



2021

Philanthropy

Review



## OUR MISSION

The Mankato Area Foundation is a trusted resource that connects donors with causes they care about, provides funding to enhance our region and serves as a collaborative community partner.

## OUR VISION

We work as a knowledgeable and innovative community foundation that promotes philanthropy and drives transformative action to strengthen our region and improve lives.

# In This Issue

Letter from President and CEO .....	3
It Takes a Village .....	4
Giving Outside the Box.....	6
Bountiful Harvest .....	8
Donor Advised Funds 101 .....	10
Fund Types.....	10
Home Is Where the Art Is.....	11
Thin Film Technology Corp: Mavericks of Philanthropy.....	14
2021 Grants.....	16
2021 Scholarships.....	17
Why a Community Foundation?.....	18
Funds We Hold.....	19

# Doing Philanthropy Differently

A LETTER FROM NANCY ZALLEK, PRESIDENT AND CEO



Dear Friends in Philanthropy,

Every day I come home from work, I have a new story to tell:

"Today, I accepted 500 bushels of grain from a local farmer!"

"Today, I toured a chapel we're hoping to make into a community space!"

"Today, I accepted and sold an excavator to populate a donor's fund!"

My family used to think they understood my job, but lately, they are left with more questions than answers at the dinner table. Even after 12 years of serving as the President and CEO of the Mankato Area Foundation, I can still say that every day in my office is a new adventure. I never know what's going to happen next when my phone rings.

But here's the thing: I wouldn't have it any other way.

Here at the Mankato Area Foundation, we take pride in doing things differently. We like to think outside the box. We like to challenge ourselves and our community to try new things and to explore new ways of giving back. Luckily, our community is always right there with us.

In this edition of our Philanthropy Review, you will read about many donors and leaders in the region who exemplify what it means to do philanthropy differently: Kristin and Pat Duncanson, who regularly give the gift of grain as part of their donor advised fund; Marian Anderson, who left her original artwork to the Foundation after she passed; and Thin Film Technology Corp., who were the first corporate donors to work with the Foundation by establishing a corporate advised fund. These are just a few examples of our many unique supporters.

You will also read about how we here at the Foundation dedicate ourselves to building unique, trust-based relationships with our donors and partner organizations. From collaborating with local nonprofits to developing creative solutions to problems posed by the pandemic, we are always finding new ways to build a brighter future together.

So here is my challenge to you: As you read these stories, ask yourself what fresh ideas they bring to mind. What problems are still waiting to be solved in our community, and what great ideas are just waiting for us to get involved? What's something you could do or donate to solve that problem that's a little bit...different? I hope you take some time to think about this, and I hope you pick up the phone when you are ready to make it happen.

I'll be waiting for your call.

With gratitude,

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



# It Takes a Village

On any given day, it's nearly impossible to find Mohamed Abdulkadir at home. He begins his workdays at MRCI in Mankato, where he fulfills his duties as a Refugee Employment Specialist, connecting refugees with employers and other resources in the region. In the evening, Abdulkadir checks in with his friends at the Islamic Center in St. Peter. There, he oversees the center while managing Hikmah—a tutoring program for PreK-12 students. Abdulkadir waits until the day's participants have finished all their assignments and asked all their questions before closing the building's doors and heading out, usually around 8 or 9 PM.

"I'm not home much, but at least I'm never bored," Abdulkadir said, chuckling.

Then again, "home" has had many meanings for Abdulkadir throughout his life. He grew up in Somalia until 1990 when rebels overthrew the government of his home country, launching a civil war. Abdulkadir fled to a refugee camp in neighboring Kenya, where he lived every day with fear and uncertainty about his family's future. Four years and two refugee camps later, he was approved to come to the United States, landing in Decatur, Georgia. It would take another seven years before Abdulkadir's wife and children were allowed to join him in the U.S., and another three years before he and his family moved to Minnesota.

"I have now spent the two halves of my life on two different continents—the first half in Africa, and the second in North America," Abdulkadir said.

The tumultuous experiences that brought Abdulkadir to Mankato allowed him to empathize with other refugees and immigrants in the area. This led to his job at MRCI, where he has been employed for over 16 years, and it acted as his inspiration to open the first Islamic community centers in Mankato and Saint Peter. In 2018, Abdulkadir took his passion for community engagement further by founding Hikmah, an independent nonprofit organization.

"Hikmah' means 'wisdom' in Somali," Abdulkadir said. "We call it Hikmah because we want to see and encourage the wisdom of children. They can use their wisdom to change the world, and we can follow their lead."

The St. Peter Islamic Center serves as a community space for anyone who wants to meet, pray and make community connections. The Hikmah tutoring program is housed within the same building and is open to all children seeking tutoring. Originally geared toward older students, Hikmah recently expanded to serve preschool and kindergarten-aged children. On any given day, Abdulkadir and his staff might work with a child learning the alphabet to a student working on her college applications.

"I truly believe that education is the key to opportunity and success, but it is not an individual endeavor," Abdulkadir said. "When even one child fails, the whole community has failed."

Hikmah was a hit from the start, but its immediate success and subsequent growth quickly pushed Abdulkadir and his team of volunteers beyond their capacity. Once the program needed consistent funding to cover the costs of rent, curriculum supplies and teacher salaries, Abdulkadir reached out to Sarah Beiswanger, Mankato Area Foundation's (MAF) Community Grants and Nonprofits Specialist.

"Once I learned about the Mankato Area Foundation, everything opened up to me," Abdulkadir said. "Before I discovered the Foundation, I wasn't sure I could keep my doors open for much longer. They helped me not only survive but grow."

After learning about their specific needs, Beiswanger connected Abdulkadir to other foundations and nonprofit resources she knew would help Hikmah achieve its goals. MAF has continued its partnership with Hikmah over the years, and Abdulkadir meets with Beiswanger regularly to discuss the organization's goals and needs.

"Whenever I tell Sarah about something I am working toward, she helps me find a solution," Abdulkadir said. "Money, furniture, books, food—whatever we have needed, she has helped connect me with the right resources."

Beiswanger takes pride in keeping her finger on the pulse of the community, allowing her to help the organizations MAF serves in meaningful ways.

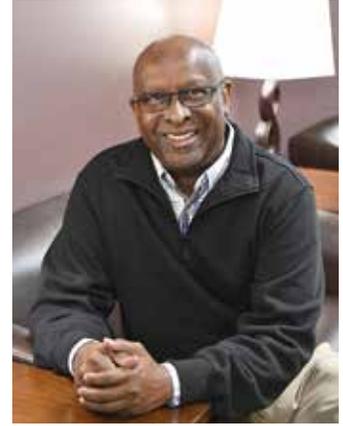
"People often think of the Foundation as a source of funding, which it is, but we find many ways to support our sector," Beiswanger said. "There's nothing I love more than connecting nonprofit organizations with the resources they need."

This relationship has helped Abdulkadir realize his dream of starting a tutoring program. Still, he does not plan to stop there.

"The immigrant and refugee community is so resilient, but there is no denying we lack resources," Abdulkadir said. "I want Hikmah to help fill that gap. I am always thinking about tomorrow, the day after that, and the day after that."

Perhaps Abdulkadir's focus on the future stems from his own experiences with uncertainty.

"While we might not know exactly what's going to happen tomorrow, we do know we can take care of our children today," Abdulkadir said. "I am so grateful to the Mankato Area Foundation for helping us make that goal a reality."



MOHAMED ABDULKADIR  
PHOTO BY MANKATO FREE PRESS

'Hikmah' means 'wisdom' in Somali.  
We call it Hikmah because we  
want to see and encourage the  
wisdom of children.

# Giving Outside the Box

When the COVID-19 pandemic reached the Mankato area, local nonprofits felt its effects immediately. Programs shut down, government funding was shifted or cut, and the uncertainty forced many nonprofits to question their future and how best to serve their constituents.

"It was an incredibly difficult time for everyone in the area, and nonprofits were hit hard," Mankato Area Foundation (MAF) President and CEO Nancy Zallek said. "As a community foundation, we knew it was our role to help support our partners through the unknown."

In March of 2020, the Foundation partnered with the Greater Mankato Area United Way (GMAUW) to rally behind these organizations by creating the Community Response Fund, a central fundraising and granting platform designed to support local nonprofits in need. Organizations applied for funds through a single, simplified system, which meant MAF and GMAUW could easily learn about the needs of the community and respond to that need in a timely manner.

"Through the Community Response Fund, we quickly learned that local organizations serving people with disabilities were struggling, and they were struggling in similar ways," Zallek said. "Through our conversations with these partners, we saw an opportunity to think outside the box to address the issues they faced."

Zallek put her head together with Sarah Beiswanger, MAF's Community Grants and Nonprofits Specialist, and the two came up with a unique solution.

"We thought, 'What if we used money from the Community Response Fund to pay for a nonprofit consultant to help these organizations discuss and achieve their collaborative goals?'" Zallek said. "We had never heard of another foundation doing anything like this before, but we were living through unprecedented times. Why not provide unprecedented solutions?"

After receiving enthusiastic support from GMAUW, Beiswanger and Zallek met with the leaders of MRCL, Leisure Education for Exceptional People (LEEP), Southern Minnesota Independent Living Enterprises & Services (SMILES) and the Miracle League of North Mankato to determine if these organizations would be interested in such an idea.

"Everyone we talked to was excited about this approach," Beiswanger said. "It's not often they are provided an opportunity to work with a nonprofit strategist, and this benefit is rarely in an organization's budget."

Zallek had worked with Kim Snyder, nonprofit consultant and founder of Excelsior Bay Group, for over ten years on a variety of projects with MAF, so Zallek knew she would be an excellent fit for the project.

According to Snyder, the idea was instantly intriguing.

"I thought this was the opportunity of a lifetime," Snyder said. "The Foundation clearly recognized these organizations as critical to the fabric of the community, and paying to help them collaborate was such a unique and wonderful idea. There was no doubt it would provide layers of benefit."

Snyder, who has a background in fundraising and strategic planning, met with the group of nonprofit leaders in November 2020 to determine their shared needs and goals.

"We were charged with identifying a vision for serving the disability community throughout the pandemic and when we emerge from it," Snyder said. "Our primary question was, 'How can we do more with what we already have in this sector? How can we leverage each other's assets to accomplish more?'"

According to Snyder, the group identified a shared vision, goals and outcomes for the disability community, all of which focused on prioritizing quality of life for those living with disabilities.

"These leaders made it abundantly clear that quality of life is not always front and center for the people they serve," Snyder said. "The strict systems, processes and funding rules in place, which were designed to minimize risk and liability, have created organization-centric systems as opposed to person-centric systems. The belief of the group was that quality of life should be equally, if not more, important than things like safety and risk reduction."

According to Lisa Wojcik, Executive Director of LEEP, the drastic services changes that resulted when COVID-19 hit were unimaginable.

"This opportunity enabled us to make it a priority to have important conversations about the impact on people with disabilities and what we could collectively do about it in a changed world," Wojcik said. "Kim's expertise was instrumental in leading our conversations and planning for the future. We would not be nearly this far without Kim and the funding provided by the Community Response Fund."

Through the development of this shared vision, LEEP, SMILES, MRCL and the Miracle League created multiple long-term shared goals. These include coordinating recreation and leisure services for the people they serve and building awareness within the community regarding inclusion as a key to improved quality of life for people with disabilities.

"We needed to be innovative in order to address the needs of those we serve," said Tami Reuter, Chief Business and Marketing Officer of MRCL. "It was a goal to streamline our processes, and in doing so, we came up with some unique ideas through this collaborative effort."

As a Twin Cities resident, Snyder has long admired the way the Mankato community rallies around such goals, and she firmly believes this group of nonprofit leaders will be able to accomplish what it desires.

"Mankato is an innovative community," Snyder said. "People get things done there. If this group says that eight percent of the population is disabled and living on the margins, people will listen and do something about it. I have no doubt about that."

According to Snyder, people are already taking notice. Snyder and her team have partnered with Minnesota State University, Mankato's social work program and department of education to pair undergraduate interns and volunteers with these disability organizations as part of their graduation requirements. The coalition will create a single intake and vetting process, curate the service-learning experiences and determine how and where the students could best serve each semester. The university faculty will then help match students according to their interests and skill sets.

"A solution like this is so exciting because it has so many areas of benefit for multiple parties," Snyder said. "The students need to meet their graduation requirements and think about inclusion in real and critical ways, the organizations need reliable volunteers and the individuals being served need high-quality experiences."

According to Zallek, such outcomes are a meaningful result of the Community Response Fund.

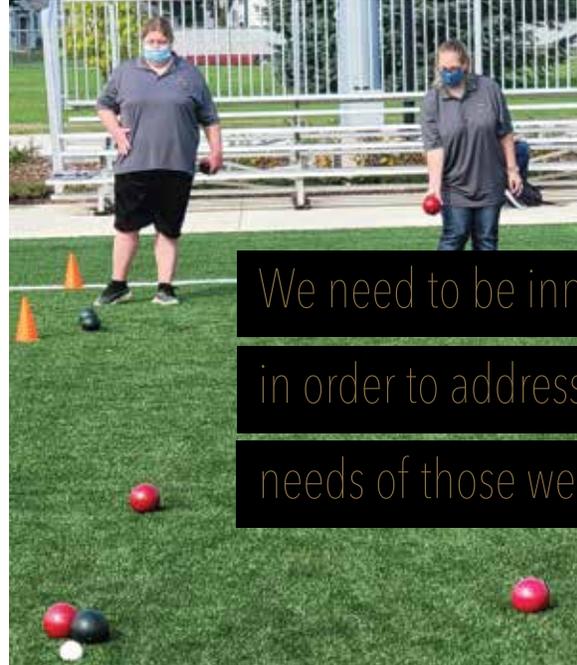
"When people donated to the Community Response Fund, they probably envisioned those dollars going toward band-aid approaches to immediate problems, which in some cases was true—but so much more has come of it than that," Zallek said. "By funding a nonprofit consultant to collaborate with multiple organizations and institutions in the area, we have turned a few dollars into decades of benefit for our community."

Snyder says this open-minded, innovative attitude toward charitable giving is what makes it so fun to work with Zallek and MAF.

"One of the things I love most about the Foundation and their approach to philanthropy is that they truly see themselves as partners to the nonprofits in the community," Snyder said. "They never tell people what to do; instead, they are always asking, 'How do we make our community better? How can we make things easier for our partners?'"

Snyder says she is proud to be part of such a unique venture.

"Getting nonprofits together to collaborate takes time and money, and it's rarely something they can do on their own. They have enough going on!" Snyder said. "The Foundation knew this, and because they aren't afraid of taking risks or doing things differently, they decided to try something new. And so many people are going to benefit because of their creative approach to philanthropy."



We need to be innovative  
in order to address the  
needs of those we serve.

LEEP SPECIAL OLYMPICS BOCCIE BALL PLAYERS  
COMPETE AT A LOCAL TOURNAMENT

## Consultant in Residency

Nonprofits have always played a role in strengthening and supporting our communities. Today, as individuals, neighborhoods and communities across the globe continue to adapt to the challenges resulting from the pandemic, nonprofits will be a critical asset in society's rebuilding. To fully play their part, these critical organizations must build their own capacity to lead and effect change.

To do this, they must be able to provide services and offer programs that generate real impact and contribute to the identification of solutions to urgent challenges. And, they must have the resources and latitude to test new ideas, try new approaches and scale high-impact programs.

Because of the success of our pilot project referenced in "Giving Outside the Box," Greater Mankato Area United Way and Mankato Area Foundation have once again joined forces to provide a Consultant in Residency program to assist local nonprofits with their most critical needs.

The program will offer access to a nonprofit strategist by providing three tracks of assistance ranging from prearranged office hours, small group training/coaching and individualized workshops for nonprofit leadership. Topics can range from restructuring a service delivery model that has been significantly challenged by COVID to guidance around the latest fundraising trends or governance strategies.

It is our goal to provide those resources that will contribute to the success of our nonprofit sector in these challenging times. We believe furnishing local groups with this opportunity, at no cost to the organization, has the potential to bolster our sector—and our community.

– Nancy Zallek, President and CEO

# Bountiful Harvest

Growing up in Wayzata, Minnesota, Kristin Duncanson always knew that giving back would be an important part of her future. What she did not anticipate is that sometimes her philanthropy would look less like cash and more like cash crops.

For the past three years, Duncanson and her husband Pat have regularly donated grain to Mankato Area Foundation (MAF) as part of their donor advised fund. The two are business partners and owners of Highland Family Farms in Mapleton, and they are firm believers in giving back to the communities and causes they care about.

"Philanthropy is part of our heritage, and we want to be strategic and deliberate about our giving," Duncanson said. "Donating grain is one great way to do just that."

Each fall, the Duncansons donate their first load of corn to a local grain elevator on behalf of the Foundation. MAF then sells the grain, and the proceeds from that sale are added to the couple's donor advised fund.

According to Nancy Zallek, MAF President and CEO, donor advised funds are a convenient and flexible philanthropic tool for individuals, families or businesses.

"Donor advised funds give you a voice in your giving, and you receive benefits similar to a personal or family foundation but without the administrative responsibilities," Zallek said. "They are especially ideal for donors who have a range of community interests."

For Kristin and Pat Duncanson, this fits their philanthropic goals perfectly. The couple regularly gives to everything from their church to nature conservatories to organizations fighting food insecurity. And by donating grain to their donor advised fund, Kristin and Pat are able to fulfill the promises they made to themselves when they acquired Highland Family Farms from Pat's parents.

"We have three pillars of sustainability: economic, environmental and community," Kristin Duncanson said. "And community is not just where we live, nor is it just agriculture, so giving to multiple causes through our donor advised fund works perfectly for us."

The act of gifting grain is not new in the ag community, and it is not unique to community foundations. Many churches and other nonprofits have accepted grain for decades, and determining eligibility can be as simple as making a phone call to the organization.

"I tell people all the time to identify what they are passionate about and then find a cooperating elevator that participates in this type of transaction," Duncanson said. "It is a super convenient way to be philanthropic."

Zallek explained that MAF always emphasizes the many benefits of philanthropy.

"Most donors are rewarded for their charitable giving with a tax deduction, but for farmers, it's different," Zallek said. "We always recommend that individuals check with their tax preparer regarding their personal situation, but a gift of grain allows most farmers to reduce their net income by the cost to produce the grain, thereby reducing their taxes."

Duncanson agreed.

"Because we don't pay taxes on the income of the sale, it simplifies our philanthropy and allows us to give creatively and flexibly."

While the Duncansons give on a regular schedule each harvest, they also donate grain whenever they see an opportunity or a need.

"If there is a clear need, like last year during the beginning of the pandemic, we will give the extra grain we have available," Duncanson said. "Additionally, if we have fulfilled a contract but have some grain left in the bin, we will donate it to our fund to further our impact."

According to Zallek, this is both a creative and practical way to maximize one's charitable impact.

"It is Mankato Area Foundation's role to make philanthropy effective, efficient and rewarding," Zallek said. "In a region so dominated by agriculture, it only makes sense to find ways to facilitate giving for our area farmers. We live in such a generous region, and our farming community is a big part of that."

Ultimately, Kristin and Pat Duncanson hope to further the legacy of giving they inherited and to instill this value of philanthropy in their children. According to Kristin, the ultimate goal is to be good stewards of what they have been given and to leave their corner of the world better than how they found it.

"We know how important it is to be philanthropic because we have been so richly blessed ourselves," Duncanson said. "Even through the hard times, and even when things are really tight, we recognize how lucky we are. And really, what better way is there to celebrate that blessing than by sharing it with others?"

Pat and Kristin Duncanson's gift of grain is one example of how you can donate to a Donor Advised Fund. See our infographic on page 10 showing how Donor Advised Funds work and the types of assets that can be gifted.



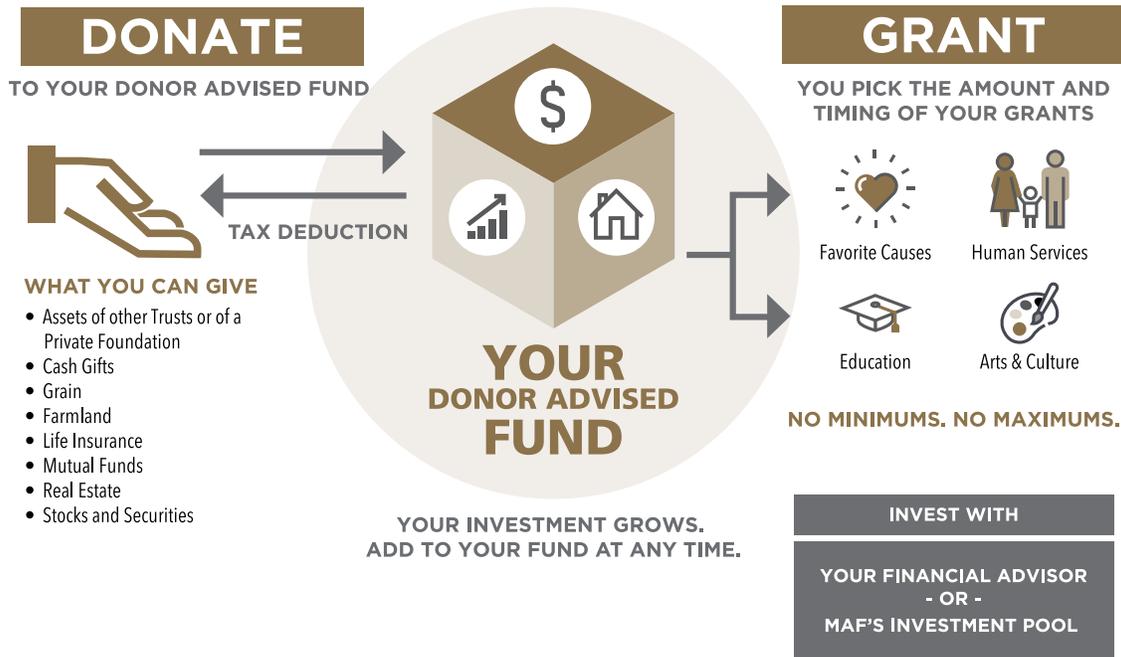
Philanthropy is part of our heritage, and we want to be strategic and deliberate about our giving.

PAT AND KRISTIN DUNCANSON, HIGHLAND FAMILY FARMS, MAPLETON, MN

# Donor Advised Funds 101

## HOW DOES A DONOR ADVISED FUND WORK?

The first step is to meet with the expert staff at the Foundation to determine your current philanthropic approach and charitable goals for the future. You can choose to name a cause or philanthropic interest or have a broad scope of giving. We then work together to shape a grants program that meets those charitable objectives and interests.



## Fund Types

### UNRESTRICTED FUND

Through a gift to our Unrestricted Fund, donors are helping to ensure there will be resources tomorrow for needs we can't even imagine today. We use our unrestricted funds to support the work of the Mankato Area Foundation while addressing current community needs and investing in local nonprofit organizations.

### DESIGNATED FUND

Through a Designated Fund, you create an enduring source of support for specific organizations and programs you care about. You choose the projects or purposes to benefit from your generosity, and we invest and distribute funds in the form of grants.

### DONOR ADVISED FUND

Through a Donor Advised Fund, you can have a voice in your philanthropy and receive benefits similar to a personal or family foundation without the administrative responsibilities. Donor Advised Funds are convenient, flexible tools for individuals, families or businesses that want to be personally involved in recommending grants made possible by their gifts. If you have a range of community interests, you may find that a Donor Advised Fund is an ideal vehicle for fulfilling your charitable wishes.

### SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Through a Scholarship Fund, you create a legacy of helping individuals achieve their potential by supporting their educational goals. You have the ability to establish a Scholarship Fund to benefit students of a particular school, geographic region, educational discipline or other designation.

### AGENCY FUND

Through an Agency Fund, your nonprofit organization has the opportunity to create a fund that generates investment income, year after year, which can be granted back to the agency, or reinvested in the fund to grow over time at the discretion of your governing board.

### EQUITY PARTNERS FUND

Through a gift to our Equity Partners Fund, you are supporting the ongoing sustainability of the Foundation. The resources from this fund help to enhance our ability to serve donors and the community.

# Home Is Where the Art Is



The next time you treat yourself to a stroll in downtown Mankato, you might notice an eye-catching sculpture of a young female painter on the corner of Second and Walnut. You might see folks taking their picture behind its open frame. You might stand behind the little bronze artist to see the world as she sees it—the movement of the city behind the still frame. Before you go, however, take a closer look. Do you notice anything out of the ordinary? Peer down at the artist's palette. That's where you'll find it.

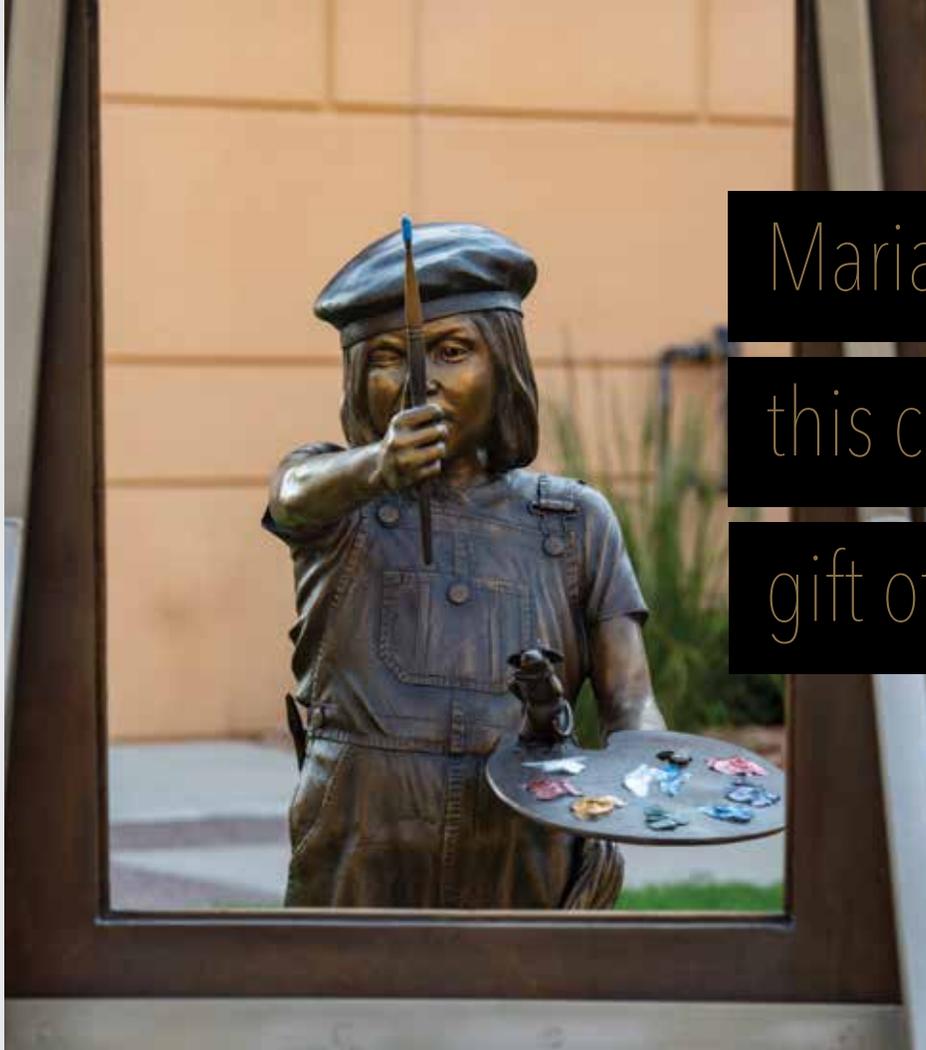
A mouse.

"That mouse? That represents Marian," said Tim Huebsch, longtime friend of Mankato artist Marian Anderson.

Marian Anderson was born in 1936 in southern Minnesota, and she was raised on farms near Nicollet and Madelia. She grew up to be a self-taught, nationally renowned painter with numerous credits and awards to her name and her art exhibited in galleries and private collections around the world. By the end of Anderson's career, her original pieces sold for more than \$10,000 each. She passed away on January 26, 2021, leaving behind a legacy for generations to come.

But she would never put it that way.

"Marian was an incredibly shy, humble person," Huebsch said. "She never wanted attention, and she preferred to be a little hidden—like a mouse. That's why we put it there on her sculpture." ►



Marian has given  
this community the  
gift of opportunity.

WORLD'S HER CANVAS BRONZE SCULPTURE BY LEE LEUNING AND SHERRI TREEBY

The sculpture in reference is *World's Her Canvas* by Lee Leuning and Sherri Treeby and was originally featured in the CityArt Walking Sculpture Tour in 2015. After Anderson passed away, Marian's close friends and the Mankato Area Foundation (MAF) decided to purchase and install the sculpture as a permanent memorial in Anderson's honor. MAF hosted a dedication of the sculpture on June 26, 2021, which both Mankato and North Mankato proclaimed Marian Anderson Day.

Another longtime friend of Anderson, Tom Hagen, agreed that Anderson always preferred the focus to be on the community and not on herself.

"Marian would have hated a whole day about her," Hagen said, laughing. "It actually rained during the sculpture dedication, and it was the first rain we had had in weeks. I'm convinced that was Marian showing her disapproval of the fanfare."

According to Anderson's friends, she was always a giver, both personally and professionally. Her art and her talent were always a gift to others. But because her husband Vince passed away in 2005 and the couple never had any children together, Anderson was challenged with how to prepare her estate before she passed. This was a unique situation because so much of Anderson's estate was made up of artwork.

Rod Meyer, Anderson's financial advisor, is credited with thinking outside the box regarding her estate. Anderson wanted the potential and flexibility of benefiting the entire community after she was gone, not just one cause or organization, and she wanted her philanthropy to evolve as the needs of the community did.

Meyer gave Nancy Zallek, MAF President and CEO, a call. The two of them got creative, and together they came up with the Marian Anderson Fund.

There are two components to the fund: Anderson's original artwork and the ways her financial resources could benefit the community. Anderson made it clear that her original artwork should be out in the community, so MAF has an ongoing partnership with Blue Earth County Historical Society and Nicollet County Historical Society to house and circulate her work. The Marian Anderson Fund of the Mankato Area Foundation will focus on supporting art and aesthetics in the Mankato area.

"Long before she passed, Marian made it clear that her art should not just sit on a shelf," Huebsch said. "She wanted people to experience it. If someone touches it, it's not a big deal. She wanted it accessible and out in the community."

According to Huebsch, Anderson always wanted her art to reach kids like her—those kids doodling in the margins of their notebooks

or staring at animals in nature—and to inspire them to express themselves in unique ways as well.

Anderson worked closely with Meyer and Zallek to develop a plan for her fund, and according to Huebsch, it was these relationships that made her feel confident in her planned giving.

"Marian developed a personal relationship with both Rod and Nancy, and that made all the difference for her," Huebsch said. "She left feeling confident that the Foundation understood and appreciated her vision."

Marian requested Hagen and Huebsch help MAF by advising the Marian Anderson Fund, which Anderson said should focus on benefiting her home community.

"Marian could have lived anywhere in the world, but she never strayed because this was her home," Hagen said. "In fact, she didn't even leave the country until she was in her 70s! Clearly, this community was important to her, and she wanted her legacy to reflect that."

The duo already have plans for fulfilling Anderson's wishes for her fund. Not everything has been determined, however, because that's the way Anderson wanted it.

"If you look closely at her nostalgic paintings, Marian always left a blank space as a symbol of the future," Huebsch said. "That open space represented the unknown and her wish that this community would continue to grow and evolve. Our job is to make exactly that happen."

According to Hagen, the beauty of the Marian Anderson Fund is in its undetermined future.

"Marian has given this community the gift of opportunity," Hagen said. "If we see a need that aligns with her vision, we can just...try it! Just like Marian never had any formal training—she just saw that she enjoyed art, so she tried it. Now she has asked us, as a community, to do the same."



MARIAN ANDERSON

## About Marian Anderson

Growing up, Anderson was the quiet girl in the back of every classroom, doodling in the margins of her notebooks. Her family struggled financially, so she never received any formal art training. Instead, the self-proclaimed tomboy spent her youth running around the family farm and painting wherever and however she could. In high school, Anderson received a scholarship to attend a three-day art seminar in Minneapolis, where she saw her first skyscrapers, took her first ride in a taxi and experienced her first stay in a hotel. That seminar was the highest level of formal training Anderson ever received.

Anderson went on to color black and white photographs for pay, and she drew original commissioned pieces for \$25 each. Eventually, however, Anderson's wildlife paintings caught the attention of organizations like the National Wild Turkey Federation, and this helped launch her career nationally as a wildlife artist.

"This wasn't without its challenges, however, because she was a woman in a man's world," longtime friend Tom Hagen said. "She had difficulty getting accepted as a female wildlife artist, but nature was what she knew. She never let what others said stop her, and she ended up being more successful than any of them."

Locally, Anderson gained the most attention for her nostalgic paintings. Even today, it is difficult to escape her depictions of old

downtown Mankato, Minnesota State University, Mankato, historic homes and more. Prints can be found on walls and in public spaces throughout the entire community. What many locals remember of Anderson, however, was her artist residency programs.

"So many people remember Marian visiting their elementary school for an art workshop," Huebsch said. "In fact, that's the first place I met her! It clearly left a lasting impact on me, and I know it did for countless others."

Some of Anderson's favorite memories were her school residency programs, and one of her most famous paintings came from such an experience. Circle of Hope features the faces of children Anderson met while leading an art program at a school in Eagle Lake, Minnesota, and prints of this painting were sent to every school counselor in the United States.

"Wherever this print is displayed, my wish is that these children be a reminder of the importance of diversity and hope in achieving a future of unity," Anderson had said when the prints were distributed. "Marian was an inspiration," Tim Huebsch said. "The priorities she exhibited in life will be the priorities of her fund. Tom and I are honored to be working with the Mankato Area Foundation as a way to continue her legacy in this community."

# Thin Film Technology Corp: Mavericks of Philanthropy



This fund has helped us develop a great relationship with the university and its engineering program.

PICTURED LEFT TO RIGHT, (FRONT): CEO MIKE HOWIESON, TOM LIETHA; (BACK): CINDY THELEMANN, FRED OLINGER AND MARK BROMAN  
PHOTO BY CONNECT MAGAZINE

It only takes a quick walk-through Thin Film Technology Corp (TFT)'s remodeled office space in North Mankato to see just how much the company's leadership invests in its employees. From large updates like easy access to the CEO's office, to small gestures like birthday cake in the breakroom, it is clear the company cares about the individuals who work there. And that level of care reaches far beyond the walls of the company's offices, says CFO Tom Lietha.

of industries from automotive to medical and military. And while their business serves the global market, their focus on philanthropy has always remained local.

"Once the company took off in the '90s, we knew we wanted to make a big impact in the community," Lietha said. "Since the company was incorporated, we had always done a little bit in terms of making donations or supporting local projects, but we always knew we wanted to have a more coordinated effort."

The company's leadership, including Lietha, CEO at the time, contacted Mankato Area Foundation (MAF) to set up a corporate advised fund in 2001. And while MAF has nearly 70 donor and corporate advised funds today, this was a new concept for the Foundation at the time. By creating a corporate advised fund, TFT was able to establish a significant giving plan toward causes they cared about without jumping through the hoops of creating their own charitable foundation from scratch.

"We had looked into creating our own foundation, but we quickly realized just how overwhelming it would be by the time you go through all the legal and regulatory processes," Lietha said. "If there is a local organization that has the expertise to manage it for you, why not let them help you?"

At the time, MAF was an entirely volunteer-run organization with less than \$1 million in assets. Today their assets exceed 27 million. Looking back, MAF's current President and CEO, Nancy Zallek, is impressed with the trust and foresight TFT had in the Foundation.

"They trusted a local group with their million-dollar fund, which is pretty amazing," Zallek said. "The leaders at TFT clearly grasped the mission and vision of our foundation, and they knew how mutually beneficial a fund like this could be."

According to Lietha, that level of confidence came from the relationship TFT developed with MAF's board of directors.

"They had been doing a great job, and they had been working hard," Lietha said. "We felt they had the right momentum, energy and attitude toward doing the right thing in the community, and they have proven that to us time and time again for over 20 years."

TFT chose to establish a fund dedicated to supporting science, technology, engineering, math and education in the Mankato region. According to Mike Howieson, the current CEO of TFT, it has always been important that their philanthropy stays in the community.

"We love that through MAF, the money stays local," Howieson said. "It allows us to keep a close relationship and to stay connected to the impact our fund makes."

Since the TFT fund was established, it has granted more than 750K in support of Minnesota State University, Mankato's annual Science & Engineering Fair for elementary students, local robotics teams, the Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota, girls' computer coding camps, hundreds of thousands in college scholarships to local engineering programs and much more.

According to Lietha and Howieson, TFT has been proud to be involved in all of these projects. These two leaders are especially proud of the college scholarships, however.

"To be able to give scholarships to people who have a beautiful mind and talent, and to help provide the opportunity for them to grow their dreams and education—there's just nothing better than that," Howieson said.

Lietha agrees.

"It's a good feeling to know you have contributed toward building the skills of people who are really going to make a difference in the world," Lietha said. "It's really amazing to see that coming from your efforts and your funds."

There is arguably a strong return on investment with TFT's scholarships, as all of the company's engineers have graduated from Minnesota State University, Mankato, many of whom benefited from TFT's scholarships.

"This fund has helped us develop a great relationship with the university and its engineering program," Howieson said. "The scholarships often turn into internships with us, which often turn into great careers for students and great employees for us. It's a wonderful thing for everyone involved."

Lietha served on the MAF board of directors for around ten years, and he remained closely involved with the work of the TFT fund during that time.

"I loved working with the foundation, but there came a point in time where there wasn't really a need for me to be there from a Thin Film standpoint," Lietha said. "Our fund was being so well run, and all the pieces were in place. MAF understood the impact we were trying to make, so we essentially handed the keys to the Foundation; they took our cause forward, and I think they have done a terrific job of it."

According to Zallek, this is often donors' favorite part of creating an advised fund with MAF.

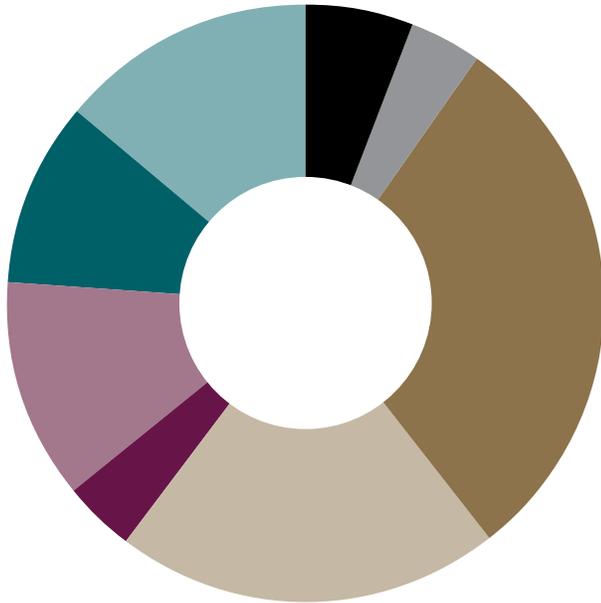
"We work closely with donors and businesses to develop a deep understanding of their charitable giving goals, and we do our best to honor that intent," Zallek said. "They trust us to research the needs of our community and to determine how their desires as a donor can fulfill those needs."

While TFT might be considered a philanthropic trendsetter thanks to their decades-long relationship with MAF, they encourage others to follow suit. "I urge anyone thinking of creating a strategy for their charitable giving to sit down with MAF and talk to them about your goals. I strongly suggest they do their giving through MAF. It's convenient, it's well organized, the policies are in place. The policies they have in place will ensure they will continue to do well," Lietha said.

"Our goal with the TFT fund is to have the Foundation continue doing exactly what they're doing," Lietha said. "There will always be a need for support in local STEM education. That was the original goal of the fund, and it remains today. And we trust MAF will continue to see our goals through for a long, long time."

# 2021 Grants

**\$2,025,327** TOTAL GRANTS AWARDED



- \$111,916** (5.5%) ANIMALS & NATURE
- \$75,215** (3.7%) ARTS & CULTURE
- \$601,137** (29.7%) COMMUNITY BENEFIT
- \$431,682** (21.3%) EDUCATION & SCHOLARSHIPS
- \$84,640** (4.2%) HEALTH & WELLNESS
- \$238,024** (11.8%) OTHER
- \$207,025** (10.2%) RECREATION
- \$275,688** (13.6%) YOUTH

## FINANCIALS AT A GLANCE

**\$27.5M**  
TOTAL ASSETS

**\$2.025M**  
TOTAL GRANTS AWARDED IN 2021

**117**  
NUMBER OF CHARITABLE FUNDS

**601**  
GRANTS DISTRIBUTED



MANKATO YOUTH PLACE

# 2021 Scholarships

\$113,750

TOTAL SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

## **Ogden W. and Jane M. Confer Scholarship Fund**

Anna Bauer

## **Elks Charitable Scholarship Fund**

Anna Bauer  
Thomas Braswell  
Joseph Burns  
Amber Casto  
Kloey Christiansen  
Jacob Devries  
Matthew Gartner  
Zachary Glade  
Alyssa Hrdlicka  
Amelia Lawver  
Alexandra Menne  
Jack Roering

## **Marlyn R. Heintz Scholarship Fund**

Ella Halls  
Grace Morgan  
Elizabeth Paul  
Sabrina Seiwert  
Kathryn Swanson

## **Dustin Lemke Memorial Scholarship Fund**

Megan Geraets  
Andrew Johnson

## **Gary W. Stroup Memorial Scholarship Fund**

Daniel Boe  
Christian Hjelman  
Elizabeth Thome

## **Virginia and Martin Krause Scholarship Martin Luther High School**

Mary Bennett  
Sutton Bohlsen  
Gideon Brakenhoff  
Josiah Brakenhoff  
Mallery Geistfeld  
Mariah Geistfeld  
Chase Hillmer  
Jade Kitzerow  
Alexis Lawton  
Brianna Petrowiak  
Trevor Rosburg  
Carter Sailor  
Emma Sailor  
Jacob Singleton  
Ryan Singleton  
Emily Sokoloski  
Isaac Taplin  
Jacob Taylor

## **McKeown/Mehia Team - Opportunity Scholarship Fund**

Thomas Braswell

## **Sam's Fund Scholarship Fund**

Tiana Clobes  
Makayla Lagerwall  
Baleigh Peterson  
Rylee Sabo  
Katelyn Schroeder  
Hannah Thorson

## **Lifetime Achievement Award**

Austin Hiles

## **Mike and Eleanor Weinzetl Opportunity Scholarship Fund**

James Wickenhauser

## **Devenport Educational Fund**

Sophomore Minnesota State University, Mankato Student

## **Florence Nightingale Scholarship Fund**

Maggie Blume  
Rachel Blumer  
Grace Haugh  
Alysha VanFleet

## **Mulford Family Charitable Fund**

Marin-Malike Williams  
Richard Martini  
Shane McMahan  
Ashley Roemhildt

## **Polly and Bill Webster Scholarship Fund**

Torey Richards  
Anwen Teachout

# Why a Community Foundation?

Community foundations make up one of the fastest growing sectors of philanthropy in the United States today. They build and strengthen communities by making it possible for a wide range of donors to participate in creating permanent (and often named) funds to meet present and future needs. Community foundations have become catalysts for improvement within urban centers and in rural settings through philanthropy that is visionary, diverse and inclusive. They are a sustainable aspect of philanthropy—providing leadership and problem solving in the present and preparing for the future with long-term funds. There are over 800 community foundations in the United States.

## 10 REASONS WHY COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS WORK

1. We are a **LOCAL** organization with deep roots in the community.
2. Our professional staff has broad **EXPERTISE AND UNDERSTANDING** of community issues and needs.
3. We provide highly **PERSONALIZED SERVICE** tailored to each individual's charitable and financial interests through a variety of giving options.
4. Our Donor Advised Funds help people invest in the **CAUSES** they care about most.
5. We **ACCEPT A WIDE VARIETY OF ASSETS** to create highly effective approaches to charitable giving.
6. We **PARTNER** with professional advisors to create highly effective approaches to charitable giving.
7. We offer maximum **TAX ADVANTAGES**.
8. We **MULTIPLY THE IMPACT** of gift dollars by pooling them with other gifts and grants.
9. We build long-term funds that benefit the community forever and help **CREATE PERSONAL LEGACIES**.
10. We are a community leader, convening agencies and coordinating resources to **CREATE POSITIVE CHANGE**.

# Funds We Hold

The Mankato Area Foundation continues to help individuals and organizations achieve their charitable goals by offering a variety of giving strategies and funds.

## THE MANKATO AREA FOUNDATION CURRENTLY MANAGES 117 FUNDS:

### Endowed Funds

Elks Charitable Endowed Fund  
O.P. and E.A. Confer Fund  
Ogden P. Confer  
Senior Citizen Endowment Fund  
Thin Film Technology Fund

### Designated Funds

Albert Fallenstein Fund  
Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota  
CLOVE  
Community Fund for Youth  
Community Response Fund  
Community Vitality Fund  
Curt and Debbie Fisher Fund  
High School Music Recognition Fund  
imagineOne Fund  
Jane and Michael Kearney Fund  
Jonathan Zierdt Cancer Fund  
Women's Giving Circle

### Corporate Advised Funds

Consolidated Communications Community Fund  
Consolidated Communications Community Fund  
for Youth  
Eide Bailly Fund  
Ryan McKeown and Danielle Mehia Financial  
Advisory Team Community Fund

### Donor Advised Funds

Andrew Willaert Family Fund  
Andy and Christine Nessler Fund  
Barbara Carson Fund  
Biederman Family Fund  
Bob and Linda Sanger Legacy Fund  
Bradley and Kathy Brozik Fund  
Brian and Mary Duehring Gifting Fund  
Brian and Valerie Koch Fund  
Bryan and Tami Paulsen Charitable Fund  
Category One Fund  
Chris Larson and Michelle May Charitable Fund  
Cunningham Family Fund  
Curt Fisher Donor Advised Fund  
Darlene and Allen Weckwerth Charitable Fund  
David Christensen and Jill Evans Fund  
Davis Daughters' Fund

Dennis and Sue Hood Fund  
Devenport Educational Fund  
Dobson Charitable Fund  
Dotson Family Fund  
Elks Charitable Fund  
Gene Biewen & Noel Van Tol Fund  
Glen A. Taylor Donor Advised Fund  
Gwesyn and Gloria Griffiths Fund  
Hagen DAF Fund  
Helen and Eldon Jones Fund  
Hoehn Charitable Fund  
Huebsch Family Fund  
James and Shannon Gullickson Fund  
Jean and Tim Bye Family Fund  
Jim and Jennie Ward Fund  
Jim and Sheri Fedson Fund  
John and Jackie Bauernfeind Fund  
John and Wendy Kind Charitable Fund  
Joyce and Gerald Roust Fund  
Kay and Lyle Jacobson Family Fund  
Kendall and Rod Meyer Fund  
Kenneth and Lori Smith Fund  
Lawton Family Fund  
Lorentz Post 11 American Legion Fund  
Maxwell Family Fund  
Michael and Lisa Montag Fund  
Mulford Family Charitable Fund  
Naples Family Fund  
Nathan and Sarah Kerich Fund  
Page Jones Richards Family Fund  
Pat and Kristin Duncanson Family Fund  
Phil and Margie Slingsby Charitable Fund  
Polly and Bill Webster Fund  
Rstom Family Foundation Fund  
Ruth and Larry Mikkelson Fund  
Ryan and Jill McKeown Fund  
Schooff Community Fund  
Schott Family Fund  
Steven and Kathleen Burnett Fund  
Sugden Family Fund  
Surprenant Family Fund  
The Adela Rindal Foundation Fund  
The Kristine Lindvall Fund  
The Marian Anderson Fund  
The Norland Charitable Fund  
The Ten Haken Charitable Fund

Tom and Diane Lentz Charitable Fund  
Veterans Memorial Fund  
West Family Fund  
Zierdt Family Charitable Fund

### Scholarship Funds

Charles Ingman LMA Scholarship Fund  
David and Michelle Schooff Scholarship Fund  
Dustin Lemke Memorial Scholarship  
Florence Nightingale Scholarship Fund  
Marlyn R. Heintz Scholarship Fund  
McKeown/Mehia Team - Opportunity Scholarship Fund  
Ogden W. and Jane M. Confer Scholarship Fund  
Samantha Chase Schaeherer Scholarship Fund  
Virginia and Martin Krause Scholarship Fund

### Agency Funds

Educare Foundation Agency Fund  
Feeding Our Communities Partners Agency Fund  
Living Earth Center Agency Fund  
Mankato Clinic Foundation Agency Fund  
Mankato Elks Lodge #225 Agency Fund  
Minnesota Valley Action Council Agency Fund  
United Way Planned Gift Fund Agency Fund  
VINE Faith In Action Agency Fund  
YWCA Mankato Women's Fund

### Fiscal Sponsored Funds

Central Freedom School  
Emily's Production - Giving Dreams Fund  
Greater Mankato Hockey Day Minnesota Fund  
Hope in Healing  
Leave A Legacy  
Mankato East High School Alumni Wall of Distinction  
Mankato Regional Airport Park Fund  
NAACP Mankato Chapter  
NicBluCares Fund  
Roots, Shoots and Boots Fund  
Rural Minnesota Equity Summit Committee  
The Christopher Center

*Funds that choose to remain anonymous are not listed.*



## MEET OUR TEAM

At the Mankato Area Foundation, we are a team of people who love where we live and love what we do. We believe that our employees are our greatest asset.

Pictured left to right:

- Sarah Beiswanger**, Community Grants and Nonprofit Specialist
- Maureen Gustafson**, Donor Relations and Programs Director
- Nancy Zallek**, President and CEO
- Tricia Lewis**, Marketing and Strategic Initiatives Coordinator
- Joan Untiedt**, Finance Director



## BOARD MEMBERS

- Kristin Duncanson** (Chair), Partner/Owner, Highland Family Farms
- Nathan Mullikin** (Vice Chair), Executive Leader, Taylor Corporation
- Seth Ferkenstad** (Treasurer), Chief of Finances, Smith Lawn and Landscape, LLC
- Tom Lentz** (Secretary), Market President, West Bank
- Christina Bohlke**, President Mankato Market, BankVista
- Heidi Boyum**, Ambassador, Jaraff Industries, Inc.
- Melissa Bradley**, Owner/General Manager, Snell Motors
- Jessica Buchert**, Shareholder, Fredrikson & Byron, P.A.
- Leah Davis**, President, AEM Workforce Solutions/Partner, Abdo Eick & Meyers
- Jennifer Pfeffer**, Sr. Regional Director of Operations, Ecumen
- Todd Prafke**, City Clerk/Administrator, City of St. Peter
- Sarah Richards**, President/CEO, Jones Metal, Inc
- David Schooff**, President, Coldwell Banker Commercial Fisher Group of Mankato
- Mark Sharpless**, Senior Manager, Network Engineering, Consolidated Communications
- David Wittenberg**, Associate Vice President/Investments, Financial Advisor, Stifel

## INCOMING BOARD MEMBERS

- Wade Abed**, Executive Vice President & Corporate Counsel, Profinium
- Jim Heilman**, Principal, CliftonLarsonAllen
- Brittany King-Asamoah**, Partner, Gislason & Hunter LLP
- Stacy Wells**, Director of Communications, Mankato Area Public Schools

## RETIRING BOARD MEMBERS

*We would like to extend special gratitude and appreciation to our board members who have completed their terms this fall.*

- Steve Jansen**, Tax Principal, CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP
- Todd Stromswold**, Wealth Management Trust Advisor, US Bank
- Andrew Willaert**, Partner, Gislason & Hunter LLP

## 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.

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



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