

Highland Area Community Foundation has \$8 million in impact

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HIGHLAND - When the American Legion and VFW wanted to build a memorial wall to Highland's fallen service members, they first contacted the city. Then they called the Highland Area Community Foundation (HACF).

The project committee had gone to the city with a detailed plan to build a memorial in Rinderer Park that would honor the community's military heroes who had given their lives in the line of duty, as well as local first-responders. To pay for it, the committee wanted to sell engraved bricks and paver stones that loved ones could dedicate to the service members, police, firefighters and EMTs in their own families.

This group of veterans had a plan, they had the city's blessing, and they had the gumption to see it through, but what they needed was help with the financial logistics. That's where HACF came in.

"Everything was just so simplified by them taking care of (the financial) part of it," said Kate Broadhurst, a former commander of VFW Post 5694 in Highland and one of the planning committee members. "We did the legwork on the promotions, and they took care of everything else."



The expertise of those at the Foundation proved invaluable, Broadhurst said.

"If we had a question, we just asked it, and they had the answer," she said.

The memorial was dedicated on July 4, but it is an ongoing project. Memorial bricks and pavers can still be purchased, and the Foundation is still helping out.

"Veterans Day is coming up. What a great way to honor a veteran – get a brick," Broadhurst said. "Just call the Community Foundation."

Similarly, when a group of parents wanted to rehabilitate the tennis courts at Highland High School, they first brought their idea to the school board. They, too, then called HACF.

“We didn’t get funding from the Community Foundation, but they are a great resource to have,” said Brenda Plocher, one of the tennis parents who spearheaded the project.

HACF’s reputation gave immediate bona fides to the enterprise, which sought private donations to back up public funding from the school district and city.

“They were a great resource to legitimize all the financing,” Plocher said.

Having a single place where donors could make their tax-deductible gifts and from which vendors could be paid was also extremely useful turning the idea into a reality, Plocher said.

“It’s just nice, because they really know what they are doing,” said Plocher, adding the group still has an account with HACF.

A LEGACY OF SERVICE & GIVING

There are hundreds of stories like these around Highland. For more than two decades, the Foundation has been at the forefront of all types of projects, locally. There have been high-profile efforts, like the memorial wall and tennis courts, and the Foundation’s crown jewel and first project, the Korte Recreation Center. But there have also been many more deeds of a more conspicuous nature, such as upgrading the plumbing at the Highland Animal Shelter or a new recliner for residents of an assisted living facility.

“One of the points in our mission statement is: ‘Serve as a resource in meeting the changing needs of the Highland area community by taking the initiative in important charitable matters and otherwise providing philanthropic leadership for the betterment of the Highland area community,’” said Terry Riffel, HACF executive director. “No matter how big -- the Korte Rec Center, Support-A-Court, the helicopter pad -- or how community service-oriented -- the Jaycees’ dog park, the veterans wall or the plumbing for the Highland Animal Shelter, security for the food pantry, or many college and high school scholarships -- the Highland Area Community Foundation stands ready and willing to be a partner in building a better community.”

When HACF was first conceived in the mid-1990s, the idea was to establish an organization that could build permanent charitable assets to use on behalf of the wider community and act as a good steward for those funds.

What has grown from that idea -- and a starting endowment of \$65,000 -- is an organization that now manages more than \$5 million on behalf a variety of charitable purposes. Hard Road Theatre Productions, the Highland Arts Council, Latzer Library,

Meals on Wheels and many other local organizations all have funds with HACF that serve as a vehicle for tax-exempt donations.

In total, the Foundation provides philanthropic leadership for 135 funds that are earmarked for grants, scholarships or operation costs of various organizations. And new funds are being created all the time. The newest pass-through fund is for the planned all-abilities playground at Rinderer Park in Highland.

The Foundation is involved in 36 scholarships that pay for tuition to colleges and trade schools, as well as local parochial high schools. One unique scholarship program is with city employees. Funded through an optional payroll deduction, higher education scholarships are awarded to children of city employees or grandchildren of city retirees.

When you add it all up, in the last 23 years, more than \$3.1 million has passed through the Foundation on its way to serve needs of the community. But HACF's reach is not limited only to Highland. The Foundation also serves neighboring communities. Those who call Grantfork, Alhambra, New Douglas, Pierron, Marine and St. Jacob home all benefit from the Foundation.

More than 100 groups from Highland and these other nearby towns have received assistance from the Foundation over the years for needs in the community that might otherwise go unmet.

“The citizens in our service area all have been a big part of the Foundation's 23 years of service. The Foundation has ‘given out’ over \$3 million in grants, through pass-through funds, and scholarships in just 23 years,” Riffel said. “The Foundation now manages over \$5 million in assets. If you add the \$3 million to the \$5 million, our donors have trusted the Foundation with over \$8 million in 23 years. This is really an unbelievable success story so far, but that is how Highland and the surrounding area works – taking care of things that are needed.”

GRANTS BANQUET IS OCT. 9

During its annual banquet, which is coming up on Oct. 9 at the Highland Knights of Columbus Hall, HACF will add to that number. Another \$77,000 in grants will be handed out that night.

Tickets to the 23rd Annual Grants Banquet are \$35 per person and can be purchased by calling the HACF office at 618-654-4727. \$10 of the ticket cost is tax deductible with proceeds going to help build a better community.

WAYS TO DONATE

TO A SPECIFIC FUND: On the Highland Area Community Foundation website -- www.hacf.org -- you will find a list of funds that are eligible for online donation. Be sure to click the DONATE button associated with the fund you would like to support. You will be taken to the HACF PayPal page where you can confidently and securely complete your online donation.

GIVE EVERY YEAR: The Sustaining Membership Program has various levels of membership – with your gift going directly to the general grants program each year. See HACF's website for membership levels.

MAKE A PLANNED GIFT: To establish a Future Builders Fund, donors advise the Foundation in writing of their decision to make a planned gift – either through a will or as beneficiary of an insurance policy - to the Foundation upon their demise. Gifts can be designated for a specific purpose or for the Foundation's Fund for Public Giving.

MORE ABOUT HACF

*HACF has a board of directors of 17 people

*More than 60 people have served as directors since HACF was formed in 1995

*HACF's service territory includes the entire Highland School District, as well as St. Jacob and Marine townships

*HACF gave out three grants of \$500 each at its first Grants Banquet in 1996

*\$3,119,393 has passed through HACF to its service area in the form of grants, scholarships and community projects

*HACF has provided \$930,000 in grants to more than 100 organizations -- some more than once

*HACF now manages more than \$5 million in assets

*You can donate to HACF via PayPal, Amazon Smile, Facebook, or the Foundation's website, www.hacf.org

*The Highland Area Community Foundation office is located at 1216 Main St. in Highland

*The phone number is 618-654-4727

*The HACF annual Grants Banquet will be on Tuesday, Oct. 9, 2018 at the Highland Knights of Columbus Hall

*An informational video about HACF runs daily on Highland Communications Services (HCS) Channel 3 at 11:52 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 7 p.m.