

PASSION & PURPOSE

THE CFO NEWSLETTER
WINTER 25/26



MORE INSIDE

CONCRETE COMPANY POURS OUT SUPPORT

\$7.8M FOREVER GIFT TO TANEY COUNTY

NEW CHAPTER BEGINS IN HOUSTON

Gifts to the Community

Stephanie Stenger's volunteer leadership recognized with annual Humanitarian Award



A MESSAGE FROM WINTER

In the community foundation world, the word “gifts” is thrown around a lot.

In our organization, “gifts” refers to any amount of money that comes into a charitable fund, whether from donors, nonprofits or national funders. Basically, it means “money in,” which is then compared to the “grants” (or “money out”) to give our staff, board and community a broad financial picture of the foundation. That is admittedly a huge oversimplification of our terminology, but on the average day, it’s what I think of when I hear “gifts” (which I hope you agree sounds so much nicer than “revenue”).

But as I sit here and write this in early December, the word “gifts” has many more meanings to me, personally. Naturally, there’s the list of things I still need to buy for family and friends, and maybe a few I secretly hope to receive come Dec. 25. (Is 24 hours of no children bickering too much to ask for? Probably.) But the gifts I’m really thinking about are those of time, talent and treasure I have the privilege to witness every day.

With that in mind, it’s my pleasure to introduce this issue of *Passion & Purpose*, which highlights several such gifts, including:

- **Gifts of service.** Our Humanitarian of the Year Award, established more than 35 years ago by Jewell Thompson Schweitzer, is a wonderful way to begin the holiday season. On Nov. 18, we celebrated Stephanie Stenger, a past CFO board chair and community benefactor who has played a leading role in a number of local initiatives. She is an inspiration and a role model, and you can learn more about her own inspirations on Page 3.
- **Gifts of community.** We have so many amazing affiliate board members who have a vision for their hometowns and are willing to give time and money to make them happen. Prime examples of this can be found on Pages 4 and 6, where you’ll read about how the Community Foundation of the Lake and the Houston



Community Foundation have partnered with a local business and the county library system, respectively, to create huge impact on their hometowns.

- **Gifts of legacy.** On Page 5, Kaitlyn McConnell tells the story of Robert Alexander, a Branson pharmacist who left a planned gift to the Community Foundation of Taney County that will make life better for so many people in the years and decades to come. Mr. Alexander’s estate could have gone anywhere, but he chose to share it with everyone. There’s no greater gift than that.

Personally, the greatest gift I receive every day outside of my family is the opportunity to work with such talented, caring individuals, who give of themselves for this organization and our communities. While they may not show up as revenue on our financial statements, these are the gifts that make the work we do meaningful and our region the best place in the world to live.

I wish you and yours the warmest of holiday seasons, and happiness and health in the new year.

Winter Kinne is president and CEO of the Community Foundation of the Ozarks.

CFO UPDATES

NEW LEGACY SOCIETY MEMBERS

- Rebecca and Arthur Farris, Springfield

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.

AFFILIATE LEADERSHIP UPDATES



Cape Area Community Foundation

Outgoing: Skip Smallwood

Incoming: Trudy Lee



Meramec Regional Community Foundation

Outgoing: Jared Niederer

Incoming: Richard Cavender



Phelps County Community Foundation

Outgoing: Marla Stevenson

Incoming: Ben Tipton

UPCOMING EVENTS

Momentum: A Planned Giving Kickstart for CFO Agency Partners

- Jan. 20, Jan. 27, Feb. 3 and Feb. 10, 2026
- Virtual series presented by Embolden
- \$50 registration fee
- For more information, visit cfozarks.org/momentum

Changemakers: Values-Based Legacy Planning with Christy Boysen-Coulter

- Jan. 29, 2026
- Virtual meeting
- For more information, contact Anna Dowell at adowell@cfozarks.org

Youth Empowerment Project Conference

- Feb. 4, 2026, at Drury University
- For more information, contact Rachel Tripp at rtripp@cfozarks.org

Nonprofit Leadership Recharge Events

- March 5, 2026, in Willow Springs
- March 26, 2026, in Cape Girardeau
- For more information, contact Tiffany Frey at tfrey@cfozarks.org

Rural Philanthropy Summit & CFO Affiliate Awards

- Co-presented with Philanthropy Missouri
- April 23–24, 2026, at Missouri S&T in Rolla
- For more information, visit cfozarks.org/summit26



COMMUNITY FOUNDATION of the OZARKS

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COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF THE OZARKS



Stephanie Stenger celebrated with fellow members of Junior League of Springfield, which nominated her for the award, at the National Philanthropy Day event.

Stenger credited her mother for setting an example of service. “All the board service, leadership and project development that I’ve participated in, she did first.”

Leading with Heart

2025 HUMANITARIAN RECOGNIZED FOR VOLUNTEERING
EXPERT LEADERSHIP TO MYRIAD NONPROFITS



PHOTOS BY AARON SCOTT

Stephanie Stenger is all about sustainable, thoughtful change. The Springfield attorney has invested years of her time and expertise in a list of local causes — several focused on children — to help create a better Ozarks today and tomorrow.

Despite a long list of causes, when Stenger was named the 2025 Humanitarian of the Year in November, she knew who received the most from these efforts.

“I will simply say that I’ve gotten much more out of everything than I have given over the years,” she said, speaking of the many friends and mentors who helped her on her journey of service. That legacy, she said, began in childhood.

“Any service that I’ve been able to do is in

large part due to the example and opportunity that my parents, Ron and Lezah Stenger — particularly my mother — gave me today,” Stenger said. “All the board service, leadership and project development that I’ve participated in, she did first.”

That modeling led Stenger to a career and community-minded moments with big impact.

“With characteristic intelligence, discretion and thousands of hours of work, she has carried several of our community groups through times of major change and crisis — and we are all the unaware beneficiaries,” wrote Crista Hogan, a fellow attorney, in a letter of support for Stenger’s nomination. “Stephanie has been president/chairman of the board of almost every major community group and a bunch of minor ones. I can speak from direct experience that when she commits to lead, she takes that role much more seriously than most.”

In addition to her role as CEO of Springfield Land LP, a real estate development company, Stenger has served in leadership roles with numerous nonprofits. That list includes Junior League of Springfield, Care to Learn, Springfield Metropolitan Bar Association, Legal Services of Southern Missouri, Springfield-Greene County Library District’s Board of Trustees, Friends of the Zoo and the CFO, where she served as board chair during its 2016 fiscal year. Stenger was also integral in Moxie Cinema’s

conversion to a nonprofit in 2010 and serves as its president.

Of these many efforts, a key example of her impact is Isabel’s House Crisis Nursery. The Springfield nonprofit, which began as a signature project of the Junior League of Springfield in 2007, provides free short-term, round-the-clock care for infants and children.

“While there were several women involved in the research, planning, fundraising and opening of Isabel’s House, Stephanie is recognized by all involved as key to the Junior League of Springfield project’s success,” wrote Morey Mechlin, the 2014 Humanitarian and former Care to Learn executive director, in a letter of support. “She listens, learns and leads. She treats everyone, from the most prominent elected official to the underprivileged student receiving Care to Learn assistance, with respect and dignity. She leads with intelligence and always delivers as promised.”

—by Kaitlyn McConnell

ABOUT THE HUMANITARIAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

Since 1990, the CFO has partnered with the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce to honor those who have dedicated their lives to community causes. The award was founded by the late Jewell Thompson Schweitzer, a local philanthropist whose generosity touched the lives of many. For a full list of recipients, visit cfozarks.org/humanitarian.

ON THE COVER

Laurie Edmondson, left, and Anne E. McGregor, right,

presented the Humanitarian of the Year Award to Stephanie Stenger in November. All three are past board chairs of the CFO.





A Concrete Solution to Giving

CAMDENTON-BASED SCOTT'S CONCRETE STREAMLINES ITS PHILANTHROPY THROUGH CORPORATE GRANTMAKING FUND

Scott's Concrete is about building community. It's true in a literal sense, as the mid-Missouri company has been in the concrete business for more than 70 years. It's also evident through the family-owned entity's efforts to support its neighbors philanthropically, whether it's by donating concrete or cash to projects that make the area even better.

"I was brought up being told that you get what you give," says Jane Martin, whose parents started the Camdenton-based company in 1954. "We've always given local — concrete is produced and manufactured locally, so it's really important to me that our money stays local."

Those donations are funneled through the Community Foundation of the Lake, a CFO affiliate, where Scott's Concrete has a corporate grantmaking fund. Having that fund available has streamlined the company's giving,

"Concrete is produced and manufactured locally, so it's really important to me that our money stays local."

JANE MARTIN
SCOTT'S CONCRETE

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF THE OZARKS



PHOTO BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

says Scott Martin, its third-generation leader — especially since it allows them to track and set aside funds for future distribution.

"I would say it's 50-50," he says of the company's community contributions, which splits between monetary donations and concrete work. Its charitable projects include Hope House, a local food pantry, and Wonderland Camp, a destination for children, teenagers and adults with disabilities.

"I'm very proud that we have done just about every church in the area. If we don't give it, we give a very substantial discount," Jane Martin says. "It's nice when people call us because they think we're doing good things for the area."

Part of the concrete company's service ties to good business, but it goes deeper than that for the Martins, whose connections with the area predate the Lake of

the Ozarks. The construction of Bagnell Dam enhanced local tourism and the area's appeal as a destination. But that growth hasn't eliminated great disparities and needs.

"We are an area where we have multi-million-dollar homes, and we have people living in tents," says Jane Martin, mentioning others without any water in their homes. "It breaks my heart that people live that way."

Understanding neighbors' realities led the Martins to support the Camdenton R-III School District Education Foundation to provide food assistance for students in need. This focuses on the district's "buddy packs" program that sends items like peanut butter, jelly, bread and canned goods home with kids over weekends and long breaks.

"We make sure and cover at least a month's worth of the buddy packs annually," Scott Martin says.

Portions of the company's philanthropy have become easier through its corporate grantmaking fund, which allows the company to track which agencies receive funds.

FOREVER FOR TANNEY COUNTY

A \$7.8 MILLION ESTATE GIFT BOLSTERS AFFILIATE'S COMMUNITY GRANTMAKING ENDOWMENT



Jane Martin and son Scott Martin lead Scott's Concrete. The Camdenton-based company funnels its philanthropy through a corporate grantmaking fund held with the Community Foundation of the Lake.



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In addition to making grants from its fund, Scott's Concrete supports community initiatives in the Lake of the Ozarks area in other ways, like partnering with Slumberland Furniture to donate beds for local children in need during the holiday season.

"It was always one of those things — she was giving to something, and I was giving to something, and it was hard to track who was doing what or how much we even gave away — whether it be to this individual or this group," Scott Martin says.

"Now, at the end of the year, instead of us going through our books and saying, 'What did we do here; how many materials did we donate?,' we can actually just go through our grant list and we can see exactly what we did and who we gave it to."

—by Kaitlyn McConnell

Bob Alexander invested his life — and ultimately, his legacy — in the Branson area. Born and raised in Taney County, he served his neighbors as a pharmacist for more than 50 years.

When he died in 2025, his estate ensured that impact lives on through a \$7.8 million gift to the Community Foundation of Taney County. The endowment will generate an estimated \$312,000 annually — and continue growing in perpetuity — to support community grantmaking in Taney County.

"Bob lived simply and was concerned especially for others in Taney County who had no choice but to live simply, many rooted there for generations and still adjusting to the glitz, glitter and high life that has grown up around them since the 1960s," says Shannon Cave, Alexander's cousin.

Alexander's roots in the Branson region were generations deep. After graduating from Branson High School and the St. Louis College of Pharmacy, and serving in the U.S. Army, he joined the family pharmacy — a hub for sweet treats where locals' memories haven't melted.

"He was famous for the pharmacy for selling nickel ice cream cones," says Mitch Holmes, a CF of TC board member, who knew Alexander for more than 35 years. "When I went to his funeral, and everybody was there who knew him, everybody would say, 'Oh, yeah, we always went there for our nickel ice cream cones.'"



Bob Alexander served the Branson community as a pharmacist for more than 50 years. His estate gift will benefit Taney County in perpetuity.

Alexander was an avid outdoorsman, skillful marksman and respected gunsmith involved with the Branson Rifle Club. He lived in the same house nearly his entire life — one that later would become part of his estate and bring community benefit through its sale.

"He loved, hunted, fished and floated the White River valley before Table Rock Dam was built, and climbed into Marvel Cave before there were stairs or elevators or lights," Cave says. "Working in the Alexander Drug store since childhood and practicing pharmacy there until it closed, he knew most of the families in the Branson area and served their prescriptions in a far different way than the big stores do it today."

Alexander's community work also included the Masons and Branson's Board of Adjustment, where he served from 1988 to 2007. These missions continued despite a significant limit of his own mobility.

"Bob fell from a tree and was paralyzed from the waist down in 1975, moving on arm-crutches and leg braces and dealing with limits to mobility and related issues the rest of his life," Cave says. "I never heard him complain about that, or to keep him from doing what and going where he wanted."

As his obituary put it, "He will be remembered for his professionalism, friendship, service, dedication to helping others and the legacy he leaves with the Community Foundation of Taney County."

—by Kaitlyn McConnell

LEARN ABOUT LEGACY GIVING

FOR DONORS: On Jan. 29, 2026, the next Changemakers event features a virtual session with Christy Boysen-Coulter. She'll demonstrate how to connect the values you hold now to the legacy you'll leave later. Contact Anna Dowell at adowell@cfozarks.org for more information.

FOR AGENCY PARTNERS: Beginning Jan. 20, 2026, a four-part virtual series will help your nonprofit launch or accelerate a planned-giving program. Presented by Embolden, "Momentum: A Planned Giving Kickstart" is exclusive to CFO agency partners but spots are limited. Go to cfozarks.org/momentum to register or learn more.

STILL HAVE QUESTIONS? Contact Ashley Silva at asilva@cfozarks.org to begin a conversation about leaving your legacy through a planned gift.



A Story of ‘Beauty’ Begins in Houston

TEXAS COUNTY LIBRARY OPENS NEW BRANCH WITH COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Chapters of community effort helped bring the brand-new Texas County Library to be. The nearly \$3 million facility opened in October, effectively doubling the size of the previous library and offering space for locals to learn and grow.

“The very first week ... 600 books were checked out, and I know that’s never happened,” says Louise Beasley, library director. “We want people to come in and see what we’re doing. I did have a patron come in and say to me, ‘I was a little skeptical about this library. And I’m very glad that I came in here, because I am just overwhelmed.’”

The new library illustrates the value of planning for the long game. In its case, plans for the new facility — that would replace the library built in the 1950s — began about 15 years ago when a new FEMA shelter was built in downtown Houston.

“(The FEMA shelter) was engineered at that time to carry the weight of a library on top,” says Brad Gentry, longtime newsman who led fundraising for the library and is a board member of the Houston Community Foundation. “But it wasn’t until about three years ago that all the different funding sources were available, and we were successful in tapping all those.”

The district is funded by a 10-cent tax levy, creating a need for additional resources. Ultimately, American Rescue Plan Act funds came into play, as did local fundraising for the new hub of the Texas County Library district. The Houston Community Foundation also received a

*“Beauty actually
inspires curiosity
and creativity,
and so I think
this library fits
all that.”*

KATHY RICHARDSON

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF THE OZARKS



Kathy Richardson, Brad Gentry and Louise Beasley were all involved in the fundraising effort for the new Texas County Library.

PHOTOS BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL



The Houston Community Foundation raised about \$140,000 to a fund named in memory of Kathy Richardson’s granddaughter and designated for the construction of the children’s department. Decorated with butterflies and other natural elements, it is now known as the Evelyn Marie Dieckhaus Creative Center.

\$4,000 Affiliate Action Grant from the CFO in April 2025 for native landscaping at the library.

“Because of the low levy, the board has always been looking for opportunities to bring money in,” says Gentry. “Along the way, there’s been some pretty good leap-forward movement because of estate giving.”

One example: The late Elizabeth Allen, a longtime library volunteer who left nearly \$1 million to the library after her death in 2015.

The library also has plans to work with local students to improve reading, a skill that saw decline through the COVID-19 pandemic. The library hopes to eventually hire a coordinator to help create curriculum to enhance opportunities at the facility, which is located down the street from the school.

Right now, just the sight of more students using the new facility is considered a good thing.

“Kids are starting to come in a little bit more, wanting to sit around and study,” Beasley said. “Even if they’re in here talking, they’re behaving and they’re in the library.”

The new library integrates a lot of light, which shines through large windows upon a bank of computers — an asset in the rural area where internet access is not always assured. A conference

room offers space for community meetings; there’s even a business center with a computer and printer.

The space also leans into the natural world. Out front, a butterfly bench was built by the local welding class; one student took the lead in its creation. Butterflies connect library spaces, including the Evelyn Marie Dieckhaus Creative Center, the children’s department that serves to inspire young patrons through the natural world.

Lifelike snakes, bugs, flowers and other colorful visuals stand in memory of 9-year-old Dieckhaus, who was killed in a Nashville school shooting in 2023. Grandparents Joe and Kathy Richardson, who live in Houston — where Dieckhaus regularly visited — helped develop the children’s wing in her memory. They were aided by more than 160 donors from the community and beyond who contributed nearly \$140,000 to the Evelyn Marie Dieckhaus Creative Center Fund held by the HCF. “It’s an inspiration of the beauty of God’s creation,” says Kathy Richardson of the children’s department, but those sentiments tie to the entire library.

“I think that small towns deserve beauty just as much (as larger places). To suppress learning, you take away beauty. Beauty actually inspires curiosity and creativity, and so I think this library fits all that.”

—by Kaitlyn McConnell

PASSION *for* PROGRESS

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

STORIES & PHOTOS BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

Dr. Jane Ward

TEACHER-EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR ·
MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY-WEST PLAINS

Dr. Jane Ward knows the importance of rural education. Ward, a veteran teacher from south-central Missouri, has served decades of students — from young children to college-aged — some who teach and lead others in rural Ozarks districts themselves.

“It’s the hub of everything that goes on,” she says of rural schools. “If you lose a school, you lose the community connections.”

Ward was the very first Rural Education Fellow with Rural Schools Collaborative, and serves with the Koshkonong School Betterment Foundation, both entities tied to the CFO. She also advises the district’s Youth Empowerment Program chapter.

That commitment to rural education is rooted in lived experience. Ward grew up near Alton and worked at the local Head Start while completing her degree. That Oregon County seat is where she became an elementary teacher in 1985 and later taught special education, served as a Parents As Teachers educator and was a school counselor.

Those roles led her to join Missouri State University’s Springfield Teacher Education Completion Program. Now 25 years strong, the program allows students to complete a bachelor’s degree at MSU-West Plains, a two-year college, helping students avoid extended travel to other communities. More than 700 students have graduated from the program.

Ward also teaches elementary education degree courses, and mentors and monitors student teachers. The program focuses on elementary education which some graduates use as a pathway to teach other subjects.

“It’s been great for rural areas,” Ward says. “This is a magnet for people, especially nontraditional students who wanted all their lives to be a teacher but were place-bound with family responsibilities.”



Tameka Randle

CEO · PORCH INITIATIVE; WARD 2 COUNCIL
REPRESENTATIVE · CITY OF CAPE GIRARDEAU

Tameka Randle improves quality of life through understanding, communicating and carrying out a plan of solutions. As CEO of the PORCH (People Organized to Revitalize Community Healing) Initiative in Cape Girardeau, Randle has led the nonprofit in raising \$1.3 million in private funding to support home ownership. Her work also links groups in the community as a city councilwoman and commissioner with the Missouri Housing Development Commission.

“Helping as many people win as much as possible — that’s very important to me,” she says. The Ohio native came to southeast Missouri to be a basketball coach and stayed: First working in education, where she saw the needs of students (and their communities) firsthand. Housing was one of those issues, with the city having an overwhelmingly high number of renters.

“It’s generational health and wealth, and it’s long-term,” she says of housing stability and sustainability. “You help a family, then they have children, then they have grandchildren, and so it’s long-term and sustainable. It’s the gift that keeps on giving; paying it forward.”

Given her distinct leadership roles, Randle says a moment of pride was when she was recently honored by three groups representing different segments of those she serves. In November, that included Church Women United’s Human Rights Award.

“I’m not just about one group, or one organization,” she says. “I think that’s important to note. I would say that in some arenas I gain respect and the people trust me to do the work — which allows me to work.”

Randle’s advice to other leaders: Find what you’re truly passionate about.

“It’s hard to have something long-withstanding if you don’t care about it and don’t have a concern,” she says.



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Whitney Guison

PRESIDENT/CEO · NIXA AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE;
ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER · NIXA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Relationships power change, and quality-over-quantity connections can make an even greater difference in communities. Those are fundamentals Whitney Guison reinforces through the Nixa Area Chamber of

Commerce, where she serves as president and CEO, and as an advisory board member of the Nixa Community Foundation.

“Relationships are everything. I think that’s it,” Guison says. “Business is business, but leadership is relationships. If you’re going to influence somebody else, anyone else, you need to build an authentic relationship with the people that need to make decisions.”

Guison’s role was an unexpected career move in 2023, but it’s one for which she unknowingly prepared. There was college, where she studied communication and conflict resolution, and later when she and her husband opened a chiropractic office in Nixa.

The ins-and-outs of small business provided good experience for her new job. That, and her education, reinforced the need for enduring connections.

“Relationship-building doesn’t always equal friendship-building,” she says. “We don’t have to be best friends with everybody, but we need to be trustworthy enough that people know that if I call them, it’s for something important, and they pick up the phone.”

There are differing viewpoints in most communities, but it’s definitely true in a place like Nixa that has seen significant growth in a relatively short time. That “old way” versus “new us” can bring challenges, but that’s where communication comes back into play, Guison says.

“I think the question becomes, ‘How do we grow well?’ If we can have a good answer to that question, then hopefully the people who want to close the doors will at least allow growth without too much frustration.”



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.



PARTING SHOT: The former Thomsville School is filled with gifts during its annual Christmas bazaar, a fundraiser for the local landmark.

Shoppers walk away with treasures in colorful bags, but the most important wrapping on the event is the building itself, which is a gift in the small Oregon County community.

The old stone schoolhouse was built in 1940 as part of the Works Progress Administration, a federal relief program that gave men jobs. Students attended classes there through the 1960s, when the school consolidated with Alton and became the Eleven Point Valley Community Center, now a CFO agency partner.

It's hosted local events, birthday parties, reunions and even is home to a branch of the Oregon County Library. Yet these things were threatened in 2017, when historic floodwaters overtook the aging structure.

Despite the devastation, Brenda Bell says there never was much debate over the building's future.

"It just means a lot to the whole community," said Bell, a leader at the community center and a former student. "We would really feel a loss if we didn't have it."

Many hours and dollars were needed to restore the building, and that's what led to the bazaar's start in 2017. The event raised so much money and joy



PHOTOS BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

that it's continued ever since.

Volunteers shop estate sales and search for after-Christmas bargains — and bring some items back to life — to fill the community center, creating a winter wonderland for shoppers who line up at the door.

"I just think it's a fun place to go — it's kind of like Black Friday," said shopper Pam Crews, who grew up in the area and still lives close by. "I see people I haven't seen in a while."

—by Kaitlyn McConnell