



# A letter from our President

Steven Wilson

I often reflect on how much philanthropy has evolved over the decades. It used to be that funders saw a community need and responded to it. Grant applications were reviewed and decisions were based on whether a project could—and would—simply *get done*.

Today, we have grantmaking priorities, access to an incredible amount of data and strong community collaborations. Equipped with these resources, we are digging deeper into complex community issues and making grants that are smarter, more sustainable and impactful than ever before. It is an exciting time to be in this field and I am honored to be part of the continued evolution of this work in West and Northern Michigan.

This year marks a significant transition in leadership at the Frey Foundation. After years of thoughtful planning and preparation, I am delighted to be working alongside our first board chair from the third generation of the Frey family, Mary Frey Bennett. Mary grew up in the communities we serve, and she knows them well. Having been raised in a philanthropic family, she has been training for this leadership role most of her life. Mary is committed to guiding an organization that embraces transparent communications, respects diverse constituencies and opinions, and continues to build responsive relationships with grantees and peer funders.

While some things are changing, there are other aspects of the Frey Foundation that we are committed to upholding. Second generation trustee John Frey had a tradition for enjoying breakfast at a local café in Charlevoix. Often, you'd find him immersed in conversation with a university dean, the leader of one of Michigan's environmental agencies, or a community foundation executive. This was John's way; his two brothers and sister have their own ways of reaching out.

Thanks to John and the second generation of the Frey family, the foundation has a legacy of listening to the communities we serve. Being approachable and accessible allows us to better understand the needs, challenges and opportunities that lie within. Though we may not be at the café every morning, our staff and board are committed to continuing this practice. We believe it is the best way to ensure our grants remain relevant and well-aligned with the priorities of the regions we serve.

As you go through this year's report, you will see evidence that our approach is working in the creative, impactful and far-reaching ideas coming forward. I invite you to continue reading and learn about a few of our grantees. Their work is inspiring!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**FREY FOUNDATION**

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