

Philanthropy Matters

Give for Good, for Ever
Fall 2020 Edition



News from the Parkersburg Area Community Foundation & Regional Affiliates

Civic Leader gets up close and personal to pandemic research

When Wood County native and Fairmont State University student Steven Boston applied to participate in the Civic Leaders Fellowship Program for a second year, he never imagined he would spend the summer helping Wood County respond to the Coronavirus pandemic. Although it was his second summer with the Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department, Steven's experience this time around was quite different. His interest in working in a public health setting or medical testing environment was met with a timely and up-close look at how a local health department must respond in a time of crisis.

"I jumped right in, calling people who had been exposed to the Coronavirus doing contact tracing and case investigations," Steven explained. "It was absolutely a real world lesson in what I want to study."

The PACF was committed to running the Program safely despite the many challenges around the Coronavirus pandemic. It took creativity, a short delay in getting the Program up and running, and some changes to the Program's structure, but ultimately, the 22 participants still had a full seven weeks gaining relevant and practical work experience while earning a competitive wage and obtaining personal leadership skills.

"Despite early challenges, the participants still had a meaningful experience with this year's Civic Leaders Fellowship Program. We knew they might not have other opportunities to gain relevant work experience so it was important to us to make it work."

-Marian Clowes

As planning begins for summer 2021, the PACF's commitment to help the region's young people find



"I would definitely recommend that others be a part of this Program. I don't know anyone in my field of study who has had this type of first-hand experience. My classes hadn't prepared me to see this kind of scientific research in a real-life situation; it was definitely a unique experience."

-Steven Boston, Civic Leaders Fellow

meaningful employment in our service region upon graduation is unwavering. As of the end of 2019, of the 65 participants who were not still enrolled in educational institutions, 82% are currently employed either locally in the PACF service region or regionally.

For students, like Steven, who have formed local relationships and networks, the ability to return home and find meaningful work experience is no longer an insurmountable challenge, the future looks bright.

If you know someone who might be interested in the Civic Leaders Program for 2021, more information is available at pacfwv.com.

Two decades of learning, leading, and making a lasting difference

Reflections on 20 years, what has changed and what's next

In the spring of 1999, Ed Dils, a PACF founder, and Ron Roberts, then its Board Chair, took me to lunch. Ron asked if I'd ever consider working for the community foundation. I famously responded, "What's a community foundation?"

Ed was visibly shaken. He'd labored as a volunteer to build the PACF for more than 36 years by then. He naturally assumed that anyone who knew anything already knew what it was. Ed said, "Don't you get our newsletter? Haven't you read it?" I tactfully responded that yes, I did, but all I could recall it discussing was how to give away my money; not why to give it. He considered that for a moment and said, "Well, you're right. We can always do better."



Judy and Emeritus Board member Sheryl Holdren - 1999

Fast forward to 2020, I remember his words as if it were yesterday. I share this story because I want you to know that we're still always striving to do better here.

As I reflect on more than twenty years at the helm of PACF now, I've learned:

- Need will be ever-present; some issues are persistent. We need patient efforts and flexible long term funds to invest in great organizations and good people to achieve lasting results.
- The challenges our region's citizens face are not insurmountable but they're often too great for anyone to tackle alone. Working together, we can make more efficient, effective use of our community's gifts.
- Size isn't important. While scale is significant, it's more crucial to remain relevant to the area's changing needs and opportunities and to grow wisely; to run the organization with the collective good in mind.
- Pandemics can occur and the unexpected will happen. All things and plans must be capable of changing and adapting. An open mind that is capable of recognizing when it's time to shift gears or direction is essential in order to keep the work moving forward.

I'm very thankful to have the great privilege of working for more than two decades for an organization that provides a constant source of inspiration. Our donors, grantees, staff, board and volunteers are always trying to improve this organization and its ability to better serve our community. We deeply appreciate your trust and support of the PACF for so many years. Together, our efforts are making a very real and lasting difference for the good of our community.

Judy Sjostedt Ritchie, Executive Director

Scholarship fund helps music students from Wirt County

If you were anywhere close to Wirt County in the early 2000s, you knew Robert Lowe. In 2001 Robert was elected to the Wirt County Commission and is recognized as the longest continuous serving Wirt County Commissioner to date.

According to Robert's brother Richard, Robert was very mindful of the position and was a great steward for the county in every way. "He worked diligently to obtain funding and grants for community efforts that wouldn't have otherwise been possible. People trusted him and shared their concerns with him and because of that he was encouraged to run for office; people could relate to him." Richard said.

Robert's identity was never wrapped up in his work, however. He was a husband, father, teacher, musician, and a community advocate. A former trombone player for the Pride of West Virginia, Robert took every opportunity to share his love of music with others, including serving as a mentor to several young aspiring musicians.

"He didn't teach in the formal sense but when his own kids were in high school, he mentored them, their friends, and anyone in the program that might have needed a little help," Richard shared.

When Robert passed away at the age of just 60 last August, his family established the Robert E. Lowe, Jr. Memorial Scholarship fund with the Little Kanawha Area Community Foundation, an affiliate of the Parkersburg Area Community Foundation. This fund will forever award scholarships to graduating seniors from Wirt County High School who plan to pursue a degree in a music or arts field of study. Robert's daughter, Logan, will present the scholarship each year as a way to honor his memory.

Richard said Robert would appreciate this fund being available and having it directed to someone going into music. "He had such a passion for music. The thought of giving that opportunity to someone else - he would have loved that."

If you know someone who might qualify for the scholarship, application information is published at pacfwv.com/scholarships.



198 students receive college scholarships

Robert's story, along with the countless others like it, demonstrates the importance of scholarship support to assist students in their pursuit of post-secondary education. This past spring, a total of \$368,439 in scholarship support was awarded to 198 area students representing 40 colleges, universities, and institutions. These scholarships are made possible by the generous support of individuals and businesses who believe in the importance of education and who have partnered with the Foundation to create permanent scholarship funds. As the cost for post-secondary education continues to rise, the PACF encourages individuals to partner with the Foundation to volunteer on the PACF's Scholarship Fund Committee, donate to build a current scholarship fund, or create a new scholarship. Together, we can make a collective impact for our community's next generation.

COVID-19 crisis response continues



One of many organizations helped by the PACF's donors was Circles, a community-based initiative that helps families in poverty to achieve self-sufficiency. A Circles Leader who had skipped several meals to save money to pay bills recently wrote to PACF, "I do not know what I would have done without your help! My hours were cut at work because of the pandemic, but because I usually have more hours I don't receive SNAP or housing assistance anymore. My budget was already tight. I really didn't know what to do. I had to choose between food and paying my electric bill. Thank you for helping with my bill, so I can eat."

As of Sept. 1st, more than 40 organizations have received PACF grants totaling nearly \$300,000 for COVID-19 relief. Funding focuses on maintaining delivery of essential services and ensuring that consistent access to food and health resources is available for persons facing financial hardships or experiencing food insecurity.

The PACF's two relief funds—the Hunger and Safety Net Funds—continue to grow in their impact, thanks to generous support from our donors. Our staff is regularly contacting area nonprofits to assess needs and identify the best ways in which to help. The PACF remains committed to granting 100% of the monies raised for these two funds back into our community.

To help those in need here at home, call us at 304.428.4438 or visit our website: pacfwv.com

Pictured at top left: Calhoun Committee on Aging volunteer preparing for meal delivery services.

The PACF Vision

...to hold a vital role in our region, supporting people who work together to build resources and apply leadership, creating a better place for citizens today and

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