

The Portage Foundation

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April 2020 E-News Update

"Tip of the Hat"

Executive Director, Linda Ferguson

Every business needs to have positions that are accountable for doing the strategic work ON the business, the tactical work IN the business - or a combination of the two. Balance is the key.



The phrase 'wearing different hats' comes from days gone by, when people in the workplace wore hats and many of those hats were specific to an official position, trade or function. Someone who had multiple roles would, in-turn, have wear the appropriate one for the occasion.

Our new full-time Foundation Specialist, Cheyenne Goss and I continue to convene local stakeholders, collaborate with many community partners, embrace technology and continue to improve the community through grantmaking and fundraising. We indeed wear (figuratively) several hats. All of these roles have taught us a lot about ourselves as professionals, and about our world-class community. We are humbled to further the mission of the Portage Foundation.

In this Portage Foundation April 2020 edition of e-news, I 'tip my hat' to the end of winter - to Cheyenne, our capable new team member - and to the Foundation Board of Trustees for choosing me to lead our community foundation over the last 6 ½ years. I'm approaching my first day of retirement on June 1, 2020 ... and I may just decide to wear a different hat every day.

As the Portage Foundation continues to fulfill an important role in the community, I voice my sincere appreciation to those who are engaged in our organization and who embrace our mission. We invite other donors and community partners to the table. Thanks to everyone for being a part of our team. I close, with one more 'tip of the hat'! in thanks to all!

COVID-19 – Portage Foundation Rapid Response Fund

The Portage Foundation has stepped-up to assist our community in the wake of the current public health crisis.

The Foundation's new "Rapid Response Fund" is designed to address the emerging need in Portage County due to COVID-19.

We will be listening to our partners in local government, the health district, non-profits and the business community to learn more about the ever-changing needs in Portage County. As unrestricted funds become available, the Foundation will review requests for funding using an abbreviated version of our typical grant process. The application is available online and requests will be vetted quickly.

An initial gift of \$5,000 to start the fund has been made by Lissa Barry and her son Matt, and the Fisher Family.



Local businesses and individuals may contribute online at www.portagefoundation.org/donate. Checks may be sent to The Portage Foundation Rapid Response Fund, 138 E. Main St. – Suite 201C Kent, Ohio 44240. Contact us at 330.474.0480 or e-mail info@portagefoundation.org if you would like to designate your gift to a specific area.

Portage Foundation Grants

An interview with Grants Chair, Debbie Smeiles

Q: Why is the PF grant process important?

A: "In order to be good stewards of the investments made by our donors, it is important for us to thoroughly review and discuss the organizations who come to us requesting money for their programs and services. Additionally, we need to prioritize the grants we make based on community needs at the time. Frequently, there are certain areas of community change over time, and we need to be responsive to those changes. Also, the committee takes a close look at duplication of service, sustainability, effective program outcomes and collaborative efforts. These will continue to be of the priorities we consider through the grant process. We also make a deliberate effort to fund programs in all areas of the county, so we have a presence throughout".

Q: What has changed since you first became grants chair?

A: "The grants process is quite different now than what it was when I first assumed the chair. At that time, board members who were part of the grants committee would be assigned to review and report on a specific grant application, while comparing it to a standard list of questions relating to mission and priorities of the Foundation. Changes have been made to that process in the following ways:

1. Site visits were encouraged.
2. Promising young leaders were added to the grants committee in order to give them exposure to the county's needs and a glimpse at how philanthropy and grant-making can have tremendous impact.
3. We invited the grant applicants to come to our committee and present in person - this gave a face to the organization and allowed for follow up questions.
4. The Foundation is being more pro-active at identifying nonprofits that align with the intent of each donor fund. We are inviting them to submit requests for grants in those areas.

These changes led to more time required for the process, and incredibly insightful discussion. It has been extraordinarily valuable, we all agree."

Q: What are some special moments you can recall from the grant review process?

A: "I think one of the most impressionable moments that I'm remembering was when I did the site visit to King-Kennedy center, one of my first site visits. This first-hand experience gave me a whole different perspective on the work that was being done and the lives that would be potentially impacted. A little different than words on a paper application. A visit to Skeels-Matthews gave me a similar experience. Both allowed me (and others on the committee) to make a more thoughtful and more astute decisions about funding."

"We once had a presentation by a woman who was making therapeutic dolls for persons with dementia who are living in assisted living facilities. The babies were so impressive, and as a result, our committee work was halted for several minutes. They each held and rocked the life-like doll and marveled at how calming and beautiful these babies were. We immediately recognized the value of this program for the elderly. The presentation was worth more than 1,000 words on paper."

Q: Tell us about your grantmaking team!

A: "Our grants committee has Foundation Fundholders, educators, business owners, banking and financial professionals, private citizens, other funders from the community and people who use data and do research in their regular jobs. We also have some members who were a part of the earliest days of the Portage Foundation. They have seen our evolution and growth. Adding the young people from area high schools has really brought a wonderful perspective to the process. And having a wide variety of participants with different backgrounds and experiences is invaluable"

Board Member Feature President, Marge Conner

The Portage Foundation Board of Trustees is a unique group of talented, forward-thinking volunteers – all leaders in their own right.



One key leader who has provided strength and resolve to the Foundation is Board President Marge Conner. Having served as our Treasurer and on numerous committees over the last 12 years, Marge is now our 2020 Board President. It is obvious the

Foundation's special projects have been part of her passion while serving on the Portage Foundation. Marge has acted as fiscal agent for the Junior Fair Improvement Campaign of the Portage County Randolph Fair and the Madonio Dog Days of Summer event, both mentioned later in the newsletter.

Attorney Marge Conner - retired once and now back to work as Partner at Arnold & Schafer Ltd, in Green - continues to lead during the Portage Foundation's sustained growth. She has over 30 years of legal, accounting and business experience and practices in real estate, trust and estate planning, business transactions, labor and employment, and litigation support services.

How can a board member improve upon being insightful, concise, consistent, balanced, respectful of all points of view - and straightforward when needed? Marge Conner is our example to follow. We say a special thanks to her for taking on many important roles for the Foundation – and for being a leader in the community.

What Makes an Effective Volunteer Leader?

Fearless Approach · Infinite Patience · Creative Thinking · Eager to Take Initiative · Humility · Driven by Passion · Teamwork



The Dog Days of Summer Madonio Animal Welfare Trust

Marge has a big role on the fiscal side when it comes to the Madonio Animal Welfare Trust. In particular, she also acts as fiscal agent for a special project of the Madonio Animal Welfare Trust.



Pet contests, food, music, a pet parade and a large gathering of the community to celebrate our pets! The annual Dog Days of Summer event organized by the Madonio Family is an exciting example of how one family put their philanthropy to work in a big way. This unforgettable annual event is one of noteworthy mention due to its size and scope - and the Madonio family continues to give grants and build their endowed fund because of the fundraising "fun" that is a part of Dog Days. Marge acts as fiscal agent for this project, also. Our thanks to all.



The Portage County Randolph Fair Junior Fair Improvement Campaign

The Portage County Randolph Fair has operated for more than 160 years in Portage County and is big part of life for farmers, families, agri-business owners, youth and the locals.



To create an opportunity for donors to support the Fair in perpetuity, the Fair Board started an endowed fund with the Portage Foundation in 2018. That year, the Fair Board also launched a Junior Fair Improvement Campaign in partnership with the Portage Foundation. The results have been impressive, with over \$775,000 in



contributions and pledges made to date. On top of that, \$106,000 in materials and labor have been donated by local business and families, in-kind.

If you've never been to the Fair, it's an experience of a lifetime!

Consider supporting the Fair and its Junior

Fair Improvement Campaign, or any other endowed fund of the Portage Foundation. Contact us at www.portagefoundation.org/donate · 330.474.0480 or info@portagefoundation.org.

In Loving Memory of Augie Straten



The Bailey Simons Frank Family Memorial Scholarship was created in 2016 in memory of 17-year old Bailey who was tragically killed in a car accident in early 2015. Pam Frank's mother, Augustine "Augie" Straten Rootstown, Ohio, age 96, passed away last week. Augie is seen here with her twin sister Clementine.

The family requests that memorial contributions be made to the Bailey Simons Frank Family Scholarship at the Portage Foundation: <https://portagefoundation.org/donate/>. Augie's obituary can be found at www.wood-kortright-borkowski.com/ **#BaileyStrong**



"Our fingerprints do not fade from the lives we touch". – Judy Bloom