As a certified “slogger” (slow jogger), I find myself alone on running paths much of the time. This quiet time allows me to listen to music, podcasts, or nothing at all. I love to use this space to think through all kinds of issues…usually related to the work of the Hancock County Community Foundation (HCCF).

The Pennsy Trail is only a few blocks from the office, and I spend many hours on it. On February 12, Indiana weather kicked in around 3 p.m. with a rainy sleet mix. I decided to brave it and headed outdoors anyway. Shortly after hitting the trail, large snowflakes began to fall. I was so struck by the beauty of a quiet wintry scene as I slogged along. I found myself counting my blessings to live in a community where I was afforded this moment and newly inspired to contribute to a county brimming with opportunity.

HCCF works with many organizations that toil daily to enrich and enhance Hancock County; however, doing so collectively can be a challenge. Logistics, viewpoints, and schedules can serve as roadblocks to progress. I was reminded during my snowy slog how very important it is to be purposeful in creating a strategic direction for the future of our precious community. As a result, HCCF has spent the last year exploring how we might serve an effort to convene those who wish to ensure a vibrant Hancock County for our grandchildren and beyond. On March 13, we will submit a proposal outlining a plan we hope will be funded with a significant grant to support visionary work.

While the aforementioned opportunity keeps community development top of mind, serving donors through the creation of permanent endowment funds continues to be central to our work. In November, we celebrated the many contributions that made it possible for HCCF to secure a $1 million matching grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc. By year end, we also rejoiced in the accomplishment of a major milestone…the endowment of Hancock County’s Imagination Library Program at $2 million. We are grateful for gifts of all sizes – including those from school penny wars – that contributed to a banner 2019. Thanks to you, we will carry this charitable momentum into 2020.
Paying It Forward

“If I were ever to retire, I thought I’d like to have a wood shop that makes sawdust and wood chips,” Bob said with a smile. Given his schedule of starting the day at 6 a.m. in his Fountaintown Gas Co., Inc. office, retirement is not likely to happen anytime soon. Now 88 years old, Bob continues to contribute to the success of the company he founded, but the road to doing so was not an easy one.

Born in Westland in Hancock County, Bob was raised and has lived his life in Morristown of Shelby County. After graduating from Morristown High School in 1949 he joined the U.S. Marine Corps. In 1953, he assumed the family mechanical, electrical and appliance business, now being operated by a fifth generation.

In 1957, Bob married Sue Myer. Sue, a secretary at General Electric, left her job to join Bob in the business, and with her bookkeeping expertise it began to grow.

At the same time, the oil business was still in full swing, and Bob became a Marathon distributor of heating fuel, farm fuel and lubricant products.

In 1966, Bob said, “I got the crazy idea that small towns needed natural gas to survive. It was the only way they could attract new business and industry.”

With that, Bob expanded his business once again, and Fountaintown Gas Company was born. South Eastern Indiana Natural Gas Co. was added in 1981. The first winter two customers were served. Today the public utility serves 23 communities in seven counties.

“Of all the different things that I have done, I never knew what I was doing and I wasn’t smart enough to know I didn’t know what I was doing,” laughed Bob.

On June 24, 2015, Bob lost his helpmate and wife of almost 58 years. The Wortmans have contributed humbly and quietly to Morristown’s vibrancy. “I’d be nothing without the people of my community. They’ve done so much for my family and my business over the years,” he said.

Morristown is not the only benefactor. Numerous charities in Hancock and Shelby counties have gratefully been on the receiving end of Bob and Sue’s generosity.

A believer in endowment, Bob has established several funds at both the Hancock County Community Foundation and the Blue River Community Foundation in Shelby County. In fact, it was his creation of the most recent endowment fund to benefit the Imagination Library Program that allowed HCCF to get to the finish line of its $2 million endowment goal.

Bob has been honored with the Sagamore of the Wabash Award, The Distinguished Hoosier award from The State of Indiana and is a 33rd degree Mason. He is a past commander of the American Legion, a member of the Marine Corp League, and past president of Morristown High School Alumni Association and PTA. He currently serves as a board member of Shelby County Senior Services, Shelby County Library Foundation, the Hancock Health Foundation and Ohio Valley Gas Corporation boards. Bob is credited for bringing Rock Steady Boxing to Shelby and Hancock counties and the Dolly Parton Imaginary Library to Shelby County.

His generosity and love for Sue has supported the sustainability of both Hancock Health’s Sue Ann Wortman Cancer Center and Major Health Partner’s Sue Ann Wortman Nephrology Center.

“I’d be nothing without the people of my community. They’ve done so much for my family and my business over the years.”

—BOB WORTMAN
HCCF has the privilege of administering the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship Program (LECSP) in Hancock County. Eligible applicants must be ranked in the academic top 15% of their graduating class and plan to pursue a four-year degree at any accredited Indiana public or private college or university. Community service is the primary selection criterion.

HCCF is excited to add Tessa Freeman (Mt. Vernon High School) and Ellie Griesmeyer (Eastern Hancock High School) to the prestigious list of Hancock County LESCP recipients!

Tessa’s passion is mental health. She readily shares that she has dealt with anxiety from a young age and has benefited from treatment that may not be available to everyone in Hancock County.

“I want other kids to understand that mental illness is just as normal and treatable as physical illness,” Tessa states. “I want everyone, young or old, to know that mental illness does not define them.”

Tessa intends to pursue a career in the mental health field, either by becoming a clinical psychologist for teens, helping to run a mental health clinic, or becoming a neuroscientist to research mental illness.

As a student in the Royal Leadership Academy class at Eastern Hancock High School, Ellie created a mentoring program where students can shadow professionals in the workplace to gain first-hand experience in that field. “I decided to bring this program to my school because I wanted students my age to be able to find what their passion is without blindly committing to it in college,” Ellie explains.

Ellie plans to pursue a career in nursing, hoping to specialize in pediatric oncology nursing.

Learn more about Tessa and Ellie at our website, www.giveHCgrowHC.org.
Celebrate Hancock County

During the last two weeks of January, the HCCF Y-GIVE Youth Philanthropy Board facilitated “Celebrate Hancock County” in the county school districts. All school staff received a 4-oz. hand sanitizer. Y-GIVE students conducted Hancock County trivia activities in the junior high, middle and intermediate schools with “Giant Smarties” candy as prizes. Elementary kindergarten-through 3rd grade students participated in a coloring contest, coloring a page featuring the Hancock County flag, with boxes of 24 crayons as prizes for the first and second best as chosen by their teachers.

YGIVE students provided Hancock County facts for each high school’s daily announcements. Earlier in the year, 4th-6th grade teachers received a Hancock County curriculum guide that adheres to the 4th grade Social Studies standards. Activities with photos of county landmarks, maps of the county and state, crossword puzzle, time line featuring important dates, and trivia questions all teach about the county we love. Thanks to all our educators for Celebrating Hancock County!

Outstanding Service

HCCF is grateful for Bill Weldon’s nine years of service to the Board of Directors. Bill, a consulting animal scientist, joined the board in 2011. His strategic expertise has benefited the Grants, Board Development, and GIFT VII Planning committees. Bill joins 68 Emeritus Board Members, a dedicated group of board retirees who continue to contribute their time, talent, and treasures to the Foundation’s important work.

We have the pleasure of welcoming Susie Broome and Mark Anderson to the board effective January 1, 2020. Susie, a well-known community servant, will contribute her nonprofit expertise to the Grants Committee. Mark, director of human resources for the Indiana State Fair and two-year HCCF volunteer, will continue his service on the Education Committee.

Jan Viehweg, a Certified Association Executive and Project Manager for Emerald Consulting, has assumed a two-year term as HCCF Board Chair. Jan joined the board in 2015 and most recently led the Grants Committee as chair. She has served on the Strategic Planning, Board Development, and GIFT VII Planning Committees.
Happy Trails to You

In 2018, the Hancock County Community Foundation made a $1,000 Mini Grant to the Town of Cumberland to purchase a dedication plaque for the Buck Creek Trail. The trail was dedicated in July 2018 with the plaque recognizing elected officials, the project team, and financial contributors.

The Buck Creek Trail is a three-mile, multi-purpose trail running along Buck Creek. The Trail connects most Cumberland neighborhoods, the Cumberland Pennsy Trail, US HWY 40, 21st Street, Buck Creek Road, and the 21st Street Trail.

Plans for the $3.3 million project were a vision for nearly a decade but were pushed back as other projects took priority. The construction, funded mostly by federal grants, began in 2017, and the trail was completed in 2018.

“By connecting our neighborhoods, we have a more involved community and a closer community that is getting out and exploring what the Town of Cumberland has [to offer],” said Cumberland Town Manager April Fisher. “We want the town to be accessible by foot, bike, or car. We want our town to keep its small-town feel and with the trails, that allows you to get out and know your neighbors.”

Holly Jolly Hancock County

CONNNECTING COMMUNITY GRANTS HELPED TWO OF OUR COMMUNITIES CREATE A FESTIVE ATMOSPHERE FOR THEIR RESIDENTS DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON.

Fortville Action, Inc. (FAI) brought more unique activities to Winterfest this year, including a zipline, a gaming truck, and more skates to the ice rink so more people could participate. These event features were spaced out along Main Street to encourage people to walk the festival “end to end” and explore the shops and vendors in between.” These were anchor points of our festival, which also included other fun activities like stage performances, holiday lighting, and a parade,” says Ronnie Brawner, FAI board president.

The City of Greenfield lit up the Pennsy Trail with more than 60,000 lights to encourage residents to get outside during the early winter months.

The Parks Dept. also partnered with Greenfield Main Street for its holiday wagon rides in which more than 250 kids and families took part. The wagon rides went down the Pennsy Trail from American Legion to Riley Ave. Santa also met with kids on American Legion Plaza.

Ellen Kuker, Greenfield Parks superintendent, said this lighting not only encouraged socializing, but it also gave Greenfield residents something to be proud of. “Getting people out of their cars and walking is a perfect way to connect them to the great outdoors,” Kuker says. “We hope that a small trek down the Trail during less-than-warm times to see the lights helped invigorate and motivate our residents to get out on a more regular basis during the winter months and enjoy being outdoors.”
Ramping Up Independence

Many of us have seen blue parking spaces, automatic doors, and handrails designed to increase accessibility for those with mobility challenges. What we may not realize, however, is how individuals with disabilities can’t benefit from those public features if they are unable to leave their houses.

In 2018, the White Family Foundation Fund made a $3,000 grant to Servants at Work (SAWs) to build five wooden wheelchair ramps for citizens of Hancock County who were otherwise trapped in their homes due to their disabilities. The ramps are in Greenfield, Fortville, and McCordsville.

“SAWs strives to build a high-quality product that will afford our recipients the ability to regain their independence, freedom and dignity,” says Rik Hagarty, SAWs founder. “We endeavor to act in such a way that the recipient and all who see our activity know that, in partnership with HCCF, we care and want neighborhoods to prosper.”

Hagarty says that while the impact on the community can only be speculated, with five more residents now more active and engaged, the impact on the individuals is measurable.

SAWs reports that more than 95% of their recipients statewide and/or their caregivers reported that the fear of being unable to escape in the event of an emergency had been all but eliminated; 89% reported that social activity had been significantly increased; and more than 91% reported that difficulty getting in and out of the house had been substantially diminished.

The White family created this donor advised fund with special preference for community development projects involving Shirley, Indiana and surrounding areas. It provides their family the opportunity and flexibility to recommend charitable grants to HCCF for causes and organizations that meet the fund’s and the family’s objectives. Since its inception in 2012, the fund has granted more than $260,000 to the community.

Making STEM Fun for All Ages

Each public school system in Hancock County benefits from an education foundation, an entity designed to raise funds to support teachers and enrich students’ educational experiences within a corporation. In 2019, HCCF granted $5,000 to each education foundation to support their programming efforts.

Greenfield Central School Foundation (GCSF) utilized its funding to support STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) education, benefitting hundreds of students throughout the district. School leaders hosted STEM nights at JB Stephens Elementary for kindergarten through third-grade students and Maxwell Intermediate School for grades 4-6.

“The project was designed to further advance Greenfield-Central Community School Corporation’s vision for continuing and expanding our Engineering and Robotics programs across the district,” says Ginny Brown, GCSF executive director. “These programs provided the foundational skills in engineering to prepare our young students for the Engineering pathways at G-CHS.” The STEM programs provided students the opportunity to extend their learning of STEM through exciting, engaging, and challenging “plugged” and “unplugged” activities. The programs exposed students to computer programming skills and enhanced computational-thinking skills while expanding their understanding of science and engineering. “We were able to make STEM more relevant and fun, thus attracting more students,” explains Brown. “Our young students are ambassadors of computer science, STEM, and robotics as they integrate their newly-formed skills into lessons and projects within their classrooms.”

The grant also allowed GCSF to purchase additional STEM gear and supplies for the junior high robotics team to create a new robot.
Preservation of Property

HCCF has been honored to receive gifts in the form of property. In 1999, we received the Pasco Funeral Home which now serves as the beautiful home of our office and that of another six nonprofits. Dorothy and Armin Schramm donated 30 acres of woods, now known as the Jacob Schramm Nature Preserve, and in 2009 we received the gift of a 155-acre farm from Lewis Strahl.

HCCF took its role as a property steward very seriously. When HCCF became the owner of the Lewis Strahl Farm in 2009, his wishes were that the income earned from the property support scholarships and the work of the church. Steps taken to care for the gift of land from Lewis included:

- Researching, determining, and collecting cash rent at reasonable, responsible rates
- Hiring a local farmer to tend the tillable property
- Conducting annual soil testing
- Implementing a three-year fertilization plan to improve soil quality and crop production
- Repairing field tiles
- Repairing or removing fencing as needed
- Clearing ditches
- Collaborating with neighbors

One can rest assured that HCCF will honor future gifts with the same care and concern for property while remaining true to the donor’s charitable intent.

2020 Farming and Agribusiness Breakfast

As you know, the Farming and Agribusiness communities play a key role in the future of Hancock County. HCCF continues to build and grow relationships with those who own and tend farmland and the important businesses that serve them. One of the ways we do so is to provide an informative update on pressing issues at a bi-annual event that includes breakfast. Every other year, HCCF hosts a Farming and Agribusiness Breakfast to gather farmers from across the county in appreciation for the work they do, share their good work of HCCF through the stewardship of land and grain, and share some “hot topics” or pressing issues in the farming and agribusiness world. This year, Michael Cooley, Attorney with Allen, Wellman, McNew, & Harvey, spoke on the following topics:

- What you need to know before clearing ground
- Working with the natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS)

Farmers from all corners of the county joined for breakfast, updates, and fellowship on February 19 at the Overlook at Briney Creek.
YOU’RE INVITED

WHAT: IMAGINATION LIBRARY DOCUMENTARY
“The Library that Dolly Built”

WHEN: Nationwide April 2

WHERE: Legacy Cinema — 2347 W Main St, Greenfield, IN 46140

For more information visit: givehcgrowhc.org/events/

THE LIBRARY THAT DOLLY BUILT

Celebrating the People Who Made Dolly’s Dream Come True

HCCF STAFF
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