THE POWER OF passion
A Note from our CEO and President

It’s hard to think about 2020 and not think about hardship, a global pandemic and civil unrest. However, as a community foundation, when we reflect on 2020, our minds turn to resiliency, generosity and passion for helping others.

During a difficult and trying year, people like you rallied together to show your support and spurred an unparalleled year of generosity in Stark County. Because of your compassion, 2020 was the largest grantmaking and fundraising year in Stark Community Foundation’s history. We awarded a record $15.6 million in grants and raised $27.8 million in outright and planned gifts. We hope you, too, feel a sense of pride and optimism as you think about the difference we made together in 2020.

Throughout 2021, we’ve had the great fortune to work alongside caring, forward-thinking individuals like you to continue strengthening our community. You’ll learn about some of these people and organizations partnering with Stark Community Foundation to support causes they care about in this year’s Annual Report. It’s these unique stories of giving that makes us who we are today— a growing, thriving community foundation focused on helping people turn their passion into meaningful action. A place where people’s care and commitment lead to a better community for all.

Thank you for being part of our story, your passion for our community and your continued partnership with Stark Community Foundation. Best wishes for a strong and vibrant 2022!

Gratefully,

Mark J. Samolezyk
Stark Community Foundation by the Numbers

$200+ Million
Awarded in Grants Since Inception

$376,999,111
Total Assets

872
Charitable Funds

Charitable Funds by Fund Type

- Donor Advised Funds (238)
- Field of Interest Funds (67)
- Community Charitable Funds (102)
- Supporting Foundations (3)
- Organization Endowment Funds (224)
- Designated Funds (136)

Grants Awarded in 2020 by Fund Type

- Scholarship Funds: $662,179
- Supporting Foundations: $808,231
- Community Charitable Funds: $1,722,257
- Field of Interest Funds: $1,797,091
- Organization Endowment Funds: $2,961,089
- Designated Funds: $3,097,949
- Donor Advised Funds: $4,584,857

$27.8 M
Raised in Outright and Planned Gifts in 2020

$15.6 M
Awarded in Grants in 2020

$27.8 M
Awarded in Grants in 2020

Raised in Outright and Planned Gifts in 2020
Responding to a Pandemic

Together, with our family of donors and community partners, we mobilized immediate support to nonprofits serving our neighbors’ most critical needs. Here’s a glimpse into how six local nonprofits were able to serve their clients during the COVID-19 pandemic, thanks to our community’s philanthropic support:

AKRON-CANTON REGIONAL FOODBANK
Thanks to emergency support from the community, the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank responded efficiently to an estimated 31% increase in food insecurity due to the pandemic. During the height of the pandemic, funding provided direct support to over 125 food pantries, hot meal sites and other Stark County programs that are part of the Foodbank’s network.

– Dan Flowers, President and CEO

COMMQUEST
The pandemic was especially hard on vulnerable communities. Our team fought hard every day for these clients even as staff were dealing with the effect of the pandemic on their own families. But no amount of our hard work could have fully addressed the financial impact of the pandemic on organizations like CommQuest. In that moment, our community came together to make sure we had the emergency funds we needed to maintain mental health, addiction recovery and social services. We have not recovered fully, but the generosity of the foundations provided stability in our most difficult time.

– Elaine Russell Reolfi, CEO

COMMUNITY LEGAL AID
COVID-19 brought to light many of the cracks in our civil justice system that Community Legal Aid has seen impact working-class residents for decades: an eviction crisis largely due to historically inequitable housing laws; unemployment and social safety net programs not robust enough to meet the high demand; stimulus assistance that didn’t take into account citizens without internet access; the dangers of pervasive domestic violence; and an overreliance of our society on low-wage workers with few protections or opportunities. Emergency funding helped address the increased need for these services, including a 400% increase in requests for help with unemployment claims.

– Steven McGarrity, Executive Director

PATHWAY CARING FOR CHILDREN
Pathway Caring for Children was able to serve the COVID-related needs of our foster children, foster parents, community counseling clients and staff with philanthropic funding. We provided cribs and diapers to foster parents who opened their homes to more children than planned, and we helped current foster parents who were laid off from their full-time jobs meet their immediate needs like food and household basics.

– Wendy Tracy, Executive Director

VANTAGE AGING
Our volunteers and staff were the only connections many of our clients had to the outside world. As an essential service, we were feeding and providing community connections to homebound seniors in our area every single day. With funding from philanthropy, we were able to provide over 5,500 of those imperative meals and wellness checks, allowing our clients to stay healthy at home with proper nutrition and friendly, warm conversations to help abate social isolation.

– Ted Watko, CEO

YMCA OF WESTERN STARK COUNTY
The pandemic had quite an impact on the YMCA. With relief funding, we helped people who were laid off, had hours cut or could not find a job due to COVID-19 by offering financial assistance for our memberships, programs and child care. While we are still recovering from the effects of the pandemic, we would not have been able to offer all the assistance we did this year without you!

– Jim Stanford, CEO
Improving Racial Equity

As part of Stark Community Foundation’s commitment to advancing racial equity and inclusion and in response to top community needs identified during 2020’s THINKBIG, the Foundation partnered with ThirdSpace Action Lab to offer four Racial Equity Institute workshops in 2021.

During this three-hour introduction to racial equity, participants deepened their understanding of structural racism and racial disparities. The workshop used stories and data to present a perspective that shows how racism is fundamentally structural in nature. By examining characteristics of modern-day racial inequity, the workshop introduced participants to an analysis that most found immediately helpful and relevant.

We received an overwhelming response to the workshop, and participants shared they found the content to be insightful, helpful and conversation-starting.

“I loved being able to see concrete reasons that destroy so many stereotypes that people use to excuse racial disparities. Seeing the data is the first step to being able to ask more questions to find ways we can all work to combat the systems that are causing disparities.”

-participant feedback

In a post-event survey, 88% of participants said they would recommend this educational opportunity to others.
Protecting Stark’s Future


Rooted in research, the report outlines why Stark County needs to intentionally work together to coordinate efforts and target resources to reduce child poverty. Protecting Stark’s Future came after a year spent analyzing the 2019 Stark County Community Assessment, a data report of more than 50 health, social and economic indicators curated by the three nonprofit partners. As we drilled down into our community’s data, we noticed that every single issue of concern was related to poverty in some way. In particular, child poverty rates in our community demanded our increased attention.

One of the report’s key findings is that of the nearly 20,000 children living below the poverty threshold in Stark County in 2018, around 9,000 or 47% resided in communities outside the City of Canton, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In 2019, the child poverty rate in the City of Canton was 56.9%, tying with Youngstown as the second-worst child poverty rate of any city in the United States with a total population greater than 65,000.

Although child poverty is difficult and complex, this is far from a hopeless situation. As a community, we can double down on what is working, bring in new approaches and increase collaboration to reduce child poverty. We are confident that if we work together, informed by data, we can reduce child poverty and strengthen Stark.

To help spur ideas and fuel change, Stark Community Foundation committed to providing one-year planning grants up to $15,000 per project and one-to-three-year implementation grants up to $100,000 per project to eligible organizations. In June 2021, nearly $430,000 in inaugural Protecting Stark’s Future grants were awarded to 12 organizations to address child poverty at the neighborhood level.

Read more about the inaugural grant recipients: www.starkcf.org/child-poverty
New Funds

Each charitable fund created through Stark Community Foundation is unique and begins with a passionate donor with a personal story. You can read more about the 44 new charitable funds – all with passion and purpose – that were established from July 1, 2020 through Sept. 30, 2021 in Our Family Tree.

DONOR ADVISED FUNDS

John and Debbie Arnold Family Foundation
Roger E. and Janet B. Baker Charitable Fund
James H. and Cynthia Strouse Camp Family Advised Fund
Craig Covey LGBT and Diversity Pride Fund
Alison and Steven Cress Family Foundation
Helleine Charitable Giving Fund
Hershey Family Fund
Johnson’s A.C. Charitable Fund
Rollie and Frankie Layfield Foundation
Kenyon and Lenore Love Foundation
Jeff and Margie McDonald Fund
Owens and Life Charitable Fund
Samolczyk Family Charitable Fund
R.N. Sundheimer Foundation
Debbie and Ed Welshenbaugh Charitable Fund

Read more about these funds www.starkcf.org/ofT

Donor Advised Funds allow donors to give to multiple organizations and programs throughout the year when the time is right for them. They simply let Stark Community Foundation know which organization they want to support, for what purpose and for how much — and we take care of the rest.

DESIGNATED FUNDS

James H. and Cynthia Strouse Camp Designated Fund
Michael Carioti Scholarship Fund in Perseverance
Cress Brookside Scholarship Fund - Honoring Patti Cress 2003
Farra Charitable Fund
Roberta “Bobbie” Heisler Memorial Fund
Robert P. and Nancy J. Leach Scholarship Fund
Leibensperger Family Designated Fund
Doris McCloud Reading Fund for Little Tigers
Jim and Mary Menegay Memorial Fund
Staff Sgt. Richard Ramey Memorial Fund
Fred F. Silk Charitable Fund
Bonnie Vazquez Memorial Scholarship Fund

12
### ORGANIZATION ENDOWMENT FUNDS

- Bluecoats Endowment - Frank Pasquerella Memorial Scholarship Subfund
- Canton Symphony Orchestra Association Endowment - Donna H. Leibensperger Scholarship Subfund
- Compassion Delivered Endowment Fund
- Friends of Stark Pound Endowment Fund
- Jackson High School Alumni Association Endowment Fund
- Katie’s Kids Endowment Fund
- Massillon Tiger Football Endowment Fund
- Minerva Education Foundation and Alumni Association Endowment - Dr. Walter Shaw Scholarship Subfund
- NAMI Stark County Endowment Fund
- Plain Local Schools Foundation Endowment - Brocathlete Scholarship Subfund
- Plain Local Schools Foundation Endowment - Jon R. Gheen Scholarship Subfund
- Plain Township Historical Society Endowment Fund
- Stark County Catholic Schools Endowment - Central Catholic Subfund

### SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS

- W. Roderic and June Covey Scholarship Fund
- W. Roderic Covey Tree Fund
- Wendell L. and Magdalen S. Jenkins Field of Interest Fund
- Olds Gheen Charitable Fund

### FIELD OF INTEREST FUNDS

- W. Roderic Covey Tree Fund
- Wendell L. and Magdalen S. Jenkins Field of Interest Fund
- Olds Gheen Charitable Fund

It’s our passion to help you support yours.
Thanks to careful planning and a new charitable fund at Stark Community Foundation, the legacy of Fred Silk and his lifelong support of the Stark County community will continue forever.

Born in Massillon in 1911, Frederick “Fred” F. Silk valued education and went on to graduate from Washington High School and Ohio Wesleyan University. He served as co-owner of the Massillon Paper Company, a business his grandfather, John Silk, started in 1867.

For many years, Fred served as a member of the Massillon City Club and board member of the Massillon Cemetery Association. He created the Fred F. Silk Charitable Foundation in 1990 that would later receive the bulk of his estate when he passed away in 1995. Since then, his generosity has provided more than $13 million in vital support to charitable causes throughout Stark County. During 2020 alone, the foundation awarded more than $500,000 to local nonprofits.

Recently when considering a succession plan, the trustees of the 31-year-old Fred F. Silk Charitable Foundation decided the best option was to transition the $16.7 million private foundation to a charitable fund of Stark Community Foundation. The new partnership continues the Silk Foundation’s philanthropic impact, provides a turnkey operation with an effective due diligence process and, most importantly, guarantees Fred’s legacy lives on.

“We are humbled by the opportunity to carry on Fred’s generous spirit and honored to be the steward of a fund that will provide thousands of dollars annually to improve the Stark County community,” said Bridgette Neisel, vice president of advancement at Stark Community Foundation, who worked alongside the trustees to ensure a seamless transition and preserve Fred’s legacy and wishes.

The gift of $16.7 million marks the largest gift ever received in Stark Community Foundation history. Neisel added, “while Stark Community Foundation received this monumental gift, it really is a gift to all who call Stark County home.”

Although the foundation’s name will change to the Fred F. Silk Charitable Fund, its charitable focus will remain the same. The fund will continue to provide annual grantmaking support to a number of local universities and an array of organizations that directly benefit the Stark County community and its residents. The fund will also grow over time through strategic investing, allowing Fred’s philanthropic spirit to give back to the community in perpetuity.
After spending more than 30 years living in Cincinnati while going to college, building careers and growing their family, Ralph and Janelle Lee headed north in 2017 to start a new chapter in Stark County. Four years later, the Lees have made Canton their home.

Because of their philanthropic spirit, passion for giving back to youth-serving programs and interest in community development, the Lees have always sought out ways to be involved with organizations in the places they’ve lived. Their experience in Stark County has been no different—once the urban dwellers moved into the Bliss Tower in downtown Canton, they immediately immersed themselves in the community.

Ralph joined the leadership team at Kenan Advantage Group, and Janelle led a county-wide economic development movement called Strengthening Stark. She now helps Northeast Ohio manufacturers strategize and grow through her work with MAGNET.

Ralph serves on several boards in the community, including American Red Cross of Heartland, Stark and Muskingum Lakes, Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce, Eric Snow Family YMCA, Employers Health, Greater Stark County Urban League and Stark Economic Development Board.

“I’ve learned a lot about giving back from Ralph,” shared Janelle. “We’ve been married for 32 years, and we’ve learned a lot from one another, but that’s one of the things that sticks out most.”

Janelle is equally as involved in Stark County and most recently served as co-chair of the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank’s successful fundraising campaign to build a new facility in downtown Canton and expand its Akron facility. She’s also involved in the Black College Football Hall of Fame Classic, Stark County Minority Business Association and Downtown Canton Land Bank, and will join the board of the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton in January 2022.

Not only do the Lees give their time and talents to better the communities in which they live and work, they also give their financial support.

While in Cincinnati, the Lees helped establish an annual golf tournament fundraiser and a charitable fund that benefited inner-city youth organizations for over a decade. Since relocating to Stark County, they created the Lee Family Foundation through Stark Community Foundation to continue their legacy of supporting, enriching and exposing the lives of inner-city kids with opportunities to learn, grow and develop.

“Youth are really important to us,” shared Janelle.

While she grew up in a two-parent household, attended Catholic school and had a comfortable upbringing, Ralph on the other hand, grew up in the projects, was raised by a single mom and was involved in a lot of after-school programs.

“As a family, we contribute to community organizations and youth programs that Ralph and his siblings benefited from growing up,” said Janelle. “His mom and church shaped him into the man he is today, but those after-school programs and summer camps he was involved in, they had a lot to do with keeping him off the streets.”

His mother’s guidance and value in education helped Ralph and his siblings become successful and beat the odds of poverty. It’s that same passion that drives Ralph and Janelle to instill in their sons, Kyle and Cameron, daughter-in-law Ashley and grandsons, Cameron Jr. and Carter, the importance of giving back and serving the community they call home.
Making Education a Possibility for All

When you grow up with two educators as parents, you learn to appreciate the value of education from an early age—and this was especially true for Darlene Drage.

“When getting an education was always important in our family,” said Darlene.

Darlene’s dad, Dr. Raymond G. Drage, served the Stark County community for over six decades as a teacher, principal, district superintendent, county superintendent and county school board member. He started his career in a one-room school house, and during his career taught nearly every grade, kindergarten through college. Her mom, Marianna, taught music in Paris Township and North Canton City schools and actually met Dr. Drage while teaching. The two went on to celebrate 65 years of marriage in 2006.

Dr. Drage introduced the regional concept of vocational education to county school systems in Ohio, and in 1963, he co-authored a bill for the Ohio Legislature to make vocational education available to all Ohio students in grades 11-12.

“He believed that all children need opportunities to learn career skills,” said Darlene.

Due in large part to Dr. Drage’s persistence and passion, a two-year public vocational school in Massillon was created in 1977 to prepare Stark County students for challenging and meaningful careers. The school was named the R. G. Drage Career Technical Center by the Stark County Area Vocational School District Board in recognition of his more than 40 years of service and significant impact on vocational education in Ohio.

Dr. Drage and Marianna dedicated their lives to supporting the educational community, serving on many boards and attending too many school events to count throughout the years. They even established a scholarship fund in their name through the R. G. Drage Career Technical Center to help the countless students pursuing careers in auto services, construction, cosmetology, culinary arts, dental assisting, HVAC and landscape management, among other fields.

Even as their health started to decline, Darlene remembers reassuring her parents each year that their annual check to support their scholarship fund was sent. After they passed away, Darlene and her family established a designated fund through Stark Community Foundation to ensure her parents’ annual scholarship support to the R. G. Drage Career Technical Center would continue.

“I know how important that scholarship was to my parents,” said Darlene. “We wanted a way for their support to carry on into the future.”

Now, through the Dr. and Mrs. Raymond G. Drage Scholarship Fund, there will never be any doubt that their legacy and commitment to education will live on forever.
Individuals and families spent their days boating, swimming, fishing, camping and hiking at Atwood, Tappan, Seneca, Charles Mill and six other lakes managed by MWCD. The growing interest in outdoor spaces led to MWCD experiencing record attendance at its parks and lakes in 2020, with an estimated 380,000 more people than in 2019.

While some experienced the parks and lakes for the first time in 2020, others have been making memories there for years. Families reminisce about their time at the annual junior sailing club at Atwood Lake, learning to fish at Piedmont Lake, summer nights camping around Seneca Lake and summer youth camps.

“We offer an opportunity for people to give back to the lakes and parks that have been an important part of their lives, whether that’s while they are living or in their estate plans,” said Sheila Hurley, executive director of the MWCF. “The stories that families share, generation after generation, provide such a rich history of their experiences at our lakes and parks.”

Most recently, MWCF generously funded the construction of an accessible fishing pier at Secrest Park, helped purchase new diving suits for the Joint Rescue and Recovery Dive Team of Dover and New Philadelphia and supported the shoreline protection work at Pleasant Hill. Since its inception, the foundation has funded projects totaling $400,000 and counting.

MWCF is looking forward to funding future projects and programs that will ensure the sustainability of the parks and lakes and serving the community and families who experience them.

Preserving Nature in Perpetuity

For decades, Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District (MWCD) has played a unique role in the lives of our community, providing experiences at its lakes and parks that allow people to relax and connect with nature while making invaluable memories with the ones they love.

While we all have a responsibility to care for our parks and lakes, the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy Foundation (MWCF) and its endowment fund managed by Stark Community Foundation ensures the watershed will be protected and preserved for generations to come.

MWCF was created in 1996 to ensure financial resources would always be available to support the watershed and meaningful experiences. Originally established as a charitable fund of Stark Community Foundation, it later became its own public 501(c)(3) organization in 2001. Each year, MWCF and its family of funds provide support to enhance facilities, programs, recreational activities and flood reduction and conservation efforts on or around MWCD’s lands and waters.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when strict restrictions were placed on inside events, people in our community appreciated, enjoyed and took advantage of the safety of outdoor activities more than ever—particularly at the 10 lakes and parks protected and managed by MWCD.

Donor Stories
For nearly 60 years, we’ve partnered with individuals, families, businesses and nonprofits in our community to establish charitable funds that will support their philanthropic passions today, tomorrow and forever. Contact Bridgette Neisel to learn how you can turn your passion into action with a unique charitable fund that meets your needs and interests.

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We seek a thriving, engaged and inclusive community.

Learn more at starkcf.org
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