

FOUNDATIONS

Building Community Philanthropy, Today and Forever



Fund Celebrates Milestone

Gay Community Endowment Fund honors founders during 25th Anniversary

Giving at Every Age

Tips for engaging young adults in philanthropy

Through the Lens

ACF fundholder honors late son through photography exhibition at local nonprofit



SEEN ON CEDAR STREET

Visitors to our lobby at Akron Community Foundation can enjoy artistic works like that of artist April Couch, whose unique “Zentangle” style features tangles, or simple patterns, that develop a life of their own as the design unfolds. April is a Certified Zentangle Teacher, and her medium of choice ranges from paper and clothing to reclaimed wood and pottery. Pictured is an untitled series of painted pottery. Local artists who are interested in exhibiting their work at Akron Community Foundation are encouraged to contact Chris Miller at cmiller@akroncf.org.

FOUNDATIONS

An Akron Community Foundation Magazine
Volume 2 • Issue 6 • Spring/Summer 2026

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Cover Photo by Shane Wynn

Original signers of the Gay Community Endowment Fund agreement, pictured left to right: Richard J. Krochka, Brian McGuire, Gerald Larson, and Steven P. Schmidt, Ph.D.

Foundations is published twice a year by:

Akron Community Foundation
345 W. Cedar St., Akron, OH 44307

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FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO

By John F. Garofalo

Where has the year gone? It's hard to believe my one-year anniversary as president and CEO of Akron Community Foundation is quickly approaching. As I reach this milestone, I find myself thinking about what we have accomplished over the past year. Each day, it is humbling to serve in this role and to witness the impact Akron Community Foundation continues to make throughout our community.

On March 31, we closed out another successful fiscal year. Your community foundation received more than \$21 million in new contributions and distributed almost \$18.5 million in grants back into the community. These numbers represent far more than dollars and cents. They represent lives that have been impacted, opportunities that have been created, and hope for a better tomorrow. This critical work was made possible because of the unwavering generosity and commitment of our donors and community partners.

While much of our work is visible through grants, scholarships and community impact, one of our most important accomplishments this year happened behind the scenes. We successfully transitioned to a new technology platform that will enhance our operations, improve the experience of our fundholders, and position the foundation for continued growth and service in the years ahead.

In addition, we proudly launched and secured the board leadership for the Summit Health and Safety Innovation Fund, an exciting initiative that was created in collaboration with County Executive Ilene Shapiro and Summit County Council. This new supporting organization of Akron Community Foundation will fund innovative solutions that improve the health, safety and well-being of our community.

None of these accomplishments would be possible without the extraordinary dedication of our board and staff. Every day, they continue to amaze me with their passion, commitment and deep belief in the foundation's mission. Their tireless efforts, professionalism, and care for our community inspire me every day, and I am incredibly grateful to work alongside such a talented and mission-driven team of volunteers and staff.

As we look ahead, I remain excited about the future and energized by the opportunities before us. We know there is important and challenging work ahead, but for now, I want to thank all of you for your continued support and confidence in Akron Community Foundation. I look forward to seeing you out and about this summer and fall! 🌱

our vision

We are our community's champion and generator of enduring philanthropy.

our mission

To identify, activate and support informed and passionate philanthropists who strive to improve the quality of life in our community.

our values

Passion | Excellence
Accountability | Inclusion
Quality of Life | Collaboration



SOCIAL *shoutouts*

First Glance Student Center

When leaders across our community come together to learn and share ideas, Akron wins. Today, members of our team attended the Nonprofit Insights Conference alongside more than 300 others. We are thankful for our partnership with Akron Community Foundation and the way they continue investing in nonprofits across the Akron community. We appreciated connecting with others who care deeply about serving Akron. We look forward to carrying what we learned back into the work we are doing every day with students and families at First Glance.

Scouting America, Great Trail Council

Because of your support, our Exploring Program is able to provide valuable career exploration opportunities, leadership development, and hands-on learning experiences that help prepare youth for future success. Your partnership strengthens our ability to inspire confidence, responsibility, and growth in the next generation.

Carve Your Own Path

We believe everyone deserves access to supportive mental health care. Thank you, Akron Community Foundation, for investing in our mission and helping us strengthen the financial stability of our essential services. This critical funding will be directly applied to support and expand our inclusive, trauma-responsive counseling services for individuals who are marginalized and have low incomes in Summit County.

Melinda Hoye

Project Learn of Summit County

Every speaker at the ACF Nonprofit Insights Conference delivered phenomenal presentations with actionable takeaways that anyone in an organization — from leadership to frontline staff — can benefit from. Truly inspiring and thought-provoking.



FROM THE COMMUNITY

Thank you so much for your grant supporting rider scholarships at Victory Gallop! Because of you, more children get the chance to climb into the saddle, build confidence, and discover just how capable they truly are. Your generosity fuels smiles, courage, and those “I did it!” moments that stay with our riders long after they leave the arena. We’re so grateful to have you cheering our riders on.

Sue Miller and Kim Gustely
Victory Gallop

On behalf of Good Neighbors and those we serve, thank you for your generous financial donation, your food and hygiene donations, and your continued support. The funds will be used to purchase food and personal hygiene items for the families and individuals visiting our Goodyear Heights Community Outreach and Food Center. Thanks to your generosity, our volunteers can better serve those in need throughout our community.

Debra Foss
Good Neighbors

We are incredibly grateful to Akron Community Foundation for your generous support through a grant from the Summit County Opioid

Healing Fund and an additional grant for general operating funds. Because of you, we can expand substance-use prevention and continue providing vital support to immigrant and refugee families in our community.

International Institute of Akron

Thank you so much for putting together these Nonprofit Insights newsletters. The little nuggets of information are perfect to “digest” quickly. I always find myself flagging these emails and the resources included for follow-up.

Julie Griffiths
Ben Curtis Family Foundation

Many thanks for this generous grant and your support of our work in the community. This grant will support the startup costs associated with a new integrated primary care clinic. This clinic will allow Portage Path Behavioral Health to provide integrated and comprehensive health care, including behavioral health, addiction treatment, and primary care services, regardless of our patients’ ability to pay. We are truly grateful for your support of our clinic and our mission of total healing and total wholeness for the community!

Tracy D. Yaeger, Ph.D.
Portage Path Behavioral Health

Share with us! Do you have a note of appreciation to share? Perhaps a photo of the good work our grantees or fundholders are doing? Send it to Michelle Nissel at mnissel@akroncf.org. Submissions may be edited for length and clarity.

FOUNDATION *news*

CFO Celebrates 30th Anniversary

Congratulations to Vice President and Chief Financial Officer **Steve Schloenbach** on his three decades of service to Akron Community Foundation. As CFO, Steve maintains the integrity of our financial and accounting systems and works diligently to preserve the transparency of the community foundation. We're so grateful to have benefited from Steve's expertise for all these years, and we appreciate his dedication not only to the foundation, but to the community as a whole.

Three Staff Members Promoted

Congratulations to **Tracy Burt**, who was recently promoted to Vice President and Chief Operating Officer. In this newly created role, Tracy will be responsible for overseeing the operations of the foundation, including facilities, human resources, and information technology, while continuing to oversee the marketing and communications department. Tracy has been with the foundation since March 2013.

Brian Reitz was promoted in January to Vice President, Community Investment. Brian has been with the foundation since September 2017, and in his new role, he will be responsible for leading the foundation's community investment strategies, including grantmaking, nonprofit partnerships and community leadership initiatives.

Mariana Silva was promoted in May to Senior Community Investment Officer. Mariana joined the foundation's staff in September 2023 and is responsible for executing our board discretionary grant processes, as well as other strategic community investment initiatives.

ACF Welcomes Two New Staff Members

Akron Community Foundation recently welcomed **Sandi Phillips** to the team as our Philanthropic Services Administrator. In this role, Sandi will



provide grantmaking support to our donor-advised fundholders, helping them achieve their charitable goals while also ensuring compliance with federal and state regulations.

Amanda Adey also joined the team as our Marketing & Communications Specialist. Amanda will be supporting a variety of the foundation's marketing efforts, including advertising and email communications, as well as providing marketing guidance and support to our affiliate funds.



New Board Members Announced

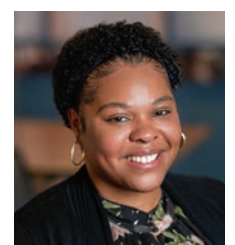
Akron Community Foundation has welcomed six new board members in recent months. Please join us in welcoming this active group of community leaders:

- **Jennifer Venarge DiSalvo**, Vice President of Human Resources, APV Engineered Coatings
- **Rev. Ron Fowler II**, Executive Pastor, Arlington Church of God
- **Jesse Hurst, CFP®, AIF®**, CEO, Impel Wealth Management
- **Eric Jones**, President, Jones Group Interiors Inc.
- **Quinnie Lane**, retired cybersecurity executive
- **Jim Nilsen**, retired business executive

Staff Members Selected for Leadership Akron

Longtime staff member **Kristen Ashby**, director of marketing, will join Leadership Akron's Signature Class 43. Kristen will join dozens of other local leaders as they learn how to maximize their impact through immersive seminars, networking opportunities and more.

Denikka Ray, finance and accounting administrator, was selected for this year's Diversity on Board class, which provides leadership development, education and board matching services to advance racial/ethnic minority representation on nonprofit and public boards.



Board and Staff Member Recognitions

Congratulations are in order for several board and staff members who have been recognized in recent months.



President and CEO **John F. Garofalo** was named to Ohio Business Magazine's Ohio 500, a list of the most powerful and influential people in Ohio. He was also recognized by Leadership Akron at its annual New Executive Leader Reception, which welcomes Greater Akron's newest top decision-makers.



Congratulations also to **Tracy Dowe**, who was awarded a Dr. Frank L. Simonetti Distinguished Business Alumni Award this spring, and **Ron Paydo**, who was named this year's honorary Canal Boat Captain by the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition.



Leadership Akron recently announced its award recipients for 2026, including **Jennifer Venarge DiSalvo** as this year's Read Family Difference Maker, which honors individuals whose efforts have been instrumental in expanding the scope or impact of Leadership Akron's mission and work.



Former ACF board chair **Marty Hauser** will be bestowed with the Lieberth Community Vision Award in November. The award honors a leader whose life and work reflect vision, pragmatism, and a tireless commitment to community causes.



Year-End Gifts and Grants

Thank you for another year of generosity! During our fiscal year ending March 31, 2026, our fundholders and donors contributed \$21.1 million in gifts to the foundation, while also distributing nearly \$18.5 million in grants and distributions to organizations doing good work in our community and beyond.

To see the full list of donors, visit akroncf.org/Donors. To see recent memorial and tribute gifts and grants, visit akroncf.org/MemorialTribute. More information about our grantmaking can be found on page 17.



UPCOMING *events*

From annual meetings and nonprofit education sessions to award events and fundraisers, Akron Community Foundation and its affiliate funds host numerous events throughout the year. For more information, visit akroncf.org/Events.

Laura Culp Selected as 2026 Bert A. Polsky Humanitarian Award Recipient

Save the date for this year's Bert A. Polsky Humanitarian Award Dinner on Nov. 17 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Akron Fairlawn, where we'll celebrate Laura Culp and her enduring impact on our community. Tickets will go on sale this fall, and sponsorships are currently available.



For sponsorship information, visit akroncf.org/PolskySponsor or contact Laura Lederer at llederer@akroncf.org.

Save the Date: 25th Annual Sugar Plum Tour of Holiday Homes

Join the Gay Community Endowment Fund on Sunday, Dec. 6, for this festive annual fundraiser, which features a tour of beautifully decorated holiday homes. Early bird tickets will go on sale in late August. More details are available at sugarplumtour.org.



A LEGACY OF PRIDE AND PURPOSE



By Tracy Burt
Vice President and
Chief Operating Officer

In the late 1990s, LGBTQ+ life in Akron often existed quietly. There was community. There was connection. There was joy. But much of it remained out of public view in spaces like LGBTQ+ bars and nightclubs, where people could gather safely.

For many LGBTQ+ residents, those spaces offered belonging in a world that still demanded silence. National conversations around LGBTQ+ rights were evolving, but many people still weighed each decision about visibility carefully – at work, at church, in their neighborhoods, and even within their own families.

Carol Dezso, a founding member of the fund and a retired judge, remembers advice from a close friend after coming out to her in the 1980s: “You never come out to anybody who has less to lose than you do.”

That reality shaped daily life for many in the community. It also shaped the courage required to imagine something greater: a permanent philanthropic resource created by and for LGBTQ+ people in Greater Akron.

WHAT ABOUT AKRON?

At the time, many community members gave to national organizations advocating for LGBTQ+ rights and services. While that work mattered, some local supporters began asking a different question: “What about Akron?”

“We would send this money to Washington, and it never came back,” recalled Eric Jones, a founding member of the Gay Community Endowment Fund and a current Akron Community Foundation board member. “So, ultimately, where’s the benefit for us living in the small town of Akron, Ohio?”

The answer began simply. On Aug. 29, 1999, a small group gathered for what organizers casually called an “outreach party.” The goal wasn’t to build an institution. At first, they simply wanted to bring people together in celebration.

“All we wanted to do was have a party,” explained Steven P. Schmidt, Ph.D., a founding member of the fund. “We developed that conversation into what has become the Gay Community Endowment Fund.” That conversation

The Gay Community Endowment Fund marks 25 years of investing in Greater Akron's LGBTQ+ community

would eventually grow into one of the nation's earliest LGBTQ+ affiliate funds housed at a community foundation.

BUILT TO ENDURE

After that first party, founders formed a strategic planning committee and spent months defining the fund's purpose, structure and long-term vision. From the beginning, they wanted more than an annual fundraiser – they wanted an endowment that could support the community for generations. They considered several options, but affiliating with Akron Community Foundation was a strategic choice that gave the effort added legitimacy.

At a time when LGBTQ+ causes were often overlooked in traditional philanthropy, creating an endowment fund sent a powerful message: The community belonged within Akron's broader civic and philanthropic life.

"My mom was a fierce advocate for her friends, for her community, and for the foundation," recalled Jill Bacon Madden about her mother, Jody Bacon, who was Akron Community Foundation's executive director at that time. "She didn't think twice when Steve (Schmidt) and Rick (Krochka) came to her about establishing an affiliate fund at ACF to support programs and services benefiting Akron's LGBTQ+ community."

In 2001, the Gay Community Endowment Fund officially launched at Akron Community Foundation with a mission to support nonprofit programs serving Greater Akron's LGBTQ+ community in perpetuity.

A HOLIDAY TRADITION

In those early years, much of the work centered on building trust – both within and beyond the LGBTQ+ community itself. Founders remember sitting around conference tables asking difficult but necessary questions about whether the broader community would support the effort. Would people even feel safe enough to associate publicly with the fund? Slowly, that support grew.

One of the fund's defining traditions began in December 2002 with the first Sugar Plum Tour of Holiday Homes. The holiday fundraiser combined celebration, creativity and community-building in a way that quickly resonated and helped the fund gain traction and broader support.

The first event raised about \$13,000 – a figure that organizers were thrilled by at the time. Over the next two decades, the Sugar Plum Tour became a beloved Akron tradition, raising more than \$1.5 million for the fund.

As public acceptance of LGBTQ+ people grew through the 2000s and 2010s, the fund grew with it. Conversations that once happened quietly became



more public, and businesses, civic leaders and institutions grew more willing to show support.

FUNDING CRITICAL NEEDS

As the endowment grew, so did its grantmaking. Over the years, the fund has supported organizations focused on HIV/AIDS services, domestic violence and sexual assault recovery, youth support, mental health, community programming, and scholarships for LGBTQ+ students.

Organizations like CANAPI, formerly the Community AIDS Network, received support during a period when HIV/AIDS continued to devastate communities while stigma and inequities persisted.

"We were finding medicines that would help, but just like today, there are social inequities that are still not addressed," explained Julie Beckert, interim executive director of CANAPI. "When GCEF offered that (funding) to CANAPI ... those were resources that weren't available anywhere else."

For many recipients, the significance extended far beyond the size of the grants. "The dollar amount may have been small, but the impact was huge," said Teresa Stafford-Wright, CEO of Hope & Healing Survivor Resource Center, about an early grant the center received from the fund. "It really set a tone in the community that individuals from the LGBTQ+ community can trust us."

Today, the fund's impact continues to expand. With assets approaching \$3 million, the Gay Community Endowment Fund has now awarded more than \$1 million in grants back into the community. The fund has also expanded its fundraising initiatives to include a legacy society and a giving circle – the Cornerstone Society and Circle of Inclusion, respectively – which provide unique opportunities for donors to get more involved with the fund.

In addition, the fund has expanded its impact by creating a scholarship fund that distributes scholarships annually to LGBTQ+ and allied students who live or attend school in Summit, Medina, Portage, Stark and Wayne counties.

THE WORK AHEAD

The fund's growth mirrors a broader national shift. When its founders first began organizing in the late 1990s, support for same-sex marriage was below 30%, according to Gallup. Today, 68% of Americans support marriage equality – a dramatic shift that unfolded during the same quarter-century the Gay Community Endowment Fund spent building visibility, support and permanence in Greater Akron.

While public acceptance of LGBTQ+ people has indeed risen dramatically over the last 25 years, many involved with the fund say recent years have also been a reminder that social progress is rarely linear.

National surveys still show broad support for LGBTQ+ people, especially among younger generations, but even support for same-sex marriage has dipped from a high of 71% in 2023.

At the same time, debates around LGBTQ+ rights – especially involving transgender individuals and LGBTQ+ youth – have become increasingly polarized across the country. That sense of uncertainty has reinforced the importance of maintaining institutions that can endure through changing political and cultural environments.

For many involved with the Gay Community Endowment Fund, the goal was never to respond only to one moment in time. It was to ensure the community would always have a permanent source of support, advocacy and care – especially during moments when progress feels fragile.

Twenty-five years after its founding, the Gay Community Endowment Fund stands as both a reflection of how far the community has come and as a reminder of the work still ahead.

Its founders say they could not have imagined exactly what the fund would become. But what they built – through courage, generosity, and an unwavering belief in their community – continues to change lives across Greater Akron every day. 🌱

To give to the Gay Community Endowment Fund in honor of its 25th anniversary, visit akroncf.org/give/GCEF. To learn more about the fund, visit gaycommunityfund.org.



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1. Jim Obergefell, the named plaintiff in the Supreme Court case that led to the legalization of same-sex marriage, was the keynote speaker at the Gay Community Endowment Fund's 25th anniversary celebration, "exhALE: Advancing Lived Equality," which took place on Friday, June 5, at House Three Thirty.

2. Greg Sterling; Michael Derr, event co-chair; and Adam Besenyodi, GCEF advisory board chair, look on as Obergefell addresses the audience.

3. Adam Besenyodi gives a toast to celebrate GCEF's 25th anniversary.

4. Members of the Gay Community Endowment Fund's Circle of Inclusion.

Photos by Shane Wynn

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AFFILIATE FUND *news*



Members of the Women's Endowment Fund's Circle of Empowerment pose for a photo at the fund's annual celebration in March. Photo by Shane Wynn.

BATH COMMUNITY FUND

This spring, Bath Community Fund awarded \$10,000 in impact grants for local projects that are commemorating America's 250th anniversary while acknowledging the impact of Bath Township residents. The largest grant supported a family-friendly community celebration and parade honoring America's history, founding ideals, and civic spirit.

During its annual grant cycle in December, the fund awarded an additional \$40,000 to 19 nonprofit organizations, bringing its total grantmaking to more than \$350,000 since the fund was established in 2014. Bath Community Fund

leaders recognized the fund's recent grant recipients at its annual meeting in June. For a complete list of grants, visit akroncf.org/BCFGrantHistory.

BLACK GIVING COLLECTIVE FUND

Local residents are invited to celebrate the Black Giving Collective Fund's growing impact at its first annual meeting on Friday, Aug. 28, at The Bank at East End.

Over breakfast, guests will reflect on the powerful success of The Soul of Philanthropy Akron and hear about an exciting milestone as the fund approaches \$500,000 in assets and prepares to begin awarding

its first grants. To register for this complimentary event, visit akroncf.org/BGCmeeting.

GAY COMMUNITY ENDOWMENT FUND

In March, the Gay Community Endowment Fund surpassed more than \$1 million in cumulative grants to programs that support the Greater Akron LGBTQ+ community. This significant milestone comes during the fund's 25th anniversary year and was celebrated at a special anniversary event, "exhALE: Advancing Lived Equality," on June 5. To learn more about the fund's impact over the last 25 years, read our article on page 6.

The fund awarded the second-largest grant in its history this year, making a \$25,000 impact grant to CANAPI to provide short-term rental, utility and transportation assistance to LGBTQ+ young adults experiencing housing instability. In total, the fund awarded \$84,000 in 2026 to eight nonprofits whose work is essential to the well-being of the LGBTQ+ community. For a complete list of grants, visit akroncf.org/GCEFgrants.

Save the date for the 25th annual Sugar Plum Tour of Holiday Homes. This year's festivities begin with a live tour on Sunday, Dec. 6, and continue with a virtual tour starting Dec. 12. Sponsorships will

Through our seven affiliate funds – and the thousands of donors who support them and dozens of advisory board members who lead them – Akron Community Foundation provides creative philanthropic solutions to targeted geographic regions and areas of interest. Learn more about their ongoing work in our community.

be available in July, and early bird tickets will go on sale during the Akron Pride Festival on Aug. 22.

To receive event news and updates, sign up for the fund's e-newsletter at akroncf.org/GCEFnews.

GREEN COMMUNITY FUND

During its second grant cycle, the Green Community Fund awarded eight grants totaling \$25,000 to nonprofit programs serving Green residents. This year's awards include a \$10,000 impact grant to the Green Family YMCA to support facility renovations. For a complete list of grants, visit akroncf.org/GreenGrants.

Save the date for the Green Community Fund's annual community gathering on Sunday, Aug. 30, at the Lodge at Brier Creek. Fund leaders will present the 2026 Green Community Impact Award to Beth Rayl of Rayl Charities, whose dedication, leadership and service has created a lasting impact on the City of Green. Reserve your seat at akroncf.org/GCFmeeting.

MILLENNIUM FUND FOR CHILDREN

In December, the Millennium Fund for Children awarded 40 grants totaling \$63,000 to children's programs throughout Greater Akron. Among the recipients is Akron Public Schools' North High School, which received a grant to preserve historical school artifacts by digitally scanning them to create a virtual reality tour of the school hallways.

Since its creation in 1999, the Millennium Fund has awarded more than \$1.1 million in grants to programs that meet children's basic needs, teach life skills, enrich students' lives through visual and performing arts, and much more. For a complete list of grants, visit akroncf.org/MillenniumGrants.

VERNON L. ODOM FUND

This spring, the Vernon L. Odom Fund awarded more than \$10,000 in grants to 14 programs that enrich the quality of life within Greater Akron's communities of color. This year's grant recipients included the Akron Black Artist Guild, which received funding for an art exhibition that uplifts Black artists across Northeast Ohio.

Since it was founded in 1993, the Vernon L. Odom Fund has awarded more than \$255,000 in grants to programs that uplift everyone from Bhutanese refugees to Black youth. For a complete list of grants, visit akroncf.org/OdomGrants.

WOMEN'S ENDOWMENT FUND

At this year's "For Women, Forever" celebration, leaders of the Women's Endowment Fund announced 39 grants totaling \$199,000 to nonprofit organizations serving women and girls. This latest round of grants brings the fund's total grantmaking to nearly \$2.7 million. For a complete list of grants, visit akroncf.org/WEFGrants.



Guests enjoy holiday festivities at the Gay Community Endowment Fund's annual Sugar Plum Tour of Holiday Homes. Photo by Starr Films LLC.

During the event, fund leaders honored Bennett L. Williams, chief engagement officer at Akron Children's, with the 2026 Judith A. Read Tribute Award for Service & Advocacy for Women. The event culminated in a fireside chat between Williams and award-winning journalist Debra Adams Simmons, who discussed Williams' leadership journey and the power of philanthropy.

Upcoming Grant Opportunities

Aug. 1 – Sept. 1:
Millennium Fund for Children

Sept. 1 – Oct. 1:
Bath Community Fund

Oct. 1 – Nov. 1:
Women's Endowment Fund

Learn more and apply at akroncf.org/AffiliateGrants.



FUNDHOLDER SPOTLIGHT

Jonathan Donald Kuhns Memorial Fund

By Danielle Dieterich, Executive Director, Cuyahoga Valley Art Center

On a cold January evening, the gallery at Cuyahoga Valley Art Center was filled with warmth, conversation, and the vibrant excitement that comes when artists gather to celebrate their work. More than 130 photographers, friends, family members and supporters filled the space for the inaugural Fine Art Photography Exhibition's Artist Reception on Jan. 16, 2026. The evening marked more than the presentation of awards – it celebrated the launch of a new annual exhibition dedicated to honoring the memory of Jonathan Donald Kuhns and his love for photography.

The exhibition came to life through a partnership that began with a simple connection. Through Akron Community Foundation, CVAC was introduced to Louise Kuhns Harvey, who was seeking a meaningful way to honor her son's legacy and passion for photography. With guidance from Jill Sellers, director of donor engagement at the foundation, conversations began about how that vision might take shape within CVAC's gallery.

Together, Louise and CVAC worked thoughtfully to develop an exhibition that would not only honor Jonathan's memory but would also create meaningful opportunities for photographers across the region. The result was the inaugural Fine Art Photography Exhibition, a juried showcase designed to celebrate the artistry, skill and diverse perspectives of contemporary photographers.

When the call for entries opened, the response from the photography community was immediate and enthusiastic. Fifty-seven photographers submitted 132 works for consideration. Local photographer Tim Fitzwater served as juror, selecting 78 photographs to be included in the final exhibition. The artists traveled from 28 cities across eight counties to submit their work, highlighting the exhibition's broad regional reach.

The exhibition itself brought together a diverse range of photographic styles and subjects – from intimate portraits and sweeping landscapes to experimental mixed-media works and compelling urban scenes. In total, 17 awards were distributed, including Best of Show, Best of Category honors, and six People's Choice Awards voted on by visitors throughout the exhibition.

For CVAC, the exhibition also created an unexpected opportunity. Traditionally quieter winter months in the gallery were transformed into a period of activity and engagement. By keeping the gallery open through December and January, nearly 1,000 visitors came through the doors to experience the exhibition and explore the stories told through the photographers' lenses.

The response from artists was equally meaningful. Many expressed gratitude for an exhibition dedicated specifically to fine art photography – something that remains rare in the region. For some, it was the first opportunity to see their work displayed alongside fellow photographers in a setting designed to celebrate their medium.

The excitement generated by the exhibition has already begun to ripple outward. CVAC saw an 83% increase in photographers entering the following Winter Exhibition, a clear sign that the photography community has found a welcoming home for its work within the art center's gallery.

For Harvey, the exhibition carried a deeply personal meaning. In reflecting on the event, she shared that it was “an amazing tribute to Jonathan's memory, while honoring some wonderful photographers,” adding that the talented artists whose work filled the gallery provided “visual candy for those of us who love artistic endeavors.”

She also shared a moving moment from the exhibition: one of the artists, Sarah Treanor, explained that her photograph titled “Hope” was created as a way of working through her own grief after losing several loved ones. The photograph was created in 2014, the same year Jonathan passed away.

“There is so much serendipity in life,” Harvey reflected.

For CVAC, the success of the exhibition represents something larger than attendance numbers or submission counts. It reflects the power of collaboration between artists, donors and community institutions working toward a shared goal: creating spaces where creativity can thrive.

“This exhibition was built from a place of love,” said CVAC Executive Director Danielle Dieterich. “Louise wanted to honor Jonathan's passion for photography in a way that would inspire others. Seeing the photography community come together around that vision has been incredibly moving.”

Thanks to the generosity of the Jonathan Donald Kuhns Memorial Fund, a donor-advised fund at Akron Community Foundation, the Fine Art Photography Exhibition will now continue as an annual event, providing photographers across Northeast Ohio with the opportunity to exhibit their work, receive recognition, and connect with new audiences.

As the gallery lights dimmed at the end of the reception evening, the exhibition's deeper purpose was clear. What began as a tribute has grown into something lasting – a celebration of photography, community, and the enduring impact of one person's creative spirit. 🌱



NONPROFIT SPOTLIGHT

RePlay for Kids



By Chris Miller
Communications & Community
Investment Officer

RePlay for Kids ensures that children with disabilities can enjoy the act of playing with toys, just like their peers.

An all-volunteer-run nonprofit, RePlay for Kids hosts workshops where participants adapt battery-operated toys so that children with disabilities can power them using external switches and other alterations. The adapted toys are also used by therapists and teachers to motivate students and to help them learn independence.

"The feedback we get from the families, teachers and therapists about the smiles the adapted toys bring to the kids is very motivating," said Bill Memberg, founder of RePlay for Kids, which has been in operation for more than 25 years. "We also receive very positive feedback from the workshop volunteers, so the whole process is rewarding."

Funding from Akron Community Foundation, through our Community Fund and the Millennium Fund for Children, has helped RePlay for Kids host toy-adapting workshops at local schools, where STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) students adapt toys for Summit County children.

In some instances, the student volunteers also get to distribute the toys to children, allowing them to experience the rewards of their work firsthand.

"Akron Community Foundation has been very supportive of our program where we bring the toy-adapting workshops into local schools, helping to show students a fun application of STEM concepts," Memberg said. 🌱

To learn more about RePlay for Kids, visit replayforkids.org.



STUDENTS

▶ On The Move

DREAMS EN POINTE



By Tracy Burt
Vice President and
Chief Operating Officer

Many little girls are asked what they want to be when they grow up, and “ballerina” is a fairly common answer.

It was indeed Aaliyah Tidmore’s answer when she was 3 years old. While many other girls’ aspirations change over the years, a decade later Aaliyah’s answer remains the same but with a focus: professional ballerina.

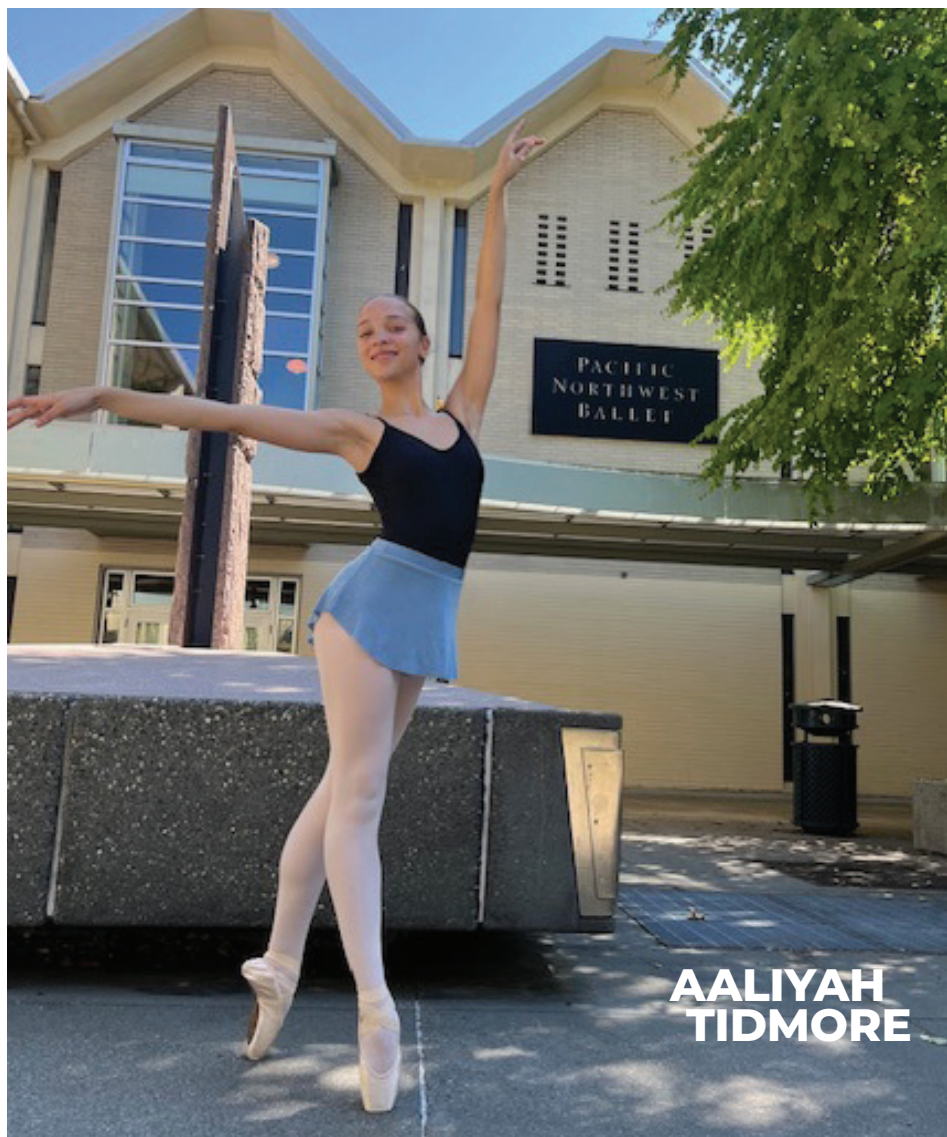
Though Aaliyah’s dream of being a ballerina started young, her journey didn’t. Aaliyah didn’t start dancing until she was about 9 years old, spending her time on other athletic outlets like soccer. But when she decided to start dancing, she knew: This was what she loved.

But several years in, Aaliyah dislocated her knee. She wasn’t able to walk – and definitely not able to dance – for months. It was an injury that set her back for a time, but now, at 15, Aaliyah is working her hardest to make her dreams come true. She dedicates 25 to 30 hours a week in the dance studio and spends her summers participating in intensives, or multi-week training programs designed to rapidly improve technique.

Last summer, she attended a summer intensive at the Pacific Northwest Ballet, a prestigious ballet company in Seattle, with the help of a scholarship from the Kate Lieberth Lytton Education in Dance Fund.

“This opportunity meant the world to me,” Aaliyah said. “At Pacific Northwest Ballet, I made good progress on working on my turnout and jumps, and it’s definitely helping me back at my home studio.”

This summer, she’ll be attending another summer intensive in Connecticut. From there, Aaliyah dreams of one day dancing for the San Francisco Ballet or American Ballet Theatre – dreams she’s working hard to make a reality. 🌱



**AALIYAH
TIDMORE**

▶ ABOUT

The Kate Lieberth Lytton Education in Dance Fund

The fund was established in 2018 to provide summer study scholarships for young dancers from Summit County in memory of Kate Lieberth Lytton.

Nearly 250 students across our community received scholarships totaling \$599,540 from one of Akron Community Foundation's 90 scholarship funds during the past fiscal year. From funds that help students attain specialized degrees to those that benefit students attending a specific university, our scholarship funds help students achieve their educational dreams and become future leaders of our community.



I wanted to express my utmost gratitude for receiving the Erwin & Katherine Geis Scholarship this year. When I first opened the email that explained I was named a recipient, I immediately burst into tears. This scholarship will allow me to reduce my workload next year, so I no longer have to juggle three jobs on top of juggling all the chaos that nursing school brings. Because of your generosity, I'll be able to fully engage in my studies and clinicals and fully enjoy my senior year. Thank you for believing in students like me. I'm so inspired by your kindness, and I hope to one day pay it forward, just as you've done for me.

Alayna Streeter
Erwin & Katherine Geis Scholarship Fund

This scholarship has allowed me to pursue my dreams and study at the University of Tampa. I am majoring in Marine Science-Biology on a pre-veterinary medicine track. Being here, I have met some of the most amazing people. I joined a great church community and started serving in the children's ministry. I have also been able to go snorkeling for class, and I joined the scuba club! Your generosity has made all of these experiences possible, and I will forever cherish your kindness and consideration of me.

Ella Henderson
Daniel C. McClelland Commitment to Community Scholarship Fund



I am writing to express my deepest gratitude for being selected as the recipient of the Faye L. Smith Memorial Scholarship. It is an honor to be chosen for this award, and I truly appreciate the support you have provided in helping me further my education. I have been working a full-time job on top of school to afford the college of my dreams. Your belief in my potential motivates me to continue striving for excellence in all that I do.

Hailey Wright
Faye L. Smith Memorial Scholarship Fund

I received the notification of my acceptance for the Eugene and Arlene True Memorial Scholarship Fund. I waited in anticipation because I received it last year. It permitted me to chase my educational goals and better prepare to lead as a volunteer at summer camp. What I didn't expect was the amount of funds to be increased. The increased funding I received impacts so much more than you will ever know. It puts me ahead by two months in my budget to move out and accelerates my plan to get out of student debt.

Nathaniel Harkleroad
Eugene and Arlene True Memorial Scholarship Fund





BUILD YOUR LEGACY: EDWIN C. SHAW SOCIETY

Thousands of donors collectively give millions of dollars to the community foundation every year, but there are ways beyond current giving to make a lasting impact on our community.

By joining the Edwin C. Shaw Society, you can take your place among the visionary donors who are shaping our region's future. This special group honors those who have made a commitment to Akron Community Foundation through a planned gift – such as a bequest in a will, charitable gift annuity, life insurance policy, or retirement plan.

The society is named for former B.F. Goodrich executive Edwin Shaw, who left a \$1 million gift in his will to establish what is now Akron Community Foundation. Shaw's bequest in 1955 planted the seeds for a legacy that has since grown to nearly \$340 million in assets and \$280 million in community grants.

Likewise, your planned gift will ensure the causes you care about are supported for generations to come – whether that's broad community needs or a specific nonprofit. You can also choose to make a planned gift to your family's donor-advised fund so your children and grandchildren can continue your philanthropic legacy into the next generation.

Joining our legacy society is simple. All you have to do is notify us of your intention to leave a planned gift. As a legacy donor, you'll gain access to exclusive events, including our annual Shaw Society gathering, where you'll connect with other forward-thinking donors and hear how your future support will fuel lasting change. 🌱

To get started, visit akroncf.org/PlannedGiving.

NEW MEMBERS

We're grateful to the generous and forward-thinking individuals who joined our Edwin C. Shaw Society from April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026:

Anonymous (2)

Roland & Sara Bertolini*

Christine Cox

Dr. Robert & Susan* Donahue

Jean F. & William E. Gadd*

John Grafton & Richard Worswick

Joe & Sue* Henninger

Thomas N. Kintz

Toby & Keith Liechty-Clifford

Timothy Maynard & Dr. Ernest W. Stone Jr.

Jim Nash & Joanne Kim

Steven P. Schmidt & Richard J. Krochka

Dianne Powers Wright

**Deceased*

PLAN YOUR GIFT

To notify the foundation of your planned gift and join the Edwin C. Shaw Society, contact Laura Lederer, vice president and chief development officer, at 330-436-5611 or llederer@akroncf.org.



EDWIN C. SHAW SOCIETY BY THE NUMBERS

For a complete list of Shaw Society members, visit akroncf.org/ShawSociety

271
TOTAL
MEMBERS

23
NEW MEMBERS
THIS YEAR

\$37M
IN LEGACY GIFTS
TO DATE



OUR GRANTS

During the past fiscal year, from April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026, Akron Community Foundation and its 900+ charitable funds disbursed nearly \$18.5 million in grants and distributions to nonprofits throughout Summit County and beyond. To see our full list of grant recipients, visit akroncf.org/OurGrantees.

NONPROFIT SERVICES

From listening sessions that help us better understand the needs of nonprofit organizations, to trainings and conferences, to newsletters chock-full of beneficial information, to exclusive materials and toolkits for our agency endowment fundholders, Akron Community Foundation offers a wide variety of resources for our nonprofit partners. Sign up for our monthly Nonprofit Insights e-newsletter and get access to our complimentary materials at akroncf.org/Nonprofits.

GRANT TOTALS BY YEAR



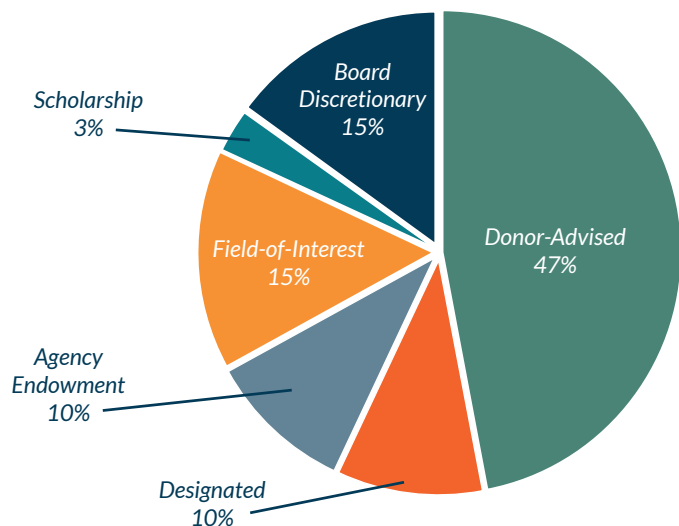
BY THE NUMBERS

\$18.5M
IN TOTAL GRANTS & DISTRIBUTIONS

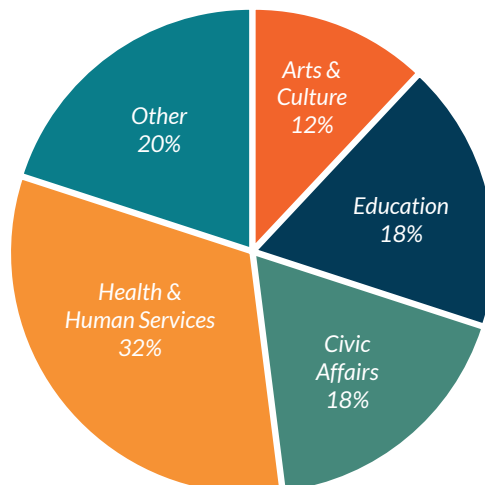
2,696
GRANTS AWARDED

802
NONPROFITS SERVED

GRANTS BY FUND TYPE



GRANTS BY PROGRAM AREA



PHILANTHROPY IS FOR EVERYONE: FOUR TIPS FOR THE YOUNG ADULTS IN YOUR LIFE



By Kristen Ashby
Director of Marketing

“Philanthropy” may sound like something reserved only for wealthy older adults, but people in all stages of life can make a tangible difference in their community. At Akron Community Foundation, we work with individuals of every generation – from young adults to retirees and everyone in between.

Young adults in particular are increasingly showing interest in moving the needle on broader community issues, and research shows that volunteering and donating are strongly tied to civic participation in younger generations.

If you’re a parent or grandparent of young adults, or if you’re a young adult yourself, you’ll be glad to know the community foundation can help. Here are four suggestions for getting started.

MAKE A POINT TO START EARLY

Many young adults are establishing charitable giving practices early in their careers. For example, it’s not uncommon for new hires to name a charity – such as a fund at the community foundation – as the contingent beneficiary of an employer-sponsored retirement plan.

If you have children or grandchildren of your own, the community foundation offers resources to help you teach children the concept of

generosity from a young age. These tools make conversations about your family’s values both simple and actionable, and they are available at no cost for families with a charitable fund at Akron Community Foundation.

MAKE IT A FAMILY AFFAIR

Through our Center for Family Philanthropy, Akron Community Foundation works with families to build a legacy of charitable giving that can be passed to the next generation and beyond. Our professional staff works closely with families to identify their values and create a plan that will amplify their generosity. This includes facilitating multigenerational family discussions so that younger family members can learn about causes that are important to their parents and grandparents, while also discovering causes that are meaningful to them personally.

MAKE NEW CONNECTIONS

The community foundation can help young adults get connected with peers who share an interest in improving our community. For example, our Institute for Emerging Philanthropists brings together next-generation donors who are interested in learning about strategic giving. Class members identify their personal philanthropic goals and make lasting connections with a network of highly motivated charitable professionals.





MAKE SURE YOU CLAIM THE NEW CHARITABLE DEDUCTION

Starting in 2026, taxpayers who do not itemize deductions can still take an above-the-line tax deduction for charitable gifts of up to \$1,000 for single filers and \$2,000 for joint filers. This offers a clear and accessible entry point for philanthropic young adults who don't yet meet the threshold for itemizing.

Although the deduction only applies to cash gifts and does not include gifts to donor-advised funds, it still provides a financial incentive for people who previously saw no tax impact from their giving. Even small gifts can lay the groundwork for lifelong philanthropic engagement, and the community foundation is happy to help donors leverage this opportunity to make a difference.

As always, Akron Community Foundation is honored to serve your family throughout every stage of your giving journey. Whether you are structuring a complex estate gift or taking your first steps toward strategic charitable giving, our team can help you find the right approach. We look forward to working with you to achieve your philanthropic goals. 🌱

For more strategic ways to give, contact Laura Lederer, vice president and chief development officer, at llederer@akroncf.org or 330-436-5611.

This content is provided for informational purposes only. It is not intended as legal, accounting, or financial planning advice.

PROFESSIONAL ADVISOR PARTNERS

Thank you to the following accountants, attorneys and financial advisors for helping your clients achieve their charitable goals with a fund at Akron Community Foundation from Oct. 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026:

Michael Batu Gardens Wealth Management | Wells Fargo
Kimberly Haws Falasco Baird
Robert McWhirter McWhirter & Associates
Don Miksch Huntington Private Bank
Michelle Royer Fifth Third Private Bank
Lewis Seikel Seikel & Company Inc.
Scott Sieverts Daugherty, Sieverts Wealth Advisors | Ameriprise Financial
David Staats Staats Rizor Malone Financial Group | UBS

Are you an advisor? Learn how we can assist you at akroncf.org/Advisors.

PROFESSIONAL ADVISOR COUNCIL

From CPAs to attorneys to wealth managers, the members of our Professional Advisor Council are adept at using philanthropy to strategically meet their clients' financial and charitable goals.

Michael Wear, chair Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs
John Adams Adams, Gut & Associates
Tyler Amos Charles Schwab
Jim Barsella Clearstead
Michael Batu Gardens Wealth Management | Wells Fargo
Trey Bennett Stark & Knoll
Gina Betti Edward Jones
Alane Boffa Cohen & Company
Thomas Clark Clark Guillian Bertsch Wealth Management
Neal Colby CM Wealth Advisors
Steven Cox Roetzel & Andress
Julie Firestone Singerman, Mills, Desberg & Kauntz
Naomi Ganoe CBIZ
Diane Johns Gilger Key Private Bank
Jared Hoffman Broadleaf Partners
Lia Jones Key Private Bank
Cathy Kemp Stark & Knoll
David Koly W3 Global Accounting
Rob Malone Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs
Bill Manby Jr. Paradigm Equity Strategies
Don Miksch Huntington Private Bank
Kimberly Miller Baird
Angelina Milo Meaden & Moore
Nathan Ollish Impel Wealth Management
Matthew Orr Adams, Gut & Associates
Taylor Papiernik Fairway Wealth Management
Reilly Perme PNC Financial Services Group
Jim Redmond Wealth Impact Advisors
Andrew Rothermel Fifth Third Private Bank
Karyn Sullivan Bernstein Private Wealth Management
David Supelak CLA Akron
Allan Sweet Palumbo & Sweet
Richard Tanner Ownership Advisors
Christopher Teodosio Key Family Wealth
Samuel Trecaso Wells Trecaso Financial Group | Carson Wealth
Kathy Vidakovics First Financial Bank
Todd Williams Fidelity Investments
Kyla Williger Krugliak, Wilkins, Griffiths & Dougherty

NEW FUNDS

During the second half of fiscal year 2026 (Oct. 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026), we were pleased to welcome 30 new funds established by charitable individuals, families and organizations throughout our community.

Donor-Advised Funds

Boldt Family Fund
Michele Boldt Family Fund
Madeline and Libert Bozzelli Fund
Fondran Family Fund
Hastings Family Fund
Michael and Michelle Huber Family Fund
Michael W. Konstan Fund
Legacy of Grace Foundation Fund
The Linear Family Fund
Kenneth C. Martin Fund
Janet A. Meyer Giving Fund
Miclau Family Fund
Sally A. Miller and Joseph G. Miller Family Foundation Fund
Robert and Janice Radl Fund
Lloyd L. and Louise K. Smith Foundation Fund
Arthur and Cynthia Sunday Family Fund
Turrell Family Fund
Yakubowski Family Fund

Designated Funds

***Jon Antalvari Designated Fund**
Established to support the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank and the International Institute of Akron.

*Geraldine Beha Designated Fund

Established to support the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank, Akron-Summit County Public Library, Community Fund of Akron Community Foundation, and the Green Community Fund of Akron Community Foundation.

*Phoebe L. Ras Fund

Established to support the Phoebe L. Ras Scholarship at the Buckeye Trail Association and the Crooked River Chapter of the Buckeye Trail Association.

Agency Endowment Funds

Akron History Center Endowment Fund
Established to support the Akron History Center's mission to create an enduring, free, museum-quality exhibit about Akron's history.

CHC Addiction Services Endowment Fund

Established to support CHC Addiction Services' mission to treat, inspire, support and empower people experiencing substance use and mental health disorders.

Crown Point Ecology Center Endowment Fund

Established to support Crown Point Ecology Center's mission to demonstrate the practical applications of ecology and to connect spirituality, social justice and environmental protection.

The Healing Sanctuary Fund

Established to support the Healing Sanctuary's mission to provide restorative retreats for women facing cancer.

Open Arms Adoptions Endowment Fund

Established to support Open Arms Adoption's mission to provide a loving, stable home to every child in need.

The Well CDC Endowment Fund

Established to support The Well CDC's mission to improve the quality of life within the Middlebury neighborhood by fostering choice in housing, job creation and community pride.

Scholarship Funds

Oma L. Evans Scholarship Fund
Established by Akron Public Schools to provide scholarships for graduating seniors at East CLC.

*Seal/Stotler Trust Scholarship Fund

Established by Akron Public Schools to provide scholarships for graduating seniors at any high school within the district.

Field-of-Interest Funds

Health and Human Services Fund
Established by Akron Community Foundation's board of directors to support health and human services needs in Summit County, while remaining flexible to respond to emerging community needs.

For a complete list of our more than 900 charitable funds, visit akroncf.org/OurFunds.

*Permanently endowed funds

6 TYPES OF FUNDS

DO IT YOURSELF

Donor-Advised Funds & Starter Funds

A great private foundation alternative – you choose the grants

Designated Funds

Support one or more of your favorite nonprofits

Agency Endowment Funds

A predictable stream of income for your nonprofit

DO IT WITH HELP

Scholarship Funds

Fund students' education in your or a loved one's name

Field-of-Interest Funds

Permanently advance the causes you're passionate about

Board Discretionary Funds

Meet the community's ever-changing needs

BY THE *numbers*

900+
*charitable
funds*

39
new funds

During the fiscal year
ending March 31, 2026,
Akron Community
Foundation achieved...

\$21.1
*million in
contributions*

nearly
\$340
*million in
charitable
assets*

\$18.5
*million in
total grants &
distributions*

271
*shaw society
members*

**Numbers are unaudited*





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