

Online resources a big boost to philanthropy causes



James A. Cutright, executive director and CEO of the Ashland County Community Foundation, knows the importance of keeping an up-to-date and informative website.

Ashland County Community Foundation ACCF executive director and CEO James M. Cutright explained why his organization has embraced information technology.

“Philanthropy is an exchange, there’s a giver and a receiver,” Cutright said. “As a community foundation, we operate at the intersection of those two things. We have those who are donors, who choose to give, and we obviously provide grants to organizations in the community that have needs. The internet has been an amazing tool for us to be able to facilitate both sides of this exchange.”

ACCF is constantly improving its website to better serve donors and recipients. The site includes tools to access information, donate and apply for funds. “We feel as though we’re educating, we’re giving our donors an opportunity to learn about how they might be able to give,” Cutright said. “Those who receive grants or scholarships can access that information and professional advisors can connect with us through the plan portal. We also have a private board portal so our board members can access meeting minutes, agendas, that sort of thing.”

By constantly updating news on the site, ACCF keeps the people they serve engaged. ACCF takes into account the IT generation gap. “We almost have to have a foot in two worlds,” Cutright said. “It’s really important to us, for example, to place print ads and send out press releases because we know the older segment of the population is still picking up the newspaper and getting their news that way. But, when we engage younger donors, few of them have newspaper subscriptions. So they’re primarily getting their news from Facebook, or using their iPad or iPhone to access one of the news organizations.”

ACCF also uses LinkedIn, a business- and employment-oriented social networking site. “LinkedIn is more of a professional forum, whereas Facebook tends to be more of a personal forum,” Cutright said. “So we’re trying to get the message out to people who are business owners, people who are more serious in their giving.” Cutright of ACCF pointed out that, no matter what role IT plays in philanthropy, the focus must remain on the people who give and receive. “We hope that technology never totally replaces in-person contact, because there is such value in those personal relations that can be built,” Cutright said.