

We Rise by Lifting Others



**COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS**

Report to Our Community 2020

Serving Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire Counties

You Lifted Others

As we all attempt to come to terms with the harsh realities of the coronavirus pandemic, supporting each other has never been more important. *You've done it*—by helping your neighbors in need.

Your determination to protect and care for each other is entirely remarkable, though not surprising. That's because the hearts of communities beat with every act of concern, compassion, and generosity—and your good works have been the lifeblood of western Massachusetts for a very long time.

Look inside these pages to see how you—and many people like you—have lifted local communities and built resilience before and after the pandemic in the past year.

You comforted each other.

You nourished your neighbors.

You lifted spirits and beautified neighborhoods.

You created safer spaces.

You sheltered each other.

You made college dreams come true.

You taught each other through screens, masks, and distance.

You sustained the earth.

You provided for the communities you love.

You donated generously to those in need.

You—our donors, volunteers, fundholders, nonprofit grantees, student scholars, and business and organizational collaborators—made these stories possible.

We are proud to be your community foundation and your partner in making our Valley strong.

Our gratitude to you is boundless.





You comforted each other

How Can Kids Cope with the Loss of Someone They Love?

At **Rick's Place** in Wilbraham, coping and comfort are found within the warm folds of its peer grief support groups for children, parents, and caregivers. The nonprofit was founded in memory of Wilbraham native Rick Thorpe, who died in the World Trade Center on 9/11.

Executive Director Diane Murray said, "They're that kid whose father died of cancer, whose friend died in an accident, or they've lost a relative due to addiction. Regardless of their ages, those kids tell us grief makes them feel very isolated."

Peer support groups can help change that. "It's remarkable how rapidly kids develop trust and share their feelings with each other, and how they can use their own experiences to help someone else along the way. There's just something about being around others who understand some of what they're going through," Murray says. "It's almost miraculous."

A grant from the Community Foundation in 2019-20 helped Rick's Place offer grief support groups to young people and their parents, grandparents and caregivers in Springfield schools—for the first time. Due to the coronavirus, Murray anticipates an increased need for grief peer support when schools re-open this fall.

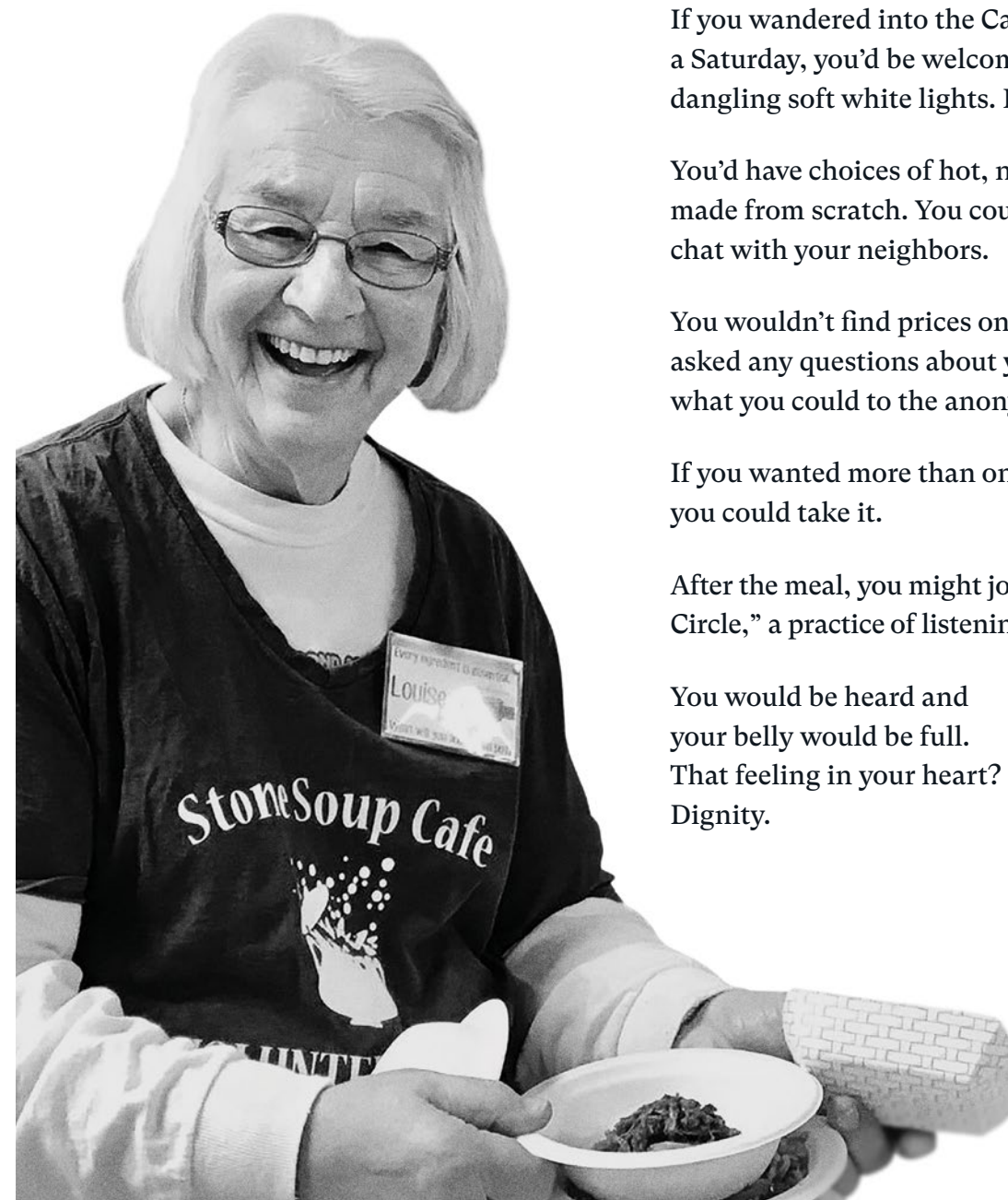
At an outdoor grief camp run by Rick's Place, kids create flower pots to remember the person they're grieving.

Photos courtesy of Rick's Place



Stone Soup Café serves 10,000 meals yearly to people who are food insecure. Grants from the Community Foundation and the COVID-19 Response Fund supported its work. During the pandemic, the Café is providing a curbside pantry and packaged cooked meals for pickup by people in need.

Photos courtesy of Stone Soup Café



You nourished your neighbors

1 in 7.

That's how many Greenfield residents are hungry, says Kirsten Levitt, executive director and chef of the **Stone Soup Café**. Housed in Greenfield's All Souls Church, the Café hosts a weekly communal lunch for anyone who comes through its doors.

What if that one was you? How would you want your community to treat you?

If you wandered into the Café in the church basement on a Saturday, you'd be welcomed into conversation under dangling soft white lights. Live music may be playing.

You'd have choices of hot, nourishing, gluten-free food made from scratch. You could linger over your meal to chat with your neighbors.

You wouldn't find prices on any foods, nor would you be asked any questions about your means. You might add what you could to the anonymous donation boxes.

If you wanted more than one meal, including one to-go, you could take it.

After the meal, you might join in chair yoga or a "Council Circle," a practice of listening and speaking from the heart.

You would be heard and your belly would be full. That feeling in your heart? Dignity.



You lifted spirits and beautified neighborhoods



Photos by Erin Long Photography

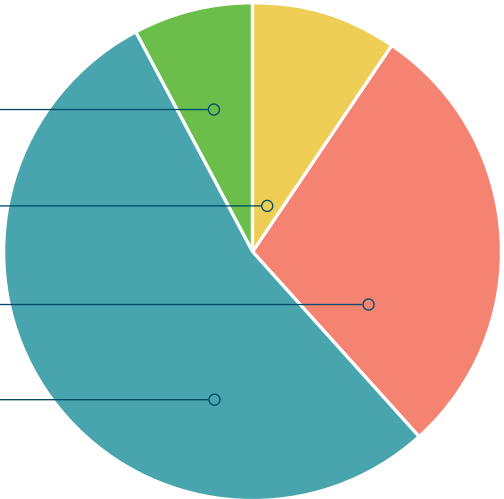
With a boost from a Community Foundation grant, **Common Wealth Murals** led the awe-inspiring mural festival, Fresh Paint Springfield®, in June 2019. Professional muralists from the Springfield area and beyond (Colectivo Morivivi, a woman-led artists collective hailing from Puerto Rico, pictured above) completed 10 large murals in downtown Springfield over the course of several weeks.

During 11 events—including paint parties, gallery exhibitions, mural tours, and a block party—people of all ages helped paint the murals. Twelve Springfield artists painted small murals for donation to local community organizations. The project contributed to the growing cultural and economic renaissance in Springfield.

In partnership with the Barr Foundation of Boston, we awarded **\$278,250** in grants to local arts organizations and artists.

- \$21,000:** Direct Grants to Individual Artists
- \$27,000** Capacity Building Grants to Organizations
- \$80,250:** Planning Grants to Organizations
- \$150,000:** Implementation Grants to Organizations

ValleyCreates



At a January 2020 workshop, 21 local socially responsible artists gathered to sharpen their “design justice” skills. They traded ideas while learning to rethink design processes, center people who are typically marginalized by design, and use collaborative, creative practices to address the deepest challenges our communities face. Yara Liceaga-Rojas and Shey Rivera (pictured above) facilitated the workshop, hosted by the Community Foundation and **Assets for Artists**, a program of **MASS MoCA**.

You cared for each other

A Determined Neighborhood Stands Tall

Springfield’s bustling North End is home to 11,000 residents. **New North Citizen’s Council**, a neighborhood pillar for 47 years, helps meet social service needs for the neighborhood’s residents working to overcome poverty—especially for undocumented immigrants excluded from social and health care safety nets.

Many people came to the North End from Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. Others immigrated from Guatemala, Mexico, El Salvador, and Honduras to work at local farms and to make a better life for themselves and their families, according to New North’s executive director, Maria Ligus.

The coronavirus pandemic hit the North End hard. Since undocumented residents were ineligible for government economic stimulus relief, despair gripped the neighborhood when unemployment rose. Worse, the crisis temporarily disrupted regular deliveries to New North from the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts.

So, when New North received a COVID-19 Response Fund grant through the Community Foundation, it purchased thousands of dollars worth of gifts cards to two neighborhood food stores. Often walking door-to-door, its staff distributed the cards to people most in need. They also handed out totes packed with masks, gloves, sanitizer, and health and safety information.

One recipient was a woman raising her three grandchildren under age six. She was overcome with emotion when she received a \$50 gift card for food.

Another was a mother of three children, one with autism. When her employer—a local restaurant—closed due to COVID-19, she had no income. The gift card helped her buy much-needed food.

And when 11 grieving North End families couldn’t afford funeral expenses for loved ones lost to COVID-19, Ligus used Response Fund dollars to discreetly arrange payment through a local funeral home. Ligus knew their sorrow firsthand; she lost her father to the coronavirus.

New North—with 100 employees—closed for just one week when the pandemic started. Nearly all programs re-opened quickly with new safety protocols and video support groups.

The neighborhood needed them.

“We were very scared,” said Ligus. “But my staff members were essential, and they put themselves at risk to deliver services. We have great employees.”

“MassMutual has long supported the Community Foundation’s efforts to create educational and economic development opportunities for all. This year, our work together took on greater urgency with the launch of the COVID-19 Response Fund, which has brought critical aid to those in need while establishing a way for others in the community to contribute. This was a great example of how our ongoing partnership with the Community Foundation allows us to make an immediate, meaningful impact when it is needed the most.”

ROGER CRANDALL, CHAIRMAN
President & CEO, MassMutual

MassMutual’s gift of \$1 million to the COVID-19 Response Fund led the business community in providing emergency relief to local residents. The Community Foundation hosts the Fund, and to date has contributed \$2.1 million as well as staff and administrative support.

Four times per month, 200 people line up for **New North Citizen Council’s** mobile food pantry. The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts delivers the food.

Photos courtesy of The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts



You created safer spaces

Becoming Agents of Change

“Many years ago,” reflected Clare Higgins, executive director of **Community Action Pioneer Valley** in Greenfield, “I got a call from a Springfield police officer. We were the only place he knew to refer gay kids when family dynamics went south and kids got thrown out.”

Homelessness is common among gender non-conforming and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth (LGBTQ), and these youth also face high rates of bullying, depression, and other behavioral risks, said Higgins.

“Even in two counties that pride ourselves on being progressive and forward-looking, youth of color, gender non-conforming youth, LGBTQ youth...they struggle,” Higgins said. “And they can be pretty isolated in Franklin and Hampshire counties.”

That’s why Community Action has worked for years, particularly in schools, to create safe places for mentoring and skill-building aimed to help these young people protect themselves from negative influences.

A grant from the Community Foundation supported Community Action’s youth-led ShoutOut! summer program in 2019. There, according to Higgins, youth learned the leadership skills to become “agents of change in their own lives.”

She pointed to success stories like the one in Greenfield: ShoutOut! youth participants successfully advocated that \$200,000 slated for school resource officers be shifted to provide student academic and mental health support.

“The decision-makers in the town government cited youth leaders who spoke out as a key in their decision,” said Higgins proudly. “It’s all about working with youth to look at things that are going on in their community they want to change—then coming together to make those changes.”

*ShoutOut! and GenerationQ youth program participants posed with **Community Action** staff before leading the 2019 Northampton Pride Parade.*

Photo courtesy of Jessye Deane, Community Action Pioneer Valley



You sheltered each other

“We Saved People’s Lives”



When COVID-19 paralyzed the Commonwealth in March, 14 children were among the families staying in the 33-bed shelter run by

Womanshelter/Compañeras, an agency serving Greater Springfield residents affected by intimate partner violence. Calls for help and protection flooded its hotline.

Carmen Nieves, in her first year as executive director, saw few options. The organization’s sister agencies closed, her shelter was full, and her staff could no longer offer survivors bus tickets so relatives could harbor them in other states. Support groups—offered in three languages—couldn’t safely continue.

But Womanshelter/Compañeras refused to close its shelter. “What was I supposed to do with families fleeing abuse?” recalled Nieves.

Her staff kept calling and checking on women who were hiding in their cars, living with their abusers, or on the streets. The agency hired an extra cleaning crew, bought prepared meals, and purchased tablets since families couldn’t gather in its TV room. Early on, the shelter lacked masks and access to COVID tests.

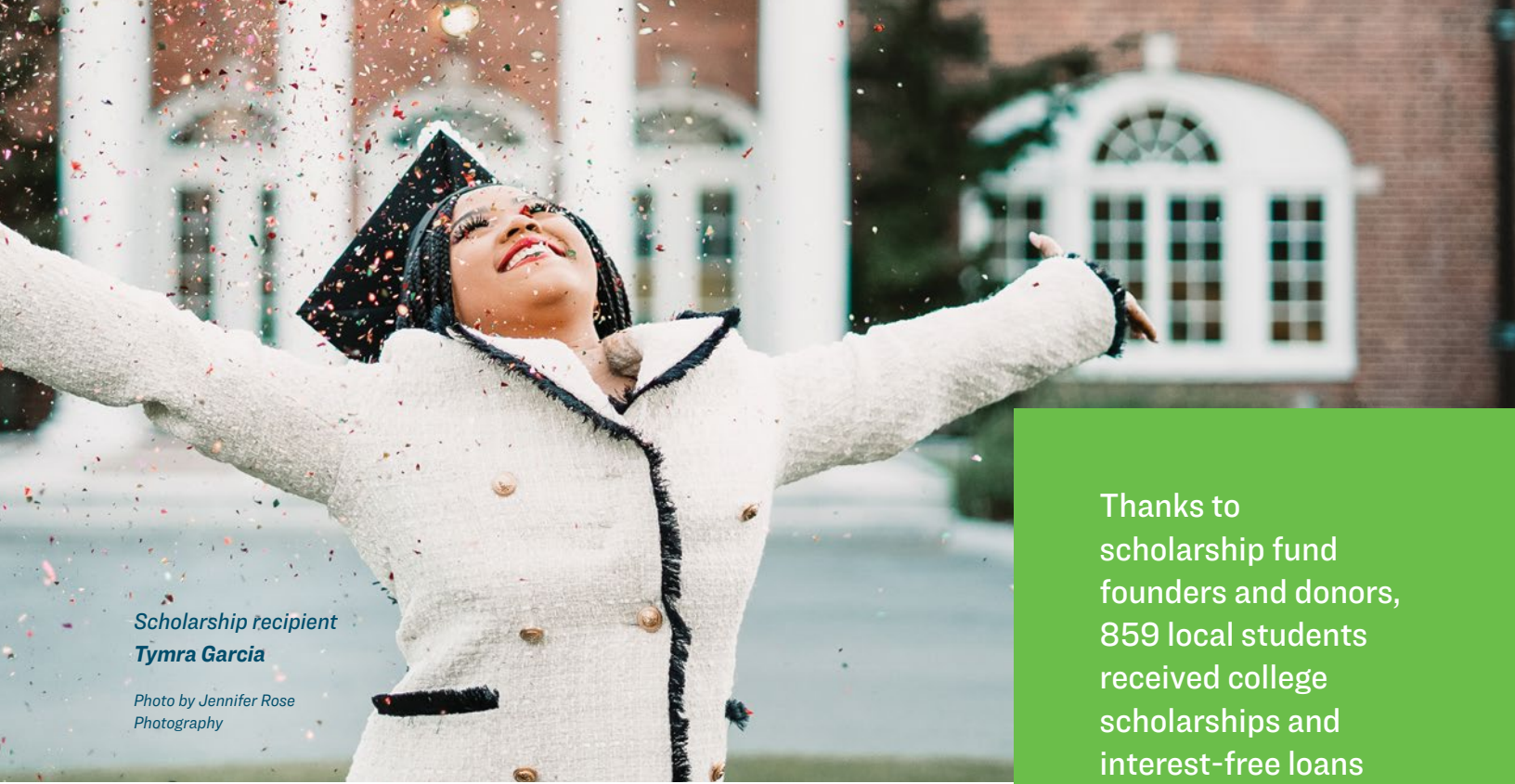
With an emergency grant from the COVID-19 Response Fund, “We used the money for hotels and to be able to save peoples’ lives,” said Nieves. Typically, the agency spent \$7,000 annually sheltering domestic violence victims in hotels; during the pandemic, those costs swelled to \$15,000 per month.

Since hotel rooms were available only for essential workers, Nieves had to advocate at the highest levels of state government so hotels would take in survivors—many for two weeks or more. Fiercely protecting the confidentiality and safety of those fleeing violence, she went to hotels herself to book rooms.

The pandemic isn’t over, and Womanshelter/Compañeras bravely perseveres. But, Nieves said, “It’s because of the Community Foundation that we were able to take so many people in during that early period and into hotels...buying us time to be able to get them somewhere safe.”

“A lot of people who live in this area love where they live. They support certain local causes and they want to continue that as part of their estate plan. It’s very inspiring for my clients to partner with the Community Foundation and have bigger conversations about their values and goals and how they can approach philanthropy in a planful, strategic way.”

SEUNGHEE CHA
Partner at Bulkley, Richardson and Gelinias, LLP, Hadley



Scholarship recipient
Tymra Garcia

Photo by Jennifer Rose
Photography

Thanks to scholarship fund founders and donors, 859 local students received college scholarships and interest-free loans totaling **\$2 million** for the 2019-20 academic year.

You made college dreams come true

An Aspiring Attorney

As an intern at Community Legal Aid in Springfield, **Tymra Garcia** was in Housing Court every Tuesday, often assisting people facing homelessness.

“Everybody was so grateful. People noticed I was so young and that I was helping them with a life crisis, foreclosure, or losing a home. Everybody who came in there was having their own problems—society may have dealt them a hard card or a hard life. I was advocating for people who couldn’t advocate for themselves in the legal world. I really liked it, and it was then I knew I definitely wanted to be an attorney.”

Tymra earned a paralegal certification and bachelor’s degree in legal studies from Bay Path University in 2020. A scholarship from the Community Foundation’s **Urban League of Springfield Scholarship Fund**, established by an anonymous donor, helped make college more affordable for her.

Tymra plans to apply to law school this fall, but she won’t forget her Springfield roots.

“I definitely want to come back to my city. Springfield is home. And I hope to get a chance to do immigration law and help refugees and people seeking asylum. I want to give back to the minority community because, as a woman of color, that’s where my heart lies.”

You taught each other through screens, masks, and distances

“Emergency Teaching”

When the coronavirus bore down on western Massachusetts and shuttered classrooms, the **International Language Institute (ILI)** of Massachusetts shifted to “emergency teaching,” said its executive director, Caroline Gear.

On most days, said Gear, the halls of the 36-year old Northampton-based language school “look like a mini-United Nations.” Sitting next to each other learning English might be a refugee with a third-grade education and an international student with a Ph.D. Aged 17 to 80, some are fitting their studies between work at two (or three) jobs. Other students—enrolled in Spanish, French, or German classes—have set their sights on studying abroad.

The common bond? A thirst to improve their language skills, work gainfully, and contribute fully to their communities.

But, when COVID-19 hit, ILI faced massive challenges. Many students—stuck at home—lacked computers, smartphones, or internet access for video learning. Many had never used Zoom or Google Hangouts. ILI’s teachers were accustomed to teaching in-person, not from their homes.

Gear and her teachers mobilized to offer classes online and to give students resources to access them. In hand was a capacity grant from the Community Foundation, earmarked to build a web-based language management system. From student enrollment to volunteer coordination and financial management, the system will give ILI the software and power to operate online daily.

“Little did I know when I wrote that grant in October that this would be exactly what we needed when COVID-19 hit,” said Gear.

Since online learning is here to stay, ILI will soon be using the new system to deliver language classes more efficiently (and virtually!) to eager learners—with the help of video technologies and dedicated teachers.

International Language Institute of Massachusetts (ILI) has provided free English classes for area immigrants and refugees for over 30 years.

Photo by Paul Specht
Photography, courtesy of ILI



You provided for the communities you love

A Lasting Love Affair with Heath

Don Conlan’s love of Heath started with a 30-acre abandoned pasture he bought from a local farmer in 1970.

By then, he was a career economist who’d worked at the highest levels of banks, brokerage firms, and government in New York, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles.

Why Heath?

Conlan answered, “Let me give you a little saying on t-shirts sold at the Heath annual agricultural fair: ‘Heath is more a concept than a place.’ It’s really true. Heath just has a mystique of its own. People fall in love with it, become very protective of it. It’s warm, cheerful, interactive and enjoys tremendous community support. And if you try and take yourself too seriously in Heath, you’re done for.”



That’s Don Conlan riding shotgun in his beloved 1968 pickup, pulling the Hysterical Society’s float in the annual Heath Fair.

Born and raised on a Michigan farm and now a California resident, Conlan has long savored Heath’s laid-back, humble vibe.

For decades he’s visited Heath, staying in a modest cabin (no electricity or insulation) he built on his now-forested pasture. He’s never missed the Heath Fair—“a time for gathering East Coast friends for a rip-roaring good time,” he says.

“Of course we had a float in the fair every year. We were notorious. We called ourselves the Heath Hysterical Society. It was always humorous and sometimes outrageously so.”

Conlan’s keen interest in Heath’s historical landmarks—some dating back to the mid-1700s—compelled him to establish a philanthropic fund at the Community Foundation that will benefit the town forever.

Conlan established the Dickinson Family Fund for Historical Heath—named to honor a revered Heath family which, he says, is connected to the poet, Emily Dickinson.

“I wanted to assure there’s money to support the maintenance and repairs of the various aspects of Heath history.” The fund supports the Heath Agricultural Fair, Union Church, and the Heath Historical Society.

Conlan designated the leaders from each entity and Dickinson family members to allocate the fund’s dollars each year. “I had to put it in the hands of the people whom I knew and trusted to shepherd the history and the historical artifacts of Heath to the future.”

Thanks to Conlan’s gifts, Heath’s future is, indeed, in good hands.

“I spent my whole professional career in western Massachusetts and I just felt it was important to give back and to do it locally, where the impact would be greater. There are a lot of nonprofits I’m not aware of that have needs. I don’t want to figure those out, but the Foundation is set up to do that. That’s why giving through the Foundation is a very easy way for me to achieve my goals.”

MIKE PARSONS
Northampton

Through donor advised and endowed funds at the Community Foundation, Mike supports causes most meaningful to him, including health care, a local church, people struggling to overcome poverty, and the Community Foundation’s annual fund.

Amazingly generous donors contributed **\$7.4 million** to the Community Foundation in our fiscal year ending March 31, 2020—all to help local communities thrive.

Donor advised fund holders at the Community Foundation made grants totaling **\$4.6 million** in fiscal year 2019-20 to nonprofits tackling issues the donors cared most about.

The COVID-19 Response Fund launched on March 13, 2020 to support emergency relief, recovery, and rebuilding in Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin counties. Since then, **650 donors and partners have contributed \$9 million to the Fund** (and counting!).

You sustained the earth

Fighting the
Global Climate
Crisis—Locally

“My fear is that life on this planet is not going to continue,” says **Nancy Hazard** of Greenfield.

Fear—of nuclear destruction and climate change—has driven her to seek solutions for protecting and repairing the earth. It’s a mission she’s pursued for decades.

Hazard has built solar homes, led the Tour de Sol (“America’s green car competition and festival”), and championed a study of Greenfield’s energy consumption to help the town save money and reduce its reliance on fossil fuels. She volunteers with Greenfield’s Tree Committee.

Hazard also directs dollars to local environmental causes from a donor advised fund she established at the Community Foundation.

“Searching for climate change solutions has led me to learn many things about fossil fuels and their alternatives—solar, wind, and water. And the Community Foundation has introduced me to local projects.”

Habitat for Humanity’s pilot project to build zero-net-energy homes intrigued Hazard. “I thought, ‘I’d love to make that happen!’ I care about low-income people, and wouldn’t it be

great if Habitat could build three to five homes each year that have very low utility bills. Solar panels would produce as much energy as the house uses.”

She supports another favorite cause—community farming—through Just Roots in Greenfield. “They’re growing food and making it available to everyone, including people who don’t normally have access to fresh food. And, they’re doing fascinating research with the Community Health Center of Franklin County to track whether eating healthy food actually improves health.”

Throughout her life, said Hazard, “I’ve gravitated toward finding solutions.” Greenfield is better for it.



*Nancy Hazard
in her favorite
place: outdoors.*

FROM OUR LEADERS

Our fiscal year—April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020—began with a strong community responding to evolving needs. It closed with an unprecedented crisis that upended the lives of every one of us.

Reflecting back, we see how our community’s history of generosity and commitment allowed our region to quickly and effectively help those most at risk during the COVID-19 pandemic.

You’ve again proven the power of philanthropy to do good.

As we write this and experience our community and nation in the throes of the coronavirus and its ramifications, and the renewed focus on racial injustice, we are clear-eyed about the challenges ahead.

We also see the opportunities to further strengthen our Valley. We altered our approach to grantmaking and the coming year will see further shifts in how we listen and how we marshal resources to support Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire counties.

Thank you for your energies, your giving, and your unwavering dedication to the well-being of your neighbors across the region. As we look to a challenging year ahead, we are more aware than ever that partnerships are essential to our region’s resilience and renewal. We are humbled and grateful to be your partner.

With gratitude,



Katie Allan Zobel

KATIE ALLAN ZOBEL
President and CEO



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ELIZABETH H. SILLIN
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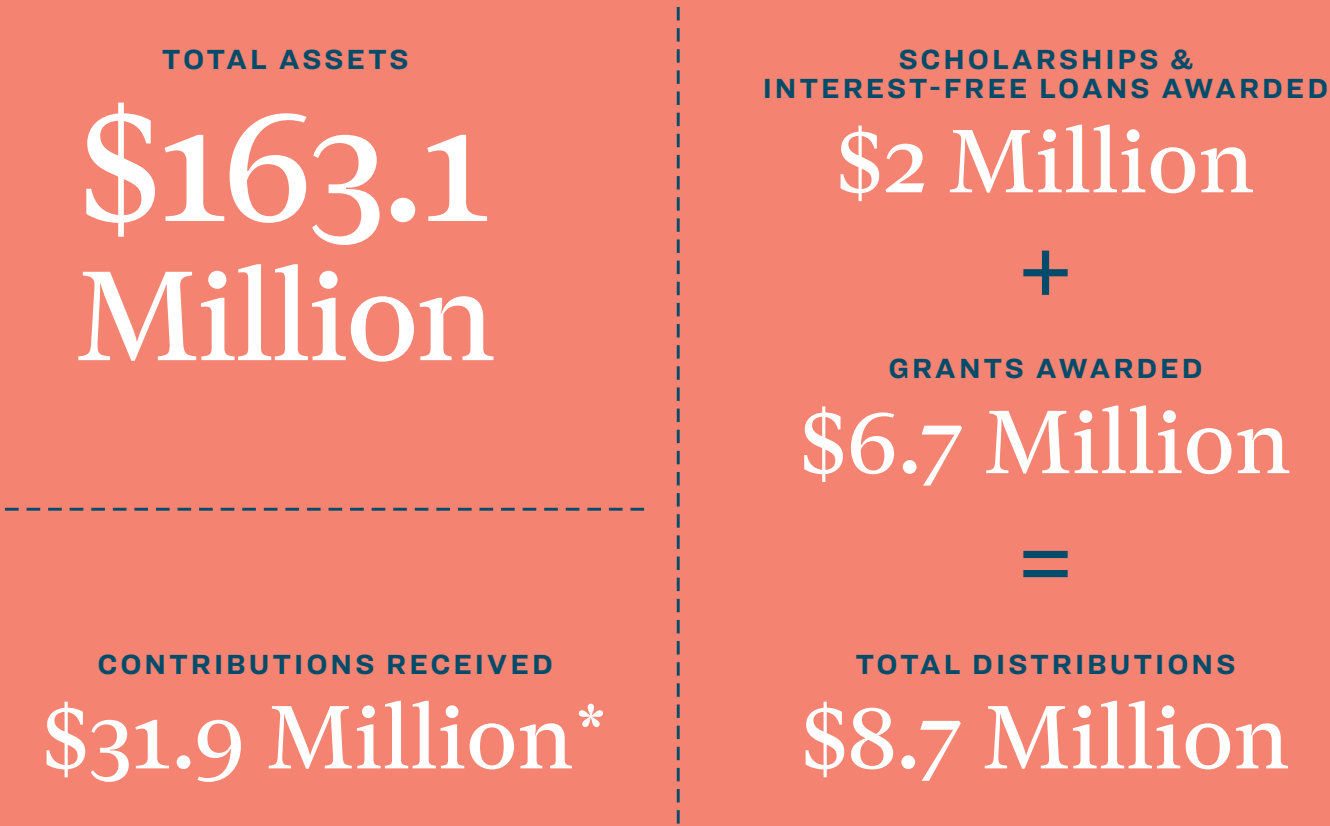
PAUL MURPHY
Trustee Vice Chair



A grant from the COVID-19 Response Fund helped Community Action Pioneer Valley, which operates two food pantries in Franklin County, safely meet the skyrocketing need for food during the pandemic.

Photo courtesy of Community Action

COMMUNITY INVESTMENTS



*Includes transfer of three trusts of more than \$22 million from Bank of America after a 29-year community grantmaking collaboration.

For our full financials, please visit communityfoundation.org/financials

CREATE YOUR LEGACY IN YOUR COMMUNITY

If you would like to build your fund or create a new charitable fund to support the causes you care most about, contact us. You can choose from flexible giving options to create lasting impact in the communities you love. Whether your favorite cause is the arts, health, the environment, human services, college scholarships, or creating more inclusive communities, we can help you meet your charitable goals. Give now or after your lifetime.

You can reach Ellen Leuchs, vice president for philanthropic services, or Daisy Pereira-Tosado, director of philanthropy, at 413-732-2858 or info@communityfoundation.org.

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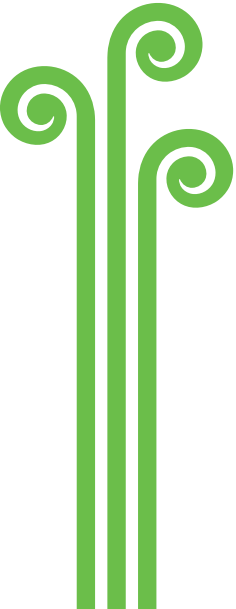
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We seek to enrich the quality of life of the people of our region by:

- Encouraging philanthropy
- Developing a permanent, flexible endowment
- Assessing and responding to emerging and changing needs
- Serving as a resource, catalyst, and coordinator for charitable activities
- Promoting efficiency in the management of charitable funds

Cover photos by Erin Long Photography

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