nonprofit status about two years ago, will kick off its first major event with St. Clair County Community College on November 7, 2024, from 6:00pm to 7:00pm in the Fine Arts Building for Native American Heritage Month. Port Huron Schools changed their mascot – formerly an insensitive caricature of an indigenous person – after receiving a grant from the Native American Heritage Fund.



Friends of the St. Clair River worked with First Nations and indigenous people in the U.S. and Canada to plant a Giitigan – a garden that honors culturally and medicinally significant plants – on the Blue Water River Walk. The Friends’ annual Sturgeon Festival honors a culturally significant species and food source for indigenous peoples, said Executive Director Sheri Faust.

The Museums have hosted a public nature walk and lecture series with an Anishinabek traditional knowledge keeper and included indigenous peoples on its Stanley Legacy Wall.

Representatives from the NACI said cultural institutions have a responsibility to give local indigenous people a platform to educate the public about their own cultures and history.



“Historically, Indigenous voices have been marginalized or erased in mainstream narratives, often replaced with outsider interpretations.

Museums, libraries, conservation efforts, and educational institutions must actively “pass the mic” to Indigenous communities, ensuring that Native voices are at the forefront of telling their own stories. By fostering partnerships with Indigenous organizations and leaders, local institutions can shift from being interpreters of Native history to supporters of Indigenous-led education,” the NACI said.

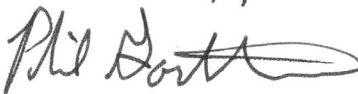
“This approach acknowledges the sovereignty of Native peoples, ensuring that their history and culture are presented with accuracy, authenticity, and respect. It also allows Indigenous communities to control their own narratives, which is key in preserving their heritage and reinforcing their rights.”


If you would like to make a gift to support Indigenous programs, [click here](#).





Community Foundation Members,
on behalf of the staff at Marysville High School, I would like to thank you for the generous grant you awarded to us. We will use these funds to purchase personal hygiene products for students in need. Your support is greatly appreciated and will benefit our students who are most in need of assistance.

Sincerely,




Your generous donation to the Blue Water Traditional Pow Wow was greatly appreciated & helped make the event very successful.

Sincerely,
The Blue Water Traditional
Pow Wow Committee
Members

Thank you for your generous donation in support of the ongoing work of Happy Day Fishing Camp. Your gift helps bring joy to our special needs community and our honored veterans.
God Bless You!

Our hearts are overflowing
Thank You

We ♥ OUR DONORS

Community Foundation

Thank you for the
generous donation to
St. John's UCC Food Pantry.
It does take a village
to help others,

God Bless
St. John's UCC

Thank you for the
generous grant funds.
Our tenants are fortunate
to receive such a wonderful
opportunity.

The holiday turkeys, hams,
and pantry supplies are
greatly appreciated.
Gratefully,
Port Huron Housing Commission



Thank you so much for the beautiful donation for the supplies for our office! It was a wonderful gesture and we are so honored to receive it!

Thank you!
Buroc



Memphis STEM lab leads to bright futures



By Laura Fitzgerald

Just before Thanksgiving break, students were hard at work in Memphis High School's Project-Based Learning (PBL) Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Career Lab. A cluster of students peered into a laser engraving machine to check the progress of a holiday decoration. Other students worked at computers alongside printing machines.

One student held up a custom-printed t-shirt that read "Rebooting my compost realm . . . Hold on one moment," a nod to the class composting project. The class offered a glimpse into how the STEM lab sets students up for success through hands-on, project-based learning. This teaching style was especially

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beneficial for the lab's inaugural 2023-24 cohort, which focused on non-traditional learners who were lacking credits needed to graduate.

That first class included approximately 24 then-sophomores, juniors, and seniors. All five seniors graduated, contributing to a 100% graduation rate for the class of 2024.

"What I heard a lot from students is, 'Why am I going to go home and do homework for three hours when I can work on my business or work on something that interests me and actually earn money doing it?'" said Memphis Community Schools Superintendent Sara Dobbelaer. "So, there was the disconnect of the why?"

They knew the content, but it just wasn't relevant to them. The STEM Lab provided the opportunity for them to demonstrate mastery of the concepts outside of the traditional educational setting."

The STEM lab is the brainchild of Dobbelaer. In fall 2023, the project received grants totaling \$40,000 from the Community Foundation of St. Clair County's Youth Advisory Council (YAC), Women's Initiative, and Grants Committee, as well as assistance from the Four County Community Foundation, L&L Products, and a Michigan 98c Learning Loss grant.

"YAC was made to give grants, create leaders, create future philanthropists, and, most importantly, help the youth in our community. Memphis's STEM lab grant supported the creation of future philanthropists while helping the youth of our community reach their full potential," said Memphis student and YAC member Drew Shy.

"The STEM Lab was an amazing avenue for students to broaden their education," added YAC President Joshua Kriesch. "Our current YAC members and alumni who were able to take part in this granting process, could not be more proud of the opportunities we were able to create for the Memphis community!"

The lab includes five 3D printers, two computer numerical control (CNC) machines, one laser engraver, one vinyl cutter and one T-Shirt press.

Students learn how to operate the machines using a project-based learning model that exposes them to a wide variety of careers in manufacturing, business, engineering, skilled trades, and so much more. The lab also teaches students life skills – such as teamwork, problem-solving, critical thinking and creativity – which students will use in their other academics and in their education and careers after graduation.

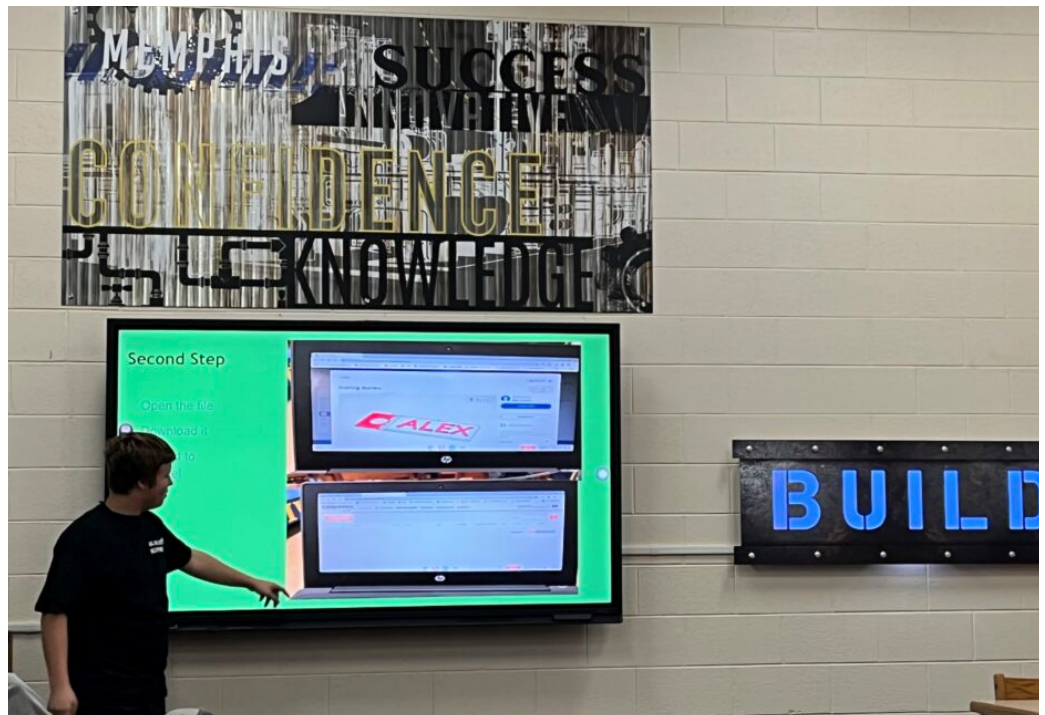
"What can we do to impact students long-term? It's not about getting a piece of paper, it's about preparing them for the real world," said Science Teacher and High School Project-Based Learning Facilitator Paula Danna. "We can support them, build confidence and give them valuable skills."

STEM Lab Boosts 2024 Memphis Graduation Rate

The 2023-24 cohort of students received intensive instruction that was a departure from their previous experience in traditional, lecture-based classrooms.

"You're offering student choice and their preferred style of learning, which increased participation and motivation," said Memphis Jr./Sr. High School Principal Jesse Szatkowski.

Students created a business plan in an industry or topic that interested them and pitched it to eight local small business owners, "Shark Tank"-style.



Students also created a resume and sharpened their interview and presentation skills. Industry experts visited the class to teach students about supply chain, logistics, manufacturing, profitability, and other business concepts.

Students used the STEM lab to create materials for their businesses, such as fliers, business cards, T-Shirts, signs, engraved materials, or other manufactured items.

Students also received intensive instruction in other subject areas to get them back on track to graduate.

Staff said students became more invested in their learning once they saw real-world results.

“We saw an increase in attendance, behavior and confidence in themselves,” Danna said.

The STEM lab not only put the cohort students on track to graduate, it also exposed them to opportunities for higher education and careers beyond high school.

“Change trajectories, that’s my goal, for every student. Because if you don’t at least graduate high school, your options are incredibly limited,” Dobbelaer said.

One graduate called Dobbelaer and his former teachers the summer following graduation to tell them he would attend college, an option he had never considered before.

“That phone call was one of the best calls a teacher could ever have,” Szatkowski said. “He said, ‘What you and Ms. Dobbelaer said, you were correct.’” “He was so appreciative of us and his mom, who was helping put him through school. It was all the things you would want to hear,” Dobbelaer added.

Future for the STEM Lab Looks Bright

The STEM Lab now serves students in sixth through twelfth grade. All high school students can explore the lab through a science elective, which can be used to fulfill graduation requirements. Middle school students gain exposure to the lab through their general science courses.

Students who take the Explore Science course use the lab to complete several projects throughout class. This year, students tested soil and water quality from the Belle River, made compost bins, and built model bridges, Danna said.

In the future, staff hope to add more courses using the STEM lab so that students can take advanced courses over multiple years.

How You Can Support St. Clair County Youth

To learn more about how to support local youth, visit each of our funds here:

- [Youth Advisory Council](#)
- [Women’s Initiative](#)
- [Community Foundation Scholarship Funds](#)



Dear Donors,

Thank you so much for your contribution to our event Caring For Kids. This was our 4th annual event and the community really came together to make this a success. We collected 564 brand new stuffed animals, 564 \$30 gift cards to Door Dash and Grob Hub, and decorated 564 get well soon cards to encourage the families and patients.

All these items will be divided between McLaren Port Huron and St. John's Main to give to kids needing surgical services, ICU stays, Oncology stays, ER visits and new borns staying in the Special Care unit. We ended with a surplus of 24 additional gift cards that were then donated to the Hunter Hospitality house for guests needing to stay the night in Port Huron close to their family who is hospitalized. All together we raised \$20,867.00.

Thank you again for your support

Nathan & Katie Thompson

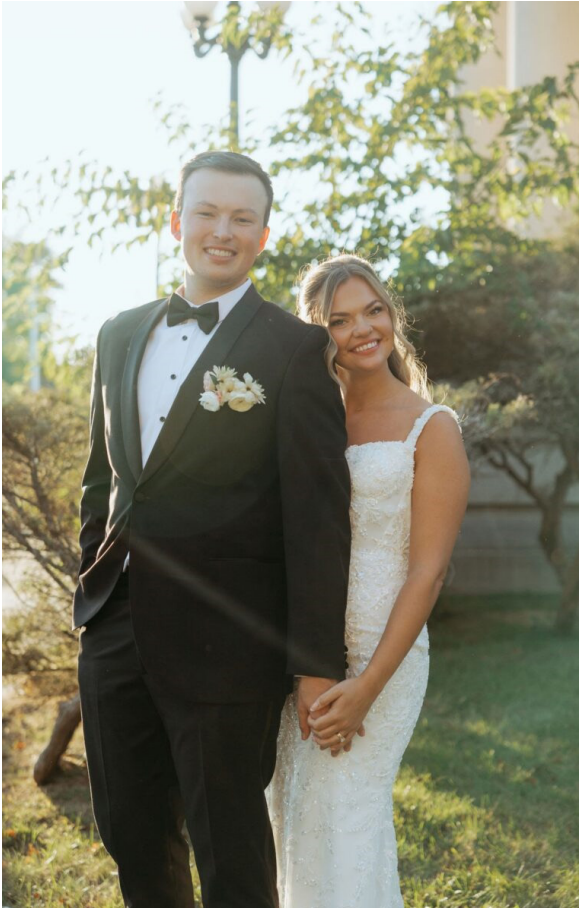
Dear Memphis Alumni,

Thank you so much for your generous gift! This will help me so much on my college journey. I feel so grateful to have been chosen.

Thank you again!

Leah Massey

Sophia Donnellon receives talent attraction award



Sophia Donnellon (née Kincaid) is the latest to be awarded a Come Home Talent Attraction Award from the Community Foundation. The \$7,500 award coincides with several major milestones in Sophia's life, including her recent wedding to Matt Donnellon and the completion of a master's degree in physical therapy.

“Going through seven years of college was not the easiest, and having the support to aid in my student loan payments once I was finished is very comforting from a financial standpoint,” Sophia said. “Also, this support truly makes me feel like a part of this community where I am able to make a difference in my patients’ lives, which I am so grateful for.”

Since being offered a Come Home Award, Sophia has accepted a position at Ivy Rehab for Kids in Fort Gratiot as a pediatric physical therapist. She treats kids from ages 0-18 and aids in helping kids reach their fullest potential through maximizing their functional mobility, strength, and improving any limitations they may have.

She earned her master's degree from Grand Valley State University in the Grand Rapids area.

Returning from the west side of the state, Sophia and Matt currently live with her parents in Yale while they house hunt. “We are hopeful our dream home will be on the market soon,” she said. “We still would like to be in Marysville, but have expanded our search to near Fort Gratiot.”

The Community Foundation launched the innovative Come Home Award in 2017 in an effort to address the region's lack of college graduates moving back home. Since then the award has been given to 22 individuals and couples.

“This program has helped us dispel the myth that young people won't move back home to small town America,” said Randy Maiers, president & CEO of the Community Foundation. “Our Foundation focuses heavily on regional growth and prosperity, and providing a little financial incentive for young people like Sophia will help our region continue to prosper.”

To learn more about our talent attraction initiatives, [click here](#).



SOS Marysville Food Pantry
 2929 Gratiot Blvd. Marysville, MI. 48040
 810-364-6333
 Sosmfp811@gmail.com

Date: Nov.26, 2024

DTE
 C/O Community Foundation of St. Clair Co.
 500 Water St.
 Port Huron. MI. 48060

Dear: DTE and Community Foundation of St. Clair Co.. Members,

On behalf of the SOS Marysville Food Pantry, Volunteers, and most importantly-those we serve, it is our heartfelt honor to say THANK YOU! Thank you for your generous donation of \$5000.00 to help our Community. THANK YOU! For helping us deliver on our mission.

Fighting Hunger, Feeding Hope! Whether you are an individual, corporate, or foundation donor to the SOS Marysville Food Pantry, we thank you for your support of our operation and mission. We are humbled and awed by what we have seen and experienced these past few years. As the adverse economic situation increased, hunger in our communities also increased. The number of our neighbors who needed our support grew to levels we never thought were possible. Through your graciousness and your financial support of our service and operations increased to meet the community needs. At the same time, we also recognize that you have felt the economic crunch also which makes it even more meaningful.

Throughout our county service area, we currently *Fight Hunger and Feed Hope* for all ages, all demographics, and genres. Families struggling to put food on the table while working hard to maintain jobs, people who have recently lost jobs due to the recession and now have unforeseen concerns, grandparents caring for grandchildren, the homeless, people who have never before needed assistance in meeting hunger needs, and children struggling to get an education while overcoming hunger. Your generous financial support helps meet some of these needs and cannot be overstated.

Again, we thank you. Please contact us at 810-364-(NEED) 6333 or email us at sosmfp811@gmail.com with questions you may have. Please also visit our Facebook page at [sosmarysvilleFoodpantry](https://www.facebook.com/sosmarysvilleFoodpantry) & sosmarysville.org for updates and information about the pantry's events while we continue to help us serve others by *Fighting Hunger and Feeding Hope* to our Communities.

With Utmost Appreciation,
Carmela Burns
 SOS Marysville Food Pantry Staff

TAX ID: 45-2737183

THANK YOU SO MUCH TO THE
 COMMUNITY FOUNDATION & THE
 DTE-FOUNDATION FOR YOUR
 GENEROUS \$1000 GRANT.
 TRENTON'S TREE WAS BRIGER
 AND BRIGHTER THAN EVER
 BEFORE AND SANTA HIMSELF
 THANKED OUR SPONSORS IN
 FROM OF A RECORD BREAKING
 CROWD.
 WE REALLY APPRECIATE
 YOUR SUPPORT!
 PEGGY EATON, CO-CHAIR
 TRENTON CIVIC COMMISSION

'Tis the season to appreciate
 caring hearts and kind spirits
 like yours.



Dear Community Foundation & Donors,
Thank you, so much for your generous
donation for our program at Wings
of the Harbor. We greatly appreciate
you helping our residents. We plan
to purchase items for independent
living items and resources for our
young adults to be successful
with their independence. Hope you
all have a blessed New Year!

- Wings of the Harbor
Rebecca Kettlewell
Program Manager

Community Foundation, Buman, Missioner & Wyatt
Walker Friendship Funds,

PTW Northern would like to say
thank you for the \$1,000.00 donation to
the Special Needs Prom. The special
needs prom is such a nice program
for our special needs students. They
enjoy it every year. Thank you for
helping making it happen for them.
PTW

Natacha Hayden to join the Community Foundation

The Community Foundation of St. Clair County has announced the hiring of Natacha Hayden, who will join the Foundation team in January of 2025. She is currently the Director of the Port Huron Downtown Development Authority. According to the Foundation, Hayden will become their new Program Officer for Community Impact, a new position at the Foundation.

“We’re happy to have Natacha join our team,” said Randy Maiers, President & CEO of the Community Foundation. “She has developed a great reputation while at the DDA and her hiring coincides with the launch of our 3-year Strategic Plan at the beginning of 2025, and she will play an important role in the strategic initiatives of our new plan.”

Hayden joined the City of Port Huron in 2018 and has been the director of their DDA since 2021. “I’ve really appreciated the time I’ve spent at the City of Port Huron,” she said. “Those years have given me the chance to strengthen my relationship with local businesses and stakeholders and broaden my experience with local projects, initiatives, and event planning. I am grateful for the opportunity that City Manager, James Freed, gave me with the DDA.” She added that one of her favorite memories was seeing people smiling as they walked throughout Downtown Port Huron and enjoyed the events, shops, and atmosphere. “It has been an honor to host multiple events and initiatives that added value to our great Downtown and brought our community joy,” she said.

Hayden moved to Michigan from Brazil back in 2010 when she participated in a cultural exchange program as an Au Pair. She then earned a Bachelor’s degree in Business Administration from Walsh College before finally joining the City of Port Huron staff.

“While I love Port Huron and everything this community has done for me, I’m excited to join the Foundation where I can expand my involvement and support of philanthropy and community prosperity throughout our region,” she added.

The Community Foundation has a current staff of eleven and is the oldest and largest grantmaking foundation in Michigan’s Thumb Region. The Foundation also owns the Knowlton Museum, Blue Water River Walk and the building housing the Ally Center on the south side of Port Huron.

“This is an exciting time for our region and our foundation,” said Maiers. “We’re fortunate to live in a very generous region and adding Natacha to our team will help us serve more donors and invest back in a multitude of programs, projects, and organizations.”



MJ Elliot Dakota Haller
Eliza Genevieve Mitchell
Mrs. Agunaga
Iris Mason Addie Addie
Randy Aubrey Adam Bo
Thank you! Phelan

Beau Lillian K. Burke curtis
ms. Harris

Dear Community Foundation
of St. Clair County,

We appreciate your generous
acceptance of the grant we
submitted. We look forward
to making blankets for those
in need. Our plan is to
donate them to the youth in
St. Clair County, possibly the →

Blue Water Safe Horizons and
CMT for counseling sessions when
kids need comfort from a terrible
situation. Expressions We have

so much fun ^{FROM}  making them and
love knowing it's for a great
cause. We will send pictures!!

Sincerely, Avoca
Elementary
Student Council

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is back!*

MAY 14, 2025