



A GOLDEN LEGACY:

50 Years of Community Impact

Sparked by a desire to build our community, Bridge Builders Community Foundations celebrates 50 years of philanthropy in northwestern Pennsylvania.

We serve three communities: Clarion County, Forest County, and Venango County. Each affiliate foundation has its own needs and resources to meet those needs.

We hope that you will begin or continue to collaborate with us as we work to support and improve our quality of life.

For the past 50 years, the Community Foundation has stood as a testament to the power of generosity, vision, and collective action. As we celebrate this milestone, we recognize that none of our progress would have been possible without the countless donors, dedicated board members, passionate staff, and, most importantly, the visionary founders who laid the foundation for this work. It is on their shoulders that we stand today, looking to the future with hope, determination, and an unwavering commitment to strengthening our community for all who call it home.

Over the decades, we have built more than a fund—we have built a movement fueled by those who believe in the power of giving, in the promise of future generations, and in the idea that lasting change is possible when we work together as a community. The momentum of this impact is growing, and as we look ahead, we embrace our responsibility to nurture and expand this positive force.

At its core, the Community Foundation is in the business of building connections—fostering relationships that unite donors, nonprofits, and local leaders in a shared vision. The resources entrusted to us—grants that sustain vital nonprofit initiatives, scholarships that empower the next generation, and funds that respond to emerging needs—do more than provide financial support. They inspire hope, strengthen community pride, and reinforce a collective belief that we can shape a better tomorrow.

We have been entrusted with more than resources; we have been entrusted with a purpose that extends beyond individual grants and scholarships to the broader goal of creating meaningful, lasting change. Our role is not just to honor the wishes of those who give but to ensure that their generosity continues to transform lives and uplift the entire community for generations to come.

As we celebrate 50 years of impact, we reaffirm our commitment to being a neutral advocate for the community—championing the people, places, and causes that make our region strong. The work of building a thriving, inclusive, and resilient community is never finished, but together, we will continue to strengthen the bonds that make this place home—not just for today, but for generations to come.

With gratitude and vision,



Trenton E. Moulin
President & CEO

What is a Community Foundation?

Community foundations have been an integral part of philanthropy since 1914, when Frederick H. Goff created the Cleveland Foundation under the auspices of the Cleveland Trust Company. He consolidated small trusts held by his bank into one organization governed by local citizens. He saw this effort as a partnership—the bank could invest, and the Foundation would disperse money.

Goff felt that foundations could be “instruments of reform” to aid problem-solving within the community.

Currently, Community Foundations are found all over the world. In the United States, over 1000 Community Foundations serve 98% of the population.

Community Foundations have three roles—to build assets responsibly, to make grants to community organizations, and to lead in the community. Bridge Builders Community Foundations does all of these things by growing the value of the funds, making grants responsibly, and by being leaders in discovering and responding to community needs.

The most important thing to remember about your community foundation is that it is run by local people supporting local causes through philanthropy. You do not have to have the wealth of Benjamin Franklin or Andrew Carnegie to support causes in your local community.

Community foundations are governed by four principles:

- 1. They seek to improve the quality of life in a defined geographic area.**
- 2. They are independent from control by government, individuals, and donors .**
- 3. They are governed by citizens who reflect the locality.**
- 4. They are open, transparent, and accountable to the community leadership.**

With humble honor and the privilege of serving on the Board of Directors, here are my thoughts regarding this anniversary. 50 years is a milestone often referred to as 'golden' and without a doubt is certainly the case in the context of Bridge Builders Community Foundations, as we celebrate this occasion. The initial vision of the founders to create a philanthropic effort for the citizens of Venango County created a \$20 million organization that offers and provides multiple opportunities for our communities throughout three counties.

I came to Bridge Builders with limited knowledge of the organization. However it became abundantly clear that the foundation has immense value for our communities. Through the years of service, my passion for philanthropy has grown. I have had the opportunity to work with a talented and committed staff and a dedicated Board of Directors. I have noticed need that I was not aware of and personally witnessed improvements in many areas. One of the major strengths of our organization is adaptability, coupled with the willingness to learn and respond appropriately. I am grateful for that.

In service to the area, Bridge Builders continues to positively evolve to address the always changing dynamics presented by the cycle of life we face. I am most proud of several of the options which have come to fruition. We are emphasizing larger dollar grant awards, including scholarships, instead of more grants. The board members along with staff spend considerable time analyzing results, resulting in wise distributions of funds. We are working with our donors to be

realistic yet flexible regarding donor wishes and direction, but also corresponding to community needs. Furthermore, we offer what I like to refer to as "living philanthropy," enabling donors to witness their generosity in action. One instance comes to mind, whereby a large volume donor viewed the unveiling of a public art initiative with tears, saying she never thought her gift could be so impactful.

Surely as life goes on, more challenges of a wider variety will be part of the future. Personally, I hope that this history will inspire others to become part of this mission. I sincerely believe Bridge Builders Community Foundations will continue to be an integral part of addressing community needs by bringing together generous individuals to uplift and support those facing hardships in our community.



Warren Thomas
Board Chair

Overall History


1975-1976

The year 1975 meant the founding of Microsoft, the disappearance of Jimmy Hoffa, verdicts in the Watergate scandal, the release of the movie *Jaws*, and the capture of Saigon, ending the war in Vietnam. In Venango County, 1975 meant the creation of the first Community Foundation, spearheaded by four local banks.



Representatives from the trust departments of First Seneca Bank and Trust, Northwest Pennsylvania Bank and Trust, First National Bank of Pennsylvania, and Pennsylvania Bank and Trust established the Venango Area Community Foundation on April 30, 1975, with a goal of using the many trust funds administered by their

organizations together to better serve the residents of the county and surrounding area. The State Charter was approved in May 1975 and officers and a Board of Trustees were appointed.



The Board members were appointed from the community, professional organizations, and local companies. No one person was responsible for growing the Foundation. They were chosen as "Prominent people chosen for their range of civic interest and sensitivity." John D. Tarr, Jr, was elected President. He represented the Venango County Labor Council. The Vice President was Sally Bloom, a representative from the Oil City Council. Carol Hutchison from Clintonville was elected Treasurer and Assistant Secretary, and Barbara Lutz, an Oil City resident, was elected Secretary and Assistant Treasurer.

Upon the creation of the Foundation, Mr. Tarr was quoted as saying, 'The Foundation was developed as a project of the Justus Trust, and it was to be a long-term planning vehicle to meet community needs.' Samuel Justus was an oil producer and president of Penn Oil Company. Upon his death in 1920, he left millions of dollars in a trust to the county to aid orphans. His funds are now used for the general improvement of civic and family life in Venango County. The first Trustees of the Foundation were Raymond Woodard, representing the Franklin City Council, John D. Rynd, Jr, from the Franklin Bar Association, Milton W. Rosen, representing the United Way,

and William J. Ahrens, a Venango County Commissioner. That year, two more people were appointed to serve, including one person from the Venango County Medical Society and one County Judge.

The goal of the Foundation was to stimulate charitable support in the community and coordinate the trust management efforts of the four banks to better provide for the local residents. The banks pledged to cover the legal fees, printing, and Foundation startup costs for the first three years.

In June 1976, the Board was overjoyed when Galena Rew Harrington and Mary Rew established an unrestricted fund to support identified community needs and programs. The next year, the first scholarship fund was created in memory of William H. Locke by his wife Mildred T. Locke. Mr. Locke was the president of National Fuel. His memorial scholarship was designated for Oil City High School students. These funds established a pattern of giving in Venango County that has continued to this day.

1981-1989

The Foundation's funds grew slowly at the beginning. By 1981, they still had only two—the Harrington/Rew Unrestricted Fund, valued at about \$33,000, and the Locke Memorial Scholarship Fund, valued at about \$243,000. By 1994, there were 13 funds serving the community with a value of over one million dollars.

Stephen J Kosak, an experienced trust fund administrator, was hired by the Board in 1989 to oversee and grow the Foundation. In two years, he increased the reach of the Foundation to include five scholarship funds with three large funds supporting the three large school systems in the county.

2008

In 2008, the three affiliates are the original Venango Area Community Foundation, Clarion County Community Foundation and Forest County Community Foundation.

1996

Nine scholarship funds and five "field of interest" funds were active by 1996, including the Margaret Feldman memorial, the money from the Ben Franklin Trust provided by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and three smaller funds: Caring for the Caregiver, the Venango Educational Fund, and the Land of Laughter Playground fund. The county residents were beginning to see and appreciate the value

of a community foundation. In the late 1990s, more funds were established, including the Vera Lamey Fund. During this period the Venango Area Community Foundation grew from about \$276,000 in 1981 to more than 80 funds valued at \$5.5 million dollars. Under Kosak's shepherding, the Venango Area Community Foundation added affiliates and became the Bridge Builders Community Foundations.

Stephen Kosak left Bridge Builders in 2010 to work at PNC Bank, and the Board hired Trenton Moulin, who had previously worked for the American Red Cross. As directed by the Board of Trustees, Moulin began to increase community awareness of Bridge Builders and to encourage philanthropy at all levels—from individual and families to corporate giving. Under his direction, the assets of the Foundation have grown to \$20.5 million with 260 directed and scholarship funds.

2010

Harrington/ Rew

Sisters Galena Rew Harrington and Mary Rew were the first donors to the Venango Area Community Foundation. From long-standing Franklin families, they were members and officers of the Franklin Business Women's Club and were staunch supporters of the Franklin Library, the Humane Society, the Franklin YMCA, and other community organizations.

Ms. Harrington was a charter member of the Business Women's Club. They both were very active in their church, the First United Methodist Church of Franklin. Both Galena and Mary supported the Franklin Hospital.

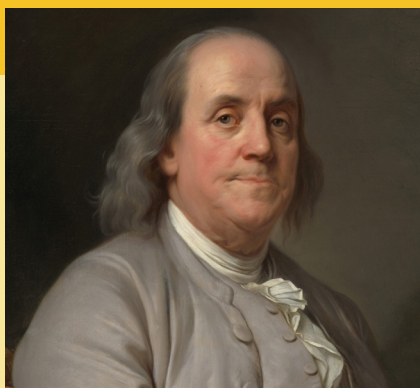
Along with many Franklin and Oil City society women, they served on the Board of Trustees of the Almira Home in Newcastle, Pennsylvania. They traveled extensively, both as a pair and with Mr. Blaine Harrington, Galena's husband. They were also well-known for their beautiful flower arrangements.

In 1976, one year after the creation and incorporation of the VACF, Mary and Galena applied to create a discretionary fund in their names, to be added to as they could before their deaths, and to continue in perpetuity. The Harrington/Rew fund has grown considerably over the years and currently provides yearly grants to organizations who serve the community. Galena passed away in 1979, and Mary in 1990.



When Ben Franklin died in 1790, he left 1000 pounds sterling to the cities of Boston and Philadelphia in gratitude for the welcome and opportunities they had afforded him during his lifetime. But he also left strict directions for the use of this money in a 200 -year trust.

For the first 100 years, the money was to be invested and to accrue interest, with that interest being used for loans to young tradesmen starting their own businesses. At the end of the 100 years, in 1890, the cities could take 75% of the principal and spend it for the benefit of their citizens. Franklin also left ideas in his will, suggesting that Boston could create a trade school and Philadelphia should connect their water supply to Wickahasson Creek. After much discussion, the city of Philadelphia opened the museum called the Franklin Institute. Boston had more difficulty deciding how to spend their money, but eventually opened a trade school with the help of Andrew Carnegie. At this point in time, Pennsylvania had about two million dollars to disperse.



At the end of 200 years, in 1990, the fund was required to "sunset." Franklin's stipulations for this were that 24% was to go to the city of Philadelphia and the remainder to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Again, after much discussion, the city of Philadelphia used its funds for grants for high school students wishing to study the trades. By an act of the Pennsylvania Legislature, the remainder of the money, about 834 thousand dollars, was distributed to the twenty existing Community Foundations across the Commonwealth.

Each community foundation created a perpetual trust fund to support community needs as determined by the community foundation's Board. Bridge Builders Community Foundations uses the distribution from this trust to fund grant requests from community members and organizations to encourage and develop educational opportunities within the county.

Ben Franklin

Affiliates

Since 2008, Bridge Builders Community Foundations has had three affiliates.

The original Venango Area Community Foundation, now serving just Venango County, Clarion County Community Foundation, and the Forest County Community Foundation.

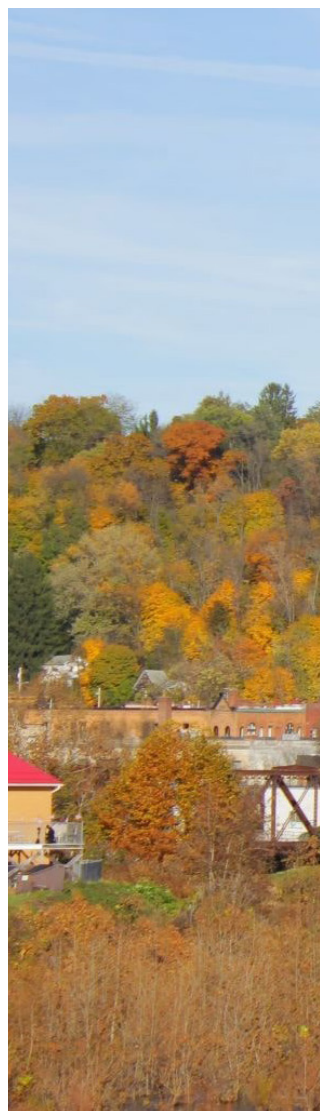
CCCF and FCCF were chartered in 2008, with small grants from VACF, and have continued to grow and impact their communities.

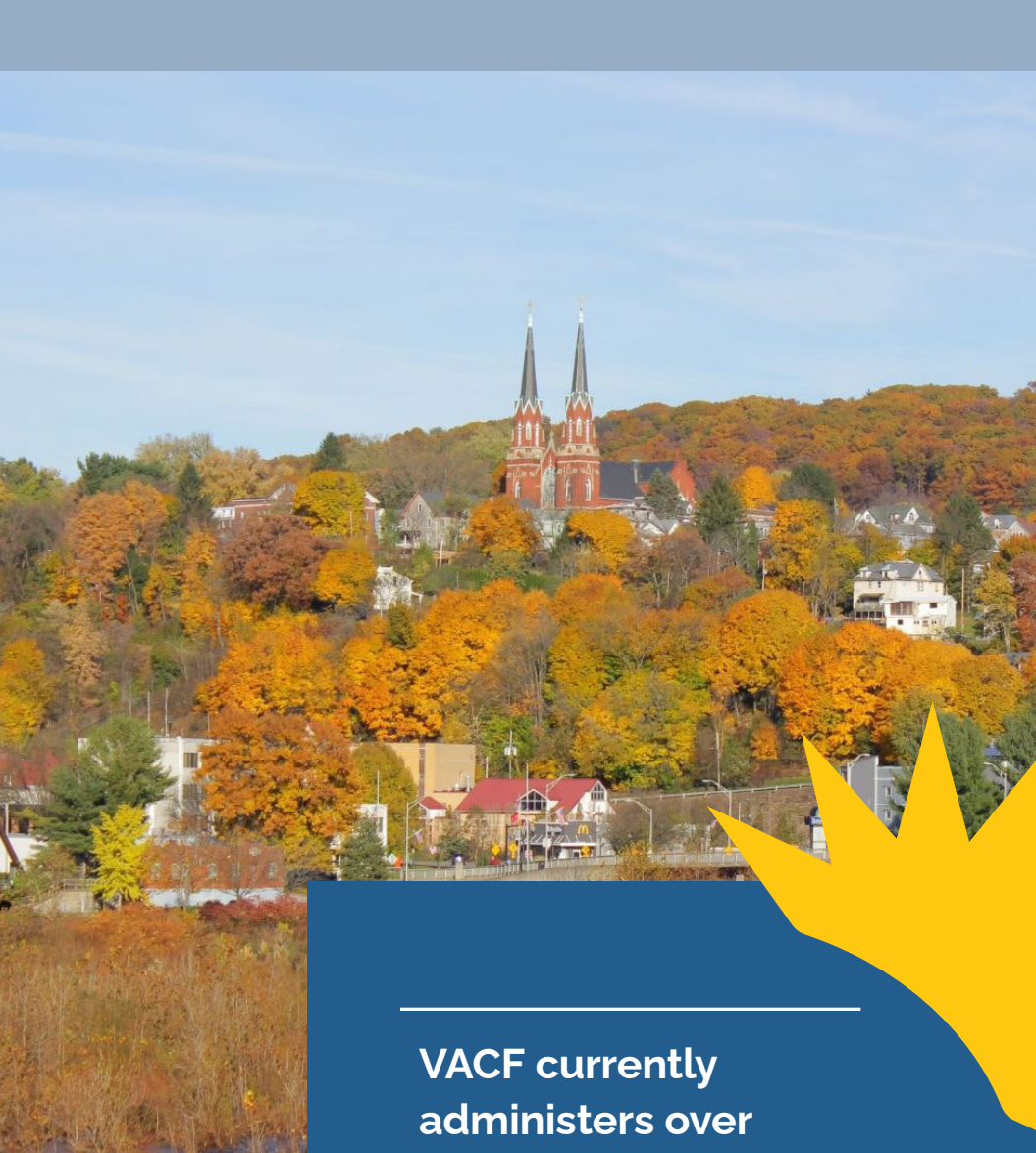




VACF was founded in 1975 by bankers who wanted to direct funds into the community according to the intent of some of the funds their banks held, and two forward-looking women with the same idea.

Together, sisters Galena Rew Harrington and Mary Rew and representatives from large community banks worked together to build a community foundation to serve Venango County and the surrounding area. With the interest and funds from the Ben Franklin Trust, the three affiliates formed Bridge Builders in 2007.





**VACF currently
administers over
150 funds and
has \$17 million
in assets**

William H. Locke

William H. Locke, a Pennsylvania native, graduated from Oil City High School in 1911, and worked his way through Penn State University to earn a degree in civil engineering. He graduated in 1917 and was immediately employed by United Natural Gas Company. After serving in the Army during the First World War, he returned to United to work until 1922, when he moved to Washington D.C., to work at the IRS as a valuation engineer.

Returning to Oil City in 1924, he became the Vice-President of United Natural Gas, and then became President of the Pennsylvania

Gas Company, located in Warren, PA. Upon his selection as President of National Fuel, in 1955, he and his second wife Mildred moved to New York City, where they lived until his retirement in 1959.

Mildred Locke established the trust known as the William H. Locke Memorial Scholarship Fund in 1976. She set the requirements for the yearly scholarship as a graduate of Oil City High School and academic achievement and character. This was the first scholarship fund created by the new Foundation.

Oil City, Pa. Thursday, May 26, 1977 THE DERRICK —5

4 Students Receive Scholarships



SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS — Four students at Oil City High School who have been awarded scholarships are (from left) Kristy Applequist, Pat Herman, Ed Lolley and Mark Bryan. Two of the students will receive \$1,000, while two will receive \$500 from the "William H. Locke Memorial Scholarship Fund."

Four students at Oil City High School have been awarded scholarships from the "William H. Locke Memorial Scholarship Fund."

Two of the students will receive \$1,000, while two will receive \$500. The students are: Kristy Applequist, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Applequist of 3 Stewart Rd. Mark Bryan, son of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick A. Bryan of 431 Main St., Roseville. Pat Herman, son of Mr. and Mrs. James P. Herman of 435 Colbert Ave. Ed Lolley, son of Mr. and Mrs. James H. Lolley of 215 First Ave., Roseville.

The "William H. Locke Memorial Scholarship Fund" was established through the Venango Area Community Foundation. It honors the memory of William H. Locke, a gas company executive who died in November 1975.

Mr. Locke's widow, Mildred, contributed \$100,000 to the foundation. The income from this invested money will be used to provide scholarships for graduating students at Oil City High School.

The foundation itself is a public charitable organization established in 1975 by the four area banks — First Seneca, administrative assistants, Carol E. Hutchinson, First Venango County Judge Will E. Brown. She is treasurer.

medical research or human relations, for example. Or donors may "restrict" their contribution, setting it aside for a specific use such as a scholarship fund.

The "William H. Locke Memorial Scholarship" can be used to pay college tuition, laboratory fees, textbook expenses and room and board.

Awards are made annually to graduates of Oil City High School. If graduates of Oil City High do not qualify to use the funds in any one year, then the fund can be used to provide a scholarship or other aid for needy graduates of other high schools in Venango County.

One other charitable fund has been recently established by the Venango Area Community Foundation. A sum of \$5,000 was given, in trust, to the foundation as the "Galena Rew Harrington Fund."

Members of the board of trustees of the community foundation are: William J. Ahrens, a retiree county commissioner who is president of the foundation. Judson W. Hill, a college professor and vice president of the foundation. Carol E. Hutchinson, administrative assistant, First Venango County Judge Will E. Brown. She is treasurer.

Locke Remembered By Sister

Margaret Feldman, a Franklin native, was a true Renaissance woman. The Margaret Feldman Foundation, established by her friends and colleagues after her death in 1992, is held by Bridge Builders Community Foundations and continues to benefit the community in a myriad of ways.



Ms. Feldman graduated from Franklin High School, Dana Hall School and Vassar College. She then moved to New York City to work in publishing and was friends with the famous wits of the Algonquin Round Table. At the beginning of World War II, she moved to Washington, D.C., where she was employed in the office of General "Wild Bill" Donovan, head of the OSS, the precursor to the CIA.

George Feldman, Ms. Feldman's father, had started Fulcrum Oil Company in Franklin, which manufactured lubricants for watches, a fitting match for his own father Bernard's jewelry store, which closed in 2025. Upon George's death and the end of the War, Ms. Feldman returned to Franklin where she became the CEO of Fulcrum Oil, one of the very few female CEOs in the country at that time.

Fulcrum Oil was sold in the early sixties. Ms. Feldman joked that, because the oil was so smooth and fine that watchmakers and repairmen needed so little, she could sell one barrel and live on the proceeds for life. She attended Allegheny College to earn her teaching credentials and taught English at Franklin High School until 1970, when she was required to retire under school board policy. As a Franklin resident, she was active in many community activities and spearheaded an activist effort to collect funds for Radio Free Europe. Her experiences in New York City and Washington D.C., brought a wider perspective to the small town. Ms. Feldman was also active as a member and officer in the Oil City chapter of AAUW (American Association of University Women) and the Wednesday Club, a local literary society.

Even upon retiring, Ms. Feldman never stopped learning or contributing. She held summer reading "clubs" for struggling readers and was "fiercely dedicated to literature and writing."

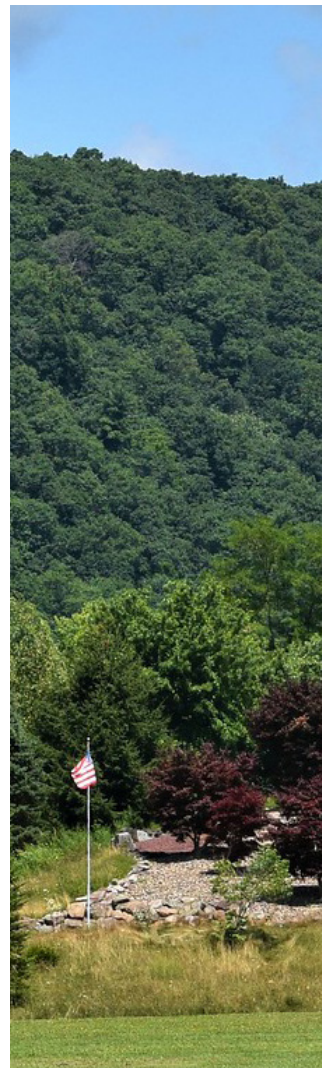
Upon her death in 1992, her friends, family, and teaching colleagues created the Margaret Feldman Foundation to continue her legacy of literary education. The main focus of this fund has evolved into a yearly essay writing competition in which local high school students write essays on a given topic. Cash prizes are given to the winning writers.

Margaret Feldman



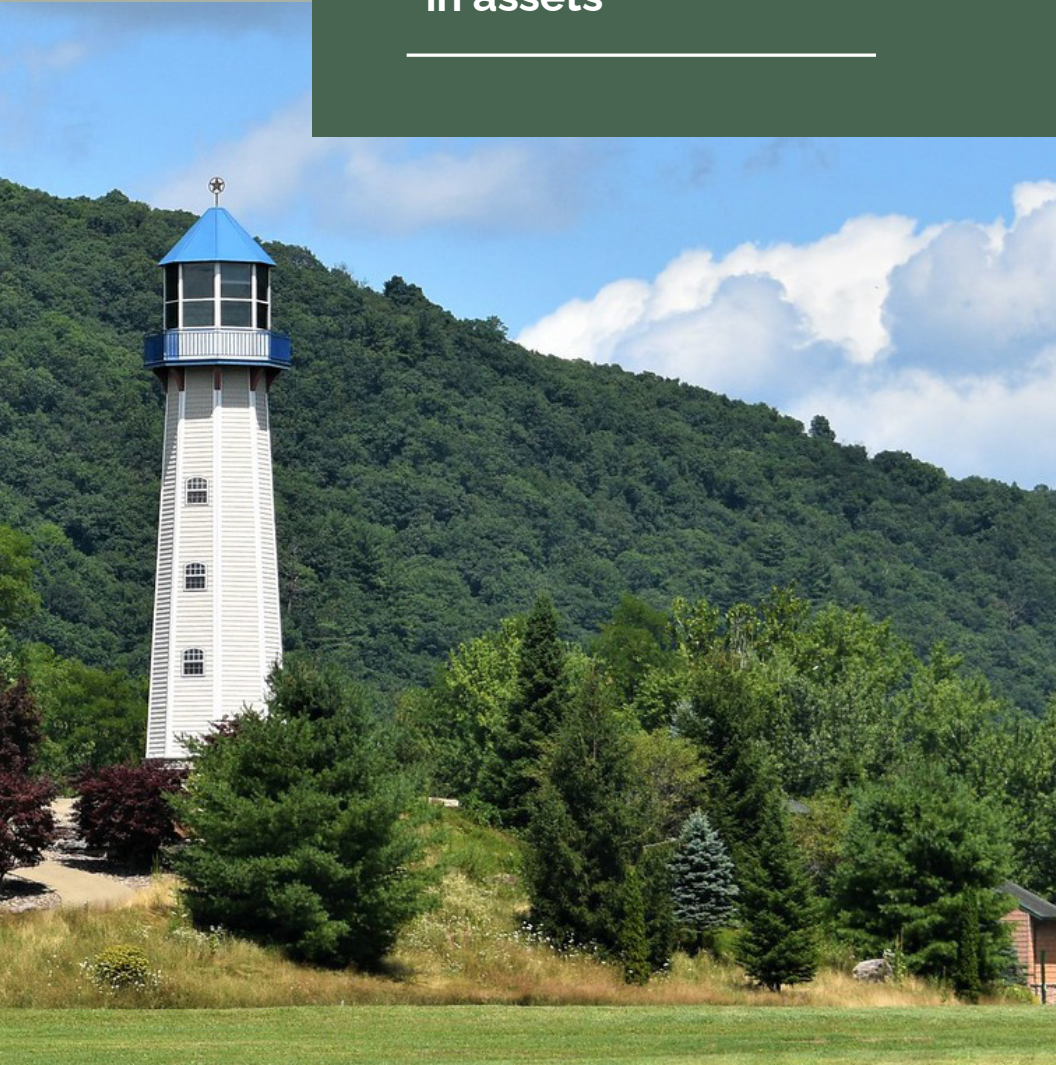
Members of the Forest County community started their affiliate at the same time as Clarion County in 2008. Its impact has been substantial as reported by Lynn McCaslin, long-time Affiliate Board member and former President of the BBCF Board of Trustees. Organizations highlighted by McCaslin include supporting the installation of the water system for the local grange hall, supporting the ambulance service and the health center, and donating to the schools.

Other grants have gone to the Pennsylvania Firefly Festival and to Rails to Trails to build and maintain the local trails which provide recreational opportunities to local residents and county visitors.





**FCCF currently
administers over
45 funds and
has \$1 million
in assets**





Four members of the Clarion area were instrumental in creating their affiliate. Dr. Charles Marlin, former President and Board of Trustee member, lauded the impact of the Foundation on the Clarion area—noting the creation of the Janice Horn Memorial Playground at the Blueprint Park, grants for improvements and features to the Tri-County Animal Rescue and to the libraries. Scholarships created by families to honor loved ones also make up a substantial part of the affiliate's philanthropy.

CCCF also works closely with the McElhattan Foundation as the McElhattans support their family's roots in Knox, PA. This Foundation works to support community development in both Knox, in Clarion County, and in Franklin, in Venango County. Included in these partnerships have been grants for increased fire department and ambulance equipment and services, telehealth programs, COVID relief, and help for cancer patients.





**CCCF currently
administers over
20 funds and
has \$1 million
in assets**

Janice Horn

An afternoon walk in Clarion, Pennsylvania spurred the creation of a multi-generational playground and park for the residents and visitors in the downtown area. Acting on her desire to see accessible and walkable playgrounds for Clarion residents, Janice Horn, Clarion County Community Foundation Board member, established a fund to design and maintain parks for the city.

Part of her dream came to fruition in June 2024 as the Janice Horn Memorial Playground, part of the Clarion Blueprint Committee efforts, was opened and dedicated.

Horn was a retired librarian and a very active community volunteer. She brought her concerns and ideas for additional playground and park space to the Clarion Blueprint Committee in 2020. With their collaboration and multiple forms of community support and fundraising, Phase One of the park was completed in 2024. State and local groups and individuals were instrumental in raising the money.

While Janice Horn passed away in March 2024, her ideas and legacy will be remembered and celebrated in Clarion for years to come.





William and Elizabeth Snell

Forward-looking William and Elizabeth Snell established a large Field of Interest fund in 2021. This fund has already altered the future of many young people in Venango County.

Through the W & E Fund that focuses on trades and applied technology, students in Venango area schools have experienced real-life project management, building construction and graphic design in the projects funded by their grants. And, by providing nursing scholarships and apprenticeships, the Fund has enabled students to both begin and complete their education and develop professional skills.

William Snell was an Air Force veteran and became an aeronautical engineer. While working for U.S. Steel, he also enjoyed tinkering and building objects around his house. His wife Elizabeth White Snell also worked for U.S. Steel. She was determined to help others, particularly young girls, to overcome stereotypes about girls and STEM professions.

Recipients of the grants from the W and E Fund have included Rachelle Surrena, art teacher at Franklin Area High School, who spearheaded the design and implementation of a mural painted by her students and the local community. This project will have lasting effects for the students and community members who

worked to bring a forgotten moment of Franklin history back to life.

The GEMS program was another recipient, under the leadership of Oil City GEMS leaders Jennifer Heffernan, Angie Harriett,



Marie Krutz, and GEMS founder Laura Jones. The middle-school girls built miniature clubhouses which used all the construction techniques used on full-size jobs—measuring, cutting, using tools, understanding scale, and much more. The Experimental Aircraft Association, under the direction of Jackson Donovan, exposed children to the use of drones and aircraft simulators. The W and E fund allowed many more children to participate in the Young Eagles program.

The W and E Fund is changing young lives in Venango County.

In 2021, Franklin Area High School art teacher Rachelle Surrena could only dream of creating a downtown community mural; BBCF, using grants from several discretionary funds, made that dream come true.

A discussion with art colleagues in Grove City spurred Rachelle to propose a community-created mural to the late Ronnie Beith, the Events and Marketing Coordinator for Franklin. Ronnie recommended applying for a grant through the BBCF, as "its funds and grants are always community focused."



Rachelle's request for \$13,028 was granted by the BBCF Grants Committee through several discretionary funds, including the Witherup Family Community Fund, the Ben Franklin Endowment, and the William and Elizabeth Fund for the Trades. These funds all support the arts and community spirit.

Rachelle's students began by brainstorming ideas with the late Carolee Michener, Franklin's beloved historian. Finding a 1910 picture postcard of the African American Sheepskin Band proved to be the inspiration needed, and the design work began.

After much research and preliminary design preparation, Franklin High School art students used the high school makerspace to print the final design on special fabric interfacing. They learned to use weather-proof paint. To involve the community, panels were taken to schools and community gatherings, where individuals of all ages painted the design. "It was really a giant 'paint-by-number,'" said Rachelle.

Her art students learned not only special design and painting techniques, but they also learned how to engage a community and carry out a project to completion., Rachelle said, "I saw students take ownership of the mural and develop leadership and project management skills. At the end, they showed

great feelings of pride and a real connection to the community."

On June 25, 2022, when Elizabeth saw the mural for the first time, she cried tears of joy.

The mural is located in Franklin, on the side wall of the Barrow-Civic Theatre in the alley between Liberty and Buffalo Streets.

Frank and Eleanor Miese

Beloved residents of Cooperstown in Venango County, Frank and Eleanor Miese left a legacy that will positively impact that small area for years to come. Before their deaths in 2005 and 2014, they established a scholarship fund and a community support grant fund to benefit underprivileged children and families in need of assistance.

Their scholarships have aided Cooperstown area residents in their college and technical careers. The grants have encouraged and provided support for family events such as the Father's Day Fishing Derby, summer Movies in the Park, and the Christmas Island festivities.

The Miese fund has also awarded extensive grants to the Cooperstown library, enabling it to expand its services and program offerings, developing a true community spirit.



Cindy and John Bracken lived in Oil City for 43 years, where he was an executive with PNC Bank. Their four sons, David, Mark, John and Benjamin all graduated from Oil City High School. Cindy and John were very active in the community, delivering Meals on Wheels, with John serving as president of the Oil City YMCA and spearheading the design and building of the new facility. In April 2019, John was honored by the Shade Tree Commission for his service to the Oil City community with the planting of two London plane trees.

As many families do, the Bracken family decided that with grown children and grandchildren, material needs are fewer and fewer. Cindy and John and their children decided that they would like to give back to the community rather than purchase individual gifts. Thus, the idea of the Bracken Scholarship was born.

Cindy worked with Trenton Moulin, Executive Director of BBCF to create a plan that would reflect her family's values and history with Oil City schools. Since its inception in 2013, the Bracken Scholarship has been awarded to an Oil City High School senior. This

scholarship is unique in that it is renewable for the years of the student's education. Cindy and her sons choose the recipient from the many applicants through the BBCF Scholarship process. They look for academic ability, community service and financial need. Cindy Bracken reported that the three awardees so far have become "like members of the family."

Evan Carll, Jenna Breth and Krista Schneider have been the first three scholarship recipients. Evan and Jenna have gone on to become professionals in their fields and Krista will complete her degree in 2025.

"The impact of this scholarship on us (the Bracken family) has been extremely rewarding." Cindy Bracken



John and Cindy Bracken

Chester A. and Beulah Baum

Chester A. and Beulah Baum established a trust with BBCF in 1981. This provided significant funds for Cranberry students who wished to continue their education. Their scholarship awards money to Cranberry area students who are of good character and have financial need to complete their education.

The Baums lived on a farm in the Bredinsburg area of Venango County, in Cranberry Township. They were active in the local Methodist Church and the Bredinsburg Community Association. Mrs. Baum was a musician, a singer, and was well known for her contributions to local entertainment. The Baums were also supporters of the local Cancer Aid Society.

Mr. Baum was a graduate of Allegheny College in Meadville, a member of the class of 1912. He was also a member of the local Masonic Lodge for over 50 years.

Beulah passed away in 1984 and Chester in 1985. Their legacy of hard work and community involvement lives on through their scholarship fund.

In the true spirit of a Community Foundation honoring family and community needs, Mary Chapman created the Viola Falconi Communion Dress Fund in honor and memory of her mother.

As a little girl during the Depression, Viola, Mary's mother, was unable to have the traditional new white dress and veil for her first communion. The family had little money—Viola's father was in the hospital and her mother was trying to take care of Viola and her eight brothers and sisters. A generous woman in her home in Lewis Run, PA, gave her a dress and shoes anonymously, and Viola never forgot this kindness.

When Viola passed away in 2010, Mary used insurance money to create a fund in her mother's name to ensure that young girls (and occasionally boys) would never find themselves in the same situation. Mary's favorite year was when she was able to outfit both a little girl and her father who were both taking their first communions together. She works with Sunday School teachers to determine need and continues the tradition of an anonymous gift to the child.

The Viola Falconi Fund seeks to provide a community need that is rarely identified, but which has a lasting impact on our area.



Viola Falconi



Young Eagles Program

A grant from Bridge Builders Community Foundations enabled Jackson Donovan, a young pilot with the Experimental Aircraft Association, to expand youth services and the Young Eagles at the Venango Regional Airport. The grant-funded purchase of iPads and a projector made the ground school simulations much more interactive for the 30 children attending each program.

Jackson, is an honors graduate of Edinboro University. He grew up in Franklin and has been a pilot for many years. He got started in aviation through his participation in Franklin Library programs, offered to both boys and girls through the GEMS program. He is a certified flight instructor, guiding the next generation of pilots as they take to the skies.





Partnerships & Projects

Over the years, Bridge Builders Community Foundations has had the honor and privilege of working closely with local and regional banks to assist them in identifying community needs and working with them to meet those needs.

PNC

A valued and long-standing partner in Bridge Builders' philanthropic journey is PNC Charitable Trusts and Foundations. With roots tracing back to Pittsburgh in the mid-1800s and deep ties to our region through its predecessor banks, PNC has played a vital role in supporting charitable initiatives throughout Venango County. Bridge Builders Community

Foundations is proud to collaborate with PNC Bank in stewarding grantmaking efforts from the Samuel Justus Charitable Trust and other significant charitable trusts—ensuring that the legacy of giving continues to make a meaningful impact across our communities.

McElhattan Foundation

The McElhattan Foundation established a partnership with Bridge Builders in 2018, almost immediately after its founding in 2017. Based in Pittsburgh, the McElhattan Foundation focuses on five areas of life: Ending Death on the Job, Out-of-School-Time Learning, Expanding Educator Diversity, End-of-Life Planning & Care, and Economic Development in Knox & Franklin, PA. Funds dedicated to community

development and education have greatly contributed to the increase in opportunities and services for the county schools, the YMCAs, parks, ambulance services, and afterschool programs such as GEMS and robotics programs. Sarah Pistella, Program Officer, stated that "The McElhattan Foundation and Bridge Builders are working together to be conveners—this is a game-changer for the two communities."

GEMS

In 2013, upon her retirement and move to Venango County, Laura Reasoner Jones brought her international program, GEMS (Girls Excelling in Math and Science), to continue her work of encouraging girls to explore and experience STEM careers. Jones was referred to Bridge Builders to explore possible funding opportunities and met with Trenton Moulin, Executive Director.

Moulin recognized the importance and value of the GEMS program and not only suggested possibilities for grant funding but proposed that BBCF become GEMS' fiscal sponsor.

Having a fiscal sponsor opened up many more opportunities and possibilities than Jones could have ever dreamed of. With the backing of BBCF, the local GEMS program won and continues to win multiple national and international grants such as mentor program grants from NCWIT, evaluation grants from Google, equipment grants from Lego and continued work with NIOST. Some of these grants also came with research opportunities, providing impact studies with the help of the McElhattan Foundation.

GEMS has grown to more than 16 local clubs and has at least one club in every elementary school in the county. Over the years of its presence in Venango County, over 6000 girls have had hands-on STEM experiences designed to help them see themselves in a STEM career.

Success stories include young women who are completing studies in biomedical engineering, computer science, electrical engineering, nursing, computational biology, and science education, to name a few.

In their club meetings, held at local schools or libraries, GEMS members learn to solder, to dissect cows' eyes, to program in several computer languages and to build model houses which adhere to local construction codes. They have also become members of First Lego League teams. GEMS clubs have taken grant-funded field trips to Pittsburgh's Robotics Day, to Carnegie Mellon and Slippery Rock Universities to explore college, and have visited the Google Headquarters in Pittsburgh. They have met and talked with female STEM employees of NASA. Their lives have been enriched by this program.

Bridge Builders Community Foundations' fiscal sponsorship of GEMS has greatly expanded the breadth and depth of the GEMS program both locally and nationally through partnerships with McElhattan Foundation and the Justus funds through PNC. The impact of this 30-year old program will continue to grow, thanks to BBCF.







The Bridge Literary Art Center

The Bridge Literary Arts Center Fund is the perfect example of a community need and interest being funded by community donors.

In the early 1990s, a group of writers and poets met for workshops and music at the Barrow-Civic Theater in Franklin. This small group organized musical arts and writing workshops. Now, 31 years later, the Bridge Literary Arts Center hosts workshops, open mic sessions, poetry and writing clinics, and even storytelling events. In 2024, the Bridge opened its second Literary Arts Festival to a large crowd, and plans to resume the publication of its journal with juried submissions from northwestern Pennsylvania residents.

Bridge Builders Community Foundations supported the Bridge Literary Arts Center through grant funding and by helping register participants in the Literary Arts Festival. They anticipate an even more intensive partnership in the future.

According to Philip Terman, founder, one of the highlights of 2024 was an exhibit entitled "Ekphrasis: Writers Responding to Art," held at the Red Brick Gallery in Foxburg, Pennsylvania. This exhibit connected writers from the Literary Arts Center with visual artists from Arts Oil City, producing collaborative works of art and the printed word.

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our past, we look to the

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