



2022

Philanthropy Review



MANKATO AREA  
FOUNDATION



## 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.

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# Philanthropy Review 2022

A LETTER FROM NANCY ZALLEK, PRESIDENT AND CEO



Dear Friends in Philanthropy,

I still remember how excited I was to learn that Mankato Area Foundation (MAF) was planning to hire an executive director. It was my understanding that the MAF board was a dedicated volunteer-run group wanting to hire a part-time staff person to build on their efforts—and I desperately wanted them to entrust me with their vision.

Luckily, they believed in me, and I was hired in 2009. The board and I spent a lot of time building infrastructure for the next couple of years and dreaming big about the future of MAF. We wanted to honor the foresight of our founding members while transitioning the Foundation from a project-based organization to a trusted resource facilitating the charitable giving of individuals, families and businesses. Our vision was to be a knowledgeable and creative community partner, advancing solutions to the community's most pressing challenges and unmet opportunities.

This 2022 edition of our Philanthropy Review takes us back to the beginning of MAF with an interview with my mother—a founding member of this organization. You'll also hear from Denny Dotson, a longtime supporter of the Foundation, regarding his philosophy and commitment to local charitable giving. You're going to read heartwarming stories about local projects and how they are changing lives—and if you get all the way to the back, you'll get a glimpse of my incredible colleagues who are responsible for everything we accomplish every day.

Thank you for taking the time to understand why charitable giving is the "secret sauce" that makes this region so unique and such a remarkable place to live and work. And thank you to the 2009 board of directors for having the confidence in me to lead this truly wonderful organization. I was excited then, and I continue to bring that same enthusiasm to work with me every day. It is an honor.

With gratitude,

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

Nancy Zallek  
President and CEO  
Mankato Area Foundation

# Happy Campers

Located on the shores of Lake Washington in LeSueur County, Kiwanis Camp Patterson has been serving thousands of youth campers each summer for the past four generations. Today, the camp continues to welcome 2,600 kids each season.

"My grandma, mother and their kids all attended camp here," said Shannon Gullickson, president of Camp Patterson, Inc. "I was actually the only one in my family who didn't attend a camp growing up!"

Camp Patterson's story began nearly 100 years ago in 1927, when Mankato merchant H.A. Patterson donated 9.2 acres of land on the east side of Lake Washington to the Mankato Kiwanis Club, which had been hosting youth camps on leased land. Over the years, the Patterson family and other Kiwanis and community members have funded improvements and the purchase of additional parcels of land for the camp, which now consists of 19.2 acres.

"The property would be almost unrecognizable to those original campers," Gullickson said. "It is a physical and visual testament to the power of giving."

The camp property is rented at an affordable rate to area nonprofit organizations who offer youth camps, including the YMCA, Celebrate Me Week, 4-H, Royal Family Kids, Camp OZ and others. Each camp provides its own staff, food and planned activities, but Kiwanis Camp Patterson provides all the rest: sleeping cabins, recreation hall, dining hall and commercial kitchen, softball field, basketball court, volleyball court, archery range, gaga ball pit and (of course) a swimming beach with kayaks and canoes.

Like so many facilities, Camp Patterson was temporarily shuttered in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But this didn't stop the volunteers or caretakers from pushing forward with the goals of the camp. Volunteers worked to trim trees, repair broken fences, add new landscaping and make other much-needed improvements to the property. Most notably, volunteer leaders from the Kiwanis Club utilized that summer to form a plan to fully renovate the interior and exterior of ten of the camp's cabins. Soon, these leaders initiated a major fundraising campaign with the goal of improving and maintaining Kiwanis Camp Patterson to serve a fifth generation of campers.

"2020 forced a pause in the operations of so many organizations," Gullickson said. "But even though we couldn't have kids participating in camps, our volunteers never lost their stride in working to better the experience of our campers."

In 2021, volunteer camp leadership approached Mankato Area Foundation (MAF) with information about their "Next Generation Campaign," and the two organizations partnered to tackle fundraising

for the item most requested by groups utilizing the facility: an expanded dining hall with air conditioning and 21st-century audio/visual capabilities. According to Nancy Zallek, president and CEO of MAF, this wasn't a tough sell to area philanthropists.

"Camp Patterson is so beloved that we knew we would have donors interested in supporting this cause," Zallek said. "We reached out to our donor advised fund holders, and to date, they have contributed over \$190,000 to the campaign. We are so pleased by the enthusiastic support for such a wonderful project."

Members of the Mankato Kiwanis Club have also contributed, as well as many community members and past campers.

"We were initially overwhelmed by how much work it would take to make these renovations happen," Gullickson said. "But we have been equally overwhelmed by the amount of support we have received—from individuals, businesses and of course MAF donors."

In June of 2022, the dining hall addition was completed just in time for the arrival of the season's first campers. Now, the committee is working on their next big project: raising funds for a new restroom and shower facility.

According to Gullickson, the group is confident they can meet this fundraising goal with local support.

"When we share the history of the camp and our plans to serve a new generation of youth campers, people fall in love with it," Gullickson said. "It aligns beautifully with the goals of so many of Mankato's philanthropists."

In addition, Gullickson notes that the partnership with MAF and the efforts of this campaign have produced palpable results.

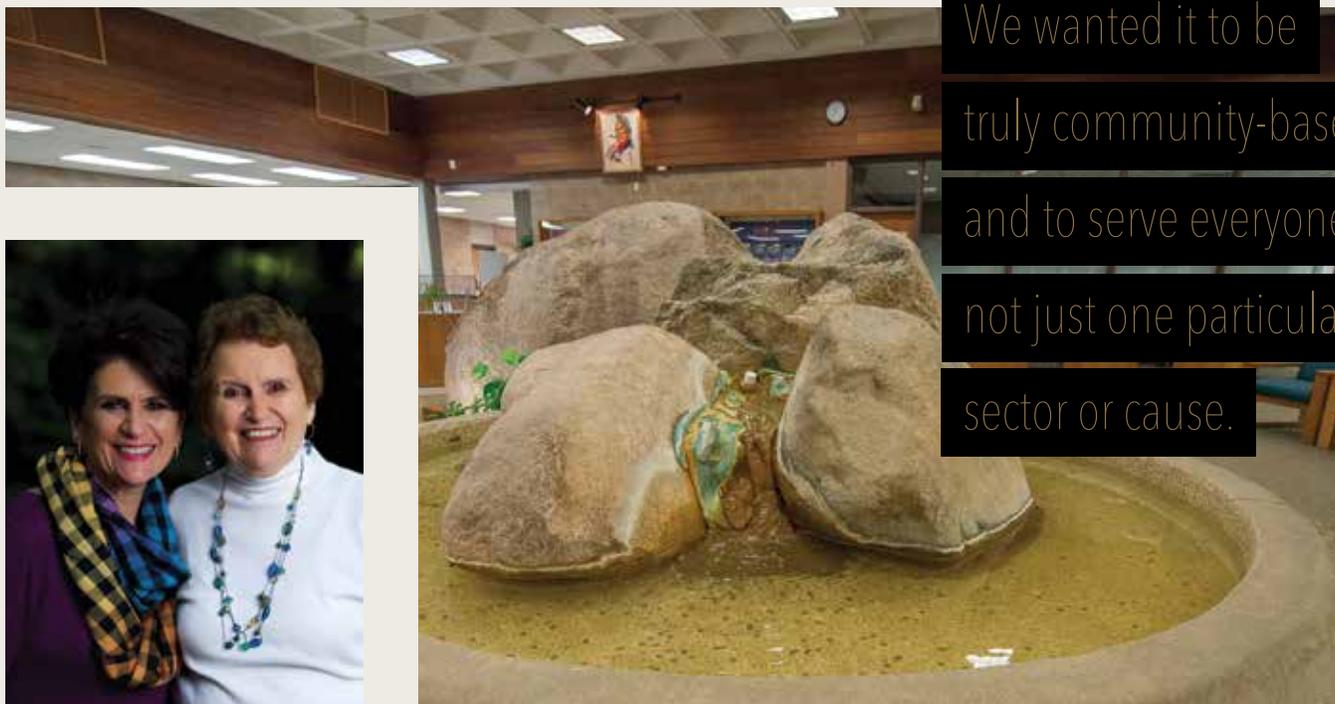
"Throughout this entire campaign, the only smiles bigger than mine have been those of young campers utilizing our stunning new facilities," Gullickson said. "And what could be more joyful than that?"

The only smiles bigger than mine  
have been those of young campers  
utilizing our stunning new facilities.



CELEBRATE ME WEEK, KIWANIS CAMP PATTERSON, LAKE WASHINGTON, MADISON LAKE, MN

# Building a Rock Solid Foundation



We wanted it to be truly community-based and to serve everyone, not just one particular sector or cause.

MANKATO AREA FOUNDATION'S EARLIEST PROJECT, BLUE EARTH COUNTY LIBRARY ROCK FOUNTAIN; NANCY (TAYLOR) ZALLEK AND HER MOTHER, GRETCHEN TAYLOR—A FOUNDING MEMBER OF MANKATO AREA FOUNDATION

When the president and CEO of Mankato Area Foundation (MAF), Nancy (Taylor) Zallek, was growing up in Mankato, she always envisioned she would one day take over her father's family business—Brett's Department Store. And she was on that path, in fact, from 1982 until it was forced to close in 1992.

"I guess you could say I have always been good at running a nonprofit!" Zallek said, laughing.

Little did Zallek know then that she would actually spend the majority of her career running the organization her mother helped found in 1974.

The roots of MAF began growing in the 1960s, back when local businessman Herman Miller tried to build a civic center for Mankato. He had approached various individuals and businesses to raise money for the cause, and it is estimated he raised around \$70,000. While this was a generous amount, it was not enough to build a civic center. And with no entity to hold these funds, Miller had to return all the contributions to the original donors.

So in the early 1970s, local attorney Art Ogle approached long-time community volunteer Gretchen Taylor (Zallek's mother), still frustrated that the civic center project had fallen through. He told Taylor that if there had been a community foundation at the time, the money would have been watched over, allowed to grow, and eventually, the project would have been completed.

"And this sort of thing is going to keep happening unless we start a foundation," Ogle had said, according to Taylor.

With Taylor on board, Ogle collected a group of Mankato leaders—people who "liked to accomplish things," according to Taylor—to form the first board of directors and officially establish the Mankato Area Foundation as a 501(c)(3) organization.

The next step? Decide what exactly this organization would do.

"With the civic center project, there had been money but no shell to store it in, and now we had a shell but no money," Taylor said. "So we had to decide. Do we just raise money for the sake of doing something, or do we start a project that will get people's attention?"

One of the board members at the time mentioned that the Blue Earth County Library was in the process of being designed. The board agreed that a unique water feature would be a great addition to this new community gathering space.

"I assumed we would just be picking out a spigot from a catalog or something," Taylor said, chuckling. "But a board member contacted artist and professor Raymond Jacobson from Carleton College to complete the design, and he wanted to use beautiful natural features like the various types of stone found in southern Minnesota. So he and I drove around for hours looking at boulder after boulder after boulder."

Eventually, Jacobson decided the boulders he wanted to use were some found in Minneopa State Park. This left Taylor with a pile of administrative work—getting permission from the DNR, the State Park Commission and others to move and utilize the stone as an art project.

"I'll never forget calling one of those entities for what felt like the hundredth time," Taylor said. "I could hear the woman on the other line turn to her coworker and whisper, 'It's that woman from Mankato. She's calling about the damn rocks again.'"

When Art Ogle passed away unexpectedly, Taylor took over as board president; she and her fellow volunteers had a lot of work to do to realize his vision for the community.

"At the time, we were a project-based organization," Taylor said. "After the fountain, we partnered with Minnesota State University, Mankato, to host a three-day public affairs institute. Soon after that, we raised money to establish the Williams Nature Center. It was one project after another, and it was all run by volunteers."

When asked about the fundraising model used in that era, Taylor admitted the process was not particularly sophisticated.

"It was literally door-to-door fundraising," Taylor said. "Becky Ueland and I would knock on doors and make cold calls, asking folks to donate to whatever project we were working on next."

At the time, Mankato Area Foundation functioned under what is now known as a community chest model, serving as a central entity for funds that could be used for projects that community members determined were important. Money would be raised and then spent, raised and then spent.

"That's really the only way we could function as a volunteer-run organization," Taylor said. "We didn't have the capacity to expand beyond that."

Decades later, when Zallek was hired to direct the Foundation in 2009, she spent a long time trying to determine why the organization was 35 years old yet only had a couple million dollars in assets.

"Looking back at the books, I could see the pattern and learned that the majority of our funds were not invested," Zallek said. "While this serves individual projects well, it is not a super sustainable model."

Zallek credits the Confer family as being the game-changers for Mankato Area Foundation. The family of Ogden P. Confer, who died in 1988, initiated the first endowed fund in his honor at MAF in the late '90s.

"This gift made the board rethink their community chest model and aim for perpetuity," Zallek said. "The board decided to shift their strategy and focus on investing assets and granting from income. With the establishment of the Confer fund, we have granted over \$650,000 to local nonprofit organizations from that original gift in the 1990s."

The next big step in MAF's growth was moving from a volunteer-run organization to one with paid staff.

"If MAF had remained volunteer-based, it would have plateaued," Taylor said. "Hiring staff was an essential investment. The organization needed continuity and full-time dedication to donors and the community—something we as volunteers couldn't provide when we were busy chasing down boulders."

According to Zallek, this investment in employees has paid for itself many times over. In 2009, the board hired Zallek (with the support of contract accountant Joan Untiedt) to lead the organization. At the time, the Foundation had approximately eight funds and \$2 million in assets. Today, Mankato Area Foundation has seven staff members, more than 135 funds and over \$27 million in assets. But the number Zallek is most proud of is granting over \$2.4 million just last year.

When Taylor, now age 91 and with over 56 years of nonprofit board service, was asked about the original vision for Mankato Area Foundation, she said the board had hoped it would be used as a tool for the growth of Mankato.

"We wanted it to be truly community-based and to serve everyone, not just one particular sector or cause," Taylor said.

And when Taylor was asked if she ever envisioned the Foundation being what it is today, her answer was emphatic.

"No," Taylor said. "No. No way. We never would have thought it could be what it is now. And I definitely never imagined my daughter would be serving in this capacity one day. But Mankato Area Foundation has grown into exactly what that original board would have wanted it to be, had we possessed the ability to see into the future."

Taylor paused.

"And a magic wand, perhaps."

# An Iron Will

After decades of running an internationally-renowned business and contributing countless significant financial gifts to the community, one might expect Denny Dotson, owner of Dotson Iron Castings, to be a bit of a self-taught fiscal mastermind. But Dotson always credits his childhood friend-turned-attorney, Jack Regan, with the best financial advice he has ever received.

"Estate and will planning are incredibly difficult and emotional," Dotson said. "When you're writing a will, you don't know if you are writing something for three, 10 or 20 years down the road. Plus, you want to donate charitably, but there's also concern for your children and grandchildren. How do you even begin to balance all of that?"

According to Dotson, Regan provided a remarkably straightforward answer to this common conundrum.

"Jack looked at Carole and me and said, 'You grew up in Mankato, and you benefited from this community,'" Dotson said. "'So why don't you treat Mankato as an additional child? You have four kids, but treat this community as your fifth.'"

And with that idea in mind, Dotson's philanthropic goals have been simplified and solidified ever since.

"It's easy. Our will says that 20% of whatever we have left will go to this community via the charitable experts at Mankato Area Foundation," Dotson said. "And I give that same advice to anyone who will listen."

That being said, anyone who knows Dotson knows his philanthropy has never been limited to what will happen after he's gone. In fact, Dotson is the first to say he gets the most enjoyment out of taking risks and giving to the newest and most innovative projects happening in the community right now.

"I like to invest money in things that might not succeed," Dotson said. "It's important to take risks. Because if or when those projects do succeed, they provide a remarkable benefit."

Coming from the for-profit business world, Dotson sees a vast disconnect in the mentalities of venture capitalists and philanthropic investors.

"Angel investors are always gambling," Dotson said. "They know not all of their investments are going to be home runs. So why don't we give nonprofits that same level of support and permission to take risks? After all, that's where the real innovation happens."

Dotson has gotten in on the ground floor of innumerable projects and causes in the Mankato region, primarily through the donor advised fund he and his wife Carole established several years ago at Mankato Area Foundation.

According to Nancy Zallek, president and CEO of Mankato Area Foundation (MAF), Dotson has been a maverick and a remarkably influential supporter of the Foundation's work for decades.

"Whenever we have or are approached with a new and exciting idea, Denny is one of the first people I call," Zallek said. "And not only does he support the ideas; he is usually the one to tell us to think even bigger."

Some of these projects include (but are not limited to) helping establish the Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota, funding the Mankato Youth Place (MY Place), developing the Shared Spaces nonprofit center made available to numerous local and regional organizations and building the Mary Dotson Skating Rink in honor of his mother.

"I strongly believe that giving should be fun," Dotson said. "And giving in Mankato is always fun."

Ironically, the adolescent Denny Dotson never anticipated he would end up living in Mankato, let alone running his family business.

"I desperately tried to get out of Mankato," Dotson said, chuckling. "I went to Notre Dame for college, then the University of Chicago for an MBA and then I joined the Navy. I thought I had left for good."

But after an economic downturn and an offer from his father to work at Dotson Iron Castings, Dotson and his wife shifted gears to return to their hometown. And according to both, they are forever grateful to have landed back where their roots developed.

"I have been fortunate enough to travel all over the world through my work, and boy, there is just no place like Mankato," Dotson said. "This is a community of relationships, of innovation and of people stepping up to make things happen. In my 50+ years of being back here, I am not aware of a single project that ought to have happened that did not happen."

Dotson credits long-time community donors like Fred and Diane Lutz or Lyle and Kay Jacobson for promoting positive philanthropic peer pressure in the region to get things done.

"When Freddy calls, you always pick up," Dotson said, laughing. "He is a competitive giver, if there ever was such a thing, and I try my best to keep up with him."

Denny and Carole Dotson are holders of 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.



DOTSON BACK 40, CHILDREN'S MUSEUM OF SOUTHERN MINNESOTA



DENNY AND CAROLE DOTSON

I strongly believe giving should be fun. And giving in Mankato is always fun.

According to Dotson, Lutz helped shape Mankato Area Foundation into what it is today.

"Freddy was one of the first to acknowledge the need to fund and hire a paid director of the Foundation," Dotson said. "He told me, 'We need to make this happen, so let me know how much you're going to contribute.' And to this day, it was one of the best investments I ever made."

When asked to describe how MAF makes philanthropy function for him and his family today, Dotson replied with one word: "Easy."

"I can so confidently trust the Foundation and its staff to be aware of what's happening and what the needs are in the community, as well as how those needs change over time," Dotson said. "They are involved in absolutely everything. Between all of that and the extraordinary back office support, MAF makes philanthropy easy. And when it's easy, it's extra fun."

This is also why Dotson trusts his long-term planned giving to be managed by MAF.

"I can't predict what the needs of the community will be 30 or 40 years from now, but the Foundation will always be adapting and responding to those needs," Dotson said. "Between their staff and our kids' future involvement in managing our donor advised fund, we can trust that our gifts will continue to be put to good use long after we're gone."

Although Dotson has donated high dollar amounts in his days, he firmly believes that financial gifts are not the sole resource for innovation.

"Any successful initiative requires three components: time, talent and treasure," Dotson said. "And at any point in your life, regardless of your financial situation, you can find some way to give back through one of those avenues."

"Look at the countless hours the volunteers and local moms dedicated to making the Children's Museum happen," Dotson continued. "Or the work Nancy [Zaltek] put into collaborating with so many entities to establish Shared Spaces. Funding is essential, but Mankato has proven time and time again that all types of talents are required to make a great idea come to fruition."

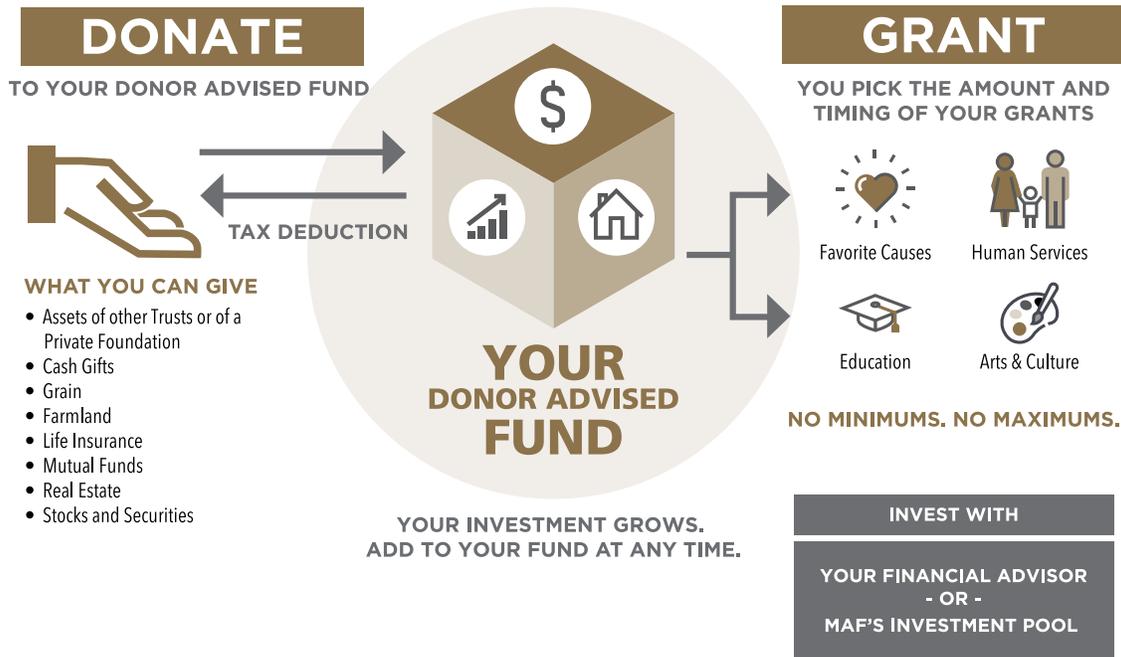
So when asked about the advice Dotson gives to those trying to determine their own unique ways to give, he returned to the wisdom of Jack Regan.

"Every parent wants their kids to have all their needs met and to live happy and healthy lives," Dotson said. "So what if we all treated our community with that same level of care? Personally, I think the results would be pretty gosh darn magical."

# 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.

# Philanthropy in Focus



MRCI CLIENT

Just over a year ago, when Melissa Enter began her new job as a Day Service Specialist at MRCI, one of her goals was to make sure those she served felt welcomed into the world around them. In her experience, she noticed that people with disabilities would often look down—at their feet or the ground—as they had been told to stay out of people’s way throughout their lives. She joined MRCI because she knew they wanted something different than that.

“Through their life experiences and the various processes and pressures of socialization, adults with disabilities have often learned to stay out of the way—to not ‘disturb’ anyone,” Enter said. “This means keeping their eyes down and just following along. But I don’t want them to follow. I want them to walk beside me or in front of me and to lead.”

Enter, formerly an international trainer for teachers and social workers, now spends each day with four adults with disabilities, exploring the community and seeking out new experiences.

“I really try to listen to them to determine what they want to do,” Enter said. “They haven’t always been given a lot of opportunities, so they don’t always know what they’re looking for. It’s my job to help them identify and explore those interests.”

So far, this has included a wide variety of activities: magnet fishing to clean out lakes, studying local flora and fauna, attending county fairs, collecting phone books to use for pressing leaves and flowers, going to local recreation centers, learning how to make stained glass, woodworking at Jack McGowan’s farm and more.

“We spend a lot of time outside because this creates endless learning opportunities,” Enter said. “Every time we do or try or see or smell or hear something new, our brains and imaginations expand.”

With this in mind, and after observing her clients’ habit of physically looking downward as they explore new places, Enter was inspired to introduce her group to photography. ►



Through the lens of a camera, my clients can show us what they see, what they look at and why it's important to them. And that is so important for all of us to see.

MRCI CLIENTS PHOTOGRAPHING NATURE ON THE KASOTA PRAIRIE

"I have always loved photography, and it was something I often did with my kids as they were growing up," Enter said. "I would give my children disposable cameras and we would go out and shoot whatever they thought was interesting. I loved it because it gave me the ability to see the world through their eyes."

Enter attempted to implement this same technique with her MRCI clients, but she found that simple cameras were generally too difficult for them to operate.

"Those cameras are small and they require coordination for an adult with disabilities," Enter said. "I quickly realized we needed something more substantial."

So, Enter reached out to local photographer Mark Zallek for guidance on the type of camera that would best suit her clients' needs. It needed to be substantial in weight, have easily manageable tactile buttons and have image stabilization or the ability to sit on a tripod. Together, they found the perfect camera to test out. Of course, such a camera comes at a cost—around \$200.00.

Enter discussed the idea of wanting to purchase a camera for her group with Maureen Gustafson, Donor Relations and Programs Director at Mankato Area Foundation. Gustafson suggested the Foundation pay for the camera for a trial run of Enter's idea, and she knew exactly which fund would align with the cause.

"We have a fund set up in Kris Lindvall's memory... focused on the arts and people with disabilities. We talked with her nephews who oversee her fund, and they loved the idea," said Gustafson.

When Enter obtained the camera and took her group to test it out during a couple trips in nature, she says the positive effects were instantaneous.

"It was like the sun came out for them; they just lit up," Enter said. "When we went out to the Kasota Prairie, one of my clients took about 100 pictures of a single rock. Another shot pictures of gopher holes we probably would have otherwise stumbled into. They talked about the colors and shapes and birds and trees they saw, and they were just amazed that what they produced were photos they had taken—photos they had captured with their own eyes and hands."

Enter explained that most adults with disabilities have never experienced what it is like to be a photographer, especially with a high-quality camera.

"It takes the right type of camera to work for my clients, and that type of camera is expensive," Enter said. "Unfortunately, that means they have historically not been trusted with handling such equipment. But we are all about respecting our clients as adults, and I think the act of providing them with this camera did just that—it gave them respect as an adult, as a person capable of handling something of great value."

While the financial contribution of this camera was far smaller than many philanthropic endeavors in the community, it has had a much larger impact than one might expect.

"It is not small to us; it is huge to us," Enter said. "It's creating opportunities these adults would never have had otherwise. My clients would never have the budget to afford something like this, so it is truly life-changing."

And according to Enter, for her clients, the positive effects of photography do not end at the shutter of a lens.

"Photography forces you to narrow your focus," Enter explained. "After all, it is easy to be overwhelmed by the world around you. But once you narrow your scope through a camera lens, you shut out all the noise around you. It simplifies and organizes your thought processes. It really is a form of mindfulness."

Based on the success of this trial run, Mankato Area Foundation contributed the funds necessary to buy three more cameras for MRCL from MAF's Kristine Lindvall Fund. Enter is ecstatic and grateful, and she knows this will only continue to benefit MRCL clients for years to come.

"Taking photos is just the beginning," Enter explained. "Already, the pictures they have taken have sparked conversations about leaves and acorns and how flowers form. They have organized their photos in nature journals based on the types of tree photographed or captioned them with names for those trees. They have told each other stories about their pictures and why they chose to shoot photos of certain people or flowers or landscapes. The opportunities this has created are endless."

In addition, Enter has noted a palpable growth in the confidence of her clients since they started experimenting with photography.

"When my clients learn they are able to do new or difficult things, it increases their confidence in themselves," Enter said. "Even carrying an expensive camera is a form of risk-taking. And when they succeed at that, they start to take healthy risks in other areas of their lives."

"One of my group members only spoke in three-word sentences a year ago, and now she speaks with eight words or more," Enter continued. "Another in the group, Emily, is blossoming—telling jokes and participating all day long. That confidence in themselves increases their ability to try new things without fear."

According to Nancy Zallek, president and CEO of Mankato Area Foundation, she never anticipated the level of impact this gift would provide.

"Every new project is an experiment, and this seemingly simple experiment has produced remarkably profound results," Zallek said. "I am so grateful for the creative and compassionate leaders like Melissa in our community, and I am proud our donors' financial support can make such a difference in the lives of those she works with."

Enter, who had already spent a lifetime caring for her sister with disabilities prior to working at MRCL, emphasizes how important it is for able-bodied people to understand the lives and experiences of those with disabilities.

"Unfortunately, this can be difficult because the nature of the disabilities themselves often limits a person's language or communication skills," Enter said. "But photography provides a language without words. Through the lens of a camera, my clients can show us what they see, what they look at and why it's important to them. And that is so important for all of us to see."

# Minnesota nICE

It is common to hear whistles blowing and fans cheering at Minnesota State University, Mankato's Blakeslee Stadium, the home of Maverick Football. But in the middle of January? Now that was a first.

Such was the case when the puck dropped during Hockey Day Minnesota 2022 at the temporary outdoor ice rink sitting atop Blakeslee Field. Hockey players and fans from across the state gathered to watch, cheer and play during the State of Hockey's annual celebration of their favorite sport.

"I love the game of hockey, and this was an amazing opportunity for the greater Mankato community," said Missy Bradley, treasurer of the executive committee for the Hockey Day Minnesota Local Organizing Committee. "That's why I got involved. What better way to showcase our community, its people and its businesses than to bring in over 22,500 spectators in one week?"

You read that correctly—one week. Hockey Day Minnesota, developed in 2007 by the Minnesota Wild, was intended to be a one-day annual celebration of the sport in a different Minnesota city each year. In 2019, Bemidji raised the bar by hosting it as a two-day event. As the first-ever host city south of Minneapolis, Mankato broke multiple traditions by having Hockey "Day" extend from January 16th to the 23rd.

"We thought to ourselves, 'Wouldn't it be amazing to have every player from the local high schools and the Mankato Area Hockey Association (MAHA) play a game on this outdoor rink?'" Bradley said. "Why not extend this event and involve as many community members as possible?"

Of course, such an undertaking requires a lot of time and energy. It all began in 2017 when Maverick Men's Hockey coach Darren Blue called David Wittenberg, a passionate Maverick Hockey fan, to suggest Mankato throw its hat in the ring for being a host city. While not sure exactly what he was getting himself into, Wittenberg was excited about the idea.

"I had seen what Maverick hockey did to keep the vibrancy in the city center of Mankato until the community could redevelop downtown," Wittenberg said. "We felt Mankato was the hotbed of hockey in Southern Minnesota, and the Maverick men's hockey team had put us on the national map as well."

After years of meetings and extensive pitches with the Wild and Bally Sports North, the local planning committee finally won the bid in 2019 to host Hockey Day Minnesota 2021. (Because 2021 could not take place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Mankato instead hosted in 2022.)

Once Mankato was announced as the next host city, the efforts of Bradley, Wittenberg and the rest of their committee turned to fundraising. But since the cost of building multiple outdoor ice rinks (plus locker rooms, bleachers, a jumbotron, warming areas and much more) added up to hundreds of thousands of dollars, the HDM Mankato committee quickly struck a partnership with Mankato Area Foundation to tackle the daunting task. MAF served as the event's fiscal sponsor, handling all the back office work and managing the finances.

"I don't think any of us realized how big it was going to get and the sheer volume of money coming in and out," Bradley said. "The Foundation made everything seamless for us, and it worked so beautifully to partner with such a well-established and respected community organization."

When the week of the event finally arrived, youth hockey players from across Southern Minnesota donned custom jerseys and faced off on the temporary professional sheet of ice. Each MAHA team played a different regional foe, bringing hundreds of players and families into Mankato for an unforgettable experience and one that was well-documented by many parents' Facebook pages.

"To see the faces of everyone—from these little kids to the MSU hockey teams—they were universal," Wittenberg said. "Everyone had the same type of smile. You could tell people were truly having the time of their life."

In addition to MAHA and local high school players taking to the ice, the committee secured a commitment from Minnesota State University, Mankato's men's hockey team to be the first Division I men's team to play outside on Hockey Day for a nationally televised game against the University of St. Thomas. Other special events throughout the week included "Hockey for Her," a day dedicated to girls' and women's hockey; events raising money for local nonprofits; games featuring local "celebrities," live music and more. All in all, more than 22,500 people crossed through the event gates, with tens of thousands more watching the official Hockey Day Minnesota broadcast on Bally Sports North that Saturday.

"It was a big coming out party," Wittenberg said. "[After the effects of the pandemic] people were starved for those types of activities to get together."

The goal of Hockey Day Minnesota has always been to celebrate and grow the game of hockey across the state, and the local organizing committee in Mankato took that to heart. All the money raised to put on the event was sourced locally and stayed in the community. When all was said and done, the committee netted about \$550,000 in revenue and knew exactly how to put it to use.



Our goal remains to make a strategic investment in growing the game of hockey here locally and regionally.

HOCKEY DAY MINNESOTA 2022, BLAKESLEE STADIUM, MANKATO, MN

First, \$99,000 was donated to Minnesota State University, Mankato, for its massive role in hosting the event on its grounds. Next, a \$450,000 permanent fund was created at Mankato Area Foundation to achieve the goal of growing the game of hockey in Southern Minnesota. The local organizing committee has now transformed into a granting committee, and they will work alongside the Foundation to accept applications and disperse grants that align with their goal.

"When we were pitching the Wild and Bally, it was all about growing the game," Wittenberg said. "Our goal remains to make a strategic investment in growing the game of hockey here locally and regionally, and we're really excited about how that can play out with the help of the Foundation and the community."

According to Nancy Zallek, president and CEO of Mankato Area Foundation (and long-time hockey mom), the excitement is mutual.

"This committee is made up of some of Mankato's strongest business leaders, and they gave a gift to the community by bringing Hockey Day Minnesota to our backyard," Zallek said. "Now, even though the event itself is over, this will be a gift that keeps on giving."

# Greater Mankato Inclusivity Study

In early 2019, a group of community stakeholders met to address the current state of inclusivity in the Mankato area. They quickly realized that in order to reduce barriers and provide equitable access to opportunities and resources, they first needed to understand the area's strengths and weaknesses. So, the group brought together twelve community partners from our public, private and nonprofit sectors and asked the Mankato Area Foundation (MAF) to lead the Greater Mankato Inclusivity Study (GMIS).

This study is one of the largest community-led, mixed-method inclusivity studies in America and is designed to gauge the current status of inclusivity for students, individuals who work in, and residents of the Greater Mankato area (Blue Earth and Nicollet counties). The study is publicly and privately funded and is being conducted by the national firm Intercultural Competence Edge, Inc.

The partners involved in the study want to hear community members' perceptions and experiences regarding living and working in Greater Mankato. Topics include housing, healthcare, education and economic well-being.

"We can't fix what we don't understand," said Nancy Zallek, president and CEO of Mankato Area Foundation. "It is important we take the time to do this right and to ensure we are hearing from a broad representation of our community."

Information about the survey was dispersed to thousands of individuals, accessible online and available in seven languages.

"I believe this information will be invaluable to our region," Zallek said.

The study will take approximately one year from start to finish and has three phases. Over the last several months, the goal has been to collect residents' perspectives through personal interviews and focus groups with local community members.

The second phase of public input included the release of the GMIS survey. And the final phase will be the analysis of the information and dissemination of the results. Those results should be available in the first quarter of 2023.



"The long-term planning involved in this study has been very intentional," said Rita Rassbach, GMIS Project Coordinator and Administrative Coordinator for MAF. "Each phase has been built on the last—I am anxious to see the end result and hear the voices from our community."

In addition to MAF, the partners supporting this study include Mayo Clinic Health System, Greater Mankato Growth, City of Mankato, Blue Earth County, Minnesota State University, Mankato, Nicollet County, City of North Mankato, YWCA Mankato, Greater Mankato Diversity Council, South Central College and Mankato Area Public Schools-ISD 77.

"We are grateful to the Mankato Area Foundation for leading this initiative and dedicating a wonderful staff member to ensure its successful completion," said Paul Peterson, Superintendent of ISD #77. "Rita Rassbach has been a champion for MAF and this initiative."

While the final study report will not provide specific suggestions or recommendations for the region, the findings will help community leaders identify areas of improvement for all ages, races, abilities and genders.

"Information gathered from this study will be utilized as a resource for better understanding the ways in which Greater Mankato can continue to build a welcoming region for businesses, members of the workforce, community member and visitors," said Jessie Beyer, president and CEO of Greater Mankato Growth.

**The survey is open to anyone who lives, works or commutes to the Greater Mankato area. To learn more or to take the survey, please visit: [greatermankatoinclusivity.com](https://greatermankatoinclusivity.com)**

# 2022 Grants

**\$2,449,479** TOTAL GRANTS AWARDED



- \$101,291** (4.1%) ANIMALS
- \$168,405** (6.9%) ARTS & CULTURE
- \$630,532** (25.7%) CHILDREN & YOUTH
- \$351,412** (14.3%) COMMUNITY BENEFIT
- \$34,828** (1.4%) DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION
- \$431,892** (17.6%) EDUCATION & SCHOLARSHIPS
- \$48,768** (2.0%) ENVIRONMENT
- \$115,910** (4.7%) FOOD INSECURITY
- \$220,225** (9.0%) HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
- \$202,411** (8.3%) OTHER
- \$127,850** (5.2%) RECREATION & SPORTS
- \$15,956** (0.7%) VETERANS

## FINANCIALS AT A GLANCE

**\$27,053,399**  
TOTAL ASSETS

**\$2,449,479**  
TOTAL GRANTS AWARDED IN 2022

**\$124,500**  
TOTAL SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED IN 2022

**136**  
NUMBER OF CHARITABLE FUNDS

**626**  
GRANTS DISTRIBUTED



MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO MAVERICK HOCKEY PLAYERS PACKING JZ CANCER FUND CARING BOXES.

# 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 136 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  
Consultant in Residency Fund  
Curt and Debbie Fisher Fund  
Dotson Family Charitable Fund  
Floyd Palmer Fund  
High School Music Recognition Fund  
Hockey Day Minnesota (HDM) 2022 Grow the Game Fund  
imagineOne Fund  
In Memory of Jean Lovett  
Greater Mankato Inclusivity Study Fund  
Jack and Trudie Gustafson Charitable Fund  
Jane and Michael Kearney Fund  
Jonathan Zierdt Cancer Fund  
Lowell and Nadine Andreas Fund  
Recharge Mankato Fund  
Women's Giving Circle

### Corporate Advised Funds

Coldwell Banker Commercial Fisher Group Fund  
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  
Be Blessed 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  
Gary E. Zywojko Family Fund  
Gene Biewen & Noel Van Tol Fund  
Glen A. Taylor Donor Advised Fund  
Gwesyn and Gloria Griffiths Fund  
Harold and Alice Klaseus Weed Charitable 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 Dennis Findley 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  
Mary Suedbeck Fund for the Encouragement of the Arts  
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 Charitable 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

Voss Family Fund  
West Family Fund  
Zierdt Family Charitable Fund

### Scholarship Funds

Charles Ingman LMA Scholarship Fund  
David and Michelle Schooff Scholarship Fund  
Dr. Bernard M. Bidelman Scholarship Fund  
Dustin Lemke Memorial Scholarship  
Florence Nightingale Scholarship Fund  
Mankato Elks Lodge #225 Most Valuable Student Scholarship  
Marlyn R. Heintz Scholarship Fund  
McKeown/Mehia Team - Opportunity Scholarship Fund  
Ogden W. and Jane M. Confer Scholarship Fund  
Samantha Chase Schaehrer Nursing Scholarship Fund  
Samantha Chase Schaehrer Scholarship Fund  
Virginia and Martin Krause Scholarship Fund

### Agency Funds

Blue Earth Nicollet County Humane Society Agency Fund  
Camp Sweet Life Adventures Agency Fund  
Educare Foundation Agency Fund  
Feeding Our Communities Partners Agency Fund  
LEEP Agency Fund  
LEEP Special Olympics Agency Fund  
Living Earth Center Agency Fund  
Mankato Clinic Foundation Agency Fund  
Minnesota Valley Action Council Agency Fund  
Partners for Housing Agency Fund  
Twin Valley Council, Inc. Agency Fund  
United Way Planned Gift Fund Agency Fund  
VINE Faith In Action Agency Fund  
YWCA Mankato Women's Fund

### Fiscal Sponsored Funds

Help Teachers, Help Children Fund  
Hope in Healing  
Inspire Heights  
Leave A Legacy  
Mankato East High School Alumni Wall of Distinction  
Mankato Regional Airport Park Fund  
Martin County CHW Project  
Martin County Prosper Project  
NAACP Mankato Chapter  
NicBluCares Fund  
Roots, Shoots and Boots Fund

*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:

- Maureen Gustafson**, Donor Relations and Programs Director
- Sarah Beiswanger**, Community Grants and Nonprofit Specialist
- Rita Rassbach**, Administrative Coordinator
- Nancy Zallek**, President and CEO
- Ashley Eimer**, Vice President of Philanthropy
- Tricia Lewis**, Operations and Governance Director
- Sammi Spicer**, Finance Director

## BOARD MEMBERS

- Kristin Duncanson** (Chair), Partner/Owner, Highland Family Farms
- Nathan Mullikin** (Vice Chair), Executive Leader, Taylor Corporation
- Seth Ferkenstad** (Treasurer), Product Manager, VSI by BOSS Snowplow
- Wade Abed**, Counsel, Corporate Legal Solutions, Securian Financial Group, Inc.
- Christina Bohlke**, President, Mankato Market, BankVista
- Heidi Boyum**, Retired
- Melissa Bradley**, Owner/General Manager, Snell Motors
- Leah Davis**, President, AEM Workforce Solutions, Partner, Abdo
- Jim Heilman**, Principal, CliftonLarsonAllen
- Brittany King-Asamo**, Partner, Attorney, Gislason & Hunter, LLP
- Jennifer Pfeffer**, Sr. Regional Director of Operations, Ecumen
- Todd Prafke**, City Clerk/Administrator, City of St. Peter
- Sarah Richards**, President/CEO, Jones Metal, Inc
- Stacy Wells**, Director of Communications, Mankato Area Public Schools

## INCOMING BOARD MEMBERS

- Bob Beadell**, VP Commercial Lending, Community Bank
- Lucas Downs**, VP International & Club Stores, Downs Food Group
- Tim Huebsch**, NACD.DC, Digital and Technology Leader, General Mills
- Erin Kragh**, Attorney, Fredrikson & Bryon, P.A.

## RETIRING BOARD MEMBERS

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

- Jessica Buchert**, Shareholder, Fredrikson & Byron, P.A.
- David Schooff**, President, Coldwell Banker Commercial Fisher Group of Mankato
- Mark Sharpless**, Senior Manager, Network Engineering, Consolidated Communications
- Tom Lentz**, Market President, West Bank

## 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)



This publication was made possible by the generosity of Corporate Graphics, a Taylor Corporation company.