A letter from our President

Steven M. Wilson

A History of Listening to Community Voices
Community is at the heart of every grant we make at the Frey Foundation. It’s a legacy we’ve built on for more than three decades. Listening to community voices is core to how we approach our work. It was instilled in us by our founders, Edward and Frances Frey, and it continues today as a new generation of Frey family trustees advances the Foundation into the 21st century.

Whether supporting the decade-long restoration of the Boardman River in Northern Michigan, or improving school readiness for young children through the Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative in Grand Rapids, we’ve made community engagement a priority. As a result, we’ve developed meaningful collaborations that are helping us move the needle in the Foundation’s four program areas—building community, children & families, community arts and the environment.

As you read this annual report and click through to the Foundation’s website, you’ll learn how we’ve adjusted our approach to meet emerging and future needs. We are combining community voices with data and science. This information is helping us zero-in on community systems. For example, we’ve supported the mapping of racial and economic disparities. We’ve also supported bringing collective impact initiatives to both West and Northern Michigan.

Working collaboratively, with all voices at the table, brings new depth to our work. It’s not always the easy way, but we believe it’s the right way, and that it will result in substantive and lasting changes in the communities we serve, for the lives of children and their families, for our creative spirit and for the health of the land and watersheds that surround us.

Within the Frey Foundation, a great deal of progress is also underway. When I joined the Foundation six years ago, my chief role was to support the trustees as they passed the torch to the third generation of Frey family leaders and transitioned to a multi-generational board. Today, Mary Frey Bennett chairs the foundation, a seat held by her uncle David Frey for more than twenty five years. Four of the five seats on the Foundation’s executive committee are held by third generation family members, as well. These new leaders are knowledgeable, enthusiastically engaged and committed to addressing the issues that are foremost in our communities. The Foundation is in good hands!

It has been my honor to serve as president of the Frey Foundation, and to help guide the trustees through this evolution. In early summer, I will retire from my position to embark on exciting new challenges. This has been a remarkable journey for which I am most grateful.

Thank you for sharing it with me.

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