

A Banner Year for ACCF

At its Annual Meeting held on July 30, 2018 the Ashland County Community Foundation officially “closed its books” on its 23rd year of operation, and its finest to-date.



Board Chairman Ken Milligan greeted those in attendance and introduced ACCF’s executive director, Jim Cutright, to report on the achievements of the past year. The theme of Mr. Cutright’s comments were “Building for the Future”, as he enumerated the various ways in which the Foundation is creating opportunities for lasting impact in the Ashland County community.

From the fiscal period of July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018 generous donors created an all-time, twelve-month high of 43 new endowment funds, eclipsing the previous mark of 35 established just in the prior 2016-2017 year.

In his remarks, Jim tempered expectations that the Foundation could maintain that rate of growth indefinitely, “While it may not be possible to add this quantity of new funds each year, we recognize that each of the 433 endowment funds for which we currently provide stewardship represents a permanent relationship that carries a tremendous responsibility for us to manage carefully. If no new funds were ever added, due to the perpetuity that endowment represents, we would still have a significant amount of work each year.”

Encouraged by ACCF’s executive committee to reflect on his past six years of service as the Foundation’s first-ever executive director, succeeding ACCF’s venerable founding president, Dr. Lucille Ford, Mr. Cutright provided statistics demonstrating the growth under his “second generation” leadership.

Since 2012, ACCF has developed its donor base from 5,790 to 6,772 individuals having made gifts to the Foundation; endowment fund creation has increased by 76%, from 246 to 433 funds; assets have grown from \$16.2 million to \$49.5 million; and total dollars re-invested in our community, through grants, scholarships and agency distributions has risen from \$5.2 million to \$12.9 million.

In 2015, a new ACCF youth grantmaking/leadership development program was established by Mr. Cutright, branded as the “IMPACT Youth Council” with its director, Ginny Telego, taking this program to a height that was unimagined at the beginning. The acronym IMPACT was created to stand for “Imagine Making Philanthropy an Ashland County Tradition”. This program engages approximately 20 area high school students each year in a 9-month curriculum designed to educate them about philanthropy and allow them full decision-making authority over a pool of grant dollars dedicated to youth programs and initiatives.

Recently, this program was the inspiration for a similar program developed by the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, with whom Cutright had consulted over the past few months.

In 2017, the need for additional ACCF staff capacity was addressed by the recruiting and hiring of ACCF's first-ever chief financial officer, Brittaney Reep, as part of a plan that Cutright terms the Foundation's "Template for Success". Since ACCF has only been in existence for 23 years, the framework has been laid for creating administrative positions that are all now being filled by part-time employees, but allow for maturity into full-time positions as the community foundation grows. At the present time, Jim Cutright is ACCF's only full-time employee.

In ACCF's 2017-2018 fiscal year, the need for additional office space was addressed by the design and construction of an 800-square-foot addition to ACCF's building, the appropriately-named "Dr. Lucille Garber Ford Wing" to add physical capacity, in the form of three additional offices and two handicap-accessible restrooms. One hundred percent of the funding necessary to cover the cost of construction and furnishings was raised prior to its start, with the lead gift being provided by Dr. Lucille Ford. Ground was broken on the addition in August, 2017 and staff moved into the new space in March, 2018.

This past year, Jim developed a new initiative to assist local agencies, for whom ACCF holds endowment, to attract estate gifts. With the invaluable contribution of Ev DeVaul, ACCF's part-time community relations director, a brochure template was created, in which the agencies could insert their personal narratives, co-branded with ACCF, with design and printing costs assumed by ACCF.

During the past six years, with Cutright's emphasis on collaborating with local non-profits, the result has been an increase from 21 agency funds serving 18 agencies to 43 such funds, serving 32 different organizations.

An initiative that is just beginning is the formation of organized "Strategic Partner" alliances with local estate planning professionals to encourage them to consider planned giving that includes the creation of endowment at ACCF.

Lastly, Mr. Cutright provided an update on the Foundation's funding for a City of Ashland "Targeted Action Plan", in close partnership with the city, Ashland County, Ashland University, Ashland City Schools, University Hospital and private investors.

Working with a professional planning firm, OHM Advisors from Columbus, this plan has identified three major targeted areas in Ashland in need of revitalization. As projects from those focus areas emerge, ACCF will consider grant funding over the next three years to inspire and challenge other investors to participate in the improvement of our community.

Jim closed his comments by stating, “In the next year, our goal at ACCF is to be a part of every meaningful conversation in our community and to lead with optimism, where every challenge becomes an opportunity.”

Mr. Milligan then concluded the Annual Meeting with the approvals of trustees Al Holdren, Don Stump and Peggy Yoder, entering their second four-year terms.

The ACCF slate of officers for 2018-2019 was approved, and includes Ken Milligan, chair; Dr. Lucille Ford, founding president; Peggy Yoder, vice chair; Anne Cowen, secretary; Jay Myers, treasurer; Dr. Andy Stein, past chair; Jim Cutright, executive director/CEO; Kristin Aspin, chief program officer; Brittany Reep, chief financial officer; Ann Guthrie, recording secretary. Other current trustees include Kathy Davis, Brian Hinkle, Connie Marble, John Miller, Marcy Myers and Tom Zupan.

Irwin Financial Associates, Inc. was approved as auditor.