



OSHKOSH AREA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

SPRING 2024

IMPACT

INSIDE

GREEN LAKE'S GUARDIAN

Accelerating progress to improve lake water quality

PAGE 2

ROAD TO RECOVERY

Waushara Shines helps individuals battling addiction

PAGE 8

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

Oshkosh Repair Café encourages fixing instead of tossing items

PAGE 12

SPRING 2024

WHAT'S INSIDE

2

BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF GREEN LAKE'S GUARDIAN

The transformative journey of the Green Lake Association and its efforts to restore and protect Big Green Lake

4

FROM HOMELESS TO HOPEFUL: IT TAKES A VILLAGE

The Tiny House Village is changing lives one family at a time

5

2023 GRANT HIGHLIGHTS

A snapshot of our grantmaking

6

STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITIES

Nonprofits are improving the places we call home and helping our neighbors

8

LIGHTING THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

Wauhara Shines offers a lifeline to those battling addiction

10

BRINGING COMFORT BEYOND THE MEAL

ADVOCAP's Home Delivered Meal Program offers companionship and support to seniors in need

12

BUILDING COMMUNITY, ONE REPAIR JOB AT A TIME

Repair Cafés foster community and sustainability by offering free repairs for broken items

13

MAKE A MEANINGFUL IMPACT IN YOUR COMMUNITY



2



4



12

Photo by Jim Koepnick

Photo by Ms. Planet

THE OSHKOSH AREA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION is a nonprofit organization created by and for the people of Winnebago County, Waushara County, Green Lake County, and Ripon. Since 1928, thousands of people have entrusted their charitable resources to the Foundation, making a lasting impact on the causes closest to their hearts. That generosity has made it possible for the Foundation to award more than \$8 million in grants and scholarships.

By investing in the long-term well-being of our region and working collaboratively, we can solve local problems and take advantage of new opportunities as they arise. Our mission is simple: to strengthen our communities. Our business is in building community and helping the places we proudly call home continue to flourish and grow.

Shaping a Brighter Future

By Bill Wyman, President and CEO

Together, we're building a stronger, more vibrant community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

We're thrilled to report that your Community Foundation has had an outstanding 2023, receiving a record-breaking \$24 million in contributions. This achievement truly reflects the generosity I witness daily in our communities.

It's also worth noting that more than 50% of the 3,669 gifts we received were for less than \$100, underscoring the significance of every contribution, regardless of size.

As we reflect on our success, I'm reminded of the profound impact each contribution has on the lives of those in our communities. Your support enables us to fund vital programs, address pressing needs, and create lasting change. In 2023 alone, Community Foundation funds distributed almost \$8.2 million in grants to nearly 400 nonprofits.

One powerful way you can leave a lasting impact is through legacy giving. By including the Community Foundation in your estate plans,

you're ensuring that your commitment to our community lives on for generations to come.

Whether you're establishing a fund or naming the Community Foundation as a beneficiary, your decision to consider the community as one of your heirs speaks volumes about your dedication to making a difference.

Legacy giving is about shaping a brighter future for our community. It's about leaving a legacy of compassion, generosity, and opportunity that will continue to benefit those who call our communities home.

I'm deeply grateful to each and every one of you for your continued support and commitment to our mission. Together, we're building a stronger, more vibrant community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for being a part of our journey and for your ongoing dedication to making our community a better place for all. ■



ABOUT THE COVER

Hmong dancers Eve Vang, Pearl Vang, and Stella Yang enjoy a break from performing with the Long Cheng Dance Academy at the **NEW Dragon Boat Festival in Oshkosh**. This festival, celebrating the diverse communities of Northeast Wisconsin, was supported by a grant from the *Community Impact Fund*.

Photo by Gretchen Herrmann



Researchers installed buoys in Green Lake to collect data for the 2017 lake study with the US Geological Survey and Michigan Technological University.

GREEN LAKE ASSOCIATION

Building the Capacity of Green Lake's Guardian

Green Lake holds a special place in the hearts of Wisconsin and Midwest residents. As the deepest natural inland lake in Wisconsin, reaching depths of 236 feet, it's a vital part of our communities. Yet, like many lakes, it faces challenges from urban development and agricultural activities, resulting in issues like increased weed and algae growth and dead zones for fish and aquatic life due to low oxygen levels in certain areas.

Since the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) declared Green Lake as an impaired waterbody in 2014, the Green Lake Association (GLA) has been working tirelessly to carry out its mission to safeguard Green Lake by improving its water quality, protecting it from critical threats, and

accelerating its return to a clean lake. In 2016, two powerful grants came together to sharpen the organization's trajectory and accelerate progress.

That year, Stephanie Prellwitz, GLA Chief Executive Officer, applied for a

\$200,000 Surface Water Grant from the WDNR to assess the health of Big Green Lake and inform watershed strategies to reduce phosphorus loading. But she knew she needed additional support to make this research project a reality.

That's when the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation stepped in with a three-year, \$38,700 capacity building grant from the *Community Impact Fund*. This grant allowed GLA to expand to two full-time employees just in time to implement the WDNR grant that was awarded.

DID YOU KNOW?

1 = 500
pound PHOSPHORUS pounds WEEDS

Once it enters the lake, one pound of phosphorus can fuel 500 pounds of weed growth.

A Wake-up Call

The 2017 research project, completed in collaboration with the US Geological Survey and Michigan Technological

University, revealed the need for a 50-70% reduction in phosphorus levels—a significant wake-up call for the organization whose previous goal was a 10% reduction in phosphorus.

Stephanie recalls, “The capacity building grant was a game changer for us. It allowed us to take on larger projects like this research project, which we’re still using the findings of today as the foundation of everything we do. I am proud that we brought science to the forefront of how we make decisions. And I appreciate that the Community Foundation was willing to fund staff. Too often donors only want to fund projects, but you need people to make those projects happen.”

Since then, GLA has transformed its strategy and messaging, emphasizing the urgency of Green Lake’s health. With its current team of eight staff members and an annual investment of \$2.5 million in lake restoration efforts (versus \$250,000 in 2016), GLA is making a tangible difference in the community.

Celebrating Small Victories

“When you’re working in the world of water quality change, you don’t see big sweeping changes quickly and so you have to look for those smaller wins,” shares Stephanie.

One of those smaller wins was the restoration of brook trout to Dakin Creek, a stream flowing into Green Lake. After 70 years without brook trout, GLA’s efforts to repair eroding stream banks and improve habitat paid off. Last year, the WDNR confirmed that brook trout had multiplied naturally.

“It’s very exciting that the brookies are back! My childhood memories of fishing the creek, even though I’m

72, still burn bright. I love that I can now share that experience with my grandkids,” said Joe Norton, whose family has deep connections to Green Lake as fishing guides for four generations.

Another win comes from the concerted efforts of local farmers to implement soil conservation practices. With over 60% of Green Lake’s drainage area being agricultural, farmers play a pivotal role in the future of the lake’s health. Cover crops, retention ponds, and other initiatives dot the landscape, quietly slowing the flow of phosphorus into Big Green Lake.

Dave Wilke, local farmer and past president of the Green Lake County Farm Bureau, explains, “We’re trying not to over apply nitrogen, phosphorus and [potassium] because it costs too much money, and it has a really good chance of winding up [in nearby streams].”

By preserving soil integrity, these practices actively safeguard Big Green’s water bodies. In 2022 alone, approximately 2,660 pounds of phosphorus were diverted from Big Green Lake— thanks to the work of the GLA, its partners, and willing landowners—preventing an estimated 1,330,000 pounds of weeds and algae from growing in the lake and tangling toes.

A Team Effort

Behind GLA’s success story lies a community of heroes—from academic researchers and local farmers to everyday folks who care. “The Oshkosh Area Community Foundation’s investment in capacity building played a huge part in GLA’s journey, proving that when people come together, amazing things can happen,” reflects Stephanie. ■



Thanks to a new partnership with the Nonprofit Leadership Initiative, leaders in the Foundation’s tri-county service area can participate in the year-long **Nonprofit Leadership Institute**. Both Trevor Fenrich, executive director at Solutions Recovery, and Alicia Wenger, executive director at Christine Ann Domestic Abuse Services, participated in this 2023-2024 class.



Congratulations to the 16 nonprofits that have graduated from the **No More Duct Tape Fundraising** learning experience supported by the *Community Impact Fund*:

- Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass
- Casa Esther
- Community for Hope
- Foxhead Regenerative Agriculture
- Fox Valley Technical College Foundation
- Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance
- Lakeside Packaging Plus
- Lourdes Academy
- Oshkosh Area Community Pantry
- Oshkosh Healthy Neighborhoods
- Oshkosh Public Museum
- Oshkosh Seniors Center
- Reach Counseling
- Reflections of Grace
- Solutions Recovery
- WisconSibs



Tiny House Village resident Kyla chases her son Nyairé, who started walking two weeks after they moved in.

Photo by Jim Koepnick

“Everyone is here to help each other.”

- Kyla, Tiny House Village resident

Cori assists families in accessing resources needed to find a well-paying job, reliable transportation, and a more permanent housing situation. Cori shared, “If the Tiny House Village didn’t exist these families would be on the streets, living out of their vehicle, or staying in a motel. THV provides them with a home of their own—a secure place to rest their heads at night.”

Kyla and her 16-month-old son, Nyairé, moved into the THV in September 2023. “I came here with nothing, just a suitcase with some clothes, mostly his clothes. The staff and volunteers helped me figure it out. Everyone is here to help each other,” shares Kyla.

Beyond providing shelter, THV offers a range of classes and programs, including Rent Smart, mental health workshops, cooking demonstrations, and budgeting assistance. Plus, a community organization comes in once a month to bring all residents together for a delicious meal.

Kyla’s words capture the essence of THV’s impact: “I moved in with a lot of hope and faith that it was going to work out for me and my baby. He is so happy here. A huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders to have this community and this support.”

From homelessness to hopefulness, the Tiny House Village is transforming lives one family at a time. ■

OSHKOSH KIDS FOUNDATION

From Homeless to Hopeful: It Takes a Village

Consider this: approximately 175 homeless children live in Oshkosh according to the Department of Public Instruction. Homelessness involves more than just not having a place to live; it’s a complex web of challenges. And for children, it can lead to disruptions in schooling, physical health problems, emotional stress, social isolation, and an increased risk of trauma.

Prior to 2022, there were few options for families experiencing homelessness locally. That’s when the Oshkosh Kids Foundation stepped up to fill the gap. After helping nearly 500 children through motel stays, rent assistance, and security deposit support during COVID, they were determined to

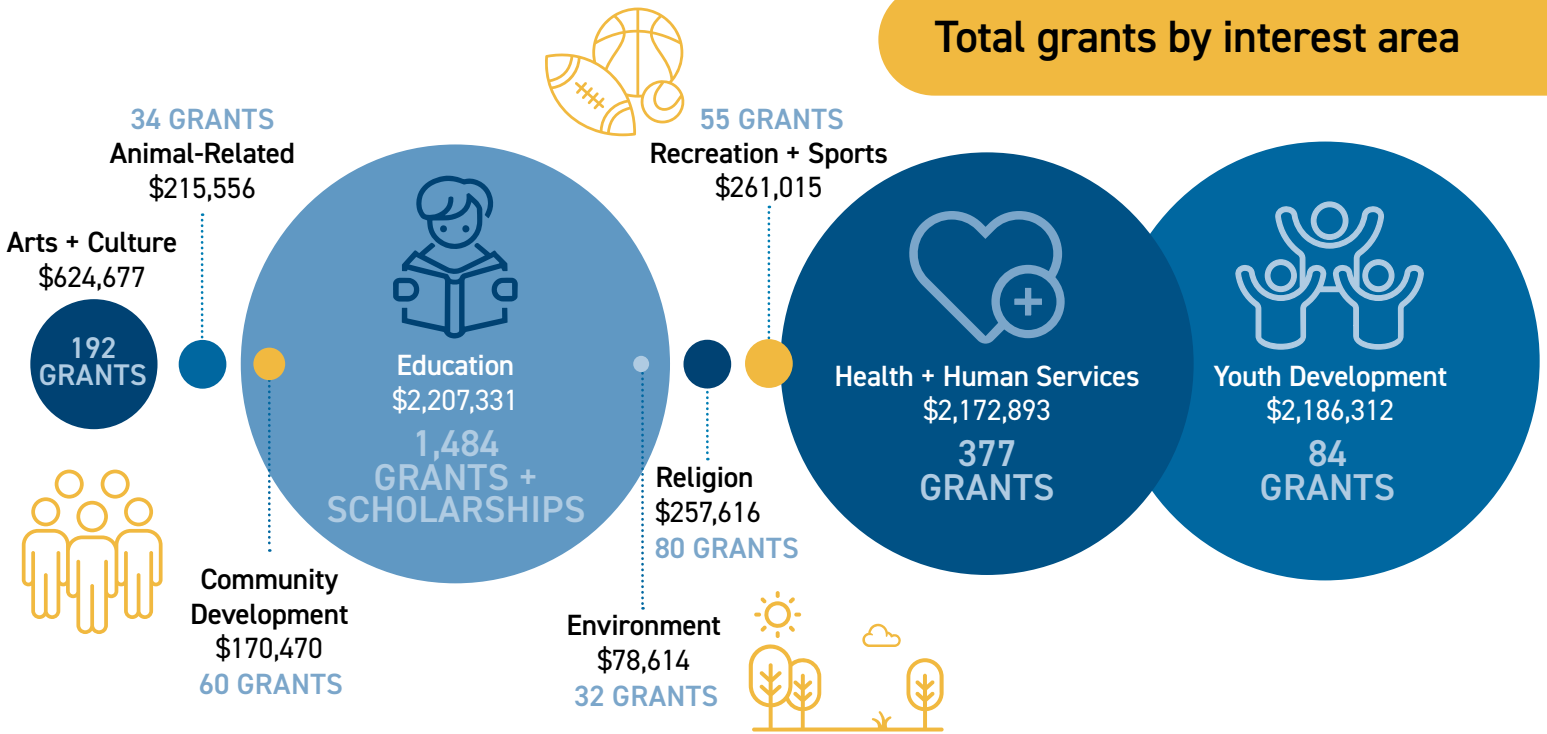
provide a more stable housing solution for families – The Tiny House Village.

The Tiny House Village (THV) comprises 32 fully furnished, 400 square foot units, complete with everything a family would need to move right in. There are currently 32 adults and 46 children living in the village.

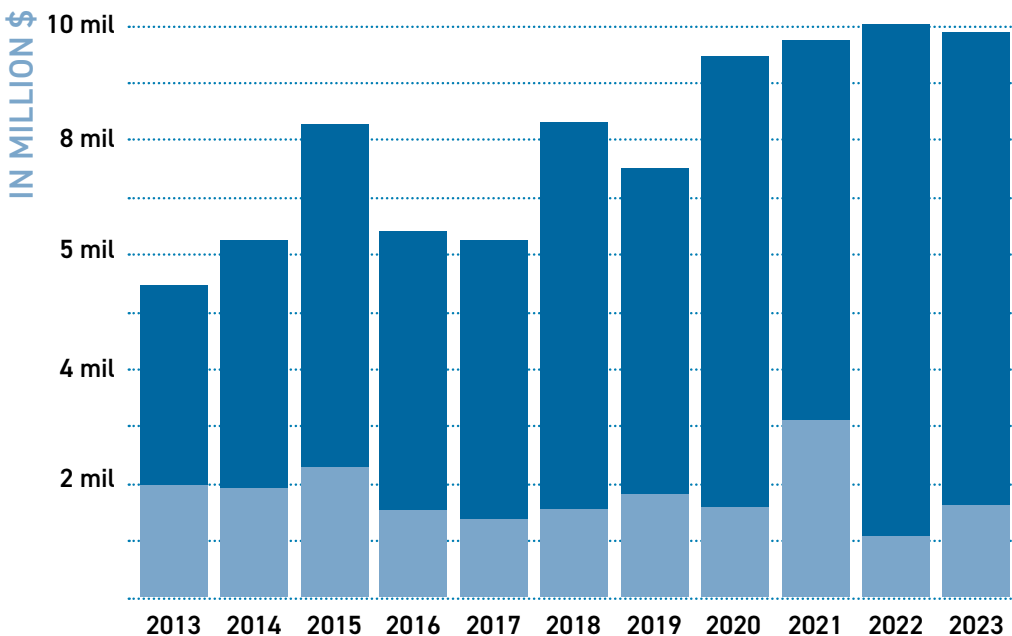
A four-year \$100,000 grant from the *Community Impact Fund* helped to support its construction, and another \$20,000 grant from the *U.S. Venture Fund for Basic Needs* helped to hire an on-site coach and case manager residents, a position currently filled by Cori Laux.

2023 Grant Highlights

Total granted \$8,174,484



10-year distribution history



PROGRAM PAYMENTS*	GRANTS
2013	\$3,469,673
2014	4,313,712
2015	6,015,452
2016	4,864,003
2017	4,892,012
2018	6,745,847
2019	5,707,070
2020	7,876,660
2021	6,648,250
2022	8,972,950
2023	8,174,484

*Program payments are distributions made for goods or services provided by a third party for the benefit of a tax exempt organization.

Strengthening Our Communities

Area nonprofits are improving the places we call home and helping our neighbors – all made possible by the generosity of people, families, and businesses that give through your Community Foundation.



RIPON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT kindergartners are improving their literacy skills with storytelling baskets, which contain characters and props that align with read-aloud books, thanks to a grant from the *Ripon Education Foundation Program Fund*.

GRANTS IN 2023

\$8.17 million

Granted to 396 nonprofits

91%

Dollars granted stayed local

\$3,409

Average grant amount

2,398

Grants awarded

490

Students received scholarships



OSHKOSH ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY and the Menominee Park Zoo invited families to Snooze at the Zoo under the stars. Funding from the *Hiwela Youth Fund* kept campers busy and bellies full.

CASA ESTHER offered story, craft, and gardening activities at Gathering in the Garden with the support of the *Mildred E. Turner Youth and Children Fund*.

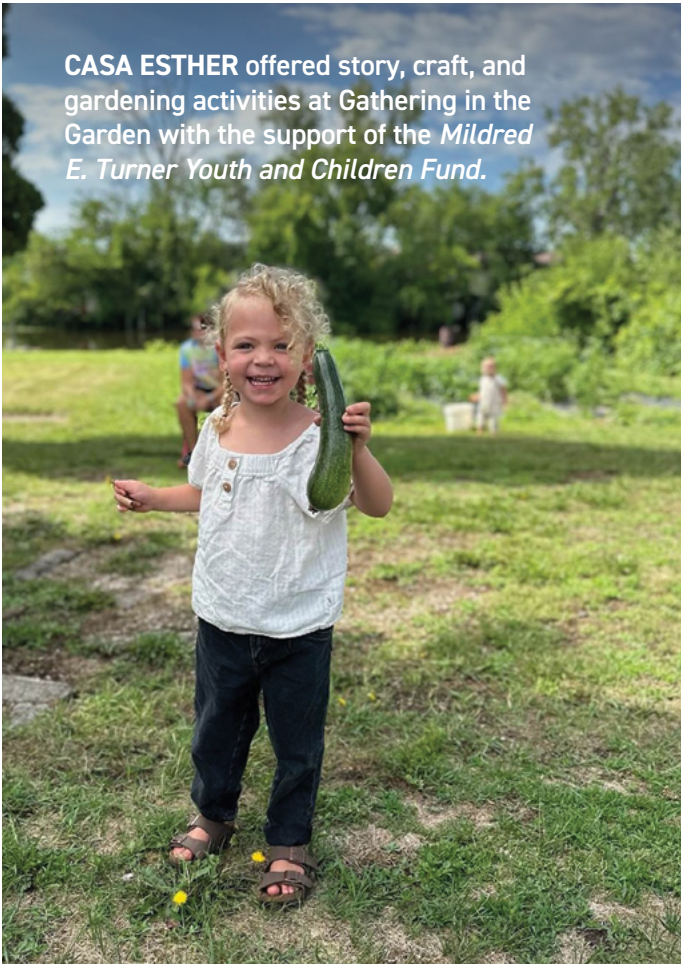


Photo by Kevin Rau

BERGSTROM-MAHLER MUSEUM OF GLASS hosted 4,800 visitors for their second annual **GLASS Arts Festival**. The *Fund for the Arts* helped to sponsor the day's glass-blowing demonstrations, the Kids Tent, live music, and more.

WINNEBAGO AREA LITERACY COUNCIL celebrated the grand opening of a learning center on Main Street in Oshkosh. The expansion, supported in part by a grant from the *Community Impact Fund*, adds two classrooms to accommodate growing demand for classes like their Beginner English course.





Founded by Sharon Woodruff, Waushara Shines offers community support and peer recovery coaching, providing a lifeline for those in the recovery community.

Photo by Jim Koepnick

WAUSHARA SHINES

Lighting the Road to Recovery

“Now 1842 days alcohol-free, I have rebuilt my self-esteem, self-worth, and gained my family’s trust and respect.”

- Michael Schuldt, Waushara Shines participant

Nestled in Waushara County is a beacon of hope that shines brightly, guiding individuals battling addiction toward the path to recovery.

Sharon Woodruff, the founder of Waushara Shines, understands this journey intimately.

“Alcoholism runs in my family, and it stopped with me,” she shares, reflecting on her personal struggles and the driving force behind her desire to help others.

For Sharon, the realization that she needed help came after losing her father and little brother to alcoholism.

“Treatment court and AA saved my life,” she acknowledges, highlighting the pivotal role that support systems played in her own recovery. Determined to break the cycle of addiction and offer a lifeline to others, Sharon established Waushara Shines in June 2018.

At the heart of Waushara Shines is a commitment to community support and peer recovery coaching. Sharon and her fellow coach Rena Beres provide a safe space for individuals to share their struggles, offering guidance, empathy, and a listening ear. “No one should have to suffer alone and in

silence,” Sharon affirms, echoing the program’s core principles.

Supported by a three-year \$117,000 grant from your Community Foundation, Waushara Shines – a program of Unity Recovery Services - has been able to expand its impact in addressing the disparity in recovery services in the rural Wautoma area.

The funding has been instrumental in providing crucial resources, including peer support and recovery coaching, daily support group meetings, and social events that give community members something fun to do, other than using drugs or alcohol.

Beyond conventional support services, Waushara Shines offers a refuge for individuals seeking

to rebuild their lives through sober-living housing. Curtis Jelinski, a beneficiary of the program, speaks to its transformative impact. “They’ve given me a second chance at life,” he shares, reflecting on his journey from darkness to light.

Michael Schuldt’s story further underscores the program’s success in fostering lasting change. “Now 1842 days alcohol-free,” he proudly declares, “I have rebuilt my self-esteem, self-worth, and gained my family’s trust and respect.” Michael’s journey serves as a powerful testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the importance of community support in times of need.

As Sharon aptly puts it, “There’s hope for everyone.” Through Waushara Shines, individuals are not only finding hope but also discovering the strength to embark on a new beginning each day. ■



Photo by Molly Szymanski

HOW



DOES THE
OSHKOSH AREA
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION WORK

IT STARTS WITH YOU - THE DONOR

- Individuals
- Families
- Businesses + organizations
- Private foundations



WITH A PASSION TO GIVE BACK IN A MEANINGFUL WAY

- Support a cause
- Honor a loved one
- Leave a legacy
- Make an impact



WHOSE GIFTS ARE USED

- Cash and securities
- Real assets
- Retirement funds
- Insurance
- Bequests



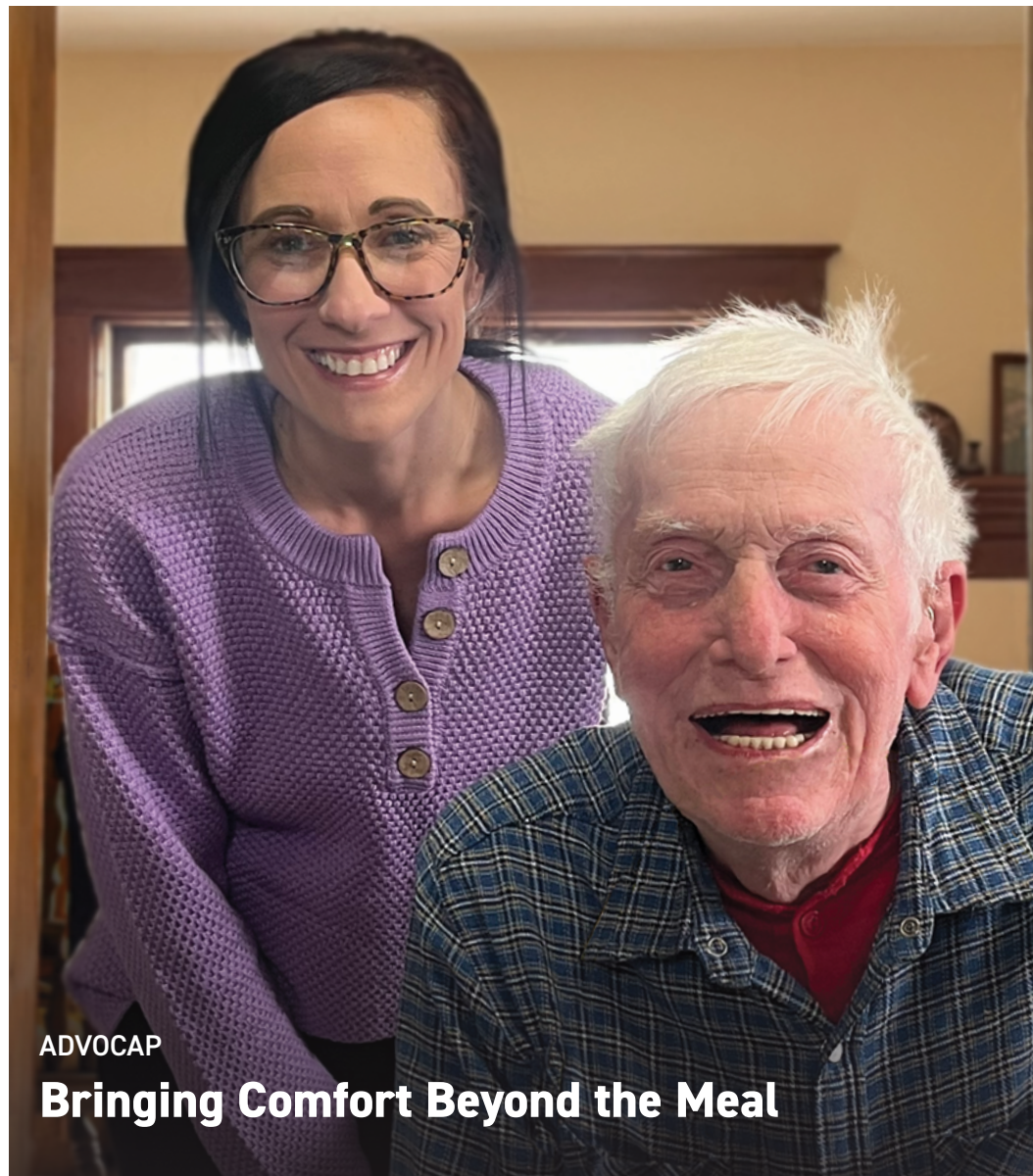
TO CREATE AND BUILD FUNDS FOR THE COMMUNITY

- To achieve your charitable goals
- To benefit current and future generations
- To address local community needs



DISTRIBUTIONS FROM THE FUNDS SUPPORTS LOCAL NONPROFITS

- Receive grants from the funds, fulfilling your charitable goals
- Lead programs funded by grants that strengthen your community



ADVOCAP

Bringing Comfort Beyond the Meal

In our community, the Home Delivered Meal Program serves as a lifeline for seniors, offering not just nourishment but also companionship and essential support.

Drivers play a crucial role in maintaining the independence of meal recipients, conducting wellness checks, and being attentive to their needs. Through daily interactions, they gather insights into clients' lives, identifying gaps in resources from household essentials to appliance repairs. Unfortunately, financial constraints often prevent clients from addressing these needs.

A \$5,000 grant from the *Ladies Benevolent Society: Advocates for Older Adults Fund* is helping to bridge that gap.

Dawn Paterson, food and nutrition director at ADVOCAP, explains, "The funding we received has allowed us to do things beyond providing meals that make a significant impact on the quality of life for our meal recipients." This grant has been instrumental in purchasing various essentials, such as walkers, blankets, can openers, and even toilet paper when a need is identified.



Amanda Weichman isn't just delivering food – she's delivering essential items and companionship, ensuring Robert Herrmann's well-being and independence.

“They gave me back my independence and dignity. It's like having a family when you need it most.”

- Robert Herrmann, Home Delivered Meal Program recipient

not only live in isolation, but they also don't have anyone to ask for assistance.

Regular meal deliveries proved critical for another client. “Being found on the floor by my delivery guy one day after a nasty fall was a scary experience,” she shares. “But thanks to receiving a walker, a bed rail, and some compression socks, I'm feeling more confident and safer in my own home.”

“More than 150 years ago, members of the Ladies Benevolent Society (LBS) gathered donations of clothing and supplies, often taken from their own homes, and delivered them in baskets to the needy along with a friendly visit,” shares Dana Stolley, who is currently on the LBS: Advocates for Older Adults grant committee.

“ADVOCAP's individualized approach to ensuring essential supplies reach those in need, is just like our humble deliveries back then. It's heartening to see this tradition of compassion and kindness still in action today.”

As the Home Delivered Meal Program continues its invaluable service to seniors in our community, it's clear that the impact extends far beyond the meal. Through the dedication of these drivers and the generosity of donors, essential needs are met, providing comfort and care to those who need it most. ■

“I never imagined life without my wife, but when COVID took her from me, I felt lost,” shares Robert Herrmann, age 83. “I couldn't even make a sandwich. Thankfully my neighbor connected me with the meal program. They gave me more than just food, a microwave, and some Tupperware; they gave me back my independence and dignity. It's like having a family when you need it most.”

A 2023 survey shows that the meal delivery driver is the only person seen during the day by almost half of meal recipients. Some participants



THE LADIES BENEVOLENT SOCIETY: ADVOCATES FOR OLDER ADULTS (LBS), founded in 1863, is the oldest charitable organization in the state. Initially aiding the “worthy poor,” their focus shifted to elderly women, and then expanded to include elderly men in 1989.

They ran a home for needy women from 1890 to 1974, starting with the Eighth homestead and later constructing a new home on North Main Street in Oshkosh (pictured). LBS maintained this home for elderly women for 84 years! In 1974, they made an agreement with Evergreen Manor to assume all obligations of the Society's remaining 9 residents.

In 1999, they initiated a grant program, later establishing a fund at your Community Foundation in 2005. Grantmaking from this field of interest fund has been overseen by an advisory board since 2007. The fund has awarded 227 grants totaling more than \$585,000 since its inception, all to support the health and well-being of older adults in the greater Oshkosh area.

Volunteer fixer
Sue Buechel
tackles a sewing
repair at a recent
Repair Café at
the Oshkosh
Community
YMCA.

Photo by Ms. Planet



OSHKOSH REPAIR CAFÉ

Building Community, One Repair Job at a Time

When our everyday items break or wear out, the temptation to toss them and buy something new often wins out. But what if there was a better way? Don't say goodbye to that temperamental toaster or give up on that lovely antique lamp with the frayed cable just yet.

Americans discard nearly five pounds of waste every day. That's a staggering amount, especially when many of these items could be repaired instead of thrown away. Enter Repair Cafés, a growing movement that encourages fixing rather than tossing.

The Repair Café concept has taken root in Oshkosh, offering residents the chance to have their broken items repaired for free.

"It's essentially neighbors helping neighbors," says Michael Borucke, co-founder of the Oshkosh Repair Café.

"We gather a group of volunteers who are experts in various fields—jewelry, clothing, appliances, electronics, you name it—and offer our services to the community."

The magic of Repair Cafés lies in more than just fixing broken items; it's about learning, networking, and building community connections. Michael explains, "There's a lot of learning going on, and people always come back and tell their friends. It's really about creating a sense of community."

The Repair Café movement originated in the Netherlands in 2009 and has since grown into an international phenomenon, with thousands of locations worldwide. Organizers estimate that half a million items are kept out of landfills each year thanks to Repair Cafés.

Inspired by his experience with Repair Cafés as a grad student in Missouri, Michael brought the concept to Oshkosh. The community has warmly embraced the initiative with three successful events in less than a year.

"Our last Repair Café saw over 60 people and almost 20 fixers in attendance," Michael shares. "We have about a 70% fix rate, and the feedback from attendees has been overwhelmingly positive. People leave with a smile, saying they'll be back."

Supported by your Community Foundation's *Community Impact Fund*, the Oshkosh Repair Café is more than just a place to fix broken items—it's a hub of community engagement and sustainability, showing that together, we can reduce waste and build stronger, more connected communities. ■

Make a Meaningful Impact in Your Community

At the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation (OACF), we see our donors as part of our extended family. We're here to support you in your philanthropic journey, offering a seamless and effective way to contribute to the causes you care about most. Our team is dedicated to providing personalized and attentive service, ensuring that your giving experience is both meaningful and impactful. Whether you choose to make an impact by giving now or are considering a blended approach by creating a fund during your lifetime and leaving a legacy gift, we're here to guide you every step of the way. To explore options for achieving your giving goals, please reach out to us at 920-426-3993.

1 Give to an Existing Fund.

Support causes close to your heart, be it a specific nonprofit or a field of interest. You can give cash, appreciated stocks, real estate, or other assets.

Use the enclosed envelope to give now to an existing fund or give online at OshkoshAreaCF.org.

2 Open a Fund.

Initiate positive change by establishing a fund tailored to your passions and values. You will receive a charitable deduction in the year you make your gift and can continue to contribute to your fund during your lifetime.

3 Grow Your Fund.

Elevate your impact by continually adding gifts, putting resources to work immediately for the causes you care about.

4 Leave a Legacy.

Make a lasting impact by planning a gift that transcends generations. When planning an estate gift, consider:

- Using a beneficiary designation in your life insurance or retirement plan. These proceeds are subject to taxes if left to your heirs but pass tax-free to a nonprofit like your Community Foundation.
- Making a bequest in your will. You can leave an outright dollar amount, a percentage of your estate, or designate residuals after bequests to your heirs have been fulfilled.

DONATIONS IN 2023

\$24 million

Contributed to OACF funds by 2,189 donors

54%

Donations received were gifts of \$100 or less

\$268,579

Donated in honor or memory of loved ones

38

Number of new funds established in 2023

956

Total number of funds at the Foundation



Financial information presented is estimated for calendar year 2023. The Foundation operates on a June 30 fiscal year end. See our most recent audited financial statements at OshkoshAreaCF.org/financials.



FRIENDS OF THE WOLF WILDERNESS RECREATION TRAIL **Clearing the Way**

Thanks to a grant from the *Winneconne Area Community Impact Fund*, Friends of the Wolf Wilderness Recreation Trail (FWWRT) purchased a specialized mower to enhance upkeep on the 2.5-mile trail that connects the communities of Winneconne, Butte des Morts, and Oshkosh.

“We now have the ability to control weeds and brush over rocky and uneven terrain that was impossible to maintain prior to the arrival of this mower,” said FWWRT board member Gary Olson.



**OSHKOSH AREA
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**

230 Ohio Street #100
Oshkosh, WI 54902-5894
920.426.3993
OshkoshAreaCF.org



Oshkosh Area Community Foundation affiliates play an important role in our efforts to strengthen our communities in Green Lake, Waushara, and Winnebago Counties, and the City of Ripon.



Green Lake County / Ripon
Community Foundation

