

# PASSION & PURPOSE

THE CFO NEWSLETTER  
SUMMER 2025



## MORE INSIDE

APPRECIATING OUTGOING DIRECTORS  
RURAL PHILANTHROPY SUMMIT RECAP  
NEW COMMUNITY LEADERS

# Connecting Outdoors

Grant-funded projects provide opportunities to explore nature and build community across the region





# A MESSAGE FROM WINTER

We celebrate New Year's Eve twice a year at the CFO — once as gifts from generous donors roll in on Dec. 31, and again as we close the books on our fiscal year on June 30.

And what a year it has been! We made more than \$75 million in grants, scholarships and charitable distributions, surpassed \$500 million in assets under management, and renovated the fourth floor of 300 South Jefferson to serve as our new headquarters. By the time you read this, we will be making the move into our new home — I think popping open a third bottle of bubbly is in our future!

## GRATITUDE & APPRECIATION

I am so grateful for the guidance of our Board of Directors, volunteer leaders who generously give of their time and talent. Five of these individuals recently completed their terms, having served in a variety of leadership roles for the CFO and our affiliate foundation network.

**Richard Cavender** completed his second term on the CFO board, representing Rolla and the Meramec region. During his first tour of duty, he was our board chair. Richard is a Legacy Society member and continues to serve on the boards of both the Phelps County and Meramec Regional community foundations. Richard and his wife, Jeannie, established the Richard and Jeannie Cavender Scholarship for Public Service.



**Laurie Edmondson** also is a past board chair, representing Springfield. Laurie had

a very busy time during her tenure, serving on our Development, Governance, Scholarships, Children's Trust Fund Facility Improvement and Infrastructure, Early Childhood and Executive committees. Laurie remains involved as an advisor for several funds left to us in the estate of Jewell Thompson Schweitzer.



**Kristi Montague**, representing the southwestern portion of our region, also served on the Carthage Community Foundation board. Kristi served on the Coover Regional grant committee and is a member of the Legacy Society and the Professional Advisors Council. Kristi is a fundholder with the Carthage Community Foundation and the CFO.



**Doug Nickell**, a Springfield estate attorney, is a longtime PAC member and a Legacy Society member. Doug and his wife, Rae, established the Doug and Rae Nickell Family Fund as well as the Miller and Sanford Educational Enhancement Fund.



**Dean Thompson**, from Republic, served as our board chair for 2023–24, ushering the CFO through its purchase of its new home at 300 South Jefferson as well as a leadership transition. He also served on the Development, Executive and Governance committees, the Facilities Task Force, and the Ozarks

Charitable Real Estate Foundation. Dean is an advisor for seven funds, including LORE — Leaders for Ozarks Regional Evolvment — an initiative launched earlier this year to improve quality of life and grow a regional workforce.



## NEW BOARD MEMBERS & EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

We welcome five new board members, who began their first three-year terms on July 1.

**Dr. Josh Cotter** is an educator and director of Southern Missouri Technical Institute in West Plains. He recently completed his final term as board chair for the Community Foundation of West Plains Inc.

**Barb Houser**, representing Springfield, leads the nonprofit practice of KPM CPAs. She serves on the CFO board as the new chair of the Audit/Operations Committee.

**Travis Liles** is a director with Forvis Mazars Private Client. Travis began his career with the CFO and returns to serve on the board representing Springfield.

**Dr. Judith Martínez-García** is an associate professor of languages, cultures and religion at Missouri State University in Springfield.

**Louise Secker** is a real estate professional and chair for the Joplin Regional Community Foundation.

The board will be led by these members of the Executive Committee:

- **Chair:** Roy Hardy Jr., Ozark (Associated Electric Cooperative)
- **Vice chair:** Jimmy Liles, Nixa (City of Nixa)
- **Treasurer:** Greg Hoffman, Nevada (retired financial professional)
- **Secretary:** Gary Garwitz, Springfield (retired partner at BKD, now Forvis Mazars)
- **At-large:** Sarah Honeycutt, Cabool (accountant)
- **Investment Advisory Board chair:** Kari Creighton, Springfield (financial professional)
- **Audit/Operations Committee chair:** Barb Houser, Springfield (KPM nonprofit practice)
- **Chair emeritus:** Anne E. McGregor, Branson (The Neighbor Company)

# FY26 ACTION PLAN

In the 2024 fiscal year, the CFO's board of directors set "moving from transactional to transformational" as the foundation's guiding principle. This north star continues to inform items in the FY26 Action Plan:

- Reconvene the regional/affiliate committee at the board level. Begin discussion about affiliate roles and responsibilities.
- Survey CFO staff twice for employee engagement and benchmark in future years.
- Survey constituents for CFO satisfaction, engagement and understanding.
- Execute staff and board plan for transactional to transformational strategies and tactics, including focused initiatives identified during FY25.
- Review discretionary grantmaking and scholarships, reporting back to board any potential changes for FY27.
- Launch a capital campaign and financing plan for our new home at 300 South Jefferson in Springfield.



## CFO UPDATES

### NEW LEGACY SOCIETY MEMBERS

- Michael and Michele McGeeney, Springfield
- Andy and Courtney Peebles, Springfield
- Gerald Popek and Susan Prine, Rogersville

The Legacy Society recognizes donors who make a planned gift to a fund held by the CFO or its affiliate foundations. For more info, visit [cfozarks.org/legacy](http://cfozarks.org/legacy).

### NEW PROFESSIONAL ADVISORS COUNCIL MEMBERS

- Mark Archer—Archer Financial, Springfield

Through the Professional Advisors Council, the CFO partners with legal and financial experts to meet their clients' philanthropic needs. For more info, visit [cfozarks.org/pac](http://cfozarks.org/pac).

### AFFILIATE LEADERSHIP UPDATES



#### Republic Community Foundation

Outgoing: Britny Fuls

Incoming: Miki Medearis



#### Community Foundation of West Plains Inc.

Outgoing: Josh Cotter

Incoming: Eric Gibson

### UPCOMING EVENT

#### Changemakers: Philanthropy's Role in a Disconnected World

- For donor-advisors: Presentation by David Burton of MU Extension and panel discussion with Coover Regional Vibrant Communities grant recipients
- 11 a.m. on Thursday, Sept. 25, at Samuel Cedars, Rogersville
- For more info: Contact Anna Dowell, [adowell@cfozarks.org](mailto:adowell@cfozarks.org)



COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
of the OZARKS

**Passion & Purpose** is a quarterly publication of the Community Foundation of the Ozarks, a public charitable foundation representing the region of Missouri south of the Missouri River. For more information, call 417-864-6199, email [cfo@cfozarks.org](mailto:cfo@cfozarks.org) or visit [cfozarks.org](http://cfozarks.org).

**Production:** Aaron Scott, Kaitlyn McConnell, Matthew Stewart and Matt Lemmon



PHOTO BY AARON SCOTT

Erin Borla, executive director of the Roundhouse Foundation and host of the "Funding Rural" podcast, addresses Rural Philanthropy Summit attendees. "Stories help us become our full selves, as philanthropists and as people."

# The Power of Story

RURAL PHILANTHROPY SUMMIT EXPLORES IMPORTANCE OF STORYTELLING TO ILLUSTRATE NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES

Telling a story — your story — helps people connect need and opportunity. Those are thoughts Erin Borla shared as the keynote speaker of the 2025 Rural Philanthropy Summit, hosted by the CFO and Philanthropy Missouri on April 11.

"Someone said to me that the shortest distance between two people is a story," Borla said. "Stories help us become our full selves, as philanthropists and as people."

Borla, the granddaughter of Gert Boyle of Columbia Sportswear, is the executive director and trustee of the Roundhouse Foundation. Based in Oregon, the foundation invests in rural causes involving arts and culture, environmental stewardship, education, and social services.

While Borla's work is based in Oregon, her words also remind of common challenges and opportunities that are shared by rural communities across the country. That list includes helping explain the needs in rural spaces to larger areas — links that should be made to bring greater visibility to the work that's being done: Be intentional with how and when stories are shared; Don't keep the good work a secret.

"They need connections. They need collaborations and access to folks who have done similar work to build a coalition," Borla said of organizations' needs that extend beyond financial. "Access to other donors. Access to volunteers and access to legislators to assist with policy changes. These are all tools that we have as philanthropists that we can share with our partners, but we're acting as gatekeepers to their stories."

For Borla, part of that work is through "Funding Rural," a podcast she hosts to highlight the work being done in rural spaces and how philanthropy can better serve communities and spark systemic change.

"Frankly, it's not our story that's making change and impact in rural space," she said. "It's the stories of folks on the ground, the folks moving mountains, just like some of you in this room."

Borla expanded on the value of storytelling for rural communities during a breakout session. In another, Jon K. Rust shared about a project Rust Communications is undertaking to improve community health around Cape Girardeau. The media company is raising financial support — through a fund held by the Cape Area Community Foundation — to expand health news coverage to improve the quality of life for folks in southeast Missouri.

"We don't shy away from tough issues, but provide context," Rust said.

Other sessions included a focus on transportation, rural prosperity, policy and capacity building, and the need for continued investment. Groups shared ideas around the state's current nonprofit landscape and how to access public funding. Rural education — from supporting community colleges to strengthening the teacher pipeline — was a focus, with particular emphasis on the needs of rural communities. The day concluded with a panel discussion of leaders across Missouri reflecting on how collaboration has advanced causes in rural places.

—by Kaitlyn McConnell





# Let's Go Outside!

OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT  
WITH NATURE AND COMMUNITY  
ABOUND THANKS TO  
GRANTS AND AFFILIATES

Five years ago, during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, people across the country fell back in love with the great outdoors. Activities like hiking, biking, kayaking — even gardening — provided much-needed stress relief, physical exercise and connections with friends and neighbors in plentiful fresh air.

But heading outside is not easy for everyone, whether due to lack of awareness or limited ability. With that in mind, the CFO presented \$66,000 earlier this year in the inaugural Everyone Outdoors Grant Program. The grants supported eight projects — two of which are described in these pages — that make nature more accessible to Springfield residents. The second year of the Everyone Outdoors program will expand to the CFO's entire service area.

Recent grants from the CFO's regional affiliate foundations and impact partnerships, like the Louis L. and Julia Dorothy Coover Charitable Foundation and the L-A-D Foundation, support similar endeavors to give residents a greater sense of place and give out-of-towners more reasons to visit their communities.

Ahead you'll find seven reasons to head outside and connect with community — all supported by the power of place-based philanthropy.



COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF THE OZARKS

## 1 American Indian Center's Outdoor Workshops

SPRINGFIELD

"In Indigenous culture, we use animal parts, feathers — things like that — in ceremonies," says Valerie Badhorse. "Our dancing, our powwows, our stories are all about animals because we lived together with them."

But for families in more urban areas like Springfield, that deep connection to nature isn't always easy to maintain. "Being urban makes it harder to get that sense of connection," Badhorse admits.

That's why the American Indian Center of Springfield — where Badhorse serves as executive director — is hosting a series of outdoor activities this summer to help people, Indigenous or not, rebuild their relationship with the land. On June 24, that activity was nature journaling at the Springfield Conservation Nature Center — an event designed to spark curiosity, creativity and a renewed awareness of the natural world.

"This is kind of like reconnection," says Hannah Scarborough, AICS's cultural liaison. "The kids love being around each other; it builds an



PHOTO BY AARON SCOTT

environment of community. And there are so many benefits to just being outside."

Those benefits are clear to Kinzee Clark, a frequent participant. "Everyone seems happier by the time they leave than they did coming in," she observes. "More connected."

The event is part of AICS's broader mission to celebrate and share Indigenous culture — and it's made possible by a CFO Everyone Outdoors grant, which supports projects that connect people to the outdoors.

Upcoming event activities include foraging and natural dyeing; keep up with the calendar at [aicspringfield.org/events](https://aicspringfield.org/events).

—by Matthew Stewart

## 2 Ava Senior Center Garden

AVA

The raised garden beds outside the Ava Senior Center grow cherry tomatoes, marigolds, lettuce, radishes — and community.

They exist because of hard work and green thumbs, but also through a 2023 grant from the CFO and the Coover Charitable Foundation. The funding allowed the senior center to construct the beds in an underused spot of the center's parking lot, offering a splash of color, free produce, a sense of purpose and a point of connection.

"I think the community aspect of the garden is more important than the food that's grown," says Hannah Tate, the center's administrator. "We have seniors who look forward to checking the progress of the garden each day they come in." The produce supplements what is offered at the senior center. What's not used is available for the seniors to take home.

"I wanted a garden here for the sense of community it brings," Tate says. "It creates a



PHOTO BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

commonality among our seniors."

The key person behind those conversations is Blue Barringer (pictured above), who served as resident gardener until June. She experimented with different plants and ideas; this year included a new method of trellising and an attempt at broccoli. Others connected to the center are now tending the garden.

"Everybody had a garden at one point around here," she says, noting those memories grow conversations. "People get excited, and I love that. That's my thing — maybe I don't have a lot of help in the garden, but people get excited to see things grow."

—by Kaitlyn McConnell





PROVIDED BY MAGIC DRAGON TRAILS

### 3 Magic Dragon Trails System

LAKE OF THE OZARKS

Connection is at the heart of the Magic Dragon Trails System, an effort to bring more people together — from the area and beyond — around Lake of the Ozarks.

“We believe bringing this type of family-friendly activities will increase year-round tourism to the lake as well as benefit the community by adding inexpensive, recreational opportunities for residents,” says Stacy Pyrtle, president of the Community Foundation of the Lake, the CFO affiliate leading the effort.

The project includes trails designed for walking, biking, hiking, jogging, running, as well as wheelchair accessibility. Since work began in 2022, the group has built about two miles of trail and maintains 13.5 miles in the Lake of the Ozarks State Park — and more are in the works.

Among other plans, Pyrtle says the group expects to soon break ground for a trail that goes around the Osage Beach city park and into the state park. They are also working with the local Duenke family to finalize an easement for approximately three miles of trail.

“The future of this project looks bright as we have received lots of support and favorable comments about bringing additional trails and greenways to the area,” Pyrtle says, noting that the final goal is to have trails and greenways around the entire Lake of the Ozarks and eventually connect to the Rock Island Trail, another project the CFO has helped support.

“I may not see that in my lifetime,” Pyrtle says of the greater Magic Dragon plan, “but that is our ultimate goal.”

—by Kaitlyn McConnell



PHOTO BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

## 4 Stockton Trails Initiative Coalition's Story Walk along Old Mill Trail

STOCKTON

Stockton Trails Initiative Coalition takes literal steps to help people enjoy nature by maintaining and promoting local nature trails.

Kim Schmid, director of STIC, says the group's goals include getting people outside and help them become stewards of the land — and to “get them off of the couch, outside with their family or friends building memories.”

There are several trails near the Cedar County seat that STIC — pronounced “stick” — promotes, like the Crabtree Trail and the eight-mile-long Lakeview Trail. Another is the Old Mill Trail, which is affectionately known as Aubree's Trail in memory of Schmid's daughter, who was in college studying wildlife conservation before she died in 2016.

Today, the one-mile trail features play equipment and a new story walk, a series of stations that hold pages of books. They are regularly swapped out, offering ongoing opportunities for families to enjoy stories along the trail (and a destination for the Cedar County Library's story time).

“We really wanted something to blend in with nature, so these are all done in wood,” Schmid says, who notes the project represents a community project.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers placed the stations, which were built by local members of the American Legion. A grant from the Stockton Community Foundation supported the project, and the library — where



PROVIDED BY STIC

Schmid serves as co-director — provides the books.

“That was a collaboration within itself, and that was awesome,” says Schmid.

In addition to physical spaces, STIC brings people together in figurative ways, too. The nonprofit regularly hosts events that merge nature and community, like its “first day” hikes on January 1, which in 2025 drew nearly 175 people (and nine dogs). STIC recently wrapped up a monthly hiking series; upcoming gatherings will feature a full-moon hike and swim and focus on the night sky.

For more information, visit [stocktonmotrails.com](http://stocktonmotrails.com).

—by Kaitlyn McConnell



PHOTO BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL





PHOTO BY AARON SCOTT

## 5 James River Basin Partnership's 100 Hours Outdoors

SPRINGFIELD

**O**n a humid and sunny morning in late June, the fish at the Bois D'Arc Conservation Educational Fishing Pond are biting. A mere 15 minutes into the trip, nine-year-old Nolan lands a bluegill — his sister Quinn picks up a small catfish a bit later. (Little brother Henry even nabs a snapping turtle.)

This productive fishing trip is part of James River Basin Partnership's 100 Hours Outdoors program, a twist on the national "1,000 Hours Outdoors" movement. "A study showed kids spend a thousand hours in front of a screen per year, so the goal is to match that with time outside," explains Brooke Widmar, JRBP's educational outreach coordinator. "We're doing just a shortened version for the summer with 100 hours, to give these opportunities where people could get some hours outside and learn about nature or learn a new skill."

JRBP's mission is to improve and protect the water quality of James River's watershed, and a big part of that project is building awareness and educating the public. "My boss always says 'Connect with what you protect,' Widmar says. "People aren't going to protect the environment unless they care about the environment."

For the kids, the day's joy is simple and tangible: the thrill of a catch, of learning how to cast a line or bait a hook. But for JRBP, the hope runs deeper — that these hours outside will seed a lifelong love for the rivers, plants and wildlife that sustain the watershed's communities.

The Bois D'Arc trip is one of several 100 Hours Outdoors events this summer, supported by a CFO Everyone Outdoors grant. For a full list of upcoming activities — including geology lessons and watershed exploration — visit [jamesriverbasin.com/100hours](http://jamesriverbasin.com/100hours).

—by Matthew Stewart

## 6 Better Together Playground at Jackson Street Park

WILLARD

Willard's "Better Together" playground is an inclusive space that allows kids of all abilities to enjoy being outside. It was made possible in part by grants totaling \$35,000 from the CFO and the Willard Children's Charitable Foundation.

"The Better Together Playground has been an incredibly rewarding and impactful project for our community," says Jason Knight, Willard's director of parks. "Since opening, the playground has become a hub of activity. It's rare to drive by and not see children and families enjoying the space."

The playground, situated within the town's Jackson Street Park, has tripled overall park attendance, Knight says. He notes one moment that particularly stood out was when a group of students visited during physical education class. They weren't kids with special needs — but that was one reason Knight says he



PHOTO BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

appreciated the scene.

"It is a play space for all children, regardless of ability," he says. "Ultimately, this playground is more than just equipment — it's a symbol of connection, inclusion and community pride. It's a beacon of hope and joy, especially for those children who were previously on the sidelines, now given a place where they belong."

"For a small town like Willard to offer a park of this caliber — one that welcomes and accommodates children of all abilities — is truly extraordinary. It reflects the strength of our community's vision and our commitment to ensuring that every child has the chance to play, connect and thrive."

—by Kaitlyn McConnell

## 7 "A Forest Gospel" Documentary

SHANNON COUNTY

**F**ounded in the 1920s, Shannondale is a United Church of Christ mission in rural Shannon County, Missouri's second-largest county with just 7,000 people for 1,000 square miles. The mission connects and serves locals through a number of enterprises, including a church, community activities, a craft store and a 4,040-acre tree farm — the latter of which is shared through one of two new documentaries that debuted in June at the Shannondale Community Center.

"We all thought we needed to capture these memories, these stories," said Kathy Love, one of the project's leaders. "It's important to preserve them for future generations and for visitors who come and don't know, don't realize, how unique Shannondale is."

Titled "A Forest Gospel," the nature-focused documentary was funded by the L-A-D Foundation and the CFO. It focuses on Shannondale's forest, said to be the oldest continuously operating tree farm in the state of Missouri. The land was procured starting in 1949 for \$4 an acre through a campaign called Pennies for Shannondale. "20,000 people from all over the



PHOTO BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

country helped purchase the Shannondale forest," notes the documentary narrator.

Today, that forest is sustainably harvested, has a role in education, and helps support the ministry with sustainable income through carbon credits. "Shannon County produces more than twice the amount of timber than any other Missouri county," notes the narrator. "The forests not only conserve the soil, air and water, they provide recreation and produce a crop: wood, which means an economic boost to the Shannondale community."

At the premiere, locals had time for conversation and connection before circling up to share additional memories of Shannondale — the place that even today is described on its website as a center for "economic and environmental justice."

Watch "A Forest Gospel" at [cfozarks.org/shannondale](http://cfozarks.org/shannondale).

—by Kaitlyn McConnell

# PASSION *for* PROGRESS

Three leaders moving the needle in their communities through the power of philanthropy

STORIES & PHOTOS BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

## Rebeca Pacheco

BOARD CHAIR · OZARK RIVERWAYS FOUNDATION;  
BOARD MEMBER · OZARK FOOTHILLS  
REGIONAL COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Rebeca Pacheco leads by serving rural Missouri's people, places and natural spaces.

Rooted in Carter County, Pacheco is a board member of the Ozark Foothills Regional Community Foundation, the CFO affiliate serving Butler, Carter, Reynolds, Wayne and Ripley counties. She is also president of the Ozark Riverways Foundation, a CFO nonprofit partner that supports the Ozark National Scenic Riverways. The national park holds approximately 80,000 acres and the Current and Jack's Fork rivers in the eastern Ozarks.

That sense of service comes through in her professional life, too. Pacheco is the deputy director of the Poplar Bluff Housing Authority, one of the larger housing authorities in Missouri. "A desire to give back to the community, to help other families, to help make the community stronger — those things are meaningful work to me," Pacheco says.

Her work with ORF began from her lifelong love of the riverways and ties to the lower Current. "It's a way to manage my own life pressures and stress," she says. "Take a walk on a trail, enjoy nature, watch the birds ... That's always been nurtured within me growing up."

When she joined the ORF board, she filled a gap in skills with her master's degree in business administration and grant writing.

"There's people on that board that know all the detailed history of the riverways — the people, the culture, all that," she says. "My piece of it was more to bring some of the businesses processes."

"What I really love about the group is that we've all come together and fit those pieces together to create programs and to influence the community. To preserve the rivers and to celebrate the heritage of the area."



## Matthew Kostelnik

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR · ELDON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Matthew Kostelnik didn't end up where he started — even though the director of the Eldon Area Chamber of Commerce is, in fact, from Eldon.

It's a different place than when the married father of two graduated from high school, and certainly altered from many years ago, when the railroad and a major manufacturer were significant employers. And while "adapting to those changes is hard," he says, considering how best to evolve a place for the future can also lead to good things.

"I would say the goal for Eldon is not to be stagnant," Kostelnik says of the community, which has worked to redefine itself for future growth. Part of that shift is finding new employers (like Quaker Windows, which came to Eldon in recent years) but also increasing focus on year-round employment and tourism. A new draw will soon be Rock Island Trail State Park, a rail-to-trail pathway linking Eldon with other communities across mid-Missouri.

Kostelnik's own path is built on change. After college, the 31-year-old chamber director worked for the Eldon school and coached basketball. He later worked in flooring, which led to community betterment work in nearby Camdenton. Those chapters helped him reach the Eldon chamber office, a "train depot" that was built with support from the Eldon Community Foundation.

"When a business comes and talks to me about something, I understand where they're coming from," he says.

Those efforts are ones Kostelnik really puts his heart into making successful.

"This is my home, and you want your home to do well," he says. "If I do end up staying here for the rest of my life, I want my kids to have a good hometown to live in and to be a part of."



## Hollie Estes

BOARD MEMBER & LEGACY SOCIETY  
MEMBER · FINLEY RIVER COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Hollie Estes preserves legacies and builds on the past to prepare for a greater tomorrow.

Those efforts are seen through the insurance business, in which she has long worked, as well as Cassidy Station at Estes Farm, an agriculture-and-community destination in Christian County she and her husband Kyle developed on his legacy family farm.

It also extends to philanthropy. Hollie serves on the board of the Finley River Community Foundation, the CFO's affiliate serving Ozark and eastern Christian County. Her six years (so far) of board service have given her visibility to causes, needs and good work going on right in her community.

"We have been extremely blessed and have always felt a 'tug' to give to those in need, whether it be financially or by donating our time to help in any way we can," she says. "Giving back can create a ripple effect of positive change. It gives us a sense of purpose and belonging."

"I strongly believe in what the CFO is doing," she says. "I truly believe in giving back to our community, and after serving on the Finley River Community Foundation board for almost six years I've seen firsthand how these grants and scholarships have made an impact in our community."

The Estes family also show that decisions around future philanthropy don't have to wait until later in life. In the couple's case, they made a planned gift by adding the FRCF to an insurance policy. Planned gifts — like what the Estes family chose to do with that life insurance policy — represent decisions made today that have significant impact in the future.

"When we invest our time and resources in our community, we're not only helping others, but we're helping to shape and mold the kind of world we want to live in."



**WHO INSPIRES YOU?** Send your suggestions of individuals moving the needle in your community to Kaitlyn McConnell, the CFO's writer in residence, at [kmcconnell@cfozarks.org](mailto:kmcconnell@cfozarks.org).





COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
of the OZARKS

P.O. BOX 8960 • SPRINGFIELD, MO  
65801-8960

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
SPRINGFIELD, MO  
PERMIT #680



**PARTING SHOT:** The Lincoln School, where Black students in West Plains were educated in days of segregation, was recently restored as a place of community. Now, its Reflection Plaza gives an even greater space for contemplation.

The new space was dedicated on May 17, drawing supporters from nearby and far away — like Dr. Bolaji Ogunwo, an artist from Nigeria — who have contributed to its success.

“This space and its statues, the mural and the symbolism throughout, is meant to invite reflection,” said Tonya Oaks, who with her husband, Crockett Oaks III, leads the Lincoln School Project. “But not just historical reflection: It is a call to look inward. When we speak of reflection here, we speak of the human in the mirror because real change, lasting change, begins not with policy or laws, but with people.”

Two large bronze statues are features of the new space. Inspiration for one came from a vintage Lincoln School photo, which shows a young boy in salute. His identity has been lost; today, he’s called “I, Too, Am America.” The other, “Feel The Love,” shows a girl making a heart with her hands.

Multi-layered meaning abounds at the plaza, which extends to the date of the dedication. It was held on the anniversary of the historic 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision that outlawed “separate but equal.”

“While it (that decision) did not immediately erase the injustices of the past, it affirmed what so many already knew,” said Oaks. “That every child, regardless of race, deserves the same opportunity to learn, to grow and to be seen. ... We chose this date to dedicate Reflection Plaza not by coincidence, but by conviction.”

—by Kaitlyn McConnell



PHOTOS BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

*A vintage photo showing a young boy in salute served as the inspiration for “I, Too, Am America,” a bronze statue which borrows its title from a poem by Joplin’s Langston Hughes. The statue was dedicated on May 17 as part of the new Reflection Plaza at the Lincoln School in West Plains.*