



**EVERY CHILD
HAS A DREAM.**



**EVERYONE NEEDS
A PLACE TO
CALL HOME.**



**EVERYBODY
COUNTS.
EVERY. BODY.**

STEELCASE FOUNDATION 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, “When it’s better for everyone, it’s better for everyone.”

It’s true. An individual’s struggle with systemic inequity carries economic and social consequences that reach into almost every aspect of community life. Yet as equity rises for individuals, the benefits are far-reaching—more stable economies, greater social mobility, higher employment, less crime, better health outcomes, lower teen pregnancy rates, greater civic participation, and more. A more equitable society simply works better for everyone.

In 2018, the Steelcase Foundation granted more than \$5 million (and \$3+ million more for future years) to deserving organizations and programs. The majority of that was earmarked for innovative programs that offer great promise in tackling the economic and social justice issues that hold people back and diminish our sense of community as a whole.

So it’s with optimism, and a sense of moral urgency, that we share our stories from this year. They reflect our ongoing commitment to working toward a world where everyone’s fundamental needs are met—where people are empowered to reach their full potential. Because every child has a dream, everyone needs a place to call home, and everybody counts.

Kate Wolters

Chair, Steelcase Foundation

Julie Ridenour

President, Steelcase Foundation

STEELCASE FOUNDATION 2018 BOARD + STAFF

FOUNDATION BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Kate Pew Wolters
Chair

Brian Cloyd

Mary Anne Hunting

James P. Keane

Craig Niemann

Cary Pew

Robert C. Pew

Elizabeth Welch

INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

Craig Niemann
Chair

Mary Anne Hunting

Stacy McKinney

Quan Mac

Kate Pew Wolters

STAFF

Julie Ridenour
President

Leslie Schoen
*Foundation Administrator and
Secretary to the Board of Trustees*

Brittany Dernberger
Grant Analyst

“No matter who you are, what you look like, or where you come from,
everyone should have a fair and equal opportunity to live, to work, and to succeed.”

— ATTORNEY GENERAL LORETTA LYNCH

A young boy with short brown hair is dribbling a basketball on an outdoor court. He is wearing a blue sleeveless shirt and dark shorts with white stripes on the sides. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a fence.

EVERY CHILD HAS A DREAM.

See how *GR8 Sports, Great Kids* is creating change on and off the field.

PAGE 13 

Kids from low-income homes are **5X** more likely to drop out of high school and **13X** more likely not to graduate on time.

INSIGHT INTO DIVERSITY

IN 2018, THE STEELCASE FOUNDATION GRANTED **\$2,638,200** (+\$2,841,000 future) for projects to improve childhood education.

“Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family.”

— KOFI ANNAN

EVERYONE NEEDS A PLACE TO CALL HOME.

See how a city-wide eviction-prevention program is curbing homelessness by keeping families in their own homes.

From 2010 to 2015, Grand Rapids' median household income rose 5% while **median rent went up 33%**.

— GREAT HOUSING STRATEGIES, CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

IN 2018, THE STEELCASE FOUNDATION GRANTED **\$645,872** (+\$479,128 future) for projects that ensure safe and affordable housing.

PAGE 14

“Home is where children find safety and security, where we find our identities, where citizenship starts.”

— MATTHEW DESMOND



EVERYBODY COUNTS. EVERY. BODY.

See how nonprofits are
mobilizing hard-to-count
communities for a full and fair
count in the 2020 Census.

PAGE 15

When people feel a strong sense of belonging,
they consequently believe their lives have
greater meaning.

(LAMBERT ET AL., 2013)

IN 2018, THE STEELCASE FOUNDATION GRANTED
\$1,342,544.50 (+\$392,482.50 future)
to projects that bring greater equity to
marginalized people in our community.

“A community is democratic only when the humblest and weakest person can enjoy the highest civil,
economic, and social rights that the biggest and most powerful possess.”

— A. PHILIP RANDOLPH

STEELCASE EMPLOYEE + RETIREE MATCHING GIFTS

\$531,751

Thank you Steelcase employees and retirees for multiplying our efforts, one gift at a time.

Our Matching Gifts program grew significantly this year as we doubled the more than half million dollars in gifts by Steelcase employees, retirees, and directors to qualified nonprofits in education, arts and culture, and environmental conservation (and, thanks to our 2018 program expansion, to crisis and disaster relief efforts, too!).

We’re delighted to double down on your efforts. Learn more about our **matching gifts program** ➔

“The best the world has to offer comes from the best you have to give to others.”

– NEALE DONALD WALSCH

2018 GRANT TOTALS:

\$5,258,767.50

(\$3,389,316 future)



Arts & Culture

\$513,158 (\$118,316 future)



Community & Economic Development

\$120,000 (\$30,000 future)



Education

\$2,638,200 (\$2,841,000 future)



Health

\$15,000



Human Service

\$1,364,258.50 (\$325,000 future)



Other

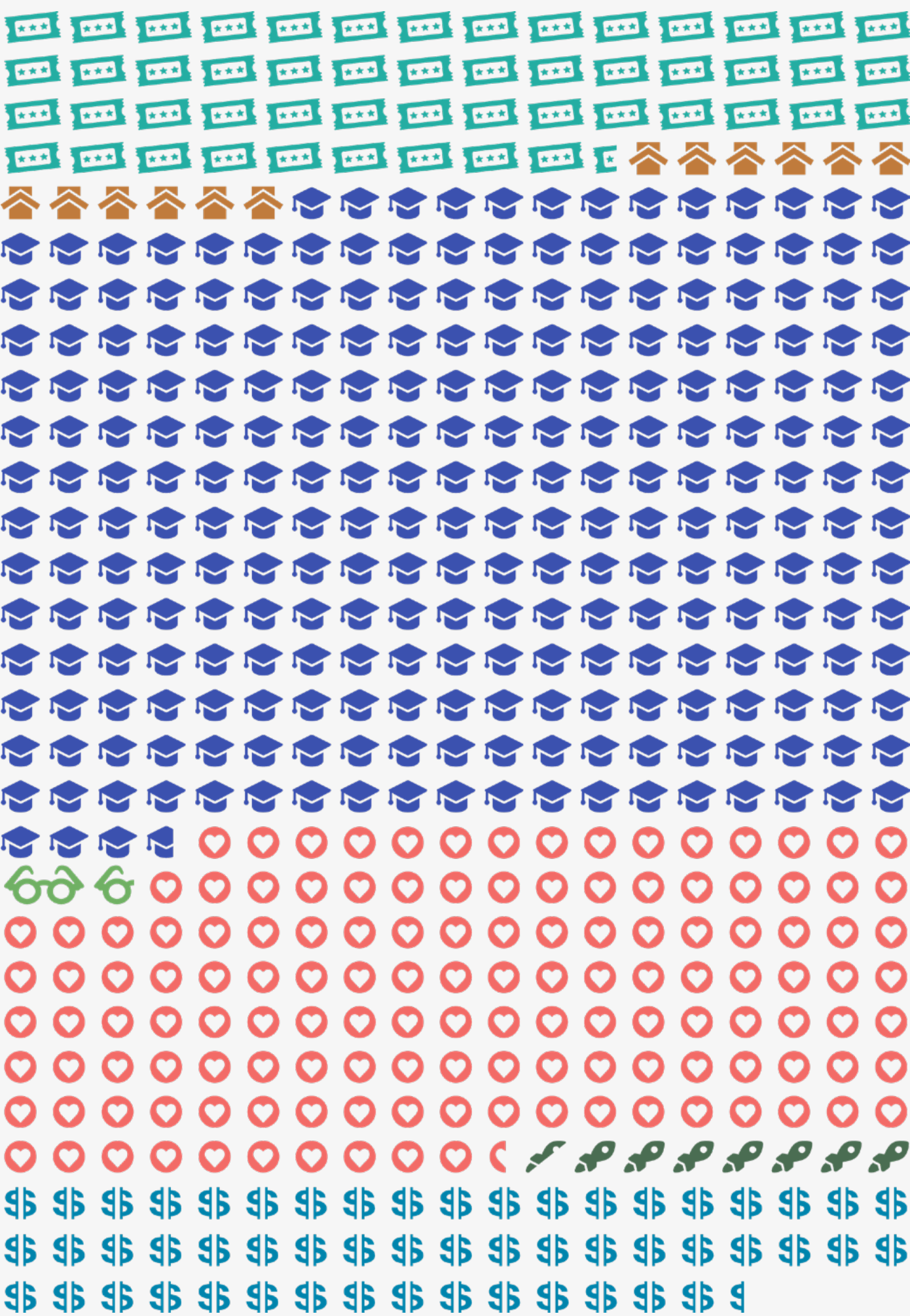
\$76,400 (\$75,000 future)





Matching Gifts

\$531,751

EACH ICON REPRESENTS \$10,000 (2018 TOTALS)



CHILDREN’S ADVOCACY CENTER MORE Must Be Done Capital Campaign \$44,166.50 (\$44,166.50 future)	
CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS Eviction Prevention (3-Year Pilot) \$50,000 (\$50,000 future)	
COUNCIL OF MICHIGAN FOUNDATION 2018 Membership Dues \$9,900	
COUNCIL OF MICHIGAN FOUNDATIONS Robert S. Collier Endowment Fund \$10,000	
COUNCIL OF MICHIGAN FOUNDATIONS CMF Annual Conference Sponsorship \$5,000	
COVENANT HOUSE MICHIGAN – GRAND RAPIDS Covenant House Michigan Residential Facility \$175,000 On November 26, Covenant House Michigan - Grand Rapids (CHMGR) opened its doors to 12 young men, welcoming its first cohort to the newly built space. Through a \$4.5 million campaign, with a \$175,000 gift from the Steelcase Foundation, the residential facility provides young men and women a safe place to call home, and support services to assist them in finding a job, finishing school, and learning skills to help them live on their own. The new facility can accommodate 28 residents age 18-24, and receives referrals for youth in need of housing and support services from community partners such as HQ, 3:11 Youth Housing, and Mel Trotter ministries. The House has moved slowly and thoughtfully, first filling the young men’s floor, to allow staff to become acclimated with the new space and build a culture of trust with a small cohort before adding women residents. As Pam Spaeth, chief operating officer of the Grand Rapids campus told us, “The greatest joy for me has been experiencing the respect, grace, and kindness each of these young men bring to CHMGR. I didn’t expect the receptive spirit and genuine desire to excel, exceed, and succeed... It’s with tremendous gratitude we at the House start each day with hope for our youth.” We’re so grateful to the staff and community partners who helped make CHMGR a reality in providing much needed shelter and support services for homeless youth in Grand Rapids.	
EARLY LEARNING NEIGHBORHOOD COLLABORATIVE Empowering Parents Impacting Children (EPIC) \$130,000	
EDUCATION TRUST – MIDWEST Kent County School Leader and Master Teacher Capacity Development \$500,000	
FIRST STEPS KENT Kent County Early Childhood Dedicated Funding Strategy \$100,000 First Steps Kent’s (FSK) vision is that every young child will enter kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed in school and in life. Through its work with early childhood partners, parents, and stakeholders, FSK acts as an independent, influential and neutral entity leading community efforts to strengthen and coordinate early childhood services in Kent County. In the summer of 2017, the Steelcase Foundation awarded FSK \$200,000 over two years to create a gap analysis of current early childhood programs, establish consistent outcomes for measurement across the early childhood landscape, and identify gaps in enrollment capacity and funding, duplications in services, and costs of expanding and sustaining effective services. The gap analysis helped to uncover where additional programming and dollars were most needed, and where successful programming could be expanded to amplify its impact. The gap analysis also helped to make the case for the passing of Ready By 5, Kent County’s early childhood millage, which will provide approximately \$5.7 million annually for six years to support high-quality community-based early childhood programs. As the first dedicated, stable funding source for early childhood services and programming in Michigan, Ready By 5 will ensure all Kent County children under five have access to vital services that ensure they are healthy and ready to learn by kindergarten. “It’s clear that children who start ahead stay ahead and this dedicated source of funding will give Kent County kids a strong foundation for a bright future,” said Kate Pew Wolters, Steelcase Foundation chair and co-chair of the First Steps Commission. We’re hopeful the fiscal gap and millage support will provide all children in Kent County access to high quality early learning and support services to help them be ready for the first day of kindergarten, setting the stage for success in school.	

GODFREY-LEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Designed for Success

\$140,000 (\$125,000 future)



GRAND RAPIDS ART MUSEUM

Empowering People to Connect Through Art, Creativity, and Design

\$175,000



GRAND RAPIDS CHILDREN’S MUSEUM

Accessibility and Inclusion Manager

\$59,158 (\$118,316 future)

In its 21-year history, the Grand Rapids Children’s Museum (GRCM) has welcomed over 3.5 million guests, and invited young children and their hosts to engage in hands-on learning and exploration through creative play.

In fall of 2018, with a three-year \$177,474 grant from the Steelcase Foundation, GRCM created an Accessibility and Inclusion Manager position, formalizing and institutionalizing existing efforts to increase the museum’s cultural competency to provide a more welcoming and inclusive experience for all visitors. As children’s museums occupy a unique space between formal and informal education, and reflect the current experience of childhood, the messages they send can have a deep and lasting impact on children. Rachel McKay, newly named GRCM Accessibility and Inclusion Manager noted, “If the experience is centered around a dominant culture, many children who need a mirror will be met with a window, observing a more commonly accepted version of childhood rather than seeing their own experience reflected and celebrated. Our vision is that every child who visits the museum can see examples of a family that looks like them, lives like them, loves like them, and plays like them.”

To ensure all guests have a welcoming and enjoyable museum visit, GRCM will

- Conduct community listening sessions
- Provide equity and diversity training for all staff
- Institute new human resources practices to attract and retain diverse talent and board members
- Make intentional efforts to recognize and celebrate what childhood looks like for all children, taking special consideration to racial, ethnic, and neurodiversity, as well as cognitive abilities

We’re excited to walk alongside GRCM as it amplifies its efforts to make the museum a welcoming and accessibility place for all children to play.



GRAND RAPIDS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Nonprofit Technical Assistance Fund

\$30,000



GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Collaborative Planning Meeting

\$5,000



GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Extension of Harvard Leadership Development Program

\$193,000 (\$387,000 future)



GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Early Warning System

\$250,000 (\$250,000 future)



GRAND RAPIDS STUDENT ADVANCEMENT FOUNDATION

GR8 Sports, Great Kids, Data System

\$25,000



GRAND RAPIDS SYMPHONY

Education, Accessibility, and Inclusion Programming

\$175,000



GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

Story Time in the Park












\$37,400



Grand Valley State University (GVSU) launched its summer literacy program, Storytime in the Park (formerly Storytime in the Heights) in June of 2010, providing children on the southeast side of Grand Rapids free books, ice cream cones, and quality reading time with family and Storytime volunteers each Tuesday evening for 13 weeks in the summertime in Alger Heights.

In 2016, the Steelcase Foundation awarded \$100,000 over three years to expand programming and move the weekly gathering to Garfield Park. The new location helped Storytime to reach students and families at nearby Brookside, Dickenson, and Burton Elementary/Middle Schools, while remaining close to its Alger participants, and provided much needed indoor shelter to continue operations during inclement weather. The expansion required additional high-quality, age-appropriate literature, ensuring programming matched young visitors with books that excited their reading appetites and met them at their current literacy level.

Last summer, Storytime served 1,058 families distributing 9,528 books and 12,976 ice cream cones, while impacting 2,543 children, about 40 percent of whom were from diverse backgrounds. Through its efforts, GVSU reported 88 percent of children who participated in Storytime spent more time reading during the summer, and 91 percent of families reported that receiving new books made their children want to read more. We’re hopeful that Storytime’s efforts will encourage children from the Garfield Park neighborhood to continue reading after the summer program, and become lifelong readers.

GRANDVILLE AVENUE ARTS AND HUMANITIES Cook Library Scholars \$25,000 (\$25,000 future)	
GRANTMAKERS FOR EDUCATION 2018 Membership Dues \$1,500	
HABITAT FOR HUMANITY OF KENT COUNTY Program-related Investment \$270,872 (229,128 future)	
HEALTHY HOMES COALITION OF WEST MICHIGAN Community Voices \$40,000	
HEART OF WEST MICHIGAN UNITED WAY 2018 Campaign \$450,000	
HEARTSIDE MINISTRY Bridging the Gap Literacy Program \$30,000	
INNER CITY CHRISTIAN FEDERATION Single Family Home Portfolio Initiative – Resident Engagement \$100,000 (\$200,000 future)	
K-CONNECT Cross-Sector Engagement Process to Create Community Homelessness Plan \$10,000	
K-CONNECT Operational Support \$125,000	
KELLOGGSVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS Community Library \$50,000 (\$50,000 future)	
KENT DISTRICT LIBRARY Bookmobile – KDL on the Road \$104,000	
<p>On October 15, the Steelcase Foundation celebrated the launch of the Kent District Library’s (KDL) new Bookmobile with Steelcase employees at its Grand Rapids Business Center.</p> <p>The Bookmobile will allow KDL to provide programming and collections to Kent County residents living in underserved areas, focusing on student use and access. The handicap-accessible vehicle is equipped with a collection of materials, Wi-Fi, a video screen, computer, printer, and modular shelves. Visitors can check out books and obtain a KDL library card, allowing them to use any library in the KDL system.</p> <p>Through a partnership with Kent School Services Network, the Bookmobile will travel to seven area schools bi-weekly, as well as senior centers, rural centers, and summer daycare programs.</p> <p>The Steelcase Foundation provided a grant of \$208,000 for the design and creation of the Bookmobile and was joined by the Frey Foundation in support of the project. Julie Ridenour, Steelcase Foundation president, said: “The Steelcase Foundation is honored to partner with the Kent District Library and the Frey Foundation to return the Bookmobile to Kent County. It is our hope that the travels of this vehicle will allow readers of every age to be part of the Steelcase Foundation vision of empowering people to reach their full potential. We hope the Bookmobile lights the imagination of all who visit and encourages the pursuits of literacy, knowledge, and love of reading.”</p> <p>For the bookmobile’s upcoming schedule, visit KDL’s Hours and Locations page.</p>	

KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Parent Academy

\$55,000

Last fall, Kentwood Public School (KPS) launched a two-year Parent Academy pilot to provide language and educational programming to the parents of the 1,800+ English-language-learner (ELL) students in the district. With a two-year \$110,000 grant from the Steelcase Foundation, KPS provided its diverse parent population sessions on learning English, school procedures, becoming a citizen, and navigating their new community, with the end goal of providing these parents the tools they need to best advocate for their children.

In the first year of the pilot, the Parent Academy hosted 20 adults for 24 hours of English-language instruction over six weeks. Each session provided child care, transportation, and a meal for participants, removing potential barriers for participation. Sixteen adults participated in a concurrent session that focused more closely on learning English and incorporated other topics when appropriate.

Early results for students whose parents attended the Academy are positive. Improvements in World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) scores increased by an average of 40.3 points for participating students, compared to 19 points for students whose parents did not attend. In addition, disciplinary actions reduced, attendance increased, and several parents attended conferences for the first time after attending the Academy.

In year two, the Academy focused more exclusively on English-language learning, and worked to better partner with local businesses to build community among Academy participants. The Kentwood Parent Academy continues to build the skillset of ELL parents, giving them the tools to best navigate and advocate for their child in school.



KIDS’ FOOD BASKET

Feeding Our Future

\$100,000



LEARN-TO-READ COUNCIL OF ATHENS & LIMESTONE CO.

Upgrade for Adult and Student Advancement

\$10,000 (\$10,000 future)



LITERACY CENTER OF WEST MICHIGAN

Family Literacy Program

\$30,000 (\$20,000 future)



The Literacy Center of West Michigan was founded in 1986, and modeled on the “each one, teach one” tutoring philosophy, which designs activities around the learner’s individual needs. As the first organization in Kent County to focus exclusively on adult literacy, The Literacy Center works with adults, both native English speakers and English-language learners, who read below a 9th grade level and want to improve their literacy.

In April 2017, the Steelcase Foundation awarded The Literacy Center \$90,000 over three years to support its growing Family Literacy Program, which provides English-language instruction to parents of elementary-aged children in Grand Rapids Public Schools, Godwin Heights Public Schools, and Godfrey-Lee Public Schools, helping them to be their child’s first and best teacher. Following a research-based model from the National Center for Family Learning, the program focuses on improving educational outcomes for children by strengthening literacy practices at home, bridging the gap between home and school.

In the first year of the grant, the Family Literacy Program served 253 parents, and reported the following successes:

- 85 percent of learners made literacy gains against their intake scores on the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) test after 40 hours of instruction
- 66 percent increased their weekly at-home literacy behaviors with their children (playing games, reading books going to the library) up from a baseline of 51 percent
- 90 percent of parents interacted more frequently with their child’s school or attended activities while speaking in English, up from 15 percent who felt comfortable before receiving services from the Family Literacy Program

We’re pleased with the progress the Family Literacy Program has made thus far, and we’re hopeful years two and three reach additional parents in need of literacy assistance. For those interested in joining the program visit [The Literacy Center’s website](#).

MICHIGAN LEAGUE FOR PUBLIC POLICY

Kids Count: Telling Local Stories to

Have an Impact in West Michigan

\$25,000 (\$25,000 future)



MICHIGAN NONPROFIT ASSOCIATION
2020 Michigan Nonprofit Count Campaign
\$25,000 (\$50,000 future)



MIGRANT LEGAL AID
Defending Against Hate
\$75,000 (\$75,000 future)



NEW YORK CITY LEADERSHIP ACADEMY
West Michigan Leadership Academy
\$620,400 (\$982,000 future)



PLANNED PARENTHOOD
Gift In Memory of Susan Broman
\$5,000



REFUGEE EDUCATION & CULTURAL CENTER
Hands Connected Multicultural Center
\$20,000 (\$50,000 future)



SIGHT SAVERS OF ALABAMA
KidCheck Plus Health Screenings
\$15,000



ST. THOMAS CATHOLIC SCHOOL
Gift In Memory of Audrey Jandernoa
\$100



STEEPLETOWN NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES
JobStart
\$50,000 (\$30,000 future)



STEM GREENHOUSE
STEM Greenhouse After School Program
\$10,000 (\$10,000 future)



UNITED METHODIST COMMUNITY HOUSE
Early Child Development and Education Expansion
\$125,000



UNITED WAY OF ATHENS AND LIMESTONE
2018 Campaign
\$43,890



UNITED WAY OF GREATER HIGHER POINT
2018 Campaign
\$330



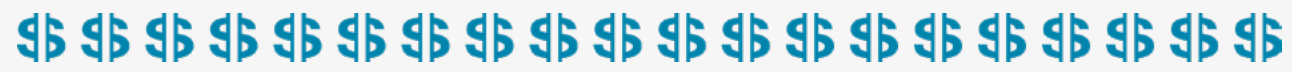
WEST MICHIGAN CENTER FOR ARTS & TECHNOLOGY (WMCAT)
Teen Arts + Tech and Leave Your Mark Campaign
\$200,000



MATCHING GIFTS, Q1: \$121,992



MATCHING GIFTS, Q2: \$199,900



MATCHING GIFTS, Q3: \$119,404



MATCHING GIFTS, Q4: \$90,455



Statements of financial position

YEAR ENDED NOVEMBER 30

2018**2017****ASSETS**

Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$ 1,443,235	\$ 2,192,769
Pending Trade Receivables	\$ 2,774,278	\$ -
Investments, at Fair Value	\$ 98,488,574	\$ 104,345,854
Federal Excise Tax Refundable	\$ 23,691	\$ 23,291
Loan Receivable	\$ 270,872	\$ -
Total Assets	\$ 103,000,650	\$ 106,561,914

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

Liabilities: Grants Payable	\$ 2,536,183	\$ 2,991,734
Net Assets: Unrestricted	\$ 100,464,467	\$ 103,570,180
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$ 103,000,650	\$ 106,561,914

Statements of activities

YEAR ENDED NOVEMBER 30

2018**2017****REVENUES**

In-Kind Contributions	\$ 388,981	\$ 427,016
Contributions	\$ 1,227,441	\$ 1,400,000
Investment Income:		
Dividends & Interest	\$ 749,892	\$ 475,869
Net Realized & Unrealized Gain on Investments	\$ 755,400	\$ 15,947,896
Total Revenues	\$ 3,121,714	\$ 18,250,781

EXPENSES

Grants & Matching Gifts	\$ 4,530,594	\$ 5,137,990
Investment Management & Agency Fees	\$ 1,188,323	\$ 1,278,881
Current Provision for Federal Excise Tax	\$ 119,529	\$ 42,975
General & Administrative	\$ 388,981	\$ 427,016
Total Expenses	\$ 6,227,427	\$ 6,886,862

Net Assets, Beginning of Year	\$ 103,570,180	\$ 92,206,261
Net Assets, End of Year	\$ 100,464,467	\$ 103,570,180
Increase in Net Assets	\$ (3,105,713)	\$ 11,363,919

“When everyone does better, everyone does better.”

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT



Grand Rapids Student Advancement Foundation
GR8 Sports, Great Kids Data System

2018 ANNUAL REPORT FEATURE STORY | Kathleen O’Brien

If you could offer a way to help students **improve their grades, attendance, self-discipline, citizenship, sportsmanship, physical health, and emotional well-being**, you’d jump at the chance, right?

Those are precisely the benefits that school sports offer tens of millions of students across the country. Yet far too many kids sit on the sidelines either because cash-strapped schools can’t afford to offer sports programs; the cost of “pay to play” programs is prohibitive, or the value of athletics simply isn’t understood or encouraged at home or in school.

Families with disposable income spend an average of \$8,000 annually on kids’ athletics—an investment that’s way out of reach for most families in Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS). But ***GR8 Sports, Great Kids*** is working to level the playing field. An outgrowth of the Student Advancement Foundation, **the program provides funding to ensure that every student in grades K-8 has access, regardless of ability to pay.**

Making school sports available to elementary and middle-school students just makes sense, according to *GR8 Sports, Great Kids* director Cara Jones. Sports help stave off health issues like childhood obesity and diabetes. Student athletes typically have higher GPAs, better school attendance, and are more likely to stay in school and graduate on time. Being on a team improves social skills, fosters leadership, teaches collaboration, builds confidence, and cultivates grit. And these programs provide positive, supervised, technology-free time after-school time for grade-schoolers who might otherwise be home alone.

A decade ago, there were no interscholastic sports in GRPS elementary and middle schools. Today, thanks to *GR8 Sports, Great Kids*, 20+ GRPS elementary and middle schools are now fielding teams in soccer, volleyball, basketball, cross country, football, softball, golf, track, swimming, and competitive cheer. With 6,000 athletes now involved in K-8 sports, the program promises to pay off in the district’s future, too. Ottawa Hills varsity girls volleyball team won its first match in 10 years, and other GRPS athletes and teams have now qualified for district- and state-level competition.

This year, *GR8 Sports* is launching a data collection system to look at the relationship between interscholastic sports and academic achievement at GRPS, funded by a \$25,000 grant from the Steelcase Foundation.

The new system will track athletic participation in grades K-8. And that information will be woven into **GRPS’ Early Warning System**, which tracks grades, attendance, conduct and more. The goal is to identify kids who aren’t on track for graduation and bring early intervention. Looping athletics in allows coaches to be a part of that support system.

The data will also be used to track how participation in K-8 sports affects overall student achievement and graduation rates in GRPS. And good, local data will support the program’s outreach and advocacy with schools, families, and funders.

By fostering sports programming, tracking its impact, and building awareness of the value sports offer students in struggling districts *GR8 Sports, Great Kids* is ensuring that every child has the opportunity to pursue his or her dreams—on and off the field.

OTHER EDUCATION-RELATED GRANTEES

[First Steps Kent](#)

[Story Time in the Park](#)

[Kent District Library](#)

By fostering sports programming, tracking its impact, and building awareness of the value sports offer students in struggling districts *GR8 Sports, Great Kids* is ensuring that every child has the opportunity to pursue their dreams—on and off the field.

“Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family.”

—KOFI ANNAN



City of Grand Rapids
Eviction Prevention Program

2018 ANNUAL REPORT FEATURE STORY | Kathleen O’Brien

As housing prices soar in hot real estate markets like Grand Rapids, renters with modest income and flat earnings find it next to impossible to keep up. **Today, one in four families spends 70 percent or more of their household income on rent and utilities.** Its a precarious balance that puts millions just one misstep or emergency away from being evicted from their homes.

Eviction is much more than losing a home. The ripple effects that follow can be devastating. Families are uprooted from neighborhoods. Children are pulled from schools and friends. Possessions land in storage facilities that demand monthly payments, or worse, are piled on the curb for any taker. And the stress of the protracted legal process can take a serious toll on a wage earner’s mindspace and well-being resulting in workplace absenteeism, mistakes on the job, and the potential loss of employment. As evicted tenants struggle to figure out their next move, they often find that the legal judgment of eviction has disqualified them for subsequent rentals, forcing them and their families into shelters or transitional housing.

Clearly, eviction takes a huge toll on tenants. But they’re not the only ones who suffer. Landlords lose time and money when their income properties are tied up in court. Courts are required to use precious resources on eviction proceedings. Schools struggle as students move in and out of districts without warning. And communities bear the added costs of emergency shelter, transitional housing, or re-housing services, following eviction.

Keeping families in their homes just makes sense, according to Connie Bohatch, Managing Director of Grand Rapids Community Services. Bohatch led the effort to create an eviction-prevention program that offers great promise for reducing the number of evictions and the cascades of disruption they cause.

With the support of a \$150,000 grant from the Steelcase Foundation and \$150,000 from the Grand Rapids Community Foundation, Bohatch launched Grand Rapids’ Eviction Prevention Program in partnership with The Salvation Army, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and the 61st District Court.

Here’s how it works: Before setting court dates for eviction proceedings, the 61st District Court sends a list of at-risk renters to both The Salvation Army and DHHS. Next, a grant-funded Salvation Army caseworker reaches out to individuals, screens their cases, and helps eligible renters apply for emergency assistance. From there, a full-time DHHS caseworker (also grant-funded) reviews the applications, works to resolve any issues that may disqualify tenants from eligibility, and helps those facing eviction access State Emergency Relief and other funds to settle past-due rent. At the same time, court representatives work with landlords, encouraging them to participate in a mediated agreement to accept relief funds and to withdraw the eviction order.

It’s a win-win solution. **And it’s working.** Of 110 cases the program managed last year, 92 percent of tenants were able to avoid eviction and stay in their homes. All told, the program saved 338 adults and children from almost-certain eviction last year.

Despite assumptions, eviction is not merely a condition of poverty. In fact, because of its far-reaching impact, it’s often a catalyst for poverty. But proactive eviction-prevention programs like these are reducing the number of evictions, helping landlords maintain their income, freeing up the judicial system, easing the burden on social service budgets, improving housing stability, and ensuring that everyone has a place to call home.

- OTHER HOUSING-RELATED GRANTEES
- Habitat for Humanity
 - ICCF Affordable Housing
 - Covenant House Grand Rapids

A minimum-wage earner must work 73 hours a week to afford a typical, two-bedroom apartment in Michigan.

88% of families served by the Eviction Prevention Program last year were women-led household; 76% were families with children.

Black and Latinx households are 2x as likely as whites to face eviction. Women, especially women of color; domestic violence victims; and families with children are at particularly high risk.

“Home is where children find safety and security, where we find our identities, where citizenship starts.”
— MATTHEW DESMOND



Michigan Nonprofit Association
Be Counted Michigan 2020

2018 ANNUAL REPORT FEATURE STORY | Kathleen O’Brien

Michigan has a lot a stake in the 2020 Census.

Beyond determining the size of Michigan’s congressional delegation, **the census count is used to allocate more than \$17+ billion in federal funds that support critical programs in the state**, including Medicaid, Head Start, Title 1, Special Education grants, and a long list of education, health care, employment, veteran services, and rural development programs. Even the level of the state’s highway funding is allocated based on the census results.

Without an accurate count, Michigan may face more than a decade of underrepresentation in Congress and—of particular concern for nonprofits—the loss of millions of dollars in federal revenue and a gross underinvestment in the vital services they provide citizens in the state. **In total, about 40 percent of Michigan’s budget revenue is derived from federal funds** and the state stands to lose an estimated \$1,800 for each uncoun­ted citizen.

Unfortunately, the risk of an undercount has never been higher. The Census Bureau, under pressure to do more with less, has reduced the number of offices and field workers in Michigan in half (there are no offices planned in West Michigan or the Upper Peninsula in 2020). What’s more, a budget-cutting Internet-first collection model is raising concerns about privacy and cyber security that may reduce overall participation. Nonprofits are also concerned that limited access to technology may further reduce participation among populations that have traditionally been hardest to count—senior citizens, people experiencing homelessness, communities of color, people in rural communities, children under age five, and those living in low-income communities.

That’s why the Michigan Nonprofit Association (MNA) has launched ***Be Counted Michigan 2020***, a statewide effort to boost participation in the census, particularly in hard-to-count populations. MNA is mobilizing nonprofits that serve those at risk of being undercounted by providing mini-grants, training, support, and tools to generate higher census participation. **The ambitious campaign is funded by more than 40 foundations, including a \$75,000 grant over three years from the Steelcase Foundation.**

Launched in 2017—well in advance of other states’ efforts—MNA’s work is attracting attention from nonprofits in other states and is serving as a model for similar mobilization efforts coast to coast.

Michigan nonprofits will live with the results of the 2020 census, and the potential funding gaps triggered by an undercount, for at least the next decade. Through its *Be Counted Michigan 2020* campaign, the Michigan Nonprofit Association is building a powerful coalition to ensure that every federal dollar Michigan citizens deserve finds its way into the state’s coffer. And making sure that everyone—including those hardest to reach—is counted.

OTHER EQUITY-RELATED GRANTEES

Migrant Legal Aid ➞

Literacy Center of West Michigan ➞

Kentwood Parent Academy ➞

...to ensure that every federal dollar Michigan citizens deserve finds its way into the state’s coffer. And making sure that everyone—including those hardest to reach—is counted.

“In matters of truth and justice, there is no difference between large and small problems, for issues concerning the treatment of people are all the same.”

— ALBERT EINSTEIN