

Steve's Letter - 2015

“Equity and inclusion must be fundamental principles of our work.”

If you've traversed a bike trail in the Petoskey area, bought fresh fruits and vegetables at the new Muskegon Farmers Market, or spent a few minutes with a student attending the West Michigan Center for Arts and Technology, you've experienced the power of collaboration at work throughout West and Northern Michigan. When we come together with other funders, sharing and embracing a common vision, big things happen that change lives!

Working at the intersection of family, community, and philanthropy, Frey Foundation trustees and staff weigh needs with opportunities as we strive to do the most good we can in our role as a mid-sized, place-based funder. When we hone our focus and partner with others, the impact of our collective support can be felt widely in the community.

If you take a look inside the Frey Foundation, you'll feel an exciting energy. Seven new family members have joined the board of trustees in the last four years, tripling its size and spanning in age from early thirties to seventies. It's a lively and diverse group that includes men and women, moms and dads, and their synergy has generated an abundance of enthusiasm and creative thinking. They share a healthy sense of curiosity and a deep passion for philanthropy, and because they hail from different parts of the country, they bring fresh perspectives to West Michigan on things they have seen work elsewhere.

The trustees and staff are taking time to explore each of the foundation's four program areas to further clarify and define our funding strategies. We are attentive to voices throughout the region, asking questions of civic leaders, our non-profit partners, and the beneficiaries of their work – the children, families and others who feel the impacts of philanthropy and understand the gaps that remain. We know there is more – much more – to be done. For starters, equity and inclusion must be fundamental principles of our organization and at the forefront of our work if we're serious about fostering communities that are healthy and productive for all.

What excites our trustees and staff the most these days is finding solutions and seeing the impact of our grantmaking on the lives of individuals and families throughout the region – watersheds restored, natural resources preserved, neighborhoods coming back, students learning how to use their skills as artists and designers to create positive community change, a new farmers' market reviving a once-flagging downtown.

We're grateful to have you along on this journey and invite you to read about some of our recent partners who are, indeed, changing lives.