



THE CFO
MAGAZINE
SUMMER
2024

PASSION & PURPOSE



New report explores
giving habits of
younger donors

PAGE 12



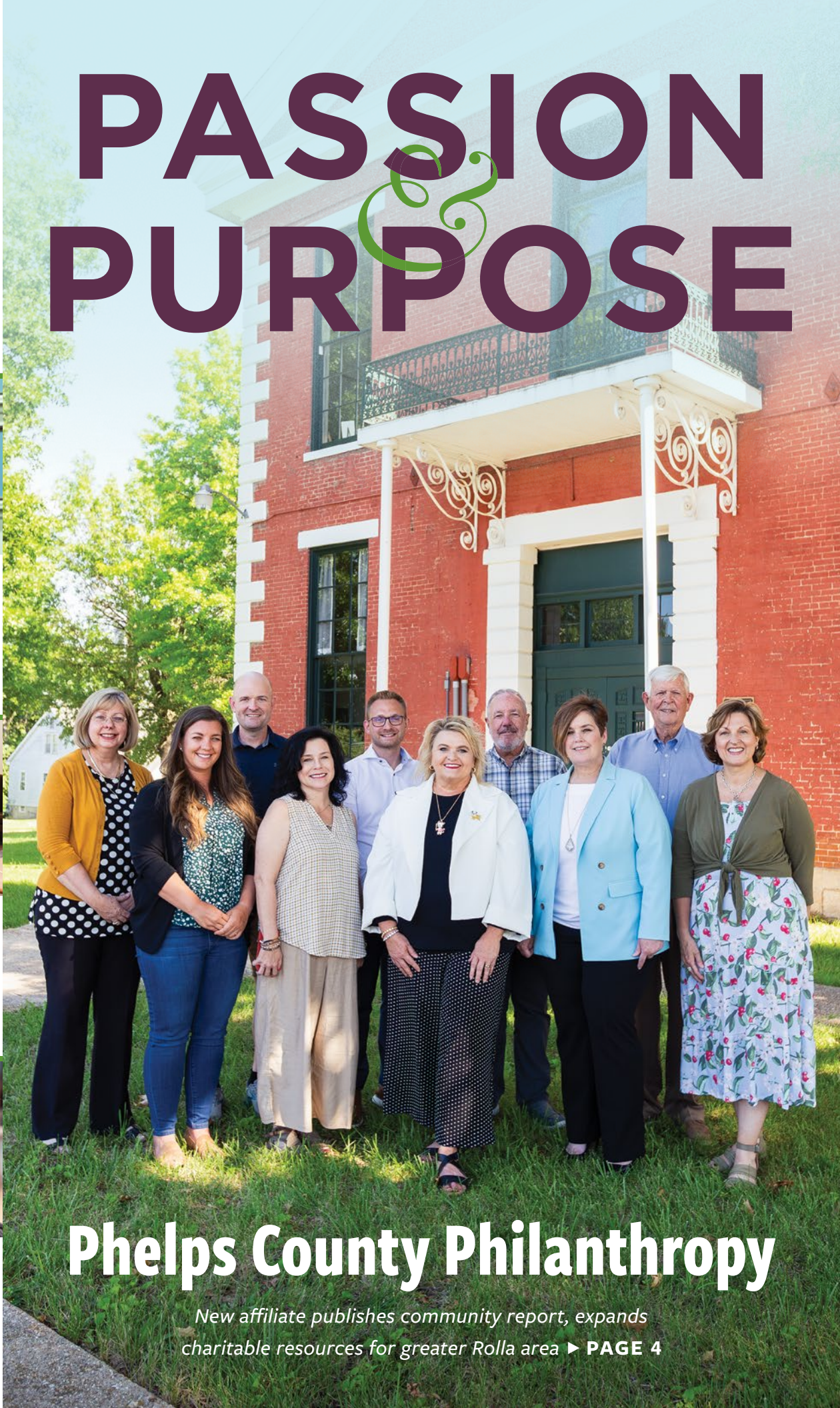
Grants fund fight
against loneliness
through music, arts

PAGE 13



Students discover
connections between
food, community

PAGE 16



Phelps County Philanthropy

*New affiliate publishes community report, expands
charitable resources for greater Rolla area* ► **PAGE 4**

PASSION & PURPOSE

SUMMER 2024



COMMUNITY FOUNDATION of the OZARKS

CFO NEWS

Letter from the Chair	1
Outgoing & Incoming Board Members	2
CFO finds its 'forever home'	3

AFFILIATES

Introducing the Phelps County Community Foundation	4
Awards recognize philanthropic excellence	6
Statewide summit convenes affiliates leaders, rural funders	7

DONORS

Fund honors memory of underwater explorer	8
Legacy gifts continue ladies' love for Taney County	10

AGENCIES

Report highlights habits of next-gen donors	12
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GRANTMAKING

Coover Regional program grants \$220,000 to fight loneliness, build community	13
Partnerships allocate \$800,000 for children's dental, safety needs	15
Schweitzer-funded garden project shapes tastes for youth	16
Collaboration changes the game for men's mental health in Springfield	18
Forestry pioneer's legacy continues with grantmaking partnership	19
Musgrave, CFO distribute \$1.7 million in high-impact grants	20

A FINAL WORD

A message from Winter Kinne	21
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PHOTO BY AARON SCOTT

ON THE COVER: Founding board members of the Phelps County Community Foundation gather outside the historic Phelps County Courthouse in Rolla. From left to right: Bonnie Prigge; Natalia Cahill; Ben Tipton, chair elect; Lorrie Hartley; Nate Cohen; Tracy Jenkins; Donald Dodd; Marla Stevenson, chair; Richard Cavender, secretary; and Kim Day, treasurer.

OUR MISSION: To enhance the quality of life in our region through resource development, community grantmaking, collaboration and public leadership.

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Letter from the Chair

A NOTE FROM OUTGOING BOARD CHAIR DEAN THOMPSON

What a year to serve as board chair for the Community Foundation of the Ozarks! As you will read in the pages to follow, 2023–24 at the CFO was one of momentous transition, with not only the hiring of a new president but the purchase of a large building to be the future home for the organization. Meanwhile, the amazing work of the foundation continued throughout southern Missouri in so many ways. It has been my honor to play a part.

As a longtime officer in the U.S. military and a champion of economic and community development (in my day job), planning, preparation and purpose are central in my life. So, it makes sense that they would also be hallmarks of my philanthropic journey.

In 2012, my wife and I made the decision to establish four endowed charitable funds through the CFO under the umbrella of our hometown Republic Community Foundation, one in each of our children's names. These funds were not for immediate use. Rather, they were intended to grow along with our kids allowing them to fund future causes important to them. There are several lessons we hoped to impart with this decision:

- ▶ **Purpose, purpose, purpose:** Philanthropy is optional, yet it is a critical part of our society that positively impacts the quality of life in our community. It has a greater purpose that requires intentionality.
- ▶ **Giving is a priority:** By endowing these funds for charitable purposes, we hoped to teach our kids the importance of giving, while also enabling them to support efforts they are passionate about.
- ▶ **Taking the long view:** Through the CFO's sound stewardship and our own financial planning, our kids can learn that modest gifts can create a significant impact years later.

Perhaps the most gratifying part of our journey is seeing how each of our kids has managed granting from their fund. Their causes are as diverse as



PHOTO BY AARON SCOTT

their personalities. They take the time to assess the impact their gift will have on individuals, organizations or the greater community. Our goal was to teach them philanthropy, but they demonstrated the literal meaning of it, “love of humanity.”

My own philanthropic journey has evolved as well. Five years ago, I went from a fundholder with the CFO to joining its board of directors. When I agreed to become an officer, then chair, I couldn't have foreseen leading this

dynamic group at such a pivotal time for the foundation. Though always rewarding, there were a few daunting moments while we were selecting the leader to transform the organization and the building we would call home for decades. During these times, I simply stepped back and reminded myself of the principles that led us to open those funds for our children a dozen years ago: Purpose. Planning. Stewardship. All with the future in mind. These also are the “whys” behind everything the CFO does ... and that includes selection of its leaders and the purchase of real estate.

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge and thank the board and CFO staff for your dedication. Together, we transitioned leadership from Brian Fogle to Winter Kinne without missing a beat. I am excited to see how Winter's passion, relationships and experience will be used to advance the foundation's mission well into the future. Together, we also purchased a home for the future that serves as a visible reminder of the CFO's role as a regional beacon for philanthropy.

Our accomplishments this past year reminded me of a Henry Ford quote: “If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself.” We never know what challenges tomorrow will bring, but by moving forward together our philanthropic efforts will pay dividends for multiple generations to come.

Dean T. Thompson

—DEAN THOMPSON
FY24 BOARD CHAIR

Gratitude & Appreciation

The CFO is thankful for the dedication of four members of the Board of Directors who completed their terms on June 30. During their tenures, they served in a variety of leadership roles for the CFO and the network of affiliate foundations.



Ron Kraettli



Megan Stack

advisor in Joplin, has served on the Investment Advisory Board and the development committee. He has also served on the Joplin Regional Community Foundation board and has been instrumental to the success of Joplin's Philanthropic Society.



Debbie Shantz Hart

Ron Kraettli served on the CFO's executive committee as treasurer. He represents the Hermann community and recently served as president of the Community Foundation of the Hermann Area. Ron is a member of the Legacy Society, a longtime scholarship committee member, a member of a newly formed cybersecurity committee and established a scholarship for the Gasconade R-1 School District.

Megan Stack, foundation and philanthropy advisor for Bass Pro Shops, is also a donor advisor and a founding member of the Generosity Collective, the new high-impact giving circle for Springfield.

Debbie Shantz Hart, a housing developer in Springfield, shared her expertise in affordable housing and real estate with the foundation. She served on the development committee and is a donor advisor.

Bryan Vowels, a financial planner and donor



Bryan Vowels

on the Dallas County Community Foundation and Fair Grove Area Community Foundation boards and has served on the Coover Regional Grantmaking committee.

- ▶ Brad Erwin, architect and owner of Paragon Architecture in Springfield, is a donor advisor, Legacy Society member and founding member of the Generosity Collective.
- ▶ Margo Spilde, an entrepreneur and former financial advisor in Springfield, is a donor advisor, grant selection committee member and founding member of the Generosity Collective.
- ▶ Angela Swan, executive assistant at Robinson Construction in Perryville, is president of the Perry County Community Foundation.

New Board Members

The CFO welcomed three new board members who began their first three-year terms on July 1.

CFO BOARD OF DIRECTORS — FY25 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- ▶ Chair: Anne E. McGregor, Branson (The Neighbor Company)
- ▶ Vice chair: Roy Hardy Jr., Ozark (Associated Electric Cooperative)
- ▶ Treasurer: Sarah Honeycutt, Cabool (accountant)
- ▶ Secretary: Gail Smart, Springfield (attorney and community volunteer)
- ▶ At large: Jimmy Liles, Nixa (City of Nixa)
- ▶ Investment Advisory Board chair: Kari Creighton, Springfield (financial professional)
- ▶ Audit/Operations Committee chair: Gary Garwitz, Springfield (retired partner at BKD, now Forvis Mazars)
- ▶ Chair emeritus: Dean Thompson, Republic (City Utilities of Springfield, LORE)

The CFO's FY25 Action Plan

In the 2024 fiscal year, the CFO's board of directors set "moving from transactional to transformational philanthropy" as the foundation's guiding principal. This north star informs the items in the FY25 Action Plan.

- ▶ Conduct assessment and develop guidelines for services the CFO provides to primary constituent funds.
- ▶ Explore and begin tracking charitable dollars the CFO influences (i.e., connecting donor-advised funds to unfunded grant proposals or suggesting a different funder connect with a nonprofit) as a benchmark.
- ▶ Explore surveys for constituents, staff and board members.
- ▶ Host retreats for staff and the leadership team to establish leadership team goals.
- ▶ Implement a new organizational chart.
- ▶ Integrate the new vice president of communications and rollout a new communications plan and policy.
- ▶ Move to the future headquarters at 300 S. Jefferson Ave. in Springfield.
- ▶ Pursue national accreditation with the Council on Foundations.
- ▶ Review fees using the results of the recent activity-based cost analysis.
- ▶ Review investment and audit services.

Preliminary plans for the CFO's new offices by Dake Wells Architecture feature natural elements that both complement and soften the building's concrete structure. According to CFO President Winter Kinne, the vision is to create a space that serves as "a symbol of the passion and stewardship of the Ozarks' philanthropic community."



RENDERINGS BY DAKE WELLS ARCHITECTURE

A Place to Call 'Forever Home'

THE CFO PURCHASES 300 S. JEFFERSON AVE. IN SPRINGFIELD FROM MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION, PLANS 2025 MOVE

The six-floor Brutalist-style office building at 300 S. Jefferson Ave. in Springfield has housed several enterprises since its opening in 1975. First, it was the home of the Bank of Springfield (later Centerre Bank), which sold the building to the Missouri State University Foundation in 1989. At that point, it became known as the Kenneth E. Meyer Alumni Center — but soon, it will be the new home of the Community Foundation of the Ozarks.

The sale of 300 S. Jefferson was announced Feb. 15. As Brent Dunn, executive director of the MSU Foundation, put it, the sale of the building is a win for both institutions: for the MSU Foundation, which will be moving its alumni center to the main campus; and for the CFO, which will be able to expand its staffing and programming while remaining centrally located in Springfield.

The 15 years that Brian Fogle was at the CFO's helm was an era of substantial growth. In that time assets grew from about \$150 million to the nearly half-billion dollars that the CFO oversees today. Now under the leadership of Winter Kinne, this growth is expected

to continue, and the required staff expansion means that the CFO has outgrown its current headquarters at 425 E. Trafficway.

There, staff members hired since early 2023 have worked from home or have been tucked into whatever available nook or corner can house them. Coupled with this growth is the expansion of the CFO's network of affiliate foundations — 55 of them scattered across southern and central Missouri, managed by the CFO's affiliates team. In the spirit of looking forward to being an agent of transformative philanthropy in our region, it became necessary to look into new real estate.

With the help of Dake Wells Architecture and JE Dunn Construction, which are spearheading the renovation, the CFO will move initially (in 2025) into the fourth floor and expand to other floors as necessary. The CFO will lease space back to the MSU Foundation until it can move into its new home, a yet-to-be-constructed building on the main campus of the university. In addition to the fourth floor, the CFO will also heavily use the Turner Family Hospitality Room, which offers the



PHOTO BY AARON SCOTT

Foundation a space to host events and other gatherings, such as the recent grant presentation for the Jeannette L. Musgrave Foundation's Multi-Year Impact Grant Program.

At more than 80,000 square feet, 300 S. Jefferson "could very well be our forever home," Kinne says, "and our vision is that it can be both a space for our staff, constituents and partners to collaborate and a symbol of the passion and stewardship of the Ozarks' philanthropic community. And all the while, we'll stay rooted at the heart of Downtown Springfield."

BY MATTHEW STEWART

Brent Dunn, executive director of the Missouri State Foundation, celebrated the Feb. 15 announcement with CFO President Winter Kinne and FY24 Board Chair Dean Thompson.

AFFILIATES



Board members began efforts to establish the Phelps County Community Foundation in 2023. “I think all of us feel a huge sense of responsibility ... to be a good citizen, a good human, in giving back in whatever way we can,” says Marla Stevenson, founding board president.

PHOTO BY AARON SCOTT

Focusing on Phelps County

NEW AFFILIATE JOINS IN APRIL TO SERVE GREATER ROLLA COMMUNITY

A new way to serve nearly 45,000 residents of mid-Missouri is growing through the Phelps County Community Foundation, which began because of a commitment to collaboration, a desire for conversation, and a call to help recognize local needs and strengths.

“I’ve heard several times, ‘I can’t believe that group of people is working together,’” says Lorrie Hartley, a PCCF board member. “But I think because we’re working together for a common goal, for the common good, (we’re) able to take off our hats and check our own agendas to bring the agenda of the Community Foundation together when we come into the room.”

Since its inception in 2023, the small but mighty group has raised more than

\$115,000 and produced the Phelps County Community Impact Report, which highlights local strengths, weaknesses and areas to watch.

“I think one of the things we realized at the beginning was that there’s really no common voice,” says Ben Tipton, PCCF board chair elect, of the role a convener could play. “Everyone is doing their own thing, and maybe are not talking to each other. Who pulls all that together? That’s one of the goals that we have: The foundation is kind of to be that sounding board.”

Amid those large efforts, the foundation also joined the Community Foundation of the Ozarks in April, becoming the CFO’s 55th regional affiliate foundation.

“Before I retired, I worked with



PROVIDED BY PHELPS COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

rural communities, and ended up working with them all over the country,” says Richard Cavender, secretary of the PCCF, who also serves on the boards of the CFO and the Meramec Regional Community Foundation, another CFO affiliate. “I quickly became aware of community foundations and how important they would be in every one of these communities if they get one started. It’s just another way of bringing the community together to solve some of their problems.”

The foundation’s initial focus is on bigger-picture planning around needs and opportunities, such as child care and early childhood education. Those focuses also extend to candid conversations around local needs — and are founded in passion for place and the people who fill it.

“I’ve lived here almost all my life, other than a short time when my husband was in pharmacy school in Kansas City,” says Kim Day, board treasurer for the PCCF and president of the TKD Foundation. “It’s just about giving back and helping. That’s very important to me.”

“I think we’ve all been blessed with the talents that we have,” Tipton says. “That’s the reason why I get involved. I kind of look at things like a piece of a pie. You might be just a little piece out of that pie, but if you put everybody together, it makes that full pie.”

An early effort of the PCCF is the aforementioned Phelps County Community Impact Report.

Published in January, the 20-page report focuses on six

buckets of research and retrospection, reflecting where things stand in the community. It follows a model established in Springfield with the Community Focus Report, a biennial publication which the CFO has helped lead since its inception 20 years ago.

The Phelps County report shows where there are wins — including the presence of Missouri S&T and Phelps Health, the region’s two largest employers, and public safety. There are also notes on where there’s room for improvement through “caution lights” and “red flags,” which have led to that emphasis on child care.

Housing, too, is a focus; the report notes that, “While the cost of living is generally lower, ensuring that housing and renting remain affordable for lower-income households is crucial for maintaining social equilibrium.”

By identifying community needs, the report has helped guide the PCCF’s first grantmaking efforts, which include funds for a mobile security camera system to supplement local law enforcement.

Even in those moments, the PCCF representatives say it’s about collaboration, communication and collective

difference-making.

As Marla Stevenson, board president of the PPCF puts it, “I think all of us feel a huge sense of responsibility because we’ve all been blessed in many ways to be a good citizen, a good human, in giving back in whatever way we can.”

BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

The Phelps County Community Foundation is based in Rolla but also serves donors and nonprofits in surrounding communities.



The new affiliate published the Phelps County Community Impact Report in early 2024 to collectively identify community priorities and help guide its grantmaking.

Annual Awards Recognize Excellence in Affiliate Leadership

CFO HONORS FOUR AFFILIATE FOUNDATIONS, SEVEN INDIVIDUALS WITH \$23,500 TO BOLSTER COMMUNITY GRANTMAKING

Exceptional leadership can make or break an organization — especially ones that depend on volunteer leadership, like the 55 foundations in the CFO’s regional affiliate network.

In June and July, the CFO recognized four affiliates and seven individuals for outstanding leadership and exceptional service to their communities. Along with the recognition, affiliates received a total of \$23,500 to supplement their annual community grantmaking.

The four Affiliates of the Year were selected using several criteria: asset growth, new funds established, overall grantmaking and new Legacy Society members during FY24. Each received \$5,000 from the CFO to support grantmaking and philanthropic leadership

for their communities:

- ▶ **Carthage Community Foundation**
- ▶ **Community Foundation of the Hermann Area**
- ▶ **Joplin Regional Community Foundation**
- ▶ **Perry County Community Foundation**

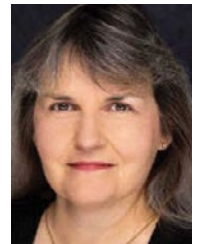
The CFO also honored two individuals for outstanding leadership with awards named after significant affiliate leaders from the CFO’s history.

Stacy Pyrtle, president of the Community Foundation of Lake, received the Stanley Ball Leadership Award. Ball, who died in 2015,



was the founding president of the Nixa Community Foundation, the CFO’s first affiliate. The award is presented by the CFO and Central Trust Company, which manages the Stanley & Elaine Ball Foundation. In Pyrtle’s honor, the Community Foundation of the Lake received a \$2,500 grant.

Trudy Lee, board member of the Cape Area Community Foundation, received the Fred Lemons Achievement Award. The award is named for the late president of the Lockwood Community Foundation, who demonstrated remarkable leadership during his 15-year tenure until his death in 2014. Presented by the CFO and the Lemons family, the award includes a \$1,000 grant to the Cape Area Community Foundation in Lee’s honor.




Finally, five affiliate leaders were honored as Board Members of Excellence:

- ▶ **Beth Bankhead**, Community Foundation of the Lake
- ▶ **Callie Linville**, Nixa Community Foundation
- ▶ **Ron Kraettli**, Community Foundation of the Hermann Area
- ▶ **Kim McCully-Mobley**, Aurora Area Community Foundation
- ▶ **Brian VanFossen**, Community Foundation of Rogersville

“Every community needs champions who selflessly dedicate their time, talent and treasure to improve the lives of others,” said Alice Wingo, vice president of affiliates for the CFO. “As our regional affiliate network has grown over the last 31 years, these exceptional leaders provide great examples for others to follow.”

AFFILIATE LEADERSHIP UPDATES

Several CFO affiliates changed leadership during the 2024 fiscal year. We appreciate the efforts of these past presidents and wish the new leaders much success in their communities.


Barton County Community Foundation

Outgoing: Martin Bunton
Incoming: Shelly Haag


Bourbon Community Foundation

Outgoing: Mary Heywood
Incoming: Mike Delasmit


Cassville Community Foundation


Outgoing: Chad Johnson
Incoming: Mindi Artherton


Community Foundation of the Lake

Outgoing: Jane Wright
Incoming: Stacy Pyrtle


Joplin Regional Community Foundation

Outgoing: Chuck Brown
Incoming: Logan Stanley

Meramec Regional Community Foundation
Outgoing: Randy Becht
Incoming: Jared Niederer

Monett Area Community Foundation

Outgoing: Beth Nation
Incoming: Kara Tinklepaugh

Republic Community Foundation

Outgoing: Alexandria Holmes
Incoming: Britny Fulks

Sarcoxi Community Foundation

Outgoing: Gary Turner
Incoming: Judy Patrick

Willard Children’s Charitable Foundation

Outgoing: Rachel Griffin
Incoming: Brandi Delleville

Collaborating for ‘Thriving Communities’

SECOND-ANNUAL RURAL PHILANTHROPY SUMMIT PROVIDES PLATFORM TO SHARE NEW IDEAS, ONGOING SUCCESSES

Like-minded motivation around creating individualized, lasting change was seen on May 8, when affiliate leaders and rural funders from across Missouri came together for the Rural Philanthropy Summit.

Hosted by the Community Foundation of the Ozarks and Philanthropy Missouri, “Creating Thriving Communities” featured presentations related to rural-specific realities.

“After last year’s summit, we heard lots of stories about folks making new connections, sharing their personal experiences and considering new ways to approach their work,” said Winter Kinne, president and CEO of the CFO. “We both know we cannot have a thriving and equitable Missouri without thriving and equitable rural communities.”

Part of that work is through having people together in one place, like they were at the Oasis Convention Center in Springfield. The day was filled with theme-specific sessions that addressed needs often seen in rural areas, and how challenges have been overcome—like getting a YMCA funded and constructed, even when a community was originally told no.

“Figure out how to collaborate,” said Rachael Martin, affiliate coordinator for the Barton County Community Foundation, in a panel of success stories. “Find what our goals are. Just get out there and start talking to people.”

It was a reminder that while needs are reflected uniquely in various communities, they often are faced similarly: With passion and collaboration for solutions.

“You care deeply about improving the lives of your neighbors and work to understand the most pressing needs in your communities and to find solutions,” encouraged Michelle Miller, president and CEO of Philanthropy Missouri. “You are already making such a difference.”

Bonita Robertson-Hardy, co-executive director of the Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group and the morning’s keynote speaker, spoke to strengthening wealth-building efforts through collaboration and regional action.

“It’s really critical to think about what are the assets, what already has momentum, within the community,” she said. “Where are there supporters or folks around already thinking about just different assets of products within the community? Then really taking a step back and constructing a value chain. Where is there momentum around something, where are there investors around something?”

“This has proven to help a lot of communities—but it really is about investing locally and making sure that wealth



PHOTOS BY AARON SCOTT

During roundtable discussions facilitated by staff of the CFO and Philanthropy Missouri, attendees of the 2024 Rural Philanthropy Summit swapped ideas for developing rural communities.



Keynote speaker Bonita Robertson-Hardy emphasized the importance of collaborating and capitalizing on existing momentum in rural development. “It really is about investing locally and making sure that wealth is rooted locally.”

is rooted locally.”

Breakout sessions shared stories of common needs, such as access to senior services (Christian County’s was shared as a success), community-building through recreation in Cassville and child care in rural areas.

One example of the latter came from a funding partner: Mindy Honey, executive director of the Silver Dollar City Foundation, shared how its Hope Grants help rural schools in Stone and Taney counties enhance early childhood education options—and also support workforce development.

“Now they’re sending them five days a week,” Honey said of the Kirbyville district, which subsidized the cost of early childhood services for parents through a grant. “The kids are seeing the benefit, and it’s huge.”

Chris Thompson, the event’s other keynote speaker, shared several projects West Central Missouri Community Action Agency and New Growth/West Central Development Corporation have accomplished to advance rural Missouri—even helping transport residents via a network of volunteers.

“We all face those things even if the reason is a little different,” said Thompson, who serves as CEO of the organizations. “We’re in this together.”

The afternoon wrapping up didn’t end the work: Leaders expressed hope that attendees will continue efforts in their own communities. Eventually, that may be extended even farther through the Rural Missouri Development Partners group, which was announced during the summit and links organizations and funders on a new level.

“We hope that today’s summit inspired you to keep doing great work that you are already doing,” said Alice Wingo, vice president of affiliates at the CFO. “And to consider new ways that you might ensure the communities that you serve and the people within them are thriving.”

BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL



Eric Lee Hahn was part of a diving team charting the depths of the underwater cave below Roaring River Spring near Cassville. After his death in 2022, his family established a fund to share his passion for the outdoors with others.

PROVIDED BY LINDA HAHN

Continuing Eric's Mission

ENDOWMENT WILL SPREAD DIVER'S LOVE OF EXPLORATION TO NEW GENERATIONS AT ROARING RIVER STATE PARK

Nestled in the Ozark hills near Cassville, Roaring River State Park is home to one of the deepest underwater cave systems in the country. For decades, divers have tried to chart the vast caverns of Roaring River Spring, which, according to the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, pumps 20 million gallons of turquoise, 57-degree water into the river every day. To date, these courageous folks have marked a depth of 472 feet, with untold further depth yet to be explored.

It's not a surprise that such a place would draw adventurous and scientifically minded divers from across the country. Eric Lee Hahn of Blacksburg, Virginia, was one of these. From October of 2021 until his untimely death a year later, Eric drove the 14 hours from Blacksburg to Cassville about once a

month to scope out the cave's mysteries with a team of like-minded explorers.

According to Linda Hahn, his mother, that's just who Eric was: full of purpose and curiosity, and always exploring that which ignited his interest. "He won a remote sailboat competition in high school. He was so into technology, from robotics to all kinds of things, just all things technical."

Eric was driven from a young age. A telling story Linda shares is Eric's admission into the exclusive Math, Engineering Science Academy curriculum when he started at Albemarle High School in Charlottesville, where he grew up. "He was adamant about getting in," Linda says, "but the teachers in his middle school weren't so convinced — but he told [the director of the MESA program] that he just had to get in."

Later, Eric studied computer engineering at Virginia Tech, and was employed as a software engineer at Torc Robotics.

But he made time for his other interests, the diversity of which speaks to his curiosity and compassion. He worked with the Blacksburg Volunteer Rescue Squad as a technical rescue member and Advanced EMT, roles he adopted after installing information technology for the organization. He also became vice president of the National Speleological Society's VPI Cave Club, a spelunking club for students at Virginia Tech. It was there that Linda believes Eric first learned of Roaring River and the frequent dives there.

Soon, Eric connected with a team from KISS Rebreathers of Fort Smith, Arkansas, comprising divers from all over the country. With the team, Eric made his first dive into the spring's chilly waters in October 2021.

Inside the spring cave, millions of gallons of water rush up from the depths every day. Especially after a rainy spring, this tumultuous barrage makes the dive physically strenuous as the divers must scale the cave walls against the current; and silty murk is often barely penetrable, even with powerful scuba lamps.

At nearly 230 feet down, the first cavern pinches to a claustrophobic squeeze — this is the ultimate barrier that held up earlier dives, including notable ones in 1979 and '99. New technology allows the KISS Rebreather team to inch through the restriction point and emerge into a second large cavern beyond. Ultimately, in November of 2021, a month after Eric joined the crew, KISS Rebreather reached a depth of 472 feet in this second chamber. At the time, this discovery set the record for the deepest underwater cave in the United States. The record was broken less than a year later by a dive of 570 feet in Texas's Phantom Cave — though potentially much more depth remains unrevealed in Roaring River Spring.

The dives, however, are not merely to generate clout or personal accomplishment; there are important scientific reasons for them. Eric documented a number of cave-dwelling animals during his dives, and the team's charting the source of the spring and mapping the structure of the cave will expand our understanding of southwest Missouri's geology.

It was on the morning of Oct. 14, 2022, on a set-up precursor to a dive the next day intended to plumb further depths, that Eric's divemate noticed him struggling in the water at about 165 feet down. Eric seemed to be panicking and struggling with his mouthpiece; the other diver, after attempting and proving unable to help or move Eric by himself, went to the surface for help. When the team reached Eric, it was too late. He was unresponsive.

Eric was a bright, curious and kind man who left a glowing impression on everyone who'd spent time around him, Linda

says, and "not just in Charlottesville or Blacksburg, but everywhere he went." His death marked a serious and painful absence to his family, friends and fellow divers.

"Eric was very kind, he thought of others. He was always gracious with his time. He was always happy to touch base or share a meal," she says. That's how many who attended Eric's memorial event in Cassville a year after his passing dedicated themselves to his legacy. "A lot of people mentioned that, in honor of Eric, that they'd share a meal, lend a helping hand, reach out to help someone in need, because that's who Eric was." Eric is survived by his parents, Linda and Gordon, and two siblings, Dylan and Heidi. His twin brother, Alexander, died in October 2023.

The Eric Lee Hahn Scholarship for Roaring River Outdoor Education is one of the ways that the Hahns have chosen to remember Eric and his giving nature. The Hahns are currently fundraising to achieve the \$10,000 minimum required to establish the fund as an endowment, so that the fund will be able to provide funding in perpetuity — as of this writing, they're about halfway there.

"So, with the endowment, we want him to live on," Linda says. "We want to remember him and keep remembering him. We want to celebrate and bring to light the things he loved."

The scholarship works in partnership with the Johnny Morris Wonders of Wildlife Foundation, which operates several recreational outdoors schools for families in Missouri. Eric's charitable fund will allow one family a session to attend the Roaring River School without cost.

Misty Mitchell, director of conservation programs at the Wonders of Wildlife Museum, recounts working with the Hahns to establish the fund: "We were familiar with the cave-diving efforts at Roaring River, and we had known about Eric's passing. When Linda reached out to us to partner on the scholarship, it just seemed like a perfect fit and a great way to commemorate Eric.

Like other WOW Schools, the Roaring River School's goal is to bring families (not just children) together to experience and learn in the outdoors. Mitchell says, "We want the entire family to get unplugged, get outdoors and learn in a way that matches their experience." With about 60 different classes to choose from — from creating natural dyes and other plant crafts to overnight canoe trips — there's something for everyone.

Eric's story is a reminder of the remarkable impact one passionate individual can have, and his legacy reflects a life lived with purpose and generosity. The Eric Lee Hahn Scholarship ensures that this legacy will continue to inspire and support future generations of adventurers and learners. As Linda Hahn says, "It's what he would've wanted."

BY MATTHEW STEWART

"With the endowment,
we want him to live on.
**We want to remember
him and keep
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and bring to light the
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LINDA HAHN

Legacies of Love in Taney County

PLANNED GIFTS BY TWO WOMEN WILL FOREVER SUPPORT BRANSON-AREA CAUSES

Decisions made today can have a lasting impact far into the future, a reality that's reminded through two women who gave of their time during life and made plans to keep being forces for good after their deaths.

Those women are Pat Davis and Margie King Berry. They shared similarities — both spent time in Texas, neither was originally from the Ozarks, they both lived in the Branson area, and both had a passion for children — and after their individual passings, their work continues due to the decisions they made.

Davis and Berry didn't know the legacies their lives would continue when they came to Branson. But looking forward, it's easy to see the impact they had — and will continue to make. Here are their stories.

Pat Davis

It wasn't until later in her life when Pat Davis moved to the Ozarks with her husband, Ransom, around 2000. The Davises were drawn to the Branson area, where they had spent time trout fishing and relaxing, and decided to make the area their home.

Pat transferred her career in the travel industry to southwest Missouri, and brought her care and compassion, too.

"She was just so outgoing and boisterous and fun — always fun," says Linda Adkins, a longtime friend. "She loved to cook; she used to do catering years ago. She was always upbeat and cheery, and they always liked to work with children, I think because they couldn't have any."

In the Branson area, those passions translated to work in the community. Pat helped establish a thrift store to help support the Branson Christian Church where the couple attended. She also volunteered, Adkins says, to run a local food pantry.

Even though she was the one doing the work, it was a team effort for the Davises.

"When she first started volunteering like that, (Ransom) said, 'You go volunteer,'" Adkins says. "He did all the cooking, and grocery shopping and laundry, and always had dinner on the table when she got home. They were a team when they were doing that."

Other causes and organizations include the Boys & Girls Club of the Ozarks; the Red Cross; the Salvation Army, and animals — the latter supported by the love of her Scottie



dogs. Those pups were her passion; she always had the black one, and the white one, Adkins says.

"I'd have to go back and count all the different ones they had, but those were her babies," Adkins says of the beloved companions.

Ransom Davis died in 2015, and Pat passed away in 2022. Their legacies, however, live on through the Pat and Ransom Davis Charitable Fund, which was established in 2014 to extend support to causes couple felt passionate about.

To date, the Davis Charitable Fund has supported a few key buckets of causes and organizations: The Boys & Girls Club of the Ozarks and scholarships for students through the OTC Foundation, support of health care for low-income neighbors through Faith Community Health Center Inc., and the Branson Humane Society.

There's also Christian Action Ministries, tying back to the place where Davis worked as a volunteer food bank leader because she wanted to serve.

"I think she would want to be remembered for both of them — they were a team when they decided to do this charitable fund," Adkins says. "They set that up together."

Margie King Berry

Margie King Berry's ties to the Branson area are also rooted in service and go back to young adulthood, when she moved to Forsyth with her family. Her mother, the late Dr. Mary King Long, was a physician who founded a nursing home in the Taney County seat.

"She saw the families that had no money to pay with, no electricity, etc.," says Mary Katherine Westgate, Berry's daughter. "She helped deliver many babies in my grandma's office in the lower level of the old nursing home."

That early exposure to health care and the Ozarks made a lasting impression. Berry became a nurse and worked in various leadership roles in posts in Kansas City and Texas. She ultimately returned to Forsyth later in her life, where she was instrumental in helping found the Forsyth Community Foundation, an affiliate of the CFO that today has become the Community Foundation of Taney County. She also served on the CFO's board of directors.

"I think growing up in the area, she saw firsthand the severe need and wanted to make it better," Westgate says. "To do what she could to make a difference in their lives."





PROVIDED BY BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF THE OZARKS

Planned gifts by Pat Davis and Margie King Berry benefit Boys & Girls Club of the Ozarks, which serves youth in Taney and Stone counties, along with other nonprofits in the area.

That passion led to the establishment of the James and Margie King Berry Fund for Taney County Youth. Today, it's held by the Community Foundation of Taney County.

"I really don't think how she'd care about being remembered as much as just knowing that kids would have a safe place to go after school to get a snack and help on homework, and be cared for," her daughter shares. "She wanted to make it easier and better for young families."

Lasting impact for beloved nonprofit

Davis and Berry's similarities continued after their passings through their shared focus on children and youth. Among other outlets, both women found a focus for their philanthropy through Boys & Girls Club of the Ozarks.

Berry was instrumental in raising capital funding to construct the club's Forsyth unit; her CFO designated fund still provides support to B&GC today. Davis, too, funneled passion-to-philanthropy through her CFO fund, which today supports academic support programs like "Power Hour," a tutoring/home-work help program for hundreds of kids.

"Boys & Girls Club of the Ozarks is forever indebted to folks like Pat and Margie who have led the way for local business and individuals to get involved," says Stoney Hays, CEO of BGCO. "Simply put, we would not exist without generous supporters in the community. Their investments encouraged other donors to get involved and rally around working parents and the future of their school-age children."

Those efforts are part of creating a lasting picture the CFO can help facilitate.

"Leaving a legacy through planned giving is a profound way to ensure that one's values and passions continue to make a positive impact for generations to come," says Ashley Silva, vice president of development at the CFO. "It allows individuals to support causes they care deeply about while still

providing for loved ones, creating a balanced and meaningful legacy.

"This thoughtful approach to philanthropy provides a sense of fulfillment to the donor, knowing that their contributions will help shape a better future."

BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

"Simply put, we would not exist without generous supporters in the community. Their investments encouraged other donors to get involved."

STONEY HAYS
BOYS & GIRLS CLUB
OF THE OZARKS

LEGACY SOCIETY

The following people have made planned giving commitments to benefit the CFO or one of its affiliate foundations from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024. For more information on the Legacy Society, please contact Caitlin Golike, director of donor services, at 417-864-6199 or cgolike@cfozarks.org.

- ▶ Merry Crouch & Roberta Hermann · SPRINGFIELD/REGIONAL
- ▶ Charles & Robin Morgan · WEST PLAINS
- ▶ Andy & Courtney Peebles · SPRINGFIELD/REGIONAL
- ▶ Dr. Marc & Mrs. Mary Lou Wittmer · SPRINGFIELD/REGIONAL
- ▶ Anonymous · TANEY COUNTY

PROFESSIONAL ADVISORS COUNCIL

The CFO welcomed 11 new members to its Professional Advisors Council over the past year. The PAC comprises professionals, including accountants, attorneys, financial advisors, wealth managers and others who help clients fulfill their charitable giving goals. Free membership on the PAC includes an annual opportunity for continuing education credits, invitations to CFO social and educational events, a monthly newsletter, and recognition in CFO publications and on the website. For more information, contact Ashley Silva, vice president of development and philanthropic services, at 417-864-6199 or asilva@cfozarks.org.

- ▶ Taylor Clark · THE BANK OF MISSOURI, BRANSON
- ▶ Tosha Cooper · US BANK PRIVATE WEALTH MANAGEMENT, SPRINGFIELD
- ▶ Clark Creighton · MORGAN STANLEY, SPRINGFIELD
- ▶ Marty Diebold · EDWARD JONES, SPRINGFIELD
- ▶ Jason Fetty · EDWARD JONES, SPRINGFIELD
- ▶ Nicolas Grimwood · FENTON & GRIMWOOD, BRANSON
- ▶ Weston Kissee · EDWARD JONES, SPRINGFIELD
- ▶ Stephanie Hurt · FORVIS MAZARS PRIVATE CLIENT, SPRINGFIELD
- ▶ Jessica Passeri · EDWARD JONES, SPRINGFIELD
- ▶ Shane Rader · KIRKLAND, WOODS & MARTINSEN, SPRINGFIELD
- ▶ Jonathan Robertson · SIMMONS PRIVATE WEALTH, SPRINGFIELD

Report, Grants Highlight Giving by Young Donors

'SHAPING TOMORROW' EXPLORES CHARITABLE VIEWS, HABITS OF DONORS UNDER 40

Headlines and memes aplenty remind us of the differences between generations, and multiple sources report that younger generations give less. But are millennials really killing philanthropy?

In 2023, Giving USA's "Giving By Generation" report unearthed a stark feature of younger generations: they seem to be less generous charitable givers. In addition to a general decline in giving — individual donors gave 13.4% less in 2022 than in 2021, when adjusted for inflation — the report noted a specific generational divide in the amount of donations.

While the findings of the report are important and interesting, our former president and CEO Brian Fogle found himself curious as to whether there wasn't more to the story. Why was this phenomenon happening? What do millennials and Generation Z think about philanthropy and using their dollars charitably? What would encourage them to give more?

The CFO enlisted the services of Habitat Communication & Culture, a Springfield-based consulting firm, to research and report on these questions with a local population sample.

As Paige Oxendine of Habitat says, "You see these headlines like, 'Gen Z

can't decide what causes they're going to support; they might not support any.' So we wanted to figure out: Are these folks genuinely less charitable, or, do they simply think about charitable giving through a different lens?"

The resulting report is "Shaping Tomorrow: A Study on Young Donors' Perspectives on Charitable Giving in Southwest Missouri." Released in February, it found that donors under 40 are in fact charitably-minded — they simply think about charity differently than their parents and grandparents. For example, they tend to be more skeptical of established charitable institutions. Most importantly, they're more likely to view crowdfunding services like GoFundMe as legitimate charitable giving. These services remove a middleman they're already skeptical of to give directly to families and individuals.

Additionally, the report recommends that, to garner more attention, trust and dollars from the below-40 crowd, nonprofits must maximize their online presence. This is because, by a

More Online

Read the "Shaping Tomorrow" report and find a list of grant recipients at

CFOZARKS.ORG/SHAPINGTOMORROW.



PHOTO BY AARON SCOTT

Paige Oxendine and Spencer Harris with Habitat Communication & Culture, which researched and produced the "Shaping Tomorrow" report, offer insights on developing donors under 40 to a room full of CFO agency partners.

wide margin, younger donors prefer to not just give through an online platform, but through a website that is easy to use, up-to-date and well-branded; when done right, a nonprofit's online experience can improve younger donors' perception and trust of an organization.

In light of the limited capacity and budgets in the nonprofit community for the innovations needed to cater to younger donors, the CFO created a grant program to help nonprofits get a leg up in adapting fundraising strategies to this generational divide. In early May, and with the support of David and Stacey O'Reilly, the Shaping Tomorrow Grant Program granted to 11 regional nonprofits with the goal of helping them gain the attention, trust and donations of younger folks.

"It was important to us that, if we were going to tell our nonprofit partners that they will need to make significant changes to appeal to younger donors, that we put some dollars behind that effort," said Winter Kinne, president and CEO of the CFO. "With the help of the O'Reillys and in partnership with Habitat, we want to make sure our partners are ready to strategize for the future."

BY MATTHEW STEWART



PHOTO BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

Building Belonging

CFO, COOVER FOUNDATION DISTRIBUTE \$220,000 TO SUPPORT PLACES AND SPACES FOR NEIGHBORS TO GATHER — AND FIND CONNECTION — IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

A place may be defined by where it is on a map, but also by the links and connections that hold its people together. And in today's uber-connected world, with technology and messaging and no need to leave the house to find information, people are feeling more disconnected — and lonely — than ever before.

Connections matter. Having spaces to make those meaningful moments is crucial, too. That's where the Louis L. and Julia Dorothy Coover Charitable Foundation, in partnership with the Community Foundation of the Ozarks, came in to help with the Coover Regional Vibrant Communities Grant Program to address the "epidemic of loneliness" in rural communities.

Through the program, \$220,000 was distributed to 14 nonprofits throughout central and southern Missouri to help

further their efforts to create community spaces.

"Loneliness levels have reached an all-time high, with nearly half of 20,000 U.S. adults reporting they sometimes or always feel alone," notes a 2019 article by the American Psychological Association, citing a survey conducted by Cigna.

Loneliness, the article argues, affects more than one's mental health: "Social isolation and chronic loneliness place individuals at much greater risk for a variety of diseases, as well as for premature mortality."

The bottom line: There's a lot tied up in feeling alone, and that's where the CFO and the Coover Foundation have stepped in to help.

"For the past couple of years, the Coover grantmaking program has focused on improving spaces for people

to gather," said Ashley Fleming, grant program officer for the CFO, at a grant presentation on April 30. "In the wake of the COVID pandemic, it's been important to rebuild the spaces where people gather, where people collaborate and where people make connections."

The funded projects are wide in scope and physical place, ranging from wellness events for breast cancer survivors and their caregivers to the purchase of a dishwasher and ice machine for a senior center.

Since the Coover Foundation began distributing funds, more than \$8 million has benefitted rural communities, said Jill Reynolds, senior vice president at Commerce Trust and chair of the Coover Foundation grant selection committee.

The Creek Rocks shared their original songs and traditional Ozarks tunes with residents of Truman Health-care & Rehabilitation in Lamar. The performance was funded by a recent Coover Regional grant to Singer Hill Miracle of Music.

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“This is a big deal,” Reynolds said at the grant presentation, and spoke of Julia Coover, who helped create the foundation years ago. “I just know Mrs. Coover would be smiling and so grateful to see all of the good that has come from this. It’s so impactful, and it’s going to go on for years and years.”

Here are just two of their stories.

Connecting through Song

Tucked away on a gravel road near the Dade-Barton county line is the Singer Hill Miracle of Music, a house concert series that began bringing friends, family and neighbors together monthly, in the middle of farmland,

more than a decade ago.

That mission expanded recently through additional concerts at other local venues like schools and nursing homes — an effort that again will grow through a \$11,640 grant from the Coover Foundation.

“I just know Mrs. Coover would be smiling and so grateful to see all of the good that has come from this.”

JILL REYNOLDS
COMMERCE TRUST

“The Coover Foundation grant allows me to build on this foundation that we already have established to reach out into new areas,” says Carl Singer, who leads the effort. “For instance, I have about 40 to 50 people usually at our Tuesday night monthly concerts. I can’t hold any more than that in my house.”

Thanks to the grant, they can give additional performances — benefiting additional people, and providing additional compensation to the musicians.

“The hope is that we can reach out into other parts of our general community with the same artist,” says Singer. “Our artists have already come into the house concerts, and they get a little extra money. They are delighted to do that.”

Singer Hill began as a mission: It was because of Kay Singer, Carl’s late wife, who needed a project to focus on as she navigated some health

challenges. The couple began the concert series in their home, setting up chairs that cascade through their living room, kitchen and sunroom — a setting that’s accentuated by Carl Singer’s stained-glass and mosaic art. To date, the series has offered more than 100 concerts in the Ozarks countryside, giving a reason for people to get together.

“I think there is a temptation to just stay at home,” says Mary Peirot Jones, a frequent attendee who helps with social media for the series.

“For me, what has been fulfilling is meeting other people who live around here,” she says. “It’s low-key — bring a snack, bring a donation, and catch up with people.”

These performers may be from across the country — or from relatively right down the road, as was the case at a recent concert with The Creek Rocks from Springfield. Husband-and-wife duo Mark Bilyeu and Cindy Woolf sang original folk songs and those found in other legacy collections.

“We like to sing songs we find from different Ozarks folk singers in Missouri and Arkansas,” said Woolf as the concert began, giving examples of collectors Mary Celestia Parler and Max Hunter.

The evening concert wasn’t the first the duo played that day. In light of the new grant funding, they also sang at two nursing homes: Good Shepherd in Lockwood — which has already hosted some Singer Hill concerts funded by the Lockwood Community Foundation, a CFO affiliate — and Truman Healthcare & Rehabilitation in Lamar.

Residents at the Lamar nursing home filled the dining area as the duo began to play. Toe-tapping, clapping and even some dancing led to success without words other than the ones that were shared by the musicians.

As they finished their set, its success was evident in a staff member’s conversation with a resident: “We’ll have to tell them to come back and see us!”

Using Art to Heal and Connect

Art is at the heart of mission-minded work being done in West Plains, the seat of Howell County and home to about 12,000 people. Despite



its size, which is larger than most surrounding communities, there is limited access to mental health therapy — and a lingering stigma, says Stacy Magdalena Tintocalis, executive director of Heart of the Ozarks United Way.

“I know therapy is nonexistent in this town,” Tintocalis. “People are probably fearful of therapy. I was thinking that maybe people who are fearful of therapy would come here instead of going to a doctor’s office, thinking this is not therapy, it’s something else.”

Here, in this case, is the Yellow House, a nearly 125-year-old, gingerbread-style house that, yes, is painted a bright shade of yellow. It’s a community arts center, and part of the focus of a \$14,107 grant from the Coover Foundation to fund the Conversation Starters program. The joint effort of the United Way, the Yellow House and Ozarks Artery, a nonprofit that encourages creativity, will provide mental health workshops and public art events that fundamentally tie to merging self-help with community good.

Several elements make up this Conversation Starters program. One is a community mural. Another is a juried art show, which will help prompt discussion among program participants. As its website puts it in its call for submissions, “Therapy participants will use the artworks you create to induce socializing.”

A third, key element are the sessions



PHOTO BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

Stacy Magdalena Tintocalis, executive director of Heart of the Ozarks United Way, partnered with the Yellow House in West Plains to secure a Coover Regional grant for art therapy programming that builds community.

themselves, which merge art and group therapy. Sessions — for adults and kids — will be structured differently, but ultimately tie to using art to start a conversation and process challenges participants face.

“When we go to the art shows Ozarks Artery has, people — strangers — stand around and talk to each other,” Tintocalis says. “I think it’s the only place where strangers talk to strangers, and there’s no barriers. There’s no feeling of, ‘Oh, I shouldn’t be talking to you.’ It’s not like the supermarket. It’s like, ‘I’m supposed to be turning to somebody and talking to them about this artwork.’”

Although not directly part of the grant, another goal of this program is to increase visibility and interaction with the Yellow House. The house dates to 1903 and was donated for local arts use, which today manifests through the distinctive structure and a guiding nonprofit.

“There’s this concept known as the ‘third space’ or ‘third place,’ and it’s disappearing,” says Tracy Fenske, a Yellow House board member, of having a place besides work and home to connect with others. “Providing a third space is an awesome opportunity because they’re just dying everywhere, but especially in small towns and especially here.”

Despite its longtime tenure in the community, organizers hope that the Yellow House can develop into a place of meaning for even more people.

“I think people can return,” Tintocalis says. “There’ll be so many different events here. They’ll be on shows. There’s music, there’s theatrical things. So hopefully people will come back for that.”

BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

Collaboration for Kids

GRANT PARTNERSHIPS SUPPORT SPECIALIZED, YOUTH-FOCUSED NEEDS IN THE REGION

It’s been said that it takes a village to raise a child, and in philanthropy, that adage can come through entities working together to funnel resources to the right needs at the right time.

Two examples of those collaborations occurred in late 2023 and early 2024, when the Community Foundation of the Ozarks worked with partners Delta Dental of Missouri and the Children’s Trust Fund to distribute \$800,000 to benefit kids throughout the region.

“We were thrilled to partner with Delta Dental of Missouri and Children’s Trust Fund to support the children in our service area,” said Ashley Fleming, grant program officer for the CFO. “These dollars will have significant impact on improving the lives of families in our region. We are pleased when there are opportunities to help extend the work of organizations in our region to impact lives, and we look forward to ways that may evolve with like-minded partners in the future.”

Of that figure, \$130,000 went to 13 agencies — each received \$10,000 — to serve needs including dental health screenings, exams and hygiene packages for school districts; to establish funds to provide dental care for students in need; and the acquisition of a handheld X-ray unit. Delta Dental of Missouri contributed \$100,000 for the grant program, which was supplemented by \$30,000 from the CFO’s unrestricted grantmaking funds.

“Every child deserves a healthy and pain-free smile so they can truly thrive,” said Rob Goren, president and chief executive officer at Delta Dental of Missouri, in a release about the grant program. “We are excited to partner with the Community Foundation of the Ozarks to support more than a dozen organizations and help children get vital dental care to improve their overall health, quality of life and self-esteem.”

The Children’s Trust Fund’s

grantmaking program was largely propelled by Rep. Cody Smith, who serves District 163 in the Missouri House of Representatives.

It represents another collaboration, said Emily van Schenkhoef, executive director of CTF, during a grant presentation in January.

She noted that it was funding available through the American Rescue Plan Act that led Rep. Smith to reach out to the CTF. That conversation led to discussion around determining how to best distribute the funding, and later, the grant round through the CFO. Ultimately, \$670,000 was granted to 12 nonprofits addressing child abuse and neglect in the CFO’s service area of central and southern Missouri.

Among other recipients, three examples of projects that received funding include Boys & Girls Club of the Ozarks, which received \$65,600 to upgrade its clubhouses in Branson and Forsyth; Project 360 Youth Services Inc. was granted \$100,000 to improve its teen resource center in Lebanon; and Good Shepherd Children & Family Services received \$74,022 to expand its foster-care facilities in Jefferson County.

“This is an example of something that government has done that I think is really beautiful,” van Schenkhoef says, noting that positive moments give her “strength and faith” in the face of the tragic realities of child abuse and neglect.

“You all are making a greater impact, you all are creating nicer spaces for people who are in really tough positions.”

BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

More Online

Find all the recipients of the Delta Dental of Missouri grant program at CFOZARKS.ORG/DELTA and the Children’s Trust Fund grant program at CFOZARKS.ORG/CTF.



Sydney Hampton, a student at Central High School in Springfield, shows off a freshly picked strawberry. She was among the students touring urban farms in Springfield as part of United Community Change's BLACC Ag Academy.

PHOTOS BY AARON SCOTT

Cultivating Community

GRANT-SUPPORTED URBAN FARMING PROGRAM SHOWS SPRINGFIELD YOUTH NEW WAYS TO THINK ABOUT THEIR DINNER

“For me, it was over the first time I had a carrot straight from the ground,” said Mia Jones with a laugh. “I couldn’t believe that I had grown something that tasted so incredible and rich!” We were standing in the grounds of Central High School in Springfield, nearing the end of a tour of the campus’s green places and gardening projects. It was the second to last week of classes and we’d been visiting a group of science students who are part of United Community Change’s BLACC Ag Academy, funded in part by a \$30,000 Jewell Schweitzer Collective Impact Grant.

Jones is executive director of United Community Change, an ambitious, multifaceted organization dedicated to empowering underserved and marginalized communities. As the organization grows, it seeks — among other things — to connect folks from these communities to safe housing and gainful employment, to educate youth and adults alike on civic engagement and to promote healthier and more equitable food access. According to Jones, who also owns Soul Fresh Farms, these are the essential elements of empowering an individual. “You need shelter and income, and community is so important to having a

support system,” she said. “And how we grow food is something that community is built around.”

On that day in mid-May, Paul Epps, science teacher and BLACC (BIPOC Leaders Achieving Community Change) Ag Academy’s liaison at Central, led a group of about 20 students through the grounds as part of UCC’s program (and, it must be said, in an attempt to recruit students to Central High’s gardening club, the Botanical Society — by the end, it seemed he’d convinced at least a couple of them). The lecture began with Epps asking his students what they’d eaten for dinner the previous evening and which vegetables comprised those meals. The question is essential to a larger educational project of urban farming: where does your food come from? How is your quality of life impacted by what foods you have access to?

Urban farming is an increasingly popular tool for not

only growing locally and ethically sourced food, but also for creating social bonds, sharing knowledge and building community. On one hand, urban farms can provide healthy greens through regenerative growing practices in areas dominated by fast food and

More Online

Learn about all the recipients of the \$120,000 Jewell Schweitzer Collective Impact Grant Program at CFOZARKS.ORG/SCHWEITZER24.

produce-less convenience stores (so-called food deserts), but perhaps their deeper and more lasting value is in demonstrating to residents an avenue to achieve self-sustainability through cooperation.

As they expand and become more intertwined with the communities they serve, these farms can offer economic opportunity for the farmers selling the produce. They are sites of education and skill-building. The green spaces they create can beautify a community and improve air quality. By positioning food growth closer to the consumers of the food, urban farms can help prepare communities for situations involving national supply chains, which are predicted to become increasingly vulnerable to natural disasters, fuel shortages and the like.

For Jones, creating a small urban farm offered a way to turn idealized activism into tangible community change. After spending time with various nationwide political movements, including Black Lives Matter, she realized she wanted to focus her community-building ideas to a more local level. Shortly after moving into a Springfield neighborhood, Jones found a neglected community garden near her home and took it upon herself to recultivate it.

The life-changing power of a community garden really became apparent to Jones after her brother was released from prison and needed a space to reacclimate to society and to a new understanding of himself. “I put him to work in the garden, which ended up being a kind of mental therapy for him,” she said. “It really was inspiring to see him pivot into a life change and become a new and more confident person. He was like my case study to confirm how much of an impact all this can have on a life.” Jones’ brother now serves as a site manager at a local community garden.

In addition to the community-building aspects of urban gardening, the BLACC Ag Academy also aspires to get younger folks interested in food in general, to think about where their food comes from and how it gets to their tables. CHS sophomore Sydney Hampton, who was present on our visit to the school and who’s been part of the program since January, said that she hadn’t considered that growing one’s own food was an option. “Mia’s taken us on a bunch of field trips; I like learning about everything that grows in these little local farms.”

Carl Tamm, another sophomore in Epps’ class, loves “meeting people who are passionate about farming; Farmer Dan is my personal hero,” referring to Dan Bigbee, co-owner of Fassnight Creek Farm, a popular Springfield urban farm, as well as a partner and frequent field trip stop of the BLACC Ag Academy.

Working with community partners isn’t just a part of UCC’s vision; it’s also an essential criterion of the Jewell



Schweitzer Collective Impact Grant program. The program’s purpose is to support innovative and collaborative solutions to what Springfield-Greene County’s Community Focus Report designates as Red Flag issues. The BLACC Ag Academy is ready-made for such support: the program exists with the partnership of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Hamra Enterprises, MU Extension, CHS and, of course, several local farms. The Red Flag issues the program addresses are those around community health and civic engagement among young people.

During the outing, Epps showed off everything growing in the CHS gardens, from green garlic growing underground to the young peaches still ripening in the trees. He pointed out that members of the faculty can enroll in a community-supported agriculture program with the Botanical Society to receive a quantity of garden-fresh veggies every week. Whatever’s left, he explained, is free to whoever wants to pick it from the garden.

A student asked Epps whether any of the garden’s produce ends up in the school cafeteria. “Not yet, but we’re hoping to change that as we grow,” he answered.

Jones agreed: “That’s a major goal of the program, to get the kids eating local food in the school.”

As Paul Epps brought us to the end of our tour, it was evident that the seeds of such a vision were already sprouting. By empowering a future generation of community stewards, and with the leadership of Mia Jones and its passionate partner organizations, BLACC Ag Academy is creating a healthier and more connected community for all of us.

BY MATTHEW STEWART

“Community is so important to having a support system — and how we grow food is something that community is built around.”

MIA JONES
UNITED COMMUNITY
CHANGE

Paul Epps, science teacher at Central High School, and Mia Jones, executive director for United Community Change, convince students to try green garlic, pulled moments earlier from the school’s gardens in Springfield.

Men's Mental Health Takes the Field

THREE-YEAR GRANT FUNDS BASEBALL-THEMED SUMMIT, NEW AD CAMPAIGN

On April 27, Burrell Behavioral Health welcomed men from across Greene County to Hammons Field for the Men's Mental Health League: Suicide Prevention Summit. Here they learned about local organizations and campaigns fighting the good fight and heard from a couple speakers on their own mental health challenges. The event was funded through the Advancing Mental Wellness Grant Program, a three-year, multi-partner project focused on mental wellness. At the end of the three years, \$600,000 will have been disbursed to Burrell and Healthy Living Alliance of the Ozarks.

The summit highlighted a key goal of the Advancing Mental Wellness

Grant Program and the resulting partnership of Burrell and HLA: getting folks more comfortable talking about their mental well-being.

In Springfield, this is an increasingly urgent issue for men in particular. In the United States,

80% of individuals that die by suicide are men, and in Greene County, the suicide mortality rate among men aged 45 and older is even higher. Given that social isolation and stigma around men voicing their emotional challenges are at least partly to blame for this reality, HLA's campaign "Hey man, you good?" hopes to expedite potentially uncomfortable, but necessary, conversations between men about their mental health



PHOTO BY MATTHEW STEWART

Former big-leaguer Drew Robinson shares his story with Matt Lemmon, then with Burrell Behavioral Health, during the Suicide Prevention Summit on April 27 at Hammons Field in Springfield.

by demonstrating the conversations can be sparked by a simple question.

Two speakers at the event shared their battles with pressure and the impact it had on their mental health. Drew Robinson is the mental health advocate for the San Francisco Giants, a position he's held since recovering from a suicide attempt in April 2020. Prior to that, Robinson was a utility player who saw big-league action with the St. Louis Cardinals and Texas Rangers.

At the summit, he recounted how performance pressure, in combination with a recent breakup and the turmoil of quarantine, pushed him into a place where he felt that ending his life was the only solution.

"It was kind of like there was this other, unattainable version of me peeking in at all times, saying no matter how good I'd done, I could've done better — this constant voice of 'not good enough, not good enough,'" Robinson said. Following his attempt, Robinson said it was opening himself up to loved ones that allowed for healing and helped break the stigma of masculine vulnerability.

"You gotta be open and honest, and know that there are people in your life ready to receive that."

Ethan Bryan is a local author whose most recent book, "A Year of Playing Catch," chronicles his rediscovery of how a game of catch can make one feel present and connected to others. This awakening has led him to pursue a project he calls Catch365 — a campaign to encourage folks to reconnect with friends and family, or even make

connections with strangers, through games of catch.

"Play is essential to being human," Bryan reminded attendees. "The opposite of play is not work; the opposite of play is depression."

Events like these are key to the vision of the Advancing Mental Wellness Program, now beginning its second year. Nia Howard, Burrell's program and engagement leader for the Be Well Initiatives, recounted strategizing for a healthier community focus on mental health.

"At the outset of this program," Howard said, "we easily identified three groups that have a higher rate of suicide completion: men, age 45 and up; the LGBTQ+ community; and our last group is what we call the 'Aged Population,' ages 75 and up." Burrell's goal is to host events addressing each of these groups, and the Men's Mental Health League is the first of them.

Each of these groups faces unique barriers to the health care they need. For the men's group, Howard said "It's an issue of permission, so often. What we hoped from the Men's Summit was that it would give permission, for men, to have an opinion, have feelings, be able to share them, in a safe space."

Ultimately, she said, it's really about community and having a network of support. Events like the summit are useful tools in breaking down the barriers that prevent open discussions about mental health, and with them we can see a future where mental wellness is prioritized and supported for all.

BY MATTHEW STEWART

"Play is essential to being human. The opposite of play is not work; the opposite of play is depression."

ETHAN BRYAN

Growing Impact for Ozarks' Resources

L-A-D FOUNDATION COLLABORATES WITH CFO FOR NEW GRANTMAKING PROGRAM

When Leo Drey began his work in forestry, his method of selectively harvesting trees supported multiple wins. Chief among them were ongoing timber production and the restoration and maintenance of thousands of acres of Ozarks woodlands, for which his Pioneer Forest has become an industry leader.

Decades later, and years after Drey's death, those efforts are still bearing benefits for ecology and the Ozarks. A new example is through more than \$54,000 in grant funding, which was distributed by Drey's L-A-D Foundation — which now owns Pioneer Forest — in partnership with the CFO in 2024.

"While L-A-D Foundation is the state's largest private landowner, they really aren't well known," says Jennifer Battson Warren, the L-A-D Foundation's manager. "It's a routine topic of conversation of the things we could do to connect better and be as supportive as possible."

The grant round is one of those efforts. Seven nonprofits received support for the conservation of natural and cultural resources in its 12-county service area, ranging from cultural history to pure conservation.

"The proceeds from the timber managements fund the land-management side, but to the extent possible, we try to offer grants that are more aligned with our strategic goal to support communities in the Ozarks," Battson Warren says.

L-A-D's Ozarks story

Pioneer Forest began in 1951. Initially supported by inheritance from Drey's family canning jar company, a series of land acquisitions led to more than 150,000 acres today. Those holdings also include sites of historic and cultural importance, such as Dillard Mill, a water mill from 1908 in Crawford County, and Grand Gulf, a significant sinkhole near the Missouri-Arkansas state line. Both are leased back to state agencies and accessible to the public.

"No one really owns land," Drey told a Springfield newspaper reporter in 1980. "I prefer to think of my role as a stewardship. We all are custodians of the land."

Drey died in 2015 at 98. His work, however, lives on through sustainable timber production — and, in a new way, through L-A-D's collaborative grantmaking with the CFO.

"We have really enjoyed working with L-A-D Foundation in our first year of this partnership to support their grantmaking goals," says Bridget Dierks, vice president of Programs at the CFO. "This work to provide grantmaking services to



PHOTOS BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

Kristie Nelson and Cheri Low educate visitors to Montauk State Park on local history and science. "There's a big part of Ozark culture that's being lost," Low says. "When we teach about the history, we're also teaching about that culture and kind of bringing it back to life."



other foundations is something the

CFO is excited to grow as we partner with fellow funders to maximize their grantmaking effectiveness.

"Joining our individual areas of expertise allow us to best serve our communities and the greater region."

Grinding Out History at Montauk

An example of the grant program's quick impact is seen deep in Dent County at Montauk State Park. Located along the Current River, Montauk began as a community before it became a state park in 1926. Today, there is a trout hatchery — and plenty of fishing opportunities — as well as a mill, which is seasonally open for guests.

Through the joint L-A-D and CFO grant program, \$6,280 will help accentuate its history and conservation opportunities, both by supporting cultural programming and research.

"I think that helps with the connection to place and history and the whole experience," says Kristie Nelson, Montauk State Park naturalist, of the grant funding.

To help tell that story, the funding covered the acquisition of manual corn grinder and shellers, which were first in use at Old Mill Day in May. It also supports the acquisition of period attire — to be worn by presenters during historical programming — an archery program and a storybook initiative.

There is, too, a focus on the natural world. A citizen science project will help document the park's cerulean warblers, an imperiled bird species that will be tracked and documented by staff and trained volunteers — which may create lasting change beyond the grant, as a model for other parks to use.

Giving back: Just like Pioneer Forest and the L-A-D Foundation continue to do in sustainable forestry, preservation and conservation.

BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

A hand-powered mill, used for demonstrations at the Old Mill at Montauk State Park, was purchased through a grant from the L-A-D Foundation.



PHOTO BY AARON SCOTT

Representatives of more than a dozen local nonprofits gathered to receive \$1.17 million in grants from the Jeannette L. Musgrave Foundation and the Community Foundation of the Ozarks on June 24.

CFO & Musgrave's Million Dollar Day

'OPPORTUNITIES TO THRIVE,' CAPITAL-PROJECT PROGRAMS CONTINUE JEANNETTE L. MUSGRAVE'S LEGACY OF HIGH-IMPACT GRANTMAKING IN SPRINGFIELD

Any day that the CFO can grant money to address community needs is a good day, but it's not every day that we grant out more than \$1 million. On June 24, the CFO, in partnership with the Jeannette L. Musgrave Foundation and U.S. Bank Private Wealth Management, presented grants totaling \$1,165,923. These grants comprise three high-impact, multiyear grant programs and support for non-profit capital projects in the Springfield metro area.

New this year is the Musgrave Foundation's "Opportunities to Thrive" program, which supports the long-term sustainability of agencies in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure continuous service to low- and no-income individuals of all ages. At the grant presentation event at 300 S. Jefferson Ave. in Springfield, the future home of the CFO, representatives of recipient organizations had a chance to speak about the impact the multi-year grants will have for them.

"We have 78 raised beds at our food bank that we inherited," said Alexa Poindexter, director of Full Circle

Gardens at Ozarks Food Harvest. "They were an old DIY project, and they really need help." Full Circle grows food by partnering with dozens of local farmers, and it features educational outreach programs for young people.

"This grant will allow us to continue growing the 13, sometimes 14,000 pounds of food at the farm, with the help of volunteers," Poindexter said, "and, most importantly, with hundreds and hundreds of kiddos who come through so they can learn and experience the direct action of growing food to feed your neighbors."

The selected organizations represent longtime philanthropic interests of Mrs. Musgrave. She was an adamant supporter of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Springfield, for example, and that legacy was carried on in the new round of grants.

"We serve roughly 5,000 kids per

year and our waitlist taking in new kids is, right now, at 400," said Rachael Salveter, director of development at BGCS, to the packed room. BGCS received \$70,000 this June, and may again for the next two years if criteria are met for renewal.

"What this grant means is that we will not only retain the staff we currently have, but that we will maintain their training and train new staff to come onboard," Salveter said, "because the only way to move kids off the waitlist is having irrationally passionate adults to teach and care for them."

Also new this year — but in keeping with Mrs. Musgrave's legacy — was an invitation-only program that granted more than \$500,000 for capital projects at five nonprofits.

"In her lifetime, Mrs. Musgrave certainly funded capital projects," said Bridget Dierks, vice president of programs at the CFO. "It's not uncommon to see the Musgrave Wing of this or the Musgrave Unit of that organization. We're excited to be lucky enough to get back into that part of her work this year."

More Online

Watch a video recap and learn more about the funded projects at CFOZARKS.ORG/MUSGRAVE24.

BY MATTHEW STEWART

A Final Word

A NOTE FROM CFO PRESIDENT WINTER KINNE

At first glance the title ‘A Final Word’ sounds so, well ... final. But upon reflection, it makes a lot of sense. A final word for this publication and, in many ways, a final(ish) word on fiscal year 2024 that ended June 30. Here at the CFO, we get the chance to reflect twice a year — once with the turning of the calendar and then again at the end of the fiscal year.

I love the chance and reminder to reflect. It must be built into my need for context and to understand the why. I’m not always good about celebrating the wins as I want to focus on the next thing that can be accomplished, but I am aware and working to improve this part of me. Reflection is important.

In the vein of both reflection and celebration, I want to share some end-of-fiscal-year highlights with you. These are preliminary numbers and, gosh, they make me awfully proud of this organization!

- ▶ We gave away 11,157 grants and distributions totaling \$63,147,543.
- ▶ We took in 32,821 gifts and contributions totaling \$70,274,956.
- ▶ Two community foundations became new CFO affiliates — the Bootheel Regional Community Foundation, based in Dexter, and the Phelps County Community Foundation.
- ▶ We launched the Generosity Collective, a high-impact giving circle supporting the Springfield community, with 64 members its first year.
- ▶ We purchased 300 S. Jefferson Ave. in downtown Springfield, the new (likely forever) home of the CFO.



PHOTO BY AARON SCOTT

- ▶ We released the 2023 interim update of the Community Focus Report for Springfield-Greene County, and began prepping the report’s 20th anniversary edition.
- ▶ We established 229 new funds that help people and organizations support causes they care about the most.
- ▶ We honored Dr. Heather Lyons-Burney, a volunteer pharmacist and board president for My Neighbor’s Charitable Pharmacy in Branson, as the 2023 Humanitarian.

- ▶ We unveiled a universal scholarship application to make the application process simpler for students.

And the list could go on and on.

Claude Monet, one of my favorite artists, once said “It’s on the strength of observation and reflection that one finds a way. So we must dig and delve unceasingly.”

We’ll continue to dig and delve as we transition into fiscal year 2025. It will be an exciting year with a planned physical move, additions to our team and elevation of our community leadership work — all while continuing our tradition of helping people create funds for causes they are passionate about during and after their lifetimes, and of being a flexible and responsive grantmaker.

This time next year, I know there will be plenty to reflect upon — I’m already looking forward to it.

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Winter Kinne".

—WINTER KINNE
PRESIDENT & CEO



PARTING SHOT: Ozarks Teacher Corps member Kelsie Jordan, center, uses a smartphone app to identify a budding tree at the Springfield Conservation Nature Center.

“Querencia ... a place where one feels safe, a place from which one’s strength of character is drawn, a place where one feels at home.”

—GEORGIA HEARD, “WRITING TOWARD HOME”

On March 22, Leslie Cook, head of professional learning for Teton Science Schools, led Ozarks Teacher Corps members through a workshop on place-based education, using “querencia” to frame the importance of rooting education to the places we call home. On a trail lined with emerging native wildflowers, Corps members learned to use all their senses—not just smartphones—to observe their surroundings, a valuable lesson that they can take to their future classrooms.

Part of the CFO’s Rural Schools Partnership, the Corps is a nationally recognized scholarship program to recruit new teachers to rural school districts. The program provides \$2,000 per year for up to two years if students commit to teaching in a rural school district for three years following graduation. To prepare them for teaching in a rural school, the CFO provides Corps members with special training, particularly in place-based education. To learn more, visit CFOZARKS.ORG/RSP.



PHOTOS BY AARON SCOTT