



Building Connection & Going Deep

A Message from President Holly Johnson

If I have learned anything over the past year, it is that if all aren't thriving, none of us can reach our full potential. As we weathered a storm together, it was clear to see that some of us were on well-tended boats, and others were clinging to life rafts. While some zip codes complained of boredom and running out of binge-worthy streaming options, others experienced disproportionate mortality, unemployment, and housing loss. The call to action remains clear—we must do more to help all thrive.

The silver lining of the last year was that it demanded that we slow down and reconnect with our families and our neighbors. As funders and philanthropists, it required us to work together to address challenges and meet community needs in the most efficient way. The closeness, trust and shared sense of mission that developed between funders and partner organizations across this city, state and even our nation is unlike anything I have ever seen in my professional life.

This new pace allowed us to pursue intentional relationships and develop comfort with a deeper level of transparency and honesty between us and our community. This mutual vulnerability provided us the opportunity to go on a more robust journey towards diversity, equity, and inclusion. It has required humility and courage to talk honestly about issues of racial inequity and injustice that have long existed. Ultimately, it will be our actions, and not just our words, that will move us toward impact and help create space for all to be seen, be heard and contribute.

The shutdown in March 2020 happened overnight but reopening and assuming a new way of life will need to be intentional and may take some time. We have an opportunity as a Foundation to influence a better way forward, to ensure a more equitable, and inclusive social sector that better serves ALL of our community members. In the coming year the Foundation will look to our partnerships to help leverage a once in a lifetime influx of federal funding as we support our community partners in re-imagining their own roles in a significantly changed landscape.

During this time, the Frey Foundation has supported organizations that celebrate community and connection. I invite you to take a moment to watch the video about *The 49507 Project* that is highlighted in this report. *The 49507 Project* is an initiative of The Diatribe, a grassroots organization led by a group of nontraditional teaching artists. It is a neighborhood-based, large-scale public art project that placed seven murals designed with community input, including youth, and completed by artists of color in traditionally underserved and underinvested neighborhoods in Grand Rapids' 49507 zip code. We were

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attracted to this project because of the Diatribe's deep commitment to authentic community engagement combined with the power of public art that reflects and is informed by the voices living in and near the surrounding neighborhoods. The murals are beautiful, moving and inspiring. We are thrilled with this investment and partnership.

In closing, I want to take a moment to honor Mary Frey Bennett's leadership and transition from Board Chair to Treasurer. Her service to the Foundation over the last five years has been truly extraordinary. I have learned a great deal from Mary, and she has authentically supported me in my role here at the Frey Foundation. As Tripp Frey assumes the mantle of leadership, I am fully confident that he will lead boldly in the community that he calls home. The third generation of the Frey family has demonstrated that they work seamlessly together and are well-suited to steward this organization wisely and well.

We also wanted to share that we recently lost a beloved member of the Frey family and a strong voice for community, Edward "Ted" J. Frey, Jr. Ted will be deeply missed, but his legacy has a firm place in our organization and the communities he loved. Please click [here](#) to see the Foundation's Statement and Ted's obituary.

Thank you for your partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy", followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that extends to the right.

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