



A Year of Introspection & Impact

A Message from Board Chair Mary Frey Bennett

2021 marked my fifth year as Board Chair of the Frey Foundation. I have been humbled and honored to be able to serve in this capacity. Next year, I am continuing my service to the Foundation as Board Treasurer and passing the Chair baton into the capable hands of my cousin, Tripp Frey. I have enjoyed bringing to the role my experience in the philanthropic sector and I am excited to see the many things Tripp will bring to the role as an entrepreneur and a committed member of the community who serves on the board of several local initiatives. As a team of trustees, our generation of the Frey family is developing its own distinctive leadership style—embracing the strengths of each of our members as we continue to steward our legacy now and in the future.

West and Northern Michigan are beautiful communities whose people and places remain close to our hearts. At a high-level, both regions are prospering, being featured on many “Best Of” lists, and garnering national attention as the wonderful places to live and work that they are...for some. The challenges of the past two years have, however, revealed systemic and structural inequities in education, employment and healthcare in way that has moved us to deepen our commitment to social justice and caring for all.

This past year, we have reimagined our diversity, equity and inclusion work. We are evaluating everything the Foundation does, from our internal processes outward, with the goal of understanding our inherent biases and committing to better serve our diverse communities and sector. Continuing in this space is more important than ever as we are all collectively grieving injustices here in Grand Rapids and across the nation.

We have recommitted to the health and well-being of young children, made meaningful investments in community arts, and in our shared green spaces. We also made it a top priority to actively engage in

collaborative impact work around housing stability. This work has gained momentum and has begun to show results in the form of shared language, honest acknowledgment of systemic inequities and a growing coalition of stakeholders who are committing resources to address it. Change comes too slowly, but the people of West and Northern Michigan have always proven that when we work together, we get things done.

“We were able to streamline our processes to focus on what really mattered—the work.”

The urgency of the pandemic allowed us to lean into the trust that we had established with our long-term community partners. We were able to streamline our processes to focus on what really mattered—the work.

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These efforts paid off in deeper and more authentic relationships that allowed us to meaningfully support our partners throughout one of the most difficult times in history.

Highlighted in this report is the work of The Diatribe and *The 49507 Project*. We include it here because it exemplifies the kind of investments that we at the Frey Foundation are most proud of. *The 49507 Project* not only brings forward and showcases what makes our communities unique and beautiful, it also celebrates what connects us to ourselves, to each other and to the places we call home. I hope you take the time to watch the video!

It has been an honor to serve my family's philanthropic enterprise. Together, we are working to support communities that are more just and equitable, where every person has the opportunity to make their dreams come true.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "May Frey Donald".

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40 Pearl Street NW, Suite 1100, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503 | www.freyfdn.org | 616.451.0303