

Building Momentum This Winter

Winter surely is in full swing and our work across the community continues to move forward. In this issue, we're celebrating the 50th anniversary of Winterfest, sharing insights into our scholarship review process, highlighting community service opportunities, and offering a glimpse into the work happening behind the scenes as we begin the year with intention and momentum.

Impact Community

Happy 50th Winterfest!

Did you know that the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation's Board was the catalyst for the first Winterfest back in 1976? What began as an idea to engage youth and encourage community connection during the winter months quickly grew into an annual tradition. Board members rolled up their sleeves to help bring the inaugural event to life, laying the foundation for what has become a beloved community staple. This year, GHACF was proud to support Winterfest as a sponsor, celebrating five decades of a tradition that continues to bring people together - no matter how cold it gets!



Sharing Philanthropy & Grantmaking with Community Leaders

Last month, members of our Grants & Program Team presented to Leadership Connect, sharing insights on philanthropy, the nonprofit landscape, and grantmaking with emerging and established leaders across Northwest Ottawa County. Through this engagement, the team helped deepen participants' understanding of how nonprofits and foundations work together to address community needs—building knowledge, strengthening relationships, and fostering informed leadership throughout our region.

Strengthening our Grantmaking Practice

This month, the Grants and Program Team will be participating in the Johnson Center for Philanthropy's *Proposal Analysis in Grantmaking*. Through this learning opportunity, the team will deepen essential proposal-analysis skills that support capacity building, stronger partnerships, and a more equitable, efficient, and transparent grantmaking process fully aligned with the Foundation's mission and values. Continued learning strengthens our work and helps us better serve our community.

Student Scholarships: Investing in the Future of our Youth

Each year, we are inspired by the number of students who apply for scholarships and we take great pride in celebrating and supporting them as they take their next steps. The Foundation is honored to administer 145 scholarships that have been established through the generosity of

donors wanting to expand access to education by reducing financial barriers. Our scholarships range from traditional academic awards to those based on financial need, community service, first-generation postsecondary education, and more. These scholarships support a wide range of fields, including education, the sciences, and physical and mental health. Through this work, we are proud to invest in our youth and the many passions and paths they bring to our community.

**This year's application window is now closed, and the review process has begun*

How the Scholarship Review Process Works:

To ensure a fair and equitable process, the Foundation implemented a blind scholarship review process in 2018, alongside a transition to online reviewing that improved both efficiency and confidentiality.

The blind review process entails removing identifying information and assigning each submission a number, allowing the reviewers to focus solely on the content of each application. While counselors and advisors may share relevant context when appropriate, this process helps ensure thoughtful, unbiased decision-making.

We are grateful to the many scholarship committee members who make this work possible—individuals who serve on our board, work within local schools, and lead youth programming at organizations across our community. Their time, care, and commitment play a vital role in supporting students to strengthen the future of our region, and also honors donors' intent.

Youth Advisory Council (YAC): Leading Community Impact

Through the Youth Advisory Council (YAC), students play an active role in philanthropy by identifying community needs and supporting projects that benefit youth from preschool to K-12. One recent YAC-supported grant focused on improvements at Mulligan's Hollow, enhancing terrain park features for local youth.

The project was led by Grand Haven High School student, Charlie Vink, who both designed the improvements and wrote the grant proposal. Drawing on years of experience skiing at Mulligan's Hollow, Charlie identified the need for updated rails and worked through the grantmaking process—from defining community impact to submitting final design plans for construction.

This project highlights the power of youth voice in shaping community spaces. Applications for 2026/27 YAC members are open through February 27—apply today.



Inspire Philanthropy

Support for Community Campaigns

The Foundation is proud to support a variety of community campaigns that create lasting impact across our region. If you're interested in making a gift, we invite you to explore the campaigns below. Each fund name is **linked directly to its donation page**, making it easy to learn more and give to the efforts that matter most to you. Community-driven campaigns like these strengthen places, expand access, and help meet evolving needs, making them a meaningful way to invest in our community.

Current community campaigns supported by the Foundation include:

- **Grand Haven Children's Museum Fund** – Supporting the operations and work of the Grand Haven Children's Museum to empower hands-on learning, play, and educational opportunities for children and families throughout the region.
- **Mulligan's Hollow Ski Bowl Capital Campaign Fund** – Replacing snowmaking equipment, infrastructure, and storage to ensure continued seasons of connection, recreation, and community.
- **North Bank Park (formerly Spring Lake Central Park) Improvement Fund** – Expanding and improving park amenities to promote connection, recreation, and community gathering.
- **Coopersville Area North Bank Trail Fund** – Supporting the Coopersville section of the North Bank Trail, which will connect Spring Lake to Coopersville along the former Grand Trunk Railroad with development, engineering, maintenance, and other capital needs.
- **Coopersville Cares Capital Campaign Fund** – Providing emergency assistance, food, clothing, and basic necessities to neighbors in need throughout Northeast Ottawa County.
- **Allendale Public School Foundation Fund** - Benefiting programs, activities, and functions of the Allendale Public School District and its students.
- **Allendale Greatest Needs Fund** - Supporting Allendale area's greatest community needs by providing flexible, responsive funds.

For additional programs and organizations you can support, visit our Community Partner Wishlist at www.ghacf.org/donors/wishlist. If you have questions about giving or would like assistance exploring options, please visit www.ghacf.org or contact our team.

Manage Investments

Partner Spotlight: Northern Trust

We are grateful for our partnership with Northern Trust, whose team provides investment management expertise in support of the Foundation's long-term stewardship and impact. Through regular collaboration and quarterly committee meeting attendance, Northern Trust helps us understand market conditions, strengthens our Investment Committee and Board of Trustee's fiduciary oversight, and ensures our assets are managed with care and intention.

Next week, members of the Northern Trust team will join our quarterly Board meeting to provide an annual portfolio review, share updates, insights, and perspective with the GHACF Board—supporting informed decision-making and ongoing learning in service of our mission.

Moving forward together, in every season.

-The GHACF Team

For **good**. For **all**. Forever.

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