

Spring has brought a season full of celebration, connection, and community impact across Northern Ottawa County. From honoring students and educators to highlighting opportunities to give back, we are excited to share what's been happening at the Foundation and throughout our community.

Impact Community

Celebrating 40 Years of Excellence in Education

The Grand Haven Area Community Foundation (GHACF) proudly celebrated the 40th Annual Excellence in Education event on April 29 at Spring Lake Country Club, honoring outstanding graduating seniors and the educators who have made a lasting impact on their educational journeys.



For four decades, Excellence in Education has recognized not only academic achievement, but also the relationships, mentorship, and encouragement that help students succeed. Each honored student selects an educator whose influence helped shape their experience both inside and outside the classroom.

This year's celebration also reflected on the program's history and legacy. We were honored to welcome Dottie Johnson, who introduced the idea for the program in 1987 after learning of a similar initiative through the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, along with Mary Jane Evink and Ken Formsma, who were both connected to the inaugural year of the event as an honored student and educator, respectively. Over the years, both Mary Jane and Ken have continued to impact generations of students and have collectively been recognized by students more than 20 times throughout the program's history.

Thank you to the students, educators, families, school leaders, and community members who continue to make this tradition possible. Excellence in Education remains a powerful reflection of our community's commitment to investing in future generations.

Community Impact Day

As a proud sponsor of Community Impact Day for both its inaugural year and again in 2026, GHACF was honored to join The Chamber of Commerce Grand Haven, Spring Lake, Ferrysburg and fellow community volunteers for this day of service. On May 13, our staff volunteered at Eastmanville Farm in Coopersville, transplanting native plant seedlings that will eventually be used in restoration projects throughout Ottawa County parks.



These plants began as seeds collected by volunteers across the county and will help improve biodiversity and habitats in parks for years to come. We were grateful for the opportunity to support a project that benefits parks and natural spaces throughout Ottawa County while also investing time in the Coopersville community, home to one of our affiliate foundations. Community Impact Day reflects the power of partnership and the collective impact that can be achieved when people come together in service of their communities.

Scholarship Award Ceremonies

Scholarship season is here, and we are proud to support students across Northern Ottawa County as they pursue their educational goals. School award ceremonies will take place throughout May at the following schools:

- Allendale High School
- Coopersville High School
- Grand Haven Central High School
- Grand Haven High School
- Spring Lake High School
- Western Michigan Christian High School



Supporting the Next Generation of Nonprofit Leaders

We are proud to share that Amy Moore, our VP of Grants & Programs, was invited to speak with the Lakeshore Nonprofit Alliance (LNA) Executive Director Cohort about grantmaking and community philanthropy.

The cohort supports nonprofit leaders in their first few years of leadership through networking, training, and shared learning opportunities. We are grateful for organizations like LNA that invest in strengthening the nonprofit sector and thankful for Amy's willingness to share her knowledge and experience with others.

Inspire Philanthropy



Spotlight on Community Service Funds

THE GHACF's Community Service Funds provide opportunities for donors to collectively support projects and initiatives that strengthen our region. Below are just a few making an impact today. Click the name of the fund to give directly.

[Coopersville Area North Bank Trail Fund](#)

Support Coopersville's portion of the 18-mile paved pathway project connecting communities from the greater Grand Rapids area to Lake Michigan.

Grand Haven Lighthouse Rehabilitation Fund

Support the preservation and restoration of one of our community's most iconic landmarks.

Mulligan's Hollow Ski Bowl Capital Campaign Fund

Help update critical snow-making infrastructure at this nonprofit winter recreation destination.

Spring Lake North Bank Park Improvement Fund

Help create a more accessible and inclusive park experience through a universally designed playground, improved pathways, and accessible amenities for all ages and abilities.

Tri-Cities Family YMCA – Y for All Fund

Support the transformation of a 50-year-old facility into a welcoming, modern space serving more than 10,000 individuals each year. Gifts made by June 30, 2026 will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$250,000.

To learn more about these or other funds, or to make a gift, visit our website at ghacf.org or call us at 616-842-6378.

Community Wish List Spotlight: Momentum Center

During Mental Health Awareness Month, we are proud to highlight the Momentum Center and the important role it plays in our community.

The Momentum Center creates opportunities for adults living with mental illness, disabilities, or those in recovery to experience connection, belonging, and support through programs, outings, and community activities. Their intentionally accessible membership fee of just \$1 annually ensures programs remain available to everyone, making donor support essential.



Gifts of all sizes help make these opportunities possible:

- \$20 supports one member for one day
- \$100 supports one week of programming for one member
- \$50 provides supplies for a craft activity serving 100 participants
- \$100 supports materials for a cooking class serving 50 participants
- \$250 helps cover the cost of a local outing
- \$400 supports a member holiday party

How You Can Help

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



May is Leave a Legacy Month

Leave a Legacy Month is a meaningful reminder that philanthropy can create impact far beyond our own lifetime. Through the Legacy Society, individuals and families who include the Foundation in their estate plans help ensure lasting support for the community causes they care about most.

Legacy Society members come from all walks of life, but they share a common belief in investing in the future of Northern Ottawa County. Whether through a bequest, retirement account, life insurance policy, charitable trust, or another planned gift, these commitments help provide long-term support for our community for generations to come.

Anyone can become a member of the Legacy Society by naming the foundation as the beneficiary of a planned or deferred gift of any size.

If you are interested in learning more about how to create your own legacy, please contact Chris Riker at 616-842-6378 or criker@ghacf.org.

Affiliate Foundations Reflect and Connect

Earlier this month, our Allendale and Coopersville affiliate foundations gathered for evenings focused on connection, reflection, and community celebration.



The Allendale Community Foundation hosted current and former advisory board members at the Grand Valley State University Alumni House for its first in-person gathering in several years. The evening provided a chance to reconnect, reflect on the organization's growth, and look ahead to future opportunities to serve the Allendale community.

In Coopersville, current and past advisory board members gathered at the Coopersville Farm Museum and Event Center to celebrate the growth and impact of the Coopersville Area Community Foundation. The event highlighted the strong leadership and community commitment that continue to shape the Foundation's future.

Manage Investments

Welcome to our New Board Members

Our Board of Trustees plays an important role in helping steward assets in alignment with our mission and ensuring long-term impact for our community. Please join us in welcoming our newest board members who will join the Board of Trustees later this month:



Renee Denslow

Renee brings more than 20 years of leadership experience across nonprofit management, marketing, finance, and construction. She previously served as Executive Director of Bluebird Cancer Retreats of West Michigan for 17 years and is the founder of 3D Homes, LLC.

Renee has a long history of community involvement, including service with GHACF's Grants Committee, Lakeshore Nonprofit Alliance, GVSU Camp Kesem, SCORE Muskegon, Bucs Pride, and Spring Lake Public Schools. We are thrilled to welcome Renee to the GHACF Board of Trustees.



Terry Nash

Originally from Coopersville, Terry is a Managing Director at Coach Road Capital, overseeing a portfolio of retail pet supply businesses and commercial real estate investments. He holds degrees from the University of Michigan Ross School of Business and Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management.

Terry has already been actively involved with GHACF through service on the Investment and Audit Committees, and we are excited to welcome him to the GHACF Board of Trustees.



Staff Spotlight: Congratulations, Cora!

Please join us in congratulating Cora Russ, GHACF's Manager of Human Resources & Facilities, on graduating from Leadership Connect Class of 2025–26 through The Chamber of Commerce Grand Haven, Spring Lake, Ferrysburg.

Leadership Connect is designed to develop and connect leaders from across the Lakeshore region while deepening participants' understanding of the communities they serve. Throughout the program, participants engage with local organizations, explore key community issues, and build relationships with fellow leaders committed to strengthening West Michigan.

We are proud of Cora's dedication to professional growth and community leadership and grateful for the perspective and experience she brings back to our team through this opportunity.

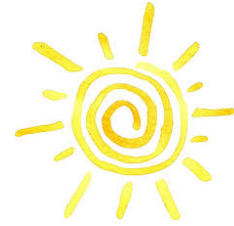
Continuing to Learn and Grow

At GHACF, ongoing learning and professional development are an important part of serving our community well. Recently, our President & CEO, Hadley Streng, and Accountant, Nancy Dykstra, attended Council of Michigan Foundations events focused on philanthropy, communications, public policy, investment stewardship, and community impact.

We are grateful for opportunities that allow our team to continue learning, building connections, and strengthening the work we do across Northern Ottawa County.

Reminder: Staff Summer Hours May Vary

As summer approaches, some staff schedules may include additional time out of the office. Walk-ins are always welcome, but we encourage calling ahead if you are hoping to meet with a specific team member. Thank you.



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

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