

David's Letter - 2014

“Forty years on...”

2014 marks the 40th anniversary of the Frey Foundation, and that's cause for both celebration and contemplation. It brings to mind Britain's Harrow School and its students' song, *Forty Years On*, in which they contemplate what it will be like *looking back* forty years after graduation. The Frey Foundation has reached that milestone and the view in both directions is remarkable!

Our late parents Ed and “Tollie” Frey created this foundation in 1974 and handed it to the second generation in 1988-89 at their passing. Because they intentionally did not leave a rigid road map for the future of the foundation, moving it from a “pass-through” to permanently endowed operating status required challenging conversations, cooperation and commitment to shared principles and purpose. The process forged sibling bonds and created a strong sense of mission.

We are delighted to welcome members of the *third* generation to the board. This group of enthusiastic cousins brings new ideas and fresh perspectives. We are committed to making GREAT outcome-based grants, and to govern and operate with accountability and integrity. To achieve those goals and to maximize our grantmaking dollars, we maintain a small, talented staff and are vigilant about discretionary expenses.

In all we do, we encourage and practice collaboration with corporate, community and private family foundations, state and local governments, families and individuals. It's a dynamite ingredient for both grant seekers and grant makers and an essential component for successful grants that are transformative and have an impact!

One unique highlight of 2013 was the leadership coalition of the Frey Foundation and two other leading West Michigan foundations, created to resolve difficult strategic and organizational issues in consolidating the John Ball Zoo and the Zoo Society. The collaborative multi-foundation effort produced a successful outcome that would have otherwise been highly unlikely. It is a superb example of what we've learned over the past 40 years of grantmaking: projects or initiatives with broad and deep support have the greatest likelihood of success.

Our geographic focus area is primarily West Michigan, a region whose residents have a celebrated work ethic and who are creative, thrifty, entrepreneurial and passionate about the region's future. In short, we are poised to lead, and the trustees and staff of the Frey Foundation are delighted to be in the thick of it. I think the founders would be pleased with our position. We have charted a course to be best in class!