

Growing Impact this Spring

As the season shifts and our community comes back to life, we are shining a light on the people, partnerships, and impact that help our region thrive. From grants in action and leadership development to new funds and the many volunteers who make this work possible, here's a look at how we are working together to shape a strong future for our community.

Impact Community

Grants in Action: Protecting our Natural Spaces

In recognition of Earth Month, we are highlighting a recent grant to the Ottawa Conservation District. Last month, the organization received just over \$34,000 to manage invasive species across more than 1,800 acres of parks and natural areas.

Invasive species are non-native plants or animals that cause harm to the environment, economy, or human health. Managing them is critical to protecting native ecosystems and the benefits they provide, including wildlife habitat and access to outdoor recreation.



This work helps protect local ecosystems while strengthening collaboration across Grand Haven, Spring Lake, and Ferrysburg, ensuring these shared spaces remain healthy for generations to come.



Investing in Community Leadership

Last quarter, we partnered with the Ottawa County Parks Foundation to bring together a small group of nonprofit leaders at Hemlock Crossing to explore how we can better support executive directors across our community. This conversation was informed by recent nonprofit community assessment findings, which highlighted a need for greater connection, peer support, and space for

leaders to step back from day-to-day demands.

The work has since evolved into an ongoing effort. This month marked the kickoff of the first full session, as the opportunity expanded to include additional nonprofit leaders from across Northwest Ottawa County. More than 15 participants gathered at Connor Bayou for a remote workday in a natural setting. The day was intentionally unstructured, giving leaders dedicated time to focus on key projects, connect with peers, and learn from one another while also

gathering for a group lunch. Participants had access to support from Kennari Consulting, which hosted office hours for those seeking additional guidance.

This initiative will continue throughout the year, strengthening connections and investing in the leadership that drives impact across our community.

Spring Grant Programs

Our grant programs are designed to meet community needs today while building long-term impact. Here is a snapshot of some of the opportunities available this season:

- **Community Impact Grants:** Supporting organizations that enhance quality of life and foster a healthy, inclusive, and collaborative community.
- **Affiliate Grants:** Our partners at the Allendale and Coopersville Area Community Foundations provide grants across key areas including education, environment, health, arts, and community development.
- **Youth Advisory Councils (Grand Haven Area YAC & Coopersville Area YAC):** Youth-led grantmaking that supports programs and opportunities for young people in our community.
- **Technical Assistance Grants:** Helping nonprofits build internal nonprofit capacity and strengthen long-term effectiveness.
- **Field of Interest & Regional Funds:** Including the Mixer Fund, which supports projects that enhance natural spaces, and the North Bank Communities Fund, which invests in environmental, educational, and recreational projects north of the bridge.

Inspire Philanthropy

New Fund Spotlight: Keith and Patricia Konarska Family Fund

We are excited to share the creation of the Keith and Patricia Konarska Family Fund, a new fund established in 2026. Longtime Grand Haven residents Keith and Patricia (Patti) Konarska have dedicated their lives to education and community. Much of their careers were spent with Grand Haven Area Public Schools, where Patti served as a Reading Specialist and Literacy Coach, and Keith served as Assistant Superintendent of Human Services before becoming Superintendent in 2005. He led the district for ten years before retiring.



Their commitment to community extends well beyond their professional roles. Together, they have supported local initiatives through service and philanthropy, including co-chairing the United Way Education Campaign and serving on the YMCA Capital Campaign committee. Keith has also been actively involved with the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation, including serving as Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Through this new fund, Keith and Patti are continuing their legacy of supporting education and strengthening the community they care deeply about.

Support their legacy by making a gift to the Keith and Patricia Konarska Family Fund.



Community Wish List Spotlight: ODC Network

This month's Community Partner Wish List spotlight is the ODC Network. Through partnerships with local schools, the ODC Network provides hands-on, nature-based learning experiences. Many students, however, lack access to the gear and supplies needed to fully participate.

Your gift can help provide:

- Rubber boots and rain suits
- Winter clothing for students
- Storage solutions for school sites
- Wagons and outdoor learning tools

The total need is \$9,000, and every gift helps ensure students can learn and explore beyond the classroom.

How You Can Help

- [Email our team to recommend a grant through your Donor Advised Fund](#)
- [Give directly to the nonprofit](#)

Every contribution—at any level—makes a difference.

Leadership in Action

Foundations on the Hill

Our President & CEO, Hadley Streng, recently joined foundation leaders from across the country in Washington, D.C. for Foundations on the Hill alongside United Philanthropy Forum and the Council of Michigan Foundations.

Together, they met with lawmakers, including Hillary Scholten, to advocate for policies that strengthen philanthropy and the communities we serve.



CEONet Annual Retreat

Hadley also participated in the CEONet Annual Retreat, a national peer network of community foundation leaders focused on strengthening leadership and advancing impact across communities.

The retreat provided space to step away from day-to-day responsibilities, connect with peers, and engage in meaningful conversations about the challenges and opportunities facing communities today. Through collaboration and shared learning, participants explored ways to navigate change while staying grounded in the values that guide this work.

We are grateful for opportunities like these that allow us to stay connected to a broader network and bring fresh perspective and renewed energy back to our work in Northwest Ottawa County.

Manage Investments

Investment Update: First Quarter Performance

Our investment pool experienced a -1.9% return in the first quarter of 2026. This performance will be reflected in your upcoming fund statements, which will be available online by the end of April. You will receive an email notification once your statements are ready to view.

New Tax Benefits for Charitable Giving

New tax laws are making charitable giving more rewarding than ever. Beginning in 2026, all taxpayers may qualify for a federal “above-the-line” charitable deduction of up to:

- \$1,000 for individuals
- \$2,000 for married couples filing jointly

This applies to cash donations made directly to qualified public charities (please note: gifts to donor advised funds do not qualify).

In addition, Michigan donors may receive up to a 50% state income tax credit for contributions to a community foundation endowment, up to:

- \$100 credit for individuals (on a \$200 gift)
- \$200 credit for couples (on a \$400 gift)

Your gift supports lasting local impact while also providing meaningful tax benefits. We encourage you to consult your tax professional to understand how these opportunities may apply to you.



Celebrating Our Volunteers

In recognition of National Volunteer Month, we are grateful for the **nearly 100 community members** who generously give their time, talent, and leadership to support our work. From board members to committee and council participants, these volunteers help guide our efforts and strengthen our community every day.

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