IN OUR COMMUNITY

EDUCATION REPORT 2021

Learn | Invest | Engage
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Education is a crucial part in strengthening our communities. The Oshkosh Area Community Foundation emphasizes education in numerous ways. The wonderful stories in this report are only a few of the many scholarships and education grants the foundation is part of. Much of our work in Oshkosh and all the communities in our service area is dedicated to education. Mentoring, apprenticeships, literacy programs, technology training, book distributions, teacher grants, capital projects, tuition assistance, employee advancement training, and scholarships are all areas that the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation supports year after year.

As Ben Franklin once said, "An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest." The Oshkosh Area Community Foundation will continue to invest heavily in education knowing it will provide great benefit for the future.

Thanks to all of you that have helped make this investment and everyone that has stepped up to take advantage of so many education opportunities that have been provided.

Bill Wyman
President & CEO

What is the OACF?

Oshkosh Area Community Foundation

The Oshkosh Area Community Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works with hundreds of donors who wish to invest in the future of our community. Since 1928, the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation has helped donors turn their charitable investments into projects that add energy and vitality to our community. For some donors, we facilitate charitable giving and help them build permanent legacies of support. Others provide gifts to be directed to emerging needs in our communities as identified by our Board of Directors. Serving Winnebago County, Waushara County, Green Lake County and Ripon, the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation strives to advance our communities’ quality of life and capacity for excellence.

Our Mission

Our mission is simple: to strengthen our communities.

We bring together leadership and funding to engage the community by coordinating local change efforts, engaging citizens, and bringing diverse voices and views together to address current and emerging needs.

We strengthen our communities through collaboration and partnership with donors and others to ensure lasting impact and to improve the quality of life for perpetuity.

We steward the funds of our donors and connect them to important projects in our community in order to see their philanthropic dreams come to life.

219 Scholarship Funds
383 Students Awarded
$384,420 New Scholarships
$366,300 Multi-Year Scholarships
$750,720 Total Scholarships 2020

Welcome
Letter

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Leaving a Legacy

We gratefully acknowledge the generous donors who have supported us, with their help by establishing funds that are invested to support and ensure programs, projects, or causes our gifts promote maximum impact.

The Foundation partners with seven local Area Community Foundations to further their education. At the time, the award was a four-year renewable scholarship totaling $6,400. Govani recalls that tuition at UW Oshkosh, the school she attended, was about $4,000 per year. She always knew she wanted to go to college and through various scholarships, living at home, and working two and three jobs, she achieved her goal, graduating with a Bachelor of Science Degree in 2006. She became the first in her family to attain a college degree and do it debt free, due to the scholarships she received. The scholarships were important to Govani as without them, it may have taken her longer to finish her undergraduate education.

In the nearly 20 years since her high school graduation and receiving the William M. Bray Scholarship, it is clear her education helped launch her to where she is today with a post graduate degree, owner of a dental practice, and in a position to pay her blessings forward. Like her scholarship benefactor, Govani is smart and entrepreneurial with a desire to give back to the community. The Govani Dental Gives Program is her way of supporting and helping people in Oshkosh. The program matches dollar for dollar donations up to $1,000 to a charity chosen by Govani Dental, each quarter of the year.

Dr. Govani’s passion for helping people, whether in her practice or her community services, is evident. When asked what gets her going in the morning, and what excites her, it is her desire to make a difference. She speaks quickly, with rapid fire thoughts and ideas spilling from her about her desire to help people whenever she can. With humble roots, she remembers what it was like to need a head start. This also drives her to mentor young people. She recalls being told what she could not accomplish, and how that drove her to achieve even more. But there was also support along the way, from her mom, Cindy and the Community Foundation. Her philosophy is, “If someone helps you, help someone else.”

She knows tomorrow isn’t promised and there is an urgency and a drive about her to accomplish her philanthropic work. She states, “I want to help someone today… make a difference today.” Her hope is that the Govani Dental Gives Program in partnership with the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation is inspiring, and people will see how their dollars can be matched and leveraged to do even more and go further.

Dr. Govani has worked hard to establish her practice from the ground up, and it is flourishing. But more important to her, is to have Govani Dental recognized as the office that collectively has made an impact. She believes it is important to leave the world a better place than how one found it. Armed with her degrees, funded in part by her scholarship, her drive, and her caring heart, there is no doubt she will.

Govani Gives

In 2002, after she finished her high school years, Dr. Shoheda Govani, DDS, received the William M. Bray Scholarship from the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation to further her education. At the time, the award was a four-year renewable scholarship totaling $6,400. Govani recalls that tuition at UW Oshkosh, the school she attended, was about $4,000 per year. She always knew she wanted to go to college and through various scholarships, living at home, and working two and three jobs, she achieved her goal, graduating with a Bachelor of Science Degree in 2006. She became the first in her family to attain a college degree and do it debt free, due to the scholarships she received. The scholarships were important to Govani as without them, it may have taken her longer to finish her undergraduate education.

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Celebrate Education

There is a lot of competition for children’s attention and engagement when they are in school. Getting them and keeping them interested in a subject or classroom lesson can be challenging. Enter innovative teaching grants funded by the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation and education grant holders who believe in the power of education and reaching children through teaching.

The grants are awarded to enhance the learning experiences of our students with a focus on innovation or getting at the core of excellent teaching. Grants could be as simple as funding a classroom library, which will motivate students to read for pleasure, to more sophisticated equipment needed to create a productive learning environment.

The grants were started in 1997 as the NET Awards – Nurturing Education and Teaching and used this name through 2004. In 2005, the grants were re-named Celebrate Nurturing Education and Teaching and used this name ever since that time over a half million dollars have been poured back into Oshkosh schools both public and private to educators, administrators, coaches and volunteers.

The community partners who gave money for grants or sponsored community events, to make these grants and awards possible include: Mid-Morning Kiwanis Club of Oshkosh, Oshkosh Area School District Education Foundation, Howard E. and Belle Rudoy Endowment Fund, Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce, UW-Oshkosh College of Education and Human Services, Oshkosh Area Community Foundation, Valley Christian School, and Lourdes Academy.

Matthew Callahan, a Technology Coach, was a grant recipient who purchased coding toys and coding lessons for three years to three different schools to which he is assigned. The students in the schools love the lessons that focus on coding robots to do various things. Other teachers in the schools integrate the robots with various lessons and curriculum. For example, one teacher uses them in her social studies lessons. The students have to code the navigation for Columbus’s journey to America, taking into account impending obstacles along the way. According to Callahan, the students love the challenges, and many have a real aptitude for the coding. Each day could be different with what the students are instructed to have the robots do.

Grant recipient Robin Goodrich teaches fourth and fifth grades at Oshkosh Elementary School. The grant for a hydroponic garden stems from her students’ interest in the environment; their concern with the use of plastics, and how to produce more earth friendly food. The hydroponic garden can grow and house 144 plants in a three-foot area. Goodrich uses the garden to fit her curriculum about new systems and learning about plants. With the garden filled with lettuce by the end of the 2007 school year Goodrich claims, “Their energy and excitement surpassed what I imagined. The last week of school we had a “salad” party. The kids went home very excited, claiming it was the best salad they had ever had.”

The power of the education grants to reach and inspire students through teachers cannot be overrated and is the motivating factor of the funders. With our funding partners, the OACF is looking forward to continuing to change the lives of students in the Oshkosh area.
The Scholarship Fund is awarded to graduating seniors from Berlin and Green Lake High School, who intend to pursue a career in the environmental field and will attend a two or four-year college. Since it was established, six scholarships have been awarded (two per year) for the past three years and the value of the fund has grown to about $26,000. Specht hopes to grow it to $40,000 which will allow it to fund two $1,000 scholarships a year. The fund is promoted during the holiday season as well the end of the school year.

Specht noted, “We want students to continue in Charlie’s footsteps. We are hoping to see it reach $40,000.

She states, “this is so much better than donating a park bench or something like that. To help educate kids is exactly what Charlie would choose to do.”

How do you honor a person, who played such a critical role in a community, and was genuine and loved anything that kept environmental things going and healthy. He learned on the job as he went, and loved being in the field. He would be honored.”

Cathy Marks, Charlie’s wife, believes Charlie would love having the scholarship in his name. She notes that his father was an educator, and he was always learning. “He would think it was awesome!” she stated during a recent conversation. “Charlie was smart, genuine and loved anything that kept environmental things going and healthy. He learned on the job as he went, and loved being in the field. He would be honored.”

Cathy likes the idea of growing the scholarship fund and appreciates Specht’s desire to see it reach $40,000. She states, “This is so much better than donating a park bench or something like that. To help educate kids is exactly what Charlie would choose to do.”
When Mary Sensenbrenner passed away in June of 2020, people in the community honored her with gifts to the Educational Foundation of Neenah. As a past school board member, Mary was a primary focus for Mary’s community efforts.

Mary was selected to the Neenah Joint School District Board of Education in 1973 and served until 1984. She chaired the board's curriculum committee for eight years and felt passionate about providing strong reading and writing programs and high-quality teaching. Before her school board service, Mary was deeply involved in the schools. She helped establish a private summer school for children in the district that also provided scholarships for those who could not afford to attend. In addition, she served on the boards of the Wisconsin Coalition for Academically Talented Youth and Lawrence University for many years.

Mary’s style was to quietly improve the schools that she loved with no expectation of recognition. She had a vision for what the education system should be in Neenah and local leadership skills. Before she took on a project, Mary did her research and had facts straight. She was known for visiting every school in the district at least one time per year, talking with the teachers and principals, and spending time seeing the different aspects of education, listening to the various opinions and witnessing problems she knew she would be forced to address and vote on. Daughter Nancy Glick stated, “My mom had the ability to dive into issues and efficiently solve problems and do it with a lot of energy and a smile on her face.”

Mary’s overarching belief was that everyone deserves a quality education. She helped develop a number of important policies and programs for the Neenah School District including placing reading specialists in every elementary school, requiring four years of high school English, and establishing a private school in the district. She was willing to make tough decisions such as closing schools if it meant better programs for all students. Her legacy in the Neenah Joint School District is still being felt today and continues thanks to the contributions by people in the community to the Educational Foundation of Neenah, will continue.

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