

GENEROSITY IN ACTION



FALL 2025



Community Foundation

of St. Clair County

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Dr. Russell Mawby Award for Philanthropy

We are beyond excited to share that our dear friends of the foundation, Geof and Jenifer Kusch, have received the 2025 Dr. Russell G. Mawby Award for Philanthropy! Thank you to the Michigan Nonprofit Association and to the Council of Michigan Foundations for recognizing their commitment to philanthropy that spans decades and two Michigan communities, first in Midland and now in their adopted hometown of Port Huron.

Through their donor advised fund, the Kusch Family Fund, they support local nonprofits, programs and projects, our schools and arts initiatives. We were blessed that one of their first local grants was helping transform the Blue Water River Walk into a landmark public space.

Beyond their impactful grantmaking, we are so grateful for their wisdom and guidance in leadership roles across the county and for the countless volunteer hours from the soup kitchen to Sandfest to Geof turning wood for an artifact on the riverwalk.

Congratulations, Geof and Jenifer!



Denise Brooks' legacy ensures lasting community impact

By Keely Baribeau
September 26, 2025

Throughout life, there are certain places we visit that remind us of someone special. For many in our community, a trip to the Fort Gratiot Lighthouse or the YMCA of the Blue Water Area almost always brings thoughts of Denise Brooks.

“Denise was a lifelong boater, and seeing the lighthouse when returning across the lake to Port Huron was always a welcome sight to her,” her husband, David Brooks, said in describing her affinity for the site. “I believe Denise realized the importance of the Fort Gratiot Lighthouse from a historical and nautical sense of place. Having the oldest lighthouse in Michigan in a county park within the Port Huron city limits was always meaningful to her.”

Denise passed away in April 2025. For those fortunate enough to know her, the Lighthouse and its campus restoration were true passion projects.

“Denise and I worked on projects together as a team,” David explained. “Two years ago, we were fortunate to visit the completely restored Key West lighthouse in Florida, and that became a focus for both of us as the standard that our Fort Gratiot Lighthouse had to become. I’m happy to say that painting of our lighthouse’s interior will begin this fall, funded partially through donations made to the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light in Denise’s memory.”

It was a true honor for the Community Foundation when Denise entrusted us to steward her legacy gift to the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light Fund. Through this planned gift, her

generosity will continue to preserve and restore the Fort Gratiot Lighthouse and its campus, ensuring the light keeps shining for generations to come. Denise’s gift will also build upon the significant annual support provided by event admissions and sponsorships from SandFest—an event she was instrumental in starting over 10 years ago.

“Our parents (Pete & Mary Jane Cameron and Walt & Mary Brooks) raised us to find ways to give back to our community,” David explained. “Deciding to be Legacy Donors was actually very easy for us, but deciding on the gift amount took some time. Denise and I had been discussing larger gifts from her estate for several months — how much and to whom. We wanted it to be meaningful and have a positive impact. We settled on equal donations to the Blue Water YMCA and the Fort Gratiot Light Fund, and this was finalized a few short weeks before her



her passing. We had no idea how little time she had.”

Legacy gifts such as those planned by Denise and David often serve as a reflection of the donor’s values and priorities. “Leaving a planned gift is a powerful way to ensure your personal values live on. It allows donors to support causes they care about deeply, from education to the arts, health care, faith, or the work of the Community Foundation,” explained Community Foundation Vice President Jackie Hanton. “These gifts often tell a story about what mattered most in a donor’s life.”

“Unfortunately, Denise wasn’t able to actually experience the thanks from the community that I’ve received for the legacy gifts,” David shared. “But I know she realized how important they would be and she’s smiling about the positive impact they’ll have on the community we love.”

We'd encourage others to make a difference—whether it's a little or a lot, it doesn't matter."

Denise's legacy gift is an excellent example of creating a pathway of future support for the Lighthouse and its surrounding park.

"In December of last year, Denise and I decided to adopt the 'Ladder to the Light,' which is part of the Adopt-a-Step program of restoration fundraising at the park," said David. "We did it to honor both her parents and mine for guiding our way. The ladder is at the top of the lighthouse and allows the United States Coast Guard to service the actual light. With Denise's passing, there is now an extra inscription to her memory on the ladder."

People may also remember Denise from other leadership roles she held in the community, such as Director of the YMCA of the Blue Water Area and former CEO of the Port Huron Hospital Foundation. Others may simply have known her as a dear friend.

The Community Foundation was fortunate to have Denise's leadership on the Board from 2011 to 2020. She was also a founding member of the Women's Initiative and served on the Grants Committee for 13 years. Denise's work in local charity was tremendously impactful. She was incredibly generous to this community—both as a visible leader and as an anonymous donor for several causes.

Denise's legacy continues to light the way for the community through other planned gifts, including one to the YMCA of the Blue Water Area. Legacy giving builds a stronger future for all by supporting endowments and long-term community needs. These gifts provide stability and sustained support for generations, helping to address future challenges or fund opportunities that may not even exist yet.

As a leader and a donor, Denise understood this well. Her gifts will leave a lasting mark for years to come in places and causes she held dear.

"Denise was always about finding a way to move a project forward to completion," said David. "She was great at creating an organized vision of what could be and bringing people together to accomplish it. She would be so happy to know that the time and talent she put into the park will have a lasting effect, along with the financial sustainability provided by the legacy gift."

May Denise's example inspire others to plan for a gift to something they care about deeply, regardless of dollar amount.


"She was a great teacher in many respects, and certainly this is one area where we can all learn from her example," noted Jackie. "Planned giving is for anyone who wants to make a lasting impact. Whether it's a small percentage of a retirement fund, a life insurance policy, or a simple bequest in a will, every gift adds up and strengthens the future of the community."

If you would like to learn more about making a planned gift or leaving a legacy through the Community Foundation, please contact Jackie Hanton at jackie@stclairfoundation.org or (810) 984-4761.

Dear friends,

We are very grateful for your generous contribution to our community thru our food pantry!



As you have blessed us, we will be a blessing to you. 



Nancy

IN ALL
Things
GIVE
Thanks



Thank you for your contributions to Mid City Nutrition Program this year.

It's been an exciting year for us, as we finally moved into our beautiful new space. We look forward to everything that 2026 has to bring.

Helping us helps a lot of people. You have made a difference in your community.

Sarah Jones

To Whom It May Concern,
We at Downriver Helping
Hands thanks you for the
generous donation. We
appreciate your support.
So many families in our
community need some extra
help. Thank you again for
helping us to help them.

YOU'RE WONDERFUL!

Sincerely,
Mary Gave



1963 Allen Road
Kimball, MI 48074
(810) 662-3936

Michael Weaver, Director
harborimpactministries.com

August 11, 2025

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

Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for your generous donation of \$2,000.00 on behalf of the DTE Foundation. This past month 640 households were served at the Harbor. We are blessed to have such faithful partners in our service to the community.

Thank you and God Bless You!

Sincerely,

Michael Weaver

Community Foundation scholarships go beyond tuition

By Laura Fitzgerald
August 20, 2025

Michigan Tech University (MTU) graduate Abi Ruthenberg has a successful career in the pharmaceutical industry thanks in part to the extra attention, mentoring and unique financial support she received from staff at her local Community Foundation in St. Clair County.

Following graduation from Port Huron Northern (PHN) in 2021, Ruthenberg attended college to study chemical and bioprocess engineering. Over four years, she received a total of \$17,000 from the Kenneth and Veri Fleury Foundation Scholarship, the Beth Linscheid Duff Memorial Scholarship, and the Howard A. Acheson Memorial Fund.

The scholarships paid for a portion of Ruthenberg's tuition, room and board, and other miscellaneous expenses.

"Those scholarships were a huge part of me being able to go to Michigan Tech and being able to live there, so it helped me," she said. "I was able to take out fewer loans and graduate with a lot less debt than if I hadn't had them."

Jessica Flann is the Program Officer for Post Secondary Success at the Community Foundation and is empowered
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with broad discretion for providing unique long-term support to the Foundation's cohort of "High Priority (HP)" students.

"Supporting Abi through her four years at Michigan Tech has truly been an honor," Flann said. "She was a standout student at PHN, earned academic scholarships from both MTU and our own Howard A. Acheson scholarship for chemistry and engineering students," Flann added.

Since the Foundation first launched its HP program in 2017 it has become acutely aware of the fact that traditional academic scholarships don't always cover everything. For Abi, that gap was housing.

"Thanks to our available life needs funding, we were able to help with rent in her final years—ensuring that financial barriers didn't derail her dreams. Imagine a student with Abi's talent being forced to leave college simply because she couldn't afford a place to live.



This is why life needs support is essential," Flann said.

Ruthenberg made the most of her college experience by joining the rowing team and enjoying all campus life had to offer, her parents, Brian and Tamara Ruthenberg, said.

"I feel very proud of myself and I feel incredibly grateful for all of the support that I received. I know that all the people around me feel that way as well, especially my parents," Abi Ruthenberg said. "It makes life a lot easier, and it makes it so that (college debt) is one less

thing I have to worry about as I start my career.”

She recently moved to Raleigh, North Carolina, to work for Sequence, a pharmaceutical engineering consulting firm. She helps companies launch pharmaceutical manufacturing operations, ensuring they follow safety regulations and implement quality control systems.

“I love being in an industry where I’m able to help people, and pharmaceuticals is also interesting to me. I loved the biology aspects of it, which you don’t get in other industries with chemical engineering,” she said. “But the main thing is being able to help make medicine that could save lives or help people feel better.”

Ruthenberg’s love for engineering stems from long hours in her father’s workshop, where she played assistant by fetching tools or tinkering with whatever electronic gadgets they could find.

Brian Ruthenberg worked as a handyman, truck driver, and tobacco pipe maker. Tamara Ruthenberg has worked at Kroger for nearly 40 years. Gushing with pride, they described their daughter as intelligent, hardworking, and fiercely independent.

“We’re just so proud of her,” they said.

The family expressed gratitude not only for the Foundation’s financial assistance,

but for the Foundation staff’s mentorship as Abi – the first in her family to attend college – navigated the complexities of financial aid, student loans, and college life.

“Asking for help isn’t easy. That’s why, through our High Priority Student program, we take the initiative to reach out

to students throughout the academic year,” Flann said. “A quick check-in email, a birthday greeting, or even a small care package—these simple gestures help build trust and connection. By creating consistent, compassionate touchpoints, we make it easier for students to come forward when they’re facing challenges.”

Help Open Doors for More Students Like Abi

Stories like Abi’s are only possible because of the generosity of donors who believe in the power of education. Yet each year, many students still face financial gaps that threaten their ability to stay in school—especially when it comes to housing,



transportation, food, and other basic needs. You can help change that. By supporting scholarships or contributing to our life needs funding, you can ensure more students not only get to college—but graduate with stability, confidence, and a brighter future.

To make a gift or explore creating your own scholarship fund, visit stclairfoundation.org/give or contact Jackie Hanton at jackie@stclairfoundation.org.



Community Foundation of St. Clair County

Published by Angie Lademer · November 18 at 6:20 AM ·



Fifteen years of impact—and still growing! Recent grants from the **PHS Endowment Fund** brought adaptive tricycle bikes to two elementary schools, and the kids are loving them.

The endowment fund has grown to nearly \$540,000 and has distributed over \$200,000 in grants thanks to strong community support! That support continues to open doors for students of all ages. See how this fund continues to support students across the district.

Full story here: <https://stclairfoundation.org/port-huron-schools.../>

Port Huron Schools





Community Foundation of St. Clair County

Published by Angie Lademer · October 23 ·



Capac Community High School students put learning into action at Manufacturing Day with Axiom Engineered Systems!

Thanks to a \$1,050 grant from our College Access Committee, PlastiVan brought hands-on STEM experiences to the event — showing students that the future of manufacturing is creative, high-tech, and full of opportunity.

Opportunities like this help students discover new interests and spark career pathways right here in our community!



\$981,000 grant boosts Bridge to Bay Trail projects

July 24, 2025

The Community Foundation of St. Clair County has received a \$981,000 grant from the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation to continue efforts at completing the Bridge to Bay (B2B) Trail system.

The Community Foundation is the lead fiduciary for a coalition of regional stakeholders who have been working on the remaining gaps in the B2B Trail since 2017. When fully completed the B2B trail will stretch 52 miles from Algonac up to Lakeport State Park.

“The Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation has been one of our strongest partners since we first began this effort several years ago,” said Randy Maiers, the president & CEO of the Community Foundation. “With their help, we have built an impressive coalition of local partners and communities all focused on the goal of completing the remaining trail gaps.”

This phase of funding will support a range of planning, engineering, and construction projects

in these communities:

- Burtchville Township
- East China Township
- Fort Gratiot Township
- Port Huron
- St. Clair Township
- St. Clair
- Cottreville Township
- Algonac

The Friends of the St. Clair River is the lead coordinator for project logistics and planning for these trail projects. “The total cost of this phase is over \$2.5 million and addresses just over 14 miles of trails,” said Sheri Faust, the executive director of the Friends group. “Some of this funding will go towards planning, design, and engineering, while other communities are ready for another round of construction,” she added.

The first phase of trail projects launched in 2020 with significant funding from the Ralph C. Wilson



Jr. Foundation along with State and local funding. Those initial projects were in Port Huron, St. Clair, and Marysville and had a total cost exceeding \$5.4 million. Highlights of that phase included the new pedestrian bridge over the Black River Canal as a part of the Campus & Canal Trail segment.



“These trails connect communities to local assets along our waterfront,” added Maiers. “The new pedestrian bridge is a great example of connecting two schools and the families that live in those surrounding neighborhoods.”

Greg Abbey is the Supervisor of Cottrellville Township in southern St. Clair County. The township will receive almost \$50,000 for planning, design, and engineering. “The Bridge to Bay Trail has been a key initiative of mine,” he said. “It’s incredibly rewarding to see it gaining new momentum, and I’m grateful for the continued support from our local Community Foundation and the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation.”

According to Faust, the remaining trail segments will take several more years to complete, and several million dollars more. “Trails are very expensive,” she said. “And they’re just not financially viable without other foundation support as well as our State partners such as the MEDC, MDNR, MDOT, and SEMCOG.”

Karen Walker, resident of Fort Gratiot, uses the trail frequently with her family. “I use the Bridge To Bay Trail over the Black River Canal almost every day! My 4-year-old son, who truly loves the outdoors, loves to take jogging stroller rides on the trail. We prefer this route over other areas because of the nature that can be observed. From chipmunks to a variety of birds and butterflies, this trail is a great addition to our community!”

To learn more about the Bridge to Bay Trail system, visit www.BridgeToBay.org. Have questions or want to help grow the Bridge to Bay Trail? Contact Natacha Hayden at (810) 984-4761 or natacha@stclairfoundation.org.

THIS HAS
BEEN A
GAME
CHANGER
FOR
IRA PARKS
AND RECREATION!
THANK YOU
VERY MUCH!
😊

Dear Community Foundation
Jackie Harton, Patricia
Hayler and Sandy Nairns
Thank you for your
generous inclusion of
Ira Township in the
assistance to smaller
communities in St. Clair
County! The Harner and
Nancy Wagers have
provided an education
and insights in
project planning.
We are able to very
appreciate of the
grant opportunity
from the Community
Foundation. Sincerely,
Cindy Salves
foundator.

Jessica,

Thank you very much for the
incredible Dell Laptop. This is
such a blessing and has
helped me more than you
know! You and your organization
are greatly appreciated.

Thank you!
Julie Ward

Thank you for your generous
contribution to the Blue Water
Traditional Pow Wow.
Your thoughtfulness is what
made our event a big success

Respectively

The Blue Water

Traditional Pow Wow
Committee

Dear Community Foundation,

We would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to your organization and the Kusch family fund for consideration of Julie's Kids program and generous donation for hygiene products. Your support has allowed us funds to purchase feminine products to be utilized at each of our schools in the Yale district. We thank you for your on-going support to our Bulldog community. Sincerely,
Julie's Kids Counseling
Wood

Community Foundation awards more than \$2.6 million in grants

By Keely Baribeau
July 3, 2025

Throughout St. Clair County, numerous public, nonprofit and community-based projects and organizations have been making steady progress this year, often with financial support from the Community Foundation of St. Clair County. Year-to-date grants from the Foundation currently surpass 524 totaling \$2,642,799. View the complete list [here](#).

“The Community Foundation is a very decentralized company,” said Patti Manley, the Foundation’s Board Chair. “So we’re making grants on a weekly, or even daily basis and so far this year is off to a really good start.”

The Community Foundation accepts grant applications year-round and there are numerous ways to receive grant funding from the organization. Almost any nonprofit in St. Clair County is eligible to have their request considered by one or more of the many committees within the Foundation. There are also numerous Donor Advised Funds which make grants at the discretion of the donor and/or their family or company.

“One of our key strategic focus areas this year is on our rural and small towns,” added Manley. “And some of our key

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Blue Water Area Robotics Alliance

grants made so far reflect that.” Some highlights include:

- Memphis Lions Club; \$3,000 for holiday food baskets in the form of a “Basic Needs” grant
- Lions Club of Emmett received \$13,329 for hall renovations
- C3 Connection, a food pantry in Yale received \$1,000 for general support and \$10,000 for building repairs
- In Emmett Township, a \$30,000 grant will support the creation of a biking/walking trail in a centralized park

Scott Mueller, Emmett Park Committee Chairman shared the impact the new recreation area has offered to the Emmett region. “We are so happy with

the support of our Master Plan and grant funding from the Community Foundation,” he said. “The walking/biking trail area is packed when we have events. This improvement is bringing this community together. There are a lot of happy people as a result of the Community Foundation’s help.”

Education has been another focus area this year. In addition to a \$38,000 grant to Yale High School for non-sport extracurriculars, the St. Clair Endowments, James C. Acheson Fund and [Youth Advisory Council](#) (YAC) granted a collective \$14,750 to the Blue Water Area Robotics Alliance (BWARA) for their quest to compete in the State/World

Championships. The East China team made it to Globals! “The Community Foundation grant’s influence extends well beyond its immediate scope,” explained BWARA President Steven Tenniswood. “Supporting BWARA Teams at the Michigan State FIRST Robotics Championship and the World Championship in Houston, Texas, proved transformative. The students would have missed these pivotal experiences entirely without the Foundation’s financial backing.”

YAC Chairperson Joshua Kriesch noted that the BWARA grant was a win-win for the teams as well as YAC. “YAC was excited to support these students and BWARA. Not only were we able to benefit the teams, we granted them an experience they may never forget!” He further detailed the Council’s enthusiasm for supporting non-traditional extracurricular student groups such as BWARA. “YAC is able to set priorities and implement positive changes to our community. Specifically for the FIRST Robotics grant, we were able to use our funding and tie the application into our personal development priority. This way students who aren’t involved in sports or art or music can thrive in their own ways through robotics! Our YAC works very hard to prioritize depth in our grant making process.”

Yale High School Principal Brad Dykstra shared additional thoughts on the impact of



Youth Advisory Council (YAC)

supporting this sector of student interest. “These grants we receive from the DuPont Family Endowment via the Community Foundation provide our students with several enrichment opportunities each year,” he said. “Students have gained opportunities like annual field trips to art institutes and the solar eclipse, allowing us to host an annual BWAC art expo, and providing equipment for our audio/visual studio and fine arts programs. The generosity of the DuPont family and the stewardship of the Community Foundation provides immeasurable benefits. We are truly blessed and grateful.”

Amidst the year-to-date grants, the Community Foundation offered a unique additional opportunity for local nonprofits through the 2025 Big Give. This event is done every three to four years and serves as a 24-hour

giving marathon. This year, 70 organizations participated 1,370 donors contributed and over \$626,000 was raised in a single day.

To learn more about the Foundation’s grant making, visit <https://stclairfoundation.org/grants/>.

To explore becoming a donor yourself, visit <https://stclairfoundation.org/giving-center/>.



Community Foundation of St. Clair County

Published by Jackie Qualman Hanton · September 24 ·

200+ Women Who Care hosted a night full of heart, laughs and grants!

- \$10,000 to The Arc of St Clair County
- \$2,500 to Port Huron Odyssey House
- \$1,500 to Port Huron Town Hall
- \$1,000 to St Clair County Dive Team

We greatly appreciate all who attended and donated as well as our amazing Women's Initiative members who make meaningful grants year round. Plus our amazing sponsors, thank you for your support!

(More photos to come) Learn more here: <https://stclairfoundation.org/womens-initiative/>





Community Foundation of St. Clair County

Published by Angie Lademer • September 5 •

...

The 100 Men Event was a huge success, and we couldn't have done it without all of you who joined us! Together, we awarded \$10,000 in grants to three incredible nonprofits:

YMCA of the Blue Water Area – 1st place

Make Saint Clair – 2nd place

NAACP Port Huron Branch – 3rd place

A very special thank you to Hale and Mark Walker for opening up “Mahogany Bay” to us. Their generosity created the perfect setting and made the evening truly memorable.

The event wouldn't have been possible without our presenting sponsors UHY, Eastern Michigan Bank, Otsi Keta Capital, Xtreme Powerline Construction, and Wadhams Equipment.

And thank you to our friends who helped bring it all together: Golf County for the fun games, Casey's for the drinks and bar service, Plat 1 Pub for the food, Phantom Pen Media for capturing the evening, Brent Mireau for the music, and Great Lakes Party Rental for the tables and chairs.



Find out what new sculpture is coming to the Blue Water River Walk

By Andy Jeffrey – as featured in the Port Huron Times Herald
September 29, 2025

A re-creation of the historic steam barge City of Port Huron has been selected as the next public art installation along the Blue Water River Walk.

The winning proposal comes from Fort Gratiot artist Scott Campbell, known professionally as Scott E. Skullz. His design is a 1/10 scale model of the 1869 vessel built in Port Huron by shipbuilder J.P. Arnold.

The steel-and-wood sculpture will measure roughly 16 feet long, 3 feet wide, and 3 1/2 feet tall, symbolizing the cargo-laden barges that once carried lumber and other goods through the Great Lakes.

“We love that this piece will pay tribute to our community’s history,” said Natacha Hayden, program officer for community impact at the Community Foundation of St. Clair County.

“This was a highly competitive process with many creative and quality submissions,” said Bill Schwarz, vice chair of the foundation’s executive committee. “We wish we could showcase them all.”

Artist’s perspective

Campbell said his inspiration came from the ship’s name and the industry it represented.

“The name of the steam barge because it’s named after the city and the shipbuilding industry because not a lot of people know about it. And that’s basically what built the town in the beginning,” he said.

A charcoal artist and longtime metal fabricator, Campbell added, “I do metal fabrication and build custom crazy cars.”

He spent three decades running Creative Customs, a Port Huron business specializing in car detailing, car services and window tinting.

Campbell, who has also created murals and exhibited drawings at the former Studio 1219, said the little-known vessel reflects an important part of the city’s past.

“It serves as a great reminder of this city in its infancy and the commerce it thrived on,” he wrote in his proposal.



Scott Campbell’s winning design, a one-tenth scale recreation of the 1869 steam barge City of Port Huron, on display at the Community Foundation. His piece was selected for the Blue Water River Walk and will be installed in spring of 2026.

Other finalists

Campbell’s design was chosen from among five finalists. Submissions included David Fry’s “Teepee to Tensegrity,” inspired by transformation and structure, and Jordyn-Lynne Denomme’s “A Turtle on a Log,” which drew on local wildlife. Other finalists were Dairoll Medrano’s “Michigan Nature Totem Pole” and Ken Kiernicki’s “The Waltz Project.”

Although Campbell's barge will be installed on the River Walk, all five finalists' 3D models are on display in the Community Foundation's downtown Port Huron lobby through Oct. 3, where residents can view them and consider commissioning the other works.

A walk rooted in history

The Blue Water River Walk stretches along nearly a mile of St. Clair River shoreline south of downtown Port Huron. Once the site of a working industrial train yard, it has been transformed over the last decade into a mix of restored wetlands, wildlife habitat, public trails and gathering spaces.

Public art has been central to that vision, with sculptures like "Stella the Sturgeon" and "Sugar the Horse" connecting people to the region's history and environment.



Five finalists' 3D models for the Blue Water River Walk sculpture project are displayed in the lobby of the Community Foundation of St. Clair County in downtown Port Huron. They will remain on display until Oct. 3, 2025.

Campbell's "City of Port Huron" will join that tradition when it is installed in spring 2026, funded by a \$10,000 commission from the Community Foundation with support from the Port Huron Rotary Club.

What's next?

With the selection made, Campbell will begin the fabrication phase for his steel-and-wood barge. The Community Foundation will coordinate with him on-site preparation to ensure the River Walk can support the 16-foot-long sculpture.

More information about the Blue Water River Walk is available at <https://stclairfoundation.org/riverwalk/>.



A charcoal sketch by artist Scott Campbell shows his vision for the City of Port Huron steam barge sculpture. His design ultimately won and will be installed along the Blue Water River Walk in spring 2026.

To everyone at the Community Foundation of St. Clair, Women's Initiative -

On behalf of all of the students, Principle, faculty, PTO board members, parents and local community in Yule, MI school district, we would like to send you the biggest thank you for reviewing, considering and approving the Science/Stem Assembly grant for our school this academic school year. It is so greatly appreciated, and the board is thrilled to bring this to our students so as to further their experiences and educational understanding around science! This grant is a HUGE deal for our kiddos and district, so again ... from the bottom of our hearts... thank you!

This upcoming February 10, 2026 we will have the formal assembly, and it will be a "kick off" to the students annual math month. When the assembly takes place, I personally will make sure to post socially, tag and share photos and any video we capture with your group! The kids are just going to LOVE this.

We hope your Holidays are filled with cheer, and a Happy New Year!

Jaclyn R. Elizondo, Yule Elementary PTO President
Samantha Peters, VP
Renee Schuman, Secretary
Kimberly Franklin, Fundraising Coordinator

Jaclyn R. Elizondo 

Dear Community Foundation,
Eastern Michigan Bank Donor
Advised Fund,
We would like to thank you
for your generous donation.
Your investment in our
organization insures a fun
filled festival that directly
benefits our community in
keeping with family fun and
small town charm. Sincerely,
Marine City Maritime Days

Thank you so much
for supporting our
mission for the kids
of our community. Your
grant will help us
so much to get us
clothing to our elementary
schools.

Thank you
Kris Waite
Secretary
Ties & Treads

To our generous friend,

On behalf of everyone at St. Vincent DePaul, I want to extend our deepest gratitude for your incredibly generous donation. Because of your support, we are able to provide essential assistance - food, shelter, clothing, and HOPE - to individuals and families facing hardship.

Your generosity is a beautiful example of what it means to live out the spirit of love and service.

It is through gifts like yours that we are able to carry out our mission and reach those who need us most.

Thank you again for your thoughtfulness and for standing with us in this important work.

May you be richly blessed for the difference you've made.

With heartfelt appreciation,
Steve Schweinhofner
and St. Vincent De Paul

Marine City & Memphis share \$500,000 in grant funding

November 20, 2025

Two small towns in Michigan's Thumb have received matching grants of \$250,000 each from the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation to support the continued development of their community hubs.

Marine City's project is the new Guy Center in the South Park area of the city, while in Memphis, the Lions Club serves as the community's central hub for community engagement, events, and recreation. The grants are an example of the Wilson Foundation's continued support of rural initiatives in St. Clair County in collaboration with the Community Foundation of St. Clair County.

"This incredibly generous funding will help the Guy Center become an economic driver for this part of Marine City, and a key asset along the Bridge to Bay Trail," said Mike Reaves, City Manager of Marine City. The Guy Center had previously received grant funding from the Community Foundation of St. Clair County and the Revitalization and Placemaking (RAP) Program of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). Planned upgrades to the Guy Center include a new pavilion, splash pad, farmer's market, along with interior and exterior upgrades to the building to create a more

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Memphis Lions Club Indoor Kitchen

user-friendly flex-space for all types of community events.

In the small town of Memphis, the Lions Club and its surrounding recreation areas have long been the focal hub of the community. Steve Weaver is a Memphis Lions Club Member, a City of Memphis Council Member, and a strong advocate for engaging the town's residents and stakeholders in much-needed enhancements to the town's assets. "I can't tell you how thankful we are for the support and collaboration of our local Community Foundation and the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation," he said. "They truly listened to what our

community wanted and needed and let us decide for ourselves what community development means in this part of rural Michigan."

The Lions Club will use the \$250,000 in funding, along with other grant support from the Community Foundation, for significant upgrades both inside and outside of their Club. Weaver said projects are already underway, including kitchen, doors, and window upgrades, concession stand improvements, parking lot pavement, new outdoor recreation amenities, and a better flex space inside the club to host events and activities

to host events and activities throughout the year.

Jackie Hanton is the vice president of the Community Foundation of St. Clair County and leads the Foundation's rural and small-town work. "Our collaboration and partnership with the Wilson Foundation continues to grow and evolve every year," she said. "These significant hub grants recognize that our local small towns need to decide for themselves what community and economic development means, and then philanthropy needs to come alongside and layer and leverage our investments for the greatest impact."

The Community Foundation has ten other small towns in its overall Rural Portfolio and provides a wide range of capacity-building support to them. "Our board has been very deliberate to ramp up our direct involvement and support to help our smaller communities achieve their goals," Hanton added. Among the help the Foundation offers is paying for part-time consultants to help these communities develop or improve master and recreation planning, project-specific development, and grant-seeking assistance.

The Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation has a growing focus on rural communities in both Western New York and Southeast Michigan, including St. Clair County. Their focus on small town "hubs" is rooted



Marine City Guy Center - Splash pad

in the definition of the Aspen Institute's Community Strategies Group, which defines a hub as "a place-rooted organization that works...to increase local capacity and create opportunities for better livelihoods, health and well-being."

Mike Reaves added, "I have had a long career in public service," he said, "and what really impresses me here in this part of Michigan is how our local Community Foundation and the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation collaborate, cooperate, and really try to understand the local goals of our small towns. This is the model for growing prosperity in rural Michigan."

Want to learn more or explore how you can support the Community Foundation's rural work? Contact Program Officer Natacha Hayden at (810) 984-4761 or natacha@stclairfoundation.org.



Community Foundation

of St. Clair County

