

ISSUE 13 / FALL 2022

# The Signal

An Akron Community Foundation Magazine

## IN THIS ISSUE

### Polsky Awards 2022

Steve & Jeannine Marks,  
2022 Recipients of the  
Bert A. Polsky  
Humanitarian Award

### Grassroots Growth

Small nonprofits find  
growth amid  
the pandemic



An impressionistic painting of a rainy street scene. The background shows tall buildings with warm, golden-yellow light emanating from windows. The middle ground is a wet street reflecting the light, with white streaks representing rain. The foreground is filled with lush, colorful flowers in shades of pink, purple, and blue.

## Seen on Cedar Street

"Do You Dream in French?" is one of seven paintings by local artist Care Hanson currently on display in Akron Community Foundation's building. For information about the artist, or if you are an artist interested in featuring your work, contact Chris Miller at [cmiller@akroncf.org](mailto:cmiller@akroncf.org) or 330-436-5627.



# The Signal

An Akron Community Foundation Magazine

ISSUE 13 / FALL 2022

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READ ABOUT HARMONY HOUSE, AND  
TWO OTHER NONPROFITS, ON PAGE 8

PHOTO BY DALE DONG

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AKRON  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
ENRICHING LIVES SINCE 1955



By John T. Petures Jr.

## FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO

I know you've heard it before. Friends and colleagues seem to readily suggest that post-pandemic life will "never be the same."

I thought I'd weigh in, as I simply don't agree. During times of great calamity, there is an incredible human spirit in this country that Alexis de Tocqueville wrote about during his travels across America in the mid-1800s. He observed that when times were darkest, America and its citizens rallied, gave back, and found the resolve to move forward and address the many ills in our democratic society. Although I'm not a native son of Akron, that's the same spirit I've seen and will count on from our friends and neighbors as we adjust to this new world and continue to contribute both personally and professionally to strengthen the human condition in our community.

Economic challenges and job satisfaction weigh heavily on the decisions we make surrounding our families and careers. Yet we've consistently found ways to remain generous and support the charities that so many have come to rely on, especially as we've dealt with the scourge of this pandemic.

Akron Community Foundation has seen this philanthropic spirit remain alive and well throughout Summit and Medina counties.

Not only did our donors contribute nearly \$20 million during our last fiscal year, but we recently celebrated a milestone of 800 charitable funds.

We also continue to do our part in creating and stewarding a highly engaged and informed community of philanthropists. This includes younger donors who are interested in starting a fund, as well as those who are passionate about donating to causes that uplift women and girls, amplify the voices of people of color, and advance a lived equality for members of our LGBTQ+ community.

Our board of directors and staff team are also excited to embark on our next five-year strategic plan, which will strengthen our governance practices, increase the diversity and preparedness of our staff and volunteers, build connections to first-time grantees (which you can read about on page 8), and equip families to create a legacy of giving through The Center for Family Philanthropy.

We encourage you to continue reaching out to us for ideas and solutions to achieve your philanthropic goals. We're here to help – one vision at a time. Have a wonderful holiday season and a healthy and prosperous start to the new year. 🌱



# BACK & FORTH

## SOCIAL SHOUTOUTS

### Girl Scouts of North East Ohio

@girlscoutsofnortheastohio

Troop 90029 camped at Mammoth Cave using tents purchased from the Medina County Women's Endowment Fund of Akron Community Foundation. The girls were able to completely set up and pack their tents independently, too. We're thankful for the assistance provided to support a great opportunity for our girls.

### Summit Education Initiative

@SummitEducationInitiative

Congratulations to Erin Johnson and the rest of the Institute for Emerging Philanthropists graduates! Thank you, Erin, for choosing Summit Education Initiative as the focus of your first philanthropic effort. And a special thank you to ACF for supporting our work and helping to cultivate a community of philanthropy in Summit County.

### Crafty Mart

@akroncraftymart

We are so grateful for ACF's continuing support! Thank you for valuing our organization's mission to help local artists, makers and artisans refine and expand their creative businesses.

### Leadership Akron

@leadershipakron

Signature Class 39's Opening Retreat is off to a great start! Exploring perspectives on leadership, leaning into new relationships with classmates, and having a lot of fun in the process. Special thanks to John Petures and the team from Akron Community Foundation for supporting an amazing experience for these special leaders.



WOMEN'S ENDOWMENT FUND CIRCLE OF EMPOWERMENT GATHERING ATTENDEES

*Part of Akron Community Foundation, the Women's Endowment Fund serves a greater philanthropic purpose very near and dear to my heart. As a member of the Circle of Empowerment, I was able to attend last night's annual gathering, which celebrates and recognizes noteworthy achievements from the past year. Just as the Women's Endowment Fund is committed to sustaining and supporting local women, I am committed to doing my part to sustain and support their grantmaking impact each year. Kudos to the Women's Endowment Fund and all the wonderful donors who help make this work possible. You are appreciated by so many!*

**Ramona Hood**

**FedEx Custom Critical**

*That was the most fun and laughter I've ever heard at a Polsky event! Congrats to all of you. You outdo yourselves each year and your gigantic efforts pay off! Jeannine and Steve (Marks) were the epitome of grace and class mixed with perfect doses of self-deprecating humor. Their love for Akron overflowed, and that made the whole night truly memorable.*

**Jackie McDermott**

**Community Volunteer**

*Akron Community Foundation has been generous to Master Singers Chorale of Northeast Ohio for many years. Again this coming year, our choristers, their concert audiences, our artistic director and collaborative pianist, and the other professional musicians we contract with will all benefit from Master Singers Chorale being an ACF grantee. Thank you again for your generosity.*

**John Hornickel**

**Master Singers Chorale of Northeast Ohio**

*I'll never forget my first presentation to Akron Community Foundation, resulting in their first-ever grant to an LGBTQ organization. Not too many years later, a group of us would become the founding cornerstone donors of the Gay Community Endowment Fund at ACF, one of the first LGBTQ endowments in the nation. I salute all those activists who came before us, with us, and following us.*

**Chris Hixson**

**Gay Community Endowment Fund  
Founding Donor**

**COMPARATIVE  
SUMMARY  
STATEMENT OF  
FINANCIAL  
POSITION**  
*In Thousands*

The following is the audited financial statement for Akron Community Foundation's fiscal year ending March 31, 2022. ACF is audited on an annual basis by Sikich LLP. More information is available at [www.akroncf.org/Financials](http://www.akroncf.org/Financials).

<b>ASSETS</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
Cash and cash equivalents	\$125	\$441
Prepaid expenses	\$109	\$98
Contributions receivable, net	\$241	\$130
Other receivable	\$343	\$468
Property and equipment, net	\$3,236	\$3,108
Accrued investment income	\$247	\$247
Cash surrender value of life insurance	\$39	\$39
Investments	\$228,593	\$223,825
Funds held as agency endowment obligations	\$33,108	\$32,214
Beneficial interest in perpetual trusts	\$13,104	\$12,968
Real property held for investment	\$550	\$552
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$279,695</b>	<b>\$274,090</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
Liabilities:		
Grants approved for future payment	\$383	\$1,036
Accounts payable and other liabilities	\$718	\$675
Funds held as agency endowment obligations	\$33,108	\$32,214
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$34,209</b>	<b>\$33,925</b>
Net Assets:		
Without donor restrictions	\$127,707	\$125,628
With donor restrictions	\$117,779	\$114,537
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$245,486</b>	<b>\$240,165</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$279,695</b>	<b>\$274,090</b>
<b>REVENUES AND OTHER SUPPORT</b>		
Contributions	\$19,837	\$22,402
Investment income, net	\$9,234	\$7,131
Net appreciation (depreciation) on investments	(\$5,851)	\$65,697
Change in beneficial interest in perpetual trusts	\$136	\$3,228
Less amounts for agency endowments:		
Contributions	(\$1,895)	(\$1,664)
Investment income	(\$1,073)	(\$803)
Net appreciation (depreciation) on investments	\$487	(\$8,008)
<b>Total Revenues and Other Support</b>	<b>\$20,875</b>	<b>\$87,983</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Grants and other distributions	\$13,530	\$20,755
Administrative expenses	\$3,257	\$3,130
Less amounts for agency endowments:		
Grants and other distributions	(\$1,233)	(\$628)
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$15,554</b>	<b>\$23,258</b>
Increase (decrease) in net assets	\$5,321	\$64,725
Net assets, beginning of year	\$240,165	\$175,439
<b>Net Assets, End of Year</b>	<b>\$245,486</b>	<b>\$240,164</b>

# ACF: *By The* NUMBERS

During the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022, we achieved:

800+ TOTAL FUNDS

57

NEW FUNDS

NEARLY \$260

MILLION  
IN ASSETS

7,412

gifts totaling  
\$19.8 MILLION

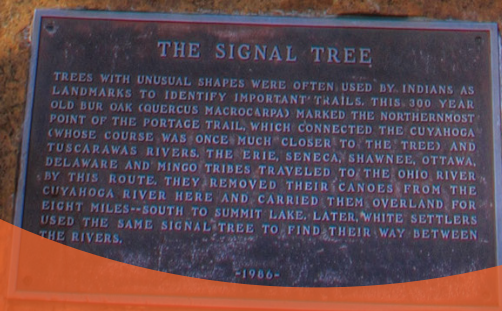
For a full list of donors, visit [www.akroncf.org/Donors](http://www.akroncf.org/Donors).

\$13.5 Million  
*in total grants and distributions*



New To Our Family

# NEW FUNDS



During the first half of fiscal year 2023 (April 1 - Sept. 30, 2022), we were pleased to welcome 14 new funds established by charitable individuals, families and organizations throughout Greater Akron.



## Donor-Advised Funds


Black Sheep Family Fund  
Madeline Bozzelli Fund  
CJS Fund  
DiLullo Family Fund  
Ethan Liming Memorial Fund  
George and Diane Sarkis Family Fund  
Bill and Trish Steere Fund  
Tucker Family Fund

## Designated Funds

Joseph Gains Memorial Scholarship Fund  
*Established to support a scholarship for Wadsworth High School  
speech and debate students*

## Agency Endowment Funds

ArtSparks Endowment Fund

 Shirley A. Froebe and Jerry M. Froebe Endowment Fund  
*Established to support the business, industrial technology,  
and home economics collections of the Stow-Munroe Falls Public Library*

Carole and Stuart Reese Endowment Fund (Cleveland Jazz Orchestra)

Summit Choral Society Maynard Family Foundation Scholarship Fund  
*Established to support the Children's Choir Program and other youth  
music education initiatives*

Summit Choral Society Grace Wakulchik Sing With Me Fund

## Professional Advisor Partners

Thank you to the following accountants, attorneys and financial advisors for helping their clients achieve their charitable goals with a fund at Akron Community Foundation from April 1 to Sept. 30, 2022:

Gregory R. Bean Stark & Knoll  
Kimberly Haws Falasco Baird  
Mark Muntean CAPTRUST

Are you an advisor? Learn how we can assist you at [www.akroncf.org/Advisors](http://www.akroncf.org/Advisors).

## Is a Donor-Advised STARTER Fund Right for You?

Akron Community Foundation is proud to introduce a new option for those who dream of making a difference in their community but may not have the \$5,000 minimum donation amount ready to give upfront. Like any donor-advised fund, the starter fund is a simplified, flexible and affordable option for beginning your strategic philanthropic journey.

You can establish a donor-advised starter fund with an initial donation of just \$300 and then build it up to the \$5,000 balance requirement over a period of three years. Donations can be made on a monthly, quarterly, semi-annual or annual basis – it's your decision.

Once your fund reaches \$5,000, you can begin making grants to the causes you care about. You can also continue to build your fund over time through tax-deductible contributions so that you'll have greater giving power in the future.

The benefits of a donor-advised starter fund include:

- Flexibility to give on your timeline
- Simple, automated giving options
- The opportunity to make a positive difference in your community

*Is a donor-advised starter fund right for you?  
Learn more at [www.akroncf.org/DAFStarter](http://www.akroncf.org/DAFStarter).*

 Permanently endowed funds

# 6 TYPES OF FUNDS

## Do It Yourself

### Donor-Advised Funds

A great private foundation alternative – you choose the grants

### Designated Funds

Support one or more of your favorite organizations

### 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 a cause or causes you're passionate about

### Board Discretionary Funds

Meet the community's ever-changing needs



**Small nonprofits find new opportunities for growth amid the pandemic**

By Olivia Eastly  
Marketing & Communications Coordinator  
Photos by Dale Dong



Over the past few years, everyone has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but younger, more grassroots organizations were especially transformed. Small organizations that were previously flourishing faced a dilemma and had to adapt quickly. Despite the odds, some groups rose to the challenge and grew during the pandemic.

### FROM GRASSROOTS GROWTH TO REGIONAL EXPANSION

Women Revived Ministries began in July 2019 in the driveway of the house Rachel Socorro acquired out of her experience in human trafficking.

“We built our whole organization through grassroots (efforts), with money from us ladies’ pockets,” Socorro recalled with a fond smile on her face.

Socorro is a survivor of human trafficking and has made it her mission in life to help other survivors thrive. But shortly after attaining 501(c)(3) status in October 2019, the pandemic hit the Akron community hard, and Socorro, as the founder and executive director of Women Revived Ministries, had to change course.

“COVID-19, for me, was what launched us into the growth we’ve seen over the last 18 to 24 months. It really exposed a lot of vulnerabilities we as humans experience,” Socorro said. “As we grew as an organization, we were able to recognize, address and serve those vulnerabilities. So we grew quickly before we realized what was happening.”

As a survivor herself, Socorro is familiar with the challenges women face when escaping from human trafficking. That knowledge made a difference when she approached Akron Community Foundation about funding one of Women Revived Ministries’ keystone programs: Operation Promise Land.

Akron Community Foundation gave the organization its first-ever grant to support Operation Promise Land in December 2021. The program provides a safe and supportive space for survivors of human trafficking and other violent situations. Participants are also offered ongoing peer support and resources for rebuilding their identity through economic empowerment and education.

“Akron Community Foundation was really the first organization to come along beside us, not only by funding us, but by mentoring and developing me as a director and leader,” Socorro said. “The money is important, but the knowledge, mentorship and development is equally important.”

Socorro and her organization have both changed tremendously in the past three years, but even as Women Revived Ministries begins expanding its services to the counties surrounding Akron, Socorro

remains dedicated to transforming the city into a place of peace and prosperity.

As of October 2022, the organization has five safe spaces accessible at most times within the city limits. Socorro explained that these spaces have low barriers to entry, allowing survivors to get the help they need without hitting red tape or becoming discouraged from establishing a new life for themselves.

“If we’re really going to help, the people we are serving have to have easy access,” she said.



RACHEL SOCORRO (RIGHT) SPEAKS WITH STAFF AT ONE OF THE ORGANIZATION'S RESIDENTIAL SPACES

Women Revived Ministries is now focused on providing survivors of all forms of trauma with a pathway to “Total Life Wellness.” This eight-week holistic health program combines education with wellness classes, building on the peer support model that was so instrumental to Operation Promise Land.

### THE PANDEMIC AS A BLESSING AND A CURSE

Karla McDay opened the first Harmony House shelter in 2014, long before the pandemic. Prior to that, there was no shelter specific to young adults experiencing homelessness in the community.

“With zero funding, I rented a small house in East Akron from a very compassionate landlord who happened to be my dad. I got cheap rent,” McDay said. “This was a single-family home, so we had four bedrooms, and each participant was responsible for paying \$10 a day.”

That \$10 provided residents between the ages of 18 and 26 with shelter, gas, electricity, water, Wi-Fi, cable, a landline telephone, a computer, a mailing address, donated clothes, donated food, and free laundry facilities.

Those expenses doubled in 2018 when McDay opened a second shelter in West Akron. Then, in 2019, she opened a home for young women. When the pandemic hit in 2020, everything became a lot more expensive. Suddenly, there were extra expenses to account for: everything from masks and hand sanitizer to gloves and cleaning supplies.

"During the midst of the pandemic, we had just recently opened a third house," McDay said. "For the first time, we had a girls' house. But because it was the middle of the pandemic, Akron Community Foundation gave us some funding that assisted us with getting the house furnished and getting the COVID precautionary items we needed."

A grant from Akron Community Foundation's Community Response Fund for Nonprofits was the first foundation funding McDay ever received for the program, and it started a chain reaction that changed Harmony House's funding model.

"COVID came about, and it was a blessing and a curse in some ways," McDay said. "Because we didn't want to see young people homeless in our community, (the community) made dollars available. So I was able to get away from the \$10 (model) and people were able to stay at a house through sponsorship."

McDay gives credit to the community foundation for the wave of funding that has allowed Harmony House to support more young people.

"Once you get funding from Akron Community Foundation... it makes people see you in a different light. It shows that you're credible. It gives exposure," she said.

Now, the organization continues to grow through local and federal funding. They also received a capital grant from the community foundation in its recent round of funding.

"We've gone from one house in East Akron with four beds, to one house in West Akron with four beds, and now 10 apartments that



HARMONY HOUSE FOUNDER KARLA MCDAY SHOWS OFF ITS RECENTLY ADDED WOMEN'S HOME

are throughout the community," McDay said. Harmony House is now able to host 26 young people in the city, "and that's a lot to start from \$10 a day and a dream," she said.

Despite what McDay has accomplished as executive director of Harmony House, she emphasized that it's a lot of work for a small team.

"One of the good things about Akron Community Foundation's funding (is that) some of it has been for operating (expenses)," McDay said. "That's what nonprofits need."

### CHALLENGES DRIVE INNOVATION

Wendy Duke and Laura Valenzuela co-founded the Center for Applied Drama and Autism in 2012 and began teaching acting classes to middle school students on the weekends. But it wasn't until 2015 that they received their first foundation funding in the form of a grant from the Millennium Fund for Children of Akron Community Foundation, which began a long-standing relationship between the foundation and the center.

CADA is best known for a production of Tennessee Williams' "The Glass Menagerie" in which the main character, Laura, is portrayed as a young woman with autism. Anna-Jeannine Kemper Griesacker, interim executive director of CADA, said that show was dependent on the studio getting its own space, which would not have been possible without the support of Akron Community Foundation.

"That was the first vote of confidence from the community," she said. "It was a show of faith, and CADA took it and ran with it."

Then the pandemic forced many theaters to close their doors for two years. Despite the setback, the staff at CADA used it as an opportunity to innovate and reach a wider audience. Griesacker observed the changes at CADA even before she accepted a job with the organization in April 2022.

"They really pivoted in one week," she said. "In one week, they announced their spring class series, and then everyone's life changed, and they turned right around and announced a full series of online courses."





A PRODUCTION OF THE GLASS MENAGERIE (PHOTO PROVIDED BY CADA)

Those online classes and performances made theater accessible to a larger audience, not only in Akron, but throughout the entire Northeast Ohio region.

"If you look at people who performed online or watched theatrical shows online, some of them had never been in a production or done drama before," Griesacker said. "Some of them had never even watched drama before. Now they can do it from their living room."

Since becoming the interim executive director after Duke retired in August 2022, Griesacker has found more than financial support through Akron Community Foundation. "It's more than just being willing to give us funds that are often not as restricted as some of the other grants we receive," she said. "It's also being able to have a person that supports you. It's so approachable to have a foundation that's here in the community."

#### ACF AND NONPROFITS AS PARTNERS

As our community grapples with rising costs, worker and volunteer shortages, health stressors, and other continued repercussions of the pandemic, Akron Community

Foundation is committed to helping nonprofits navigate this ever-changing landscape, whether it's through grant funding, workshops, informational events, networking, or making connections with the foundation's many fundholders.

"It's important for us to fund these smaller, grassroots organizations, while also acknowledging that they may need more than just financial support," said John Garofalo, vice president of community investment. "It is our philosophy that the mentorship, training and one-on-one consultation we provide to these organizations is sometimes more valuable than the grant itself."

As many nonprofits can attest, a bright spot over the past few years has been the emergence of leaders who are guiding their organizations to new heights as they find creative ways to meet the critical needs of their neighborhoods. And just as crucial are the partnerships the community foundation continues to foster with these grassroots organizations. 🌱

## More Equitable Grantmaking

In late 2021, Akron Community Foundation asked dozens of diverse nonprofit leaders to participate in a Racial Equity Impact Assessment of our competitive grantmaking process, with the goal of ensuring our grantmaking is as inclusive and equitable as possible.

Understanding that every nonprofit has different grant writing capabilities, we sought to make our grant application process more streamlined, less redundant and easier to follow.

To assist those who are applying for their first grant from the community foundation (and for some their first grant ever), we created two versions of the application – one for first-time applicants and one for returning applicants.

Also new to the process is the ability to upload a video. Applicants have the option to verbally tell their story and provide information that may not have been covered elsewhere on the application, but would be important for our board to consider when making grant decisions.

Akron Community Foundation hosted a webinar this summer to roll out the updated application to grantees. To view the webinar, visit [www.akroncf.org/GrantUpdate](http://www.akroncf.org/GrantUpdate).

**Learn more about Akron Community Foundation's funding at [www.akroncf.org/Grants](http://www.akroncf.org/Grants).**

A FESTIVE HOME FEATURED  
ON THE 2021 SUGAR PLUM  
TOUR OF HOLIDAY HOMES

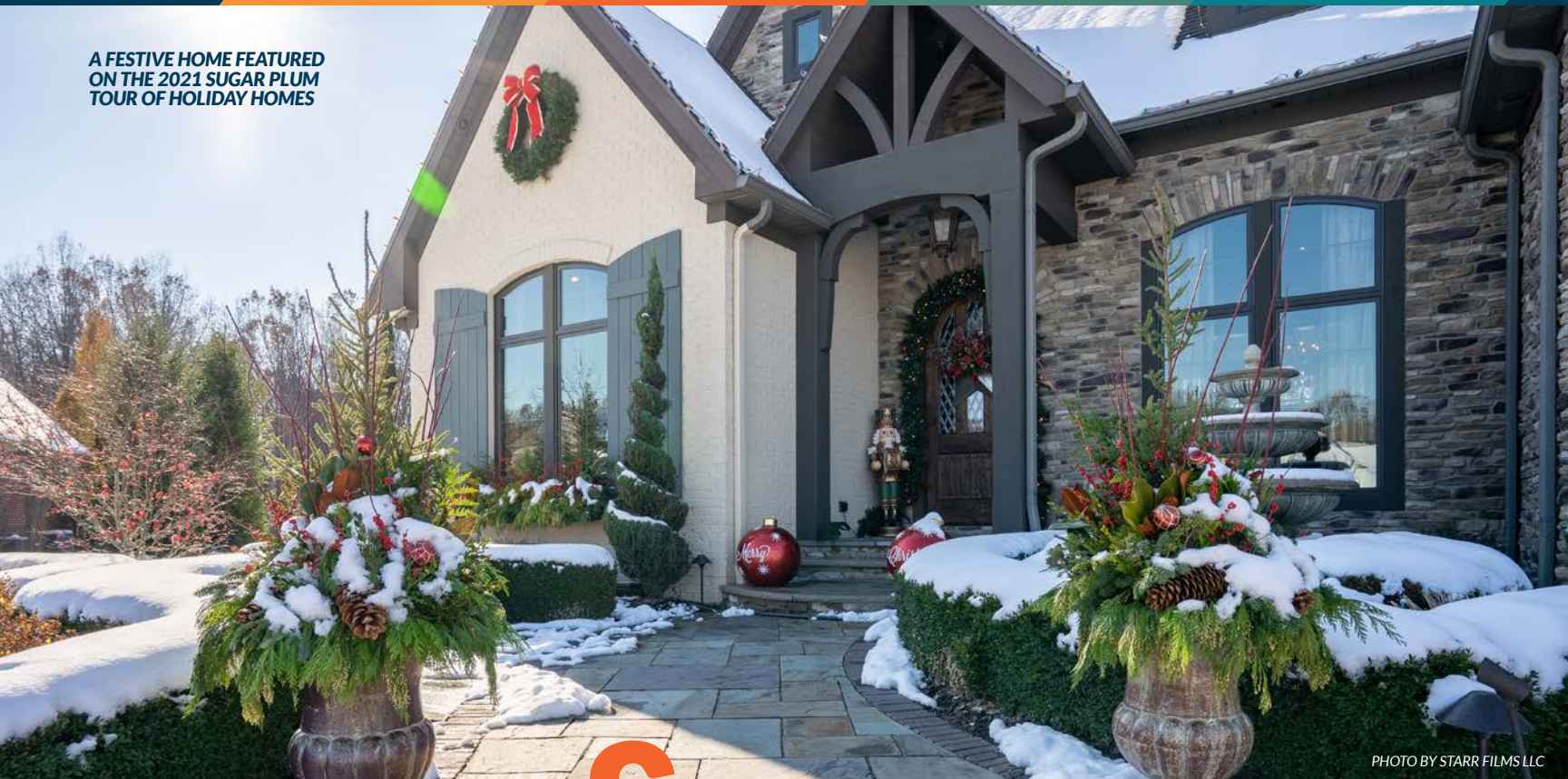


PHOTO BY STARR FILMS LLC

# FUNDS & INITIATIVES

## BATH COMMUNITY FUND

Supporters of Bath Community Fund gathered at Hale Farm & Village in August to celebrate the fund's impact in the community at its annual meeting. Among the nonprofit leaders in attendance was Jeannine Marks, executive director of Stewart's Caring Place, who thanked the fund and its donors for allowing the cancer wellness center to support 73 Bath residents who have been affected by cancer.

Bath Community Fund will announce its latest grants in December, bringing the fund's total grantmaking to more than \$200,000 since it was created in 2014. For a complete list of recipients, visit [www.akroncf.org/BCFgrants](http://www.akroncf.org/BCFgrants).

## GAY COMMUNITY ENDOWMENT FUND

Community members are invited to join the Gay Community Endowment Fund for its 21st annual Sugar Plum Tour of Holiday Homes. This signature fundraiser showcases the area's finest historic and contemporary homes, all decked out for the holidays. This year's festivities include both live and virtual tours, with the live tour taking place on Sunday, Dec. 4, and the virtual tour occurring the weekend of Dec. 10-11. Tickets are \$35 and can be purchased at [www.sugarplumtour.org](http://www.sugarplumtour.org). Proceeds from the tour support the fund's mission of advancing a lived equality for all LGBTQ+ people in Greater Akron.

Congratulations are also in order for GCEF advisory board members **Adam Besenyodi**, **Stephannie Garrett** and **Kate Raymond**, who were selected for Leadership Akron's Signature Class 39. This annual program exposes local leaders to experiences that prepare them to maximize their community impact.



The Gay Community Endowment Fund will award its next round of impact grants this winter. Strong preference will be given to programs that create safer environments for LGBTQ+ youth, combat phobias of the LGBTQ+ community, and support mental health and suicide prevention programs for LGBTQ+ people. Applications for both impact grants and micro grants are due Dec. 15. For more information, visit [www.akroncf.org/ApplyGCEF](http://www.akroncf.org/ApplyGCEF).



## MEDINA COUNTY COMMUNITY FUND

The Medina County Community Fund announced grants totaling \$33,700 to 15 nonprofit organizations during its annual Spark Hope event in June. This year's awards





included a \$3,000 grant to Access the Arts to provide digital arts classes for youth at the Medina County Juvenile Detention Center.

During the event, fund leaders also presented the inaugural Founders Award to fund co-founders Norbert “Nobby” Lewandowski and Jack Holland. Going forward, the Founders Award will be presented annually to a community member who has demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to improving life in Medina County for those less fortunate.

Applications for next year’s grants are due March 1. Apply online starting Feb. 1 at [www.akroncf.org/ApplyMCCF](http://www.akroncf.org/ApplyMCCF).

### **MEDINA COUNTY WOMEN’S ENDOWMENT FUND**

This summer, the Medina County Women’s Endowment Fund awarded \$24,700 in grants to nine nonprofit organizations that improve the lives of Medina County’s women and children. Several of the grants awarded this year supported programs that integrate the arts, play and education to help children grow into healthy, well-rounded individuals. A \$10,000 impact grant to Brunswick City Schools supported the construction of an inclusive playground that will meet the needs of children with disabilities throughout the community. For a complete list of grant recipients, visit [www.akroncf.org/MCWEFGrants](http://www.akroncf.org/MCWEFGrants).

Applications for next year’s grants are due March 1. Apply online starting Feb. 1 at [www.akroncf.org/ApplyMCWEF](http://www.akroncf.org/ApplyMCWEF).

### **MILLENNIUM FUND FOR CHILDREN**

A partnership between Akron Community Foundation and the Akron Beacon Journal/Beaconjournal.com, the Millennium Fund for Children enriches the lives of children throughout the newspaper’s audience

coverage area. Since 1999, the fund has grown to nearly \$1.2 million and invested almost \$900,000 into local children’s causes. Gifts from individual residents and corporations alike help fuel this growth, including the more than \$45,000 in gifts made last year. See the full list of donors at [www.akroncf.org/MillenniumDonors](http://www.akroncf.org/MillenniumDonors).

The Millennium Fund will announce its latest grants in December. For a complete list of recipients, visit [www.akroncf.org/MillenniumGrants](http://www.akroncf.org/MillenniumGrants).

### **VERNON L. ODOM FUND**

As president of the Akron Urban League for nearly 30 years, Vernon Odom spent much of his career improving the lives of Akron’s minority communities through education, advocacy and mentoring. Since 1993, the Vernon L. Odom Fund has continued his legacy by investing nearly \$215,000 into local programs that promote diversity and support ethnic and racial harmony.

Applications for the next round of grants are due Dec. 15. Apply online at [www.akroncf.org/ApplyOdom](http://www.akroncf.org/ApplyOdom).

### **WOMEN’S ENDOWMENT FUND**

In August, the Women’s Endowment Fund welcomed guests to its annual Circle of Empowerment gathering. The fund introduced a new four-tier model for the Circle of Empowerment, with opportunities to join at the \$10,000 Empower tier, \$5,000 Uplift tier, \$2,500 Inspire tier, or \$1,000 Support tier annually. The circle has grown to include 89 members who collectively contribute \$113,000 annually to the fund. Learn more about joining the Circle of Empowerment at [www.akroncf.org/WEFCOE](http://www.akroncf.org/WEFCOE).

The Women’s Endowment Fund will also host its 30th anniversary celebration on April 27 at the Akron Civic Theatre.

This year’s keynote speaker is Debra Adams Simmons, vice president of diversity, equity and inclusion for National Geographic Media. During the event, the fund will also honor former advisory board President **Tracy Carter** with the 2023 Judith A. Read Tribute Award for Service & Advocacy for Women. For more information, visit [www.akroncf.org/ForWomenForever](http://www.akroncf.org/ForWomenForever).



## **Welcome, New Board Members**

#### **Bath Community Fund**

Carolyn Kean  
Steve Strayer

#### **Gay Community Endowment Fund**

The Honorable Carol Dezso  
Kim Rivers  
Dr. Jeremy Troxler

#### **Medina County Community Fund**

Brian Frasier  
Edward Hopson  
Laure Javorsky

#### **Medina County Women’s Endowment Fund**

Lindsey Mickler

#### **Millennium Fund for Children**

Abby DiSalvo  
Michael Little  
Dannika Stevenson

#### **Vernon L. Odom Fund**

Shaleeta Smith  
Sonya Williams

#### **Women’s Endowment Fund**

Jolene Lane  
V. Rena Suber



*Steve and Jeannine Marks,  
2022 Recipients of the  
Bert A. Polsky  
Humanitarian Award*

By Tracy Burt  
Photos by Shane Wynn

# Setting The **PACE**

September marked the 20th anniversary of the Akron Marathon, a signature race series that has been an economic boon for Greater Akron since its founding by local visionaries Steve and Jeannine Marks. In October, the Marks family gave the community another reason to celebrate as they were honored as this year's Bert A. Polsky Humanitarian Award recipients. Steve and Jeannine accepted the award in front of nearly 450 of their family members, friends and colleagues.

Guests at the event were first regaled with the story of how this powerhouse couple came to be.

"I have this cousin," said Bob Littman, Jeannine's brother Matt's accountant at the time.

"You and everybody else," said Jeannine.

But, Jeannine acquiesced and gave him a chance. Atop the Cascade Plaza at the City Club a mere 13 months later, Steve popped the question. He rented a plane to circle the building, but Jeannine was busy at the buffet and didn't see the first two trips.

"I panicked! I only had enough to pay for three trips around the building," said Steve.

Luckily, the plane was so close that the table settings started to vibrate and caught Jeannine's attention.

"Well?" asked Steve.

"Of course!" said Jeannine.

And so began a relationship that would impact the community for decades to come.

While the Marks family are well known for bringing the marathon to Akron, they're equally known for the impact their daily work has had on the community where they were born and raised.

Everyone knows the muffin man, or so it seems in Akron. Steve Marks and his business partner, Harvey Nelson, started Main Street Gourmet as a muffin shop in downtown Akron after visiting an upscale mall in Los Angeles, where the busiest location was a shop selling only muffins and coffee.

Steve's entrepreneurial streak began in elementary school, where he tasted the



# *Giving back is a marathon, not a sprint, for two local humanitarians*

sweet success of business ownership by selling cinnamon-flavored toothpicks to his fellow fourth graders at Bath School. Despite his first setback – being shut down by the principal – Steve continued to embrace that entrepreneurial spirit, and with his partner, Harvey, built Main Street Gourmet to its current status as a leading provider of bakery products for both national and regional grocers, restaurants and food operators.

Through programs like Muffins for Mammograms, which has helped provide mammograms to uninsured women through sales of their product, and No Muffin Left Behind, which benefited the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank, Steve and Harvey used their confectionary empire to better the Greater Akron community, too.

But Steve wasn't the only one giving his time and talents for the benefit of the community.

In the mid-2000s, Jeannine helped Mimi Surloff establish Stewart's Caring Place, a nonprofit organization that provides support services to individuals and families on their cancer journey. Jeannine understands firsthand the impact an organization like Stewart's can have on a person, as she has lost several of her nine siblings to the disease.

For years, she channeled her grief through her volunteerism, but in 2016 she was tapped to lead the organization. Her hard work has paid dividends, as she's grown Stewart's fundraising and budget by more than 900% and was integral in the capital campaign for its new building that opened in Copley in 2020.

While building their careers, the Marks were also busy raising a growing family. Their oldest son, Wyatt, lives in Columbus and has completed more than 200 skydiving jumps. Middle daughter McKenna attended the Fashion Institute of Design, and their youngest daughter, Brady, is an on-air personality, hosting a radio program on WNWV 107.3.

Amid their work, volunteer commitments, and raising a family, Steve and Jeannine still had time for a personal hobby: running. Marathons, in particular.



Ever the entrepreneur, Steve envisioned bringing a marathon to Akron. In 2003, the first Akron Marathon was run with 3,700 participants. This past September, more than 7,000 participants ran through 13 neighborhoods during the marathon's marquee race event.

Since its inception, the marathon has generated more than \$130 million in economic impact and has raised over \$6 million for charities in Greater Akron.

In addition to the large-scale accomplishments the Marks are known for, they've served on myriad boards, committees and events, and have been honored with other prestigious community awards.

Steve is a graduate of Leadership Akron Class 9 and received its Distinguished Leader Award. He has served on the boards of Akron Community Foundation, the All-American Soap Box Derby, the Akron Civic Theatre, the American Red Cross and the Greater Akron Chamber, which honored him with its H. Peter Burg Award in 2012. He has received the Simonetti Distinguished Business Alumni Award and the University of Akron Alumni Honor Award from the university.

In addition to her work with Stewart's, Jeannine has served on the boards of Cleveland Clinic Akron General and the Jewish Community Board of Akron. She has received the Murray Glauberman Young Leadership Award from the Shaw Jewish Community Center of Akron and the Women of Achievement Award from the Women's Network of Northeast Ohio.

The Marks were both honored with the Chairman's Award from the Akron/Summit Convention & Visitors Bureau.

And now, the Bert A. Polsky Humanitarian Award. 🌱



STEVE & JEANNINE MARKS



HARVEY NELSON



ANNE BITONG, DIANE & BRET TREIER, LAURA LEDERER



JOHN T. PETURES JR.



SYLVIA TRUNDLE





FRANCES SEIBERLING BUCHHOLZER, JOE KANFER,  
ROB MALONE AND JACQUELINE SILAS-BUTLER



ANNE BITONG



WYATT, JEANNINE, STEVE AND BRADY MARKS

## An Ode to Steve & Jeannine Marks By John T. Petures Jr.

It's been quite a while since we've gathered  
Coming together to celebrate and reflect  
On the lives of dear friends we'll honor tonight  
That I'm certain we'll not soon forget

I've been so eager to craft words that rhyme  
With poetry so inspiring and keen  
My task was made easier by *their* selection tonight  
Thank goodness beyond Steve there's Jeannine

I spent endless nights pondering one simple word  
And then it hit me all of a sudden  
Go ahead and move on with the next stanza please  
Nothing really worthy rhymes with "muffin"

Most notable of their collective achievements  
Comes near the close of our summer  
An economic boon and marathon for our city  
With 20-year memories of runners

This is indeed a caring couple  
Who've inspired so many, it's true  
You've lifted the spirits of children and families  
Made friends and built bridges too

The words in this poem could never convey  
Nor capture the lives that they've touched  
Steve was on the search committee that hired me, of course  
So you know why I owe him so much

In his own right Steve has been honored  
With awards from the White House and Chamber  
And together they've rallied when needed the most  
Finding help for both friends and strangers

We've all lost loved ones to cancer  
This scourge on our journey through life  
Jeannine's felt this pain, offering support and comfort  
Loving daughter, caring sister, precious wife

Tonight will be filled with conversation and laughter  
Many will inquire, "How's this feel?"  
To join other legends who've received this award  
You see now it's quite a big deal

Giving back to this place has always mattered  
Contributing time, treasure and, yes, a race  
We've noted just a few of the ways you have rallied  
Living your lives with such compassion and grace

In the spirit of the Polsky tradition  
We pause and give thanks to our best  
With gratitude and admiration for all you have done  
Living your lives with such passion and zest



# NOTEWORTHY

## ACF LAUNCHES NEW CHARITABLE FUND OPTION

Launched in September, our donor-advised starter fund allows you to establish a donor-advised fund over a three-year period. With an initial \$300 donation, you can establish your fund and begin making payments to build it to the \$5,000 minimum balance required of traditional donor-advised funds. For more information or to start your fund, visit [www.akroncf.org/DAFStarter](http://www.akroncf.org/DAFStarter).

## ACF WELCOMES NEW STAFF MEMBER

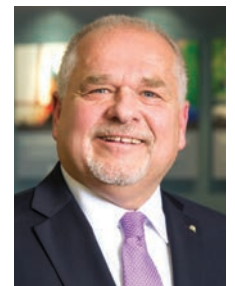
**Patty Stone** joined the community foundation this summer as our new Affiliate Fund Events & Volunteer Coordinator. In her role, Patty provides administrative support to our seven affiliate funds and serves as a liaison between the funds' volunteers and the foundation's staff. Prior to joining Akron Community Foundation, Patty worked for



Jobs for Ohio's Graduates, Junior Achievement and as a teacher. Please join us in welcoming Patty!

## PRESIDENT AND CEO NAMED TO OHIO 500

Congratulations to Akron Community Foundation President and CEO **John T. Petures Jr.** for being named to Ohio Business Magazine's Ohio 500, which recognizes "the most powerful and influential Ohioans who are working to make our state great."



## FOUNDATION RECOGNIZED BY FREEDOM HOUSE FOR WOMEN

Thank you to Freedom House for Women for recognizing Akron Community Foundation's service to the community at its 15th anniversary dinner on Oct. 8.



## TWO NEW BOARD MEMBERS ANNOUNCED

Akron Community Foundation is excited to welcome Angelina Milo and Brian Moore as our two newest board members.

**Brian Moore** is the shareholder-in-charge of the Akron office of Roetzel & Andress, where he negotiates real estate and finance deals for financial institutions, health care systems, regional transportation hubs, investors, developers and other real estate parties. His vast experience includes drafting and negotiating construction documents and leasing agreements for commercial, industrial and institutional real estate projects. Brian is actively involved in many organizations throughout the community and has joined the foundation's Community Investment Committee.



**Angelina Milo** is a certified public accountant with more than 25 years of experience in advising privately owned businesses and their owners on general tax planning, business restructuring, mergers and acquisitions, and succession planning. She is currently a vice president in Meaden & Moore's Tax Services Group and has joined the foundation's Finance and Investment Committee.



Congratulations also to Angelina for being named one of Cleveland Magazine's Women of Distinction.

## ACF BOARD MEMBERS HONORED

Congratulations to our board member **Dr. Rachel Talton** on being named one of the Enterprising Women of the Year Award winners from Enterprising Women magazine, a national publication for women business owners and entrepreneurs. Dr. Talton was celebrated at an event in Clearwater, Florida, in October.



On Nov. 3, **Theresa Carter** was celebrated as this year's Community Service Honoree at Goodwill's Taste of Vintage Gala for her work in inspiring volunteerism and empowering others to give back to the community.



Congratulations to you both on this well-earned recognition!

# EVENTS

## SUGAR PLUM TOUR OF HOLIDAY HOMES

**LIVE: DEC. 4, 2022**

**VIRTUAL: DEC. 10-11, 2022**

The Sugar Plum Tour is Akron's premier holiday home tour and the signature fundraiser of the Gay Community Endowment Fund. Join hundreds of tourgoers in experiencing the twinkling lights, roaring fires, sparkling trees and dazzling holiday decorations of homes nestled in neighborhoods throughout Greater Akron. This year's festivities will include both live and virtual tours of some of the area's finest historic and contemporary homes. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit [www.sugarplumtour.org](http://www.sugarplumtour.org).

## FOR WOMEN, FOREVER

**APRIL 27, 2023**

Join the Women's Endowment Fund as it celebrates 30 years of uplifting women and girls in our community. The keynote address will be delivered by Debra Adams Simmons, vice president of diversity, equity and inclusion for National Geographic Media. During the event, the fund will also honor former advisory board President Tracy Carter with the 2023 Judith A. Read Tribute Award for Service & Advocacy for Women. This will be the fund's first in-person celebration since 2019 and tickets are sure to go quickly, so reserve your seats now by becoming a sponsor at [www.akroncf.org/ForWomenForever](http://www.akroncf.org/ForWomenForever).

## ON THE TABLE: ACTION CHALLENGE

**FEB. 1-15, 2023**

More talk and more action. That's the hope for Akron Community Foundation's return of On the Table. In the fourth installment of this community-wide event, we're issuing the On the Table Action Challenge, which encourages residents of Summit and Medina counties to participate in seven specific tasks. The tasks range from reading articles and stories to attending community arts events and patronizing locally owned businesses – all culminating in a one-on-one conversation with a community member with whom you wouldn't typically interact. Learn more at [www.onthetableakron.com](http://www.onthetableakron.com).

**MEMORIAL GIFTS TO:**

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Betsy I. Tausch  
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Thomas Adam  
Judge John R. Adams  
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**Madeline Bartz by**  
Culp Family Charitable Fund at  
Schwab Charitable  
**Vern Cunningham by**  
Judythe A. Hummel  
**Edith Hartle Darnell by**  
Ann Otto  
**Marian Davies by**  
Judythe A. Hummel  
**Evangelia Tsimpinou Diamanda by**

Litsa Varonis  
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Colleen R. Tullius  
**Christine Freitag by**  
Barbara Tannenbaum  
**Rosalie Gaylor by**  
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# MAXIMIZE YOUR TAX SAVINGS

## *With Gifts of Stock*

Despite this year's market volatility, many taxpayers are still looking for a way to increase deductions and reduce their tax burden for 2022. Our experienced team can help you lower your tax liability and preserve more of your hard-earned money for your charitable goals.



If you own stock with unrealized losses, consider using **tax-loss harvesting** to turn the loss into a win for both your portfolio and for charity.

+



By selling the stock at a loss and donating the proceeds to charity, you can offset other realized capital gains and **reduce your overall tax burden.**

=



Capital losses that exceed capital gains can also be used to **offset up to \$3,000 in ordinary taxable income** per year and can be carried forward indefinitely\*.

For investors who do have highly **appreciated stock**, donating the shares directly to charity gives you a double benefit: You receive a deduction for the fair market value and also **eliminate capital gains taxes.**



For the **greatest impact**, donate appreciated shares with a **low cost basis.**

You can then repurchase the same number of shares with **cash**



to **reset your cost basis** without recognizing the capital gain.



\*Keep in mind that all sales transactions must be completed by Dec. 31 for the 2022 tax year and investors cannot repurchase stock sold for a loss within 30 days.

Learn more about ways you can maximize your tax savings before the end of the year at [www.akroncf.org/YearEnd](http://www.akroncf.org/YearEnd).



# TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR IRA

*ACF Makes Donating Retirement Assets Easy*

The deadline for a required minimum distribution is **quickly approaching!**



If you are 72 or older and haven't yet taken your required minimum distribution, consider using it to support your favorite charities.

By making distributions **from your IRA directly to charity,**



you'll gain the equivalent of a **dollar-for-dollar charitable contribution deduction** on this year's tax return.

Qualified charitable distributions allow donors to

**avoid paying income taxes**



on the distributions

while supporting deserving causes in the community.



These tax-free distributions can be large or small — from \$100 to \$100,000.

Gifts of IRA assets are especially advantageous for seniors who can no longer itemize their charitable contributions under the current tax law.

## IMPORTANT REMINDERS

Distributions must be made **directly**

from the trustee of the IRA



to charity

Donors cannot deposit the distribution and then write a check to charity.

Qualified charitable distributions

can support



**any**

**public charity,**

including Akron Community Foundation



**Qualified charitable distributions**

⊘ cannot support Donor-Advised Funds



**They CAN support or create**

- ✓ Designated Funds
- ✓ Scholarship Funds
- ✓ Agency Endowment Funds
- ✓ Field-of-Interest Funds (in the donor's area of interest)

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# The Signal Wish Book

Look for **The Signal Wish Book** in early 2023 and help fund the most pressing needs for 50 of our community's vital nonprofits. From helping to purchase computers to providing shoes for children to purchasing bunk beds for a homeless shelter, your fulfillment of these wishes will make an immediate impact in our community. With your help, we hope to fulfill every wish on the list – nearly \$250,000 in requests!