In 2020, the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation didn’t spend much time looking back. We took what we’ve learned over our 93-year history and sharpened our ability to be flexible, collaborative, and nimble like never before. Thanks to donors giving through the Community Foundation, we distributed a record $9.48 million in charitable grants and scholarships.

Though we cannot be confident of what the future holds, we can be clear and resolved in our mission: To strengthen our communities. We are always learning and working to help our community improve. We continually convene and collaborate with nonprofits, municipalities, philanthropists, grantees, and more to learn about their issues and work together to develop plans to address them. We are a trusted, influential resource for our service area and are regarded as a strong community leader.

Having the Community Foundation as a partner will ensure that your valuable gifts truly make a difference in our communities. There are endless options to make an impact, and we’re always here to help.

Thank you.

Bill Wyman
President & CEO
The Community Foundation spent a lot of time during the last year talking to our nonprofit partners and learning about their challenges, innovations, and outreach determinations in weathering the pandemic. Two frequently recurring words dominated these conversations: technology and fundraising.

Nonprofits have been forced to lean on technology like never before to continue critical service delivery, fundraising, and support of remote workers. They have also had to figure out new in-person fundraising events were canceled. “Like so many small non-profit organizations we do not have the benefit of staff that specializes in technology and have gotten by with hand-me-down recommendations and hardware in the past. I can’t say enough about how wonderful it has been to get help from someone with tech knowledge that understands nonprofit needs. It’s been such a relief to know I’m spending the organization’s money in the best/smartest way,” shares Nikki Hessel, Executive Director at Future Neenah.

To help provide nonprofits with as much flexibility, certainty, and stability as possible, the Community Foundation:

• Added new options for general operating support
• Established emergency funds for COVID-related expenses
• Offered nonprofit adaptation grants for technology and consulting
• Reduced restrictions on current grants
• Introduced more flexible grant application deadlines
• Reduced reporting burdens

These changes helped to build grantee capacity to not only survive the COVID crisis but to come out of it better positioned to achieve their challenges, innovations, and outright determination in meeting the evolving needs of our customers, so did the Community Foundation. Their willingness to shift giving practices and meet organizations, such as ours, where we were, was critical to our continued ability to stay afloat, maintain momentum and increase impact.”

JASON PRESTO
CEO of the Boys & Girls Club of the Tri-County Area

When discussing technology, we heard many nonprofit say, “We don’t know what we don’t know” — leaving them confused, overwhelmed, or paralyzed about where to start. This inspired us to offer free technology assessments and coaching in addition to grants.

“Technology is not a luxury. It is a necessity,” shares Amy Rollins, CEO of the Boys & Girls Club of the Tri-County Area. “Technology is a critical tool to support remote learning and fitness classes.

The Community Foundation’s Technology Support Grant Program is a great opportunity can come from crisis. These changes at lightning speed, the ingenuity and irrepressible spirit that we’ve witnessed during the last year has reinforced our belief that great opportunities can come from crisis.

Grants have supported a wide range of technology-related improvements including:

• Technology for telehealth appointments, virtual learning, and social connection for isolated individuals.
• Virtual fundraising and volunteer management software.
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Nicole Kordus and Natalie Stanard offer patients much more than resources and help for their addiction. They also bring “street cred.” As peer recovery coaches, they have walked the walk and use their own personal stories to encourage patients with substance use disorder in ThedaCare’s Emergency Departments in Neenah, Berlin and Shawano.

“When I am talking with someone in the emergency department, I will declare things about myself to help them feel comforted or understood and also let them know that I have been in their situation and I understand. I always tell them that there isn’t much they can say that will surprise me, and that I have most likely done the same thing at some point in my life.”

NICOLE KORDUS Peer Recovery Coach

When Natalie shares her story with patients, she can feel them let their guard down. At a time when they are feeling hopeless, exhausted and alone it lets them know, “I’ve been in that same spot. I understand you and you don’t have to go through this alone.”

Nicole and Natalie are two of 13 recovery coaches and certified peer support specialists in the new Emergency Department to Recovery Plus Program (ED2R+) that was recently launched by ThedaCare.

“Peer support is shown to offer a level of backing that increases success in recovery. It can be as simple as having someone to call when they are having a difficult day, or suggestions about speaking with loved ones about their addiction. We want those who are in the beginning stages of their recovery to have access to any resources that might support them.”

SADIE BODENBACH Clinical Substance Abuse Counselor and Peer Recovery Coach with Apricity

To get the program started, funding from numerous sources was essential. To support patients, a $100,000 grant from Wisconsin Voices for Recovery, as well as support from the Fox Cities CHAT Team (Community Health Action Team) and Basic Needs Giving Partnership, which is supported by the U.S. Venture Fund for Basic Needs within the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation, the J. J. Keller Foundation, and other community partners.

Both Nicole and Natalie have been trained and certified through Apricity, a Neenah-based recovery organization.

“I really enjoy working with the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation because they are an outstanding organization that is truly customer-driven. The Neenah Joint School District has partnered with the OACF for almost a decade. My only regret is that we didn’t start working with them earlier in my tenure. The staff are hard workers and do an incredible job assisting our school with numerous scholarships and donations. I think our Fox Valley community is very fortunate to have a foundation like the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation in our backyard.”

JONATHAN JOCH Chief Financial Officer Neenah Joint School District

ACHIEVING EQUITY
VACCINATION RATES

COVID-19 vaccine distribution is picking up speed in many places. With a plentiful supply of vaccine, there will be more urgency to persuade those reluctant to accept it. The good news is that vaccine hesitancy is falling. In September 2020, 49% of Americans told the Pew research group they probably or definitely wouldn’t take the vaccine. By February, that number had fallen to 30%.

The early data we have on vaccination rates shows that Black Americans are getting vaccinated at a much slower rate than their white counterparts. This is troubling given how hard the pandemic has hit Black Americans.

Some say vaccine hesitancy is caused, in part, by a history of medical exploitation and mistreatment toward people of color in the United States. A grant from the Oshkosh COVID-19 Relief Fund supporting African Heritage’s “Get The Shot” campaign aims to address this. If features well-respected community leaders who live and work across northeast Wisconsin getting their vaccinations.

Others point to a lack of vaccination access as a cause. To help make sure that all who are eligible have access to vaccine appointments, the Winnebago County Health Department has reserved a portion of their appointments to directly assist people that experience barriers such as technology access and language and communication challenges. Furthermore, the Community Foundation established the COVID Vaccine Transportation Fund to help make sure that transportation to vaccination appointments is not a barrier.

Jonathan Joch received his vaccination at Aurora BayCare in Green Bay.
Rock the Block will roll into the River East neighborhood in Oshkosh this summer with its volunteer-powered home repair program. Launched locally in 2019 by Habitat for Humanity of Oshkosh in partnership with Oshkosh Healthy Neighborhoods and the City of Oshkosh, the Rock the Block program creates a sense of neighborhood. It brings homeowners and community volunteers together to do dozens of exterior projects in a short period – often involving several homes on the same block in a matter of days.

The program specializes in “muscle” projects including landscaping, painting, and repair of broken porches or railings – projects where many hands make light work.

“We bought our home three years ago and neither my wife nor I have green thumbs so everything was super overgrown and leaves were everywhere. The clean-up took a couple of hours and it’s something my wife and I couldn’t do in a couple of years. We are super thankful. Thank you so much for Habitat for Humanity for coming and helping us out.”

DAN CLAYTON
Oshkosh Homeowner

Even a pandemic couldn’t stop last year’s Rock the Block. Liz Last, Rock the Block Manager at Habitat Oshkosh, felt that a promise had been made to 30 homeowners in the Congress Field Neighborhood that work would be done and wanted to avoid cancellation if at all possible. With assistance from Construction Manager Rob Rabie, Liz spent countless hours working on proposals, guidelines and the steps needed to get each job done safely and correctly with the smallest crew possible.

“Without this grant, Rock the Block Oshkosh would not exist. This program is now an annual part of Oshkosh. It has been a catalyst for neighborhood associations to increase their efforts and formed a unique public-private coalition that promises to last for years to come. And the Basic Needs Giving Partnership can be proud to have been a leader in the growth of this program.”

TOM SIMON
Executive Director for Habitat for Humanity of Oshkosh

The excitement surrounding Rock the Block draws people’s attention and creates a “we are in this together” spirit. Even during the pandemic, neighbors walking their dog or isolated in their homes came outside to converse with volunteers, bringing a sense of connectedness during a difficult time of physical distancing.

The Community Foundation helped Rock the Block get its start by funding a manager to oversee the effort, supplies for the initial wave of projects, outreach, and direct support of coalition partners through a freeware grant from the Basic Needs Giving Partnership, which is supported by the U.S. Venture Fund for Basic Needs within the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation, the J.J. Keller Foundation, and other community partners.

“Building Community
ROCK THE BLOCK

2019
Sacred Heart Neighborhood
25 homes repaired
140 Volunteers

2020
Congress Field Neighborhood
30 homes repaired
78 volunteers

2021
River East Neighborhood
20 homes scheduled for repair

GARY R. & SANDRA YAKES

“We have a long and fruitful relationship with the Community Foundation. I was on the board of directors when the Oshkosh Foundation was converted from a private foundation to a public charity in 1992 and hired Andrew Swinney as the first executive director and Foundation staff member. Sandra & I established the Fund for the Arts as a field of interest fund because of our long support for the arts in the Oshkosh area. We make annual gifts to this fund and give us great satisfaction to know that many worthy arts organizations have prospered as a result.”

ROCK THE BLOCK OSHKOSH

Tom Simon, Executive Director for Habitat for Humanity of Oshkosh
When entering a town, welcome signs are usually the first thing visitors see. Through careful deliberation, Winneconne’s Beautification Committee recently picked a new sign that incorporates the town’s new bridge design, features simple and elegant colors, and is maintenance free. A $1,500 Community Impact Grant from the Winneconne Area Community Foundation, an affiliate of the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation, helped kick start the project.

In four months, the committee raised enough funds to purchase both east and west side signs. An additional $5,000 will be raised to cover lighting and landscaping needs.

“We chose our tagline as Community of Opportunity to be all inclusive. Winneconne offers opportunities to small businesses, restaurants, tourism, religion, schools, etc. The sign also says we value our community. The Community Foundation kept us up-to-date on all donations to our special project fund. They made the whole process easy, rewarding and very positive.”

LAURA BRODERICK
Member of the Beautification Committee

One in three families struggles to afford diapers, and the pandemic has made things worse. But there are people helping. In Green Lake County, Jake’s Diapers has partnered with the Health and Human Services Department, Bella Medical Clinic, and the Children’s Wisconsin Start Right Home Visitor program to get free diapers into the hands of those who need them the most.

A $15,000 grant from the Green Lake Basic Needs Fund accelerated efforts to create a network of key service organizations to distribute diapers and other basic hygiene essentials throughout the county.

“Life in rural areas where people and nonprofits have limited access to resources to help others out, can be challenging to identify and reach families in need. Through this grant, we hope to develop a deeper understanding of what it takes to reach these rural communities and develop repeatable systems to make this happen.”

LYSSA SCHMIDT
Director of Communications for Jake’s Diapers

“10 REASONS TO GIVE THROUGH THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION”

1. We are a local organization with deep roots in the community.
2. We have broad expertise regarding community issues and needs.
3. We provide highly personalized service tailored to each individual’s charitable and financial interests.
4. Our funds help people invest in the causes they care about most.
5. We accept a wide variety of assets and can facilitate even the most complex forms of giving.
6. We partner with professional advisors to create highly effective approaches to charitable giving.
7. We offer maximum tax advantages for most gifts under state and federal law.
8. We multiply the impact of gift dollars by pooling them with other gifts and grants.
9. We build endowment funds that benefit the community for decades and help create personal legacies.
10. We are a community leader, coordinating collaborative resources to create positive change.

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“Showcasing Pride
Winneconne Welcome Signs”