Program Updates
COVID-19 Initiatives

Grand Junction City Council partnered with our Community Foundation to administer the #GJStrong Fund - a rapid response grants process to distribute funding for emergency needs including food and housing assistance for City residents. Our staff team reviewed and recommended grants totaling $500,000 to nineteen nonprofits to help feed and shelter some of our most vulnerable citizens, including children, seniors, and homeless youth and families. Grant funding was distributed in mid April.

Memorial Tribute:
The Power of an Endowed Charitable Legacy

Phyllis Brownson
(1929 - 2020)

Long-time Grand Junction resident and Long-time Community Foundation donors, Charlie Quimby and Susan Cushman

Several of these stories took place in the first months of 2020 but were "bumped" to this May e-newsletter, given the huge change of course COVID-19 has had on our organization and community. These stories are belated but very worthy of sharing with our donors and friends!
are the inspiration behind our West Slope CARES campaign. When they realized they would be receiving a federal stimulus check to help during the COVID-19 crisis, they immediately thought about donating their checks to others who might need the money more than they do.

They worked with us to develop a marketing campaign to encourage others to do the same. To date, West Slope CARES has raised almost $50,000 from 55 donors. Funds will be distributed to meet COVID-related needs, including basic needs and programs that strengthen families who may be struggling with mental health issues, substance abuse, and domestic violence during these difficult times.

As people in our community faced loss of jobs and other economic uncertainty, food pantries and hunger relief programs across the region saw a huge increase in demand. Meals on Wheels has responded to a 40% increase in need for meals by home-bound seniors. Community Food Bank has shifted their business model to drive through food pick up and home delivery of food boxes.

Loyal Community Foundation supporter, Phyllis Brownson passed away in January this year at the age of 90. Attending her memorial service was a celebration of family (three sons and multiple grand- and great-grandchildren), friends and lifelong athletic interests, especially tennis and swimming.

The Brownson name is highly recognized in Grand Junction and especially on the Colorado Mesa University campus, where students, faculty/staff, and community members all visit the Brownson Arena to enjoy basketball, volleyball, and wrestling tournaments as well as graduation and other special events. Many students on campus benefit from the generous athletic scholarships endowed by Phyllis and her late husband, Bruce ("Bud"), both strong supporters of scholarships and athletics at CMU.

Less well known but another important aspect of the family's charitable legacy is the Bud and Phyllis Brownson Fund, an endowed donor-advised fund managed by our Community Foundation. Bud and Phyllis were amongst our first donors, setting up their fund in 1999 at the suggestion of their friend and long-time accountant, Wes Wendland. Phyllis was a loyal and steady donor to the Community Foundation over the past two decades.

Over the years, the endowed account has grown almost four-fold, through annual donations and strong investment growth. Total grants distributed from the fund to date exceed $150,000.

Phyllis had broad charitable interests but favorite local nonprofits included the Brownson Memorial Fund (which makes grants for substance abuse prevention and treatment), Colorado Discover
Our **Virtual Canned Food Drive** has raised over $45,595 to date from 186 generous donors. As of May 6th we have awarded 18 grants totaling $36,000 to food pantries across all seven counties we serve.

**Click on link to see a short video about our Cash Not Cans initiative**

In addition to these special COVID-19 response projects, our Community Foundation has distributed an additional $600,000 in grant funding to COVID-19 relief projects from our donor-advised funds.

In total, **over $1,000,000 has been granted in the first several months of 2020 for COVID-19 response efforts.**

**Donor Spotlight:**
**Roy and Pamela Blythe**
**A Legacy of Building**

As a young man, Roy Blythe went off to college hoping to become a teacher and a coach. He discovered architecture along the way and became a registered professional architect instead.

Fast forward four decades, Roy and his wife Pamela founded Blythe Group + co, a local architecture, interior design and project management company. Their firm has been involved in dozens of renovation and new school construction projects across the Ability, Wounded Warriors, and shelter programs like HomewardBound and Karis the House. Her oldest son, Sandy, and his daughter, Laura, have been helping Phyllis in recent years with her annual giving and will take over as advisors for the Bud and Phyllis Brownson Fund.

Phyllis Brownson and her family are strong advocates for using the Community Foundation for their family giving and for supporting favorite causes.
in need and small businesses struggling to stay afloat.

The new **Caring for Our Home Community Fund** launched several weeks ago. Grant funding is provided to nonprofits who serve food and meals to vulnerable populations; grant dollars are used to purchase meals from local restaurants that have been impacted. A classic "win-win," the program provides funding to nonprofits that are seeing increased needs and fewer volunteers due to safety concerns, while bolstering local restaurants that are struggling during these times.

To date, over $43,000 has been raised, including $10,900 from the Guys Giving Club (see photo below). There are seven participating restaurants and, to date, $22,000 in grants have been made to eleven nonprofits, including Doors 2 Success, Grand Valley Catholic Outreach, Hilltop, Homeward-Bound, Joseph Center, Karis, Riverside Educational Center and others.

Donations are being accepted to address on-going needs and can be made [here](#).

Over a decade ago, Roy heard about the model of a public education foundation in Eagle County that raised private funds to support public education. He wanted to try a similar approach here. Many meetings and incorporation documents later, the D51 Foundation was formed. Notes Roy, "our school system is an integral and critical institution in our community. Those teachers work so hard to educate their students - both in academic subjects and as citizens of our community. We know our school district has limited funds and we hoped to find ways to involve the larger community in supporting the work of our teachers and district administrators."

On the occasion of D51 Foundation's 10th anniversary in February, Roy and Pamela surprised guests at the annual fundraiser dinner by presenting Angela Christensen with a significant endowment donation. The Blythes explained, "we always planned to leave an end-of-life donation to benefit D51 Foundation but we realized, why not do it now and invite other people who care about public education to join us in promoting the mission of the D51 Foundation and building an endowment for long-term funding support?"

The Blythes have established the **Roy and Pamela Blythe Fund for D51 Foundation**. Their generous donation is so appreciated and fitting for a couple who has committed years of their lives to a cause near and dear to their hearts, working tirelessly on behalf of the students and staff of D51 to enhance and expand learning opportunities.
Our Community Foundation received funding from the Guys Giving Club of Grand Junction last week for the **Caring for our Home Community Fund**. This is the first time we have received funding from one of our local giving clubs - thank you!

Habitat for Humanity Breaks Ground for 24 new houses along Waldeck Avenue

We know we speak for our colleagues on the D51 Foundation Board and across D51 when we say, **THANK YOU FOR YOUR INCREDIBLE GENEROSITY TO STUDENTS IN OUR COMMUNITY!**

Roy and Pamela Blythe present an endowment donation to leaders of the D51 Foundation at their annual fundraiser on February 1st.

**Living Legacy Award**

Bernie and Mary Beth Buescher Recognized for their Philanthropy

The Community Impact Council of Mesa County honored our long-time donors Mary Beth and Bernie Buescher with the Living Legacy Award at their recent annual celebration of nonprofits, the Inspire Impact Breakfast. The award recognizes community leaders who have made a real difference through their philanthropy and...
Ten years ago, Ellen Jo Waldeck left a generous endowment to provide operating support for Habitat for Humanity and seven other nonprofit organizations in Mesa County.

Over the years, this steady funding from the Waldeck Endowment Fund allowed our local Habitat affiliate to almost triple the number of homes they can build for families annually.

In appreciation of their generous donor, Habitat has named a new street in the Hoffman Estates subdivision after Mrs. Waldeck. A celebration and ground-breaking for Phase III of development was held on March 6th. Her two daughters were on hand and received honorary street signs named after the family.

The Western Colorado Community Foundation is confirmed in compliance with National Standards for U.S. Community Foundations by the Council on Foundations.

We are thrilled that our Community Foundation board member, Mary Beth, and her husband were appropriately recognized!

More than half of the sold out room for the 2020 Inspire Impact Breakfast's celebration of nonprofits stood when asked if Bernie or Mary Beth Buescher had served on their boards or supported them financially.

Reflections from the President

The past two months have felt like six... and I am sure it is the same for many of our e-newsletter readers. The COVID health and economic crisis is a complete "rug pulled out from under you" - for our businesses and nonprofits, workers learning to work remotely or adjusting to the loss of jobs, parents scrambling to help children with virtual classroom learning.

While the past several months have seen a huge pivot for our organization - responding to needs and opportunities to help our community during this crisis - our regular work continues. COVID hit right at the apex of our annual scholarship selection season. Our scholarship team responded by setting up video selection committee meetings and virtual interviews for scholarship applicants, getting our scholarships reviewed and awarded in the
normal tight timeframe. We have figured out ways to recognize scholarship winners who are not attending award nights or high school graduation ceremonies this year.

Our work with donors and promoting charitable legacies also continues. We have met with new donors, concerned about COVID, wanting to get their affairs in order. We celebrate the lives well lived of long-time donors who have been involved with our organization and giving back to our community over the years and decades.

I want to send a hearty THANK YOU to our hard-working and energetic staff team for being nimble in responding to the COVID crisis. And an equal hearty thank you to all the donors who have responded generously to various initiatives and projects. We are hard at work promoting local philanthropy, making grants and scholarships, supporting people who care in various ways to give back to causes that matter. We are here for you - in regular times and in the New Normal dictated by COVID. Thank you!

-- Anne Wenzel