

Fond du Lac Area
FOUNDATION

COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT 2025



Dear Friends and Partners,

As we reflect on a year of significant growth and connection, I am energized by the patchwork of nonprofits, businesses, and people that make Fond du Lac County thrive. Our forward-thinking vision has always been to help our community invest in bold futures, and this year, we are taking a major step forward. We have developed a new strategic plan designed to ensure we are not just treating the symptoms of community challenges, but addressing their root causes to create permanent, systemic solutions.

This new roadmap sharpens our focus across four core accountability areas: **Impact & Regional Contributions, Financial Stewardship, Leadership & Governance, and Reputation.** By prioritizing strategic philanthropy and disrupting traditional models by introducing **high-value Impact Grants** and our first **24-hour giving day**, we are evolving to become an even more active partner in our community's progress. This direction ensures that every dollar of our permanent endowment is leveraged for the greatest possible community return, from education and wellness to housing security and the arts

Our commitment remains clear: *to create a better community by promoting philanthropy and providing leadership on the issues that matter most, today and forever.* This strategic plan is more than a document; it is our pledge to move from simple giving to true impact investing, ensuring our region remains a vibrant place where everyone can flourish. Thank you for your continued trust and for joining us as we build this brighter future together.

With gratitude,

Greg Giles
Executive Director



Staff and board members honored our 50th anniversary with the ribbon cutting for the newly named Carl Tonjes Street – the block of 14th Street where Founder Carl Tonjes lived and operated the Foundation from 1975 to 1989.

OUR CORE VALUES



STEWARDSHIP

We honor the legacy and trust of donors by protecting community assets and ensuring that resources create lasting impact.

- We serve as a responsible custodian of charitable funds by investing them prudently, granting them thoughtfully, and ensuring they serve the community's evolving needs.
- We steward every gift with care and purpose while building trust and accountability with donors, stakeholders, and the public.
- We are committed to positively impacting and celebrating philanthropy in our community.

ETHICS

We operate with integrity, transparency, and accountability, ensuring all decisions comply with regulation and align with our mission to serve the public good.

- We are accredited by the Council on Foundations' National Standards. This accreditation signifies our voluntary adherence to operational quality, legal compliance, and effective grant-making, and it demonstrates our commitment to sector-leading integrity beyond minimal legal requirements.

- We complete an annual certified audit by an independent accounting firm, guaranteeing accountability and compliance while confirming all financial statements are accurate, funds are managed prudently, and the Foundation is upholding its fiduciary duties.
- We distribute an annual report and bi-annual fund statements to fundholders, demonstrating transparency and keeping donors fully informed of their funds' performance and the collective impact of our work in serving the public good.

LEADERSHIP

We are a trusted convenor, championing collaboration and inspiring generosity to address local challenges. We promise to be proactive, step forward with vision, and be deeply rooted in the needs of the Fond du Lac region.

- We convene nonprofit, business, and civic leaders to address shared challenges, building partnerships that blend philanthropy, business, and leadership.
- We provide data, insight, and research to guide community priorities.
- We advocate for the long-term wellbeing of the Fond du Lac area.

Honoring a Memory Through Opportunity

Michael Wolfe is remembered for many things: his easy smile and signature dimple, his laughter, and his warmth. He approached life with enthusiasm, embracing every opportunity to learn. A 1999 Goodrich High School graduate, he excelled academically and was involved in band, athletics, Key Club, Math Team, and community service.

At Purdue University, Michael quickly embraced campus life, joining organizations such as the crew team, Habitat for Humanity, and the Society of Professional Engineers.

Michael's life was cut tragically short in an automobile accident in October 1999 while home from Purdue. Yet even in loss, his kindness continued. As an organ donor, Michael extended the lives of many, a final reflection of his caring nature and respect for others.

The Michael J. Wolfe Memorial Fund was created as a heartfelt way to honor a life defined by curiosity, kindness, and an unwavering desire to help others. Established by Michael's parents, Jim and Cathy, the fund ensures that his spirit continues to encourage students in Fond du Lac County to learn, grow, and pursue purposeful futures, just as Michael did.

When creating the scholarship, Michael parents sought a way to reflect the many dimensions of his life: academic achievement, a love of sports and music, meaningful

involvement in school, and a commitment to serving others. Their hope has been a living reality within our holdings.

Now in its 26th year, the fund has awarded **\$30,650 to 39 students**, each carrying forward a piece of Michael's light. Through this scholarship, Michael's legacy endures in every student who embraces learning, leads with heart, and gives back in his honor.



Michael with parents Cathy and Jim Wolfe

WANT TO START YOUR OWN FUND?

Establishing your own named charitable fund doesn't require wealth and isn't complicated. Our Donor Relations team will work with you every step of the way to create a fund that achieves your charitable vision.

Call us today at 920.921.2215 to find out how!

A Scholarship's Journey: From the Welles' Vision to Johanna's Legacy



Johanna Schultz

In 2025, the Fond du Lac Area Foundation marked a meaningful milestone as the final payment was made to a recipient of the **Frances and John Welles Science Scholarship**. Since 2011, this recurring award supported local students pursuing studies in the sciences, reflecting the Welles family's deep belief in education and opportunity. Its impact will continue to be felt in the accomplishments of the students whose journeys it helped shape.

The scholarship began a new chapter in the fall of 2023, when the fundholder made the heartfelt decision to transition the award into a memorial scholarship honoring Johanna Schultz, a 20-year-old Marian University student whose life was tragically cut short in March 2023. Johanna was known for her warmth, her curiosity, and her passion for learning, making the fund's new purpose a fitting tribute to her spirit.

A deep connection to **Laconia High School** runs through both the scholarship's past and present. The Welles award was reserved for Laconia seniors, and because Johanna herself was a proud Laconia alumna, the memorial scholarship now honors her legacy by supporting Laconia seniors and alumni alike.

Today, the **Johanna Schultz Memorial Scholarship** stands as a testament to resilience, remembrance, and the power of educational opportunity to carry forward a legacy of love.

EMPOWER YOUR EDUCATION

To view our expansive scholarship catalog, visit www.fdlareafoundation.com.

Opening Doors to Education for Single Parents, One Grant at a Time

When a single parent chooses to pursue a degree, it can shift the entire trajectory of a family's future. That's exactly what grants to **Marian University's Working Families Grant Program** make possible, and the Fond du Lac Area Foundation is honored to support their mission through both our **competitive grant cycles** and **donor directed grants**.

For Ashley, returning to school as a single parent once felt impossible. Life had become repetitive and isolating, and she struggled to envision a path forward beyond the daily routines she shared with her young daughter. She longed to create a more secure future for them both.

Through Working Families, Ashley found what she needed to take that step. The program offered not only tuition assistance but also a community that believed in her potential. With this support, she was able to focus fully on her coursework while still being the present, engaged mother she wanted to be. That balance allowed her to excel, **graduating in three years with a double major**, continuing on to **pursue her master's degree**, and modeling for her daughter the **power of perseverance**.

Today, Ashley is thriving in a meaningful career, and her daughter is growing up with a front-row seat to her mother's remarkable journey.



THE WORKING FAMILIES GRANT PROGRAM

is one of the nation's most comprehensive support systems for economically disadvantaged single parents. It provides:

- Tuition assistance to reduce student loan debt
- Monthly stipends for rent, childcare, and food
- Emergency funds for unexpected hardships
- Support services

To learn more about upcoming grant cycles, visit
www.fdlareafoundation.com.



Thank you for helping us celebrate **50 years** of generous giving that ensures the story of **Fond du Lac County** will be a great one for generations to come. **Here's to 50 more!**



2025 Carl Tonjes Inspired Giving Award: Rick and Joni Parks

Rick and Joni Parks embody the heart of inspired giving, bringing possibility and genuine care to every corner of our community. Their long and meaningful relationship with the Fond du Lac Area Foundation reflects a deep commitment to lifting others up and creating opportunities where they are needed most. Guided by compassion and a belief in the power of personal action, the couple have spent years helping others feel seen, supported, and hopeful about what is possible.

One of the most notable parts of Rick and Joni's philanthropic story is their passion for supporting students. They established meaningful scholarship opportunities for incoming freshmen and extended support to students in Shoals and New Washington, Indiana, the communities where they grew up. In 2023, they also established the Parks Family Society Insurance Scholarship for the children and grandchildren of Society Insurance employees..

The Parks' generosity reaches far beyond education. Rick and Joni have supported critical community services through organizations such as St. Vincent de Paul and St. Katharine Drexel Shelter. Their giving philosophy is rooted in the belief that it should feel good to help others, a mindset that guides their continued involvement.

Together, Rick and Joni champion collaboration and resourcefulness, reinforcing shared responsibility in building a better world. Together, they inspire others to act with purpose and to see generosity as a powerful force for lasting community change.



The Carl Tonjes Inspired Giving Award honors trailblazing individuals who embody the legacy of founder Carl Tonjes by continually stepping up to meet community needs and creating real possibility, change, and hope for Fond du Lac County through exceptional and deeply connected giving.

2025 Legacy Award: Sandi Roehrig

For more than two decades, Sandi Roehrig shaped the Fond du Lac Area Foundation with a blend of courage, innovation, and unwavering community commitment.

During her 23 years as Executive Director, she helped guide the Foundation through a period of profound evolution. Philanthropy expanded beyond the wealthy as donor-advised funds made the “give while you live” philosophy accessible to everyday residents.

Sandi’s leadership sparked the creation of treasured community assets, including the Fond du Lac Arts Council and the Fond du Lac Area Women’s Fund. She considered her greatest achievement the role she played in launching the National Standards program for community foundations. Sandi and the State of Wisconsin helped lead this initiative, which strengthened donor confidence and set the operational framework that continues to guide the Foundation today.

Sandi’s tenure included challenges such as the severe flooding in 2007 and the economic recession in 2008, events that tested the community and the Foundation’s resources. Yet these moments only highlighted her steady leadership. Guided by a strong and conservative financial philosophy along with the foresight of building unrestricted funds, Sandi ensured the Foundation remained resilient and responsive.



The Legacy Award honors those whose partnership with the Fond du Lac Area Foundation has significantly strengthened local nonprofits and enhanced the quality of life in Fond du Lac County through exceptional community philanthropy.

Instead of simply weathering the storms, she positioned the organization to continue meeting unmet needs, supporting partners, and reinforcing its role as a dependable pillar for the community. Her positive, forward-looking approach helped the Foundation emerge stronger and more united, ready to serve with even greater purpose.

Grounded in her “attitude of gratitude,” Sandi’s legacy continues to inspire all who believe in the power of community and the possibility of flipping the script for good.

NEW FUNDS ESTABLISHED IN 2025

Bridges of Dodge County, Inc. Fund*	Agency Endowment
Diverse Options, Inc BD Fund*	Agency Endowment
Diverse Options, Inc FDL Fund	Agency Endowment
Dodge County Humane Society Animal Care Fund*	Agency Endowment
Dodge County Toy Bank, Inc. Fund*	Agency Endowment
FDL High School Special Needs Students Endowment Fund	Agency Endowment
Friends of Horicon Marsh Education & Visitor Center Fund*	Agency Endowment
Horicon Phoenix Program Giving Fund*	Agency Endowment
Pregnancy Support Center of Dodge County Fund*	Agency Endowment
United Way of Dodge County Emergency Relief Fund*	Agency Endowment
United Way of Dodge County Fund*	Agency Endowment
Auten Family Fund*	Designated Purpose
Behind the Scenes Fund*	Designated Purpose
City of Fond du Lac Fire Rescue Fund	Designated Purpose
City of Fond du Lac Police Department Fund	Designated Purpose
David & Linda Schollmeyer Legacy Fund	Designated Purpose
BDACF Impact Grant Fund*	Donor Advised
Greg & Laura Giles Family Fund	Donor Advised
Klodowski Family Fund*	Donor Advised
Nici Colwin Fund	Donor Advised
Tripp & Colleen Ahern Family Fund	Donor Advised
Tyler J. Lavey Fund	Donor Advised
BDACF Disaster Relief Fund*	Field of Interest
Barb Gray Piano Scholarship Fund	Scholarship
BDHS Class of 1963 Spirit Inspire Award Fund*	Scholarship
Bob Koch American Legion Scholarship Fund*	Scholarship
Donald B. & Janet K. Mayo Scholarship Fund	Scholarship
G&L Foundation Technical Scholarship for MPTC Fund	Scholarship
John Johnson UW-Madison Scholarship Fund	Scholarship
Marshmen Foundation Scholarship Fund	Scholarship
Mike Bushkie Memorial Scholarship Fund	Scholarship
Tom Radke Memorial Scholarship Fund*	Scholarship

*Denotes funds of the Beaver Dam Area Community Foundation

2025 GRANT IMPACT

	GRANTS AWARDED	GRANT AWARDED
Grant Cycle I	37	\$90,000
Grant Cycle II	32	\$65,000
Impact Grant	6	\$145,000
Rural Vitality Grant	7	\$50,000

New Funds Established in 2025	32
Scholarships Awarded	297
Scholarship Dollars Awarded	\$409,528

FAMILY OF FUNDS BY FUND TYPE	FUND TALLY
Donor Advised	144
Designated	126
Scholarship	125
Agency	119
Field of Interest	45
Unrestricted	32
To be Determined	17

FDLAF HISTORICAL DATA

	TOTAL ASSETS	GIFTS RECEIVED	TOTAL GIFTS	GRANTS AWARDED	TOTAL GRANTS	FUND TALLY
2025	\$88,461,223	1,621	\$4,515,645	1,162	\$3,703,611	608
2024	\$77,864,065	1,555	\$6,453,009	997	\$3,471,514	582
2023	\$68,786,798	1,115	\$3,877,141	960	\$3,523,241	532
2022	\$60,123,049	1,038	\$3,471,994	862	\$3,404,312	491
2021	\$72,684,459	1,130	\$6,499,578	779	\$1,989,162	464
2020	\$61,934,610	1,362	\$7,333,992	533	\$1,918,248	419

*Fiscal year runs January 1 - December 31



South Shore Chorale utilized a \$2,500 **unrestricted grant from the Community Fund**. With more than 180 voices and a 60-piece orchestra, the Chorale delivered a stunning performance to a sold-out Fond du Lac audience. This investment helped bring a truly memorable artistic experience to Fond du Lac County.



A \$16,582 **Rural Vitality Grant** sponsored by **Compeer Financial** helped Dodgeland High School add a new graphics printer to its Fab Lab, giving students hands-on design experience while creating banners, signs, and products for local schools and businesses. Rural Vitality Grants are awarded to communities in both Fond du Lac County and Dodge County.



Fond du Lac Area
FOUNDATION

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ACCREDITED
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SAVE THE DATE EARLY 2027

