GENEROSITY IN ACTION

FALL 2026



Community Foundation

of St. Clair County

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info@stclairfoundation.org

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For more information on our giving center, scholarships, and grants, please visit our website at:

stclairfoundation.org

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WELCOME TO THE TEAM!

We're excited to welcome five new team members to the Community Foundation this year! Karen Deschaine, Natalie Green, Jon Ganci, Collin Holzberger, and Emily Westrick have joined us. We're grateful to have them as part of our team and excited for the ways they'll help us continue serving our donors, fund holders, nonprofits, and community.

To learn more about our team visit:
https://stclairfoundation.org/about/our-staff/

Foundation invests in anchor projects

The Community Foundation of St. Clair County has completed its purchase of another building in downtown Port Huron. The Foundation closed on the former Country Style Market grocery store on June 29th.

"We're excited about this latest investment," said Will Oldford, the Foundation's Board Chair. "This building on Mainstreet in downtown Port Huron represents the kind of placed-based anchor project that has served our region well over the years."

The Foundation used assets from its various stock market investments to pay for the majority of the purchase and then leveraged additional funding via the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation. This new building, at 310 Huron Avenue, is directly on the Bridge to Bay Trail network which runs from Lakeport down to Algonac.

"Our current Strategic Plan calls for a greater focus along the main commercial corridor of our region," added Oldford. "This latest investment will serve as a long-term home for the Discovery City children's exhibit, as well as business and residential units on the 2nd floor. It will certainly be another key anchor in the downtown."

The City of Port Huron recently approved a 10-year lease for the main floor and basement of the building, and when factoring in the value of the children's exhibit, the Foundation projects the total value of this new project to exceed $2 million.

"Our board and staff truly believe in making local bricks and mortar investments when we feel it will advance our region's growth and prosperity." Oldford said. The Foundation also currently owns the Knowlton Museum, its own offices and courtyard in Port Huron, 39 acres of open land along the Black River in Kimball Township, which will be the site of a future waterfront park, and the Blue Water River Walk along the St. Clair River.



310 Huron Avenue, Port Huron

It had previously owned Studio 1219 (now the Foundry), farmland, a home for homeless teens, and the Atrium restaurant which was later donated to Blue Water Allies.

In recent years the Foundation has used both grant funds and investment assets to support other anchor projects in Marine City and St. Clair. The Foundation is also quickly expanding its work and impact in the smaller and more rural communities along the western part of the county as well.

"Our Foundation doesn't exist just to make grants and award scholarships," Oldford concluded. "We're here to make an impact and be relevant to our region's growth and prosperity."

We have more opportunities like this in the pipeline! If you or a member of your family would like to get involved, we'd love to hear from you.

Please reach out to Randy Maiers or Jackie Hanton for more information.



Thank you for your most generous donation to our Walk for Warmth. Because of amazing organizations like you, we are able to continue helping local families in need. Your kindness and commitment to our community makes a meaningful difference.

Sincerely, Team BWCA

Blue Water Community Action...
Helping People. Changing Lives.

Growing community impact through recurring gifts

By Krystal Moralee

Water shapes life along the Thumb Coast, and for many Community Foundation donors, protecting it is just as important as enjoying it.

For Susie Babcock, that connection is deeply personal. "Water is life," she said simply. "Without water, we couldn't live." It's a belief that has guided how she sees the world and how she chooses to care for it.

That care has become a steady generosity through her ongoing support of the Bioregion Reparation Fund at the Community Foundation. Month after month, Susie gives through consistency rather than grand gestures. It's the kind of giving that, over time, fuels something lasting.

Susie's family has a long history in the Port Huron area, and she was raised to be a good steward of the natural world. It's something she has passed on to her own son, Nathan. In the late 1990s, she and Nathan became involved in a small local effort led by Sisters Veronica Blake and Concepcion Gonzales of the Sisters of Mary Reparatrix. The group, called Savers of Wet and Marshy Places, or SWAMP, invited young people to see the natural world not as something separate, but as something sacred, woven into both daily life and spiritual understanding.

That early experience grew into a deeper connection for Susie, and she joined retreats through the Full Circle EcoHouse of Prayer, where the same sisters continued their work, blending ecological awareness with a sense of reverence for the Earth. When the sisters began preparing for retirement, their concern was not for themselves, but for what would remain and they enlisted the help of those closest to them.



"They decided to open a fund at the Community Foundation to give grants to do positive things around water," Susie said. "They wanted us to try to get the money coming in to help get it established."

For Susie, the decision to give regularly to the fund was rooted in both gratitude and responsibility.

"I felt a real loyalty to them to do this," she said. "I, myself, gained so much from being around these two women."

Since its establishment in 2018, the Bioregion Reparation Fund has supported projects that ripple outward, such as environmental education, conservation efforts, and sustainable practices that protect and honor local waterways. Grants have helped fund green building initiatives, support land conservation, and connect communities to the health of their watershed.

"While large, one-time gifts can act as a significant spark, recurring support like Susie's keeps the momentum flowing. Even modest monthly contributions, when given faithfully, become something far greater over time," said Jackie Hanton, vice president of the Community Foundation.

For Susie, the mission of the Bioregion Reparation Fund embodies everything she has learned through her life about caring for the natural world.

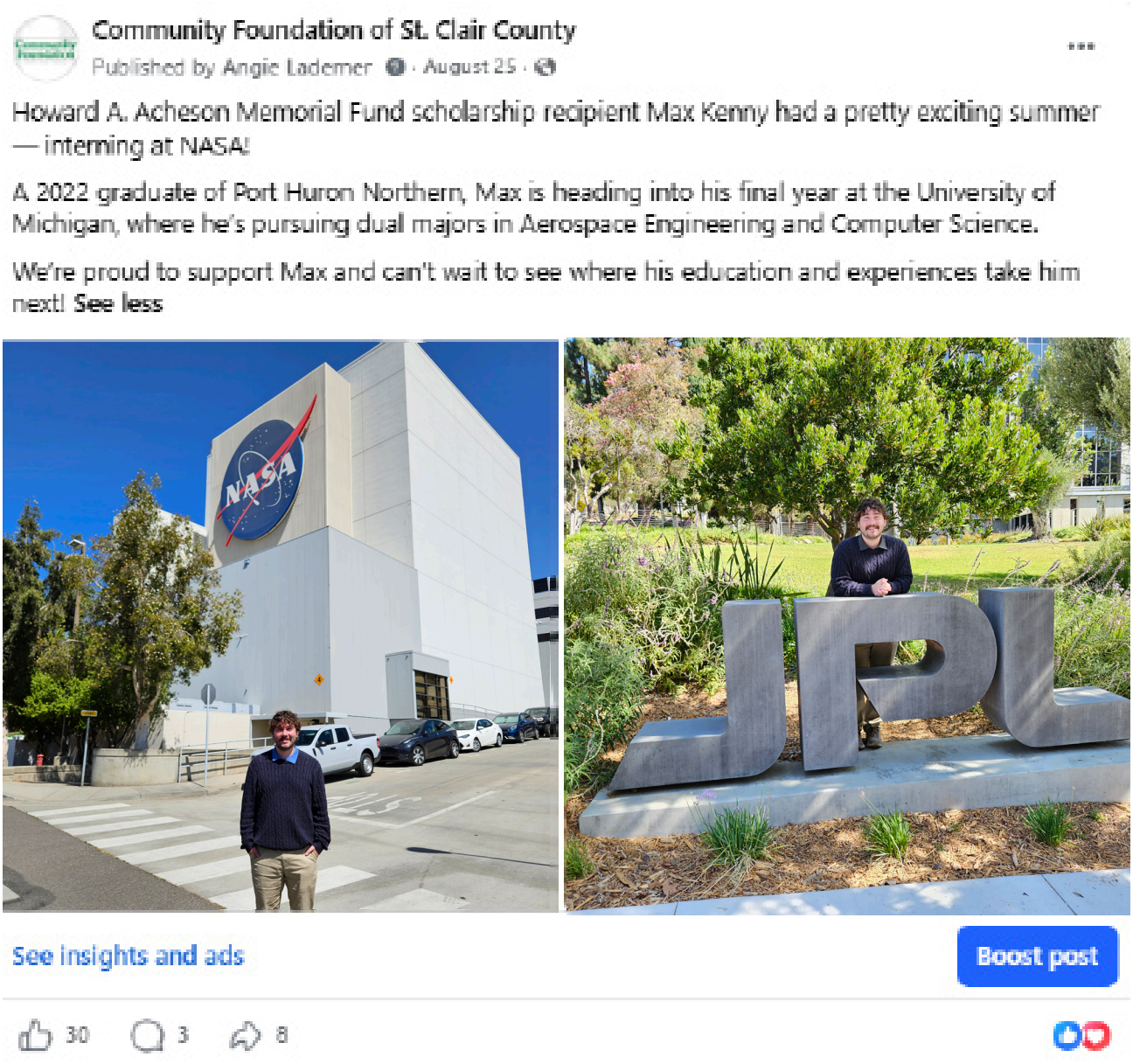
Growing up in the 1960s, she remembers her family tending a small backyard refuge, reusing what they could, composting, and making space for wildlife. "That's probably where it really started for me," she said.

Today, that same spirit shows up in the way she lives, tending what she describes as a "small but intense" garden, helping others with theirs, participating in bird counts through Audubon groups, and continuing to give.

"We are part of nature and we are all connected," she said. "And what befalls any part of nature befalls all of us eventually."

In a region defined by water, the similarity is hard to ignore. A single drop may seem small, but over time, it shapes shorelines, nourishes life, and reaches places we may never see.

To learn more about the Bioregion Reparation Fund or to begin your own recurring gift, visit the Community Foundation of St. Clair County at stclairfoundation.org or send a contribution by mail. Because when you care for the water, you're caring for everything and everyone it touches.



DEAR All STAR Services DONOR
advised FUND + COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
of ST. Clair COUNTY,

Thank you So Much for your support of
The 4th ANNUAL YOUth Matter Michigan Wheels
for AWARENESS EVENT.
your gift of $250.00 helped US To Raise
over $4000.00 To support youth MENTAL
health PROJECTS in MICHIGAN.
We are very Grateful for your support
+ LOOK forward To CONTINUING our PARTNERSHIP
in The future.

SINCERELY,
REBA WICKINGS (founder) + The ENTIRE
YOUth Matter Michigan TEAM

Randy/Community Foundation
Thank you For a $6,250 CONTRIBUTION
TO a Sky CHALLENGER and STEM FEST!
10,000 people attended this year
and is only possible Through Donations
Such as yours.
Thank you For Helping US Bring
the EXCITEMENT of SCIENCE TO PEOPLE
in a Powerful and MEMORABLE WAY.

Thank you.
Kirk



Dear Audrey + ~~Hoff~~,

On behalf of the Marine City Chamber of Commerce, I would like to thank you for your support of our 10th Annual Golf Par-tee fundraiser. Your support is greatly appreciated and a tremendous part of our success.

Thank you again!

Jane Merchant

Christian Amlot

We appreciate your support. Thanks so much for all you do for the students at PHN!

Courtney Werden

Thank you so much
- Katie

Grace Braun

Your support will provide so many supplies and organization tools the students will have for years to come. So many projects to choose from. Thank you!

Elizabeth McCabe

Mady Fleming

LJ Hendley

Thank you so much for supporting Stitchers Unite at PHN!

Southern Ferry Dock reopens, restored by community support

The Southern Ferry Dock is once again open for everyone to enjoy – and it's something our community can be proud of. Located along the Blue Water River Walk, this historic dock has served many roles over time. It helped railroad cars cross the river, then became home to the Gray Fox ship, a former Navy vessel used to train young Sea Cadets, and today, reclaimed and restored for public use.



Blue Water River Walk - South Ferry Dock

Thanks to the support of generous partners and local donors like the Knowlton Foundation Fund, Chuck & Vicky Knowlton, Sue Ann Ostrom, Port Huron Rotary Club, James C. Acheson Fund II, Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Legacy Funds, Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation, and gifts made in memory of Colleen Smith, in total, the Southern Ferry Dock received nearly $300,000 in gifts to fund the renovations.

Improvements include a new paved path connecting the dock to the main trail, updated lighting, and new decking with accessible railings that will make the space even more welcoming and easier for everyone to enjoy.

"Now it's not only preserved – it's a space that the whole community can enjoy."

- Will Oldford

"The southern ferry dock was one of our last remaining large projects, and in serious need of repair," said Will Oldford, Community Foundation Board Chair. "Now it's not only preserved – it's a space that the whole community can enjoy."

The Community Foundation of St. Clair County, which owns and operates the Blue Water River Walk, led the project, starting by listening to what the community wanted most. Local fishing enthusiasts, including Mary Williams, Captain Dave Malkiewicz, and Tom Watkins, shared ideas to improve access and make the dock better for anglers. Their feedback led to custom railings that can accommodate pole holders and ADA-friendly design features.

"The Southern Ferry Dock adds to the very few places where wheelchair users can connect with the river and use it as a recreation amenity," said Watkins.



"It means more people can fish, relax, and actually experience the water, not just watch it from a distance."

Every part of the project was completed with quality in mind, including contractors and materials. Local companies helped bring the vision to life, including Blue Water Audio and Video, B&T Electric LLC, Jelsch Paving Company, Seawall Answers, Union Properties LLC, Blue Water Glass Inc, Hyde Home Exteriors LLC, and DTE Energy. This team handled everything from stabilizing the ground to installing hardwood decking, lighting, pathway, and Corten steel railings that will patina and stand up to the elements over time.

These improvements are part of a long-term commitment made to its original owner, James C. Acheson, who donated the land to the Community Foundation fifteen years ago. "We promised Jim that we would maintain, protect, and care for this one-mile stretch of shoreline and its amenities, ensuring it stays public, accessible, and welcoming for future generations," added Oldford.

More enhancements are on the way, including plans to light the entire trail to make it even more inviting. This work will be done in phases, continuing with an additional 300 feet of lighting scheduled for summer 2026. Anyone interested in supporting future improvements and upkeep to the Blue Water River Walk—whether individuals, businesses, or organizations—can reach out to Randy Maiers or Natacha Hayden at the Community Foundation.

SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS...

Community Foundation of St. Clair County
Published by Angie Lademer · August 21 ·

The River Walk is getting a little brighter! We've installed new light poles along 300 feet of the trail, making it more enjoyable for everyone. This is just the beginning as we continue lighting the whole trail in future phases.

A big thank you to B&T Electric for helping bring this project to life, and to the James C. Acheson Fund II for their generous grant that helped make this project possible! See less



See insights and ads

299 27 23

Community Foundation of St. Clair County
Published by Angie Lademer · September 10 ·

There's something special about seeing SC4 students work toward careers where they'll make a difference for others.

Thanks to SC4 Foundation scholarships, 77 students have received $169,770 in scholarship support so far this year — helping ease financial stress and keep students focused on their education and future.

Read the story to see how the SC4 Foundation is making a difference for SC4 students. https://stclairfoundation.org/sc4-foundation.../ See less





Community Foundation of St. Clair County
Published by Angie Lademer · September 29 at 3:56 PM ·

We're excited to celebrate a special milestone — 30 years of the Algonac-Clay Historical Society Fund!

Thanks to the generosity of donors, this fund has helped preserve local stories, historic places and more than 20,000 artifacts for the past 30 years.

It's a great example of how donor support can help keep local history alive for generations to come.

Read more: https://stclairfoundation.org/algonac-clay-historical.../ See less





Community Foundation of St. Clair County
Published by Angie Lademer · June 17 ·

Our friends at RESA do cool stuff for the community, and we're happy to provide grant funding when we can.







St. Clair County RESA
June 9 ·

Thanks to a generous $11,000 grant from the Community Foundation of St. Clair County, the Pine River Nature Center has a new crew-style vehicle that will help make outdoor experiences more accessible for visitors and students. The vehicle will support Woodland Developmental Center's Can-Do Crew during their work-based learning experiences at the nature center, assisting with trail maintenance, weed pulling, and lodge cleaning. Thank you to the Community Foundation for investing in our community and for opportunities that connect students to the outdoors and hands-on learning. #EnvironmentalEducation #WeAreSCCRESA

20 years later – Oak Crest Homes

By Randy Maiers



Twenty years ago this summer our Community Foundation began an ambitious collaboration to help revitalize a neighborhood and bring more single-family housing to the south side of Port Huron. Looking back on the complexity of it now, with all of the moving parts and obstacles, I'm honestly a bit surprised we pulled it off. Perhaps a healthy bit of naivete was actually what we needed.

Back in 2006 I had never heard the term "Impact Investing" or "Mission Related Investing" and our foundation certainly didn't have abundant and unrestricted assets. What we did have, and what we leaned into, was our history dating back to the late 1940's and the courage and culture to be bold. Our Foundation's first project back then, which still stands proudly today, was Memorial Stadium in Port Huron which honored the local lives lost in WWI and WWII. Talk about bold, a football stadium!

Equally impressive was that our partners on the Oak Crest Homes project: Acheson Foundation, City of Port Huron, Port Huron Housing Commission, Economic Opportunity Committee (now Community Action Agency), Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA), and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority –were all equally willing to be bold and take a calculated risk.

To be fair, while this would turn out to be our largest and perhaps most complicated investment at the time, we weren't new to this game. In the few years prior we had purchased and developed a new art incubator (Studio 1219), a home for homeless teens and had begun the Community Renaissance Program around Woodrow Wilson Elementary School.

Yet the vision for Oak Crest Homes was far more complex: we would buy up almost two square blocks along the main corridor leading into the City,



which was the site of an auto repair facility. We would design and build a new 13-home mini neighborhood, all owner-occupied homes with front porches, sidewalks, garages in the rear and common space.

To be fair, I don't honestly recall whose idea it was. I do however remember being inspired by some of the other community foundations around Michigan that I had benchmarked and learned from, especially the Community Foundation for Muskegon County. In one word, "bold."

Our first partner, the James C. Acheson Foundation, certainly knew what bold philanthropy looked like. Once they were on board with the first $1 million investment, there was no doubt we'd eventually succeed. Our Foundation's role was more behind the scenes organizing the funding and financing and partners. After we directly purchased the two square blocks and had the land cleared, we donated it all to the Community Action Agency, which then managed the entire construction and eventual sales of the homes.

Oak Crest is just a few blocks south of our offices and I drive by them on a regular basis. They still look great. I don't see 'for sale' signs very often in this little neighborhood.

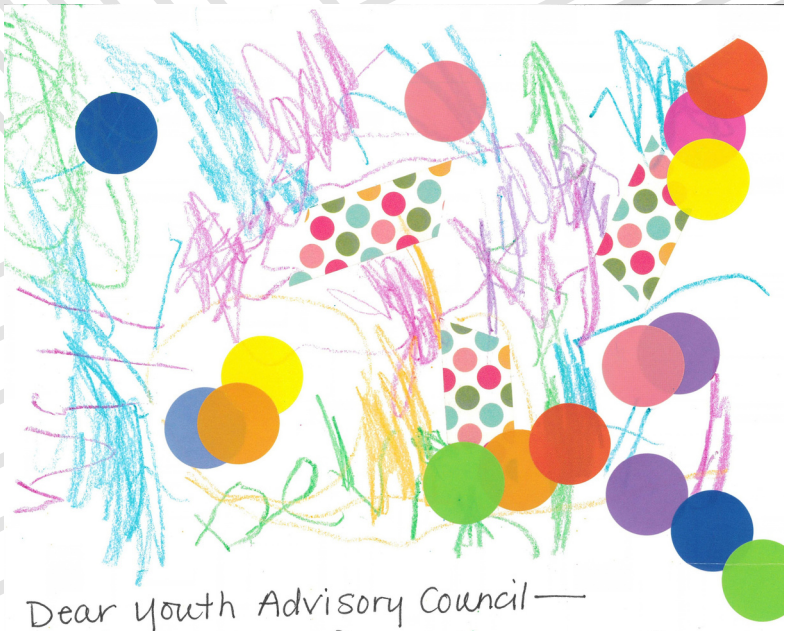
In the years that followed our foundation would continue to push the boundaries of Mission Related Investments. The Blue Water River Walk, by far our largest and most complicated investment would follow less than a decade later. We've owned restaurants, museums, provided loans and mortgages, and built a downtown courtyard and parking lot.

Back in 2006 there wasn't a housing crisis like we have today. Homes were certainly more affordable for the average American family. That's not the case today. So we're in the early stages of exploring another kind of housing development, inspired in part by the current trends in pocket neighborhoods and the theories of Strong Towns and Escaping the Housing Trap. Something, or many things, need to change in the housing continuum. This is a lane that philanthropy can do well in – helping lift-up and advance new ideas and theories around what it means to address the housing crisis. I'm eager to see where this work leads us.

Dear Dan,

Thank you so very much for all your support through the years. We appreciate your very generous donation of $1,000.00, Wow! Together, we are helping thousands of local children each year. Thank you are making a difference!

In Gratitude,
K.I.D.S.



Dear Youth Advisory Council—

Thank you for your generous support of the Imagination Library in St. Clair County. Your investment is helping put books into the hands of young children and fostering a lifelong love of reading—and we are truly grateful!

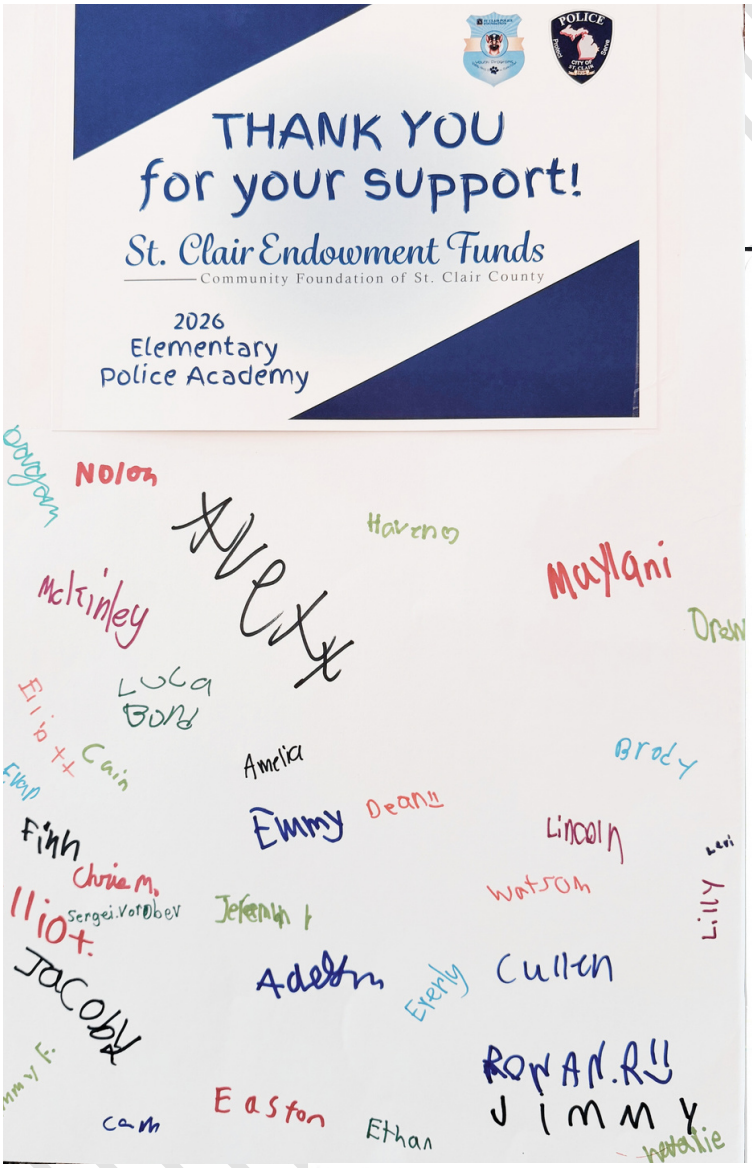
With appreciation,
Jen Gunderson, the Imaginatio
team + all my enrolled little
friends

Dear friends

On behalf of the families we serve, thank you for the St. Clair County Cancer support grant! Thanks to you, so many in your community will be provided with immediate relief ... we can't wait to share all the good will accomplish together!

Thank you again!

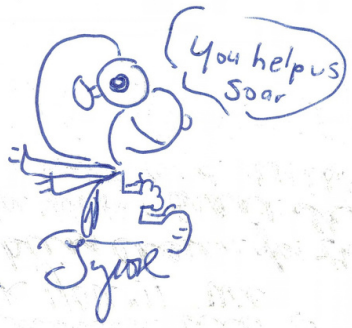
- the team at New Day Foundation



Dear Community Foundation of St. Clair County,

Our entire team at SONS Outreach would like to shout "THANK YOU"!! We appreciate being chosen for the "With Youth, For Youth" Grant. Thank you for your support and assisting us in making a difference for the children of St. Clair County!

Jeff



Dalauna

Ryan

Dear Audrey and Donor Team,

Thank you to the Community Foundation and Donald W. & Alice I. Giese Fund for the generous support of River Bash! Your generosity directly benefits programs and services for over 10,000 families and students every year. I am grateful to have you as a partner in this work. Thank you for creating a more healthy St. Clair River watershed!

Sheri

Community Foundation awards $530,000 in scholarships to local students

By Krystal Moralee

The school year is firmly underway, and 176 Blue Water Area students have begun it with scholarship support from the Community Foundation of St. Clair County with help that can ease financial pressure and allow them to focus more fully on their educational goals.

For this academic year, the Community Foundation awarded 87 new scholarships and renewed 89 others, providing more than $530,000 in support. The awards reflect a deliberate shift toward renewable scholarships that follow students through multiple years, supporting not only access to college but long-term success.

That continuing support can be seen in the experience of Peyton Miller, a fourth-year recipient of the Alexander & Celestine Lamere Fund scholarship.

Miller, a 2023 Marine City High School graduate, is studying radiology at St. Clair County Community College and expects to graduate in the spring. She is exploring careers in X-ray and mammography, and the scholarship has allowed her to devote more time and energy to school without placing the financial burden entirely on her family.

"For one thing, obviously, it's a huge financial relief," Miller said. "It's hard to put on my parents, and as a full-time student, it's hard to get hours for work to help pay for it."

Magdelene Swartz, a 1996 Port Huron Northern graduate, recently completed her nursing degree at SC4 with help from the Douglas and Elda A. Webb scholarship fund. She continues her education with help from the Webb scholarship as she works toward her BSN degree. "Receiving the Webb scholarship again has relieved so much financial stress, allowing me to focus fully on my coursework and stay on track to reach those goals."

Evan Martin, a 2024 Marine City High School graduate, is a third-year renewal recipient through the Lamere Fund. After participating in dual enrollment and spending two years at St. Clair County Community College, he transferred this fall to Saginaw Valley State University, where he is studying accounting and expects to graduate in fall 2027.

Martin has completed an internship at Eastern Michigan Bank and is exploring auditing and tax accounting as he advances through his program.

"Right now, I'm very interested in the auditing space, whether for government or independent," Martin said.

Alton Fox, a 2024 Marine City High School graduate and third-year renewal recipient, is a junior at Michigan State University. He is



Magdelene Swartz

pursuing a double major in Games and Interactive Media and Journalism, with a minor in Creative Writing.

Scholarships were especially important when Fox's family faced financial difficulty early in his college career while his mother dealt with health issues and temporarily had to leave her job. She is doing well now, but at the time, several scholarships helped keep his education moving forward.

"Scholarships were definitely a huge help, especially during that particular time," Fox said.

Ella Carlson, a 2025 Marysville High School graduate, is a second-year renewal recipient through the

Ted & Joyce Wildermuth Scholarship Fund. She attends the University of Michigan, where she is studying psychology on the pre-med track and expects to earn her bachelor's degree in 2029.

"Scholarships have helped me in such a big way as they have allowed me to attend school without a large amount of debt and have given me the freedom to not have to have a job while on campus," Carlson said.

The students' experiences reflect the Foundation's broader approach. "A few years ago, the Foundation shifted its scholarship philosophy from simply supporting access to college to supporting success in college," said Jessica Flann, program officer for post-secondary success at the Community Foundation. "While scholarships are only one part of what students need to complete a degree, we've found that ongoing encouragement and connection matter too."

Community Foundation President and CEO Randy Maiers said the growing emphasis on renewable scholarships allows donors' generosity to become something more enduring than a single award.

"When our donors invest in a student year after year, they're doing more than helping with one semester's expenses," Maiers said. They're giving that student a community of support that stays with them as they learn, grow, and work toward completing their education."

Your gift can help the Community Foundation continue providing renewable scholarships and sustained support to students across the Blue Water area. To invest in the current scholarship program and help local students pursue and complete their education, contact Jackie Hanton at jackie@stclairfoundation.org.



Evan Martin



Ella Carlson



Alton Fox



Peyton Miller

The Wismer Scholarship has been such a gift to me throughout my undergraduate education. I cannot thank the donors enough for their generosity to support my education and make it so that I don't have to deal with the financial burden that comes with receiving a college education. I'm still in shock that I received this scholarship my senior year and am so grateful each year when it is renewed.

Thank you so much, your indulgence in my education means the world to me.

Therese

John F. & Rose Marie Wismer Community Foundation Scholarship

BLUE WATER AREA
RESCUE MISSION
REAL HELP. REAL HOPE.

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

Dear Randy Maiers,

Thank you for the $20,000.00 gift you made on 10/6/2026. Your generosity and kindness is providing safe shelter, hot showers, nutritious meals and spiritual care for your homeless neighbors. But more than that, your gift lets each man know that they are loved. On behalf of all the men helped by your kindness, thank you.

Because we are a registered 501(c)3 ministry, your donation is completely tax deductible. Please keep this for your tax records to claim your deduction.

Thank you for remembering your neighbors in need and thank you for partnering with us to bring real help and real hope to each one. May God bless you for your kindness.

Warm regards,
Demetri Stafford
Demetri Stafford
Executive Director

~ Randy & the St. Clair County Community Foundation Team,

From the bottom of my heart, thank you for believing in the work done here at the Mission each day. Your generosity means more than financial support, it reminds our team and guests we're not alone in the work, and that others see it as important, to love our neighbors in need. Your tremendous gift is truly a blessing and we are extremely grateful for your investment and willingness to stand with us! Thank you for providing real help & real hope!

BWARM.net • 810-824-3244 • info@bwarm.net • 1920 24th St. • Port Huron, MI 48060

Dear Community Foundation - Donors, Staff & Boards,

We at BWRDC have dubbed all of you Honorary "Partners in Recovery!"

With out the generous support of ALL of you, this would not be possible!

Thank you

OUR PURPOSE IS TO OFFER HOPE & ENCOURAGE RECOVERY

June 9, 2026

Dear Mrs. Sachor.

Thank you for the Grant Check of $1200.00 from Community Foundation and Algonac-Clay Community Foundation. We are very proud and pleased to have your support. We will use this money to continue our software program to preserve our rich history.

Sincerely,
Marilynn Gengaw
Corresponding Secretary

Community Foundation of St. Clair County,

Thank you for the check to support the Food Pantry at Lakeport Wesleyan Church. This grant from the Community Assistance Fund allowed the church to purchase food for the many people that come to the Food Pantry for assistance.

Thank you. once again.

Kristie Lamb
Treasurer

Scholarship support that goes beyond tuition

By Krystal Moralee

As a recipient of the Little Brother, Little Sister Scholarship through the Community Foundation of St. Clair County, Kayla Dunham arrived at Michigan State University carrying more than her luggage and the typical nerves of a first-year college student. She also brought with her the honor of being the first in her family to go to college, and the determination to make the most of the opportunity.

"I just feel like I had to set the example," she said.

Now, four years later, that example is already rippling outward. Dunham's twin brothers, who are graduating this year from Port Huron Northern High School, are both headed to college themselves, motivated by their sister's success.

For Dunham, who graduated from Port Huron High School in 2022, the scholarship provided more than just financial assistance. It connected her with a support system that helped her navigate college life and celebrate her victories along the way while building confidence far from home.

"It has truly been a pleasure working with Kayla over the past four years through her renewable scholarship and as part of our high-priority student cohort," said Jessica Flann, Program Officer of Postsecondary Success for the Community Foundation of St. Clair County. "Watching her transition to Michigan State and fully immerse herself in the college experience has been incredibly inspiring."

Dunham initially dreamed of attending Louisiana State University and was accepted there but ultimately realized she was not ready to move so far from home on her own.

"Michigan State felt more at home," she said, and that decision became the beginning of a college journey defined by leadership, service, and involvement.

This August, Dunham will graduate from MSU with a Bachelor of Science degree in Kinesiology and a minor in African and African American Studies. Throughout college, she has maintained above a 3.1 GPA while balancing demanding coursework, leadership roles, internships, and hundreds of hours of community service.

"I made sure I was involved in a lot of organizations," she said.

That might be a bit of an understatement.

During her time at MSU, Dunham served as secretary, vice president, and president of Sisters Building Women. She was director of committees for Sistas That Care, historian for MSU's Black Celebratory, secretary for Eris Mob, and secretary for the National Council of Negro Women.



She also organized and led campus programs focused on wellness, culture, mental health, and student engagement.

Along the way, she earned the Senior Class Exceptional Leader Award from the Associated Students of Michigan State University, was recognized within the Kinesiology department for leadership and community impact, and completed more than 100 clinical hours as a physical therapy intern with ATI Physical Therapy. She is CPR and AED certified and was also admitted into two fellowships this summer.

Flann said Dunham demonstrates exactly what the Community Foundation knows students can achieve when they feel supported.



"Kayla took full advantage of every opportunity by getting deeply involved on campus and applying what she was learning through her extracurricular activities right away," Flann said. "When we encourage students to engage beyond the classroom, Kayla embodies exactly what that can look like. She is going to be a difference-maker and a tremendous asset as she begins this next chapter."

Dunham plans to continue her education in graduate school, pursuing clinical exercise physiology and potentially a second master's degree connected to African studies.

While the scholarship itself helped financially, she said the encouragement and continued support from the Community Foundation made an equally lasting impact. The handwritten notes, care packages with gift cards and essentials, and supportive check-ins reminded her that people were genuinely invested in her success.

Now preparing for graduation and the next phase of her journey, Dunham encourages younger students to keep pushing forward, even when opportunities feel out of reach.

"Don't take no as an answer. Continue to follow up," she said. "Rejection is literally just redirection, so don't take it personal."

She also strongly encourages students to build relationships and connections wherever they can.

"So many doors opened for me from networking," she said. "Just get to know people better, because you just never know what you might need and who will be able to give it to you."

Help open doors for more students like Kayla. To support student success through the Community Foundation, contact Jackie Hanton at jackie@stclairfoundation.org or 810-984-4761.

I want to sincerely thank you for awarding me this scholarship. I am truly grateful for your generosity and support.

This scholarship means more to me than words can fully express. It not only helps relieve the financial burden of my education, but it also motivates me to continue working hard toward my goals. Knowing that someone believes in my potential gives me even more confidence in my future.

I understand that opportunities like this are made possible by people who care about students and their success, and I do not take that lightly. I am committed to making the most of this opportunity and using my education to positively impact my community.

Thank you again for your kindness, support, and investment in my future.

Trashawn
Douglas & Elda L. Webb Scholarship

Growing up as the child of a retired veteran, I witnessed firsthand the profound dedication, sacrifice, and resilience that defines military service. Receiving the Charles Myron & Betty Gossman Veterans Fund would be an incredible honor that directly connects my late father's legacy of service to my own educational journey.

This critical financial support from the Community Foundation of St. Clair County will allow me to fully commit to my Applied Science degree, focusing on the specialized fields of Equine and Livestock nutrition, dentistry, and training. By easing the tuition burden, this scholarship empowers me to build a meaningful career in the equine industry, honoring my father's memory through hard work and community impact.

Alivia
Charles Myron & Betty Gossman Veterans Fund

Receiving the John F. & Rose Marie Wismer Community Foundation Scholarship is a tremendous honor and an opportunity for which I am deeply grateful. This scholarship will help ease the financial burden of pursuing my education, allowing me to focus more fully on my academic and personal goals. It also serves as a meaningful reminder that my community believes in my potential and is willing to invest in my future. I am inspired to make the most of this opportunity and to give back to my community through my future accomplishments and service to others.

Gavin
John F. & Rose Marie Wismer Community Foundation Scholarship

I'm going into my final year at the University of Michigan, which happens to be my 5th year due to dual majoring in Aerospace engineering and Computer Science. As you can probably imagine from those two degrees, I have a pretty high workload, and am normally incredibly busy.

Being awarded with this scholarship gives me the comfort to continue to pursue academically rigorous courses and semesters by alleviating the pressure to work to pay for my schooling.

Without the Howard A. Acheson Memorial Fund, I don't think I would have been able to take nearly as many interesting classes as I have, and for that I am forever grateful! Thank you for affording me the opportunity to grow academically and professionally without having to stress over the bills!

Maxwell
Howard A. Acheson Memorial Fund

This scholarship has given me the opportunity to attend one of the best universities in the country, which has been a dream since I was little. I'm so thankful for the Bates family for this scholarship as it has allowed me to receive a prestigious education in the city of my dreams!! Their kindness has motivated me to work hard towards everything at school, I will forever be grateful!

Charlotte
James & Barbara Bates Scholarship

Designed by local kids, built by the community: Emmett Township unveils new playground



Emmett Township Park witnessed a remarkable transformation as community members gathered to build a brand-new, community-designed playground.

"Seeing this playground rise from the ground in just a few days, built by the hands of our own neighbors and friends, is something I will never forget," said Carrie Kot, Emmett Township treasurer and build-week volunteer. "We didn't just build a place for our kids to play; we built a foundation of community pride."

This new playscape represents a massive leap forward for the township's park revitalization efforts, continuing a shared commitment to creating vibrant, welcoming spaces that strengthen community connections. The playground also complements the momentum of the DNR Recreation Passport Grant awarded to Emmett Township earlier this year, continuing outdoor recreation enhancements that will serve generations of families.

Made possible through a partnership between Emmett Township, KaBOOM!, the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, and the Community Foundation of St. Clair County, this multi-day community build brought local families together to physically construct a playspace created by and for local kids.

Local Involvement and Rural Placemaking

What started as youthful drawings from local 4th grade students became a tangible reality. Over the course of three months, passionate members from the community met on Monday nights to turn these drawings into the park that came to life on Saturday, July 11, 2026. From organizing team leads to designing activities for kids throughout the build, these Emmett Township residents created a community celebration on a construction site.

Community members, crew from AMPRO EBS, and crew from Done Right Masonry and Concrete volunteered for three days of site preparation mixing concrete, assembling equipment, moving mulch, and securing playground posts. Fronney's Foods, Rose Scott, Sandy Reliford, and Carrie Kot kept the crews fueled with donated meals, snacks, and water.

"The best community projects are created with community. Local students designed this playground, generous partners believed in the vision, and this weekend neighbors came together to build something that will serve local families for decades," said Scott Mueller, Chairman of the Emmett Township Parks Committee.

This playground acts as a powerful example of rural placemaking by bringing residents together to physically create the spaces they will use. By relying on volunteers, a sense of ownership arises and new relationships with fellow community members are built.

Connecting Resources

The Community Foundation has seen the best community projects happen when the right partners come together. By connecting experts like KaBOOM!, the generosity of the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation's Built to Play initiative, and local leaders with the Foundation's capacity-building support, ideas generated by community residents can become lasting investments in the places they call home.

"Whether it's a playground, a trail, or a downtown gathering place, our role at the Foundation is to help create the partnerships that allow local ideas to become lasting community assets. That's exactly what happened here in Emmett Township," said Collin Holzberger, Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation Rural Fellow at the Community Foundation of St. Clair County.

The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation's support for this playground is through its Built to Play initiative.



The Wilson Foundation launched the initiative in 2018 in partnership with KaBOOM! and The Skatepark Project to help communities in Southeast Michigan and Western New York provide more safe and imaginative places for kids to play. To date, the $17 million initiative has supported the creation of nearly 100 play spaces and skateparks across its two regions. The final eight projects supported through Built to Play will be completed throughout 2025 and 2026, in coordination with local community foundations. (To learn more about the impact of this initiative, visit RWBuiltToPlay.org).



KaBOOM! is the national nonprofit committed to ending playspace inequity – the reality that quality places to play are not available to every child, especially in communities of color. Since 1996, KABOOM! has partnered with kids, communities, and public and private partners to transform 17,000+ playspaces, expanding access to the physical, mental, and social benefits of play for more than 12 million kids nationwide.

As KaBOOM! celebrates its 30th year, the organization is focused on community-driven solutions through public-private partnerships, research, policy, and advocacy to elevate the current state of our kids and center youth voice in shaping equitable access to playspaces and nature. Together with partners across sectors, KaBOOM! is building the play infrastructure kids need to grow up happy and healthy for generations to come. Learn more at kaboom.org

For more information about the build or to support project like this in your community, contact Collin Holzberger at collin@stclairfoundation.org.



Jody Parmann ~ 2026 Featured Artist

Art on the River 2027
June 11, 12, 13
Mark your calendar!

Art on the River was fortunate to welcome Jody Parmann as our featured artist in 2026. The painting on the front of this card is the work she created for Art on the River this year. You can view that painting at the Municipal Office Center close to the City Clerks office. It is because of collaborations like these we can spread the love of art around St. Clair County. And without your help as a sponsor or donor, we could not do something like this. Please know how much we appreciate you and your business. Take a moment to stop off and view the painting in person. It was made up of many people's finger prints from our community. Jody turned it into this painting. We are working already to bring Art on the River back to Port Huron in 2027 and we hope you will join us.

We would like to thank the Blue Water Arts Council for your support of the Featured artist each year. We are thrilled to share these paintings with the community

Trina Avedisian
CVC President ♡

City of St. Clair Recreation Department

Thank you!!
Community Foundation of St. Clair County
For a fun and safe summer

"YAPS" Summer Playground
2026

Dear Grants Committee,
On behalf of St. Clair County RESA and the Pine River Nature Center,
THANK YOU!

Nature has a unique power to inspire and teach. By funding our new utility vehicle, you have made the outdoors fully accessible to our special education students. They can now safely navigate deeper into our trails, immerse themselves in nature, learn vital life skills, and build confidence.

You haven't just funded a piece of equipment; you have gifted students moments of breakthrough, inclusion, and joy in the great outdoors. Thank you for your vision and heart.

With deepest gratitude,

Sarah Nelson Ellie Wieland Monique Werner

To Whom It May Concern:
Thank you for your generous donation to the Blue Water Traditional Pow Wow.
Your generosity made our event a huge success.
"Megwitch"
The Blue Water Traditional Pow Wow Committee

Community Foundation of St. Clair County,

Thank you so much for your generous $2,000 donation to the First Presbyterian Church of Yale Food Pantry. Your kindness and generosity will help us provide food and support to individuals and families in our community. We are truly grateful for your willingness to help those in need. May God bless you for your generosity.

And grateful
are the receivers.

Thank you so much.

First Presbyterian Church of Yale

Community Foundation grants $160,000 to Blue Water Safe Horizons

By Krystal Moralee



A $160,000 grant from several donor advised fund holders at the Community Foundation of St. Clair County is helping Blue Water Safe Horizons renovate key areas of the domestic violence and sexual abuse shelter to bring survivors into a safer, more welcoming, comfortable, and healing environment.

The renovation project will transform key spaces within the shelter to better support women and their children as they begin rebuilding their lives.

"I turned over every rock I possibly could, and thank God for the Community Foundation," said Melissa Jacobs, executive director of Blue Water Safe Horizons.

Jacobs, who became executive director a year ago, quickly recognized that one of the shelter's greatest challenges was its physical space. In previous years, many survivors had to be housed off-site because the shelter lacked adequate facilities. With only two showers available, it wasn't practical to accommodate everyone within the building.

"When people are housed away from the facility, it's difficult to empower them," Jacobs explained. "The advocates are able to work with them every day when they're here. When people are away and relying on bus transportation, it's harder to connect them with resources, and it just doesn't lead to as good of outcomes."

This grant will help ensure survivors have not only a safe place to stay, but an environment that fosters hope, healing, and a fresh start. Plans include a new bathroom addition with four showers and a bathtub. Two of the showers will also be ADA compliant, helping the shelter better serve all clients.

The existing shower area will then be converted into a small living room, creating another area where residents can rest, connect, and begin to heal.

While state and federal funding exists to help survivors directly, there are far fewer opportunities to fund improvements to the shelter itself. That is where the Community Foundation donors stepped in.

"Our donors toured the shelter, heard directly about the needs, and witnessed the life changing work happening through Blue Water Safe Horizons. They wanted to make significant gifts that they knew would make a meaningful difference," said Community Foundation Vice President Jackie Hanton.

For Jacobs, watching that connection happen was moving, and the impact ripples beyond the walls of the shelter itself.

While the shelter serves under 100 people annually, Jacobs said the organization has intentionally shifted away from short-term housing models. In the past, stays were capped at 30 days. Today, the average stay is closer to six months.

"Thirty days often wasn't enough time for people to put the things into place that they needed so they could stay on their own," Jacobs said. "They would end up going back to the bad situation."

Now, with more time, more support, and improved facilities, the organization hopes survivors will have a stronger foundation for lasting independence.

Blue Water Safe Horizons also operates a 24/7 hotline that receives between 600 and 700 calls each year, offering



support even for people who are not yet ready or able to leave abusive situations. The organization also provides outreach services and trauma-informed education through specialists who help survivors process what they have experienced and begin planning for safer futures.

Jacobs said none of this would be possible without the support of donors and the Community Foundation's ability to bring people together around shared compassion for their neighbors.

"We're so grateful for the Community Foundation," she said.

For those currently experiencing domestic violence, sexual abuse, or elder abuse – even if they are not yet ready to leave – Blue Water Safe Horizons encourages them to reach out for help. The organization's 24/7 hotline can be reached at 810-824-7948.

To learn more about how charitable giving through the Community Foundation of St. Clair County can support organizations making a lasting difference throughout the region, contact Jackie Hanton at the Community Foundation at 810-984-4761 or jackie@stclairfoundation.org.

Community Foundation

of St. Clair County



GENEROSITY BRINGS US TOGETHER.

IN EVERY GIFT, EVERY CONNECTION, EVERY POSSIBILITY.

THANK YOU FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE!