

REMEMBERING

15

YEARS

FOR GOOD. FOREVER.

A LOOK BACK

The following compilation consists of information taken from representative excerpts of archived reports and corporate records of the Community Foundation of Chippewa County. Much of the information was previously summarized in Board Chair and Executive Director Messages for the Foundation's Annual Reports. As the Community Foundation of Chippewa County celebrates its fifteen-year anniversary, we extend a special thanks to all those who have helped document the cherished history of our Community Foundation.



For Good. Forever.

1995 – 2001

An Idea Whose Time Had Come

In 1995, conversations began with the express purpose of exploring interest in the possibility of creating a local community foundation. A concept paper entitled "Vision 2020" was prepared in order to "stimulate thought and planning around philanthropy in the Chippewa Falls community today and in the early decades of the 21st Century." The paper noted, "Hindsight is 20/20. To look ahead a quarter century to the year 2020 requires visionary thinking, careful planning, and the commitment of community-minded persons. Such planning for tomorrow now will benefit future generations, enhancing a unique quality of life."

Motivated and inspired by the energy and knowledge of Bert Swanson, representative community leaders were interviewed. Questions were asked and answered until, over a period of several years, a consensus emerged around several key themes. First, those participating in conversations agreed that, if created, the focus of such a foundation should be county-wide. Secondly, it should – as community foundations are designed to do – complement, and not compete with, the work of area nonprofit organizations. Finally, it should procure the resources needed to support its early years of development through a special founder's campaign.

An ad hoc committee was formed, and by early February 2001, the decision was made to create what is today the Community Foundation of Chippewa County, Inc. A successful Founders Society initiative generated necessary operating capital. Every commitment to the campaign was supported in full without a single dollar's attrition. Other gifts, along with the prudent investment of those assets, form today's operating reserve.

Much credit for those early discussions about a possible foundation goes to Bert Swanson, Dave Fish and Gerald (Jerry) Jacobson, who had discussed with many local leaders the idea of forming an organization in Chippewa County that would provide individuals, organizations and businesses an avenue by which to give back in perpetuity to our community. Jerry served as the Foundation's first Board Chair. He and Dennis Boisvert, the Foundation's second Board Chair, lent credibility and considerable leadership abilities during those crucial early years. Tom Kell served as Treasurer, giving more time, service and leadership than most can imagine. Practicing attorneys B. James (Jim) Colbert and Heather Hunt provided invaluable insight and professional assistance to develop policies for the Foundation which would ensure that donors' wishes would be met in a financially sound and ethical manner. Jay Mayer, CPA served as an advisor. Other Board members were Jacqueline Bernier, Dennis Ferstenou, Dennis Heyde, John Lubs, Gordon Schafer, William Volker, and ex-officio member Melinda Haun, then-President (CPO) of the United Way of Chippewa County. These individuals were key to the establishment of the Community Foundation.

2002 – 2007

Rooted in Tradition

By the fall of 2002, volunteer efforts alone were not enough to accomplish the Community Foundation's goals. At that point, the Foundation hired its first Executive Director, Carol Gienapp, on a part-time basis. Carol brought the same passion and energy that she had for the Chippewa Area Mentor Program to the Community Foundation. She became the face of the Community Foundation for the next seven years. Through her connections in the community and the strength of her personality, Carol played a key role in helping the Foundation to create a presence in Chippewa County, and laying the groundwork for its future success.

At the same time, the Foundation found a new home in the Rutledge Charities Building in downtown Chippewa Falls and hired additional staff.

In 2003, the Foundation was found to be in compliance with the National Standards for U.S. Community Foundations, ensuring the highest levels of ethical and operational integrity. As such, the Community Foundation was recognized as a leader, not only in the state of Wisconsin, but also in the nation.

Assets under management grew from a nominal amount to more than \$2 million. As the Foundation grew, the Board of Directors maintained a commitment to provide training for its members and for Foundation staff to ensure that governance and operations were at the high level that donors, nonprofit organizations and citizens of the county expected. A three-year strategic plan was developed and implemented, and an ambitious public relations and marketing campaign was carried out throughout Chippewa County.

Around this same time, the Foundation hosted a national leader in the Community Foundation field who spoke with the Board and professional advisors throughout the Chippewa Valley during sessions held here in October. The conversation focused on charitable giving and the Transfer of Wealth Study commissioned by the Donors Forum of Wisconsin (now called the Wisconsin Philanthropy Network). Another national leader from the Council on Foundations spoke with the Board of Directors and committee members about ways our Foundation could build upon its successes.

Former Board members joined current Board and Committee members at an education and training session with a facilitator from Ohio University who observed, "Though the Community Foundation is only seven years old, it has a long history of motivated, dedicated volunteers and inspiring community philanthropists to celebrate community pride and give back in ways that are consistent with and reflective of the defining characteristics of the region."

The first annual Wine & Dine at Irvine event, which was held in June, 2006, succeeded in helping the Foundation raise funds for operations. The camaraderie and community spirit which pervaded the event helped to demonstrate, once again, why Chippewa County is such a wonderful place to live.

2008 – 2009

Economic Downturn

The 2008 – 2009 fiscal year was a year of many changes, challenges and opportunities. While the Foundation's assets under management fared better than many other foundations, the drop in 2008 – 09 market value resulted in substantially reduced fee income and operating fund losses. In spite of these difficult economic times, the Foundation continued to grow, demonstrating the continued donor confidence that the Foundation could provide an opportunity to impact Chippewa County in a number of significant ways.

This, coupled with the retirement of Carol Gienapp, the Foundation's first Director, required the Board to take an aggressive approach on how to maintain and grow the Foundation's viability. The Board decided to hire a full-time Executive Director and to solicit financial support for the Foundation from select members of our community for at least an eight to ten year period of time. The community quickly responded to the Sustaining Fund Campaign for Operations; their solid support was a validation of the Community Foundation's purpose and impact on Chippewa County.

It was during this time that the Foundation engaged the services of what is now known as Orgel Wealth Management to serve as the organization's Investment Advisor. The Foundation's Finance and Investment Committee and Board of Directors supervises, monitors and evaluates the investment of all assets under management with Orgel to preserve and enhance the purchasing and earning value of the funds held in the Community Foundation of Chippewa County portfolio.

2010 – 2012

Growing for the Future

The Sustaining Fund Campaign for Operations was brought to a successful conclusion and the Guardian Society was established to recognize those who contributed \$5,000 or more to the Community Foundation Operating Fund.

The Community Foundation reached out to other communities and individuals in the county in an effort to allow them to express their philanthropic goals and endeavors. A number of new funds from the Bloomer and Cornell areas became part of the Community Foundation during this time. Later, funds from the Stanley, Cadott, and Holcombe areas of Chippewa County would be established.

In 2010, the Foundation and our community lost a good friend and mentor when Bert Swanson passed away. Bert was a key leader in the formation and growth of the Community Foundation, and in many other philanthropic endeavors within the community as well. He had taken the lead in advocating for a professional full-time Director in order to ensure the Community Foundation's growth and development. Bert's presence in the community and his involvement in many organizations have left Chippewa County a much better place. He believed deeply in giving back and helping others; he felt that only through his personal dedication and example would that message truly have an impact. He gave unselfishly to many organizations, and his impact will be felt for years.

In 2010, the Community Foundation hired a full-time Executive Director, Bonnie Lynn Robinson, who was then succeeded by Melinda Haun (2011 – present).

The community remained steadfast in its support of the Foundation and the organization continued to see an increase in total assets under management. The new funds that were added from across the county had an impact on a wide range of individual philanthropic aspirations.

In just over ten years, the Community Foundation distributed more than \$2,750,000. This allowed the Foundation to have a significant impact in the short term. More importantly, and most reflective of the Community Foundation's mission, it allowed fund holders to support and influence those things that were most dear and important to them.

2012 – Beyond

Looking Ahead

The past five years has seen significant growth. As a result of gifts, contributions and investment income, total assets under management have grown from \$5.6 million in 2011 to over \$14.6 million.

It was during this period of time that Chippewa Falls native, Joseph W. Joas, who spent the better part of his career working for Chippewa County as the County Land Agent and later as its Forests and Parks Director, passed away in December of 2011. Involved in many civic organizations, Joe's insight and sensitivity towards his community made him a strong advocate for the hometown where his roots were deep. Through his estate, Joe left a substantial bequest in excess of \$2 million to the Community Foundation of Chippewa County. The assets he entrusted to the Foundation to establish two endowment funds were a tremendous, overwhelming gift to our community. As then-Board Chair Bob Hogseth remarked, "The size of Joe's gift was a glowing endorsement of the Community Foundation of Chippewa County. . . his example will undoubtedly inspire others to consider including the Foundation in their estate plans."

Since 2001, the Foundation received and processed gifts totaling more than \$18,473,815. Two hundred twenty-one funds have been established, and cumulatively more than \$5,962,863 has been distributed back into our Chippewa County communities in the form of grants and distributions from permanently endowed, restricted pass-through, and affiliated organization funds.

Key to our overall strategic direction has been our focus on objectives that would drive growth and deepen our presence and relevance in Chippewa County. Planning for growth also involved thinking about what it would take to ensure the long-term sustainability of our organization. As a result, the Foundation continued to be fiscally sound, and it became less and less reliant on general contributions from the community to offset operating expenses.

For the second time, the Foundation received confirmation in 2013 from the Community Foundation National Standards Board that we were found to be in compliance with the National Standards for U.S. Community Foundations. Accreditation demonstrates our Foundation's commitment to accountability, excellence and service. It affirms that our local operations are aligned with nationally-recognized effective practices. Our accreditation also distinguishes our Foundation from community foundations and philanthropic organizations that have not met these rigorous standards.

In 2014 and 2015, the Foundation further clarified our strategic direction for continued growth, impact and community leadership throughout Chippewa County. Consultants with extensive experience and expertise from the Community Foundation field were brought in to lead the Board of Directors and select members of the community in two consecutive, annual strategic planning retreats. As a result of this process, the Board of Directors developed an updated Strategic Plan, revised our Mission Statement and developed a new Vision Statement. The Foundation will continue to serve as a resource to the community, work to help donors achieve their philanthropic goals, ensure that we have strong operating standards in place, make grants to support local programs and projects throughout Chippewa County, assist various community organizations who have placed their assets with us, and build awareness about the Foundation in all segments of our Chippewa County communities.

BOARD LEADERSHIP Gerald H. Jacobson 2001 – 2003 Dennis H. Boisvert 2003 – 2005 Bert Swanson 2005 – 2006 Heather Hunt 2006 – 2008 David Raihle, Jr. 2008 – 2011 Bob Hogseth 2011 – 2012 Tim Scobie 2012 – 2013 Ken Custer 2013 – 2014 Rick Schafer 2014 – 2015 Susan Kern 2015 – 2016 David A. Jankoski *Current Board Chair*
PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP Carol Gienapp *Executive Director, 2002 – 2009* Bonnie Lynne Robinson *Executive Director, 2010* Melinda Haun *Executive Director, 2011 – Present*