

# A YEAR IN REVIEW

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE BIENNIAL  
PHILANTHROPY REVIEW

## Barn Raising

A GRANT FROM THE MANKATO AREA FOUNDATION  
TURNED A COLD SPACE INTO A WARM BARN FOR  
KIWANIS HOLIDAY LIGHTS.

When Scott Wojcik reached out to the Mankato Area Foundation for a grant to add heat to the red barn in Sibley Park, he was thinking specifically of the Kiwanis Holiday Lights. He was thinking about how the additional usable space would enhance the activities at the event each year. “There’s just so much we could do in there,” he says.

But Wojcik, who helped start the holiday tradition seven years ago, knew that the impact would expand well beyond the six weeks of Holiday Lights each year.

“I told the city that Kiwanis Holiday Lights would submit the request,” he says. “But the hope would be that it could be used year round by the community, too. It’s not just for us—this is something that benefits the whole community.”

“Now, thanks to funding from the Mankato Area Foundation, the *Giving Barn* is the perfect place for birthday

parties, graduation celebrations and other gatherings all year long—except, of course, between Thanksgiving and New Year’s, when it becomes one of the spaces occupied by Kiwanis Holiday Lights. We were thrilled to have it as usable space last year and we’re looking forward to using it even more this year.”

Wojcik explained that the grant from the Foundation made it possible to insulate the building and add heat, but they also provided funds to enhance the aesthetics of the building. The Foundation collaborated with Blue Earth County Historical Society and SPX Sports in order to feature murals and historic photos of our local agricultural history. “I hope our visitors will stop by and see it—it’s really very unique. And, now that it’s heated, it’s our goal to use that building as a music venue,” he explains. “The ability to feature local choirs and bands will clearly enhance the experience of Kiwanis Holiday Lights.”



The Foundation has supported Kiwanis Holiday Lights since Wojcik first brought the idea up in 2010. He’s grateful that they saw it as a worthwhile investment and had the foresight to step forward as a lead sponsor. He also appreciates that they remain open to supporting it as it grows.

“The thing I like most about the Mankato Area Foundation is that they have an open mind about the projects they help fund,” he says. “When we pitched Holiday Lights originally, the Foundation was on board right away. It’s important to have a philanthropic partner like the Mankato Area Foundation. They help enhance the whole community. We’re lucky to have them.”

# A New Generation of Philanthropists

A LETTER FROM NANCY ZALLEK, PRESIDENT AND CEO



Over 40 years ago, visionary community leaders realized the importance of creating an organization whose mission was to facilitate and grow philanthropy in our region. Their goal was to build an institution that could identify and support key projects and initiatives in the community. Their vision became the Mankato Area Foundation.

As the Foundation has matured, our vision for the future challenges us to *be a knowledgeable and innovative community foundation that promotes philanthropy and drives transformative action in order to strengthen our region and improve lives.*

Today, a brand-new generation of philanthropists is building on our predecessors' vision. By putting their resources to work in ways the founders could never have imagined, we have been able to support art on flood walls, utility boxes and in a local museum; a children's museum and a community center for active seniors; holiday light displays and our amazing park systems.

Together, the Mankato Area Foundation and our donors have experienced the power of giving, and are challenging the limits of philanthropy in order to maximize the impact on this region. In 2017, nearly \$700,000 in grants was provided to nonprofit organizations that are making a difference. Please take a moment to browse through this "A Year in Review," our way of updating the Philanthropy Review we present in even-numbered years.

We chose to feature a few articles on projects we funded recently.

Wherever generosity can make a difference, our donors are instrumental in helping to make it happen! We believe in the power of philanthropy and—we're glad you do too.

Giving Looks Good on You—Mankato!

P.S. If you missed last year's Philanthropy Review, it can be found on our website at: [www.mankatoareafoundation.com/who-we-are/publications](http://www.mankatoareafoundation.com/who-we-are/publications)

All my best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Zallek". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Nancy Zallek  
President and CEO

Mankato Area Foundation



# Keeping a Vision Alive

FUNDING FROM THE MANKATO AREA FOUNDATION HELPED MAKE THE CITYART FLOOD WALL MURAL POSSIBLE.



Julie Johnson-Farhforth had the right idea at the right time.

When she shared her vision for a mural on the Minnesota River flood wall with Noelle Lawton, the director of the Twin Rivers Council for the Arts quickly recognized that it was just the kind of downtown art project she was looking for.

“Julie’s timing was ideal,” Lawton says. “Twin Rivers and the City Center Partnership work together on downtown art projects, and we had been looking for a project to support but hadn’t settled on one.”

Johnson-Farhforth, a local artist with a passion for the river and water-related issues in general, proposed a mural that would “reconnect the community to what we can’t see behind the flood wall,” Lawton explains. But she needed two things to make it happen: permission to paint on the flood wall, and funding for the project.

Lawton knew that previous requests to the Army Corps of Engineers for such

projects had been turned down—but she also didn’t think there was any harm in asking again. “I said, ‘Let’s ask again, because maybe something has changed and they’ll say yes,’” she says. “And sure enough, they said yes!”

That left just funding. And Lawton was willing to take that on as well. She had a good idea of where to start—the Mankato Area Foundation, which has been a willing partner in funding such projects in the past.

“The Mankato Area Foundation has been so generous and so helpful,” she says. “That’s one of the most beautiful things about their staff. They really want these projects to move forward and succeed, and so they are very willing to help throughout the process.”

Lawton’s experience seeking grants from the Foundation helped in this case as well. “Julie had never written a grant before, so we took the lead on fundraising,” Lawton says. “We focused on that so that she could focus on the project.”

In the time it took Johnson-Farhforth to put together a team of artists and put together a plan for the mural, Twin Rivers and City Center Partnership were able to raise more than \$20,000 for the project—including a grant from the Mankato Area Foundation.

“The Foundation’s support was significant,” Lawton says. “It’s nice when you can write a grant and know that a huge chunk of the money will be provided. It helps to get other people on board with the project as well; when they see the backing of the Mankato Area Foundation, then people know it’s for real and are willing to be part of it.”

*It really does make  
dreams come true for  
local artists.*

It was significant for Johnson-Farhforth and the team of artists who worked on the mural as well.

“Everyone was very encouraged when we received that grant,” Lawton says. “Receiving funding for these projects inspires artists to do other projects, which is huge for the arts community.”

“It really does make dreams come true for local artists,” Lawton adds. “When you know you have the Mankato Area Foundation on your side, it’s a big deal. It’s a huge marker of success for our community.”

# The Importance of Trust

THROUGH THE INVESTMENT PARTNERS PROGRAM DONORS CAN ESTABLISH FUNDS AT THE MANKATO AREA FOUNDATION WHILE THEY CONTINUE TO INVEST THOSE FUNDS WITH THEIR TRUSTED ADVISOR.

Brandon Thiesse feels completely comfortable recommending the Investment Partners Program with the Mankato Area Foundation to his clients at US Bank. It fits well with their overall philosophy.

“Our approach is relationship driven and goal based,” says Thiesse, a Wealth Management Advisor with US Bank Wealth Management in Mankato.

“We work very hard to earn our clients’ trust because people don’t share their personal goals and dreams with people they don’t trust.”

That includes philanthropy as well. Many of the people who Thiesse meets with are interested in charitable giving and are looking for advice about how to best include charitable goals in their plan.

“We take an all-encompassing approach to wealth management,” Thiesse explains. “We don’t believe it is our job to push the idea of giving on our clients. However, when it comes to philanthropy, our experience tells us that many clients have charitable goals, but they just don’t know how to get started. So we are very proactive in asking our clients about their charitable intent as part of our planning process.”

When he brings up the Investment Partners Program, the fact that he will continue to manage his client’s assets is a strong selling point. “Our clients, like the idea of being able to stay in touch with the gift that they have made as a routine part of our planning and review process,” he says. “We can continue to show them how their fund with the



Foundation is doing, how it’s growing, how it’s helping to accomplish their charitable objectives as well as how it continues to fit in with their long-term financial plans.”

From US Bank’s perspective, the partnership is positive as well.

“We love having the Mankato Area Foundation as a partner,” Thiesse says. “They’re on the front lines of what’s coming up in our community. The Foundation is able to help us match our clients’ charitable interests to the needs of our community. It is able to identify initiatives that align with our clients’ passions and interests.”

“The Foundation and the work they do is part of what makes this community great. I think people recognize that. I’m pleased when my clients attribute their success to being part of this community,” Thiesse says. “I often hear things such as, ‘This community has been good to me, to my business, to my family.’ They want to give back to the community, and we can help facilitate that with the help of the Mankato Area Foundation. And when we do that, everyone wins. Honestly, it makes me proud to live and work here.”

*The Foundation and the work they do is part of what makes this community great.*



# A Nobel Effort

HELPING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ATTEND THE NOBEL CONFERENCE—AND UNDERSTAND ITS IMPORTANCE—WAS WORTHY OF A GRANT IN 2016

Each fall, world-renowned scientists gather at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter for the Nobel Conference. They come together to discuss weighty topics and to tackle some of the most pressing issues facing the world. Interestingly, almost a quarter of the roughly 4,000 people in attendance, are high school students!

It helps to prepare those students for what they're going to hear in advance, which falls to the Nobel Conference High School Outreach (NCHSO) Program.

The NCHSO program brings master teachers to Gustavus to develop curriculum to use in classrooms prior to the conference. It provides cutting-edge lessons focused on the unique topics being presented. It also makes funds available to bring high school groups to the conference, including an overnight stay on campus and lunch with a featured speaker.

"Last fall, we provided a grant to support NCHSO. The goal was to ensure that student groups who wanted to participate were able to," says Nancy Zallek, the President and CEO of the Foundation.

Zallek said the Foundation was eager to support this initiative. "We felt this conference matched our support of education efforts. We saw it as a way to touch 1,000 high school students in this region," Zallek says.

The Foundation's Community Fund provided \$10,000 of the total \$15,000 grant; the remainder came from the Consolidated Communications Community Fund, which is also managed by the Foundation. "Consolidated Communications was excited to be able to provide a grant in the St. Peter area and to work with Gustavus," she says. "They saw this as a very unique opportunity to have a real impact on local kids."

It's an example of how the Foundation is able to connect causes with the right donors. "If we know what kinds of projects or programs our donors like to fund, then we connect them with nonprofits doing important work in that area. It allows us to bring together financial resources in support of critical initiatives in a much more efficient manner. That's the power of collaboration amongst philanthropists," says Zallek.

The fact that collaboration led to an opportunity for local students to explore a college campus and learn more about important, timely topics is even more exciting. "Our hope is that this experience might inspire some of these students," she says. "For some, it might be their first time on a college campus. It could lead to all kinds of new opportunities for them."

# Meeting a Need

WHEN VINE FAITH IN ACTION NEEDED MORE SPACE TO SERVE OLDER ADULTS, THE MANKATO AREA FOUNDATION WANTED TO HELP.

It's was a great problem to have: Fewer than three years after opening a brand new, spacious facility in Mankato, VINE Faith in Action already needed more room.

The VINE Adult Community Center, which opened in July 2014, originally occupied three of the building's five floors—which, combined with expanded service hours, seemed like more than enough.

It turns out that the older adults served by VINE eagerly embraced the community center and its cushioned walking track, fitness center with elder-friendly machines, yoga studio, warm-water exercise pool and spaces for meeting and interacting with others.

Before long, every room was occupied at certain times of the day, lines were queuing up for the fitness machines and all 140 parking spaces were regularly filled. The use of the space had grown "well beyond projections," Pam Determan, Executive Director of VINE Faith in Action, was pleased to report.

In the first 12 months that the Community Center was open, more than 34,200 people came to the facility and almost 600 people became members. During the second year, the number of members surged to 1,253 and the total number of guests topped 83,000.

The good news is that the fifth floor is currently vacant and available for use. The fourth floor is leased to non-profit partners. The bad news is that VINE needs more than \$282,000 to finish off the fifth floor and another \$90,000 to purchase additional exercise equipment to be used there.

That's where local philanthropists come in. Already, the organization has raised more than \$203,000 for the project, including a \$30,000 grant from the Mankato Area Foundation to pay for the build-out of the fifth floor, which includes a beautiful overlook of the city.

"The Mankato Area Foundation really understands community," says Determan. "They understand the importance of having a space to gather and to do things together. And, they're willing to commit local money to make our region a better place to live."

"We appreciate that the Foundation values our work. MAF also provided funds for the patio when VINE started repurposing the building for its Community Center. The additional support for the expansion to the fifth floor has been tremendous," Determan says.

"What they do for the community is so important," she adds. "We're lucky to have a philanthropic organization like Mankato Area Foundation in this area."

## FINANCIALS AT A GLANCE

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**\$12.5**

**MILLION** TOTAL ASSETS

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**42**

TOTAL NUMBER OF  
**CHARITABLE FUNDS**

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**\$697,047**

**TOTAL GRANTS AWARDED**  
IN 2017

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## WHO WE ARE

Since 1974, the Mankato Area Foundation has been dedicated to building a community of individuals that believe in the strength of giving. We continue today to shape Greater Mankato through connecting acts of giving with our community's needs.

Learn how you can start to make an impact today.

[www.mankatoareafoundation.com](http://www.mankatoareafoundation.com)