



## **Community Foundations Reflect Local Values, Needs**

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By Lindsay Barber Byrne

If you've seen one community foundation, you've only seen one community foundation. That's because no community foundation is the same. Each is unique because it reflects its community's values and needs.

In 1914, the first community foundation, The Cleveland Foundation, was established by Frederick Goff, a banker. Goff wanted to find a way for charitable bequests to be managed and invested by the bank, and have the income distributed by local citizens who had knowledge of their community's needs. He created a distribution committee made up of a publicly appointed, volunteer board of directors. It was responsible for distributing the investment income of the bank's charitable trusts.

Community foundations still operate within that basic purpose, although they have been expanded to include many other services, which relate specifically to their local area. Today, there are nearly 700 community foundations in the United States, holding billions of dollars in assets.

Locally, the Greater Green Bay Community Foundation serves Brown, Kewaunee and Oconto counties in much the same fashion as the original Cleveland foundation serves Cleveland, Ohio. It is designed to address the needs of three constituencies: the charitable donor, local nonprofit organizations and the community at large.

GGBCF is widely supported by community volunteers, not just a few individuals. Since its inception 20 years ago, hundreds of volunteers have served on the foundation's board of directors and other committees. Foundation staff and volunteers are a source of knowledge for people who want to invest in the community's overall quality of life.

The foundation provides donors an opportunity to make a contribution and watch it grow. They see the ripple effect when a grant is awarded. For nonprofits, GGBCF is a potential source of funding that conveys this message: "We know your budgets are generally tight, that you have emergencies as well as new ideas and needs. Tell us about them." For the community at large, it is an ongoing stream of support for present needs and future issues.

Perhaps the community foundation's greatest advantage is its flexibility. Virtually any of a donor's charitable goals can be accomplished by working with the community foundation. A guiding principle of the GGBCF is to achieve and maintain the donor's intent.

By contributing to GGBCF, you, too, can become part of the giving tradition in our community both now and in the future.

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